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MT. KENYA WORLD HERITAGE SITE REVISITED

A Conservancy's Quest for Perpetual Safekeeping

Nearly sixteen years after designation, the original boundaries of Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site changed. This event was the outcome of a longer process that had started in 2007. At the time, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, a property located on the eastern-most outskirts of the former White Highlands and bordering Mt. Kenya in the north, began lobbying for World Heritage recognition. The managers of the property soon realized that Lewa Wildlife Conservancy only stood a chance of obtaining World Heritage status if it managed to join the existing Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site. Subsequently, they started to file different applications for a site extension to the World Heritage Centre. Eventually, the World Heritage Committee agreed to Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's request, and in July 2013 it was included in Mt. Kenya's World Heritage designation.

Those behind the petition for Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site's extension assumed that World Heritage status would improve Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's position within Laikipia's precarious land question. Like other private conservancies, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy is affected by the contemporary political implications of the area's colonial history, and like other landowners the conservancy's executives aim to ward off risks of land alienation. They believed that World Heritage could contribute to this end as it could mobilize a global community calling for Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's continued existence, in case the Kenyan government decided to cancel title deeds or demand different land use.

In what follows, I discuss how Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site comments upon the constitution of Kenya's political arena in the late 2000s and early 2010s. I undertook a similar effort for 1996 and 1997 in chapter three, where I argued that Mt. Kenya's original World Heritage designation served the interests of incumbent politicians. Below I take an opposite stand, and draw attention to how World Heritage might play a role in challenging a country's state administration. It follows that World Heritage's relationship to state power is not absolute: on the one hand, it can give expression to state sovereignty; on the other hand, it may also defy it. In both cases, World Heritage is likely to reproduce a country's power hierarchies, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's World Heritage mission suggests, and I will argue that the conservancy could only capitalize on Mt. Kenya's World Heritage status because it was already an influential and authoritative player in Kenya's conservation industry.

The making of a conservation titan

In 1922, Alexander Douglas, born in South Africa to a Scottish father, settled on the northern foothills of Mt. Kenya. He established a ranch that he called Lewa Downs (Breed 2011). In 1952, Lewa Downs passed to one of Douglas's daughters, Delia Douglas, who together with her husband David Craig continued ranching. In 1972, the couple established a tourist camp on Lewa Downs – according to their own records, this was the first tourist camp located on a private conservancy in the entire country (see Lewa Wilderness n.d.^B). A few years later, Lewa Downs passed to one of Delia and David Craig's sons, called Ian Craig. He was the main architect of what is today Lewa Wildlife Conservancy.

When Ian Craig took over Lewa Downs in 1977 it was still operating as a cattle ranch. This changed from 1983, when Lewa Downs gave up a far corner of its land to establish a rhino sanctuary. This sanctuary was the brainchild of Anna Merz, a British-born philanthropist who had primarily worked as a racehorse trainer and chimpanzee conservationist in Ghana. Merz moved to Kenya in 1976 to retire but, the story goes, after she arrived in the country she was appalled by the large number of rhinos that were poached. She decided to spend her retirement protecting these animals and began looking for a place to start a rhino sanctuary. Different landowners turned a deaf ear to her pleas she later recounted, but Merz persisted (see for instance *The New York Times*, 21 April 2013). Her unrelenting advocacy established her reputation as Kenya's rhino patron, and Desmond Morris once described her as: 'what Joy Adams was to lions, Dian Fossey was to gorillas, and Jane Goodall is to chimpanzees, Anna Merz is to rhino' (Morris in Merz 1991: 9).

Eventually, Anna Merz convinced David and Ian Craig to cooperate, and they allowed her to build a small rhino park on Lewa Downs. The reserve covered a fenced-off area of approximately five thousand acres: it became operative in 1986, and it was called Ngare Sergoi (Lewa Wilderness n.d.^A). Merz allegedly paid for the establishment of Ngare Sergoi with a family inheritance, and she recruited game-trackers and veterinarians to bring rhinos to her reserve (see for instance *The Daily Telegraph*,

27 May 2013). But since Kenya was in the midst of one of its severest poaching crises it proved difficult to find any animals left to protect, and during Ngare Sergoi's first years its main task was survey what was left (see also American Association of Zoo Keepers n.d.^A). Michael Dyer,⁶⁷ owner of a family property located next to that of the Craigs, remembered the period well. He told me that his brother and Anna Merz had collected the last two rhinos in the Matthews,⁶⁸ the last two in Isiolo, and so on. 'It was fun in those days', he stressed, and those who had been involved in the project had felt like pioneers, he said.

Rhinos from all over the region were brought to Ngare Sergoi and over the years the reserve grew steadily. By 1988, the initial five thousand acres no longer sufficed, and Ngare Sergoi doubled in size (Lewa Wildlife Conservancy n.d.^E) – at the time, cattle ranching was in retreat, and Lewa Downs had plenty of land available. In the meantime, Anna Merz began looking for donors and private investors to help funding the operation, and entered into a partnership with, among others, the American Association of Zoo Keepers (American Association of Zoo Keepers n.d.^B). This marked the beginning of the Craig family's close relations with American nature conservation lobbies, which I discuss in more detail later.

Ngare Sergoi's rhino population kept growing, and in the mid-1990s the number of animals again exceeded the reserve's carrying capacity. In response, the Craig family took a drastic decision. It turned the whole of Lewa Downs into a nature park, which it called Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. It was a groundbreaking move, for hardly any privately owned conservancies existed in Kenya at the time. In later years, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy advertised itself as the founder of an entirely new conservation model, but critical observers stressed to me that Lewa Wildlife Conservancy had never been established for that aim: rather, it was said that the Craig family simply faced bankruptcy after the collapse of the cattle industry and had made the radical transition to prevent an execution sale of the land.

When Lewa Wildlife Conservancy was officially established in 1995 it replaced Ngare Sergoi, which ceased to exist. Apart from the former territory of Lewa Downs, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy also came to include a government forest reserve called Ngare Ndare. The Craig family already became involved in the management of Ngare Ndare in the early 1990s, when the forest's adjacent large landowners had raised money to fence off the government reserve (see Ngare Ndare Forest Trust n.d., although the website does not mention the sponsors by name). I was told that these landowners had meant to curtail the access to Ngare Ndare, because they were of the opinion that both the Forest Department and the African communities living around it depleted its resources. The fence was erected in stages throughout the 1990s, but the northern border, where Ngare Ndare touches the property of the Craig family, was left open. Thus, Ngare Ndare effectively became a part of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, and the latter assumed management control over the area.

Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's start-up phase resembled that of Ngare Sergoi, and at first it was largely without wildlife. It then began retrieving animals from elsewhere. A senior KWS official, who

did not want to be mentioned by name, told me that this had irritated the KWS, because Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's managers had not asked permission from the institute – in fact, they had failed to consult them at all, and had not informed the KWS about the operations. Instead, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy people had captured animals under the false pretence that they were ill and needed treatment, he said. They 'just darted wildlife' and moved them to the conservancy, he told me. I once had the opportunity to ask Ian Craig⁶⁹ himself about this affair but he largely avoided the matter. Instead he said that, in general, wildlife does not need much more than the right environment, plenty of nutrition and protection against poaching – if one offered that, it would come on its own. A few moments later he commented 'if wildlife is not hassled it will stop moving around' and immediately added that, if I understood the full extent of what he was saying, I was 'really very smart'.⁷⁰ This left me with the impression that Lewa Wildlife Conservancy had collected animals by actively chasing them from neighbouring properties into the conservancy, where it was left in peace in the hope that it would stay. I shared my thoughts, but Ian Craig refused to give further clarifications.

In only a few years' time the Craig family property no longer looked like a livestock farm, but measured up to the image of a wild East African savanna with lone acacia trees, extensive grasslands and charismatic wildlife species such as elephant, rhino and lion as well as grazing herds of all sorts of herbivores including zebra, gazelle, giraffe and buffalo. In essence, the Craig family had created what Soper called 'nature as appearance' (1995: 180). This was a 'new' nature that did not derive its credibility from the historical absence of human interference, but from deliberate landscape engineering that created the potential for spontaneous biophysical processes (see Onneweer 2009: 54-55) – the presence of these biophysical processes made the conservancy appear natural, even though it was patently man-made.

As the Craig family property's landscape changed, so did its business model. Unlike the former ranch, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy was founded as a non-profit organization (Lewa Wildlife Conservancy n.d.^B), and soon its operation was paid for with money from international organizations such as the American Association of Zoo Keepers, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the World Bank, and the Worldwide Fund for Nature (*Ibid.*). Over time, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy became fully donor dependent, meaning that it failed to generate money of its own and instead relied on the gifts of others. Many other former ranchers as well as conservationists considered this a regrettable development, they told me. On the one hand, it had made Lewa Wildlife Conservancy a sloppy and irresponsible spender, they maintained, for money simply came in too easily. One critical observer, for instance, told me that one of Lewa's managers had told him that, whenever Lewa Wildlife Conservancy needed building materials, it did not bother to check prices – it just went where it was easiest. The person in question explained to me that he deemed this highly problematic, because it sent out the wrong message to suppliers: it suggested that whites had money and would pay any price, which put the rest of Laikipia's white landowners with less financial means in a difficult situation.

On the other hand, critical observers indicated, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's total reliance on donor money stimulates dishonest and aggressive marketing practices. A former employee clarified to me that Lewa Wildlife Conservancy organizes fundraising events in the United States and Britain, which rest entirely on the idea that Lewa Wildlife Conservancy is the sole successful private conservation initiative in the entire country, and that without it Kenya's wildlife would be doomed. He explained to me that Lewa Wildlife Conservancy needs huge amounts of money to cover their costs, and that in order to raise such amounts it continuously exaggerates its importance and influence. 'Lewa tries its best to let donors believe that no one else exists but Lewa' he said, and added that he condemns this as it disregards and downplays the merits of all of Laikipia's other conservation initiatives. A conservationist who requested anonymity, as he did not want to antagonize Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, said that the conservancy's main point of departure is making itself look bigger by making others look smaller. He described Ian Craig as a 'Rambo conservationist', i.e. someone who is only interested in sensation and spectacle. He said that the things that really matter for conservation, such as butterflies and beetles, were of no interest to Ian Craig, who only concerned himself with fancy cars, private airplanes, and large charismatic mammals. Documentaries and television series that feature Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, such as *Game Ranger Diaries* (2006),⁷¹ *Drawing the Line* (2014),⁷² and *Earth, a New Wild* (2015)⁷³ largely subscribed to such an image, and further reinforced the idea that the conservancy is all-important and decisive for Kenyan conservation.

Over time, Laikipia's endangered charismatic mammals became Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's main asset and came to generate the most donor money. Mordecai Ogada from the Laikipia Wildlife Forum, for instance, indicated to me that the endemic black rhino, a critically endangered IUCN Red List Species,⁷⁴ can produce about \$60,000 in funding per year. He pointed out that Lewa Wildlife Conservancy understands the economic potential of endangered species quite well, and that it makes a habit out of accumulating as much IUCN Red List species as possible: it has the black rhino, the Grevy's Zebra, and in mid-2012 there was talk that it was preparing the translocation of the critically endangered Hirola from an area north of the Tana River. There are conservationists who strongly disapprove of this, because it makes it nearly impossible for other private conservancies to obtain international donor money – by taking full control over the conservation of certain species, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy simply corners conservation money.

In addition to being funding magnets, iconic species can also be a form of political capital to Laikipia's landowners, as the following account reveals. From roughly 2010 onwards, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy again hosted more rhinos than its environment could sustain. A neighbouring property called Borana Ranch, which since the late 2000s had been making preparations to host rhinos on its property (see Save the Rhino n.d.), offered to take in a proportion of the animals. In July 2012, the manager of Borana⁷⁵ told me that the ranch had taken all the necessary steps: among other things, it had upgrade its ring-fence to keep out poachers, it had hired extra staff, and it had trained its personnel

under supervision of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. Yet, each time that Borana Ranch thought that the animals would be brought in, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy objected for one reason or another.

According to one conservationist, who regularly cooperates with Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, Borana Ranch failed to meet Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's high security standards. He underscored that the latter's safety system is state-of-the-art and extremely expensive and that, in comparison, Borana Ranch's measures were simply insufficient. Mentioning this, he touched upon a broader problem: rhino conservation was so risky and expensive that the KWS has largely walked away from it, and today gladly leaves the animals in the care of private landowners. But most of these landowners do not have sufficient resources either, and in 2012 two private conservancies pulled out of rhino conservation due to the costs and dangers involved. After that, Laikipia's rhino population confined to three properties only, namely Solio Ranch, Ol Pejeta Conservancy, and Lewa Wildlife Conservancy.

One of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's former employees offered an additional explanation for the continuous delay in the relocation of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's rhinos. He told me that the latter not only doubted the quality of Borana Ranch's security standards, but that it also was unsure about how to organize the translocation itself. He clarified that different experts held different opinions: some advised putting the rhinos in a small enclosure on Borana Ranch so that the animals could get used to the environment, while others suggested simply lowering the fence between the two properties and letting rhinos wander in by themselves. The latter strategy was obviously the easiest, the former employee told me, but it had a downside: in this way, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy could not attract much media attention. He underscored just how keen Lewa Wildlife Conservancy is on publicity, and he said that the conservation preferred 'some big deal, a big hoopla rhino introduction'.

In the meantime, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy questioned Borana Ranch's motivation for the rhino relocation project. It maintained that Borana Ranch was not so much interested in the continued existence of the species itself, as in the political support of influential conservation lobbies that do everything in their power to protect rhino habitat. Borana Ranch was only interested in the black rhino because the animals would give the property a stronger position if the Kenyan government decided to target privately owned land, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's CEO suggested to me. He stressed that if the government confiscated Laikipia's large estates, then those hosting black rhinos would be among the last to fall, for conservation organizations would fight for them till the bitter end. Of course, this rationale was also applicable to Lewa Wildlife Conservancy – however, its PR machine effectively covered such incentives up.

In 2014, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy finally agreed to bring rhinos to Borana Ranch. As expected, the conservancy dramatized the event and announced on its website that the translocation had created the 'biggest rhino sanctuary in the country' (see Lewa Wildlife Conservancy n.d.^A). Lewa Wildlife Conservancy also shot a sensational promotion film that showed how rhinos were darted from a helicopter, how they were put in big containers and transported, and how the animals were finally released amid much loud trampling and snorting (YouTube 2014). The promotion clip constantly

showed Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's name and logo, but information on Borana Ranch's contributions was kept to a minimum.

The way in which Lewa Wildlife Conservancy branded the rhino relocation project almost entirely as its own was illustrative of the conservancy's powerful position – Ian Craig tended to get his way, I was told on several occasions, and over the years both he and Lewa Wildlife Conservancy became increasingly authoritative. This manifested in different ways. For example, Ian Craig initiated another conservation initiative in 2004. This was the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT), which he established in cooperation with the politician Francis Ole Kaparo, an influential statesman who had, among other things, served as the speaker of the lower house of parliament between 1993 and 2008. NRT aimed to offer conservation support to those community ranches located north of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy that were in the hands of pastoralist groups. In essence, NRT was an extension of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy under a different name, and one of NRT's main objectives was to make the communities around Lewa Wildlife Conservancy agreeable to conservation. This was necessary because the safety of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's wildlife depended on their goodwill and cooperation (see also Northern Rangelands Trust 2013: 6).

Initially, NRT worked with some ten or eleven pastoral communities. It supported them in the management of wildlife and in setting up ecotourism businesses. Il Ngwesi, a community ranch that borders on Lewa Wildlife Conservancy in the northwest, became NRT's showpiece: it established a luxurious lodge, and with the marketing support of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, Il Ngwesi managed to attract a steady stream of tourists. Yet, in later years, NRT and Il Ngwesi fell out. Someone from the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy bandwagon told me that Il Ngwesi's community felt exploited, and that pastoralists claimed that NRT had profited too much from their work. In response, these pastoralists had demanded full control over Il Ngwesi's lodge and no longer wished to work with NRT. Despite such setbacks, the number of community conservancies that NRT worked with expanded rapidly. At the time of writing the organization cooperated with more than twenty-seven community ranches. It had expanded into areas further north as well as into Kenya's coast region, and in total controlled more than 7,600,000 acres (Northern Rangelands Trust n.d.).

But Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's influence over other conservation areas did not stop there. In the mid-2000s, the British conservation organization Flora and Fauna International (FFI)⁷⁶ bought Ol Pejeta Ranch, where it wanted to establish a conservancy modelled on Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. Ol Pejeta Ranch had a turbulent history: it had been owned by, among others, Thomas Cholmondeley, 4th Baron Delamere (son of Hugh Cholmondeley, 3rd Baron Delamere, introduced in the previous chapter), by the father-in-law of Christina Onassis, daughter of Aristotle Onassis, and by infamous weapons dealer Adnan Khashoggi (Pearce 2012). After FFI bought Ol Pejeta Ranch it contracted Lewa Wildlife Conservancy to organize Ol Pejeta Conservancy's management. Batian Craig, Ian Craig's son, became overall supervisor and Ian Craig himself took a seat on Ol Pejeta Conservancy's board of directors. Within a few years, Ol Pejeta Conservancy became very successful and today some

even consider it more prosperous than Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, for Ol Pejeta Conservancy generates its own income through livestock farming and does not depend on donor money.⁷⁷ In any case, together Ol Pejeta Conservancy and Lewa Wildlife Conservancy became Laikipia's two conservation giants – and Ian Craig stood at the helm of both.

Ian Craig's influence over Laikipia's conservation scene also showed in his appointment to the KWS board of trustees in 2008, where he served six consecutive years (KWS annual report 2008: 9). In this period, Ian Craig promoted cooperation between the KWS and private conservancy owners in general, and cultivated a stronger relation between the KWS and Lewa Wildlife Conservancy in particular – I return to the latter development later in this chapter. In recent years, the KWS certainly seems to have become more agreeable to Laikipia's large white landowners, and it might have realized that it cannot compete with influential stakeholders such as Ol Pejeta Conservancy and Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. In fact, the organization is dependent on such private conservancies, as the outsourcing of rhino conservation suggests. Former Mt. Kenya senior warden Robert Obrien⁷⁸ realized this all too well, and he indicated to me that although Lewa Wildlife Conservancy does not need the KWS the KWS certainly needs them. He said that Mt. Kenya should consider itself lucky with a neighbour such as Lewa Wildlife Conservancy: the effect of the latter's tight security system spilled over, and ensured that the overall region was safer and better protected against poaching.

Ian Craig's position on the KWS board of trustees and his partnership with politicians such as Francis ole Kaparo granted Lewa Wildlife Conservancy a favourable lobby position. Mike Watson,⁷⁹ Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's CEO since April 2011 (see Lewa Wildlife Conservancy n.d.^D), told me that the conservancy's staff and board had invested in reinforcing state relations for a long time. This had rendered Lewa Wildlife Conservancy considerable political leverage, which revealed itself, for example, during the design phase of a KETRACO power line. In 2006, the governments of Kenya and Ethiopia had signed a memorandum of understanding on the construction of a transmission line that would run from the Ethiopia-Kenya border to the plains east of Mt. Longonot. On its way it would traverse the regions Marsabit, Samburu, Isiolo, Laikipia, Nyandarua and Nakuru (see KETRACO Kenya Electricity Transmission Co. Ltd. n.d.). The initial design for the power line suggested that it would scrape Laikipia in the east. As such, it would go over Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. Watson told me that once the conservancy had realized this it had begun lobbying to have the design changed, as a power line over its property would affect its pristine-looking landscape. Lewa Wildlife Conservancy managed to persuade the politicians involved to adjust the KETRACO line's course, and eventually it moved further north (to the detriment of private conservancies located in that region).

All together, Ian Craig had turned the former Lewa Downs into a conservation titan. Many conservationists and landowners saw him as a visionary who had understood the potential of private conservation long before others. Yet they did not necessarily like working with him, as he was known as a man who did not tolerate contradiction and who let no one stand in his way. One conservationist told me in private that he truly disliked Ian Craig, but that he had to make do with his presence and

influence. 'I have to live here and work here, and so I have to make the best of it', he said. In line with this, another conservationist later told me that Lewa Wildlife Conservancy does not hire people to think for themselves, but to promote Ian Craig's vision. The greatest source of frustration seemed to be that Ian Craig's and Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's behaviour as the grand dame of Kenyan conservation undermined endeavours to strengthen Laikipia's conservation industry as a whole, and belittled the efforts of other private conservancies. At the same time, those involved in Laikipian conservation were well aware of Ian Craig's range of influence, and especially conservationists and landowners who relied on Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's goodwill or financial support were careful not to state their criticism in public (which is why many of the informants in this section have been anonymized).

But although Lewa Wildlife Conservancy had a powerful position it was not invincible, and critical observers pointed out, in particular, the risks of its business model. A former employee who once worked at the top of the conservancy's administration told me that Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's managers were always worried about reaching income targets. This made the conservancy incredibly donor pleasing, he said, and the organizations that fund the conservancy largely came to direct its conservation agenda. As a result, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy got caught between what American and British donor organizations want on the one hand, and what its Kenyan staff deems appropriate and suitable on the other. Brockington & Scholfield (2010^C) have identified such dynamics for Sub-Saharan conservation efforts more generally, and stress that conservation funding is a powerful tool with which the North enforces its conservation ambitions on the South.

In addition to how the principles of international organizations affected Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's daily operation, the conservancy had another vulnerability related to its complicated and fragmented ownership arrangements. After Lewa Downs became a conservancy, the non-profit organization Lewa Wildlife Conservancy came to supervise about 62,000 acres of land. Of these, approximately 40,000 acres were owned by Craig family members; about 8,000 acres were in the hands of other private owners who had bought properties from the Craig family in the past; and the remaining 14,000 acres largely covered Ngare Ndare forest reserve (Lewa Milele n.d.^B). During Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's initial years, the supervision of all this land rested solely on informal agreements. This changed in 1999 when Craig family members signed an easement that gave Lewa Wildlife Conservancy full management control over the land in their possession, but in legal terms this easement was not very strong and it only lasted for thirty years (*Ibid.*). Moreover, the easement did not cover the 8,000 acres not owned by Craig family members, and on these properties informal agreements continued. At a certain point, these informal and fragile arrangements began to unsettle donors, I was told – Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's sponsors wanted a more secure future for their investment, and they demanded that the risks be averted. In response, the conservancy's managers developed a strategy that consisted of a number of measures, of which two are discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

A devilish land sale?

As long as Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's land question was not settled, the conservancy's future was uncertain. On the one hand, there were the informal and legally weak arrangements between those who owned the land and the non-profit organization; at the same time, there was also the risk of political expulsion confronting all Laikipia's white landowners. In the run-up to the new constitution and Land Act it became obvious that private property rights would be curtailed, but little was said about corporate property rights. As such, the executives of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy believed that land would be less vulnerable to government confiscation if owned by a firm, rather than one or more white individuals, and thus they decided to transfer landownership to a Kenyan shareholding company. They thought up the following plan: a shareholding company would be founded, called Chikwe Ltd. (see Government of Kenya 2012: 54), which would buy 32,000 acres of the approximately 40,000 acres that the Craig family in total possessed (Lewa Milele n.d.^B). After the sale, Chikwe Ltd. would allocate the management right to the non-profit organization Lewa Wildlife Conservancy – the organization would supervise the entire area, with the exclusion of the residences and tourist lodges owned by individual Craig family members who would have the opportunity to lease such real estate back.

In order to pay for the land sale, as well as for the employment of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy as general overseer, Chikwe Ltd. had to accumulate money: Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's executives estimated that the shareholding company needed nearly \$30 million to get through the first years, of which roughly \$17.5 million was needed for land acquisition (Lewa Milele n.d.^A). It was decided to generate this money through donor funding, and Lewa Wildlife Conservancy partnered with the American conservation organization The Nature Conservancy (TNC): TNC would partially finance the project; in addition, the two organizations would launch a fundraising campaign to collect the rest of the money. This fundraising campaign was given the name *Lewa Milele*, Kiswahili for Lewa Forever, and was primarily meant to attract private investors and philanthropists.

Lewa Wildlife Conservancy began cultivating an alliance with TNC from 2008 onwards (see Lewa Milele n.d.^C). At the time, TNC was new to Kenyan conservation. The American organization had been founded in 1951, but for a long time it concentrated its activities in North and South America, with an occasional project in Asia. Today, TNC is considered one of the wealthiest and most powerful environmental conservation organizations worldwide (see Forbes 2011). According to its own website, TNC pursues 'non-confrontational, pragmatic, market-based solutions to conservation challenges' (The Nature Conservancy n.d.^C) – in practice, the organization buys up vast tracks of land with government funds and money from the private sector, and subjects these lands to authoritative management plans.

In the United States, TNC is primarily known for its controversial methods. Especially its aggressive land-acquisition strategies, and its reselling of land to the United States government at increased rates gave way to different scandals. In 1993, for instance, TNC hit the headlines after it bought a farm from the elderly Frederic Gibbs, a well-known neurologist and scientist. Gibbs's heirs, his two sons, then sued TNC: they maintained that their father had not been mentally competent when he signed the agreement, and they argued that the organization was fraudulent and manipulative. Gibbs's sons won the court case, and TNC had to give back the property. Another often-heard critique of TNC is that its board includes directors of oil companies, chemical producers and mining concerns – it is believed that TNC prioritizes the interests of the corporate sector and has conservation only as secondary concern, illustrated, for instance, by the organization's condoning of logging and drilling for oil.⁸⁰ Holmes (2011) notes that, in general, the roles of NGOs, corporations, and the state have become increasingly indistinguishable in nature conservation (see also Spierenburg & Wels 2010): TNC is a perfect example of this.

In 2006, TNC began to invest in African conservation programmes. It soon entered Kenya, where it immediately got caught up in another scandal that roughly went as follows. In 2008, former president Daniel Arap Moi announced the sale of his Laikipian ranch, Eland Downs, which had been in his possession since 1997. The announcement alarmed Eland Downs's adjacent landowners, Ol Pejeta Conservancy's CEO Richard Vigne⁸¹ told me. It was shortly after the 2007 and 2008 election violence, and at the time politicians were looking for land to settle hundreds of thousands of displaced people. Laikipia's white conservancy owners worried that Eland Downs would turn into a refugee camp, and they feared the effect that this would have on their properties.

To prevent Eland Downs from becoming an African refugee camp, an organization called African Wildlife Fund (AWF) offered to buy Daniel Arap Moi's property. AWF did not have the money to finance the purchase but TNC, which at the time was trying to get a foothold in Kenya, volunteered to sponsor the buy. The two organizations sided, and AWF bought Eland Downs with the intention of turning it into another conservancy. Yet, shortly after the transaction, a group of Samburu pastoralists began to protest. They said they lived on Eland Downs, and maintained that they were the property's rightful owners. Moi had grabbed their land decennia earlier, they stated, and as such the sale between the former president and AWF was unlawful.

AWF rejected the pastoralists' objections. The organization declared that it had paid Daniel Arap Moi and had thus gained legal possession of Eland Downs, but the pastoralists refused to leave the ranch. In 2011, Channel 4 ran a documentary on the situation, called 'Conservation's Dirty Secrets'.⁸² The documentary featured Samburu men who claimed that the Kenya Police had tried to evict them in a violent manner, and witnesses declared that police forces had beaten people up, had stolen money, had burned huts, had raped women, and had killed one man. After the documentary was broadcast, international media and organizations jumped on AWF. *The Guardian*, for instance, headlined 'Kenya's Samburu People Violently Evicted After US Charities Buy Land' (14 December 2011); the

indigenous rights organizations Just Conservation and Cultural Survival publicly condemned the proceedings (see Just Conservation n.d.; Cultural Survival n.d.); the German travel branch organization threatened to discourage tourism to Kenya (see Deutscher ReiseVerband n.d.); and the indigenous rights organization Survival International sent a petition to the United Nations (see Survival International n.d.).

International rights movements portrayed AWF's land purchase as a human rights violation, but their reports were sensational, confusing, and sometimes downright contradictory. Cultural Survival, for instance, said that the evictions had affected three hundred pastoral families (Cultural Survival n.d.), while Survival International spoke of two to three thousand households (Survival International n.d.). Also, the organizations seemed uncertain about how long the pastoralists had actually been living on Eland Downs before AWF interfered. In the meantime, AWF fought back, and it presented a 2008 court file in which the same group of Samburu pastoralists claimed to be living next to Moi's ranch instead of on it. But the pastoralists received public support, and with the help of international organizations they took AWF and Daniel Arap Moi to court. TNC was spared because it had never been a party to the sale – it had merely made funding available.

By November 2011, AWF was tired of the witch-hunt. It donated Eland Downs to the Kenyan government, after which Moi's former ranch turned into a National Park under supervision of the KWS (*Daily Nation*, 11 November 2011). The affair had driven a serious wedge between AWF and TNC and, shortly after international rights movements had begun to target AWF, TNC moved out of the organizations' shared office in Karen, Nairobi. After AWF had taken its hands off Eland Downs, TNC also published a public statement in which it said:

The Conservancy has never approved or enabled the evictions of Indigenous Peoples from this property. Moreover, the Conservancy condemns the use of violence or any forcible removal of Indigenous Peoples from their land or territories.

[...]

We are shocked and saddened by reports of abuse to Samburu pastoralists in the Samburu district, and we are investigating the matter. In such a highly charged environment, emotions and rumors are running high, and ascertaining the facts is a challenge. However, we remain committed to transparency and openness, and we will communicate updates on this issue as developments occur.

The Nature Conservancy, 16 December 2011

In August 2012, I visited Charles Oluchina,⁸³ TNC's Kenyan director, in the organization's new headquarters in another neighbourhood of Nairobi. He said that AWF had abused TNC's trust, and that he did not believe that AWF had not known about the politics in advance. Maybe he was right, or maybe not – in any case, the partnership with AWF had put TNC's introduction in Kenya in a bad light.

At the time that the Eland Downs affair unfolded, TNC's cooperation with Lewa Wildlife Conservancy was already well underway. Chikwe Ltd. had been founded, and the land sale was in process – the two organizations had cut the vending process in two so that funding could be raised in steps (Lewa Milele n.d.^B), and by the time that the Channel 4 documentary began to cause upheaval the first phase of the sale was nearing completion. On the one hand, the developments around Eland Downs certainly affected TNC's reputation; at the same time, the organization had already made headway by then – it had become Chikwe Ltd.'s biggest shareholder, and as such it had secured major influence over Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. During a conversation in August 2012 Charles Oluchina highlighted TNC's control over Lewa Wildlife Conservancy and said that, if the conservancy's CEO failed to manage the property well, TNC would fire him. 'It's tough love,' he stressed.

Laikipia's landowners and conservationists seemed worried about TNC's growing control. Mordecai Ogada told me, for instance, that he feared that TNC's mode of working would do serious harm to the country's conservation industry, because in the context of Kenya's land scarcity the organization's land-buying principle was likely to fuel African resistance to white conservation efforts. Another conservationist, who had worked for Lewa Wildlife Conservancy in the conservancy's early days, also underscored the dangers of working with TNC. He admitted that TNC has the money that Laikipia needs, but at the same time the organization's rigid and autocratic approach to conservation was likely to cause more harm than good. He concluded that working with TNC was like 'dancing with the Devil'.

After Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's land sale to Chikwe Ltd., TNC's power expanded rapidly both in Laikipia as well as in the country at large. Firstly, TNC followed Ian Craig's lines of influence and became a partner to both Ol Pejeta Conservancy and NRT (see The Nature Conservancy n.d.^A). On the one hand, this seemed to constrain the decision-making power of these organizations' former executives, and an employee from a regional NGO who had visited one of NRT's management meetings said that TNC had ruled the entire session. 'It came up with a conservation strategy and it simply dictated it without any room for discussion', he stated. On the other hand, TNC's approbation seemed to boost confidence, and Ol Pejeta Conservancy's Richard Vigne emphasized to me that TNC's interest in Ol Pejeta Conservancy confirmed the latter's good work – while critical observers insisted that wildlife conservation and cattle ranching were incompatible, Ol Pejeta Conservancy had showed them otherwise and TNC had recognized the potential of their business model.

Here it may be noted that Ol Pejeta Conservancy's success also seemed to have another effect: it encouraged Richard Vigne to advocate in favour of implementing stricter land use regulations that centred on maximum gain. He suggested that Laikipia's land debate should no longer focus on acreages but on efficiency, and he claimed that the region needed a method to enforce productivity upon landowners. 'If a landowner fails to manage his or her land effectively', he said, 'then transfer the management to a better manager'. This did not necessarily have to infringe upon ownership rights – even without title deeds, Vigne stressed, Ol Pejeta Conservancy's staff was very willing to take over

the daily management of properties such as Kuki Gallmann's Laikipia Nature Conservancy, or even that of Eland Downs.

Such calls for what may be dubbed 'management imperialism' seemed to echo TNC's ambitions and, like Ol Pejeta Conservancy, TNC did not make a secret of its ambitions. Charles Oluchina indicated to me that TNC did not believe in fragmented conservation projects and that the organization meant to gain control over a vast terrain, ideally over the whole of Laikipia. To this end, TNC continuously tried to enter into new partnerships. Sometimes its lobbying paid off and in April 2014 the organization Space for Giants announced that, in cooperation with TNC, it would take over the management of a property called Loisaba Conservancy (see Space for Giants n.d.).

Meanwhile, TNC also gained a hold over the KWS. The KWS had long been under the spell of the animal rights lobby, as I indicated in the previous chapter, which, among other things, had prevented the revision of the 1989 Wildlife Act. But when TNC began to finance the KWS's operations, the latter largely broke its ties with animal rights organizations. When I asked Charles Oluchina what he expected from TNC's partnership with the KWS, Oluchina responded that, in future, all organizations working in Kenya should be accountable to TNC. 'We will not kick out NGOs with expertise', he said, but added that the core of Kenyan conservation was to be with TNC, the KWS, and private conservancies.

It was clear that if such a partnership was to work, the 1989 Wildlife Act first had to be updated as it estranged the KWS and private landowners from one another. Changing Kenya's regulations thus became a priority for TNC, according to Oluchina, and like most Laikipian conservancy owners he took a firm stance against the hunting ban – TNC in general opposed such bans because they deprived wildlife of economic value, and this was at odds with the organization's principle of market-based conservation. Moreover, Oluchina found the legal backing of Laikipia's private conservancies too weak and he advocated in favour of strengthening conservancies' tenure rights. I learned during a stakeholder meeting organized jointly by TNC and the KWS in 2012 that, in order to motivate the KWS to initiate such legislative changes, TNC had invited KWS executives to its headquarters in Washington and had sponsored 'educational trips' to Namibia where hunting was permitted and private conservancies flourished.⁸⁴

In late December 2013, the Kenyan government finally adopted a new Wildlife Act. The 2013 Wildlife Act demonstrated TNC's impact: it reintroduced culling and cropping licences (article 80), and it offered a legal basis for private conservancies (article 39). I suspect that, after more than two decades of advocacy and negotiation, Laikipia's conservancy owners celebrated this as a victory. At the same time, I take it that some also had mixed feelings because the legislative changes further illustrated TNC's climb to power. The position of private conservancies had finally improved, if only slightly, but it remained to be seen at what cost.

A first attempt to become World Heritage

The Craig family's land sale to Chikwe Ltd. constituted one strategy to help secure Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's conservation prospects but, as Ian Craig once formulated it to me, one should not put all one's eggs in one basket. Thus, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy undertook additional measures to bolster its conservation status. Most prominent among these measures was the conservancy's endeavour to obtain World Heritage status.

Jonathan Moss,⁸⁵ CEO of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy at the time that the conservancy filed its first World Heritage nomination to UNESCO, told me that Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's executives had considered World Heritage status an extra layer of protection against land grabbing. If the conservancy was on the World Heritage List, he explained, then it would arguably be more difficult for the Kenyan government to cancel title deeds or confiscate the land, for such an event would then not only matter to Kenya but to the world at large. Moss stressed that, with the help of World Heritage status, the ongoing existence of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy would be a 'public and global concern'. As such, he reiterated World Heritage's official discourse that underscores that World Heritage Sites belong to 'mankind as a whole' (UNESCO 1972: 1), and he highlighted the political potential of addressing a global community via World Heritage – if there was ever a day that the Kenyan government challenged Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's existence then this global community could be motivated to become an active citizenry (see also Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006: 189), and defend the conservancy's survival. World Heritage listing could thus be promising, but obtaining World Heritage status was not an easy task, as the coming two sections point out.

Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's World Heritage adventure began in 2007 when it hired a Kenyan consultancy firm, Okello Abungu Heritage Consultants, directed by archaeologist George Abungu. At the time, Abungu was the Kenyan representative to the World Heritage Committee and hence was closely involved in the World Heritage programme. Furthermore, between 1999 and 2002, Abungu had been the director of the National Museums of Kenya in Nairobi, and in addition he was involved in numerous heritage initiatives such as the World Monument Watch,⁸⁶ the International Council of Museums⁸⁷ and the Global Heritage Fund.⁸⁸ Abungu was obviously well informed about cultural heritage, but he had little experience in natural heritage conservation. Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's executives had been aware of this, someone who had been involved in the project at an early stage said to me, but they had felt that Abungu's contacts and network would outweigh his lack of expertise and they had hoped that Abungu's relations would help shorten the application process.

Since George Abungu was unfamiliar with natural heritage he asked a second man, Maurice Nyaligu, to carry out a feasibility study on Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's World Heritage potential. Nyaligu had worked for the KWS and IUCN in the past, and he had even been stationed at IUCN's headquarters in Gland, Switzerland, where he had served as a World Heritage monitoring officer.

After carrying out the study, Nyaligu concluded that, on its own, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy stood little chance of obtaining World Heritage status – the conservancy was simply not unique enough (Abungu & Nyaligu 2008: iv). Nevertheless, Nyaligu proposed an alternative course of action. He advised Lewa Wildlife Conservancy to join Mt. Kenya's World Heritage status, and to apply for an extension of the existing site (*Ibid.*: iv-v).

Based on Maurice Nyaligu's advice, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy contacted the KWS to gauge their view on the matter, Jonathan Moss told me. If the conservancy wanted to apply for an extension it would need the backing of a state institution, and the project's chances depended on the KWS's willingness to cooperate. An insider told me that Lewa Wildlife Conservancy made the KWS an offer: if the latter drafted and submitted the application, then the conservancy would cover the costs and pay the KWS a fee. The KWS accepted the offer, but for a different reason, an insider later suggested to me. In 2008, the organization was still in conflict with the Forest Service over Mt. Kenya's management mandate – if anything, as I suggested in chapter two, their antagonism had only increased after the adoption of the 2005 Forest Act. So when Lewa Wildlife Conservancy sought cooperation, some people within the KWS had taken that as an opportunity to extend Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site not only with the conservancy, but also with the lower forest ring that Bongo Woodley had been told to remove from his application (see chapter two). In this way, Mt. Kenya's KWS team hoped to reinforce its authority over the area, and to gain the upper hand over the Forest Service.

Although the KWS had initially agreed to participate, it soon lost interest. Someone from Lewa Wildlife Conservancy told me he recalled that the KWS became increasingly suspicious of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's intentions. Also, for reasons that I never learned, the KWS's initial plan to include Mt. Kenya's lower forests in the extension disappeared. The organization put the application on the back burner and the process stalled. Geoffrey Chege,⁸⁹ one of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's conservation officers who played a central role throughout the entire application procedure, told me that eventually one individual KWS staff member had drafted the application at home, in his own time. The document that this staff member produced carried the logo of the Kenyan government and included the necessary official credentials, but in practice the KWS had taken its hands off the project. I had this confirmed when I visited the National Museums of Kenya to speak to Hoseah Wanderi,⁹⁰ the museums' World Heritage contact. While waiting for Wanderi a helpful secretary wanted to hand me the original application file, but she struggled to locate it in the museum's database. Then, Wanderi came in and told her she would not find it – since the application had not been written by the KWS as an institute, it had never been filed.

In January 2010, the application for an extension to Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site finally reached the World Heritage Centre in Paris. The request for a revision to the existing site primarily rested on two arguments. First, the application highlighted Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's black rhino and Grevy's Zebra population, and it argued that Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site's overall biodiversity record would become more unique if the site came to include the conservancy (The Government of the

Republic of Kenya 2010^A: 35-36). Second, the application went out of its way to argue that there was an unmistakable symbiotic relationship between Mt. Kenya and Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. To strengthen this argument, the application file displayed various maps. For instance, it included a map that blotted out all the other private conservancies, thus giving the impression that Mt. Kenya and Lewa Wildlife Conservancy were two heavily-dependent conservation islands in otherwise empty surroundings (*Ibid.*: 16). There were also maps that underscored Mt. Kenya's and Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's ecological connectivity by showing the movement of elephants between the two properties (*Ibid.*: 27-28). But like the first one, the latter maps were misleading – they were based on the journeys of a single bull elephant, notorious for his wanderings between the two properties, and they failed to show that elephants moved in other directions as well. But more important even than the maps, the application tried to brace the argument of ecological connectivity by highlighting the presence of a wildlife corridor that connected Mt. Kenya and Lewa Wildlife Conservancy (*Ibid.*: 4).

The wildlife corridor had a history of its own. In 2006, two farm owners and two local conservation organizations, the Bill Woodley Mount Kenya Trust (BWMKT) and the Ngare Ndare Forest Trust (NNFT), had agreed to build a fenced-off elephant passage that would connect Mt. Kenya's northernmost forests with the adjacent Ngare Ndare forest reserve, and which meant to centralize elephant movement in the area. All four parties believed they would gain from the corridor: the two farms wanted to control elephant migration because the animals invaded their lands and destroyed their crops, and BWMKT and NNFT wanted to control elephant migration to offer better protection against poaching and to reduce human-wildlife conflicts in neighbouring African villages. Due to its close relationship with Ngare Ndare forest, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy was also affiliated to the project (see Bill Woodley Mount Kenya Trust et al. 2006).

BWMKT, NNFT and the two farmers reasoned that the elephant corridor was an important conservation investment because it would re-establish and protect traditional elephant migration routes that colonial settlement had disturbed (see also Avery 2006). Among other things, proponents of the project argued, the recovery of these traditional routes would contribute to the diversification of the area's elephant gene pool (*Ibid.*). But a number of observing conservationists questioned this. One of them, a trained zoologist,⁹¹ was especially critical of the idea of historical elephant routes. When we met, he told me he was working on an article in which he meant to show that there is little scientific evidence that explains how elephants pick their migration routes. As such, he emphasized, it would be premature to assume that 'historical' elephant routes exist. The zoologist had also worked on a number of elephant fencing projects throughout Laikipia, which had given him the impression that the elephant herds on Mt. Kenya's highlands and the elephant herds on the lowlands north of Mt. Kenya were isolated from one another. From the perspective of elephant conservation, therefore, he saw little benefit in connecting the two areas.

The zoologist was sceptical about the corridor's utility but had observed the negotiation process between the stakeholders involved with slight amusement, he told me. All stakeholders coped with

dense elephant populations, and all hoped that the corridor would bring relief: lowland stakeholders anticipated that the corridor would lead elephants into Mt. Kenya's forests, while the stakeholders on Mt. Kenya anticipated that the corridor would lead elephants into the northern rangelands. There was clearly a conflict of interest, but that did not inhibit the corridor project – rather, it stimulated and shaped it (see also Tsing 2005: 10). In the meantime, the zoologist hoped that the corridor would indeed fail to achieve anything at all, for if it caused two thousand Mt. Kenyan elephants to head for the lowlands, or vice versa, pressure on the environment and human-wildlife conflicts would only further increase.

Alternatively, there were also conservationists who supported the corridor plan for reasons other than its conceivable capacity to direct elephant migration. These conservationists focused more on the project's potential political capital than on its possible conservation merits, and they stressed that the corridor could enhance Laikipia's conservation reputation. Anthony King, for instance, suggested to me that the corridor would show the rest of the world that Kenya spoke the language of conservation, and would demonstrate Laikipia's innovative outlook. He underscored that, apart from a possible ecological effect, the corridor could generate a psychological effect and he called it 'a piece of conservation bling'.⁹² As such, Anthony King tapped into the current popularity of wildlife corridors more generally. Goldman (2009) suggests that this popularity may be a result of corridors' ability to satisfy different conservation philosophies: they connect otherwise isolated conservation enclaves, but ideally do so in a manner that least affects surrounding communities. Thus, she suggests, corridors appeal to both fortress and community-based conservationists (2009: 336).

That, on the whole, and with the exception of only a few critical observers, there was such enthusiasm for the Mt. Kenya-Ngare Ndare corridor may need to be seen in light of the failure of an earlier corridor project. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, a man called Mike Prettejohn, the owner of a property called Sangare, had meant to build a corridor between Mt. Kenya and the Aberdares mountain range. Someone who had followed Prettejohn's proposal closely told me in confidence that there had been no scientific justification for Prettejohn's plan: there was only one source that suggested that there had been elephant movement between Mt. Kenya and the Aberdares in the past, and that was the diary of a colonial administrator called Richard Meinertzhagen (Meinertzhagen 1983 [1957]: 107) – Meinertzhagen had come to the White Highlands in 1905, but not long after the British government had ordered him back because it considered his mode of administration too violent and too brutal (Garfield 2007: 61).

The corridor between Mt. Kenya and the Aberdares mountain range differed from the corridor between Mt. Kenya and Ngare Ndare forest in at least one important respect: it had meant to cut through a densely populated area with African smallholdings. Thus, African farmers had had to be relocated, and the initiators of the corridor project had thought up a compensation scheme. Max Graham, who became involved because he was doing a PhD on elephant movement at the time, told me that these farmers had initially received the scheme well, although matters complicated when more

and more people had demanded payment. But as the 2002 elections drew closer, the corridor had become a political target: a regional politician had managed to convince the farmers that the corridor was a cover-up for whites taking over African land, and the farmers had turned against Prettejohn. Graham stressed that these farmers became increasingly aggressive and violent, and that for reasons of safety the project was eventually abandoned.

The corridor between Mt. Kenya and Ngare Ndare was more fortunate. It only ran over two white-owned farms, and its biggest challenge was financial rather than political. Stakeholders predicted that the construction of the corridor would be unusually expensive, most importantly because it required an underpass to cross the Nanyuki-Meru highway, and the estimated costs totalled one million dollars. Even so, stakeholders managed to collect enough funding, among others with the help of gifts from Richard Branson's Virgin Atlantic and the Royal Netherlands Embassy. In 2008, building began (see for instance Nyaligu & Weeks 2013).

When the application for Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site's extension reached the World Heritage Centre in early 2010, the construction of the corridor was in progress. In stressing the corridor's importance, the application summed up all the arguments that BWMKT, NNFT and the two farmers also used: it claimed that the corridor would re-open former migration routes; that it would relieve elephant population pressure; that it would alleviate human-wildlife conflicts; and that it would diversify gene pools (see for instance The Government of the Republic of Kenya 2010^A: 12). But the application also obscured one important thing, namely that the corridor did not link Mt. Kenya and Lewa Wildlife Conservancy *directly* – rather, Ngare Ndare forest reserve was positioned between them. This meant that Lewa Wildlife Conservancy could only join Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site if Ngare Ndare did so as well, and hence the application requested the designation of both (*Ibid.*: 51).

By October 2011, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy had not yet heard back from the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, and the status of the application was still unclear. This changed as a result of my own interference: after I met Jonathan Moss, who was the first to inform me about Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's World Heritage project,⁹³ I checked World Heritage's online archive and I found that the World Heritage Centre had viewed the application as incomplete (UNESCO 2011: 20). I sent my findings to Moss, who, in turn, forwarded them to Mike Watson, his successor as Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's CEO, who was apparently unaware of the developments. Sceptics told me that this aptly illustrated Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's irresponsible spending: first the conservancy invested a lot of money in a World Heritage application, and then it forgot to follow-up on the results.

Since World Heritage's online archive did not say much about why the application had been considered incomplete, Mike Watson began an inquiry of his own. He later showed me his email correspondence, which revealed that his investigations had brought him to IUCN's regional director for East and Southern Africa Ali Kaka; to a staff member of the IUCN office in Nairobi called Leo Niskanen; to staff of IUCN's headquarters in Switzerland, including director of the World Heritage Programme Tim Badman; and to a World Heritage nominations manager called Alessandro

Balsamo,⁹⁴ who was located at the World Heritage Centre in Paris. Together, these World Heritage experts raised a number of concerns. Firstly, they told Watson that there had been several administrative flaws. Among other things, the information on the surface acreages had been imprecise, and there was a lack of adequate maps and photographs. Also, the request for extension had not been put on Kenya's World Heritage tentative list prior to submission.

In addition to these shortcomings, which could easily be rectified, there were more problematic issues. Firstly, the World Heritage Centre had not accepted the application's argument that Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's black rhinos and Grevy's Zebras would add to the overall biodiversity of Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site. It had turned down this argument, not because of its content, but because it rested on World Heritage nomination criterion (x),⁹⁵ which had not been part of the original designation of Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site. Instead, the 1997 designation only made mention of World Heritage criteria (vii) and (ix), and therefore the World Heritage Centre maintained that the alterations proposed were too drastic to pass as a simple site extension – either Lewa Wildlife Conservancy and Mt. Kenya needed to apply for an entirely new World Heritage listing that did include criterion (x), or Lewa Wildlife Conservancy needed to adjust its argument to fit criterion (vii) or criterion (ix). This illustrates World Heritage's remarkably static understanding of heritage sites, as well as its rigid enforcement of such an understanding. The World Heritage experts that Mike Watson had contacted furthermore indicated that they had reservations concerning the validity of the corridor argument: since the corridor had not yet been finished when Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's application had reached the World Heritage Centre, experts had considered it too early to pass judgement on the its ecological merits.

Needless to say, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy was not happy with the outcome. It had spent approximately \$150,000 to \$200,000 on the application, only to find that the document had been doomed in advance because the KWS had not followed World Heritage's bureaucratic procedure properly. In light of this, Mike Watson consulted a colleague to discuss whether he could hold the KWS responsible and whether it would be of any use to file another application. He forwarded me the emails, of which a part read:

[The KWS] were far from transparent, and failed to share the document until well after the fact – so I regret I have no expectation that you will get anything further without throwing money at it. I would suggest you get as much detail as you can from IUCN in the first instance. If the inscription criteria is a deal breaker then there is no point in pursuing this further. If it is simply a case of missing paperwork, mapping – and indeed procedure – then it should be fairly straight forward [*sic*]. Even so you will need KWS support and would need to fund the resubmission. I doubt there will be much appetite amongst donors unless prospects look good. I also fear that the KWS were not particularly interested in the Lewa extension – and were simply using [Lewa] to try and expand the WHS on the mountain to cover the entire reserve – and even that is seen of only limited value given the limited return KWS see from the WH inscription of Mt. Kenya (in financial terms).

It appeared as if Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's World Heritage venture was stranded, not least because Mike Watson left me with the impression that he was not very motivated to go through the entire application process again – it would cost more time and more money, and Lewa Wildlife Conservancy had already improved its position vis-à-vis the Kenyan government through the Chikwe Ltd. land sale. To Watson, World Heritage appeared as 'just another box to tick' when it came to securing the conservation status of the land. But after Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's ownership arrangements had changed, this box had lost most of its appeal.

All this happened shortly before I left Nanyuki for a few months. I expected that, by the time I returned, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy would have moved on to other things. I got it completely wrong.

A former cattle ranch as World Heritage

In December 2011, Geoffrey Chege rewrote the application for Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site's extension with Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. Apparently, the conservancy had not trusted the KWS with the task and had taken matters into its own hands. Chege primarily made two modifications to the initial application: he deleted all references to criterion (x), and put more emphasis on the ecological connection between Mt. Kenya and Lewa Wildlife Conservancy (see The Government of the Republic of Kenya 2012^A) Accordingly, the corridor between the mountain and Ngare Ndare forest came to serve an even stronger rhetorical purpose. Yet, this time round, that seemed less problematic: the corridor had been finished, and from early 2011 there had been reports of elephants using it (see for instance African Conservation Foundation 2011; *The Huffington Post*, 30 January 2011).

While Lewa Wildlife Conservancy showed little confidence in the KWS's ability to rewrite the application in such a way that the World Heritage Centre would accept it, the KWS also seemed reluctant to assist the conservancy a second time. On different occasions KWS officers told me that they did not see the point of uniting Mt. Kenya and Lewa Wildlife Conservancy in one World Heritage Site: they underscored that the properties were completely different, for instance in terms of habitat, conservation problems or management capacities, and they maintained that the two were not supposed to be connected. In the course of the process, moreover, a number of people within the KWS had become increasingly suspicious of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's intentions. For instance, one warden⁹⁶ told me that he was certain that the conservancy had clear reasons for its interest in World Heritage status, yet he had no idea what these reasons were. He stressed that Mt. Kenya had long been a World Heritage Site, but that this status had never delivered anything, either in terms of management mandate, or in terms of financial support. In fact, he was so disappointed with the World Heritage programme in general that he suggested removing UNESCO's logo from Mt. Kenya's gates entirely. His own scepticism about World Heritage had made him wary of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's objectives, for he suspected that the conservancy knew things that he did not know. If the site

extension was truly beneficial to all parties involved, he reasoned, then Lewa Wildlife Conservancy would have been less secretive about it.

Despite this warden's mistrust, the conservancy nevertheless managed to get the institute's approval for Geoffrey Chege's rewritten application, and KWS director Julius Kipng'etich⁹⁷ signed the document himself (The Government of the Republic of Kenya 2012^A: 82). Still, the warden had made valid remarks about the application's lack of transparency and openness. From the beginning, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy had largely kept the venture to itself – not only had it kept the KWS in the dark about its motivations, it had also failed to involve affected parties such as corridor stakeholders. This became evident when I visited NNFT's office and spoke to the trust's project manager, Dominic Maringa,⁹⁸ in May 2012. By that time, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy had already submitted the rewritten application to the World Heritage Centre, and I asked Maringa how he or other members of the trust had contributed to the revision process. In response, he raised his eyebrows, and said: 'I was not aware of all this'. Apparently, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy had requested World Heritage status for Ngare Ndare forest, but without notifying the forest's daily management team.

Lewa Wildlife Conservancy had also not put much energy in informing the two farm owners who had made available land for the corridor. Both⁹⁹ told me that they had heard one or two things about the extension project, but had not known what to expect from it. Since the corridor ran over their lands they would inevitably be drawn into a World Heritage extension, yet neither of them knew how, or even if, World Heritage status would affect their land use possibilities – one of them grew crops in the corridor and the other had real estate plans, and both were uncertain about UNESCO's power to curtail such activities. They indicated that they would only condone Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's World Heritage campaign if it did not affect their individual businesses. But since the conservancy hardly engaged them they could not assess the situation.

In addition to the reservations of immediately affected parties, there were also onlookers who were not directly involved but who were nevertheless critical. Different observers told me they disapproved of how Lewa Wildlife Conservancy had acted alone, and had turned the entire undertaking into a one-man affair. At the same time, people tended to dismiss the request for Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site's extension as just another event that illustrated Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's over-the-top marketing practices. One conservationist, for example, told me that he considered the conservancy's quest for World Heritage status a 'typical Lewa thing', and he repudiated it as 'mainly bullshit'. He clarified that he did not see why, if Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site had to be expanded, it should only include Lewa Wildlife Conservancy and not all the other private conservancies as well. He emphasized that Lewa Wildlife Conservancy had once again acted at the cost of other people. A colleague of his, whom I talked to a few days later, agreed with this point of view and said that it was about time someone told Lewa Wildlife Conservancy to stop growing and disadvantaging others.

IUCN also entertained the idea that if Lewa Wildlife Conservancy could be added to Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site then other conservancies could be as well. When Lewa Wildlife Conservancy had

just submitted the rewritten application to the World Heritage Centre, one of IUCN's technical advisors located in Nairobi¹⁰⁰ indicated to me that the conservancy could only obtain World Heritage status if it could demonstrate that, of all possible extensions, the one they proposed would create *the most extraordinary* World Heritage Site. He speculated that this would be difficult, not in the last place because the conservancy's application rested entirely on the argument of the corridor, while the corridor only had limited ecological potential. It linked Mt. Kenya to Ngare Ndare, he clarified, but it only enabled the movement of one particular wildlife species, namely elephants. The technical advisor therefore stressed that, contrary to what the application suggested, the corridor did not 'link' two ecosystems – instead it just offered elephants a safer passage. In theory, the corridor could also be opened to other species such as rhinos or Grevy's Zebras, but different conservationists indicated to me that Lewa Wildlife Conservancy would never let such valuable species off its property, and even the application itself explicitly mentioned that the conservancy had no such intentions (The Government of the Republic of Kenya 2012^A: 18).

In addition to the corridor's limited ecological benefits, IUCN's technical advisor pointed out, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's complex ownership issues further problematized the application. The proposed extension included land owned by Chikwe Ltd. and supervised by the non-profit organization Lewa Wildlife Conservancy; land owned by Chikwe Ltd. but leased back by Craig family members; land that Chikwe Ltd. had not (yet) bought and that was owned by different third parties; corridor land that belonged to two different private landowners; and Ngare Ndare forestland in possession of the Kenyan government. IUCN's technical advisor stressed that, in general, IUCN is not in favour of such complicated arrangements, because the involvement of many different stakeholders typically hinders effective management. Besides, he stressed, if Mt. Kenya and Lewa Wildlife Conservancy were united in one World Heritage designation then their individual management plans also had to be fine-tuned. He doubted whether that was feasible, because the two had completely different modes of operation and completely different budgets. In sum, he did not seem to believe that the extension would actually happen.

Nevertheless, in late May 2012, Mike Watson notified me that he had heard indirectly that the World Heritage Centre had accepted Geoffrey Chege's revised application, and that IUCN was making preparations for a field evaluation. This evaluation eventually took place in October 2012 and was carried out by a South African called Roger Porter. Through others I heard that Porter had spent two or three days on Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, and that there had been one stakeholder meeting to which all corridor partners had been invited. It was said that none of these partners had raised any serious concerns, and the report that Porter later produced stated:

The LWC-NNFR [Lewa Wildlife Conservancy – Ngare Ndare forest reserve] extension brings an additional set of ecosystem processes and biodiversity that are currently not part of the Mount Kenya World Heritage Site by incorporating the lower lying, scenic foothills and arid habitats of high biological

richness and diversity. Of particular significance and value is that LWC-NNFR lies at the ecotone or ecological transition zone between the Afro Tropical Montane ecosystem and its associated biodiversity and that of the semi-arid East African Savannah Grasslands. It thus provides for a more ecologically intact World Heritage site especially in its incorporation of the complete and diverse range of outstanding ecological processes.

IUCN (2013: 9)

Despite all the complications, including the intricate landownership arrangements, the weak arguments for ecological connectivity, and the failure to include affected stakeholder, Porter supported the extension.

Perhaps Roger Porter's uncritical approval of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's proposal for extension must be understood in light of IUCN's willingness to help secure the conservancy's future. Roughly nine months after Porter's site evaluation I briefly met Tim Badman,¹⁰¹ the director of IUCN's World Heritage Programme, at the World Heritage Centre in Paris. Badman told me that, for IUCN, the World Heritage initiative is essentially one conservation scheme amongst many others. It is primarily of interest to IUCN, he explained, because it assists in setting aside as many areas as possible for conservation. He commented that, in recent years, World Heritage status had inflated, and he stressed that quite a few natural sites had been added to the list of which the management and state of conservation was insufficient – as such, IUCN officially maintained that the number of new World Heritage inscriptions had to be curtailed (see for instance IUCN 2012). But Lewa Wildlife Conservancy was a different case entirely, I realized after the talk – the conservancy controls the management of its property to the very last detail, and perhaps IUCN hoped that the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's best practices would trickle down to Mt. Kenya if the two were joined in one World Heritage designation. In addition, at the end of July 2012 a former IUCN employee told me that IUCN had a longstanding interest in NRT's community conservancies. Yet due to some unfortunate event in the past, the organization had fallen out with either the wider management of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, or with Ian Craig personally. Already in July the person expressed to me his expectation that IUCN would write a favourable report either way – he stressed that the organization would want to re-establish contact, strengthen the links, and finally gain a foothold in the northern rangelands.

Regardless of how and why Roger Porter had arrived at his positive assessment, the World Heritage Committee adopted IUCN's advice and in July 2013 it voted in favour of Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site's extension with Ngare Ndare forest reserve and Lewa Wildlife Conservancy (UNESCO 2013: 155). After more than five years of trying, the latter's efforts had finally paid off, and a former white cattle ranch had been accepted as natural World Heritage.¹⁰² Some of Laikipia's conservationists found this staggering, they told me: they could not understand that land, which less than twenty years ago had still hosted a cattle business, had ended up on the World Heritage List. Different World Heritage experts, however, took a completely different perspective. IUCN's Roger Porter had clearly supported the extension, but also Hoseah Wanderi from the National Museums of Kenya told me that

Lewa Wildlife Conservancy fully deserved World Heritage status. He did not find the conservancy's short existence troubling, and he underscored that World Heritage was primarily about unique features and enhancing conservation – from his point of view, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy fulfilled both. George Abungu¹⁰³ even went a step further. Not only did he not take Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's ranching history as an obstacle to becoming World Heritage, he turned the whole thing upside-down: he said to me that the conservancy deserved heritage status all the more, because after so many years of colonial occupation it had finally returned to its original landscape and it had welcomed back the wildlife that had always been there. To him, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy was a showpiece example of pre-colonial land use.

Like Mt. Kenya's original World Heritage designation in 1997, for which Bongo Woodley argued that the mountain was a pristine wilderness area unaffected by human interference (see chapter two), Mt. Kenya's 2013 World Heritage Site extension was vested in visions of an ideal landscape. These visions outweighed Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's actual history and, notably, after World Heritage listing the conservancy actively began to cover up its own cattle ranching past. Prior to mid-2013, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's website openly mentioned that the conservancy had grown out of Lewa Downs livestock farm. If anything, the website revealed a certain pride in how the Craig family had managed to turn an unprofitable cattle ranch into a world-renowned nature reserve, and pictures of rhinos featured alongside pictures of colonial cattle caravans (see for instance Lewa Wildlife Conservancy n.d.^B; Lewa Wildlife Conservancy n.d.^C). But after World Heritage listing, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy redesigned its website: it deleted most references to how the property had been used in the past, and presented the foundation of Anna Merz's rhino sanctuary as its historical moment of origin (see Lewa Wildlife Conservancy n.d.^E). After it obtained World Heritage status Lewa Wildlife Conservancy had apparently found it necessary to reinvent itself – in the process, it disposed of those parts of history that could impair its World Heritage credibility.

A brand in the hands of elites

Initially, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy became interested in gaining World Heritage status because it aimed to strengthen the conservation status of its land. This ambition reverted to the colour bar politics that I discussed in the previous chapter, which continue to inspire a persistent nervousness on behalf of many white landowners over their title deeds, and which lay bare the Kenyan government's ambivalent stance on the future of white property rights. During the 2004 Maasai campaigns, the government sided with Laikipia's landowners and refused to redress Maasai grievances over colonial injustices, but the 2010 Constitution and the 2012 Land Act suggest that tides may be turning. In any case, Laikipia's white landowners are careful to minimize risks of confiscation and they have

developed a variety of land securing strategies, such as being as productive as possible, or investing in community work.

Within this context, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy conceived of World Heritage as yet another strategy to avert the threat of expropriation. Its managers hoped that if the conservancy was acknowledged as one of the world's most extraordinary natural treasures under the World Heritage Convention, then it would be able to summon a sense of collective global ownership. This sense of ownership could subsequently translate into political capital: if the Kenyan government decided to interfere with the conservancy's land use or cancel its title deeds, then World Heritage status could activate a global community urging for and defending Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's preservation. The pressure that such a community could exert is limited, for UNESCO has no legal sanction to enforce the World Heritage Convention. In fact, there are numerous examples of governments that take little notice of the lobbying of World Heritage advocates. The Australian government mining in Kakadu National Park (see Maswood 2000) and the Tanzanian government building a highway through Serengeti National Park (see Death 2013) are exemplary in this regard. Even so, in light of Laikipia's landowners' limited means to improve their position, even the smallest opportunities are exploited.

These dynamics are not unique to Kenya. Maurice Nyaligu¹⁰⁴ told me that, immediately after the release of Nelson Mandela, different South African farmers put forward World Heritage nominations for their private estates. Like Laikipia's white landowners today, these farmers had feared losing rights of possession, and they had tried to stay one step ahead of possible land reform policies. Nyaligu recounted that such nominations had caused heated debates within the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, for different state representatives had taken the firm stance that World Heritage should not serve as a political tool in domestic struggles over land distribution. Of course, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy aimed to employ World Heritage in exactly the same way, but unlike the South African nominations this never revealed itself as a problem. There might be several possible explanations for this; perhaps Lewa Wildlife Conservancy was more successful in covering up the politics at play due to its heavy reliance on nature conservation rhetoric; perhaps state representatives were less aware of current developments in Laikipia and in Kenya at large; or perhaps state representatives were simply less critical than they had been in the early 1990s, which might be an effect of the overall increasing politicization of the World Heritage Committee and its present-day tendency to prioritize inscription over thorough research and evaluation (see Brumann 2014^B; Meskell 2012 & 2013).

At the same time, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's interest in World Heritage status cannot entirely be explained through the ambition to secure ownership rights. By the time that the conservancy learned of the World Heritage Centre's rejection of the first application, which was in late October 2011, the Craig family's land sale to Chikwe Ltd. was about to be concluded. This land sale generated far more legal protection against colour bar politics than World Heritage status ever could, Mike Watson suggested to me, and also Ian Craig indicated that the transfer of ownership was more of a boost to Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's conservation future than a UNESCO designation. Nevertheless,

Geoffrey Chege rewrote and resubmitted the application and the conservancy continued pursuing World Heritage status. This was arguably partially motivated by the investments that had already been made, for when the World Heritage Centre turned the application down Lewa Wildlife Conservancy had already spent between \$150,000 and \$200,000 on the project. At the same time, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy may have been interested in World Heritage status for yet another reason – World Heritage offers a trademark, which the conservancy could employ for marketing purposes.

Over the years, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy put great effort into advertising itself, and to this day it continues to invest heavily in improving name awareness both inside and outside Kenya. To put it in the words of one informant, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy simply ‘puts its name on everything’. The relocation of rhinos to the neighbouring Borana Ranch, which was accompanied by dramatic media announcements as well as a sensational video that almost entirely focused on Lewa Wildlife Conservancy and marginalized Borana Ranch’s efforts, is exemplary in this regard. But such branding activities also mark the conservancy’s CSR programme; the flamboyant charity events and galas that it organizes or that its representatives attend (see for instance Lewa Wildlife Conservancy 2015); the yearly Safaricom Marathon (see Safaricom Marathon n.d.); or the conservancy’s regular appearance in nature documentaries and films. In short, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy is keen on media attention and it presumably intended to employ World Heritage status for this purpose. In fact, both the applications that the conservancy submitted to the World Heritage Centre proposed to alter the name ‘Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site’ to ‘Mt. Kenya-Lewa Wildlife Conservancy World Heritage Site’ (see The Government of the Republic of Kenya 2010^A & 2012^A). The World Heritage Committee did not grant this request, and the name remained unchanged – even so, after designation, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy quickly redesigned its logo, and since then features its World Heritage status prominently. This suggests that even if the conservancy no longer needed World Heritage for securing land rights, its managers still felt that the UNESCO brand name could contribute to summoning the large amounts of donor money that its operation depends on.

Although Lewa Wildlife Conservancy immediately employed World Heritage for marketing purposes, and despite having paraded its World Heritage status ever since July 2013, I do not mean to reduce World Heritage listing to mere branding in the way that tourism or administration studies sometimes do (see for instance Poria et al. 2011; Ryan & Silvanto 2009). More than just a prestigious label, the case of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy shows that World Heritage is a catalyst and mobilizer in its own right (this is comparable with how Mosse 2005 approaches development). Besides, the way in which Lewa Wildlife Conservancy today promotes its uniqueness and extraordinariness via World Heritage seems to exemplify more structural conditions, namely the conservancy’s ruling position in Laikipia’s wildlife conservation industry. This finds expression in, among other things, how Lewa Wildlife Conservancy monopolizes the donor money for certain wildlife species, or in how it changed the design of the KETRACO power line.

I believe that Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's success in obtaining World Heritage status was itself an effect of the conservancy's strong network and overall dominance. Already at an early stage, the conservancy managed to secure the support of influential stakeholders such as Julius Kipng'etich and George Abungu. Despite the suspicion of various wardens and rangers, the conservancy's plea for extension received official KWS support; and despite arguments that called into question both the extension's ecological value as well as its ownership complexity, IUCN evaluator Roger Porter backed the application. From the start, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy had the necessary key figures on its side, and it seemed that its World Heritage project could hardly fail. It was Maurice Nyaligu who pointed this out to me most vividly. In August 2012 he said that, without doubt, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy would end up on the World Heritage List – every person within Kenya who either had the knowledge, the capabilities and the power to halt the nomination had been won over.

The joined World Heritage designation tightened the bond between Lewa Wildlife Conservancy and the KWS, and in theory it even authorized the latter to meddle with the conservancy's management (because the World Heritage Convention allocates state parties the exclusive right to supervise World Heritage Sites). Yet, this did not seem to worry Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, even though the KWS only recently softened its previously hostile attitude towards private conservancies in general. Mike Watson once pointed out that the KWS can be fairly robust with regard to rights of ownership, management and utilization, but he added that, in the end, the organization does not have the capacity to enforce any of its rules. From his perspective, the KWS was hardly a threat to Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's hegemony. Besides, the revised 2013 Wildlife Act suggests that the conservancy's largest shareholder, TNC, already gained considerable control over the KWS's conservation agenda as well as over its policy-setting. Moreover, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's executives have direct connections to the KWS: in 2012 Julius Kipng'etich, for instance, joined the conservancy's board of directors (see Lewa Wildlife Conservancy 2012) and in 2013 he was accompanied by Paula Kahumbu (see Lewa Wildlife Conservancy 2013), a protégé of Richard Leakey who himself took a place on the KWS's board of trustees in 2015.

The case of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy thus suggests that World Heritage reifies existing power structures. If the conservancy had not been as influential as it is, it probably would have been unable to capitalize on Mt. Kenya's World Heritage status. It seems to me that Laikipian landowners and conservationists disapproved of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's World Heritage campaign so strongly, precisely because the undertaking underscored something they already understood quite well – namely that Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's political and economic capital surpasses theirs, and that the conservancy continues to grow at the expense of others. This illustrates just how much World Heritage is in the hands of national elites, but it also immediately reveals that such elites are not necessarily within the state apparatus. It also calls into question the work of scholars who foreground World Heritage's top-down implementation structures (see for instance Byrne 1991; Smith 2006; Rowlands & Butler 2007), for here the World Heritage label was not imposed but seized. I agree that the World

Heritage programme does set strict and rigid parameters for heritage conservation, and that it does rely on narrow understandings of heritage, but this should not draw our attention away from how stakeholders put such parameters and understandings to good use to get what they want. In the process, World Heritage's technical idiom may enable such stakeholders to conceal what is actually at stake – even if that is colour bar politics and white anxieties over property rights.