

Land, belonging and structural oblivion among contemporary white Kenyans

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As scholars and activists have noted, white privilege in Western nations involves not only socio-economic advantage, but also the luxury of a less marked racial identity than that of persons of colour. In most sub-Saharan African contexts, however, whites are a visually conspicuous minority, and in the postcolonial era some are uneasy about whether they can be fully accepted as belonging. Kenya, for instance, is home to tens of thousands of white expatriates and approximately 3,000 to 5,000 whites descended from settler families, the latter of whom bristle when linked to the phrase ‘old colonial’. At one level, their insecurity may seem unwarranted; after all, they haven’t undergone the state-sanctioned land seizures of white farmers in Zimbabwe, nor the institutionalized reckoning with apartheid-era atrocities occasioned by South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission.¹ Instead, at Kenya’s independence in 1963, President Kenyatta let the settlers off lightly, voicing his hopes for coexistence. The state endorsed the purchase of settler lands on a ‘willing buyer, willing seller’ basis, and allowed settlers to apply for citizenship; those who stayed on also made a comfortable living for themselves in Kenya’s economy.² But the question of white belonging goes beyond legal citizenship to cultural citizenship; to the public perception of whether whites belong to the nation or stand as anathema to it (cf. Holsten and Appadurai 1996). The issue has come to the fore in recent years, perhaps especially because white landholdings are resented in this nation that roils with antagonisms over autochthony and rights to land.³ Through some of these conflicts, we can examine some challenges of belonging faced by contemporary white Kenyans.

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¹On precarious belonging for whites in Zimbabwe, see Fisher (2011: 32, 136); see also Hughes (2010), Pilosof (2012) and Rutherford (2001). On white anxieties about belonging, see Steyn (2001) and Vice (2010). On South African whites’ efforts to be accepted as ‘African’, see Freedberg (2006).

²In 2010, the new Kenyan constitution also formalized the right to hold dual citizenship, which has made Kenyan citizenship more accessible to those of European descent who also wish to retain a European passport.

³Land tenure remains an extremely controversial topic in Kenya today, and the conflicts are usually framed in terms of ethnicity and autochthony. Colonial policies encouraged the idea that ethnic identities are essential divisions, and fostered conflict and competition between these newly reified groups, in part by displacing and crowding many into reserves. Independence did not end the tensions: when the Crown Lands were turned over to Kenya’s first President Jomo Kenyatta in 1963, for instance, political patronage meant that Kikuyu were disproportionately favoured, and pastoralist grievances went largely unaddressed. Kenyan politicians have sponsored and otherwise encouraged violent ‘ethnic’ clashes over land during every general election since 1991.

In 2004, 2007 and 2008 I explored white Kenyans' uncertain sense of belonging through participant observation and interviews with several dozen middle- to upper-middle-class individuals descended from European settlers (McIntosh 2016). My respondents from Laikipia, Naivasha and other parts of the Rift Valley make their living through ranching, conservation-oriented tourism and floriculture on (sometimes) contested lands. The Nairobi-area white Kenyans quoted in this article, by contrast, make their living through business ventures or tourism (with the exception of one tea estate-owning family), most of their families having sold off their larger landholdings around independence. But regardless of their home base and associated livelihood, nearly all I spoke to seemed anxious to present themselves as good nationalists who are better equipped to assist the country than the European and American expatriates they refer to disparagingly as 'two-year wonders'. They told me repeatedly of their investment in Kenya's modern, 'developed' future, and insisted they bring special skills to the nation's productivity, as well as the conservation of its wildlife and land. Although these discourses have contemporary appeal, they come with a long colonial history, some of which I discuss below.

The controversy I focus on here came to a head in 2004 in Laikipia District (renamed Laikipia County in 2013). Many of Laikipia's large landowners are elite Africans, Asians and Euro-American expatriates, but approximately forty white, former settler families own roughly 1 million acres of land, devoting it to commercial cattle ranching, conservation and luxury tourism.⁴ Thousands of marginalized Maa-speaking pastoralists – most self-identified as Maasai – also live in the region.⁵ In August 2004, Maasai activists made a major bid for damages from the British and Kenyan governments, and, as part of this, drove large herds of cattle onto the ranches of whites from old Kenya families, demanding the return of ancestral grazing lands that had been taken by the British colonial government a century earlier. Under siege from activists who did what they could to rhetorically fold the colonial past onto the present, some whites living there felt charged with the collective guilt of their colonial ancestors.

⁴The number of whites descended from settler families who are now Laikipia landowners and the percentage of land they own are hard to pin down with precision. Sources sometimes conflate newer European and American arrivals with whites who have family roots in Kenya, and the parcelling of land subdivisions (and other land transactions) sometimes takes place below the radar of the Ministry of Lands (Letai 2011). Kantai (2008a: 60) gave the number of 'white settler families' in Laikipia in 2004 as thirty-seven, and while his wording is ambiguous, it is plain that either most or all of those families have roots in the colonial era. David Blair (2004), writing for *The Telegraph* in the UK, stated that twenty-seven white-owned ranches covered almost half of the land in the district. In late 2012, Mathew Lempurkel, the Laikipia County ODM (Orange Democratic Movement) Branch Chairman, claimed that 'more than 60% of land in Laikipia is owned by white settlers', as he pledged to right the historical injustices against pastoralists (Waweru 2012). One 'AfricaFiles' website names some of the white Kenyan families linked to Laikipia, and claims even more starkly that twenty 'foreigners', including those of British descent, own 74 per cent of the land there (<<http://www.africafiles.org/printableversion.asp?id=6723>>, accessed 7 July 2013). For more on recent land transactions in Laikipia, see Letai (2011).

⁵It is worth noting that various groups have assimilated over the years, speaking Maa and deeming themselves 'Maasai'. Many who self-identify as Maasai, furthermore, are not pastoralist. Neither ethnic identification nor linguistic affiliation is historically rigid, and what it means to 'be Maasai' is continually in flux (cf. Carrier 2011; Spear and Waller 1993).

My central interest here concerns white responses to this particular challenge, which revealed a great deal about twenty-first-century whiteness in Africa – both its historical residues and its responses to change. ‘Whiteness’ is typically characterized in terms of ‘historical systemic structural race-based superiority’ (Wander *et al.* 1999: 15), but this superiority is (partially) sustained through white stance-taking that varies across space and time, shifting with context. In the case of my respondents, I found an intriguing lamination of historically durable rhetoric and new stances that respond to changing winds in Kenya and more globally. For, on the one hand, I located widespread discourses about land management with roots in the colonial era, as well as a degree of ignorance about the historical and ecological disenfranchisement of Maasai, suggesting historical continuity in some white rationalizations of their power. On the other hand, some of my respondents – typically, though not exclusively, those middle aged and younger – had been influenced by the rise of global discourses of liberal humanism (which stress the agency and rights of individuals and collectives), as well as the global push for ‘community-based conservation’ that encourages consideration of subaltern groups living on the fringes of one’s land. With the rise of such liberal ideologies, the public expression of colonial-era social Darwinist racism has been on the decline, and some white Kenyans are more motivated than their predecessors to seek forms of connection and understanding with African Kenyans. This material highlights the fact that whiteness today is increasingly forced to reckon with those who have been racially disadvantaged; arguably, in fact, this trend towards expanded perspectives should be folded into our understanding of what whiteness can be – and probably increasingly is – across the globe. But this is not to suggest a neat teleology towards the loosening of white hegemony, for aspects of these new forms of white Kenyan commiseration may furnish another variation on the theme of privilege. In subtle ways, in other words, they may use new forms – including discourses of ‘community’ inclusion – to rationalize old white advantages.

To explain these dynamics, I relate them to what I call ‘structural oblivion’: the blind spots, dismissals and beliefs that help prop up privileged social groups. Structural oblivion is a state of ignorance, denial and ideology that emerges from an elite social structural position, and it is constituted by the refusal of certain implications of social structure, particularly the experience of and/or reasons for the resentment of the subaltern. Structural oblivion is a central aspect of elites’ own role in the hegemonies that sustain them. The concept of structural oblivion articulates with certain recurrent themes in whiteness studies – including Charles Mills’ (1997: 18) suggestion that a tacit ‘racial contract’ produces for whites an ‘epistemology of ignorance ... producing the ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to understand the world they themselves have made’.⁶ Melissa Steyn (2012: 10) dubs this dynamic ‘The Ignorance Contract’, and contends that white South African ignorance of the depredations of apartheid ‘must be studied as a social accomplishment, not just as a failure of individual knowledge acquisition’.

I locate similar forms of ignorance among white Kenyans, but with the phrase ‘structural oblivion’ I also highlight the architecture of elite ideology. For both

⁶See also P. McIntosh’s (1992) and Sullivan’s (2006) work on white privilege as habitual and unconscious.

their ignorance and their legitimating ideologies are orchestrated and motivated by structural advantages, and both tend to foster incomprehension of or lack of sympathy for the damage done by the same political and social structure for others in less elite positions. In the case of white Kenyans defending their landholdings, the ignorance extends to historical, ecological and affective dynamics, while the relevant ideologies include particular notions of entitlement to land – notions that seem to be shifting with political exigency.

To be sure, the challenges posed by Maasai activists and (before them) by new, community-minded models of conservation have prompted some of the whites I engaged with to reckon with African vantage points in new ways. Although almost none of my respondents had read the available history books about Maasai disenfranchisement, it is the case that some, especially (though not exclusively) younger people, have expanded their sense of possible truths compared with those of earlier generations. I suggest that ‘community-based conservation’, or CBC, and Maasai activism have destabilized *aspects* of structural oblivion among some white Kenyans, although they have simultaneously furnished the terms for *new forms* of structural oblivion that rationalize white advantages in new ways.

A primary shift in structural oblivion for these whites concerns their willingness to entertain alternative perspectives on the land situation. In our conversations, I sometimes encountered preliminary concessions to Maasai points of view, an epistemological loosening Nietzsche (1990 [1956]) would have called ‘perspectivism’.⁷ This shift is bound up with a global shift towards liberal humanism that has encouraged CBC in Kenya and elsewhere, and bound up, too, with younger Kenyans’ felt need morally to belong to Kenya through various gestures of connection and uplift.

Yet a case can be made that with these new stances of sympathy, the possibility of new forms of structural oblivion emerge. For if whites frame their land ownership as being in the interest of the nation because it is benevolent, socially integrated and conservationist, this framing provides new rationales for holding disproportionate land and risks occluding a full reckoning with white privilege and the potential problematics of CBC itself. Among some of my respondents, the argument seems to be that whites understand where Maasai complaints are coming from, but land restitution need not be considered because whites are stewarding the land with a new sensitivity to the community. The transitions one can track through the Laikipia case reflect broader continuities and shifts in the subjectivity of ‘whiteness’ among white Kenyans, and perhaps other white Africans as well, in an era that rejects public expressions of racism and increasingly prods whites into new expressions of moral nationalism and inclusion to legitimate their belonging.

Land alienation and colonial erasures

The British Crown began to expropriate East African land in the nineteenth century with near-total disregard for existing community ownership arrangements. Typically, these involved the inheritance or allocation of rights, and

⁷A related theory termed ‘value pluralism’ was greatly expanded later by Isaiah Berlin (1969). For an expansion, see <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/value-pluralism/>>, accessed 3 June 2013.

relied on an ethos of group sharing.⁸ Maasai, for instance, had a complex notion of *e-rishata* that distinguished zones in which certain families negotiated for rights to mingle together and graze their herds in certain areas (Galaty and Munei 1998).⁹ In the eyes of officials and settlers, however, a system of individual land rights would encourage ‘proper’ land use, especially greater agricultural production – a colonial priority across Africa and the New World (see, for instance, Cronon 1983). And so, in the early twentieth century, the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1902 imposed English property law (see Berman and Lonsdale 1992: 19). Africans were to forfeit any land not occupied or developed – although the interpretation of these criteria was so biased that Africans could easily be evicted and confined to native reserves. The state could then parcel out the so-called ‘white highlands’ of the Rift Valley to European and white South African settlers, who ran their farms on the backs of poorly paid Africans squeezed into labour by household taxes and other factors. Migrating in from the reserves, many such workers would become defined by their predicament as squatters (Berman and Lonsdale 1992; Clayton and Savage 1974). The injustices perpetrated in this era were often justified in terms of a social Darwinist racism; Africans were a lower order of people, and while the civilizing influence of whites held the hope of uplifting them, they did not merit the rights or privileges of those of European descent.

Colonial notions of land tenure were grounded in a Lockean ideology where land rights are established through a particular kind of labour that changes and ‘improves’ the environment. ‘As much land as a man tills, plants, improves, cultivates, and can use the product of,’ writes Locke, ‘so much is his property.’¹⁰ Accordingly, Hardinge announced that ‘Africans only owned land so long as they occupied or cultivated it. The moment they moved off the land it became “waste”’ (Hughes 2006: 26). The Lockean model overlooks the ways in which pastoralists *did* transform and sustain the land as they grazed their animals, moved on as the seasons turned, and returned to graze again on regenerated flora (Schroeder 1999; Adams and McShane 1997). But pastoralism didn’t look like ‘development’ to colonials, and according to European politics of control and morality, it involved too little labour and too much motion (Berman and Lonsdale 1992: 35; Comaroff and Comaroff 1997; Hodgson 2001). Furthermore, the notion that African animal husbandry would erode the land was widespread in the colonial administration – in spite of the fact that early settler farming practices suffered from settlers’ ignorance of the ecosystem and contributed to declining soil fertility (Hughes 2006: 157; Anderson 1984).

This, then, furnished the ideological backdrop for the seizure of land from pastoralist Maasai. The appropriation involved several stages. In the late nineteenth

⁸For an expanded look at the collision of ideologies surrounding land, particularly in the case of Luo people in Kenya, see Shipton (2009).

⁹Their Bantu neighbours, including Kikuyu, Kamba, Embu and Meru peoples, were cultivators with whom they had trade relationships and strategic intermarriages (Berman and Lonsdale 1992: 20).

¹⁰See Locke’s 1690 *Second Treatise on Government*, Chapter V, Section 32 (<<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/7370/7370-h/7370-h.htm>>, accessed 3 June 2013). As Katja Uusihakala (1999: 37–8) has argued of settler self-image: ‘It was knowledge of the land and an ability to improve and to utilize it that made the Mzungus [white settlers] distinguish themselves from both the Africans and [expatriate] Europeans.’

century, Maasai had ranged from Laikipia to the north, down through what is now Tanzania, and west into much of the Rift Valley. In the nineteenth century, British officials' maps had recognized this proprietorship, labelling the East African highlands 'Maasailand' (Hughes 2006: 3–4; see also Waller 1976 on collaborations between Maasai and the British in the years leading up to the land seizures). Yet in 1904, the British persuaded Maasai – apparently without force – to sign away their rights to land in the Naivasha and Nakuru areas of the central Rift Valley. Over the next year, Maasai were moved into two reserves, one to the south and the other a desirable grazing area in Laikipia to the north. Under the treaty agreement, the British promised these grazing areas 'so long as the Masai as a race shall exist'. But in 1911 the administration wanted to make room for more white settlement in Laikipia, so coerced Maasai into signing a new agreement, this time with more pressure, and even threats (Hughes 2006: 172). Maasai leaders balked at the prospect of the low-quality land in the south, capitulating only with dread: 'We are sure our stock will die there, but we are prepared to obey the orders of the Government and go' (*ibid.*: 43).¹¹ Between 1911 and 1913, about 10,000 Maasai, 175,000 cattle and over 1 million sheep followed four prescribed routes to the south, with hired white settlers and *askaris* (guards) from other parts of Africa herding them at gunpoint. Government officials at the time described Maasai as 'well behaved' (*ibid.*: 44), but many wound up turning back, their move being postponed until a few years later. Oral testimony from elders who were children during the moves suggests that there were at least a few deaths from sickness, exposure and the stress of travel.

All told, by 1913 Maasai had lost between 50 and 70 per cent of the lands they originally used, and felt duped by the moves, which confined them to arid terrain while subjecting them to intensified disease (human and bovine), population pressures, soil erosion, and loss of vegetation (Glover and Gwynne 1961; Hodgson 2001: 106; Tignor 1972; see also Hughes 2006: 105, 118ff.). Maasai mourned not only the loss of their livelihood, but also the 'bounty, freedom, and range' of their earlier lifestyle (DePuy 2011: 48). In a series of recent interviews conducted in English by environmentalist Walter DePuy (*ibid.*: 35–6), Maasai elders waxed nostalgic about the autonomy and mobility of their forebears: 'They were just free before these private ranches came up'; 'Nobody control[led] you'; 'They were just free and roaming everywhere, so the life was just simple and it was good'; 'They were just free ... there was nobody who was ruling them ... Because everywhere was just for them.'

A colonial enemy in the present

Maasai tried to find legal recourse for their losses over the decades, without success.¹² With the rise of NGOs by the 1990s, some Maasai had new venues

¹¹It should be noted that several colonial officials objected to what they saw as a 'disgraceful' manipulation of the people, but other administrators subjected Maasai sympathizers to a 'witch-hunt' of sorts, effectively silencing them (Hughes 2006: 19–20, 49, 51–5, 71, 81).

¹²Maasai appealed several times for the return of their northern lands, taking the case to the High Court of British East Africa in 1913 and the Kenya Land Commission in 1932, and

(such as the Maasai Laikipia-based Osiligi) through which to articulate grievances and campaign for their objectives, while Maasai lawyers and journalists grew increasingly vocal about the plight of pastoralists without adequate access to land. In 2004 there was a special impetus to be bold. Not only did some Maasai believe that century-old colonial leases in Laikipia were expiring, but there had also been a severe drought. Pastoralists could see wells and pipelines just over the fences in privately owned ranches as their own cattle were weakened by dehydration. And although by this time many Laikipia lands were owned by politicians' families and other non-white elites, it was less risky for Maasai to go after white owners than to call out the multi-ethnic politics behind distorted land distribution.¹³ Focusing on white landowners, in particular those colonial appropriations, would avoid stirring up 'tribalism' in this nation sometimes riven by politically sponsored ethnic violence, and would position the debate within global discussions of reparations on the part of former imperial powers.

Focusing their sights on the colonial legacy, a group of Maasai activists mobilized to demand restitution. They argued that Laikipia leases allocated in the early twentieth century were ninety-nine years long and so, on 15 August 2004, the land should revert from white hands to the Maasai people. Lotte Hughes, although repeatedly stating her sympathy for the Maasai's sense of betrayal, points out some of their factual inaccuracies, including the fact that the 1904 agreement was not technically a 'lease' (Vasagar 2004). When activists issued a press release making claims of extensive torture and killings, their claims, although founded in genuine loss, exceeded the available historical facts (Hughes 2006: 221).¹⁴

Nevertheless, some Maasai drove their herds onto white-owned ranches in Laikipia, while others attempted to deliver petitions addressed to the Kenyan and British governments. The petitions demanded the return of Laikipia to the Maasai community, as well as compensation – land and money – from both governments (Kantai 2007: 112). Ultimately, however, the pastoralists received nothing for their troubles. The Kenyan state, anxious to preserve the tourism-based economy and Western aid – and probably concerned, too, that activists might eventually set their sights on non-white land grabbers – sent in the paramilitary unit of the Kenyan Police Force to violently evict the protesters. The fact that a 1915 Crown Lands Ordinance had extended the Laikipia leases to 999 years (Hughes 2006: 25–6) doubtless made it easier for the state to rationalize its uncompromising response.

Before Maasai were literally beaten back, the 2004 social drama highlighted a dilemma faced by white Kenyans today: colonial history may be held against those of European descent in the present. At one point, for instance, the

raising the issue during independence negotiations in London in 1962. In the 1913 case, Maasai plaintiffs claimed that the Maasai signatories to the 1911 agreement had lacked the authority to enter into it, that it violated the 1904 agreement, and that it did not benefit the Maasai. However, Maasai illiteracy proved a major disadvantage in their ability to establish their version of events (Hughes 2006: 6–7).

¹³'Government, Maasai, ranchers clash over land in Kenya – 2004-08-30', Voice of America, 28 October 2009 <<http://www.voanews.com/content/a-13-a-2004-08-30-28-1-66892807/261977.html>>.

¹⁴Apparently, many Maasai now believe that the British routed them to the south in a deliberate effort to kill them (Hughes 2006: 118) and are convinced that, during the moves, 'hundreds if not thousands of people died from starvation, disease, exposure, or gunshot wounds'.

procession in Nairobi marched to the British High Commission, but it was closed for lunch and the High Commissioner, Edward Clay, did not happen to be in. A Maasai activist said: 'Clay's refusal to see us shows how much contempt he has for us. It smacks of colonialism' (quoted in Kantai 2007: 113). Maasai spokesmen also repeatedly invoked another complaint dating to the imperial era: namely, that whites – deemed 'settlers', in the colonial vein – care more about African wildlife than they do about Africans (cf. Garland 2008; Ndaskoi 2005). Ratik ole Kuyana, a Maasai tour guide, narrowly escaped arrest during a protest and remarked: 'We're now squatters on our own land ... I'd rather spend my days in prison than see settlers spend their days enjoying my motherland.' He went on to invoke the seizures of white Zimbabwean farms: 'I think Mugabe was right' (Lacey 2004a). Placards held up during the demonstrations read 'We Demand our Land back from the British!' (Kantai 2007: 110) and 'Sunset for the British and sunrise for the Maasai' (see Kantai 2008b). Such rhetoric erased not only the multi-ethnic quality of land grabbing in Kenya, but also the fact that some current white Kenyan landowners in Laikipia purchased their lands after independence rather than inheriting them directly from their settler forebears. But in 2004, Maasai activists painted a picture of a simple enemy: contemporary white Kenyans were not legitimate citizens but colonial interlopers, relics from a dead era.

Colonial discourses, structural oblivion, and the politics of sentiment

White Kenyan responses to this portrayal need to be understood in the broader context of their current sense of identity. In many conversations, I heard white citizens of Kenya, descendants of former colonial settlers and administrators, attest again and again to their heartfelt nationalism. None of them wish to be 'tarred by the same brush', in their words, as 'old colonials'. Instead, they told me of their love of Kenya's people; of their wish to learn the 'beautiful' national language Kiswahili better if they didn't already speak it well; of their enjoyment in 'connecting' with Afro-Kenyans; and of their dismay at politicians' efforts to foment ethnic conflict in the nation they say they love. As will be seen, they also told me of their sense that the landscapes and wildlife of Kenya are 'in their blood'. And they consider themselves qualified to understand what Kenya needs. Unlike the expatriates who arrive with naïve notions of what is best for the country, they frame themselves as pragmatic, forward-thinking realists (see also Styles 2011). With such stances of moral nationalism, white Kenyans earnestly proclaim allegiances that they hope might evade some of the criticisms their forebears have incurred.

It was all the more striking, then, to hear so many of them respond to Maasai critiques in 2004 with colonial-style narratives about land use. Many white Kenyans I spoke to were derisive of what they call Maasai's 'romantic' efforts to regain lands. They portrayed Maasai bids for restitution as 'unrealistic', particularly given how many times much of the land has changed hands, and represented Maasai as opportunists. A Nairobi-based safari guide named Clem snorted with laughter as we talked about the Maasai protesters who had stormed the ranch of his distant family members. 'If they think there's any compensation that can be gained through those demands for restitution,' he said, 'well

sure they're going to push that. And that's a *good* one, a *really* good one to try to exploit.' Meanwhile, whites rationalized the colonial seizure of Laikipia land through collective amnesia and old colonial rhetoric. Few white Kenyans today know much about the Maasai moves of a century ago. Through a combination of defensiveness and historical ignorance (possibly fostered by administrative whitewashing¹⁵), narratives circulating among earlier settler families mostly spun events in a way that sidestepped the moral unpleasantness of the colonial administration. Inheriting this legacy of oblivion, some white Kenyan respondents told me earnestly that *all* of the Laikipia territories had been 'fairly purchased' directly from Maasai.

Obviously, those who were landowners had material motives: they want to hold on to their title deeds. But they didn't *experience* this dynamic as simple greed – and, indeed, one of the functions of structural oblivion is to legitimate one's advantages. Hence, in much of their discourse, they modelled themselves as entitled to the land, in part due to pastoralists' lack of claim. They implied that Maasai had no real rights to the land to begin with because they were barely even present there – and here we see signs of an implicit, and time-worn, ideology that pastoralists have a lesser existence because they are not settled. Royal Geographical Society explorer Joseph Thomson wrote in the late nineteenth century that most of Laikipia was 'quite uninhabited' – in spite of the evidence of pastoralism he himself documented (Hughes 2006: 24; see also Hughes 2010). More broadly, in the early twentieth century, colonial officials saw no permanent settlements in Kenya's highlands, overlooked pastoralists' seasonal migrations, and jumped to the conclusion that, in their words, 'a considerable portion of Maasai country was masterless' or 'empty' (Hughes 2006). The idea has apparently been passed through the generations, as my white Kenyan interlocutors repeatedly described the land in Laikipia as having been 'empty', 'virgin' or 'uninhabited'. An elderly Laikipia cattle rancher, Devon, told me that his great-cousin, who was employed to help move the Maasai out of Laikipia a century ago, found that there was '*nobody* to move', and then 'moaned' for years that the dearth of people there meant he barely got paid for the job. Clem also employed a sweeping rhetorical gesture to erase the seizures from Maasai: 'There was no one there [when whites settled in Laikipia],' he said. And a middle-aged businesswoman in Nairobi who grew up in the Rift Valley rhetorically conflated the idea of pastoralist land with unoccupied, unused land: 'A *lot* of the prime land was in areas that were not previously occupied or used ... a lot [of] unused territory. By *all* accounts ... a lot of huge tracts of the country were pastoral.' The Maasai historical presence – their very being – is thereby swept away, and the wounds left by their forced removal simply not acknowledged in most white Kenyan narratives I heard.

Where Maasai did exist, said many of my respondents, their use of the land was inadequate. Like colonial officials before them, they described pastoralist mobility

¹⁵It has been established that colonial authorities in Kenya concealed the most damning archival records concerning their violent crackdown on Mau Mau insurgents (Anderson 2013). Might they have done the same with their records of the Maasai moves? Regardless, it seems that most settlers were not apprised of the details of the moves, particularly the coercive nature of the second one.

as haphazard, impulsive and aimless.¹⁶ Take the words of Nairobi-based entrepreneur Jessa, who in 2004 phoned her Laikipia landowner friends on a near-daily basis. From her vantage point, Maasai mobility was too aimless for them to have rights to the land:

[T]hey wander from place to place to place, in a certain area. Now they say that's our land. How did that suddenly become your land? *Why* have you got historical rights to that land? Just because you wandered round it for a couple of hundred years or whatever?

A Rift Valley farmer in his seventies, James, portrayed Maasai as greedy and their mobility as utterly spontaneous, steered by brawn rather than reason: 'They reckon they own the whole of Kenya,' he told me, and began to giggle at the image. 'The Maasai just went wherever they felt like it 'cause they were really tough, wiry people.' During my visit to a white-Kenyan-owned tea estate in Limuru, my hosts around the lunch table described Maasai as rudderless when it came to land stewardship; they 'wouldn't know what to *do* with that land' were it returned to them. Such images disregard the ecological, social and even customary legal structures that historically underlay Maasai's transhumant pastoralism (see, for instance, Galaty 1992; Neumann 1997), while re-inscribing the Lockean ideology that tilling the land establishes responsible belonging through a kind of reverse autochthony. Those of European descent may not be 'born from the soil', but, they feel, the soil was born from them.

Meanwhile, white Kenyans criticized Maasai for 'romanticizing' their plight and their interactions with the land. At least a dozen white Kenyan respondents told me that Maasai land claims were capitalizing on what they termed 'that feel-good factor' or 'that powerful story'. Said Carey, the manager of a horticultural farm in Naivasha:

You've got all these NGOs who are in there drafting these policies [saying] you've gotta bend over backward to try to *de*-marginalize the marginalized people because of some romantic notion that they have, and it's completely inappropriate!

Inappropriate, says Carey, in part because restitution would be impractical, and in part because Maasai would misuse and desertify the land. In a similar vein, another white Kenyan in his sixties complained about the discourse that 'Maasai can do no wrong'; it's absurd, he said, because 'through most of the Rift Valley the Maasai are doing *untold* damage'. Whites related these critiques to their identity as 'conservationists' who, as a community, know and care more than most black Kenyans about stewardship of Kenya's flora and fauna. Many respondents, then, were derisive about the narratives found among NGOs supporting Maasai efforts, such as the Maasai Environmental Resource Coalition (MERC), an influential group of grass-roots organizations in Kenya and Tanzania. A publicity-oriented section of the MERC website describes how

¹⁶We can see the precedent for this discourse in 1934, when former Commissioner Charles Eliot wrote: 'I cannot admit that wandering tribes have a right to keep other and superior races out of large tracts merely because they have acquired a habit of straggling over far more land than they can utilise' (quoted in Bekure and Ole Pasha 1990: 234). The colonial language is preserved almost unchanged decades later.

Maasai have 'lived in harmony within the rich ecosystems of East Africa for centuries'.¹⁷ While the wording simplifies the vagaries of history, and almost nobody would agree that Maasai today live in ecological harmony in the marginal or overpopulated spaces they now occupy, the MERC authors have a point. In spite of colonial and contemporary anxiety that pastoralism desertifies the land, many historians and ecologists now agree that, in the precolonial era, pastoralists' seasonal movements helped preserve the land from overuse. This symbiotic relationship, however, died largely as a result of colonial interference in pastoralist culture and ecology (Adams and McShane 1997; Glover and Gwynne 1961; Hazzah 2006; Hodgson 2001: 106; Hughes 2006: 105, 118ff.; Sindiga 1984).

If some white Kenyans scorned any hint of Maasai sentimentality, romance flourished in their own sense of connection to the land. The landscape and wildlife, they said rhapsodically, are 'in their blood'. Mary, from a coffee farming family in the Rift Valley, framed it as an ontological bond: 'Kenya's landscape is absolutely a part of me; it is just *so* magnificent.' Simon, a Laikipia-based conservationist, called Kenya 'the air I breathe'. A young man recently returned to Nairobi from university in the UK said that England never felt like home: 'The smells and colours and the landscapes here are so much more vivid; it's like I feel more alive when I'm walking around.' And Clem told me in a heartfelt voice: 'Yeah, for me I love the landscape. It's really – it's really – you know it's *engrained* in you! You just *love it to the bone*.' Ironically, while white Kenyans treated Maasai mobility as a disqualification for land ownership, their own attachments to Kenya's spaces were often rooted in sentimentality about their 'total freedom' in childhood when they could 'go anywhere', 'wander far and wide', and have exhilarating encounters with wildlife that set the stage for their passion for conservation (see, for instance, the colonial childhood reminiscences found in Considine and Rawlins (2008) – although plenty of reminiscences I encountered post-date Kenya's independence). In treasuring their ability to range freely, white Kenyans seemed unaware that Maasai have potent nostalgia of their own for their past 'freedom' and mobility. But whites' free ranging, of course, is different, emerging from their access to land, technology and wealth. The 'locals' (once 'natives') are defined as such precisely because so many of them are incarcerated in space by poverty and consumed – in critical narratives, anyway – by parochial, 'tribalist' ethno-territorialism in a way that white Kenyans don't imagine themselves to be. This, then, is part of the privilege of being a white Kenyan – a claim to space accompanied by the sense that one transcends it.

In sum, these respondents' structural oblivion about land rights included ignorance of aspects of Laikipia's history and ecology, a politics of affect that sometimes occluded or dismissed Maasai suffering, and distinctive ideologies of land use and entitlement. Pastoralists were thought barely to use or occupy land, their wandering across the land was framed as pointless, and their emotional appeals for the land framed as manipulative and destructive. Meanwhile, whites understood their own mobility as innocent and exhilarating, and their own pragmatic and emotional connection to land as legitimate and authentic.

¹⁷See <<http://maasaierc.org/the-maasai-people>>, accessed 11 September 2012.

New perspectivism and adjusted structural oblivion?

Yet aspects of structural oblivion in some white Kenyans have been rattled by developments in the conservation world. Starting in the 1980s, the World Bank and Asian Development Bank began to fund 'integrated conservation and development projects' that would 'reduce the threat to conservation from local people' (Berkes 2007: 15189). By the 1990s, the international conversation had undergone a paradigm shift to include humans in the ecosystem, and to recognize that local inhabitants needed to be enlisted if conservation efforts were to succeed. Many regions of Africa became sites for so-called community-based conservation (CBC), which attempts to enlist local citizens as partners in conservation, often through income-generating activities.

In Kenya, Maasai themselves had pushed for community involvement in conservation as early as the late 1950s, forwarding an innovative proposal that local councils rather than the central government should manage the Amboseli and Maasai Mara game reserves, both of which extend across the Tanzanian border. While the management of these parks has been contentious, surrounding Maasai communities have still benefited from tourism through park revenues and 'ethnopreneurialism' (the marketing of their cultural insignia and expertise), and the incidence of poaching has been low relative to other areas (Honey 1999: 310). The Kenyan shift towards CBC over the last three decades has also been influenced by innovators such as David Western (of British descent, born in Tanzania, but later a naturalized Kenyan citizen), who became director of the state corporation known as the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) in 1994.¹⁸ Curious about Maasai, and in conversation with international conservationists, he came to a richer understanding of how Maasai grazing habits might complement the Amboseli ecosystem, and championed a coexistence model of national parks and pastoralists that would not just benefit local communities but also involve them.¹⁹

In Laikipia, the private conservancy that has led the way since the early 1990s has been Lewa Downs, owned by the Craig family, who first came to Kenya in 1924 as part of the post-World War I soldier-settler scheme. Lewa was originally a cattle ranch but was losing wildlife quickly from around it and failing to turn a sufficient profit. The managers turned to conservation and, in conversation with the international CBC community, ramped up local employment, education, health, micro-credit, water, road infrastructure, community forestry, livestock for community grazing and other initiatives in the surrounding communities.

¹⁸Western succeeded Richard Leakey, a controversial figure with deep family roots in Kenya who, in defence of the threatened elephant and rhino populations, instigated a policy that authorized units could shoot poachers on sight. Mindful of the high tensions with surrounding communities, Leakey also promised that KWS would give 25 per cent of park revenues to those who lived on the periphery, but the expectations he raised were impossible to meet, and Leakey was so cynical about corruption that he remarked a few years after his resignation: 'I don't believe community-based conservation has a hope in hell' (Honey 1999: 301–3).

¹⁹It should be noted, though, that Western's position as a figurehead represents a demographic trend; despite the presence of some Afro-Kenyan leaders in conservation, a disproportionate number of conservation leaders in Kenya, as across Africa, are of European descent (whether expatriates or white Kenyans), perpetuating what Garland (2008) has called the 'colonial character' of wildlife conservation.

The Lewa website touts the changes proudly: ‘With the changed perceptions of local people, the protection and conservation of wildlife is a source of desperately needed income rather than poaching for rhino horn.’²⁰

Lewa has gained international approval, publicity that has altered the perspective of some other white Kenyans. In the words of one slightly nervous landowner, its example has ‘put a good deal of pressure on those who aren’t doing the same thing’. A (white) Lewa insider I call Trevor delicately suggested to me that racism informs the mentality of those landowners who resist:

[When the Maasai came through Laikipia in 2004,] other ranches said: ‘Well look what you’ve done to us. You’ve just ... stood up, you’ve done things ... and we haven’t. And you’ve left us high and dry.’ Which is a bit of a narrow-minded way – it’s, to be honest, it’s a bit of a sort of, I hate to say it, a sort of Zimbabwe mentality if that makes sense ... it’s such a closed-gate policy to anybody. [The policy at Lewa is]: We’re Kenyan, we’re a Kenyan company, we’re owned by Kenyans. The guy next door is a Kenyan – what’s the difference? There is no difference.

Worth noting in Trevor’s words is a subtle plea not only for white Kenyans to recognize similarity with ‘the guy next door’, but also for Afro-Kenyans to recognize them as equally part of the nation. ‘We’re Kenyan,’ he insists – as opposed to white Zimbabweans, whose exclusionary racism, Trevor almost implies, contributed to their downfall. In other words, he frames CBC as not only a means of involving less privileged neighbours to augment conservation, but also a means of demonstrating to the public that privileged whites belong in the national mix.

By now, some white Kenyan property owners have felt this pressure and have incorporated community-minded initiatives into their conservation practices. In 1992, the Laikipia Wildlife Forum was founded, describing itself as ‘committed to bettering the lives of people in the area through supporting and generating livelihoods, while securing dependable, sustained access to essential natural resources’.²¹ Some white Kenyan landowners are members, and the regular meetings of the forum have provided an arena for dialogue with Laikipia’s pastoralists, small-scale landowners and community groups. Through these venues, some white landowners have been placed in close contact with the voices of those who feel marginalized.

Ranch by ranch, as they have witnessed the rise of CBC and felt the tension with resentful neighbours, some have begun to find different perspectives on both land and wildlife more vividly available to them. In the words of one Laikipia landowner: ‘If people don’t care about [conservation] and they’re not part of it, it won’t work. You can’t simply say, “You can’t kill that.”’ As one middle-aged woman contemplated the movement towards CBC and her own shift away from colonial-style attitudes, she mused, ‘How *can* an African value an elephant higher than the farm he uses to feed his family?’, as if somewhat surprised she ever thought he could. A Rift Valley landowner characterized pastoralist antipathy to wildlife as ‘quite understandable’, while a safari guide, discussing

²⁰See <<http://wildaboutanimals.forumotion.net/t109-lewa-wildlife-conservancy>>.

²¹See <<http://www.laikipia.org/>>.

‘poaching’ on protected lands, framed it as a structurally understandable act: ‘If I had ten children at home and no job, I’d do the same thing.’

Exposure to CBC seemed to affect some white Kenyan responses to the 2004 Maasai activism. The thirty-something daughter of a landowner, Laria Grant, whose father bought 14,000 acres around the time of Kenya’s independence, told a journalist: ‘I’m sympathetic to them ... I know how it would feel if I were them, even 100 years later. To me, it’s not the exact details of the lease that’s the issue. It’s about land and their feelings toward it. They’re poor and can see our huge acreage of beautiful grass across the fence. But,’ she parried, ‘we feel as strongly about this land as they do’ (Lacey 2004b). Laria began to imagine herself into the complainants’ feelings – but suggested that the power of whites’ sentiments prevents them from handing land over. Still, other whites, too, verbalized at least partial concessions to the points of view of those who object to their privilege, as well as to the possibility of historical facts that might threaten it. Even as his Laikipia neighbours urged police to crack down harder on Maasai demonstrators, for instance, landowner Michael Dyer told another journalist that he wanted to delve deeper into the history of how Maasai lost land to begin with: ‘Everyone knows there is a land issue here. It is causing quite a lot of distress now to the [Maasai] community ... My feeling would be let’s get everyone around the table and let’s get some proper interpretation of the Maasai agreements, and let’s start the process of reconciliation’ (Phombeah 2004). Probably not coincidentally, Dyer was among those who had already engaged in community outreach, setting up a scholarship programme for Maasai youth, for instance, which had put him in communication with community representatives.

Among my respondents, white Kenyans who came of age around Kenya’s independence (in 1963) or later, and who had travelled extensively (often to attend university in the UK or in South Africa), were somewhat more likely than elderly whites to imagine pastoralist points of view. One such woman in her thirties, employed by a Laikipia conservancy, imagined herself in her neighbours’ subject position: ‘Within a 5 kilometre radius of our boundary there are close to 50,000 people ... all looking over the fence and thinking: “Well, they’ve got firewood, they’ve got wildlife. They’ve got everything we don’t have.”’ And a wealthy urbanite in his fifties, whose family sold its landholdings at independence and who has begun to read critical colonial histories penned at liberal Western universities, framed today’s tensions through an overtly perspectivist lens:

From our perspective, from the white perspective [creating privately held conservation areas] was the right thing to do. But for the poor guy who lived in the park, and the poor guy who wants to poach – the motive behind poaching is probably poverty ... But if you’ve got one family on 60,000 acres, it’s easy to conserve ... If I was a white landowner I’d have anxiety but the fact is I’m not, [and] I *kind* of think that land should be redistributed ... I don’t think you can hold on to a title deed that was got from an injustice system [*sic*] 100 years ago, in a colonial time, you see, ‘cause the chiefs all signed it away.

Another young woman from a Laikipia family startled me by stepping back so far as to shift her pronouns to position herself neutrally in the debate between white ranchers and Maasai: ‘They’re both right and they’re both wrong, really, at the end of the day.’ Although her family members are ranchers, her formulation

reframed both sides as ‘they’, and neither side has a lock on the moral high ground. Such a statement is a long way from the scoffing I heard from the more conservative white Kenyans. Apparently, as white Kenyans feel the influence of CBC, African activism, and presumably of the reach of humanist and human-rights discourses, the changes have amounted to a broadened epistemology for some: a shift in consciousness that makes preliminary concessions to subaltern points of view.

CBC initiatives appear to have enhanced the livelihoods of some pastoralists in Laikipia (see, for instance, Glew *et al.* 2010). That said, CBC more broadly has been widely faulted, particularly with the argument that its proponents often fail to understand the world view of local inhabitants – fail, in other words, to be as perspectivist as their publicity would suggest. A wave of scholarship coming out of Tanzania, Kenya and other sites of African ecotourism is finding that, despite good intentions, many CBC initiatives continue to simplify or marginalize local knowledge claims and secure Western economic and cultural hegemony (see, for instance, Akama 1996; Brockington and Homewood 1999; Goldman 2003; Neumann 1998; for broader, multinational critiques, see Agrawal and Gibson 1999; Berkes 2007). The ‘development’ enabled by CBC is not universally welcome, local critiques are not always heard, and revenue often feels like inadequate compensation for the loss of land and mobility (Igoe 2004).

Indeed, a case could be made that in contexts such as the Laikipia one, CBC has opened the door to a new rationalization of white landholding, and that, as such, it has set the terms for a new form of structural oblivion. This complaint is strongly voiced by an MERC founder, Meitamei ole Dapash, who accuses white-owned ranchers of using the ‘guise’ of community-engaged ecotourism to hoard land and resources in the hands of a few families (Honey 1999: 325; see also Akama 1996). Trevor unwittingly gave this claim some credibility when he remarked that ‘the ranches shouldn’t be given back, as long as they are managed in a way that’s benefiting the local people’. Another white Kenyan CBC proponent I spoke to remarked that: ‘We know how to strike a balance between benefiting the people and protecting the land and wildlife; you won’t find the Maasai doing that.’ The Kenyan government has not failed to notice that white ranch owners and farmers say that they pump money into the economy; their farming and tourism activities bring revenue, and the money they put into community development gives CBC a kind of moral and economic legitimacy in the eyes of the state.²² These developments were on the radar of the government when it supported white landowners against Maasai objections, and certainly they were part of white Kenyans’ arguments as well. Stewarding the land and wildlife while ‘involving the community’ in a kind of patronage role has become bound up with white Kenyan nationalism; these are, they say, expressions of love and concern for the well-being of the country’s future, as well as emergent from white Kenyan forms of ‘expertise’ accrued over generations. Yet a critical perspective suggests that, sincere though this stance may be, it facilitates many whites’ dismissals of the concept of restitution.

²²Government, Maasai, ranchers clash over land in Kenya – 2004-08-30’, Voice of America, 28 October 2009 <<http://www.voanews.com/content/a-13-a-2004-08-30-28-1-66892807/261977.html>>.

Conclusion

Most white Kenyan landowners feel deeply emotionally tied to their land. Their holdings are easier to justify because they do not know much about the history of Maasai displacement by the colonial government, they tend to overlook the possibility that Maasai ever used the land sustainably, and they see themselves as the more responsible stewards. Where they diverge, however, is in how much they are willing to entertain – or even *begin* to entertain – Afro-Kenyan vantage points on land rights and conservation, and the extent to which they essay to ‘do right’ by the surrounding communities (while keeping their title deeds). Growing numbers are falling into the latter camp. Although these differences have not caused a major cleavage in white Kenyans’ collective sense of identity, they have created some resentments of the sort described by Trevor, in which conservative landowners bristle at the ‘pressure’ they feel to take pastoralist well-being into account. Part of what they are feeling, of course, is the pressure to emerge from one historical era and enter into another.

My analysis reaffirms that the subject positions of whiteness are not essential and fixed, but mutable in response to historical changes. If white subjectivity in the colonial era was informed by a public ideology of social Darwinist notions of white superiority, whites today have a pressing and political need to frame themselves as respectful, contributing Kenyan citizens, justifying what they have in other terms. Still, it seems that in the decades after independence, even as old expressions of racial superiority were shunted to the background, white Kenyans continued to lean on colonial-era discourses about land management, and to privilege the authenticity of their own connection to the land and wildlife.

This postcolonial mode of whiteness has been precarious in its own right. On the one hand, white Kenyans’ supposedly superior stewardship helps them justify their inherited privilege, but if they come across as elitist or exclusive they risk being deemed foreigners. As the voices of African activists and community-minded conservationists grow, white subjectivity has found itself in the midst of a further transition, reckoning anew with the way in which white elites are perceived by frustrated and marginalized groups. Although this shift has been more provisional, it involves a transition into a nascent perspectivism, an epistemology in which subaltern complaints are somewhat (though still only partially) visible to whites, and occasionally (though still only partially) conceded to. These concessions mark quite a distance from the era when, say historians, so many settlers were determined to maintain their ‘prestige’ through an ‘aloof and inscrutable manner, unexpressive of doubts’ (Kennedy 1987: 154; see also Shadle 2015). If white Kenyans need to make a case that being white is not antithetical to being Kenyan, they cannot afford to be dogmatic.

And yet, as I have argued, even stances of ‘connecting’ and ‘sympathizing’ may be bound up with new forms of structural oblivion. Those who are relatively more liberal and pride themselves on listening to the community through CBC may use this beneficence to enhance their conviction that they are superior twenty-first-century stewards of Kenyan resources. And, in this conviction, they tend to shut down possible conversations about the redistribution of such resources.

A final note on ‘whiteness’ seems in order. Many theorists focus wholeheartedly on the components of whiteness that defend white hegemony. When white Kenyans say that they sympathize with indigent pastoralists longing to use their

capacious lands, is this stance therefore a shift away from whiteness? I am not inclined to agree, for several reasons. First, we must take note of contextual shifts in white stances, allowing whiteness to respond to political contingency. Second, as I have indicated, even when whites' perspectivism feels well-meaning, it has a tactical component, particularly among this group of whites anxious about their entitlement to belong in Kenya. This stance, in other words, is a new and (even when heartfelt) strategic aspect of inhabiting a white subject position and negotiating the advantages they have inherited. (The same, indeed, might be said about the 'white guilt' about which scholars have written in other contexts.) True, taken to its outer limits, perspectivism has the potential to unsettle or undermine certain white privileges, but, as South African philosopher Samantha Vice (2010: 327) argues, even whites critical of their own structural position and suffused with guilt may have 'less obvious, pernicious character traits [and, I would add, ideologies] ... that are themselves the unwilling and unwanted effects of white privilege.' (Analogously, CBC has been criticized as still suffused by Western hegemony, in spite of its perspectivist efforts.) Thus, as we evaluate shifting meanings of 'whiteness' in Africa, we must consider at least the following components. One is the moral pressure some whites feel to be more relativist and self-critical, to hear alternative points of view, and to question their own advantages – their unsettling of conscience, in other words. Another is the extreme difficulty of renouncing the privileges and stances that have benefited them. This uneven adjustment of conscience is part of the story of 'whiteness' in Africa today, and it may prove structurally important to the way events unfold from here.

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Abstract

In recent years, settler descendants in Kenya have found their rights to hold land in Laikipia challenged by Maasai activists. Many have defended themselves by drawing on colonial-era discourses about pastoralist ecology and what constitutes good use of the land. These discourses have side-stepped ecological history and the

moral problematics of colonial land seizure, while treating Maasai anger and nostalgia as manipulative and inauthentic. At the same time, new 'community-based' conservation movements, in conjunction with Afro-Kenyan activism, have prodded some white Kenyans into loosening their epistemology and making preliminary, partial concessions to Afro-Kenyan points of view. Yet, I suggest, these concessions themselves are part of a new, shifting model of whiteness: one that responds to new political imperatives, yet retains certain ways of justifying white advantages in landholding. I draw on these shifts to explore similarities with and disjunctures from colonial whiteness among these contemporary white Kenyans feeling the pressure to move from one historical era to another.

Résumé

Au cours des années récentes, des descendants de colons au Kenya ont vu leurs droits à détenir des terres dans la région de Laikipia remis en cause par des militants masai. Beaucoup se sont défendus en s'appuyant sur des discours de la période coloniale à propos de l'écologie pastorale et de ce qui constitue une bonne utilisation des terres. Ces discours ont contourné l'histoire écologique et la problématique morale des saisies de terres coloniales, tout en traitant la colère et la nostalgie des Masai comme manipulatrices et inauthentiques. Dans le même temps, de nouveaux mouvements de conservation « à base communautaire », en conjonction avec le militantisme afro-kenyan, ont incité certains Kenyans blancs à assouplir leur épistémologie et à faire des concessions préliminaires partielles aux points de vue afro-kenyans. L'auteur suggère cependant que ces concessions s'inscrivent dans un nouveau modèle dynamique de la blancheur : un modèle qui répond à de nouveaux impératifs politiques tout en conservant certaines façons de justifier des avantages blancs en matière foncière. L'auteur s'appuie sur ces changements pour explorer des similarités et des disjonctions par rapport à la blancheur coloniale parmi les Kenyans blancs contemporains qui se sentent contraints à passer d'une période historique à une autre.