

The London School of Economics and Political Science

**Impermanent Development and the Pursuit of Permanence:
Mobilising marginalisation and uncertainty towards a
rightful share of Kenya's oil**

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Anthropology at the London School of
Economics and Political Science for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

What happens when the historically marginalised part of a country becomes overnight a reservoir of potential national wealth? In 2012, commercially viable crude oil deposits were confirmed in Turkana County, Kenya, home to some of East Africa's few mobile pastoralists. This thesis examines the dynamics of resource extraction that unfolded since then, including promises of development and social inclusion for this hitherto relegated region. Oil is unusual in that it is a highly lucrative commodity with tremendous economic potential. In recent years, there has been a proliferation of policies around 'ethical extraction' and the requirement that oil companies need to leave communities better off than they found them. This thesis argues that despite the social performances of global best practices, oil has actually exacerbated the precarious living conditions in the county instead of providing the stability that was promised. The net result is a community that lives in a cycle of impermanence characterised by temporary jobs, incomplete infrastructure, and inconsistent development projects. This has resulted from a combination of the fragile and indeterminate nature of oil itself, the technical nature of jobs in the extractives industry, the unequal power relations between industry and government, and the ambiguous ethical codes that appear to breed secrecy more than accountability and transparency.

The thesis includes an analysis of Turkana's rapidly shifting position within Kenyan political and economic structures; an account of the redefinition of entitlements to resources and revenues and how this has shaped local political, socioeconomic, and ethnic identities; and a discussion of how the Kenyan state, corporate actors, third-sector agencies, and local populations are seeking to design the prospective future with oil. It develops an original analytical framework in order to explore how histories of marginalisation and uncertainty shape the processes of natural resource development. Anthropologists have long examined the relationship between pastoral societies and modernisation, particularly their exclusion from national social compacts and political life. This study aims to contribute anthropological perspectives on the extractive industries by investigating the uneven distribution of early oil benefits and the competing responsibilities for constituting and securing a rightful share of the profits. This involves paying attention to the power relations and governance techniques that perpetuate marginalisation and to the internal dynamics of livelihood struggles and social relations in pastoral areas.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CBO Community Based Organisation

CSR Corporate Social Responsibility

HSNP Hunger Safety Net Programme

NGO non-governmental organisation

NRT Northern Rangeland Trust

Sh Kenyan shillings (in the style of Kenyan newspapers)

GLOSSARY

Akoro hunger

Ateni truth

Baraza A public gathering

Biashara Swahili word for business also used in Turkana

Eturkan The Turkana land

Lolem Not fit for the purpose; meaningless; useless

Lopetun Local term for the cash transfer scheme (literally translates as ‘widespread’ or ‘for everyone’)

Mabati A house made with a mixture of stones, iron, and mud

Manyatta A traditional hut

Ng’aturkana The Turkana language

Ng’iturkana The Turkana people

Permanent A modern house made of bricks and mortar

Raia Swahili word for civilians but used in Turkana to describe traditional pastoralists

Reserve A remote rural area

Semi-permanent A house made of a mixture of mud and concrete

Tarmacking Looking for work

Prologue

IN PURSUIT OF PERMANENCE: 'IF YOU SIT DOWN, YOU WILL EAT NOTHING!'

My neighbour Rebecca was sanguine in the way of one who accepts all things as the will of God and in the spirit of the metaphor that half bread is better than none. On this February morning in 2016, half bread in Kenyan shilling notes was precisely what the twenty-two-year-old mother of one counted and carefully placed inside her gold sequinned purse, a glittering prize she won in a local beauty pageant. Secondary schools across Kenya had resumed the day before, and the hard-earned cash from her eclectic livelihood portfolio, which ranged from pageant competitions to livestock keeping, petty trade, assistance from benevolent sources, and a myriad of temporary administrative jobs, had to be retrieved from its safe place somewhere beneath the clutter of furniture to pay for her younger brother's school fees. The young boy had already faced the humiliating experience of not being allowed to register for the new term. Seeking enrolment with little more than pleas had not sufficed when he had turned up at the boarding secondary school without fees. It did not help that his large metal box contained less than half of the required provisions and stationery. The days when people had to be coaxed into enrolling in school in Turkana County were long gone. The benefits of education as the pathway to economic integration and claim-making, especially in the time of oil, were apparent to all.

The cash in Rebecca's purse could only cover half of the payment, so three goats were tethered outside to balance up – an acceptable form of exchange in Turkana, where subsistence pastoralism remains the mainstay of many despite increasingly hybrid forms of livelihood. Small stock such as goats and sheep are currency even for town residents like Rebecca; she preserves a sizeable herd in the hinterlands as capital while a few are kept handy for quick sales or exchange in pressing situations such as the emergency at hand. Rebecca's aged mother hovered outside; brows knitted in apprehension. Word had reached her of the situation, and she had made the short trek from her thatched house to see things first-hand. Rebecca's father, once a revered teacher and one of the first residents to settle in the area, often struggled between family commitments and a dedicated attachment to inebriating beverages. There was not much he could do to help.

Born and raised in Lokichar, an erstwhile nondescript peri-urban town in the vicinity of the Turkana South Lokichar Basin where oil was discovered in 2012, Rebecca's relative prosperity was evident in the aesthetic of her household and her disposable income. Unlike many of her neighbours, who could barely afford a lacklustre dinner of *githeri* or *ugali* as the main meal of the day, she could at least afford to 'cook tea' for breakfast with *mandazi* - a local pastry as accompaniment. Lunch was almost always available; dinner was certain and even meaty on occasion. A makeshift convenience store in the form of a roofed shed stood by the corner of her home and contributed some daily income. Rebecca, like many others, had established her store in response to the great number of people who migrated into Lokichar from other parts of Turkana and Kenya in search of oil work. Her main abode, locally classified as a *semi-permanent* house, was constructed with a mixture of mud, concrete, corrugated roofing sheets, and finished artistically with a blue wooden door and windows. The *semi-permanent* home stood in contrast to the 'traditional' *manyatta* huts made of twigs and thatch associated with the *raia*—people still actively engaged in rural pastoralism. The *manyatta* is on the lowest rung of the aspirational ladder, and, in Turkana, it embodies the aesthetics of poverty and the ambiguities of tradition and modernity. But even for many townspeople, *manyattas* are the most affordable way to start towards the journey of the highly desirable *permanent* home – a smart modern house built with bricks and mortar that resonates with aspirations of permanence, stable income and livelihoods, elevated social standing, and all things associated with *maendeleo* or development.

The varying degrees of durability and permanence ascribed to houses in Kenya offered me a way into the temporal and affective dispositions related to development and aspirations for social mobility despite the uncertainties and marginalisation that continue to challenge people's survival. I would argue that Turkana is in a state of *semi-permanence* – not quite, not yet – as Ferguson (1999) notes regarding his Zambian Copperbelt interlocutors who were stuck in a loop of expectations of moving up to that desirable state of modernity which I term permanence here. As an analytical tool, the concept of permanence fuses local aspirations for livelihood stability and social mobility with the normative rationale of oil for development as espoused by the state and corporations. Here, oil stands for development, and development as permanence. A rightful share of this permanent envisioning of oil development is therefore expected to materialise in modern houses, secure and consistent livelihoods via wages, connections, education, business, and other modern entrapments.

What lies in between is the responsibility and brokerage of these promises and aspirations which are occurring against the backdrop of marginalisation and uncertainty about livelihoods and the future. Thus, *permanent* is not only the spatial and concrete ensemble of things but a process of social mobility.

Inside Rebecca's *semi-permanent* house, three large posters were pinned to the cream lace curtains and garlands covering the blistered walls. One of the posters featured a large American-style house and a red Ferrari parked in front with pop singer Rihanna demurely perched atop. The accompanying text on the poster read: 'Success is not final, failure is not fatal, it is the courage to continue that counts.' In her eternally optimistic manner, Rebecca, like some others in the oil exploration areas of Turkana, often punctuated tirades against the Anglo-Irish oil company Tullow Oil with the phrase 'At least, things are getting better *polepole* [slowly, slowly].' This reflective sentiment echoes both acceptance and reservations about the rapid development of an oil industry in the erstwhile marginalised County. It tempers local expectations from the corporation with the abdicated responsibility of the state and political 'elites' for the area. 'There was nothing here before Tullow Oil', many admitted to me as they tried to juxtapose the dearth of economic opportunities in the past with the current potential for income generation that has so far been ephemeral.

Livelihood opportunities in Turkana are characteristically unstable and consist of an increasingly creative assortment of activities, even for the nomadic pastoralists who make up a significant portion of the population¹. One can easily find a pastoralist working as a security guard in order to invest the wages into restocking the family herd. The pursuit of permanence, then, involves building social tunnels, channels, and strategies to make a living, which is an everyday struggle in a region where not even the weather can be counted upon to provide moisture for the pasture. To achieve economic stability or even basic sustenance, one must 'tarmac hard', as Kenyans put it – hit the road in search of sustenance in any form. In Turkana, this means doing a bit of charcoal sales here, local brew there, casual labour, and serving as a translator or research guide for the large number of researchers and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) 'doing development' in the region. All these activities are part of

¹ The 2019 census, which placed Turkana's population at 926,976, has been disputed as too low by the county government; the 2009 census placed it at 855,399. H. Etyang, 'Turkana leaders dispute census results as too low', *The Star*, <https://www.the-star.co.ke/counties/rift-valley/2019-11-07-turkana-leaders-dispute-census-results-as-too-low/>

Rebecca's portfolio. What oil brings to the table is a new vista for making these aspirations concrete.

Tucking her glinting purse beneath an elbow as we stepped outside the house, Rebecca adjusted her long leopard-print bodycon dress and bent over to release the goats. 'You must work hard, Doris', she said as we walked the short distance to the school, goats in tow and the beleaguered brother trailing behind. 'In this Turkana, if you sit down, you will eat nothing! Especially in this time of oil!' This statement would come to define many of my observations in Turkana and even Kenya at large.

In the chapters that follow, we will hear more about hard work, precarity, and what development experts refer to as 'mixed livelihoods.' But this is only part of the story. The central concern of this study is the pursuit of permanent, stable livelihoods in contemporary Turkana and the politics of how these are fiercely contested and reconfigured in the time of oil. As we will see, the politics that I am mostly concerned with are those of individual action and responsibility, which stem from a nagging apprehension many laypeople have of official politics as a saboteur seeking only the advancement of vested interests but also, a mistrust of so-called community representatives and gatekeepers, speaking 'on behalf of the people.' During my fieldwork, from time to time, the quiet everyday 'social non-movements' (Bayat 2015: 34) of individual actions soldered into collective actions to subvert established political hierarchies even though the unity in the 'collective' might dissolve in the claims-making process or after some benefits had been obtained. This speaks to various forms of resistance that are not necessarily staged to oppose but are rather designed to negotiate terms of inclusion and engagement, whether by direct action or by being 'social' and vigilant, as Rebecca describes her strategy.

It puts me in mind of an encounter with another friend who works in Nairobi's transport business and whose favourite maxim was that, in Kenya, 'Everything is politics, and politics is the enemy of progress.' We were talking about Kenya's economy on a drive through Nairobi's leafy Karen estate, with its well-manicured trees, picket fences, and horse stables, a far cry from his own modest neighbourhood. When I broached the subject of livelihood and survival in Kenya, he laughed derisively at the idea of a collective Kenyan economy as if it were a concept that existed outside the borders of the ordinary *wananchi* or citizens – something separate, other, controlled and enjoyed by politics of might and connections. In fact, in Kenya, politics is a metaphor for corruption and connections, the ultimate symbol of a 'disconnected

development' (Gardner 2012). It might work to include or disconnect, depending on where you stand, who you know, and the extent to which you fight to make your way in. 'Your question should have been how is *your* economy, not how is Kenya's economy', he corrected me. 'I can tell you about my economy. How I survive.' When I asked him about oil in Turkana, he echoed Rebecca's sentiments regarding the need for individual effort to attain any kind of benefits. Unless oil is depoliticized, he said, it would only serve a few. It would only flow between those who hold power and those who know their way around power, whether via patronage or activism.

From this perspective, the flow of oil's benefits does not merely involve people in power marginalising the poor from above; it also involves the complex workings of power from 'below' and how people marginalise or include themselves. As the Nigerian anthropologist Omolade Adunbi (2011: 102) notes in his ethnography of Nigeria's Niger Delta, '[T]hese communities view the Nigerian state as an impediment to the realisation of these ancestral promises, because they perceive the state as operating in alliance with multinational corporations that exploit the oil resources for their own profit.' Thus, survival and inclusion in securing a 'rightful share' (Ferguson 2015) of oil depend on a significant level of individual responsibility. Making one's own way into benefits is a skill, a necessity that cannot be acquired by sitting at home. In the time of oil, one must be vigilant of events and seek out secret meetings and plots, go beyond the public posters advertising jobs that are transparently posted in public places, know the right questions to ask, and be attentive enough to know what happens at night after the public consultations have dispersed. Crucially, it is about knowing how to be positioned, how to perform.

Many of my interlocutors in Turkana have not perused scholarly critiques of ethical capitalism, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the burgeoning number of extractives industry frameworks, but they seem to have come to similar conclusions on their own. That is, the discourse of CSR, transparency, community engagement, local participation, and other 'codes of global ethics' do not guarantee everyone a free pass into the mine of resource benefits. Like codes, they need to be deciphered and activated by 'those who know their way', as some like to frame it. As such, responsibility matters, but not the kind of responsibility displayed in the glossy multinational newsletters that show development projects and proud villagers positively engaged in the process of resource extraction or offer declarations of transparent dealings with corporate interests. It is a post-corporate social responsibility kind of

responsibility that requires individual action. It draws from histories of uncertainty and marginalisation where nothing is given freely. Resistance, in this case, is not necessarily aimed at the oil operations but at the often-ambiguous negotiations of the terms of incorporation. As Kristin Phillips writes in her *Ethnography of Hunger* concerning rural Tanzania, '[D]espite all the daily hype about *development* by international aid organisations, national politicians, and the village elite, it is *subsistence* and the management of risk that for many rural villagers is the key project of everyday life' (2018: 5). For people in Turkana and other Kenyans seeking a way into the anticipated oil largesse, it is not the official promises that count but the tunnels of inclusion constructed via alliances, subversion, and, for Rebecca, 'being social'.

On our arrival at Rebecca's brother's school, we joined the queue outside the principal's office. Harried parents, especially women, held onto the ropes around their goats while anxious children looked on helplessly as successfully registered students buzzed about the premises. Some women had no goats with them, nor did they appear to have any cash. They planned to appeal to the goodwill of the principal. In our waiting corner, we chatted in hushed tones about money, food, and all things home economics – especially the very poor who had come to appeal with empty hands. I pointed out to Rebecca that most people in line, including us, were all being 'social' in hopes of negotiating enrolment. She cheerfully agreed, pointing out that 'being social', which she uses in the context of being a sociable, assertive, out-and-about person, was a necessary skill for accessing help, even from one's own relatives, friends, or local politicians. Rebecca's payment was accepted, and the boy could register for the new term on the condition that the items on the list for boarding would be provided during the week. In the meantime, he could settle in with whatever was available. Mission accomplished, we went back to Rebecca's place and opened the store for the day just as her phone rang and the oil research group she works with as a local fixer - thanks to her social skills, called to inform her of their imminent arrival.

Just another day in pursuit of permanence.

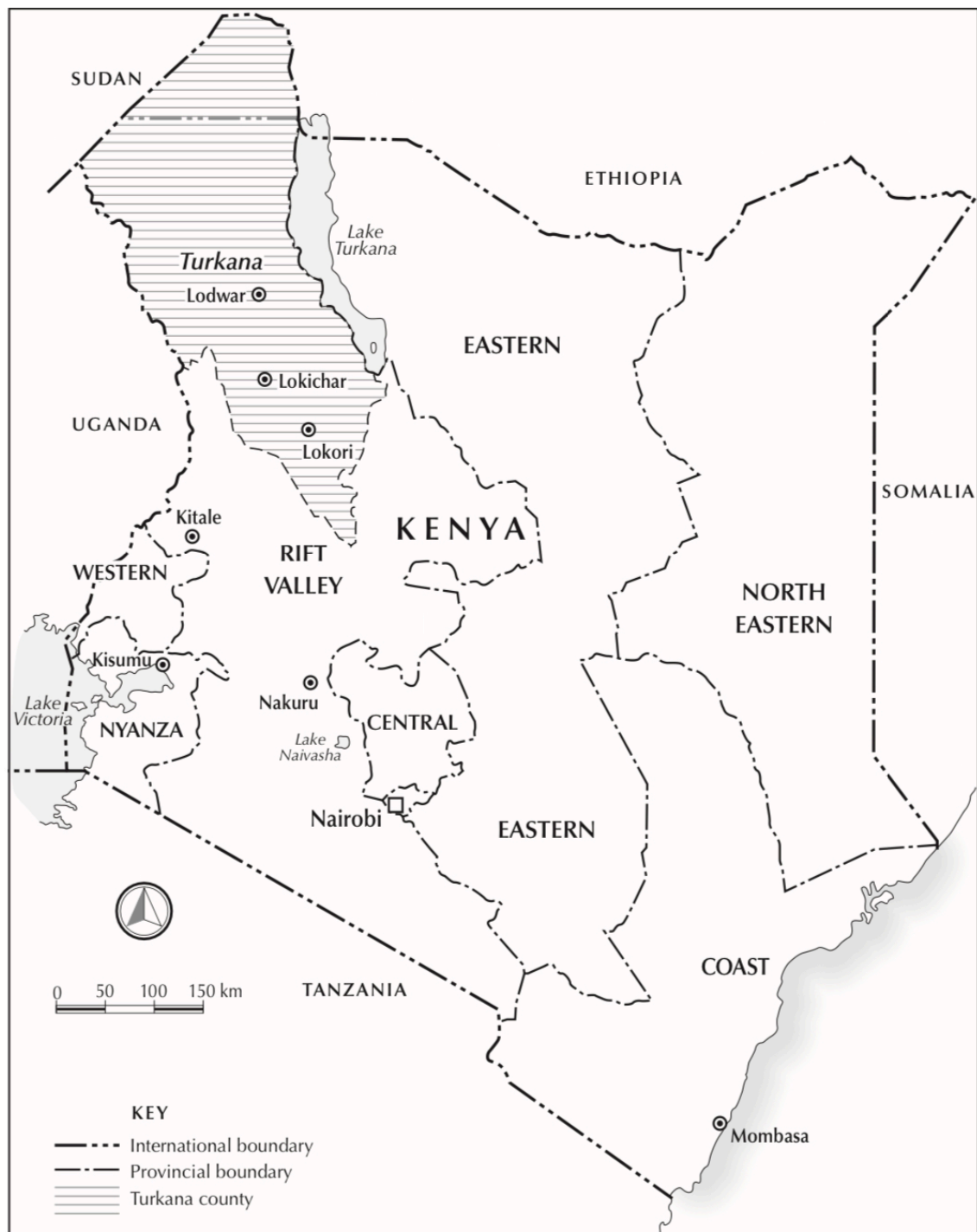


Figure 1. The location of Turkana County within Kenya (Source: Wikipedia)

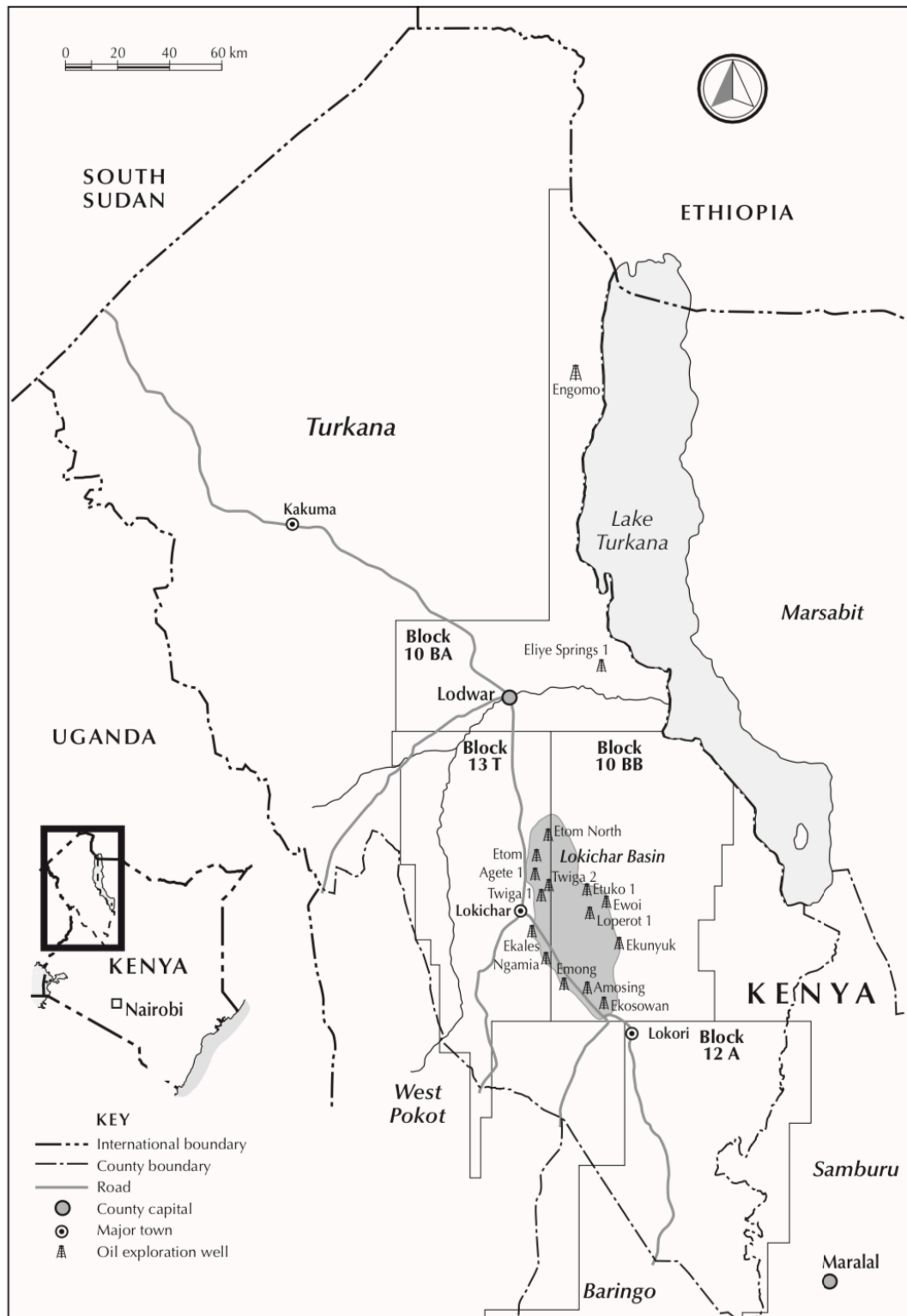


Figure 2. The location of oil blocks and wells within Turkana South and East (Sources: Cordaid Report 2015; Africa Oil & Gas - Mozambique Mining; Oil News Kenya – Phased Development of Lokichar Basin)



Figure 3. The author in front of Rebecca's semi-permanent house in Lokichar



Figure 4. Resource pride: a young Turkana woman displays her Turkana oil t-shirt



Figure 5. Aspirations of modernity and permanence

The thesis in context

My research into Kenya's oil dynamics in Turkana County started in 2014, some two years after the discovery of oil, as part of my master's degree thesis. I spent the last quarter of 2015 to January 2017 on PhD fieldwork in the region, with a return visit in August 2017 for the general elections (which was a significant event in terms of the country's oil future) and in November 2019. The big question for my research was, what will oil do? What will it reveal? Juxtaposed with the long-term impacts of natural resource extraction evident in other parts of Africa and Kenya's own struggle with the redistribution of national resources, what can we learn from Kenya's crude oil discovery in an area predominantly inhabited by nomadic pastoralists and still considered among the poorest and most marginalised regions in the country? What impact will oil have in a pastoral region? How will pastoralism, the emerging hybrid forms of livelihood and rapid social transformations in Turkana shape oil developments?

I was interested in the kinds of encounters, relations, and resource imaginations that might unfold due to the crude oil springing up like an oasis from the subsoil of an arid and semi-arid land hitherto dismissed as unproductive by the state. My premise was that oil would

become a rallying point for new articulations of citizenship, inclusion, and claims-making. The proposed objective was to study the ways people in Turkana were reimagining their place within the nation-state and renegotiating entitlements to their ‘rightful share’ (Ferguson 2015; *The Star* 2017).² The new politics of devolution also presented an interesting dynamic. Kenyans voted for a new constitution in a 2010 referendum. In 2013, a year after oil operations had commenced in earnest, the general elections ushered in devolution – a shift from a centralised national government. Forty-seven new counties were created to replace the former provincial system of districts. They are now administered by county governors, an elaborate executive cabinet, local houses of assembly, and, in the case of Turkana, the second largest allocation of national revenue next to Nairobi County. The county system is further decentralised into sub-counties and ward units. The confluence of new political structures, existing customary leadership, social organisation, and oil exploration in Turkana raised important ethnographic questions about how oil’s potential economic development unfolds.

In the process of my fieldwork, I found that concerns about claims-making, competing representations of community and identity, resource ownership, values, and benefits were indeed ubiquitous. They were articulated around particular conceptualisations of development for the public good: ‘those desirable ideals that are considered universally beneficial for everyone’ (Bear and Mathur 2015: 21). Initially, I observed events from the perspective of anticipations around a resource yet to be fully commercialised. But the dark substance in a transparent jar Tullow displayed as a sample of the waxy crude oil (which is now being extracted and exported for early market testing), the benefits circulating in the form of postgraduate scholarships to UK universities, infrastructure projects, contestations over jobs and contracts, land speculation and demarcation, meetings, dialogues, capacity-building workshops led by international NGOs with remuneration for participants, funds available to international NGOs from their headquarters and parent donors to focus on the extractives industry with part of the funds trickling down to local NGOs and activists frantically reconfiguring their mission statements to include resource governance, new university courses and entrants for petroleum studies, the production of expert knowledge, and the proliferation of experts and of professionals and associations from Nairobi to Turkana all told a different story – that of oil’s

² The Turkana governor Josephat Nanok also often deployed the term ‘rightful share’ when discussing potential oil revenue sharing. S. Rutto, ‘I will push for increased oil proceeds for Turkana – Governor Nanok’, *The Star*, <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2017-05-14-i-will-push-for-increased-oil-proceeds-for-turkana-governor-nanok/>

virtual presence as an affective and material force (see Weszkalnys 2013, 2015, 2016). As David Graeber (2001) notes, values are about actions, not objects. Thus, the value of oil does not lie exclusively in its geological composition as a substance but in the actions or ‘resource-making projects’ (Ferry and Limbert 2008:15) associated with its extraction and in the contestations over its value as a life-transforming object which ascribe its worth and brings it into being. With the ongoing Early Oil Pilot Scheme in Kenya, resource anticipation is steadily morphing into actual production.

This study builds on the work of anthropologists who have examined development and the extractives industry to illuminate how Kenya’s budding oil sector impacts local livelihoods, social mobility, and networks. At the heart of the extractives industry is a story that is largely founded on the promise and ‘conjuring’ (Tsing 2005) of economic growth and development. ‘Contemporary masters of finance claim not only universal appeal but also a global scale of deployment’ (Tsing 2005: 57) adopted by many nation-states, especially those in the global south. This ‘magical conjuring’ (Li 2011) of possibilities resonates with local aspirations and harnesses dreams of social mobility. But, as many studies have shown, the hopes for connections to global capital (Gardner 2012) have materialised in patchy, sometimes arbitrary forms. Take for example, jobs. ‘One of the false promises of oil relates to employment generation’ (Frynas and Paulo 2007: 247). The dismantling of full-time, stable, and even lifelong employment in many places where security was predictable and taken for granted brings into sharp focus the ‘infelicitous promise’ (Abram and Weszkalnys 2013:10) of the industry. Further, the logic of the market as the panacea to poverty (Rajak 2011) has not lived up to expectations. The numbers simply do not add up. As cash economies begin to take hold in places where wage labour previously had limited significance, the emphasis on job creation and the markets reflects the ways in which labour has increasingly become a structuring element of social and economic life in contemporary Turkana as well as how ‘the appearance and/or disappearance of waged work reconfigures foundational understandings not only of the relationship between productive and reproductive labour, but also of personhood, citizenship and place’ (Harvey and Krohn-Hansen 2018: 11; see Little 2014 on economic development in Africa).

With these themes in mind, the first chapter aims to provide the background to the rest of the thesis. First, an outline.

Outline of the thesis

The seven chapters in this thesis revolve around the encounters that have emerged from Kenya's oil, examining what oil reveals when it intersects with culture, transition, and livelihoods. It focuses on the formative stages of Kenya's emerging oil industry, a period which is relevant even now because of the ongoing disputes over extractives industry ethics and the distribution of benefits. Much of what follows is concerned with negotiations that speak to broader issues such as livelihood, scarcity, the quest for permanence, and integration into the wider Kenyan imaginary. What do the demands and contestations tell us? And, how much positive impact does the economic rhetoric in favour of extraction really have? When local communities demand work and all manner of development projects, they are not merely casting the burden of so-called 'unrealistic' expectations and demands upon a corporation as opposed to holding the state accountable. Rather, their efforts reflect an indictment of the state's historical abdication of responsibility and a bias towards particular kinds of value and economic progress.

Oil exploration has given a new charge to the development and evolutionary agenda that has been characteristic of the governance of pastoral regions, including alternative livelihood programmes, sedentarisation, education, and so on. These ideas now have a stronger foothold in the harnessing of local aspirations with an oil-for-development spin in light of dwindling pastoralism, ecological pressures, and demographic changes in not just Turkana or Kenya but across East Africa, where a new wave of a hydrocarbon boom is underway and erstwhile 'risky frontiers' are being reimagined as new sites of global capital.

Chapter 1, the introduction to the thesis, is organised into two parts. The first part provides the necessary background to the chapters that follow: an overview of oil exploration in Kenya, a background to the marginalisation of pastoralists in Turkana, a discussion of development as permanence, and an analysis of the extractives industry. Part two focusses on the methodology of the thesis.

Chapter 2 gives a detailed introduction to Turkana, including its historical trajectory, social relations, and economic production. Here, social organisation, political structures, and livelihood patterns are discussed in detail. It reflects on the subject of pastoralism, which has been central to the history and social organisation of Turkana even as it remains relevant though contentious today. I frame this around the debates on tradition and modernity and show how

these binaries have a long history in ethnic categorisation processes from the colonial regime to the postcolonial dispensation.

Chapter 3 expands on the theme of aspirations for permanence via the oil-for-development rationale. In thinking through the things that constitute oil benefits, I show how speculation and the by-products extracted from oil exploration materialise a kind of physical landscape and sociality. This connects thematically with the question of ‘evidence’ and producing a permanent legacy from oil in the communities, one that also benefits the corporate image.

Chapter 4 focuses on Tullow Oil’s community engagement programmes of consultations and development and asks how consultations and engagement enact social and spatially differentiated kinds of communities. They involve negotiations which invariably invite ambiguous forms of representation to broker development and benefits. ‘Community engagement’, fundamental to the practice and performance of an ethical extractives industry, manifests in a new kind of situated identity politics for Turkana. This chapter shows how communities become ethical zones where corporate responsibility and the social life of extraction are demonstrated – a site where the public good is fashioned and negotiated.

Chapter 5 expands on what I term ‘inclusion by subversion’, which is fostered by rumours and accusations of cheating and betrayal. Despite the many engagement efforts by Tullow and various ‘communities’ of stakeholders to ensure transparent operations, why do people still feel cheated or that they are being held out on? Is transparency breeding more secrets? This chapter is built around a roadblock and protest that were held in September 2016. They arose from intricate networks of vigilance across different settlements that revealed that oil trucks were set to be transported from Turkana to Mombasa for early testing. It also considers how locals deal with representatives when mistrust sets in, a kind of literal anti-politics machine, such as in the case of a village that expelled its government representatives from mediating on its behalf. This chapter thus considers creative forms of resistance and how people act on their mistrust of political machines they believe to be cheating them. It also shows how these are entangled with the moral economy of community-based organisations and activists that are often accused of ‘selling out’ to the oil company or politicians by those they represent.

Chapter 6 returns to the idea of a rightful share by juxtaposing forms of exchange and obligations that existed in Turkana prior to oil with current expectations from Tullow. It also

discusses practices of hoarding and the rotation of oil benefits. One of the key findings that emerged from my research was that settlements around oil installations explicitly stated they did not want to share employment quotas with other parts of Turkana. Within these settlements, however, residents insisted on the notion of rotation to ensure that everyone got a ‘taste’ of the benefits derived from oil. Various moralities mingled around deservingness for some or for *lopetun*, meaning for everyone regardless of category or proximity.



Figure 6. L-R: A permanent house in Lokichar and its semi-permanent predecessor beside it



Figure 7. An even more permanent house in the 'Nairobi West' area of Lokichar



Figure 8. A passer-by looks at an MP's permanent house in progress in Lokichar town



Figure 9. A semi-permanent house in Kaputir, Turkana South



Figure 10. A manyatta on the outskirts of Lokichar town



Figure 11. Aerial view of Lokichar town, the largest oil-affected urban centre in Turkana South



Figure 12. Aerial view of Nakukulas, the largest oil-affected village in Turkana East

Chapter 1

IMPERMANENT DEVELOPMENT: MARGINALISATION, UNCERTAINTY, AND A RIGHTFUL SHARE OF OIL BENEFITS

PART ONE: OIL IN TURKANA, KENYA

The discovery of oil in Kenya: resource speculation and temporal reckonings

Oil extraction in Africa and other parts of the world has a long, tortured history, which is why Kenyans have been keen to draw on these histories of exploitation to achieve a better outcome. How has Kenya fared so far, and why does it matter? For this study, oil is a subplot. The story here is what oil reveals: livelihood precarity, uncertainty, and the struggle for a rightful share towards a better future, all of which I have incorporated into the pursuit of permanence. History is not a passive backdrop to this story. On the contrary, it is the impetus. What I present are the narratives and lived experiences of the resource-making process in a particular place and time, what this means for everyday lives, and the contentions over resources and economic development. Oil is unfixed and viscous, and the process of making it a resource is even stickier than the oil itself as people try to trap the flow and make it stay in tangible form. ‘When the oil came, we thought God has seen us’, many in Turkana told me, adding, ‘Now we will be great. Now we will be millionaires.’ Often viewed as unrealistic demands by global investors exploring in the area, these local expectations of improved livelihoods via foreign sources are not new. Turkana can also be understood as a globalised local site, a development frontier, as evidenced by the vast array of project signposts across the county. Since the 1970s, the presence of international development funds has been the way out for many, providing jobs, livelihood, food, education, and basic social amenities. Access to these permanence-making projects is a shared aspiration. ‘Development is access’, as one of my informants put it. It is access to things that enable one to make a stable life, things that stay, not the kind of development that is here today and gone tomorrow.

The official announcement of oil in Kenya was a moment of reckoning. It revealed those peculiar temporalities of resources that ‘frame the past, present, and future in certain ways; they propose or preclude certain kinds of time reckoning; they inscribe teleologies; and they are imbued with affects of time, such as nostalgia, hope, dread, and spontaneity’ (Ferry and Limbert

2008: 4). Kenya's oil industry has so far unfolded as a 'war of position' over the ethical conduct of the oil industry (Barry 2013: 75; Gramsci 1971) among those charged with the responsibility for getting it right. 'For if the struggle between "right and wrong" has become central to the politics of oil, how is it possible to demonstrate that something *is* ethical or unethical?' (Barry 2013: 76). And, in a country where democracy and the distribution of resources have been characterized by land disputes, ethnic divisions, patronage, and political competition (Hornsby 2012; Lynch 2006, 2011), what are the odds that oil will materialise the eternal promise of *maendeleo* or development that Kenyans have anticipated since independence in 1963?

Evidence is central to the plot. Many have asked, how will Kenya be different from its problematic resource-rich African counterparts against the backdrop of its own historical antecedents? These concerns reflect the history of democracy in Kenya that is characterised by the struggle for recognition, inclusion, and redistribution of wealth between the forty-two recognised ethnic groups. This interethnic rivalry is the subject of many studies that draw on postcolonial themes of nation-building, political parties and patronage, ethnicity and political competition, land grabbing, land redistribution, and more (Boone 2012; Lynch 2006, 2011). Taken together, these ideas suggest an understanding of the state as a resource and a site of struggle. They also suggest that the underlying cause of interethnic conflicts in Kenya has more to do with the nature of governance (Oucho 2002; Wanyande 1997) as a colonial continuity rather than as change (Branch 2011). A rotational paradigm of political inclusion and revenue-sharing along tribal lines is articulated in the maxim 'It is our turn to eat' (Branch et al. 2010; Burgess et al. 2010; Wrong 2010) or, as Jean Bayart (1993) terms it, a politics of the belly. As the wealth of the nation rotates to benefit some and elude others (Oucho 2002), dividing the national cake also means deploying the colonial tactics of divide and rule where each ethnic group clamours to 'grab' their 'rightful share' from 'the grip of the vampire state' (Kantai 2007). Resource struggles and identity politics go hand in hand as contingent forms of social differentiation emerge to facilitate claims-making. Again, contingency, here, 'could imply links to people and developments that offer resources. To be contingent upon persons or happenings that cannot be fully foreseen is to lack control and be subject to uncertainty' (Whyte and Etyang Siu 2015: 20). But it is not all negative because 'to try to create contingencies in the sense of making connections to possible forces for improving security is to attempt to move an uncertain situation towards greater confidence' (ibid.).

Although the news of oil was delivered with promises of development, uncertainty about its potential was evident in the caveat against bad politics and a clarion call to act on the premonition of a potential disaster (Weszkalnys 2014). ‘We are well aware of the curse that comes with oil discoveries’, then energy minister Kiraitu Murungi was quoted as saying in news reports of March 26, 2012.³ Echoing the doubts that would eventually nag the hopes of many Kenyans, Mr. Murungi, on behalf of the national government, assured all that ‘we want it to be a major blessing. This will only happen if we ensure that both the interests of the community [where] the find is made, the national government, and the discovering company are taken on board’. Only a few days later, *The Nation*, one of Kenya’s leading newspapers, published an exposé of clandestine connections between a permanent secretary and a company that made nearly Sh1 billion (£7,466,208.80) profit from selling the block of land where oil was discovered in Turkana County. The ‘resource curse’ (Auty 1995) as many pundits saw it, was afoot, threatening to derail Kenya’s efforts at making its budding oil sector less contentious than its resource-rich counterparts in Africa. The allegations and refutations of ‘cheating’ have continued to the present, casting a shadow on the corporate ethics of responsible extraction, the government’s rhetoric of equitable distribution, and oil as the potential fuel for Kenya’s developmental ideals, including not least the ambitious Vision 2030⁴ aimed at robust modernisation (Agade 2017; Government of Kenya 2007; Patey 2014).

Under the current Kenyatta administration, oil, gas, and mineral resources are listed as the ‘sixth priority sector within the economic pillar of Vision 2030’ (Patey 2014: 4). The Lamu Port, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Transport Corridor is one of the star projects of this vision. The aim is to construct road, rail, and oil pipeline links between regional neighbours, airports, resort cities, and an oil refinery. Besides regional trade, the vision bodes well in principle for the northern parts of Kenya in terms of national integration and economic opportunities (Patey 2014). For Turkana, oil discovery is patently ‘the largest inflow of global capital’ (Lind 2017: 2) in the county’s history. Even with the Early Oil Pilot Scheme, large-scale production is still years away and is dependent on several factors, such as additional licensing, environmental and social audits, large scale infrastructure financing in the region (Lind 2017). However, economic and

³ D. Opiyo, ‘Excitement as Tullow strikes oil in the first well in Turkana county’, 26 March 2012, *Daily Nation*, <https://www.nation.co.ke/news/We-have-found-oil-says-Kibaki-/1056-1374314-2uy9pcz/index.html>

⁴ ‘The Kenya Vision 2030 aims to transform Kenya into a newly industrializing, middle-income country providing a high quality of life to all its citizens by 2030 in a clean and secure environment.’ ‘The vision’, Kenya Vision 2030, <https://vision2030.go.ke/>

development expectations have outpaced these practicalities. As scholars who have observed the process from its inception point out, '[E]ven if Kenya's oil resources of 600 million barrels were to multiply with new finds in the coming years, the country would still only be able to play the role of a small African producer' (Patey 2014: 26). Regardless, national and local aspirations conjure up spectacles of modernity (Apter 2005; Coronil 1997; Rogers 2015).

Considering how long Kenya has been prospecting for oil, the national surprise at a viable discovery was to be expected. Even more perplexing, however, was the question of what to do next. 'We are not prepared', many academics, experts, and civil society activists cautioned. A report commissioned by the Department for International Development Kenya via the Adam Smith Institute opined that 'Kenya's oil, gas and mining industries are nascent, so it is not surprising that resource management capacity in terms of quantity, level and quality is extremely low' (ASI 2013: 29). The report warned that 'the combined effect of this general lack of knowledge and understanding will lead to gross mismanagement of the extractive industries, and a lack of accountability pressure on Government to address this issue' (ibid.).

A series of unsuccessful wildcat attempts across the country's four sedimentary basins (Anderson and Browne 2011) had made oil something of a pipedream. It all began in the 1950s with Shell and BP. Their surveys and mapping of geological basins led to the drilling of the first oil well in 1960, followed by over forty wells on and offshore, but to no avail (Patey 2014). The National Oil Corporation was founded in 1981 both to regulate and boost exploration, and the 1990s saw a flurry of interest from a mix of small-scale and established companies such as Total. In 1992, Shell discovered a trivial amount of crude oil in Loperot, south of Turkana, but eventually withdrew from Kenya following the political strains that characterized then president Arap Moi's regime (Anderson and Browne 2011). When I went to Loperot to see the site, identified by a rusty plaque (see figure 14), locals were of the opinion that it was the witchcraft of diviners averse to development and not politics that had dried up any further potential for oil, though some were quick to point out that, these days, both customary leaders and contemporary politics have become strange bedfellows.

In the post-Moi era, a new wave of licensing and exploration began and eventually led to the 2012 discovery by Tullow of oil in Turkana. Rigorous exploration was spurred by neighbouring Uganda's oil discovery in 2006 by Hardman Petroleum (now owned by Tullow) and offshore gas discoveries in Mozambique and Tanzania (Patey 2014). The East African hydrocarbon boom was underway, and Kenya's dream expedition eventually materialised in

Turkana out of the oil blocks operated by Tullow Oil and Africa Oil Corporation. The first well, Ngamia-1⁵ (see figure 17) in Turkana East, marked the start of a significant programme of drilling activities across the South Lokichar Basin, which straddles parts of Turkana South and East. More exploration oil wells have followed – Twiga, Etuko, Ekales, Agete, Amosing, Ewoi, Ekunyuk, and Etom – but the Ngamia and Amosing wells that encircle over ten villages and pastoral settlements are the main focus for the next stage of oil development.

The initial assessment after an accelerated appraisal and exploration phase estimated recoverable resources of up to 750 million barrels of oil, which was later revised down to 560 million barrels. Added together, Tullow's blocks (10BA, 10BB, and 13T) encompass an area of 66,000 km², which accounts for over half of the 77,000 km² that make up Turkana County's landmass, raising concerns over what has been dubbed the 'Turkana land grab'. In fact, a 2016 report declared '95% of land in Turkana County grabbed'.⁶ The next section examines some of these land issues in detail however, these are some of the anxiety-inducing issues that have shaped notions of what it means to get oil right, not just for Kenya but for the East African region where industry expertise is considered to be sorely lacking.

In Uganda, for example, questions over Tullow's transparency, over government corruption, and especially over allegations that concessions were sold below competitive prices remain a bone of contention (Okumu 2010). Further, the challenge of regulating trading rights of smaller companies such as Tullow added to the high cost of developing oilfields and left the Ugandan government unable to control commercial arrangements (Anderson and Browne 2011: 393). Indeed, Tullow, a relatively junior company in the extractives industry, claims to have built a reputation upon 'its ability to find oil in hitherto unexploited areas' and raises capital with these finds (Anderson and Browne 2011: 394). The company prides itself on having 'a track record of discovering significant oil resources in East Africa' (*New York Times* 2012; Tullow Oil 2009), from 1.7 million barrels of oil in Uganda to growing prospects in Kenya, not to mention its interests in West Africa.

⁵ The oil wells are named after animals in Swahili and the Turkana language as part of 'community participation'

⁶ E. Owenga, '95% of land in Turkana County grabbed – Report', Feb. 7, 2016, *Citizen Digital*, <https://citizentv.co.ke/news/95-of-land-in-turkana-county-grabbed-report-113846/>



Figure 13. The plaque marking the site of the 1992 oil well in Loperot, Turkana South

‘To anticipate is not simply to expect’, writes Gisa Weszkalnys, ‘it is to realize that something is about to happen and, importantly, to act on that premonition’ (2014: 212). Following how the anticipation of oil in the small African Atlantic island state of São Tomé and Príncipe mobilised citizens to become vigilant subjects against the infamous resource curse, Weszkalnys notes that ‘through the institutions they build, the laws they ratify, the accounts they publish or, in essence, through the ways in which they concern themselves with a future with oil, Santomeans are urged to display their preparedness’ (2014: 212). These presentiments about an impending disaster or ‘cheating’, as Kenyans like to describe corrupt politics, are shaped by historical antecedents. In the case of Kenya, oil development therefore requires putting a check on history and stopping it from repeating itself. Thus, the dialectic of oil as a blessing or curse, which has emerged as a sort of national consensus, especially among international organisations and the local punditocracy, has amplified laypeople’s apprehensions that oil is dead on arrival if the same structures of governance that have regulated resources in the past still apply.

To many of my interlocutors, a cursed outcome seems more likely considering the country’s problematic antecedents of scant redistribution of national resources, politics of ethnic domination, and allegations of widespread corruption. This preoccupation with getting

Kenya's oil right draws on the global narrative that the difference between countries that fare better with their natural resources and those that fare less well is good resource governance – including legislation, accountable governments, transparent and responsible corporations, and investment in long-term development projects. This idea became a template that Kenya's robust body of civil society groups and international organisations could draw upon. Indeed, the Department for International Development, Kenya, commissioned a study of the emerging oil industry by Adam Smith International, and the subsequent report (ASI 2013) became a reference guide for those concerned with oil. Its immediate and long-term recommendations were quoted widely in national debates and among academics, activists, and journalists, who all agreed that development (*maendeleo*) is the sure way for all Kenyans, especially the host community of Turkana, to reap the benefits of oil. But who would make the decision to get it right? Who would sit at the negotiation table? Whose voice would be heard? Whose responsibility would a positive or negative outcome be? Who had the necessary expertise and knowledge of the industry?

Latching onto the international discourse regarding the 'resource curse' (for a critique see Gilberthorpe and Rajak 2017; Weszkalnys 2010, 2011), the debates have not shifted much from whether Kenya's oil would go the Nigerian or the Norwegian way; these two countries are the popular examples of failure and success, respectively. In this scenario, bad politics, not oil, is the curse – a point that resounds in news media and everyday conversations. 'Don't bring politics here' is another way of saying 'do not create discord'. The terms resource curse, Dutch disease, Niger Delta, and war and conflict have become part of the everyday lexicon and have made their way to Turkana through representatives of NGOs and activists working on oil sensitisation programmes. The proliferation of expert reports among civil society groups calls for a rethinking of the processes of knowledge production and circulation in this context. Anderson and Browne (2011) note the same template in Uganda, where the government 'has been keen to emphasize that its model for oil development is "Norway not Nigeria"'. They also note that although Kenyan officials (long before the discovery of oil in Kenya) 'excitedly talk of the "oil bonus" that could fund development over decades to come, there are already signs that the frailty of regulatory authorities throughout the region and the all too familiar problem of rent-seeking by governments and their officials may undermine the development potentials' (2011: 371). Frynas and Paulo (2007), in their article titled 'A New Scramble for African Oil?', argued that 'past lessons from oil-producing states do not encourage optimism. Oil and gas investment have many proven negative economic and social effects, which often outweigh the benefits. Whatever we

call them, the new investments in the African oil and gas sector may not necessarily be good news for ordinary Africans' (2007: 251).

Expert knowledge, according to Richardson and Weszkalnys 'mobilize[s] a set of techniques and measurements through which resources "become" in different ways' (2014: 19). Through this 'expert knowledge', the Kenyans were mobilised to action and initiated into the ethical auditing of global best practices, and oil's potential for good and evil was established. These 'affective responses' (Weszkalnys 2016), generated by the resource curse apprehension and juxtaposed with Kenya's pre-existing crises of mismanagement and corruption, shaped the national consciousness, corporate policy, and state practices that followed. However, the disaster is not merely about a national failure. As my material shows, it is also the personal fear of failure – people's fear of being left behind because they were not open enough to take advantage of opportunities. Hence, many individuals had a sense of urgency about the need to be well positioned. What emerged was a loop and a game of being in and out of the loop. Conferences, meetings, and processes mapped and thereby enacted stakeholders, representatives, and communities of interest, information, knowledge, and the secrets of the unknown. During my fieldwork, these became ethnographic objects. The process created a loop of influence, stakeholders, information, and benefits, and everyone was caught up in the flux of getting in or creating momentum from the outside to get in. Even Tullow Oil wanted to get in. International organisations who also funded local civil society groups commenced an active reconfiguration of their mandates towards the extractives industry.

These anticipatory processes and the demand for evidence of ethical corporate social performance, also placed CSR at the centre of Kenya's oil distributive politics. The auditing of Corporate Social Performance (CSP) highlights an important trend which is that the success of global capital in today's contemporary world, is largely dependent on the ability of transnational corporations to present themselves as ethical. Thus, the analysis of corporations and the extractives industry is inextricably linked to the story of ethics often framed around CSR and subsidiary capricious terms like Local Content, Social Investments (SI), shared value, sustainability, and so on. CSR as a global mandate of ethical extraction has been broadly concerned with what corporations owe their resource enclaves in terms of ensuring informed consent, meaningful inclusion in the resource making process, tangible benefits and sustainable environmental processes of extraction. Conversely, it has also offered a central narrative around

which local communities and authorities articulate their claims for a rightful share (Gomez and Sawyer 2012).

It then follows that CSR encapsulated by Tullow as shared prosperity, was headlined in the discourse of global capital investments as the panacea for national economic advancement through oil exploration and potential extraction in Kenya. More specifically for Turkana, the measure of oil's success was to be a win-win for capital and community through local cooperation on the one hand, and the fulfilment of corporate promises on the other, materialised in social investments through CSR projects, a term Tullow deployed in their initial annual reports before transitioning to the use of sustainability as their most recent Sustainability Report (2019) shows. Here, the viability of a capital investment becomes dependent on the pliability of its host community. Like many extractives industry companies, Tullow's invested significant sums of money on community-based development projects to improve their social performance. On the company's website, reports and magazines, some aspects of their social performance in community investments and local content were highlighted more than others. The recent sustainability report (Tullow 2019:4) states that 'in 2019, we employed 879 people, most of whom are local nationals in our countries of operation. We are committed to delivering shared prosperity in all of the communities where we operate.' The company's approach to CSR or Sustainability (see also chapter 4), follows the typical pattern of consultations and community development activities that involve local procurement and supplier development (Local Content), capacity building, skills development, education, supporting entrepreneurship, infrastructural developments in healthcare, roads and sanitation.

For a self-funding oil company like Tullow, good social performance is crucial to stakeholders, securing investments and potential buyouts. In the extractives industry, Tullow Oil falls into the category of junior companies. These are small to med-cap companies that focus their activities primarily on exploration and discovery of new natural resources. Unlike the more established high capital senior companies, they are prospectors, in search of buried treasure and trade on risks and speculation to grow the size of their capital. Over the last decade, so-called junior oil companies have gained prominence in the extractive industries by taking on regions that the major players have exited or ignored following a history of contentious extraction. As Aidan Heavy, the founder of Tullow recounts about the company's history, 'I was talking to a friend of mine and he was talking about small oil fields in Africa, which had been left behind by

the majors and had no-one to work them. That is where the idea came from.⁷ Founded in the 1980s, the company prides itself on being ‘Africa’s leading independent company’ with a focus on ‘finding and monetising oil’ (Tullow 2019). With an exploration and appraisal portfolio that spans Africa and South America the company’s main production assets are based in West Africa: Ghana, Gabon, Cote d’Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea with material discoveries in East Africa prominently Uganda and Kenya.

A key feature of prospecting companies is the short cycle focus of their operations which complicates the ethics of long-term sustainability promises that could end in chaos as was eventually the case with Tullow’s operations in Ghana, Kenya and some other regions of exploration. The signs were there since 2014 when the global oil glut rocked the oil markets with a price crash. Amidst the uncertainty, Tullow scaled back its Turkana operations as well as CSR projects, employment quotas and foreign postgraduate scholarships. Operations picked up again in 2016 as did a newly evolved CSR policy that emphasised Local Content procurement contracts and monetary payments for community lands converted to oil fields which reinforces the earlier point about the point about viable resources vis a vis cooperative community of extraction. Presently, the company is undergoing a management shift, struggling with debts and seeking to sell its shares in Kenya to recoup losses. A review of Tullow’s CSR strategy from archived annual reports on the website, shows how the framework has evolved from 2007 to date. Early social performance reporting between 2007 to 2011 took a generic approach to the standard narrative of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS), social investments, community engagement and accountability. The company’s CSR strategy was articulated this way:

“At Tullow, Corporate and Social Responsibility (CSR) is a core value. As part of our culture we support the communities where we work and protect people and the environment. A clear link Good CSR helps us develop a political and community profile that supports our business and strategic objectives... CSR in Tullow is embedded in our business processes and aligned to our ‘Working with Communities’ initiative, which encompasses all our community based activities... We prioritise our support for carefully selected projects, which can be as basic as the provision of clean water through to programmes aimed at socio-economic change. Where we have long-term operations we have a greater opportunity to engage in longer-term CSR activities such as assisting schools and building birthing centres. However, in the early exploration phase we typically focus on short-term, stand-alone projects such as the distribution of mosquito nets. (2007:34)

⁷ <https://www.tulloil.com/about-us/our-story/>

With this mandate, expectations were set on how local demands and interpretations would challenge the actual manifestation of these carefully articulated concepts. Subsequent reports especially from 2012 when the company farmed into Turkana, expanded more on plans for more broad-based consultations and investment with a focus on sustainability:

Shared prosperity is at the heart of our sustainability framework and represents our aspiration to ensure that all we do in our host countries brings not only business benefits for Tullow, but also lasting improvements in the quality of life and the ability to generate better livelihoods in all the communities touched by our operations. Our shared prosperity approach includes three broad elements: - optimising local content and developing supplier capacity; - building local skills and developing people; and - driving socio-economic investment that enhances local economies and local communities. Our shared prosperity approach requires that we understand and manage our impacts on local communities and the environment. Establishing and maintaining effective relations with our stakeholders is central to our success and local teams update host communities and engage with them on a regular basis
2019:17

An important point to highlight is that so many things have been subsumed under CSR such that often it becomes unclear what exactly is being talked about. CSR in the Kenyan context reflects CSR in the extractive industry more broadly but also features some peculiarities, revealing a tension between what people want now and in the future. It also reflects the transitory nature of global capitalism and the short-lived opportunities as capital constantly skims around the world in search of more profitable sites which encapsulates the story of the extractives industry now being tempered by the ethics of CSR. We also find that CSR is a process of drama management where prospecting companies invest heavily in exploration, navigate the messy business of licensing, community disturbances and environmental impact assessments then seek to recoup those investments (often leading to heavy debts) by partnering with bigger companies or securing a buyout. Here, the image of the broker corporation begins to emerge, a narrative often associated with local leaders and gatekeepers. What we find is a process of trial and error which can help us move beyond corporate victims and villains towards a more nuanced understanding of how particular kinds of corporations navigate the ethics of expanding their capital. A resource loop that creates and sustains communities, markets and entanglements.

Getting into the resource loop

Ephraim's goal when I first met him in 2014, two years after the discovery of oil, was to establish himself as an oil and gas expert, a vision shared by many Kenyans, especially those close to the action in Nairobi and locals in the host community of Turkana. Being one of the early beneficiaries of the Tullow postgraduate scholarship increased his chances. Unlike Rebecca, Ephraim was not a Turkana indigene; he often reminded anyone who cared to listen that oil was for all Kenyans. Much as he agreed that Turkana deserves a front seat at the table of benefits, he was not confident that the region could produce the calibre of qualified experts Kenya needed for the budding oil industry. In fact, *kazi ya waturkana ni kuchunga mali ya Tullow oil* was a popular refrain I heard from other Kenyans, which means 'the work of the Turkana people is to guard the wealth of Tullow's oil' and is a reference to the bottom-heavy opportunities for work as security guards with little room for the social mobility of locals within the higher echelons of the industry. This is a point many Turkana continue to make in terms of the quality of jobs and contracts apportioned to the oil-affected communities. Large-scale contracts and technical positions were given to better-educated Kenyans and established companies outside Turkana. The postgraduate scholarship scheme which has since been withdrawn was part of Tullow's capacity-building corporate social responsibility (CSR) mandate aimed at bridging the skills gap required for industry practice. Priority was given to the host community of Turkana, but few people qualified compared to other parts of the country where levels of education tend to be higher. Some of the successful candidates were absorbed into the company upon their return from the UK. In Turkana, posters bearing the suited image of a popular successful male candidate posing against the distant background of Westminster adorned corner shops as testament that 'one of our own' is rising on the oil ladder above menial jobs.

Ephraim obtained an MSc from the University of Aberdeen in petroleum geoscience – the choice subject for many Kenyans seeking a way into the industry. He returned to Nairobi with new credentials: 'oil and gas professional, technology enthusiast, consultant and entrepreneur', as emblazoned on his business card. Subsequently, he established a consultancy company offering trainings in oil and gas as well as other industry-related issues. 'You have to make things happen', he liked to say. 'Take advantage of every opportunity or create one. You have to push! Push! Push!!!' This idea was also mentioned in the prologue of this thesis. When I met Ephraim in 2014 during my preliminary fieldwork, he had just returned from Aberdeen.

According to him, he got in by sheer grit and no connections. He had seen the scholarship advert, applied, and got it. 'You just have to keep trying and tarmacking', he said. When we met up again in 2015 during my PhD fieldwork, I was keen to know how he was getting on with his oil expert project but found him worried about what he considered Kenya's problem of 'fake modernity'. He explained this as the 'copying and pasting' of Western ideals proliferated by 'foreign expats doing development in Kenya', reinforced by the government, civil society groups clamouring for funding, and the IJGBs (I Just Got Backs) swaggering their way into choice jobs with an affected accent and foreign academic qualifications as their claim to expertise. 'I have been abroad to study, but I don't behave like those IJGBs', he countered when I pointed out he had also just gotten back, as it were. He was concerned that everyone seemed to be saying the same thing and that even legislators drafting the proposed petroleum bill were all 'copying and pasting'. The morning of this conversation, the popular KTN breakfast TV show railed against the government having similarly 'copied and pasted' the new petroleum bill 'blindly' from other countries. 'I'm not saying it is bad to copy', Ephraim grumbled. 'But must we copy and paste without editing?' Unfortunately, he admitted, 'We know nothing about oil, so the *muzungu* (white) experts have to teach us.'

As he tucked into the plate of steaming *pilan* rice before him, he argued that 'Kenyans have to get into the inner circle, the petroleum upstream sector where the control and power is'. But the characteristic boom and bust of the oil industry had already hit the budding sector between 2015 and early 2016 forcing Ephraim to close up his oil and gas training consultancy and take up a job with an oil company in Nairobi. This was not so bad as it still placed him in the action after oil operations picked up again. 'You just reset.' His new focus was to get into that upstream inner circle, as he put it. 'Tullow is the main company drilling, so there are so many British people in the industry. Kenyans are just fighting over the smaller benefits, especially those in Turkana, instead of positioning themselves on the inside and looking for bigger things.' To this end, he had raised some personal and borrowed funds to return to Aberdeen for more short courses in oil and gas development plus a couple of other overseas trainings just before he landed his current job with the oil company in Nairobi.

Ephraim's approach was more sophisticated than that of many of his Turkana counterparts. I commenced fieldwork for this study in the autumn of 2015 at the height of the glut, and locals in Turkana who had been retrenched from Tullow jobs found it harder to reset than Ephraim did. However, the politics of proximity and the strategies of getting in have

similarities with speculation, positioning, vigilance, knowledge, and information, especially the expert knowledge of the 'best practices' required to move up in the scheme of things beyond 'CSR handouts'. These politics are how experts are made and how Ephraim seized the moment. It is also how brokers and 'elites' emerge from settings of rapid transition (James 2011). They grapple and grab. Many of the Kenyan experts, activists, and government officials I spoke with expressed frustration at what they considered CSR handouts or 'low-hanging fruits' that do not last beyond a company's cycle of operations in a particular area. They believed concrete development projects, capacity-building, and technology transfer were key to Kenyans benefitting more from the entire 'value chain', not just jobs (for which only a few qualified) and arbitrary gifts.

For instance, in October 2013, just over a year after the oil discovery was announced, Tullow Oil was forced to shut down its exploration activities in Turkana County. Youths and community activists had besieged the installations and demanded inclusion and the fair distribution of job opportunities. They contended that Turkana locals had been relegated to the bottom of the ladder while foreigners and Kenyans from other tribes dominated the more exclusive spots. An agreement was eventually reached between the community and the corporation. The memorandum of understanding was not made public until the news media obtained a copy. What emerged from the leaked document was contrary to official platitudes. Rather than the 70–90 percent of local employment that the oil company had officially claimed, top management positions had been filled almost exclusively by foreigners; unskilled labour positions that could have been occupied by the Turkana were given to Kenyans from other regions; and firms with years of international oil industry experience reported no or low numbers of unskilled or semi-skilled jobs and local employees. This raised concerns over the actual extent of opportunities to boost the local economy and alleviate rural poverty in Turkana.

Conversely, Tullow and the government officials explained that employment was driven by the level of skill required for the job. Hence, the Turkana, having only the lowest levels of education, possessed limited to no potential of taking advantage of a memorandum that gave priority to high local content. To bridge the so-called literacy gap, scholarships and other training programs funded by Tullow and the Kenyan government have been initiated. However, these scholarships are targeted at general skills needed by the industry. Moreover, returning beneficiaries are not required to move back to Turkana, nor are they guaranteed a spot with Tullow. A few months down the line, a new angle to the crises emerged. It was alleged that

some Turkana politicians who were disgruntled with Tullow over the awarding of contracts had incited the youths to violence. This is what Merina Welker (2009: 144) terms the ‘gangsterisation of politics’ in her ethnography of a transnational mining corporation’s (Newmont) operation in rural Indonesia:

Elites were downwardly dependent on ordinary villagers to participate in the demonstrations they organised, and upwardly dependent on Newmont managers to furnish them with patronage goods. Newmont managers, in turn, nourished local patron–client relations by relying on elites to keep the peace, hiring them and their sons in the mine’s Community Development and Community Relations offices, and rewarding them with contracts.

In the case of Turkana, an unwritten pact (jobs for kin and clan in exchange for mobilising support) between the corporation and local elites had been broken, hence the unleashing of the youths. The major point of contention for the Turkana people, as reported by the media, was that a higher number of Kenyans were brought in from other regions for even the unskilled or semi-skilled positions that many Turkana people are already qualified for or could qualify for with basic training. As Laura Bear et al. (2015: 1) note about speculation, futures, and capitalism, ‘[T]he situated materialities and magical realities of global capital flows can only be fully understood through attention to such practices of anticipation’; other scholars mention the state of ‘activated uncertainty’ (Pelkmans 2013:17) and contingency (Cooper and Pratten 2015) speculation produces. These shape the practices of resource anticipation and the imaginations. In their edited volume *Ethnographies of Uncertainty in Africa*, Elizabeth Cooper and David Pratten (2015) argue that uncertainty can be mobilised as a ‘social resource and can be used to negotiate insecurity, conduct and create relationships, and act on a source for imagining the future with the hopes and fears this entails’ (2015: 2). In the case of Turkana, marginalisation can also be mobilised in this way. So, ‘[T]o be contingent’, as Susan Reynolds Whyte and Godfrey Etyang argue in the same volume, ‘is to be related: to people, institutions happenings, circumstances. Contingency denotes uncertainty about what may or may not occur, but it inflects uncertainty with specificity and invites us to consider connections’ (2015: 19). Therefore, I focus on collective and individual preoccupation with knowledge production and social connections to channels that can facilitate oil possibilities.

Early in my fieldwork, I was convinced that people were holding out on me as far as the oil relations were concerned. I was also convinced that the sheer physical stress I experienced while getting into oil affairs was because of my outsider status. Then I realised that everyone assumed the same of everyone else. Everyone was stressed out and trying to ‘get in’ just as I

was, albeit in varying contexts. Secrets were the elusive ethnographic object we were all trying to decipher, akin to what some scholars have explored in terms of transparency and the secrets it creates (Barry 2013; Ferry and Limbert 2008; Weszkalnys 2014). For Tullow, the goal was to decipher the ‘real’ Turkana, an understanding of the intricate workings of social life that evades easy comprehension. For activists as well as community-based organisations and NGOs in their ancillary capacity as social auditors, these corporate gestures of transparency and community engagement revealed very little about Tullow’s ‘real’ intentions, operations, and relations, both with the local communities and with the political powers. Many of the locals I spoke with were ambivalent about Tullow and the social auditors. Thus, building direct channels of engagement, forming alliances based on shared interests, and expelling curious representatives were paramount to deciphering the secret of how one might really get into the loop of things. Making ‘engagement’ work or being in the loop was a kind of labour that required resources and skills. Vigilance, energy, funds, building and nurturing social contacts – these all counted as part of my research methods. For those on the ground, however, their everyday life was based on this notion of the hidden, of oil as a nomadic, nocturnal, unfixed, fluid, and slippery phenomenon that could not be taken at face value. I now turn to the phenomenon itself – oil and investments in erstwhile ‘unproductive’ lands in the context of land and resource frontiers.

Turkana: from a national liability to a new frontier for global capital

Pastoralists are often a visible symbol of political and economic marginalisation vis à vis the nation-state. From Africa to Asia and the Middle East, nomadic pastoralists have been pressed on all sides (Catley et al. 2013), resulting in record levels of decline in pastoralism (Schlee and Shongolo 2012). A review of the literature on pastoralism reveals these historical trends and how they continue to re-emerge. For Turkana, the time of oil is unfolding ‘against a backdrop of chronic marginalisation and armed conflict between pastoral groups’ (Agade 2017: 34). The questions that Anna Tsing asks in the context of resource exploitation in Indonesia are relevant here: ‘For whom were these resources discovered and developed . . . national interest, the army, the president, foreign corporations, or, perhaps, all of the above?’ (Tsing 2003: 5103). While she speaks of the deleterious impacts of forest logging in Indonesian villages, the purpose of frontier investments and how they emerge seem applicable to the Turkana context, where investments not just in oil but in green energy, wind farms, and geothermal projects are in motion. Turkana’s emergence as a new frontier for global capital exemplifies the notion of

‘patient capital’ (Gilbert 2015) in vast lands and what lies beneath, ready to be mobilised by the ‘impatient capital’ (ibid.) of global investors.

A resource frontier, Tsing writes, ‘is an edge of space and time: a zone of not yet – not yet mapped, not yet regulated. It is a zone of unmapping: even in its planning, a frontier is imagined and unplanned’ (2005: 28). Frontiers are also zones of ambiguous dreams, promises, futures, and uncertainty. They are unruly and open for interpretation to be claimed via knowledge, connections, power, and subversion. The emerging configuration of relegated pastoral drylands as new frontiers of global capital and resource extraction opens up the ‘dreams’ and ‘nightmares’ of contemporary capitalism (Cross 2014: 6), that ever-beckoning ‘universal bridge to a global dream space’ (Tsing 2015: 85). This invites consideration of how ‘most descriptions of resource frontiers take for granted the existence of resources, they label and count the resources and tell us who owns what. The landscape itself appears inert: ready to be dismembered and packaged for export’ (Tsing 2005: 29). Africa’s drylands, which are mostly inhabited by pastoralists, have undergone a shift in their place in global capital. The narrative has changed from lack of potential to productive possibilities. What has stayed the same is the idea of idle lands, vast empty tracts of arid lands that make up most of Kenya’s landmass, empty space waiting to be plotted. What was once seen as the most unproductive variable has become the biggest source of investment.

Tsing describes this distinctive vision of the frontier as a ‘magical vision: it asks participants to see a landscape that doesn’t exist, at least not yet’ (2005: 68) as new prospects are conjured up to erase and replace existing local landscapes and incompatible lifeworlds. This is James Scott’s (1998) concept of legibility par excellence. Peter Little rightly notes that ‘perhaps no other livelihood system has suffered more from biased language and narratives than pastoralism. Some of the worst misperceptions equate pastoralism with poverty, violence, illegal trade, economic insufficiency, ineffective tenure systems, environmental degradation, hunger and food aid dependency, and/or “vacant” wastelands’ (Little in Catley et al. 2013: 244). Hall and colleagues’ seminal study titled *Africa’s Land Rush: Rural Livelihoods and Agrarian Change* argues that ‘while planned, new and failed deals do not yield much detail on the question of investment impact, they are important for mapping developing processes, the key actors and their positioning, resistance and other responses to deals’ (Hall, Scoones, & Tsikata 2015: 10). As Michael Watts (2018) notes in his study of frontiers in Nigeria’s Niger Delta, the ordering of power and the crises of social reproduction and exclusion shape the emergence of frontiers.

In 2014, during my preliminary fieldwork, I found Turkana residents in a state of anxiety over what oil might mean for land use. At a *baraşa* (public gathering) in a small village with the feel of a makeshift urban centre in Turkana North, an old man questioned this idea of inert, idle landscapes waiting to be capitalised. ‘There is nothing like empty space here’, he cried out loud as soon as the presiding chief opened the floor for questions. ‘The [so-called] empty land is our grazing area. If we are displaced or moved, where do we go, and are we going to be paid, and how much, and who determines this prize?’ His defiance of the impending situation was met with murmurs of consent, which the chief tactfully supported. Although the chief openly encouraged the villagers to be vigilant when the company delegation arrived for a so-called sensitisation visit, he told me afterwards that it was futile to hold on to pastoralism when ‘land is wasting’ as something good could now be lying beneath it. Seismic surveys did not yield any discoveries in that part of Turkana, and the anxieties switched to feelings of alienation when the company infrastructure relocated to sites deemed to have more potential. So, even within the frontier there are zones of exclusion based on commercial viability.



Figure 14. Vast dryland imagined as capital in waiting



Figure 15. Oil in motion from Turkana to the global markets



Figure 16. Ngamia-1 oil well in Turkana East



Figure 17. A standard oil well pad, fenced off and waiting for production



Figure 18. Gas flaring at the Amosing oil wells close to Nakukulas village in Turkana East



Figure 19. Goats 'wandering' across a tarmacked road constructed for oil haulage

In principle, the host community of Kenya's oil deposits is the entire Turkana County, or the 'Turkana community', which is considered to constitute a distinct ethnic/indigenous group within a specific geographic location and with a shared language. But proximity to the resource is what qualifies the primary beneficiaries, which becomes redefined as an 'area of influence', as Tullow states in its *Stakeholder Engagement Framework* (Tullow Oil 2017: 78; also see figure 2). Turkana County is administratively divided into seven constituencies or sub-counties. Oil exploration activities have been carried out to varying degrees across the area. The significant finds, however, are in the South Lokichar Basin, an area that straddles Turkana South and East sub-counties, making these two sub-counties, in Tullow's terminology, primary areas of influence. The corporation uses four categories of settlement patterns, mostly drawn from the county's administrative outline, to administer its community engagement and social investment projects, benefits, and compensation for land where necessary. They include major settlements comprised of permanent urban/peri-urban centres with a mix of the rural and cosmopolitan; major-minor settlements mostly consisting of sedentary pastoralists and containing a fair number of social amenities such as a school and shops; minor settlements which are mostly

rural; and, lastly, migratory routes which are transient settlements for randomly dispersed mobile pastoralists. This is how the main operational distinction between the directly and indirectly impacted communities emerged. Within the affected areas, two sites are prominent: Lokichar town in the south and Nakukulas village in the east. Smaller affected settlements are often merged with the more prominent locations. But, for Turkana Central, the county's administrative headquarters, other constituencies in the north and west, and Loima and Kibish are marginal community stakeholders. Even within the southern and eastern constituencies, wards and villages outside the perimeters of exploration and discovery only feature in the animated oil-affected regions to the extent that they impose themselves as actors in protests or negotiations.

Land remains a protracted site of struggle in Kenya. However, it constitutes a relatively novel phenomenon for the Turkana in terms of dispossession, redistribution, and resettlement compared to other pastoral groups like the Maasai (Boone 2012; Schlee and Shongolo 2012). As a female Turkana MP noted: 'We did not know anything about land.' Prior to the discovery of oil, Turkana had been of little relevance to global capital and the national economy. Oil has now provided an immediate answer to the question of what Turkana has to offer, a purpose and justification for its inclusion in the wider Kenyan imaginary. But there remains the Turkana 'problem'. How can arid lands be made more productive? Can 'traditional' pastoralists be led into the twenty-first century via modern techniques of marketisation and sedentarisation? Where is the place for the large number of youths who have arrived in the modern century via education? How can the Turkana people be enlightened to help themselves become productive citizens and contribute to the Kenyan state despite the natural limitations of the region's environment? Even with the advent of oil, what seems to be of more importance is the resource itself and not the population as such. Cross's study of India's special economic zones, aptly titled *Dream Zones*, shows how the global economy builds upon state dreams of progress, corporate desires to advance capital, and local anxieties and aspirations (Cross 2014). In this sense, dreams are capital in and of themselves, an affect just as much as practical reason that can be mobilised towards generating profit 'for all'. 'These dreamed-of-futures have lives of their own and material effects upon which our current global moment depends' (ibid.: 6). Although Turkana is not a designated special economic zone, it is marketed as such by both the national and county governments, aided by the potential for oil extraction and green energy investments (see also Golub 2014).

The ‘problem’ of pastoralism and the drylands it inhabits is also the imagined problems of productivity, control, and conversion – three ideas that have shaped power relations and interventions in Turkana through time. A resounding emphasis that runs through the anthropology of development studies is the invention of problems, or how parts of the world become problematised as poor or ‘underdeveloped’ according to particular paradigms and indices of poverty, resources, and livelihood in order to advance standardised or normative models of progress à la Western orthodoxy (e.g. Ferguson 1994). In this sense, Turkana is a development frontier par excellence, and there has been no shortage of interventions aimed at bringing the area into the global markets, attracting capital investments, and contributing its share to the advancement of the Kenyan state, not least the ambitious Vision 2030. Thus, the Turkana ‘problem’ has been largely articulated as a problem of productivity related to arid and semi-arid lands, perennial droughts and food shortages, poverty, and untenable land use and livelihood patterns, especially ‘traditional’ subsistence pastoralism. This is a paradigm shared even by locals; many declared to me time and time again that ‘there was nothing happening here’ before oil and devolution. In the areas yet to ‘taste’ the benefits of oil or experience devolution beyond new school buildings without teachers or money for stencils, there still is nothing happening there by way of economic and social opportunities. As such, the notion that ‘oil is our milk’ rings true, considering that pastoralism, the mainstay of over 70 percent of the population, has been in steady decline for decades based on natural disasters, diseases, and conflicts with neighbouring tribes. On this development frontier, the disjuncture between poverty alleviation programmes and emergent realities is evident and pronounced.

The British colonial administration imagined the Turkana ‘problem’ along the lines of a ‘worthless’ (Rayne 1919), unproductive, arid wasteland with wandering pastoralists who needed to be controlled and converted into sedentary, governable citizens settled along clearly established spatial boundaries. The colonial regime’s interest in Turkana was more about controlling the porous borders with Uganda and Ethiopia than any significant value or resources to be exploited from the area. For resources, large swathes of land in the fertile part of the Rift Valley and highlands were expropriated and became the enclave of British and South African colonialists who converted the lands to large-scale farming maintained by the local labour force, consisting mainly of members of the Kikuyu, Kalenjin, Luhya, Maasai, and Luo tribes. Coffee and tea plantations were established that dispossessed local settlers, and, by 1897, the British had declared all ‘waste and unoccupied land’ in the East African Protectorate to be ‘Crown Land’. With nothing to exploit in terms of resources, the problem with Turkana was how to

govern and tax an unrooted population of ‘wandering’ pastoralists. The solution was to treat the vast majority of the population ‘as flock with a few as shepherds’ (Michael Foucault quoted in Pandian 2008: 89) by drawing up territorial boundaries for livestock grazing, the appointment of chiefs, and introduction of hut taxes. Despite the British ‘pastoral power’ (ibid.), the population still proved too difficult to control. In response to the problem of resistance, Turkana was cut off from the rest of the country.

Catholic missionaries were the first relief providers as they were the only outsiders the British allowed into Turkana to assist with the hunger and impoverishment that emerged from the livestock confiscation, epidemics and neighbouring raids. Pauper camps were established for relief food distribution and other forms of assistance. Many pastoralists who could rebuild their herds remained in these camps, and sedentary patterns as well as patterns of social differentiation started to emerge, pitting pastoralists against non-pastoralists and town against bush. Population distribution and settlement patterns in Turkana mostly cohere around livelihood and economic opportunities. In essence, land matters, but it matters for different reasons for different groups of people. Gardner and Gerharz (2016) review similar processes in South Asia, where land expropriation has been a violent process of displacement and dispossession by large-scale investment projects of mining, extraction, agriculture, and more. They write, ‘As land changes hands and usage, the implications for rural economies that were once based on agriculture are enormous. In most instances there are few economic opportunities for newly landless people, for even if the land has been cleared for Special Economic Zones or extractive industries, these rarely employ local people’ (2016: 1). Rather, what awaits are increasing immiseration for those with the least social capital and greater opportunities for vast profits for those with the most, almost always resulting in a heightening of social and economic inequality. Hall, Scoones, and Tsikata (2015) add that ‘whatever the governance frameworks, the outcomes of “land grabs” are as diverse as the contexts into which they are inserted... [L]and deals articulate with pre-existing politics, populations and economies, rather than presuming that they involve the creation of entirely new production systems in an environment that is economically and politically inert’ (2015: 10).

The postcolonial state, established at independence in 1963 in the moment of building a new Kenya, had no place for ungovernable pastoralists and a region that was making tangible contribution to the national coffers. In the early days of Kenya’s independence, the politician Tom Mboya famously remarked, ‘You cannot redistribute nothing.’ He was reiterating the

process of centralised economic planning in Kenya. The economist David Ndii coined a term for this ideology – Chlorophyll Zones – to describe the more fertile agricultural regions which were therefore privileged in terms of economic distribution (Kantai 2014). A plan of economic segregation placed the areas with the highest potential, the ones producing major cash crops, at the top of the distribution chain. Places like Turkana that grew nothing got nothing; this was a colonial continuum resulting in the isolation of what were deemed to be fruitless regions.

Non-state actors that continue to intervene today have experimented with numerous projects designed to turn pastoralists into fishermen, irrigation farmers, entrepreneurs, and so on with varied unintended outcomes which will be detailed in later chapters. For the postcolonial state, it was a question of productivity as well. Turkana integration was more of a capital-intensive investment rather than a wealth-generating region the postcolonial state developed on the principle of economic priority and integration efforts, so the Turkana problem remained the preserve of non-state actors. Hence, marginalisation created a development frontier with impermanent development solutions whereby newly built roads became a symbol of government neglect. This has manifested in the proliferation of urban centres, urban-centric development, and the clamour for waged labour. The growing population of unemployed youth constitutes a type of surplus labour generated through education, which in turn has led to more people disengaging from the pastoral livelihoods and has created a deepening divide between town and bush, rural and urban, educated and illiterate. In this context, nomadism, so central to Turkana identity, is often taken to be synonymous with impermanence and seen as an unreliable basis for development. However, as I will argue, even for those locals who continue to pursue a nomadic lifestyle, being permanent does not necessarily speak of a geographically settled status but rather of a stable existence. Consequently, pastoralists engage in waged labour and invest their remunerations in replenishing livestock. Some others engage actively in various forms of small trade in order to protect their primary capital – livestock.

More importantly, pastoralists have their permanent homes – the *ere*. This is where they trace their ancestry and birth to. So, regardless of how far they ‘roam’, there is a permanent location somewhere they can always return to. Further, pastoralists move for other reasons besides sustenance. ‘Mobility is also a peace keeping and security strategy to manage competition for space and resources within or with outside groups: evade authorities and thwart plans of cattle raiders’ (Dyson-Hudson and Dyson-Hudson 1980: 15). Movement varies among individuals and groups based on the ‘unique constellation of ecological, political, economic and

affective factors' (ibid.) at any given point in time. Many nomadic pastoralists I spoke with could not understand why portions of land were mapped out as town and everyone had to crowd in there when there was so much space available. However, they did not deny the economic lure of oil. As a corporate inducement for community cooperation, it resonates with the dwindling fortunes of subsistence pastoralism.

A melange of erratic weather patterns, conflict, changing land use patterns, institutional marginalisation, and cycles of ill-judged development initiatives have all combined to diminish the viability of pastoralism in Turkana. Oil emerged at a time when pastoralists were becoming increasingly vulnerable due to land use patterns shifting towards large-scale development plans by the new county government and global capital investments. The vast majority of the Turkana population are subsistence pastoralists, especially those in the rural hinterlands. Notwithstanding this, there have been dynamic changes, and the transition towards a hybrid economy has been growing steadily (Catley et al.; Müller-Dempf 2014) with emerging livestock trading, casual labour, small and medium enterprises, and administrative opportunities for a rising class of civil servants in the county offices. But, the pace of economic change in Turkana remains relatively slow despite these developments. Even more so, devolution, the rise of a new political class, and an increasing number of school leavers mark a shift in generational relationships and customary forms of leadership towards more contemporary and contentious forms of politics. Emerging placemaking projects and processes of planning reveal these tensions ethnographically, raising questions about community, land, and livelihood. As the subsequent chapters will show, the project of remaking Turkana with formalised land use patterns and livelihood activities reveal that frontier-making is both imposed and internally driven (Askew et al. 2017; Young and Sing'Oei 2011).

The idea of vast, idle land is at the heart of local government planning. The Turkana County Integrated Development Plan for the years 2016–2020, co-developed by the United Nations Development Programme, is revealing in this regard. The plan's section on the pastoral economy and agriculture states that 'Kenya's vision 2030 envisions an additional 1 million hectares of idle land in existing farming areas to be brought under production, and an additional 1.2 million hectares in ASALs [arid and semi-arid lands] be brought under irrigation. . . . Turkana County has about 2.5 million hectares of arable land. . . . The County has the potential to become a major player in horticulture production for export as well as the domestic consumers' (Turkana County Government 2018: 24). The plan also notes that the 'availability of vast land and the

existence of the Lomidat Meat Factory in Lokichoggio [are] a sure bet to support livestock ranching' (25). This represents the makings of a dream zone par excellence co-developed by the United Nations Development Programme. Conservancies and ranches such as those that have dispossessed groups in central Kenya have also been proposed for Turkana (Little 2014).

As Tsing notes, '[F]rontiers aren't just discovered at the edge, they are projects in making geographical and temporal experience' (Tsing 2005: 28). Mobile settlements (now referred to by townspeople as reserves), which are convenient for nomadic pastoralism, are not as popular following the proliferation of small urban centres. The requirements of livestock-keeping still influence residence patterns, especially in the rural areas. The Turkana distinguish between three different types of settlements. The *ere* (pl. *ng'irea*) is the family homestead and the wet-season residence of the entire family. If a Turkana goes 'home', he or she goes to the *ere*. *Ng'irea* are relatively stable settlements and rarely move. Some of these are located in urban areas. During the dry season, the elderly and women with small children remain in the *ere* while the younger people move with the animals to places where they can find forage and water. These mobile settlements are called *adakar* (pl. *ng'adakaran*) or 'cattle camps' (Müller-Dempf 2014). *Abor* (pl. *ng'aborin*) or *achok* is what an *adakar* is called when it is very far from home, which may be 100 to 150 km or more. Towns were first introduced during the British administration, gradually leading to the common distinction between towns (*etaun* or *erek*) and the rural/pastoral settlements now collectively referred to as *raia* (and sometimes as 'reserves'). As a Turkana word was not at hand, the word *raia* (civilians) was borrowed from Kiswahili to describe rural dwellers and pastoral settlements as the opposite of urban centres (Müller-Dempf 2014). It has now gained a more political and socioeconomic connotation.

The county government has continued the long campaign of development interventions aimed at modernising the *raia*. Turkana has a long history of humanitarian and development interventions owing to natural disasters compounded by teleological policies. As Fratkin and McCabe argue, '[P]opulation growth, the loss of herding lands to private farms, ranches, game parks, and urban areas, shifts to agricultural production, increased commoditisation of the rural economy, urban migration by the young and poor, and increasing dislocations brought about by drought, famine, and civil war have accelerated dramatically in the past twenty years' (1999: 5). Natural disasters provided a platform for policymakers to problematise nomadic patterns and encourage a market economy (Günther and Shongolo 2012). When many impoverished pastoralists flocked to urban centres in search of relief, it was interpreted as a sign that

pastoralism and poverty were linked (Anderson and Broch-Due 1999). Meanings of wealth and status also began to change as education and religion portrayed pastoralism as regressive (see Hutchinson 1996; Krätli 2001). Those who still retained the nomadic life became the antithesis to the Turkana in transition. And, the *raia* have become adept at navigating these challenges to some extent.

From this brief background concerning how Turkana has gone from a problematic area of non-productivity into a new frontier, let us turn to the question of permanence, a theme that is central to this thesis, and the extractives industry.

Development as permanence: producing lasting evidence of an ethical extractives industry

In pursuit of permanence, particular kinds of infrastructure in their concrete and soft forms have become conceptualised as pathways to creating permanence in Turkana. Like other ethnographers of resource exploration in various parts of the world (e.g. Appel 2012; Gardner 2012; Weszkalnys 2016), I was struck by ‘the extent to which people articulated [and equated] questions of responsibility for the outcomes of oil extraction and production in terms of infrastructure’ (Appel 2012: 443) and development (Gardner 2012). Infrastructure as well as jobs serve as evidence of development. The rhetoric of development (*maendeleo*) in Kenya has long been ‘a discursive site which is often underlain by bitter struggles over material resources’ (Gardner et al. 2014: 1). The national dialogue of anticipation is premised on getting the ethics of extraction right by attention to transparency and an equitable sharing of oil revenue and opportunities (e.g. through so-called local content policies) with residents of the host community of Turkana, who are anxious about the quantity, quality, and durability of the social investment interventions. As a result, questions about the material and temporal longevity and tangibility of oil-related infrastructures and investments as well as question of ethics and responsibility have come to underscore the process of oil exploration in Kenya. Concrete implications aside, permanence here speaks of an affective force and anticipatory disposition towards the future with oil (cf. Weszkalnys 2014, 2016). It also manifests as a kind of spatialised temporality – a way of securing the present and reckoning the future based on a past characterised by marginalisation.

Oil for development is the promise of a future expected to be materialised via the ethical codes, rational plans, and blueprints of extractives governance. This promise is brought into being by what I call the material evidence of permanence – the infrastructure, houses, and other

signs of modernity that constitute the collective aspirations of the state and citizens. This is what people aspire to and hope for – as shown, for example, in the negotiations around the drilling of a new oil well discussed in chapter 3. However, not only is oil considered impermanent, but even the modernity and prosperity that people want seems to retain something of the fluidity and impermanence of pastoral traditions. Thus, even in their permanent homes, people perceive their condition as precarious and as constantly changing. Meanwhile, Tullow is aiming for a different kind of permanence – one that establishes a good legacy of oil in Turkana and one that demonstrates ethical responsibility in social investments which nonetheless remain somewhat detached from their socio-material contexts.

As stated earlier, each of the communities affected by the current oil operations in Turkana is different in demography, livelihood, land use patterns, and lifestyle, but it is important to note that economic opportunities are scarce and disposable household income tight across the board (see chapter 3). Turkana settlements mostly cohere around livelihood patterns, and livelihood is determined by the peculiarities of a location, including fishing along Lake Turkana, agro-pastoralism in the riverine areas along the rivers Turkwel and Kerio, mobile pastoralism in the drier parts of the north, south, and east, and small trade and business activities in urban towns and villages close to the highway. Arguably, pastoralists who remain committed to communal land ownership are the ones who have the most to lose when grazing areas are converted to oilfields.

The conventional practice of oil exploration begins with gaining access to land. When oil exploration was revived in 2010 with seismic surveys, local narratives held that no official consultation of local communities was carried out by the contracted Chinese firm, BGB, or by government officials. General announcements were made during the chiefs *barazas* (public meetings), but not necessarily to seek consent. Some of those employed as drivers and road marshals insisted that explanations to residents in areas being surveyed were offered on the go. They often enjoyed sharing stories of irate pastoralists threatening to shoot the seismic team. Women recalled dealing with the noise from the vibrations and children running away in fear. Animals were startled, and the rhythms of everyday life were punctured with the vibrations and seismic processes.

Oil literally came with a bang. Based on a survey I conducted, those whose houses were marked to lie within the area where seismic research was carried out were compensated with Sh1,200 (about £10). The seismic survey was followed by the official confirmation of crude oil

deposits, which summoned a whirlwind of speculation. Land in the oil potential areas of Turkana acquired new value beyond serving as livestock grazing sites. As oil rigs were deployed to the region along with the establishment of the required infrastructure, private investors and savvy locals seized the moment to acquire land. An early encounter that set off land and representation tensions was the acquisition of a large swathe of land in Lokichar by a private investor. This investor, whose name continues to come up as a symbol of exploitation, met with elders and local seers in Lokichar with a plan to construct a multipurpose camp-like resort. African Camp Solutions, in principle, was introduced as an employment-generation enterprise that would be fully equipped with lodgings, wildlife, and an airstrip. The ‘community’, represented by the elders who were engaged, agreed to the lease. Shortly after, the site was leased to Tullow, and it remains the company’s main operational base camp in Turkana. In areas marked as having drilling potential, consultations were carried out with the locals, and a project (ranging from classrooms, boreholes, and the like) was attached to the establishment of a well along with a ground-breaking ceremony offering meat and drink. Officials with the Turkana County Council and locals continue to question the transfer of land for oil exploration, though in 2016 the sum of Sh7 million was introduced by Tullow as a ballpark payment for each well pad.

What complicates these contrasting promises and aspirations is that contemporary capitalism is marked by the experience of transient and contingent livelihoods (Bolt 2015), a feature very familiar to pastoralists, who have a long history of uncertainty, adaptation, and flexibility in terms of adopting auxiliary forms of livelihoods. One could argue that pastoralists arrived at a flexible economy long before the rest of the world caught up with adopting multiple ‘gigs’ to survive. Yet, the economic spin of the oil industry is that of stable livelihoods via promises of jobs and development schemes. How, then, given the volatility of the oil industry embodied in its characteristic boom and bust cycles, can permanence and stable livelihoods be created from an indeterminate sector? Also, how can the unseen be made tangible? If oil is hidden from view, beneath the ground and behind the fences of well pads, if the process of exploration and extraction, the dynamics and flow from the wells to markets are not easy for a layperson to comprehend, how can oil’s presence and promised potential for a brighter future be shown or captured? There is the odd jar containing a black substance displayed by Tullow, but that is the only visual connection people have with the oil. Many of those who have worked in the camps within the gated oil well pads speak of the no-go zones and cannot claim to have actually seen oil as such.

As Turkana residents seek a connection to stable livelihoods and permanent employment created by Tullow's operations, the everyday stability of both the corporation and the community remains provisional, based on the market and the global investment landscape. Thus, making oil stay in the context of a capitalist order that is always in motion with an emphasis on jobs as one aspect of a so-called social investment on the part of the extracting company, reflects a paradox when juxtaposed with global conditions of unemployment and social exclusion. Further, '[D]etachment as a corporate ethic . . . enable[s] transnational corporations and individual managers to establish limits and endpoints in the relationships to producers' (Cross 2016: 113). In the development world, this is also known as the exit plan, which often involves leaving tangible things behind but doesn't always happen as promised.

In her ethnography of Chevron's gas extraction in Bangladesh, Katy Gardner describes the ways in which locals sought permanent material connections to global capital as opposed to temporary work contracts and detached corporate interventions. She writes that 'in contrast to the increasingly precarious rural livelihoods through which the majority eke out a living, regular, formalised employment in a multinational corporation which has high ethical standards and procedures, involving formal contracts, sick leave, pensions and so on, is not only highly desirable, it is viewed by some as their right' (2012: 97). Echoes of these sentiments that reflect continuity, stability, and permanence resonate in Turkana, where many are of the opinion that every family should be represented in Tullow's employ. Not just a few but everyone should 'taste' the benefits and thus receive their rightful share. As I discuss in chapter 3, the proof of progress lies in how oil's transformative powers are deployed for good in concrete, tangible ways: permanent houses of brick and mortar financed through wages from oil company employment, permanent employment that keeps the wages coming, permanent roads that endure – in short, permanent development which ultimately speaks of connection. Thus, through its material arrangements, oil becomes an affective presence that animates the landscape, redefines value, mobilises people into action, and creates new social and political formations.

Permanence, as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is 'the state or quality of lasting or remaining unchanged indefinitely.' It suggests stability, durability, dependability, constancy, and all the locally desired circumstances that run contrary to the timed, transient, and bounded nature of the extractive landscape. The ethical frameworks that regulate the global extractives industry are layered with similar ideals of legacy, permanence, and sustainability with the aim of shifting the extractives process from histories of exploitation and enclaves (Ferguson 2005) to

incorporated communities in ‘partnership’ with multinational corporations. What mediates this partnership is the promise that oil is good for the community, and the tangible evidence of this rationale is manifested in various development projects. It is the logic that underlies corporate social responsibility, in the overarching sense of the concept. This is extraction with a conscience, which broadly entails a give-and-take scenario that, rather than dispossessing locals or degrading the environment, claims to leave something behind in the form of durable social investments while taking or extracting resources.

In extracting ‘with a conscience’, socially thick, measurable ventures that create shared value are emphasised, thereby placing multinational companies right in the centre of development discourse and practice. Consider this ‘evidence’ of responsibility as articulated by Tullow Oil in a 2012 report, early on in its operations in Turkana. From the headline that reads ‘Tullow Oil Invests in Modern Schools in Turkana’ to the main text, the emphasis is on the Sh30 million (£223,946.10) invested ‘in the provision of primary school buildings for students to experience learning in modern classrooms which shelter them from harsh weather conditions in this semi-desert environment’.⁸ This is part of what it means to be ‘a responsible company, a safe operator and a good neighbour’ (ibid.). The normative is smuggled in through the notions of extraction as a time-oriented project to be harnessed for the creation of a stable future that will extend beyond production cycles. As such, investments in infrastructure, technology transfer, capacity-building, and all other sustainability-related ideas have become a ‘self-evident’ pathway for extending the benefits of oil and creating a ‘desirable’ future.

Ethnographies that have used time as an analytical lens to explore development projects show how ‘multiple and often, ambiguous temporalities are organised, negotiated, and contested across the diverse terrains of NGO and anthropological interventions’ (Davidov and Nelson 2016: 4). The temporal ordering of development projects resonates with the ‘ethical regime’ in the extractives industry that has initiated corporations into the development landscape (Dolan and Rajak 2016; Gilberthorpe 2013). Responsibility is ‘grounded in particular social and material realities’ (Dolan and Rajak 2016: 2). If we look at Tullow’s oil operations in Turkana at the most basic level, the exchange is oil and the land it lies beneath is imbued with value for a wide range of things, such as potable water, roads, and houses. Permanency in this regard gains a more

⁸ ‘Tullow Oil invests in modern schools in Turkana County’, 4 April 2012, Tullow Oil, <https://www.tullowoil.com/media/press-releases/tullow-oil-invests-in-modern-schools-in-turkana-county>

diffuse meaning by referring to the desirable state of stability and continuity. Thus, oil's materiality becomes a path to wealth, a regular means of livelihood and opportunity, predictability, and permanence. In short, the time of oil is envisioned as a time of transition and transformation, which is why there is much emphasis on the idea that the time of oil should not be replaced by the time of lack. Thus, the material politics of oil and the infrastructure it enables is both a judgement and an approval of social performance. After all, how do we know oil has arrived or that oil is here if we cannot see what it has done? This is captured by the popular refrain, 'Oil has not reached here.'

In Turkana, the absence of social amenities and infrastructure such as roads, electricity, and modern buildings, as well as a supposedly modern aesthetics, has become a symbol of a marginalised and underdeveloped locality. It continues to influence how the state is conceptualised and how the relationship between the state and the margins is narrated. The question of evidence is articulated in comparison with 'down country' and in sentiments and rhetoric such as 'What have we to show for being part of Kenya?' This reflects the historical failure of the state to fully incorporate Turkana into the wider national development project via good road networks, education, and the like, as well as suspicions that the current interest in the region would not have happened without oil. As Dalakoglou (2017: 822) writes, '[I]nfrastructures comprise the realm where the state or the market materialize a great proportion of the social contract [and are] the typical site where state-craft [or corporate responsibility] becomes tangible to the citizenry'. This project dimension of extraction that runs concurrently with the market and exploration cycle is at the heart of corporate social performance and community engagement schemes. Studies of infrastructure have opened an understanding of the ways in which various forms of infrastructure enchant (Harvey and Knox 2012) even as they combine with social and political arrangements to create particular kinds of relations (see also Gupta 2015). In establishing a positive legacy for oil, much of the industry's ethics is steeped in the temporal language of permanence that emphasises leaving something behind while extracting. A point to consider is how oil becomes visible through its material qualities as conceptualised by various actors, particularly through the enchantments of tangible, concrete, and permanent infrastructure expected to outlive oil (cf. Richardson and Weszkalnys 2014).



Figure 20. A school building: the concrete and 'permanent' evidence of corporate responsibility



Figure 21. 50-bed dormitory in Nakukulas, another evidence of corporate responsibility

As Douglas Rogers points out in his analysis of oil development in Russia, '[A]ttending to these projects in a single region [e.g. host communities] permits an examination of some of the more direct—and less state-mediated—mechanisms by which oil and gas participate in the reshaping of political, social, and cultural orders' (2012: 284). At this level of analysis, he adds, '[T]he kinds of material and semiotic processes that help constitute hydrocarbon politics come into particularly sharp focus' (ibid.). Producing the right future, and interventions to ensure the production of that future, becomes a project framed as creating 'shared value' by engaging with the material values and politics of the resource, i.e. what corporations should do in the local communities of extraction. What is implicit in community engagement in line with the CSR mandate is that social performance has a timeline which shapes engagement as an intervention driven by exploration and production cycles. As Davidov and Nelson (2016) argue in relation to NGOs,

[T]his project of transforming futures involves both negotiating multiple temporalities and articulating of "the future" as possible and contingent and even morally charged, rather than singular and self-evident – bringing into relief issues of power dynamics not just in terms of how a particular project or development trajectory will unfold, but in terms of a kind of epistemic persuasion and authority: who gets to "authenticate" a future as a self-evidently "correct" or desirable one? (Davidov and Nelson 2016: 8)

In pursuit of permanence, particular kinds of infrastructure in their concrete and soft forms become conceptualised as pathways to creating permanence in Turkana. Concrete public infrastructural projects and employment are some of the main things people demand as benefits from Tullow. Indeed, some of these projects have permeated parts of Turkana impacted by oil exploration activities in the form of potable water supply, paved roads, school buildings, jobs, and more. In addition, using money from wages and compensation funds, people have constructed their own private infrastructure such as houses and commercial buildings, established business enterprises, restocked their herd of cattle, afforded a wife, purchased vehicles and motorbikes that are often deployed to commercial purposes, and paid school fees for their children, while others have even gone abroad on the postgraduate scholarship scheme. From this perspective, the extractive process is not for oil alone but is also to produce other things. For corporations, tangible constructions and other material benefits provide evidence of 'responsibility' and 'engagement'.

This thesis does not provide an audit of oil-related CSR activities in Turkana. It does not seek to measure the quantity and quality of oil's benefits as administered by Tullow, nor does it try to judge the choices prioritised by locals as good or bad. Rather, my aim is to deviate from the 'audit cultures' (Shore and Wright 2015; Strathern 2000) that characterises oil operations and carry out a 'material diagnostics' (Knox 2017: 5) of these infrastructures of permanence: 'a form of questioning, interrogating, tracing, supposing, linking, storytelling and demonstrating, that is formed in the interstices of bodies, histories and materials as they come together in moments of infrastructural affect' (ibid.).

In the next and final section of this introduction, I discuss the current trends in anthropological studies of the extractive industry and show how local struggles for a rightful share of benefits complicates Tullow's CSR narrative of shared prosperity.

The extractives industry:

brokering corporate social responsibility and a rightful share

To understand the emerging contentious politics of distribution around a rightful share (Ferguson 2015), which is a central concept in this thesis, this section considers the ways in which resource communities, the ensemble of benefits, and beneficiaries often glossed as 'stakeholders', are constituted through the rendering of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). I argue that a major unintended outcome, as the thesis shows, was that in the process of implementing CSR, communities of interest were inadvertently enacted thereby producing new forms of exclusion and social differentiation. An analytical concern with the distribution of oil wealth and how it is conceptualised both by the corporation, governments and local communities, places my study right at the heart of a continually growing literature on oil extraction across the social sciences. Coincidentally, rightful share as a term is also regularly deployed in Turkana most notably by the governor who constantly forewarns that 'all of us have to join hands in fighting for our rightful share of oil profits. Failure to which, the future generations will blame us for failing to safeguard their interests.'⁹ With its rightful share of oil profits, the anticipation is that Turkana would have adequate resources to enable it to catch up and match the level of development enjoyed in other counties

⁹ S. Rutto, 'I will push for increased oil proceeds for Turkana – Governor Nanok', 14 May 2017, *The Star*, <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2017-05-14-i-will-push-for-increased-oil-proceeds-for-turkana-governor-nanok/>

Critical studies on natural resource mining and extraction have explored CSR by mostly focusing on the big corporate players. But as highlighted earlier, exploring CSR from the perspective of prospector companies like Tullow, raises new lines of enquiry around the ways in which the senior companies now rebranded as ethical following the need for good social performance rankings from their CSR activities, shift the ethical focus to the hustler junior companies seen to be undermining the industry's reputation. This kind of narrative serves to mask what may be considered as a division of ethical work: outsourcing the chaotic, messy business of securing a social license from 'problematic' communities. What the junior companies promote in hopes of securing a buy out and investments is both the process of executing low-cost exploration and the ability to hand over a relatively clean slate operation. Hence, my ethnography in the subsequent chapters seeks to push the existing CSR debates further by showing Tullow not as the corporate player calling the shots but as a part of the resource making community seeking to broker a piece of the action. Imagining the corporation as a hustler casts a new perspective on the community engagement meetings, the consultations and the relationship with the community.

Predictably, the advent of oil in Turkana was accompanied with promises of lucrative benefits and social inclusion as state and corporate campaigns sought to elicit cooperation from the region's residents. Consultations were held in public and in private with a cross-section of so-called community stakeholders complemented with corporate-funded development projects in a move to obtain what scholars have termed 'the social license to operate' (Altman in Sawyer and Gomez 2012:55; Gardner 2018; Gehman et.al. 2017; Prno and Slocombe. 2012; Stuart Kirsch in Dolan and Rajak 2016:55; Zalik 2004). Local politicians demanded a rightful share for their people even as civil society groups and NGOs swelled the community engagement apparatus, critiquing corporate ethics while sensitising locals to their rights. The repertoire of resource-making imaginaries, as discussed earlier, includes both future wealth and disaster. Yet, these participatory practices have not allayed local apprehensions of being 'cheated' out of the new resource benefits. As hope mingles with uncertainty over alleged shadowy distributive politics and the expropriation of communal pastoral lands, the notion of oil politics as a cloak-and-dagger operation is one that has gained ascendancy in the minds of many in Turkana. It generates a heightened sense of a future disaster or 'resource curse' that needs to be averted through vigilance and subversive tactics (Rogers 2015; Weszkalnys 2014). Resistance is not new. Local communities deploy manifold strategies to negotiate their place within various regimes of development and resource wealth distribution.

The subversion I propose here highlights particular strategies of resistance and manoeuvres, not just resisting in the conventional sense of opposing an investment but a way of engaging with it and getting connected. Conceptualised here as inclusion by subversion, it is a kind of nuanced contentious politics that opposes the worst of an investment but also seeks to secure new terms of local incorporation by stretching the mandate, a form of challenging the tunnel in the morning but building the networks at night. It moves beyond reductive critiques of community participation towards practice and performance. It extends our attention from the investor to the internal dynamics among people within the community. It also shows how the broader debates about disclosure approaches for high-value natural resources is evolving and indicates that transparency might not be the catch-all panacea to better governance of natural resources. Dialogue and public consultations are all well and good. However, my ethnographic material points towards more complicated dynamics that challenge the whole directionality of resource and investment governance. Further, oil wells do not line up in a linear pattern. As stated earlier, discoveries are followed by the establishment of gated oilfields that run through villages, towns, and individual settlements of rural, sedentary, and mobile pastoralists. (Officially, however, communities should not be located within 50km of an oil well.) Thus, engagement and negotiations happen on a case-by-case basis because the solution for an affected town might not work for a rural settlement. While Turkana is the host community of Kenya's oil in the most generic sense of the word, the spatiality of oil is a border-making project as stakeholders are mapped according to hierarchies of relevance: directly affected communities, existing leadership structures, and so on. Thus, whereas claims to resource benefits draw on a broad Turkana identity, the nuclearization of community speaks of direct proximity to the resource.

What the tensions and discussions of rightful share shows is that locals have taken the promises of CSR seriously, far beyond the fluffy corporate narrative that does not quite clarify the ratio of shared prosperity. Hence, resistance and contestation in the discourse of rightful share is also a process of local accountability audits demanding the actual value of the oil and 'our rightful share' in the shared prosperity narrative. I do not propose that oil exploration is the sole contributing factor to the emerging divisions and conflict in an erstwhile united and egalitarian Turkana, ignoring the prevalence of conflict over scarce resources and the scant opportunities for social mobility among its hybrid population. As I have indicated in previous sections, everyday politics in Kenya is often perceived by laypeople as a game of shadows that places the burden of responsibility on individuals to forge alliances and networks that keep them

in the loop. Thus, what has emerged as a counter-logic among Turkana to the public transcript of economic inclusion from large-scale investments like oil is that if previous national development and revenue-allocation processes have institutionally excluded the region and political representatives have sought clandestine connections to enrich themselves, the odds are that oil politics will be no different ‘unless the people fight for it’ and build their own channels. Since Tullow’s arrival in Turkana, the company has invested in a range of development projects to demonstrate its community engagement and social responsibilities, though locals insist that ‘we have never benefitted from Tullow’. Between Tullow’s claims and local dissent, where lies the truth? A better approach, as I explore in chapter 6, is to examine how different moral economies of giving and receiving collide.

At a meeting organized by the Aga Khan University in Nairobi to discuss the emerging extractives industry, a female national government official charged the representatives of multinationals present, especially Tullow, as follows: ‘You must make sure that marginalised persons in those communities who have no hope benefit from the oil (Fieldnotes September 2016).’ The forum, entitled the Third Workshop of the Extractive Sector Forum: Local Content in Kenya’s Extractive Sector, came on the heels of a ‘Public Debate on the Senate Local Content Bill’ put together by Strathmore University (also a private institution). I watched the latter from a small box TV in a grocery shop in Lokichar with some infuriated locals who felt the conversation was far removed from their realities, though there was a lone Turkana ‘community’ representative rustled up at the last minute, as she would tell me in a later conversation. At the Aga Khan event I attended as a panellist; here, too, there was a Turkana ‘community’ representative, an elderly woman garbed in traditional regalia flown in from Lokichar.

The opinion of the government official summed up many of the comments other delegates had made, including the Turkana woman. Puzzled, as I often was, by the emphasis on the responsibility of the company to the ‘marginalised person’ or region, I asked the official her thoughts about the root causes of marginalisation in those parts and whose responsibility it was to fix it. She did not get around to an articulate response, but an academic on the panel seized the opportunity to caution against placing the responsibility for solving problems rooted in historical antecedents. This moral injunction, symbolic of the ethical regime of capitalism (Barry 2004; Dolan and Rajak 2016), has been exceptionally visible in the extractives industry. In their study of competing responsibilities, Trnka and Trundle note that responsibility ‘is often used to reference individual or collective accountability through judgments of one’s rational capacities, assessments of legal liabilities, and notions of moral blame’ (2014: 137). Marginalisation is a

keyword in discourses concerning Turkana and within community conversations about itself. Try as one might to sidestep stereotypes, the evidence confronts one at every turn. However, beyond the aesthetics of poverty – that is, the visible lack of basic amenities and economic opportunities – part of what this thesis aims to show is the need to explore the processes that have led to the deep-rooted perennial challenges of food shortages and the dearth of economic opportunities and basic social amenities in Turkana, bearing in mind that it is currently the county with the second highest revenue allocation in Kenya. Yet, beyond the hustle and bustle of the emergent capital in Lodwar and a few other urban centres, the hinterlands have seen little by way of ‘development’.

Critiques of CSR and ethical capitalism bear a similarity to post-development critiques that reject alternatives to development. Alternative development, in this view, is even more odious than mainstream development because of its friendly exterior, which serves as a coverup for development’s unpleasant truths (see Gustavo Esteva cited in Pieterse 2000: 341). In essence, the system that generates extractives exploitation and the system that generates the ethics to counter it are inextricably bound together. Beyond corporate propaganda, these rhetorical devices of engagement and participation are complemented by the imagery of magazines and the symbolism of meetings. The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, Global Mining Initiative, Extractive Industries Accounting Regulation, and Local Content and Corporate Social Responsibility are just a few initiatives that utilise global discourses of ethics to audit social and environmental performance and interventions (Gilberthorpe 2013: 261). Consequently, multinational corporations have taken up the fulfilment of social performance standards by engaging in relentless image-building campaigns, with many adopting CSR as a tool for operationalising ethics (Gilberthorpe 2013).

This contemporary political framework also advocates resource development as a human right and a vehicle for economic growth, with the extractives industry as the means to achieving it (Benson and Kirsch 2010; Frynas 2005; Gardner 2012; Gilberthorpe 2013; Gilberthorpe and Banks 2012; Kapelus 2002; Rajak 2008). Corporate social performance, as many studies have shown, serves as a corporate strategy for formalising connections to local communities (Gardner 2012: 163). In these circumstances, as Andrew Barry points out, ‘[C]onsultation may be treated by an oil company or an international institution as a technical practice of qualification’ (2006: 247). For corporations, visibility is key to the carefully ordered narratives that represent successful community engagement (Gardner 2012). Imagery is just as

important to the champions of community rights as local activists and international organisations seek to mobilise campaigns for ethical extraction. The image of locals being consulted by oil company staff or sensitised towards their rights by NGO workers is not peculiar to Turkana. The ethical turn in the extractives industry crystallised the agitations against corporate impunity and led to the proliferation of regulatory frameworks. Perhaps the most significant aspect of this juncture was the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which animated the category of the ‘indigenous’ and mobilised ‘host communities’ into action with a new kind of situated identity. In Turkana, mistrust and suspicion complicate responsibility and heighten the contentious politics of distribution (Cooper and Pratten 2015). The news that ‘Kenya’s first crude oil sparks demands over revenue sharing’, as reported by Reuters¹⁰ and other media outlets in August 2019, draws attention to claims and demands between entitlements and deservingness. As Ferguson notes of South Africa, ‘[W]hile the state-owned mining company remains an internationally reputable model for natural resource extraction, the region’s history has made clear that such nationalisation (or nationalist rhetoric) by no means automatically leads to ordinary people “sharing in the country’s wealth”’ (2015: 166). Thus, what oil reveals is a new form of political mobilisation and claims-making fostered by histories of marginalisation and the uncertainties of precarious livelihoods in Turkana.

In the second part of this chapter, I discuss research methods and ethics. First, I outline how Turkana pastoralists have been framed as research objects and have come to embody a distinction between bush and town which maps onto the distinction of tradition and modernity, evident in national as well as academic discourses before outlining my own research methods and experiences.

¹⁰ J. Akwiri, ‘Kenya’s first crude oil export sparks demands over revenue sharing’, 26 August 2019, *Reuters*, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kenya-oil/kenyas-first-crude-oil-export-sparks-demands-over-revenue-sharing-idUSKCN1VG1FQ>

PART TWO

METHODOLOGY AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ethnographic fieldwork for this study was conducted primarily in Turkana County, Kenya's oil host community over a period of 14 months from November 2015 to January 2017. There were subsequent follow up visits in August 2017, during the general elections, and in November 2019. Prior research in 2014 for my MA dissertation also helped the design of a preliminary hypothesis and research methods. London and Nairobi were important secondary sites not least because they featured prominently in the processes of enacting an ethical oil industry in Kenya but in how the national and international discourse shaped local realities. As the host community, Turkana cannot be studied in isolation of the wider Kenyan state that claims ownership of the oil resource or the international community that function as economic and ethical referees of global capital. It was crucial to strike the right balance between observing local realities in the resource community and following events at the national and international level that also shape those local experiences discussed in the chapters.

The fieldwork was focused on an innovative methodological strategy of following people as they follow oil. My approach builds on George Marcus's (2005) ideas for multi-sited ethnography which revolves around following the plot, people, things. As an innovative contribution to ethnographic methods, it allowed me to produce some novel analytical and empirical insights about the febrile and chaotic constellation of the relationships and resources that global oil investments set into motion. Also, it helped me track the opportunism, resilience and graft people require in their attempt to make sense of, negotiate and claim benefits from the emerging oil economy. Thus, beyond gathering information about the dynamics of oil in Kenya and what it reveals, understanding *how oil is enacted and experienced* promised a more fruitful line of ethnographic enquiry that required immersion in people's experiences. This after all, is the stuff of thorough participant observation. Oil is a contentious and highly politicised issue. As such, fieldwork required sensitivity and a keen sense of observation to understand who and what to follow. The lines between 'victims' and 'villains' rarely seemed clear-cut due to the many interests that ran across social sets and geographies and the changing nature of the situation. My fieldwork also involved engaging in specific spheres of activity that revealed conceptualisations, negotiations of inclusion, and the key themes discussed in the first part of this introduction.

The organisation of this second part of the chapter are as follows: the first section introduces the field by discussing the dilemma of how sites and subjects are framed. The second section then presents the field sites followed by methods of data collection, the process of data analysis and some concluding thoughts on the ethical conundrums.



Figure 22. Eki, a young Turkana pastoralist (raia)

Entering ‘the field’: the framing dilemma of ‘authentic’ sites and subjects

To many folks ‘down-country’, Turkana is that mysterious part of Kenya that is lost in the mists of time: poor, marginalised, underdeveloped. For Turkana residents, ‘down-country’, which is how they refer to more developed parts of Kenya, is an aspiration as much as it is the evidence of a biased state. The image of sinewy pastoralists garbed in sheets and colourful beads standing in food distribution queues in a dry region plagued by droughts and food crises is one that has stuck. Therefore, I often found myself defending the area passionately when down-country folks express shock and surprise at my research in Turkana. ‘What do they do there? Are they now wearing modern clothes? What do they even eat? Could I get a bottle of beer to drink? Are there pubs?’ were all questions non-Turkanas posed to me. ‘Traditional’ nomadic pastoralism as a lifestyle and form of livelihood continues to confound the modern, expressed in their surprise and assumptions that people just ‘sit with’ their livestock rather than sell it. Many of

my interlocutors expressed irritation with these stereotypes especially as it painted a homogenous picture of what life in Turkana is really like. Some who had casual labour jobs with Tullow Oil spoke of derogatory statements made by other non-Turkana staff members. There is even a popular notion that the work of Turkana in the oil industry is limited to being security guards – a metaphor for unskilled labour (see the discussion of Ephraim in part one of this chapter).

The framing dilemma then stems from the fact that ‘traditional’ pastoralism and its non-market orientation remains largely misunderstood as irrational, even as the assumptions about free markets, modernisation, and economic growth have become something that pastoralists themselves grapple with, especially the nomads. Although it is often denounced as an outmoded way of life, pastoralism has become a claims-making device that confers a particular kind of legitimacy and an ‘authentic’ identity’ as ‘the people’. Educated members of the community, townsfolk, politicians, and activists stand up in meetings to declare that ‘we as Turkana people are pastoralists’ and, at the same time, acknowledge that pastoralism is an untenable means of livelihood. The pastoralists, *raia* as they are called in vernacular, would also argue that they are the true custodians of land and culture in Turkana and as such should lead any negotiations with the state or the oil companies. Local activists and community-based organisations need to claim access to the ‘local communities’ (by which they mean the *raia*) in order to gain legitimacy with donors and invitations to community-engagement conferences. Those among them claiming to be pastoralists were often dismissed as elites, usurpers, and opportunists, but I argue that pastoralism is a cognitive foundation as much as it is the livelihood of many Turkana, whether they live in towns, as *raia*, or outside the county (Müller-Dempf 2014: 4). These are not competing representations of Turkana; together, they constitute a multidimensional articulation of community that encompasses various lifeworlds. Further, pastoralists have never been traditional in the sense of intransigent to change. On the contrary, so called traditional pastoralists are some of the most sophisticated and forward-thinking groups that have engaged in various kinds of exchange and social relations based on its relevance to their situation per time.

My host pastoralist family often dismissed my questions about why they keep animals besides market production. They would give an amused chuckle, a pause and then struggle to formulate an answer, unsure what it was I wanted to hear, as if I had asked the most banal or rhetorical question. They never asked me why I was going to school. Is that because everyone accepts school as a valuable pursuit? ‘Will you ask a farmer why he farms?’ one of the women

once retorted. ‘How can you live without animals?’ For them, bride wealth, tradition, and all aspects of social life are articulated through livestock. The question that most core pastoralists answered without a moment’s pause for thought, was whether they could ever imagine not being pastoralists. The answer was always a resounding no. ‘Unless the animals finish or something bad happens! Then we become poor.’ While they are pleased that their quotidian life is fascinating enough for people to expend so much time and energy researching it, how do my questions compel and the search for an analytical approach lead research participants to reflect on their lives after a particular fashion, to self-analyse in a way that opens up life in a particular analytical direction other than everyday living? Ordinary affects, Kathleen Stewart asserts, “are the varied, surging capacities to affect and be affected that give everyday life the quality of a continual motion of relations, scenes, contingencies and emergencies” (2007: 2). In retrospect, the struggle of my pastoral informants to articulate a singular reason for why they do what they do is because the affects of life as they live it, in fact, the ordinary affects of pastoralism, are ‘not the kind of analytic object that can be laid out on a single, static plane of analysis, and they don’t lend themselves to a perfect, three-tiered parallelism between analytic subject, concept, and world. They are, instead, a problem or question emergent in disparate scenes and incommensurate forms and registers; a tangle of potential connections’ (Stewart 2007: 3–4).

Holtzman notes this in his study among Samburu pastoralists and suggests that ‘an approach centred upon the mundane realities of everyday life – though certainly not the only possible approach – has a value in forging a unique and meaningful alternative to western models of change, without “other-ising” our subjects in the process’ (Holtzman 2007: 437).

Locating the fieldwork

To offer a sense of place, there are nightclubs in Turkana, just as there are people who live in the wild. Some visitors have declared the entertainment scene in Lodwar, the Turkana capital, the best there is. When Diamond Platinum – the highest-paid East African musician at the time – performed in Lodwar on Valentine’s Day 2016, Kenyans on social media platforms expressed both surprise and disgust. Some were surprised that such an event was even conceivable ‘there’, while others complained that such an event could take place when devolution and oil money could feed the hungry population. There is phone and data connection across most parts of Turkana. Many nomadic pastoralists have phones and connect with each other even while in the most remote mountainous areas. Turkana has an airstrip. In fact, many hinterlands have airstrips, even though they are not tarmacked. They were built for

humanitarian relief food distribution at the height of the crises decades ago to make food delivery easier. The educated section of the population is growing in leaps and bounds even as a large number remain engaged in various forms of pastoralism. So-called permanent houses made of brick and mortar are fast replacing mud *mabati* structures and *manyatta* huts. Airlines ply the Nairobi-Lodwar route at least three times a day.

Although there is much to examine about the ‘development fever’ by the county government; the plotting and monetisation of communal lands; the resorts, clubs, ‘smart’ sprawling houses, and SUVs allegedly owned by the new class of county civil servants and some oil beneficiaries; and the hunger crises that still rock the county even as recently as 2019, the point is that Turkana has always been open and mixed in different ways long before oil. As we will see in chapter 2, the area was a popular frontier for the ivory trade and pastoralists were socioeconomically engaged with their neighbours. The focus of studies and popular narratives on pastoralism, tribes, and tradition does not mean that other kinds of social life do not exist. Narrative is an exercise in categorisation that sometimes has the unintended outcome of dichotomising a situation, i.e., in defence or acknowledgement of one and obscuring the other. For example, consider a *New York Times* article that first had the title ‘Kenya’s Ariaal Nomads Are Perfect for Anthropology: They’re Isolated and Willing to be Observed’, which was later corrected to ‘Remote and Poked: Anthropology’s Dream Tribe.’ As the article goes on to suggest: ‘The rugged souls living in this remote desert enclave have been poked, pinched and plucked, all in the name of science. It is not always easy, they say, to be the subject of a human experiment’ (2005). Featured interviews revealed some local experiences and their assumptions:

“I thought I was being bewitched,” Koitaton Garawale, a weathered cattleman, said of the time a researcher plucked a few hairs from atop his head. “I was afraid. I’d never seen such a thing before.” Another member of the tiny and reclusive Ariaal tribe, Leketon Lenarendile, scanned a handful of pictures laid before him by a researcher whose unstated goal was to gauge whether his body image had been influenced by outside media. “The girls like the ones like this,” he said, repeating the exercise later and pointing to a rather slender man much like himself. “I don’t know why they were asking me that,” he said.¹¹

Indeed, during my own fieldwork in Turkana, assumptions about my purpose were linked to the Illuminati and, in some cases, to witchcraft based on my Nigerian heritage (thanks

¹¹ M. Lacey, ‘Remote and Poked, Anthropology’s Dream Tribe,’ 18 Dec. 2005, *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/18/world/africa/remote-and-poked-anthropologys-dream-tribe.html>

to Nollywood movies that prominently feature *juju* practices). For the nomadic pastoralists I lived with for a period, my interest in their everyday lives was a source of no small amusement. Flattered that someone cared enough to live out in the wild with them, they were also irritated and amused in turn by the fact that I was of the opinion that their quotidian life was a 'school', as they put it. Irritation set in when they could not articulate their practices to my satisfaction because it meant *mam*, nothing. When I really became a pest, they would redirect the question to me and ask why I assumed my way of life was the right and normal way. The teenage girls in the family expressed great pity for me because I had to pay for a spot to lay my head (rent) and be so dependent on money (even though they acknowledged its benefits).

A 'good' field site, according to Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, is defined by 'its suitability for addressing issues and debates that matter to the discipline' (1997: 10). In anthropology, they note that the emergence and conventions of substantive 'subfields' such as legal, economic, and psychological anthropology 'helped to shape not only the topic of investigation, but also the conception of the field site itself, in a number of ways' (ibid.). Particular areas became linked to specific subjects; 'thus India, with its ideologies of caste and purity, was long taken to be an especially good site for an anthropologist of religion . . . and Africa (with its segmentary lineages) was thought ideal for the political anthropologist, just as Melanesia (with its elaborate systems of exchange) invited economic anthropologists' (ibid.).

This is nowhere more evident than in anthropology's interest in pastoralism, initially inspired by the 'romantic stereotypes of brave, independent, fierce men, freely moving with their herds, and not having to deal with the constraints and frustrations we ourselves face in day-to-day "civilised" living' (Dyson-Hudson and Dyson-Hudson 1980: 15). This ideal type of the 'free' nomadic man permeated pastoral studies for up to three decades beginning in the 1940s and was rooted in the British structural-functionalism school of thought. The studies conceptualised nomadic pastoral societies as bounded and stable systems, dismissing 'apparently anomalous behaviours as resulting from contamination of the "pure pastoralists" by contacts with agricultural neighbours, with colonial administrations, or with other disruptive forces external to the to the pastoral society itself' (Dyson-Hudson and Dyson-Hudson 1980:15–16). Many studies from the 1970s onwards have since challenged these assumptions of symmetry and egalitarianism in pastoral societies. A consensus has emerged that 'cultural' patterns differ among nomads based on their ecological, political, individual history, and everyday realities. Sarah Hutchinson (1996), in her response to Evans-Pritchard's Nuer chronicles, argued that

‘what earlier generations of anthropologists tended to view as “the logic” of a particular social system has thus often appeared, on closer inspection, to be merely the logic of some segment of it. As a result, notions of culture and society have begun to fracture and dissolve’ (1996: 28). With the reflexive turn in anthropology, bounded notions of place and culture have shifted to more complex conceptual considerations. However, this historical preoccupation with particular types of people and regions as ‘authentic’ sites of studies remains in some form. Moreover, it has gained ascendancy in regions such as Turkana, where locals themselves point me towards those they consider ‘the real Turkana’ suitable for my study.

My research, as I saw it, would be to describe a multiverse, a society in transition with unfolding dynamics. But when my interactions with residents of the urban/peri-urban centres of Turkana were pervaded with questions from the locals such as ‘Have you been to the real Turkana?’, ‘Have you seen the real Turkana, the pure pastoralists?’, ‘Have you tasted blood?’, and ‘Won’t you go to the reserves and stay with the *raia*?’ my resolve quivered. Although anthropological studies of pastoral societies have become more reflexive, the reality in my field site appeared to be the opposite. Conversations were often binary and stratified: pastoralists versus non-pastoralists, the town and the bush, traditional people versus modern folk, *raia* vs. educated professionals. Despair slowly crept in when I could not seem to establish myself soon enough with a family of ‘pure pastoralists’, nor could I figure out at the time the borders and boundaries of the so-called reserves. Were they some fenced-off confinements? Were they tucked away in the mountains that encircle the region? Where on earth did these terms come from? And why were the people called *raia*? But the *raia*, easily identified by their clothing and hairdos, roamed freely in and out of towns and villages with their livestock. Some even lived in towns. They sold their milk and bought grain from shops, meaning they were not entirely isolated. What was so different about them?

Some informants went out of their way to tell me about anthropologists who had worked in the region, how they lived in the reserves and drank blood with the *raia*. This was way back when that area was a reserve, before the shops, schools, and dispensaries which are now the hallmarks of this urban centre. Is pastoralism then about livelihood, an identity, or an embodied experience? And, if you don’t have one, could you have the other? I began to think that my ‘real’ fieldwork would not start until I inhabited the *raia* space and drank blood (which I did, eventually, see figure 26). Everything was pointing me in the direction of the ‘pure’

pastoralists who were admired as custodians of the ‘real Turkana culture’ yet denigrated for being backward and incompatible with the times.

The Ariaal pastoralists of Kenya (Fratkin [1998] 2004) have become research subjects, and not just for anthropologists. The long history and nature of research in Turkana and the northern environs of Kenya have shaped today’s encounters, and the results of the research have unfortunately not been tangible to the participants. More recently, there has been an increase in different kinds of research projects in the context of oil developments – not just academic research but also activist research, NGO research, policy-related studies, etc. Such research is largely remunerated and participating in research projects has become a source of income for many. Some of this research has put the Turkana in a position to have to essentialise themselves, as it were, either to receive compensation or because the research demands simple (rather than complex, entangled, ‘multiverse’) answers. Thus, research is an alternative economy where data is a resource to be mined and information is a currency to be exchanged, even between researchers.

I now turn to the various field sites in detail.

Field sites: locating oil and following the action

London: Starting in London, the location of Tullow’s headquarters, I attended key events on Africa’s extractives industry organised by the Chatham House and Africa Research Institute (ARI) respectively. The events featured delegates from Tullow, DFID, extractives companies, Turkana and Kenya more broadly. While these events provided insights for my research at a thematic, sectoral and regional level, following the attendees from Kenya including the Governor of Turkana, offered the ethnographic experience and augmented my research design. It also brought into sharp relief the ways in which international NGOs and think-tanks play a matchmaking and mediation role in the making of extractives economy through the discourse of ethics. Significantly, their role in how host countries and host communities become enacted as viable sites for global capital. Here, the viability of oil is dependent on the viability of its host country and communities based on the company’s ability to manage risks from community conflicts. As I noted in the introductory section of this chapter (see part one on the temporal reckonings of resource speculation), these events can be understood as one of those sites where the struggle between right and wrong in the extractives industry are played out. The presence of corporations in these events are akin to a summoning where they are urged by the

international referees or brokers to demonstrate and defend their ethical positions to investors and stakeholders. Positionings and brokerage are not the sole preserve of locals but also international organisations and corporations.

Nairobi: During the first month of fieldwork in Nairobi, I interviewed officials, researchers, old friends, and contacts, some of which I followed up from the London scene. I also joined a reading group organised by the British Institute in Eastern Africa, where I was affiliated. I returned to Nairobi on several occasions during fieldwork to attend oil-related events, including a conference at the Aga Khan University where I was invited to speak as a panel member. I used these opportunities to talk to government representatives, NGOs, and Tullow staff in the company's Kenya headquarters. They allowed me to witness first-hand the varied ways in which hydrocarbon resources were being made and shaped. I also observed the performativity of representation in these meetings, such as the 'token local' flown in from Turkana to Nairobi to speak on behalf of his or her community (or perhaps no one at all). People often regaled me with tales of elders taken to Nairobi or those working with Tullow who felt going to Nairobi was the height of inclusion in oil participation. At these meetings, Turkana became just one component, something to be considered in the agenda while the focus was on 'bigger' technical issues.

Turkana: Locating and following oil in Turkana was both a nomadic and sedentary process which follows the social life of the area. My initial plan was to be based in a single location and study the impacts of oil in the region and the complexity of the situation from a single vantage point. It soon became apparent, however, that the ethnographic object I was following, oil, was unfixed by nature and 'flowing' across various sites. A variety of socio-political scales were involved, ranging from the local community and the public gatherings where issues of importance were discussed to participation in meetings organised by NGOs or workshops with government representatives, oil corporations, stakeholder groups, and local communities. This thesis does not claim to be a definitive illumination of the impact of oil from all angles. It follows the path I walked, the people I met, the meetings I attended, and what I encountered as I followed oil and the people following oil. This was also characteristic of Turkana, where people often seem to flow in and out of locations.

Research was centred around the south and the east and the capital, Lodwar. I settled in Lokichar, though, a small rural town in Turkana South where Tullow had established its main operational base. From Lokichar, I would take any available means of transport, mostly

motorbikes, to other settlements around the scattered oilfields or far-flung nomadic clusters. It was in these areas that I established relations with specific families as a resident guest. For example, through snowballing in Lokichar, a friend introduced me to his extended family of nomads. I also lived with a diviner and his family in another village of sedentary agro-pastoralists as well as with a young family in Nakukulas, the largest settlement around a cluster of oil wells. These encounters exposed me to different ways of being and living with oil in Turkana today. As described earlier, Turkana is divided into seven sub-counties with wards, centres, and villages. Each area has its own characteristics, with a population that ranges from tens of thousands to as little as five. A centre has a church, a school, some shops, and a dispensary. That is a town in the making. So, you find a rural urban sprawl of centres that are not quite there yet littered around the region.

Two sites feature prominently in the oil exploration areas: Lokichar town in the south and Nakukulas in the east. Until the early 1980s, Lokichar was a nondescript pastoral settlement in what was then Turkana District. At that time, the provincial administrative system of government was still in place and Daniel Arap Moi was the president of Kenya. His visit to the region led to the construction of a highway in 1978 that runs from Turkana Central, cuts through Turkana South, and leads all the way to Nairobi. The highway invited a cluster of settlements along its margins and boosted small-scale economic activities in existing villages such as Lokichar. This is the part of Turkana that shares a border with the Pokots, a tribe the Turkana have been at war with for a long time. The conflicts often take the form of the two sides raiding each other's livestock and, in many gruesome occasions, killings of humans and livestock. In addition to droughts, famine, and the 'modernisation' agenda of both state and non-state actors, conflict with the Pokots has been a major reason for the decline in pastoralism. Some pastoralists have been raided so many times that they are left with no potential for restocking. In some cases, family members and friends who could have assisted with restocking by offering animals from their herd to an unfortunate individual were also depleted from the raids. As an old woman put it, 'You run to your neighbour for help only to see the sun is burning them too.' Many of the sedentary pastoralists or pastoralists who became local brewers and charcoal producers in Lokichar town and other pop-up centres along the highway had previously experienced raids that left them in search of alternative livelihoods. For those for whom Lokichar is their *ere*, they simply returned home when they no longer had a large herd to cater for.

Today, Lokichar has derived a new identity from oil. Though it is also the administrative centre for the Turkana South sub-county, when people within and outside Turkana talk of oil exploration, Lokichar is referenced. Tullow Oil has its sophisticated operational base camp here, along with an enclosed airstrip. An enterprise development centre was established in the town centre as a more accessible office (compared to the heavily guarded base camp) for locals to present their grievances and obtain information about exploration activities and job opportunities. An IT section was recently added to the mix, with computers and Wi-Fi available to members of the community. There are no oil wells within Lokichar, but the presence of Tullow's base camp has created a buzz around the town. The oil wells are scattered across the basin, encircling villages and homesteads whose inhabitants are mostly pastoralists. To make way for the oil well pads across the region, land is 'leased' from the families and settlements around the sites. Compensation is included in the corporate social responsibility package that includes schools, water, and dispensaries. Some settlements or families now insist on cash, and Tullow has set \$70,000 as a benchmark payment for lands used for oil exploration. Another component of my fieldwork focused on some of the families and settlements directly involved in the oil exploration.

When exploration activities commenced in 2010 with seismic surveys by China's BGP and Tullow's subsequent entry, this brought employment for many locals, mostly from Lokichar and Lodwar, the county capital. Jobs with Tullow became highly coveted, creating what Parry (1999) describes as a 'local aristocracy of labour'. The jobs were insecure, however, with contracts liable to terminate according to the demands of exploration schedules and global oil market trends. Nonetheless, the work offered the highest wages many could ever imagine. The lowest-paid employee took home a monthly average of Sh30,000 (\$300). Some received as much as Sh100,000 (\$1,000). They lived in camps that some described to me as 'heaven inside earth', with exquisite facilities and food. Some fortunate youths landed postgraduate scholarships in the UK and were absorbed into the oil company afterwards. Petroleum studies became the subject of choice for students getting into university. Those with an education were the most likely to be hired by Tullow, while those with lands around the oil wells received compensation, albeit still contested. *Manyatta* huts gave way to semi-permanent houses with shiny corrugated iron roofs- one step closer to *permanent*.

Pastoralists who had never paid much attention to education now saw the error of their ways. Some people even named their children Tullow. At the same time, however, protests,

roadblocks, and aggressive negotiations by the community garnered attention. Things ground to a halt for a while in 2015 when the global oil market took a downturn. Tullow drastically reduced its operations, including its workforce and supply contracts. The depression hit Lokichar hard. Just as the oil markets were facing the problem of glut, so were the many lodges, restaurants, shops, and businesses that had opened in the erstwhile sleepy town to service the emerging sector. Hopes were suspended in mid-air like the fancy houses some oil workers had started constructing. It was around this time that I commenced my fieldwork. Towards the last quarter of 2016, oil prices stabilised, and exploration activities picked up again. The competition was cutthroat. There were more protests and roadblocks, accusations and counter accusations that corrupt politicians were side-lining the community, and new associations like the Lokichar drivers' union and the association of market women as well as youth groups emerged to stake their claim on the opportunities.

Within all this was a category that became very contentious: pastoralists. This became a blanket term deployed by activists and job contenders during negotiations with the oil company. Consequently, the 'real' pastoralists as it were, became obscured. A divide emerged between the educated and the illiterate (mostly the nomads), with the former claiming the higher intellectual ground for negotiating oil-related affairs. For example, a group called Turkana Elites, later renamed Turkana Professionals, sought to oversee discussions with the government and the oil company. Paradoxically, they deployed the term 'pastoralists' to describe themselves. Who, then, are the 'real' pastoralists? The constant reference to pastoralists, whom I never saw in Nairobi meetings or high-end gatherings related to oil explorations, increased my resolve to explore what Michael Jackson (2012) in his essays in existential anthropology classifies as the town and bush dichotomy. Indeed, going to the reserve could feel like crossing into a different reality. It does not matter whether the reserve was just on the edge of a town; it was still considered off the beaten track. The reserve is a parallel reality that coexists with the humdrum routines of town life. Contrary to what one might readily assume, time is more fluid in town because economic activities are often temporary and unfixed. But, for civil servants, casual labour and petty trade are dependent on the small number of customers available.

The reserve does not have that kind of luxury. My first encounter with the term 'reserve' and its complementary category, the *raia*, left me baffled. The reserve was commonly described to me as 'inside the bush', a place 'where government has not touched' that did not have the three significant markers of development: schools, water, and dispensaries. The bush is an

outpost inhabited by the *raia*, the ‘real’ Turkana pastoralists. The term *raia* is a Swahili word that means nationals or citizens. It is a label used both by townspeople and by the *raia* themselves as a form of identity and class distinction. For example, during household surveys, questions about parents or absent family members are answered by statements such as ‘They are *raia*’ or ‘They are in the reserve.’ This automatically means they are uneducated, probably poor, and live in the wild with their livestock. They are, on the one hand, portrayed as symbols of what it means to be authentically Turkana and, on the other, deemed living relics of days gone by. There is a sense that one has not really touched the heart of Turkana without going to the reserve to see the *raia* and experience their ‘traditional’ or ‘pure’ Turkana way of life. I experienced this feeling myself. And regardless of how much time I spent following oil activities in the urban or semi-urban settlements, I was conscious of a world ‘in-there-somewhere’ yet to be explored.

Data Collection

I used a mix of mainly qualitative methods, including participant observation as well as formal and informal interviews. I also carried out a household survey in Lokichar and Nakukulas. Film and photography were important methods that helped me establish relationships, particularly with women and young people. Based on my proficiency, I became a sort of local photographer for burials, special occasions, and other events. The *raia* were particularly keen on being photographed and being given copies. The young girls in my *raia* host family preserved the copies I provided them in their metal box. Ethically, I always sought consent and refrained from taking random photos, especially close-ups. For the most part, the relationship determined the kind of picture I took. All photos in this thesis were taken by me, except the ones I am featured in. Below is a methodological breakdown.

Formal and Semi Structured Interviews: A wide range of formal and semi-structured interviews were carried out in London, Nairobi and Turkana. This kind of interview was best suited to very official contacts with limited amounts of time to spare. At the London events, I interviewed Tullow’s Vice President, the Turkana Governor, DFID and Adam Smith International Kenyan representative and a host of other delegates. On the ground in Nairobi, the first month was spent in Nairobi finalizing my research permit, connecting with friends and contacts I had made during my previous MA fieldwork in 2014 and from the London scene. I wanted to know more about the experts, their ethics, and how they did what they did. Also, I followed up on national government politics and conducted interviews around oil legislation and benefit sharing. A hypothesis and narrative began to emerge from these interviews which informed the analysis in the introduction on expert knowledge, the resource curse and

normative notions of development and ethical extraction. Interviews were also carried out with senior staff members of Tullow's headquarters in Nairobi and the conversations offered context and nuance around abstract notions of CSR and corporate entanglements.

Informal and Conversational Interviews: This method was used on a regular basis to draw out life histories, biographies of locations and settlements and specific details about people's experiences. Participants ranged from individuals and a cross section of lay people, families, local NGOs and activists, businesspeople, market traders and pastoralists. Informal conversations were also helpful in cultivating a long-term relationship with local Tullow staff members who were none too keen to be recorded.

Survey: A household survey using questionnaires was carried out in Lokichar and Nakukulas. There are limitations to this method in Turkana. The history of research in the area elevated anything related to lists, documents and personal information to a monetary activity. There is also the challenge of information hoarding particularly around livelihoods and household income. The assumption was that full disclosure may limit inclusion in potential benefits if certain people are deemed well off based on their answers. However, the survey was insightful as it showed settlement patterns, land use, perceptions about oil and the specific demands and benefits people claimed.

Participant observation and following people as they follow oil: As noted earlier, following people as they followed oil was central to my methodological strategy. What it offered was an embodied experience that interviews, and surveys do not yield. The visceral feeling of running alongside my interlocutors as they sought out secret oil meetings or racing to submit a job application on foot from a far-flung village brought a tangibility to the study of affect. Following in this light, shows a pursuit of order and logic as my interlocutors seek to navigate the ad-hoc processes of CSR and the distributive politics of a rightful share. It also shows how ethics can be a destabilising process as opposed to the order it promises. Thus, people are not actually following oil because it is not the oil itself that counts, rather, they are following the supposed development processes that this investment is supposed to give rise to.

Documents, Archives, Social media, Internet: An analysis of news reports and documents from Tullow's website on their operations was carried out. I also followed local oil debates virtually on social media sites, especially WhatsApp where groups formed and mobilised on topical issues around oil.

Data Analysis

Data was analysed through a process of thematic coding. Recorded interviews were transcribed and categorised into emerging themes. Information from observation fieldnotes, interviews, and survey were analysed and sorted into categories as well. From here, clear concepts began to emerge for an organic juxtaposition with existing theories and studies of natural resources in anthropology.

The next section concludes this chapter with some ethical considerations.

Two cheers for anthropology:

colour, local notions of research, and gender implications

I was blindsided during my fieldwork by people's reactions to my nationality. The influence of Nollywood (Nigerian movie industry) was deeply significant in Turkana and created a rather unflattering model of who Nigerians are. Popular themes include witchcraft, women of easy virtue, and crafty young men. Added to this was the widespread conception that Africans don't conduct research in other African countries. My field of anthropology further complicated things as it was conceived by other Kenyans familiar with the subject as a 'white' discipline, as noted by some Kenyan scholars. As one argues, '[B]y the time students join university, only a small proportion has heard of a subject known as anthropology... There is a well-documented misconception that anthropology's main focus is on the past, "bones and things that should be forgotten" with no relevance to contemporary Kenyan problems. (Nyamongo 2007: 40). There were positive aspects to my being African, of course, in terms of resonances and connections. But there was always the feeling of floating, of being neither this nor that. In studying identity and the way resource-making and development projects categorise people in Turkana and how identities shift circumstantially, I became caught up in a kind of identity project myself.

I did not stumble on Turkana by chance, nor did I arrive in Kenya with romanticised notions. Being African furnished me with a sense of familiarity, and Turkana was a good field site for understanding the dynamics of the new hydrocarbon boom emerging in East Africa. Perhaps for me it was a kind of comparative study based on my lived experiences being from a country steeped in decades of oil contestations. Familiarity has its benefits and became part of my research capability. The many similarities with Nigeria, especially its pastoral north, that helped my understanding of Turkana. In addition, people wanted to know about Niger Delta oil communities and sometimes created an us (we Africans) versus them (Tullow Oil) situation.

I came to anthropology by chance and much to the chagrin of many of my African friends and family. The discipline is not popular with an African audience, and its historical positioning in terms of race, class, and national identity continues to shape the perimeters of non-Western engagement (Amory 1997). A factor I consider even more germane is how education is conceptualised in Africa. Why do we go to school? One of the reasons for the assumption that foreign research is a Western prerogative is that ‘we Africans’, as some young men put it to me, ‘are too busy surviving and looking for how to help our family.’ Thus, going ‘elsewhere’ to carry out a ‘white’ kind of research is a luxury. Education should have the immediate benefits of jobs and food on the table.

Gender also played an important role in my fieldwork. Perceptions of promiscuity, especially because I was walking round Turkana alone and single, dogged the way that I was perceived. Nigerian movies opened as many doors as they closed. The themes of witchcraft and promiscuous women with scarlet talons and long synthetic hair flowing down to their generous behinds did not help matters. But being a woman also had its advantages. I was able to strike up close relationships with women. Plus, times have changed from the days when most anthropological research focused on men. Women are quite active currently. As towns and opportunities open, many women see town as a way out of the hard labour of pastoralism. This has increased the rate of girls running away from the reserve to escape forced marriages or simply to get an education.

I left the field in January 2017. In August of the same year, I returned for the general elections which played a key role in Turkana oil politics. Indeed, the conditions of fieldwork have changed drastically from the days when one fully left the field for logistical reasons. Technology has eased communication, and though one physically departs, friendships, interlocutors, and acquaintances are only a click away on WhatsApp, Facebook, and other platforms. As oil in Turkana was a developing story, it was important for me to keep abreast of issues, and the internet was significant in this regard. Although my research must have a cut-off point for analytical and ethnographic coherence, I kept abreast of issues with key interlocutors and news events. I have followed reports keenly and, on many occasions, find resonance in the things I have seen in the field. Things have improved for some of my interlocutors, but others’ circumstances have stayed the same. What has not changed is the pursuit of permanence. In London, I have also kept in touch with some Kenyans and have continued my Swahili lessons.

Regarding names and pseudonyms, I have used Christian names with a particular pattern and ring to them that are popular in Turkana, including the names of angels, biblical characters, and so on. Where I have used Christian or biblical names, they represent the category of the character's actual name. There are also many English names, which might sound 'atypical' to my non-Turkana interlocutors in Nairobi. For traditional names, finding local pseudonyms was trickier because names are very idiosyncratic – people can be named after anything. So, I have opted to shorten or abbreviate names or, in the case of the character I call the Eagle (see chapter 6), I created a name that reflects the meaning of his local name without giving too much away. I refer to members of civil society groups as activists or mobilisers. For Tullow staff and government officials, I have changed their names entirely except for those that spoke to me on record. Names of villages and locations were impossible to anonymise because they feature in media reports and studies.



Figure 23. Anthropological artefacts: Nakapwon displays some documents from the time he worked with anthropologists in the 1980s



Figure 24. Anthropological artefacts: Nakapwon's mementos



Figure 25. Entering the 'reserve' to meet the raia



Figure 26. The author at last drinks blood



Figure 27. L-R: Co-wives Ng'uppe and Apalo enjoying a hair day



Figure 28. Author assisting women drawing water from shallow wells for animals

Chapter 2

TURKANA IN PERSPECTIVE: LAND, LIVELIHOOD, AND LIFESTYLE

How is Turkana, as a place and a people, identified today? How is the past remembered and articulated? How is the future imagined, and by whom? Moreover, does development herald the end of herding? Many of my informants were split on these questions. ‘Too much tradition! This is our problem and we have to change!’ This was the view of a chief in one of the oil-affected settlements during my interview with him in 2016. ‘Too much following animals! Not for us to leave animals but at least, to try and become like Kenya down-country!’ He was the fourth chief to make this kind of remark to me. This line of reasoning is shared wholly by many and partially by others in Turkana. It resonates with persistent campaigns of development planners and policymakers to modernise pastoralists by bringing them into the market economy (Schlee and Shongolo 2012). It also suggests incompatible lifeworlds. The idea that pastoralism in its ‘traditional’ form is discordant with the times has created uncertainties where people’s identities, livelihood, and futures are entangled with global processes of capitalism, development practices, and discourses (Broch-Due 1999; Catley et al. 2013; Catley and Aklilu 2013; Fratkin and McCabe 1999). An evident impact of such discourses is the polarisation of pastoralists and non-pastoralists. This is a false dichotomy, as Müller-Dempf (2014) observes, yet it is undeniably influential in the ways pastoral societies are being structured.

What is even more at stake is the extent to which pastoralism itself becomes obscured in the dialectic because as debates rage for or against, ‘the real’ pastoralists are busy contending with more pressing challenges to their livelihoods. Yet, ‘untenable’ as it is made out to be, pastoralists and pastoralism survive and will continue years from now (Schlee and Shongolo 2012) in spite of the uncertainties associated with the process (Scoones 1995; Little et. al. 2018). But what is it about pastoralism that makes it such a polarised subject, often in need of defence or downright rejection? Why does it matter now to be recognised as a pastoralist or excluded from the category? Why the renewed zeal over who is and is not a pastoralist, who belongs where? Why have ‘culture’ and ‘tradition’, whether denigrated or extolled, found significance in mobilisations for social inclusion and exclusion? What is at stake? These questions are germane to understanding both the homogeneous and contradictory articulations of what it means to be a Turkana in the wake of oil. As the Comaroffs point out, ‘[T]he objectification of identity, in short, appears here to have produced a new sensibility, an explicit awareness of its essence, its affective, material, and expressive potential’ (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 2).

To answer these questions, we must turn to history, review the literature, and contextualise the debates. This chapter puts Turkana in historical perspective by examining salient moments that have shaped the region socially and economically. First, I present a conventional account of Turkana's origins and social organisation, followed by a brief discussion of the role of the state and national politics in the time of oil. At the heart of Turkana's history is the changing and ever-increasing need for stability – for permanence. As noted earlier, 'traditional' pastoralism continues to survive and, in fact, seems to be more permanent than the 'modern' impermanent forms of waged labour desired by many. What comes out strongly from the histories and accounts of the Turkana background are the long history of social differentiation, which is discussed in detail in chapter 3, the effects of marginalisation and its generative potential, changing forms of leadership and livelihood, and a strong mistrust of the state. These patterns of social differentiation coalesce strongly around binary social sets, new forms of social stratification, and the ways in which people in various categories, organic or imposed, are rethinking their place in society.

A major implication of these patterns of differentiation in the time of oil is that inclusion becomes contingent on fitting into particular identity structures. Another is the separation of livelihood from culture, which is evident in the 'town and bush' dichotomy. The town represents modernity, whereas the bush – or the reserve, as locals term it – is the place of the *raia* and the tradition of nomadic pastoralism. Here, pastoralism is imagined as culture and culture as in opposition to progress. The separation of livelihood from culture as a distinct category emerged from the position that 'eastern African pastoralism is intrinsically self-destructive and that a more progressive approach to development should steer pastoralists into other, allegedly more secure means of assuring their livelihood' (Anderson 1999: 240). As such, culture was and still is in many ways pitched as a threat to survival. But, as Ferguson argues, '[W]ealth cannot be separated from the wider sociocultural context within which different categories of wealth acquire their meaning, and within which exchange between such meaningful categories is prescribed, enabled, or prohibited' (Ferguson 1992: 55). Broch-Due (1999: 36) argues that 'the contention that the "livestock-labour-land" equation is intrinsically an "unproductive" one constitutes the recurrent "problem" that colonial and post-colonial policies have sought to redress.' As in many other colonised countries, establishing spatial borders and social hierarchies among so-called primitive tribes were 'norms of a broader political order' (Shah 2010: 13) in the time of colonialism. In the Turkana context, as with other pastoral societies, productivity also played a significant part in

differentiation, as noted earlier. Colonialism emphasised difference and sought to keep people grouped and rooted within clearly demarcated boundaries (Broch-Due 1999).

The postcolonial dispensation was no better. As pastoralism came under increased pressure from ecological factors such as drought, disease, and famine, these distinctions became even more apparent. Human-made problems such as conflict and intertribal raids, added to environmental issues, also created room for the diversification, rehabilitation, and settlement orthodoxy to take root. However, '[N]ew strategies have created new forms of differentiation and exclusion, and the accumulation of wealth now seems to threaten rather than support pastoralism' (Waller 1999: 20). Although the overall aim of development policy has been to mitigate the impact of droughts, '[C]ontemporary development thinking is often tinged with the same mixture of despair and exasperation once found in colonial reports' (ibid.). Urbanisation in pastoral areas has become synonymous with economic diversification and alternative livelihood strategies. Early town settlers were mostly those who lost animals to drought, disease, and conflict. Others made the choice to leave the 'reserves' in order to gain better access to basic amenities. Most of today's towns and urban centres started as temporary grazing settlements that morphed into permanent sites, having become food aid distribution or trade centres.

I now turn to the trajectory of the Turkanas' emergence as a distinct ethnic group in Kenya.

Identities on the move: Turkana origins and colonial encounters

Turkana is a language (*Ng'aturkana*), a people (*Ng'iturkan*), and a place (*Eturkan*). A popular myth of origins has it that all Turkana are descendants of Nayece, an old woman who aided a group of eight young men in search of a lost bull. The young men had left their home in the Karamoja area (now Uganda) and crossed the escarpment that is presently the border between Uganda and Kenya to arrive at the Tarash River. By the headwaters of the river, they found the bull with Nayece, who had also come from Karamoja in search of sustenance. She hosted them and showed them the potential of the area. Inspired by the greener pastures, the eight young men went back to Karamoja to mobilise their peers and gather the rest of their livestock. Ignoring the curse of their elders, as some versions have it, they returned to Nayece and established a new identity in the land that became Turkana (Lamphear 1976, 1988, 1992; Mirzeler 2014; Müller 1989). Variations of this myth and other narratives of Turkana origins abound. Importantly, as historian John Lamphear points out, Turkana's vivid and dramatic oral traditions suggest multiple moments of becoming as opposed to a single monolithic 'origin'. Also

significant is that the narratives ‘also correspond to important stages of change in the development of the Turkana community, and, as such, they (together with less “formal” traditions associated with them) provide vital historical information’ (Lamphear 1988: 38). This suggests that foraging, hunting, and herding have long been key to Turkana history. However, as Gunther Schlee (1989) notes, pastoral identities are always on the move. In exploring the trajectory of tribes and ethnic groups, John Lonsdale (1977) argues that, as scholars, our interest in historical antecedents should not be driven by ‘when did group (X) become’ but rather the multiple moments of becoming in the ‘unfinished process of coming to be’ (1977: 132; see also MacArthur 2013 on the Luyia tribe). Ethnic identity thus becomes not an object or product out there for us to find but a process (Brubaker and Cooper 2000).

The embryonic Turkana led by the pioneering age group called *Ng’iputiro* (Lamphear 1976) expanded rapidly in the first half of the nineteenth century. This is a significant factor that is reflected even today in the ways that leaders emerge circumstantially. This is not to suggest that no established social or political hierarchies exist but is meant to point out they are always subject to contention. For example, the rise of diviners and warriors coincided with the fight against the British during which elders took a back seat. Once established, hierarchies have been somewhat fluid, and identities are constantly being remade. Paul Spencer’s (2003) study conducted in 1965 of gerontocracy among the neighbouring Samburu tribe in Kenya focused on the age set system characteristic of pastoral societies, with particular attention to the relationship between the *moran* (unmarried young men) and their elders. The latter, at the head of the leadership hierarchy, acted as custodians of tradition. Spencer analysed the concept of *nkanyit* – ‘sense of respect’ – considered one of the most important social values and noted that it also reinforced the inequalities produced by gerontocratic rule. Conversely, *nkanyit* also produced the adverse effect of rebellion among the *moran*, who felt their personal desires were stifled by their elders. Thus, a ‘sense of respect’ also generated a rebellious outcome.

In addition to the agile young men seeking new opportunities, Turkana’s advancement was aided by ecological pressures and livestock diseases that weakened communities in the areas they claimed. Pushing towards the north along the Tarash, eastwards to the shores of Lake Turkana, south between the Turkwel and Kerio Rivers, and to the northern highland areas, existing inhabitants were dispersed while others threw in their lot with the conquering Turkana as a means of survival (Lamphear 1976, 1992). Around 1850, the Turkana were in control of virtually the entire territory between Lake Turkana in the east and the escarpment in the west

that became Turkana land located in the Great Rift Valley of East Africa (Lamphear 1992; McCabe 2004: 49). Between the expansion years in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Turkana overcame and assimilated many other pastoralists they encountered. They also survived some devastating droughts in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Dyson-Hudson 1999: 28). Their successful expansion has been attributed to ‘assimilation rather than annihilation’, which gave them control over the vast plains around Lake Turkana (Dyson-Hudson 1999: 25–26; Lamphear 1988: 28–30). Some of the reasons for the rapid expansions include the human and livestock epidemics that left neighbouring communities vulnerable and easily overpowered by the Turkana. Superior weapons and diviners also kept the Turkana one step ahead, plus the species of cattle (zebu thoracic-humped cattle) they acquired at the time, which were well suited to the harsh terrain (McCabe 2004: 49).

By the 1800s, Turkana was a renowned ivory frontier that was attracting Swahili caravans of ivory hunters. By 1884, the first Europeans arrived in the south of Turkana, also in search of ivory, while the Ethiopians arrived in the north at about the same time and were followed by the British in 1897. A few years down the line, conflict between the Ethiopian Empire and the British over the control of Turkana ensued. The British were not particularly interested in Turkana. Their concern was to control the porous Turkana borders and prevent the advancement of the Ethiopians, who had also brought firearms with them for the Turkana (Lamphear 1992). British military patrols increased, along with the establishment of hut taxes and the establishment of the office of a chief in 1905 with the intention of introducing structure to what the British colonisers considered a ‘headless’ society. The Turkana rebelled against taxes, which led to confiscations of livestock as punishment. Further, neighbouring tribes with whom the Turkana engaged in traditional livestock raids were armed by the British while the Turkana were disarmed, making them even more vulnerable.

In retaliation, the Turkana began to mount counter-military attacks against the British (McCabe 2004). The British impact on the Turkana leadership structure is perhaps one of the most significant aspects of the colonial encounter. By the late nineteenth century, when Turkana first encountered early African traders, European explorers, and British military patrols, ‘[T]hey were reported to be an arrogant, wealthy, and warlike people, hated and feared by their neighbours, able to field an army of 2,000 men’ (Dyson-Hudson 1999: 27) and were in possession of a vast territory of some 24,000 square miles, which corresponds closely to their

present district (Lamphear 1988: 27). British colonial officer Henry Rayne provides an apt description of this period:

The Turkana lives on low plains, surrounded by high hills and escarpments leading up to plateaux, on which live war-like tribes. The plains, though fair cattle country, are, for a good many months of the year, practically desert, and can only be held by a tribe inured to hardship. This tribe must be warlike, because its territory is so easily raided from the surrounding heights. Offence, under the circumstances, is the best form of defence; centuries of strife have taught the Turkana that one way to live in peace is to terrorise his neighbours – then they leave him severely alone. (1919: 259)

This level of military organisation, primarily deployed for cattle raiding and territorial defence, gave the British the Herculean task of conquering the region (Dyson-Hudson 1999: 29; Lamphear 1988: 23; 1992). Vigdis Broch-Due (1990 quoted in Wolputte and Verswijver 2004) writes that the signs of unease first manifested in 1888 with the first Europeans to visit Turkana, who took the local customs of a warrior dance that demanded gifts from first-time strangers to mean an invitation to battle. Worst of all, water – a scarce commodity – was taken without permission. These conflicts of cultural misinterpretation grew worse with the arrival of the colonialists, and by 1918 the British had declared war on the region, an era the Turkana people describe as ‘the year of scattering’ (Carla Huysmans in Wolputte and Verswijver 2004: 121).

The confrontations with the British were brutal. On the Turkana side, ‘[I]ndirect casualties were 14 percent of their population – proportionally greater than suffered by Germany in World War II’ (Dyson-Hudson 1999: 27). Lamphear (1992: 115) estimates that at least 2,000 Turkana died in armed clashes with British patrols and an additional 3,000 people died of disease and starvation, while thousands of livestock were confiscated. Lamphear posits that most of the historical accounts of Kenyan resistance to the British conquest have largely ignored the Turkana, who were even more tenacious than the better represented tribes which fought for independence, such as the Mau Mau rebels of Kikuyu (1992: 2). Hence, the occupation of Turkana proved to be a very costly and unsuccessful endeavour for the British, ‘a pit into which money must always be thrown without any return’ (Leslie and Little 1999: 34–36). Geoffrey Archer, the British Administrator in Turkana at the time, recommended the following:

- (1) that the Turkana region be administered strictly on a maintenance basis;
- (2) that appearance by any outsiders be tightly controlled;
- (3) that the nomadic peoples be allowed to follow their own customs under the guidance of their own chiefs;
- (4) that Government interference be kept to an absolute minimum. (quoted in Lamphear 1992: 243)

These policies sealed off Turkana from the rest of Kenya, allowing in only Catholic missionaries on a scheduled basis to administer healthcare and other basic needs. The isolation endured after independence, so much so that ‘there were still roadblocks on entering Turkana as late as 1976, 13 years after Kenyan independence in 1963’ (Dyson-Hudson 1999: 28). Metaphorically speaking, the roadblocks still exist if one considers the fact that today there are no reliable road networks within or outside Turkana, making movement and trade extremely difficult. Any hopes of reintegration with the wider society after independence were dashed because the unification agenda of the postcolonial state did not extend to Turkana. Both its land and its people were seen as a liability and allowing donors and the church to continue in the service of governance was considered to be more convenient than direct state intervention.

Political organisation and social relations

Early works on East African pastoralists were focused on locating structures and replicable models (Dyson Hudson 1980). In the absence of any formal hierarchies such as kings and chiefs, they were often considered more acephalous than structured in terms of social organisation and political systems. This may explain why earlier scholars gave much attention to the analysis of generation sets and age groups as the focal point of leadership. Tullow representatives similarly emphasised the challenge of locating power due to its seemingly constantly shifting nature. The consent of a chief or local politician was by no means a guarantee of universal cooperation. But, however dispersed or autonomous as a group the Turkana may seem, authority exists after a fashion, and in Turkana authority is polycephalous, with a dispersed and varied leadership structure (Müller-Dempf 2014).

When the initial Turkana split from the Karimojong cluster, they adopted a similar pattern of flexible leadership that focused on localised autonomous kinship and/or territorial associations. Elders were the principal authority figures and were made up of family heads. They controlled the generation age system whereby young men were initiated according to their father’s alternation- a form of social categorisation discussed later in the chapter. In the era of territorial expansion, the age set was an effective mechanism for elders to mobilise young men for raids on other communities; it also provided a check on what were perceived to be the excesses of youth. Ritual specialists – including fire- and rainmakers, healers and diviners – were marginal figures whose activities were relegated to neighbourhoods. Warriors were secondary figures subject to the authority of the elders. Their task was basically to recruit young men for initiation and raiding activities. But with expansion came more formidable resistance from

groups who refused to be subjugated by the Turkana. In desperation, the elders changed the criteria for initiation. Instead of the grouping according to birth alternations, biological age sets were introduced. Further, men of fighting age yet to be initiated were allowed to go on raids. This gave rise to militarism as leadership became associated with the ability to display one's fighting prowess during raids. The marginal figure of the diviner seized the opportunity to build a following of young men eager to prove themselves (Lamphear 1992: 25). The British incursion and its military campaign created an opportunity for the development of central leadership figures. It marked the rise of diviners and war lords who began to assume a more political role. Lokerio, a popular diviner at the time, extended his spiritual activities to military affairs. His prophecies and tactics led to successful raids and, as Lamphear notes, '[U]sing an efficient system of messengers who worked in relays from one territorial section to another, Lokerio now began to co-ordinate the mustering of larger raiding parties than had been assembled in the past' (1992: 31).

Independent nomadic patterns fostered a decentralised form of political and social organisation. There was no traditional form of political hierarchy or central authority as people did not concentrate in permanent places for a long period of time. The basic unit of social organisation became the *awi*, or homestead, 'a self-determinant pastoral unit, moving more or less independently of like units' (Gulliver 1955: 252). Here, management of livestock is achieved through the subdivision of different family herds into specific species and production units (McCabe 2004: 40). Larger kinship groups, such as clans or lineages, exist for particular purposes but the range of kinsmen to whom one could turn in legal matters, for bride-wealth assistance, or for help in livestock management are limited (Lamphear 1992: 14), as I will show in the later discussion on clans. As people move in and out of settlements and neighbourhoods according to their own nomadic patterns, the relationships between homesteads are transient. In some cases, these relationships might revolve around watering points when people come up to water livestock. For example, the Lok family with whom I stayed periodically repeatedly emphasised how much the distance to the next homestead mattered to them. They were an isolated unit. Some of their children have never seen towns. Those born in the bush are called *Aroo* or *Iroo*. The only time we met neighbours was on the way to or at the watering points. Even during crises of cattle raids, my hosts would wake up only to discover that neighbours had simply moved away.

Stock associations are important relationships formed and maintained between herd owners and widely dispersed networks of bond-friends (Lamphear 1992: 14). This pattern remains prevalent among nomadic pastoralists. Systems of kinship and stock associations are important relationships by which individuals to gain access to livestock and labour in times of stress. McCabe describes Turkana social organisation as ‘two systems of social relationships operating simultaneously. One system is based on social relationships, territory and rights in pasture and water, the other is based on kinship, relationships among individuals, and rights in livestock and labour’ (2004: 53). This distinction is captured by the terms *ng’itungakan* (my people) as opposed to *n’gikolomak* (strangers, acquaintances). Gulliver (1955) uses the term stock-associates to describe enduring relationships of cooperation. ‘A man who is closely related is ipso facto one who gives and is given animals, for this not only expresses mutual confidence and affection but it expresses also a genuine co-operation in each other’s life and development’ (Gulliver 1955: 197). Examples of this distinction were demonstrated during my fieldwork. The exchange extends beyond livestock to include other kinds of assistance, such as school fees, food, or cash, but the point remains that close kin are not necessarily biological but those who come to one’s aid in time of need. Friendship is more important and more treasured than kinship and affinity (Johnson 1999: 91). ‘In Turkana . . . people are liked and engaged for their individual qualities’ (ibid.). Thus, Turkana relationships are multiplex (ibid.), which signals fluid relationships defined less by kinship and more by mutual bonds and investment.

When I joined a local NGO worker on his sensitisation rounds across Turkana South, we were hosted by one of his friends in Kaputir, a riverine semi-urban settlement. Our host slaughtered a goat for us, which is considered one of the highest forms of regard in Turkana and explained that the gesture was in appreciation for my companion’s help with school fees during a very difficult time. The gesture, carried out almost a year prior, had strengthened the bonds of friendship between them and opened channels of reciprocity in the absence of blood ties. In the same vein, lack of action can sever relationships, even with kin. The uncle (mother’s brother) of another young man I worked with ceased paying school fees because he was of the opinion that the young man’s own brothers, who were *raia*, should assume responsibility by committing some of their livestock to the cause. Void of any gesture, the relationship soured to the point where the two men never saw or spoke to each other again.

So, although many Turkana in a particular geographic area may be related through ties of kinship or marriage, individual relations within these categories vary considerably according

to degrees of ‘friendliness’. Brothers and brothers-in-law are not necessarily close unless their relationship is buttressed by actions associated with friendship. Friendship is also defined and sustained through ongoing mutual support. Past friends are not necessarily intimate unless they are camped near enough to one another that they can maintain an active relationship. In Turkana, active relations share food when available, occasionally exchange livestock, and engage in mutually affectionate labour and leisure activities. Relationships can sometimes lie dormant and only become important when acted upon. Next, I describe the various units of social organisation.

The *awi*, or household/homestead

The Turkana are polygynous, as already described in the methods section with the example of my pastoralist host family. A man can have as many wives as he can afford. Men in past generations had as many as twenty wives. One of my informants believed he was remotely related to everyone in his town because one of his ancestors was a wealthy livestock owner with as many wives as his herd could pay for in bride wealth. Thus, a single family is an organisation in itself because family size also impacts the quality of pastoralism in terms of labour. The *awi* or homestead, which encapsulates the most fundamental unit of social organisation in Turkana, comprises a man and his wife or wives, children, and livestock (Gulliver 1955: 124; Lamphear 1992; McCabe 2004: 53). It might also include a widowed or orphaned close relative. Wives and children constitute the fundamental labour force required for the growth and management of the family herd. Female children are especially valued for the bride wealth they bring into the family in form of livestock when a man seeks their hand in marriage. Young men marry when they can raise their own livestock or if the father has enough to assist in the bride-wealth payment as discussed later in the section on marriage.

The *awi* is spatially configured by a low fence made of thorny shrubs that establish its external perimeters. Inside, the space is demarcated into yards that separate the *ekols* (lit. huts but translated as households) that are the domain of each of the wives and her children. The *ekol* is a physical space where each wife establishes her domain, gives birth, raises her children, and conducts her daily affairs and runs her household. It also marks a social unit of full siblings born of the same woman. In addition to the *ekols*, the *awi* also includes a livestock population and is organised around it. Livestock holdings consist of separate herds of camels, cattle, donkeys, and small stock (goats and sheep are herded together). Most *awis* have herds and flocks of each of these livestock species, although the species composition of the herds and flocks will vary

according to location, wealth of the herd owner, number and types of animals inherited, and the individual preference for certain species of the herd owner (McCabe 2004: 53). Although the *amvi* or homestead is a man's territory in terms of absolute control, the homestead is divided into 'yards' based on maternal affiliation (Gulliver 1955: 128). According to Ohta,

"The family head stands, as it were, outside the yards, being the focal point genealogically and sociologically at which they are united into the single corporate group. Each wife is the pioneer of her own section and receives an allocation of female animals (cows, camels, ewes and goats), perhaps a few male animals, and two or three donkeys for pack purposes. Allocations are made directly by the family head in accordance with the proportionate requirements of each wife (depending on the number of children) for the staple food, milk. A family's livestock holding is considered the sole property of the family head, but all livestock also belong to the women's hut or *ekol*'. (2007: 5)



Figure 29. The structure of a typical homestead

Women and their daughters milk the female animals, pour the milk into a gourd after milking, and share between the yards after fermentation. When livestock is slaughtered for meat, it is skinned and dissected at the woman's *ekol* and distributed to other members of the family from that hut. To designate which hut should do this, all the animals are allocated to certain huts in advance (Ohta 2007). Each animal has its individual owner, but members of an *ekol* also have

a certain collective right to the animals that belong to their hut. The woman does not own the stock in the complete sense of ownership. She is a caretaker on behalf of her husband and has no say as to the allocation of animals or what happens to them beyond milking, watering, and related activities. Certain gender and property rights and senses of entitlement and access to resources stem from that. Young men obtain their own animals upon the death of their father, through relatives and friends, and during cattle raids. If livestock is acquired through raids, it is shared by all who participated. In the past, raiding offered (and still does, in some cases) one of the quickest ways to acquire livestock. Each herd owner has a home or *ere* to which he often returns in the wet season (but not every wet season, from my observation, as some areas might not be as wet as others due to the uneven rainfall dispersion). Most herd owners live and travel with two or five other herd owners and their families (especially during crises), forming what is referred to as an *adakar*, a collection of homesteads. Within this unit, herding responsibilities are often shared, and occasionally food is distributed among members. Herd owners may remain together for weeks or years, depending on individual choices and situational circumstances. People within the *adakar* remain together for companionship and protection for as long as the forage and water resources permit; this is often two to four months following the onset of rains.



Figure 30. Women milking camels at dawn.

Initiation, age groups, and the alternations

Age groups are an important feature of social organisation in Turkana. Their major significance, in addition to acting as an everyday social support network, is their provision of security and military organisation in times of threat. From the colonial era to the present-day crises of cattle raids, a section of young men can be counted upon to protect the community. It is also significant in establishing hierarchies and generational relationships. *Asapan*, the initiation process, is a thing of pride even among those in towns and is considered the hallmark of a real Turkana man. The ceremony is often carried out during the wet season and involves activities that emphasise masculinity and fearlessness. Young boys between the ages of fourteen to eighteen are initiated into manhood through an elaborate ritual that can last for several days or separate days over the course of a year. It culminates in the spearing of an animal (an ox is considered the most prestigious, but any affordable small stock would do). The initiation age varies. Some men even are initiated past forty years of age, as the Turkana governor did during my fieldwork. The entrails of the carcass are smeared on the initiates as purification. Each participant is initiated into an age group, and the senior men in the group conduct the process, handing down ideal traditions and rules of membership. The initiates are now able to join group activities, wear certain apparel, and participate in group activities such as feasting, dancing, war-making, and rituals. Commonly, two new age groups are created in each initiation year, one in each alternation. The alternations form the basis of the initiation ceremony and attendant rituals.

Alternation is the nomenclature coined by Gulliver (1958) in order to explain the form of social classification whereby every Turkana male belongs to one of two groupings. Locally, these are termed *imurut* (Stones) and *erisait* (Leopards). It is an alternation because at birth the male child automatically assumes membership in his grandfather's group instead of his father's: the sons of Stones become Leopards and vice versa. The two groups do not represent tribal generations because it is a birth placement process; thus, each alternation will always include males of similar ages. Within a clan, for example, there are men of different alternations, and the two alternation groups include men from a variety of clans. Women are not part of this placement. Only through marriage do they become part of their husband's alternation, his clan, and his family. Married *raia* women wear metal rings around their neck according to the colour of their husband's alternation. The rule is that Stones should only wear black ostrich plumes and dark-coloured metal ornaments (rings, neckpieces, bracelets, anklets); Leopards wear only white

ostrich plumes and light-coloured or gold metal ornaments, and they alone may wear leopard-skin cloaks.

As Gulliver argues, belonging to these alternations is a fundamental aspect of Turkana social life – a natal affiliation that is expressed and reinforced through feasting, dancing, war-making, and ritual and through specific affects of respect and mutual support that members of an alternation show towards each other. He continues,

The two new age-groups which are established in any one initiation season, and which together comprise a total collection of coevals, do not find an especial common interest and mutuality, nor do they coalesce as a single age-class. Instead, each group tends to associate itself with its next senior group in the alternation, and in later life age-group membership gives way in part to the wider membership of the alternation. Young men tend to seek the advice and help and to accept the orders and restraints of the senior men of their own alternation, but they can ignore both counsel and control coming from the other group. There is a greater formality and conscious distinction between members of contemporaneous groups but of different alternations than there is between members of successive groups in a single alternation. An elderly Stone at a ceremony or dance would not give orders to a young Leopard, but he would expect and would normally obtain compliance and respect from a young Stone. (Gulliver 1958: 903)

The alternations are most visible in group meetings. An assembly of men automatically splits into two groups in line with their alternations. They sit in an arc or semi-circle known as an *akiriket*. The oldest men in the two groups sit in the middle and the rest in the order of seniority till the youngest at the end of the *akiriket*. Note, here, that there are different age sets within an alternation. Those initiated at the same time, i.e. in the same ceremony, form an age group. Uninitiated men sit outside the *akiriket* or behind it. Scraps of meat are thrown backwards to them, which is something they often joke about. In the days of war (fighting the British or raiding the livestock of neighbouring tribes), Turkana military attacks, according to Gulliver, were normally mounted by a two-pronged assault, each prong composed of men of one alternation (1955: 250; 1958). Beyond social categorisation, mutual support, and mobilisation, the alternations now have few readily discernible functions.

Clans

In principle, a clan – or ‘brand’, as some scholars prefer (Barret 1998) – serves as a form of micro-classification of the wider group and an opportunity to form individual relationships of mutual assistance. For example, herd owners stranded in unfamiliar territory look for animals with the same mark as theirs and then follow the livestock home. The assumption is that, as clan

relatives, the visitors will be provided with food and shelter. In practice, however, clan members are not obliged to help one another. Although members of the same clan may be willing to offer hospitality, in times of real need it is the relationship between individuals that is of utmost importance. There is not a hierarchy of clans among the Turkana, nor do the clans have any corporate functions. The only clan assigned a separate status is the one from which the diviners (*ngimurok*) emerge (McCabe 2004: 57). Every clan has a distinctive brand symbolised by the characteristic mark imprinted on the livestock of clan members which highlights both its symbolic and social functions. A man becomes a warrior when he kills an enemy or large animal. His new status is recognised by the ritual marks (*ngageran*) carved in his own skin or that of his sister and his ox. In the past, all Turkana people had three distinguishing marks (*ngadungon*) imprinted on their foreheads (*ngasip*). Adolescent girls today have beauty marks on their shoulders and upper arms. Married women, unmarried mothers, and girls are distinguishable by the skins they wear and their style of decoration. Females from the different brands can be recognised by the different types of skins they wear, the colours of clay on their heads, the sticks they carry, and their hairstyles. Animals and where they belong are identified by the marks on their bodies. A man creates the identity of the animal, and the animal gives identity to him. Every man has a so-called ox-name in addition to the name he is given at birth.

There is, however, a matrilineal dimension to clan membership. So-called children of the dancing ground, namely, those born out of wedlock, trace their lineage through their mothers (Dyson-Hudson et al. 1998). In these cases, the mother's father assumes the role of a social pater. Though promiscuity is generally frowned upon, these children are given a legitimate place in their maternal family line. For male children born in this category, their mother's brothers become their brothers as they now share the same father, but the child grows up among his father's household and blends in.

Turkana clans are generally exogamous. Every Turkana is identified with one of the existing twenty-eight (Gulliver 1951) or twenty-nine (McCabe 2004) patrilineal clans from birth. Women, however, switch from their patrilineal clan to that of their husband after marriage. Some clans are restricted to geographic locations, while others cut across the various sections (Gulliver 1951; McCabe 2004: 57). Elements of these groupings are invoked circumstantially in discussions about politics, representation, oil – about who is deserving or not of compensation and support and identity as a real Turkana. Based on my survey, interviews, and ethnographic

observations, being part of a clan is not a guarantee of assistance from one's kinsmen but can be important for political mobilisation.

Territorial sections, settlements, and property rights

Where the clans tell us of laws, customs, and culture, territorial divisions (*ngikitela*) tell us of rights to property, including land, water, and grass. People and settlements are spread out across eighteen or nineteen territorial sections, or *ng'itela*, which is literally translated as ridges (Dyson-Hudson and Dyson Hudson cited in Leslie and Little 1999: 81). The number and relevance of sections vary amongst scholars and amongst my interlocutors. However, the common idea is that sections underscore the boundaries for grazing livestock. People become parts of the sections they are born into but have free access to other sections in times of dire need, especially dry seasons. Territorial sections are different from clans, though some locals when asked for their clan give the name of their section. Sections have more to do with territorial boundaries that organise and define population dispersion according to the peculiarities of their residential areas in terms of weather patterns, natural resources, and livelihood. It is also a way to manage access to resources, especially grazing land and water, even though the common understanding is that every Turkana has rightful access to all land. The wisdom of communal land ownership is that no individual has a singular claim to land.

Most pastoralists carry out their everyday subsistence activities within the boundaries of their own territorial section, but in times of need such as droughts, people may cross over to other sections and negotiate access. For example, the riverine areas are always lush compared to drier areas. Following a peaceful negotiation during which the herder negotiates for access, often by offering a goat to be shared in the new area, he is welcome to access resources. This way, conflict between people crossing from one section to another is mitigated. Thus, sections serve as a form of social classification along geographical lines. Their names are derived mostly from the resource found in the area or the predominant livelihood pattern. For example, the section called *Ngibelai* carries a name that means 'bending and breaking of sticks', which is derived from a habit of living in bushy places and making of fighting sticks for sale, while *Ngikebootok* refers to 'poor people' because people in that section do not have livestock and *Ngikwatela* refers to 'white stones', meaning people of the white plains whose land area is covered with white ballast and gravel traditionally referred to as *ekitela*. However, these names are rarely reflected upon or referenced today. Presently, sections are classified according to political constituencies. They have

been substituted for administrative wards. For the nomadic pastoralists, however, customary sectional categories remain important.

Terrence McCabe (2004) points out that before the 1980s, very few Turkana lived in towns or engaged in fishing and farming as a means of livelihood, but then ravaging droughts and cattle raids left the region vulnerable, leading to severe suffering and enormous relief efforts. Food shortages had become a regular occurrence in Turkana as a result of the British administration's blocking of access routes into many areas. These roadblocks were still in place long after Kenya gained independence. Coupled with regular droughts, food shortage became a permanent fixture such that between 1936 and 1984, 80,000 Turkana became destitute and lived in famine relief camps which had been set up as far back as the colonial era (McCabe 2004; Wolputte and Verswijver 2004: 125). The drought of 1980–1981 was the most devastating (Cullis and Pacey 1992), and McCabe notes that 'by 1985, about half of the Turkana population was living in or close to famine relief camps. As drought stress lessened and relief camps began to close, many, but not all, of those who migrated into the camps returned to the pastoral sector' (2004: 39). By 1995–1996, a new form of social organisation emerged called *arum-rum*, largely in response to heavy attacks from the Pokots¹². This consisted of a large encampment of many herd owners under the leadership of a single man. People lived within a series of concentrically built thorn fences, and the young men within the *arum-rum* were heavily armed. The whole encampment moved together as a unit. The *arum-rum* is widely taken to have signalled the beginning of permanent urban settlements in Turkana (McCabe 2004).

Marriage

Marriage in Turkana is perhaps the most important domain of negotiation and the fundamental mechanism of wealth and resource redistribution. It is the means by which a family increases its livestock through bride wealth. Therefore, female children are considered more valuable; they enrich the family when they marry. Livestock is associated with wealth, and marriage increases livestock. Young men who have moved to towns now largely ignore this ritual. Some have converted to Christianity; others point to their education as an excuse to break from this tradition. As I explain in chapter 4, the process of negotiating the bride wealth offers great insight into the way the community negotiates for land access and benefits with the oil company. Bride wealth is a form of exchange with social and economic implications. A female child is exchanged

¹² The Pokots are a neighbouring tribe of Turkana. The two counties have a long history of cattle raids and conflict.

for livestock, and the recipient of the latter in time exchanges livestock for a bride. This is a circle that strengthens bonds of friendships and other associations, creates affines, and replenishes herds. Livestock is the most important property and source of wealth. Those without access to livestock are considered poor (*ng'ikebootok*). A man inherits livestock from his father and also buys to build up his herd. Bride wealth is an important means of building up a herd, thus making the process integral to the pastoral survival strategy (Dyson-Hudson et al. 1998).

Marriage in Turkana is a process, not an event (Dyson-Hudson et al. 1998; Gulliver 1955: 22). Typically, it includes the following steps: a son can identify a wife for himself subject to his father's approval, and the father can arrange a match equally; both families accept the match and commence negotiations regarding the bride wealth; the bride accompanies the man to his father's house; a ceremony is held where livestock are exchanged; and the killing of an ox marks the completion of bride wealth, which can take years and, in many cases, continues even after the death of the man. Male children often complete their father's debt so as to claim his lineage. I was told that a bride's family might refuse to give away their daughter to a suitor if the suitor's family had a bad reputation of cheating, were badly in debt, or were known to practise witchcraft. The negotiations establish the future of the kind of relationship between the two families. Thus, the personal attributes of sons' wives are also important because these women will become part of the production unit (Dyson-Hudson et al. 1998). The cycle of debt increases when a child is born. Added to the pending price for the bride (most people are unable to complete payment at once), children from the union attract more debt – forty goats for the first child and twenty for subsequent ones. Failure to complete all payments means the children will not be legally recognised as members of their father's clan. As is the case with unmarried mothers, the children then become part of the woman's lineage.

On one occasion I witnessed, the relatives of a friend's wife came to his small store in town and demanded groceries as part of his payment. In fact, during a household survey I conducted, one of my respondents cited claiming bride wealth as a means of livelihood. She and other relatives would visit men married to their siblings and request a goat, some food, or any kind of assistance he could offer them. This implies a constant moral pressure to redistribute. The *raia* and old men in turn lament the rate at which young men move to town and ignore tradition, preferring to marry town girls rather than *raia* girls. Among the same self-consciously modern class, however, it is a thing of great pride if one has performed *ekuta*, which is the wedding ceremony itself that involves spearing an ox. This signifies the end of all payments.

With this, one is fully a man and has married well. A member of the County Assembly proudly told me he is a “complete Turkana man” because he had completed the most important rites of passage of *asapan* (initiation), on the one hand, and *ekuta*, on the other.

In one of my frequent conversations I had with my fieldwork companions about life among the *muzungu* (white men), a young *raia* man was scandalised to learn that bride wealth was not a requirement for a man to marry a woman in the UK. ‘So, what do the parents of the girl get for taking care of her and bringing her up? Do they just take the girl without giving her parents any animals? That is like what townspeople are doing here in Turkana now.’ Some others found the idea that one wasn’t bound to family and responsibilities refreshing. ‘Dependency’, a schoolteacher once told me, ‘is killing us here. School fees, feeding, everybody wants you to help. Those people over there are lucky.’

Leadership

The traditional Turkana community is gerontocratic and dispersed. As noted above, a senior clan member, an elder or elders representing a settlement, or even a chief do not signify absolute representation of the whole. It was the British colonial administration that initiated the order of chiefs. Otherwise, leadership often boiled down to the head and elders from the wider cluster. The nature of pastoralism necessitates each family to make decisions favourable to them while collaborating with other families over shared resources such as water points for animals and grazing sites. In the past, seers (*emuron*) were located at the top of the social hierarchy. They were mediators between the seen and unseen and were noted for leading the warriors in raids, providing guidance for the community, carrying out rituals, and providing protection against the evil spirits of barrenness, livestock disease, and so on.

In some parts of Turkana, seers are still revered. They exist side by side with contemporary leaders such as chiefs and modern-day politicians. They settle certain kinds of disputes and are given special consideration in oil exploration negotiations. There have been incidents where the seer in an area was not consulted or given gifts by the oil company and, as a result, exploration stalled. Vehicles would not start, and drilling machines clamped up until the seers were appeased with gifts. But, the wider population is generally apathetic towards the seers. Several factors have led to this. One is the rise of Christianity, which dismisses the activities of the seers as witchcraft and devil worship. Second, seers are said to have become greedy and to have cast evil spells on those who had a healthy number of livestock or were successful in other

endeavours. Also, politicians are known to be in constant contact with the seers, offering gifts in return for protection and influence. There is thus a tension between customary and contemporary leadership. The advent of devolution reduced the powers of traditional elders and elevated the younger generation, as it were. Elders are still accorded much respect, but their decisions may be subject to the approval of a political office holder such as the Member of the County Assembly in the area or the MP.

To summarise this section, these customary patterns have combined with contemporary forms of leadership in ways that are sometimes successful and sometimes fractious. It is also worth pointing out that the Turkana have never been a stable population compared with more settled agrarian communities. Despite their political organisation, they are highly flexible, depending on the particular conditions and context. Also, the use of the social classification described above is now mostly prevalent among the *raia*. The significant numbers of Turkana associated with churches, the more educated individuals, and people living in town generally claim that tradition has become irrelevant for a number of different reasons. However, it is interesting to note that there are circumstances when such people chose to accept or deflect these customs. For example, marriage and the expected exchange of livestock as bride wealth is a sore point for many self-styled ‘modern’ men. Some claim that, as Christians, they should not be expected to participate in such pagan rituals. Those who agree with appeasing the elders struggle with the prolonged process of payment. They contend with relatives of the bride showing up uninvited to demand payment.

From this somewhat formal account of Turkana social and political organisation, I now turn to regional politics, devolution, and community consultation in the time of oil.

Politics in the time of devolution and oil

The translator was not having a good outing at all. He was struggling to understand a draft of the petroleum bill being read out in English, not to mention translating it to *Ng’aturkana* (the Turkana language). There were two of them standing in front of the hall, facing the audience with their backs to the very important politicians seated on the elevated platform. The first man read out the proposed bill in English while the other attempted to articulate it in Ng’aturkana. Things fell apart when the latter tried to find words to translate a phrase such as ‘whereas a bill is entitled an act of parliament to provide a framework for reconstructive exploration development and production of petroleum’. He stuttered. The audience, a large and rather fierce

group, picked up on his limitations. Some laughed in derision while others grumbled that they couldn't make sense of his words. Translation is a multi-layered process, not just of language per se but also of 'specialized' vocabulary and style. I was often struck by the formalism of language when it came to the presentation of 'public' or official statements read out from a paper in an awkward legalistic fashion rather than adapted to the task at hand.

The meeting was taking place in Lokichar town, the oil exploration hub in the south of Turkana County. The governor, who had convened the meeting, was part of the group seated on the elevated platform. He was ensconced in an imposing red chair with golden accents. The chair accompanies him on trips around the county, a departure from Turkana customs in which traditional leaders or elders sit on small stools (*ekicholong*) and chiefs commonly use plastic chairs. Meetings like these, however, called for a type of pomp and circumstance. The convocation was comprised of county politicians, elders, businesspeople, women, and youth representatives from wards across Turkana East and South. Two things were on the agenda: the fresh outbreak of cattle raids by the neighbouring enemy tribe, the Pokots, and a new oil revenue-sharing formula proposed by the president. Of the two matters, security was more pertinent than oil. This was the first and only official public meeting convened by the county to discuss oil I had witnessed in over a year of fieldwork. The closest to this was one of a slightly similar nature held to discuss concerns about conservation projects being funded by Tullow, the oil company. That had come about after several protests over what locals considered land grabbing by Tullow in collaboration with the national government via a rangeland trust I will discuss shortly.

Some men seated close to me argued among themselves about the real motive behind this particular meeting. One said, 'It is because of oil they [the politicians] are here, not the Pokots that have been killing us and taking our animals. They just added the raids so that it will not be as if it is only oil they want to discuss.' The perception was that issues more pressing to locals were secondary and were used to disguise the real motive – finding more economically beneficial prospects. Others agreed with him. Indeed, the meeting came on the heels of a statement by Kenya's president which suggested that a reduced percentage of the oil proceeds should be given to Turkana as the county administration does not have the capacity to absorb a high amount of funds from the anticipated proceeds. An old man, seated among the cynical men near me, chided them and pointed out that were it not for devolution, there wouldn't even be an opportunity for anyone to sit here and negotiate anything. The national government after all, would not have come down from Nairobi to reason with people in Turkana. In other words,

they should be thankful that there is a local government on the ground to negotiate with and on behalf of the people. His comment suggested that people were keenly aware of the type of political inclusion that oil and devolution had afforded Turkana, at least on paper.

As noted earlier, oil exploration in Turkana coincided with a new constitution that ushered in a devolved government and the birth of new counties, which came into effect in 2013. A watershed in the history of Turkana, devolution, for many people, is the medium through which rights to the state, to oil, and to other resources can be negotiated. If administrative powers were still located primarily at the centre, it would have been a case of a few ‘big men’ reaping the oil largesse at the expense of the 1 million-strong Turkana population. Regardless of the outcomes of these meetings, the activity in itself is key in conveying a sense of control and inclusion. The new constitution altered the institutional structure of the country in complex ways (Boone et al. 2016). Devolution’s primary objective was to devolve control over resources to the county government level and expand the political arena to include lay citizens, especially marginalised ethnic groups and regions such as Turkana. Currently, 28 percent of national revenue is sent to the devolved administrations now responsible for the provision of basic amenities and some infrastructure developments while the national government retains the responsibility for security and nationwide policymaking. With the new opportunities for local-level economic development initiatives as well as the expansion of the political sphere came the emergence of a new political class. With the oil factor, visibility was guaranteed at the level of national politics.

As a local MP told me in an interview, ‘Because of oil, we are now being invited to the statehouse for tea.’ Turkana gained a government of its own with the full bureaucratic apparatus of a modern state and a regime of political aspirations and aspirants. The field had formerly been restricted to a senator and MPs representing four constituencies. One of the first tasks of the new county was to produce a County Integrated Development Plan with the overall aim of making Turkana formal, ‘modern’, and attractive to foreign capital. The same MP also shared visions of investing in CNN adverts for tourism in Turkana. The Turkana governor echoed this in 2015 during a presentation at the Chatham House in London where he listed development, infrastructure, and investments as the primary focus of his administration. To formalise the economy, taxation, business registration (more people were setting up shops in front of their houses to avoid shop fees), and the focus on infrastructure development (irrigation to combat drought, *biashara* (business) start-up funds for businesses, Early Childhood Development (ECD)

schools, roads, bursaries for school fees, proliferation of urban centres) became more rigorous, though relief food distribution still exists.

All these were followed with allegations of corruption and mismanagement of allocated national revenue. The corruption charges and perceived continuance of hunger in the county led Kenya's president to insist that Turkana lacked the capacity to absorb the allocated income from its share of oil revenues. Corruption allegations escalated tensions between the county and national government but also between the county and its citizens. For example, Tullow paid a certain amount to the county for community projects, but some of this was rumoured never to reach its destination. Added together, the situation muddled the domain of what the corporation is obligated to do and the government's responsibility (water, infrastructure, social amenities, etc.). The idea of devolution was to improve amenities and create an efficient local-level civil service. Indeed, the county government is now the major employer of labour, displacing NGOs, including World Vision and Oxfam, who have currently scaled down their development activities in the areas of water and basic necessities. People told me: 'NGOs won't help us anymore. They now say Turkana has money.'

What oil and the 'political technology' (Gledhill 2000) of devolution have inspired is the remaking of citizens, an awakening of a sense of belonging whereby the Turkana now redefine themselves as full Kenyans, direct owners of a viable national resource, and active participants in its distribution. Meetings like this are platforms for performing this new identity and asserting control. It also gives the county administration or politicians the opportunity to engage in participatory democracy and reiterate the rhetoric of an awakened citizenry.

When the reading and the not entirely successful translation of the draft petroleum bill were completed, the event moderator took over the microphone. He encouraged the audience to get a copy of the bill (unrealistic considering the language barrier) so as 'to understand what [harm] this [national] government wants to do to the Turkana community'. And with the 'exuberant showmanship' that characterizes Kenyan politics (Haugerud 1993), the moderator led the audience in choreographed applause to invite the governor to speak. 'Everything is politics', someone whispered to me as we clapped to the moderator's chants in anticipation of the governor's speech, a double-edged sentiment echoed by many to convey the promise and their disappointment. Here, politics can be seen as the potential channel for realising equity and the bane of its achievement. To quote a ward administrator, '[T]oday's politics means that a Turkana is manning [leading] a fellow Turkana and we are in charge of our own destiny even

though we are not perfect.’ He explained that despite the new challenges of devolution, having an active local government was better than a central national form of administration.

To sum up this section, Turkana has experienced an acceleration of certain significant changes in recent decades, as have other pastoral societies elsewhere: increased interactions with the state, a rapid shift from pastoralism to other forms of labour and livelihood which has had a direct impact on land use patterns, and changes in forms of social organisation and political leadership. In addition, state-society relations have increased with new political dispensations which have placed emphasis on particular kinds of leaders. One result is a preoccupation with appointing educated people while the role of customary leaders shrinks. Most advertisements for administrative leadership positions are printed out and displayed across towns and villages.

Turkana professionals

The association called Turkana Professionals gained prominence in the wake of the oil exploration. Their mission, as they explained it, was to protect the Turkana people, preserve culture, and prevent lands from being exploited by foreign investors and corrupt politicians. The consortium was comprised of teachers, businesspeople, and traders (notably the more established ones), graduates (including primary school certificate holders), and, as a friend sardonically pointed out to me, ‘almost anyone with a smartphone’. Indeed, WhatsApp was Turkana Professionals’ preferred platform for mobilisation. The group positioned themselves as the voice of Turkana, especially in key negotiations for land and oil-related affairs.

While members of Turkana Professionals were mainly located in the central part of the county, Turkana East also mobilised their professionals as even more oil wells are situated there. Together, they created a WhatsApp group called ‘Turkana Land Saga’ to raise questions about the rising spate of land speculation in relation to oil. The *raia*, most of whom did not have smart phones, were having none of it. Some vociferous men among them declared they were professionals too and should not be excluded from any conversations or negotiations over land. After all, they argued, they are the ones who interact with the land more than those living in urban centres, and pastoralism is a professional occupation in its own right. Young men in Nakukulas, the largest settlement around the oil wells in the east, also registered a community-based company to access contracts from Tullow. The idea, as a friend from the village told me, was to be unified and speak with one voice. Speaking ‘with one voice’ was a slogan I would often

hear during my fieldwork. It worked well as a call to arms but imploded when individuals wanted to assert a particular kind of Turkana identity most favourable to the circumstance at hand.

Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) in their book *Ethnicity Inc.* note that labour surplus has created a market for identity as an alternative commodity. They argue that ethnicity, marketed as an incorporated product or commodified concept, is part of a wider process whereby social institutions and entities are increasingly taking on corporate forms. Hence, an important role of government, which has itself become an explicitly corporate entity, is to 'creat[e] the conditions for its entrepreneurial and ethno-preneurial subjects to realize their aspirations, by treating those subjects as, above all else, stakeholders in the corporate nation' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 128). While this resonates in many ways with my field site, there is a reverse aspect to it in that, for many in Turkana, selling culture and mobilising on the basis of a shared cultural identity is contingent on gaining access to the labour market and global capital. The professional association did not start out to claim opportunities, nor am I suggesting it was an opportunistic syndicate in its entirety. It was first established by a former MP for Turkana South before oil exploration took root. His aim was to initiate some sort of civic education and political awareness in his constituency, starting with students. He termed the group Turkana Elites, referring to their potential as future leaders. Following his death and a lull in the association's life, its vision was picked up again by some resourceful people who renamed the group Turkana Professionals after some of the more sensitive members found the term 'elites' objectionable. Other groups started to emerge, aided by the dawn of smartphones and internet connectivity in Turkana.

There had been issues regarding the involvement of Turkana Professionals in negotiations with Tullow before. However, things came to a head over a planned conservation project. Tullow Oil and its partners, in collaboration with the Northern Rangeland Trust, was proposing to establish six community conservancies in Turkana and neighbouring West Pokot. Note that the two parties considered themselves sworn enemies. The press release by the trust (a conservancy trust funded by international donors) read as follows:

Tullow Oil and Africa Oil have entered into a five-year grant agreement with the Northern Rangeland Trust (NRT) that will support communities in Turkana and West Pokot Counties to establish and operate six community conservancies. These conservancies will aim to transform lives, secure peace and conserve natural resources. . . . The community conservancies . . . are expected to help communities living in these areas, to better manage their natural resources, to tackle insecurity, to build upon their livestock-based livelihoods, to engage with and benefit from pending changes and through

this process promote integrated development. The conservancies will do this through promoting sustainable land management and wildlife conservation, developing security and peace-making programmes and offering alternative livelihoods for pastoralists. The conservancies are also expected to create around 180 jobs, through the local recruitment of conservancy management staff and rangers. . . . This agreement is part of Tullow's commitment aimed at ensuring that the oil and gas sector brings real and long-lasting benefits to host communities where we operate and that the impacts of oil development are adequately managed. (NRT 2015)

The professionals rejected the conservancy idea on several grounds. First, the conservancy plans were mapped along the oil routes instead of the areas with wildlife, and Turkana does not have that much wildlife in any case. Second, literate locals (i.e. the professionals) were being side-lined again in favour of traditional leaders and *raia* folk who might not be able to translate the terms of agreement. Some of the *raia* men, especially the young agile ones who were already employed by the Northern Rangeland Trust as rangers and security personnel, felt that the professionals and townspeople did not want them to benefit from the opportunity to make extra money to increase their livestock. The trust latched onto the *raia*-town divide when it became obvious who their supporters were. They suggested that since the townspeople have benefitted more from the oil jobs because they had the exposure and educational capacity, it was now the turn for the pastoralists to reap some dividends from the conservancies. In addition, the language of entrepreneurship and the protection of culture and natural resources were combined. Comaroff and Comaroff are helpful again here, for they note that whereas corporations initially gained the legal status and rights of an individual, it was individuals who now assumed corporate roles, as exemplified in the commodification of ethnicity – ethnopreneurialism, that is, '[t]he congealing into tangible, marketable, owned products those signs, symbols, and practices that signify individual and group essence' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 130; see also Hull 2010). I best describe this as the concept of corporate communities of the extractive industry where a particular type of organisation and positioning is required to be the right kind of host community in line with 'global best practices.' Susan Sawyer (2004) describes a similar situation in Ecuador where indigenous politics took on a kind of corporate form in order to engage with multinational corporations extracting oil in the area.

Back to the conservancy issue in Turkana, the governor convened a *baraza* (public gathering) to discuss the matter. Interestingly, the announcement was made via WhatsApp calling on all Turkana professionals to converge on Lokichar, but the news travelled far and

wide. The morning of the gathering, a significant number of *raia* folk descended on the enclosed venue and demanded to be admitted. When I asked some of the professionals (many of whom are mostly resident in the capital) why the *raia* were not officially invited, they explained that the *raia* could be unreasonable and had a way of confusing straightforward issues. Everyone was eventually allowed in, and a long meeting followed.

I have given these sketches to help us consider how the debates may easily appear to be polarised between pastoralists and non-pastoralists or to be one side exploiting the other. But this is too simple because rather than difference, the dialectic is about deploying the essentialist or modernist ideas that feature in official narratives and *modi operandi* (whether oil or otherwise) to negotiate social inclusion. The next two sections tie up the chapter with a discussion on livelihoods. This discussion brings our focus back to making a living, which, as argued in chapter 1, is at the heart of this thesis.

Making a living: pushing time and doing nothing

‘Feelings of surplus time are often exacerbated by a sense of being left behind’ (Jeffery and Young 2012: 641). People in Turkana often described their activities as something they did while waiting, ‘pushing time’ until something better came forth. ‘You must be wondering how we are surviving here’, some young men said to me in December 2015. It was Christmas Day, and they were visiting the homes of well-to-do returnees in hopes of Christmas gifts. One of them claimed to be a close relative of my host in Lokichar town when they enquired whether he was home from the capital city Lodwar, where the family is based. My host did not return for Christmas for this very reason – the burden of expectations, which I will address later in chapter 6. The family only popped in briefly in the new year and left almost immediately. Seeing there was no one to grant Christmas favours, they engaged in a long conversation with me about livelihood and survival. Four of them were ‘jobless’, as they described their situation. They depended for survival on the goodwill of friends and relatives like my host, whom they had come to ‘greet’. Benefactors like my host, on the other hand, lament the ‘laziness’ of youths who prefer to ‘sit around’ waiting for handouts instead of doing something productive with their time, even if it is a lowly menial job.



Figure 31. Women outside a returnee's home on Christmas Day 2015 in hopes of Christmas gifts.

The threat of going 'back to nothing' is one that is often levelled at oil-affected settlements by politicians. Many residents of those areas spoke to me about the ways in which they were sometimes manipulated into cooperation. They were often told that if Tullow goes, so do the chances of oil production and the benefits that come with it. But what is nothing? When a person says, 'I have no work' or 'I am doing nothing', what does it mean? Does it speak of a specific type of employment, enterprise, or remuneration? In today's Turkana, what counts as work? What does daily economic life consist of? The standard response I got to my question about what people do for a living, what their work was, was 'nothing'. Some were more dramatic with their reply and claimed, 'I am a jobless person'. In chapter 1, I explained that livelihood opportunities are scarce and that there are significant differences in the composition of affected communities.

'Why would you describe yourself as a jobless person?' I once asked Glory, my neighbour. I wanted to understand if the statement was as ominous as it sounds or whether it was her attempt at an English articulation of her situation. Her tired face crumpled, and she looked much older than her eighteen years. 'What am I doing? Nothing. Just going up and down

[aimless] or sitting here'. She waved a hand at the cluster of huts around us. Glory made it to the second year of secondary school before circumstances forced her to drop out of secondary school. School fees were not the least of her challenges. She also fell pregnant. 'Without education', she continued, 'you will never be employed with a certain job, and so you become a jobless person, like me.' Even for those who managed to gain access to a 'certain' kind of desirable job, like working with Tullow, education was the prominent marker between being able to attain a permanent contract and a temporary one. Put crudely, being a security guard or a line manager depends on one's level of literacy. 'So, what do you call this business you are doing if you are a jobless person?' I asked Glory. The father of her child, her husband – to use her word, even though they are not formally married but live together (without the formalities of the bride-wealth) – owns a motorbike and uses it as a commercial mode of transport. In addition, Glory sells small food items such as maize, beans, and sugar in the homestead and, occasionally, at one of the small village markets in the area (Lokirimo). She laughed and covered her mouth shyly: 'I am just using it to wait and see and manage until maybe I can go back to finish school and maybe I will get good work.'

I wondered if she would feel less aimless if her trade yielded more money. Or, even if it did, would she still be 'pushing time', as some say, until a certain good work came along? Would good work for Glory mean an office job and a steady monthly salary, like many seem to be longing for these days in Turkana? What is the measure of good work? Livelihood categories in Turkana can be roughly grouped as follow: pastoralism, agro-pastoralism, fishing, waged labour, and commerce. It also follows locations. For example, areas around Lake Turkana naturally engage in fishing activities; settlements around the two main rivers – Turkwel and Kerio in the south and east – combine agriculture with pastoralism; and drier areas in the north are mostly inhabited by mobile pastoralists while people in towns and urban centres focus on trade, waged labour, menial jobs, petty trade in charcoal, and local brews. In the oil-affected areas such as Lokichar town in the south, petty trade is the economic mainstay, whereas in its rural counterpart – Nakukulas in the east – pastoralism is the mainstay. In between these two categories is 'nothing'. For those who are not pastoralists (and there are many, especially young people) or are unable to engage in some form of trade or casual labour, there is very little to do. But even for those who are trading, as I show in the next section, there is a glut on the market.

‘We are all selling, but who is buying?’

Pastoralists, especially the non-commercial ones, do not consider themselves as people with work. For them, keeping livestock is a lifestyle, not a trade. They might only consider selling one or two animals when circumstances are dire. If the herd is depleted, looking for work as a security guard or petty trader might be an option. As Olivia Harris points out, ‘[W]ork as an abstract category arises in particular kinds of economy’ (2007: 143). When I carried out the household survey, it took some distilling to understand what doing nothing actually meant, especially for those who seemed to be doing something, however meagre. When the *raia* say ‘nothing’, they mean they are not earning pay from waged labour or profits from business or trade.

The rise of small and medium enterprises in Turkana is unmistakable. Many have turned to petty trading for sustenance, and some are more ingenious than others. Peter Little observed the same trend in his study titled *Economic and Political Reform in Africa*. He argues that the proliferation of petty traders in Africa’s urban and peri-urban centres, often praised as a symbol of ‘productive microenterprises’, is in fact ‘more symptomatic of larger structural problems that leave many individuals with little choice but to “trade to eat” and pursue other survivalist strategies’ (2014: 46).

Most of the micro traders in Turkana set up shop in their homes to avoid paying business license fees – a reflection of how the county’s interest in commercial enterprise is influencing policy and development plans. Loans and grants are now provided, especially to women and youth as well as to nomadic pastoralists, presumably with the aim of ‘formalising’ their economic activity and nudging them towards a more sedentary lifestyle. The question of who is buying has also been echoed by pastoralists. For instance, my nomadic host family faced a challenge on Christmas Day in 2016. They needed money for a medical emergency, so they took a sheep to town for sale. Unfortunately, the sale yard was saturated with livestock for sale. ‘No one is even looking at our sheep, not to talk of pricing it’, one of the wives lamented. A petty trader in Lokichar town raised the same question when more of her neighbours erected tables with meagre groceries for sale in front of their houses. ‘We are all selling, but who is buying?’ she lamented to me.

Thus, the boundaries between the urban and rural, town and bush, rich and poor, elites and illiterates are superficial, occasionally deceptive, and extremely fluid in Turkana. The fallacy of these assumptions is often revealed in claims-making situations. Those in towns often speak

of the assumption held by their rural or *raia* relatives that living in town is synonymous with the good life – but the *raia* relatives might actually be better off. If we take Asef Bayat’s description of the ‘urban poor’ as ‘an empirical category to mean those “low-income, low-status, and low-security” working people who largely (but not exclusively) navigate informal life and labour of precarious nature’ (2015: 34), we find that the boundaries remain fluid. In Turkana, a government worker or a member of the so-called professional and educated elite may have arrived at that position via the investment of his nomadic relatives, perhaps a father or brother who sold some livestock to ensure his education. The same person may, in time of need, find no relief in town and may resort to seeking help in the ‘bush’. What gives commonality to the differentiated categories ‘includes a more or less shared experience of precarious life and labour . . . marked by prolonged mobilisation with episodic collective action—open and fleeting struggles’ (Bayat 2015: 34), sometimes without clear leadership or a structured organisation.



Figure 32. 'Pushing time': youths in a truck passing through Lokichar market



Figure 33. Stalls at Lokichar Market

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed some of the ideas about pastoralism, culture, and modernity that are influencing the debates about oil and Turkana's future. As implied in my brief historical account, these ideas are far from new; they have been used since colonial times to demarcate land and to include and exclude people from territories. Traditional forms of Turkana social organisation, as described in classic anthropological accounts, remain important to how people live, but so too do national- and state-level politics.

In the next chapter, I turn my attention to the ways in which 'community engagement' summons into place a notional community. My ethnographic material will come mainly from meetings, which constitute an important bureaucratic and political arena and space for the performance of social relationships. For oil to bring benefits to the communities of extraction, those communities must first be summoned into existence.



Figure 34. Chief Josephine, Lokichar chief, and some elders in preparation for a baraza



Figure 35. Chief Josephine and her assistant, Chief Erupe

Chapter 3

‘THEY ARE EATING WITH OUR NAMES’: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, PARTICIPATION, AND THE CONTENTIOUS POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION

The Trader is a gatherer and carrier of stories. He collects secrets, a source of income, a pleasurable economy. He cannot endure not knowing. Every memory, even borrowed ones, are his. Sometimes he distributes these when he needs to, and always for a profit. The Trader trades in names, but never with his.

– Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor, *DUST*

If you want to get anything from Tullow, you have to show that you can mobilise people. There is one boy we now call Community because he is always saying I am the community. There is another man that calls himself the stomach of the Community. If you can mobilise, you will eat. If you cannot mobilise, you will continue to suffer.

– Mobiliser

Mobilising the participating public

How do corporate engagements with local populations enact ‘community’ as an ethical zone to qualify corporate performance? First, we might ask, who is the community? What do community engagement and participation entail in practice? What kinds of moral aspirations and social relations shape engagement? Most importantly, what emerges from the cracks between what should be performed and what actually happens?

One of the key findings of this study is that the clamour for inclusion and a rightful share in the oil benefits have heightened existing processes of social and spatial differentiation in Turkana. Benefits are being contested through the lens of those who are assumed to be authentic beneficiaries. People therefore find themselves in a position where they have to negotiate among the various ideas of community, culture, and identity in order to establish what it might mean to be an authentic member of the Turkana community, where the boundaries of this reimagined Turkana community lie, and what its rules of membership or belonging are. In this context, pastoralism as an identity has taken on a central role as people have begun to reconceptualise their role in the locality and their relationships with each other. Pastoralism, which continues to be viewed as the ‘tradition’ and indeed continues to be the economic mainstay of many in Turkana, became the point of reference in negotiations around oil exploration and development-related affairs. Community narratives often bordered on

pastoralists as the main beneficiaries based on their relationship to the land in terms of grazing and their perceived identity as the illiterate backward part of the population that needed to be spoken for and were not to be trusted with oil-related decision-making. This led to the creation of ad hoc alliances and associations that took the shape less of labour unions per se and more of Turkana age groups in a new guise. When I began to explore the social life of identity, as it were, and constructions of personhood as they took on fluid forms in the process of Tullow's 'community engagement', it became clear to me that people were making sense of a complex process of transition and place (re)making.

Like most development 'buzzwords' (Cornwall and Eade 2010), the extractives industry's ethical lexicon is laden with 'warmly persuasive' words 'that admit no negatives, words that evoke Good Things that no-one could possibly disagree with' (Cornwall and Eade 2007: 472) What could possibly be wrong with 'transparency and accountability'? After all, many Kenyans agree that corruption is the bane of democracy. Or, what could be wrong with the fuzzier idea of *community participation*, which 'came into vogue in the 1970s, taking on an altogether different connotation in the 1980s as "do it for yourself" became "do it by yourself" as neoliberalism flourished' (ibid.). As multinational oil corporations combine development with business, it is no surprise that they are following the path of the development industry's orthodoxy that has been firmly established in Turkana. Writing about local development in 1998, Abram Simone and Jacqueline Waldren note that 'the forms and effectiveness of "participation" are so variable that the term actually denotes few specific practices, indicating only the notion of "efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations, on the part of groups and movements hitherto excluded from such control"' (1998: 5). This is as true today as it ever was, especially in the era of ethical extraction.

To consult a community about oil operations, the participating public, as I term it, must first be enacted and mobilised into the processes of 'community engagement'. This includes the politics of representation that often turn contentious, the consultations that enact a particular kind of corporate community, and, added together, the process of establishing the boundaries of engagement and participation. This chapter aims to show how community becomes enacted along spatial and socially differentiated lines of tradition and modernity – how representation becomes a contentious process in which certain people I refer to as 'mobilisers' emerge to broker negotiations in the name of the community and end up being accused of betraying the interests of others. Brokering the social license to operate is central to an enactment of the

‘resource community’. Alex Golub, in his study of the Porgera gold mine and its indigenous host community the Ipili in Papua New Guinea deployed *Leviathans* an analytical tool for understanding ‘all of those kinds of collective entities’ (2014: 4) that come into being to animate the mining process. He argues that the mine and the host community co-created and produced each other as leviathans. ‘Both “the mine” and “the Ipili,” then, share a common feature: at a distance, they appear to be unproblematically existing actors, but the closer you come to them, the more their coherence and integrity begins to falter’ (Golub 2014:12). A similar process can be observed in Turkana.

To obtain the ‘social license to operate’, corporations are required to extensively consult the host communities, obtain free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), and invest in improving the material conditions of people in the locality. Tullow’s entry point into Turkana is widely described as a faulty start by many residents and officials. From my first visit in 2014 to my most recent visit in 2019, I was always greeted with statements like ‘*mam* engagement’, which means no engagement. References would be made to the lack of transparency, often referred to as truth (*ateni* in local parlance), insufficient information about operations and opportunities, and front-stage public *barazas* but more detailed private meetings with a select few. Some people in oil-affected areas claim never to have heard a single relevant piece of information. Information is currency. Like wages and infrastructure projects, it is considered a benefit. It determines how one might be positioned to receive the concrete results of oil.

But, how does a corporation engage with a community? What might a successful engagement look like? On several occasions, I posed this question to residents. Besides *barazas*, focus group meetings, leaflets and so on, what should be added to the standard methods of consultation and information dissemination which Tullow appears to follow? Some recurring points from the responses I got were that middlemen posing as community mobilisers and representatives had to be eliminated from the process and that public gatherings should offer more than generic information. However, if we recognise that community engagement and participation is a component of particular ideologies which are enacted through forms of governance (Abram and Waldren 1998; Gardner 2012), then none of the forms of decision-making, strategies of inclusion, and contentious representation can be reduced to linear categories of brokers, gatekeeping, or elite capture. In this chapter, I also aim to differentiate the various social groups and highlight the making of brokers and elites.

Meetings are the key ‘machinery by which group decisions are reached’ (Richards 1971: 1) and consulting a community with the aim of eliciting some form of ‘unanimous’ consent often involves dialogic sessions. But what is ‘practically and conceptually at stake’ when meetings are convened (Brown et al. 2017: 14; see also Schwartzman 1987)? And, to what extent do these consultations yield the desired results, if they yield any result at all? As Katy Gardner (2012: 52) notes, ‘[P]eople’s relative control over the discourse is central to the struggles over resources. . . . Who speaks and who listens? Who persuades others that particular actions are right and wrong, and who is never heard?’ In a special issue of the Royal Anthropological Institute titled *Meetings: Ethnographies of Organisational Process, Bureaucracy, and Assembly*, Hannah Brown et al. (2017: 11) argue that meetings ‘are not just instances that exemplify broader issues, but key sites through which social, political, temporal, spatial, and material circumstances are constituted and transformed’. From ‘stakeholder’ roundtable conferences in swanky Nairobi hotels with academics, civil society groups, experts, and the odd sprinkle of ‘community representatives’ to meetings with a cross-section of Turkana denizens beneath trees in the scorching sun, the mapping and consultation of stakeholders – particularly the affected communities in the host county – has been central to Tullow’s aspirations for smooth operations in Kenya. Part of what is being staged and audited as a form of ‘public reflexivity’ (Turner 1979: 465) is not only the corporate commitment to the precepts of ethical extraction but the process of ‘creating community’ (Gardner 2012: 169). This involves the making of particular kinds of ‘responsibilised’ community (Trnka and Trundle 2014) co-produced by NGOs, the state, and the local people themselves. However, several factors complicate the idyllic notions of community.

First, the trouble with consulting a community in situations of rapid, complex transitions (James 2011), such as Turkana’s time of oil, is that such engagements are almost always inevitably brokered by the proximity to the resource and the politics of recognition and deservingness. One result is the production or amplification of social differentiation. For example, negotiating access to land is contentious. As Adunbi notes in his case study, ‘[W]hile the laws assert clearly that state and local governments own the land, communal landholding still persists in many parts of Nigeria. This has led to a situation in which multinational corporations, in many cases, negotiate both with the state and with communities – and even family members – in areas they explore for oil’ (2011: 102). This bears much similarity with Turkana and fosters differentiation.

Second, community is not a single homogeneous entity whose views can easily be mobilised into producing unanimous consent. This seems even more unlikely in pastoral societies where, historically, decision-making and leadership have been highly decentralised despite their insertion into contemporary state structures. Third and most importantly, the term community as deployed in the context of oil-related negotiations constitutes, in many ways, a new language in Turkana. Like the buzzwords participation, capacity-building, sensitisation, and so on, community in its pervasive oil usage is less an indigenous term and more part of the development jargon that has been adopted in local everyday talk. Community in the generic context of a group with shared origins, customs, and values is *Ng'iturkana*, which denotes the Turkana people or, simply, the people. In very traditional circles, *Ng'iturkana* features in oil debates, but community in its English form has become a more prevalent alternative. This current ubiquitous deployment has undertones and, in many cases, overt references not just to Turkana as oil's host community or to *Ng'iturkana* as the people but to specific circumscribed spaces defined by proximity to the oilfields. Community, in this sense, becomes two things: a sub-territory demarcated by oilfields while existing within the broader society and a category under which people within that territory are incorporated into a sort of formalised corporate community occasionally referred to as 'affected areas'. In essence, the community as an oil project site and the community as 'the Turkana people' in capital budgeting terms for CSR projects are mutually exclusive. The company cannot pursue consulting and developing both its 'areas of influence', i.e. affected communities, and the wider Turkana community. Thus, the viability of oil is as important as the viability of target areas within the host community, which is dependent on cooperation and consent.

Golub (2014: 19) rightly pointed out that 'one of the first things that needed to be fashioned were spokesmen.' It is a balancing act of knowing who to please and who poses a potential threat to capital. Engagement of this kind is also driven by threats and risk assessment. From this perspective, community participation, consultation, and consent via meetings or *barazas* (public gatherings), focus-group sessions, and so on 'can be seen as dynamic sites in which networks are extended but also cut' (Brown et al. 2017: 14; Strathern 1996). This is a categorisation process that includes as much as it excludes (Li 2007). Here, inclusion can be an exclusive process that reinforces established hierarchies, creates spaces for subverting those hierarchies, and excludes some altogether (see Watts 2018 on the genealogy of the Niger Delta insurgency). Of interest here is how these engagements, couched within the tenets of global extractives ethics, enact particular kinds of communities, performances, and multi-level

brokerage. In short, community consent-building is a form of brokerage or what Dorothy Hodgson (2011: 4) terms ‘positionings’ – a politics of recognition closely tied to the politics of political representation (2011: 6). In her study *Being Maasai*, Hodgson shows how another kind of global ethic – human rights, which also features heavily in the extractives industry – produced an activist class of ‘professional’ Maasai who represented and spoke on behalf of ‘the community’ on both local and international platforms. She writes:

Positionings, therefore, incorporate and index agency, structure, meaning and power; they demonstrate the articulation of political economy and cultural domains of meaning, signification, and representation. Positionings are thus, by definition, relational. Individuals and groups position themselves for and against certain ideas, issues, institutions, and identities. As a result, any one positioning has consequences for other relationships, for other positionings, often at distinct political scales. (2011: 6–7)

These tensions of positionings, identity, cultural rebranding and indigenous politics (Sawyer 2004; Sawyer and Gomez 2012) draw attention to the binary discourse of tradition and modernity, which is ever-present in the social relations, interventions, and constructions of pastoral societies. ‘While it is necessary to avoid over-simple stereotypes, it would be wrong to go too far the other way and suggest that no patterns exist’ (Crewe and Harrison 1998: 4). Ferguson (1988: 491) also notes that ‘it is not the question of whether to ignore culture and focus on political economy or to ignore political economy and dwell on culture; it is a matter of grasping political and economic realities in a culturally sensitive way, and grasping culture in a way that convincingly relates it to political economy.’ This is important to highlight because the nomadic sections of the population are prone to being neglected in land right claims and compensation as opposed to their sedentary counterparts. As Dawn Chatty (2001: 2) observes in her study of oil and pastoralists in Oman, ‘[I]t is the lack of a meaningful relationship with the oil companies whose concession areas cover their traditional tribal lands, which has highlighted the fundamental disadvantage of a significant stakeholder group’. Pastoralists are not averse to change, nor are they irrevocably traditional, for if modernity means taking advantage of new trends and opportunities, then we might argue that pastoralists have always been modern (Chatty 2001). This is why the emerging forms of socioeconomic differentiation based on those who deserve a seat at the oil decision-making table according to levels of literacy and modernity are tantamount to complicity in the perpetration of social exclusion. Therefore, the question of where economic power lies in Turkana today requires a discussion or engagement with the ambiguous subject of cultural production and its relationship with questions of livelihood and oil’s political economy. Prior to oil’s presence, membership in the

context of citizenship was an exogenous concern based on Turkana's marginal status within the nation-state. At that time, a popular question to visitors from 'down country' was 'How is Kenya?' – a loaded reference to local feelings of alienation from the wider Kenyan society. Presently, these sentiments are directed at Lodwar – the Turkana capital awash with 'devolution money' and development projects – and to the oil areas where stories of work opportunities and development sound like stories to those far from such spaces.

In what follows, I first discuss how community is enacted through the performance of engagement, staged within specific cultural and political boundaries that accentuate specific kinds of images, rhetoric, gestures, and rituals. On this stage, drawn along reimagined borders of what constitutes community, actors emerge to mobilise, persuade, and prove deservingness. Indeed, at the interface of engagement in Turkana, as subsequent sections will show, new borders of community are called up, various worldviews collide and collude during public consultations, and negotiations are enacted regarding corporate community projects, land, and other entitlements. Contrary to egalitarian assumptions of creating shared communal benefits, the ethics of community engagement is also a morally ambiguous and politically charged terrain. Engagement, though informal in its local composition (i.e. meetings take place under trees or in other casual settings), is also a highly ritualised and formalised bureaucratic process that maps, enacts, and brings extractive communities into being. This is not to say that it is all top down (Cross 2014). As I will also show, locals respond to and shape engagement through various strategies to gain visibility, inclusion, and voice. It is thus a question not only of how the company engages with the community but also of how the community engages with itself. In considering the politics and performance of community engagement as derived from the extractives industry's ethical frameworks, I propose to explore community engagement as an ambiguous regulatory practice and 'a site of creativity and experimentation' (Pinker and Harvey 2015).

The focus here is on the inherent ambiguities of participation and existing frameworks for consultation processes mediated by particular knowledge structures and how they produce people, place, and time. In settings of uncertainty and marginalisation, such as Turkana, community engagement manifests as an intersubjective creative process that mobilises resources and people into new relational categories (Barry 2006, 2013; Golub 2014; Rajak 2011; Watts 2004). New forms of social relations, mediation, and institutional arrangements emerge. In this ethical zone umpired by so-called global best practices, new forms of social relations,

institutional arrangements (Graeber 2005), and shifting hierarchies emerge as transnational corporations seek to gain the consent and cooperation of local communities. As I will show, the emphasis on community consent and regulatory frameworks such as FPIC must consider the mechanisms of decision-making in Turkana, particularly in the affected areas where customary lore often holds more sway than contemporary politics. Here, everybody may gather, and many may speak, but only the 'long and elaborate speeches' (Müller-Dempf 2008:2) of a few hold sway based on the speakers' level of influence and generally accepted wisdom.

This chapter focuses on two locations – Lokichar town in Turkana South and Nakukulas in the Turkana East – but also reflects on broader programmes outside the area. I draw on observations of consultation meetings and land access negotiations as well as case studies of individuals and an analysis of the social relations in various localities. First, we might ask, who is the community? What does community engagement entail in practice? What kinds of moral aspirations and social realities shape this engagement? Most importantly, what emerges from the cracks between what should be performed and what actually happens in community engagement activities? There is no doubt that locals attest to the contributions that Tullow's presence has made in some areas, as reflected in the opening section of this thesis. But this contribution is also spatially circumscribed and has a focus on affected areas. The result is a politics of proximity. Proximity, here, is not only about living close to the oil but also encompasses a kind of social proximity experienced by those with the skills and social capital to get into the loop of benefits and projects that can serve as evidence of development.



Figure 36. Erut oil well pad in Lochwaa, Turkana South



Figure 37. The homestead of a family close to Erut oil well

Enactments:

socioeconomic differentiation, the dissonance of ‘culture’ and modernity

In conversation with a member of Tullow’s Social Performance team who is from Turkana, I asked what part of the county he hails from. While I did suggest he must be from the south or east – that is, the areas where oil is being extracted – the question was not intended to gauge or measure the deservingness of his employment with Tullow. But his response was familiar. It exemplified the emerging hierarchy of localness, a kind of ‘hyper’-indigeneity in Turkana when distribution of benefits was involved. ‘No, not Turkana south or east. I am from Turkana central, but I am still a Turkana’, he said with a hint of defiance. Local activists and literate sections of the community also responded defensively when their claims of ‘we are pastoralists’ were countered with questions of legitimacy considering they resided in a town and did not make a living from herding livestock. Processes of marking territory in spatial and socially differentiated terms are hard to miss, upending the normative assumptions of unity embedded in the concept of community. Many Turkana now imply a hierarchy of ‘localness’ that seeks to differentiate between Kenyans in general, the broader Turkana, and settlements in direct proximity to oil exploration sites. Although Turkana is regarded as the ‘host community’ of Kenya’s oil development, the process has also fostered the emergence of more nuclear or individualised designations of ‘community’.

In a sense, exploration and appraisal operations are synonymous with a border-making project in which various discrete stakeholders are identified and are accorded relevance in ensuring the social acceptance and, ultimately, the security of oil operations. These include people living in direct proximity to the oil wells who are directly affected by construction activities or by the need for land for operations; these people also have the ability to disrupt the company’s operations and, therefore, need to be won over. Stakeholders also include customary authorities, sub-national political administration, civil society groups, businesspeople, and local contractors. Thus, the idea of community has been more contentious than ever before in Turkana since the advent of oil, especially in the oil-impacted areas dubbed ‘affected communities.’ While rapid processes of socioeconomic differentiation have been evident in pastoral societies for decades, as evidenced, for example, by changing forms of livelihood, land use, and social organisation (Catley et. al 2013: 19), the establishment of oilfields has contributed in no small measure to changes in the landscape, with ‘already populated areas reshaped due to

differences created between those on the inside and those on the outside of these fields' (Guzman-Gallegos 2012: 157). With livelihood and land use patterns at stake for different sections of the population, competing representations of community and the attendant scale of preference should not come entirely as a surprise.

Our first conundrum then is what to make of this constellation called 'community' and the often essentialising qualities that have come to define 'host', 'indigenous', and 'local' in extractive contexts. As Watts (2004: 198) notes, '[W]ithin the maelstrom of capitalist modernity, the possibilities for community are almost endless'. The concept of community is a flexible and elastic travelling trope that can be too homogeneous, vague and variable (Baumann 1996; Hodgson 2011; Li 2000; Watts 2004). Yet, it cannot be denied that community is good to think with (Amit and Rapport 2002). Even if it has little or no disciplinary analytical purchase, the concept offers both the qualifiers and the qualified a strategy for claim-making (Gilberthorpe and Hilson 2014; Sawyer and Gomez 2012). Even though it is circumstantial and ambiguous, 'host community' remains the established term in the extractives industry's lingo to delineate the specific spatial and social location of the resource. Here, 'community' simplifies the complex process of categorisations and measurements in the extractives industry stakeholder charts as well as the qualification of corporate social performance. Much the way the term 'local' is used in the local content framework in the national context but gets complicated when defining who the local actually is, the host community is just as ambiguous. The concept is generic and communally inspired, on the one hand, but exclusive and specific on the other when it comes to operationalising who gets what and why. Host community as an aspirational concept imagines a *communitas* where social strata are suspended and a homogeneous 'people' with unified interests are summoned into being. In the process, '[A] certain sort of 'community' will emerge, in which exploitation, desperate poverty and injustice are swept from view' (Gardner 2012: 166) The assumption is that through Tullow's responsible footprints, a model ethical zone or host community will emerge in which a population with an assumed development-dependency mentality will be replaced by one made up of self-reliant entrepreneurs. This is not, of course, the case on the ground; later sections will explore the uneven spread of benefits.

In their review of the anthropology of mining, Ballard and Banks (2003) note that in contrast to the relatively prescribed roles for multinationals and government agencies, '[L]ocal communities are only summoned into being or defined as such by the presence or the potential presence of a mining project' (297). Although this assertion does not obscure the prior existence

of particular localities, the point Ballard and Banks aptly make and that I have tried to argue so far is that ‘particular contingent histories of engagement around mining projects yield specific forms of local community, which are themselves subject to continuous processes of transformation over the life of a mining project’ (297). Barry (2006) takes this further with his concept of technological zones defined as ‘a space within which differences between technical practices, procedures or forms have been reduced, or common standards have been established . . . they may also imply particular demands on the identity of objects and persons that exist within them’ (239). In other words, this line of argument may simply be called ‘target group thinking’, following Vigdis Broch-Due’s (2000) critique of development and poverty-reduction schemes in Turkana. Templates, whether for doing development or consulting affected communities, ‘depend on the development of various technical devices which make it possible for the qualities of objects and practices to be assessed and compared’ (Barry 2006: 241).

The moral and political ambiguities of ‘community-making’ (Watts 2004) and self-production are not peculiar to Turkana. Tania Li (2000) uses Stuart Hall’s concepts of ‘articulation’ and ‘positioning’ to examine the competing representations of community and indigenous politics in Indonesia. She argues that ‘a group’s self-identification as tribal or indigenous is not natural or inevitable, but neither is it simply invented, adopted or imposed. It is rather a positioning which draws upon historically sedimented practices, landscapes and repertoires of meaning, and emerges through particular patterns of engagement and struggle’ (Li 2000: 151). Hodgson’s own work with indigenous Maasai movements in Tanzania draws on Li’s ‘positionings’ in the plural to argue that ‘positionings, therefore, incorporate and index agency, structure, meaning, and power; they demonstrate the articulation of political economy and cultural domains of meaning, signification, and representation’ (2011: 9). These ‘antinomies’, also evidenced in Michael Watts’s (2004) study of the Niger Delta, show that *‘communities (with their attendant forms of identity, rule and territorialisation) can be produced simultaneously at different spatial levels (scale politics) and may work with and against one another in complex and contradictory ways* (2004: 198, author’s emphasis).

It may then be presumptuous to buy into the notion of a ‘divided Turkana’, which some have argued for based on perceived oil divisions. In engaging local people, the local and the community (as unified) are also performed. The local and the host ‘community’ are shifting categories that are contested, negotiated, and won (or lost, as there are those yet to gain traction on their side) through the performance of community. As people often said to me, ‘If you sit

down, you will eat nothing.’ Through various kinds of agitations that are also performances in themselves, the rigidity of templates and target group thinking is altered and renegotiated. While the idea of community engagement derives from global best practices and its templates, it becomes fluid on the ground. So, when those outside Lokichar or Nakukulas or in nontargeted areas say, ‘Oil has not reached here,’ they are reflecting the struggle of how to make oil get there and to engage with it. Voice, persuasion, and influence (real or imagined) are some of the key tools that determine the success of attracting oil benefits as was the case with Nakukulas. A way of understanding the configuration of the local host community is to look at the nature of engagement or, as some lament, the lack of it. To understand the contestations around the configuration of oil and its host communities requires an understanding of the genealogy of engagement and goes back to the question of informed consent.

Since the advent of oil in Turkana, the tradition and modernity contradiction has become evident in the ways designs of cultural authenticity animate ‘pure pastoralists’ as the embodiment of what it means to be a real Turkana while, at the same time, relegating them to the side-lines as relics of a ‘tradition’ incompatible with the zeitgeist of what it means to be modern. As discussed in the previous chapter, this dichotomy is spatialized by ideas of another opposition: town and bush. Living in the town and being sedentary is almost synonymous with being modern as it supposedly reflects a rooted population ready to embrace commercial activities and the order of town life. Nomadism or ‘being *raiya*’, by contrast, means being both authentic and backward and has become part of the self-representation of oil host communities as deserving beneficiaries. When it is not being denounced as an outmoded way of life, pastoralism thus becomes a claims-making device that confers a particular kind of legitimacy and ‘authentic identity’ as ‘the people’. Educated members of the community, townsfolk, politicians, and activists stand up in meetings to declare ‘We as Turkana people are pastoralists’ and at the same time acknowledge pastoralism as untenable. An informant who denigrated the rigorous Turkana marriage rites claimed, ‘I have gone to school and cannot follow that kind of olden-days lifestyle. It is for those *raiya* that are illiterate and still follow tradition’, but he also affirmed, ‘I am a pastoralist’. He admitted to investing part of the money he earned working for the oil company in livestock he acquired for himself and his father. Local activists and community-based organisations only need to claim access to the ‘local communities’ – by which they mean the *raiya* – to gain legitimacy with donors and invitations to community engagement conferences. While they are often dismissed as usurpers and opportunists, I argue that pastoralism is a cognitive foundation as much as it is the livelihood of many Turkana, whether they live in town,

the *raiya*, or outside the county (see also Müller-Dempf 2014: 4). Thus, these are not competing representations but an expression of multiple lifeworlds communicated in somewhat opposing terms.

Discussions with various residents of Turkana often highlighted how modernity and rapid changes to the 'Turkana way of life' are a major impact of oil development in the area. For some, this is a good thing. For others, not so much. However, I did not find an outright rejection of development but more situated contexts in which the advantages and disadvantages of the economic and associated cultural changes were being carefully weighed. Young people and town folk or even young people in the 'reserves' leaned towards a preference for certain kinds of modernity, whereas older people tended to be more circumspect. Pastoralists have never rejected development if it is in line with their ideals (Chatty 1996, 2001). The challenge for Turkana is that it can no longer be classified as an absolute pastoral society with only livestock concerns. Children have gone to school; times have changed and are continuing to change.

'What is modernity?' I asked this of the same member of Tullow's Social Performance team I mentioned earlier. He opined that 'it means issue of schools, this construction of iron sheets, those modern things, you know . . .' He continued by stating that 'they' (which is often how people in towns or those who are educated refer to the 'traditional' pastoralists or *raiya*) were against modernity and the construction of houses with bricks and roofing sheets because it might shrink grazing lands. He gave the customary rundown of all the things Tullow has done, such as the construction of school buildings and dispensaries.

The change of the culture also, at least it has improved. The dressing also improved. If you move around [before now], you will see that men walk naked, stark naked, so it has improved. Those who went to school could tell the community this is not right; this is now turning cosmopolitan place. Can we also create modernity like any other place so that we can pay respect to other people [not embarrass visitors]? (Interview, April 2016)

I asked him whether modernity and development might mean being connected to the rest of Kenya, which is more developed than Turkana, and to other parts of the world.

'Very true', he affirmed:

We Turkana have been marginalised for a good period of time through the leadership of this country. Due to devolution and the availability of oil, now the government have turned their face towards us, now at least they can listen to us. Turkana County now has the second largest allocation of national revenue, so it has attracted attention. So, modernity has at least tried to

improve our living standard in this community. Though there are still many challenges, but at least, we are there... At least, an improvement has been noted. (Interview, April 2016)

Struggles around ‘the production pie’ (Ferguson 2015: 166) of oil have not just been between capital and labour but between knowledge and deservingness – a form of situated politics (Li 2008). The rapid transformation of place, livelihood, and land use patterns have also been attributed to the new county’s development agenda. Areas formerly inhabited by nomadic clusters are fast transforming into urban centres. Crucially, accessing emerging opportunities requires a level of shapeshifting in order to navigate in and out of multiple economic zones. Being identified as pastoralists or vice versa, therefore, becomes contingent. For the pastoralists whose livelihood and rituals are rooted in livestock and free access to land, staking a claim as custodians of the land is just as important as it is for non-pastoralists in the context of speculators seeking to purchase communal lands for amounts of money that they never imagined possible. A look at some antecedents will show that these events are not exclusive to this time of oil and that the Turkana (as is true for other indigenous people) have a long history of navigating identity constructs. Vigdis Broch-Due (2005) writes about the response of Turkana pastoralists to essentialist notions of identity during the British colonial administration:

The British forged clear-cut tribal identities in Kenya by enforcing districts, tribal grazing boundaries and repatriating those considered out of place to delineated zones. The effect was devastating for many Turkana who were repatriated from other districts where they had lived and grazed livestock for generations. Their response, when direct opposition failed, was ‘to try and manipulate it to their own advantage. Most interestingly, by reading between the lines of many colonial records one can deduce the ways in which ‘protection’, ‘repatriation’ and other essentialist notions/identities in the colonial vocabulary were subverted and strategically deployed by Turkana as discursive resources against the administration. . . . They exploited the situation to press claims of compensation. (2005: 9)

Also significant was how the identity politics set off by the colonial state created new social distinctions between ‘poor and prosperous, those with and without cattle. Ethnicity became a production of cultural difference’ (Broch-Due 2005: 9). Broch-Due continues, ‘[T]he dramatic reconfiguration of want and wealth, so characteristic of the postcolonial landscape, has produced extreme levels of uncertainty about the legitimacy of established identities, rights and claims’ (2005: 2). Thus, reinforcing essentialised ideas about identity and culture is once again being deployed as a strategy or means of producing certainty and social inclusion. As the Comaroffs note in discussing their term ‘ethnopreneurialism’, ‘Identity appears here to have

produced a new sensibility, an explicitly new awareness of its essence, its affective, material and expressive potential' (2009: 2).

'Who is the community?' Locating power and establishing hierarchies

March 2016, Lokichar

The gathering had a furtive ambience. Rebecca's countenance alternated between harried and amiable as she tried to soothe a focus group of over fifty tired, hot, and hungry men comprised mostly of village elders and seers. When we first met her in the prologue of this thesis, she was preoccupied with sorting out her brother's school fees with a combination of goats and cash. Here, we find her living out a scenario from one of her many livelihood portfolios – that of a fixer, mobilising a focus group session for a research organisation. Why Rebecca? It seems slightly odd to hire a twenty-two-year-old woman for this task, given the patriarchal leadership structure of Turkana and the predominantly male-dominated nature of most extractive operations. Perhaps she is being engaged for reasons of diversity? Not quite. Diversity features in Tullow's community engagement to the extent that women are allowed a voice in certain non-traditional kinds of meetings and are also given 'something too' by way of small contracts to supply vegetables, often after much agitation from the women. As noted earlier, benefits often follow the direction of risks and threats. But, besides diversity quotas, women make excellent mobilisers. Although Rebecca will not be lending her voice to this meeting of elders, it is acceptable for her to 'fix' it.

Rebecca assured the disgruntled group baking in the heat that food would be available in due course. In the interim, they were to make do with the drinking water dispensed from worn jerry cans into a large barrel. I could not help but observe that the setting contrasted sharply with stakeholder engagements in Nairobi, and Rebecca would later wonder why the convenors always assumed Turkana 'culture' meant a preference for meeting in hot dry riverbeds rather than cosier arrangements. There had been several instances when some focus groups accused her of inviting them to a long-distance occasion of this nature that had little or no plans for lodgings and sustenance, a situation that left her privately vowing never to get entangled with community engagement situations like this again – that is, until the next opportunity for translation and 'participation' work came up.

Assembled beneath a tree on the outskirts of Lokichar town, the men had been ferried in batches from different villages in Turkana South and East to meet with a small delegation of

Kenyans from Nairobi representing a London-based research consultancy company. The research group was contracted by Tullow as one of the multiple ways the corporation sought to engage with a cross-section of the local community. Their mandate was to study the social architecture of the region with the hope of easing corporate-community tensions. Much of the face-to-face parley with locals was carried out by the Nairobi crew (and sometimes visiting UK staff), with Rebecca engaged as the Turkana fixer. Her job was to translate, mobilise, organise, and guide the team around their areas of interest. A reasonable command of the English language and knowledge of the area had equipped her with the social infrastructure that enabled her to traverse cultural and corporate boundaries as a local mobiliser of sorts. Unlike the more domineering community gatekeepers, Rebecca's task was to act as an administrator in the context of the surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and focus group activities run by the researchers. Obliging villages had been encouraged to select three representatives, including a chairman, a secretary, and a youth representative. So far, the research team had been able to rally a group of elders (mostly seers) and young men into a kind of consortium that met in different locations to discuss oil-related issues. It was an all-male affair in line with the Turkana patriarchal 'tradition'. During these meetings, participants were asked about their opinions, experiences, and expectations of Tullow. The consultancy had been contracted based on allegations of Tullow's poor entry into Turkana.

The biggest challenge for Rebecca (and others in similar situations) was this: she could not clearly articulate what the engagement was about or what the research group was really trying to accomplish. This often put her in the awkward position of interpreting things she was not clear on and making promises on behalf of Tullow she could not ascertain. 'You have to promise something, or they will not listen', Rebecca often lamented to me. Thus, she generally kept things safe and superficial by towing the official community partnership line with her simplified version: 'Tullow wants to know your problems and how to solve them'. This made mobilising an audience easier, especially given the growing public fatigue over meetings, questionnaires, and the like.

I discuss similar a tricky position in the next chapter in the form of 'strategic interpretations' in the case of some locals in Tullow's employ as community liaison officers. As we will see in the case of Mr C in the next chapter, the local Tullow official, mistrust of community mobilisers, whether they worked for NGOs, Tullow's community liaison officers, or the unending pool of researchers, made mobilisation tasks difficult and genuine participation

almost impossible. In addition, most people, including the different focus groups that had been in talks with the research outfit, were not clear on who was engaging them, though they kept showing up for meetings. This was the challenge of those formally or informally tasked with the responsibility of mobilisation as well as those being mobilised. Interpreting transcripts had to be a selective and strategic process. Accepting to participate was just as ambiguous, for what was often mistaken as participation was mere attendance. Attendance, the act of showing up to a meeting and granting audience, is not participation, nor does it imply consent even after the participants have accepted meat, drink, and a 'sitting allowance.' In the event of consent, it was rare that it was reached via a unanimous consensus. Rebecca's saving grace was that she was generally not considered part of the more established 'opinion leaders' or notorious brokers and local elites. Most people understood she was basically trying to make a small living on the side, being quite young and with many dependents.

Uninvited guests circled the perimeter. It was not uncommon for passers-by to 'happen on' isolated gatherings and calmly, or riotously if they felt unduly left out of a 'secret plot' for benefits, assert themselves into the activity. This gathering indeed had the trappings of the much-despised 'secret meetings', the 'divide-and-rule' tactics associated with oil. Two small boys looked hopeful as they installed themselves between the old men sprawled on the dry sand. A gathering of men often held the possibility of roasted meat, and children were rarely shooed off. But when the meeting eventually commenced near sunset, there was still no sight of food, and the audience politely tried to keep up appearances when the master of ceremony opened the floor with introductions. At this point, Rebecca, two local women on hand to assist, and I had retreated to the back of the circle. The female member of the Nairobi delegation also sat apart as a nod to tradition. In customary meetings in Turkana, women sit apart from men. And in the all-male gatherings where the participants sit in an arc (*akiriket*), women are not allowed in at all, nor beneath the elders' tree where the men congregate. Thus, participatory meetings can be culturally ambiguous. Rebecca, for example, is young and female, but she also has the capacity to fix. In another kind of meeting, Rebecca and other women might be able to speak up.

The role of master of ceremonies was delegated to the head of the chairmen, who hails from a family of seers. As the MC, he gave everyone a chance to introduce themselves, myself included. When he tried to rally the old men from their sprawl, the younger members of the audience chided him to leave them alone (*kimiek kiangasi*). Indeed, keen observers of Turkana gatherings would notice that old men prefer to stretch out and listen with their eyes closed,

regardless of the status of the convenor. Following this, the agenda was presented. First, the MC encouraged the delegates to relay all discussions back to their various locations. ‘This meeting is not by chance’, he pointed out. ‘It is one of the meetings that we have held in different places in a broad daylight. We have been also electing people during the day and not at night . . . you will have to take back the report to your people, you assemble them the way we are doing here.’ First, it was very unlikely that the delegates, upon return to their villages, would assemble their people to relay the minutes of the meeting when the jury was still out on how worthwhile the meeting was. Moreover, there were just too many of these consultations and participation and capacity-building sessions going around. After all, ‘[L]istening to someone is not the same as being persuaded by them’ (Gardner 2012: 52). Second, the emphasis on broad daylight versus night-time indicated the awareness that ‘secret night-time plots’ had become a ubiquitous complaint and a metaphor for Tullow’s consultations, even though it was obviously impossible to consult by knocking on every single door. In fact, the focus group had been dubbed ‘Tullow’s elders’ in many quarters. That was how some people felt about the idea of talking to ‘some’ and leaving others out, for whatever reason.

On the meeting’s agenda, the big issue was politics, leadership, and representation. The MC believed customary leaders such as those present were being relegated to the background because they lacked knowledge of contemporary issues such as oil. ‘Other tribes have come into our land in big numbers to steal from us’, he said to rousing applause. He was referring to the notion that better-educated, well-connected Kenyans were gaining more access to oil opportunities than Turkana people. ‘The main cause is our leaders whom we elected. When Turkana elects a leader, they relax, forgetting to follow up the performance of their leaders. They think that the leader will source and bring any information, yet that leader is just focused on his own issues.’ This was also agreeable to the audience, though some started yawning visibly. The MC ploughed on:

You as the community [he used the word *Ng’iturkana* for the Turkana people interchangeably with the word community in English], what is the meaning of community? That is a question that I want us to think about it. Who is the community? The chief says he is the community chosen by the national government, MP says he is the community elected by the people, MCA [Member of the County Assembly] says he is the community because he was elected by the citizens, and you also say you are the community. Who exactly is the community?

A brief silence was followed by low murmurings as some turned to each other to deliberate. But one of the elders, now alert, was ready with an answer. ‘I, the owner of the land, is the community’, he said, to which the crowd hastily agreed. His use of the first-person pronoun was not ‘I’ as an individual but represented his status and those of his counterparts, who were not just elders but also *raia* – active pastoralists. Fellow elders quickly chimed in to buttress the point, saying, ‘Yes, we the civilians, are the community. It is we who are seated here are the community.’¹³ The MC called for order and encouraged the raising of hands before speaking to avoid interrupting others. The first respondent continued:

I remember very well that it is me the owner of the land is the community. Any other investor coming to my place should first consult me the owner of the land. I have stayed with this belief that the government is a stranger of the land. It is me who is always on the ground, but the government comes and find me asleep. After the government realizes that I am asleep, the only thing it does is to cover me with a heavy blanket.

‘Continue sleeping’ (*tojotoor . . . tojotoor . . . tojotoor jik*), some voices called out convivially. This was a humorous approach to what they perceived as their folly of trusting the young and modern, ‘who do not tell us anything.’ This is what the old man was implying with his turn of phrase about being covered with a heavy blanket.

The speaker carried on:

The chief says he is the community, the Member of Parliament I elected in the morning who is still counting and numbering his days claims that he is the community. Anything just arises and claims that he is the community. I have failed to understand how every one of these can be the community. That is when I realized I have been covered with a thick blanket. Even when I try to face any direction, I am told you can’t! You can’t! You can’t! So, I decided to just stay and hold on to land because that is what I live on and where I will be buried. Even those claimers will also be buried on this land. I am the real community because I stay at the bottom part of the land while the government is tapping it from the top.

So, here ‘the community’ means someone who can make claims because they work and own the land. Community is constructed as a group that can make claims on Tullow. The question ‘Who is the community?’ is at the heart of the crisis of representation that has dogged oil operations in Turkana. First, it encapsulates Tullow’s challenge of locating power and authority that has resulted in the presence of the research consultants.

¹³ The word *raia* is Swahili and translates as civilians. So, the old man meant ‘we are the *raia*’ in the sense of ‘we are the pastoralists’, as *raia* is used in the vernacular to describe pastoralists.

A Tullow field officer from Turkana echoed the same concerns a month later. When I asked how consultation works in the official template, he was just as confounded:

When we came first, there were so many systems in the place. We used to move depending on what the community tells us. We used to engage the political leaders, then the administration, and also the community, but it all of a sudden changed to more of . . . it's like . . . everybody had an interest, everybody became interested in it at the end of the day, but at the beginning, there was no interest. This was a purely pastoralist community who were not interested in what we were doing, but as time went on, they realised that there is something good coming out of this. We used to engage with the community through their leadership, [but] now the community have turned out to say we want to be engaged directly, not through the leadership.

So, there is a pull-push within the community where the political leader says I should be the entry point and the political leaders are the MCAs. Then again, the national government representatives where we have the deputy county commissioner and then we have the chiefs say they are the ones that are supposed to be engaged directly. . . . If the MP gets an information, the other one says, why did the MP get the information . . . ? The real challenge we are facing right now is, who should be engaged first? Community believes we should engage them through their seers, go to the chief, then take [it] to the political group [professionals]. The political group are demanding them[selves] first. So, there is a demand from both sides. Bottom-up or top-down sort of approach?

Who is in charge and what are the social hierarchies that should guide community consultations? What do these accusations and counteraccusations tell us? The diatribes against elected officials and educated elites that accuse them of passing off their personal interests 'in the name of community' help us move beyond classic notions of brokerage and gatekeeping to what I describe as *trading with claims to influence*. The venture is to conjure up and control the 'community', the ability to mobilise and 'collect names', which is a form of speculation and a social resource. This highlights a core challenge to Tullow's aim of participation and building consensus: it is a speculative exercise preoccupied with locating social hierarchies along the established order, which often has chaotic and fragmented results. It requires a form of disengagement in order to engage. Put differently, to mobilise support for a particular cause, potential influencers have to be targeted, disengaged from the wider public, and reconnected to their constituents with a narrative. The architecture of community engagement in Turkana depends on locals with the real or imagined potential to influence favourable relations between Tullow and residents.

What community engagement and consultation also takes for granted is that decision-making in Turkana, though seemingly fixed along established lines of gender and age, is highly subject to the vicissitudes of life. Decision-making is never fixed or concentrated in a single domain of authority but is a constantly negotiated process. In critiquing the framing of so-called traditional societies, Gledhill (2000: 11) argues against universalising power, which still happens today, especially in the case of identifying linear levels of authority in local host communities. He asks, '[A]re these societies in which political power [supposedly] *does not exist* at all and which therefore lack any political organisation, or is there something wrong with the assumption that all power is coercive, and that the forms of power found in modern Western societies (and other civilisations) are universal?'

In Turkana, power is not universal; rather, it shifts and, as the preceding chapter has shown, leaders or representatives emerge circumstantially. When this happens, those at the forefront are those with insight. This is similar to how seers and warriors often overshadow the rule of elders in times of conflict and expansion. With oil, the old men are barely able to grapple with the basics, and the explanations of the technicalities do not offer much clarification for them. Further, the population dispersion, varied settlement, demography, and livelihood patterns make a unified community position impossible. Thus, one might argue that everyone is a broker and 'gatekeeps' their interests, which brings us back to the point of the *ami*, the homestead, as the fundamental unit of organisation. Contrary to the requirements of Tullow's community engagement, social organisation in Turkana is essentially impermanent and fluid. Power lies in small places as much as it does in the established quarters. By the same token, losers can become winners in creative ways. Rebecca does not sit in the council of elders or men, but she does convene meetings and gather information central to the negotiation process. This shows that those often considered 'powerful actors' are influential and responsible in different ways, and 'some of them are less powerful than they seem' (Li 2010: 233).

Close to twilight, the proceedings took a sluggish turn. The MC was still insisting on discussions first, food later. The men argued that if the meeting was following the Turkana 'culture', as the convenors claimed, then a goat should have been roasted before the commencement of deliberations as opposed to the other way around. 'The discussion concerning community is very long, and it may take time. It has more than twenty issues within it,' someone pointed out. Another chimed in, 'And because we are the community, we are supposed to follow the laws. We were not supposed to discuss anything without the leaves being

arranged for roasted meat.’ In the end, some goats were roasted, and the children who had persevered were not disappointed.

Participation: (mis)informed consent, rhetoric, and the producing of community

The phrase ‘carrying the community along’ reverberates throughout Tullow’s brochures, replete with pictures of community ‘development’ projects, and Turkana denizens being ‘consulted’ under trees in vivid illustrations of corporate-community partnership. But, community engagement in this context is not the sole preserve of the corporation. NGOs and activist groups, in their ancillary capacity as social auditors, produce similar image-ridden reports of community engagement meetings driven by the language of global ethical standards that counter or validate corporate social performance. This is part of what Andrew Barry (2006: 239) describes as *technological zones* – ‘a space within which differences between technical practices, procedures and forms have been reduced, or common standards have been established’. In the context of Turkana, community engagement has sought to establish global standards of ethical extraction. The corporation draws on carefully ordered narratives of ‘shared value’ and community partnership (Gardner 2012) which are often contradicted by the blockades, protests, and various forms of claims-making assembled by locals. At the same time, community engagement has shifted to become a bureaucratic process of global finance. As a regulatory framework, corporations are seeking not just a social license to operate but also the technical qualifications from funding bodies that demand particular kinds of social performance. Multinational extractive corporations are thus caught up in enacting various types of staged performances for different audiences. Tullow for example is a small-time player, a junior company compared to the big multinational oil companies such as ExxonMobil, Shell, or BP. Success depends on social performance, especially during the early stage of exploration and the development of new extractive sites. The implication of such ‘theatres of virtue’ (Rajak 2011) is that both the corporation and the NGOs aim to demonstrate responsibility because they all draw funding from the corridors of global finance and development bodies.

Community engagement is not merely a buzzword for extractive corporations. It is a structuring concept and a regulatory practice central to the demonstration of an ethical corporation and a transparent government. In an era of ‘ethical capitalism’ (Barry 2004) with proliferating global standards or ‘best practices’ that emphasize frameworks such as local content, corporate social responsibility, free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), accountability, and indigenous participation, corporate ethics should not be summarily dismissed ‘as an abstract

set of ethical principles’ but should be understood ‘as a practical and heterogeneous set of techniques directed towards a specific set of issues’ (Barry 2004: 195). Although engagement does not guarantee inclusion, as many people – including my friend Rebecca – have noted, it does constitute an important stage on which ideas about what it means to be a good corporation are enacted and contested. Morality is not the only driving force. Community engagement is a regulatory mandate that influences corporate access to funding. Performance standards introduced by the International Finance Corporation, a sister organisation of the World Bank, require strict adherence to the right to free, prior and informed consent – a framework Tullow did not initially implement in Turkana but adopted in 2015. The publication of Tullow’s human rights policy in 2016 was preceded by a \$50 million (appx £30 million) investment from the International Finance Corporation through an equity subscription agreement in August 2015. The policy makes a commitment to:

Engage meaningfully with and obtain broad, community support from impacted communities throughout the project life cycle, including, where appropriate, using traditional community governance mechanisms and obtaining the perspectives of vulnerable groups, including women; . . . to obtain the informed agreement of project-affected communities early in the project cycle, and prior to major project developments or changes that would significantly affect them; . . . to ensure that affected communities have access to a transparent and fair non-judicial project-level grievance mechanism which operates in a timely and predictable manner. (Tullow Oil 2016; Oxfam 2017).

To engage, therefore, is to be ethically visible. Meetings and projects are central to this validation of responsibility. The specific kinds of meetings I speak of here are those geared towards participation, community engagement, and the production of knowledge about the extractives sector. These events are scaled up or down depending on the audience. They may be convened by the oil company to engage with host communities, by NGOs to mobilise and sensitise local people, by academic institutions to rally knowledge about the industry, by the state to show its role as mediator, or even, in some cases, by local residents eager to negotiate their place. But, as Barry points out:

Through consultation it is thought possible both to incorporate society’s concerns into the design of a technology or the conduct of a company’s operations, and to demonstrate to others that they have been incorporated. . . . But, at the same time, whether consultation has been carried out properly, and whether or not the results of consultation have or have not actually been incorporated into the work of the oil company and its contractors, may themselves be contested. In practice, zones of qualification are multi-layered,

for not only do the qualities of the object need to be qualified, so too does the quality of the work of qualification itself. (2006: 247)

Locals were not blind to this fact either, or else there would have been no contention. Consultations were greeted with ambivalence as to their actual impact, though many never shied away from an opportunity to discuss the ‘good and bad’ ways of Tullow. Even if nothing concrete was decided, meetings often involved some form of compensation by way of lunch or small monetary tokens for attendance. The scenario of people being gathered and made to recount their experiences with Tullow or form a consensus over some agreement was constant. However, Strathern cautions that ‘to dismiss meetings as ritualistic or pointless is another way of evaluating expectations about their efficiency’ (2017: 201). As Gardner succinctly reflects, ‘[C]ommunity engagement thus attempts the tough gymnastic act of successful manoeuvres on both the local and the global scale’ (2012: 166). Thus, exploring how ‘community’ is mobilised and staged is central to understanding that the internal dynamics of engagement are not the sole preserve of the corporation (though derived from industry standards) but rather a process that involves a variety of institutional actors operating on more ‘global’ and more ‘local’ levels.

Auditing responsibility: narrative action and ‘rituals of verification’

Community engagement and consultation practices present the dilemma of place and voice, proximity and representation. In engaging the community, who acts as the authentic representative? As my ethnographic vignette implies, this was the central question which the elders’ consortium and Tullow’s researchers sought to tackle. ‘Just as they order the world, construct and reveal identities and are used as political tools’, Gardner writes, ‘narratives are also accorded differential value by their audiences’ (2012: 52). Narratives, also have to be varied, performed, and directed at targeted audiences, whether to accuse, validate, or lay claims. As Michael Carrithers points out, ‘[T]hrough the glass of rhetoric, we can see that, in any moment of interaction, some act to persuade, others are the targets of persuasion; some work, others are worked upon’ (2005: 578). Voice, persuasion, and influence (real or imagined) are key tools that determine the success of one’s positionality. ‘Acting’ came up frequently during fieldwork as an accusation against those who shoved their way into the loop by strategically stirring up contention or by the contenders themselves narrating the success of their strategy to me. Thus, the process of engaging is also the process of being persuaded to accept, reject, or make more demands through the rhetoric and performances of particular actors and the circumstances in which these actors emerge. After all, a good leader in Turkana is one who can ‘speak well and

convince people'. This characteristic comes in handy while negotiating inclusion; it is the ability to assert oneself and show that one can convince others to accept or reject Tullow. What we have then is a stage where engagement is performed, sometimes literally.

In this section, I focus on two performative stages: the Turkana oil and gas conference and a consultation convened by a local organisation in collaboration with the Ford Foundation. Though set for a different audience and with different targets in mind, they both aimed to control a narrative and present it to a wider audience beyond Turkana. Opportunities for such engagements are scarce, and the story of Turkana's oil as depicted on the national stage is that of disenfranchisement, on the one hand, and unrealistic demands, on the other. On occasion, locals might be flown to Nairobi to participate; notably, however, most of this effort to shape the narrative does little to include people outside the bubble of the Turkana capital or Lokichar in discussions about oil. In fact, the oil and gas conference were a major event organised by the local government. In addition, a series of meetings were convened by the governor in Lokichar to debate a much-disputed plan by Tullow for conservancies and the community revenue percentage for oil that had been reduced by the national government. During my fieldwork, no other internally driven engagement aimed at the hinterlands took place.

In May 2016, the 2nd Annual Turkana Oil and Gas Conference was convened at the Cradle Resort (allegedly owned by the Turkana governor) in Lodwar, the county capital. The prestigious television news crew from Nairobi that covered it live on national TV kept repeating 'We're live at the Cradle hotel in Turkana' as if this were part of the response to the conference theme, 'Are We Ready?' I caught the endless refrain as I watched the proceedings in my Lodwar host's house while getting ready to attend the event. The conference was billed as a public consultation about oil, but the attenders were mostly Nairobi-based guests, staff of the county's Ministry of Natural Resources, and Lodwar-based CSOs/NGOs. Some *raija* were ferried in from nearby villages, but I did not observe any being invited to sit at the high table. A large tent was constructed inside the Cradle premises. From there, one could make out the large unfinished building of a nearby future conference centre. English was the language of communication all through the conference, sometimes interspersed with Kiswahili depending on the speaker. There were no translators, neither for Kiswahili talks nor to provide translations for Turkana participants.

Some of the participants were quite vociferous about the exclusive nature of the conference and pointed out to me that this was becoming a trend for discussions about oil

taking place at high levels. When I asked one of the organisers about plans to replicate smaller fora like this across the sub-counties, a toned-down version for everyday locals to understand what is at stake, and whether the leaflets that had been distributed would become available in translation, she claimed that plans for such provisions were in the pipeline. When I asked my friends back in Lokichar why they had not attended the event, one of the active local mobilisers explained that he had no funding, invoking another familiar term from the NGO vocabulary. Sh400 bus fare was a large amount since Sh20 could feed a family with beans for dinner. Other friends that had heard about the meeting had found the prospect of a long journey too tiresome. Many had not heard about the meeting at all. Even chiefs were absent from the proceedings.

The governor's featured investment plans included a science park, resort city, and suggestions for equity rather than outright cash compensation for land in the oil process. Tullow gave a PowerPoint presentation about their activities and emphasised that the next phase would be market testing. The (literal) pipeline is still in the works, and the crude oil is expected to be trucked from Lokichar to Lamu port. As I will show in chapter 5, this piece of information, colourfully displayed at the conference, would become the bane of the scheme when locals, far removed from such spaces, blocked the trucks from leaving because they had not been consulted. The cabinet secretary for petroleum, representing the national government, spoke about plans to fix the broken highway the trucks would travel on. He encouraged 'the people' (who were largely absent and did not have TVs to connect remotely) to speak up for their rights. Plenary sessions ran well into the second day of the conference, filled with technical jargon that was beneficial for some but lost on many. The plenary session on community engagement and rights was the last session of the second and final day of the event. By the time the conference ended at 7 pm, I counted fewer than ten people in the dishevelled hall.

A few days later, on the back of the conference, one of the top civil society organisations in Turkana organised a more intimate roundtable session of about ten people on the same subject of oil and the community. They pooled stakeholders from the county government (the Ministry of Lands), Oxfam, and some other individuals, me included. What was interesting about the meeting, though, were the comments and conversations that took place informally, specifically those regarding the position of pastoralists. Pastoralism was discussed as the main source of livelihood for local people but, more interestingly, as the economic powerhouse of the county. Drawing a comparison with the experience of northern Nigeria in relation to pastoralism, I challenged the discussants to address how Turkana pastoralism could become an

economic powerhouse when the principle of keeping animals is not for commercial purposes but for subsistence, exchange, and status. This is a change, of course, especially with the Department for International Development's new initiative of livestock market trusts that has resulted in livestock markets and slaughterhouses springing up in parts of Turkana¹⁴. I directed this question to the director of the Pastoralists Institute, who punctuated his sentences with phrases such as 'I am a pastoralist' and 'Pastoralism is my identity' but in the same breath declared pastoralism 'an outdated mode of existence'. His eventual response was that 'what we should be talking about now is how to phase out pastoralism because it will not survive the development that is coming. We cannot run from it. It is not possible to sit with animals and not sell them and be crying *akoro* (hunger). Or we can also look for modern ways. Okay, not phasing out, what I mean is we have to go modern.' He did not explain what would power Turkana as an economic powerhouse.

The Oxfam representative, a non-Turkana Kenyan, was livid about many of the assumptions and stereotypes that came up in the discussion. 'It is so arrogant to talk about pastoralists as if they are irrational beings,' she said reproachfully. There was great confidence in the way participants expressed knowledge about pastoralists and pastoralism, yet when I asked about pastoralists' inclusion in these conversations, I got responses like '[W]e represent them,' particularly from the designated pastoralism expert, who is also a Turkana.

Fast-forward a few months to November 2016, when the same community-based organisation invited a civil society delegation from Uganda and the Ford Foundation for a whistle-stop, on-the-ground assessment of oil exploration. They were first conducted to Tullow's premises in Lokichar, where they met with some officials and discussed the state of oil affairs. The main agenda, however, was to hold a town hall-style *baraza* with the community. Community members had been mobilised and were waiting to deliver narratives for and against oil operations in Turkana. Commendable as the event was in terms of creating a space for local voices and a comparative platform between Turkana and oil communities in Uganda, where Tullow is also exploring, the aim was not clear to most participants. A young man who spoke on behalf of Turkana youths followed me out after the event to enquire about the organisers, asking whether I was a part of it since I am also a researcher. He seemed unsure about the actual

¹⁴ 'New dawn for pastoralists in Turkana', 15 May 2015, Kenya Markets Trust, <https://www.kenyamarkets.org/new-dawn-for-pastoralists-in-turkana/>

purpose of the event and explained he had been roused from a midday nap and asked to prepare a speech because visitors from Uganda were coming to engage with the community about oil.



Figure 38. Participation meeting in Lokichar



Figure 39. A sample of Kenya's crude oil in a jar as displayed to the social auditors by Tullow Oil

The meeting featured different groups and communities of interest. It was convened in the Turkana language and translated into Kiswahili and English for the guests. Seated at the high table were community representatives of various groups, while the visiting delegation sat with the crowd. One after the other, the moderator (the activist who had lacked the funding to attend the Oil and Gas Conference in Lodwar) called upon representatives of the different groups to speak. Members of a prominent women's group, Neema, sat together in their uniforms – green T-shirts with the group's logo. When it was her turn, the group's leader, a middle-aged woman, made a case for the inclusion of women in oil opportunities. She explained that the Neema Women's Group started in 1998 as a merry-go-round¹⁵ and that each member contributed Sh20 (about 80p). They expanded from basic contributions to investing in poultry, having observed a gap in that trade. By 2012, around the time Tullow came onto the scene in Turkana, they had acquired a plot of land and added the commercial production of eggs to the business.

The women's group applied for a tender to supply Tullow with eggs for use in the oil camps. They were given conditions for hygiene standards and a date for inspection. Despite their efforts, however, they were not awarded the contract. 'There is one question I want to ask our visitors and the other people that are here,' the group's leader said:

We used to milk camels . . . your camel when it gives birth, can you leave the milk of the camel that is at home and go and buy milk from a camel that is in Kitale? It is not easy here . . . things are not easy here! When your camel produces milk, will you go to another homestead to buy milk, yet your own camel is producing milk? Is that in order?

The audience agreed it was out of order. What she said she found even more perplexing was that part of Tullow's community sensitisation mantra was self-empowerment, which Neema had been committed to for decades despite challenges of water supply, transportation, and storage facilities. This led them to the conclusion that they were denied the contract because 'our farm is far from where oil business is being conducted; everything is happening on the

¹⁵ Merry-go-round is a popular savings scheme in Kenya whereby people form a group and contribute small sums of money, often on a weekly basis, and the full sum is regularly paid out to one of the members. Everyone has a turn in receiving the payout, after which another cycle begins. The logic is that saving small sums via the group converts to a larger payoff.

other side. Maybe God will remember even us because Tullow has concentrated on the other side and does not want to even help us.'

Another woman from a different organisation, Lokichar Petroleum, corroborated the gap in opportunities for women. Although her registered company was one of the forty awarded the contract for light vehicles, she complained that women were always considered last and were often side-lined by men. 'The women groups that have the required papers, they should be considered. The cake must be shared equally. We should not be greedy . . . there are some greedy companies that believe they must be given all the hiring of vehicles, fuel, and so on. What about the rest? How will people benefit from Tullow, because Tullow will not be here forever!'

In contrast to the women's group, the speaker for the business community had had more favourable outcomes. Kapese Transport and Carrying Ltd. was owned by a Turkana MP and managed by his younger brother, who was the next to speak. Most of the companies had been established for transportation contracts. Their engagement began with a contract for vehicle supply in 2013, notably after the popular protest that temporarily shut down Tullow's operations. He told the audience:

When we completed the process of registering a company, we went to see the Tullow subcontractors' companies. We told them we have that capacity. We went through a procurement process and followed all the rules. After that, we were awarded a contract. Now we are working with Tullow, and we are grateful to Tullow because they uplifted our lives. . . . [W]hen we started this business, we used to borrow people's vehicles or friends' and then we come and give to Tullow; now we have our own vehicles. We have also built a modern petrol station, and that was all through Tullow. We thank Tullow.

The downside to his success story was a contract clause that stated that the company must share their benefits with other local companies in Turkana:

But we have seen that Tullow is trying to misuse that clause. Sometimes we are given a chance for one vehicle and then we are told we have to subcontract this same vehicle to the community. So you find all those burdens Tullow has brought to us exempting the other companies from Nairobi, Eldoret, ROLLS, OML, Oil Movers, AFEX, but you find that any business community that goes to Tullow, they are told to go to Kapese, they have work, but there is no other time they can tell them there is work at AFEX, ROLLS, so you see we have a lot of burden . . .

The MP's company appeared to be the only one with very tangible benefits. Others in the business community, the Muslim community, and the drivers' association reflected on this. A

popular dissenter who championed road blockades against the trucking of oil from Turkana commented,

Tulow has uplift Kapese company? But some of us, we are just the way we were before Tulow came. I am in pain because of this. There is one problem: Tulow is a political entity. It is a political company. . . . First, they stole some oil using the trucks at night while everyone was asleep. . . . The question that I want to ask you is this, what do you want these people to give you? Tulow is the government. What can the community say? You are wasting our time by making us to sit here. We need education.

The drivers' association pointed out that without direct action, inclusion will never be guaranteed:

We tried to sit down with Tulow and then decided to block the road. Tulow asked us if we had driving licences. We told them we did not have licence but decided to go to driving school. We saw that even if we blocked the roads and we did not have driving licences, it was useless. We went to school. We were around eight hundred people. There were twenty women and plant operators. When we came back, we found that Tulow had employed their own people from Nairobi. Tulow employed only one woman driver from our company. We are still feeling cheated by Tulow up to now.

A businessman representing the Muslim community summarised it thus: 'There are opportunities where we can all benefit from Tulow but . . . first the politicians who would like those job opportunities for themselves, and because Tulow fears the politicians, the ordinary person will not get that chance.' This was a direct jibe at the MP's brother seated on the high table. 'Even now, if you say that you want to know those people that were employed by Tulow, only a few will show the papers and [the] rest have never been employed or even gone near Tulow since they started their work here. They just hear about them.'

A local theatre group, Ngikonei, noted it was for precisely this reason, to bring Tulow close to the community, that they had been contracted. In what the group's leader described as 'CSR meaning corporal social rehabilitation', their representative argued that Tulow's responsibilities, which included the 'building of hospitals, drilling boreholes, and creating employment', had all been done quite well except for their uneven spread. The theatre group started in 2008 with the aim of providing civic education on emerging issues. Their plays about HIV and AIDS were quite popular. When Tulow ran into problems with roadblocks and protests, the idea of engaging the theatre group seemed like an efficient strategy. Protests can be productive. 'We saw that this was also our time to be heard by Tulow,' the theatre representative told the crowd. 'We even mobilised the community better than the CLOs

[community liaison officers]'. With Tullow's help, they registered as a company and were able to obtain some contracts.

What was missing in the back-and-forth were narratives of those without papers. Someone from the visiting group asked, 'Who is in charge of pastoralism? Because I have heard a lot about benefits, benefits, benefits.' An eloquent *raiya* on the high table was given a chance to speak. 'I have been looking for this person called Tullow . . . so that we can plan on these oil wells. They cannot be dug all over the riverbeds. They must leave some plains for grazing. If Tullow takes over every part of Turkana, the valleys, the hills, the plains, and the rivers, where will we start?'

The women then faced off the men, and benefits, or the lack of them, dominated the talk. The first speaker, a respected elderly woman in Tullow's employ as a village socialisation officer, accused the men of blaming Tullow for their negligence and greed:

How can you say that you want Tullow to give you the land for grazing your animals, yet it is you who knows where the grazing land for your animals is and knows that this is our watering point? You as the elders of the community should see where your grazing lands are and refuse Tullow even if oil has been found there.'

The second woman, a *raia*, added to this: 'You support Tullow, and now you have come to cheat us that your land is being taken. Now you are telling us, the uneducated, that we have left our land to be taken! We are all to blame, the educated and the *raia*!'

There is much in this scene that is of interest. First, what was meant to be an engagement exercise turned out to be a verification exercise in the sense that it provided more of a platform for accusations and counteraccusations with little impact on the overall scheme of things. More interesting was that it was the women who called out the internal complicity by accusing the men, especially the elders. For them, Tullow's missteps were enabled by the shortcomings of local leadership, which was often dominated by men. This speaks to the seemingly free-for-all mode of community participation that invites contentious forms of representation embodied by the position of mobilisers, to whom I now turn.

Mobilisers: rebranding brokers, translators, and gatekeepers

Mobilisers are situated between brokerage and gatekeeping. They are not always big men or established political figures, though they might start out as such. Most mobilisers start off working for NGOs doing community development work.

‘NGOs have outlived their uses’, declared a senior government official in Turkana. The object of his wrath, a self-proclaimed community rights defender, tried to maintain a respectful silence while waiting for a pause in the tirade to defend himself. Discretion had replaced his initial audacity. I was of two minds myself – whether to quickly chip in a word that I was not of the erring fold or to silently stand by the accused who had brought me to the government office to introduce my research. I was spending some time in the area in preparation for my main fieldwork. Only a short while ago, as we were walking to the office, the community rights defender had told me about a recent *baraza* he had convened on behalf of a popular community-based NGO aiming to ‘sensitise locals into establishing a community parliament. ‘Now, we must make our leaders accountable to us through community parliament,’ he enthused. ‘The community have to know their rights and use it’. It was the aforementioned parliament that was now the bone of contention.

Things at first progressed rather well with the government official, who was amiable enough about my research on oil and shared his own thoughts and writings on the subject with a mention of his degree in the social sciences and plans for a PhD. When he touched on the subject of widespread ignorance and the need for more civic education to help locals manage the oil situation, the activist deemed it a good opportunity to mention that a community parliament was in the pipeline to that effect and that a *baraza* had just been held in that regard only few days ago. ‘So, you people were the ones behind that gathering, eh?’ the official exclaimed.

‘Yes,’ the activist proudly responded. Not sensing the tension brewing, he launched into visions of empowerment and capacity-building until he was interrupted by the curt statement, ‘[W]ell, I was not invited.’ Somewhat confused, the activist responded: ‘Oh, *Pole* [sorry], sir. But we sent invitation!’ ‘Wait,’ the official interjected as he reclined back in his plush black swivel leather chair. ‘You people have to learn how to follow procedures and start doing the right thing. The days of NGOs running around and operating in secret are gone. I feel sorry for anyone trying to work with NGOs. NGOs have outlived their uses. Now there is a new way to do things.’

The activist tried to get a word in but was silenced with a wave. ‘What does it take for you to tell us I am doing so and so? We should know what is happening around here. Or, my sister, is that not true?’ He finished off, turning to me. I nodded, concerned that the facilitation of my first encounter with one of the senior government officials by what now appeared to be

an anti-government local activist might have me labelled as part of the NGO crew. Then the activist responded with, '[W]ell, that is why we have brought our friend, so that we can follow procedure', which compounded my fears. I found my voice, thinking it was time to speak for myself. Coming to meet people and getting introduced was my idea, after all. I just needed facilitators. I launched into an explanation of why I was there and where I was from and what my research was about. 'Well, you should make me your research assistant', the official boomed jovially.

Brokers emerge from the gaps created by social situations that require channels of mediation and translation. They are creative and often Janus-faced based on their ability to navigate multiple social sets and geographies. Oil exploration in Kenya depends much on these mediation figures. As community liaison officers or village socialisation officers, they are cultural translators who translate Turkana to the company and corporate interests to the community; they broker peace and ensure the smooth running of operations. Their claim to influence is based on membership, public recognition in some cases, and their self-professed knowledge of their community. The list goes on in terms of categories of brokers and gatekeepers.

In this section, however, I conceptualise these people as mobilisers, especially the informal intermediaries who become official influencers. I am particularly interested in the spaces and encounters these mobilisers emerge from. As I argued in the prologue of this thesis, power lies in small places and people mobilise in less obvious ways to become influential. My neighbour, Rebecca, with her maxim of 'If you sit down, you will eat nothing', does not fit the classic concept of a broker, gatekeeper, or local elite in the same way that the popular civil society female entrepreneur who 'represents' Turkana globally does.

Gatekeepers, brokers, translators, and local elites feature prominently in development schemes and natural resource politics. As in a dramatic work of fiction, they have become the inevitable stock characters or archetypes in the story of resource extraction, often blanketed under terms such as local elites, the political class, or civil society entrepreneurs. These characters are present in Turkana. But, brokers do not appear overnight. Deborah James (2011) has shown that brokers are products of the phenomenon they find themselves in. In Turkana, they are also creations of the stakeholder charts that delineate groups or communities based on their ability to affect (positively or negatively) Tullow and its contractors' activities (see Tullow's definition of 'area of influence' in Tullow Oil 2017: 78). Thus, brokers or mobilisers emerge in the spaces of engagement and social audit, through protests for or against engagement, and in

meetings convened by activists. Through researchers like me who are seeking translators, brokers are empowered to speak for, to interpret, and to express and take on perspectives. This gives them the ability to create channels of expression, negotiate, and rally influence on a large or small scale. Rebecca might not be considered a broker in the sense of someone who is able to exploit others, but she has been able to create her own channels of engagement through her social skills.

Conclusion

As we have seen, corporate attempts to conjure the community do not yield the homogeneous or apolitical groups that are imagined in glossy corporate social responsibility brochures. We have also seen that community engagement and consultations can be counterproductive. Rather than foster the collective, they draw out the individual and ad hoc alliances that are based on ever shifting and contingent communities of interest. Bonds and associations could become relevant for particular purposes; then again, they might be discarded. As we have also seen, people recognise manipulation even though they play along. Engagement is an active process, but for whose benefit is the performance? Who is being mobilised? Engagement performance happens in the diverse forms of consultations convened by a myriad of internal and external actors. Consultations and consensus-building invite enactments and categorisations of community. The specific politics and performances and their affects materialise in various dimensions of mobilisation, in positionality (who speaks and decides), and in assumptions about deservingness (moral economy). These actions and processes connect as much as they disconnect (Gardner 2012). Who is included and excluded is thereby contingent on the common definition of the internal dynamics of engagement as ‘distinct but related to specific “external” contexts’ (Brown et al. 2017: 14). From here, one begins to rethink the category of ‘host communities’ and who the host really is. The host often does not act like a host, nor are they in the position to act like a host beyond dwelling in the resource environment and demanding benefits. The knowledge they have about oil is the curated version offered by the company and some educated residents. The communities do not generally convene meetings or dictate the terms of engagement. Rather, they respond and try to negotiate within the ambits of the templates presented to them or gleaned from other sources.

In the next chapter, I consider the material components of engagement and what promises of oil tell us about oil extraction.

Chapter 4

‘SEDUCING THE COMMUNITY’: OIL FOR DEVELOPMENT, PRODUCING PERMANENCE, AND THE TANGIBLE EVIDENCE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Mosese: That is why I don’t believe in such crap as the last shall be first and blessed are the poor for they shall inherit the Kingdom of heaven! For years we waited for the Kingdom, then they said it had come. Our Kingdom had come at last, but no. It was all an illusion. How many of us have set eyes upon that Kingdom? What colour is it?

Jere: I wouldn’t know, but I guess it’s blood red.

– Francis Imbuga, *Betrayal in the City* (1976: 27–28)

‘This house is not good’: impermanent development and demands for permanence

This chapter discusses the material and project dimensions of community engagement – the promises made and the permanence that is demanded, claimed, and often unrealised. What can the things being demanded and offered as benefits tell us about the sociality of oil exploration in Kenya and the practice of ethical extraction on the margins? What do the competing aspirations of the benefactors and beneficiaries reveal about the temporality of responsibility and exchange that mediate the extractive process? How does the economic rationalisation of resource extraction foster the affective pursuit of permanence through concrete things? What kinds of sociality emerge from the new forms of labour, livelihood, land use patterns, and permanent projects facilitated by oil? Phrases such as ‘too many demands’, ‘unrealistic expectations’, and even ‘misplaced priorities’ are popular among activists, NGOs, and pundits commenting on the emerging outcomes of corporate-community relations in Turkana even as ‘marginalisation’, ‘local exploitation’, and ‘handouts’ are used to describe Tullow’s engagement so far.

In ‘thinking through things’ (Henare et al. 2007) that constitute oil benefits in Kenya, this chapter emphasises permanence. Concrete public infrastructure projects and employment are some of the main things people demand as benefits from Tullow. Indeed, some of these projects have permeated areas of Turkana impacted by oil exploration activities – a potable water supply, paved roads, school buildings, jobs, and more. From wages and compensation

funds, individuals have constructed their own private infrastructure such as houses and commercial buildings, established business enterprises, restocked their herd of cattle, afforded a wife, and purchased vehicles and motorbikes often deployed for commercial purposes. What relations emerge from the things created? If, for instance, we conceptualise as infrastructure the proliferating permanent and semi-permanent buildings people invest wages in, a basic question would be, what kinds of relations come into play? Rather than think of them as single or isolated objects, we might consider what brings them into being, what these structures make possible, and what limitations they put in place. With this line of questioning, the houses facilitated by jobs and contracts, the skills needed to get recruited, the boreholes, classrooms, and roads all become part of a whole network of relations that shift between circumstances. As such, the extractive process is not for oil alone but is for the production of other things as well. Further, in this domain of engagement mediated by tangibility, concrete material benefits provide evidence of the responsibility of corporations. As operations progress into appraisal, extraction, and production, a smaller number of highly skilled outside labourers replace the roustabouts, road marshals, and other jobs created to engage casual labour. The numbers simply do not add up in a way that manifests the promised economic stability as opposed to transient opportunities.

If ‘the basic stuff of social life is performance,’ as Victor Turner (1987) asserts, then we may consider community as the stage where the social life of the extractives industry is performed. The imagined kingdom invoked by Mosese in Francis Imbuga’s (1976) famous play serves as the model for the materialisation of ‘good’ extraction. It serves as the physical evidence of a responsible corporation that is in line with the tenets of global governance. Indeed, ethics is political and is contested via performances (Tilly 2008). Through the practice of community engagement via consultations and social investment, corporations and the communities in which they operate negotiate the ambits of what constitutes a responsible social performance (Welker 2009, 2012). This marks a shift from considering mining and extraction communities solely as enclaves of exploitative capital (Ferguson 2005) to seeing them as sites of redemption where corporations seek to redeem their reputation by forming ‘partnerships’ (Gardner 2012: 166; Rajak 2011). Community in this sense also becomes a precinct of ethical abstractions that pilot particular ideals. Here, it is the ‘local, framed around a moral imaginary of “community” which provides the intended target of these cosmopolitan coalitions’ (Rajak 2011: 32). In other words, part of the natural resource-making process involves not just ‘a sustained project of abstracting substances identified as useful, valuable, and natural in origin from their

environment' (Richardson and Weszkalnys 2014: 6) but also a kind of abstracting of people and communities. But, this also means that a new form of local enclaves emerges where capital hops among disparate sites within the said host community, creating islands of success and exclusion (cf. Ferguson 2005).

When the question of how oil has benefitted Turkana is posed to residents, especially those in the oil-affected areas, the response is often 'We have never benefitted from anything' or 'Some people are eating more than others.' For those far from the oil sites, oil is a distant tale, though they also wonder, 'Are we not all part of the same Turkana?' This suggests that if oil lies beneath the communal land that supposedly belongs to the entire Turkana 'community' in the sense of *Ng'itürkana*, the Turkana people, why are some parts favoured more than others? Even neighbouring counties, such as West Pokot, have called upon Tullow to extend the benefits of oil to their regions because they are in need of help with basic community development projects as much as their Turkana counterparts.¹⁶ Though some locals might take a more nuanced approach by outlining the 'good and bad ways of Tullow' or blame internal community wrangling for the disputes over sharing, the question of who benefits from oil is contingent.

It was precisely this problem of strategic transcripts on benefits that led friends and even some strangers meeting me for the first time to caution me about gifts. Their context was that gifts are never understood by most recipients as a one-off gesture but instead trap the giver in a relentless cycle of expectations as a potential source of assistance. A national government official from another part of Kenya stationed in Turkana put it bluntly: 'If you start with giving [locals] money and things, you will fail, it will never stop, they will never appreciate it, and they will never stop expecting from you.' He proceeded to reel off all Tullow has done for 'these people', and yet, he said, 'They will never appreciate or accept they have been given anything!'

As noted in chapter 4, Tullow officials and some sections of the civil society are just as confounded by the claims that nothing has come out of oil operations in Turkana even though the evidence is visible in the boreholes, jobs, and scholarships and other social investment schemes undertaken by the corporation. A Kenyan journalist working in Turkana was quite riled by the community agitations and the ubiquitous collective refrain of '*mam* benefit' or no benefits

¹⁶ I. Shanzu, 'Tullow on the spot over social corporate responsibility', 4 Jan. 2019, *Standard Digital*, <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001308242/tullow-on-the-spot-over-social-corporate-responsibility>

from 'Talo' [Tullow]. 'I don't even want to be hearing that kind of thing,' he told me on my first trip in 2014. 'The oil company has done a lot. They have spent a lot, and should they not get the benefits of their investment?' Perhaps his perspective differed from those of his mainstream counterparts because he was resident in Turkana as opposed to those doing the pervasive drive-by reportage who often concluded their 'investigations' with headlines that reiterated the narrative of conflicts and little or no impact from oil.

Have people benefitted from oil in Turkana? As my friend Rebecca put it, 'Somehow things are better now than before, for some people.' Before returning to this issue, however, I will first examine the benefits and the beneficiaries and the question of who is left out and why. I argue that the notion of 'no benefits' should be seen as rooted in histories of transient development interventions in Turkana. It calls into question the impermanent architecture of corporate social responsibility schemes that have incorporated social investments as a core ethical mandate of natural resource extraction. It calls into question the idea that it is possible to leave something tangible and auditable behind while taking. What is being left behind often turns out to be unsustainable in the long term. The kinds of capacity being built are those that are highly dependent on the life cycle of the industry. For example, business trainings carried out by Tullow are often contracts-related and or directed towards education. The result of this approach is a supply glut of contractors, people with petroleum degrees, petty traders practically in front of every house, community-based organisations working on extractives justice and dialogue, and so on. When oil is down, nothing happens, nothing moves. This has already happened following the oil price slump in 2015 and whenever Tullow scales down their operations. Against the background of jobs and short-term contracts, we can begin to understand the broader context of 'no benefits' in the boom-and-bust context that is the oil industry. Following this, our enquiries should focus on systematically exploring these benefits to produce more nuanced interventions.

Second, I expand my argument that the conceptualisation of oil benefits in Kenya is significantly based on an idea of 'oil for development' that emphasises physical infrastructure and job creation as the ultimate public good and as hallmarks of economic growth. This populist economic and developmental aspiration of infrastructure and jobs creation conflicts with the neoliberal paradigm of entrepreneurial, self-reliant citizens who create wealth rather than depend on old-fashioned handed-down projects. While corporate social investments seek to move beyond the provision of roads and water, the need for proof and evidence keeps it in the

temporal loop of project cycles and target-group thinking – the classic development space driven and defined by measurable schemes. Indeed, as Raymond Lee (2005: 68), drawing on Bauman’s treatise on ‘liquid modernity’, argues, ‘[S]olid and liquid modernities are interspersed with varying perceptions of development’s endpoint, or we can say both types of modernity are no longer subjected to a teleological viewpoint. It is no longer possible to define development precisely as the emergence of solid’. As such, what Tullow offers and the things people demand demonstrate the blurred boundaries between the classic solid structures of oil’s tangible benefits and the liquid notion of governmentality that seeks to turn communities into modern, flexible citizens with temporary contracts who are creating development for themselves (Elyachar 2002; Gardner 2012). I will spell these ideas out in the sections that follow.

This chapter starts from a notion of development as a promise that is grounded in speculation (Dolan and Rajak 2018) and, for better and worse, involves assumptions about the ways in which the future of particular groups of people can be reshaped via more ‘resilient’ livelihoods (Lewis 2005; Mosse 2005). Sometimes it works; more often than not it misses the mark with ‘unintended’ or, perhaps, intended outcomes that lead to abjection (Ferguson 1994, 1999) and feelings of betrayal and disappointment similar to those expressed by the fictional characters in Francis Imbuga’s political satire *Betrayal in the City* (1976). The everyday discontent with the *uhuru* (independence) and the *maendeleo* (development) that never quite materialised as promised are long-running themes in Kenyan research, media, and pop culture. Francis Imbuga’s play is set in the imaginary ‘kingdom’ of Kafira. Things have fallen apart in this newly minted state, forged from the struggles against colonial domination and enacted with lofty ideals for a brave new equal world. Like Imbuga’s characters questioning the illusory ‘kingdom’ and the even more elusive glory, residents of Turkana also continue to ask, ‘What is our share? Where is our rent for the land being milked for oil? Where is the promise that was made to us?’ As previously stated, political regimes in Kenya have structurally excluded the Turkana, and the trajectory of development interventions have mostly been transient, thereby ‘unintentionally’ fostering the impermanence the regimes seek to ameliorate. Because of this, locals are none too keen on vague long-term ‘shared prosperity’; rather, it is material evidence in the here and now that counts. As I was often told, ‘The rivers are not permanent, jobs are not permanent, development has never been permanent, everything just comes and goes.’

While conducting household surveys, for example, I complimented a young man for having a nice house. I meant it in a courteous sense as he had been very welcoming. Nonetheless

he took offence. Pointing to the thatched roof, which I thought worked better in the heat as opposed to metal sheets, he responded, ‘Can you live [in] such a house? I will give it to you so you can come and stay here. These things are just temporary. This house is not good.’ Appeals made to Tullow reference things that can ‘permanently remove idleness.’ Many others describe the development phases and projects as temporary, telling me, ‘Nothing ever stays here. It just comes and goes. That is why we want this oil to stay permanent.’ For instance, many of the water points supported by Tullow’s social investment schemes are not permanent boreholes. Water tankers replenish the stationary tanks from time to time. When Tullow scaled down its activities in 2015, many of the water points shut down. The emphasis on jobs and infrastructure also opens up the need for us to revisit the conversation and debates on formal and informal economies, particularly the glut created by the oversupply of casual workers, contractors, and petty traders emerging to service the oil industry with little demand to sustain their existence. The ‘reserve army of urban unemployed and underemployed’ (Hart 1973: 61) is hard to miss in Turkana’s rapidly growing urban centres and in Kenya more broadly (see also Dolan and Rajak 2018). Young men and women, many of whom have gained an education, ‘tarmac’ daily in search of opportunities – preferably permanent jobs. The term ‘permanent and pensionable’ (P&P) has become ubiquitous among those working in the Turkana county headquarters in Lodwar as casual labour, and so-called informal forms of livelihood are increasingly being characterised as impermanent and insecure. With few formal work opportunities in Turkana besides county civil service and NGOs, much of the working-age population resorts to casual labour and petty trade. The county’s urban-centric development plan also gives rise to these aspirations, as does the history of development interventions aimed at sedentarisation, commercialisation, and so on. The question is, how many of these newly entrepreneurial residents are actually making a living they can survive on? As Glenn Banks et al. (2016: 246) argue, ‘[T]he outcomes of CSR [corporate social responsibility] initiatives that are developmentally focused are shaped not only by the imperatives, structures and effects of corporations working within neoliberal environments, but also by the relational effects and agency of the communities that are the targets and objects of these activities.’

The development promise: brokering demands and ‘strategic translations’

‘Development is the management of a promise’, writes Jan Nederveen Pieterse, ‘and what if the promise does not deliver?’ (2000: 176). As abiding ‘targets’ of poverty alleviation and livelihood enhancing projects, people in Turkana are very familiar with the development promise. While

they are thankful to the NGOs that have supported education and provided basic amenities over the years, they also believe that development has not delivered according to the textbook – whether from the state, local politicians, or NGOs. So, when the likes of Mr C, the frail-looking but kind-looking man seated across from me, showed up to rally community cooperation with promises on behalf of Tullow, chances are that they would be branded liars, traitors, and cheats if those promises did not materialise. As a Turkana local in Tullow's employ, Mr C's task is to facilitate smooth corporate-community relations with the promise of development related to oil: jobs, projects, education, and so on. This is the mantra of community engagement. To foster consent and participation, he might even on occasion resort to 'strategic translations' (Nauta 2006: 168) and stretch the promises a little beyond the corporate brief. 'We are the ones on the ground,' other community liaison officers and non-Tullow mobilisers often told me in defence of extempore promises thrown in during community consultations. An old retired teacher turned school security guard described it to me as 'manipulative participation': exaggerated promises, perverted truths, and 'divide-and-rule' tactics of selective inclusion. Examples are privileging those with real or imagined influence such as seers, 'noise-makers' (rambunctious young men), and politicians with permanent houses and contracts above others; secret meetings where details of issues are negotiated as opposed to the perfunctory information in leaflets and posters; taking some elders to Nairobi for massages, as some stories go; or fostering the number of serial attendees in 'participation' meetings with 'sitting allowances'. Added together, the general perception is that truth, *ateni* – which is how people refer to transparency, honesty and openness – has become perverted.

So, if development is the rationale for oil extraction, then it is an 'infelicitous' promise (Abram and Weszkalnys 2013: 10) based on the ambiguous plans and regulations expected to bring those promises into being. As Abram and Weszkalnys (ibid.) note, '[T]he complexity of planning promises, often involving a number of different institutional actors with different aims and agendas, offers about planning much opportunity for such infelicity.' Plus, the complex corporation expected to materialise these promises is 'inherently unstable and indeterminate, multiply authored, always in a flux, and comprising both material and immaterial parts' (Welker 2014: 4). However, these entrenched narratives with claims of corporate social investments and counter-tales 'can help us to analyse and describe such modern-day development dilemmas' (Nauta 2006: 168) that characterise the ethics of the global extractives industry and its tenets on corporate social responsibilities. Another way of putting this might be that corporate

‘community engagement’ planning may give the impression of being orderly, but things are often very messy on the inside.

‘If you don’t mind a final and personal question,’ I requested as my interview with Mr C, the Tullow community liaison officer, came to a close, ‘[W]hat were you doing before you started working for Tullow?’ It was December 2016, and we were in Tullow’s Resource Centre in Lokichar town. The kind of job held by Mr C offers more secure and long-term work than the casual jobs available in the oil camps. Education, previous work experience, influence within the community, political ‘connections’, and claims of local knowledge all contribute to the recruitment of individuals like Mr C. The sharp contrast between the air-conditioned office where we were seated, and the searing heat outside was a benefit in itself. People often added the air-conditioned ambience in Tullow’s offices and camps to the material benefits of wages and regular meals. The leafy green premises also house an Enterprise Development Centre equipped with computers and a library. Here, interested locals can attend business development workshops, access the computers and Wi-Fi, and generally enjoy the facilities. The main operational basecamp, however, is not so easily accessed. Located in Kapese, on the outskirts of Lokichar town, the premises are heavily guarded, and access for those without immediate business there requires a long bureaucratic process.

The crux of my meeting with Mr C. was the land access procedure for oil exploration and appraisal. The company commenced a new exploration and appraisal phase in the final quarter of 2016 with a fresh round of land access negotiations with residents near potential oil sites. The process had been contentious, especially the issues of compensation and employment. As noted in the previous chapter, the realisation that land is crucial for oil exploration sparked a wave of speculation, plots, and fences among residents of affected towns, villages, and settlements. Understandably, people wanted to know what exactly they were getting in return for the grazing lands that might become oilfields, while some went a step further and demarcated some acres in hopes of claiming compensation. As Mr C and I talked, the thought crossed my mind that he might not be readily available the next time I asked. These officials were often busy or simply unavailable to me, which made ‘studying up’ (Gusterson 1997; Nader 1974) challenging. The importance of this cannot be overemphasised because it adds a more complex dynamic to the research process and helps us take a less monolithic approach to how corporations are enacted (Welker 2014).

Back with Mr C, I seized the moment to pursue my interest in the personal trajectory of Tullow's local staff and how they navigate their positionality as simultaneous members of the community and representatives of the corporation. The expectations are enormous from both sides. I can best describe these liaison officers as cultural translators and mediators for both company and community. As noted in the previous chapter, the establishment of 'standard operating procedures, a hierarchical structure and defined roles and responsibilities' (Golub 2014: 19) is central to community engagement. Brokerage with locals becomes crucial and is increasingly institutionalised. Companies' engagement with local communities is a process of brokering access via established informal and formal channels and people that might be described as messengers of progress. Armed with the maxim of progress and the potential drawn from both official texts and improvised messages, these messengers waded into the communities they already know well, but now they have the aim of gaining consent. For community liaison officers, members of the Social Performance team such as Mr C, and those tasked with the responsibility of facilitating smooth corporate-community relations, success lies in their ability to communicate the promise – what Tullow intends to do for the community in exchange for land access and overall oil operations. The state makes promises too, namely, that oil will benefit everyone. Politicians, having been assured by the corporations of their good intentions (sometimes via their own private channels), extend the promise to their constituencies. Here, development transcends a mere promise and morphs into a speculative gamble, captured in a vague plan for the potential of the 'not yet'. The promise can also be 'a "mere" expectation, an instruction, a policy, a project, an exercise of democracy, a blueprint, a law. It may not be a vow, but it always includes some element of moral obligation that ties the present to the future, and occasionally, the past too' (Abram and Weszkalnys 2013: 11). Though promises are inherently futuristic, in the case of Turkana, promises are very much tied to the past in terms of how people evaluate new pledges via failed ones.

'I am a teacher by profession,' Mr C now replied to my question, pleased that I had showed my curiosity for his personal and not just his official affairs. He had a benign air about him. He wore the careworn look I had observed in some of the field officials I had already encountered but lacked the hardness that came with constantly being caught up in company-community tensions. 'I taught for eight years, after which I joined a humanitarian organisation, World Vision, for another eight years. But recently, when it was phased out, I joined Tullow.' This is a familiar trajectory for a significant number of literate people in Turkana. The NGO world was like a professional rite of passage. Before the advent of oil and devolution, NGOs

were the most significant provider of waged labour in Turkana. Their presence grew in response to the perennial crises of drought and famine that had established the region as a development frontier. Curious whether Mr C's perspective had changed once he started working for Tullow, I asked, 'What was your perception of Tullow as an outsider when you weren't part of the company, and what changed when you came in? What did you see differently?' He laughed:

As a community member on the outside, I understood Tullow as an institution that is coming independently . . . people who are very rich . . . who can come and change things, change the mode of living and improve livelihoods. And when they came, we thought, it is a government on its own coming with all the money, with all the equipment . . . and surely when they came, they did it. They did it! They have constructed schools when the government has not yet done. They have provided for water when the government, this responsibility is theirs, have not done. And, remember, this part [Turkana] has been marginalised for more than ten decades. And the Turkana community including myself thought, oh, thank God for bringing somebody to come to our rescue.

This person has brought money for education and surely these people were giving money for school fees. Education was improved here, schools were constructed and, remember, laboratories have been built by Tullow and equipped, hospitals, very good, level 4, level 5, have been built in Lokori, Lokichar, and Lodwar, when the government is still there. It has all the money, but it has not considered doing it.

He spoke very earnestly as his face assumed the incredulous expression of one looking back and cringing at his days of ignorance. 'But when I came in,' he reflected, 'I understood it as a commercial company. It is not a humanitarian organisation. . . . They have their own interests, and for them to achieve this interest, they have also to weigh how to balance their business with the community where this resource is found.' He went on to explain that to access land for exploration, the company must gain goodwill and build a relationship with the community. In essence, land access or, better still, 'sharing land together as partners and neighbours', is the connecting factor in the company-community relationship. While this line of reasoning reflects the rationale of corporate social responsibility in return for the 'social license to operate', it underscores the broader notion of 'emancipation' through the market as the panacea to poverty (Rajak 2011) and contains the seed of its own crises in the paradox of promises that are doomed to end in disappointment. As Mr C saw it:

They [Tullow] are coming here and telling them [the community] . . . because we need this [land/resource], we will exchange it for: one, we will give you projects so that we access this land; we will give you opportunities, business opportunities; we will give you employment, and that is what has [kept] the

relationship going on for six years. . . . Because even if we push them [Tullow] away and we don't have the skills, we don't have the equipment, we don't have the capacity, then, that thing [the resource] will remain inside the ground and nobody will explore it.

His sentiments were not unusual. I heard similar accounts narrated with as much candour, especially from those who had obtained some sort of direct benefit from Tullow either through employment, contracts, or a development project in their area. That does not mean, however, that beneficiaries are not vociferous about what they perceive to be the company's failings.

Evidence is perhaps the main factor that induces community consent and cooperation. The question of material, concrete evidence could not be more crucial in mediating and shaping the relationship between Tullow and its key stakeholder communities. Buried underground, oil is not readily visible, nor does its extraction translate to immediate use in a homestead. Between oil's journey from subsoil to production and petrol pumps, there is no physical contact or direct relationship with the host community. Oil becomes visible or tangible in the things it spawns, including infrastructure, revenue, employment, and other convertibles it generates – as 'marketed' by the corporation to secure the cooperation of the people. The things oil enables thus become the promise, the mediator of relationships, and the flashpoint for larger debates about what constitutes benefits and, by implication, a responsible corporation.

As I listened to Mr C talk about trust, promises, and benefits, my mind linked up some counter-narratives I had previously come across during my fieldwork. One in particular was when a friend invited me for a Christmas meal in December 2015. Her husband was keen to hear about oil-affected communities in Nigeria. He explained that his biggest concern was the way in which Tullow's community liaison officers and politicians shoved the importance of the investor down their throats – 'by force', he claimed. He said that locals were often warned that if they tasked investors beyond their capacity by making 'too many demands', all would be lost and they would be back to 'nothing'. Irritated, my host, a young man of about thirty and employed in one of the county's directorates, had erected a barbed-wire fence around his compound, like many others who believed a seismic survey might cut through their plots and, if oil were discovered, earn significant compensation.

Mr. C's phone buzzed incessantly, and he looked at me apologetically as he reached for it. I thanked him for sparing over an hour to chat with me, and he promised to stay in touch. Trudging out of the premises, miffed at the dramatic change in temperature, my eyes fell on the fire extinguisher canister resting on a wall. My mind wandered to a night when fire broke out in

the Lokichar market. After it became clear that beating the fire with sticks would not save the day, murmurs about Tullow started emerging from the despairing crowd. ‘Where is Tullow to help us?’ some women wailed. Some irate youths decided to storm the company’s premises to demand extinguishers, while calmer individuals suggested phone calls to various local Tullow officials with appeals for help. There was no mention of reaching out to government administrators – a reflection of how people feel about their politicians and what they expect from them. ‘They help who they like and eat the money among themselves,’ replied a young man whom I asked why no one seemed to be calling any politicians. A Tullow official I spoke to later made a similar point: ‘Don’t they know their government?’ Another went even further, as noted in a study, saying that ‘people look to us as if we are the government. If someone is bitten by a snake – look for Tullow. Need a road? Go to Tullow. Their appetite for benefits and employment has increased hugely.’

So, ‘Why Tullow?’ I asked the young man at the fire scene in a bid to understand why people felt Tullow should be involved or was responsible for putting out the fire. He replied, in English, ‘Because they are taking from us and should give us help. Because they are our partners.’ His words echoed the kind of rhetoric espoused by the likes of Mr C or NGOs during community engagement meetings and sensitisation rounds. Tullow is here to help you. Presenting the process as benign, it is a community relations narrative device of oil-for-development, shaped by collective aspirations for permanence, and yet it runs contrary to the boom-and-bust cycles of the oil industry and the ‘ephemerality and perpetual change’ (Bolt 2015: 5) that ‘contemporary flexible capitalism’ has become (Bolt 2015: 5). This is a struggle between entanglement (Appel 2012) and detachment (Cross 2014; Gardner 2012).

The table of benefits:

‘shared prosperity’ and speculative livelihoods in the time of oil

A popular line of enquiry taken by researchers and NGOs studying the processes of oil exploration is to assess how oil has impacted individual and community life and, more importantly, whether promises have been fulfilled, invariably turning communities into sites of verification, as detailed in the preceding chapter. This assumes that people understand or have bought into the conventional concepts of what oil is and the particular kinds of things that qualify as evidentially ethical and universally beneficial. But what is oil? Locals readily outline what it converts to in terms of cash and comforts, but what exactly is it? Someone posed the question even better: ‘Who has seen oil?’ Banal as the question may sound to those lettered in

the workings of the global oil industry, the answer is not as lucid for many in Turkana. To ask what oil is and how it works is to understand what people know of it, what they have seen of it, and what it is they are hoping for or agitating against. Gabriel, whom we shall meet shortly, simply described oil to me as ‘something God has put in the ground that will change the life of Turkana people for good if everyone cooperates with Tullow and do not cheat one another.’ When I pressed for more details about the substance, the technical, ethical, and marketing process, knowing he had worked on a rig, he prevaricated before submitting that the ‘real’ knowledge about oil is deliberately kept secret while locals are enticed with meagre benefits. It is, thus, an untriangulated promise from an unknown entity. Others conceptualise oil in agricultural terms as a produce of sorts to be harvested. Unfortunately, unlike crops or even gold, which is locally mined in parts of Turkana, the complicated processes of extraction renders oil elusive and hidden even from the ‘insiders’.

The ambivalent responses to my questions about oil, this substance and phenomenon that has animated parts of Turkana, cut across residents of communities at the forefront of oil contentions and those far removed. Understandably, for those ‘where Tullow [meaning oil] has not reached’, definitions remain hazy. For those in the affected areas, oil is Tullow. Not the resource being mined by the corporation but the corporation itself is the resource to be mined because the substance in itself is abstract and largely invisible. Thus, to see and to know oil is to experience its tangible impact, which makes its infrastructure and the things it enables ‘a locus, even a stage’ (Appel 2012: 442). This is framed in the language of mutual benefits, shared values, good neighbours, partnership, give and take, exchange, and the proof of what will be left behind. When the corporation is seeking a social license to operate, locals are sensitised to material definitions of oil, and when they lay claims on the spin they were sold based on their own strategic interpretations, their expectations are dismissed as unrealistic expectations and as a new type of dependency. The corporation then seeks to disentangle itself from becoming enacted as a kind of social and material infrastructure that could facilitate permanence through permanent projects beyond its central speculative venture. Many consider oil and Tullow synonymous because ‘oil is what Tullow says it is and Tullow are the ones seeing and doing oil’. Even at the county level, officials routinely referred me back to Tullow for any ‘difficult oil questions’, as they put it. They would tell me that all the files were with Tullow. ‘It is Tullow that knows everything.’ Hence, oil’s visibility is not in the substance but in its multiple materialities – in the built environment, in various forms of infrastructure, and in the permanence, it is hoped it will facilitate (Richardson and Weszkalnys 2014).

Again, this is the narrative framing the introduction of oil to the community. But, the community itself is also a resource because the oil is only viable if the community allows or cooperates in its smooth extraction. Take Nakukulas, for example, one of the affected settlements close to the oil wells in Turkana East. Nakukulas is referenced among other parts of Turkana as a community with 'hotheads' and is one of the highest beneficiaries of Tullow's largesse because of its importance to the company's operations. The first things you notice, or at least I did, upon entering the village are the gleaming corrugated roofing sheets rapidly replacing thatched roofs. 'Nakukulas is shining' is how some residents describe the modern development, which is a far cry from what it was when I first visited in 2014, when there was hardly a single permanent or semi-permanent house besides the chief's residence. An alternative for those unable to afford the metal sheets are black tarpaulin rolls wrapped around the *manyatta* huts as protection from the elements. Both the roofing sheets and the tarpaulins are credited to the presence of Tullow and the benefits of oil. From their temporary contracts on the rigs, young men can erect semi-permanent houses, as Gabriel, my host in the village, did. The most prominent feature in his small two-room structure is a poster that lists the Ten Commandments and, beside it, several pictures of him in Tullow orange overalls working on the rig. Indeed, Nakukulas is a site of verification par excellence. It exemplifies what people hope that Tullow and oil will bring. The shiny roofs provide evidence of some development thanks to oil. It gained more permanent or semi-permanent houses with a small satellite dish perched atop the roof that could turn a home into a community entertainment centre for evening TV news programmes. If there is a motorbike for the man of the house for private or commercial use and a small shed for petty trade managed by the household females (wife or daughters or both), a family may generally be perceived by neighbours to have arrived at an elite point of relative stability. Gabriel had only made it to the point of completing the building's exterior before his contract ended. He deeply regretted not establishing a small business first or procuring a motorbike and sometimes wondered if he had made the right decision to cast his temporary wages in concrete instead of a generative enterprise. Getting reconnected to the rig was an aspiration he nurtured daily while providing for his growing family through any available casual labour and assistance from friends. It was here in Nakukulas that I saw first-hand the process whereby promises are made and evidence assessed. As Glenn Banks et al. note, corporate community development as they term it, are 'activities enacted with the specific intent to benefit communities', focusing on the perspectives of the affected communities. They write:

From this vantage point the critical evaluative elements of these programmes and effects are the ways in which CCD [corporate community development] impacts on, and is constituted by, relationships, agency and the negotiation of the meanings of and spaces for development. We argue that the best way to view how community perspectives intersect with the discourses and programmes of the corporation is through an examination of CCD in place: the negotiations, practices, discourses and effects that make up the ‘development interface’ . . . [A] grounded, practice-based perspective is required, building on a wider project that examines CCD practices and outcomes. (2016: 246)

In the next section, I address how Tullow negotiates land access as a development exchange in the Turkana communities where it operates.

‘Seducing the community’: negotiating land access as bride wealth in community consultations

In keeping with the ethical mandate of informed consent and community engagement, a high-level delegation from Tullow convened a meeting on 5 December 2016 in Nakukulas, one of the larger villages proximate to the oil sites in Turkana East. The aim of the consultation was to negotiate land access for the company for more exploration wells. The two in view would bring the existing number of the Ngamia and Amosing wells in the area to a total of about sixteen. Gabriel could barely contain his excitement when he called to inform me of the event. Nor could I. Opportunities to observe such negotiations first-hand were rare. ‘The rigs have come back,’ he piped. ‘Tullow have come back, and they want to discuss and agree with the community.’ The land access negotiation meeting, which I discuss in more detail below, was conducted in the language of exchange and was mediated by the things Tullow had done, had failed to do, and was still promising to provide: ‘development’ projects and public infrastructure such as water, school buildings, employment opportunities, tenders for local contractors, and more. The mobilisation and demobilisation of rigs from site to site mean that when a rig is deployed to a new site, temporary work contracts are terminated in the existing location, freeing up jobs for a different set of people. Gabriel had been in and out of employment with Tullow and was now hoping to get in again with the return of exploration activities to his area. With the earnings from his previous engagement as a roustabout in one of the oil well pads, Gabriel had built a compact semi-permanent house – a *mabati*, as it is known in local parlance. This is a step up from the *manyatta* ‘traditional’ huts most families can afford but not as high up as a permanent house – the ultimate ‘smart’ brick-and-mortar house.

I was following other oil-related engagements when Gabriel called to inform me of the land negotiation meeting, but I duly made my way to Nakukulas just before the appointed date. Fortunately, the chief cleared me to attend the event and record the proceedings since it was to be a public gathering. On previous ‘secret’ occasions, as locals term meetings they deem surreptitious, he had asked me to return later. Residents outside the ‘secret’ loop often referred to select participants as ‘those people always benefitting and eating among themselves’. This is a popular sentiment echoed in other proximate oil settlements where some elders, popular youths, and ‘opinion leaders’, aka ‘hustlers’, feature more prominently in negotiations than others. The five-man delegation from Tullow was comprised of community liaison officers from the Social Performance unit and staff members. All but the middle-aged foreign expatriate who flew in from Nairobi were recruits from Turkana and other parts of Kenya.

Much to the excitement of the villagers, this would be the ‘white man’s fourth time in the area’. The popular refrain was that ‘local’ staff, especially those from Turkana, were mere messengers with no power to implement local demands. An elder once compared it to a man sending a proxy empty-handed to negotiate with the family of an intended bride instead of showing up himself accompanied by his father, who would most likely provide the livestock for the bride-wealth exchange. The question of allegiance also fostered mistrust in the sense that locals in Tullow’s employ were seen by some to serve the company’s rather than the community’s interests. Often, they were considered part of the problem of those ‘using the name of the community’ to advance themselves by short-changing their own people. The position was not an enviable designation in terms of navigating the cusp of community and company interests. As more than one harried community liaison officer said to me, ‘It is hard to satisfy everybody’.

Casting everyone into the generic net of villagers or locals does not offer much. Some specifics are necessary in order to understand who comes to these meetings, the relations at play, and the odds and the stakes for each party. Conventional seating arrangements for *barazas* position men separately from women, while young men sit or stand behind their elders. The entire gathering is positioned in an arc (*akiriket*). In all male settings, formal or informal, seating is arranged according to generation sets and initiation age, with the most senior men in the middle. Younger men may sit in the arc if they have been initiated. On this occasion, the routine was loosely adhered to. Everyone sat separately, but clusters according to immediate alliances were apparent.

By the time Gabriel and I arrived at the venue, a good number of elders were in position. This was convenient, for the meeting was located in their spot, a large acacia tree also known as the Tree of Man where the old men congregated to relax, consult, and engage with each other. Some were seated on their traditional small stools (*ekicholong*), while others stretched out on the sand and used the stool as a headrest. As second in command to the chief, their consent was crucial. From previous conversations and the current events related to insecurity, I knew their main concerns revolved around the renewed spate of cattle raids by neighbouring Pokots. The oldest man in the village had only just lost a large portion of his herd to bandits who had attacked his son in the grazing fields. Therefore, benefits for them were mostly prioritised along the lines of corporate social investment in security, livestock restocking, and employment for the large number of 'idle' youths. The old men were also concerned about their own job prospects. Unsited for rigorous rig labour or simply to expand the limited designations on offer (in order to satisfy their need to produce participation and inclusion), jobs such as road marshals, security guards, and, in the case of elders, village security officers were initiated by Tullow to allow them to serve as advisers and mediators, albeit on a temporary basis limited to the duration of the corporation's operations in the area. With the return of the rig and new negotiations for more land, they were going to try and push the position to be made permanent regardless of operational timetables. As the crowd swelled and the chief arrived, one of the elders reminded him to demand bullets from Tullow during the proceedings. Empty guns had become a grim running joke among villagers unable to defend their livestock from raiders.

To describe the atmosphere as a palpable loop of competing aspirations would be putting it very mildly. Bullets, jobs, contracts, food, building projects, money, and more were among the items demanded from Tullow. Interestingly, state officials had been sternly cut out of this particular negotiation loop by a sort of unanimous village agreement and were not at hand to offer official representation (see chapter 5). Young men made up the bulk of the participants. Akin to the livestock bonds that formed the basis of traditional Turkana associations and age groups (McCabe 2004), the setting of this meeting revealed new bonds of associations and communities of interest based on emerging shared goals. Gabriel, for example, was in the category of those who had been employed by Tullow during an earlier phase of exploration. Some of the others with similar previous work references, such as Benjamin, sat with us in a cluster within the male section of the arc. My guest status allowed me to navigate both the male and female sides. The men mused over the number of jobs that might be available for the new oil sites even as they promised each other to keep an eye on the selection list that would

eventually be drawn up by ‘opinion leaders’. From the perspective of those who had never been employed by Tullow, this eagerness to be recruited again was sometimes misconstrued as greed and selfishness. Their opinion was that ‘those who have tasted before should allow others a taste too.’

A few metres away from the main setting, where Tullow’s vehicles were parked beneath the general shade, eager and robust young men stood in different clusters. Among them was a group of men referred to as local contractors and businessmen. These were people who had pooled their funds – sometimes with the aid of a politician, sometimes independently – to register a company, which formally allowed them to apply for Tullow community projects such as the construction of classrooms, the supplying of operation vehicles, and so on. Some were members of the group of beloved and despised ‘opinion leaders’ and could have a say in who made the employment list. Their bowed heads and hushed tones drew attention and scathing comments from those seated at my end. I made out the words ‘hustlers’, ‘cheating’, and ‘secrets’ uttered by Gabriel and his friends, who were itching to mingle but may have felt hindered by my presence. ‘Those contractors want to be close to the white man; that is why they are standing near the cars,’ one commented wryly. Neighbouring communities affected by the oil operations also had some residents (mostly elders) in attendance, but the bulk of the local participants were from Nakukulas. The game of numbers and stronger mobilisation trumped proximity in this case. An observation I had been following was that the families and small settlements directly on the oil sites were often subsumed by the larger centres in the negotiation process. This was the case of Nakukulas; most of the traffic related to oil had been located in Lokichar town until inclusion was asserted. Women trickled in, some carrying their mobile chores with them (beads, etc). The keenest among them appeared to be those with small businesses, such as the restaurant owner who must have left someone in charge of her shop to be part of the proceedings. In Lokichar, women’s groups have been very successful in getting contracts, such as to supply vegetables and eggs to the oil operations. However, as discussed in chapter 3, this has not been without challenges. Women’s groups often agitated against the excuse of ‘quality standards’ given to them by Tullow as to why they were not being patronised by the company.

To lease a bride: bride as metaphor for land

The chief hushed the meeting to order. Guests were placed in front of the arc where plastic chairs had been lined up, and a pastor was invited to open the meeting with prayers. The non-Turkana official acted as spokesperson while the Turkana staff translated his words from Swahili

to the audience in Turkana. Another member of the Turkana staff seated beside the foreign expatriate interpreted the events into English. Introductions and protocols were followed by preliminary statements and a nod to the security crisis in the area before the spokesman got to the matters at hand. First, he acknowledged that some promised ‘development’ projects were yet to be fulfilled and appealed for patience. He then listed the completed projects and those in progress, such as classrooms and dormitories, as well as the names of local contractors engaged in executing these projects. This was to show that those with registered companies in the area were being awarded contracts but also to get people to know who was responsible in the event of failure or success. Some eyes immediately shot towards the contractors.

‘The best way to help you as a community and help us as Tullow,’ the speaker continued, prefacing the request to follow, ‘is to make sure that we give these projects now.’ This was a nod to the complaints against unfulfilled promises. He then got to the main agenda by announcing that ‘today, we have come so that we can tell you everything about the “lady” [meaning land] we want from you. Today, we have come to tell you that we are still going on with this work of looking for oil in your area.’ Blending bride, land, and oil into a request yielded a cultural rhetoric that stimulated the audience and drew murmurs of approval. Here, Tullow’s ‘elders’ (as some of its officials sometimes referred to themselves) were seeking to entangle the corporation further into the ‘traditional’ narrative of bonds and mutual assistance. As we saw in chapter 2, social organisation revolves around reciprocal mutual assistance in clans and age sets and friendships. In fact, seduction is a word that comes up often when people talk about Tullow’s community engagement strategy. Once, during a particularly fraught period in community-company relations, I sought the chief’s opinion as to what the issues were. He shook his head wearily and explained, ‘[Y]ou know, when you are seducing a woman, like Tullow is doing to the community, you start with many promises to make her agree. After she agrees, you forget the promises. She will never be happy with you.’

This repositioning of community engagement into the domains of one of the most sacrosanct traditional rites of exchange was tactfully ‘disentangled’ (Appel 2012) from the thorny subject of the Production Sharing Agreement. It was not within Tullow’s jurisdiction, the spokesman at the Nakukulas meeting pointed out, to decide how the potential oil revenue should be split between the national government and the county and host communities, though the company hoped the proposed petroleum bill would favour the community generously. In the interim, he said,

It would be good for you if we continue getting oil every time. Already we have seven hundred and fifty million [barrels], and if we continue getting oil, we may reach . . . say, . . . one billion, two billion [barrels]. That means the profit that we will be getting as revenue will increase. So, whenever you allow us to continue with this work, you give us a chance to know the amount that we will get and, from there, you will be able to know the amount you are supposed to be given from this oil.

Practically every sentence was punctuated with existing and potential evidence of what oil would do: provide a legacy and permanence and the promise of development. The spokesman was attempting to counter doubts and opposition.

Rent: revenue sharing and land lease payments

The bride wealth on offer, to continue in the language deployed for the exchange, was as follows: Sh7 million (\$70,000) per well site covering 200 by 200 metres of land; an employment quota of 110 for each well, totalling 220 for the two sites in view (this was later increased); ‘development projects’ of choice as prioritised by the community; seven camels and forty goats purchased above market price to be slaughtered and shared during the ground-breaking ceremony commemorating the agreement; and, finally, the construction of a Tullow liaison office in the village to ease the stress of travelling to Lokichar or Lokori, the nearest urban centres. Should the terms be agreeable, the ground-breaking ceremony would be held in a week or less to sign the agreement and formally seal the deal with meat and sodas. A joint account was proposed for the Sh7 million to be spent at the community’s discretion, though Tullow might make suggestions. Four signatories would be required, including the chief, two elders, and a Tullow representative. The introduction of cash compensation based on a market-reviewed value for the land was explained as compensation for the loss of land and livelihood. The spokesman explained further: ‘When we come there and fence that piece of land, goats will not get inside, no camels will get inside, no donkeys will get inside, that means we have reduced the land for grazing, so we are giving you this money to help yourselves in one way or another because you have lost your grazing land.’ While creating a narrative of mutually beneficial partnership and exchange, the perimeters of engagement were also being established, and wriggle room was set outside the domain of the ‘culture’ being evoked. The market was introduced to the negotiations as ‘the strict controller of abstraction and equivalence’ (Appadurai 2006: 21). The land had morphed from being a ‘lady’ for whom a bride wealth was being paid into a commodity re-enchanted by monetary value, whilst the ‘benefits’ were

reconfigured from gift to transaction even while retaining the generic appearance of neighbourly assistance.

It was not the locals who had come up with the amount of Sh7 million shillings, nor did they particularly understand how it had been derived. Still, they tried to push back and impart local forms of negotiations to the global standards. Once again, the pitch was that of articulating oil in terms of the monetary value it embodied as a generative commodity and an infrastructure loaded with possibilities. Attention to the things that are being negotiated and exchanged rather than to the forms or functions of exchange, as Appadurai notes, makes it possible to argue that what creates the link between exchange and value is politics, construed broadly (Appadurai 1986: 3). The job slots were to be shared between Nakukulas and neighbouring oil-affected settlements. The choice of recruitment would be left to the ‘community’, as long as the candidates had the necessary qualifications. The new Tullow office promised extra employment opportunities for more community liaison officers, a secretary, the construction contract itself, and the necessary labourers. As at the Enterprise Development Centre in Lokichar, computers would be provided for IT training and community use. Trees would be planted, and people would be employed and trained in tree nursery management. Following a successful training period, the trainees would also be taught how to draw up a proposal for nursery contracts that would be deployed in land restoration projects. This direct approach was in response to the tried and failed processes of committees in a central location selecting workers as well as the contentious compensation packages.

It was on the point of development projects that one of the vociferous contractors, who also serves as a community scribe of sorts, took the delegation to task when the floor was opened to comments and counter-negotiations. His demand for a complete list of the projects that had been implemented since Tullow’s advent at each of the existing wells met with robust support, even from Gabriel and his friends. What he was aiming for, and ultimately achieved, was, first, to demand a re-auditing of the quality and quantity of existing projects – solid evidence of oil’s benefits – and, second, the establishment of a savvier pattern of negotiation. ‘The people have woken up,’ he declared. News of shrewd negotiations in other settlements had reached Nakukulas before Tullow’s arrival. What people were now demanding was not just oil’s potential to transform but, indeed, evidence of the corporation’s responsibility vis à vis the locales where it carried out its operations. ‘Show how you have helped the people and what you have left behind,’ people seemed to be saying.

Accompanying projects (the Tullow office in Nakukulas)

The Tullow representative grappled with the answer and reeled off some projects from the top of his head, then promised to provide a hard-copy list later. After more speeches and a short break for Tullow staff to confer among themselves, the agreement was set at the offer price of Sh7 million as was the price for livestock; however, more employment slots were approved. The suggestion by some of the contractors that the Sh7 million be paid into personal accounts caused some commotion. Chaos descended as people broke into groups, and the chief barely managed to hush the crowd enough for the closing prayers offered by one of the men who had proposed his account for the deposit. The loose agreement was that the ground-breaking ceremony would follow in a week or sooner, during which the formal agreement would be signed, and the two new wells commemorated with meat and drink.

Gabriel had disappeared from my side during the heated exchange over where the money should go. I found him locked in an argument with other young men surrounding the Tullow delegation close to their vehicles. For better or worse, the corporate ‘gift’ or benefits is the domain where the possibility of permanence and stability become tangible, the things that concretely materialise the social contract of corporate responsibility. As someone said to me in 2014 during my first visit to Nakukulas, ‘[B]efore now, before Tullow and oil, there was nothing.’ The ultimate mediator of these engagements is time, with Tullow racing to meet the deadline and locals keen to get solid by-products before the oil either flows away or never materialises. This means that the benefits can never be permanent. Oil exploration and extraction are a matter of time. It is a time-bound and in a sense temporary project, hence the desire to make things permanent – to create security and stability – prevails in the minds of many, even though their efforts to achieve permanence do not always prove successful.

Impermanent development: boom, bust, and back again

As highlighted in this chapter’s introduction, many of the oil-related businesses that started as development projects did not thrive as had been expected. This reflects the depths of livelihood precarity and economic shifts that cannot be fixed overnight with oil projects and corporate gifts. The tell-tale signs started in 2015 when Tullow first scaled down its operations. There are currently four stages to Tullow’s presence: the early years of exploration, the 2015 bust, the 2016 return for appraisal, and the current Early Oil Pilot Scheme. Different processes have accompanied each stage.

In November 2015 when I commenced fieldwork, the local narrative in the parts of Turkana where Tullow Oil was exploring was that oil was at an end. This is how the global glut was interpreted. Take the case of Lotela, a middle-aged man from Turkana South. Like most people in Turkana, his family were nomadic pastoralists, but he had the opportunity to attend primary school thanks to the Catholic Church and some other NGOs. He didn't finish secondary school because things got very bad in his area. Drought, livestock diseases, and raids by bandits depleted his father's stock. He left Turkana to seek greener pastures in another part of Kenya, only returning home for short visits. When he learnt of the oil discovery in 2012 and the promise of jobs, he returned to Turkana permanently with his wife and children and settled in Lokichar town, where the oil action was. His expectation was that, finally, something good would stay in Turkana as opposed to the usual here-today-gone-tomorrow projects. 'I was willing to do anything' he told me. 'Any work they [Tullow] give me since I do not have any school papers. I was hoping for anything.'

In January 2013, he landed a job with one of Tullow's subcontractors who dealt with construction and catering. In what he hoped was a wise investment, as many others had also assumed, he felt that building a permanent house was the way to go. At least, his wife told me, 'If oil finishes or Tullow goes, we will have this house.' But the oil business is a matter of timing, and unfortunately, two years after his recruitment, Lotela's time was up. He was laid off early in 2015, two years after his recruitment, because of the global oil glut that had forced oil prices down. Tullow decided to scale down its exploration activities and observe the market before speculating any further. People had been forewarned that the exploration phase might only be temporary, which would affect opportunities for labour, especially unskilled labour contracts during the various stages of exploration and extraction. Lotela admitted he knew no condition was permanent, which is why he was hoping to make hay while the sun shone, but he was laid off even before the predicted time for exploration to end. He found himself back in the hand-to-mouth time loop. He went from the air-conditioned oil camp to the streets in a flash, eking out a living as a commercial bike rider using a borrowed motorbike. Much of his Sh30,000 monthly salary – some £200 – had gone into the building project. His permanent transition was now suspended on the edge of the new beginnings and futures imagined by the presence of oil (Ferguson 1999). His was an incomplete transition and transformation; it was not quite, not yet, and may never well be.

Lotela was not alone in his disappointment. Many people had erected permanent structures for both private and commercial purposes to service the emerging industry. Tullow itself had committed to several development projects, such as water, classrooms, and health centres. The sense of seizing the moment and having something to show for oil was palpable, hence Lotela's enchantment at the idea of a private permanent home. Lotela's attempt at creating permanence through netting the forewarned ephemeral qualities of oil in a building entails a politics of anticipation. It is anticipated that oil may not last forever or, worse still, that the exploration may not even turn a profit. In the fortunate event that all goes well for Kenya, the solution to preventing capital from hopping from local resource enclaves is to invest in things that will outlast production: infrastructure, skills development, the expansion of other industries, and so on. Those in Lotela's shoes were mocked or commiserated with for counting their eggs before they were hatched. 'Tullow has gone and left us the same way they found us,' I was often told. Many believed I had come at the wrong time for there was 'nothing to study' since the oil company appeared to have packed up. The meaning of 'packing up' was that exploration activities had been downsized (employment layoffs, contracts and development projects stalled). Thus, the end of oil was marked by the cessation of its material flows and was articulated as another moment of transient transformation. What was worse, in the minds of my interlocutors, was that oil's presence had displaced the conventional role of NGOs that had been operating in the region, some for as long as thirty years. Most had changed their operational focus to auditing the social performance of the oil company and the newly constituted devolution government rather than doing development themselves.

Since Tullow Oil was considered a development project, the articulation of oil as a project whose cycle had come to an end was understandable. It was like another time of the yellow maize (relief food) or the time of *lopetun* (a cash transfer scheme), when one kind of intervention served as a temporal marker. The difference between Tullow Oil and other NGOs was that the latter were accepted as favours even though local ambivalence prevailed, whereas the former was seen to be taking something and thus obliged to leave permanent positive footprints behind. Lotela, who had left Turkana years back during the time of great drought, returned to Turkana upon learning that the grass was now as green if not greener back home. He gained employment with one of the oil company's subcontractors, but it did not last. He invested in something he hoped would stand the test of time and ended up in a liminal state.

Where is the state? Labour, dependency, and responsibility

In this concluding section, I return my focus to the crucial question of demands and promises as seen from the perspective of those at the margins. What are and what are not considered to be ‘realistic demands’ is a question of geopolitics. If local expectations are ‘unrealistic’, then so are the promises. These promises are made as part of a narrative of exchange deployed in the process of soliciting cooperation and the state apparatus that allows it. The increasing precarity of pastoralism and the few livelihood alternatives that exist inspire the pursuit of permanence via oil. Some pursue this more actively than others, but the desire cuts across those deemed ‘traditional’ and modern to reveal the artificial nature of the dichotomy and the gap in the government’s responsibilities.

As the chief of Nakukulas said to me in an effort to justify local demands of Tullow, ‘[W]e have no bullets to protect livestock, we have no other work to do. What do we have if not to fight with Tullow for work?’ The oil extraction site and the built resource environment ‘exemplif[y] industrial order and modernity’ (Gardner 2012: 97). People actively watch for the movement of the oil rigs to note where they are going next or returning to for further exploration and drilling. ‘The rig is coming back’ or ‘The rig is coming here’ implies possibilities of getting reconnected, even though the timeline of exploration shrinks employment opportunities. As operations progress into appraisal and production, highly skilled outside labour replaces the roustabouts, road marshals, and the hundreds of other jobs created to engage casual labour. The numbers simply do not add up to manifest the promised economic stability as opposed to transient opportunities. A popular consensus among the land negotiation audience described earlier was that for as long as Tullow was present in Turkana to explore and possibly extract oil, the social benefits should be permanent and continuous. As was also mentioned earlier, some areas received the benefit of water supply, albeit on a temporary basis through tankers supplying water instead of permanent boreholes. This, however, was widely considered insufficient. As a young man put it during the negotiation meeting, ‘[W]e want to work until Tullow transports oil. How can we be working for only five months when Tullow is occupying everywhere? When lights are seen everywhere at night?’ He might as well have been asking, where is the permanent evidence that oil is a good thing?

Producing permanence against the backdrop of historical uncertainty goes beyond a time-bound indeterminate project like oil exploration. While local aspirations for things that stay echo the aspirations of ethical capitalism that seeks to solidify oil’s flow into time-bound development

projects, the indeterminate nature of oil (Weszkalnys 2015) has proven to be the least guarantor of permanence, and *things* that are perceived to be permanent do not always guarantee stability for they can also be volatile. This is materialised in the rigs that move from site to site, taking and giving as they do so, and the gated operational camps that separate the resource from its ‘community’ only to invite people back in as needed. Lisa Smirl writes about how the physical environment of the aid world – the hotels, planes, cars, and compounds – shape and normalise development practice. She argues that ‘taken together, this landscape of aid has been a key driver in how the West has collectively understood aid and for the kind of policies that have been pursued’ (2015: xiii). In the extractives industry, benefits and infrastructures of permanence mediate the corporate-community engagement deployed with cultural and political rhetoric. What is ethical extraction and responsible corporate social performance if it does not show what oil can do in the communities of extraction?

As this final question implies, for oil to bring benefits to communities of extraction, those communities must exist. We have seen in this chapter how oil’s promise is both temporal and material, for it references a desired future but never lasts and is evidenced in material proof of permanence. In the next chapter, we turn to questions of secrecy and transparency which reverberate in the fallout between community-making and disputes over oil’s benefits.

Chapter 5

‘WHAT HAPPENS AT NIGHT?’

SECRETS, TRANSPARENCY, AND INCLUSION BY SUBVERSION

In the night-time, by the riverbed, I joined to mobilise for a protest that will happen in the morning. On that same morning of the protest, I also joined to attend a participation workshop because I am a peace ambassador for some NGOs. You must mobilise with protest and with peace and see which one will work, or maybe they will work together.

– Madam Chairlady, Lokichar

Introduction: the transparency effect and regulatory ambiguities

Mobilising towards a rightful share of oil by combining peaceful procedures with protests is the crux of this chapter. As Madam Chairlady’s assertion implies, inclusion, literally and metaphorically, lies in what happens during the hours between night and day. One must not assume that attending participation meetings will ensure that all is well with how oil benefits will be shared or that even those whom one has protested with will be as candid in the event that the collective hustle yields some spoils. In this chapter, I will show how notions of corruption and transparency, captured here by their more ubiquitous substitutes – cheating and truth (*atemi*) – galvanise the micropolitics of vigilance and subversive tactics. By cheating, I mean the affective sense of being short-changed, deceived, and left behind by the oil company and by political and community representatives, including one’s own kin and friends, whereas truth is often used to encompass openness and honesty. Seen this way, local contentions rather than global extractive ethics – specifically, the transparency project – have done more to shape the configuration of oil benefits and beneficiaries. Those who benefit and how they gain access are determined by voice, might, and strategy. In this scheme of things, ethical frameworks such as local content or corporate social responsibility are *lolem* (not fit for the purpose they were created for); they are meaningless until acted upon. They are not defined by any clear sense of policy but by potential and actual risks to the oil project posed by prevailing factions in the host community. The company gives attention wherever it feels most threatened.

Corruption and cheating, like other practices linked to the ‘political imagination’ (Friedman 2011) around oil, are prone to misconceptions, exaggeration and fantasies (Mulugeta 2019). However, they do not emerge out of thin air; rather, they are productions of everyday discursive practices (Mulugeta 2019; Tsing 2003). They are revealed through the manifold ways in which people experience, narrate, symbolise, and construct practices of cheating. Corruption and cheating also give insight into the broader discourse of transparency and accountability in the extractives industry. Here, local discursive practices and interpretations entangle with global discourses and transparency ethics to produce an alternative, unstable framework of community engagement. As the chairlady articulates, making things transparent, namely, open and honest in terms of clear inclusive oil practices and benefits, is a struggle. It requires shape-shifting across subversive and participatory platforms and navigating ‘best practices’ that inherently eliminate certain groups. For example, the awarding of contracts requires papers – a registered company. Where does that leave those without such papers?

I introduce the term ‘inclusion by subversion’ to describe a kind of nuanced contentious politics that opposes the worst of an investment but also seeks to secure new terms of local incorporation by stretching the mandate. It is precisely these kinds of moves that shift the balance of power in ways that spread benefits more widely to those who agitate and otherwise subvert the norms of participation, dialogue, and inclusion valorised in front-stage community engagement practices. As noted in chapter 1 of this thesis, the advent of oil in Kenya was a moment of reckoning with the country’s history of corruption and redistributive disputes over land and prior existing resources. Seen this way, the resource curse maxim, now deployed in reference to the oil industry, was not new, given Kenya’s long-standing experience of resource exploitation (agriculture, wildlife, and gold) (see Shilaro 2008 on the Kakamega gold rush). In the previous chapter, I also showed how processes of community participation and consent are inevitably linked to brokerage and the production of gatekeepers in the name of community representation.

Protests against dubious practices amidst persistent calls for transparency have become staple features of natural resource extraction. In Kenya and elsewhere in the world, these are prominent rituals of resistance by civil society groups and local communities, either to oppose extraction in its entirety or to negotiate the rules of engagement and terms of incorporation (Gardner 2018; Lind et al. forthcoming; Watts 2018; Welker 2009). Following Georg Simmel’s (1950) work on secrecy, Andrew Barry observes that ‘practices of making things public and of

criticising what has been made public have come to be central to the governance and politics of oil' (2013: 25). Extractive disputes are also heightened in regions where corruption is considered a significant part of everyday life and politics. Katy Gardner's observation that 'rumours abound nationally and locally about backhanders and bribes offered to government officials by corporations eager to win contracts in the rush to extract Bangladesh's natural resources' (2018: 8) applies equally to Kenya. The growing discontent with sketchy and often illegible information about the oil process led to a proliferation of civil society coalitions and communiqués calling for information to be placed in the public domain (*The EastAfrican* 2019; Strathmore University Extractives Baraza 2017). Similarly, albeit via less sophisticated platforms, protests in Turkana are popular methods of enforcing inclusion and exposing Tullow's 'secret operations' and the actions of allegedly deceitful representatives. From organised blockades and picket lines outside Tullow's premises with machetes in hand to less ordered revolts like throwing stones at community liaison officers and local theatre group performers visiting villages for oil sensitisation, locals have organically mobilised; some have also been incited by their politicians to show resistance to Tullow's success stories and the government's progress reports.

What I argue, here, is that protests are part of the transparency-making process. 'What happens at night', rather than daytime ethical performances of consultation and participation that are described in the previous chapter, is what determines who gets connected to or disconnected from the benefits oil represents in Turkana. In this chapter, I aim to direct the focus to different ways of thinking about transparency, disclosure, and the public sphere, not through documents, official transcripts, and global transparency discourses but through subversion, local vigilance, mobilisations, and the building of clandestine channels of connection. My premise for this assertion is that practices of transparency are not apolitical. Not only are the underlying factors that perpetuate inequality and 'neoliberal ideologies' asserted (Gardner 2012: 192), but practices of transparency place the responsibility for good governance in the hands of the culprits ('elites'). This heightens existing tensions and contestations over the representational nature of the transparency project (Hetherington 2011). In promoting reputable faces to front open resource-governance campaigns, 'guerrilla auditors', often 'marked as ill-suited for the rational space of the public sphere' (Hetherington 2011: 9), emerge from the side-lines to 'unleash undisciplined interpretations' into the highly textual technicalities of extractives ethics.

The real transparency project, then, is not found in the stylised world of technocrats, bureaucrats, and experts but in the ‘unruly’ local and creative forms of political expulsions and protests. By expulsions, I mean the ways in which politicians, NGOs and local elites are tactically (and overtly in some cases) removed from the frontlines of community negotiations, as I will show later in this chapter. Documents, which are the main technology of transparency, are not anti-politics, either. They invite class distinctions and new forms of social differentiation. Documents matter for those at the table of ‘global speak’. Further, discourses of transparency often emphasise what is expected of organisations and governments. However, what is expected of the public? Of the people? One implicit outcome is the bureaucratic mandate of ‘best practices’ that requires people to be formalised in their engagement with industry certification, training, ordered channels of agitation, and so on. For example, locals are required to follow the rules of accessing tenders by registering companies and having the relevant certification for choice positions in the industry even as corporations are required to disclose their government deals and other activities. Who, then, does transparency benefit? And how are those who call for transparency – civil society, community representatives, or the community themselves – held accountable?

Part of Kenya’s vision of getting oil right is to become a textbook case of transparency and a model of successful extraction in Africa. However, ‘[Q]uestions about what is made public and what is not, and about what is kept secret or confidential and what is not, have themselves become vital political issues’ (Barry 2013: 18). Practices and discourses of transparency have spawned alternative narratives and disputes over secrets lurking behind public transcripts of accountability. As Barry writes, ‘The development of the practices of openness does not, therefore, reduce a given reservoir of secrets. Rather, it transforms the nature of what is kept secret, and what is valuable to keep secret and what is not’ (2013: 59). Thus, transparency as a mechanism of democratic accountability in Africa’s extractives industry has often been impeded by the ‘smoke and mirrors’ (Mkandawire 2010: 1149) political practices that come along with it.

Calls for transparency in Kenya’s oil sector have intensified since the Early Oil Pilot Scheme kicked off in June 2018. Civil society groups such as the Kenya Civil Society Platform on Oil and Gas, Friends of Lake Turkana, scholars from Kenyan universities and the general public have asked for a full disclosure of the transactions and the buyers of the oil. Prior to the more formalised outcry from established platforms and sections of the society calling for information and disclosure via documents, residents of Turkana had been wary about ‘secret’

haulage since 2015. The sense of oil as a cloak-and-dagger operation was one of the first things I noticed early on in my fieldwork. The promise of oil was widely perceived as a game of shadows, conducted under the cover of darkness by a secret society of those in the loop. Interestingly, complaints were not so much about the loop of secrets as they were about getting into the loop itself and being part of the ‘knowing’ team backed by the currency of inside information. Being left behind, left out of the loop, was a palpable affect. People’s quest to know, to see inside the shadows, literally opened doors for me. A number of people were keen to invite me into their homes, hoping I could educate them based on my knowledge of the Nigerian context of oil. On more than one occasion, it was suggested that I might have some knowledge of the Niger Delta mobilisation tactics. A young man who works in the county’s energy ministry explained his apprehension this way:

Secrets. I don’t know why these oil companies are so secretive. It is as if it is our government causing this. Even those working there [in Tullow’s oil camps], our own people, don’t know what is happening. There are some areas inside that camp where the workers cannot even cross. They are driven off the premises before nightfall, and so what happens in the night, nobody knows. Now, since nobody knows what is going on at night, how can we be sure the oil is not being taken out? You see tankers with clean water written on it going up and down from Tullow camps. We don’t understand. These oil companies are very funny. Do you know what is happening? Is it the same in Nigeria? Is it better there?

When I described some similar challenges that Nigeria’s oil communities were still grappling with, the young man’s shoulders visibly sagged, though he tried to laugh it off. ‘So, we are all just in darkness like this everywhere?’ he mused.

‘Rumours and conspiracy theories’ (Gardner 2012: 195) of corrupt oil practices also call into question the viability of transparency discourse and best practices. Although ‘the crisis is as much imagined as real’ (Harrison 2006), how much accountability does it produce? How much is disclosed about the extractives industry? To whom and to what end? With ‘open government’ (Birchall 2011: 2) as the new mantra of the extractive industries, transparency is ‘championed not only for access to, and participation in, governance it affords the public, but for the “transparency capital” it bestows upon the organisation or individual advocating it. Transparency has become a sign of cultural (as well as moral) authority’ (ibid.). The point is that ‘it is not just the state which is imagined via discourses of corruption, but also aid agencies, multinationals and NGOs, all of which contribute to and are constructed by freely flowing “ideoscapes” . . . of good governance and transparency’ (Gardner 2012: 195). The growth of

transparency has also spawned alternative narratives and disputes over secrets lurking behind public transcripts of accountability. ‘In relation to the oil economy,’ Barry argues,

the substantial growth in the quantity of information made public, partly in response to the demand for transparency, has been met by an escalation of public disputes about the value and the significance of this information. Questions about what is made public and what is not, and about what is kept secret or confidential and what is not, have themselves become vital political issues. (2013: 18)

Some scholars have suggested the deployment of local framings, a more robust civic education on the extractive industry, and new alliances beyond the established civil society bubble (Awortwi and Nuvunga 2019; Gaventa 2019). However, I would caution that consultation is not an assurance of consent. Participation does not guarantee consent. That people show up for meetings does not mean they are keen to agree or will be persuaded by the rhetoric. Consent is not also consensus, and consensus is rarely unanimous. Both must be constantly mediated across more dynamic platforms that extend beyond established templates more preoccupied with corporate validation and civil society visibility as opposed to a deep commitment to some moral philosophy (Barry 2004). While global efforts have advanced in checking the excess of extractive businesses and rendering their activities transparent, disclosure is still limited, and the ethics of oil are highly contentious. Policies aimed at transparency and participation expand the platforms for inclusion, but they also invite new forms of inequalities (Awortwi and Nuvunga 2019; Dunlap 2018; Hetherington 2011) and foster the perception of more secrets because the ‘transparency capital’ trades on information. It produces an information economy in which information becomes currency and is the determinant of who gets in. The very survival or direction of inclusion depends on access to information which allows people to mobilise and subvert. In the next section, where I discuss local blockades that stopped Tullow’s trucks from moving oil, local intelligence and information about the convoy created an opportunity for a successful demonstration. The protesters were able to show Tullow that secrets can be discovered and exposed, and operations can be thwarted by local sleuths.

This chapter is organised into four sections. First, I establish the contest of clandestine practices using the case of a protest. Some Turkana residents agitated over the trucking of oil outside Turkana, a process they suspected happened only at night, and also used the cover of darkness to expose Tullow’s activities. It was a case of exposure to enforce disclosure. The latter is understood here as mandatory but not legally binding, whereas the exposure deploys shame or a confrontational element to provoke a reaction. Protests are productive, as well. And, it is

the productive element that creates community tensions when others who do not benefit from mediations feel betrayed by their mobilisers. This segues into the next section on greed and betrayal, which explores themes of complicity and the moral contradictions of secrets and discourse. When people demand openness from their representatives and each other, how much is held back by those making the demands? As Barry aptly observes, '[B]oth those who promote transparency and those who interrogate the limits of transparency will inevitably leave a great deal that is undisclosed about their own practice' (2013: 60). Nonetheless, the third section discusses how subverting alleged traitorous hierarchies opens up opportunities. I present a scene between an oil-affected village and their local MP who was tactically excluded from all negotiations with Tullow. However, the inherent challenge in distributive politics is this: who decides on the size of the pie, and how it is distributed? The chapter concludes with some ideas about the public sphere and what Kregg Hetherington terms 'populist transparency' (2011: 184).

Clandestine practices, disclosure, and exposure in the extractives industry

Multinational extractives industry corporations, global investors, governments, and civil society all turn to international policies that regulate the social performance of the industry. Some of the most popular have been free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), recognised in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and aimed at the consultation and consent of indigenous communities before the commencement of a project; voluntary forms of corporate social responsibility designed to ensure the inclusion of communities in the entire value chain of the extractive process; the Publish What You Pay campaign for transparency and accountability; and the Extractives Industry Transparency Initiative.

On the African continent, FPIC processes are now routinely applied in extractive contexts as a principle of 'best practices', even if affected communities do not identify as 'indigenous' (see also Oxfam 2017: 10). FPIC was first initiated by the International Labour Organisation in the late 1980s, but it was the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that established the legal standards adopted by governments and businesses. FPIC is generally considered a means to reduce inter- and intracommunity conflicts as well as to establish the legitimacy of the operator (ibid.). In its guidance notes on performance standards, the International Finance Corporation requires its clients to have engagement processes that ensure the FPIC of the affected communities, including attention to their understanding of the changes. So-called social performance standards stipulated by many international finance institutions serve as a tool to mitigate a project's potentially negative social

and socioeconomic consequences but are imperfect in their ability to bring about positive change (Warner 2005: 7–8). Taken together, these frameworks can be understood as elements of a technological zone that, according to Andrew Barry, consists of ‘a set of structuring relations, which has a normative force, but one which does not necessarily take a disciplinary form’ (2006: 241). He argues:

It would be wrong, for example, to draw an opposition between the more or less bureaucratic and technical activities of international organizations and business, and the democratic activities of civil society organizations. As we shall see, what are thought of as civil society organizations are themselves centrally involved in the creation of transnational technological zones. Both international organizations and their NGO critics claim to speak in ‘society’s’ interests. In these circumstances, the analysis of technological zones is best conducted in the middle of events, at times and places where the discrepancies between the public statements of international organizations, multinational corporations and NGOs and the complexity of social forms become most apparent, and when the direction of change is uncertain and contested. (2006: 244)

Transparency as a concept for institutional reform and good governance gained ascendancy in the 1980s (Hood 2006), but its history can be traced further back to the works of Spinoza, Rosseau, and Bentham (Barry 2013: 57). As a market device, Hetherington (2011) traces the nexus between information and economy to Friedrich Hayek’s ‘economics of information’. Hayek (1945) opined that state control of information (particularly Soviet-style opacity) could only result in a stifled democracy and economy. In this sense, Hetherington (2011) in his study of transparency politics in Paraguay writes that ‘what had begun as a relatively marginal branch of microeconomics during the Cold War came into its own in the 1990s, popularising the premise that markets cannot achieve efficiency if participants are ill-informed (or asymmetrically informed) about the relative value of the goods they are buying and selling’ (2011: 4). In the oil industry, transparency’s prominence is deeply rooted in the resource curse paradigm, which holds that when the shadowy practices of governments and corporations are undisclosed, the economy and citizens will be worse off (Gilberthorpe and Rajak 2017; Weszkalnys 2011). A publication from the University of Strathmore’s Extractives Baraza (2017:1) in Nairobi reads like a textbook case of this approach:

Transparency is a necessary ingredient for the achievement of accountability and good governance in the management of natural resources. It requires that all stakeholders with official roles in the management of natural resources and the revenues they generate – including the government and the private sector

– proactively disseminate information that helps citizens understand how key decisions in the public interest are made.

This line of reasoning is echoed by many civil society groups. It takes for granted that ‘the development of practices of openness coincides with the development of practices of secrecy. . . . For when much is out in the open, what is not acquires a new and arguably greater value’ (Barry 2013: 59). If transparency is an exercise in information disclosure which inevitably focuses on the public display of documents, it can only be expected that the information disclosed will be lost in interpretation to large sections of ‘the public’ who are being sensitised. Perhaps this is why meetings, protests, verbal disclosure, and exposure have featured more prominently in Kenya alongside what then appears to be perfunctory calls for paper disclosure. Although many Turkana and other Kenyans might not have access to these documents, public meetings, the *baraza*, and other public spaces do offer occasions for such documents to be read out and translated, albeit in varied ways. Also, actions to expose the limitations of paper documents seek to overrule the might of paper. Subversion is the way to get past best practices that require certification. Even with the bureaucratic criteria of best practices, what happens after you have gone to school, registered a company, and played by the formal rules with papers in hand? Subversion is the extra push to make things go your way, to challenge the hierarchies blocking your path. Thus, it cannot be taken for granted that information about oil processes in itself improves public knowledge and participation. The confusion also extends to local government officials I interviewed, who were often in the dark about detailed oil documents. When I enquired about such documents, they would often suggest I should ‘ask Tullow about the papers’. A shelf in one ward administrator’s office marked ‘Tullow’ held only a single file.

Underlying much of the global governance of the extractives industry and the resource curse paradigm is the view that irrational governments need guidance to prevent bad choices. This has led to a moralising discourse about civic education that reflects Northern views of African politics of patronage and underdeveloped governance structures. Implicit in assumptions of capacity-building and technological transfer are often the adoption of ‘best practices’ based on established orthodoxies. Such discourse continues a prevalent contempt for local elites that has characterised the political analysis of Africa, enshrined in neopatrimonialist approaches focused on the ‘politics of the belly’ (see Bayart 1993; Mkandawire 2010: 1158–1159). The preoccupation with ‘getting it right’ in Kenya is reflected in an obsession with policy coherence (Mkandawire 2010: 1161). Like aid programmes, the extractives industry has spawned so-called ‘briefcase organisations’ (ibid.) which are preoccupied with transparency and

accountability to foreign donors, leading to the ‘homogenisation of the voices of civil society around themes that donors deem pertinent at any given time’ (2010: 1163) and ‘ventriloquised policy pronouncements’ (2010: 1169). Where does that leave people in practice? I will answer this question with a series of incidents.

What happens at night? Occult mobilisations

On the morning of September 13, 2016, denizens of Lokichar town were greeted with news of a demonstration taking place on the main highway that cuts through the town. Very few people raised an eyebrow because protests against Tullow had become relatively regular occurrences. On this occasion, a group of young to middle-aged men had successfully prevented a convoy of trucks contracted by Tullow from transporting oil out of Turkana. The demonstrators set up blockades that included burning tyres with the aim of thwarting the maiden trip of the Early Oil Pilot Scheme. The trucks were scheduled to convey crude oil from the Ngamia wells in Nakukulas, Turkana East, to the ports of Mombasa for onward shipping and market testing. The Early Oil Pilot Scheme was a political stratagem of the national government under the banner of the governing Jubilee coalition party and was intended both to mobilise investors and garner support from unenthusiastic Turkana citizens ahead of the country’s 2017 general elections. As an opposition stronghold, the Jubilee party was pulling out all the stops to secure votes from Turkana, which would also place control of the oil resource firmly in the party’s domain.

I happened on the scene by chance, at around 7 am while out on a morning walk to observe market women setting up stalls for the day. I was drawn to a number of trucks lined up in a row in an open field by the highway. I could easily identify some Tullow officials, both foreign and local, as well as NGO staff and government officials. Some appeared to have dressed rather hastily, having been roused unceremoniously from sleep. The demonstration was spearheaded by an association of drivers. Some local businesspeople and unemployed youths also joined in solidarity. When I talked to one of the ring leaders of the protest later that day, he explained how they had achieved their aim of halting the trucks. ‘We were monitoring them [Tullow and the oil trucks] since night’, he declared triumphantly. ‘We were phoning them [residents around the Ngamia 1 oilfield where the trucks departed from] and asking them what is happening and when the trucks will start moving so that we can block them from this side’. As he spoke, he matched his words with theatrical gesticulations akin to a guerrilla fighter, crouching and treading softly before bursting in on the unsuspecting enemy. Familiar with the

energetic youths in Nakukulas and the surrounding villages where the trucks took off from, I could vividly imagine what might have transpired, including the ease with which people in Turkana move in darkness unaided by torches or streetlights. The protester narrated the events with relish, not particularly for the blockade itself but for the intricate tactics that led to the successful standoff. ‘You have to cook your brain,’ he told me between desperate gulps of cold water. ‘You have to think and know what is happening.’ His idiom of ‘cooking the brain’ was a statement I had encountered from others, especially ‘professionals’, who often seemed to be waging a war against the perceived ignorance of Turkana people on the part of other Kenyans and foreign staff of the oil company. Hence, commandeering the trucks was not only the action of a disgruntled group but also a show of power from below and a display of intelligence. Thus, beyond expressing aversion, protests can also be productive forms of engagement (Diz 2016; Gardner 2018; Suykens and Islam 2013; Welker 2009). Protests also expose where disclosure is seen to be lacking based on the idea that whereas disclosure is voluntary, exposure leads to an enforced mandate. Protests are a way of rendering secrets transparent and uncovering what happens at night or in the shadows.

Threats of military intervention were bandied about by national government representatives in Turkana when the trucks were grounded while Tullow and its contractor resorted to dialogue. The bone of contention, placed before Tullow when all parties were invited to the company’s liaison office for a discussion, was that Turkana locals had not been officially informed of the movement of the crude oil. Moreover, they had been excluded from the oil transportation process in favour of more connected Kenyans represented by Oil Movers Limited, the company contracted for the task. The drivers’ association and others protesting in solidarity wanted the chance to drive the trucks and possibly to supply them via a collectively registered company. They also expected some assistance with raising the capital required for such a hefty venture. An instructive point was that the contractor, not Tullow, spearheaded the negotiation, defending his contract even though he was a Kenyan citizen and a *de facto* beneficiary of the nation’s wealth.

Another protester with the drivers’ association told me with a pained expression, ‘[T]hey are looking at us like we have no brain. Can we not work? Like other Kenyans down country?’ Again, his objection was about challenging the stereotypes of Turkana as a ‘backward’ region and the corporate defence that area residents lacked the technical skills and certification required in the oil industry. ‘At least we can drive! We can do many things even without paper

[certificates]'. Similar demands for work opportunities were also made by rural livestock-keepers in pursuit of oil benefits to support their livelihood. They disputed their exclusion from the status of residents in oil-affected settlements simply because they resided in unmapped 'bushes' or lacked 'papers'. Some who had gained cash from their employment as security guards were enviable examples, for they had managed to replenish their livestock with the wages they earned.

There was also a marked difference between this demonstration and the very first protest held in 2013 led by local politicians, which had halted Tullow's operations and dominated international media reports at the time. In that earlier protest, two local MPs were at the forefront of community mobilisations against paltry employment and contract quotas. In an example of tacit and, in the more recent case, overt expulsions when benefits appeared to have ended up in the pockets of a small, select number of representatives, ad hoc groups and associations emerged to stage direct engagements. The struggle became not only to challenge the oil company but how to channel benefits *directly* as various communities of interest emerged to speak for themselves either through blockades, disruptions, or dialogue in an attempt to demonstrate to Tullow who has the power to mobilise.

As Gardner (2018) notes of similar ubiquitous protests and demands for work with Chevron in Bangladesh, 'the opposition which originally united people against the gas field during the initial stage of land dispossession has, nine years later, changed into escalating estrangement and conflict between groups, based around new forms of patronage' (2018: 2). Welker (2009) describes how local elites in Indonesia became corporate defenders of Newmont mining corporation to the extent that they staged attacks against environmental activists who organised workshops on the hazardous impacts of mining. In the case of Turkana, allegiance to the company was indeed contingent on access to information and benefits. Further, 'elite capture' resulted in a precarious position of power because at any point new groups could be mobilised to upset the balance of power. This is how potential losers are guaranteed a win – by diminishing the established authorities Tullow depends on. By reordering the basis of patronage (Gardner 2018), overlooked communities and groups can mobilise to funnel benefits, bypassing brokers but also ending up becoming brokers themselves. Power, in this context, is as transient, fluid, and unfixed as the oil itself.

Perhaps this was why local opinions about the blockade were mixed. Though the blockade was seemingly void of political instigation, it bore a resemblance to the politically instigated protests of the past like the 2013 demonstrations. Thus, many were of the opinion

that joining a group to protest in solidarity only yields favour for the particular group and not the wider community. ‘They burn tyres in the morning and get work at night,’ complained one unimpressed resident who denounced the protesters as attention-seekers who, like the politicians or ‘community representatives’ before them, would eventually resort to shadow negotiations to secure some advantages over others. ‘What happens at night?’ is a question many residents asked, not only about oil trucks moving at night but also in the context of benefits and opportunities. As a young man put it, ‘I was together with my friend fighting for work in the morning, and we all went home after. But by the next day morning, he was chosen, and I was still without work. So, what happened at night?’ His ire was not only directed at the companies that employed local casual labourers but also at his friend, who had allegedly negotiated in the shadows. A youth leader who was still miffed by demonstrations months after had this to say:

Within our community, we have some individuals, car hire brokers [nicknamed *ng’imuchuri*, businessmen, and the more derogatory *ng’ikokolak*, thieves]. One person can hijack all the opportunities using innocent people backing him, and when he gets that opportunity of getting three or five vehicles, whatever he or she gets from there, does not share with others that were with him when blocking the road. Our people now are divided (Interview, January 2017).

Who are these brokers and hustlers? I asked some young men this question. They described them as ‘people that claim to be sons of the community’ and gave instances of those that worked with NGOs in the past, those that hung around politicians, people with successful businesses prior to oil who were well placed to register companies. Many of those in these categories came together and established companies. ‘The community are not happy with the contractors because they seem to be diverting everything to themselves’, the young men told me. Like Jean and John Comaroff’s (1999) analysis of the esoteric modes of rapid wealth generation in what they term ‘occult economies’, the seemingly magical transformative potential of secret mobilisations and inclusion tactics attributed to why some people benefit from oil more than others is a preoccupation that has captured the imagination of many in Turkana. Issues that led to the blockade were partially resolved after talks that promised more inclusion. The resolution was partial because the protests carried on to the point that the Early Oil Pilot Scheme was stalled until the president visited Lokichar in 2018 to flag off the project.

Almost a year after this incident, I returned to Kenya in August 2017 for the general elections, in which oil played a central role for Turkana. I was also keen to know what had been happening with agitations over the Early Oil Pilot Scheme. Speaking to one of the agitators of

the 2016 blockade, he explained they were still trying to stop Tullow from ferrying oil out of Turkana until a favourable deal for benefits was reached with the county government. When I asked what he considered good benefits, he explained that, first and foremost, benefits would include the 10 percent share of revenues promised to the community in the Production Sharing Agreement. In addition, they demanded that all the old jobs be restored and Turkanas be given priority in any subsequent job allocations. He claimed the national government was still influencing recruitment and that more serious opportunities, such as accountancy jobs, tenders for food, and contracts for building materials, were still being given to outsiders. I then asked about his association specifically. They had named it Alitowar, which loosely translates as a group of people who have fastened their sheets around their waists and are ready to fight from morning till night. He seemed to have forgotten the association. It didn't register immediately when I mentioned it. He thought for a while and then remembered. He said the group was formed to fight for their benefits and challenge secret oil plots, but some of its members had been pursuing personal interests by succumbing to the local leaders they were supposed to hold accountable.

In speaking with this popular mobiliser, I was struck by several things, including the discordance between hidden transcripts versus official narratives and the inconsistencies or lack of articulation in the narratives around benefits. One gets the sense of an official narrative and the prompt to keep repeating the complaint about the lack of any good thing from Tullow. Of course, there is the fear that communities openly expressing their satisfaction with the projects and infrastructure provided by Tullow might be struck off the list of future beneficiaries. Further, different types of benefits and compensation were hard to distinguish in local narratives. One way to look at this is that there is no yardstick for measuring benefits, so when they are placed against something else or viewed from a different perspective, what has been obtained pales in comparison to new possibilities or possibilities elsewhere. Also, the realisation of the temporary nature of the oil-related jobs hits when it is too late, and agitations start all over again. I would argue that benefits are partly fought for not on ideational grounds but based on hearsay and assumptions about what is going on elsewhere. Benefits are shaped by contentions, not by clear ideas. The political class and civil society unfortunately do not engage in robust civic education, so few people actually know what is going on. The only people that have a grasp of the situation seem to be senior company staff.

‘You have blocked our pipe’: greed and ‘betrayers in the community’

‘There are some betrayers in our community’, the strident youth leader in Lokichar surmised. He saw the disputes over oil as follows:

You see some people saying they are the community, or they are speaking for the community. You hear some names here called community liaison officers, but we understand them amongst ourselves as company liaison officers because they are working for the company not community. They are employed by the company. The same people are the ones giving the company the secrets of our community, to these foreigners. When we talk about the seers, we are not allowed to go there just anyhow, but these people employed are giving this information and the goods we normally take there when we want to talk to the seers, and that when the seer gives an okay, the rest of the community will never object it. That is the route Tullow is taking. They don’t come back to the majority, and they stay with that one person.

Roadblocks are not just against Tullow but also against those who had erected roadblocks against others. When I pointed this out to my companions, it resonated, and they immediately gave an analogy to explain the internal roadblock happening within the community and how people short-change others. The phrase *akichak e pipe* – you have stepped on our pipe or blocked our pipe, i.e. the flow of benefits – originated from the rise of sudden deaths in the county in 2018, notably of those who were either in debt from contracts they had executed for the county government or those awaiting a promised contract. As the analogy goes, hypertension, stress, and heart failure were the reasons for the deaths, and people placed the blame on the county government for refusing to fulfil the promises made to its local contractors and allies. Completed contracts were unpaid and approved tenders were yet to be mobilised.

Women seemed to be the hardest hit by betrayals. As Madam Josephine, a women’s leader, explained, ‘I have to gate-crash engagement meetings.’ She presented several scenarios in vivid detail. The first was that women are often exempted from high-level stakeholder meetings except for the public *barazas*. On one occasion, a meeting had been convened in Tullow’s offices in Lokichar. Other women brought this to her attention and asked why she was not there representing their interests. She hastened to the location and barged her way in. The second scenario was the case of a mobilisation for a protest in 2018 after the flag off of the Early Oil Pilot Scheme. She was mobilised at night by some popular businessmen. They all gathered by the river to discuss limited contract opportunities, especially the contract for oil transportation trucks. ‘Women are used to mobilise’, she explained, ‘but I was left with nothing. After we finished protesting, the men shared the contracts that came among themselves.’ In this

case, the result of protesting was counterproductive. ‘That is why I have decided never to fight for another person’s idea but just focus on my own,’ Madam Josephine concluded.

Secrecy and accusations of betrayal in Turkana are often used in the context of the hogging of benefits and hoarding of information required to access those benefits. Even more interesting is that those at the forefront of exposing secret plots, are also accused of having similar interests to those of the alleged ‘cheats’. So, both secrets and transparency seemingly have the same end – to section off portions of benefits at the expense of others. While public ‘disclosure and exposure’ (Manderson et al. 2015: 183) have become the normative technology of extractive ethics, to what extent do the interpersonal and cultural politics of disclosure and transparency shape the public practice of honest extraction in Turkana? This requires an exploration of the private and public life of disclosure. As Clare Birchall asks, ‘is there any space for secrecy’ (2011: 2) between the social and private life of exposure? This is vital because ‘on one side, it is challenged by calls for transparency and openness; on the other it is trumped, in moral terms, by privacy’ (ibid.). People recognise their rights to privacy, but at what point do the lines get blurred between what should be secret and what should be revealed to all? The pervasive calls for transparency and accusations of hoarding information for one’s own gain certainly demonise secrecy and lying to advance one’s own lot and cheat others. Does the implication that ‘secrets corrupt, signalling political conspiracy’ (Birchall 2011: 2), also extend to the moral economy of patronage and interpersonal forms of assistance? Demands for information-sharing regarding oil is as pervasive as demands between kin and friends to declare private fortunes. People are accused of holding back ‘the truth’ about how much they earn, the amount of property they possess (especially livestock), or even how much food they have. Again, scenarios help bring this to light.

Gabriel, my host in Nakukulas, never invited visitors to join in a meal. He was often irked at what he considered the ‘bad habits’ which led people to wander into his yard just as he was settling down to a meal with his family. On several occasions, much to my discomfort, I would watch him go through the meal resolutely ignoring the ‘visitor’, even when it was his father. ‘They know I do not have enough and still they keep thinking I have hidden extra money or food inside, even though they can see me going up and down looking for labourer work.’ He continued, ‘When I got work from Tullow, I gave my father money to buy more animals, I bought some for myself, I built this house, I also gave the elders some money. I helped people. The money finished; the work finished. Everybody knows it has finished, but some of those

people [he points to some neighbouring huts] still gossip that I have something and will never say the truth'. Friends and family members, he said, would go out of their way to 'investigate' just how much an individual was earning, and then 'they will wait for you to give them something, if it is like 100 bob, they will accuse you that you are collecting 30,000 from Tullow and giving them only 100 bob'.

Another case in point is my household surveys. I soon learnt that asking people for specifics about their income, number of livestock, and so on, was a sure way to lose favour. Much as I explained that my studies had nothing to do with government registers, NGO baseline studies, or official censuses, many still believed my 'list' was going somewhere related to a distribution of sorts. Disclosing property details, then, could mean they might not qualify for relief food distribution, cash transfer, NGO poverty schemes, and so on. As I will discuss in the next chapter on sharing, both rich and poor turn out for food distribution, and the cash transfer programme for the chronically poor is riddled with accusations of greedy false beneficiaries who are dishonest about their true wealth.

The scene I now turn to gives another example of how people navigate betrayal and dishonesty. While some protest, others mobilise more tacitly but with consequences just as visible. Either way, the perception of being used or being left behind, whether by Tullow or fellow kinsmen, results in counteractions.

Inclusion by subversion: circumventing politics and betrayers

Nakukulas, 15 December 2016

Following the somewhat successful negotiations between Tullow and residents of Nakukulas village over the new oil well discussed in chapter 3, a ground-breaking ceremony followed a week later designed to commemorate the official agreement with meat and drink. But, the ceremony was dampened by several factors. The first was that the meat did not get around to everyone involved. Seven camels and thirty goats which were slaughtered and shared between Nakukulas and neighbouring affected settlements did not reach those who had come late to the occasion. For some, this meat would be the only direct benefit from oil besides shared community development projects such as boreholes. Second, and more importantly, the area MP who had been excluded from the proceedings arrived at the village some hours after the ceremony to berate the villagers for signing agreements in his absence. The MP had been excluded from the ceremony on the strict instructions of community elders. The consensus was

that the politicians had eaten enough from the oil company and that Tullow must now negotiate with the people directly and exclude broker politicians. A messenger had come the day before with a note from the MP stating that no agreement about the new oil wells or ground-breaking ceremony should proceed without him. The old men, with their daggers sharpened in anticipation of slicing up some roasted meat, were livid but complied. They agreed to delay by one day. Tullow, torn between appeasing the constituted authority and the village elders, were relieved the people had agreed to wait. Bright and early the next day, villagers, especially the old men, started gathering around the tree. When the MP (who would lose his seat in the general elections) had not shown up by 10 am, the elders instructed anxious Tullow officials to proceed with the ceremony. Not even the chief could intervene. The animals were slaughtered, and the agreement was signed. For Sh7 million (approximately £52,000), with some 120 jobs, 7 camels, 30 goats per well, and community development projects thrown in, Tullow would now access two new oil sites, bringing the total number of wells in this area to sixteen.

When the celebration was over, I caught up with several people to gain some perspective. First, I introduced myself to the foreign delegate with the Tullow team and asked his thoughts on the day's proceedings. 'It is all about the community', he said. 'We have to cooperate with what they want.' But he was wary of the political tensions. The small matter of the excluded MP who was expected to arrive soon clearly made everyone uncomfortable. The Tullow delegation did not hang around for the telling-off that was to come. Next, I located one of the vociferous speakers, the community negotiator Samuel, to ask what he thought about the meeting. 'Today's meeting,' Samuel replied, punctuating every sentence and shaking his head in disappointment, 'today's meeting,' he repeated again, 'you know that agreement, I didn't agree to sign that agreement. I read the agreement and saw that they were only talking about exploration wells, not appraisal. Exploration and appraisal wells are different.' I asked if a copy of the agreement had been left behind. It had not. 'You know what happened?' he asked, 'I said to them, let us consider the agreement first and understand it, but the chief and those *wazee* [old men] were in a hurry. They quickly signed.' I admitted that I was perplexed as well and that it seemed like there was a trend of eat first and ask questions later. 'They are just eating meat and not thinking!' he cried out. 'As if I'm the one asking too many questions and stopping things. You are too educated, that is the problem, they told me. But it is okay. We shall meet Tullow at the site. This night I will get my guys together, and we shall discuss then wait for them.'

Samuel was not alone in this sentiment. This was the crux of the tensions between elders and the younger generation, the town and rural folk – the idea that although elders possess deep knowledge about land and pastoralism, oil is way out of their league and they could inadvertently end up selling the precious resources for a meagre return. When I asked Samuel about the MP, he replied: ‘He is upset the community have closed the tap and stopped the pipe of money flowing to him. We have now directed it to the community, straight!’

I then walked over to the chief, who was visibly worried that he had lost control of the situation to the authority of the elders. ‘What will I tell the MP?’ he whined. ‘They did not want to wait before eating meat, but they were disturbing me, shaking, complaining, now, now, now, so I said okay, go ahead!’ He gesticulated frantically as he spoke. ‘I also talked to these youth, the way they want to share the jobs is not good. I said you have to consider other villages like Karuko, Lopii, etc. It should be equal because these other places are in this location, not only Nakukulas. We have to distribute equally!’ Indeed, one of Gabriel’s friends had been told by some boisterous boys hovering around with a list that he would not be added for jobs because he lives in Lokichar and the jobs are for Nakukulas folk. Yet, Gabriel was born in the village and his father was a respected elder. My motorbike driver, Kevin, who had tagged along for the event, looked on with a mixture of longing and disappointment. ‘Today is for Nakukulas, one day, maybe oil will be on our side too,’ he said.

The issues, however, were not only about oil. Some road contractors working on a national government project had attended a *baraza* in Lokichar to announce that twenty-one jobs were available and would pay Sh500 a day. Kevin, who lives in Lokichar, also accused the chief there of adding only her people to the list, and, in fact, the contractors had not disclosed the actual number of jobs available. The rest would be revealed ‘in the night.’ Yet, Kevin could not hide his admiration for Nakukulas. They had been able to considerably bypass their politicians and challenge the dominant gatekeepers. In fact, Nakukulas was in the shadow of Lokichar town when the oil process began. Most of the employment and meetings were carried out in Lokichar until people in Nakukulas acted forcefully to channel the attention directly. The same thing was happening in Lochwaa. That was the settlement where the Sh7 million payment for oil sites was first initiated by Tullow. The educated residents mobilised and decided they would not accept only arbitrary development gifts and random jobs. Each area had its own demands, creating new lines of authority. Nakukulas got so much attention, it seemed, that

Tulow constructed a liaison office in the village. As this implies, different groups are able to undermine and undercut their supposed leaders through careful manoeuvring and manipulation.

However, in circumventing politics, politicians, and brokers, new forms of exclusion emerge, as do new power brokers. Also, there is the element of how mistrust could lead to further dispossession when agreements are not carefully thought through. For example, when settlements like Nakukulas seeking to exclude ‘cheating’ representatives or ‘sell-out activists’ by concealing agreements negotiated directly with Tulow, where was the guarantee that they had not been ‘cheated’ by the fine print in the agreements they often did not understand? To what extent was the consent they signed informed consent, considering it was not rigorously vetted? When I asked some of the elders about the details of the agreement they had signed, like the size of the area that Tulow wished to access, I was told that ‘it is Tulow that knows’.

This was the detail the MP picked up on when his SUV cruised into the village, raising dust in its wake. Residents reassembled to face the MP, who was flanked by chiefs and government officials from other wards. The audience maintained a placid look of ignorance as the tirade commenced. Following the chief’s introduction, an elder tactfully welcomed the MP and claimed they had not been aware he was actually coming but he was most welcome all the same. The MP then began by asking for the chairman, or whoever had been leading the oil negotiations, to rise. People looked left, right, and behind, murmuring to themselves. Then, an elder called out that the said individual was absent from the gathering. The MP’s lips curled into a tight smile, and then he let them have it. ‘I have seen that there are some people who have taken the role of organizing meetings and signing agreements without involving others. You just wake up and call Tulow to come and slaughter camels and goats. You don’t know that oil has problems. A good example is Nigeria and South Sudan, where people are fighting every time.’

The irony of this rant was not lost on the MP’s unrepentant audience. Subverting power brokers like him in a bid to avoid the political causes of the oil fights in Nigeria and South Sudan was precisely what they were trying to achieve. Gabriel and his friend hissed beneath their breath and muttered to me, ‘The people are tired of politics, and this MP was not there when we discussed matters with Tulow. We did not call him during the first meeting; why is he coming today when we are celebrating to spoil everything? Who is to give out the well to Tulow – the community or the MP?’ Other people seated next to me were muttering about the MP’s alleged demand that Tulow fund his upcoming re-election campaign. Unmoved by the escalating

murmurs in the crowd and the old men who had decided to stretch out and pretend to sleep, the MP, whose speech I recorded, ploughed on:

It is like you have lost trust with your leaders, and therefore you are free to choose other leaders and form your own country because it is like you are now independent. You just welcome everybody to this area, even those that you don't know where they are coming from and start slaughtering camels. Okay, you have slaughtered camels today and everybody will eat meat today, but what about tomorrow? Another thing is about the money that you agreed with Tullow. I heard it is seven million or so. What I want to know is, which account will that money be kept?

I am sorry for you people. . . . Who are you in this area without leaders? And I think your Tullow white man knows all the offices in this sub-county and therefore he should be consulting leaders there before he faces the community. I want to tell you now that Fredrick should not come here again without consulting me. . . . This well that you are celebrating today, I am sorry to tell you that there is nothing in the name of a well that be open until Fredrick meets with me in Lokori. For your information, I do not want any white man to hold meetings here, and let today be the last time the white man will hold meeting here with the community in the name of Tullow.

The oldest man in the village, who was still recovering from a recent livestock raid that had cost him a significant portion of his herd, interrupted with lamentations about growing insecurity. While his point was germane, it was also a smooth way of telling the MP to focus on the key issues that residents faced rather than the oil dealings. In response, the MP retorted that the community might as well sort itself out since they had shown independence in the oil negotiations. 'Follow Tullow for security,' he taunted. Though the raiding crisis was later discussed in detail, he was not ready to let go of the oil situation so soon. He continued:

Oil is not for Turkana alone because it is something constitutional. It is under the law and therefore you should not consider it as something personal that you can do anything with it the way you want. I hear you people turning the word community into a song when it comes to oil. Yes, you are the community, but that does not mean you should organize everything about oil. And if you will continue behaving like this, you will end up getting nothing from oil. Instead, you will just keep on singing community . . . community . . . community! Those people who slaughtered those camels from Tullow should pay for those camels because you have not followed the right procedures when it comes to well opening.

At this point, some elders decided to assuage the speaker's ego with statements like 'we are your children'. Other officials who had arrived with the MP took turns admonishing and advising. They all propounded the wisdom of constituted authority and the oneness of Turkana, which means that 'everybody is equal and shares equally,' one official particularly emphasised. It then

struck me that sodas had been passed around to the people in front, where the distinguished guests sat. Some sipped a chilled bottle of Coke as they called for equity. I felt a sense of affinity in that moment with my friends; we were all seated on the hot sand, parched and looking up at the leaders drinking soda. The passing out of the sodas was a seemingly insignificant action, but it demonstrated how ‘public transcripts’ concerning unity and equality get lost in contradictory actions.

Conclusion: the secret sphere and ‘populist transparency’

In this chapter, I have shown how the discourse of ‘transparency’ implies a certain bureaucratic order that pivots on the spread of information. At the same time, unruly protest and action based on alternative notions of transparency as ‘truth’ have undermined established hierarchies of information and benefits-sharing in unpredictable ways. While some credit the benefits they have achieved to dialogue, others point to their ability to mobilise and disrupt. The general wisdom is that those who sit and wait for things to happen ‘will continue to suffer’. Conversely, protests are considered a way of making peace and putting engagement to work by breaking into the loop or creating parallel loops of influence – all based on the notion of something being hidden. And nothing could be more hidden than oil – a nomadic, nocturnal, unfixed, fluid substance that can flow or slip out of one’s control. Further, given the sense of occult participation as the driving force for inclusion, many will continue to seek either to counter these secret societies of beneficiaries or become part of them.

The next chapter brings us back to a broader discussion about rightful share.



Figure 40. A camel being prepared for the ground-breaking ceremony for a new oil well

Chapter 6

GIVE EVERYONE A FISH: EXPECTATIONS, 'DEPENDENCY', AND A RIGHTFUL SHARE

Amosing [oil well] is the best area of the oil. This is the source of oil. If Tullow is coming back, we want our share [*ekineri*] from Tullow. If it is old men, if it is the young, they should all be given work and salary. Tullow must arrange that and see how they can share to everyone.

– Nakukulas elders, August 2016

When the [oil] well is found somewhere, the few people within that well now claim that everything including jobs will now belong to them. Even vehicles or supplying. That is now the problem. It has happened now with three wells: Erut, Amosing 6, and Ngamia 10.

– Youth leader, Lokichar, January 2017

In August 2016, the sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development was convened in Nairobi. For the first time since its inception, African leaders did not have to journey to Japan to discuss African development. In an interview with *The Nation Media*¹⁷, Toshitsugu Uesawa, Japan's Ambassador to Kenya, was asked, '[I]n what ways can Kenya, and Africa generally, benefit from Japan's advancement?' To this, he responded with the well-worn maxim: '[G]ive a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime. This philosophy is the basis of Japanese official assistance as well as Japanese business.' A similar logic drives many other development initiatives in Kenya and shapes the direction of oil companies' development interventions.

James Ferguson's reflections on the new politics of distribution takes this maxim as his book title, *Give a Man a Fish*, and point of analysis. The slogan, he writes, 'encapsulates a certain development ethos, economically expressing a core belief that the object of development work is transformation, not charity, and that recipients of aid should get productive skills and the opportunity to work, not handouts and dependency' (2015: 35). This is covertly akin to the insidious productionist logic of 'chlorophyll zones' that shaped Kenya's colonial and postcolonial distributive ethos; economic integration and redistribution is focused on regions that add to the national coffers. The fundamental problem with the *give a man a fish* dictum,

¹⁷ <https://nation.africa/kenya/news/what-kenya-africa-stand-to-gain-from-japan-s-key-forum-1232320>

Ferguson continues, is the assumption that ‘the problem of poverty is fundamentally a problem of production (not catching enough fish) and that the solution is to bring more people into productive labour. . . . It implicitly scoffs at the importance of distribution . . . and implies that a durable solution must instead bring the hungry person into the world of production’ (2015: 36). And, in this imagined world of viable production and productive citizens, the queues for handouts, like those that continue to swell in Turkana for relief food, would be eradicated as people caught and ate their own fish. And with oil on the scene, locals are encouraged to embrace ‘capacity-building’ and entrepreneurship as opposed to short-term gifts from the oil company. But, as Ferguson also notes, teaching a man to fish, both metaphorically and literally, is empirically dubious. He argues:

Teaching a man to fish in these times, then, may be just a good way of creating an unemployed fisherman, or, at best, a marginal hanger-on in an already oversaturated competitive field. It is not obvious that being trained for a non-existent job would benefit the man in anyway, and it is certainly nonsense to suppose that he really would, by virtue of that training, be fed for a lifetime. Nor is it at all clear that such training would be beneficial for the fishing industry, the global ecosystem, or, indeed, the fish. (2015: 36)

Juxtaposing the fishing analogy with the oil industry’s promises of jobs, ‘capacity-building’, and all-round economic development, it is not clear how the capacities being built to service the industry with contracts or impermanent development projects and engagements will benefit the ‘community’ in the long term. Because ‘rightful share’ is articulated in material terms, the promises and demands largely take for granted the fact that those outside waged labour or the domains of production can benefit.

Disputes over wealth distribution and contradictions in the narratives of giving and receiving are commonplace in extractives frontiers. Claims and counterclaims are the stuff of distributive domains, which is why I was often elated at opportunities to witness negotiations first-hand as opposed to relying on second-hand information and other people’s narratives alone (see chapter 3). There are numerous strands to the distributive disputes regarding oil in Turkana. There are also various types of giving and forms of assistance that people expect from each other and their patrons. On the one hand, there is the county government’s discontent with the Production Sharing Agreement that reduced the percentage of the revenue share that would be allocated directly to Turkana, allegedly because of the Kenyan government’s view that Turkana

lacked the necessary absorption capacity.¹⁸ On the other hand, locals agree with their governor to the extent they are mobilised during public *barazas*. Backstage, they do not look favourably on elected officials who have yet to account for the fees paid by Tullow or the contracts the politically savvy have managed to extract from the corporation at the expense of the community, hence the notion of ‘betrayers in the community’. Then there is the intercommunal struggle over benefits, revealed in statements such as ‘We do not want to share anymore’ with other settlements. All this suggests a tension between notions of equality, egalitarianism, communal ownership, and private accumulation.

First, at the heart of these contestations over benefit-sharing is the vague political nationalist rhetoric that promises that all Kenyans and all Turkanas must benefit from oil. How will these benefits be distributed? How can all Kenyans and Turkanas share in the oil wealth of the nation when history has shown that such rhetoric does not guarantee ordinary people a share in the national wealth (Ferguson 2015)? Contention becomes the inevitable path towards securing a rightful share; inclusion is achieved through assertion. Second, the paradox between ‘our share’ as a community and ‘our share’ in spatially differentiated or individual terms should not be misconstrued as the disintegration of social cohesion in an erstwhile pastoral community. Rather, it reflects the long history of what James Woodburn (1982: 431), in his study of hunter-gatherers, termed ‘asserted egalitarianism’, a situation where existing inequality actually influences the forms of sharing and distribution that are easily assumed to be features of an inherently altruistic society. Woodburn argues that societies characterised by immediate return – hunting and gathering societies as opposed to economies where there is some investment – are characterised by higher levels of egalitarianism. However, equality in this context, which can also be extended to pastoral societies, is not neutral, nor does it mean inequalities or hierarchies do not exist. Rather, equality, like inclusion, is asserted because ‘people are well aware of the possibility that individuals or groups within their own egalitarian societies may try to acquire more wealth, to assert more power or to claim more status than other people, and are vigilant in seeking to prevent or to limit this (Woodburn 1982:432). This leads me to ask, what else is happening in Turkana besides oil? What else is being shared, distributed, and contested?

¹⁸ This agreement has been recently revised. See D. Miriri, ‘Kenya offers bigger share of oil revenue to local communities,’ 10 Nov. 2017, *Reuters*, <https://www.reuters.com/article/kenya-oil/kenya-offers-bigger-share-of-oil-revenue-to-local-communities-idUSL8N1NG482>

Tensions around sharing oil largesse invite us to consider various forms of sharing and distributive claims in Turkana. How do these scenarios diverge from or shape expectations from oil? How can other domains of exchange, reciprocity, and institutions of assistance lead us to a broader understanding of the clamour for oil's rightful share? Exploring pre-existing sets of practices around giving and non-oil-related forms of distribution offers some perspective. This chapter begins with moral expectations. These are illustrated with an ethnography of hunger, claims of poverty, and the pervasive demands for help, *akoro*. Instances where people demand and deny help to others offer some insight into how everyday assumptions of poverty and expectations of assistance are carried over to the official lines of distribution, which is what the second section takes up. I discuss *lopetun* (a cash transfer scheme), systems of relief food distribution, and local expectations of how benefits should be rotated to reach everyone. The latter is a method deployed by some settlements like Nakukulas to ensure everyone gets a taste of Tullow's opportunities as I will discuss in chapter 7. Added together, these organised distributions offer some perspective on local aspirations regarding equitable sharing.

Akoro: hunger, poverty, and the burden of expectations

New Year's Day 2016

Michael is walking me through Lokichar and its surroundings. It is still early in my fieldwork, and there are remnants of Yuletide in the air. Those for whom the festive season is also a time of harvest are on the prowl, actively seeking out returning relatives, friends, politicians, and visitors in hopes of obtaining Christmas gifts. Women in groups move from house to house or waylay persons of interest with song and dance. Young men and women visit uncles and friends. New connections are forged, old ones rekindled and called upon.

As we negotiate a bend during our walk, Michael catches his breath upon sighting two elderly women. The duo, dressed in traditional Turkana garb with layers of colourful beads worn over the bright thin sheets covering their bodies, have already sighted us and are making a beeline in our direction. Michael greets their tipsily rendered song and dance with nervous enthusiasm. They circle around him, clapping and nudging before stopping to face him squarely. They have been visiting people, they breathlessly tell him, their words slightly slurred. I suspect they have indulged in a bit too much *busaa* and *changaa*, the local brews which constitute a significant source of livelihood for many women. A few seconds into the conversation, one of the women stretches out an open palm. 'Christmas', she demands. Michael's gaunt face painfully

resolves into a sort of smile. He scratches his head and attempts to deflect the request. The second woman hisses at him. ‘*Akoro*’, she says. Hunger. Michael turns out the pockets of his fraying trousers as evidence. Raising both palms, he shows the women he has nothing to offer at this precise moment. ‘*Mam*’, he says. Nothing. The conversation turns harsh but retains its jovial undertones. The more he tries to explain, the more the determined pair hiss and tut-tut, having none of his excuses. But this father of two small children, nursing an empty stomach (as he would later tell me) and an ailing business, and perhaps in search of ‘Christmas’ for himself, will be neither cajoled nor threatened. Resigned, the women wave him off and carry on their merry way, hilariously calling out ‘adaptation’ and ‘economy’ as their chosen invectives.

Development buzzwords, as I noted earlier, are not confined to NGO discourse but have broken free and entered local parlance to become part of everyday conversations (see also Cornwall and Eades 2010). The women learnt the development clichés from church and NGO workshops, Michael explains with an affectionate laugh at the retreating pair. To their mind, he has fallen prey to the teachings of development (*maendeleo*) people by adopting what they see as the non-Turkana spirit of accumulation and hoarding. Not even Christmas, a time of jollity, would make him part with some money, because he is probably more interested in saving (economising) than distributing Christmas tokens, an accusation also levelled against the oil corporation, albeit with a different narrative. ‘Tullov is dividing the community and making us fight with each other and not help each other like before,’ people would say to me. These somewhat superficial assertions that speak of community fragmentation created by oil or external elements obscure existing relations around sharing, expectations, and reciprocity. But, locals themselves realise the layers and complexities of giving and entitlements, and they echo narratives of colonial divide and rule, as I will show later.

What claims do the women demanding Christmas gifts have on Michael or on the people whose doors they had been knocking on earlier? I was rather relieved to witness Michael, a local, go through what I had assumed was a phenomenon reserved for strangers because I had been dealing with a similar situation. Michael described the women as his relatives. Familiar with the fluid deployment of the term ‘relatives’, I pressed for details as to how they were related to him. One of the women was an aunt to his best friend. The other was a relative of sorts that he could not quite explain. He was more interested in talking about the burden of expectations. ‘This is why I do not carry any money with me when I am going around, so that I will not be forced to give, give, give. These people will finish you, but they will not help you when you are

finished.’ He attributes this pressure to his small shop, which cuts an artificial picture of comfort and places him in the category of local elites and the attendant expectations that come with it. This is not to say there are no expectations of reciprocity, but there is an awareness that it might not always go as expected when one needs help in return. Hence, a prevalent idea is that those you have assisted in their time of need may very well hold back from helping you up in your hour of need or simply move on to the next benefactor.

The encounter presents two opposing ideas of sharing and expectations in Turkana. On the one hand, you have the song-and-dance duo making demands on a relative, however loosely the term is conceptualised. The idea is that those who are deemed to be well-off should help the less privileged. On the other hand, there is the reluctant benefactor attributing his impoverishment partly to the burden of filial and community expectations. Like Michael, other friends would often talk to me about how they might have been better off financially but for the assistance rendered to a vast number of family and friends in need. This complicates the question of poverty and invites us to look closer at how privilege and entitlements are conceived. First, who are the poor and what counts as poverty?

Akoro, which translates as hunger, has become a standard response in Turkana greetings (Müller-Dempf 2014), often choreographed with a hand gesture that touches the belly and mouth followed with an outstretched palm for emphasis. I initially assumed this response was reserved for foreigners and visitors, as other scholars have asserted (*ibid.*), but as in Michael’s encounter and numerous others I witnessed, friends, neighbours, family members, politicians, and anyone considered well-to-do are not immune to expectations and demands. Nicolas Peterson (1993) makes a similar observation in his ethnography of ‘demand sharing’ among Australian foragers. ‘Confronted by such a forthright demand for a loan as “I want to owe you five dollars,” delivered without hesitation or apology, visitors to the Murngin of Australia might well feel that this mode of approach is reserved for comparatively wealthy outsiders. They would be wrong’ (1993: 860). The safe word in Turkana, as Michael demonstrated, is *mam* (nothing), and I eventually adopted the same pattern when my greetings elicited the response *akoro*. My Lokichar host family, a Turkana woman by marriage, once confided that ‘after one week when I first came here, I was saying to myself, what is this? Where am I? I told my husband I cannot stay. I am going back to my country; we don’t behave like this. Everywhere you go here it is *akoro, akoro, akoro!*’ Her husband, a native of Lokichar, is part of the rising middle class, with formal education and professional work experience in the development sector, and he was

working at the time in county administration. The family was based in Turkana's capital Lodwar and visited Lokichar on occasion. Indeed, whenever they were in town, visitors trooped in and out of their permanent brick-and-mortar house in the hope of receiving at least a meal.

I asked my close friend and neighbour Rebecca for her thoughts on the *akoro* phenomenon and why people seemed so ready to make demands on others. 'I just don't know', she said helplessly before attributing it to oil exploration and Tullow's gifts 'spoiling' people. I countered that the same had been said of NGOs with their gifts and wondered whether expectations and demands for assistance have not existed prior to the arrival of 'development people.' Rebecca vehemently defended her motion that 'people were not always like this'. Instantly assuming I was referring to local demands for remuneration in the process of my research or *akoro* as a local response to foreigners, she explained that 'before Tullow, you can interview them and go without them asking for things. But now that Tullow is always giving them something, people are now exposed.' I still insisted that there were other parts of Turkana where Tullow was not exploring and yet people still randomly requested assistance from visitors and kin alike. She laughed and concluded with a shrug of resignation, 'That means it is just their culture'.

Rebecca's emphasis on 'they' and 'them' by way of distancing herself from the situation was common when people described a circumstance that they found uncomfortable or dissatisfying. 'You people should stop begging', a chief warned his villagers at a *baraqa* I attended some years ago before my PhD fieldwork. Yet, when I was done interviewing him after the meeting, he requested money for drinks not only for himself but for his assistant and neighbouring chiefs. Although development and the more recent oil exploration have indeed exacerbated material expectations and entitlements in social relations, the point here is that these expectations, in various forms, exist in other relationships (friendship or kinship) and are not reserved for outsiders. The question then becomes, what does giving confer and what moralities underlie these expectations? And, to what extent have notions of poverty, expectations, and sharing been shaped by particular circumstances?

To a large extent, hunger is a part of everyday life for many in Turkana. For the *raiya*, it comes with the herding territory. Heavy meals (when available) are reserved for dinner, after a hard day's work. Children can have fresh milk and some leftovers in the morning, but the norm is that everyone goes about their daily tasks without food until nightfall. This is both a strategy

for staying sharp while herding but also an economic condition, especially during dry seasons when food is scarce. Müller-Dempf (2014: 9) writes:

[H]unger is by no means advocated as an acceptable state of the Turkana society. It must be pointed out, however, that what may be called the ‘western hunger paradigm’ – nobody should be hungry at any given time – is not a Turkana paradigm. However, Turkana and their neighbours quickly understood that real or even alleged hunger opens donors’ pockets. Akoro, hunger, has thus become a common greeting, when Turkana meet foreigners.

So, how did people supposedly behave in the past, and what are the external elements that were so disruptive? And, who are the poor? Beneath the public odes that recall a once-united society of Turkana or elsewhere for that matter (see Hiatt 1982 on Aboriginal Australia), lamentations over greed, exploitation, begging, selfishness, and vices that run contrary to altruistic virtues abound, as do strategies for navigating these expectations of assistance and reciprocity. Dempf’s (2014) argument about hunger as a strategy, inspired by poverty and development interventions, picks up on broader studies on the subject. Poverty is a subjective way of seeing that differs within and between societies (Anderson and Broch-Due’s 1999). Also, what has become the standard metric of poverty in Western development orthodoxy has little bearing in Turkana. For instance, the Turkana language has no word for ‘poor’. What comes close is *ng’ikebootok*, used to describe people without livestock. The word now commonly used to designate ‘poor’ (*maskini*) has been borrowed from Swahili.

Patta Scott-Villiers (2011) presents an ethnographic dilemma in which some elders and youths across the Horn of Africa were invited to Nairobi to discuss the challenges and future of pastoralism. During the meeting, development experts and consultants presented a normative frame of pastoral poverty that placed pastoralists at the bottom of the ladder. She writes:

Four old men in traditional clothes sat listening with three younger ones murmuring a translation. One of the elders rose to his feet. ‘Who built this house?’ he asked, pointing to the triangle of elites, bureaucrats and poor. ‘We are not poor!’ He went on to say that some people did indeed come to towns and settle there to obtain access to food relief, and they became separated from the traditional welfare system that still protected the majority. He talked about the wealth of the rangelands, the cattle and camels, sheep and goats. He gave the example of one district, statistically the poorest in Kenya, whose camel population is in the millions. ‘Camels are not counted in the statistics’, he said. ‘You say the north of Kenya has a food crisis. But we have the best grazing in a long time and milk is plentiful. Neither are we ignorant’, he went on. ‘This old man here is responsible for the decisions about where to take the camels of an entire clan for water and grazing. Any mistake and the clan

loses everything'. He explained that sharing between richer and poorer pastoralists is central to their self-understanding as a society. (774)

Stunned by the outburst, Scott-Villiers recounts that some members of the development group interpreted the reaction to mean that the locals they had selected as representative of the community were elites after all. These were not an eternally grateful bunch. The assertion that 'we are not poor' was then countered by some relief and development players: 'How can you say your community is rich? You may be personally rich, but you ignore the poor!' 'How can you say that food aid is not needed? We have seen the poor people and measured the levels of malnourishment and drought!' 'Your communities are poor!' (ibid.).

In her introduction to *Nature and Poverty in Africa*, Vigdis Broch-Due (2000) presents a trajectory. She writes that 'the development agencies' charter for a change in livelihood and labour thus has come to embody an extension of the nineteenth-century colonial project of specifying new social forms of living for the poor and marginalized. East African pastoral communities have fiercely opposed these perceptions and policies' (27). The claim that pastoralism is unproductive has been discussed earlier in this thesis. It is an idea that continues to inform perceptions of, and interventions in, Turkana. I would argue that over time, fierce opposition to this idea has also mingled with complicity, evident in the ways people describe themselves using development terms and ideas.

Without a doubt, making ends meet is hard for many in Turkana, as discussed in previous chapters. Part of oil's effect and impact is that the history of reciprocity, distribution, and sharing has been re-narrativised and recreated as one that extols an egalitarian ethos that supposedly existed before oil allegedly shattered the fabric of social cohesion. A common refrain among my interlocutors was that Tullow and the business of oil exploration was creating divisions among an erstwhile united community. Phrases such as 'divide and rule' were often touted. Reports emphasised and attributed the conflicts to the governance processes of oil. Other narratives added that the development regime first instituted selfishness in Turkana when people were taught to economise and manage resources. In this sense, the 'modern' livelihood initiatives ruptured community life with socially differentiated target group projects and a self-reliant ethos. When I asked some companions on one occasion whether there were other circumstances besides oil where people fought with each other or were not generous, some were not pleased. A young lady in our midst looked at me narrowly and thrust her smartphone camera in my face, clicking furiously. She proceeded to ask for my details all over again so she could

‘investigate’ whether I was really a Tullow spy. For her, such questions reeked of Tullow’s divide-and-rule tactics. Incidentally, she was a beneficiary of the university scholarship scheme in a Kenyan university, where she was studying petroleum engineering. Over time, and especially in private, people would open up to me about existing tensions in the community and how the problem of disunity is a ‘Turkana thing’ based on scarce resources, greedy leaders, false representatives, and the ‘evil spirit’ that causes people to think of ‘only me’. Thus, the oil company was not to blame as such.

For instance, at a private meeting between members of a small oil settlement, elders admonished the youths who were planning a blockade because they were not included in some ‘secret’ negotiation for jobs with Tullow. ‘This is not about Tullow. Sometime back someone said that this oil issue will turn us against each other, but we doubted, [and] now we are here exchanging rough words against each other,’ an old man scolded. ‘Tullow officials are not here,’ he continued, ‘so I am going to point out something. Tullow has done nothing wrong, but they should not be holding secret meetings and ground-breaking of some wells. Instead, they should bring everything in front of everybody.’ Another elder buttressed the point by adding, ‘Let Tullow continue because it is not his fault that you missed what you wanted. It is because of the enemies in our midst. Let the employed people go to work. What was budgeted for [the benefit in contention] has been taken away by your enemy, and you will not get it back. Stop blocking roads [and] let people to work’ (January 2017).

In her study *The Morality of Exchange and the Exclusion of the Turkana Poor*, Vigdis Broch-Due (1999) teased out the contradictions in the narratives of Turkana pastoralists on poverty. For some of her interlocutors, poverty was of one’s own making. Referring to a round of interviews she conducted, ‘[T]hose present, women as well as men, seemed to perceive poverty not as a condition beyond one’s control, but rather as the cumulative effect of a person’s inability to move things his/her way’ (1999: 51). This line of reasoning was evident in my own fieldwork in more subtle ways. When people attributed the challenges in the oil negotiations to the lack of unity, they were alluding to the fact that failures were the result of individual greed or the inability of Turkanas to mobilise under one voice. In more private and isolated conversations, people would admit that the reason why some people were not faring well or benefitting from the oil was because they were too lazy. As they saw it, those people sat down and did nothing while expecting to eat miraculously. When, for example, a person became the target of ‘jealous’ remarks based on the measure of their perceived benefits, the accused would justify their success

with questions like ‘Where were you when we were fighting?’ or would offer jibes against those who had invested in the wrong thing, drank their wages away, and now sat empty-handed after the contract was terminated. There was the somewhat general attribution and recognition of a certain level of responsibility at the individual level to create and appropriate their own benefits. As some of Broch-Due’s informants insisted, ‘[Y]ou make poverty or prosperity through the ways you move your livestock!’ (1999: 51).

This mark of individual responsibility is the premise upon which pastoral society came to be imagined as egalitarian. As a form of social organisation, individuals in pastoral societies ‘have no real authority over each other’ (Woodburn 1982: 431), in contrast to Malinowski’s assertion that ‘authority is the very essence of social organisation’ (1960: 61). Gunther Schlee’s (1979) study of the social system of Rendille (a pastoral tribe in northern Kenya) emphasises that ‘there is no single centre of power in Rendille society and . . . ritual and political powers, both narrowly intertwined, are divided between different clans in a way that enforces consultation and cooperation’ (quoted in Schlee and Shongolo 2012: 19).

But studies such as Pierre Bronte’s (1981), Waller’s (2010), and the contributions to Anderson and Broch-Due’s (1999) volume challenge this view, suggesting that no social system, central leadership or otherwise, is without its forms of inequalities. Therefore, James Woodburn’s (1982) approach to egalitarianism as politically charged and ‘asserted’ rather than a given in these societies resonates with my own observations.

Writing about hunter-gatherer societies, which can also be extended in part to pastoralists based on their decentralised political structures, Woodburn traces the term egalitarian from its French political etymology, noting that it still carries with it ‘echoes of revolution, of fervour for equality in opposition to elaborate structures of inequality’ (1982: 431). Rather than assume that ‘politically assertive egalitarianism’ is a feature only found ‘in hierarchical systems under challenge and in their successor regimes’, Woodburn argues that ‘it is equally characteristic of many systems without direct experience of elaborate instituted hierarchy’ (ibid.). Equality, therefore, should not be assumed in so-called simple societies.

In these societies equalities of power, equalities of wealth and equalities of prestige or rank are not merely sought but are, with certain limited exceptions, genuinely realised. But, the evidence suggests, they are never unchallenged. People are well aware of the possibility that individuals or groups within their own egalitarian societies may try to acquire more wealth, to assert more power or to claim more status than other people and are vigilant in seeking to prevent

or to limit this. The verbal rhetoric of equality may or may not be elaborated but actions speak loudly: equality is repeatedly acted out, publicly demonstrated, in opposition to possible inequality. (Woodburn 1982: 432)

This is precisely what I described in the previous chapter, where subversion is a means of challenging established hierarchies, venal leaders, and dubious community representatives. Schlee's suggestion reflects the idea that 'age-class systems, for example, can be seen as egalitarian institutions in the intra-class perspective and as instruments of separating, ranking and, often enough, dominating and controlling in the inter-class perspective' (Schlee and Shongolo 2012: 19). Pastoral egalitarianism, therefore, cannot be assumed or modelled by a single form of social organisation. Egalitarianism 'may be limited to those who manage to remain pastoralists. Some poor pastoralists may succeed in this with the help of others' (Schlee and Shongolo 2012: 20), based on redistribution mechanisms such as livestock loans or exchange for labour, but 'below a certain threshold, the poor are sloughed off: they die, settle, and/or are ethnically excluded' (ibid.; see also Anderson and Broch-Due 1999; Broch-Due 1999).

Formal and informal institutions of sharing are also significant sources of livelihood that should not be dismissed as a form of begging or dependence (Ferguson 2015; Gardner 2012). People or entities are also a resource. Someone is a resource for as long as they are perceived to have the potential of bringing benefits to the table, similar to the way that Tullow has become a resource for Turkana even more than the oil itself. The livestock exchanged during marriage ceremonies have established the wealth of many in the pastoral sector. Relatives and friends assisting with school fees, rent, and other day-to-day necessities have been the sustenance of others. In short, one's survival could depend on the extent to which one can harness goodwill from friends and relatives (see Leslie and Little 1999). To ask someone for support is to acknowledge an underlying moral expectation that people should be selfless with what they have. Realistic expectations would require some consideration of the giver's own challenges. Where the friction often emerges is in determining who has 'surplus' to share and what constitutes surplus beyond the assumptions made from the outward appearances of living in town, having an education, owning a shop, or possessing a sizeable herd. Exploring this through language might make it clearer. Terms such as assistance (*aking'arakin*) and begging (*akilipa*) are largely used interchangeably. Then, there is sharing (*akimor* or *emorete*), sharing as in for all of us equally because we have a right to what is being shared, like the oil – *ibore nikan*, something of my own. Sharing in this sense now becomes a demand based on *entitlement*. What is being shared

belongs to me or us, so we should all be given an equal share. This is different from *ainakin* or *akorakin* (to give out), such as when a politician or a rich relative or other person gives out money. These distinctions and terms people deploy to make demands are based on circumstances, relationships, and individual status.

Give everyone a fish: egalitarianism, dependency, or rightful share?

Welfare programmes are emerging and proliferating across the so-called developing world, claiming to help the poor to help themselves. Although these programmes occur alongside neoliberal processes of market expansion and the production of self-reliant citizens as opposed to food aid recipients, many perceive the initiative as a system of wealth distribution that should be extended to all, not a few. As Ferguson (2015) notes, '[T]here is much that is unclear about these programs, but it does seem evident that they are associated with an important new kind of politics, focused, at least in part, on the distributive claims of those excluded from the world of waged labour' (119). This is the focus of the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP), rechristened *lopetun* in Turkana parlance – an unconditional cash transfer programme aimed at assisting households living in extreme poverty, particularly in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands. It was piloted with funding from the UK's Department for International Development to test a more effective response to drought and famine in the eleven counties that make up the region of arid and semi-arid lands. Four counties –Turkana, Marsabit, Mandera, and Wajir – emerged as pioneers for the scheme's pilot in 2008. The plan was for HSNP to complement and eventually replace the traditional response of relief food distribution (which is discussed in more detail later in this chapter).

The selection of chronically poor and vulnerable recipients was done using community-based testing and the Proxy Means Test. These involved the use of questionnaires on household income, property, dependents, and so on. From interviews with locals, I was told there were occasions in Turkana where, during *barazas*, names of potential recipients would be called out for the public to vote on whether they truly qualified as poor. The first phase of the project ran from 2008 to 2012, funded by the Department for International Development and the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade. Biometric smart cards were used to make payments via the private-sector provider Equity Bank. It targeted the poorest households of the poorest people in the 4 counties. The cash payment was regular and fixed at Sh1,750 (approx. £13) per household on a monthly basis. Other cash transfer schemes had existed before HSNP for older persons, orphans and vulnerable children, and persons with severe disabilities.

The four cash transfer schemes, including HSNP, now form the national social protection project harmonised under the National Safety Net Programme. The reason HSNP gained popularity among locals and earned the name *lopetun* ('widespread') during the second phase that kicked off in 2013 was because additional households were registered, and the programme's objective was scaled up to include emergency payments to the rest of the population in times of severe or extreme drought. This time, it was co-funded by the governments of Kenya and the UK, the plan being that the Kenyan government would eventually take over. The new HSNP recipients were given bank accounts and ATM cards as an early response to crises, but, as far as many were concerned, HSNP was now being extended to everyone – *lopetun* as opposed to a small selection of those categorised as poor and vulnerable. I observed the same *lopetun* attitude during relief food distribution where both those presumed rich and poor turned out to receive rations of grain.

Prior to its contemporary usage to refer to cash transfer schemes, *lopetun* featured briefly in a few studies of Turkana and neighbouring Karamoja (Uganda) (Gray et al. 2003: 12; Hazama 2018: 35). Locals used the term to describe widespread events such as *ekaru ngolo lopetun* – a widespread cattle epidemic in 1968, which was the year relief food was distributed for the first time. Its present association with cash transfer resonates with the 'widespread' nature of the scheme and reveals underlying sentiments of *lopetun* as an egalitarian ethos or aspiration where everyone gets to share in the relief being offered.

Although *lopetun* has been locally rewritten as an all-inclusive social protection scheme, technically, it is not designed to benefit everyone. Yet, it is treated (or desired) as such. Both those confirmed as poor and those who are relatively well-off queue up for relief food and find ways to be included in the cash transfer scheme. The focus here is less on the projects and more on the sentiments and actions they inspire. What we see is how people respond to official distribution schemes and how the cash transfer, in particular, is conceptualised as the best way to ensure equitable distribution, even to the extent that it was being promoted as the preferred method for sharing the oil largesse instead of development projects. People consider themselves and others as deserving of assistance, which is often revealed in situations where something is being officially or informally distributed, whether cash, food, or some other kind of assistance.

Can we then understand *lopetun* as a way of challenging the simple metrics of categorising the poor as deserving of aid? Here, it can be seen as a collective form of claims-making and entitlement to the collective national wealth – even though most of the money is coming from

donor countries and, irrespective of the metrics of relative need, it is a way of seeing the state and being part of the national infrastructure that has eluded Turkana. In this sense, a person not captured by the selection criteria may feel justified to receive cash or grain as a form of direct connection to the state. After all, who can really judge what dire need looks like behind closed doors? Can we also extend this idea to other domains of sharing and reciprocity where expectations that might be dismissed as greedy or ridiculous reveal something more about facilitating connections? In the case of oil, for instance, those outside the exploration catchment, as I have noted earlier, often express disappointment at the concentration of benefits in affected areas instead of all over, considering that oil is for all of Turkana and not just some places.

I suggest that *lopetun* as an aspiration embodies a desire for an egalitarian ethos of distribution where everyone gets to share in resources. It is not a blind or utopian assumption that everyone in Turkana is selfless and keen to share. It recognises that some might be more deserving than others based on circumstances even as it notes everyone has problems that cannot always be captured on paper. This could explain why a seemingly well-off family would still queue up for beans and maize; the fact that the market stall they own has not yielded any profit for months was not captured by the selection criteria of poor and vulnerable. For them, 'rightful share' cannot be entirely linked to relative poverty but is related to a wider ideal of egalitarian aspirations. As a conceptual tool, *lopetun* allows us to navigate the public and private spheres of giving and to explore the benefits people assume should be public or more selective. When demands are made of a stranger, is the underlying morality based on the notion that the visitor's pockets should benefit not only the hosts but everyone around the hosts? Do wages belong to the entire family, the community, or merely one's immediate relations? These distinctions are clear-cut on the surface of the pastoral clusters, where property is chiefly comprised of livestock, which is owned by the man, but are less clear on closer examination.

HSNP was initiated with the hope of trying out a better response during drought emergencies than the classic relief food distribution. The registration criteria for phase 1 of the pilot scheme was restricted to the chronically poor and vulnerable. Cash is distributed via ATM cards. The only banks or cash machines are in Lodwar (the capital), so bank agents with POS machines and computers have been posted all over to reach more people. The phase 1 ATM cards bore a photograph of the cardholder for purposes of transparency and identification, the equivalent of a signed debit card. When the more ambitious phase 2 was launched with wider coverage (hence the *lopetun* caption) for drought emergencies, the ATM cards were plain,

without images of cardholders. Contrary to popular hopes that payments would follow the same monthly and bimonthly patterns of the first phase, people belatedly began to realize the scheme was only for emergency relief should the occasion arise. The new ATM cards without photographs were then branded *lolem*, meaning useless, flat, faceless, empty – like a goat without horns, as some described them to me. When I asked people whether they were a cash transfer recipient, they'd say, 'I have the useless *lolem* card. ATM cards without money inside.' The *lolem* analogy can also extend to promises. Words are *lolem* if they are unfulfilled.

The administration of HSNP is managed by the government of Kenya and the National Drought Management Authority. HelpAge International, a network of not-for-profit organisations, was contracted to manage the component of social protection rights, which involved sensitising the community and recipients on their rights in terms of service delivery and effective project implementation. Local HelpAge officials, one of whom I was privileged to follow on his rounds, were expected to monitor payment locations and collect grievances and forward them to appropriate quarters. Here is how the Mobiliser, as I call him here, outlined the benefits of the scheme based on his observations:

It is like you are giving this person freedom to decide on what to buy. You are giving this person freedom to decide what to do with this cash by not fixing the household to food only. Government was supplying maize and beans and cooking fat [oil], and we saw from that study how the community explained themselves. They said, 'When a member of the household falls sick, how will we intervene? You've supplied us with food, but when somebody is sick here . . . you cannot take food to hospital' [as payment]. That is one. Another thing, 'Yes, you have given us food, but if a child is sent out of school because of school fees, what do we do? Will school accept food? The only place to buy books is from the shop. Will this person in the shop accept beans and maize and salt for payment? This food? Some beans and maize and salt?' So . . . the community prefer the cash transfer, and we also advised them that relief handouts will not be there for your lifetime.

'So, it never lasts forever?' I asked, picking up on the potential end of the programme and likening it to the time-bound process of oil exploration. The end of the cash transfer projects could mark another moment in the impermanent landscape of interventions in Turkana. The Mobiliser agreed: 'That is why we explain to people that this cash is to protect them from losing assets. If someone has maybe five goats, with this cash, they will not go and consume the five goats because of hunger during drought. At least they can make that asset grow and reserve for future when this cash is withdrawn by 2017.' During his sensitisation rounds, he constantly reminded his audience that donor funding for *lopetun* was temporary and there were no

guarantees the government would sustain the programme, so the cash should be invested wisely now.

The selection process often takes the form of a census. Sampling is carried out across Turkana, and in the second phase – HSNP 2 – all households were registered, which sparked the *lopetun* chorus. The methodology which was used to register informed the targeting now. The community-based target methodology combined with the Proxy Means Test featured some thirty-six questions posed to all registered households. However, these methods did not prevent false claims, as we will see from an excerpt where the Mobiliser addresses a village. Added to complaints about irregular payments, accusations of dubious recipients were rife. I had the good fortune of accompanying the Mobiliser on one such round through the south and eastern parts of Turkana. In the course of the Mobiliser's thirty-something years of life, he had been able to attend school thanks to World Vision's charity, laboured as a mason's apprentice, and survived on the goodwill of friends and family until his big break with HelpAge International. He also considered his job a sort of preparatory school for oratory and politics. Convening *barazas*, displaying the good oratorical skills of 'convincing people', and getting seen and established as a public personality were all part of becoming a good politician, he explained. 'One day, you may return to Turkana and I will be the governor.'

His mandate on the assignment I shadowed was to inform people of some changes to the *lopetun* scheme, address grievances, and initiate the selection of oversight committees in villages. In each location, the chief had been alerted to rally villagers for a *baraza*. When the chief was absent, the deputy or an elder would take charge. Below is an excerpt from a *lopetun baraza* that was held in August 2016 in Kaputir, one of the riverine settlements of agro-pastoralists. The translated excerpts reveal some of the texture of these meetings. They show how schemes are convened and sometimes exaggerated beyond their original mandates and how power relations play out in mobilising people. Following the opening prayers, the Mobiliser was introduced to explain his purpose. The tone he chose to give his message weight was deliberately didactic and engaging, popular characteristics of orators in Turkana.

Mobiliser: What are the problems that you would like the government to assist you with? I know some members of the community were not present during the previous registration, but now the government has given them this chance to be registered since they are now present. Are they really present as we speak?

Audience: *Eceb*. Yes, they are many.

M: Every household (*ani*) today should be registered in the government book, and anybody who misses today registration should not blame anyone. This new registration of new households will no longer be done under trees. When we received the names of the people who were eligible to benefit from this program, you started complaining that those individuals were the financially able among you, right?

Audience: *Eeeh.* Yes

M: We then took those complaints to the government in order to identify the right beneficiaries of this fund. We were requested by the government to identify the criteria to be used in registering genuine beneficiaries and how to identify those people. This registration will be done from one household to another by the registration officers and no more gathering people under trees. Is that good or bad?

Audience: It is good. [applause]

M: This will help us identify the needy people within us. [*A man tries to interrupt.*] Please wait a bit, do not make me forget what I would like to say [*audience murmurs*]. I told you to listen first and ask the questions later. I said, we are in a . . . ?

Audience: Class.

M: Anybody who would like to ask something should raise their hand, and as the “prefect” I will stand up to give you a chance. Therefore, pay attention like a Turkana. Right?

Audience: *Eeeh.*

M: I think now the old man is seated. What was my last point?

Audience: Households.

M: Yes, I said registration will be done from household to household because in the previous household registration, inaccurate data was collected by the registration officers, like in the case of one household which had five goats, they recorded fifty goats.

Audience: [*Murmurs of disappointment*]

M: Hello [*in English; then he continues in Ng’aturkana*]. False information was realised, and we would like those officers to come and collect *the right data on what the beneficiaries own* so that we can be able to identify the needy people [emphasis mine; little wonder people hide what they own].

Audience: [*Murmuring*]

M: The government has put in place the right procedures to identify the beneficiaries. This will enable the government to redirect its funds to the right beneficiaries to avoid the misuse of funds allocated for this program. We do not know the intentions of our leaders concerning these funds that are supposed to benefit the needy people in our community. [He mentions the “chief” referring to him as a good leader, but there are some leaders

who follow Satan's ways]. *Bwana asifwe* – praise the Lord. [*This is a bold statement for a young man, but such a display of fearlessness before elders earns him respect as an honest potential leader*].

Audience: Amen!

M: We know not everybody will benefit from these funds, but the needy households must benefit; that is why we have this second phase of household registration.

Audience: [*Someone coughs*]

M: The elderly people with sixty-five years and above are the target group for this registration process [*someone coughs*]. This registration will also help us identify the households with orphans and people with disabilities so that they can be helped by the government. I am disappointed with the first registration because the registration officers were influenced by some chiefs to register specific people, that is, their families, in-laws, and relatives leaving out the right beneficiaries of this *lopetun* program.

Audience: [*Applause*]

M: Registration of households should be done in an open and accountable manner to ensure that each and every needy individual is registered to help them get out of poverty. People should not register their families and relatives who are not needy but only hungry for money that is meant to help the poor within us who are targeted by the Hunger Safety Net Program.

Audience: [*Murmurs . . . some commotion*].

M: The government noticed that the criteria used in the previous registration of households was not genuine.

Audience: It was not right!!!

M: For example, the money meant for the elderly people benefited the youth, who were not the target group, then leaving the elderly to continue suffering.

Audience: Very true. [*applause*]

M: *Bwana asifwe tena*, praise the Lord again!

Audience: Amen!

M: It is wrong for one person to benefit from all these categories of beneficiaries. It is even a curse to eat while the other person is sleeping hungry. They are using wrong tactics to register themselves. Even God will not help you if you fake the way to succeed while other people are suffering. Even if you take more money, it will not help you.

The Mobiliser framed the illicit behaviour of rapacious representatives as more than a case of cheating the state or the programme. Rather, it was a moral breach that would be judged by

God. On a more personal front, emphasising the ‘evil’ of such illicit behaviour qualified the Mobiliser for potential leadership based on the hope that he would do better when placed in the domain of distribution.

Similar observations regarding the moral contradictions of honesty and disclosure, which I discussed in the previous chapter, come into focus in the domain of relief food distribution. ‘Relief food! Still!!!’ This was how I captured the events of 6 August 2016 in my fieldnotes. ‘Why is relief food still being distributed? And how are the needy determined? Because everyone appears to have turned out’. Midway through a survey outing on that August morning, the young man I was interviewing outside his house became restless. His discomfort was heightened by the appearance of a middle-aged female neighbour who suggested in loud urgent tones that we wrap up our discussion. It was food distribution day, organised by the county government, and had not happened in a while. She wanted the neighbourhood to head to the distribution field as a group and to be there early enough. On distribution days, recipients were required to organise themselves according to the various villages that made up Lokichar town. I joined the throng of people heading to the distribution field. Rebecca was walking beside me, and, in a whisper, she explained that the zealous woman was more eager than the rest because she is a ‘size 20’, which reflects the number of family members attached to her. People are registered as recipients based on their circumstance and family size, i.e., the number of children and other dependents, in a process similar to that used for *lopetun* registration.

With a size 20 family, one could get as much as a sack of maize as opposed to two or three *goro-goros* (small plastic measurement buckets) that smaller-sized families received. The gossip continued. The size 20 woman had twelve children of her own plus other dependents living with her. ‘And she has nothing doing. She just sells some maize and beans in that homestead,’ Rebecca finished with a touch of irritation in her voice. The scorn was even more pronounced when she suggested the woman might be selling part of the relief food she collects and that she was adept at seeking favours from politicians to assist with school fees for her children (a situation Rebecca herself was adept at as she too was heading to the distribution line).

When we arrived at the main distribution centre, a large field where an Assemblies of God church is located, people (mostly women) were already clustered according to the neighbourhoods and villages they lived in. The church’s storehouse was used to stock the sacks of grains. Many of my acquaintances turned away when they sighted me or outright hid

themselves in embarrassment. Even the owner of a popular restaurant had sent one of his workers to stand in line. Shops and market stalls were closed while people waited at the various distribution centres. Other activities in the town seemed to have ground to a halt. This distribution was coming at a time when there was no imminent drought or famine, nor did it appear like a scheme about to be phased out anytime soon in favour of cash transfer. While waiting for distribution to commence, conversations filtered back and forth, mostly complaints that contradicted each other, ranging from comments that relief food was not as regular as before to a young man who asserted that ‘the politicians just want us to remain beggars; that is why they won’t do anything permanent for us and keep sharing food.’ Some translated his words to the others in the local dialect, and they all unanimously agreed with his submission. The county’s official explanation for the distribution was that the commodities were products of irrigation projects and this was a way of showing people its success. Later, I spoke with a county official who was riled at the prospect of relief food distribution. For him, it is a political strategy to keep elected officials and aspirants connected to their constituents. This links back to the comment that participating in income-sharing is about a belief or aspiration for inclusion in the Kenyan state – so both politicians and ordinary people participate in the ideal of distribution.

Membership, not production: an unlikely beneficiary navigates the system

A few weeks after attending the *baraza* with the Mobiliser, I started spending time with the family of a seer in one of the areas we visited to learn more about his life and practices. One morning, sitting outside the house, I watched as my host, whom I shall call the Eagle, made a dramatic show of shaking his *lopetun* ATM card vigorously before lifting it up to his crossed eyes for closer inspection. His young wife, his favourite of the two, shook with laughter as she wondered aloud if he thought the card was a physical cash holder. Ignoring our jibes, the Eagle declared there was money inside the card. ‘It is heavy,’ he said and prepared himself to head for the *lopetun* payment centre. Keen to see the end of the matter, I took up his invitation when he briskly called out ‘*Kapana*’ – let’s go. The payment centre was in a neighbouring town across the river, over an hour’s walk. We waded through the river to the other side and had walked only a short distance before meeting a throng of people returning from the same journey with disappointed faces, women with children trailing behind them and old and young men. They stopped to lament that their names were not on the list of recipients for this month. Indeed, payments are irregular, but a point people often seemed to miss was that most of those registered in phase two were part of the emergency payment response that would be activated

only in times of crisis. Among the young men were his friends, and, inspired by the Eagle's confidence, they decided to accompany him back to the payment centre. The group grew along the way as more people stopped to chat and tag along. Even those who were not in possession of a card joined the procession in hopes of getting a tip should the Eagle be successful in accessing his payment.

At the agents' office – a hut inside a fenced-off compound – a crowd had built up. One could describe these *lopetun* payment centres as spaces of hope and disappointment based on the practical needs that have brought recipients to the centres. People were seated on wooden platforms, on the floor, sleeping, or standing around, alone or in clusters, all waiting for their names to be called. Some, like us, had walked for miles. They had come with the expectation of receiving the month's payment. Some had not received any money at all since the card was issued, yet every month on payment day they showed up in hope. To have come all the way and return empty-handed could mean a prolonged season of hunger and lack. Sometimes, the cash paid out was irregular. It could be bulk backdated payments or short of the actual amount. The Eagle retained his jocular rhythm as he entered the premises. People rose to greet and chat with him. In guarded and hushed tones, he turned to his friends and me and instructed us to go find somewhere to sit while he went in to meet with the agents. I sensed he did not want people, not even his friends, listening in. After some thirty minutes or more, he came out and declared in the hearing of all that the ATM machine (POS machine, actually) did not 'know' him today, using an idiom of social relations. *Mam*. He had received nothing. We left.

A smaller group of people followed us out. Away from the madding crowd, he laughed and turned to me, 'Did I not say my ATM is heavy?' He had received money after all, Sh8,000 (£60). 'I have a lot of friends,' he explained, 'but I cannot give them all I have.' By nightfall, everyone seemed to know that the Eagle was one of the month's successful *lopetun* recipients. The amount was no secret, either. His ruse only lasted for a short time. People came in and out of the compound with the attitude of just-passing-by-and-stopped-to-say-hello. A neighbour's wife, jokingly but no less hopeful, requested a share of Sh1,000. 'I want to be given one thousand today,' she announced in the local dialect as she strolled over from her section in the shared compound. She lingered for a while even though it was evening, a time when women were busy with dinner preparations. The Eagle, less cowed and more brazen than Michael, the friend we met at the beginning of this chapter, also 'jokingly' informed her and other august visitors that the money would be shared equally between his two wives.

Demands of this nature are common in Turkana, both verbal and unspoken. The mere appearance of someone at mealtimes conveys that their interest is partly in the meal. However, there is also an unspoken response by which the host does not extend an invitation to join the meal. Both the Eagle and his neighbour were vocal enough, and his stated strategy was to place the money in the name of his wives, a situation the neighbour could relate to since she was a wife herself. She would not expect her husband to go sharing money when there were needs at home (some men were not as responsible, though). Michael's strategy was to avoid carrying money or material things about town, walking about empty-handed and turning out his pockets. I asked the Eagle why his neighbour's wife expected a share of his *lopetun* cash and whether these neighbours had been of previous assistance to him. He explained that neighbours and friends should help each other within reason, but her demand was unfair and greedy. Nor were they particularly generous people. After all, when the Mobiliser and I visited the Eagle during the *lopetun baraza*, he had killed a goat as an act of reciprocity for when the Mobiliser had assisted him with school fees. Prior to the assistance, they were little more than nodding acquaintances, but the gesture strengthened their friendship. A relative, such as a brother, sister, or uncle, might be more demanding based on close kinship ties and could even express anger if not given a share. The logic is that if one person among us had something, she or he should share it seeing that others did not have as much. The only time people do not expect or demand, as a woman told me during my household surveys, is when 'the same sun is shining on all of us' – when it is obvious that everyone is hungry or suffering.

The moralities that underlie giving, hoarding, and sharing in Turkana do not draw from a uniform worldview. As I have shown in the various sections and illustrations, the lines between poverty and wealth are blurred, as are the ways in which categories of beneficiaries are defined, whether they are for oil benefits, food aid, cash transfer, or assistance from kin. What connects these various types of giving and receiving is the idea that everyone is entitled to benefits considered communal based on membership or affiliation to the resource. What constitutes communal in the private sense is less straightforward. I now turn to the final chapter of the thesis.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION: ‘SOMEHOW, THINGS ARE BETTER NOW THAN BEFORE, FOR SOME PEOPLE’

Lodwar, November 2019

Rebecca was as sanguine and sociable as ever, but beneath her ebullience was a palpable sense of hardship. ‘I am struggling, Doris. I am very much stressed. Everybody is now depending on me’, she confided after the excitement of our reunion had subsided. She was now based in the county capital, Lodwar, as a temporary contract staff for a community health project funded by a foreign NGO. Her livelihood portfolio had gotten even more eclectic with a part-time diploma in social work and community development added to the mix. Her father was now officially retired as a teacher, and the small assistance he rendered to Rebecca on scarce occasions had dried up entirely. Her elder sister, whom she described as ‘one of those people that like to sit down and wait for things to come to them’, was not much help either. Rebecca expressed disappointment at the widening inequality between the small emerging class of P&Ps – permanent and pensionable civil servants employed by the county government – and the larger society who could barely afford regular meals, not to mention pay Sh500 (£3) to swim in the several pools popping up in the modern-aesthetics- obsessed capital. Employment with the county government offered what was perhaps the only kind of permanence in Turkana and symbolised livelihood security and access to credit facilities. Permanent staff also have access to loans and credit facilities unlike casual workers without such a safety net. What immediately stood out was that she seemed to have left oil behind when she had moved from the boom-bust town of Lokichar. ‘You cannot trust oil. Today they [Tullow] are drilling and small work comes, tomorrow there is no work, tomorrow again, they will open a new well and small work comes’, she noted. Though her current engagement at the health centre was not permanent, she felt it was an experience that could open up more long-term prospects as opposed to the seemingly arbitrary pop-up jobs and opportunities conjured by Tullow to keep locals happy for a time. For her and others I spoke with, oil was a distraction that trapped those around it in a loop of short-term benefit struggles. They became distracted from pursuing more durable livelihood potentials. Oil-related jobs might look attractive, but only for a time. Some people moved up the socioeconomic ladder, but they did not stay there once the wages and contracts ceased.

How does one prematurely conclude a dynamic, ever-changing, shape-shifting story such as the story of the effects of oil on Turkana? In terms of social mobility and the pursuit of permanence, who has moved up? Who is left behind? What has oil done so far? In the introduction of this thesis and throughout the chapters that followed, I have tried to show how the struggle for livelihood stability, which I described as permanence, is at the heart of the contentious politics of oil. I also argued that oil is a subplot and showed how various negotiations, corporate interventions, brokerage, representations and community politics all contributed to the pursuit of making oil stay and leave something tangible behind. In the sections below, I discuss how these struggles continue and how the story of Kenya's oil flows beyond the remit of a definitive conclusion for this thesis. I have only captured moments that offer a perspective on the phenomenon that seems to have only just begun.

As in the prologue of this thesis, where Rebecca's maxim – 'If you sit down, you will eat nothing' – set the tone for things to come, I turn to her recent remarks for a working conclusion that 'somehow, things are better now than before, for some people.' Conversely, things are worse than before for some people, including those previously considered winners. In this concluding chapter, I will draw on some recent turns of events in Turkana to recap the points raised in the previous chapters.

In November 2019, I made a trip back to Kenya with thoughts about what I had written, what might have changed, and how things have stayed the same. It was more of a reunion than a fact-finding mission. But it was nevertheless gratifying when people who had been part of my research juxtaposed current affairs with scenarios I had witnessed during my fieldwork, much of which has been discussed in previous chapters, such as the Tullow-community land lease negotiations (see chapter 4). Impermanence and the pursuit of permanence loom even larger than ever. What is instructive is how uncertainty and marginalisation continue to drive and shape oil operations and how locals are looking for more creative ways to make oil stay even though the company's activities are scaled down. In addition, marginalisation and inequality are morphing into an internally generated condition rather than the historical state-driven form of exclusion. This latter point was evident in the new narratives of divine repercussions visited upon those who were seen to have steadily blocked others' paths. A wave of deaths, ill health, and (literal) strokes of misfortune had befallen some of the customary leaders and top political representatives. Rumours abounded as to why, the most popular being that 'they ate the oil money before the community'; in other words, they suffered due to their greed and cheating the community. This was not a narrative of jubilation over the calamity of others. These were tales

that symbolised hope, the belief that divine intervention had stepped in to mediate between the weak and the powerful and that forces beyond human machinations had intervened to clear the pathways blocked by greed. Here, God appears to be the ultimate enforcer of the rightful share, a point often deployed by Kenya's president when calling on Turkana leaders to ensure an equitable distribution of the benefits of oil.

In June 2018, Kenya's president Uhuru Kenyatta was in Turkana to commemorate the Early Oil Pilot Scheme. While the visit flagged off the first convoy of trucks transporting crude oil from Turkana to Mombasa ports for onwards export, it was also an overt intervention in the community-corporate disputes that had stalled progress. Many people recounted to me the president's warning against sabotage, referring not just to protests against Tullow's operations but also to the need to protect transparency and the equitable distribution of benefits by the people in charge. Promises of 'local employment and investment opportunities'¹⁹ were once again being pledged. 'No one will be left behind', the deputy president promised. Under the Early Oil Pilot Scheme, 2,000 barrels of crude oil are now being transported daily via trucks from the Ngamia and Amosing wells in Turkana East to Mombasa. The first consignment of 200,000 barrels was shipped from Mombasa in August this year, sold to a Chinese firm – ChemChina – for Sh1.2 billion.²⁰ Several factors had paved the way for the eventual commencement of the Early Oil Pilot Scheme amidst community tensions. One was the petroleum industry bill finally being signed into law in March 2019. Besides the creation of new regulatory agencies and frameworks for resource governance, the significant part for Turkana is the revenue-sharing formula that stipulates that 'a county government is to receive a share equivalent to twenty per cent of the national government's share while local communities will receive a share equivalent to five per cent of the national government share.'²¹ However, the formula takes effect only when full production commences, not during this pilot phase. So, where does that leave the locals? How are they being carried along?

On the one hand, the early oil scheme marks a positive turn for the overall outlook for oil production in Kenya. On the other, a decline in community benefits is evident. Since the last

¹⁹ 'President Uhuru flags off first crude oil consignment as leaders hail historic day', 4 June 2018, Turkana County Government, <https://www.turkana.go.ke/index.php/2018/06/04/president-uhuru-flags-off-first-crude-oil-consignment-leaders-hail-historic-day/>

²⁰ M. Smith, 'Kenya enters the oil business', 26 Sept. 2019, *Petroleum Economist*, <https://www.petroleum-economist.com/articles/politics-economics/africa/2019/kenya-enters-the-oil-business>

²¹ 'Kenya: President signs into law the petroleum and energy bills', 12 March 2019, *AllAfrica*, <https://allafrica.com/stories/201903130058.html>

two wells negotiated between Tullow and affected settlements (see chapter 4) were eventually drilled in 2017, no new ones have been added. After much ado about job quotas for the rig, in addition to the Sh7 million Tullow paid out to Nakukulas and neighbouring settlements, what happened subsequently? Gabriel, my host in the village who was still ‘tarmacking’ for work opportunities, explained that the oil rig was on site for two months, August to September 2017. The 120 job slots that had been negotiated (see chapter 4) were split among the residents, many of whom were deployed to the rig. To ensure everyone got ‘a taste’, they were split in two batches of sixty – one month of work for each of the 120 job beneficiaries – and were paid Sh80,000 for a month’s work. Some women were given contracts to supply vegetables to the camp, but the male-dominated club of local contractors ‘were those that benefitted a lot,’ as Gabriel put it. In 2018 another rig was brought in for gas flaring, but the employment process was more formal and fewer people were hired for the temporary positions. Presently, the Early Oil Pilot Scheme is Tullow’s only active project in Turkana, which means jobs are out of the question because there are none to offer – no rigs to work on or active camp sites to engage. Attention then turned to the oil truck contracts (see chapter 5), just as in 2016 when drivers and businessmen had demanded inclusion in the scheme.

Two major benefits then emerged after locals petitioned Tullow for jobs and contracts to no avail. The first was a share in the oil trucking process – non-Turkana companies now give local companies a percentage from their oil haulage contracts – and the second was the establishment of a community trust fund by Tullow Oil with Sh126 million. Both outcomes will be discussed in the next section. Another point that will be addressed in this chapter is the rise of participation as a social enterprise. The number of recently registered community-based organisations is staggering. Out-of-work young men previously employed by Tullow had taken up the ‘participation business’, as one put it. This involves attending meetings and, in some cases, receiving funding from the national government or foreign donors for community engagement programmes. In between these main outcomes is the ever-increasing glut of petty trade and self-help enterprises. Some were engineered by Tullow, such as the women’s farming group in Nakukulas, but most were initiated by savvy locals in hopes of making profit from the increase in disposable income oil workers bring to the table. This has not worked out as planned, as I will show. In fact, it has created an oversaturation of supply with little demand now that there is diminished liquid income from wages. Permanence seemed to lurk in the least expected places – among the *raia* and the so-called informal traders who had been at it long before oil. As a Turkana civil society activist put it, ‘That Mama Mboga [vegetable seller] and those *raia*

pastoralists have been there before oil work. They are still the ones standing after many have lost oil jobs.’

The rightful share of early oil: ‘connections and disconnections’

The official transcript from Tullow is that community grievances over the early oil trucking scheme have been greatly reduced since the 2016 and subsequent demonstrations. The company’s vice president for East Africa, Mark MacFarlane, is reported to have said in September 2019 that ‘the contentious issues, if there were any contentious issues, have been agreed.’²² But, there is no question that there were contentious issues. There were. The question here is how they were resolved and what was agreed. On the ground in Turkana, a member of staff in charge of the company’s local content policy for the host community attributes the conflict ‘resolution’ to the fact that the Early Oil Pilot Scheme is Tullow’s only active project, so there is not much to fight over. When new drilling starts sometime in 2020, fresh agitations may resume. However, he is confident that things will not be as bad as before because ‘the community have already understood the game of getting businesses.’ What is the game, I asked? He explained:

Previously, they believed opportunities are mostly given to outsiders, but now we always make sure that every business, even the ones they are not qualified or capable, still get something. The local content policy within our internal Tullow operations is that in order for us to obtain social license, it is not about engagement alone. It is all about business as well. But the community capacity is very low, so we need to capacity build so we can entrust them with the big business. We cannot keep saying they are not capable. We have to make sure they grow.

In chapter 5, I discussed how protesters in Lokichar obstructed oil trucks from making their maiden trip in 2016 because they wanted employment as drivers, contracts to supply the trucks, and capital to procure the trucks. OML, one of the Kenyan companies awarded the contract, had to defend their position and negotiate how to share the benefits of their contract with the host community. One of the ways it achieved this was to employ some locals as drivers, but this did not solve the demand that local companies the trucks. To mitigate the problem, Tullow initiated a local content policy that requires any investor outside Turkana (including

²² M. Smith, ‘Kenya enters the oil business’, 26 Sept. 2019, *Petroleum Economist*, <https://www.petroleum-economist.com/articles/politics-economics/africa/2019/kenya-enters-the-oil-business>

other Kenyans) to be connected to a local company. This officially positions local companies as intermediaries or middlemen and imposes a percentage from the external company to the community. As the Tullow official claimed, 'They [the community] have now gotten more than 30 percent of the trucks.'

'Who is them?' I followed.

'The them now is the problem', he mused ruefully, referring to the crises of representation and elite capture.

There are two categories of truck contracts. In the first, any company awarded the contract to supply trucks to Tullow for oil haulage from Turkana to Mombasa is paid Sh21,000 (a little over \$200) per day for each truck. This amounts to some Sh600,000 monthly (over \$5,000). Local companies with the capacity to procure and tender brand new zero-mileage trucks are given priority. Obviously, only a very few individuals have companies with such potential. But, if some can (as some have), they are awarded the full contract and do not have to share their profits because they are part of the host community. Interestingly, they now find themselves in the same situation the non-Turkana companies were in. The issue for them is no longer about being given a supply opportunity but is instead about having to defend why a single company would take all the benefits from a contract. The Tullow official admitted the process is tricky, not only because it 'sometimes contravenes the procurement process in order to assist those with low capacity' but also because it raises issues of power relations.

The second and more accessible category is for group-owned companies that are connected to an outside contractor. This is what Tullow or locals mean by 'the community have been given trucks.' 'Trucks' here refers not only to the contracts for supplying the trucks but also to a percentage from the companies that execute the contract that is given to the smaller local companies unable to supply the trucks. For example, individuals, groups or associations from the affected communities of Turkana South and East band together to register a company. They could belong to women's groups, youth groups, or interest groups. They put in a tender, and the selected companies are linked to an outside contractor that owns the truck. The contractor pays the intermediary company between Sh105,000 to 130,000 (over \$1,000) for each truck. In short, local companies are attached to a contractor with a truck, receive part of the proceeds, and share the proceeds among themselves. So, in addition to overhead and logistics, an outside company must give a percentage to the local company attached to it.

On the face of it, this can be described as a rightful share par excellence, especially for the intermediary companies that do not supply the trucks but receive a percentage from non-resident contractors. As Ferguson (2015) notes, claim-making is based not on production but on membership. I repeated this thought to the manager of the African Camp Solutions camp (the site of Tullow's main operational base), who is a Turkana. I asked whether he agreed with people who see these local companies formed by groups as shells that receive money for doing nothing from a contractor that has invested heavily in procuring and maintaining trucks. He raised an eyebrow and replied, 'For doing nothing?' He went on to argue that 'it is not doing nothing. This oil is here. It is their oil. It belongs to these people. How else can they benefit?' His concern was less about the deservingness but more about the dynamics of inclusion and the long-term prospects of these collectively owned companies. 'People have to be trained on how to manage money. If these companies are smart, they can save the percentage they are collecting from contractors and maybe use it to buy their own trucks one day or do something that will last instead of sharing it among themselves and discover they have nothing at the end of the day.' This was a reference to what happens every time Tullow scales down its operations. When contracts cease to flow, as do wages from employment, most people seem to revert to square one.

I would argue however, that the issue is less about investment training and more about with the ways in which jobs, infrastructure, education, and so on – particular kinds of solid and social infrastructure – have become conceptualised as linear pathways to permanence. As I argued in chapter 4, infrastructure as development is never a complete business because it invites other infrastructure. They are 'gestures' (Weszkalnys 2017) or what Larkin (2013) describes as the 'as if' effect. Also, the urban-centric direction of oil investment fosters a preoccupation with order and formalisation in the form of papers, schools, houses, shops, and professionally curated agitations in opposition to the unruly informal sector and those who make a living informally. In the next section, I discuss how these preoccupations directed the course of how a newly established community trust fund was spent. In this case, it is the community itself that executed the disbursement.

The Kapese Community Charitable Trust Fund

A community trust fund was officially launched on January 2019 in Lokichar with much fanfare.²³ The aim of the trust is to mitigate unemployment, augment and improve livelihoods, and assist with education bursaries and other development ideas of the community. But, as locals and activists like to point out, benefits do not emerge without a struggle, and the trust fund was not an entirely new development initiated by Tullow. This particular benefit was set in motion in 2018 by some sixty youths and ‘professionals’ mainly from the Kapese area of Lokichar who demanded jobs from the company. As the story goes, they had heard of something called a ‘bed levy’ from their local intelligence networks. One explained, ‘We were just sitting down, doing nothing because since the early oil started, Tullow said there is no more work. So, we started thinking how else we can get something from the company, and we have been hearing about bed levy, bed levy, so we went to investigate.’

Their claim to a rightful share was based on being residents of Kapese – the site where Tullow’s operational camp is located. The land was first leased from the community by African Camp Solutions company in 2014. As noted in chapter 1, African Camp Solutions in turn leased the land to Tullow. Known only by a few people, Tullow and African Camp Solutions signed an agreement at the time of the 2014 lease towards the establishment of a community trust fund as a way of leaving a lasting benefit behind. Although the trust did not materialise until recently, the Tullow staff in charge of local content explained to me that the company had been putting aside funds for the trust from bed levies. A bed levy is charged to every single person who spends the night in the base camp and had accumulated to the sum of Sh126 million (\$126,000). With the possibility of another demonstration looming, Tullow then decided it was time to unveil the funds and suggested the establishment of a trust fund to the sixty youths. However, as some suggested, the benefit had to extend beyond the group and even beyond Turkana South. It had to include all the affected areas in Turkana South and East.

The process had to be formalised with official registration but was also considered ‘capacity-building’ on managing a trust fund. A board of trustees was selected from the affected communities plus representatives from Tullow, African Camp Solutions, and the county headquarters. The chairman, three members of the board’s finance committee, and Tullow’s

²³ ‘Trust deed for establishment of Kapese Community Charitable Trust signed’, 5 Jan. 2019, Turkana County Government, <https://www.turkana.go.ke/index.php/2019/01/05/trust-deed-establishment-kapese-community-charitable-trust-signed/>

representatives are the five mandatory signatories on the account. Tullow invited consultants to train the committee members, who had been ‘selected by the community themselves’, as the chairman of the board, Joseph Adome, explained to me. His own selection was based on his extensive experience with an international NGO and as the leader of the Turkana South professionals association. Other members were drawn from professional associations, women’s and youth groups, the disabled, the council of elders, pastors, businesspeople, and so on. Besides a sprinkling of elders, the *raia* were noticeably absent from the board. The process was finalised in the last quarter of 2018 after the county’s attorney general reviewed the documents. It was instructive that the first project the trust tackled was bursaries.

As of November 2019, Sh67 to 70 million (\$70,000), or over half of the funds, had been awarded for bursaries. A significant number of people I knew told me they had received ‘school money’ from the fund. When I asked why they were not away at school already, they pointed out that the bursaries do not cover expenses, so they would hold on to what they had until such a time. Some less prudent ones had already used up the Sh10,000 – 15,000 awarded to tertiary applicants. Indeed, the average cost of tertiary education in Kenya is over Sh150,000 for an academic year. A term costs at least Sh50,000. What, then, inspired the trust fund committee to embark on such a feat when it was clearly another impermanent venture? The issues are, first, the bursaries offer less than half of the fees, and second, if the lifeline of the trust fund is the accumulated Sh126 million bed levy, what happens after that source is gone? ‘Hangover’ is how one prominent figure described it. He used the analogy of being drunk to describe what he saw as clouded judgement due to the rapid emergence of a large amount of money. He was also at a loss as to why bursaries were chosen as the first investment.

I took this up with the chairman, Joseph Adome, who agreed, with the benefit of hindsight, that things could have been done differently. However, he defended the initiative as the choice of the people. He explained that the board was inundated with pressure from vulnerable families and youth who were being chased away from school because they owed fees. This seemed to present an obvious and immediate crisis to the committee, hence the decision. They decided to focus more on children enrolled in secondary schools, where the pressure seemed highest. Sh44 million was committed to that end and more than Sh20 million for college and university students. He insisted the committee had embarked on a rigorous vetting process across the wards in Turkana South and East to ensure the right candidates were awarded. However, qualified candidates or not, how sustainable was the fund? ‘Well,’ he reflected, ‘we

have started informing people that it may not be possible for next year so that they will know what to expect.’

Also, considering the trust was set up primarily as a formal means of paying out the accumulated funds from Tullow, there is no clear agenda as to what happens once Tullow is no longer in the area. Does the trust now serve as a new way of centralising and systematically coordinating Tullow’s corporate social responsibility projects? Does this mean an end to independent negotiations with affected communities in the future and that all proceeds will be directed through the funds? Besides this immediate bonus, what else is there? No one was clear on this. There is much confusion about corporate social responsibility, compensation, pay-offs, etc. It is all mixed up. How have these impacted livelihoods directly? Most of these projects are education-based, projects that do not necessarily have immediate returns.

The chairman hoped things would be revealed in time, but in the interim, he said, ‘We have set up a committee for resource mobilisation to help us in identifying opportunities for funding.’ Some locals were none too keen on the choice of investment in bursaries, viewing it as symbolising the trend of inconsistent development in the county. While there are now a significant number of new permanent school buildings made of brick and mortar, there is a deficit of teachers. Even the Lokichar chief established a small kindergarten, but it has low enrolment because many cannot afford the services. Similarly, there are new hospital buildings, but they too are short-staffed and lacking in drugs. As one person put it, ‘It is better to have *manyatta* [hut] hospital with staff and drugs than a permanent building that is empty.’

‘Surviving somehow’: the ‘participation business’ and the supply bubble

The sheer number of newly registered community-based organisations in Lokichar and Nakukulas is remarkable. Akin to the swell of intermediary companies seeking inroads into oil truck contracts, community participation and capacity-building has emerged as a sort of social enterprise with the ‘community’ as capital. By offering mediation services and community mobilisation for dialogue, individuals and groups have banded together to establish community-based organisations, thereby creating a form of livelihood for themselves. Thus, since corporate social investments are time-based, attention has shifted to other forms of engagement to extend the timeline of the project. This reiterates the point I made in earlier chapters about the extractive exchange in Turkana: Tullow extracts oil as the resource, and the community mines benefits from Tullow. As described in chapter 3, the dynamics of participation and the

contentious politics of representation have produced a wave of mobilisers to negotiate on behalf of the community.

Thus, one of oil's benefits is participation, and what participation has yielded is not consensus or information that is needed but a means of livelihood. 'That is what everyone is doing', some friends told me about their newly registered community-based organisations on community justice. When I asked about the ethics of establishing a community-based organisation as a means of employment and the blurred boundaries between public and private, they explained that it was also a way to keep busy and become self-employed. Attending meetings remains lucrative, especially for serial participants, due to the sitting allowance. Some have been flown to Nigeria for capacity-building. Some have fallen out with each other over plans to register community-based organisations. Community is capital, and the ranks of mobilisers are swelling. This is not entirely new, only heightened. As a development frontier, Turkana continues to be at the forefront of participation engagements. Interventions often yield unintended outcomes. As more international organisations turn towards sensitisation and participation in the oil dialogue, people rise to the challenge of becoming mobilisers and fill the ranks. The national government, also keen to avoid conflicts, is investing in participation workshops that include high-end training sessions for community-based organisations and a significant sitting allowance to boot. The new narrative is 'Engage, not fight'.

Whether it is the registration of local shell companies or the establishment of more community-based organisations to mobilise the community into cooperation, one thing is clear – 'the community' has become positioned to receive benefits as middlemen. Receiving a percentage from an actual company does not solve the so-called capacity deficit. Members of civil society serving as middlemen makes meaningful participation beyond remunerations difficult. The issue of Tullow's 'ineffective projects'²⁴ in Turkana continues to feature prominently in news reports about Turkana, as do the narratives of Turkana as a drought-afflicted region. But what do these projects say about the nature of global extractive ethics and the requirements for evidence? In most cases, community engagement must be seen to have been done. The extent of the consultations and the quality and durability of the projects is another matter. Some schools have been built, hospitals constructed, boreholes drilled, bursaries

²⁴ M. Waruru, 'Revealed: Tullow Oil's community projects having "very little impact" in Kenya's drought-ravaged Turkana Region', 29 Oct. 2019, *DesmogUK*, <https://www.desmog.co.uk/2019/10/29/tullow-oil-s-community-projects-kenya-having-very-little-impact-drought-ravaged-region>

provided to students, herds of cattle given out to pastoralists, and jobs and contracts awarded, to the extent that it is feasible for the company to provide these. Much of these claims of community development made by Tullow are still contested. But, beyond accusations and counter-accusations lies the question of responsibility. A county development fund drawn from the national revenue has been allocated to Turkana, and it includes bursaries and infrastructure projects. Licencing fees are paid by Tullow to the county government for each oil well, among other levies. A portion of these are meant to go to the affected communities in a 60/40 split. As the chairman of the community trust fund noted, 'You can only demand accountability if you have information. It is difficult for people to ask the politicians about their part of this oil matter. Many things are hidden, there is a lot of darkness.' This is precisely what public participation is meant to unveil, but there have been few results in that regard.

This thesis opened with a portrait of survival and the everyday life of making ends meet in Turkana. It concludes with the same. Creativity, negotiation, being sociable, being assertive, and looking out for one's own economic interest are key for my informants. I have also shown that demanding a rightful share of oil is an assertive form of egalitarianism. With or without corporate social responsibility, there are not enough fish to go around. People must figure out their own ways to survive. Some have reversed their fortunes through protests, participation, subversion, compensation, or competition. The question of whether the benefits go round is subjective. Benefits goes where it does based on the contentions that direct it. A rightful share is not a one-off payment or settlement, nor is the host community a homogeneous entity. Both are constantly mutating and subject to creative negotiation. As recent developments have demonstrated, livelihood precarity is not easily tackled by arbitrary schemes or codes of ethical capitalism, as each of the chapters in this thesis has tried to show. In Turkana, development is not an abstract concept. Development is a visitor. It is not the substance of oil itself, and it is not the schools and boreholes funded by NGOs. Development is also the people who bring these goods into being, as exemplified by the ways in which Tullow is personalised as an individual and NGOs are personalised as development. Like visitors, they come and go and leave what they can, and often they start something that never gets finished. As the oil comes and goes, people find new ways to engage their main resource – Tullow Oil.

Somehow, permanently, semi-permanently, or with impermanence, life goes on.



Figure 41. Premises of a new community-based organisation funded by an Irish organisation in collaboration with the Catholic Church



Figure 42. Auren, a community-based organisation's mobiliser attends to the business of the day



Figure 43. KK, resident of Nakukulas proudly displays his certificate of participation

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