

3. The inter-relationships between community-based conservation governance arrangements and lion conservation in Amboseli ecosystem, Kenya

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Abstract

Livestock predation by lions poses huge costs to the poor, leading to retributive killing. Protective conservation is considered an underlying cause. There is, however, scarcity of literature on the effects of governance arrangements on lion conservation. Using mixed methodology including key informant interviews, focused group discussions, and household surveys, governance capacity of community-based lion conservation in the Amboseli ecosystem was evaluated. The results indicate that the effects of policy arrangement approach variables including discourse, financial capital, natural capital, rules monitoring, on lion conservation are serially mediated by linking capital and congruence. The community lacks financial capital, which they acquire by collaborating with well-linked NGOs. Congruence was a strong positive predictor of lion conservation, indicating the importance of stability in community based conservation (CBC) policy arrangements. Residents of Selengei group ranch had positive perceptions of lion conservation compared to other areas due to the diversity of actors involved. The discourse of coexistence between lions and people is largely shared by NGOs, the state agency, Kenya wildlife service, community leaders and people who benefit most from conservation but not by majority of the community who feel left out in decision making and benefit sharing. Compliance to the rules and natural capital had significant negative relationship with lion conservation. Moreover, natural capital had a significant and negative indirect effect on lion conservation through linking capital and congruence. Communities perceive local-level organizations, which are major links to the larger institutional context to be imposing downward natural resource access restrictions, and rules directly related to lion conservation resulting in negative attitudes toward conservation. Communities should therefore be meaningfully involved in formulation and implementation of rules to increase legitimacy, and control of conservation and its benefits to avoid opportunistic behaviors particularly lion killing. Involvement of diverse actors to inject more resources in CBC is also recommended.

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