Remember Me by My Goat

Stories of Relatedness in More-than-Human Worlds of Maasai Women in Kenya

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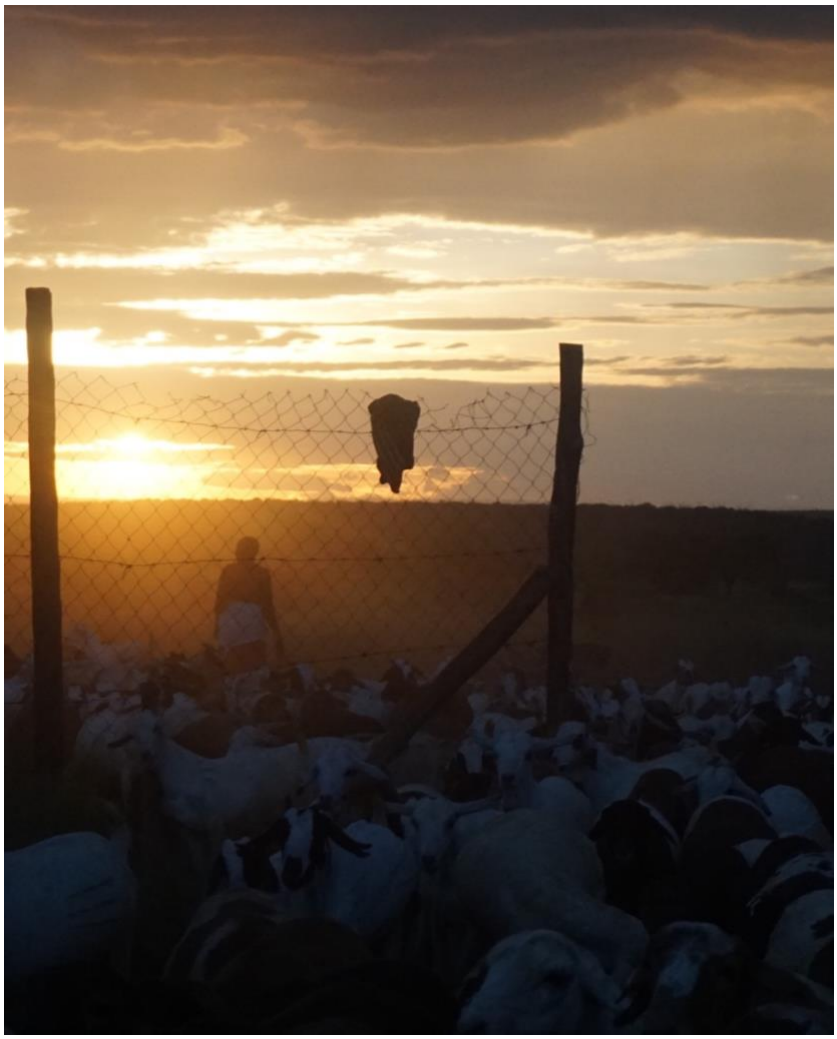

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Abstract

This thesis explores the lives of Maasai women today in general, and in particular as seen through the lens of one woman, and her social network in Kajiado County, southern Kenya. By using a storytelling approach, I let the women's own vivid stories, thoughts and priorities stay in focus. While the women's stories reveal personal details in their lives, I argue that their stories also broaden the perspective of what it is to be a Maasai woman today. Inspired by a framework of multispecies relations, especially the concept of *relatedness*, I look at the relationships – to both humans and non-humans – which shapes the women's lives, possibilities, decisions, and concerns. As I explore the women's more-than-human worlds, the agency of cows, goats, sheep, and even flies are acknowledged. In combination with inspiration from the framework of feminist political ecology – especially the concepts of *resource access* and *displacement* – I bridge understandings about how multispecies relations affect the women, with reflections on education and working situations, and matters of land. With this thesis, I wish to contribute to and broaden the literature and often stereotyped image of what it is to be a Maasai, especially a Maasai woman.

Keywords: Kenyan Maasai, women, multispecies relations, resource access

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I wish to give my appreciation to Mama Christine, her wonderful daughters, sons, and grandchildren, for inviting me into their home. You gave me a place to stay during my time in *Engejusiteti*, you also made me feel like one in the family, and helped me with all my questions, concerns, and curiosities. I wish to thank Sylvia and Marianne, along with their families, for letting me spend time together with them and openly sharing their thoughts and lives with me. Secondly, I am deeply grateful to SORALO and the staff working at Lale'enok – for helping me make this thesis possible, supporting me along the way, and making my stay in Kenya a lovely and unforgettable memory.

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1. Introduction

"The men were surprised; a woman selling cows? But then they got used to it. If I did not attend to the market for some weeks, people began wondering where I was and asked for me. Sometimes Joel attended in place for me, but it was not as appreciated – people wanted to buy from me! After some time, other women appeared at the cow market, peeking in. I took their hands and said, 'This market does not belong to men only'.

Today, there are many women selling cows."

- Mama Christine

In this thesis, I am concerned with the everyday circumstances of Maasai women's lives today in general, and in particular as seen through the lens of one woman, Mama Christine, and also by joining her social network in Kajiado County, in Kenya. I was introduced to Mama Christine by the land-owner association SORALO[1], and was invited to stay in her house for three months at the end of 2019. By helping with household chores, walking next to the women, herding and milking, going to church, having conversations, and take part in their everyday life, I got a glimpse of how the life of a Maasai woman looks like.

As I spent time with Mama Christine[2], her daughters and friends, I came to know a group of strong and bold women. In different ways, they all break the stereotype of what a Maasai is or how Maasai women are commonly portrayed in research, media and popular culture. Mama Christine is an extraordinary woman in that she is in charge of the animals and the household, without involvement of male relatives. As narrated in the vignette, she even sells cattle at the market place. She is a busy woman, always occupied with errands, business, ceremonies and social responsibilities. Mama Christine's joyful friend, Sylvia, has a thirst for knowledge and eagerness to explore. She is well aware of women's legal rights, as well as the advantage of being informed about your material rights, such as land rights. This is something that she tries to spread to women in her neighbourhood, so that they too can claim their rights. Marianne,

[1] South Rift Association of Land Owners (SORALO) is a "community-based and community-driven land trust established in 2004 to unite 16 Maasai communities in the management and security of their landscape". Their approach is based on the Maasai cultural concepts of "Enkop'ang | our good land, our common identity, our common pride" and "Erematare | stewardship and care over common resources" (SORALO, 2020).
[2] See "Apendix 1: Persons" for list of all persons mentioned in the thesis.

who is another close friend of Mama Christine's family, is an innovative and motivated woman with many projects and ideas. She makes beautiful beads handicraft, which she sells abroad, and she also travels to teach the art of Maasai beading techniques. By going to restaurants in the town of Kiserian by herself, and having equal dialogues with her husband, Marianne shows that she is not afraid of breaking norms.

A Maasai have commonly been portrayed as a man, especially the male warrior. The young Maasai warriors, the *morans*, jumping with the walking sticks in their hands, is a common motive on Kenyan postcards and other Kenyan tourist material. A reoccurring theme that comes up when I describe my research project to people in Sweden is exactly the jumping Maasai – "Do they jump?" – which is something that I, after spending in total nine months in areas with Maasai people, did not see once. Along with the notion of the Maasai warrior, there is the imagined, suppressed Maasai woman; a victim to the patriarchal Maasai society with its strong cultural conservatism, unwilling to change from their "traditional" lifestyle (Hodgson, 2001). Despite the voluminous research on the Maasai, very little address Maasai women's *actual* situation and perspective (Talle, 1988; Westervelt, 2017; Yurco, 2018). By telling the intimate and vivid stories of Mama Christine, her daughters and friends, I seek to contribute to and invite further scholarship concerned with Maasai's life today. I wish to highlight how the women in many ways do *not* conform to the image of Maasai women as subordinated or victims under the patriarchal society, yet still recognize that they are living in a highly patriarchal society.

Through storytelling, I provide space for the women's voices. Their stories and personalities are in focus, giving another perspective of Maasai as opposed to how they most often are depicted through the stereotypical and general descriptions discussed above. A similar approach is used in "Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman" (Shostak and Nisa, 1990), and "Tomorrow, God willing" (Wikan, 1996), which both, in biographical ways, tell the stories of women's lives, and give a picture of their contemporary times and surrounding societies. By letting the women's perspectives lead the way, this thesis deals with issues such as livelihood, education, dreams, social and interspecies relations, and land matters. The themes are entangled, and together they form the lives of the women, as well as they describe current societal streams, changes and challenges for Maasai today.

Consistently, in the stories told, the theme of relations is foundational, and shapes the decisions, values and lives of the women. Inspired by Radhika Govindrajan's (2018) concept of *relatedness*, I extend my analysis to include not only relations between humans, but also the relations between humans and cows, goats, sheep and flies. Relatedness is described as something that emerges over time, from sharing the same land, "eat from the same soil, […] drink from the same rivers", and over time creates exchanges and entanglements (Govindrajan, 2018, p. 9). By embracing these multispecies interactions, the agency of the animals becomes visible. Species' characters, and the personalities of singular, individual beings, impact the women's daily lives and their relations to each other. By noticing this agency of the animals, seeing *beyond* animals as a commodity and a "thing," new exchanges and entanglements between humans and non-humans are illuminated.

In "Animal Intimacies: Interspecies Relatedness in India's Central Himalayas" Govindrajan further point to the specific "gendered nature of labour involved in creating and sustaining interspecies relationships" (2018:29), and hence that women's and men's relation to an animal differ. I show how a gendered aspect of relatedness is crucial, not only for relations between humans and non-humans – such as who takes care of which animal, and how the women's lives are intertwined with that of the animals – but also for how land is used, managed and owned. Talking about land matters with Mama Christine and her friends, the relations – both to their families, social networks and the cows, goats and sheep – have a central role in how they come to think about, manage and use the land. While Maasai men, by the women, are described as being positive to land sales, a Maasai woman "hates when land is sold" – because where will the children live in the future, and where will the cows graze? The vital issue with land sales, explained to me, is the way land ends up in the hands of non-Maasai, and the fences erected with this. Fences which "no one can pass through and no goat can get inside", as Mama Christine expressed it. While people, in Mama Christine's home area *Engejusiteti*, have private entitlements to their land, and have had for many years, there is, yet, no major issue of fences cutting up the land or restraining the movement of people or grazing livestock. I was told about a common understanding, that a Maasai never puts up chained fences around grazing areas. This statement comes back to the relevance of relatedness; decisions on how to manage land is decided out of relations to humans an non-humans in their surroundings.

Issues of land are furthermore linked to wider power structures, national and global politics and economics, as well as historical accounts. This makes the framework of feminist political ecology inspirational. While political ecology deals with human access and control over environmental resources, its subfield feminist political ecology includes the otherwise mainly overlooked, gendered difference in resource access and control (Westervelt, 2017). The concepts of resource access and displacement in feminist political ecology (Elmhirst, 2011) are useful when considering the correlation between gender hierarchies, resource access and control over land, and livestock for the Maasai women. Along with the debate within feminist political ecology on post-humanist ontologies, focusing on "the doing and becoming of social identities across species boundaries" (Elmhirst, 2018, p. 4), I seek to bridge the discussion on (interspecies) relatedness and resource access and control, out of a gendered perspective, and further contribute to research on Maasai life today.

Without claiming that the lives of Mama Christine, her friends and their families are representative for Maasai women in East Africa, there are wider commonalities which their specific stories expose. Their stories tell of deep and entangled webs of relations with non-human beings around them; such as how the troublesome flies every day is fought and swept away from the floor, while simultaneously being a symbol of a generous home with plenty of milk and food. Their stories also tell of a gendered division of labour with the cows, goats and sheep, which, combined with the centrality of family relations for the women, have implications to the way women and men think of, use, and manage land differently. While literature on the Maasai describes the centrality of the cow, traditional gendered division of labour, and issues of land ownership in Maasai communities, the women's individual stories provide vital details and nuances which enable a deeper understanding of these topics.

When exploring the main research question of what it is to be a Maasai woman today in general, and in particular as seen through the lens of one woman and her social network, I also delve into questions of how relatedness affect the women's lives, and, how issues of resource access and control are influenced by their relations to humans and other living beings.

Organization of the thesis

This thesis consists of four ethnographic chapters in which the women's stories are told and reflected around out of four main themes.
In the first ethnographic chapter, Chapter 3, *A Strong Maasai Lady*, I introduce Mama Christine, her family and friends by telling their histories and backgrounds.
Chapter 4, *Humanimal Relationships*, tells stories of the intimate life of the women and surrounding animals, as well as the centrality of milk for the women's social lives.
Chapter 5, *Education, Work and the Future*, goes into the importance of education for the women, what they do for a living, what they dream of, and how this plays into other issues of how they handle land and livestock.
The last ethnographic chapter, Chapter 6, *Women and Matters of Land*, handles the use, management and rights to land. The discussions of gendered differences and fencing are central in this chapter.
In Chapter 7, *Concluding Discussion*, I gather the findings presented in the previous chapters, and show how the stories and themes are interconnected in the women's lives through relatedness.

Before the ethnographic chapters, I will, in the next chapter, give a background to my field site and the research, as well as I place myself in the field and the study. I describe the home area of Mama Christine, *Engejusiteti,* which is the location of this study. After that, I summarize the history of Maasai people, previous research, followed by a section on the theoretical frameworks I use. Lastly, I discuss methods used, describe my position as a researcher, and problematizes my fieldwork and research.

For clarification on persons mentioned in this thesis, and a glossary with the most commonly used words in Maa and Swahili, see *Apendix 1: Persons*, and *Appendix 2: Glossary* at page 74-75.

2. Background

A place with no rocks and plenty of trees

Like many other times, Sylvia and I sat together by her *enkang*[3] – she working on her beading, and I, tentatively, practicing my skills in the Maasai handcraft. I asked her what she likes about living here, in *Engejusiteti*[4]. She thought for a while before she said, "The thing I really like about this place is that there are no rocks and plenty of trees for shadow". As we, at that moment, sat beneath the tree, which gives such a well-needed shadow, I could understand why trees giving shadow was a much-appreciated quality for the area.

Engejusiteti is located in the most southern part of Kenya, in the arid Kajiado County (see maps on p. 13-14); halfway between the cool altitudes and green hills of Nairobi[5], and the Tanzanian border in the South. Driving North from *Engejusiteti*, towards Nairobi, you can, in just about an hour on almost empty, uphill roads, reach the hectic suburban centres of Kiserian and Ongata Rongai. Every day, two *matatus*[6] drive back and forth between Kiserian and the southern part of the county – sometimes on a predetermined schedule, sometimes not. The matatus are most of the time fully loaded; inside with people and children, and on the roofs with packages of goods that are to be delivered to the shops along the road, cages of goats, and water tanks. As I commuted the bumpy, dusty route between *Engejusiteti* and SORALO's field office Lale'enok[7] further south, the *matatus*, while serving their purpose of getting me to my destinations, left me exhausted and sore. Traveling the other way, between *Engejusiteti* and Kiserian, there are white *Probox*-cars available, working as a carpool taxi. When I travelled with Mama Christine or her daughters, this was the means of transport mostly used. Usually, we squeezed in, two or three of us, next to the driver in the front seat, while waiting for the backseat and the car boot to be filled up similarly with passengers and goods, over, what would seem to be, the maximum.

3 *Enkang*. "The pastoral Maasai live in large scattered residential units often referred to in the literature as villages or kraal-camps" (Talle, 1988, p. 50).
4 The name *Engejusiteti* (really 'Engeju ee siteti') is, due to anonymization, not the real name of the town.
5 Nairobi is located on an altitude of 1795 meters above the sea, thereby the colder weather. The name Nairobi comes from the Maa language and means "that which is cold" (Payne and Ole-Kotikash, 2005).
6 *Matatu.* "A minibus or similar vehicle used as a taxi. Origin: Swahili, short for mapeni matatu 'thirty cents', a flat fare charged in the early 1960s" (Lexico, 2020).
7 *Lale'enok* meaning "place where information is brought and shared" (SORALO, 2014).

Figure 1: Map of Kenya. From un.org

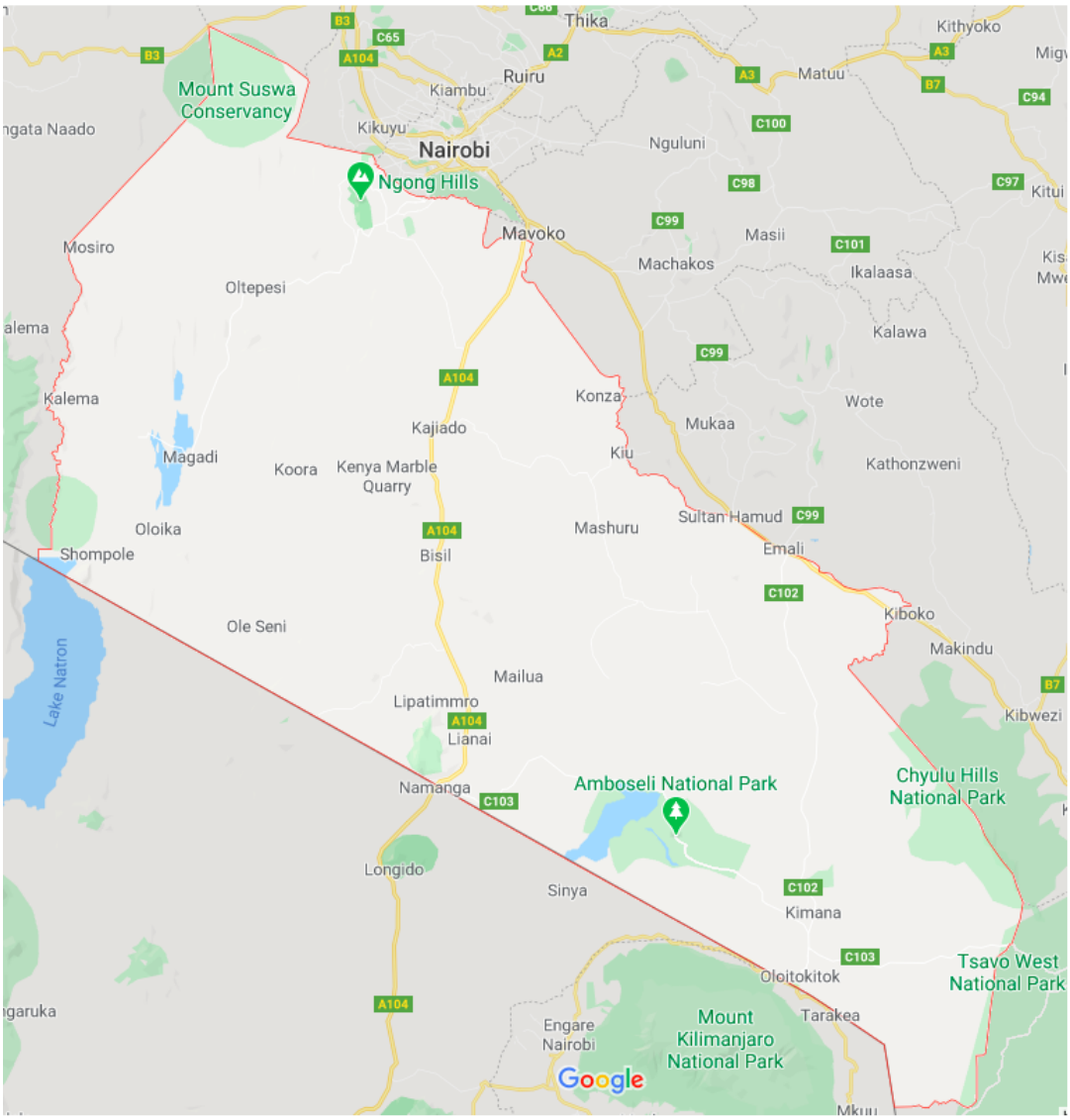

Figure 2: Map of Kajiado County. From Google Maps

For people in the area, *Engejusiteti* is a well-known town. Looking at Google Maps[8], the town is, however, not marked and you can only see that there actually is a town when looking at the satellite pictures, which shows the tin roofs of buildings lined up along the main Magadi road. The buildings contain shops selling sodas, flour, soap, bread, beadings, parts for motorbikes and cars, and various other goods that people may need to buy, without going all the way to Kiserian. There are small so-called hotels, where you can buy a cup of chai, eat chapati, mandazi, order some stew and socialize. There are hairdressers, a pharmacy, and rooms for rent in some buildings. Just outside the main centre there is also a hospital, schools, and churches. Many plots are still unused, and empty buildings are ready to be rented for new

[8] https://www.google.com/maps

businesses and people looking for rent. Neither the plots, nor the buildings are ownerless, but usually bought by Maasai from the area and non-Maasai from other parts of Kenya, prepared for the assumed, upcoming expansion of the town. Before I checked out from an Airbnb in Nairobi where I had stayed, I told the host that I was going back to *Engejusiteti* for fieldwork. At first, the host did not recognize the place and wondered where it was, but after I explained, she bursted out, "Oh, Engejusiteti, I remember now, I even have a plot there". The woman's comment underlined the way *Engejusiteti* still is a small and unknown town to most people outside the direct area, yet attractive enough to gain the interest of land investors from the big city.

While the shops, hotels, and, compared to adjacent areas, quite hectic life in the town, is what first meets you when you reach *Engejusiteti*, there is more than just that. Most people live outside the town, spread out in the vast landscape. Mama Christine and the family of her oldest son lives about 20 minutes car-drive, or an hour's walk, from the town. This is considered to be a good and accessible location, since it is connected to the town with a dirt road. The fact that *Engejusiteti* has a town centre makes it more modernized than other places in the area, and more in demand on the market – which is valuable for the people living there. Mama Christine's daughter, Beatrice, told me that people in the more remote areas might not have the same access to education, which also creates a difference in how well educated the women are about their rights, for example, to land.

Since many years ago, land in *Engejusiteti* can be privately owned, sold, and bought. The fact that *Engejusiteti* is a subdivided land area makes it possible for plots to be bought in town, the women's families to have their own private land on which they can build permanent houses, and fences to be erected. This current form of land ownership has its roots in history, which is discussed next.

A Maasai history

To understand the lives of Maasai women today it is crucial to include a historical background. By doing so, I wish to avoid isolating current phenomena from its surroundings, history, politics, and economics. I start by giving a brief description of the early and pre-colonial history of the Maasai people and their presence in East Africa, followed by historical

processes that have shaped how land is used and owned today. Thereafter, the focus is on gender roles and the position of women within the Maasai society since late 19th century.

It is believed that the Maasai came to Kenya from Sudan 400-500 years ago, along with other pastoralist people searching for pasture and water (Galaty, 1993; Mwangi, 2007; Talle, 1988). Maasai had exchanges with neighbouring ethnical groups through trade with livestock, crops, and intermarriages, but the contact was as well shaped by wars and cattle raiding (Mwangi, 2007; Talle, 1988). Through their excellent warrior skills, the Maasai quickly expanded their territories over the next about 250 years. By the early 19th century, they occupied a large area of about 10 million acres in current Kenya and Tanzania (Mwangi, 2007), comparatively almost a tenth of Kenya's total size[9]. By the 1890s, the simultaneous events of drought, famine, outbreaks of human and livestock diseases, and intersectional wars, had decreased the Maasai populations and their herds (Mwangi, 2007; Spear, 1993a; Talle, 1988). The disasters left the Maasai vulnerable and weak when the British colonization started by the same period in the region. With the entrance of a colonial administration, property formation, and "pasture alienation" began (Talle, 1988, p. 19).

The colonial government had an interest in the fertile highlands and areas close to the railway built from the Kenyan coast to Uganda – areas which previously were Maasai territory (Mwangi, 2007). While Europeans settled on the highlands, treaties[10] between the colonial administration and a Maasai "chief" in 1904 and 1911 restricted the Maasai to smaller, government-controlled reserves[11] (Mwangi, 2007; Talle, 1988). The Maasai reserve was located in the southern, more arid part of Kenya, which today is Kajiado and Narok County (Mwangi, 2007).

By the 1960s, an increased pressure to privatize land introduce the system of group ranches (Homewood et al., 2009; Mwangi, 2007; Weldemichel and Lein, 2019). Based on the

[9] 580 000 km2.
[10] The so-called Maasai-agreements treaties in 1904 and 1911 were contested by the Maasai, as well as by civil society movements until present day (Koissaba, 2016). It is critiqued how the colonial administration were the ones who instituted the position of "chiefs" in the Maasai communities, and were in control of *who* became the chief. Therefore, whether the chief who signed the treaties actually could speak for all the Maasai communities in Kenya when deciding that "it is for our best interests to remove our people, flocks, and herds into definite reservations […] away from any land that may be thrown open to European settlement" and that the treaty would be "enduring as long as the Masai as a race shall exist" (Hamilton, 1914, p. 382), have been questioned.
[11] The colonial administration created "native reserves" to which Kenya's native ethnical groups were limited and separated in, such as the Maasai reserve and the neighboring Kikuyuland.

government's assumption that Maasai land management was unsustainable and led to land degradation (Mwangi, 2007), rangelands were divided into smaller units to avoid overstocking, restore an ecological balance, and prevent future droughts (Talle, 1988; Weldemichel and Lein, 2019). Both to the colonial and the post-independence government, there was as well interest to get administrative control over the Maasai; make them adopt a sedentary lifestyle, and integrate them in the market economy to raise their profitability for the nation-state (Talle, 1988; Weldemichel and Lein, 2019). From the 1980s, dissatisfaction amongst group ranch members, due to unequal division of land parcels, population increase, and desire to take loans through properties, have made many ranches subdivide the land amongst the group members (Mwangi, 2007). Beatrice told me that *Engejusiteti* has always been divided into individual entitlements – that is the only way she knows *Engejusiteti*. It was first when she grew older, and for example, saw Olkiramatian group ranch where SORALO works, that she understood that there is another way land can be managed. When talking to Mama Christine, she told me that 'the change' – in how land is used and divided, the ending of the tradition of making holes in the ear and stretching them long, and women's ability to affect decisions – came at the same time as she gave birth to her first daughter, in the late 1980s.

In the stories of Mama Christine and her social network, land matters have a pivotal role in the women's everyday lives, gender relations, and the possibilities for women's empowerment. Furthermore, the history of land transformation is "a key factor in the transition of the Maasai economy and of changes in female-male relations" (Talle, 1988, p. 19). In the 19th century, Maasai women had central positions in trade with agricultural neighbours, rights to livestock, and interactions with European travellers, giving them autonomy and the freedom of mobility (Hodgson, 2001; Talle, 1988). With the colonialization came the entrance of the cash economy, and the "division of the complementary, interconnected responsibilities of men and women into spatially separated, hierarchically gendered domains of 'domestic' and 'public'/'political'" (Hodgson, 1999, p. 43). The power thus shifted predominantly to Maasai men, leading to that the status of Maasai women changed, and the discourse of Maasai men as the "real" pastoralists was evoked (Hodgson, 1999).

With the European arrival to Kenya came an interest in research about its native people, and literature on the current voluminous collection on the Maasai people begun. While research on the Maasai is extensive, there are, as is described next, gaps in the literature concerning

who it is written about and from whose perspective.

Previous research

Topics such as Maasai rituals and traditions, social organization, age-systems, systems of production and reproduction, and their ethnical identity, have been well covered in the literature on the Maasai (see Hollis, 1905; Spear and Waller, 1993; Spencer, 1988). To this comes extensive research on land and tenure systems in Maasai areas, looking at, for example, the use of rangelands, its "grazing capacity", ecosystem conservation, and the property systems of communal land, group ranches and subdivision (see Galaty, 2013; Homewood et al., 2009; Mwangi, 2007; Rutten, 1992; Weldemichel and Lein, 2019).

Despite the extensive literature within academia on the Maasai, research with a gendered approach focusing on Maasai women, or pastoral women in general, is scarce (Hodgson, 1999; Mitzlaff, 1994; Talle, 1988; Westervelt, 2017). While even early research give descriptions of the position and social status of women in pastoral societies, "women's crucial role in decision-making processes and their structural position in the construction of the social system are, however, seldom acknowledged in the analysis of these societies" (Talle, 1988, p. 8). The limited inclusion of women is also shaped by descriptions *of* them by European men, not *by* them and from their perspective (Mitzlaff, 1994). Furthermore, scholars such as John Galaty, describes how "Maasai men were the 'real' pastoralists, while Maasai women were negatively equated with lower status hunters" (Galaty, 1979 see Hodgson, 1999, p. 42). Hodgson (2001) writes about how Maasai ethnicity has been associated with, and also created as the male nomadic pastoralist – the *moran* (warrior). Marianne and her husband Andrew occasionally travel to speak about the Maasai in England and the US. Andrew told me how he sometimes tries to change the content of his talks, only to be met with resistance – what everyone wants to hear about is the *moran*.

I wish to acknowledge the patriarchal structures the women are surrounded by, while also giving the intimate picture of how these women break norms and act contrary to what is generally perceived as a "Maasai woman". By doing this, I follow the research by female scholars who focus on women and gender roles within the Maasai society (see Talle, 1988; Mitzlaff, 1994; Hodgson, 1999, 2001, 2005; Wangui, 2003, 2008; Westervelt, 2017). While

some early research on Maasai and gender roles emphasize the way Maasai women are "dependent or ownable" (Llewelyn-Davies, 1981, p. 331), and the “loss in female decision-making power vis-à-vis men” (Talle, 1988, p. 1), more recent scholars tend to refute the stereotyped image of Maasai gender roles in favour for emergent, more nuanced perspectives. Westervelt, along with Wangui (2008), shows how the role of Maasai women have changed and expanded, leading to "rising dependence on women's labour and income for survival" (Westervelt, 2018, p. 827). Also, Archambault (2016) stress the importance of looking at the way Maasai women's position has changed, and the critical role of the women's social networks, when dealing with resource access in times of land fragmentation.

The Maasai is throughout in research described out of their identity as pastoralists and a “people of cattle”[12]. Both 'cattle' and 'livestock', as terms to describe cows, goats and sheep, are commonly used within this literature. The animals are described as parts of the Maasai production system – something in which Maasai puts a monetary and cultural value and can be bought, sold, given away, bequeathed, killed, and used. From this way of seeing the animals, what they *are* is narrowed down to that of a “thing-like” commodity[13]. During my time in *Engejusiteti* I witnessed a personal agency of the animals, in how the cows, goats, and sheep, with their different characters and as individuals, affect the women. While literature on pastoralists, in general, acknowledge the agency of animals (see Gooch, 1998; Stépanoff, 2017), out of my findings, no writing on the pastoral Maasai takes this multispecies approach. Furthermore, focus in literature is primary on the Maasai cattle, whereas I place a greater emphasis on goats and sheep.

Theoretical framework

A shared theme in the stories of Mama Christine and her friends is that of relations. Both relations to humans and non-humans are central to the women, and are affecting their daily behaviours, decisions, and values. Looking at social connections not only between humans,

[12] The Maasai see themselves as ‘people of cattle’ (Galaty, 1982; Spear, 1993b), as well. There are, however, also other ways of ‘being Maasai’ – which does not include a pastoral livelihood. While not being the focus for this thesis, the women’s stories do tell of different ways of ‘being Maasai’.
[13] Wilkie (2017, p. 1) describes the commoditization of animals, and how they get a "thing-like status". This view of the animals is linked to how they are seen as property for humans, which can be bought, sold, given away, or destroyed.

but also between humans and other species, makes the field of multispecies relations (deriving from the work of anthropologists such as Haraway, 2007; Kohn, 2013; Tsing, 2015)[14] relevant for this thesis, and leads into ontological discussions. The "ontological turn" in anthropology is described as focusing "not just on how humans and their worlds are portrayed but on how they are thought to be" (Kirksey, 2014, p. 3) and invites reflections on what the human being *is*. The discussion welcomes an understanding of human beings as multispecies beings, whose nature is intertwined with other species and ecosystems (Kirksey, 2014). Furthermore, the western dichotomy of nature and society as two separate entities, which historically has been integral in anthropology (Gooch, 1998), is challenged in the "ontological turn" (Kirksey, 2014). For Mama Christine and her social network, the lives of cows, goats, sheep, and even flies are always present. Interspecies relations and relations between humans are overlapping and entangled, making ontological discussions relevant. However, as highlighted by Govindrajan (2018, p. 12), there is a tendency within these discussions to simplify native conceptions of the non-human world in "totalizing and homogenous ways that bear troubling resemblance to the idea of culture as a bounded whole" – as if the reality of indigenous groups would fundamentally differ from that of others. I wish to depart from the simplistic and homogenous image of the Maasai people as "the cattle people" and an indigenous group. By focusing on the women's personal stories, I give a more detailed and intimate description of the multispecies relations shaping these specific women's lives, and invite the agency of individual animals.

Radhika Govindrajan in "Animal Intimacies: Interspecies Relatedness in India's Central Himalayas" (2018) enters her field with a multispecies approach and focuses on *relatedness* between humans and non-humans in the Himalayas. She uses the concept of relatedness to answer the question of what it means "to live a life that is knotted with other lives for better or worse", and how these knots come to be tied (2018, p. 3). Govindrajan is inspired by scholars such as Janet Carsten and David Schneider, looking at relatedness and kinship. Through the concept of *relatedness*, I can look deeper into the "the myriad ways in which the potential and outcome of a life always and already unfolds in relation to that of another" (Govindrajan, 2018, p. 3). In this thesis, relatedness involves human to human relations; human to animal relations; relations between human, animal, and material; and all the ways in which these overlap and are entangled with each other. While Govindrajan describes how her interlocutors

[14] For an extensive review of multispecies ethnography and its leading scholars see Kirksey and Helmreich (2010).

explicitly feel a kinship towards the animals, I did not see this during my time in *Engejusiteti*, and will use the concept as a way to capture the way social worlds are being intertwined with each other.

Since the women are the central figures in this thesis, emphasis is on interspecies relatedness out of a gendered perspective. As Govindrajan (2018, p. 29) states: "understandings and experiences of what it means to live a life in relation to another shift across different kinds of humans depending on their caste, class, and gender, among other things". The women's stories tell of how their contact with non-human beings differ from the connection men have with the same beings, and seem to derive from men and women's different responsibilities and labour. Similar is discussed by Govindrajan (2018, p. 29), suggesting that "the gendered nature of the labour [is] involved in creating and sustaining interspecies relationships".

The specific gendered interspecies relations and gendered labour, also leads into a gendered way of using, managing, and thinking about land. Looking at gendered aspects of resource access, feminist political ecology serves as an inspirational framework, due to its focus on how "women's orientations to natural resources are linked to national and global scale economic and political systems that determine their resource rights, roles, and opportunities" (Westervelt, 2017, p. 24).Within the framework of feminist political ecology, I am initially interested in the strand dealing with resource access and displacement (see Elmhirst, 2018).

Bina Agarwal (1995), writing about gender roles and resource access in South Asian rural contexts, argues that women's independent property rights[15] in land is central for equality in gender relations, and for women's economic independence. Moreover, she emphasizes the difference between *rights* and *control* over property; how equal *legal* rights to property does not guarantee actual equal *ownership*; and how *ownership* does not ensure *control* over property. Agarwal (1995, p. 19) defines *rights* as "claims that are legally and socially recognized and enforceable by an external legitimized authority". It includes both the ownership of land and the right to use land, as well as it covers different "degrees of freedom to lease out, mortgage, bequeath, or sell" (Agarwal, 1995, p. 19). These land rights can, for example, stem from inheritance, community membership, or purchase – which are the three

[15] Independent property rights meaning that the woman enjoys the full land rights, not joint titles with her husband (Agarwal, 1995).

most obvious ways of acquiring land rights in and around *Engejusiteti*. Two more loosely defined terms of relevance for this thesis are *access* to and *control* over land. According to Agarwal (1995), access to land can be described as having rights of ownership and use, but can also include more informal agreements between individuals, allowing a person to access and use the land without having actual legal rights to it. *Control* over land can, for example, involve being able to decide how land is used, and whether or not it should be sold (Agarwal, 1995). While Agarwal describes the example of how a woman, despite having rights in land, might not be in control over the same, I look into the opposite situation when women do *not* have rights in land, but still are the ones who mainly use and are in control of the land. Through Mama Christine's and her friends' stories, I show, which Agarwal stress, how women's rights in land, indeed, can be crucial for women's economic and social independence. Furthermore, I emphasize how the implementation of women's rights in land is beneficial to their families, livestock, and the community, but also the hazards coming with the system of individual property rights and privatized land.

Useful when discussing the issues of resource access and property rights is the concept of *displacement* as used by Vaz-Jones (2018) within feminist political ecology. Displacement and land grabbing are often framed as an "abrupt, singular and catastrophic moment of loss imposed from above and contested from below" (Vaz-Jones, 2018, p. 711). Vaz-Jones, in her use of the concept, instead "seeks to better align theories of displacement with the real, everyday, and gradual ways it is often negotiated" (2018, p. 712).

How the women deal with land matters make me come back to the way relations between humans and non-humans affect the women. Besides the concept of relatedness discussed above, feminist political ecology scholars explore ontological questions through feminist post-humanist thinking (Elmhirst, 2018). Feminist post-humanist thought, similar to Govindrajan's concept of relatedness, derive from discussions on interspecies relations and dispute the nature-society dualism. I find it useful to complement the concept of relatedness with feminist post-humanist thinking since it further stresses the "ways *gender* [author's own emphasis] and species hierarchical arrangements work, materially, symbolically and through technologies of security, development and conservation, in a range of diverse settings" (Elmhirst, 2018, p. 4). By combining the concepts of resource access, feministic post-humanism, and relatedness, I wish to bridge and analyse how the themes of relatedness, multispecies relations, resource access, and gender are linked in the women's lives.

I have so far in this chapter described the field where the stories of Mama Christine and her social network take place, given a historical background, and a review of previous research and theoretical frameworks that are relevant for this thesis. In the following and last section of this chapter, I discuss the background of this research, my position as a researcher, and ethical considerations.

Methodological considerations

My interest in the Maasai people started with a half-year internship at an organization in Kajiado County in 2016. Through the organization's projects, in a Maasai area, I came to see the importance of access and rights to land and water, struggles coming with unpredictable changes in rainy- and dry seasons, and the centrality of women and mothers socially and economically for the households, as well as for the community. Someone suggested, when I came back to Kenya for my fieldwork in 2019, that I had been "bit by the Kenyan bug" – because I was coming back a second time. The combination of the "Kenyan bug" and my curiosity to dig deeper into the issues, that I in 2016 had only been able to briefly scratch on the surface of, made me focus my master thesis in social anthropology on the Maasai. In dialogue with SORALO I decided to focus more specifically on Maasai women and their relation to land, surrounding environments, and human-animal relations.

In this subchapter, I further describe my research process in terms of methods used, my position in the field, ethical challenges, and language concerns. Starting with a description of how I, through embodied experiences, became familiar with the area of *Engejusiteti*, and, through that, came to know the women.

Embodied knowledge of the field

The organization SORALO have up-to-date knowledge on current issues of discussion in the area, and staff that are Maasai themselves, or have lived and worked in Maasai regions for a long time. These assets, together with SORALO's capacity to help me practically with contacts and accommodation, made them crucial for my fieldwork and research. SORALO's

field office, Lale'enok[16], came to be my "home base" in between my stays with Mama Christine in *Engejusiteti*. Whenever I was at Lale'enok I tried to take my time to breathe, getting distance from my fieldwork and reflect on the material I had gathered from *Engejusiteti*. To completely turn off my mind from looking, learning, understanding and asking were, however, difficult. Right before the Christmas holidays, when I had about two weeks left of my fieldwork, I was invited to have dinner at a luxurious eco-lodge, about 30 minutes' drive away from Lale'enok. The lodge was located on the ascent of the impressive escarpment, climbing upwards with its green slopes, until reaching the Loita platue. Standing by the lodge, I, for the first time, saw the landscape I was researching from a new and distanced perspective – I was no longer bodily *in* the landscape. It became clear to me how the landscape often is romanticized when just glancing at it from a distance, and I questioned if there even is such a thing as a 'landscape' when *being in* it. Pernille Goosh (1998, p. 90) writes about "subjects *being-in-the-world*, a world which is not an object 'out there' but a world *in* which I am through my body". The idea of a scenic savannah landscape, or the 'green hills of Africa', does not include the details of 'devils'[17] that get stuck under your shoes, the thorny bushes, the dust, or the mud. Those things that, when living *in* it, moving *in* it, is what actually creates the *lived* place (Gooch, 1998, p. 114).

The thought of a landscape, *the* landscape, was constantly present during my fieldwork. Having the initial idea that my research would focus on how land is used, made the concepts of land and landscape, and my understanding of those concepts, central. To *be in* the landscape, in contrast to looking *at* the landscape and upholding the distance it creates (Gooch, 1998), became synonymous with *being in* the field. My understanding of the landscape was easily translated to the ethnographic fieldwork I was doing; the crucial details are the feeling of getting devils under the shoes, not to observe from a distance while enjoying a beautiful view.

While to bodily and sensuously experience a space is intrinsic to the method of participant observation (Milton and Svašek, 2005; Stoller, 1997), the embodied practice can be realized to different degrees in ethnographic fieldwork. I used participant observation to get both the explicit and tacit aspects of people's way of living (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010), allowing me to get a deeper understanding of, not only what people *say* they do or *wish* they do, but to see

[16] *Lale'enok* meaning "place where information is brought and shared" (SORALO, 2014).
[17] *Devils* – short for the plant Devil's thorn.

and take part in *what* people do. Valuing the embodied knowledge, I found that a method of walking (Lee and Ingold, 2007), allowed me to deepen the practice of participant observation further. Mama Christine, her daughters and close friends all live in permanent houses and do not practice a semi-nomadic lifestyle, as Maasai traditionally have done. Yet, living close to their cows, goats and sheep, whom they follow for pasture and water, as well as surroundings that occasionally makes the feet the only possible way of transportation, the practice of walking is fundamental in the women's lives. Joo Lee and Tim Ingold (2007, p. 67) describes how one, by walking *with* another, is "heading the same way, sharing the same vistas, and perhaps retreating from the same threats behind", and, through that, can reach an embodied understanding, both environmentally and socially.

During my months in *Engejusiteti* I came to walk with the women in the hot sun, where we had to take a pause in the small shadow of every other tree and bush. I ran, together with the children, for an hour through pouring rain, while trying to secure our mobile phones from damage, and making it back home, before the swelling river became too deep and strong. I crisscrossed between market booths while avoiding to fall on the slippery ground at Kiserian market. And I slowly followed the goats and sheep for pasture and water. These walks enhanced my understanding, and also seemed to make the women accept me, when they saw that I wanted to join them, and could handle the walks with them in *their* environment. The last day before I left *Engejusiteti*, Sylvia, Mercy and I sat under Sylvia's tree, after earlier having walked with her goats and sheep to the water. She looked at my feet, which I had released from my sandals, and asked me if my feet were alright. I told her that they were all fine, whereas she proudly replied by saying how strong I am and that I can do everything – comparing it to how "some *mzungus*[18] can't even walk around here without being hurt".

The concept of relatedness becomes useful also here, when thinking about how relatedness is created from sharing "the same harsh environment" (Jalais, 2010 see Govindrajan, 2018, p. 9) I believe that I, during some occasions, came to share what Lee and Ingold calls a 'rhythm' of walking (2007, p. 69):

> "A person walking generates a particular style of movement, pace and direction that can be understood as a 'rhythm' of walking. Sharing or creating a walking rhythm with other people can lead to a very

[18] *Mzungu*. White person, Europé.

> particular closeness and bond between the people involved […]. This physical co-presence, emphasized by common movements, is also important in ethnography as we attempt to live and move as others do."

In combination with my methods and way of getting to know *Engejusiteti* and the women through participant observations and walking, I used semi-structured and unstructured interviews. The semi-structured and unstructured interview allows the respondents to influence the interviews, and bring in topics and concerns of their own – making it more open-ended (Davies, 2002). I limited my interviews to a few main interlocutors; Mama Christine, her friends Sylvia and Marianne, and their respective family members. When discussing my methods with Beatrice, she told me how she first did not understand why I wanted to do this kind of study – what the purpose of participant observation was – but that she, later on, saw the use of how I could observe things she could not see in their everyday life. She also noted that the way I focused on only a few ladies, not doing any extensive survey, was excellent. She thought that many men, otherwise, would have interfered with what the women told me, while it now was very natural that I, as a friend to Mama Christine, spent time with her friends.

Critical reflections of friendship, decolonization and feminism

Ethnographic research often comes with an intimate relationship between researchers and researched, which is an asset that both can deepen the analysis and come with problematic aspects (Davies, 2002; Owton and Allen-Collinson, 2014). To stay with, and be part of, Mama Christine and her family's everyday life inevitably made me good friends with them. The friendship has made discussions about my research with Mama's older daughters, where we share our thoughts, give input, and share observations, a natural part of the research process. Through this, I have been able to make my research more collaborative (Lassiter, 2005). This ongoing dialogue creates a shared development of understanding (Davies, 2002), and serves as a way to validate the research (Michrina and Richards, 1996). The friendship, as well, comes with an ethical challenge to balance the way they, at the same time, are my friends and interlocutors. In our friendship, during the fieldwork, I had to make sure they remembered that I was there as a researcher, despite the bond that was formed.

During my first encounters with my interlocutors, I described my planned research project and told that they, at any time, could change their minds about participating. I also said that if

my presence, or any of my questions, appeared intrusive, they should tell me straight away. I continued to now and then bring up the ethical questions[19] of my research. I usually got the answer that it was no problem – "This is your home, you're our friend, and you're always welcome to do as you please here". Due to the responses I got, and the social atmosphere of hospitality, I regarded it to, instead, be up to me to be sensitive to my surroundings and be observant of signs of my interlocutors no longer being comfortable with having me around.

Helen Owton and Jacquelyn Allen-Collinson (2014) discuss the challenges with being sensitive to what has been told by the informant "off record" in trust as a friend, when there are no distinct boundaries of what is *on* and *off* record. Living with Mama Christine and her family was a crucial part of my fieldwork, which gave me insights I would never have been able to get if I had just been visiting for some hours. I have checked not to betray the trust invested in me through continued dialogue with Mama Christine's daughters during the writing process.

The ethical considerations described above also feed into the decolonizing framework (Smith, 2012), which I have been influenced by during my fieldwork and research. Linda Tuhiway Smith (2012, p. x) describes research as a "set of ideas, practices and privileges" strongly linked to European imperialism and colonialization, whereas research by non-indigenous people in an indigenous community has to be problematized. "Methods" of decolonization (Davies, 2002) includes understanding the importance of reflexivity, to work collaboratively, and, when approaching power structures and oppression, not only look at the "oppressed", but as well the ones in powerful positions. I am, more specifically, inspired by the decolonizing framework within feminist thought (Mohanty, 2003). By giving focus to the women's stories I wish to portray the *women* as "real, material subjects of their collective histories", and leave the tendency within western feminism to describe and reproduce an image of the *woman* as a "cultural and ideological composite other constructed through diverse representational discourses" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 19).

[19] As described by Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth (2011)

In this thesis I describe Mama Christine, Sylvia and Marianne as "strong ladies"[20], out of descriptions by their daughters and also based on how they talk about themselves, for example in terms of how a paid-working woman has to stay strong. It is, however, crucial to emphasize the "strength discourse", of how Black women, in an un-nuanced and simplistic way, are portrayed mainly and *only* as strong (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009). As written by bell hooks (2014, p. 153) "It is not that black women have not been and are not strong; it is simply that this is only a part of our story, a dimension, just as the suffering is another dimension—one that has been most unnoticed and unattended to". By telling the stories told to me by Mama Christine and her friends, I wish to give a nuanced picture, where both their strengths and the hardships they face are emphasized and acknowledged.

Reflexive research

Due to how the researcher, in ethnographic studies, becomes intimately involved with informants and their society, the discussion on objectivity and reflexivity is salient:

> "All researchers are to some degree connected to, a part of, the object of their research. And, depending on the extent and nature of these connections, questions arise as to whether the results of research are artefacts of the researcher's presence and inevitable influence on the research process. For these reasons, considerations of reflexivity are important for all forms of research" (Davies, 2002, p. 3).

By being reflexive about the fieldwork and research, one can highlight how the researcher's role and position may have affected the material (Davies, 2002). That I could enter my fieldwork, with the specific focus on women, the way I did, was dependent on the fact that I am a woman myself. That I, as a 26-year-old woman, was not married and had no children, also affected how people perceived me and the information they shared with me. A woman who does not have children is perceived as being young. Being a *mzungu* is also decisive in how people related to me and hence affected the material I gathered. At the same time, the fact that I, by being a *mzungu*, was an outsider, might have been what made it possible for me to get into discussions and topics, which for an *insider* could have been problematic to bring up. My different background, and in many ways different life, also created an opportunity for us to have a knowledge exchange.

[20] I occasionally use the term "lady" since the women themselves many times spoke about "ladies" instead of "women".

The first time I sat down with Sylvia beneath her tree, I, for maybe 40 minutes, asked her all kinds of questions while trying to get to know her and the atmosphere. When I was finished with my questions, she said, with a new energy in her eyes, "You have asked me a lot of questions, so now it is my time to ask you questions". She asked about my parents, and when I joined school, leading up to me saying that I'm still in school and do not yet work. Sylvia then asked "So she is not married?", at the same time as she laughed and said, "Oh maybe I shouldn't have asked that". I explained, despite knowing that 'boyfriend', for the older generation of Maasai, have a different connotation, that I have a boyfriend in Sweden. This was followed by that she started giggling, and giving me a high five, for sharing this so openly with her. The other times I met Sylvia, she always asked how my parents were, and if I had talked to my mother. Both by Sylvia and Mama Christine, I was also told that the next time I come to Kenya, my parents must come. During my time in *Engejusiteti* I came to see how the 'relatedness' – which so clearly decides many other parts of the women's lives – as well is significant in the contact between the women and me.

Language, in the field and the thesis

Not knowing the area or the languages of Maa or Swahili, it was necessary for me to, at almost all times, have a guide and translator. This was at many times challenging, yet it also came with benefits. Three of Mama Christine's daughters in turns worked with me, to guide and translate between English and Maa, or sometimes English and Swahili. By having their company I was also helped to familiarize myself with the area and people. Their presence made it possible for me to access places and situations I would not otherwise have been able to access, due to how people in the area already know them and they know the area. To have a guide and translator through my fieldwork, as well created a more collaborative research, where I could invite the knowledge, questions and priorities of Mama Christine's daughters. To be introduced to the area through one family created a particular point of entry, where they could influence who I met and talked to.

During my fieldwork, I came to learn some words in Maa from my interlocutors and Mama's grandchildren, which were more than happy to assist me in my Maa education. Some words were written down for me, while some were just spoken out loud. Having found a Maa

dictionary online[21] and presenting it to my interlocutors, I realized, however, that there are different ways of spelling Maa words, whereas I cannot guarantee that the spelling of Maa words, in this thesis, are completely accurate.

The first day at Mama Christine's house, I sat in her living room on one of the couches, tired from a very early morning on the matatu from Lale'enok to *Engejusiteti*. I listened to when she and a visitor talked. The language, and what they said, were incomprehensible for me, but hearing the rhythm, I could do. One person telling a story, part by part, not in a hurry to speed it up, the other person in the natural breaks saying "*o-o*" or "*e-e*" or "*kesipa*" (meaning "that is true"), until the person telling the story is finished, and the other person takes by. Marianne's husband confirmed my observation when saying that he feels that the languages of Maa and English are different. He explained, that, when talking in Maa, it is only one person at the time speaking, unlike in the English language, where anyone can interrupt the one telling a story with questions. To my ears, the rhythm in their story-telling and the Maa language is mesmerizing, and it is a sensory memory I strongly associate with my time spent in Kajiado. In this thesis, I try to mimic the way I understood that flow of telling a story; letting the women speak for themselves without interrupting them.

I have anonymized the name of my field site, and the names of my interlocutors in this thesis. The name of my field site I use, *Engejusiteti* (really '*Engeju ee siteti*'), is taken from a type of shrub that grows around one of the seasonal rivers, close to Mama Christine's house. The shrub is usually used by women to build their houses and beds. One of Mama's daughters helped me come up with the name, to make sure that it still has an authentic connotation to the area, and the Maasai language.

21 https://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~dlpayne/Maa%20Lexicon/lexicon/main.htm

3. A Strong Maasai Lady

In following chapters, the stories of Mama Christine, Sylvia and Marianne are told: how they relate to the cows, goats, sheep and flies; their dreams and thoughts about the future; and, how education and land matters are both causes for joy and worries. This first ethnographic chapter I dedicate to introduce the women, out of how I came to know them during my time in *Engejusiteti*.

The first Maasai woman taking care of her own cows

Mama Christine was the favourite daughter of the *Oloiboni*[22]. Once, I sat and talked to one of her daughters, Irene, who is still living with her two daughters at the *Oloiboni boma*[23], about an hour from Mama's house in *Engejusiteti*. I asked Irene how it was to grow up with the *Oloiboni* as a grandfather. As we spoke, Mama herself arrived, and she asked me why I had never asked her about the *Oloiboni* – as he was her father. I asked her to tell me.

> "*He was my father. The day Oloiboni died, I had just given birth to my fourth child. My father was the Oloiboni of this place, this whole place – he was known from here to Oltepesi. My father had people from around, who came to this boma to settle beside my father. They took those stones and putted them in the shuka*[24] *to give power."*

When Mama got married, her father, the *Oloiboni*, said that she and her husband should live there, by the *Oloiboni boma*, so that he could visit her anytime. Mama and her husband also got many cows and goats as a gift. That Mama stayed at her father's *boma* was unusual. Her sisters were married away, like most girls, and moved to the *bomas* of their husbands' families. Beatrice told me how the *Oloiboni*, when he was still alive, said to everyone how Mama will take part in the men's meetings, where big decisions are made. The ones who defied this would be cursed – even after the *Oloiboni's* death.

22 An *Oloiboni* is a medicine man, ritual expert and diviner, "endowed with supernatural powers to procure the well-being and fertility of people and livestock, to call forth rain and to tell the future" (Talle, 1988, p. 78). The Oloiboni uses stones to divine (Hodgson, 2005).
23 *Boma*. Homestead.
24 *Shuka*. The sheets traditionally worn wrapped around the body (Payne and Ole-Kotikash, 2005).

I asked Mama why she moved to *Engejusiteti* and the *shamba*[25] where she currently is living, which is located about an hour's walk from the *Oloiboni* boma. She explained to me:

> *"Because that is my land. In the past, the boys were given land; every brother had a piece of land. But as the favourite daughter of the Oloiboni I also got a piece of land – I was the only girl [that got land]. It was not normal that daughters had land. However, the land which I was given from my father has so many stones, so I bought land [in Engejusiteti] where there are no stones."*

After Mama's husband past away some years ago, she continued raising her nine children and taking care of all the cattle, goats and sheep by herself – without involvement of the men around her that wanted to be in charge of her land, livestock and children. One morning, outside the house, I watched Mama with a vaccination shot in her hand, as she, together with her grandsons and shepherds gave all the goats and sheep medicine. The last weeks, many young animals, the *orkuos,* had been lost to a disease, whereas Mama had bought medicine from the veterinary to avoid losing more of them. Her daughter, standing next to me, proudly announced to me that Mama was the first Maasai woman who by herself took care of the animals. Mama later also told me that she was the first woman who sold livestock at the market; until she entered the market, it had been a man's business to sell livestock.

Figure 3: Mama Christine shows how she marks her goats

[25] *Shamba*. "A piece of ground under cultivation, garden", or "Plantation" (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Used when talking about a person's owned land, not only cultivated land.

Mama's family and home

Mama has nine grown-up kids, of which five have families on their own, giving Mama a bunch of grandchildren for whom Mama goes under the name of *Shosh*[26]. During the time I was in *Engejusiteti* it was the national school holidays. This meant that several of the grandchildren stayed in Mama's four-bedroom house, and made the place highly alive with their constant songs, mischiefs, and eagerness to help me learn the Maa language, as well as beading techniques. The youngest son is still in secondary school, and lives in Mama's house, while the older daughters, with families of their own, lives spread out between Ongata Rongai and *Engejusiteti*. Mama's oldest son, Joel, has his house just next to Mama's, in the same *enkang*, where he lives with his wife and their four children. Joel, every Sunday, makes his duty as a pastor, while he on other days drives his white pro-box car between *Engejusiteti* and Kiserian with goods and people. Except for the income it gives, I also saw what value the car have in how it enables mobility, access and security for the family, which otherwise is hard to obtain. Joel's wife, Lydia, works at the hospital in the area. Marianne, who as well is a paid working lady, told me how it is still unusual for women to have a salary-work in *Engejusiteti*. The ones who are working have to stay strong, and not care for looks and baloney from people who do not understand why they, as women, decide to work – instead of, as other people see it, taking care of their own homes and families. Mama's oldest daughter, Christine, works and lives in Ongata Rongai with her two sons. She occasionally accommodates her younger sisters, who are still in high school and college, and some of her nieces. Beatrice, during the time I was in Kenya, also lived and worked in Ongata Rongai. She have a passion in girls' and women's rights, and told me how she sometimes goes to schools in *Engejusiteti* to talk with the young girls and give them a role model. She wants to show them that it is possible for a Maasai girl to not go through Female Genital Mutilation, to stay in school, get a good education and a job. Beatrice tells me how her family have influenced her to do the things she does today, and be the person she is:

> "*I come from a dynasty of strong women. I have seen my mother and sisters do things, and I haven't grown up in a male-dominated home. My mom has been on the top of the ladder here. There are other women doing the same thing, but far from all single-mothers would have the power to do what my mom have accomplished.*"

[26] *Shosh.* Kenyan slang for grandmother.

Outside Mama's house, Beatrice, with her University degree in Environmental science in dry lands management, has planted trees for land preservation and shadow. Despite that the trees are still quite young and delicate, they manage to give the shadow wished for – making everyone place the plastic chairs underneath them while cooking, washing, cleaning and chatting. I was told how neighbours, at first, were suspicious towards this escapade of planting trees, but soon, when seeing the results, followed and planted trees of their own.

With chained fences around the *enkang*, and dividing fences inside the *enkang*, human and non-human family members are separated from wildlife on the outside; humans are separated from livestock; the cows are separated from goats and sheep; and the young *olashe*[27] and *orkuo*[28] are separated from the grown up animals. Many nights, I heard the hyenas laughing in the distance, or just on the other side of the fence – always followed by the dogs' yelps, to keep the intruders away. Except for hyenas, there are few wild animals to be afraid of in the area, since elephants and lions, I was told, are long gone. Giraffes, zebras, ostriches and antelopes roam the surroundings, not being of any other threat than if the zebras break into the grazing areas called *olokeri*[29], with the pasture that is saved for weak and young livestock in times of drought.

Figure 4: Divisions inside the enkang

[27] *Olashe*. Calf.
[28] *Orkuo.* Small goat or sheep.
[29] *Olokeri.* Grazing field set apart for young calves, usually fenced by branches.

The rains had not yet come the first day I spent at Mama's house in November. Patchy short, burnt, yellow grass, mixed with a bare dusty ground, covered the areas around the house, and outside the *enkang*. Here and there, a persistent bush continued to grow, despite the lack of water. Already the next day, the rain decided to come. It was not a very heavy, or a very long rain, but enough to the following day make grass, here and there, venture its way up. During the upcoming weeks, the place changed from the previous yellow and dry tone, to a green and lush one. Nancy told me "Maasai loves rain, because it means more grass for the cows and goats to graze, and that means more milk". Mama's family have small water tanks, standing close to the houses, ready to be filled up with rain water dripping down from the roofs, as well as a big water tank, which on a monthly basis is filled up by a water truck. While the sandy and muddy roads to Mama's house is not the easiest for a heavy truck to pass, we were never out of water more than a couple of hours during my stay with Mama, even in lack of rain. Mama's family have the possibility to secure a water supply through these water tanks. Other families are more dependent on the rain. I saw neighbouring women, with yellow plastic buckets leaning on their backs, every now and then passing by on their way to the river, or the borehole further away, to get water. However, while rain mostly is a blessing, giving well needed pasture and drinking water, it can as well be a curse, when it hits with a ruthless force. It brings ruined and impassable roads, isolation, and landslides and floods even causing deaths.

Daily business and social networks

Every morning, when the rest of the house is still asleep, Mama Christine wakes up to pray, before she prepares chai and heads out to the cows and shepherd. While the shepherd taking care of the goats and sheep usually gets a calm morning, the one taking care of the cows have to get going early in the morning. Not waking up before dawn made me, many mornings, miss the cows' and their shepherd's departure from the *enkang*. I, however, saw how Mama always discussed with the shepherd who takes care of the goats and sheep. I asked her what they talk about, and she said that since the shepherds are not from here, she have to guide them, telling them where to go for pasture and water that day. Once the rest of the house came to life in the morning, I could see Mama sit on the bench outside the shepherds' tin house, just

next to the *boo oo ngishu*[30] and *emwatata*[31], following the departures of the animals. Other mornings, Mama left the house before I had even woken up. Those mornings she went with Joel in his car to the town for errands, or to see relatives or friends for the day. Business, ceremonies, women groups, delivering of milk, and just doing the duty of socializing and looking after the family members, demands her attention daily. Mama and the family, one day, were to have visitors from Nairobi. All Mama's daughters and closest friends were invited, to help with the preparations of goat meat, soup, potato stew, chapati and chai. I was told that there was a ceremony taking place that same day, which Mama due to the visitors did not attend to. People who were going to the ceremony had become really curious and started wondering, "Who are these visitors of Mama Christine, that makes her even miss a ceremony? They must be very important visitors!".

One of the women helping Mama Christine with the preparations for her visitors that day was her friend Sylvia, also called Mama Ben. I was told that Sylvia and Mama Christine are the closest of friends, who share everything that happens, and do everything together. Already my third day in *Engejusiteti* I was introduced to Sylvia. Sylvia lives together with her husband, their children and grandchildren, about a 40-minutes' walk from Mama Christine's house. The weeks that followed I got to know a warm and joyful woman, with whom I spent many hours together with beneath her tree. Since her children were home from school, she was released from the work of walking with the goats and sheep, and spent a lot of time beneath that tree, working on her beadings which she later sold. I, for as long as my unused legs and back could take it, sat beside her on her mat, talking, and practicing on my own beading. Most days we were accompanied by Sylvia's two young granddaughters, and her daughters who came with chai for us.

Two other friends to Mama Christine's family, that I came to know, is Marianne and her husband Andrew, both speaking English. They quite recently moved to *Engejusiteti* from Ngong, close to Nairobi, with their two children. Growing up, Marianne was the only of her siblings who did not go to school, since her father and mother needed one daughter to help at home. Despite this, once Marianne got married to Andrew, she learnt English by herself through watching cartoons on the TV. Today she is traveling to England and the US, where she teaches Maasai beading techniques as a part of a cultural exchange program. Andrew,

[30] *Boo oo ngishu*. Shed for cows.
[31] *Emwatata*. Shed for goats and sheep.

during these trips, hold talks about the Maasai culture, and they sometimes as well receive groups with tourists to their home in *Engejusiteti*. Marianne, like Sylvia, works with beadings. She, together with a woman in Nairobi, designs and do beadings on bags, which are exported and sold abroad. Marianne is a highly ambitious woman, with a lot of ideas and energy. Just in the end of my stay in *Engejusiteti* she opened a shop, where she sell beads of all different colours.

I was able to sometimes join Mama Christine for her daily visits and errands. Yet, many times these were not accessible to me, due to my position as an outsider, researcher and *mzungu*. If people saw Mama accompanied by a *mzungu* at the market, she might for example have to pay a higher price for the goods, than she would otherwise. Mama's days are usually long, and many times she does not come home until after dark, after everyone else have eaten. Regardless, the next morning she wakes up, again early, when the rest of us are still asleep, ready to take on the errands of the day.

God's presence

Mama Christine lifts her hands towards the sky, where she sits on the couch in the living room, in her red and blue *shuka*-dress. The word I here and there snap up when she talks is *Engai* – God. After spending some weeks with Mama Christine I, despite my lack of knowledge in Maa, can guess what she is probably saying. Mama is as good as professional in giving extensive speeches of gratitude and blessings; speaking about how good *Engai* is for bringing us together, how she bless *Engai* for all of us, and how she prays for me, the same way she prays for her own daughters. I, coming from a home in Sweden, where speeches of gratitude does not reach the same levels, have to push myself for these circumstances, finding different ways of saying how thankful I am and that I, as well, will pray for them – trying to at least make it a couple of minutes long.

God's presence is strong in Mama's house, as it is in general in *Engejusiteti* and Kenya. During the evenings, one of the children's favourite games is to take up the Bible and play church and pastor. It is part game, and part real; mixing the fun of playing that one of them have the authority of a pastor, who preaches God's word, with the seriousness when they close their eyes, keep their hands towards their faces, and mumble their prayers, while

rocking their bodies towards the floor. This is mixed with loud, enthusiastic songs in Maa – similar to the ones they sing in church on Sundays.

God's presence is strong throughout the weeks, but reaches its crescendo on Sundays. With several churches in the area, with different characters and pastors, there is a fit for almost everyone. Mama Christine, Sylvia and Marianne all three go to different churches, according to their preferences. Both in *Engejusiteti* and during my stay in Mashuru in 2016, I could see how predominantly women are the ones attending church services – a phenomenon described by Hodgson in her "The church of women" (2005). However, most people, both women and men, in the area are highly involved with their churches, and celebrates both Christmas, New Year and most other festivities with the church. While this is appreciated by many, I got described for me how socialization through the church limit other ways of socializing and celebrating together. This also makes a family's religion, and ways of practicing it, a topic for the public.

When introducing Mama Christine, her family and friends, the presence of cows, goats and sheep quickly becomes visible. The way Mama Christine was the first woman selling cows at the market, and taking care of her own animals, is a big part of who she is. Also, several of the daily businesses of the women are shaped by the ways of the animals. In the next chapter I dig deeper into this topic, when discussing human-animal relationships.

4. Humanimal Relationships

The centrality of the cow in pastoral Maasai culture, economy and livelihoods, is well known and discussed in literature about the Maasai. Spending time with Mama Christine, Sylvia, and Marianne, I came to see how cows, goats, and sheep affect the lives of the women – in a way that differs from the common picture of these animals as commodities. In this chapter I wish to highlight, what I perceived as, the agency of cows, goats and sheep, but also flies, in the women's lives. I start by looking at the different characters of cows, goats and sheep, and how these shape the women's daily work. After that, in two subchapters, I move on to the personalities of individual animals, and I show how social relations between humans and animals are intertwined with the social interactions between humans. Lastly, I look into how these intertwined and shared interspecies worlds of human and human, human and animal, and animal and animal, can be seen through milk, as it lives on and gets social meaning in the human world.

Figure 5: Curious goat

Calm cows and stubborn goats

I ask, "Where does the livestock graze?", to which I am answered by an interrogative face wondering what I mean. It could as well just be the word "livestock" that Nancy does not

know, yet, the event makes me think. By using the word "livestock" I at once bunch all animals together, as if they are all the same. The truth is the opposite; cows, goats and sheep all have their own personalities, are treated as individuals, and affect the behaviours of humans around them in different ways. Not only are cows, goats and sheep separated, the individuals are as well seen, and treated, according to their characters.

Each morning and afternoon, the shepherds and children are occupied with the procedure of milking, taking out, and bringing in the goats and sheep for their pasture – everything overseen by Mama Christine. The smallest goats and sheep, the *orkuos*, have slept in their separate enclosed part of the *emwatata* during the night, to avoid being stepped on, and to ensure there is enough milk left in the morning. One shepherd and some of the children are in charge of milking the goats and sheep belonging to Mama, while the others are in charge of milking the ones belonging to Joel and Lydia. The milking is performed under loud protests from the *orkuos*, that are still separated from the rest, longing to go to their mothers. The mothers, on their hand, as well yell for their young ones. Once the milking is done, the young *orkuos* are released to join the rest of the herd. The screaming continues until the kid finds its mother, and a period of calmness is settled. I could see how a goat mother and her kid cried to each other, being the last ones who had not yet found each other. Despite them being separated by just about a meter, the kid, being the one who should find its mother while the mother stands still waiting, was unable to locate the mother. The shepherd works quickly to speed up the process, and soon comes to rescue, by lifting the kid to its mother and restoring the peace in the herd. After a while, the *orkuos* and the grown up goats and sheep are to be separated again for them to, during the day, graze in different areas.

During the dry months of the year, when there is more dust than grass on the dehydrated ground, cows, goats and sheep have to walk far with their shepherds to find pasture and water for the day. These times demands hard work. There is, however, a difference between the cows, goats and sheep during these times, which was explained to me by Mercy as;

> *"The goats are good, they can survive almost everything. They are stubborn and energetic, and climb and jump everything. And they are not picky. The cows only want grass, but goats, they can eat trees, or bushes when there is no grass. They are endurable."*

Figure 6: A moment of friction in the aulo

As the rain arrives and the ground comes alive, the grass becomes green and the water ponds fill up. The tough search for pasture can be put on a break, and the characters of the cows, goats and sheep are put in a new context. With plenty of grass everywhere, the calm cows now walk by themselves. I was told that, while the cows find their own pasture, stay together and find their way home in the evening, the goats' characters of being stubborn and energetic makes it necessary to continue to keep an eye on them. Their energy make the small goats trying to get inside the house, eat on the nicely planted trees, or climb the dog shed that Mama's grandchildren have built. "The goats are disturbing", as they always say.

Joining Sylvia one day, when she was looking after the goats and sheep, she rather phrased it as she "follows" them. Once we had steered the animals in the right direction towards the small river where they were to drink, they knew what it was about, and we became the ones following *them*, instead of them being shepherded by us. During that last week in *Engejusiteti* schools had opened again, meaning that the children could no longer help take care of the cows, goats and sheep at home. While Sylvia's family have a shepherd for their cows, Sylvia was the one who now had to follow the goats and sheep, until her husband would go to Shompole and find a new shepherd to help them. Sylvia informed me of that I, from the week the schools opened, would no longer find her beneath the tree working on the beadings, and that I, from then on, instead should follow her with the goats and sheep. I was told that women can walk with the goats and sheep, but never with the cows. However, during my

stays in Kajiado, both this time in *Engejusiteti* and back in 2016, I saw all the daily tasks being performed by the Maasai women and I asked what the men were doing during the day. I sometimes, again, got the answer that the men take care of the cows. When I ask if it is not correct that the cows most of the times walk by themselves, the women laugh saying, "Women do everything".

The different characters of the cows, goats and sheep influence not only how 'humans' in general behave around them, but also affects the men and women in different ways. That "women come to know and relate to some animals differently from men" through the "gendered nature of labour" (Govindrajan, 2018, p. 29) becomes visible. In Chapter 6, on women and land matters, I deepen this discussion when looking at how land is a gendered sphere through the gendered labour, and women and men's different relations to the animals, that comes with it.

Seeing the many ways in which the cows, goats and sheep affect the lives of the women in *Engejusiteti*, one crucial aspect for me, when observing my surroundings, was to actually be able to tell the difference between goats and sheep – which I at first was incapable of. During my last day at Mama Christine's house, I and Mercy helped the shepherd to watch the goats and sheep in the *aulo*[32], while the shepherd ate his lunch. Mercy complained how stubborn the goats were this day – they did not want to stay in the *aulo.* I observed how both goats and sheep formed a pattern, the goats standing in the middle of the group and the sheep surrounding them. I thought, how strange that I, just a couple of weeks ago, could not see what was now so obvious to me; the goats and sheep are not only *looking* differently, they are as well *acting* differently.

The daily chores of shepherding and milking, as well as how seasonal changes are dealt with, are all shaped by the different characters of the cows, goats and sheep. Furthermore, the individual animals, with different personalities and ties to the human world, do also play a pivotal role for the women's daily lives, which I look into next.

[32] *Aulo.* Area around the *enkang*.

Remembered me by my goat

- *Yesterday I tried to milk a goat, but she [the goat] just looked back at me – I think she knew I wasn't the one usually doing the milking – and she started screaming at me, I told Sylvia, as we sat beneath the tree outside her house.*
- *The goats know their owner. Some goats will refuse you to milk them, since you're not their owner, or you're a stranger. And some goats will run away. I have my cow who knows me. Anytime I see her, she will come to where I am. I milk her, and then she will go away. No one else can milk that cow.*

Sylvia, in a soothing voice, hums "Ooh Nontoje Nontoje ooh Nontoje", and explains:

- *That call is very unique to one person. If you don't call me that* [*talking from the cow's perspective*], *I won't come to you, and I will know you're a stranger and not allow you to milk me. So that is how sometimes these cows behave. Here we give cows names because then they will know you.*
- *What's the name of your cow?*
- *A cow that was brought for dowry will be called Nontoje. Nontoje is girls. That cow knows she was given for dowry for girls. So I will call it "Ooh Nontoje ooh Nontoje". That cow over time will master that voice, so when you go there and you just want to milk it, it will not allow you until you say "Ooh Nontoje ooh Nontoje".*

Sylvia gives other examples, if the cow is not *Nontoje*, it can be *Nonkera*. *Nonkera* would be the cow given to you as a symbol of appreciation when you give your child away, in a sort of adoption. A cow can also be *Naleko*; the one you remain with if the drought comes and take all the other cows. Or *Emongo*, that would be the name of the first cow you ever got. I ask Sylvia if the goats ever get names, and she describes how the goats get their names:

> *"Maybe you're given a goat as a gift from Mama Christine. Then you'll say, 'This is Mama Christine's goat'. But it will not belong to her – she gave it to you. Sometimes during celebrations one will promise you a goat, and you will say, 'Yes, that small goat comes from Mama Christine's home'. When it has grown up and grown big, we'll still call it 'Mama Christine's goat'."*

The names of the cows and goats tell stories of the human world; how they came to represent their human owner, the human social ties, or what their journey has looked like. However, it can also go the other way around, when, how people refer to each other, is decided out of

their relationship to the animals. Sylvia told me that if you get a grown up goat from someone, you then call that person *Pakine*, and that person will call you *Pakine*. If you were given a small, young goat, you call that person *Pakuo*. She says:

> *"When you give someone a goat, that goat will help you to be remembered. That person will not call you by your name, they will call you after the goat. You will call someone after what they give you. So it becomes really a good thing. The name will then even be changed in the mobile phone, because then that will be the new name of that person."*

When thinking in terms of the names of the women, alluding how they may call each other by the goat which was given, or out of their relation to their children, such as *Mama Christine* or *Mama Ben*, the centrality of *relatedness* becomes visible.

When Sylvia talks about the cow for whom she hums, and the gift of a goat that helps you to be remembered, the particular animals appears and show the relatedness between them. It shows on a relationship, not between 'humans and the cows', or 'humans and the goats' as a general thing, but as a relationship between two individuals. Radhika Govindrajan (2018, p. 21) highlights the need to see the *particular* individuals involved in an interaction, and to avoid the pitfalls of speaking "so generally [of the 'non-human', 'other-than-human' or 'animal'] that we lose sight of smallness and singularity". Govindrajan writes "animals who "talk" do not do so in the name of a "we" where the "we" represents an entire species "but in the name of a "we" constituted by the assemblage" of the animal(s) and the person(s) between whom conversation takes place" (Despret, 2008 see Govindrajan, 2018, p. 20).

By acknowledging the characters of the different species and the singular animals, new sides of the Maasai as a "cattle people" emerges, and, to that, the gendered ways in which these interspecies relations impact the lives of the women. While the positions of the cows, goats and sheep are prominent in *Engejusiteti* and the women's lives, I will now turn to a constantly present, yet neglected, species, which makes shared more-than-human worlds visible.

Agency of the flies and shared worlds

At least two times a day, one of Mama Christine's daughters and grandchildren sweep the

floor. As I got into the daily routines of Mama's house, this task was also assigned to me. I was asked if I like sweeping, if that was my favourite thing to do in the house. Mercy's favourite thing is to cook, and Nancy's is to do laundry. And indeed, sweeping probably was my favourite household chore. Continued everyday cleaning is necessary as the floor within short is covered by hundreds of flies, dead and alive. Even if Mama rarely takes part in the in-household chores, she takes keen interest in the fly-elimination project; sometimes sprinkling white powder on the floors and other surfaces, which kills the flies. When Mercy had managed to clean the house, making it perfectly free from flies and dirt, I complemented her skills in cleaning and she was proud of that. Although, we both knew that the whole procedure would have to be done again the next day – it is a never ending fight against the flies.

A more subtle and peaceful fight with the flies takes place during the rest of the day. With slow, sweeping motions with hands over the food, the cup, or the face whenever a fly finds its way to the mouth or eyes, they push the flies away from where they are not supposed to be. "Are the flies bothering you?", or "Are you scared of the flies?", I was sometimes asked when I tried to wave of the flies of my own plate, or cup of chai. While I for myself thought that I was doing the waving motions in the same way as I saw Mama Christine and the other do it, I must have done it in some other way.

While the flies are unwanted, they are a necessary evil. Before the Christmas holidays, during which I was to leave *Engejusiteti* for Nairobi, I was talking to Beatrice. She said that I will probably miss the flies when I go up to Nairobi. I agreed, and shared my observations of how there even at Lale'enok are no flies. Beatrice told me:

> *"You see, for Maasai, when you go to a homestead and there are no flies, it will be like, 'No, this is a selfish boma. There is no milk, no milk spillage in the sitting room'. If you go to a home and you find flies, that mean that there is food, we have food around."*

Beatrice's way of describing the simultaneously unwanted and desired flies, show the entanglements of the species' worlds. Worlds are shared and relatedness is created, not only between humans and non-humans, but as well in the symbiosis between different non-human beings. Flies, the same as humans, are being drawn to the places where there are cows, goats and milk. By inviting the agency of the flies into the analysis, the, previously in this chapter

described, relationships between two species – humans and cows, or humans and goats – now turn into an assemblage of multispecies relations. Several beings' worlds convene with each other, and, in these meetings, new meanings are created, in which each being's attributes and character is a part.

Figure 7: Worlds meet by the motorbike

By inviting the agency of the flies, the power dynamics of the relations as well change. The conceptualized room for action has to be shared with yet another species, who affects and influence the behaviours of the others. This notion challenges the conception of Maasai cows and goats as simply a commodity, over which humans have an autonomic position. Acknowledging the co-presence, and inviting the agency of different species, does however not imply that the relationships are non-hierarchical or simply positive. As Govindrajan writes, "knots of connection [… are] not always nurturing or heart-warming", instead, they can be "shaped by and enables "differentiation, hierarchy, exclusion, and abuse"" (Carsten, 2013 see Govindrajan, 2018, p. 10). For Mama Christine, while buying medicine for the goats and helping heifers giving birth, the slaughtering is, as well, a natural part in the relationship. These different parts of the relation between the families and the goats and cows are however not something that is filled with either a negative or positive value, it just is.

The co-presence of other species surrounding the women in *Engejusiteti* do not only affect the women's direct relationship with the cows, goats, sheep and flies, but as well penetrates the socialization between humans. A repeated joke when I was in *Engejusiteti* was that I should

marry a Maasai. Sylvia, one day, saw me walking around the goats' area at Mama Christine's house and told me:

> *"When you get married within Maasai land, that will be so good, because then you already know how things are. You know how to go with the goats, and how to look after them. Nowadays you will know which goat is missing."*

In my many conversations, and the daily chit-chat with the women and their families, I noticed how things often are spoken about, and described, in relation to the animals: a fence is defined out of how it is impassable for the goats; marrying into the Maasai is about knowing the goats and knowing if a goat is missing; and the women saw that I differed due to how I did not whisk away the flies in the same way as they did it. Other species are central in the humans' interactions with each other, and a shared understanding is reached through their presence.

A common interest for all species, which further ties together the women's lives with that of the cows, goats, sheep and flies, is the matter of *milk* – which will be discussed in the next subchapter.

Milk Detached

The matter of milk is relevant out of two aspects. First, the milk itself is a shared interest for all species and a matter which ties their worlds together. From the perspective of humans, the value of flies mainly lies in how it is a symbol of the presence of milk in the house. Milk is, as well, the reason Sylvia finds it important to know her cow, and soothingly hums "Oh Nontoja". And, rain is loved by the Maasai due to how it gives plenty of grass for cows and goats, which then gives plenty of milk. Secondly, the milk as a thing, while not *being* the cow or the goat, neither being a matter belonging totally to the human world, in these interspecies meetings gets a meaning of its own.

Many of Mama Christine's and her friends' everyday doings and events, in one way or the other, circulates around or includes the presence of milk. Either as milk as such, or in the shape of *chai*. Staying in the house of Mama Christine, I soon understood how the daily

schedule must be adapted out of the making and drinking of chai. Chai is done by pouring the fresh goat milk into a big pan, mixing it with tealeaves, and heating it up over a gas stove or a fire outdoors. At the precise moment, not a second earlier or later, when the boiling and bubbling reach the edge of the pan, you quickly remove it from the heat. When the chai is done, it is poured through a small tea strainer into the cups and served. If a guest comes by, it is necessary for the host to prepare and offer some chai – even if it is just the *boda boda*-driver passing by. The shortest visit to someone's home, is, therefore, never shorter than the time it takes to prepare chai, and thereafter drink it together while chatting. Once, when me and Mercy were in a hurry for an appointment, it was with surprise to me, and I think as well to Mercy, she said that we are in such a hurry so we will "not even take chai before we leave the house".

While I found their chai with the thick goat milk tasty, I could not handle it in the same amount (or heat) as Mama Christine and the others. When they drink chai several times a day, plus having the milk to *ugali*[33] and drinking it just plane in a cup, I had to pass at times, or accepting half a cup, not to be rude. I was asked if I like chai with tealeaves, making me wonder what else the tea (which was my translation of *chai*) would consist of. I was presented with the options of otherwise having my chai with chocolate or coffee powder, which one of the daughters living in Ongata Rongai preferred. I realized that *chai* was not about the tealeaves, as I had thought, but, above all, about the goat milk. In Mama Christine's house the goat milk is considered the best milk, and is the milk most commonly used both in the daily chai, drunk just as milk, or eaten together with *ugali*.

Every day, Mama Christine transports milk from her goats and sheep to family and friends, both close by and further away, who do not have their own cows and goats to milk. When some friends of Mama Christine were visiting, they told me that Mama is so good, because she gives them milk – even too much milk. Some days she goes with Joel to Kiserian, where the housekeeper of Christine, who lives in Ongata Rongai, meet Mama to receive the milk delivered in plastic bottles. Other days, Mama sends the milk with Joel, or with other people (like me) going in a *Probox*-car up to Kiserian and Ongata Rongai. As a part of Mama's daily milk delivery, there is, as well, the task of stopping by the *Oloibon's boma* and her daughter Irene, to pick up a bottle of milk which the family's goats have produced there. I asked Mama

[33] *Ugali*. Porridge made of maize flour.

about this daily milk delivery, and got the answer that “They should not be without milk!”. For her daughter living in Ongata Rongai, they of course have supermarkets close by where they can buy milk on a bottle. However, Mama did not think that kind of milk is sufficient – her daughters and grandsons should have *real* milk.

The milk, and its transformed shape of chai, as can be seen, is a cornerstone in the social lives of Mama Christine and her friends. The matter of milk as such gets a meaning of its own and becomes a commodity, detached from the cows and goats. However, when understanding the importance of milk as a matter, the humans’ relatedness to the surrounding cows, goats, sheep and flies becomes comprehensible in a new way. The milk of the cows, goats and sheep is central; to social relations, status, and the Maasai identity, as well as why the flies are around, and how the cows’ and goats’ relations to humans looks like. In a direct way, it shows on the shared worlds, and is in itself a reason why the cow, goat, sheep and even the fly is valued by humans. It is a matter that affects all of these beings’ behaviours and relations towards each other.

While the coexistence of humans, cows and goats is a natural and important part of the lives in *Engejusiteti*, it is as well shaped by worries for the future. Present (and believed future) changes in livelihoods, priorities and interests of the young Maasai population, also comes with a concern of what will happen to the cows, the land and the Maasai. In the following chapter, these topics along with the women’s stories and thoughts around education, work and the future is discussed.

5. Education, Work and the Future

Mama Christine, Sylvia, and Marianne, with their big dreams and high ambitions both for themselves and their children and grandchildren, are progressive women who challenge the ways things are "supposed" to be. For themselves, it comes down to the work they do, mainly with beadings and their visions of what they will do in the future – which is the focus in the first part of this chapter. Thereafter, in the rest of the chapter, attention is on the women's children, by looking at education – both as an investment and as a cause for worries.

Beading and dreaming

Once I decided to focus my research specifically on Maasai women, I knew that beading, in one way or another, would become a natural part of my days in *Engejusiteti* and the thesis. While the beading can be simple, and something which Sylvia's four year old granddaughter can accomplish, it can, as well, take the shape of advanced designs; big necklaces, bracelets, belts, and decorating for clothes. When I came to *Engejusiteti* I soon, with help from the

Figure 8: Beading

women and their children, started my own beading. Small plastic beads, in sharp and bright colours of white, orange, green, blue, red, and yellow, are put on a thin manilla-thread, one by one. The work requires dexterity and embodied knowledge. While I, at first, could not do the beading simultaneously as talking and listening to the women, my hands soon got used to their new task, and I managed to speak, listen and bead at the same time. Sharing my experience, of the embodied way of learning the beading, to Marianne, she told me a story of an old Maasai woman who had become blind – but still was able to do the beading since her hands knew what to do.

While the beading for me was a fun and creative skill to learn, its significance for the women extended way beyond that:

> "*If you see a woman having fixed hair like this [Marianne points at her hair which is braided at the hairdresser], then you know that woman is working and do beadings. If you're not working, your children will not go to school, because the husbands don't care. The men wake up early in the morning, go to town, eat their green thing*[34]*, and that's it. Then you have to do something! Even if your husband is buying food, you don't have a good cup, you don't have good shoes or any good clothes. So you have to do something, to look smart like other women, and for your children to look smart. All women are now doing something. The problem when you work is, however, that your husband starts to relax because he thinks the woman has money and can pay."*

Marianne is a hard-working woman, who except for doing the beading which "all women" are doing, also have contacts abroad to whom she sells beadwork, and she owns a small shop in town where she sells beads. To get an income of her own is for her crucial – it gives her the ability to buy things of her own, care for her and her children's looks, and buy more "advanced food" such as meat when going out on restaurants. When I talked to Sylvia about the work women do, she told me that she also does beadwork, but earlier, she used to get firewood and sell, and cut charcoal. Similar to what Marianne said, Sylvia does it to educate her children, buy food, and help people. While Maasai men would never do beadings, for a woman to not do beadings would be very strange, because "beading is the work of the women, that's what they do".

[34] Referring to the plant khat, classified as a drug, which is chewed for intoxication.

The work of the beading is one way through which the women's ambitions become visible. Another is when Mama Christine, Sylvia, and Marianne spoke to me about their dreams, and their eagerness never to stop learning and exploring. While Marianne has been abroad several times, both Mama Christine and Sylvia talked about how they would one day do the same. Sylvia described how she loves to go to different places, and how she, when she learns new things, wants to go to villages and educate other women. When Mama Christine told me how she wishes to learn new languages and travel, she also added that she wants this, even though she once, when meeting her daughter at the airport together with the whole family, did not know how to go on the escalator and almost fell.

The women's willpower and dedication are reflected in their children and all the families' commitments to education. However, as is described in the next two parts of this chapter, education comes with both benefits and concerns.

Education as an investment

Marianne and I sat in her big, cool living room, each working with our beadings. We came into the topic of marriage, whereas she brought up the problematic practices of female circumcision and early forced marriage within Maasai culture. Afterward, she says, "In all cultures there are some good and some bad things. The ones who will make the bad things in our culture go away are the children who go to school", and continues with an example of how girls get empowered through education:

> *"When you're educated, you can choose a boy for yourself. You can come and tell your parents, 'Now I have a boy whom I want to marry'. But if you don't go to school, you don't know anything about life outside. In Maasai places, people only choose husbands for the girls who don't go to school.*
>
> *When a boy and a girl get married, the relationship changes. It's a serious thing, getting married, but the girl [with education] wants to have it the same way as when they were dating, calling each other sweat heart and so. Most men have expectations of a woman once she becomes his wife. But those girls who go to school don't want that, they think, 'The way we were as girlfriend and boyfriend, we will stay like that'. But life is not like that. You can look*

> *at women here; girls and women who finish Form 4 with good grades or go to University are not married. These girls don't want anyone to have authority over them. Then, the boy leaves her and look for a girl who did not go to school – because he knows she will listen to him. This is a big problem for now."*

From some women, I heard that it is becoming more equal for Maasai women and that even men are positive to this change. I asked Marianne about it, whereas she, being a straightforward person, without hesitation, said, "No, Maasai men have a lot of authority. They want you to know that 'I am the one, I am the king'. They are like male lions. So you see, there is no chance they would want to have it equal".

Mama Christine, Sylvia, and Marianne all take pride in their children's and grandchildren's education. Several of Mama Christine's children, for example, have higher education, and all of her grandchildren go to good schools. The same for Sylvia and Marianne. Especially the education of girls is valued, since it, like Marianne describes, gives them opportunities and an empowerment which otherwise is hard to reach. The destiny presented for many Maasai girls who do not finish school is early marriage with men they do not choose for themselves. Also, in remote areas where many girls drop out of school, they do not know of their rights to land. "It is through education that women get empowered and knowledgeable about their rights", said Beatrice.

Usually, during my time in *Engejusiteti*, whenever the topic of education for girls came up, it was followed by a discussion on the marriage of girls – and vice versa. During a conversation with Sylvia about marriage, I told her that in Sweden, there are no bride prices. She became shocked and sceptically asked, "So your parents would just give you away for free? I have taken my daughter to school, and educated her, how could I give her away for free?". Another day there were visitors at Mama's house. They talked about Beatrice's university education, and soon joked about how much money the boy wanting to marry her will have to give in bride price due to her high level of education. These things were said with humour, but it was a joke that, Beatrice later told me, she did not appreciate very much. The topic of marriage and bride prices have a highly serious aspect to it, which Beatrice herself has seen the backside of close up. Due to the desire for money or cattle, that a bride price consists of, girls can be given away as wives to practically unknown men and place the girls in dangerous, harmful situations. However, as Marianne described, for young women with higher education

it is different – they can choose for themselves and will not accept getting married to a man who acts like a "lion".

While Mama Christine, Sylvia, Marianne, and their families value education and the bright futures it offers the girls, education as well brings worrying developments for many people who wonder what will happen to the Maasai in the future.

Worries of education

> *"Our grandparents, they were like 'If you don't have cows, then you are not a real Maasai'. You couldn't say that this is a home of a Maasai if you didn't see many cattle. Back then, people were not going to school and were not looking for different jobs – they were just taking care of the cattle. People thought that the cattle is everything. For the older generation, the cattle means wealth. Now, people go to school, and they come with different mindsets, like 'I need to be employed and get a different job, not only look after the cattle'. If you go to school, University, and get employed, you don't have time to look after the cattle. You can find that someone, if they have 50 cows, will sell 20 and instead buy a plot somewhere and build a good home. The old generation thought, 'I have to have a big number of cattle'. But the people who are taken to school now, the youth, they see it differently. They don't prefer having a large number of cattle; they prefer having a permanent home, to have something they have built for the future. When people go to school, everything changes slowly."*

The thoughts above were expressed by Florence, a young woman who lives and works in Olkiramatian, where SORALO is active, and I had my "home base" between my stays in *Engejusiteti.* The changes she describes, of education and new ways of living for young Maasai, were reoccurring issues that came up in conversations with most people I met and talked to. No matter what the topic was – cows and goats, land, fencing, housing situations, or livelihoods – thoughts and uncertainties about the future, linked to the issues Florence talks about, nestled there ways into the conversations.

There is a strong generational aspect to the issue, where the older generation of Maasai have certain preconceptions of what young Maasai value and how they will act in the future. I asked Beatrice how she, as a young Maasai woman with an education, think about it and

whether the older generation is correct or not in their assumptions that the youth will not want to have cows:

> *"For me, I even have goats. Sometimes, when I have enough money, I send Mom some money to buy me goats. So that I one day can come and build my own house and take my goats there. I do it because I want to feel some identity, some sense of belonging. If a friend asks me if I'm a Maasai and if they can come and visit my home, I can say yes and tell my Mom, 'Let's take one of my goats and slaughter it'.*
>
> *But there is another thing as well: women usually do not do that [have goats]. Even now, it's only a few women that have goats, because they know they will leave their home eventually to get married. But this is a modern society. I don't even know if I'll get married. So I feel like it's a good thing – if a man can own cows and goats, I can also own it! So that is a new thing. Also, sometimes when I'm broke in the city, I can tell my Mom 'Tomorrow you can bring my goat and sell it in Kiserian'. I feel good to be able to have a small source of income."*

The way Beatrice describes her thoughts around having goats and cows – despite having an education, employment, and living in the city – I heard from several young people. While the youth, as Florence said, will probably not have as many cows and goats as Maasai in the past had, it seems so still be an essential part of their identity as Maasai. However, another issue that people described to me is the lack of shepherds that comes with education. For now, Mama Christine and Sylvia both have shepherds from Shompole and Tanzania, due to how "people in *Engejusiteti* now go to school and get education. In Shompole they don't get education yet, so we can get our shepherds from there". When the boys get an education, they do not want to watch after someone else's (or their own) cows and goats, and their parents will not let them be shepherds since they have invested in the boy's education. Florence thought that this would make people have only "a small number of cattle that you know you can handle".

Linked to people's thoughts around what will happen to cows and goats in the future, also comes worries about how education will affect their lands, and whether all youth will subdivide their lands. Some, like Beatrice, believe that it's a perception with no real truth in it:

> *"For me, it doesn't make any difference that I got an education. To think that people will leave their way of living, their cows and everything, I think that's a notion. If a culture is well-rooted in the youth – like for me, I know my language, I know what we believe in, I know our system – then why would I leave my whole life, just because I'm 'elite' and have gone to school and been empowered? Why would I come back and do bad things? I know subdivision is not a good thing."*

However, others are more blunt about it, meaning that the young generation has to get rid of the cows since it demands hard work, which can be obliterated by just one dry period. Also, the perception is that the youth will want to build their own houses, to have something for the future. This, I was told, inevitable, will lead to the subdivision of all land. These questions of land are further discussed in the next chapter of women and land matters, where the topics of human-animal relationship, gender, and education, work, and thoughts of the future come together.

6. Women and Matters of Land

Following the stories of Mama Christine, her daughters, and friends, a perennial theme – regardless of whether we talk about the goats, or the children's education and their future – is that of *land*. In this chapter, I give attention to the women's stories on the different aspects of matters of land. The first part of the chapter focus on the embodied *use* of, and access to, the land, and how this is shaped by gender aspects. Then, I move on to the juridical aspects of land as a resource on the paper in the context of the family, described through the women's stories and thoughts about control and rights in land. Lastly, the aspect of land as a place to physically move in, and land as a property, are combined when looking at the issue of subdivision and fencing at a communal level. When discussing matters of land, other values and relations in the women's lives become visible, showing how land, along with the themes of relationships between human and non-human, and thoughts on education and the future, are all interwoven.

Land as a gendered sphere

One day, sitting with Mama Christine at the *Oloiboni boma* we talked about how a "good" Maasai woman is supposed to be, out of beauty standards and expectations on behaviour. I shared with Mama how I think all Maasai women physically look so strong, at which she told me that it is because the women are the ones taking care of the goats:

> *"The women take care of the goats and sheep, while the men like to be in town, chatting, talking about land. The men can be away to find a job to get some money for food."*

Except for taking care of the goats and sheep, I heard of, and saw, several other household chores many Maasai women have on their daily schedule: fetching water and firewood; making sure the household has enough food and preparing it; cleaning and washing; taking care of the children; and, if having the possibility, get an extra income to the family from making and selling beads.

The gendered division of labour, discussed in Chapter 4, with separate tasks of men and women, affects how they relate differently to the animals, as well as it impacts how men and

women use and relate to land. During and after the rain period, when there is plenty of grass, the task of looking after the cows leaves plenty of spare time for other activities – since the cows walk by themselves, and find their way back to the *enkang* in the evening. To follow the stubborn and energetic goats, on the other hand, involves a greater effort. Sylvia described how she, when looking after the goats, can sit beneath a tree and work on her beadings while simultaneously keeping an eye on the goats. It is, however, necessary that she stays out in the lands with the animals, for them not to walk away in the wrong direction, and to avoid the goats from being mixed with other herds. Other chores of the women, such as fetching water and firewood, in households where this is needed, also make the women be out *in* the land and use the rangelands.

Figure 9: Following the goats and sheep

Marianne, in a similar way to Mama Christine, described how men spend most of their time in town, to eat and drink. Women, as well, spend time in towns, such as Mama Christine who several times a week goes to *Engejusiteti* town or Kiserian, for business and to meet up with friends. However, the town contains many spaces which are restricted to men only. Marianne's story of how she and her husband once went to a hotel (which could be translated as a restaurant) in a town called Bisil, illustrates the division:

> "*The husband comes in through this door* [*Marianne pretends that we are sitting in the hotel and points at the main entrance*] *and sits down. The wife, however, comes in from the other way* [*points in another direction towards a pretended back door of the hotel*]. *It's one hotel,*

> *but it has two rooms for people to sit and dine in. This first room is for Maasai men, and when you come inside, the cashier knows that the man has the money, so he gets a lot of meat and food. The wife goes to that other room, and the cashier knows she is going to have two mandazi and one cup of tea – nothing else. I go together with my husband and sit down in the first room. I'm the only woman. Everybody is looking. And the problem was that my blouse was like this [showing how the sleeves of her blouse was pulled up to the elbow], because now they see these [pointing at her Maasai beadings], and then they know 'She is a Maasai'. You can come there with a woman from another tribe, Kikuyu for example, but they see me and think, 'Oh, this woman is a Maasai! Why? What is she doing here?'. They were all staring. I was embarrassed… A big hotel and everyone was looking at me. And they were all men. I started looking and wonder, my husband said 'You see that door?', and I saw all the other women in that room. I felt that I could go and tell all those women 'Come in here, sit here and have some meat!'. I never wanted to go there again."*

In addition to towns, roads are also spaces where men have dominance. In *Engejusiteti* I did not see any women drive cars or other vehicles, and the men were in charge of all transport; the boda-bodas, cars, and matatus. Sylvia told me how one of her daughters-in-law currently tries to learn how to drive a car, and Sylvia herself knows how to ride a bicycle. She said that her next step is to learn how to ride a motorbike. While Sylvia and other women soon might take on the motor-vehicles, pushing back the men from their exclusive rights to the roads, women are still restricted to either walking by foot, or getting transported by men. Men's and women's varied possibilities of transport, along with their respectively daily work tasks, make them use the land in different ways, and to move in it differently. To walk in an environment creates a certain, embodied way of getting to know the area (Lee and Ingold, 2007). Walking also means shaping the surroundings through footsteps, leaving their prints on the ground, and trees and branches being forced to bow for the body coming through. A woman's task of following the goats and sheep also implies being in charge of deciding where the herd will walk, graze, and take water.

Scholars have suggested that rangelands, as a space, belong to Maasai men, while women's sphere is mainly in the household (Talle, 1988; Yurco, 2018). Hearing the stories of Mama Christine and her friends, and seeing how men and women use the spaces around them, I propose that both rangelands *and* households are spheres of women, while towns and roads belong to men. Women are, as described above, the ones who mainly *uses* the land and moves in it, through their daily work. By the women's movement in the lands – and along with them

the goats and sheep – the women get the possibility to also *control* the land through their bodies and their decisions over the animals' bodies.

In the next subchapter, I change the perspective and look at land as property. Issues of jurisdiction, legal rights, and paperwork then come to matter, with the questions of *how* and by *whom* the land is used and controlled and who it belongs to.

Keeping the land and selling the cows

- *Did people own land when you were young?*
- *In past days, this land belonged to everybody. It belonged to anyone who wanted to feed his cows.*
- *When did the way of owning land change?*
- *At the same time I got my firstborn, and the same time as the Maasai tradition of piercing and stretching the ears ended.*
- *What do you think about this change?*
- *I'm thinking about positive things. Everyone now has their own portion of land. To pierce your ear creates a lot of pain, so now there is no longer any pain. Our children get an education now. My life has been good just because of the change.*
- *In what way has it been good?*
- *Before the change, there were conflicts, about cows grazing, for instance. Today, because land belongs to someone, the conflicts have reduced. Maasai women like the change since everyone has their own land. Maasai men love to sell the land, but the women know, 'This land belongs to my husband and me'. If the man says, 'Let's sell', the woman can object and say 'No, we will not sell, because my children need a place to live in the days to come'.*
- *Are there any disadvantages in this way of owning land?*
- *Everything that has a positive side, must also bring something negative. When women say 'Don't sell', but the man refuses and sells, he will suffer. The women will suffer after the husband sells the land, being stressed day by day, thinking, 'Where can the children live?'. Women of Maasai do not like it when land is sold. Because non-Maasai will buy land, they will put a fence that no one can pass through, and no goat can get inside. Maasai women hate that so much! Nowadays, women can tell their husbands not to sell, they can talk about land, talk about their culture, how we can settle this in a way so that everyone wants to be part of it.*

The conversation above took place between Mama Christine and me, once again sitting in her

daughter's place at the *Oloibon's boma*. While Maasai men, as Mama Christine puts it, love to sell land and women hate it, the attitude towards selling livestock is the other way around. At the beginning of January, schools were to start again after a two months long holiday. Mama Christine was busy during this week, traveling back and forth to the children's and grandchildren's boarding schools. She arranged with payments and made sure all children and grandchildren settled in as they should. Mama got help from Christine, who lives in Ongata Rongai, and Joel with his car. This week, Mama sold two cows to be able to cover all the school fees. When I visited Sylvia, and for the first time walked with her and her goats, she said that they used to have many more goats and sheep. Now they had sold 20 goats to afford her children's school fees – making the herd significantly smaller. The women had many times before, just in passing by when talking about the cows, goats, and sheep, mentioned how women usually try to make their husbands sell cows to afford food and school fees for the children. The husbands, however, are generally not that interested in selling the cows – instead, they value the actual possession of having many animals[35]. Sylvia's comment, "Where will the cows graze in the future if we sell our land", made it clear that also the women find it essential to care for the well-being and future of the animals – but perhaps for a different reason than the men. The importance for the women to secure their land from being sold, making sure that the cows have pasture to graze on, and, when necessary, to sell cows and goats, all have the common base in the women's concerns for the safety and future of their children. This assemblage of questions visualizes how land, cows, goats, and sheep are linked to, and intertwined with, the women's social relations and well-being of their families.

Mama Christine and Sylvia are in positions where they can impact decisions about, or even single-handedly decide, when to sell or not sell cows, goats, and the families' lands. Sylvia told me when I asked about her abilities to affect the land:

> "*Even if my husband now says that we will sell the land, I would simply say no, and I will even go and place a caution*[36] *on my land, as a wife – because that is my knowledge. I have control over the entire land, not only over where I live, but all land, because it's my land and my children's future. I don't want my children to suffer without their land. As they grow up, I*

[35] Traditionally "a man's prestige is measured by the number of cattle and children he accumulates" (Talle, 1988, p. 12).
[36] "A *caution* is a notice in the form of a register to the effect that no action of a specified nature in relation to the land in respect of which the notice has been entered may be taken without first informing the person who gave the notice" (National Land Commission Kenya, 2017).

> *want to lead by example, and for them to say 'No, we will not sell our land, because our mother did not do that'. So, I'm doing this for my children."*

For other women, who compared to Mama Christine and Sylvia, are not the head of their households, or don't know about their rights as a woman[37], the situation can be very different, and every one of them might not have the same autonomy. Despite that Maasai women, according to Mama Christine, are strongly opposed to selling land, they may not have any possibility to get their will through. Sylvia told me that she tries to talk to, and educate other ladies about their rights, but that it is hard and takes time to change. She explained that the wife, if she is aware of her rights, can stop the man from selling their private piece of land since she has legal right to place a caution on it. The husband might, if the wife is unaware of her legal rights, or if she puts up resistance to the land sale, go to town to find another woman who can pretend to be his wife, and sign the papers needed for the land sale. While the husband still is the legal owner of the land, the wife can, to a certain degree *control* what happens to the land – for example deciding whether or not to sell.

Another way a woman can be in control of land is if she has inherited an individual piece of land from her parents, which is entitled to her. This would mean that she has the *control* and the *rights* to the property. Mama Christine's youngest daughter Suzan explained to me: "My father gave me a piece of land. If I get married and my husband and I are not understanding each other – if he beats me and I don't like him – then I still have my piece of land and I can move to there, and take my children with me". Similar to how Agarwal (1995) describes it, the rights to property makes the women less fragile to marital breakdown. Agarwal (1995, pp. 16–17) also raises the question of whether women's property rights are linked to the "control over women's sexuality, marriage practices, and kinship structures". Some scholars argue that a woman's property rights comes with greater familial control over her sexuality and marriage, in order for the family to secure the property (Agarwal, 1995). While this might be true also in *Engejusiteti*, I did not see any traces of this kind of control linked to the women's property rights. Instead I saw and heard of the opposite – property rights for a woman gives her greater freedom to make her own choices about her sexuality and marriage, and a security

[37] "The *Marriage Act* calls for registering all marriages - effectively granting women a legal basis for land ownership claims. The *Matrimonial Property Act* protects women's rights to property acquired during marriage, and the *Land Registration Act* defers to it. The *Land Act* provides spouses some protections from having their home or land leased or sold without their knowledge. The *Law of Succession Act* gives both male and female children the same inheritance rights" (Nnoko-Mewanu and Abdi, 2020).

for herself and her children. It was, however, also explained to me that since a girl, when getting married, is supposed to move to her husband's boma, it may often happen that she gives away her piece of land to one of her brothers – since she will live with her husband and, thus, does not need the land from her parents. While some of the women described that things have changed, so that most girls these days inherit land, since that is their legal right, I could also hear the opposite of how it is rather more common that a girl does *not* inherit land.

This attitude of women striving to keep their land, and selling the cows (when necessary) stand in contrast to what Rutten describes in "Selling wealth to buy poverty" (1992) – that the Maasai, once an area has been subdivided, will sell their land so that they can buy more cattle. The drive for selling land (the 'selling of wealth') and buying more cattle ('buying poverty'), in *Engejusiteti*, seem to be true for men, while not representing the way of the women.

When Mama Christine talks about how land these days belongs to someone, it is in comparison to how land in *Engejusiteti* in the past was owned by the community. Mama describes the positive aspects of private land ownership; conflicts of where the cows should graze have decreased, and there is a greater security in knowing that the family have their own land. Along with that comes the possibility of girls to gain independence through private land ownership. But Mama as well mentions how all positive things brings about something negative; in this case the negative is how land is being sold and fences erected. In the next subchapter I will focus on the women's stories and thoughts around private land ownership as a tenure system and the fences that are linked to it. Talking about these issues, the bodily practice of using the land and the juridical aspects of land rights come together.

Figure 10: Outside and inside of a fence

Fences that no one can pass through and no goat can get inside

> *"Selling land is not a very good thing. It shouldn't be allowed. But you can't control it, because people own their land and whatever they do with their land is up to them. I have gone to other places and seen that the land has become so small, that people are congested, and people even lack good air to breath. When people are so many, and they're all coming and building all those buildings, it's not good for us and not something that should be done. We are beginning to see the effects here. People have started to buy land, and they have started to fence their lands. Fenced in a way that, during dry seasons, we can't even take our cows there because it's fenced. All the ways we used for our cows to graze and take water, they are all blocked. So we can't even access water points. If it's them that have drilled water in their land, they will not allow us to have the water. We see it as a selfish thing – when someone come and fence and limit others to access that resource."*

When I asked Sylvia what she thinks about the land tenure system of private land ownership in *Engejusiteti*, she quickly came into the topic of land sales and the problem of fences that comes with it. Beatrice, similar to how Sylvia described it, told me that even if *Engejusiteti* have been subdivided for a long time – as long as she has lived and know of – it is not until now that people are wakening up and they see the money they can get from selling their lands. While a Maasai, I was told, never fence the bigger grazing areas, neither with branches or with chains, the fear when land is sold is that the buyer is a non-Maasai – who puts up chained fences however they like.

Next to Mama Christine's *shamba* there is a fence which exemplified the women's discussion for me. This fence was one of the first things I noticed when arriving to Mama Christine; a tall, chained fence surrounding a big area with nothing but untouched grass and a watchtower inside it. A fence saving the landowner's property from grazing animals and the trespassing of humans. Sylvia told me that the owner sometimes, in times of drought, allows grazing on his fenced land in exchange for payment. Even though the fence soon melted in as a natural part of the environment for me, it was many times a barrier, making the walk from Mama Christine's house to Sylvia's a good 1,5 hour during the rainy season. For Sylvia this fence makes it more difficult for her to reach the water place on the other side, and the grandchildren of Mama Christine complained about how it made everything harder to reach.

The fence is, typically to how Mama Christine describes it, a fence that "no one can pass through and no goat can get inside". That not even the goats, with their stubborn personalities and ability to climb and get into most things, can get inside the fence, is descriptive of how a fence is restricting movements.

When the women talked about how non-Maasai comes to their land and buy parcels that are not actually theirs to have, what I heard was their fear of a future displacement (using the concept of Vaz-Jones, 2018). The way Mama Christine, Sylvia and Marianne manage the land, perceives it and talks about issues around it, I could see and hear a resistance in it. A resistance against the way their land is sold to strangers by the men, against how the land is managed and used in ways they do not approve to, and a resistance to what this mean for their children's future possibilities. The women's way of acting is a way of "resistance to the loss of land, livelihoods and future possibilities" which is emerging in response to displacement (Vaz-Jones, 2018, p. 715). However, there is also another side of the perception of displacement happening, which became clear when I at times heard Mama Christine's family talk about how some other Maasai in the area do not like how Mama bought the piece of land that is her *shamba*. I was told how some neighbours ask "Why can't you live like other Maasai? Why do you have to have your land like that – building houses and buying the land?". While it was not clear to me what it actually was that people were upset about in the way Mama had acquired her piece of land, it is clear that even when a Maasai buys a piece of land, it is not unproblematic.

Both traditional pastoralism and wildlife are dependent on open landscapes to secure migration routes, and access to pasture and water (Archambault, 2016; Homewood et al., 2009; Weldemichel and Lein, 2019). Fences, such as the one next to Mama Christine's *shamba*, divides and creates boundaries in the rangelands. The fences are impassable for both human and non-human, and becomes a distinct reminder of the existing tenure system. In literature on privatization and subdivision of land, this tenure system is many times directly linked to the problems of fences, enclosure, fragmentation and the "end of Maasai"[38]. However, what I heard in the women's stories about matters of land was that privatization *per*

[38] The way of talking about the "end of Maasai" or "end of pastoralism" is, as described by Weldemichel and Lein (2019), an ageold discourse where pastoralism numerous times have been predicted to come to an end (Rutten, 1992). A man working at SORALO told me how "Subdivision is the end of Maasai", referring to how subdivision of land leads to fragmentation of land, and makes the Maasai pastoral way of living coming to an end.

se is not perceived as a problem – it even comes with benefits, if the women's property rights are simultaneously incorporated. The problem, rather, lies in the land sales to non-Maasai, and the practice of putting up fences on grazing areas.

While the women talks about the hazards with fences, they also describe how most land still is open and accessible for them. During the weeks I stayed in *Engejusiteti* it was almost the whole time plenty of grass around, and no need for people, cows or goats to migrate to other areas for grazing. I, however, asked how they manage the dry seasons, and was told that they just go further away where there has been rain, or go up on the hills where there usually is more grass. When talking about this with Sylvia and her husband, they told me the area up on the hills is public land and do not belong to anyone. While some land up on the hills is public, there is as well private land. For example Mama Christine told me that she has land that belongs to her on the hills. In times of drought she takes her cows and goats there, but it is free for everyone to use: "Everyone is free to use my land, it is not fenced. But people know that it belongs to me – I have a letter saying that the land is entitled to me. If someone wants to use it, they can ask me and then it is no problem". The same goes the other way around; when Mama Christine does not have grass on her own land and needs to find pasture elsewhere, she can just ask the person the land belongs to, and if it is a Maasai it is mostly no problem.

Archambault (2016, p. 729) highlights the way in which pastoralists are used to adapt to "changing environmental, economic and socio-political forces" – which stands in contrast to the obsolete picture of Maasai society as stagnant (Talle, 1988). In communities facing an increased fragmentation and erection of fences, the adaption needed consist of "new arrangements for accessing grazing and other natural resources", in which social networks plays a major role (Archambault, 2016, p. 729). The way Mama Christine and her friends deal with access to key resources, and the difficulties presented by private land ownership, show on this capability to adapt their pastoral practices to the circumstances. What the women however express is their fear for the future, which might bring more unknown people and fences to *Engejusiteti*. As Beatrice describes it, it is not until now that people see the money they can get from selling land, and the erection of fences have just started. Also, while land in the area already is bought by non-Maasai, most of it is not yet used or fenced, making it possible for people to still use it as "public land", and, so far, easing the effects of land sales. Many people, both from *Engejusiteti* and Olkiramatian, expressed their fears for what will

happen in the future – will subdivision be the end of Maasai? At the same time, privatization and subdivision of land is seen as the *only* possible future, and fences as an unavoidable part of that process: “People are getting educated. They want to settle and build their own houses. You can’t build a house in a village if you do not own the land. You probably want to fence your land, because you want to grow some things on it. If one puts time, money and energy into growing things, then that can’t be for everyone to use, and therefore you must have fences. So in the end you want your own land”.

The topic is talked about with ambivalence, a mix of different opinions and an attitude of capitulation for circumstances people themselves cannot control. I heard people talk about privatization of land simultaneously as a disastrous problem, and a desired stage that has to be reached. I, however, rarely heard anyone talk about it simply as an either-or question. What becomes clear is the complexity and nuances in the issue of subdivision and fencing, as with the topic of matters of land in general, discussed in this chapter. Subdivision and fencing ties on to both the theme of bodily *use* of land, which is connected to gendered labour and the women’s close relation to the animals, and the gendered, juridical aspects of property *rights*, *access* and *control*. Foundational to why these land issues are such matter of the hearts for the women, is the relational concerns they are interwoven with. The women’s worries today, about the futures of the children, is tied together with the futures of the cows and goats, as well as how it is shaped by the pasts of humans and non-humans affecting land, economic, politics and culture. The displacement felt by the women and their families is linked to, and partly felt *due* to, the displacement of cows and goats, in a “common experience of inequality and exploitation” (Govindrajan, 2018, p. 11). The way "human pasts, presents, and futures are gathered with the pasts, presents, and futures of the multiplicity of non-human [and human] animals who share worlds with them” (Govindrajan, 2018, p. 4) becomes evident.

7. Concluding Discussion

Nancy and I sat outside Mama Christine's house, doing the dishes from the morning chai. We talked about the morning; how Mama, the boys and shepherds had given all the young goats and sheep medicine to prevent more of them from dying. As we spoke, Nancy said "A dying goat is the worst thing that can happen to a Maasai". At first, I thought that this phrase was just a saying – surely, there must be other things that are worse than a dying goat. However, as I later reflected on Nancy's comment, I saw how there might be more to it than I first noticed. With phrases such as; "Maasai loves rain, because it means more grass for the cows and goats to graze, and that means more milk", "When you give someone a goat, that goat will help you to be remembered", and, the description of fences that "no goat can get inside", it becomes evident that a goat who is dying implicate much more, than *just* a dead goat.

As I in this thesis have tried to grasp the daily thoughts, happenings and surroundings of Mama Christine, Sylvia and Marianne, I have at the same time shown how most parts of their lives are intertwined and entangled with one another – just like a dying goat is linked to as well the social importance of milk, as human friendships, and matters of land. By letting the women's stories determine the content and themes, the *details* have become visible: in their social networks; their co-presence with non-human beings; beading; education; thoughts about the future; and matters of land. Details which, I argue, not only tell of the lives of Mama Christine, her family and friends, but also speak of broader commonalities of what it is to be a Maasai woman today.

Throughout the stories of Mama Christine and her friends, relationships are key – to each other; to me; to their children; to species which surround them; and to matter such as milk. With the concept of *relatedness* (Govindrajan, 2018), I have shown how the women's relations determine their paths and motives, in why they choose to, or happen to, do the things they do. Crucial in the analysis of the women's relatedness with other beings, have been to include the agency of cows, goats, sheep and flies. By doing so, links and perspectives become visible which would otherwise remain overlooked – such as how flies affect the women's daily lives when hours are spent trying to get rid of them, while a home without any flies is a sign of a selfish home with no milk or food.

I continue to argue that the agency of non-human beings, through relatedness, influence what the women think of their children's future. While education is an investment in their children, especially the daughters who get empowered through education, it is also associated with fears of what will happen if a young generation of Maasai no longer cares for the cows, goats, or the land. Discussing these questions, relatedness between the women and non-human beings become interwoven with the relatedness between the women and their children.

By looking at interspecies relations and shared worlds, I also show how new perspectives of matters of land, resource access and control (Elmhirst, 2018) become visible. I question the notion of Maasai rangelands as a "male sphere", and argue that, since the women are in charge of the animals demanding most safeguarding when grazing, they are also the ones who mainly *use* and *control* land (Agarwal, 1995). I show how gendered labour with animals (Govindrajan, 2018), the women's way of always considering the best of the children, and the centrality of relatedness in their lives, are what affects the women's interest in how land should be managed – they strive to keep the land and are willing to sell cows for the future of their children.

While I tell the intimate stories of a few Maasai women in southern Kenya, with happenings, circumstances and thoughts that are personal to *them*, the above-described issues, and the details in the women's stories, tell of commonalities in a wider sense. I consider their stories tell of wider commonalities due to how I, during my previous stay in Kenya in 2016, saw issues that I now delved deeper into: the central position of cows, goats and sheep; gendered labour where "women do everything"; and issues of resource access and control. The centrality of the cow is covered by most literature on the Maasai, and confirms the importance of looking *beyond* the cow, goats and sheep as commodities, and instead acknowledging their agency and the relationships existing between humans and non-humans. Some research on Maasai women emphasize the changing gender roles and increased burden put on the shoulders of women (Wangui, 2008; Westervelt, 2017), as well as the women's central position when it comes to land management and access (Archambault, 2016). This as well confirms the way the learnings drawn from the women's stories are applicable on a broader scale, for example in how the gendered labour with animals have an impact on livelihood, education and resource access and control.

I see how further research, if using a wider scope of study and other research methods, can

complement and confirm the findings in this thesis. However, experiencing the benefits with the frameworks used in this thesis (multispecies relations and feminist political ecology), I wish to stress the relevance of this combination of approaches to deepen and make the research on Maasai, especially Maasai women, more nuanced.

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Appendix 1: Persons

Mama Christine	also “Mama”, Shosh or Elisabeth; lives in *Engejusiteti;* daughter to the *Oloiboni*
Christine	oldest daughter to Mama Christine; lives in Ongata Rongai with two sons; works with an NGO in Maasai areas
Mercy	daughter to Mama Christine; studies home science at a college in Nairobi
Beatrice	daughter to Mama Christine; completed University studies in Environmental science; previously worked with SORALO
Nancy	daughter to Mama Christine; in high school
Irene	also Mama Therese; daughter to Mama Christine; lives at the Oloiboni boma with two daughters
Joel	oldest son to Mama Christine; lives in *Engejusiteti* with two daughters and two sons; works with driving; pastor
Lydia	Wife to Joel
Sylvia	also Mama Ben; lives in *Engejusiteti*; works with beading; pastor
Ben	Sylvia’s husband
Marianne	lives in *Engejusiteti* with her husband and two children; works with beading and her beading shop
Andrew	Marianne’s husband
Florence	lives in Olkiramatian; works with SORALO

Appendix 2: Glossary

aulo	area around the *enkang*
boma	Maasai homestead
Boo oo ngishu	shed for cows
engai	God
enkang	homestead
emwatata	shed for goats and sheep
olashe	calf
oloiboni	ritual experts, diviner
olokeri	grazing field set apart for young calves
orkuo	small goat or sheep
moran	warrior
shuka	sheets traditionally worn wrapped around the body
matatu	minibus or similar vehicle used as a taxi
mzungu	white person, europé
shamba	piece of ground under cultivation, a person's privately owned land
ugali	porridge made of maize flour