At the intersection between beekeeping and dispossession: an analysis of Ogiek eco-cultural resilience from Nessuit and Mariashoni in the East Mau Forest

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"Our beautiful home in the forest,

It is no longer ours; it has been taken,

You understand the "superiority complex"

Look at us!! We have been forgotten!!

The only job well done in our home is deforestation,

Followed by industrialization,

Then they discovered that there are negative climatic observations,

Blame games were started. Discrimination!

For one to own a land they must have documents,

Clean documents to avoid arguments,

We now don't know who gave the "intruders "permission,

Can someone please tell us? We need an explanation.

They mention big names,

The mentioned bodies are in big business debates,

Why don't you hear the cries of at least children and grannies?

At least give them a place to settle their bodies.

It is painful to see a grandmother cry,

Yet you sold her land,

You are sleeping in a mansion while she is dying,

Do you see the picture? It is very bad.

We are requesting for not much,

We want our ancestral land back,

With this we shall say thanks,

And we shall unite again in our land"

Excerpts from the poem *The State of Being a Small Tribe*, by Winnie Lesingo (Ogiek poet)

Abstract

Land upholds and defines the survival of indigenous populations' cultural distinctiveness and their unique characteristics and transcends economic value. The identity and resilience of indigenous communities is based on specific values and practices which are determined by the interaction between their cultural system and their natural environment. In spite of this, indigenous people have historically been subject to systematic uncertainty regarding land possession.

In this thesis, I explore the value of the cultural and environmental practices of the Ogiek of Nessuit and Mariashoni, an indigenous group native to the Mau Forest, Kenya. Specifically, I aim to understand the practices the Ogiek develop within their communities that strengthen and support their cultural and environmental resilience. These practices are analysed through the lens of eco-cultural resilience, which is based on the symbiotic relationship between an indigenous community and its natural environment. Additionally, this research takes place against the backdrop of pervasive historical landlessness, deforestation and encroachment. Such conditions highlight the importance of understanding Ogiek cultural and environmental practices that create eco-cultural resilience against destabilising intervention, in Nessuit and Mariashoni.

Key words: Ogiek, Nessuit, Mariashoni, indigenous identity, culture, environment, eco-cultural resilience, symbiotic relationship, landlessness

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Chapter I – Introduction

"Culture is our central concept, and everything else depends upon it"

Sol Tax (1975, p. 514)

As we rode down the hillside, I looked across to the escarpments of the East Mau Forest. A green line of trees drawn on the distant slopes delineated the beginning of the edge of the woodland. The sun heating the space between me and those distant trees, beamed down on a blanket of open fields.

"Our identity is based on our attachment to the forest. We depend on the forest for our survival, but we live in fear. I ask, why is the forest being destroyed while we are still here? This place used to be all forest"[1]. The elder's voice rang through the small house in Mariashoni, commanding respect for the land struggles the Ogiek have known for generations. He said he did not know a time when the Ogiek had no land struggles, or a time the government had not been intervening in the forest.

"We went to court so we could continue keeping our bees, so we could be given back our land and protect some areas of the forest", he continued, showing pictures of the 2017 African Court ruling. The Court recognised the importance of Ogiek's relationship to the Mau Forest, acknowledging the forest as their ancestral home, and as the source of their distinct identity.

My eyes are drawn to some artefacts hanging on the walls, "What are they?", I ask. His gaze follows mine, and he says: "you know, traditionally we are beekeepers, and that is how we conserve the forest, because that is where the bees get their nectar. It is also where we get our food". He describes how women traditionally knit and produce utensils to harvest and carry honey. "Now, we are still protecting the forest, but the government destroyed our indigenous trees and replaced them with exotic ones, and started chasing us away, so it's very hard to practice beekeeping properly. It impacts our culture".

The realities of Mariashoni and Nessuit, the neighbouring village, are still today marked by government and company deforestation, illegal logging and encroachment, despite the Court ruling. "It's the government that opened the forest and subdivided the land and brought other people to settle here, so it's them who contributed to the destruction of the forest. Right now, myself I don't have land, we never really had a chance to have land".

But despite these conditions the Ogiek are proving their resilience, presenting their own model of cultural and environmental protection. The elder tells me that in Nessuit and Mariashoni they are

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[1] All quotes in this section are from: Author's Interview on March 17th, 2020 with Respondent 3 in Nessuit, an Ogiek man and community elder in Nessuit

continuing their practice of beekeeping and tree planting. "The Mau Forest represents Ogiek identity. We perform our rituals there, hang beehives, gather our food and traditional and medicinal plants". With their indigenous knowledge of the forest, the Ogiek are planting trees for the purpose of mitigating climate change and protecting their livelihood and culture.

We continue our conversation outside. The elder leads me to an old Kenya-Cedar tree; he wants to show me their traditional honey harvesting practice. He says, "beekeeping, hanging beehives is our culture and conservation encourages it. We are protecting the forest because our rituals are performed there… we praise our forest, there is a lot of value in it". The Ogiek aim to prove how despite the challenges, they are resilient and can show the government that "we can conserve the forest and prevent people from interfering with the forest".

A young man joins us, and the elder climbs to the beehive held in the cedar tree. He binds a thick, long net of dried moss into a small bowl, into which he places amber and creates smoke. The elder then blows the smoke into the beehive. Resilience in Nessuit and Mariashoni is a collective effort, involving every member, men and women, young and old. Knowledge is passed on through generations. It strengthens their bonds and their ties to the forest, as their efforts are directed collectively to practicing resilience.

After all, as Rotarangi and Russell (2009) argue, "to be indigenous is to be resilient" (p. 209), I find these words to reflect at the most fundamental level the identity of the Ogiek of the East Mau Forest.

Against this backdrop, my aim in this thesis is to understand the specific cultural and environmental practices the Ogiek perform in their communities which represent eco-cultural resilience. A more detailed explanation will be given in further sections of this Introduction.

1.1 The Ogiek

The Ogiek are an indigenous hunter-gatherer community native to the Mau Forest, Kenya. Their name translates as 'the caretakers of all plants and wild animals'. As environmentalists, they are "uniquely specialised people intimately related to the particular ecosystem [of the Mau Forest]" (Sang, 2001, p. 114). They depend on the forest for their livelihood, cultural continuity, stability and resilience. They also recognise it as part of their identity and cultural heritage (Chaudhry, 2019, pp. 53-54).

The most prominent and significant connection between the Ogiek's ecological and cultural practices is through beekeeping. Beekeeping within the Mau Forest has "set in motion a number of

symbiotic relationships that have maintained the health of the forest for centuries" (Agera, 2011, p. 31). Beekeeping and honey production contribute to their livelihood and, through its symbolic value, to their cultural identity as well. (ibid., pp. 27-28). It is used, for example, during traditional ceremonies and rituals, as well as for medicinal purposes. It is also used for personal consumption and is a mainstay of the local economy (ibid., p. 29).

1.2 Historical Context

The Ogiek have experienced a history of land rights challenges preceding the Colonial government and persisting throughout independent Kenya (Kimaiyo, 2004). Their lack of a formal claim to the Mau Forest allowed British rule to transform the Ogiek's communal land into parcels of state – and privately – owned land. The Ogiek were declared "landless and became trespassers and squatters" in their own forest (Kimaiyo, 2004, Chapter VI).

Following independence, the government acted towards putting the land to 'better' use (Constitution of Kenya, Chapter V). They instated policies concerning land tenure and forest conservation constructed on Western ideals of development. This led the government to gazette the Mau Forest into state reserves. Subsequently, the government pursued evictions and the assimilation of indigenous groups to facilitate modernisation projects (Constitution of Kenya, Chapter V).

Land restrictions limited the Ogiek from accessing woodland areas, and they were pushed to the fringes of the Mau Forest. This negatively impacted their traditions and livelihood and threatened their very existence (Meinzen-Dick & Nkoya, 2007, p. 15; African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights VS. Republic of Kenya, 2017, iv-vi). Such policies also ignored beekeeping practices and other Ogiek customs, which protect the environment and reflect their cultural identity (Agera, 2011).

In 2017 after decades of legal struggle, the African Court recognised a series of mass human rights violations by the Kenyan government regarding the Ogiek people. The Court recognised the Mau Forest as their ancestral land and acknowledged their rightful ownership, along with their essential role in protecting it. Specifically, they ruled that the Ogiek had suffered continued subjugation and marginalisation due to the evictions, forced assimilation and lack of recognition of their indigenous status (Claridge, 2017, 6). The Court also declared that the Mau Forest's environmental degradation is attributed to state actors, companies and other indigenous communities, not to Ogiek cultural practices and lifestyle.

1.3 The complication

This thesis arises from the empirical complication which I stated in the initial section of this Introduction. In summary, it concerns the pervasive land seizure and deforestation in the East Mau Forest affecting the Ogiek of Nessuit and Mariashoni, despite the legal recognition of their land rights by the African Court in 2017.

1.4 Research Objectives

Primarily, I will research the specific cultural and environmental practices that create and support eco-cultural resilience among the Ogiek of Nessuit and Mariashoni. I will do so by looking into the elements that support and reflect Ogiek identity, culture and environmental protection and how these interact. The purpose is to highlight and explore the Ogiek's practice of eco-cultural resilience in light of systematic land struggles, and how it is used to strengthen they community.

I will also explore the symbiotic interaction between the Ogiek and the forest. This important interaction creates the basis of Ogiek identity and supports their eco-cultural resilience (Swepston et al.,1985).

In conclusion, I will focus on the ramifications of continued lack of communal land ownership on the Ogiek's eco-cultural resilience. These include understanding the impacts on their livelihood, cultural practices and environmental protection in the two communities.

1.5 Research question

The thesis is based on the following central research question:

What forms of eco-cultural resilience are the Ogiek practicing in the communities of Nessuit and Mariashoni, in light of their continued exclusion from their ancestral land, the Mau Forest, despite the legal acknowledgement of their land rights by the African Court in 2017?

This research question is supplemented by important sub-questions which intend to explore different facets of the topic, all of which are related to the primary research question. They explore the details of

cultural identity and the environmental role of the Mau Forest in the lives of the Ogiek of Nessuit and Mariashoni, as well as the leading challenges they face. These sub-questions are:

1) What are the specific practices exercised in Nessuit and Mariashoni that maintain their Ogiek identity?

2) What are the specific cultural and livelihood practices exercised in Nessuit and Mariashoni that protect the local ecosystem of the forest areas adjacent to their villages in the East Mau Forest?

3) What are the external factors which limit their practice of eco-cultural resilience?

4) In what way do the Ogiek of Nessuit and Mariashoni practice their eco-cultural resilience despite limiting external challenges?

1.6 Analytical framework - Eco-cultural Resilience

The analytical framework this thesis adopts is 'eco-cultural resilience'. The notion of an eco-culture represents the inextricable link between ecological and cultural systems (Pretty, 2011, p. 131), which define the identity of indigenous populations worldwide. Furthermore, it represents a system which goes beyond the social network of a community, and includes the "world-views, identity, values, distinct cultural practices and behaviours that make a community or group culturally distinct" (ibid., p. 131).

Applying the concept of resilience to an eco-culture represents the way in which eco-cultural identities and systems are able to maintain their integrity and stability in the face of change or challenges. In this way it focuses on the stability of cultural and environmental systems, and most importantly the interaction between them. Eco-cultural resilience can be used to emphasize the need to adopt "a holistic approach to resilience-building as a consequence of the interconnected complexity of human and ecological systems" (ibid., p. 132)

Eco-cultural resilience includes a critical cultural dimension which other social resilience theories lack. In fact, it is best applied in understanding the relationship between indigenous people and land, by exploring the connection between their cultural systems and the environment. Cultural systems include

elements which define their community, such as local dynamics, location, language and social relationships (ibid., pp. 132-133).

1.7 Chapter conclusion

Overall this introductory chapter has provided the background onto which the research is placed. It has provided a general understanding of the context of indigenous peoples in relation to land and the challenges they face, and specifically described the Ogiek's identity and history.

The chapter has also detailed the outline of the thesis. It has done so by presenting the problem statement and the research objectives that support the central research question as well as its sub-questions. Finally, this chapter has presented the reader with an extensive understanding of the analytical framework which is an essential component of the thesis and which provides the lens through which I have collected and analysed the research data.

Chapter II - Literature review

This literature review aims to present the larger academic debate in which this thesis is situated. Specifically, it critically assesses the debate regarding environmental resource management, indigenous identity and resilience. It begins by presenting contrasting views on the effectiveness of private and subdivided land versus collectively owned indigenous land. The debate addresses the role of indigenous people in resource management, and the importance of indigenous cultural identity and traditional knowledge in conservation. It further debates the relationship between indigenous environmental knowledge and indigenous resilience and presents a discussion on eco-cultural resilience. Finally, the chapter details the gaps in the academic literature where the foundation of my thesis is located. This will inform the reader as to how the research adds to the pre-existing knowledge surrounding this topic.

Modern theories regarding resource management, restoration and depletion find their roots in Garrett Hardin's 'Tragedy of the Commons' (1968). In his thesis, Hardin argues that the 'tragedy of the commons' represents the inevitable over-exploitation and depletion of commonly held resources, stemming from the supposed human belief that we are free to behave individualistically and with self-interest in order to "maximise our gain" (1968, pp. 1244-1248). He plays with the concept of freedom, stating that unregulated and unlimited access will eventually deplete the resource. He argues that such freedom will eventually limit peoples' agency, as the resource will eventually be depleted. For this reason, land must be regulated through policy to limit continued resource extraction (ibid., p. 1248).

This argument is generally refuted by academics who analyse conservation through an indigenous lens. They state that indigenous people have an evolved understanding of their land, and that they are able to manage the resources in a sustainable manner, without creating an environmental emergency (Lu Holt, 1997, p. 3; Richards, 1997; Berkes and Ross, 2013). However, others believe this only holds true in particular situations. Kramer and van Schaik (1997) argue that with modernisation leading to population growth and eroding traditional practices, it cannot be guaranteed that indigenous people protect the environment and control resources in a better way (pp. 6–7).

In spite of its lack of clarity, Hardin's world-renowned essay influenced land policy changes in the global South in the second half of the 20th century, including Kenya (Richards, 1997, 3). Governments began subdividing and privatising communal indigenous land areas with the purpose of reducing resource exploitation and depletion. Land subdivision was understood as the solution to the over-exploitation of commonly held resources, since access to resources became restricted. This was supported by academics,

who stated that to ensure that resources are not depleted, it is necessary to implement either centralised government regulation or privatisation of land (Kramer and van Schaik, 1997).

This resulted in the exclusion of indigenous people from their traditional land. In fact, governments did not take into account that the majority of these lands are managed by indigenous systems which ensure that their resources are protected (Richards, 1997; Lu Holt, 1997).

Elinor Ostrom, with her publication 'Governing the Commons' (1990) was able to reformulate the narrative concerning communal land use, arguing for the implementation of "durable cooperative institutions that are organized and governed by the resource users" (p. 415). Ostrom argues that success for collectively governing commons is based on a series of criteria. These include defining the boundaries of the land area, and collectively understanding and deciding the contextual rules of resource extraction. Additional requirements are accountability and responsibility among collective landowners, along with sanctions where the agreements are violated and a system to mediate conflict. Landowners finally must have recognition of their rights to govern the land and manage this set up (ibid., p. 417).

Richards (1997) posits that literature supporting 'the tragedy of the commons', fails to acknowledge the fundamental difference between indigenous and non-indigenous land management and its resources. He states that while Ostrom's thesis significantly contributes to communal land governance theory, it does not expand on the importance of identity or culture in the collective management of communal land. It does not emphasise indigenous identity, nor does it acknowledge the cultural and traditional intricacies involved in the practice of indigenous land management, resource use and environmental protection (pp. 2-3).

White (2005) considers that one reason literature on land governance does not focus on cultural identity and the traditional connection to the land could be that the concept of governance was developed by Western thinkers. For this reason, it does not consider the dynamics involved in indigenous and native land use, which rest primarily on their identity, culture and tradition (pp. 2-4).

Indigenous identity has a specific and traditional view on "territory and land use which views land not as property but as 'Mother Earth', subject to several overlapping uses" (Richards, 1997, p. 5). Through their strong connection to and permanence in the land, they have an inherent knowledge and understanding of how best to use the land's resources to benefit all the community. In fact, "indigenous 'territory' models [position] land and resources [as] integrated with cultural conceptions of space and socio-political organisation" (ibid., p. 6).

Berkes (1993) introduces Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) to highlight the inherent environmental knowledge in indigenous life. TEK is a culturally inherited cumulative body of knowledge about the relationship of living beings to one another and the environment (Berkes, 1993, p. 3). Land is a living organism constantly exchanging resources and information with its native dwellers (ibid., pp. 2-3). TEK also highlights how indigenous groups will not exploit their resources because it is not in their best interest to do so (ibid., 1993, p. 5).

Understanding the relationship between land and indigenous communities provides foundations for conceptualising indigenous resilience. Indigenous resilience reflects the ability for communities to practice social, environmental and cultural continuity. Their environment provides the platform for indigenous expression and is the foundation for their resilience (Pretty, 2011; Rotarangi and Russell, 2009). Berkes and Ross (2016) agree, arguing that TEK and a developed social relation within the community fundamentally support indigenous resilience (p.4).

Thomas et al. (2015) present resilience from the perspective of the Inuit, Métis, Mi'kmaq and Mohawk communities. Resilience is collective and includes the self, the community and family within a cultural and political context. (ibid., p. 4). Their relationship to land creates a dynamic whereby it becomes impossible to separate the two realities form one another (ibid., p. 5).

Newhouse (2006) on the other hand critically assesses human and indigenous resilience through a positive psychology framework, arguing that it can be an individualistic and competitive concept. In fact, he argues that it "may be seen as a polite expression of a Darwinian belief about the survival of the fittest" (p.1). Rotarangi and Russell (2009), however, caution that resilience understood through this lens can reflect a colonialist model which channels power to the dominant society. Eventually this could destabilise indigenous communities (p. 211).

For this reason, Rotarangi and Russell (2009) place the focus on social-environmental resilience theory. Such an emphasis highlights the importance of social relationships in understanding indigenous resilience. However, the authors argue that social-environmental resilience lacks a fundamental cultural focus. Culture is essential to how indigenous communities understand and interact with their environment. Its absence weakens indigenous resilience (pp. 210-211).

Pretty (2011) introduces eco-cultural resilience in order to bridge this gap. Eco-cultural resilience consolidates the connection between culture and local landscapes. It is the resilience found within eco-cultures, which define the inextricable link and interplay between indigenous cultural practices and their

environment (pp. 130-131). This connection is fundamental to ensure the resilience of indigenous systems without losing critical functioning (ibid., p. 131).

Costanza et al. (2007) argue that indigenous societies have been successful in protecting the integrity and resources of their ecosystem through their cultural practices. Furthermore, the ecosystem provides significant foundations on which indigenous communities develop and express their cultural identity (p. 523). An example of this is clan-based land management, which is a holistic system providing a direct link between indigenous cultural identity and the environment. (White, 2005, pp. 2-4).

Customary land ownership and clan-based land management offers a close-up view of indigenous micro-politics and eco-cultural resilience, as it focuses on the protection of ecological, social and cultural systems (Horowitz, 2008, p. 260). While the community represents a collective entity, it is divided into clans based on ancestral ethnic structures and kinship. Land management is based on such understanding (ibid., pp. 259-261). Here, resources are accessed and managed through customary rules which prevent resource overexploitation by restricting people from accessing resources and land that belong to another clan (White, 2005, p. 3).

Pretty (2011) agrees, arguing that cultural systems have co-evolved with the environment. Such co-evolution ensures the development of a distinct indigenous identity, religion, knowledge, language, social position, practices, norms, etc. (p. 129-130). This is because the environment represents access to sustenance, which is the basis of their cultural and social identity. In eco-cultural resilience furthermore, through indigenous cultural practices, people do not just take, but manage and amend the resource they are accessing. This preserves the natural environmental cycle (ibid., p. 133).

Adaptability also plays an important role in eco-cultural resilience. TEK has allowed communities to develop various cultural practices and subsistence strategies, which have strengthened the identity of the community. For example, hunter-gatherer communities adapted to external changes and became "hunter-foragers" or "cultivator-hunters" (ibid., pp. 132-133). Pretty (2011) argues this indicates the extent to which culture and nature are bound together (p. 133). The adaptability of their cultural and livelihood practices consolidates their eco-cultural resilience (ibid., p. 133). Sol Tax offers an important view on adaptability, stating that indigenous communities are generally quick to adapt to new environments and conditions, however difficulty arises when they are not free to change in their own way, through their own culture and beliefs (1975, p. 514).

Having presented the literature, I argue that the academic theories and conceptual understandings have created a dynamic debate concerning land management and resource use, exploring indigenous

environmental knowledge in relation to indigenous resilience. However, I consider this literature to lack an expansive academic perspective into eco-cultural resilience. In fact, I consider the debate to focus too closely on the relationship between social and environmental structures, disregarding the role of culture. While some authors, such as Rotarangi and Russell (2009), Berkes and Ross (2016), acknowledge the importance of culture, they themselves fail to expand on the subject.

Overall, the role of culture in relation to indigenous resilience and environmental protection remains largely underdeveloped within academia. The authors do not detail the practices which support eco-cultural resilience, nor explore the notion of this resilience in relation lack of land ownership and dispossession. This includes indigenous response and resilience to environmental changes by actors external to the land.

For this reason, I consider my research to be relevant and I place it in this academic gap I have presented. Its purpose is to understand what the specific cultural and environmental practices are which create and support a state of resilience within the Ogiek community. This research and analysis on eco-cultural resilience takes place in communities subject to land struggles and displacement due to the intervention of government and non-state actors. Through this analytical lens, I aim to highlight how the cultural interaction between land and people is a reciprocal exchange which maintains and preserves indigenous identity and the forest's ecosystem. The research will highlight the practices which uphold this.

2.1 Chapter conclusion

The above analysis of the relevant literature and theoretical debate has enabled me to identify the gap that this research will bridge. There is a significant lack of literature invested in understanding eco-cultural resilience, and specifically related to the context of indigenous displacement and external environmental change. This research positions itself in this gap, by highlighting the eco-cultural practices which the Ogiek develop in their communities affected by lack of land rights

The literature presented a compelling and dynamic debate surrounding different forms of land management and explored the concept of eco-cultural resilience by detailing the relation between indigeneity and land. This debate provides theoretical support for the analysis of the data and provides an important and significant basis for the development of a rich debate in Chapter V - Discussion.

Chapter III – Methodology

This chapter presents the methodology adopted to carry out the research into Ogiek eco-cultural resilience within the communities of Nessuit and Mariashoni in the East Mau Forest. This section firstly presents the research design which highlights the foundations on which I carried out the research. Secondly, it details the methods used for conducting fieldwork and data collection. It provides insight into the ethical considerations and the limitations encountered during the data collection and fieldwork process. Finally, it depicts the necessary changes which were carried out to continue the research.

3.1 Research Design

For the blueprint of the research, I adopted a qualitative design. A qualitative approach grants the freedom to "explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, the experiences and imaginings of our research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate" (Mason, 2002, p. 1). Qualitative research observes and studies the world through human experiences and social phenomena, focusing on how the social world is "explained, understood, experienced, produced or constituted'" (ibid., p. 3). It does so through flexible and sensitive methods which allow for arguments to be built involving complex, detailed, contextual understandings (ibid., pp. 3-4).

3.1.1 Ontology and Epistemology

Culture and relational interaction represent the ontological design of the research. Collectively, the elements which both constitute and inform culture, such as meaning, symbols, livelihood practices and identity, represent a dynamic construction of meaning. This happens through sharing ideas, values and assumptions, symbols practices and beliefs (ibid., 2002). Relational interaction adds to this, as it is found at the core of human relationships. It acknowledges that "human beings are part of an intricate relationship with all those things that collectively ensure a continuity of life and good health" (Hovey et al., 2014, p. 38). Combined, these elements add depth to the qualitative design, exploring the 'texture',

'context', 'multi-dimensionality', 'depth' and 'complexity', etc. (Mason, 2002, p. 1) of the specific content of this research.

Grounded theory is the epistemological design which observes phenomena not as static but as continually changing in relation to changing and evolving conditions. It seeks to understand how conditions change and how people respond to such changing phenomena. It calls upon the research to catch this interplay, favouring fieldwork and ingrained in qualitative research (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 5). I argue that the intersection between ontological and epistemological designs creates a valuable texture to the quality of the research process, and informs the reader on the underlying nature and trajectory of the study.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

This section details the methods of data collection used throughout the research process. It highlights the necessary changes made in methods of data collection given how the research was carried out during the development and growth of the Covid-19 global pandemic. Data collection methods were adjusted to ensure the continuation of a secure and ethical research process, due to the fact that the pandemic reflected a great sense of uncertainty and instability.

3.2.1 Fieldwork

Fieldwork reflects the optimal choice of data collection, given the subject and topic of research. I selected an ethnographic and interpretivist multi-method strategy which provided texture to the research. Fieldwork was based on the grounded first-hand discovery of socio-cultural environments and peoples' collective interpretations, understanding, processes of reasoning, social norms and more (Mason, 2002, p. 55).

An ethnographic and interpretivist approach proved fundamental for this research. In fact, I was able to interweave methods from both strategies, allowing the use of a diverse sample of methods. This allowed for a variety of data and flexibility in the research process. The ethnographic approach reflected the 'study of culture' and was grounded "in a commitment to first-hand experiences and exploration of a particular social or cultural setting on the basis of participant observation in addition to interviews and informal conversations" (ibid., 56).

An interpretivist approach shares similarities with ethnography, however it does not base itself on a total immersion in the setting. It prioritises interviews, though which "interpretation, perceptions, meanings and understandings [are] the primary data sources" (ibid., p. 56). The purpose is to understand people's processes of understanding, reason, etc.

This multi-method strategy has allowed me to collect data from cultural settings and social interactions as well as from the perceptions and perspectives of the specific people being researched.

3.2.2 Semi-structured interviews, focus groups and participant observation

Semi-structured interviews were the predominant data collection method during the fieldwork as this design allows the respondents to elaborate and develop their answers freely. This method allows the use of an interview guide, but none of the actors involved in the interview are strictly bound to it, allowing space for an organic conversation to evolve (Longhurst, 2010, p. 102-103). Respondents are free to provide supplementary information they consider pertinent and relevant to the themes and topics of the research. This can inform the researcher of subjects he or she is not aware of.

I chose to supplement interviews with focus groups, which also took on a semi-structured nature. These focus groups were based on interactions between respondents, which allowed for information to grow and develop in an organic way (Mason, 2002, p. 64).

Finally, I adopted participant observation as an important qualitative strategy. Its interactive nature allowed me to immerse myself in the research setting, in order to observe first-hand the range of dimensions of that setting (ibid., p. 84). The aim of this was to gain knowledge into how the livelihood, cultural and environmental practices work within the Ogiek settlements.

3.2.3 Sampling

I adopted the method of strategic sampling, which aims to produce "a relevant range of contexts or phenomena, […] in relation to the wider universe, but not represent it directly" (ibid, pp. 123-124). This includes any range of experiences, characteristics, categories, cases, etc. Additionally, strategic sampling aligns with non-probability sampling based on "researcher's choice and a population which is accessible and available" (Setia, 2016, p. 1).

3.2.4 Access to the field

I gained access to the field thanks to my relationship with the local Nakuru-based NGO, Ogiek People's Development Programme (ODPD), specialised in Ogiek's human and land rights. They hosted me and provided relevant, empirical understanding of the Ogiek context in the East Mau Forest.

I conducted an interview with the Gender and Youth Officer of OPDP, collecting primary data on Ogiek identity and the importance of beekeeping in conservation, traditional practices and economic development. Additionally, OPDP facilitated my access to the field locations and provided an interpreter who worked closely with me.

Certainty of accessibility to the field was limited due to the arrival and development of Covid-19 in Kenya on the 13th of March 2020. It was not clear whether it would be possible to carry out research in remote areas while respecting the security and sensitivity of the community members. We held lengthy and detailed meetings at OPDP discussing the security measures and political and cultural implications of the virus in Kenya, including a potential lock-down. However, given the low number of cases at that time, we considered it possible to access the target areas of Nessuit and Mariashoni. Following from the field experiences we would assess whether to continue the field research.

3.2.5 Fieldwork Locations: Nessuit and Mariashoni

I conducted two days of fieldwork and collected significant primary data in the rural settlements of Nessuit and Mariashoni in the East Mau Forest. I collectively carried out nine (n=9) semi-structured interviews, including two (n=2) focus groups in the two Ogiek communities.

In Nessuit specifically, I carried out five (n=5) semi-structured interviews with three elders (of which two men and a woman), a woman community leader and a focus group discussion with two scouts (men). I preceded all interviews with a brief informal conversation to establish rapport and gather background information. I then acquired their consent to record the interview. The interviews took place at the interviewees' homestead. The interview was followed by another informal conversation which included information considered essential by the respondent. The interviews were often conducted in the presence of multiple people, such as family and friends, who would add to the conversation. The interview guides varied based on the people I interviewed, respecting the difference for example between the scouts and elder women.

In Mariashoni, the research method adopted a similar process. I interviewed five (n=5) respondents of which three were community leaders (all women) and two were elders (one man and one woman). Here, in addition to the informal conversations, interviews and focus group discussions, I practiced participant observation.

Participant observation provided a more detailed understanding of the explanation of traditional methods of beekeeping. I was involved in the preparation of a fire, of which the smoke was used to remove the bees from the beehive to harvest the honey. It was important to observe and participate in the process to better understand indigenous practices.

Regarding additional methods of data collection, I was hosted by a family between the night of the 17th and 18th of March 2020 and engaged in informal conversations and participant observation. I was involved in local and indigenous household and livelihood practices and recorded information through field-notes. I recorded additional data through field-notes and photography during my two-day fieldwork in Nessuit and Mariashoni to document the landscape and the context which the communities inhabit.

3.3 Fieldwork Limitations

3.3.1 Language

During data collection, I noticed some linguistic barriers which initially represented a challenge. The interpreter for example did not know the meaning of some key words, such as 'resilience'. This is because some vocabulary in English does not accurately translate into Ogiek language and vice versa. This made it difficult for the interpreter to convey the essence of the question to the respondents. However, we were able to move past this efficiently. I reformulated the meaning of the word and she was able to ask the question framed in a different way.

3.3.2 Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 global pandemic limited the fieldwork in a decisive way and led to the impossibility to continue research through this method. This section depicts the limitations encountered which brought the adoption of other research methods.

3.3.2a Positionality

Positionality plays a central role in fieldwork as it reflects both the biography and personal aspects of the researcher, which determine how they are presented in the field. (England, 1994, 251) It includes the fluidity of experience which celebrates the dynamic nature of identity, creating a shared personal space between the researcher and the local inhabitants (Cousin, 2010).

The presence of Covid-19 negatively impacted my positionality, making it difficult to conduct field research. My ethnicity and Italian nationality framed me as a potential carrier of the virus. At time, Covid-19 was still informally named a European virus. This affected the community's behaviour towards me. I experienced significant social distancing by community members who had not been informed of my purpose and role in the villages.

3.2.2b Ethical considerations

In Nessuit and Mariashoni there was a palpable and growing fear concerning the spread of the virus. While my respondents were open and receptive, Covid-19 presented itself as an obstacle in conducting exhaustive research.

Such fear challenged the ethics of the fieldwork which led me to make important changes in the data collection process, sample size and methods used. In fact, I did not want to overstep my boundaries and impose a standard of research which was not suitable for the present context.

Given the increased vulnerability of the community members due to poverty, limited transportation and medical facilities, I did not consider it ethical to expose the members of Nessuit and Mariashoni to my continued field visits. Based on this, I considered that to continue with fieldwork during the pandemic would have impacted and limited the quality of the filed research. For these reasons, I decided to discontinue my field research completely.

3.3.2c Security

Uncertainty regarding the progression of Covid-19 in Kenya challenged my personal security, given that the potential of the virus could exacerbate pre-existing instabilities within the country. As I conducted

the research alone, and given the potential imminence of a lock-down, upon extensive discussion with OPDP, my supervisor and the coordinator of the Master's, I made the decision to return home.

3.4 Changes in Methodology

This section details the adoption of remote qualitative research as the optimal method to continue and finalise the data collection.

3.4.1 Internet-based Qualitative Research

I adopted the internet-based strategy of online qualitative interviews, and specifically the method of VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) to conduct data collection. VoIP is a system "which provides users with a way to send voice and video across the internet via a synchronous (real-time) connection" (Lo Iacono et al., 2016, p. 2). Examples of this are Skype, Zoom, FaceTime, etc.

This system permits visual and audio recording of the video conversation, allowing for the interview to be transcribed. I consider this to be an optimal method as it allowed me to "transcend geographic boundaries" and "breaks the barrier of time and space" (Lo Iacono et al., 2016, p. 4).

Specifically, I used the software Zoom, and conducted two (n=2) one-hour long interviews, respectively with the Executive Director and a with a volunteer at the organisation specialised in Ogiek culture, women's empowerment and traditional practices. The respondents were selected through strategic and non-probability sampling. I composed a targeted interview guide and conducted informal conversations and semi-structured interviews.

3.4.2 Limitations of Internet-based Qualitative Research

The limitations of this method concern the inability to collect primary data from the Ogiek community members of Nessuit and Mariashoni. This is because they lack stable internet access, and also most community members are not literate in computer-based systems. This reality has cut this demographic out of my continued online research (Lo Iacono et al., 2016, p. 8).

Lack of rapport is another potential limitation as it is difficult to develop through online real-time audio-visual platforms such as VoIP (Lo Iacono et al., 2016, p. 9). Thanks to my pre-existing relationship with both the Executive Director and the volunteer at OPDP, however, this was not an obstacle.

3.5 Chapter conclusion

This chapter presents the methods used during the research process conducted between the 27th of February and the 29th of May 2020. It specifically highlights the process of fieldwork and depicts the conditions of conducting fieldwork during the Covid-19 global pandemic. Furthermore, it shows the necessary changes in the methods used to continue the data collection remotely. Overall, this chapter is an elaborate depiction of the methodology and research process which were involved in the construction of the research and data collection.

Chapter IV - Data Analysis

This chapter represents analysis of the empirical primary data collected during the fieldwork in Nessuit and Mariashoni, Kenya, and the online qualitative interviews conducted remotely.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse and understand the forms of eco-cultural resilience the Ogiek practice and develop in their communities. This includes how these actions speak to the environmental protection and the preservation of their cultural identity. It focuses on the elements which compose the symbiotic relationship between the Ogiek and the Mau Forest, which strengthen the framework of eco-cultural resilience.

Finally, I present my understanding of the challenges they face, which obstruct their cultural continuity and limit the further practice of their resilience and identity.

4.1 Setting the Scene: Nessuit and Mariashoni

Nessuit and Mariashoni are two hilly neighbouring areas of green highlands located on the escarpment of the East Mau Forest, standing between approximately 1300 and 3000 meters above sea level. They are part of the larger Mau Forest Complex, home to Ogiek communities. These areas are situated within Nakuru county, to the West of Nakuru Town, and within the Rift Valley. They are villages formed in the late 1990s and early 2000s by the government, which excised forested areas and reserves from the East Mau Forest and converted them into settlements to relocate the Ogiek (Langat el al., 2016).

Nessuit is a heterogeneous settlement, with three sub-locations composed predominantly of Ogiek communities, but including other immigrant ethnic groups brought in through additional settlement schemes (Musembi and Kameri-Mbote, 2013, p. 15; Langat et al., 2018). The specific research area in Nessuit was in a sub-location with the same name, inhabited solely by Ogiek. Mariashoni has a similar nature, however it is an older homogeneous settlement occupied solely by Ogiek (Langat et al., 2016).
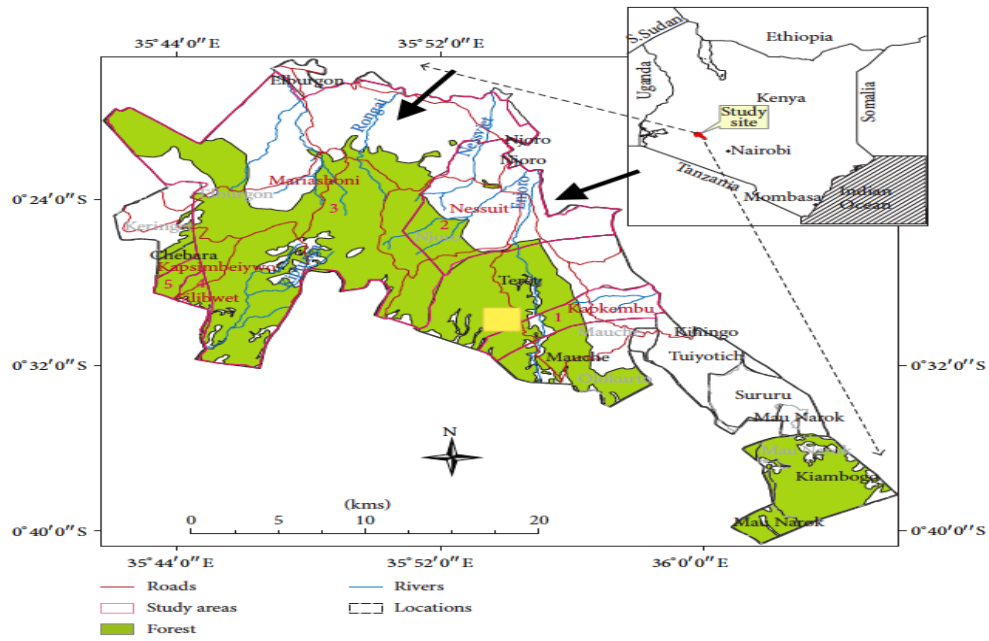
Figure I: Map of the study location - Nessuit and Mariasoni, East Mau Forest[2]

A significant characteristic of Nessuit and Mariashoni is that they have been routinely and systematically subject to government activity, which has allowed industrial forestry, including logging and resource extraction. These practices have reduced forest land coverage of the surrounding areas, from which the Ogiek gather important resources, products and services. For this reason, most community members reside adjacent to the forested areas known as Kiptunga and Logoman (Rambaldi et al, 2007; Albertazzi et al., 2018).

Photo 1: Picture of Ogiek households adjacent to a forested area in Nessuit, East Mau Forest

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[2] Retrieved from: Langat et al. (2016) "Role of Forest Resources to Local Livelihoods: The Case of East Mau Forest Ecosystem, Kenya"

Additionally, the Ogiek have been subject to incomplete and irregular land division processes, affecting Nessuit and Mariashoni. This has left the Ogiek of this area with high levels of landlessness and lack of land ownership which impact their natural and cultural landscapes (Musembi and Kameri-Mbote, 2013, p. 15). Community members consider land dispossession as increasing their vulnerability, as they are unable to defend their homesteads and surrounding area from external intervention, such as encroachment by other communities, environmental intervention and resource extraction.

> The government viewed this land as government, state property, so they had all the rights to do whatever they wanted with the land. Initially the place had indigenous trees, but the government came and deforested this space and planted the exotic trees for commercial purposes. That's the government, and this is why there's no trees. Now I am vulnerable, along with the community. We are vulnerable also because of how the community and land was subdivided and they [the government] did not give us full documents[3]

These key features of Nessuit and Mariashoni offer important insight into the settlements and contextualise the areas of fieldwork and data collection. Addressing the condition of landlessness and deforestation in Nessuit and Mariashoni sets the scene for an exploration of the primary data.

4.2 The Mau Forest as Home and Identity

"Our identity is based on our attachment to the forest. We depend on the forest for our survival. We depend on the forest for gathering food, for collecting medicine, for honey. My lifestyle is especially attached to the forest, this defines me as Ogiek"[4]

The Ogiek of Nessuit and Mariashoni, although they do not reside in forested areas, regard the Mau Forest as their home. The majority of the Ogiek have not lived in any place other than the Mau Forest since time immemorial. They continue to view the land as representing their identity. All respondents have credited the Mau Forest as the source of their cultural distinctiveness, which includes language,

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[3] Author's Interview on March 18th, 2020 with Respondent 10 in Nessuit, an Ogiek woman and community leader in Mariashoni
[4] Author's Interview on March 17th, 2020 with Respondent 3 in Nessuit, an Ogiek man and community elder in Nessuit

social organisation, cultural values, religion and modes of livelihood production. The Ogiek attribute their identity to their historical permanence in the forest.

The Ogiek consider any threat to their permanence in the forest as a violation of their rights, identity and cultural continuity (Rotarangi and Russell, 2009). This is because the elements which represent and maintain their indigenous identity are interconnected and ingrained in the resources the forest offers. The attempt to remove the Ogiek from their habitat interferes with their identity and puts it at risk.

> Once the forest is destroyed also our identity is threatened because of our attachment to the forest. If the trees are not planted, we lack shade, we lack where to hang beehives. This threatens our identity[5]

The Mau Forest was officially recognised as the Ogiek's rightful ancestral home by the African Court in their 2017 verdict[6]. They understood the essential link between the indigenous population and their environment and acknowledged it as their source of identity, culture and livelihood. They consider the Ogiek to "have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership [...] with due respect to the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous people concerned"[7].

The Mau Forest's resources are the source of Ogiek indigeneity and distinctiveness. The forest upholds Ogiek identity in its totality, representing an encompassing range of cultural features. These include language, symbols, rituals and traditions, ways of producing shelter and homesteads, and economic activities, all of which reflect the unique nature of Ogiek identity.

The African Court further observes that it is exactly their permanence within and attachment to the forest which promotes the use and development of their specific cultural attributes. They argue that through their land ownership, the Ogiek can practice cultural continuity and self-identification. They can "transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity as the basis of their continued existence as peoples in accordance with their own cultural patterns and social institutions"[8].

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[5] Author's Interview on March 18th, 2020 with Respondent 7 in Mariashoni, an Ogiek man and community elder in Mariashoni
[6] African Commission on Human Rights and People's Rights VS Republic of Kenya
[7] African Commission on Human Rights and People's Rights VS Republic of Kenya, pp. 40-41
[8] African Commission on Human Rights and People's Rights VS Republic of Kenya, p. 35

4.3 Ogiek identity: exploring eco-cultural resilience

Against the backdrop, the next section 4.3.1 Cultural Resilience firstly describes and analyses the practices which define and support Ogiek culture. From here, section 4.3.2. Environmental Resilience depicts how the Mau Forest is protected through Ogiek cultural and livelihood practices. Collectively, these sections support 4.3.3. Eco-cultural Resilience, in which I analyse the specific Ogiek practices which sustain and reinforce their eco-cultural resilience. The section will also analyse how this resilience is supported by the Ogiek's symbiotic relationship with the Mau Forest.

4.3.1 Cultural Resilience

Although traditionally they were hunter-gatherers, today all respondents consider beekeeping as the primary practice which supports and represents Ogiek identity. Beekeeping was practiced in tandem with hunting and gathering. The respondents attribute the use of beekeeping over hunting-gatherer practices, and specifically hunting, to government-led land tenure changes within the Mau Forest. Nonetheless, beekeeping remains the predominant symbol of culture, a source of livelihood, and a fundamental link between themselves and the environment.

> Beekeeping is something I was born with, I found my parents practicing the same. It is how we maintain culture. We practice beekeeping and hang the beehives in the forest. We use dead logs from indigenous trees to prepare traditional beehives. It is also how we get our livelihood. We also keep bees for consumption and selling[9]

> You know, right now there is no way you can say you are an Ogiek if you don't have a beehive. That is something that will symbolise us, or you as an Ogiek. So even right now, when you go to town, they will tell you I want honey from the Ogiek community, because they know they are selling pure honey. They have not added any chemicals, it is very pure[10]

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[9]Author's Interview on March 18th, 2020 with Respondent 10 in Nessuit, an Ogiek woman and community leader in Mariashoni

[10] Author's Interview on March 12th, 2020 with Respondent 11 in Nakuru, Gender and Youth Officer of OPDP

Respondents position beekeeping as connecting to and strengthening other attributes and features of cultural life and Ogiek identity. Honey harvested from the beehives is processed by elders into traditional brews, which play an elemental role in traditional ceremonies, such as marriage and circumcision. Traditional artefacts, such as small bowls and utensils are then produced and used for collecting and transporting the honey brew, and traditional attire, made from hyrax skin and worn during ceremonies.

Together with the honey we are using traditional herbs. We mix it and then they use it in traditional ceremonies, we prepare a brew called 'muratina', and it's used during traditional ceremonies and we also use it for [personal] consumption and sell it for livelihood[11]

Photo 2: An Elder Ogiek woman holding a traditional bowl[12].

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[11] Author's Interview on March 17th, 2020 with Respondent 4 in Nessuit, an Ogiek man and community elder in Nessuit

[12] These traditional bowls are made by women and elders using hyrax skin. They are commonly embroidered also with beads in patterns and colours which reflect Ogiek symbolism. The bowls are made to hold honey, mixtures or traditional food such as Ugali, which are transported to the circumcision and marriage ceremonies.

Photo 3: An Elder Ogiek man wearing traditional attire[13].

Photo 4: Ogiek women holding traditional clay bowls used to conserve honey and food.

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[13] This traditional attire is made out of hyrax skin and is traditionally worn during circumcision and marriage ceremonies. It is a way to symbolise Ogiek identity as the hyrax is a local animal to the Mau Forest. The Ogiek however are currently banned from hunting the animal as the Kenyan Government considered this practice to put the animal at risk. For this reason, the continued use of wearing the hyrax skin

Culturally, the Ogiek have developed a detailed understanding of the specific properties of honey, as well as the characteristics and locations of the herbs within the local neighbouring forest. Through this they produce medicinal brews using indigenous honey, herbs and roots gathered from the forest. Such brews have been historically used to fight and alleviate ailments such as infections, the flu, the common cold, etc. Although Ogiek communities also consume 'Western' medicines, the medicinal brews are still routinely produced and widely consumed.

Analysing this information, I submit that the practice and production of these traditional and medicinal brews are an example of Ogiek resilience and cultural continuity. Indeed, from a young age, children are brought to the forest where the elders teach the boys how to harvest honey and the girls how to forage for medicinal and traditional plants.

> We mentor the younger generation, we let them understand what culture is, passing it from one generation to another. We still teach the young how to keep beehives and how to harvest the traditional way[14]

> We collect herbs. Together with elderly women we look for medicinal herbs, traditional medicine. It is something from the old times, and we still do it now also for money. We were taught about various types of herbs which are used and the things about them, like how to prepare [them]. Now we teach the children. We know the role of every tree in the forest. We know you're supposed to take the roots of these trees, the fruits of this tree and that some roots are not supposed to be touched[15]

Beekeeping in the communities is also connected to personal and economic livelihood. The honey harvested is used for consumption and/or is sold for profit. Some respondents argue that their personal and economic livelihood is the source and the basis of their culture. They have in fact attributed the frequent collective practice of beekeeping in Nessuit and Mariashoni to livelihood maintenance.

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[14] Author's Interview on March 17th, 2020 with Respondent 4 in Nessuit, an Ogiek man and community elder in Nessuit

[15] Author's Interview on March 18th, 2020 with Respondent 6 in Mariashoni, an Ogiek woman and community leader in Mariashoni

Photo 5: Picture of a modern Ogiek beehive (currently unpopulated by bees)

I argue that livelihoods grant a form of stability and development which creates the groundwork on which the Ogiek are able to freely practice their culture. In fact, Ogiek responses have given insight into the increased challenges of supporting themselves and their family with food, sanitation, education, clothing and health care, without a stable income. They argue that the lack of such essential elements in daily life can result in an increased difficulty in participating in the cultural features of Ogiek life which strengthen and support their identity. This reality marks the importance of the collective involvement of the community members in beekeeping and honey production for their economic livelihood.

Rotarangi and Russell (2009) support this argument, by stating how livelihood stability is the foundation of culture. Without livelihoods and social relations, cultural expression is limited and threatened. Poverty and dependency on external systems for subsistence greatly hinder cultural expression (pp. 211-213). I posit that resilience and the expression of indigenous distinctiveness is challenged if indigenous communities are not able to access basic resources such as food, education and healthcare, and attention is directed towards survival.

Beekeeping activities furthermore fulfil a fundamental role, as they represent a great part of the social make-up and fabric of Ogiek communities. In Nessuit and Mariashoni, beekeeping is practiced and carried out through community involvement in groups and collectives. Participation is comprised of young, middle-aged and elder men and women who work together over common purposes.

Supported by Pretty (2011, p. 131), I suggest that this is enabled through a heterarchical structure, based on high social capital and emphasising bonding, bridging and linking—a network of social

relations. In fact, community members use the groups as platforms on which they organise and direct community initiatives and activities. These are for the purpose of improving their livelihood, maintaining culture through teachings, and planning for forest protection, all of which reinforce Ogiek identity.

4.3.2 Environmental Resilience

"By planting trees… Everybody protects the trees to protect the beehives. This is the connection between Ogiek culture, livelihood and environmental protection"[16]

The Ogiek of Nessuit and Mariashoni say that by protecting the forest they are fulfilling their ancestral role as custodians and reaffirming the East Mau Forest as their home and source of expression of identity. Their conservation model is based on their cultural practices and they contend that they cannot practice conservation without beekeeping.

> We can rehabilitate the forest which will be beneficial for climate change as well as livelihood of the Ogiek community. Indigenous communities like the Ogiek protect the forest, we can conserve the forest, [and] can prevent any intervention, external, locals, anybody who is interfering with the forest[17]

Beekeeping and hanging beehives in the forest generates biodiversity in forested area, as it creates a rich environment where indigenous bees can access their nectar and pollinate. The Ogiek produce beehives from dead African Juniper or Kenya-Cedar trees, indigenous to the local area, and these are then hung onto living Kenya-Cedar. Ogiek practices do not interfere with living organisms as they know the "value of a tree"[18], and cutting them down or disrupting the environment would be counterproductive.

> Environment conservation is part of the Ogiek livelihood, because when you conserve the forest, you are giving the opportunity for bees to pollinate, and you will be in a position to

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[16] Author's Interview on March 17th, 2020 with Respondent 1 in Nessuit, an Ogiek woman and community elder in Nessuit
[17] Author's Interview on April 20th, 2020, with Respondent 12 Remote Interview, Executive Director of OPDP
[18] Author's Interview on April 23rd, 2020 with Respondent 13 Remote Interview, Volunteer of OPDP

attract them to come over. So, if you don't practice environmental conservation, you cannot practice beekeeping[19]

Supported by Berkes (1993), Berkes and Ross (2013) and Kofinas (2009), I argue that tree-planting represents a form of environmental planning which the Ogiek have developed through their detailed TEK of the Mau Forest. In fact, indigenous tree-planting represents a strong form of environmental conservation, which creates resilience in response to non-native and invasive uses of the land. Encroaching communities practice large-scale agriculture and logging, which the Ogiek and the African Court[20] say disrupts the natural organism and biodiversity of the Mau Forest. This has included the planting of foreign trees for commercial use, which has produced a reduction of local flora and fauna.

Monocultures, or rather the [tree] plantations are for business… it has nothing to do with pollen. The bees cannot get pollen from those trees, so it is a very terrible ecosystem change[21]

Photo 6: Example of large-scale agriculture and deforestation in Nessuit

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[19]Author's Interview on March 12th, 2020 with Respondent 11 in Nakuru, Gender and Youth Officer of OPDP
[20] African Commission on Human Rights and People's Rights VS Republic of Kenya
[21]Author's Interview on April 20th, 2020 with Respondent 12 Remote Interview, Executive Director of OPDP

I argue that tree-planting supports eco-cultural resilience because it concerns long-term environmental planning. Given the cultural connection the Ogiek have to the forest, tree-planting aims to strengthen the density of native indigenous trees around Nessuit and Mariashoni. This long-term goal furthermore contributes to the creation of stable cultural continuity for generations to come. In fact, as Kofinas (2009) states, "a common feature of indigenous environmental planning is long-term goal setting and deep historical reference to past resource changes that provide an intergenerational awareness of social-ecological processes and change" (as cited in Rotarangi and Russell, 2009, p. 209).

Furthermore, the Ogiek communities of Nessuit and Mariashoni represent an optimal example of indigenous environmental planning through their participation in tree-planting and tree-nursery groups. In these groups, members are involved in nurturing indigenous seedlings and preparing them for planting. They are guided by Ogiek elders who sensitise the community on where best to plant when the seedlings are ready. Groups also work and collaborate with the Community Forest Association (CFA), and the Scouts, an Ogiek local-level committee which represents the front line of indigenous environmental protection in Kiptunga and Logoman forest.

> We normally guide them, we guide them in terms of what types of trees to plant, strategic positions in the forest, and then they normally report to them when they encounter logging in the forest. We are guided by our traditional knowledge [of] forest conservation[22]

The role of the Scouts is fundamental. With their traditional knowledge, they patrol the forest and perform a guardian-like role, ensuring that there are no illegal activities going, such as logging, charcoal burning or forest fires. This illustrates how the Scouts operate through TEK (Berkes, 1993), which is fundamental for environmental resilience. The forest is as an organism which constantly exchanges information and resources with its inhabitants (ibid., p. 3).

 Furthermore, they scout for the most ideal locations to plant trees and inform the tree-nursery groups. Respondents state that a good location for tree-planting is on the banks of the rivers that flow through the East Mau Forest. This is because the trees, through their root system, prevent soil erosion and keep the river from drying up, also allowing them continued access to fresh sources of water. Tree planting provides a source of fresh and clean air which can help contribute to climate change mitigation.

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[22] Author's Interview on March 17th, 2020 with Respondent 3 in Nessuit, an Ogiek man and community elder in Nessuit

Tree planting can mitigate the effects of climate change. I am protecting the forest because that is the source of fresh air and when there are no trees, when the environment is not good and there are no more trees, you cannot live well… When you plant trees, you can protect the riverbanks and also protect the rivers. You also increase the clean oxygen around you because trees consume carbon and so it makes the air around clean and it's also a source of rains[23]

The challenges of the environment are when the forest is destroyed, the streams also dry and they lack water. So, they are striving to protect it, so they are protecting the water sources, the water catchment areas[24]

4.3.3 Eco-cultural Resilience

"We try to show that you cannot separate us from the Mau Forest, and we do this through conservation of the forest"[25]

I argue that the environmental protection practiced by the Ogiek of Nessuit and Mariashoni also actively protects their culture and identity. Most tree-planting is in fact performed for the purpose of preserving the bees and the beehives in the forest. This in turn preserves their culture. I suggest that this is a symbiotic relationship between the Ogiek and the forest, based on reciprocal interactions, which consolidates their eco-cultural resilience. This reciprocity further preserves the natural cycle of the ecosystem.

I consider the relationship between conservation and cultural identity to characterise the Ogiek as a unique indigenous group with specific attributes. Supported by Pretty (2011), I consider this particular relationship to strengthen their cultural and livelihood practices, social structures, beliefs, and customary rules (p. 129). I posit that this symbiotic relationship distinguishes them from other indigenous

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[23] Author's Interview on March 18th, 2020 with Respondent 15 in Mariashoni, an Ogiek elder and a community leader in Mariashoni
[24] Author's Interview on March 17th, 2020 with Respondent 2 in Nessuit, two Scouts of Nessuit involved in protecting the Mau Forest
[25] Author's Interview on April 23rd, 2020, with Respondent 13 Remote Interview, Volunteer of OPDP

communities who have encroached on Ogiek land and are living in the Mau Forest. These communities have not co-evolved with the forest as the Ogiek have. Supported by Berkes (1993) and Berkes and Ross (2013), I suggest that for this reason they lack traditional ecological knowledge of the Mau Forest. They are also disconnected from cultural and livelihood practices which preserve the biodiversity of the forest.

Photo 7: A young Ogiek man demonstrating the honey harvesting process[26]

In contrast to non-native groups, Ogiek maintain that "everybody protects the trees to protect the beehives" [27], and this "is the connection between Ogiek culture, livelihood and environmental protection"[28]. In fact, the Ogiek say that as traditional forest-dwellers they know the value of a tree, both environmentally and culturally, and state that "planting is the strongest way of proving the forest belongs to us"[29]. For this reason, repopulating the forests with indigenous trees protects both their environmental and cultural heritage, enabling eco-cultural resilience.

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[26] The Ogiek man is producing smoke which he will blow into the traditional beehives, situated in an adjacent Kenya-Cedar tree. This practice represents eco-cultural resilience as it combines the preservation of the environment with the preservation of his culture. Further explanation is found in section 4.2.3. Environmental Resilience and 4.3.3. Eco-cultural resilience

[27] Author's Interview on April 23rd, 2020 with Respondent 13 Remote Interview, Volunteer of OPDP

[28] Author's Interview on March 17th, 2020 with Respondent 5 in Nessuit, an Ogiek woman and community leader in Nessuit

[29] Author's Interview on April 23rd, 2020 with Respondent 13 Remote Interview, Volunteer of OPDP

I'm conserving the forest and for areas like this place we're trying to plant more. It's important. The flowers are used by the bees so it's important to plant more trees[30]

I see beekeeping as a part of maintaining Ogiek culture and also tree planting as a way of maintaining Ogiek culture, and also as a form of livelihood, we earn a living once we sell the honey. That is, even during difficult times[31]

For example, as mentioned in section 4.3.2 Environmental Resilience, planting of indigenous trees leads to greater biodiversity, allowing the local ecosystem to stabilise, and a higher yield of the honey used for cultural practices and livelihoods. Preserving the forest also protects a variety of elements such as traditional and medicinal plants, herbs and food, and other cultural customs.

The trees planted still help us preserve the culture, because the kind of seedling they do plant is the one that supports beekeeping. The indigenous trees we plant support beekeeping. We also plant a kind of tree which is used as herbal medicine... so we still maintain our culture…[32]

Tree-planting also creates cultural spaces within Kitptunga and Logoman, where the Ogiek go practice traditional ceremonies such as circumcision and marriage. This is because woodland areas shelter the Ogiek from other neighbouring ethnic groups during intimate cultural practices. Forested areas increase protection because the Ogiek have more TEK than non-native indigenous communities (Berkes, 1993). Tree-planting also creates forested areas closer to their homestead, which increases their safety. In these safe spaces, the Ogiek are free to express their cultural heritage.

As discussed in section 4.3.2 Environmental Resilience, tree-planting is also an investment in a future forest with higher indigenous tree density, which strengthens Ogiek identity. In fact, a higher population of indigenous trees in turn strongly reflects the ancestral and historical environmental make-up of the forest, preceding government deforestation and illegal logging (Kofinas, 2009; Rotarangi and Russell, 2009).

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[30] Author's Interview on March 18th, 2020 with Respondent 10 in Nessuit, an Ogiek woman and community leader in Mariashoni

[31] Author's Interview on March 18th, 2020 with Respondent 15 in Mariashoni, an Ogiek elder and a community leader in Mariashoni

[32] Author's Interview on March 17th, 2020 with Respondent 5 in Nessuit, an Ogiek woman and community leader in Nessuit

About ceremonies, for instance for initiation of boys, it normally happens in December, so you need to be in a place which is bushy, not in an open place. So, when you conserve the environment, you can do [the ceremony] nearer, you don't have to go far away, and you promote your identity through that. If you don't protect the environment, how will people recognize you as an Ogiek, because the Ogiek are known to be people who protect the environment and that is something we want to promote. We are really doing it.[33]

Furthermore, I consider that eco-cultural resilience is also reflected through adaptability and argue that adaptability highlights the extent to which two variables in a system, the Ogiek and the environment are bound to one another. Adaptability to external environmental changes is essential for the consolidation of eco-cultural resilience (Pretty, 2011, p. 132). Ogiek cultural practices historically have changed from hunting and gathering to a focus predominantly on beekeeping.

I consider the co-evolution of Ogiek culture in tandem with the environment to have strengthened their practice of beekeeping. This is because the strength and resilience of an indigenous community does not arise from its being fixed and unchanging, but rather from its flexibility in response to externally driven modifications. I posit that a community's inability to adapt to changes in its environment is likely to create challenges within the community, such as the inability to access resources or practice livelihoods.

The fundamental challenges of everyday life subsequently come to limit cultural and social practices, because of their dependency on subsistence. I consider Ogiek livelihood to be strengthened by their adaptability to changes in the environment and the forest make-up. In fact, supported by previous argumentation in section 4.3.1. Cultural Resilience and by primary data, I posit that Ogiek livelihood is the foundation of culture, environmental protection and eco-cultural resilience.

Through adaptability, the Ogiek community has been able not only to maintain the practice of beekeeping, but to place it in the foreground, emphasizing its environmental and cultural benefits. This indicates how beekeeping has been an optimal form of environmental protection, which has created stability within the environment, and which in turn strengthens their cultural identity.

Overall, I argue that the Ogiek have successfully adapted and self-organised into culturally and environmentally stable structures through eco-cultural resilience. They have recognised changes in their

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[33] Author's Interview on March 12th, 2020 with Respondent 10 in Nakuru, Gender and Youth Officer of OPDP

surrounding landscape and managed them through what Walker et al. (2006) call "persistence, adaptability and transformability" (as cited in Arora-Jonsson, 2016, p. 99).

> Beekeeping is our identity, but livelihood is the source of everything… of culture, of development. If we don't have a livelihood we can't speak about culture. We can't! You see, when you have something you call your own, you can have that self confidence among yourselves. If you don't, who will even want to hear you when you speak?[34]

An example of this is how the Ogiek have adapted to neighbouring livelihood practices. They have adopted non-native small-scale farming and animal husbandry, which includes sheep and poultry. These practices are used primarily for their subsistence and economic livelihood.

Subsistence, as previously mentioned, is the source of indigenous cultural, social and environmental wellbeing. For this reason, I argue that the Ogiek's adaptability to these practices represents strength within the community, and a resilience that serves to maintain their indigenous identity. In fact, these livelihood practices grant them the stability to express their eco-cultural practices of beekeeping, tree-planting and environmental protection.

Within the Nessuit and Mariashoni, there is some divide among the respondents regarding the influence agriculture and animal rearing have on Ogiek cultural resilience. Some argue that they do not compromise Ogiek identity, because these practices were adopted by previous generations. Others have been adamant that such practices do not reflect their culture, arguing that they threaten their original identity.

My position is that this debate within the community fortifies the distinctiveness of the Ogiek. This is because even though they have adapted non-native livelihood practices, they have developed them in their own way, which distinguishes them from neighbouring communities. The Ogiek are using these livelihoods to ensure intra-communal stability, which supports the practice of beekeeping, foraging, tree-planting, and ceremonies. These practices reinforce their eco-cultural resilience, as well as granting them additional livelihoods.

> I'm involved in maize planting, beans planting, potato farming. I don't have a problem with the activities because they were brought by the great forefathers… I don't see it as a

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[34] Author's Interview on March 12th, 2020 with Respondent 10 in Nakuru, Gender and Youth Officer of OPDP

threat to culture, although I've never accepted that it is our culture. One thing I'm insisting on is on beekeeping. I've always wanted to keep beekeeping alive[35]

Another feature of eco-cultural resilience reflected in the Ogiek's cultural and environmental practices is clan-based land management (White, 2005; Horowitz, 2008). The Ogiek have a clan-based system which regulates their access to forest resources. This system fundamentally protects their cultural heritage, considering that land represents their cultural identity.

Supported by Horowitz (2008), I hold that clan-based environmental protection is the optimal form of cultural and environmental protection and resource access. This is because nobody understands the land better than the indigenous communities that live on it. I further claim that clan-based land management successfully mitigates intra-ethnic conflict. Cultural sharing and clan-membership arguably represent the most profound connection a people can have to their indigenous identity. For this reason, the violation of customary laws and socio-ethnic structures would result in serious consequences.

I posit that this offers a deeper understanding of eco-cultural resilience, as it details the social structures and customary rules involved in preserving the environment and their own culture. It represents the most basic connection between an indigenous group and their habitat, and it excludes involvement of political, hierarchical, or external power structures. Their cultural connection to the land reduces the likelihood of political influence and corruption, which strengthens their eco-cultural resilience.

Government intervention and ethnic encroachment, however, have weakened and destabilised the Ogiek clan-based system. Respondents argue that once they are in possession of their land rights, they will able to base all forest management on clan systems.

Ogiek has clans, and each clan has their own territory. So, there was no way you could sneak to another person's territory. If you are caught in another person's territory, you are liable… you will pay. For instance, when you are hunting, and then the animal which you are chasing crosses to another person's territory, there is no way you can go hunt in that territory. You need to first seek permission from the owners before you go and hunt. The same case applies for firewood. You know for us, you are only supposed to collect the firewood which is dead. So, there is no way you can go and cut down the one which is still standing. It is against our taboo. If you want to go to the other territory to collect firewood,

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[35] Author's Interview on March 17th, 2020 with Respondent 5 in Nessuit, an Ogiek woman and community leader in Nessuit

you have to go and seek permission. We want to maintain our environment, we want to maintain our culture[36]

4.4 Destabilising factors to eco-cultural resilience

Despite the legal and indigenous recognition of the important environmental and cultural relationship between the Ogiek and the Mau Forest and the Ogiek's rightful ownership of the land, the Ogiek of Nessuit and Mariashoni have presented examples of challenges which obstruct their access to and practice of eco-cultural resilience.

The respondents state that the overarching difficulty is the Kenyan government's continued reluctance to return the land to the Ogiek. The Ogiek of Nessuit and Mariashoni find themselves in a condition of landlessness and dispossession which greatly impacts the stability of their culture and livelihood. This lack of land ownership has enabled historical government involvement in the forest, changing its natural make-up. Specifically, the government has allowed deforestation and logging, and planted non-native trees. With lack of land deeds, the Ogiek were not able to prevent this from happening.

The government cut down the trees because we didn't have the documents, but also because we are weak… if you try protecting them [the trees] they arrest you, if you try protesting, they arrest you, so you have no power, you just keep watching[37]

The forest was destroyed. The KFS lured us saying 'let us clear the forest so we can plant exotic trees which blossom first so they can be harvesting honey in shorter season, so they don't have to wait a long time for the flowers to blossom'. The indigenous trees take longer before they bloom, so they lured us so and came in with exotic trees. The government did, through KFS. They came in to cut the trees and planted the exotic ones[38]

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[36] Author's Interview on March 12th, 2020 with Respondent 11 in Nakuru, Gender and Youth Officer of OPDP
[37] Author's Interview on March 18th, 2020 with Respondent 14 in Mariashoni, an Ogiek man and community elder in Mariashoni
[38] Author's Interview on March 18th, 2020 with Respondent 15 in Mariashoni, an Ogiek elder and a community leader in Mariashoni

Photo 8: Ogiek elder and youth in Mariashoni observing the deforested hillside transformed into arable land[39]

With the support of Swepston (1985), and the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN, 1995), I argue that Kenyan modernisation and economic and industrial development have led to a serious disregard of the Ogiek's attachment to the Mau Forest. In addition to their own intervention, the government has allowed the involvement of companies in extracting resources from the forest. Additionally, private actors have been allowed to settle within the boundaries of the land.

I posit that continued disregard of legal land rights recognition, which has resulted in Ogiek evictions, instability and persistent external environmental interference in the Mau Forest will result in what Barelli (2012) defines as indigenous 'rapid deterioration'. In fact, physical displacement includes economic, cultural and spiritual displacement as well (Brockington and Igoe, 2006, p. 424). It reflects the "symbolic obliteration from their landscape – their removal from its history, memory and representation" (ibid., p. 425). I argue that the Ogiek, without a stable hold on these collective elements, fail to protect their identity and to practice their eco-cultural resilience.

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[39] Ogiek elder and youth walk on their land. They lack land titles therefore they are susceptible to being evicted from their home. They observe the hillside where indigenous trees used to grow. They were cut down through government intervention. The government was able to access the land due to lack of land titles and legal recognition of land rights at the time of the deforestation. The land now is used for agriculture.

Lack of land also means that they are potentially subject to evictions from their homes in Nessuit and Mariashoni. The Ogiek state that with evictions they fear that their identity will be lost. This is because they will not be in a condition to practice beekeeping, traditions and ceremonies or protect the forest through tree planting. They lack safety and security, which is impacting the frequency of their current eco-cultural practices. In fact, with the fear of eviction, some are doubtful whether it is beneficial to hang beehives. I argue that modernisation practices threaten Ogiek distinctiveness and increasingly challenge their ability to remain separate from other neighbouring groups.

For instance, lack of land titles has allowed other indigenous communities to encroach onto Ogiek land and practice their own culture and livelihoods, including large-scale agriculture. Because of this, they have cleared forested areas within the East Mau Forest to make space and create land areas for cultivation programmes. As previously mentioned, non-Ogiek presence in the East Mau is challenging Ogiek access to forest areas where they gather traditional and medicinal herbs, hang beehives and perform rituals and ceremonies. It is forcing the Ogiek to travel far into the forest to find spaces where they can express their identity.

> We are facing a threat so it [culture] might get extinct if it's not taken care of. In the past there used to be so many rituals and traditional ceremonies but nowadays they have reduced[40]

While in section 4.3.3 Eco-cultural Resilience I argued that adopting small-scale non-native practices provides livelihoods that support beekeeping, etc., I suggest that pervasive encroachment can lead to cultural assimilation. The Ogiek's small size in fact may facilitate their assimilation into a larger neighbouring group. Such assimilation entails the loss or weakening of their cultural and social practices and livelihoods. It also results in the cessation of Ogiek environmental protection. However, as argued in 4.3.2 Environmental Resilience and 4.3.3 Eco-cultural Resilience, Ogiek conservation is fundamental to their cultural distinctiveness. Such a loss also means that future Ogiek generations will not be able to access their cultural heritage and TEK (Berkes, 1993; Berkes and Ross, 2013).

For these reasons, I posit that continued practices of modernisation and intervention in the Mau Forest can result in what Zygmunt Bauman called 'liquid identity' (Bauman, 2000). Bauman shows how

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[40] Author's Interview on March 18th, 2020 with Respondent 14 in Mariashoni, an Ogiek man and community elder in Mariashoni

modernisation has led to a global society which has a weak sense of distinct identity, especially in the West. I maintain that lack of land rights, deforestation and cultural assimilation will eventually lead to a liquid identity even among the Ogiek. It is unclear to me if Ogiek eco-cultural resilience will be able to maintain their unique practices in face of increasing modernisation. In fact, as Micheli (2014) argues, Ogiek identity "is running the risk of disappearing in the liquid form of the current globalised world" (p. 1).

> Modernisation and encroachment connect to our culture you see, because with this cultivation, a lot of chemicals are used, and this threatens the survival of bees. Because they normally mutate, and they become extinct because of the chemicals used in the farm[41]

> We live in fear and that impacts us from carrying out our practices as such, and also other tribes have joined up with politicians so they normally issue threats to us Ogiek, and that makes our life more worried, so we cannot carry out our livelihood activities in peace[42]

Additionally, the presence of non-native trees has negatively influenced the practice of beekeeping. "Beekeeping has gone down because exotic trees don't have the flowers and don't produce good honey, so that's making the production of honey decrease"[43]. A decrease in honey production has ramifications on their production of economic livelihood, medicinal and traditional brews and also affect their personal consumption, all of which overall limits the stability of Ogiek identity. When asked about the practice of beekeeping and the protection of the Mau Forest, all informants responded in ways similar to the following statement.

> We still are protecting [the forest], but the government destroyed the forest and replaced it with exotic trees and started chasing them away, so it's very hard to practice it properly[44]

Large-scale agriculture requires the use of fertilizers and pesticides, which have a negative impact on eco-cultural resilience. It affects the stability and population of the indigenous bees which produce

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[41] Author's Interview on March 17th, 2020 with Respondent 3 in Nessuit, an Ogiek man and community elder in Nessuit

[42] Author's Interview on March 17th, 2020 with Respondent 4 in Nessuit, an Ogiek man and community elder in Nessuit

[43] Author's Interview on March 18th, 2020 with Respondent 14 in Mariashoni, an Ogiek man and community elder in Mariashoni

[44] Author's Interview on March 18th, 2020 with Respondent 14 in Mariashoni, an Ogiek man and community elder in Mariashoni

Ogiek honey. Furthermore, the vicinity of the agricultural practices impact Ogiek's access to the forest and the health of their ecosystem.

> I think the land issue is the biggest problem and it has given birth to poverty and all this deforestation and assimilation[45]

Collectively these challenges are threatening the peace and eco-cultural resilience of the Ogiek of Nessuit and Mariashoni. They are interfering with their cultural and livelihood practices as well as with the protection of the East Mau Forest through tree-planting and the hanging of beehives. However, with the African Court's verdict in their favour, the Ogiek are hopeful the government will finally give them their communal land title, so that they can practice their eco-cultural resilience and protect their forest and culture.

4.5 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has presented a description and analysis of the data collected collected during fieldwork in Nessuit and Mariashoni, and remotely through audio-visual online interviews. Through the lens of eco-cultural resilience, I explored the cultural and environmental elements within Ogiek culture which provide resilience to the community and the Mau Forest.

Specifically, my argumentation in the data analysis posits that beekeeping is an Ogiek practice which strengthens their identity as guardians of the Mau Forest and their conservation of the forest. In fact, through their traditional environmental knowledge, they understand where best to hang beehives in order to protect the forest's ecosystem. In turn, the data highlights that the preservation of the forest provides a stable platform onto which the community are able practice cultural continuity. This interchange represents a symbiotic relationship which strengthens their eco-cultural resilience.

Tree-planting further represented an environmental and cultural practice. The repopulation of the Mau Forest with indigenous trees, provides a fertile environment which fosters a healthy ecosystem of bees, which in turn will yield a bigger honey harvest. I have argued that honey is essential for the livelihood of the community. It also creates a livelihood which enables more frequent cultural practices. I posit that this livelihood also strengthens social bonds. Strong heterarchical bonds within the

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[45] Author's Interview on March 18th, 2020 with Respondent 10 in Nessuit, an Ogiek woman and community leader in Mariashoni

community create a collective involvement which cultivate social harmony and facilitate environmental and cultural practices.

Eco-cultural resilience is further based on the co-evolution of the Ogiek community with the environmental changes in the Mau Forest. I have argued that the community's adaptability and conformity to new ecological structures strengthens their cultural identity and resilience as an indigenous group. Additionally, I have presented clan-based environmental management as a form of eco-cultural resilience. Strong ethnic bonds in fact create inviolable customary laws, which mitigate resource over-exploitation, and which protect their cultural symbols, found in the forest.

In a final section the chapter discusses factors limiting eco-cultural practices, such as government deforestation, lack of land titles and encroachment by other communities. It offers examples of how the Ogiek attempt to practice their resilience despite these limitations.

Overall these findings have depicted and explored the details of the practices of eco-cultural resilience of the Ogiek communities in Nessuit and Mariashoni. They have also served to answer the sub-question presented in section 1.5 Research Question, detailing the specific elements which protect their Ogiek identity and practices which form their eco-cultural resilience.

Chapter V – Conclusion

This research paper has presented and analysed the specific forms of eco-cultural resilience which the Ogiek of Nessuit and Mariashoni, in the East Mau Forest, practice in their communities. The study was specifically developed in the light of continued government intervention within the East Mau Forest and pervasive Ogiek displacement, despite the legal recognition of their land rights by the African Court in 2017.

The data analysis explored and answered the research question posed in section 1.5 Research Question. It was further conducted through the framework of eco-cultural resilience. This focus is based on understanding how the foundation of indigenous identity lies in the relationship between their culture and their environment, conceptualised as an eco-culture (Pretty, 2011).

Firstly, the data answers the research question by highlighting in Chapter IV 4.3.1 Cultural Resilience how, along with their attachment to the forest, beekeeping identifies and represents Ogiek identity. Supported by Rotarangi and Russell (2009) and Pretty (2011), I discuss in what ways it also creates economic and social structures, which promote Ogiek cultural continuity.

In questioning how the Ogiek culture is connected to the environment, in 4.3.3 Environmental Resilience, I analyse how beekeeping and tree-planting construct environmental planning for the purpose of intergenerational environmental and cultural protection (Berkes, 1993; Kofinas, 2009, Berkes and Ross, 2013). 4.3.4 Eco-cultural Resilience, expands on this, highlighting how such practices create a symbiotic relationship between the Ogiek and the Mau Forest. Furthermore, Ogiek clan-based land management and the adaptability of their cultural and environmental practices to external changes not only ensure their survival as a distinct group but have placed their cultural identity in the foreground.

Finally, I have argued that eco-cultural resilience is a response to modernised and invasive practices which represent threats, such as deforestation, external intervention and encroachment (Barelli, 2012), which I argue can lead to liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000; Micheli, 2014).

This research has contributed to the understanding of indigenous eco-cultural resilience through the case study of the Ogiek of Nessuit and Mariashoni. It adds to the academic debate by highlighting those specific practices within an indigenous group which interconnect and provide both environmental and   cultural   protection. It also highlights the importance of indigenous culture, where existing debate focuses predominantly on the debate between a social and environmental system. This research contributes to stabilising the

imbalance found in the academic literature. Additionally, it offers a detailed insight into how the Ogiek are attempting to maintain their distinct identity against external threats.

This thesis is useful to understand how, through specific practices, indigenous communities have self-organised and adapted to external changes without losing their identity. Importantly, it highlights in fact how rigidity and inflexibility within indigenous communities does not lead to cultural integrity, but rather to cultural disintegration. Against this backdrop, the Ogiek show that their eco-cultural resilience is based on cultural and environmental sustainability, in the form of beekeeping and tree-planting, fortified through the integration of livelihoods and social heterarchical structures (Pretty, 2011).

5.1 Recommendations for future research

This research was limited by the arrival of Covid-19, which restricted the collection of primary data from Nessuit and Mariashoni. Given the nature of the research, I consider it important that the primary information originates directly from the respondents of the East Mau Forest. For this reason, considering the limited amount of primary data, I was not able to take the discussion on eco-cultural resilience to a deeper level of analysis.

I argue that future research in the Ogiek community should take place after Covid-19 has been fully eradicated. The benefit of ethnographic, interpretivist and anthropological research in fact will then outweigh the disturbance which such research has on a community (Tax, 1975, p. 514).

Overall, I argue that continued research into indigenous eco-cultural resilience in the Mau Forest will provide a more extensive analysis of life there, which will supplement the present paper. For example, I recommend that future research look into further socio-cultural dynamics between and within ethnic groups in the Mau Forest. This specifically concerns the inter and intra-communal relationships of the Ogiek with the neighbouring indigenous groups.

I argue that this research is important to an understanding of how culture is not static and bound to singular practices, but rather is informed by and informs perceptions, social and functional interrelations and perspectives on the identity and positionality of indigenous communities (Tax, 1975, p. 515). For this reason, I argue that future research into the Ogiek and the Mau Forest should take into consideration the culture, identity and perspective of other indigenous communities. This includes research into groups who have encroached and who have participated in inter-ethnic conflicts with the Ogiek, which my current research has not covered.

I additionally consider that research into relations between the Ogiek and different indigenous groups would provide important information which would add depth to the study of Ogiek eco-cultural resilience. Research on the perspective, beliefs, cultural practices, livelihoods and environmental management of other ethnic groups can inform readers and the Ogiek community itself on the reasons why inter-ethnic conflict, assimilation and encroachment arise. Additionally, it would give insight into different forms of cultural and environmental management of the Mau Forest, for the purpose of finding a common symbiotic ground between non-native indigenous groups and the Ogiek. This research, for example, could take place during or after the restitution of communal land rights to the Ogiek.

Furthermore, I consider it important to conduct research into the institutional body of actors, such as the government and international companies, which have intervened in the Mau Forest, practicing deforestation and evicting Ogiek communities. A limitation of this specific research concerns potential challenges in gaining access, for example, to government officials to conduct interviews. I suggest that such research should be conducted over an extended period of time, whereby researchers will be able to build a significant and important network in order to collect uncensored data.

Overall, I argue that research into eco-cultural resilience, and more importantly, the Mau Forest and the Ogiek represent rich foundations on which to continue research. Importantly, however, such research must be conducted through in collaboration with, and in the best interest of, the communities being studied. It should offer information which they can use and benefit from for their own well-being. Research in fact, should respect the subjects' truth, freedom and value (Tax, 1975, p. 516).

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APPENDIX I

Declaration of Originality/Plagiarism Declaration
MA Thesis in Conflict Studies & Human Rights
Utrecht University

(course module GKMV 16028)

I hereby declare:

- that the content of this submission is entirely my own work, except for quotations from published and unpublished sources. These are clearly indicated and acknowledged as such, with a reference to their sources provided in the thesis text, and a full reference provided in the bibliography;

- that the sources of all paraphrased texts, pictures, maps, or other illustrations not resulting from my own experimentation, observation, or data collection have been correctly referenced in the thesis, and in the bibliography;

- that this Master of Arts thesis in Conflict Studies & Human Rights does not contain material from unreferenced external sources (including the work of other students, academic personnel, or professional agencies);

- that this thesis, in whole or in part, has never been submitted elsewhere for academic credit;

- that I have read and understood Utrecht University's definition of plagiarism, as stated on the University's information website on "Fraud and Plagiarism":

"Plagiarism is the appropriation of another author's works, thoughts, or ideas and the representation of such as one's own work." (Emphasis added.)[46]

Similarly, the University of Cambridge defines "plagiarism" as *" … submitting as one's own work, irrespective of intent to deceive, that which derives in part or in its entirety from the work of others without due acknowledgement. It is both poor scholarship and a breach of academic integrity."* (Emphasis added.)[47]

- that I am aware of the sanction applied by the Examination Committee when instances of plagiarism have been detected;

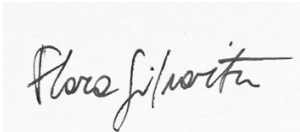[46] https://students.uu.nl/en/practical-information/policies-and-procedures/fraud-and-plagiarism
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- that I am aware that every effort will be made to detect plagiarism in my thesis, including the standard use of plagiarism detection software such as Turnitin.

Name and Surname of Student: Flora Gilmartin

Title of MA thesis in Conflict Studies & Human Rights:

"At the intersection between beekeeping and dispossession: an analysis of Ogiek eco-cultural resilience from Nessuit and Mariashoni in the East Mau Forest"

Signature	Date of Submission
Flora Gilmartin	03/08/2020