

**The role of indigenous knowledge on rangeland management: the case of Maasai of
Ngorongoro conservation area**

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In this study, I pursue to explore the role of Indigenous Knowledge in the management of common-property rangeland resources in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA). I draw on political ecology approach to examine the politics of conservation and the space of Indigenous Knowledge on rangeland management. I also adopt Ostrom's collective action and institutional arrangement approach to explore the indigenous institutions and forms of knowledge for rangeland management among the Maasai pastoralists of Ngorongoro Conservation Area. I employ exploratory research design and qualitative methodology (using methods of data collection such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, life histories, and observation) to capture the differing narratives from local indigenous people and analyse them using thematic analysis method.

Findings generally demonstrate the abundance of indigenous knowledge pertinent in the governance of local natural resources. The forms of indigenous knowledge such as rangeland rituals and cosmologies, rangeland zonation, livestock taxonomy, water communism and pastoral mobility regulate and maintain the harmonious relationship between the indigenous people and the wider ecosystem. Moreover, there is strong evidence to substantiate that indigenous institutions play a key role as custodians of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and are responsible for instituting norms and rules governing the access and withdrawal of common-property resources. It was also observed that the politics of conservation at the global and national scale pose challenges to the local organization of indigenous resource governance. There is also an evidence base to suggest that indigenous people are rapidly diversifying their livelihood and this is prompted by the socio-political dynamics. Findings also indicate that there is a substantial lessening of IK due to livelihood uncertainties posed by declining rangeland productivities, recurring food insecurity, and eviction incitement. This study contributes to the sociological and anthropological insights to the

studies on rangelands management, pastoralism, and Indigenous Knowledge. The study recommends the recognition of IK as an integral component of local resource governance, and formation of indigenous rangeland cooperatives and preservation of Indigenous Traditional Institutions.