



Perceptions and Experiences of Land use Change in Chepareria, Kenya

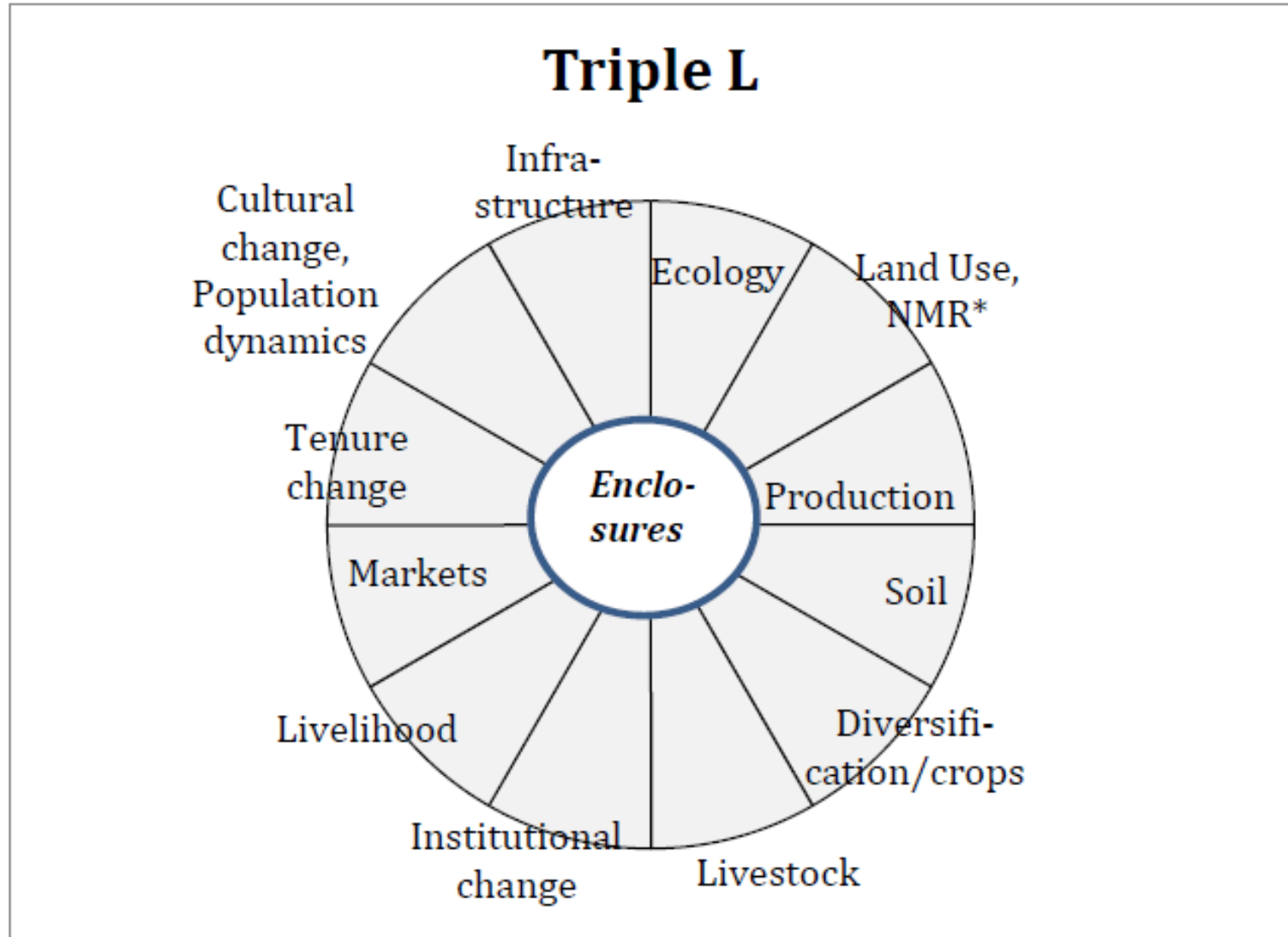


Presentation based on master-thesis fieldwork by Julia Wernersson



Research aims:

- To investigate the social aspects of a land-use and thereby providing an initial foundation on which to situate the natural science contributions of Triple-L.
- Analyze the many, and at times conflicting, social processes in human-environment interaction





Research questions:

- How do individuals belonging to different social strata in Chepareria perceive and experience land-use change?
- What do the perceptions and experiences say about the relationships between knowledge, agency and landscape in the land-use dynamics?



Agency

- Agency concerns the capacity for individuals to make their own individual free choices.
- Agency consequently links behavior to social structures such as norms, networks, authority, organisation, social control, regulation, trust, social cognition, etc.



Knowledge

- Knowledge about the human and non-human world is seen as a process that is plural, partial, contingent, situated and contested
- Knowledge can be both individual knowledge and collective or shared knowledge.
- Common knowledge in a community or collective knowledge and memories can be understood as guiding a community, but can change over time depending on interactions with power, social structures, context and agency



Landscape

- A dynamic social and physical construction which reflect process and change through historical and contextual experience
- landscape is a subjective experience as well as a shared collective symbol and/or a physical or geographical entity



Method

- Explorative interviews on land-use change
- Observations
- Semi-structured interviews



Selection of respondents:

- respondents that could represent different types of leaders in the community,
- respondents of different genders and ages,
- respondents in different areas within Chepareria
- respondents that were known in the area as having knowledge on new land-use techniques
- *respondents that were struggling or vulnerable.*



The collective narrative

- 30 years ago, life was tough in a dry and unproductive environment with old traditions.
- The land was very bare or dry, without trees or grass, with problems such as desertification, soil erosion, and gullies.
- It was unimaginable that trees and grass could grow in the area

- New land-use techniques are introduced, resulting in:
 - development and change into an easier life
 - that hunger can be alleviated more effectively through land management
 - Children are going to school
 - the area is taking part in modern development.
 - increased milk production from four cups a day to five liters
 - higher market prices for livestock at the weekly market



However, throughout the narrative, all the respondents pointed out strong connections between the land-use change and social changes occurring simultaneously



Emergent themes:

- Boundaries
- Learning and communication
- Pressures
- Social order



Boundaries

- The introduction of enclosures has decreased the need for expansion or migration into other territories
- The introduction of enclosures has increased boundaries within Chepareria
- The Chepareria landscape is decreasingly local
- The on-going distribution of knowledge related to land rehabilitation predominantly takes place within the boundaries of Chepareria.
- Agricultural and livestock production has increased the exchange between the Pokot and the Turkana.
- The changing boundaries for women as connected to land use change



Learning and Communication

- Early adapters as role models
- Land-use change as a question of intimacy: the importance of motivation, trust, sensitivity and innovative learning methods.
- The manifestation of “common” knowledge in the landscape
- The importance of access to knowledge nodes



Pressures

- The landscape as embedded in the monetary economy
- Adapting to financial pressures rather than drought
- Population growth and the need for more money on less land
- Land, even degraded land, is becoming more valuable



Social order

- Elders
- Private ownership, customary demarcation and group ranches.
- Higher acceptance for demarcation and fencing in areas with a high degree of demarcation and fencing, and private tenure.
- Land use conflicts
- Social exclusion



Conclusions

- The landscape as a manifestation of the dynamic relations between the local & the global, the private & the common, the traditional & the new
- The focus on knowledge and agency in relation to landscape makes it possible to understand individual land use choices without losing sight of the socio-economic and biophysical structures that influence them.
- The study gives insights on the function of social structures in human-environment interactions (often missing in, for example, resilience research)

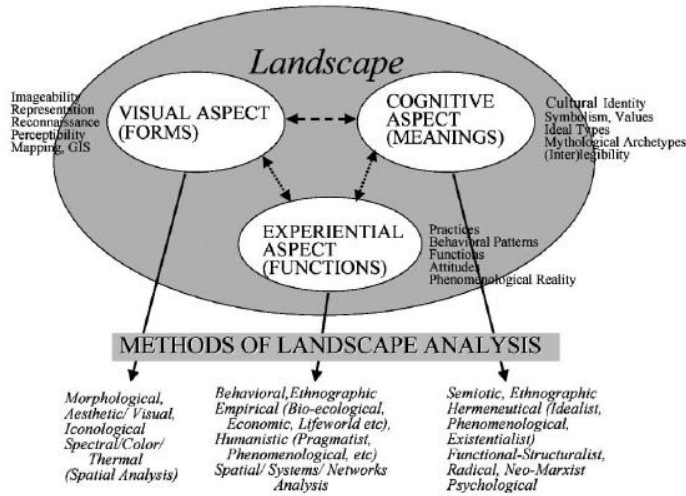


Fig. 1. Landscape aspects and methods of analysis.

