Draft concept note for discussion – Community mapping of use rights

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This concept note presents a methodology to be used for a community mapping exercise to be implemented in Narosura Group Ranch, with support from SORALO and I-CAN. The purpose of this mapping is to visualize current use rights in order to provide a picture of wished land uses at community level. This will enable informing the land demarcation process that Narosura group ranch is planning to implement, and to question the relevance and modalities of this demarcation. The exercise is proposed to the Narosura group ranch authorities following the qualitative baseline study, or "quick case study," implemented in Narosura by Jacques Pollini (I-CAN/McGill) and Samson Ole Silantoi (SORALO). It is part of the support provided by SORALO to establish a land use plan and accompany the land demarcation process in Narosura group ranch.

The mapping will be done by communities living within Narosura group ranch, at the scale of relevant entities that remain to be defined during preparatory meetings. The entities managing the mapping will be the governance institutions that manage the land and its resources and allocate use rights. In general, land management units are villages, or clusters of settlements that share a common grazing land, and governance institutions involved in management are the village elder and its committee, the council of elders, the Chief or Assistant Chief, and the representative of that village in the group ranch committee. The influence, authority or power of each of these institutions vary greatly from place to place, so the approach will have to be flexible.

The exercise will be first conducted at the scale of one village or settlement cluster to test the methodology (pilot phase), with supervision by SORALO and Jacques Pollini. Proposed date for this pilot phase is from June 11 to June 17. It will then be replicated to all villages or settlement clusters within Narosura group ranch, under SORALO supervision.

A few people in the community will be trained to using GPS software on a tablet or smartphone. These software include "Geo Tracker," which enables to record tracks and mark waypoints, and "Distance and Area Measurement," which enables measuring areas. The community will be given smartphones and tablets to conduct the mapping, as well as sim cards and phone credits to send the data to SORALO all along the process. Experience shows that in most communities, we find a few young educated men familiar with the use of smartphones that could be easily trained to using these tools. SORALO will have minimal implication on the ground but will be able to see if things go right by receiving data every day.

The communities will be proposed to map the resources and infrastructures found on their land, and to delineate parcels according to the distribution of use rights that they wish the group ranch leadership to recognize and consider during the demarcation process. We expect that use rights will match with actual land uses in most cases. Of course, the two normally superpose. But as the map will reflect wished use rights, they will not necessarily reflect current land uses. For instance, if during the mapping exercise the community finds out that a piece of land is farmed by an individual in contradiction with use rights as authorized by community institutions, for example if that individual farms on a piece of land reserved to dry season grazing according to community rules, then this piece of land will be considered as grazing land in terms of wished use rights, even though the actual land use is farming. The fact that this land is farmed, though, could also be mentioned and the boundaries of that plot be mapped, but as a way to record unauthorized or unwished uses, forming a different layer in the map.

We expect that the exercise will generate intense debates within the community to clarify each situation where unauthorized uses occur. In some cases, the community will reject these uses and current land use will not superimpose with wished use right. In other cases, it will accept this de facto soil occupation and validate it as wished use right. These debates will slow down the mapping process, but we should not be concerned too much about that because discussing these controversial cases will enable solving potential conflicts which otherwise would occur after the land demarcation process, in which case their resolution would be much more challenging.

The community will be explained that the map it will create does not necessarily reflect the actual boundaries that will be set by the demarcation process, for two reasons. First, the same use rights can be recognized under a status of private land with individual tenancy (individual private property), with joint tenancy (property shared by a man and his spouses for instance), with tenancy in common (collective private property), and with community tenancy (according to the provisions set by the Community Land Act). Second, once each cluster will have realized the map reflecting its wishes in terms of land use, the maps will need to be harmonized at group ranch level for equity issue and for introducing additional objectives that are not those of the communities, but from which they could benefit, like conservation. The maps will serve as a base for a negotiation process which may result in modifying them to ensure a fair and equitable process at the scale of the whole group ranch. They may also be a tool that the community will use to discuss under which conditions (compensations, payment for ecosystem services, benefit sharing schemes...) conservation objectives would be achieved.

To decide which land will be under a given tenancy regime (private and individual, private and collective, community, public), will be a further step, to be achieved after the map will be produced. But as the map needs to provide baseline information for that future step, the community will indicate, for each parcel, who are the individuals enjoying the associated use rights. These individuals could be the adults of a household, the adults of a boma, the adults of a cluster of bomas, the adults of a village, or the adults of the whole group ranch, according to the cases.

Based on the results of the quick case studies, we assume that the items below need to be mapped:

- Schools [S], health centers [H], markets [M], and other public infrastructures [I].
- Roads passable by vehicle all year around or just during the dry season [RY, RD].
- Water points [WP]
- Individual settlements and group settlements [IS, GS].
- Olokeri [O].
- Non-irrigated agricultural land [A].
- Irrigated agricultural land [IA].
- Pastoral land used during the rainy season [PR].
- Pastoral land used during the early dry season [PED].
- Pastoral land used during the late dry season and where a conservancy could be established [PLDC]
- Other important features in the landscape like:
    - Salty lakes [SL],
    - Critical grazing resources [CGR],
    - Sites where livestock disease is frequent (indicate which disease) [D].
    - Sacred sites and places where rituals are implemented [SS],
    - Scenic features where ecotourism could be developed [SF],

- Sites where wildlife is frequently seen (indicating which type of wildlife) [WS],
- Sites where wildlife interacts with people and livestock and creates problems [WP].

The codes in between [...], followed by a number, should be used to name the shape files or waypoints in the GPS. The mappers will draw a table, under the supervision of community institutions that will validate it, indicating the list of users for each waypoint and parcel, except when all the community or anybody is user (in which case they will indicate “community” or “anybody”). For each parcel, they will also provide a list of rules applicable to this parcel and indicate which authority or institution in the community is in charge of guaranteeing compliance with these rules. This exercise has to potential to improve resources governance because the community will face the fact that some parcels have no rules or these rules are not respected, so the mapping will be an incentive to reinstate these rules. Eventually, the mappers will provide a complete lists of all households established in the locality, indicating which ones are group ranch members and which ones are not, and whether the non-members have a relationship with a member.

The data (kml files) will be sent by email to SORALO for processing. The kml files will be open in google earth or in other mapping software in order to produce maps, with satellite images in the background, which will be printed on posters and brought back to the community for discussion. These maps will be the base to discuss resources management and the modalities of land demarcation. Data processing will also enable to calculate how many acres are accessed by each group ranch member. For instance, if a member accesses 3 acres of farm land alone, plus 1 acre around his settlement, and then accesses 500 acres of grazing land shared with 10 other members, and accesses a 10,000 acres conservancy shared with 1,000 other members, then he will have access to (he will have use rights over) 3+1+(500/10)+(10,000/10)=64 acres.

Note that to this date, it seems that land demarcation in group ranch is either rejected, or implemented in a radical way, by dividing all land in the group ranch into as many equal plots as there are group ranch members, like was done in Maji Moto group ranch. Experience shows that this way to conduct demarcation has disastrous consequences, while demarcation is still called for by an increasingly number of group ranches in spite of these difficulties. The approach we propose has the potential to encourage the adoption of a compromise in between “demarcation as usual” and no demarcation. By creating a map that visualizes use rights as they have already been allocated by community institutions, or as these institutions wish to allocate them, it gives a chance to the adoption of a bottom-up demarcation process that will recognize these use rights, at least when compatible with national policies regarding natural resources uses for instance, and when compatible with constraints existing at a broader scale, like competition between neighbour group ranches to access limited resources.