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"Failure by Design? Revisiting Tanzania's Flagship Wildlife Management Area Burunge"

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In this paper, we revisit the on-the-ground reality of Burunge Wildlife Management Area (WMA) that is celebrated as one of Tanzania's best examples of community-based conservation (CBC). We find Burunge WMA rife with conflict and contestation over grievances that remained unsettled since its establishment a decade ago. These grievances have been accentuated by growing land pressure resulting from increasing human, livestock, and elephant populations, in combination with infrastructure improvements and support for agriculture-led development. The WMA governance regime has little to offer the residents and village leaders of Burunge member villages who appear hostages in a situation where interests in human development and conservation are pitted against each other, making a mockery of the notions of CBC. By re-examining this exemplary WMA case and compare our findings with the way it is being portrayed by supporting agencies, we pinpoint the tendency of the actors promoting conservation in Tanzania to misrepresent or ignore the realities on the ground that defy official policy promises. In doing this, we hope to call upon the many empathetic and hard-working individuals to end the collective failure to address this detrimental discrepancy between reality and representation, and start supporting affected residents in their struggles for self-determination. (Text from authors' abstract)

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