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## Looking to the future: Map drawing in Madah, Central Tanzania

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### · Introduction

The Burunge Hills, an area of about 300 square kilometres in Kondoa District, Central Tanzania, is rapidly being settled by small-scale farmers from more densely populated and degraded parts of the district. It is a time of new opportunities. *Twende kufyeka* (Let's be off and clear new land) is a phrase on the lips of many farmers. More commercially oriented people see the possibility of harvesting finger millet from newly cleared areas and selling the produce at a substantial profit to breweries in the Arusha area.

When new fields are opened up in the Burunge Hills, vast numbers of trees are felled and burned on site. More often than not land is cultivated without any conservation precautions. Neither the village councils of the communities surrounding the hills nor the district administration are managing the recent colonisation of the hills. It is just happening. The authorities recognise that many people have legitimate demands to obtain access to new land, and one obvious solution is to accept that fields are cleared and livestock grazed in the hills. Such an attitude is supported by the ideology that land belongs to all the inhabitants of Tanzania as well as the political tenet that those who have *uwezo* (ability, capacity) should be allowed to use land to produce food.

Different ways of life now meet in the hills. In this formerly sparsely populated part of the district, land is now being sold, quarrelled over, and even becoming scarce. The immigrants and the Burunge agree that vacant land still remains

in the hills, but they disagree on whether the remaining forests should be cleared or not. Many newcomers hold that the sooner the forest is gone the better. Additional settlers mean more people who can defend their interests, and who can help solve the problems of wildlife, lack of water, inadequate transport and so on. However, the people of the area, the Burunge, harbour no urge to transform the forest. They feel that the hills have already received more than enough outside settlers.

### · Madah, a new life in the hills

Madah is a rapidly growing community dominated by immigrants. They came with their minds set on obtaining land and large areas have been cleared. Since most immigrants cultivate with a plough, few trees remain in the fields. The immigrants also cultivate larger fields than the resident Burunge. They also came with experiences of how cultivating a surplus can provide improved living standards. They expect to live in houses made of bricks and roofed by iron sheets. They are used to having bicycles, ox ploughs, water points, radio receivers - goods seldom encountered in a Burunge home.

Madah farmers have also formed a CCM party branch, elected their own leaders and embarked on communal projects, such as starting a small school. The villagers have constructed a new road allowing traders from the towns of Arusha, Dodoma and Kondoa to buy at the farm gate. The small village centre is growing.

On the flat cultivated slopes approaching the Denesa river, which passes through Madah, surface erosion is common. In many fields the

crops look stunted or have simply been washed away. Figure 1 shows areas suffering from soil erosion. Where livestock pass, there is also much evidence of land degradation.

• **Map drawing in Madah**

The common opinion among the settlers is that Madah has abundant land resources for the community's future needs. During a meeting with village leaders a map of the Madah area was drawn on the ground by six participants. It covered an area of about 20 square meters.

Drawing a map of the area and discussing it publicly had a profound effect on the perception of land use for a number of people in Madah. We had been told over and over again by the immigrants that the pastures and areas to be cleared were sufficient to meet their needs into the future. Faced now with a map showing that the cultivated area was bigger than the reserve areas, and also a poster we had prepared depicting a dramatically increasing population curve, many came to express their worries: *'People increase all the time but the land cannot increase. Settlers arrive. The young start new families. Where are they to go?'*

Not all of them worried, though. One influential member of the CCM branch committee reminded those present that no one gets land in Madah without a period of probation and that s/he can be given only 3 acres at most; that s/he must have a permit to move from the previous village and that any clearing must be supervised by the forest officer. Now, this is not the way land is allocated at Madah. As the official spoke, adding more and more details about how carefully the committee monitors the land resource, local people could not stop laughing.

**Figure 1. Madah area, Central Tanzania.**  
 Notes: Map drawn on the ground by Rashidi I. Kidunda, Hatibu H. Nyodi, Juma A. Nkuri, Siraji L. Sasha, Ali I. Suleiman and Meda Unei. Map redrawn by Karin Weilow after a sketch from the original map by Elias Etho.



As we probed deeper, the chairman was obliged to confirm that the party branch has no legal right to stop a newcomer, with a licence, from clearing land. Another member of the committee tried the argument that a local rule prevents livestock from moving along the slope on their way to the wells. Again people burst into laughter as we mentioned several cattle tracks proving the opposite. The local rule was clearly inappropriate: How do you make livestock heading for water take extra turns in an open landscape?

At this point several people expressed concern over the number of livestock brought into Madah from other areas and also from distant places in Hanang and Mbulu Districts. This was the first time we had heard such worries expressed by the immigrants. They had remained insistent that there was sufficient land for decades to come. By contrast, the Burunge living in Madah had often suggested that there are too many people and livestock in the area.

The map-drawing exercise provided a new arena for discussing an issue which was not yet on the agenda. The discussions went far beyond the stereotypes about the community and gave rise to a new interpretation about land patterns of land use.

## • Conclusions

The majority of Madah residents are in favour of immigration to the area as this provide additional people to help build social institutions and promote economic activities. However, participatory mapping helped to focus local interest on the area's natural resources. This enabled the local people to think about land use planning for the future.

The situation in the Burunge Hills is similar to changes now taking place in many other parts of Tanzania. The (varying) achievements of organised soil conservation work, or of land that was taken out of use because of the population redistribution during the villagisation process of the 1970s, are currently being superseded by new developments. It is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain a commitment to public control of natural resources, when entrepreneurial initiatives are expected to make up for diminishing government funds. In this situation participatory

mapping can be a useful method for local communities to actively monitor and manage their natural resources.

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## NOTES

This article is taken from *Land is coming up. The Burunge of Central Tanzania and Their Environments* (Stockholm 1995) by W. Östberg. Available from Almqvist & Wiksell International, PO Box 4627, S-11691, Stockholm, Sweden. Price: 282 Swedish Crowns

The field study in Burunge was carried out with Mr. Joseph Mduma, a forester with the Kondoa based soil conservation project HADO. Mr. Mduma lent not only his professional skills to the research but his gift for field work. Mr. Cassian Sianga, manager of the HADO project, participated in the mapping session. He has a long history of participatory work and we all benefitted from his experiences.