

EXPANDING THE REACH: ETHNOBOTANICAL KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNOLOGICAL INTENSIFICATION IN BEEKEEPING AMONG THE OGIEK OF THE MAU FOREST, KENYA

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FRAMEWORK OF THE PROJECT

- This research aims to study the implementation and impacts of projects designed to safeguard and promote rural and indigenous foods and associated heritage, using Kenya as a case study.
- It explores the “Ogiek Honey Slow Food Presidium”, a multi-actor project aimed at safeguarding and promoting traditional beekeeping and honey amongst the Ogiek communities of the Mau Forest.
- The research investigates how the introduction of modern beekeeping techniques and tools, aimed at improving and expanding honey production may alter the socio-cultural and ecological relations surrounding this activity. It focuses on the relationships, tensions and complementarity of different knowledge and practices and the ways in which they are employed in beekeeping strategies.

TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE INTRODUCTION OF MODERN HIVES TRANSFORMED THE BEEKEEPING-ASSOCIATED KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES OF THE OGIEK OF THE MAU FOREST ?

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Ethnobotanical study in the **Eastern part of the Mau Forest** in a context where **Ogiek beekeepers** are involved in a project aimed at promoting honey production through the **modernization of beekeeping**.

- (1) to inventory the **diversity of plants used in beekeeping and associated knowledge**,
- (2) to document the **social and spatial organization of beekeeping** in the different ecological zones,
- (3) to explore **relations and complementarity between traditional and modern beekeeping**.

METHODS

STUDY AREA

- Eastern Mau Escarpment - Mariashoni District, Nakuru County
- Mariashoni Community Development (MACODEV) - Ogiek Honey Slow Food Presidium

METHODS

Fieldwork: August 2019 and January 2020

- 30 in-depth semi-structured interviews with Ogiek beekeepers
- Vegetation survey in 8 apiary sites (different ecological zones)

RESULTS

1. Ethnobotanical knowledge

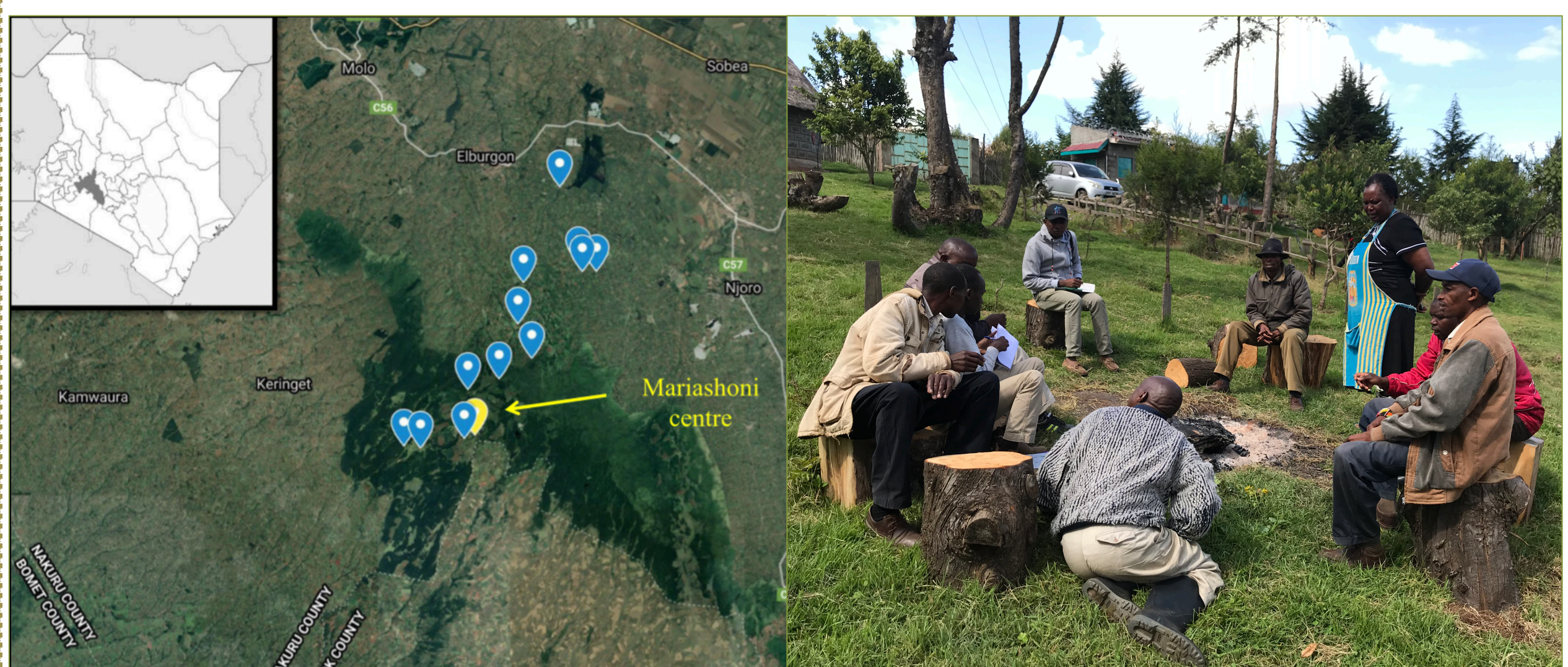
- **66 plant species** (36 botanical families and 58 genera) / **6 main use categories** (melliferous, making hives, placing hives, attracting bees, harvesting honey and storing honey)

2. Beekeeping environment and techniques

- **FOREST:** beekeeping has continued with traditional log hives is embedded into the forest ecology, and ethnobotanical knowledge is rich and detailed.
- **LOWLANDS:** beekeeping relies mainly on modern beekeeping methods sourced from external agents, and ethnobotanical knowledge encompasses exotic species and crops.

3. Relations and complementarity

- **Hybridization:** Development of ethnobotanical knowledge about exotic species; Adaptation of modern hives (e.g., hive construction), drawing from traditional knowledge.
- **Adaptation:** Using modern beehives and associated techniques, Placing log hives close to homesteads; Relocating log hives from the forest to the lowlands.



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- The research indicates a **complementarity and an incipient hybridization of traditional and modern beekeeping**.
- Modern beehives are instrumental in **expanding the reach of beekeeping into deforested and cultivated areas**.
- However, the process of intensification based on **modern beehives may decouple beekeeping from the forest, weakening the role of the forest in the livelihoods and culture of the Ogiek**.

To avoid these unintended outcomes, programs aimed at promoting honey production should target the continuity and resilience of forest beekeeping by:

- Promoting traditional **log hive production**, the valorisation of **forest honey** and associated ethnobotanical knowledge and floristic diversity.
- **Involving the community members to find endogenous elements for the design of innovations** supportive of beekeeper livelihoods and of the beekeepers' role in forest conservation.

CONTACTS

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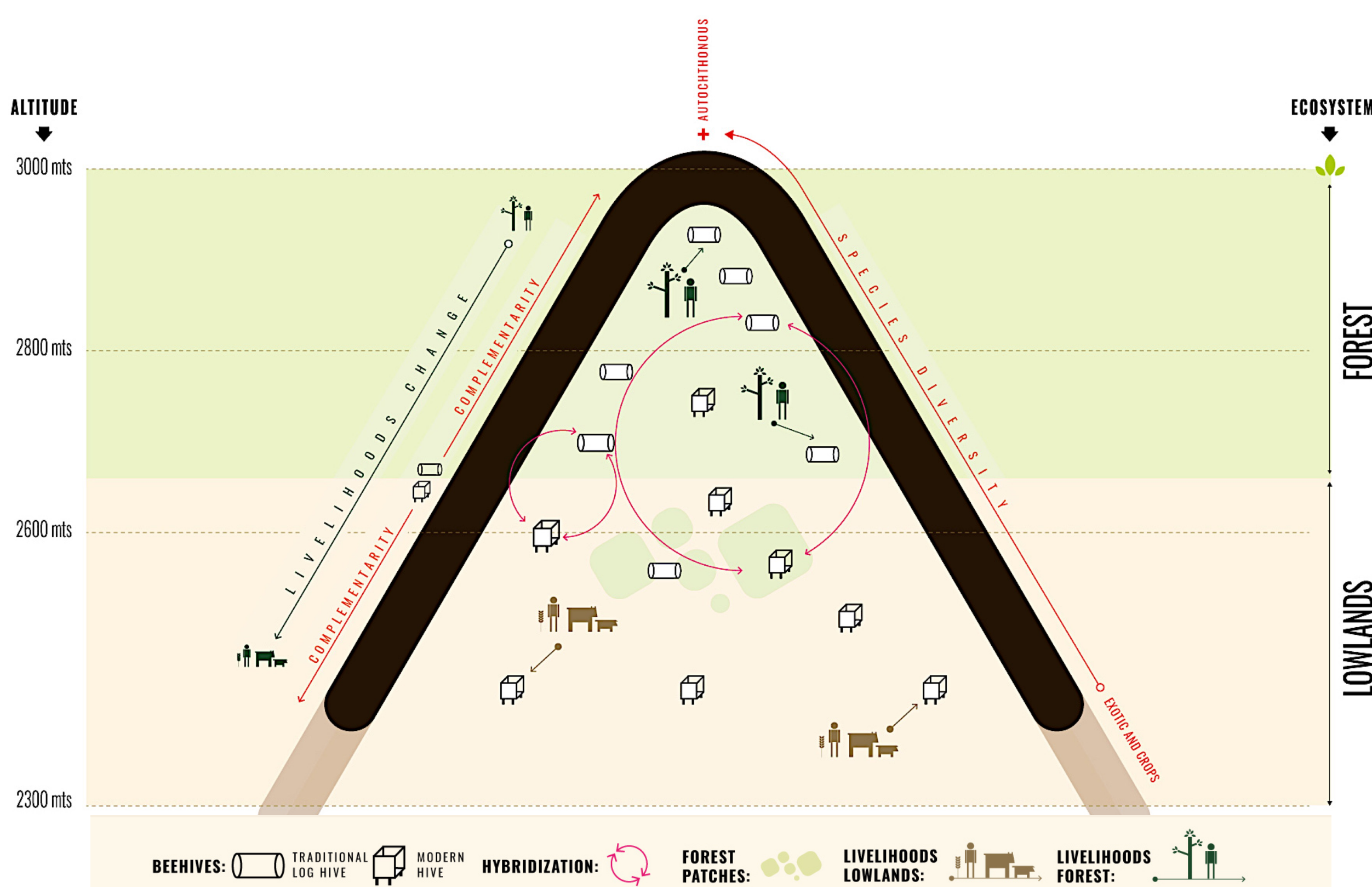


FIG. 1 COMPLEMENTARITY AND HYBRIDIZATION BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND MODERN BEEKEEPING SYSTEMS AND LIVELIHOODS