

## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE CHALLENGE OF SUSTAINING PASTORALISM LAND TENURE SYSTEM FOR ECOLOGICAL CONSERVATION IN THE MAASAI MARA ECOSYSTEM**

**By**

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In the Maasai Mara ecosystem nomadic pastoralism remains a dominant form of land use where pastoralists align their livelihoods with seasonal climate variations by systematically moving their livestock to different grazing locations. In recent past, nomadic pastoralism in the Maasai Mara is challenged by the concept of private property where conventional private property regimes seek to allocate individual rights to land, traditionally over a fixed and well-defined areas. Following the period of decolonization in Africa, implementation of these programmes became popular worldwide, even in regions with arid and semi-arid climate. However, pastoralism as a sustainable Land Tenure system has persisted and conflicts soon ensued with small holder crop farmers.

Contemporary drivers, many underpinned by climate change adaptation, further complicate these tenure conflicts.: Surges in large-scale foreign investment in land, increased nature conservation activities, growth in tourism, forest depletion, oil and mineral extraction programmes all increase tensions between the different stakeholders. Under these circumstances, nomadic pastoralism often loses out in these climate change inspired conflicts. While pastoralists are intrinsic climate change adaptors, they are weaker economically and legally.. Unlike other land uses, pastoralism activities are not always assured by national land policy and administration frameworks. Private ownership is often given precedence over customary land tenures. Despite policy and legislative movements, approaches for practical recording remain unclear: knowledge on how to record pastoralism tenures in a manner that ensures sustainable ecosystem conservation is almost non-existent. The climate change adaptation offers an opportunity to develop methodologies for recording pastoralism. Currently, there is a general agreement that pastoralism has a major role in supporting sustainable ecological and economic systems. Moreover, the limitations of conventional private property approaches are clear as the National land policies already reflect the changing ideology.

The challenge is to operationalize the new ideology. Many studies focus on understanding the status quo: pastoralism actors, related resources, and various interactions are studied. Others seek solutions. Clear acceptance of pastoralist tenures at all levels is an important ingredient in operationalization: all successfully secured formal land tenures rely on clear descriptive and spatial identification. Fit-for-purpose adjudication, mapping, and recording processes deliver this point of authority to communities, governments, and NGOs. Understanding the spatial and temporal aspects of migratory routes will assist in developing this authority. Whilst pastoralism has been widely studied and some routes are recorded many remain undocumented: only vague ideas exist of how pastoralists move. Moreover, the climate change induced shifts in migratory routes are also unknown. Conventional land administration tools are not equipped to capture or manage pastoralist tenures.

This paper therefore seeks to look into the changing land tenure and land use regime in the Maasai Mara conservancy and proposes a methodology for comprehensive documentation of the changes as a means of further understanding the climate change induced migration and thereby understand how pastoralism can be better sustained for better ecological management.