

## **"Diversification, Experimentation, and Adaptation: Pastoralists in Communal Governance of Resources and Livelihoods Strategies"**

### **Abstract**

Pastoral societies in Africa have progressively faced conditions of diminishing production resources, as territories and pasturelands are diverted for purposes of conservation, settlement, tourism, industry and cultivation. Property rights and land-tenure transformations, introduced in many countries as modernizing economic reforms, have, and continue to facilitate processes that are contributing to the fragmentation, individuation, privatization and enclosure of communal pastoral landscapes.

In Kenya, the Maasai society, which has been at the vanguard of land tenure transformations, now manifests a diverse range of these processes<sup>1</sup> outcomes, and reveals important dynamics in the livelihoods strategies pastoralists are employing to adapt to new realities. In the face of mounting tenurial and territorial constraints on pastoral production, livelihoods diversification has strategically been employed by the society as adaptation, and to manage mounting exposures to economic risks.

This paper will show that contrary to conventional policy prescriptions, pastoral livelihoods diversification and economic experimentation are not contingent to the existence of individual property rights or tenure systems.

In converse, landscape fragmentation and individuation diminishes the inventory of economic options available to pastoralists for adaptation, eliminating economic opportunities, such as wildlife conservation, that demand non-constrained spatial settings to undertake. Using a case study of community land and resource management in southern Kenya, the paper will show that pastoral livelihoods diversification strategies are pursued at both individual and community levels. It will argue that communal ownership of land and resources, managed through local institutional arrangements, facilitates, rather than inhibits, diversification and robust adaptation by pastoral systems.

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