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NomadSed: A Board Game on Sustainable Land Use of Mobile Pastoralists under Global Change

BIRGIT MÜLLER, ROMINA DREES, KARIN FRANK

Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ), Ecological Modelling, Germany

Abstract

Mobile pastoralism has been proven to be an appropriate type of land use in drylands to cope with harsh climatic conditions. However, in society and policy making, misconceptions exist on functioning and relevance of mobile pastoralism in particular under recent processes of global change.

In the frame of the interdisciplinary Collaborative Research Centre 586, the board game NomadSed was developed where up to six players step into the role of nomadic herdsman. The goal for each of the players is to build up capital in terms of sheep while coping with multiple social-ecological challenges. The rules of the game map important ecological and socioeconomic aspects and their interrelations with respect to resource utilisation of pastoralists in drylands.

NomadSed is, firstly, designed and already in use for environmental education in *e.g.* schools, university courses or, in the frame of outreach activities. The game provides insight into the everyday life of nomadic households, their strategies of resource utilisation, and the complex challenges they have to master in order to secure their livelihood. One of these challenges is how to maintain their live support systems through enabling sufficient regeneration of their pastures. Coping actions can be influenced by events on the individual, regional or even global level such as job migration of a member of the individual household, a regional drought or a rise of price for supplementary feeding on the world market. These influences are simulated by means of event cards which incorporate knowledge of empirical socio-geographic research in various dryland regions (*e.g.* Syria, Morocco and Tibetan Highlands).

Secondly, the game offers the potential to support the dialogue and knowledge exchange of science and development organisations with local stakeholders. It is planned that the board game is played by local stakeholders (*e.g.* the nomadic herdsman) themselves. Therewith new insights can be gained on pastoral decision making and important aspects of local knowledge: *e.g.* under which condition cooperation between the players is pursued or how stakeholders react on external influences. This endeavour is supported by cooperation with non-governmental organisations working with pastoralists in drylands (*e.g.* Veterinaires Sans Frontiers Germany).

Keywords: Decision making, global change, pastoralism, social-ecological dynamics, strategic board game, transdisciplinarity