

“Carbon feels like cash cropping”. Pastoralists’ perceptions of rangeland carbon projects in Kenya

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I. INTRODUCTION

Background

- 43% of the land area in Africa is rangelands (Samuels et al., 2023).
- They support pastoral livelihoods and ecosystem functions, and are largely described as underdeveloped and vastly degraded.
- Carbon markets for harnessing finance, yet publicly criticized for tradeoffs.

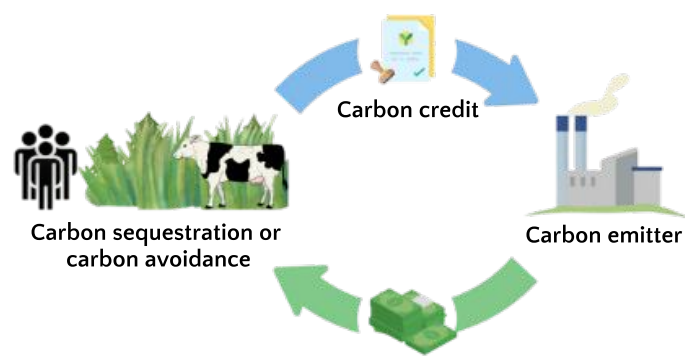


Figure 1: Carbon market mechanism

- Carbon projects = Increased Investments = Improved Rangelands (Tennigkeit & Wilkes, 2008).



Figure 2: From degraded to improved rangelands

Research Questions

- How do participating communities conceptualize carbon projects?
- How do communities perceive carbon projects?
- How do communities perceive various actors’ influence on project success?

II. METHODS

Data Collection: January – March 2025

Study Area: Northern Kenya (Northern Kenya Rangeland Carbon Project)

Research Approach: Qualitative – Case Study

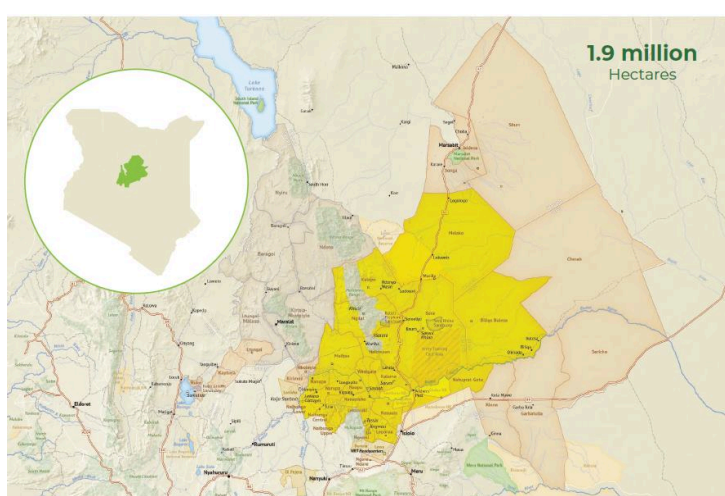


Figure 3: Map of Kenya showing the project area

Methods: Semi-structured interviews with community leaders, elders, women and youths.

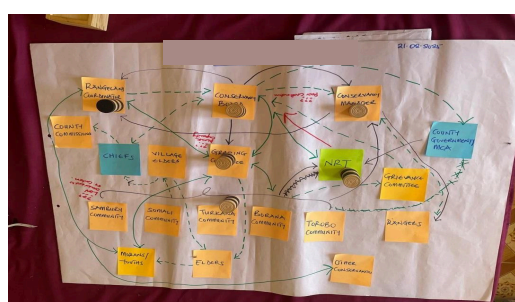


Figure 4: Net Map conducted with community members

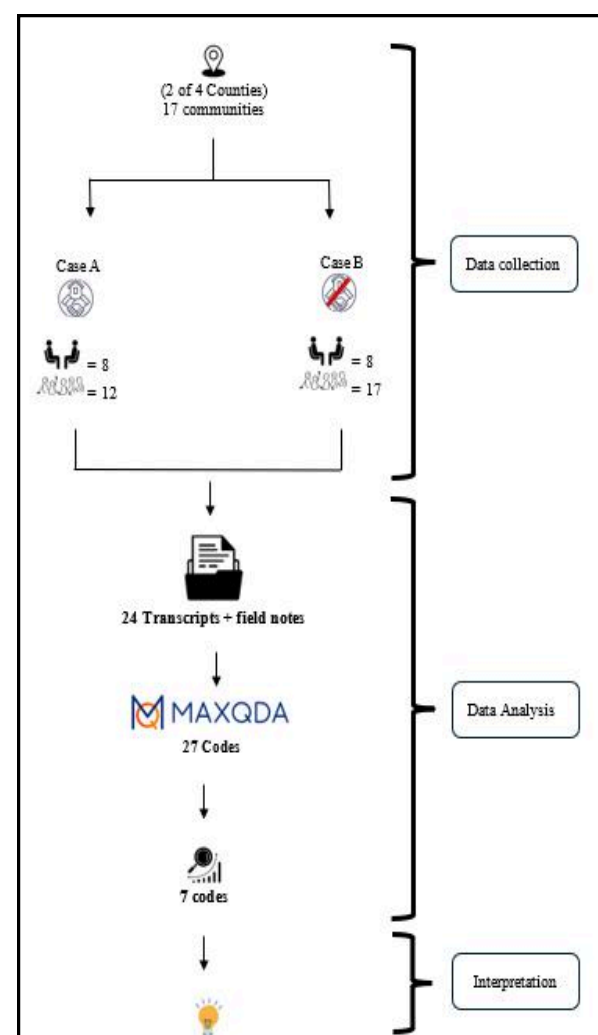


Figure 5: Data analysis flow diagram

III. RESULTS

- Carbon project = Conservation for benefits.



- There were generally mixed perceptions of the project, shaped by received benefits, trade-offs, and lack of information.



“...we faced numerous challenges until we received funding from carbon credits. Now there are no more challenges”.
– Elders, February 09, 2025.

“We are unsure if they (proponent) have been trading carbon on our behalf. I know that you cannot hide things for long”.
– Elders, February 09, 2025.

- Community members perceive themselves as the most influential actors in the project.

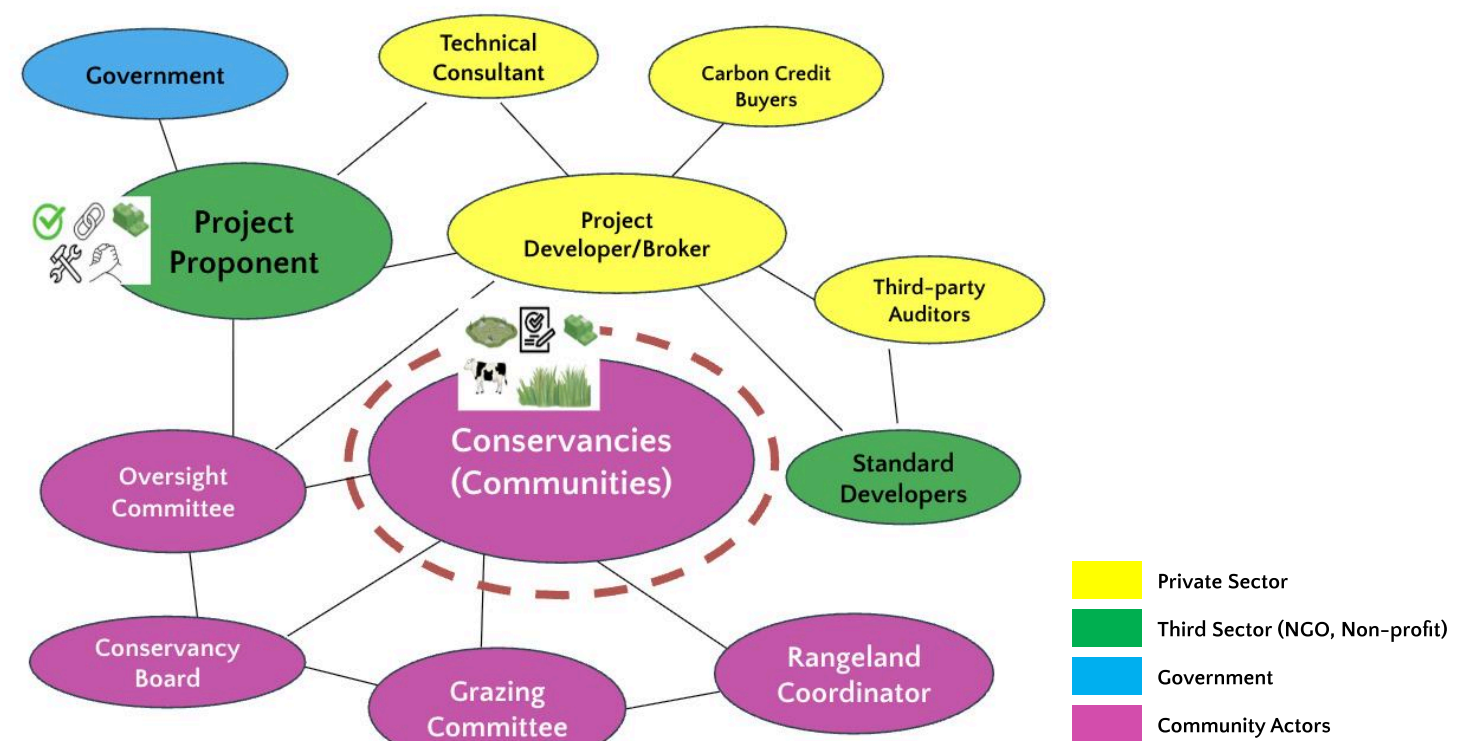


Figure 6: Actor-influence map

IV. CONCLUSION

- Participating communities have an understanding and take ownership of the project.
- Communities’ framing of carbon as conservation with benefits aligns carbon projects with sustainable rangeland health.
- However, a lack of information and transparency creates mistrust among respondents, threatening the long-term sustainability of the project.

REFERENCES

- Samuels, M. I., Egeru, A., & Mugabe, P. (2023). African Rangelands and Pastoralism in a changing continent: Perspectives and Opportunities. African Journal of Range & Forage Science, 40(1), iii–vi. <https://doi.org/10.2989/10220119.2023.2182070>.
- Tennigkeit, T. and Wilkes, A. 2008. An Assessment of the Potential for Carbon Finance in Rangelands. Working Paper no. 68.

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