

Publication

Historical Ecologies of Pastoralist Overgrazing in Kenya: Long-Term Perspectives on Cause and Effect

JournalArticle (Originalarbeit in einer wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift)**ID** 4506923**Author(s)** Boles, Oliver J.C.; Shoemaker, Anna; Courtney Mustaphi, Colin J.; Petek, Nik; Ekblom, Anneli; Lane, Paul J.**Author(s) at UniBasel** [Courtney-Mustaphi, Colin](#) ;**Year** 2019**Title** Historical Ecologies of Pastoralist Overgrazing in Kenya: Long-Term Perspectives on Cause and Effect**Journal** Human ecology**Volume** 47**Number** 3**Pages / Article-Number** 419-434**Keywords** Historical ecology, Compression effects, Rangeland management, Pastoralist mobility strategies, Eastern Africa, Kenya

The spectre of 'overgrazing' looms large in historical and political narratives of ecological degradation in savannah ecosystems. While pastoral exploitation is a conspicuous driver of landscape variability and modification, assumptions that such change is inevitable or necessarily negative deserve to be continuously evaluated and challenged. With reference to three case studies from Kenya - the Laikipia Plateau, the Lake Baringo basin, and the Amboseli ecosystem - we argue that the impacts of pastoralism are contingent on the diachronic interactions of locally specific environmental, political, and cultural conditions. The impacts of the compression of rangelands and restrictions on herd mobility driven by misguided conservation and economic policies are emphasised over outdated notions of pastoralist inefficiency. We review the application of 'overgrazing' in interpretations of the archaeological record and assess its relevance for how we interpret past socio-environmental dynamics. Any discussion of overgrazing, or any form of human-environment interaction, must acknowledge spatio-temporal context and account for historical variability in landscape ontogenies.

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