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Kenya

# Resisting “green capitalism” in Kenya

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**Indigenous communities are resisting a project aimed at introducing carbon credits on their lands, which would profoundly alter the pastoral economy.**

Carbon credits enable multinationals to offset their carbon dioxide emissions by funding environmental projects. In Kenya, the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) specialises in this type of activity. It manages ‘conservancies’, i.e. areas set aside for this purpose.

## A dubious project, but...

The NRT has launched the Northern Kenya Grassland Carbon Project (NKCP). The aim is to sell carbon credits – generated by carbon sequestration in the soil through a reorganisation of grazing practices – to companies such as Netflix and Meta.

The project covers two million hectares, comprising more than a dozen ‘conservancies’, and affects nearly 100,000 people from various communities, notably the Rendille, the Maasai, the Borana and the Samburu. These communities graze their livestock using pastoral practices that blend cultural traditions and ancestral know-how, following local and regional rainfall patterns, which are becoming increasingly scarce due to global warming.

This is precisely what the NRT aims to change by introducing planned rotational grazing, which it claims would enable 1.5 million tonnes of carbon to be stored in the soil each year. However, the scientific evidence put forward by the NRT to demonstrate that this system would increase carbon storage is, to say the least, questionable. The main argument is that the free-range grazing practised by local communities degrades soil quality. This argument echoes the colonial view that indigenous peoples are incapable of preserving their environment.

The Wall Street Journal reports that the NRT has already sold nearly six million carbon credits, with an estimated value of between 42 and 90 million dollars depending on market prices.

## ... lucrative

This project strips pastoralist communities of control over their livestock in favour of centralised external management, which would decide where the herds are to graze and for how long. Traditional livestock farming would thus be transformed into a more industrial and commercial system.

However, community protests, supported by NGOs such as Survival International, have succeeded in halting the project. The certification body Verra has suspended its verification procedures on two occasions. In particular, it was established that the free and informed consent of the affected communities had not been obtained.

Furthermore, the NRT is usurping authority over the land by creating conservancies in breach of Kenyan legislation, notably the Community Land Act of 2016, which recognises collective land ownership by communities.

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The NRT is exerting heavy pressure on local people to accept its project. Bus transport is organised to take residents to meetings at which they are asked to sign contracts, even though many of them cannot read or write. Financial blackmail has also been reported, whilst, in the past, the sums paid and their recipients have remained particularly opaque.

Kenya’s pastoralist communities are thus suffering a double blow. They are bearing the brunt of climate change—for which they are not responsible—which is undermining their livestock farming, whilst at the same time being forced to change their way of life in order to offset the greenhouse gas emissions of Western multinationals.

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Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l’Anticapitaliste](#).

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