

Junior Fellowship for Dr. Paul Roden: A Multi-Perspective Evaluation of Land Degradation in a Dryland Environment (Central Pokot, Kenya)

Initiative: Wissen für morgen – Kooperative Forschungsvorhaben im subsaharischen Afrika (beendet)

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Land degradation is of serious concern for populations living primarily off the natural resource base. This problem can be particularly acute in drylands, as it can lead to a loss of ecosystem services, and a reduction of livelihood security. Several challenges to the understanding of land degradation have been recognised, some of which stem from conceptual and methodological inconsistencies related to the various definitions of land degradation and from different scalar and disciplinary perspectives leading to contradictory results. Such inconsistencies have contributed to a gap between knowledge and policy or practice. In recognition of the fact that land degradation dynamics are influenced by the complex interactions between biophysical and social factors, and that conflicting stakeholder perspectives limit the potential of mitigating and remediating land degradation, this study adopts a multi-perspective approach to understanding land degradation. This approach integrates a remote sensing analysis of the spatial and temporal dynamics of land degradation, with a social science perspective that assesses local and expert knowledge of land degradation in Central Pokot, Kenya. A meso and local scale view of change in biological productivity will be produced through multi-scaled remote sensing images. Participatory focus group discussions will be conducted to elicit local knowledge on the perceptions of land cover change and degradation, and its causes. Standardised field surveys conducted in partnership with land-users will identify both local and expert indicators of degradation. Expert interviews with higher level land-use decision makers will also be undertaken to understand their rationales of action and their influence in affecting change. Overall, the study will provide for a more holistic understanding of drylands - also beyond Central Pokot - by identifying the patterns of land degradation, investigating their roots causes, and assessing ways to mitigate degradation.

Projektbeteiligte

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