

New postdoc in Drylands Transform

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James is joining the Drylands Transform project as a postdoctoral researcher. Photo: private

- I am excited to join Drylands Transform and work as part of a multidisciplinary team. My research in northern Kenya has highlighted to me how the region's drylands are undergoing rapid economic and political transformations; large-scale investments and land tenure reform are affecting pastoralists' and agro-pastoralists' land rights, access to natural resources and security, says James. In the face of these changes, governance of rangelands has emerged as a major issue for policy makers and academics. James will work as part of a team, led by Per Knutsson and Göran Bostedt, to identify and promote innovative natural resource management and governance institutions that strengthen both pastoralists' and agro-pastoralists' secure and flexible rights to resources.

To achieve this objective, the research James will be involved in will consist of a sequence of three distinct but related empirical studies:

1. A desk-based comparative analysis of key national and sub-national natural resource institutions in Kenya and Uganda, focusing on how they directly or indirectly guide and regulate pastoralist and agro-pastoralist land use and livestock production systems.

2. Informed by the findings from Study 1, fieldwork will be carried out to explore how natural resource institutions at different levels (international, national, regional, local) combine to regulate land use and livelihoods among pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities. Here, a combination of qualitative methods for groups and individuals will be used at the four research sites in Kenya and Uganda.

3. Based on the results from studies 1 and 2, and inputs from research activities in the other parts of the project, the potential of existing and alternative institutional mechanisms and practices will be quantitatively assessed to enable sustainable natural resource governance, which will provide valuable inputs into the identification, design and evaluation of future scenarios towards the end of Drylands Transform.



Turkana is the driest of the four Dryland Transform sites. Photo: Stephen Mureithi

Research background

The topics and themes of Drylands Transform have been central to James' research in Samburu and Marsabit Counties of northern Kenya, where he spent two years during his PhD. He has also conducted research at sites across the Kenyan drylands, including West Pokot and Turkana Counties and is therefore familiar with the project's study region in Kenya.

Focusing on the Lake Turkana Wind Power (LTWP) project, his PhD research examined the impacts of large-scale investments and land commodification on pastoralists' lives, including their relationships with the changing environment, conceptions of place, interactions with neighbours and politics of belonging.

James' postdoctoral research has continued this work while pushing it in new directions to look at intersections between large-scale investments, land governance and pastoralism.

- My research draws on a range of theoretical approaches from geography, anthropology, and political ecology to conceptualise the commodification of drylands, pastoralist dryland use, and governance, says James.
- I am excited to apply and develop my knowledge and experience of pastoralist land use and governance in East Africa and contribute as part of a multidisciplinary team to this very important research project, he finalises.

Facts:



Drylands Transform

Drylands Transform is a 4-year research project funded by Formas that started up during the Covid-19 pandemic in October 2020. It includes an interdisciplinary research team representing SLU and seven other universities and international organisations from Sweden, Kenya and Uganda.

[Visit the website for Drylands Transform.](#)

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Relevant publications

Drew, J. (2018) *Pastoralism in the shadow of a windfarm: an ethnography of people, places and belonging in northern Kenya*. Doctoral thesis (PhD), University of Sussex.

Drew, J. (2020) 'Meanings of Place & Struggles for Inclusion in the Lake Turkana Wind Power Project', in Lind, J., Okenwa, D. and Scoones, I. *Land, Investment & Politics: Reconfiguring Africa's Pastoral Drylands*. Oxford: James Currey.