

Living Inside a Wind Park - Exploring Energy Justice Concerns in Large-Scale Renewable Energy Projects Among Rural Communities, March, 2025

The JUCAN team congratulates Lucía Fajardo Ligerero and Susann Heidecke on the successful defence of their master thesis. The research was conducted between September and October 2024 in the Kipeto Wind Farm, Kajiado, Kenya. The JUCAN research project has supported the two Global Development students from the University of Copenhagen during their fieldwork and writing process. Their thesis explored how expanding renewable energy infrastructure can address the needs and justice concerns of local rural communities that host them. Environmental justice is a critical concern because the impacts of the global push for renewable energy (RE) to mitigate climate change are often felt most strongly in rural and Indigenous communities through land dispossession, loss of livelihoods, and social marginalization.



The thesis analyses a unique case: the Kipeto Wind Farm, Kenya's second-largest wind park, which has widely been portrayed as a 'best practice example' – in contrast to other dispossessive and extractive RE projects in Kenya, Africa and globally. Based on 6-weeks of fieldwork and using a mixed-methods approach, including interviews, focus groups, survey data and participatory

wealth ranking, the thesis examines the wind farm's impact on the Maasai pastoralist community in Kajiado County, which hosts the wind park. The study aims to understand how the benefits and burdens of renewable energy projects are distributed within host communities and how social networks influence the redistribution of resources.

The findings show that, although the benefits of the wind farm are distributed unevenly, strong social bonds within the community facilitate a reallocation of resources, helping to support rural livelihoods and local development. The host community does not only experience but also actively shapes distributive justice dynamics. However, the research also reveals broader structural inequalities that



shape the impacts of renewable energy projects, cautioning that these projects risk fostering division and dependency within the communities on large-scale RE projects if not carefully managed.

Ultimately, this research contributes to the under-researched field of energy justice in the Global South, advocating for justice frameworks rooted in the local context and considering the unique dynamics of rural and Indigenous communities.

All support towards this research is highly appreciated and acknowledged.