Development as a Trojan Horse? Foreign Large-Scale Land Acquisitions in Ethiopia, Madagascar and Uganda

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Note: We look forward to discussing the research programme described below with the participants of the conference on 'Global Land Grabbing' to be held on 6-8 April 2011 (University of Sussex, Brighton, UK).

Title:

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Programme details

Programme

a. Research motivation:

The past decade has been characterized by an unprecedented rise in foreign, large-scale land acquisitions in Africa. While commonly presented as a development opportunity for national governments and local communities, such projects often trigger livelihood shifts, dislocation from ancestral lands and pervasive social, cultural, environmental, and economic changes. Impacts of land deals on local heritage-making, livelihood processes and ontologies anchored in land have yet to be fully measured. While foreign land acquisitions have fundamentally altered power structures and relationships in host countries, analysts currently struggle to respond to these new paradigms with appropriate theoretical models. We propose a multidisciplinary, theoretically and methodologically innovative approach to examine the dynamics of poverty, sustainability and development within the context of foreign land acquisitions. Our model - referred to as 'zones of intermediality' - will be tested in four comparative case studies in Ethiopia, Madagascar and Uganda.

b. Duration of the programme: Four Years (4 PhD Projects) from September 2011-September 2015

c. Country(ies) where the research will be carried out: Madagascar, Ethiopia and Uganda

Summary of the research programme

This project examines the role of foreign large scale land acquisitions in shaping development, conservation and sustainability practices in Madagascar, Ethiopia and Uganda. The past decade has witnessed an unprecedented rise in foreign direct investment (FDI) in Africa's arable land, sparking new international debates about 'land grabbing'. While proponents argue that land deals lead to economic growth, poverty alleviation, and environmental protection, detractors point to livelihood losses, cultural changes, land dispossession, and environmental degradation. However, an empirical basis upon which to prove or disprove such assertions is lacking. This project aims to fill this gap by generating an analytical and theoretical framework to analyse the global drivers and local impacts of large-scale mining in Madagascar, foreign food production in Ethiopia, REDD initiatives in Madagascar, and Chinese investments in Uganda's Lake Victoria Free Trade Zone.

The project integrates an interdisciplinary (history, anthropology, geography, GIS/Spatial Analysis, political science, ecological economics, linguistics) team of experts active in land studies. Results will be made available and discussed with all relevant stakeholders (smallholders, NGOs, government officials, policy-makers, private sector). Findings should reveal various local realities and implementation processes of land deals thus far lacking in the literature.

The research has four aims. First, we will analyse the global actors, networks and interests (e.g. political, economic, social, cultural, environmental) driving foreign land acquisitions, examining the role of the state, neoliberal reforms and donor interests in facilitating land access. Second, a grounded stakeholder

analysis will detail local impacts, perceptions and responses to land deals. Third, we will map, through our theoretical model, 'zones of intermediality', the ontological grids of (inter)national - local stakeholder encounters where diverse ideologies, discourses and practices of land use and valuation are mediated. Fourth, we will use this model to capture commonalities between stakeholders and potential areas of contestation.

The four aims are anchored in two phases. Phase I (aims 1, 2) will construct an inventory of stakeholder land claims and intangible/material valuations of land (e.g. heritage, source of identity, biodiversity, food security). Phase II (aims 3, 4) will define 'zones of intermediality' where various cultural paradigms and land claims meet on the same playing field, and imperatives of local cultural references, practices and discourses encounter those of external actors. We posit that this model will unravel the complexities of stakeholder interaction whilst identifying conflict resolution strategies to mitigate or resolve adverse impacts of land deals.

Description of the programme

   a.   Rationale and background

The unprecedented scope of African 'land grabs'- long-term exploitation of mega-tracts of land and resources by foreign entities – has changed development realities on the ground (Vidal 2010). Daewoo's proposed 99 year lease of three million hectares in Madagascar sparked massive protests and a coup d'état. Ethiopia recently earmarked three million hectares of fertile land for foreign investment (Rice 2010) and China now enjoys privileged investor status in Uganda (Xinhua 2010).

World Bank and IMF policies favouring economic liberalisation, land privatisation, export-oriented growth and environmental/biodiversity protection in developing countries have created circumstances favourable to mega-land acquisitions (Sarrasin 2006). These transnational entities now suggest foreign land acquisitions could improve "rural sustainable development" in host countries (Cotula et al. 2009). The 8th Millennium Development Goal outlining "global partnerships for development" specifically aims to involve foreign investors in poverty alleviation and environmental protection (De Schutter 2009: 13; Cotula et al. 2009: 9; Hamann 2010). Land deals are consequently promoted as a "development opportunity" for state and local communities (Cotula et al. 2009: 4), with promises of better education, "economic growth", technology, infrastructure, healthcare, and alternate income-generating activities (e.g. employment on concessions, ecotourism) viewed as "trade-offs" (or compensation) for the lease of arable land (Smaller and Mann 2009; IIED and FAO 2008).

Sceptics wonder whether corporate pledges of "sustainability" in discourse and media are more honoured in the breach than in the observance: "while foreign companies pay lip service to the need for 'sustainable development' … demand for land is resulting in the loss of pasture and forests … causing an increase in greenhouse gas emissions" (FOE 2010: 27). A recently leaked World Bank report "*The Global Land Rush: Can it yield sustainable and equitable benefits?",* concedes that "investors failed to follow through on their investments plans, in some cases after inflicting serious damage on the local resource base" and that much vaunted sustainable development projects were "rarely if ever" realized in host countries (Blas 2010).

Has the multiplicity and power of these foreign actors engaged in land deals weakened nation-states (Duffy 2006) or do governments have a renewed role in negotiating political economic governance (cf. Peck and Tickell 2002; Büscher 2010)? And how do local people reliant on land react to foreign land deals and the presence of (foreign) stakeholders? These questions and others remain unanswered, as analytical tools to confront these shifts in power structures are outdated or non-existent. Comprehensive assessment of local impacts, particularly related to non-economic (e.g. food, asset, cultural, existential) forms of security (Cotula et al. 2009: 7; GRAIN 2010) is impeded by transparency and information flow issues. Ill-defined notions of "ownership" politicize the negotiation process and often exacerbate divisions and inequalities within communities (Daniel and Mittal 2009: 10). Against this backdrop, observers are demanding that local livelihoods, interests and needs be prioritized (Mann 2010: 8).

Analytical and theoretical model

We propose an innovative theoretical model to address the above problematic, focusing specifically on how diverse, culturally-informed stakeholder approaches to the environment and land use come together on the same playing field. The grid of stakeholder engagement in land deals is anything but static; language, lexicons, positions, and postures are deployed interchangeably and for various reasons. A tribal elder may draw upon the discourses of an NGO to refer to "synergies", while a conservation group might frame new utopias to local communities - formerly the arena of politicians or religious leaders. Although signs may have become interchangeable, with various actors using a common terminology, what is signified may be entirely different. Our neutral analytical and theoretical model, 'zones of intermediality' is designed to capture such dynamic complexities.

'Zones of intermediality' are physical and ontological grids where land claims are mediated, legitimized and/or defended by various stakeholders - company, government official, local elder, NGO, etc. 'Zones of intermediality' may be triggered by any number of discursive and non-discursive factors: the arrival of a brand new WWF jeep displaying a decal of a panda bear, a radio broadcast heard in an outlying village on the importance of 'empowering' women, a WWF 'consciousness-raising' event on sustainable development, a villager hired by a conservation NGO to 'educate' fellow villagers about the value of biodiversity. In this regard, 'local', 'national' and 'international' are by no means analytically exclusive categories, often converging or reforming within individuals or sub-groups. Whereas certain actors who enter 'zones of intermediality' are quick to adapt and deploy lexicons for their own purposes (as 'capital'), analysis has yet to reconstruct these into intelligible patterns which could be used to predict conflict and better orient policy.

We approach 'zones of intermediality' in two principal ways:

1. *land access and legitimization*: by investigating media used by stakeholders to legitimize their land claims;

2. *embodied valuations*: by analysing how different land and livelihood valuations are mediated by cultural paradigms;

The first approach would focus on historical and contemporary processes of inclusion/exclusion (dispossession or access restrictions) from land as legitimized through media/processes of mediation. Media plays an important role in legitimizing high impact land projects, and the depiction of local stakeholders as the main degraders of the environment in mainstream media is a powerful discourse of legitimacy (Seagle 2009; Igoe 2010; Brockington 2009). We aim to situate 'land degradation' within specific historical, cultural, ecological, political-economic and discursive contexts (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987; Peet and Watts 1996).

The second approach would focus on the breakdown - where each actor in the 'zone of intermediality' might use a similar language, but mean something different. This is predicated on the hypothesis that different stakeholders approach notions of wealth, land use, labour, 'sustainability', and heritage differently. Where, why and how does a break point (conflict) emerge within the context of (inter-)national – local interaction? We aim to adapt this model to applied development aims by showing how and why different stakeholder approaches to land are mediated by (non-)discursive cultural paradigms.

In sum, intermediality has a double interest - as a tool wherein media is deployed to achieve certain ends, be they economic, political, cultural and/or charitable, and as a mirror of the wider cultural environment.

Land as Contested Heritage
Within each 'zone of intermediality', powerful universal discourses or values of land may conflict with local conceptions of land as heritage. International environmental NGOs (IENGOs) such as the WWF suggest that every world citizen is affected by ecological degradation;[1] nature is often portrayed as 'world heritage' and a universal entitlement, thus legitimizing IENGOs' claims to 'protect', survey and manage ecosystems.[2] While IENGOs often promote the consumption of 'nature' as world heritage in commodities (e.g. t-shirts, stuffed animals, films), they on occasion deny local people access to land and natural resources, restricting subsistence activities and livelihood practices (Harper 2002; Luke 1997, 1995). We suggest that land ('nature') and land-use constitute dynamic *local* heritage: environmental knowledge, cultural ontologies, kinship/ancestral ties, social relations, and dynamics of cultural heritage/identity formed around land are part of heritage and at risk of dispossession within the context of land deals.

This programme explores two principal aspects of 'land as heritage':

1.) *anatomy of heritage*: what factors substantiate various stakeholders' claims to land as heritage?

2.) *rights to heritage*: why do some heritage claims override others, who determines this and on the basis of what criteria?

Aim 1 analyses how daily human-environment interactions generate local conceptions of land as heritage.[3]

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1   "...the biological riches of this planet are part of a seamless web of life where a threat to any part threatens the whole" (WWF Annual Report, 1994: 2).

2   UNESCO recently labelled the Malagasy forests of Atsinanana as "World Heritage Site." See http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/mg.

3   "Land" herein broadly includes forests, biodiversity, water, and natural resources.

Human-environment interactions combine both intangible (e.g. ancestral, ritual, existential) and material (food security, income, medicinal) aspects. We see heritage-making as an embodied process (cf. Csordas 1990; Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987) integrating these two dimensions. While land secures livelihoods and the provision of food, it is also embedded with [non-economic] socio-cultural meaning (Scott 1977; Yao et al. 2007; Cormier-Salem and Bassett 2007).

Aim 2 addresses contested heritage claims and tensions between global notions of heritage and local realities of land use and valuation. Who has rights to heritage, and who doesn't? Why do some heritage claims override others, and who determines this? UNESCO recently widened the boundaries of heritage to include "intangible cultural heritage" which, whilst encompassing "traditions that countless groups ... have inherited from their ancestors and transmit to their descendants," must also comply with international norms of "sustainable development" (UNESCO 2005). Such a definition could exclude aspects of heritage deemed 'unsustainable' (e.g. shifting cultivation).

b. Programme outline, incl. Methodology

Research Questions

What are the global structures, interests and relationships driving foreign land acquisitions, and what are land dwellers' experiences and perceptions of these deals? How are diverse stakeholder claims to and values of land mediated by cultural paradigms within 'zones of intermediality', and how might these different conceptions create unforeseen sources of conflict? How can negative impacts of land deals be mitigated by examining material and intangible dimensions of land use and stakeholder encounters within 'zones of intermediality'?

Programme Objectives

1. Structure of land deals: inventory of global actors, networks and interests (e.g. political, economic, social, cultural, environmental) driving acquisitions, legitimization strategies and media used. Role of the state, neoliberal reforms and donor interests in facilitating land access. Historical background for individual foreign land deals, particularly land use, valuation and access, and oral histories.
2. Local impacts: Analysis of local responses to foreign large-scale land acquisitions, impacts on livelihoods, and implications for sustainability, poverty, and environmental protection in each setting.
3. Stakeholder interaction: charting zones of discursive and non-discursive interactions of stakeholders through the model, 'zones of intermediality'. Mapping and inventories of mediated ideologies, discourses and practices of land use and valuation. Tracing anatomy of land as both material and intangible heritage within each setting.
4. Applied use of 'zones of intermediality' model as predictor of unforeseen impacts of land loss, conflicts or disputes. Dialogue with stakeholders to develop conflict resolution/mitigation strategies. Dissemination of results to local communities, regional officers, and the wider policy, NGO and academic community in the form of various reports, publications and four PhD theses.

Case Study Outline and Rationale

The programme is divided into four projects. each elaborating upon a different (inter)national motivation for acquiring land: climate mitigation (REDD, cf. Olivier De Schutter [2009: 4]); mineral extraction; foreign food security; and Chinese special economic zones (SEZs).

Project 1 ('Mada1', PhD) examines social and environmental impacts of large scale mineral extraction in Madagascar. GIS technology will compare landscapes of local heritage versus landscapes of extraction or protected areas. Data collected on local use values will be contrasted with corporate 'sustainability' claims.

Project 2 ('Mada2', PhD) focuses on equitability issues surrounding REDD projects in Madagascar. GIS will measure land use change and non-economic valuation. Data on implementation processes and local reactions will include an historical analysis of conservation/displacement.

Project 3 ('Ethp3', PhD) analyses foreign food production (agribusiness) in highland Ethiopia and related implications for social/cultural dislocation and food security. GIS will feature in land use maps, and an historical component will anchor diverse political and economic drivers of land acquisitions.

Project 4 ('Ugan4', PhD) examines land access strategies employed by Chinese businesses in developing Uganda's Lake Victoria Free Trade Zone (termed 'enclaves'). Focusing primarily on (inter)national drivers, it also details local and Chinese workers'/officials' responses.

Methods

An analysis of archives (including historical maps), government (including colonial) documents and oral histories (collected in field) will bring historical depth to each project. One year of ethnographic fieldwork/qualitative data collection will anchor the programme in local realities of land deals; ethnographic methods will be used: participant-observation, discourse analysis and (structured/semi-structured) interviews with all relevant stakeholders.

The GIS component will commence during second half of field research. GPS devices will collect spatial data on land use/cover change and valuation patterns (particular focus on zones of contestation). Local 'GIS teams' will be engaged to assist in data collection (community mapping). Field data will be integrated into a Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI) on foreign land deals, which will integrate data from each sub-project.

Innovative aspects

This programme offers a comprehensive, empirical study of four globally relevant types of 'land grabs' in Africa, whilst developing an innovative theoretical framework ('zones of intermediality') to examine stakeholder interactions within land deals. Detailed local ethnographies of land projects will be compiled. The programme aims to make interactions between government entities, local interests and global relationships underpinning land grabs more "readable" for specialists working on dispute prediction and prevention. Conclusions drawn from such a study will be relevant to an array of stakeholders involved in land issues, particularly policy-makers.

The proposed use of GIS and related SDI on land deals is novel and should provide spatial documentation of contested land use. We aim to uncover local notions of 'sustainability' and development which, framed within the needs, experiences, histories, and perceptions of land dwellers, may or may not converge with the development initiatives of foreign actors. Such an analysis is grounded in the hypothesis that land deals encompass a broader playing field wherein diverse actors approach notions of poverty, wealth, development, and the environment differently ('zones of intermediality').

Description of the projects

a. Project descriptions

Project 1

Title of project:	**The mining-conservation nexus: New regimes of 'sustainable development' in Madagascar**
Discipline(s):	Environmental Anthropology; History; Geography; Linguistics
Description:	

Introduction
While the World Bank and international conservation groups occupy powerful positions in Madagascar's policy-making and development (Duffy 2006: 1-2; Sarrasin 2006), recent governance shifts have been linked to the expansion of large-scale mining in the country – a phenomenon directly tied to surges in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (cf. Harbinson 2007). Under acute pressure to take social and environmental issues into account, mining companies now play an important role in anchoring regional sustainable development and conservation practices in Madagascar. However, in Madagascar, one of the most biodiverse places on Earth – where up to eighty percent of the population depends upon land for survival - multinational mining is an urgent area of inquiry.

Context
Historically, dislocation from land has triggered violent conflicts between the state and local communities. During the pre-colonial Merina kingdom, when slavery was implemented on the island to meet specific political and economic objectives (Campbell 1991: 111), land was forcibly denied as a means of control, de-historicization and pacification, breaking links between Malagasy people and their ancestors and eventually making them *andevo* (slaves). *Andevo* were "lost people", lacking links to ancestral lands and tombs and thus precluded from becoming ancestors themselves - the essence of the Malagasy identity (Evers 2002, 2006). Colonial-era policies aimed at export production, 'colonial conservation' and forced labour regimes continued to break local links with the land, as many forests were appropriated for logging concessions (Jarosz 1993). Today, the term *andevo* still implies

someone who lacks anchoring in land through tombs, land and history (Evers 2006: 417).

Currently, striking parallels can be drawn within the context of large-scale mining; continued dislocation from ancestral land, perceptions of *mivaotra tanindrazana* ('selling off the land of the ancestors'), and memories of colonialism are all growing concerns (Seagle 2009). While eviction from conservation zones has been a leading concern of some Madagascar scholars (Walsh 2005; Harper 2002), recent partnerships between multinational mining companies and international conservation NGOs have led to complex, overlapping landscapes of biodiversity protection and mineral extraction. In Madagascar, rural communities continue to have strong cultural attachment to land, and lack of access to biodiversity and natural resources might present considerable risks for livelihood and ontological reasons. Preliminary research from the Rio Tinto mine in Madagascar's Southeast suggests that, contrary to Rio Tinto's global media representations and discourses describing the project as a 'benchmark' for 'green mining', rural Malagasy living near the mine face devastating consequences of land and tomb loss, food insecurity, livelihood upheaval, cultural fragmentation, and lack of adequate compensation (Harbinson 2007; Seagle 2009).

Aims
This project traces a convergence of factors leading to the overlapping governance spheres of mining and conservation in Madagascar. It will examine: a.) land access and legitimization strategies, and b.) local perceptions/responses and stakeholder configurations ('zone of intermediality'). The PhD candidate will use GIS/GPS (consultation with Madagascar Land Observatory) to depict land cover/use change over time, carrying out in-depth interviews and oral histories to better conceptualize local realities of mining projects.

 Project 2

Title of project:	**The power configurations of climate policy: REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) in Madagascar**
Discipline(s):	Geography/Environmental Science; Anthropology; History; Linguistics

Description:

Introduction
In a special United Nations report on the "right to food", Olivier De Schutter (2009: 4) suggests that "[t]he development of large-scale land leases or acquisitions can be explained by ... (v) expected subsidies for carbon storage through plantation and avoided deforestation." In 2008, the United Nations (joint UNDP, FAO, UNEP) endorsed REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) in an effort to offset carbon emissions through integrating forests into global carbon markets. The logic behind REDD is to pay states (and subsequently local communities) financial compensation in exchange for forest conservation activities. More cost-effective than cutting emissions altogether, it is an increasingly attractive option for investors and businesses (Olsen and Bishop 2009: 1).

Context
In Madagascar, REDD policies are increasingly applied to extensive forest and biodiversity protection schemes (Ferguson 2009: 133). While conservation would rarely be applied to 'land grab' classifications, the eviction of local residents from protected areas has been a long-standing concern of indigenous peoples and various scholars (Brockington and Igoe 2006; Adams and Hutton 2007; Walsh 2005; Harper 2002). Recent concerns over the equitability of REDD have featured prominently in debates linking conservation and "land grabbing" (see also LDPI and ILC, Indigenous Environmental Network 2010).

As a climate mitigation tool, REDD has received mixed reactions. The FAO (2008) estimates that nearly 1.6 billion people rely on forests for survival, and at least 60 million of those are indigenous peoples. While the logic of REDD is indeed to pay host countries and local people for lost access to forests, the equitability of fund distribution and levels of compensation for non-economic forest uses remain points of conflict and confusion. For instance, the UN (2008: 11) concedes that in terms of compensation, "[e]lite capture is the main risk for legitimate beneficiaries." Another important issue brought up by indigenous groups has been the lack of attention to cultural modes of land rights and ownership. While REDD is promoted alongside many other schemes employing the rationale of 'payments for ecosystem services' (PES), the UN acknowledges that "REDD may erode culturally rooted non-for-profit conservation values" as well as "lock-up forests by decoupling conservation from

development," in the vein of fortress conservation (UN Framework on REDD 2008: 4). With regard to PES, Olsen and Bishop (2009: 2) state that "the distribution of benefits from most PES schemes has been neutral, at best, with respect to poverty..." The authors go on to state that, for various reasons, "small landowners and the poor may be marginalized from REDD" (Olsen and Bishop 2009: 2).

Aims
This case study examines a.) global relationships and structures driving REDD initiatives in Madagascar, b.) local implementation practices of REDD within the context of diverse stakeholder interaction ('zone of intermediality') and c.) the effectiveness of equitable benefit sharing arising from REDD. The PhD researcher will work closely with the Madagascar Land Observatory, using GIS to chart forest use/valuation in relation to protected area boundaries.

Project 3

Title of project:	**Foreign large-scale food production and local dislocation in highland Ethiopia**
Discipline(s):	Geography; Political Science; Anthropology; Oral Heritage/Linguistics

Description:

Introduction
With Saudi Arabia's recent $100 million acquisition, large-scale land leases increasingly impact upon Ethiopia's development agenda (Williams 2009: 1053). Ethiopian farmers, who are seen as "people of the plow" and maintain attachments to local agricultural practices and land (McCann 1995), have historically often experienced displacement (Gamaladin 1987; FAO/GIEWS 2000; Gebre-Mariam 1994) and face increasing dislocation due to foreign land leases for export food production.

Context
The US Agency for International Development and other Western donors have played key roles in shaping development priorities and policies in Ethiopia, primarily through encouraging the government to improve policies of food security and seek durable solutions to frequent and severe problems of food shortage and occasional famine. Reformed land tenure policies that favour private ownership and economic deregulation are key components of this donor - government relationship. This is accompanied by the creation of national parks and protected areas, and opportunities for international commercial investments in a variety of agricultural endeavours. The resulting connections to networks of both environmental and economic international discourse has led to heated disputes with local land users with regard to environmental policy, particularly agricultural and grazing land (USAID 2000, UNCT 2004). At the same time, the government's policy of "ethnic federalism" means that significant decentralization has occurred in the various ethnic administrative areas or "Regions", including important aspects of land tenure (Sugule and Walker 1998). While this can serve to protect certain interests of local communities, this is not always the case, particularly under scenarios where regional governments make their own arrangements with international NGOs, donors and commercial interests (Gebre-Mariam 1994).

The Ethiopian highland landscape is historically linked to the plow, and the particular lifestyle is celebrated in folklore, oral poetry, oral literature, and the Amharic language. Whenever the Ethiopian government has in the past relocated highland communities to lowlands so as to provide for increased food security, the relocated populations inevitably drift back to the highlands, despite the harsher conditions. In reaction to international discourses and policies aimed at making Ethiopia food-secure, many people tend to strengthen local identity formation and cultural attachments to land (Michaelson 1999). While these development projects are designed to increase national food production, local dislocation from land is a frequent occurrence.

Aims
This sub-project investigates how stakeholders in Ethiopia, in particular Amhara cultivators in the highlands and the Ethiopian government (at the *woreda*, regional and national levels), engage in processes of heritage formation in the 'zone of intermediality' by land management and use, and confront livelihood shifts within the context of foreign land leases. The sub-project will examine the cultural and historical context for these processes and how access to different media have legitimized the varying contested claims to land. The proposed PhD researcher will carry out interviews and GIS analysis to analyse local conceptions of land as heritage, engaging with the Forum for Social Studies (FSS Ethiopia) to identity conflict resolution strategies.

Project 4

Title of project:	**Chinese "Eco-Cities" in Uganda's Lake Victoria Free Trade Zone (LVFTZ)**
Discipline(s):	Anthropology; History; Linguistics; Geography

Description:

Introduction
With last year's discovery of lucrative oil reserves, Uganda is now tipped as Africa's next top foreign direct investment (FDI) destination, and Chinese businesses have been designated privileged investor (Xinhua 2010). Chinese investment methods in Africa are linked to a broader strategy of the Chinese Government to create tax-free enclaves, so-called 'Special Economic Zones' (SEZ's), in order to attract business and accelerate development. These tax-free 'enclaves of development' offer attractive, purely business-related zones for host governments, and are thus 'anti-political' in nature as they supersede the political sphere altogether (Nyiri 2009; cf. Ferguson 1990, Büscher 2009: 29).

Context
In 2008, the Chinese company *Paradise International Investment (PII)* signed an agreement with *Kagera Eco-Cities* which, in cooperation with the Ugandan Government, led to the joint acquisition and management of 32,000 hectares in the Lake Victoria Free Trade Zone (LVFTZ) (Habaa 2008; TradeInvest Africa 2008). Under Ugandan constitutional law, *Kagera Eco-Cities* was awarded the 99 year lease, allowing for *PII* to autonomously invest in the construction of a 1.5 billion dollar 'eco-city': a tax free 'sustainable flagship of post-industrial development' (see Sseesamirembe Eco-City website) and prime example of extraterritorial Chinese 'enclaves of development' and 'modernity' in Africa and elsewhere (Nyiri 2009; 2006: 84). Thus, the opportunity for this eco-city has arisen due to the interaction between different forms of development and other interests in a global context.

Chinese investments may impart similar social-environmental impacts as mineral extraction or plantation agriculture (in terms of intensive land use) though entail different drivers, state relations and local cultural dynamics. Chinese leaders emphasize the respect of national sovereignty and non-intervention in the affairs of other countries as central tenets of their current foreign policy, a notion most likely drawn from previous experiences in Africa in the late 1970s and 1980s (Lewis 2007: 2; Segal 1992). These tenets operate as a filter for values and ideologies in their relationship with African countries, resulting in a significant degree of pragmatism. This is of key importance as inferences drawn from such pragmatism consequently inform the circulation of diverse values and ideas competing in the 'zone of intermediality', particularly with respect to land-labour relations.

Aims
This sub-project explores how various Chinese actors – managers, workers and entrepreneurs – attempt to implement familiar economic strategies and instil labour disciplines as they deal with local officials and workers (in 'zones of intermediality'). At the same time, it will examine how on the other hand the 'legal command', namely the capacity to control, dominate, to extract and dictate through the law, confronts local notions of land as heritage. While the project aims to examine these culturally informed labour relations, it will also detail local smallholders' responses to development initiatives (including employment) brought forth by Chinese businesses. The proposed PhD candidate will work closely with the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR) and Uganda Land Alliance for brainstorming ways to link ongoing findings to practical applications (e.g. conflict resolution or improved dialogue between stakeholders).

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