



The Land Deal Politics Initiative

LDPI Small Grant Competition Part 2 – 2011-12: Call for applications

A convergence of factors has been driving a revaluation of land by powerful economic and political actors. This is occurring across the world, but especially in the global South. As a result, we are seeing a dramatic rise in the extent of cross-border, transnational corporation-driven and, in some cases foreign government-driven, large-scale land deals unfolding worldwide. The phrase 'global land grab' has become a catch-all phrase to describe this explosion of (trans)national commercial land transactions revolving around the production and sale of food and biofuels, conservation and mining activities.

In-depth and systematic enquiry has become urgent and necessary in order to have deeper, meaningful and productive debates around this issue. This is the reason why the Land Deal Politics Initiative (LDPI) has been launched and had sponsored last year a small grant competition. The latter was a huge success: we were able to fund 40 small grants. Many of these papers were later presented at the LDPI-organized International Conference on Global Land Grabbing held at IDS, Sussex in April 2011. The 2011 Sussex conference was a major success, with 120 papers presented. Many of these papers have subsequently contributed inputs to various policy initiatives such as the UN Committee on Food Security (CFS) related studies and deliberations. Several of the papers from the first round of small grant competition and the 2011 Sussex conference have been selected as contributions to three forthcoming journal special issues on land grabs: 'Green Grabs: a new way of appropriating nature?' guest edited by James Fairhead, Melissa Leach and Ian Scoones for release in March 2012, 'The politics of global land grabbing' guest edited by Ruth Hall, Ben White and Wendy Wolford for release in May 2012 – both in the *Journal of Peasant Studies (JPS)*, and 'Governing land grabs', guest edited by Jun Borras, Ruth Hall, Ian Scoones, Ben White and Wendy Wolford for release in July 2012 in *Development and Change*. In early 2011, *JPS* released the 3-article 'Forum on Global Land Grabbing' with contributions from Klaus Deininger, Olivier de Schutter and Tania Li. We want to continue building on this emerging body of literature on critical perspectives on global land grabbing. This is one of the reasons for the second round of small grant competition for 2011-12; this is the reason why we are holding an 'LDPI International Conference on Global Land Grabbing Part 2' in October 2012 in Cornell University in New York. Further information about the latter will be released soon via: www.iss.nl/ldpi.

LDPI is an 'engaged research' initiative, taking the side of the rural poor, but based on solid evidence and detailed, field-based research. In the LDPI we will aim for a broad framework encompassing the *political economy*, *political ecology* and *political sociology* of land deals centred on food, biofuels, minerals and conservation. Working within the broad analytical lenses of these three fields, we will use as a general framework the four key questions in agrarian political economy: (i) who owns what? (ii) who does what? (iii) who gets what? and (iv) what do they do with the surplus wealth that has been created? We will add two additional key questions, highlighting political dynamics between groups and social classes: 'what do they do to each other?', and 'how do changes in politics get shaped by dynamic ecologies, and vice versa?' We will ask a range of big picture questions through detailed in-depth case studies in a number of sites globally, focusing on the *politics* of land deals.

Encouraged by the success of last year's LDPI small grant competition, and confronted by the challenge of having a deeper understanding of the dynamics of land grabbing, LDPI is launching a Small Grants Competition Part 2: 2011-12. Grants of up to US\$3000 per study are available to successful applicants who wish to undertake original field research, carry out follow up fieldwork on an ongoing related initiative, or write up a paper based on research that is being/has been undertaken on any of the following themes (or combinations).

For the 2011-12 small grants competition, we are particularly keen on themes around **resistance and alternatives** (see the first two sets of questions below) – although we remain open to broader topics around political economy, political ecology and political sociology:

- What are some of the relevant emerging alternatives from key actors? Are some of the traditional policies such as land reform, and some of the more recent alternative visions such as 'food sovereignty' (and 'land sovereignty') relevant and useful in protecting and promoting the interest of the rural poor in the midst of these (trans)national commercial land deals?
- What is the range of reactions from local communities to these investments? To what extent have agrarian political struggles been provoked by the new land investment dynamics? What forms and strategies of resistance are emerging? What are the issues that unite or divide the rural poor, organized movements, and rural communities around the issue of land deals?
- What changes in broad agrarian structures are emerging? Are these new forms of agrarian capitalism or repeats of the past?
- What is the nature and extent of rural social differentiation – in terms of class, gender, ethnicity – following changes in land use and land property relations as well as organizations of production and exchange?
- Have land deals undermined local level and national food security? How and to what extent? What have been the socially differentiated impacts on livelihoods by class, gender and ethnicity?
- What are the various competing policy and political narratives and discourses around the multiple crises of food, energy, climate and finance, and how have these shaped and been reshaped by the land deal politics? How

and to what extent has (trans)national finance speculation played a role in land deals in the context of the convergence of food, fuels, climate and finance crises? What narratives exist around 'investment, growth and modernization' versus 'marginalization, displacement and impoverishment', and so on?

- How have competing frameworks and views on land property been deployed by various camps around the contested meanings of 'marginal lands' (or, idle', 'waste', 'unoccupied' lands)?
- What are the emerging trends around dynamics of power, elites and corruption; land as a source of patronage? How can we make sense of the politics of land deals in different contexts?
- Have development-induced displacement and dispossession occurred? How and to what extent and with what immediate and long-term outcomes and implications for rural livelihoods, including new rural refugees or internally displaced peoples (IDPs)?
- Have global land policies of different overseas development agencies (World Bank, FAO, EU, IFAD, and so on) contributed to facilitating/encouraging or blocking/discouraging land deals? What are the limitations of 'code of conduct', certification, regulation, information dissemination, and capacity-building strategies?
- What are the dynamics of international politics of land grabs in the broader context of energy, mining, forestry and conservation; and the role of big capital and powerful interests?

The research must be original, policy-relevant and based on detailed, case-specific field study. General review papers will not be accepted. Final papers will be around 10,000 words long, and guidelines for their production will be issued to successful grant holders. The final papers will become part of an international series (the LDPI working paper series) that will be published on the internet and widely disseminated among regional and international research institutions, donor community, policy makers' circles, NGOs, and agrarian movements – with the possibility of more formal academic publication, either in an edited volume or a special issue of a journal.

To be eligible:

- The applicant must a doctoral or post-doctoral (graduating within the last five years) researcher
- Non-doctoral/non-postdoctoral researchers may apply but will have a different requirement – see further below.
- The research must be based on recent (over the last 5 years), field-based, site-specific research

Short proposals (500 words maximum) for the research/paper must be submitted by email to landpolitics@gmail.com by **15 December 2011**, together with a short CV (maximum one page, including the name of one referee). For non-doctoral/non-postdoctoral applicant, a longer proposal is required, at 1,500 words, together with the names of two referees. A review committee, drawn from the sponsoring institutions, will award small grants in January 2012. Successful applicants will have until **31 July 2012** to complete a paper. All papers will be peer-reviewed and final versions will be submitted before **30 September 2012**. Papers will be published (electronic format only) in the LDPI working paper series. Some papers might be selected for presentation at the LDPI International Conference on Global Land Grabbing in **October 2012** in Cornell University. Details about this conference will be released soon.

The 'Land Deal Politics Initiative' (LDPI) is initially a joint effort of Initiatives in Critical Agrarian Studies (ICAS) and the Resource, Environment and Livelihoods (RELIVE) Research Cluster at the International Institute of Social Studies (Saturnino 'Jun' Borras Jr. – the LDPI international secretariat, and Ben White), the Future Agricultures Consortium at the Institute for Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex (Ian Scoones), the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) at the University of the Western Cape (Ruth Hall), and the Polson Institute for Global Development at Cornell University (Wendy Wolford).

More on the LDPI can be found at the LDPI website: www.iss.nl/ldpi

For additional information, you may contact one of the LDPI convenors:

- Saturnino ('Jun') Borras Jr., junborras@yahoo.com
- Ruth Hall, rhall@uwc.ac.za
- Ian Scoones, i.scoones@ids.ac.uk
- Ben White, white@iss.nl
- Wendy Wolford, www43@cornell.edu

Coordinating institutions:



In collaboration with:

