

The 'New' Politics of Land and Development: Experiences of Dispossession, Social/Gender Equity and Environmental Sustainability in East & Southern Africa



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Setting the Scene: Synthesis of Research

IDRC

(Kenya – Gender, Land, Livelihoods)
(Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique,
Zimbabwe – Women’s Rights to Land)

NPA

(Mozambique – Land rights)

Research: 1996-
2010

WISP-IUCN & FAO

(Kenya – Pastoral land rights)

SOAS

(Madagascar – Anthropological study of
development interventions and actors)

Main Question:
What's 'New' about Land Grabs?
What are its Effects and Implications?

**Land Grabs in Africa:
So, What's 'New'?**

Main Argument: Land Grabs

Echoes of the past, showing striking similarities with colonial interventions and dispossessions

Contemporary political-economic changes and simultaneous crises, exacerbated by shifting geopolitics, corruption and elite-capture, have enabled widening inequities in power and land grabs

When viewed from a political-ecological lens, land is experienced by farmers and pastoralists as having multiple values and meanings, linked to social relations, economic-welfare, material use, cultural identity/status, spirituality, well-being, etc.

As powerful global forces and elite actors flex their muscles in terms of land deals, acquisitions and grabs, social justice, environmental sustainability and customary institutions are losing out to narrow economic framing narratives which focus on resource extraction, external food security and bio-fuel production based on the priorities of a few

As these assumptions/notions gain traction, women and men are being increasingly dispossessed of their land and livelihoods, experiencing acute marginalization and food security

Brief Overview of Land Grabs: Multiple Definitions

1. Trans-national commercial land transactions and speculations driven by LARGE-scale production, sale and export of food and bio-fuels (Borras and Franco, 2010)
2. Resulting from contemporary LARGE-scale, cross-border land deals or transactions carried out by TNCs or foreign governments, and resulting from multiple causes (Zoomer, 2010)
3. * Land grabs, dispossessions, deals, investments and acquisitions resulting from multiple causes and an inter-play of global and local forces in the contemporary context, but rooted in historical, geopolitical and patriarchal relations of power (varying size and scale)

Brief Overview of Land Grabs: Driving Forces

Investment/expansion of off-shore/transnational mono-cropped agriculture and food production (food crisis)

Investment/expansion of non-food agricultural commodities (horticulture) bio-fuels and carbon sinks (energy crisis)

Expansion/creation of protected areas, natural reserves, eco-tourism, conservancies, REDD, etc.

Building of large-scale infrastructure, works and interventions

Urban expansion, migration, housing projects, rural-urban linkages, etc.

Extractive industries (mining and minerals, quarries, oil, WATER, etc.)

Military operations and land as 'strategic'

* Territorial expansion and wealth accumulation/concentration

* Patriarchy and gendered power relations



Key Learnings

Dominant Narratives

Land Grabs & Disposessions in SSA

Disconnects

Land Grabs & Disposessions in SSA

Pastoralist Lens

Land Grabs & Disposessions in Kenya

Gender Lens

Land Grabs & Disposessions in Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Kenya and Zimbabwe

Dominant Framing Narratives

Discourses

- Neo-liberal policies: privatization, commoditization, enclosure, liberalization of land markets
- Economic-reductionism, profit-seeking and resource extraction: neglect socio-cultural, political, historical, identity and spiritual values of land (link to ancestors and afterlife)

Discourses

- VOLUNTARY “Codes of Conduct (IFPRI)” and “Principals for Responsible Agricultural Investment” (World Bank): LARGE scale land investments
- Benefits: Increase off-farm and smallholder incomes, transfer of technologies, increase in food production, building of infrastructure, access to basic services, export opportunities, etc.

Pastoralists

- Assumption is that land is ‘idle’ and ‘vacant’, and pastoral land management as ‘illogical’
- Bias towards privatization/subdivision/enclosure of land
- Agricultural-centric policies: view pastoral land use and mobility as ‘unsustainable’

Gender

- Claims focus on “pro-poor”: gender blind and lack social differentiation (“the farmer”)
- Focus on agriculture, without recognizing women’s critical role in farming and food security
- Assume that “benefits” (if any) will be shared/captured equally (gender, class, ethnicity, etc.)

Disconnects

Effects

- Lack of participation, consultation, compensation and resettlement: harassment (Mozambique)
- Not just global, bi-lateral, trans-national actors: negotiations, collusion with local elites
- Focus on trans-national without attention to 'local' power, elite capture
- Decentralization: unintended consequences/opportunities for elite capture and concentration

Effects

- Subsistence land dispossessed for bio-fuel production (and carbon sinks, mono-cropped tree plantations): negative effects of adaptation to climate change
- 'Efficient' land governance/administration: technologies to document land (mapping, computerized recording) also make dispossession more 'efficient' (knowledge/power)

Pastoral

- Potential for and ongoing dispossession of pastoral and indigenous women and men from land and resources (already happening in Kenya: Kitengela, Naivasha)
- Loss of cultural identity, indigenous knowledge and sustainable NRM practices

Gender

- Resettlement on marginal land: increase in women's labour (water/fuelwood collection, farming, etc.), and ignores/weakens their land and property rights (opportunity to title lost)
- Decrease in food security, livelihoods/income options; exacerbates male out-migration
- Lack of legal resources in the face of powerful actors and death threats (Mozambique)

Are Land Grabs 'New'?

Historical Connections

- MNCs seeking African resources for profit and to feed the needs and demand for luxuries of more powerful nations and actors have been around since the 16th and 17th centuries (i.e. Dutch East India Co. and British East India Co.)
- Resource extraction was a driving force for colonial intervention, expansion and development (infrastructure, interventions, etc.)

Africa

- Colonial land grabbing and extraction of resources could not have happened to the extent it did without collusion with local elites (Madagascar: caste and ethnicity differences) and already existing asymmetries in distribution of land, resources and power
- Land grabbing by both customary and statutory leaders/actors, as well as commercial/foreign actors
- Ongoing processes of withdrawal of the state (SAPs, decentralization, etc)

Gender

- Colonial interventions entrenched men's power and changed property relations within patriarchal discourses
- Customary laws re-interpreted in favour of men and erosion of women's land rights and access
- Land grabbing by brothers, in-laws, etc. became common; statutory laws interpreted/open to gender bias, corruption and discrimination

So, What's Really New?

Globalization

- Globalized nature of the grabs: same forces/new actors (South)
- Critical mass and numbers of TNC's - defy territorial boundaries and the 'nation-state' and accountability. ITCs
- Rapidly changing climates and convergence of global crises: "Perfect Storm" of financial, environment, energy, food crises
- Speed and intensity of the dispossessions, volume of land markets

Africa

- Non-African nations seek long-term land leases and holdings beyond own borders in food insecure nations to supply food and energy to their own populations (ethics/hunger/food security)
- Land deals destabilizing whole nation states (Madagascar; Daewoo scandal, neglect of spiritual/cultural values, acute shifts in power and bilateral relations with changing governments)

Gender

- Aggregation of everyday gender dispossessions are significant
- Land and water interface, and implications for women (Mozambique)
- Social movements: women's movements on a large scale over the last century

Research, Action & Policy

Recommendations

Research

- **Regional/global analysis and synthesis is CRITICAL (IR/Geopolitics)**
- **Urgent GAP: rigorous, credible research on impacts (alternative narratives, experiences, life stories) beyond journalistic**
- **Tailor/translate research for 3 target groups: researchers, policy makers and marginalized groups**
- **What are the implications /significance of high rates of male out-migration and shifts in male identity/modernity for land grabs**

Action

- **Dead research, not enough to be right, links to power, change agents and social movements (Eric Holt)**
- **Support dispossessed communities with legal support (cases, compensation, resettlement, etc.) and basic services**
- **Demonstrate difference between policy/discourses and impacts**
- **Involve customary leaders and share/disseminate information widely (information centres, drama, radio, etc.)**

Policy

- **Land is more than a 'commodity', this should be reflected**
- **Class conscious, gender-sensitive, historical, cultural, human rights**
- **Demand greater transparency, accountability, checks/balances, democratization, ethics, and equity**
- **Strengthen indigenous/pastoral women rights (policies, strengthening of international instruments, etc.)**

Food for Thought: Is it Helpful to View Land Grabs as an 'African' or 'Southern' Phenomenon?

Given examples from Latin American, Asia, North America, etc. of land grabbing, is there room for S-S and N-S dialogue, sharing of experiences and expansion of social and gender equity questions in key critical international instruments and movements (i.e. rights of indigenous peoples, climate change, etc.)?



Food For Thought: How to We Deal with Complexity and Multiple Narratives?

Although some of the forces and actors responsible for land grabbing may be global, how do we analyze differences in reactions and resistances in local contexts and deal with complexity (i.e. differences between India and Madagascar: value/opting out of agriculture, modernizing discourses, meanings of land, links to ancestors, etc.)?



Thank You!

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