



Call for Papers

International Conference

"Africa for Sale"

Analysing and Theorizing Foreign Land Claims and Acquisitions

**Groningen University, Netherlands
Thursday 28 and Friday 29 October 2010**

While foreign land acquisitions in Africa are no recent phenomenon, the last several decades have witnessed an unprecedented level of large-scale land acquisitions all over the continent; millions of hectares of land in Africa are increasingly claimed by and leased out to transnational entities, government businesses, multinational corporations, and international organisations. Sometimes referred to as "neo-colonialism" due to their resemblance to colonial land exploits, these acquisitions have been largely driven by a global "scramble" for food security and access to natural resources. Foreign actors gain access to land in part by employing discursive tools and media to portray African farmland as "unused" or "unproductive" while the local farmers are portrayed as "backwards", underdeveloped, environmentally destructive, and desperately poor. Access is also secured through the market capitalist economy and often legitimized as "economic growth" or "sustainable development". Indeed, proponents argue that land deals bring new technologies, improved agricultural practices, poverty alleviation, and modernisation to developing countries.

However, the presence of foreign stakeholders in local territories also involves an encounter of often contradictory cultural paradigms, leading to pervasive social, economic and cultural changes and/or conflicts. In practice, these new land deals often result in the forced eviction of subsistence farmers from land which is simultaneously viewed as their "cultural heritage", thereby severing them from their cultural and socio-economic attachments to past, present and future.

While the nature and scope of large-scale, foreign land acquisitions has been taken up by the non-governmental arena (e.g. NGOs) very little academic scholarship has addressed these deals both analytically and theoretically, from [comparative] historical and contemporary perspectives. In turn, several important questions remain unanswered: What are the implications of foreign land leases for local populations? How are these deals mediated, structured and legitimized? What is the role of multinational corporations in the economic, political, social, and environmental governance of developing countries in Africa?

Submissions addressing historical and contemporary aspects of foreign land acquisitions are welcome. We also encourage papers that offer methodological tools and theoretical models to analyse these land acquisitions. Due to the multifaceted theme of the conference, we seek and welcome abstracts from a variety of disciplines.

Contributions addressing the following four fields are particularly welcome:

- 1.) *Food security*: Foreign (government or company) investments in “unused,” arable land for large-scale agricultural production.
- 2.) *Large-Scale Mining*: Multinational claims to land for mineral exploitation.
- 3.) *Conservation Projects*: International environmental NGO acquisition or control of land for biodiversity conservation and/or protected area management.
- 4.) *Tourism*: Land acquisitions for purposes of tourism development.

The following thematic list is provided to help orient potential submissions: Cultural Implications; Poverty and “Sustainable Development”; Food and Human Security; Neoliberalism; Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR); China's Engagement in Africa; Environmental, Social and Cultural Impacts; Socio-cultural dimensions of “compensation”; Multinational Mining; Land Tenure Conflict; Food and Financial Crisis; Bio-engineering; Corporate Governance; Offshore Food Production; Debt-for-Nature Swaps; REDD (Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation); Carbon Trades; Biopiracy; Ecotourism; Mining-Conservation Partnerships; Biodiversity Offsetting; Climate Change; Land as Cultural Heritage; Cultural Change; Resettlement; Indigenous Environmental Knowledge; World Bank “Growth Poles” Project; Special Economic Zones (SEZs)

Important dates:

- 15 May 2010: deadline for abstract submission of individual papers (max. 400 words) including brief biography of the author(s) (max. 100 words)
- 15 June 2010: selection of papers by the Conference Organising Committee and designing of the final programme
- 1 September: deadline for submission of selected papers (max. 8.000 words)

Abstracts and papers should be written in English. The conference language is English.

Please forward your submission to:

Conference Organising Committee:

Michel Doortmont (Groningen University), Sandra Evers (VU University Amsterdam),
Froukje Krijtenburg (Institute of Historical Justice and Reconciliation), Caroline Seagle (VU)

Email: NVASconference2010@hotmail.com

Conference fee (lunch and coffee/tea included):

- 20 euros for students who are member of NVAS (two days) and 10 euros per day.
- 30 euros for other students (two days) and 15 euros per day.
- 50 euros for NVAS members (two days) and 25 euros per day.
- 100 euros for other participants (two days) and 50 euros per day.

Any further queries or requests for information on the conference should be sent to the above email address.