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Global Land Grabbing and Political Reactions ‘From Below’

SATURNINO M BORRAS JR* & JENNIFER C FRANCO

ABSTRACT Contemporary large-scale land deals are widely understood as involving the expulsion of people who, in turn, struggle instinctively to resist dispossession. This is certainly true in many instances. Yet this chain of events evidently does not always occur: large-scale land deals do not always result in people losing the land, and many of those who face expulsion do not necessarily respond with the kind of resistance often expected of them. Indeed, much evidence shows that the nature of and responses to big land deals can (and do) vary across and within ‘local communities’. Taking off analytically from a relatively narrow selection of cases, the expulsion–resistance scenario is too often assumed rather than demonstrated, thereby leaving many inconvenient facts undetected and unexplained. This suggests a need to step back and problematise the variable and uneven responses ‘from below’ to land grabbing, both within and between communities. This paper offers an initial exploration into why poor people affected by contemporary land deals (re)act the way they do, noting how issues and processes unite and divide them. This helps explain variation in political trajectories in the context of land grabbing today.

Across the globe today a major revaluation of land is underway, the result in part of a convergence of global dynamics (or ‘crises’) around food, energy/fuel, climate and finance,¹ and leading to a resurgence of what some observers refer to as ‘land grabbing’. For others, certainly, ‘land grabbing’ is an unacceptable term for what they see as legitimate business transactions. For still others the large-scale (private) investment in rural spaces that these transactions might bring is needed, but at the same time can be risky, and so the term would apply only to those big land deals that fail to uphold criteria of ‘responsible investment’ and ‘good governance’. For the latter, one underlying assumption is crucial: that the solution to today’s multiple global crises lies in the putative discovery of vast quantities of previously overlooked, supposedly marginal, underutilised or empty land. The amount of such land is estimated to be a minimum of 445 million ha.² (Re)framed in these ways, land is now increasingly (and conveniently) presented as ‘available’ for transformation into

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new economic arrangements that, according to mainstream economic and political elites, are deemed necessary not just for ‘development’, but for the very survival of a growing human population. In this way, and against the backdrop of multiple global crises, land grabbing of various sorts is being actively reimagined in mainstream discourse as necessary and ‘responsible investment’.

This attempt to make land grabbing seem acceptable has not gone uncontested, and many voices have been raising critical questions about both the phenomenon and the public relations makeover surrounding it. Initially behind, the academic community has started to catch up with the earlier efforts made by news media and NGOs seeking to raise public awareness and to engage in critical debate. Today there is a growing—but still limited—body of academic research that has contributed significantly to a better understanding of land grabbing.³ Complicated by its still-unfolding and fluid character, the study of land grabbing is further constrained by unresolved issues around how to define, and conduct research on, the phenomenon.⁴

One still underexplored dimension of contemporary land grabbing has to do with the political reactions ‘from below’—eg among groups of poor, vulnerable and marginalised people and peoples who are affected by large-scale land deals. How do those most affected actually perceive and react to these large-scale land deals and why? On this issue public debate is quite polarised. Whether for or against, there is a strong tendency to assume *a priori*, rather than to demonstrate, what the reactions of affected groups of people are or would be. On the one hand, those in favour of large-scale land deals generally assume that poor people would naturally want the opportunities that such investments are purported to bring. On the other hand, those opposed to the deals generally assume that if only those same poor people knew what they were really getting into, they would reject the deals outright. The problem is that evidence can always be marshalled for both sides, so it would seem that, while neither side can be ‘right’, neither side can be ‘wrong’ either.

Stepping back from this political impasse, however, one can begin to see serious analytical shortcomings with both sides. Characterising both in our view is a shared, largely implicit assumption of the homogeneous nature of affected local communities: that the ‘local communities’ affected (or potentially affected) by these land deals exist in homogeneous spaces, and that at stake for the people who inhabit these spaces are very similar (if not identical) interests, identities and aspirations for the future.

If there is one thing that the spectre of land grabbing has shown, however, it is that local communities are socially differentiated and consequently the impact on and within communities will likewise be differentiated, leading in turn to an *array* of diverse responses. It is not just that different people will be affected differently. Rather, what adds further complexity to the whole thing is that different people will perceive and interpret the experience differently, based on a whole range of variable and relative economic, political, social and cultural factors, conditions and calculations that are often not well understood and in any case would require much deeper inquiry than is often given. In short, the individual and collective political reactions of people and peoples affected by land deals cannot be taken for granted.

Imagine two books of account, one listing all the reported land grabs and the other listing all the reported protests against land grabs. Comparing these two lists would probably reveal a curious thing: that they do not add up to the same total. This is obviously an imagined account, but there is evidently no automatic 1:1 ratio between land grabs and protest against them – otherwise we would have seen Cambodia or Ethiopia erupting in conflagrations of protest. It is clear that the reported protests against land deals are far fewer than the reported land grabs themselves. There may be a number of very interesting explanations for this discrepancy that warrant a closer look. First, some reported land deals ultimately do not (or will not) push through as initially planned or intended, but instead are redirected, abandoned mid-stream, cancelled, stalled or blocked, perhaps as a result of what Anna Tsing would call ‘frictional encounters’, or ‘the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference’.⁵ This is not so surprising in a politically charged context where what is often initially reported (or announced) in the media are the business agreements, rather than the actual transfers of control. Second, looking from another angle, it is likely that many protests go unseen, unrecognised and unreported. Maybe they are overlooked or dismissed as insignificant; or maybe they escape attention because of what James Scott calls the ‘friction of terrain’, or ‘geographical resistance’: often these places are not easy to reach or are completely out of range for those who want to report cases of resistance.⁶ Third, some combination of both sorts of scenarios is also possible. But in any case what is suggested here is that there is still much left to be unpacked on this score, and thus more systematic empirical research is warranted.

This paper aims to contribute to this challenge by offering an initial discussion around a possible broad framework that can be useful in researching and understanding this topic more fully. While the ‘collective action problem’ in classical sociology tried to explain why it is that people mobilise to defend their interests,⁷ this article poses the opposite question, ie why people fail or refuse to mobilise in the face of attacks on their livelihoods. It builds on earlier critiques, including those by Marc Edelman,⁸ as well as on the rich scholarship on agrarian politics that has attempted to explain the trigger for peasant collective action.⁹ Another important starting point for this purpose is a reiteration of what we mean by ‘land grabbing’: the capturing of control of relatively vast tracts of land and other natural resources through a variety of mechanisms and forms, carried out through extra-economic coercion that involves large-scale capital, which often shifts resource use orientation into extraction, whether for international or domestic purposes, as capital’s response to the convergence of food, energy and financial crises, climate change mitigation imperatives, and demands for resources from newer hubs of global capital.¹⁰ Even though the term ‘land grabbing’ carries a lot of baggage and remains problematic, in our view it still has the advantage of 1) focusing attention on the core issues of politics and power relations; and 2) underscoring the dimension of extra-economic coercion involved in land deals.¹¹

The contextual and definitional discussion above helps situate our discussion on political reactions from below. Against this backdrop many questions arise: what is the particular range of political reactions from below to land grabbing

in a given case? Why and how do various social groups react the way they do to particular types of land deals, and with what outcomes, in specific situations? What are the issues that unite and divide social groups? What are the political tensions and synergies within and between communities? How and to what extent are such political contestations (re)shaping the trajectory of global land deals? These are some of the questions that come to mind, and that have been left largely unanswered so far in the emerging body of literature on land grabbing.¹²

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows: the next section explores the contested meaning of land and the role of the state. The following section discusses struggles against expulsion; the fourth section is on struggles for incorporation, the following one on struggles against land appropriation and concentration, and for redistribution and recognition; section six examines struggles across geographical and institutional spaces, before some concluding discussion is offered in the final section.

Contested meaning of land and role of the state

The contested meaning of land is a key starting point. On many occasions competing views about the meaning of land underpin land-based political contestations, but this is only implicitly suggested. Land has multiple meanings to different groups of people. For some, including the corporate world, it is a scarce factor of economic production valued in monetary terms, and measured partly in terms of yield. In this context it is a resource that is used to produce primary commodities such as food and timber for commercial purposes. For many agrarian communities, land is a resource base that guarantees subsistence, and provides a cushion from occasional external food price shocks by enabling them to produce some or all of the food they need for consumption. While land is indeed an important natural resource, it is a special one since it is also key to gaining *access to other* natural resources. One needs to control land in order to capture water, in order to extract subsoil resources, in order to calculate, capture and commoditise carbon, and so on. On some occasions, because land is not a movable investment asset, some form of land control is necessary in order to deny access to land to peasants so that they are forced to look for work—and/or to capture the cheap labour through a variety of plantation set-up and/or contract farming schemes. For others still, including indigenous communities, land is also a territory where their ancestors lived as a people, and where they continue to live and reproduce as a people, engaging with their immediate natural environment. Others may value land principally because of its being a habitat for other species, a necessary host for biodiversity, a landscape, for its aesthetic beauty.

To reduce the meaning and value of land to just one of these many functions oblivious of other overlapping meanings is absurd, and provokes or aggravates much of contemporary land-based political conflicts and contestations. Often heated debates and political conflicts appear unresolvable because the contesting parties are coming from different perspectives and talking about land from very different starting points.

At the local level different groups are related to land, but they are linked to land differently. Some groups belong to landed elites with or without private titles. They can be private landlords, warlords, or narco-syndicates using land to launder money, or elite clans or local chiefs in charge of local allocation of land.¹³ Cashing in from land deals either by selling or renting out land can be, and in many places has become, a lucrative enterprise. Indeed there is a discernible pattern of an emerging class of what can be termed 'land grabbing entrepreneurs'—they are the land brokers, speculators and scammers who have taken advantage of pre-existing institutional arrangement of land control in order to cash in on the ongoing global land rush. There are also capitalist landowners who may want to further transform their land either by directly capitalising on the emerging market or by forging partnerships with foreign companies looking for local partners, partly because of laws prohibiting foreign companies from purchasing land or from full ownership of a company, as in the case of Argentina.¹⁴ The latter is particularly attractive to local partners who are 'land rich and cash poor' elites.¹⁵ Others depend on land for their livelihoods but do not have (formal) ownership and/or control of the land they work: tenants, farmers on public lands, indigenous communities, pastoralists, forest dwellers, or forest non-timber product gatherers. In some cases these groups of people may or may not be present in official state censuses to begin with.

In many settings these relatively stable, broad patterns of social relationships to land are gender-based and ethnic-oriented. When land deals hit these communities, the impact is not uniform among these various groups. Some benefit, others do not; some are adversely affected, others are not. Concepts such as 'local community' and 'local people' are useful to our understanding of the phenomenon but only to a limited extent. These concepts conceal more than reveal the uneven and differentiated impacts of land deals on such communities and people. Conceptual lenses around class and other parallel and/or overlapping social divides are thus indispensable. The overlap and intersection between class and other identities are summarised and explained in Bernstein: 'class relations are universal but not exclusive "determination" of social practices in capitalism. They intersect and combine with other social differences and divisions, of which gender is the most widespread and which can also include oppressive and exclusionary relations of race and ethnicity, religion and caste'.¹⁶ The cumulative impact of multiple forms of oppression over the course of a lifetime may have a lot to say about whether individuals or groups will mobilise around a particular issue.¹⁷

Other relevant dimensions are the geography, ecology and institutional character of land deals. Contemporary large-scale land deals privilege or target specific geographical locations: lands that are proximate to sources of water, existing roads and other transportation channels.¹⁸ Some land deals, specifically those that are linked to green grabbing, such as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+), specifically look for forested terrain.¹⁹ Others are more interested in the subsoil resources, with little regard for the communities that may happen to be sitting on top of a coal field, for instance. Finally, land deals are often directed to specific lands through state-created institutional maps: carved out tracts of land specifically reserved

for land deals such as the Economic Land Concessions (ELCs) in Cambodia, or the contemporary initiative in Gambella region in Ethiopia.²⁰

Different state policies are implicated in land deals in different ways. What this implies is that traditional conceptual tools that are specific to particular geographic or institutional spaces may have only limited relevance in explaining political reactions from below. For example, a block of land may have been allocated for a land concession with a big agricultural company, at the same time that it has been identified as a mining site, at the same time that it has been declared as a REDD+ project site. These institutional overlaps, layerings and intersections partly shape the political calculations of affected social groups in deciding about their political actions: eg where and with which state agency to engage, which institutional space to bring their political struggle to, and which formal and informal institutional traditions and state policies to invoke to frame their demands as just, reasonable and/or legal.²¹

Amid such complexity it is rare to find local communities reacting and mobilising in relation to a land deal in a unified fashion. Some who have been expelled from their lands, or are being threatened with expulsion, resist land deals or mobilise to seek better compensation. At the same time there may be others who mobilise not to resist land deals—but to demand incorporation into the emerging enterprises either as workers or as contract farmers. Yet others may mobilise in order to demand improvements in the terms of their incorporation into these emerging investment enclaves (more working days, higher wages, better working conditions, fairer growership terms, and so on). Such differences can also create new or exacerbate existing political tensions between groups within and between communities.

Political mobilisations for or against land deals by affected social groups do not emerge automatically, despite the changing objective conditions, a topic that has been the subject of research in agrarian studies and social movement/collective action studies for quite some time now. Some individuals and groups are able to resist through covert actions, more fluid and pervasive at times. Some groups are able to resist and succeed. Some mobilisations are localised and isolated, while others are able to link up with national groups. Still others are able to forge links between local, national and international actors and mount globally coordinated campaigns, the outcomes of which maybe varied.²² Ultimately groups that are able to galvanise broad unity within and between affected communities, able to recruit and mobilise influential allies from within their communities and beyond (including international actors), within and outside the state, and able to generate sympathetic media attention are likely to succeed, even if just partially, in their political struggles in the context either of struggle against expulsion or of adverse incorporation.

The role of the state

The history of the development of global capitalism is a history of varying combinations of state and capital alliances, where accumulation and dispossession have advanced and occurred hand in hand.²³ As in past cycles of enclosures the state has a central role in facilitating contemporary global land

grabbing.²⁴ Therefore, it has to be a significant part of any analysis of the politics around land deals, even when it appears to be largely absent on the ground. In our examination of various cases of land grabbing, we observe that states engaged in systematic policy and administrative tasks aimed at capturing so-called 'marginal lands' and turning them into an investable commodity.²⁵ Each task is a step towards eventual full capture of land control. Each task is inherently political. These are the operational mechanisms towards land dispossession. The tasks of the state include a combination or all of the following: 1) invention or justification of the need for large-scale land investments; 2) definition, reclassification and quantification of what are 'marginal, under-utilized and empty' lands; 3) identification of these particular types of land; 4) assertion of the state's absolute authority over these lands; 5) acquisition or appropriation of these lands; and 6) re-allocation or disposition of these lands to investors.²⁶ In most settings only the state has the absolute authority and the capacity to carry out these key legal-administrative steps to facilitate land deals. These mechanisms of land dispossession separately and altogether constitute varying shades and degrees of extra-economic coercion by the state. Often stories of such dispossession are indeed, in Marx's words, written in 'blood and fire'.

More broadly there are three distinct but interlinked areas of state actions that are relevant in understanding contemporary land grabs: 1) a state simplification process; 2) the assertion of sovereignty and authority over territory; and 3) coercion through police and (para)military force to enforce compliance, extend territorialisation and broker private capital accumulation. First, in order to administer and govern, states engage in a simplification process to render complex social processes legible to the state. The creation of cadastres, land records and titles are attempts at simplifying land-based social relations that are otherwise too complex for state administration.²⁷ This in turn brings us back to the notion of 'available marginal, empty lands'. The trends in state discourse around land grabs seem to be: if the land is not formally titled or privatised, then it is state-owned; if the census does not show significant formal settlements, then these are empty lands or, if it does not show formal farm production activities, then these are unused lands. Second, beyond the economic benefits of land investment, land deals are also viewed as an essential component of state-building processes, where sovereignty and authority are extended to previously 'non-state spaces'.²⁸ Third, coercion and violence, usually with the use of police, (para)military and the courts to enforce compliance with state simplification projects and the broader state-building process, have accompanied land deals in various parts of the world.²⁹

Based on the discussion above, Jonathan Fox's formulation of the two permanent contradictory tasks of the state, namely, to facilitate capital accumulation but at the same time to maintain a historically determined minimum level of political legitimacy, provides a useful perspective on why and how the state engages with large-scale land deals, and why and how it is both part of the problem of and the solution to land grabbing.³⁰ It will push and push hard for large-scale land deals and on most occasions is even the one directly engaged in the actual land grabbing—but occasional 'brakes' will be applied when the

character and extent of accumulation and dispossession processes threaten the legitimacy of the state.³¹ This explains the occasional moratorium on land deals and some forms of regulation, as in the cases of Cambodia and Ukraine (moratorium) and Tanzania (land deal-size ceiling) more recently, for example, with varying outcomes. It is in this broader and historical context that we should understand the political dynamics around the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Tenure Guidelines.³²

Broad types of political conflicts and terrain of contestations

Looking at the intersections of conflict and terrain of contestations will help us understand how poor people who engage in contentious politics understand their issue, identify their adversary, frame their demands, and choose the forms of their collective action. There are at least three intersections of political contestations within and between the state and social forces around current land grabbing that are relevant to our analysis, namely, poor people versus corporate actors, poor people versus the state, and poor people versus poor people.

Poor people versus corporate actors tends to be more common in cases where the issue is about incorporation into an enterprise, or is about improvement of the terms of poor people's inclusion ('struggles against exploitation'-type of contestations). Issues are usually framed within demands for companies to make good on promised jobs, uphold labour standards, or improve the terms of growership arrangements. Increasingly, we also see in this type of conflict the rise of environmental issues: poor people taking issue against companies on pollution or chemical contamination issues. Poor people-versus-the state is much more common in cases involving actual or potential expulsion of people from their land, or terms of relocation and resettlement arrangements. It brings us back to the centrality of the role of the state in land appropriation discussed above ('struggles against dispossession'-type of contestations). Poor people versus poor people—of inter- and intra-class types—are probably more common than the popular literature would acknowledge. This links back to the differentiated impacts of land deals on social groups within and between communities. In a community it is common to see mobilisations *against* a land deal parallel to counter-mobilisations *in favour* of the same deal.

On many occasions we see political contestations around a particular land deal where contentious politics have multiple intersections—all three types discussed above are simultaneously at work. The two main types of struggles by working classes—struggles against dispossession (largely of 'struggles against expulsion from the land'-type, as well as the broader, more encompassing type of 'struggles in defence of the commons') and struggles against exploitation (or 'struggles against adverse incorporation'³³)—are more usefully examined in a relational way, rather than in isolation from each other.

The key point is that it is not useful to casually claim that conflicts around current land deals are either just between 'local communities' and foreign companies, or between 'local communities' and the central government. The configuration of actors and the intersections, character and trajectory of political contestations are far more diverse and complex than casual claims in the current

TABLE 1. Overview of struggle fronts and political trajectories, in terms of frequency

Four broad arenas of struggle	Key struggle fronts	Campaign/advocacy/lobby principal target			
		National state	Foreign states	International financial and/ or development institutions	Corporations (foreign and/or domestic)
Struggle against expulsion	Agrarian justice, environmental justice, human rights, indigenous peoples' rights	High	Medium	Low	High
Struggles for, and within, incorporation	Labour justice, agrarian justice	High	Medium	Low	High
Struggle against land concentration and/or redistribution and/or recognition	Agrarian justice, environmental justice, human rights, indigenous peoples' rights	High	Low-medium	Medium	High
Struggles across interlinked geographic and institutional spaces	Agrarian justice, environmental justice, labour justice, indigenous peoples, human rights	High	Medium-high	Medium	High

media and popular literature on land deals would suggest. The discussion so far can be partly summarised in Table 1, which offers a broad typology of struggle fronts and political trajectories. The categories we entered (in terms of frequency) are indicative—meant to serve as signposts for more systematic research in the future, rather than a definitive assessment. This is elaborated in the succeeding sections.

Struggles against expulsion

When the land is needed, but the labour is not, the most likely outcome of a land deal is the expulsion of people from the land.³⁴ It is a double whammy if and when expelled people have no place to go and no possibility of jobs. Many of them end up in city slums. Many contemporary land deals have needed large tracts of land and are establishing monocrop large farms that are highly mechanised. These types of farms are inherently labour expelling or labour saving.

Throughout this section we are concerned about struggles against expulsion from the land—and not the more generic and broader formulation of struggles against dispossession (the latter can encompass a much broader meaning and not just dispossession of land property). Struggles against expulsion from the land have accompanied the histories of peoples worldwide, whether in the context of ‘primitive accumulation’ or ‘accumulation by dispossession’.

There are different types and trajectories of expulsion of people from the land. The subsequent political reactions of affected social groups from below depend partly on the type of expulsion that occurs. There are at least three discernible broad types in the current context: 1) expelled people have nowhere to go and are not absorbed in any other productive sectors of the economy; 2) expelled people are absorbed in other productive sectors of the economy; and 3) expelled people are relocated somewhere to continue what they were previously doing. A single land deal can have more than one of these trajectories. In addition, people may be compensated for their expulsion or not. Having some kind of formal or community-recognised rights over the appropriated land may increase the possibility of expulsion-with-compensation, although not automatically. The gravest scenario is the first one, where people are expelled without (any significant) compensation, and have no place to go and no jobs to do. The other two types, especially when done with significant compensation, may not be as bad as the first type—at least as far as the affected social groups are concerned. The last type, expulsion-with-relocation, is more common in land-abundant countries, such as in many parts of Africa. It can be seen on a smaller scale, such as in the case of Procana sugarcane plantation in Mozambique during its original inception around 2008–10, or on a large-scale resettlement project in order to capture a vast tract of land for reallocation to corporate investors, as in the case of Gambella region in Ethiopia.³⁵

There is no automatic relationship between each of the three types of expulsion (with or without compensation) and certain types of political reactions from affected social groups. The gravity of the situation, especially when it leads to, or threatens to lead to, subsistence crisis, partly determines the political reactions of people who have been evicted from their land. A useful conceptual

reminder in this context is James Scott's framing: often it is not about how much was taken but how much was left that is crucial to providing a trigger to poor people's decision to engage in contentious politics.³⁶ Moreover, in some cases it is not only economic subsistence that provokes poor people to engage in contentious politics. At times when non-economic considerations, such as their identity, culture or tradition, are threatened or, indeed, if there is a perceived threat to what is considered 'public goods' (water source, landscape, community forest) poor people may also engage in political contention. Recent protests by Mapuche people and many other environmentalists against the 900 000 ha acquisition made by the United Colours of Benetton in Patagonia is an example.

But as the rich critical agrarian studies literature has shown, the objective existence of unjust treatment or exploitation of poor people does not automatically translate to affected social groups mobilising and engaging in contentious politics—otherwise we should have already seen a conflagration of uprisings against land grabbing worldwide. Changing political opportunity structure can partly influence poor people's decision to engage in overt political contention to struggle around their expulsion, either against their expulsion or to demand some kind of compensation or better terms of compensation. Tarrow identified four important political opportunities: access to power, shifting alignments, availability of influential elites, and cleavages within and among elites.³⁷ The availability of all or some of these opportunities can create possibilities that even weak and disorganised actors can take advantage of; conversely, the strong may also grow weak.³⁸ Key is poor people's ability to perceive and take advantage of the shifts in political opportunity structure, or to create changes in the opportunity structure if there are none. The emergence of collective perception about a possible threat to their community landscape or ecology can arguably be an important shift in the structure of political opportunity or threat that can bring different groups of people together to oppose a land deal. The contradictory role of the state—in maintaining political legitimacy while advancing capital accumulation³⁹—often triggers shifts in the political opportunity structure, including divisions among the ranks of state officials. The emergence of elite allies within and outside the state is central to rural poor people's ability to engage in contentious politics. For example, the most popular tactic employed by Chinese local villagers protesting at contemporary land grabbing is to pry open the latent division between central and local state officials, accusing the latter of being corrupt while pleading for support from the former, who are represented as 'reform-oriented'. This can also be seen in the framing of rights by the same rural villagers protesting at land expropriation: they invoke the official promises of the state to demand disciplining of those who are disloyal to the official state narrative, and mobilise around this political master frame, in what O'Brien and Li call 'rightful resistance'.⁴⁰

Let us examine more closely an illustrative case. In Kampong Speu, Cambodia, two concession contracts each with close to 10 000 ha were awarded to two companies owned by a politically powerful, well connected member of the Cambodian elite.⁴¹ The 10 000 ha size of each concession is not an accident; it is obviously meant to circumvent a law that limits a concession to a maximum of

10 000 ha. The land was part of the tracts allocated to ELCs. These lands are assumed to fit the mainstream global narrative about marginal, empty, under- or unutilised—and available—lands. It turned out that, when the company moved in, the combined 20 000 ha of land were inhabited and worked by hundreds of people either living and/or farming within the allocated land. Many farms (some estimated to be up to 2000 ha in size) were highly productive, irrigated riceland that followed criss-crossing creeks. The 20 000 ha plot can be likened to a Swiss cheese—with so many holes (patches of irrigated ricelands) inside. There were also patches of community forest that were the source of non-timber products for the villagers. There were up to 1000 villagers affected by the land deal. Most of them had lived in this place for more than a generation. There is a handful of new arrivals, however, post-1994.

The company was to plant a single crop, sugarcane, in a large-scale, industrial, mechanised way. This involved a tie-up with a Thai corporation aimed at capitalising on the EU's 'Everything But Arms' (EBA) special tariff arrangement for goods exported to the EU. The company needed to flatten the moderately sloping terrain, close existing creeks, clear the secondary growth forest, and destroy all patches of irrigated rice lands inside the 20 000 ha plot. The first people to be evicted, their houses and garden plots destroyed, without much of a whimper, were the post-1994 settled households. They were dumped outside the edge of the newly drawn plantation boundary, at the foot of a hill without any infrastructure for a village settlement. They were given US\$25 each as one-off compensation for their expulsion. The more difficult eviction was the one involving the farms of the original villagers whose residence is just outside the newly constructed plantation boundary. The company at first preserved the patches of farms but cut off completely any access routes to these farms, then eventually destroyed the farms. Everything was burned down and flattened. The company offered \$100–\$200 compensation per hectare, which the villagers rejected, arguing that they earned more from farming.

Villagers resisted. They started with combined covert and overt forms of resistance, including sabotage, arson, and stoning of bulldozers, but addressed their main demands to the Cambodian government. The case started to attract sympathisers from the capital and internationally: human rights, environmental and agrarian activists started to assist the villagers, which in turn emboldened them to escalate their resistance to more overt and defiant acts: trooping to police headquarters and court, highway blockades, and so on. Their leaders were thrown in jail a number of times and harassment escalated. The struggle has been going on since 2010 amid rapid development of the 20 000 ha plot into a modern, monocrop, large-scale industrial sugarcane plantation. This industrial character of the plantation required only a few labourers, many of whom are employed just for seasonal work. The company recruited a handful of local villagers, some of whom were previously affected by expulsion. But the bulk of the current workers are recruited from outside the ranks of the villagers previously affected by the land deal, and several mill workers are from Thailand.⁴² The affected villagers and their allies have resorted to a campaign in the EU to stop providing special trade preference through EBA to what they call 'blood sugar', sugar produced from sites of land grabbing.⁴³

Struggles for, and/or around the terms of, incorporation

There is an implicit tendency in the emerging literature on contemporary land grabbing towards viewing the issue of land deals via an 'exclusion versus inclusion' dichotomy. A land deal is a land grab when it excludes and expels people. It is assumed to be otherwise when people are included in some way in the farm enterprises that emerge. It is essentially a procedural definition of land grabbing. This is of course appropriate and important, but only partly. Our present discussion is informed by both a procedural and substantive definition of land grabbing, as explained at the beginning of this paper.

Resorting to large-scale monocrop plantations that are highly mechanised is one way to save on labour and labour management costs and is thus desirable to corporations. But there are just as many situations where capital has needed the land *and* cheap labour. Capture of cheap labour can be done in a variety of ways, including the incorporation of people as landless workers in the emerging enterprises, or as small-scale farmer-growers contracted to sell their produce to the company. When and where this happens, the character of political contestations gravitates around the issue of incorporation and the *terms* of such inclusion.

Poor people who struggle to become incorporated into the emerging enterprises, or are demanding improvements in the terms of their inclusion, can be those whose lands were acquired by companies by purchase or lease; often it is the latter—be it a lease arrangement between the corporation on the one hand, and the people or the state on the other. This is illustrated in the case of some 11 000 ha Ecofuel sugarcane ethanol investment in Isabela, Philippines, where several hundred beneficiaries of recent government land redistribution programmes (land reform, formalisation of land rights programme) were left without any follow-up support services to develop their lands. It is not surprising then that they were relatively eager to lease their lands to the company in exchange for regular income from land rent, or growership arrangements for some, and promised jobs for others.⁴⁴ This is despite well known forms of subsumption in which small owners of land do not lose their land but become completely dependent on the company for credit, technology, marketing, and even daily subsistence needs.

The people who engage in political struggles for incorporation may also be those who failed to demonstrate their formal rights over the acquired lands, and are therefore relatively more vulnerable than those who have formal claims to land; they may thus not always choose the path of struggle against expulsion. It is probably a matter of a 'second best option' for them. When the Philippine government allocated one million ha in 2008 to San Miguel Corporation in the Philippines, it was assumed that these lands were empty—at least that was what the official records in Manila would show. But many of these lands turned out to be inhabited and farmed by a variety of rural poor people, whose 'invisibility' in the official records allows them to work the land without giving any rent to anyone or tax to the government. When the deal with San Miguel got underway, their 'squatting' was put under a spotlight, their situation rendered politically vulnerable. The government and company instead offered some form

of growership arrangement, and many of them agreed and in the process negotiated the terms of their incorporation.⁴⁵

But the people who engage in political struggles can also be poor people who were not inserted in any pre-existing social relations of landed property, people who have no claim whatsoever over the land but are landless in and around the land deal site, or indeed, in some cases, from far away but who are being recruited as workers. The diverse provenance of this group of people shapes the multiple framings of their demand for inclusion, or for improvement in the terms of their incorporation. When the sugar company started to operate its plantation and mill in Kampong Speu, (see above), the workers who were recruited came from a variety of origins. The earlier struggle against expulsion seemed to make no significant connection with them.

There are at least two types of struggles around the issue of incorporation: agrarian and trade union. Agrarian struggles often have something to do with land-based social relations. These include those involving poor people who were expelled from their lands on a variety of (legal, institutional) bases and are demanding to be incorporated into the business enterprise as workers; and poor people who have leased their lands and are demanding improvements in the terms of the lease contract, often associated with arrangements over labour employment in the plantation. They also include poor people in and around the land deal site wanting to be incorporated through growership arrangements whereby they remain small-scale farmers selling their products to the company. Agrarian justice struggles for inclusion and/or against 'adverse incorporation' thus cut across land and labour issues, as demonstrated more commonly in the oil palm sector in Indonesia.⁴⁶ 'Propertied proletariats', in this context, have two fronts to anchor their struggles: their property (land) and their labour, often around issues of rent, wages or terms of exchange.

Labour justice struggles are distinct struggles, despite often being linked to land. Regardless of their provenance, workers raise labour issues: extent of employment generated by a land deal, wage issues and conditions at the work place. It is not uncommon to see the overlap between the two, as in the case of Isabela, Philippines (discussed above), where small-holders who leased their individual plots to the company were promised the opportunity to become some kind of regular (part-time) plantation or mill workers and/or contracted growers.⁴⁷ Hence, groups of people are simultaneously confronted by agrarian *and* labour justice issues, and framing political struggles in complex situations like this is not straightforward. Recent and still unfolding struggles among land reform beneficiaries in the plantation belt of the Southern Philippines (in Mindanao), especially in the banana sector, have shown similar complicated struggles around agrarian-labour and social justice.⁴⁸ There are also situations where we see parallel and, arguably, political and institutional intersecting processes between agrarian justice and labour justice issues—as in the case, more broadly, of the sugarcane sector in Brazil: workers' unions tend to emphasise demands for labour issues addressed to sugarcane plantation owners, while peasant movements like Via Campesina Brazil demand the redistribution of these plantations for conversion into small family farming plots. These two streams of poor people's campaigns do not always interact with each other.⁴⁹

In short, agrarian and labour justice struggles are inherently marked by issues that unite and divide, by tension and synergy, within and between social groups in affected communities. The poor people versus poor people axis of political contestations is not uncommon in the agrarian-labour justice intersection. This is also where serious dilemmas are found, partly because of the 'multi-class' character of some rural poor involved in this situation: some are still part-time farmers who moonlight as seasonal plantation workers, and so on. Their class political standpoints cannot be reduced simplistically as either a peasant or a worker standpoint.

The struggle for incorporation or for the improvement of the terms of incorporation is diverse, and it is impossible for a single case, however iconic, to capture the diversity of issues. With this caveat in mind, let us examine more closely the case of Chikweti Forest in Niassa, Mozambique, a case that involves a consortium of investors, including a Swedish investment fund and a Dutch pension fund.⁵⁰ A few years ago the Mozambican government promised a company more than 100 000 ha of land to be developed into an industrial tree plantation, on lease agreement for 50 years, renewable for another 50 years. By 2013 51 000 ha of land have been taken by the company, and planted with eucalyptus intended for industrial commodities for domestic and regional trade, as well as for an anticipated REDD+ programme. This was billed as a 'win-win' investment where local villagers would find additional jobs to augment their largely subsistence-oriented farming livelihoods. A few years later, there has been a significant gap between what was promised and what was delivered. There are two principal issues for the villagers: undermining of their subsistence farms and questions of jobs that were promised. On the one hand, villagers accused the company of having encroached into their subsistence farms and sources of livelihoods in at least four ways: 1) directly taking over their plots; 2) taking over lands that they had purposely kept fallow based on their more mobile, rotating way of farming; 3) planting trees too close to the farms, which in turn block the sun; and 4) destroying the nearby forests and thus their sources of non-timber products.

One immediate effect of these encroachments is that peasants are forced to go much further from their homes to look for plots to farm. On the one hand, they felt cornered and their autonomy and capacity to construct subsistence livelihoods significantly undermined. In 2011 villagers chopped and burned up to 60 000 trees in protest. On the other hand, the villagers felt that the promised jobs were not fully delivered, and this condition can be seen in a number of ways, including fewer jobs than initially promised (around 1000 by late 2012), a decreasing trend following the initial surge of jobs thanks to clearing and planting work, which rapidly disappeared once this was done, and too few working days, too seasonal, and thus much less aggregate working days, as well as the fact that wages were quite low. Between these two clusters of agrarian and labour justice issues, villagers put forward a set of demands: respect their subsistence plots and sources of subsistence livelihoods and deliver the promised jobs at fairer wages and working conditions. To date, there has never been any significant, organised call by the villagers for the company to pull out of their land. Some global justice activist groups have been tempted to raise the

call to demand investors to pull out from Niassa, in line with the call to stop land grabbing more generally. But they are cautious since this is clearly not what the affected local population wanted.

Struggles against land concentration, and for redistribution and recognition

The first two broad types of struggles discussed above are among the most commonly known struggles directly related to contemporary global land grabbing—a political process in which extra-economic coercion is an important component. But while land grabbing is a key land issue, it is not the only critical land issue in the world today. The generic issue of land concentration remains an urgent and important one for many—probably a majority of—poor people in the rural world today. The character, demands and trajectories of political struggles around this issue are, and will be, different from the land grabbing-related political struggles.

Pre-existing land monopolies and recent trends towards a greater degree of land concentration are caused, conditioned and perpetuated by pre-existing agrarian structures and institutions (see the related discussion in Edelman and Leon, this issue). The revaluation of land as a result of the recent convergence of multiple crises discussed at the beginning of this paper has, in many places in the world, driven the process towards an even greater concentration of land in the hands of the few landed and corporate elites. Dispossession by social differentiation is the common mechanism of this concentration.

It is also critical to emphasise the relevance of looking at land grabbing in the context of parallel and overlapping generic land concentration in a region, as underscored in the Edelman, Oya and Borras, introduction to this collection.⁵¹ Land concentration is the main land issue in the global North, as in the case of Europe, alongside a creeping phenomenon of land grabbing starting in its Eastern front.⁵²

Poor people's struggles against land concentration have taken on different characters, led to different framings of demands, and charted different political trajectories. Where land concentration is greatest, the demand for conventional redistributive land policies, eg land reform, restitution, leasehold and forest reallocation policies has occupied the centre-stage of political struggles. This is the case, for instance, in Brazil or in Indonesia, where radical rural social movements have taken the most prominent profiles in the struggles there.⁵³ In settings where calls for conventional land reform may not gain any immediate political or policy traction, these calls have been focused on the driver of land concentration. Such have been the land struggles in the EU, where the subsidy scheme in the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is the principal target of rural social movement organisations. In societies where indigenous peoples live, the demand against creeping land appropriation or concentration usually takes the form of demanding *recognition* of claims over territory, and respect for and compliance with some relevant global governance principles such as free, prior, informed consent (FPIC) in the context of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and the campaigns concerning the land rights of Afro-Colombians. Demands for redistribution and/or recognition in these

political settings are just as profound as the demands to stop the expulsion of people from their lands as a result of contemporary corporate enclosures.⁵⁴

Struggles across overlapping/intersecting geographical and institutional spaces

The convergence of multiple crises has brought together various sectors of the world's economy in a global land rush—with various corporate sectors rushing in to join the bandwagon: chemical, oil, biotechnology, automobile, biofuels, seed, pulp, banking and finance, among others. This also means overlaps and intersections between agrarian, labour and environmental issues in different settings, and thus of struggle fronts. What we see are different elite (state, corporate) actors coveting the same, or adjoining, plots of land/territory, and exploring and employing different institutional channels and instruments to get to their coveted object. Their race to the same or adjoining tracts of land results in increasing competition over this resource, and may create spillover effects to adjoining plots of land or territory. For example it has become more common to see a plot of land or adjoining plots allocated by different agencies of a national government to different entities for different purposes—economic land concession for agricultural production, mining, or conservation such as REDD+, invoking various national laws and policies—affecting a common set of people—ie various groups that have otherwise different socioeconomic interests but are unified by a common adverse impact of the land deals. Resolution of resource conflict in one plot and under one institutional umbrella has become increasingly difficult, if not impossible. These conflicts are usually associated with competing, overlapping or intersecting agrarian, labour and environmental justice issues.

The convergence of issues—eg expulsion of peasants from the land, labour issues in mining, or ecological issues in the land deal site—may be tackled by different groups of poor people, depending on their take on each of the issues, which in turn depends on which issue affects them most. Further, the decision on collective action targets and institutional frameworks for campaigns depends on the campaign master frame: struggle against expulsion (specifically, or the broader struggle against dispossession) or struggle against exploitation (broadly cast) or struggle against land concentration. Perhaps it will be the ministry of land and forestry if the case is against dispossession, the ministry of agriculture if framed on agricultural issues, probably the ministry of labour if framed about labour standards, or the ministry of mines and/or the environment if about extractive industry issues, maybe the water ministry if the issue is centrally about water, despite being apparently a land issue, and so on – or, indeed, it may be all of the above, simultaneously. Multi-layered, overlapping, competing and intersecting agencies, laws, policies—and sectoral traditions of campaign master frames and repertoire of collective actions—are likely to surface in these types of settings. They will expose both tensions and synergies within and between groups of affected people—and the targeted state agencies—and how they react politically to land deals. Hence, cross-sectoral, cross- or multi-class, cross-institutional and landscape-type of struggle fronts may become more

common. If so, adjusting our analytical lenses to study the emerging politics around land deals becomes an even more urgent challenge. The complication explained here is captured partly in a case in Oddar Meanchey in Cambodia, one of the world's first REDD+ pilot areas, underscoring simultaneous political and institutional processes occurring in one landscape and affecting various groups of people therein, and its implications for poor people's political reactions 'from below':

Recent ELCs seek long-term leases to convert forestland to plantation crops including sugarcane... In 2007, 44 000 hectares of forestland was granted to large concessionaires... ELC issuance frequently results in ... rapid and extensive deforestation of the concession area, while displacing forest-dependent populations that transfer pressures that degrade or deforest neighbouring areas. In the case of Oddar Meanchey, ELC applicants and cfmc [Community Forest Management Committees] were in direct competition for the control of some of the proposed forest blocks in the REDD project area... Mitigating the impact of ELCs on deforestation is certainly beyond the capacity of communities and RE project design teams.⁵⁵

In short, and essentially, we reiterate the relevance of the broader framing of struggles against dispossession ('dispossession' broadly defined, beyond land expulsion), also often phrased as contemporary struggles in defence of the commons ('commons' here broadly cast⁵⁶). But, here again, we restate the importance of taking a closer look at the necessarily cross- or multi-class character of emerging struggle fronts, where various social groups and classes which have otherwise different (and even competing) socioeconomic interests might be affected similarly, negatively, by various land deals.

Concluding discussion

There are multiple implications that can be drawn from the initial discussion in this paper. We pick six points for further discussion that we think are critical to addressing the challenge of understanding the political reactions from below to global land rush.

Land property relations change and beyond

Changes in the social relations of landed property have been a central theme in the emerging global land rush literature. Who is getting dispossessed of their access to land and who gets to control these lands are two of the most critical questions in current land deal studies. The act of expelling people from the land is usually done by the state, deploying extra-economic coercive mechanisms. But, as discussed above, deploying concepts such as 'local community' or 'local people' and *a priori* assumptions their political reactions, ie either for or against land deals, are not helpful. More nuanced empirical research is required to advance our understanding of this matter. Conceptual lenses such as class, and conceptual frameworks such as struggles against dispossession in the broader

context of the two broad types of struggles, with struggles against exploitation as the other type, are important analytical handles to deploy.⁵⁷ These will help us appreciate the broader meanings and implications of specific case studies.

However, there are situations where the state and corporations have needed the land and the cheap labour. On some occasions this is a better bargain for capital in dealing with the problem of the crisis of over-accumulation, to significantly bring down the cost of inputs,⁵⁸ and in this case of land and labour. In situations like this we are dealing with a very specific kind of dispossession—that which does not require expulsion of people from the land. This can happen in a variety of ways, including peasants still the nominal owners of their land but who have ceased to have any effective control over it after having been recruited to a growership arrangement. Hence, a 'landed property relations-centred' analysis risks overlooking the actually existing changing social relations dynamics because, while on paper peasants were not expelled from their lands, they may have been effectively dispossessed, subordinated to the emerging capitalist plantation enclave. In cases like this one may therefore not see any struggle against expulsion. What we may see are different forms of emerging political contention around struggles over the terms of incorporation. While this is likely to be 'adverse incorporation', there is a danger of this template being used in an either/or fashion, since we are actually referring to the terms of incorporation, which is better seen as a matter of degree, not a matter of either completely adverse nor completely non-adverse.

In sum, our point is that the unit of inquiry should be the *dynamics of change in social relations* as a result of large-scale land deals, regardless of what the official documents may tell us.⁵⁹ That should be the basic starting point towards a better understanding of why and how affected rural under-classes react the way they do to large-scale land deals in relation to questions of social relations of land property.

'Land grabbing' and beyond

'Land grabbing' has grabbed popular attention worldwide and, as Carlos Oya has explained, the global land rush has also ushered in a global 'land grab literature rush'.⁶⁰ This is important, in our view, especially in the context of 'engaged research'; research that aims to have societal relevance and impact, to help interpret—and change—existing situations. It is important therefore that the level of interest in land grabbing among media practitioners, policy makers, civil society organisations and academics remains high—pushing it further to understand better the varied political reactions among affected social groups.

But looking at land grabbing and the politics around it in isolation from other relevant land issues and political contestations will not only miss a significant portion of what transpires in the rural world, but may even lead to only partial understanding of the land grabbing phenomenon itself. As we mentioned earlier, land grabbing is an important and urgent issue, but it is not the only urgent land issue today. The generic land concentration through market mechanisms and without significant extra-economic coercion is just as profound and is probably even more widespread—with a similar impact on the lives and livelihoods of

subordinated groups in the countryside. The political struggles around the generic land concentration issue are necessarily of a different character than those against expulsion from the land, the set of demands necessarily different. When is capital content with its accumulation processes through the ‘normal’ course of social differentiation via commoditisation, and when is it pushed to resort to extra-economic coercive measures, including forcibly and often violently expelling people from their lands? These are key contextual questions that help shed light on the questions that we are interested in: the political reactions by affected social groups to these different processes of dispossession. In more concrete terms, this will help us make sense of why, for example, within the international peasant and farmers’ movement *La Via Campesina*, there tends to be different emphasis by various regional groups, with the African section more actively engaged in an explicitly anti-land grabbing framework, while the Latin American group as well as the North Atlantic groups seem to be more keen on framing their issues within the generic land concentration perspective. What are the political implications of these varying master frames in terms of capturing the diversity of political configuration around land deals in various regions? What are the sources and implications of tensions and synergies within and between agrarian movements? These are some of the empirical questions that need to be investigated further. And it is best done not by looking at land grabbing and land concentration as two separate and unrelated processes—but as likely to be organically linked.⁶¹

Corporate land grabbers and beyond

Despite the growing prominence of the state and its role in land grabbing in the emerging literature on the subject, the main attention remains on corporate, often foreign, grabbers. But as we have discussed above, the state plays a central, albeit contradictory, role in all crucial steps in securing land for corporate investors. This puts the state centre-stage in terms of the politics of land deals and as a principal target of the various social groups affected by land deals. Recent studies have contributed a lot to our better understanding of this matter. It might be useful if further empirical research and conceptualisation are done in terms of disaggregating the ‘state-subordinated classes’ political interactions around land deals based on the broad types of struggle: against dispossession/expulsion, against exploitation, and against land concentration and for redistribution and recognition, as discussed earlier in the paper.

‘Local communities’ and ‘local people’ and beyond: inter- and intra-class political dynamics

This is probably where empirical research remains faced with a daunting challenge. To date, there has been hardly any systematic research into the dynamics of inter- and intra-class tensions and synergies (the issues that unite and divide), nor any moving away from not-so-useful categories, such as ‘local community’ and ‘local people’, that conceal more than reveal actual dynamics of politics. The relatively easier area to study in the future is to see the

emerging politics by clearly defined social groups and the variegated ways they are becoming inserted into plantation enclaves: eg peasants expelled from their lands, peasants who have leased their lands but have not secured wage-earning jobs elsewhere (dispossession without proletarianisation), peasants who leased their lands and secured wage-earning jobs, and migrant workers recruited to join the workforce of the newly established plantation. Latent and actual political divides are relatively easy to discern, and fronts of struggles not difficult to figure out. Nevertheless more systematic empirical research needs to be done within this framework.

But, as we also know, there are individuals who cannot be reduced simplistically to a single class—they are small-scale farmers, but they are also workers in a plantation, and so on—and there are situations that are more complex than others, such as the case of 'propertied proletarians'. Hence a simplistic view of a class political standpoint will run into some difficult cases like this. It is likely that there are more situations reflecting these complexities; these demand careful and rigorous conceptualisation and methodological approaches in studying (class) politics.

Local, case-oriented country studies and beyond

The Land Deal Politics Initiative (LDPI, see www.iss.nl/ldpi) International Conference on Global Land Grabbing II held in October 2012 at Cornell University was the first time that a critical mass of academic papers was made available that had something to do with political reactions among affected social groups towards land deals. Many of the papers were empirical, looking at specific country or land deal case studies. This is a critical piece of the puzzle. In our view it is important to accumulate a critical mass of good, solid empirical cases of political reactions to land deals. This remains a challenge, and so should remain a growth pole in the emerging academic literature on land grabbing. However, studies of local, case-oriented politics need to be accompanied by big picture studies of multi-scale politics around land grabs. Again, this will help us grapple with tensions and synergies, the issues that have united and divide social groups and movements, and which will be missed in our analysis if we limit ourselves to local and case-oriented analyses of politics. And it is a similar problem with the other side of the story: studies that look only into the dynamics of political contention at the (inter)national level, and which are not sufficiently grounded at the local, land-grab site level, will miss the empirical richness (ie contradictions) of land deal-related politics.

State and corporate self-regulation governance instruments and beyond

So much attention and momentum have focused recently around global governance instruments, specifically the Tenure Guidelines (TGs),⁶² and related instruments like transparency instruments, all in response to the emerging political reactions of various affected social groups towards large-scale land deals. This is an all-important and welcome development, academically and politically. But studies of the politics of land deals should therefore accompany the process

of policy debates around the TGs and related matters. The more effective way of doing this to avoid a depoliticised, administrative and technical take on matters that are essentially political is to embed one's research framework and methodology within the first five points we have raised above.⁶³

Notes

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- 1 P McMichael, 'The land grab and corporate food regime restructuring', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(3–4), 2012, pp 681–701.
- 2 K Deininger, 'Challenges posed by the new wave of farmland investment', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 38(2), 2011, pp 217–247.
- 3 Important academic journal collections include the 'Forum on Global Land Grabbing: Part 1', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 38(2), 2011, which outlines key ideological and analytical strands and includes a contribution by O de Schutter, 'How not to think of land-grabbing: three critiques of large-scale investments in farmland', pp 249–279; J Fairhead, M Leach & I Scoones (eds), *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(2), 2012; B White et al (eds), 'The New Enclosures: Critical Perspectives on Corporate-driven Land Deals', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(3–4), 2012; L Mehta et al (eds), 'Water Grabbing? Focus on the (Re)appropriation of Finite Water Resources', *Water Alternatives*, 5(2), 2012; W Wolford et al (eds), 'Governing Global Land Deals: The Role of the State in Rush for Land', *Development and Change*, 44(2), 2013; M Margulis, N McKeon & S M Borras Jr (eds), 'Land Grabbing and Global Governance', *Globalizations*, 10(1), 2013; and S M Borras Jr, C Kay & J Wilkinson (eds), 'Land Grabbing in Latin America', *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 33(4), 2012.
- 4 On the latter, the 'Forum on Global Land Grabbing: Part 2', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 40(3), 2013 has been dedicated to jump-starting a more rigorous debate on this matter. See, specifically, I Scoones et al, 'The politics of evidence: methodologies for understanding the global land rush', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 40(3), 2013 pp 469–483; M Edelman, 'Messy hectares: questions about the epistemology of land area and ownership', pp 485–501; and C Oya, 'Methodological reflections on land "grab" databases and the land "grab" literature "rush"', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 40(3), 2013, pp 503–520.
- 5 A Tsing, *Friction*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005, p xx.
- 6 J Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009.
- 7 M Olsen, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965.
- 8 M Edelman, 'Social movements: changing paradigms and forms of politics', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 30, 2001, pp 285–317. See also related discussions in A Walder, 'Political sociology and social movements', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 35, 2009, pp 393–412. We thank Marc Edelman for pointing this out to us.
- 9 See, for example, various works by J Scott (above and below); B Kerkvliet, 'Everyday politics in peasant societies (and ours)', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 36(1), 2009, pp 227–243; and J Paige, *Agrarian Revolution*, New York: Free Press, 1975.
- 10 S Borras, J Franco, S Gómez, C Kay & M Spoor, 'Land grabbing in Latin America and the Caribbean', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(3–4), 2012, pp 845–872.
- 11 We refer to some case studies to illustrate some of the analytical points we are trying to put forward. These case studies were generated through joint and individual field visits by the authors to several land grabbing sites in several countries (including the Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia, China, Brazil, Mali and Mozambique), with each field visit lasting around two weeks. These are therefore not exhaustive case studies, but sufficient for our current purpose.
- 12 Among the few exceptions are S Adnan, 'Land grabs and primitive accumulation in deltaic Bangladesh: interactions between neoliberal globalization, state interventions, power relations and peasant resistance', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 40(1), 2013, pp 87–128.
- 13 See, for example, K Woods, 'Ceasefire capitalism: military–private partnerships, resource concessions and military–state building in the Burma–China borderlands', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 38(4), 2011, pp 747–770; J Grajales, 'The rifle and the title: paramilitary violence and land control in Colombia', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 38(4), 2011, pp 771–792.
- 14 See M Murmis & M Murmis, 'Land concentration and foreign land ownership in Argentina in the context of global land grabbing', *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 33(4), 2012, pp 490–508.
- 15 We thank Marc Edelman for pointing this out to us.
- 16 H Bernstein, *Class Dynamics of Agrarian Change*, Halifax: Fernwood, 2010, p 115.

- 17 We thank Marc Edelman for pointing this out to us.
- 18 L Mehta, GJ Veldwisch & J Franco, 'Water grabbing: editorial introduction', *Water Alternatives*, 5(2), 2012, pp 193–207; J Franco, L Mehta & GJ Veldwisch, 'The global politics of water grabbing', this issue; and P Woodhouse, 'New investment, old challenges: land deals and the water constraint in African agriculture', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(3–4), 2012, pp 777–794.
- 19 J Fairhead, M Leach & I Scoones, 'Green grabbing: a new appropriation of nature?', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(2), 2012, pp 237–261.
- 20 T Lavers, "'Land grab" as development strategy? The political economy of agricultural investment in Ethiopia', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(1), 2012, pp 105–132.
- 21 This can also be seen in the context of land reform implementation in the Philippines where more than 20 government agencies are directly involved, with very different histories of interaction with peasant mobilisations from below. This in turn influences the choices of institutional targets of peasant mobilisations for land. See J Franco, *Bound by Law*, Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2011.
- 22 S Borras, M Edelman & C Kay (eds), *Transnational Agrarian Movements Confronting Globalization*, Oxford: Wiley–Blackwell, 2008.
- 23 G Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century*, New York: Verso, 1994; K Marx, *Capital: I*, London: Penguin, 1976; and D Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- 24 W Wolford et al, 'Land grabbing and global governance: introduction', *Development and Change*, 44(2), 2013, pp 189–210; and M Levien, 'Regimes of dispossession: from steel towns to Special Economic Zones', *Development and Change*, 44(2), 2013, pp 381–407.
- 25 It is relevant to note that lands that were once marginal may become less so with a different crop mix and new technologies. The marginal claims are sometimes connected to new cash crops that do well on poor soils, eg jatropha, or new kinds of millets in India or Africa. We thank Marc Edelman for pointing this out to us.
- 26 S Borras, J Franco & C Wang, 'The challenge of global governance of land grabbing: changing international agricultural context and competing political views and strategies', *Globalizations*, 10(1), 2013, pp 161–179.
- 27 J Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 Grajales, 'The rifle and the title'; Woods, 'Ceasefire capitalism'; N Peluso & C Lund (eds), 'New frontiers of land control', *Journal of Peasant Studies* (special issue), 38(4), 2011; and Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.
- 30 J Fox, *Food Politics*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993, esp ch 2. For related discussion, see Harvey, *The New Imperialism*; and G Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century*, esp his concept of 'capitalists and territorialists'.
- 31 Balancing the issue of the 'legitimacy of the state' includes calculations of resistance from entrenched (local) elites. We thank Eric Gutierrez for pointing this out.
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