Land Grabbing
Large scale rural transformation

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…broaden the view

- Agriculture
- Mining
- Tourism
- Nature reserves/ protected areas
- Special economic zones

(See also: A. Zoomers (2010) Globalisation and the foreignisation of space: seven processes driving the current global land grab)

Here → focus on agricultural activities
Foreign land acquisition for agriculture

- FAO estimates that in the last 3 years in Africa alone 20 Mha have been acquired by foreign investors (other estimate 50 Mha)
- Predominantly long term land leases (30-99 years)

Context

- Liberalisation of land markets (World Bank; bilateral donors, prominently the Millennium Challenge Account)
- Global boom in FDI in agriculture (1 billion USD in 1991 → 3 billion USD in 2007; WIR 2009)
3 core drivers:

- **Food price crisis** in 2008 (nat. food security back on the agenda)
- Global **agrofuels** boom:
  - Binding targets set by Governments (artificial markets)
  - 37% of all ‘land grabs’ for agrofuels production (unconfirmed WB data)
  - Land demand forecasts:
    - 480 Mha in 2045 for 'sustainable' fuels mix (Ecofys 2010)
    - 10% substitution of global gasoline & diesel demand in 2030 requires up to 500 Mha ↔ total EU-27 surface 420 Mha (Ravindranath 2009)
- **Financial crisis**: Search for new/ more ‘real’ investment opportunities
What is new/ different?

„Why do they buy the whole land instead of purchasing the rice at the market?“ (Cambodian peasant)

- Cash crops for the world market ↔ **direct imports** to investing countries;
- High value crops ↔ basic food crops & fuel crops (econ. of scale);
- **Dimension**: 20 to 50 Mha of transferred land since 2006 (EU: 100 Mha arable land);
  single land deals of more than 1 Mha;
- **Players**: Private sector (TNC), States (direct or via devel. banks, sov. wealth funds) & investment funds.
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Example
Cambodia

Land Concessions leave only small corridors for the rural population
Map by LICADHO
Clearing of community forest in Phepimex concession
Fisher community at Kampot coast loses access to fishing grounds
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Large scale dispossession of land under the banner of development

Rhetoric of the investors/ states:

• Jobs, jobs, jobs…
• Infrastructure
• Economic development for the benefit of all

Reality check:

• No jobs:
  ◦ Small number of workers needed (industrial farming);
  ◦ Very low wages;
  ◦ Seasonal/ precarious work;
• Infrastructure not for local needs
  ◦ Export infrastructure (ports, highways...)
• Loss of access to land / forests/ water/ fishing grounds

Local protest: 1000 thumbprints against a concession
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Land grabbing...

- ignores national law and violates human rights (right to food);
- increases concentration of land;
- further marginalizes rural communities.

→ Land grabbing = negative agrarian reform

→ Facilitating deals is a clear decision for large scale industrial farming

"Today, when we hear ‘development’, we have fear’
(Cambodian peasant)

Time for EU and its member States to intervene

- Initiate **international regulation** to prevent such land acquisitions;
- New **EU investment framework**: Include clauses with clear reference to international human rights law and its supremacy;
- Scrap energy based **targets for renewables** (agrofuels) & reduce EU needs for foreign land;
- Strengthen implementation of **human rights based land policies** (EU support to AU land guidelines should under no circumstances be used to promote/ facilitate large scale investment in land);
- Support the upcoming FAO process on voluntary **guidelines on responsible governance of land and natural resources** tenure and the final declaration of the **International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development** (ICARRD).

*See*: 2009-2010 Monitoring report by European Civil Society Organizations of European Commission’s proposal for Advancing African Agriculture
In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence.

(Article 1.2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights)

Thank you!

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