

Session 1

1. ANNETTE AURÉLIE DESMARAIS



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Annette Aurélie Desmarais is Canada Research Chair in Human Rights, Social Justice and Food Sovereignty at the University of Manitoba. She is author of *La Vía Campesina: Globalization and the Power of Peasants* (2007) that has now been translated into various languages. She also co-edited *Food Sovereignty: Reconnecting Food, Nature and Community* (2010), *Food Sovereignty in Canada: Creating Just and Sustainable Food Systems* (2011), and *Public Policies for Food Sovereignty: Social Movements and the State* (2017). Her research focuses on agrarian change and struggles for food sovereignty.

Measuring and locating changes in farmland ownership on the Canadian Prairies

Annette Aurélie Desmarais

This presentation will discuss the results, benefits and challenges of using land titleholder data and Geographical Information Systems software to analyze the extent of land grabbing and farmland concentration on the Canadian prairies, a region where 71.6% of Canada's total agricultural land is located. We first tested this methodology by investigating changes in land tenure in three rural municipalities in Saskatchewan, a province in which investors were particularly interested (Desmarais, Qualman, Magnan and Wiebe. 2015). While 7.8% to 13.1% of the farmland in these municipalities is now owned by land grabbers, our study also found a significant rise in land concentration in the hands of farmers. For example, in one RM the four largest landowners—a mix of farmers and investment companies and farmer/investor hybrids—now own 28% of the land. Using the same methodology, we then expanded the research to measure changes throughout Saskatchewan as a whole, while also analyzing how the changing political, economic, and legal context under neoliberalism has shaped patterns of farmland ownership in the province between 2002-2014 (Desmarais et al., 2016). Our research indicates that over this time, the amount of Saskatchewan farmland owned by investors increased 16-fold. Also, the concentration of farmland ownership is on the rise, with the share of farmland owned by the largest four private owners increasing six-fold.

By using land titles data, we were able to identify farmland investors and determine very precisely the location of their landholdings thus allowing us to provide a fine-grained analysis of the actual patterns of farmland ownership. By locating the specific rural municipalities of high investor activity and/or land concentration we can then deepen the research through qualitative research to analyze the social dimensions and environmental implications of changes in land tenure. However, we are facing significant challenges to expanding this research to include the other prairie provinces of Alberta and Manitoba. Especially important

is the (semi) privatization of the management of land-titling data, and the difficulties of measuring land concentration among farmers.

Desmarais, Annette Aurélie, Darrin Qualman, André Magnan and Nettie Wiebe. 2015. "Land grabbing and land concentration: Mapping changing patterns of farmland ownership, in three rural municipalities in Saskatchewan, Canada," *Canadian Food Studies*, Vol. 2, No.1, pp. 16-47. Available at

<http://canadianfoodstudies.uwaterloo.ca/index.php/cfs/article/view/52>

Desmarais, A.A., D. Qualman, A. Magnan and N. Wiebe. 2016. Investor ownership or social investment? Changing farmland ownership in Saskatchewan, Canada. *Agriculture and Human Values*, Vol. 34, Issue 1, pp. 149-166.

2. MICHAEL LEVIEN



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Michael Levien is assistant professor of sociology at Johns Hopkins University. He received his PhD in sociology from the University of California, Berkeley in 2013. His research falls within the fields of development sociology, political sociology, agrarian political economy and social theory, with a geographic focus on India. His book *Dispossession Without Development: Land Grabs in Neoliberal India* is forthcoming from Oxford University Press. His articles on land acquisition and SEZs in India have appeared in *World Development*, *Politics and Society*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, *Development and Change*, *Journal of Peasant Studies*, and *Journal of Agrarian Change*. In 2014, he was a visiting professor at the Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi.

The New Kulaks? Land Brokers and the Politics of Dispossession in India

Michael Levien

Based on ethnographic and survey research conducted in villages dispossessed for a Special Economic Zone in Rajasthan India, this paper makes several arguments about rural land brokers and their consequences for dispossession politics. First, rural land brokers are ubiquitous in rural areas with appreciating land markets, and form a feeding chain around major capital projects involving state land dispossession. Their role is to connect and build trust between outside investors and village sellers, earning commission in return. Second, it is typically farmers with non-menial social networks spanning the village and city who become brokers. Because this form of social capital (in Bourdieu's sense) is highly associated with economic and cultural capital, land brokers disproportionately come from the dominant castes

and classes. Third, however, there is a hierarchy of brokers from large politician-mega brokers all the way down to individuals who opportunistically engage in one deal. The important implication is that the broker stratum is more fluid than traditional agrarian classes, and can include even some lower caste smallholders. Fourth, brokers often use their social networks for unscrupulous gain, deliberating cheating poorer or less educated and informed fellow villagers. By capitalizing on their social networks, rural land brokers are solvents of solidarity and help to undermine any possibility for collective action against dispossession or its aftermath. Rebuffing brokers is thus a major challenge for anti-dispossession movements. And such movements and their advocates must evaluate the consequences of government land acquisition policies in terms of the scope they give to brokers. Understanding the role of brokers, like understanding dispossession politics generally, requires dispatching with rural romanticism and examining how different forms of dispossession and state compensation policies refract through unequal agrarian social structures.

3. NIKITA SUD



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Nikita Sud is Associate Professor of Development Studies at the University of Oxford, and a Fellow of Wolfson College. She is working on a monograph tentatively titled *Unfixed Land*, based on a decade of research on India's contemporary land transitions. Her early work on land has been published in the journals *Development and Change*, *Modern Asian Studies*, *World Development*, *Geoforum*, and *Environment and Planning*. She is also the author of *'Liberalisation, Hindu Nationalism and The State: A Biography of Gujarat'* (Oxford University Press, 2012). She regularly writes on land and related themes in the popular media including *The Conversation* and *Scroll.in*

Brokers taking land to market in India

Land is multi-dimensional: enlivened nature for some (Ulloa 2015; Escobar 2016), territory for others (Elden 2010), authority practiced in space (Berry 2002), the state-adjudicated right to property (Lund 2011), and a marker of access and exclusion (Ribot and Peluso 2003, Li 2014). This paper asks how multi-dimensional land is taken to market? How is land transformed into a commodity for exchange? After all, as Polanyi (1944) pointed out almost a century ago, land is a fictitious commodity. It cannot be readily purchased, nor does it have commodity-like qualities of inter-changeability and uniformity. Based on a larger book project, I focus on one set of stakeholders: land brokers, who imagine, perform, and socially and politically embed land in a commodity state, albeit imperfectly, and temporarily (Appadurai 1986). A chain of brokers links the buyers of land, with its sellers, users and formal and informal regulators. However, far from uni-dimensionalising land as a flattened out 'thing', ordered and paperworked for sale, brokers instead facilitate the privatization of land's fictions. Field research in east and west India, shows broker-led actions that continue to spiritualise,

territorialise, and socially and politically order land even as it goes to market. While the burgeoning literature on accumulation and the grabbing of land tells an important story unfolding across the world, it is time to deepen the narrative via how we view land, as also the actors that produce it. In turn, the (multi)landness of land co-produces the very institutions that shape and re-shape it .

Session 2

1. ANNA HAJDU



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Between 2014-2017 Anna Hajdu worked as a Research Assistant within a European Research Council (ERC) research project led by Oane Visser, at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS). Her work focused on farmland acquisitions and investment strategies in Romania, business models and perceptions of investors related to farmland investments, land intermediaries and rural development more broadly. She conducted intensive fieldwork, especially in Romania, interviewing farmers, farm managers, asset managers, consultants, portfolio managers, lawyers, real estate managers, investment managers, land brokers and small-scale traditional farmers. Her work also included collaboration with the University of Amsterdam (Faculty of Social and Behavioural Science-Department of Anthropology) for the organisation of a workshop and presentation on land brokers organized in November 2017 at the ISS. In 2014 she coordinated the organizing of a conference and presented at the Romanian Academy in Bucharest, in collaboration with the Francisc I. Rainer Anthropological Research Center.

Anna was invited to present her work at international conferences, among others at: University of Cambridge, Utrecht University, IAMO Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition Economies and RANEP (The Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration).

A genealogy of the 'land rush'. Waves of farmland acquisition and diverse investor strategies in Romania

Anna Hajdu and Oane Visser

Studies on the construction of farmland as a financial asset have not yet paid much attention to the historical dimension of this phenomenon as Ouma (2016) observed. This holds true as well for the literature on land acquisitions at large, as noticed by Hall (2011), Edelman and León (2013) and Edelman et al. (2013). At the same time, recently there has been a call to unpack the notion of the 'investor' and pay more attention to the various types of farmland investors and farmland intermediaries (Ouma 2014; Clapp et al. 2017), as the categories of investors, their strategies and subsequent roles in agricultural and rural development may

diverge quite substantially. Following up on Edelman and León (2013) I argue that the common conceptualization of 2007 as the watershed food crisis year, spurring a land rush everywhere across the globe, is incomprehensive, as it neglects further historical, geographical and socio-economic factors that may influence the unfolding of farmland investments in a certain region or country.

Based on my fieldwork in Romania conducted between 2015-2016 and for this paper thirty in-depth interviews with fund managers, farm managers, farmers, company representatives, land brokers, consultants, lawyers, asset managers and authorities, I distinguish various waves of farmland investment, with the first already starting in the mid-1990s. Further, I show that each of these waves is different, in terms of the stage of agriculture in Romania and the composition of farmland acquirers, investors and intermediaries, their land acquisition and business models. For instance, several 'trailblazers' motivated by a "first mover advantage" (Li 2014) entered when farmland was highly fragmented, whereas the majority of other categories of investors entered much later when larger consolidated landholdings became available. Also, the extent of corporatization and financialization is not static, but varies across these waves.

2. SARAH RUTH SIPPEL



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Sarah Ruth Sippel researches farmland investments and financialisation in Australia. She is the Principal Investigator of a four-year research project 'Land Imaginations: The Repositioning of Farming, Productivity, and Sovereignty in Australia' (C04, Collaborative Research Centre 1199) funded by the German Research Foundation and a Partner Investigator in the Australian Research Council Discovery Grant 'Food, Farming and Financialisation: Agri-food Transformations in Australia (DP160101318).

Mediating between the worlds of finance and farming: the role of those 'in the middle'

Sarah Ruth Sippel

For some years the growing involvement of financial actors in food and farming has been one of the major recent transformations in the global food system. Multiple intersections between food and finance have been observed, from commodity speculation to agribusiness to direct investment in agricultural production and farmland. This paper looks at land deals enabled by financial flows in Australia. The focus will be on those companies and organizations that are situated in between the 'agricultural' and the 'finance' world, and which, as intermediaries between these two worlds, have actively raised capital in recent years to push for a new, finance driven agricultural production model. The paper seeks to identify the strategies and

intentions involved along with the various sources of 'finance capital' that are targeted. It will be argued that the 'successful' liaison between the worlds of finance and farming relies on, and requires, active efforts of especially these actors situated 'in the middle'. Often being at home in both worlds, these actors have been particularly important in turning farming into a 'bucket' for financial investment by inventing and adapting new incentives, logics and farming rationales as well as active mediation, translation and value creation.

3. JEROEN ADAM



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Jeroen Adam studies the dynamics of resource access, violent conflict and reconciliation in Southeast Asia. Dr. Adam has conducted research on the Philippines for the past 8 years, resulting in multiple publications and the approval of different research grants. The past 4 years, dr. Adam has conducted research within the framework of the LSE based JSRP (Justice and Security Research Program) wherein he analyzed interventions of reconciliation in Muslim Mindanao.

Intimacy, secrecy and hybrid state brokers. An analysis of land transactions after land redistribution in the Philippines

Jeroen Adam

This contribution analyses the particular socio-political transformations occurring after the implementation of a large-scale land redistribution program in the Philippines. As a case-study, we will focus on the redistribution of coconut plantations on the Southern Philippine island of Mindanao. Quantitative and qualitative data hereby indicate how – despite redistribution - the majority of so-called land beneficiaries remain weak actors in a competitive capitalist economy, resulting in increasing debts and ultimately, dispossession from their lands. Within this process of dispossession, a new type of landowners enters the scene. This entrance is rooted in a specific type of secret knowledge based on intimate social relations, due to the very informal nature of these land transactions. Interestingly, rather than initiating an upward social mobility of poor peasants, one hereby sees how land redistribution in this region has particularly benefited a local village elite, further differentiating the overall rural class structure. Next, due to the proliferation of informal land transactions, the 'local' state has gained more prominence as a broker in these land transactions. Local state officials hereby add a particular symbolic state capital to these transaction, resulting in hybrid arrangements situated at the edge between formal/informal, state/society. In return, these state officials

add to their own political capital as they become central nodes in this emerging informal land market.

4. DILINI ABEYGUNAWARDANE



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Dilini Abeygunawardane works for the ERC-MIDLAND project at Université Catholique de Louvain as a postdoctoral research fellow. In the MIDLAND project, Dilini focuses on transnational investment decisions in agriculture and forestry across emerging agricultural frontiers, with a specific focus on Southern and Eastern Africa. Her background cuts across ecology, natural resource management, and agricultural development policy. She holds a PhD in environmental management from The University of Queensland, Australia (2014).

Prof. Dr. Patrick Meyfroidt

Patrick Meyfroidt holds a PhD in geography (2009) and a degree in sociology from Université Catholique de Louvain in Belgium. His main research interests are land use and forest transitions, linkages between globalization and human-environmental changes, and feedbacks between environmental perceptions and land changes.

Dr. Angela Kronenburg García

Angela Kronenburg García holds a PhD from Wageningen University (2015) and a degree in cultural anthropology from Leiden University. Her research has focused on land use change, access, land and forest tenure, natural resource conflict, land governance and political leadership, and her geographical expertise includes the drylands of Kenya and Mozambique. She is currently a postdoc researcher in the MIDLAND project from the Université catholique de Louvain. Her research seeks to understand the strategies, decisions and coalitions of actors in the emerging land use frontier of northern Mozambique.

Investing in land versus land use: implications for land acquisition and land use

Dilini Abeygunawardane, Patrick Meyfroidt, and Angela Kronenburg García

Our work in Southern Africa investigates investor decisions in large-scale transnational commodity agriculture in frontier regions with a primary focus on understanding the different

trajectories of land use change. We believe that understanding investors' decisions, i.e. where, when, why and how an investment takes place will enrich the debate on global 'land investments' and the role of different actors in enabling or hindering such 'deals'. Our work in Mozambique, Zambia, and Tanzania reveals crucial differences between two groups of investors, both highly mobile and having a large capital. The key distinction is in the investment strategy – The first group invests primarily in land, and then chooses the most profitable crop suitable for that land, while the second invests primarily in a specific crop or land use for which they already have expertise, including an established set of skills and assets. The location of an investment and subsequent land use vary depending on these different investment strategies and we suggest that this also reflects in the means by which the land deals materialize. This distinction between investments strategies is also likely to have different social and environmental implications and warrants further investigation and discussion.

SESSION 3

1. WARD WARMERDAM



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Ward Warmerdam completed his PhD on Chinese development assistance at the ISS in 2015. His current research covers many commodity sectors (mining, agriculture, forestry, energy, fisheries, weapons) as well-related issues (deforestation, social impacts) and financial stakeholders. His specialized research covers the role of financial institutions in transitioning to a low carbon economy, the role of financial institutions in mitigating the environmental and social risks associated with the exploitation of forest-commodities, Chinese ethnic minority issues and Chinese aid, trade and FDI in Africa.

Forests & Finance

Ward Warmerdam

The global demand for agro-commodities, including palm oil, pulp & paper, rubber and timber, has led to the rapid development of land for the cultivation and harvest of these commodities. Much of this development has taken place in regions with weak and poor governance. The effect has been wide-scale deforestation and loss of biodiversity, unsustainable development on peat lands and there with increased GHG emissions and risk of fire, land grabs and community conflicts, among numerous other issues caused by uncontrolled development and poorly enforced regulations. Financial institutions have played a crucial role in the development of these agro-commodities. They provide financing to companies for land acquisition, the development of mills and refineries, trade finance, and finance for general corporate purposes. A number of financial institutions have developed policies to prevent their exposure to risks in high-risk countries and high sectors, such as Indonesian and Malaysian

palm oil. However, many continue to finance the development of agro-commodities without any consideration of the environmental, social and governance risks involved.

This paper presents the Forests & Finance research project. It will describe the findings of the mapping of financial flows to companies engaged in four high deforestation-risk agro-commodities (palm oil, pulp & paper, rubber and timber) in Southeast Asia. The paper will further outline the findings of financial institution policy analysis, highlighting the gaps in policies. Finally, it will provide insights into the on-the-ground efforts to prevent the financing of uncontrolled development of these agro-commodities in Southeast Asia.

2. JAN WILLEM VAN GELDER



Jan Willem van Gelder
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After studying development economics at the Wageningen Agricultural University (the Netherlands), Jan Willem van Gelder has gained a broad expertise in economic and market research, financial analysis and strategic advice. Since 2000 he is the founding director of Profundo, a research consultancy based in Amsterdam, which specializes in analysing international commodity chains (in the agriculture, forestry, oil&gas and mining sectors) and the role of banks, pension funds and other financial institutions in fostering sustainable development.

Chain reaction research

Jan Willem van Gelder

The production of tropical commodities such as palm oil, soy, beef and timber in Asia, Africa and Latin America creates sustainability risks: deforestation, peat land development, land rights conflicts and labour norms violations. Importantly, deforestation and land use change are key contributors to human greenhouse gas emissions and with this a significant driver of climate change.

As the attention for these issues is growing globally and governments, customers and financiers boost their efforts to address such sustainability risks, commodity producers will find it increasingly difficult to continue operating as usual. Their expansion opportunities will be curbed, consequently turning land concessions into stranded assets rather than sources of future cash flow. Investors that are financing commodity producers, traders and processors thus have two reasons to worry: their involvement in serious sustainability issues puts their reputation at stake, and the financial risks of their investments are increasing as well.

Chain Reaction Research (CRR) - a collaboration of Aidenvironment, Climate Advisers and Profundo - is since 2014 exploring how sustainability risks created by tropical commodity

sectors are translating into financial risks for banks and investors. CRR has been writing and publishing reports for investors on companies producing, trading and processing tropical commodities such as palm oil, soy, beef and timber. Our reports and newsletters are available at chainreactionresearch.com.

3. DANNY WIJNHOU



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Jan Derk (Danny) Wijnhoud, graduated for his MSc in Physical Geography at Utrecht University with majors in Tropical Land Evaluation and Soil & Water Conservation. His thesis work was based on field research in respectively Botswana and Burkina Faso. He graduated for his PhD on Integrated Development Strategies at Wageningen University with his thesis work at the interfaces of sustainable land management, rural diversification and livelihoods based on prolonged research in Northeast Thailand while drawing in on some of his professional experiences in Africa, in particular from Mozambique and Ethiopia. He has worked as a capacity development advisor for Natural Resources Management, Local Economic Development, Sustainable Livelihoods and Food Security on a wide range of assignments in among others Mozambique, Ethiopia, Uganda and Malawi. Since late 2012 he is working from the Netherlands as a Senior Researcher in support of ActionAid's lobby, policy advocacy and campaigns. Based on a human rights based approach and with a strong gender lens, he mainly focuses on women's land rights, livelihood resilience and the right to food within a climate and political economy changing context.

Land deals and land grabs in the African context: at the crossroads of drivers and grass root driven remedies.

J.D. Wijnhoud

The paper introduces the background and characteristics of the land rush on the African continent and its human rights impacts, in particular the impacts on rural communities, women smallholder farmers and the right to food. It discusses key drivers and elaborates remedies and safeguards and their implementation in policy and practice. Within the prevailing political economy of unfair globalization and rising inequalities within African states,

the policy, institutional, legal and political constraints are being revealed and discussed. The paper zooms in on the situation in a few countries, including experiences with grass root driven remedies involving community participatory research and advocacy in Mozambique. It identifies gaps towards engendered inclusive land governance as essential for broader inclusive socioeconomic developments. A number of clear recommendations are given to bridge the gaps between to be improved policies and practice securing women's land rights for improved and sustainable livelihoods within an inclusive African development context.

SESSION 4

1. LAURENS BAKKER (University of Amsterdam) and MOHAMED NASIR (Balikpapan University and Radboud University Nijmegen)



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Laurens Bakker is assistant professor (UD) in the department of anthropology of the University of Amsterdam. He works on questions of governance, law and justice with a focus on land use, resource conflict, discourses of authority and non-state violence. Most of his research is focused on Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia. At present he is principal investigator for the 'Securing the Local' project, which comparatively studies the role of non-state security groups in countering the threat of extremist violence in Indonesia, Kenya and Nigeria. With Mohamad Nasir of Universitas Balikpapan and Muhamad Muhdar of Prakarsa Borneo, he heads the Tiram Research Project in East Kalimantan, Indonesia. This project is funded by the International Development and Law Organization (IDLO) and seeks to develop and strengthen the participatory law-making capacities of government, CSOs and local communities in regional resource management.



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Mohamad Nasir is a lecturer in the Faculty of Law of the University of Balikpapan, East Kalimantan. He involved in regulatory reform in East Kalimantan and North Kalimantan, particularly in natural resource and environmental issues. Most of his research is focused on coal mining, palm oil plantation, forestry and degradation of the environment. At present, he is pursuing his Ph.D. at the Center for International Development Issues Nijmegen, Radboud University. With Lauren Bakker of the University of Amsterdam and Muhamad Muhdar of Prakarsa Borneo, he heads the Tiram Research Project in East Kalimantan, Indonesia.

Brokering a Land Deal in East Kalimantan, Indonesia

Laurens Bakker and Mohamad Nasir

The Indonesian province of East Kalimantan is a major 'hot spot' of international investment in natural resources due to the presence of deposits of coal, gas, oil, bauxite and gold, as well as large quantities of land for oil palm and other plantations. This has led to considerable conflict. In 2013, for instance, the provincial governor announced that at that time there were 742 cases of conflicts between mining operators, plantation companies and local communities registered.

A considerable number of conflicts is due to overlapping claims and concessions, which in turn are caused by inconsistencies in and frequent changes to the legislation on land governance over the past eighteen years.

In this paper we discuss the ways in which access to land and land usage is achieved and maintained, and the legal and illegal elements that come to play in this process. Our interest lies in the procedures as much as in the actions and the actors. While not all routes are open to all actors, we find that those who manage to obtain a concession generally deploy a diverse spectrum of strategies that transgresses the official trajectory as set out in the law.

2. TIJO SALVERDA



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Tijo Salverda's research interests include elites, power, land-based agricultural investments, and corporate responses to the criticism they face. His publications include 'Facing criticism: An analysis of (land-based) corporate responses to the large-scale land acquisition counter-movement' (*Journal of Peasant Studies*, forthcoming), *The Franco-Mauritian Elite: Power and Anxiety in the Face of Change* (Berghahn Books, 2015), *The Anthropology of Elites* (co-edited with Jon Abbink; Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), and 'In defence: Elite power' (*Journal of Political Power*, 2010).

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What about financial obscurity? Methodological consequences of the financial complexities behind a land-based investment in Zambia

Tijo Salverda

The main investor behind a European agribusiness, which obtained 38,000 ha in Zambia, has a disputable reputation and, according to the *Financial Times*, relies on obscure financial practices. In Zambia, there are signs that this is influencing the agribusiness' operations (e.g. laying off of staff, delays of financial commitments, slow expansion of the project). Yet the agribusiness denies that there are any problems and instead presents a rosy picture of all the 'good' work it is doing. Since it is very reluctant to provide financial information, however, it leaves researcher little choice but to speculate about the company's financial situation. In this presentation I will discuss methodological consequences following from the financial complexities behind many land deals – and the discrepancy with companies/investors that at the same time expect researchers to publish 'objective' research.

3. MIHIKA CHATTERJEE



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Ms. Chatterjee's thesis focuses on the evolution of an industrial zone and its variegated effects on rural-urban transitions, livelihoods and agrarian change in Maharashtra, India.

Undoing a Land Deal over Time: rule-breaking state, rule-restoring court and resisting farmers in Maharashtra, India

Mihika Chatterjee

The Shendra (Five Star) Industrial Area is spread across 902 Hectares (Ha.) of land close to Aurangabad town in Maharashtra, India. Agricultural land was systematically acquired and converted for industrial use by the parastatal in charge of developing industrial areas in the region, ostensibly under the provisions of the industrial Act. Within this largely successful land acquisition endeavour, 200 Ha. of land within the zone assigned to Ajanta Pharma Pvt. Ltd. for operation as a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) had been forcibly acquired by the state from unwilling farmers; there were many procedural irregularities, including collusion with village elites, forged signatures on consent form, threat and intimidation. A protracted period of resistance by the landowning farmers involving protests, appeals to local politicians, and finally judicial intervention from the local court ensued between 2008 and 2016. The district court ruled in favour of the farmers in 2016 and the land had to be de-notified and returned. Using interviews with farmers, local bureaucrats, and advocates involved, as well as legal documents

and press reports, this paper sheds light on the *undoing* of a land deal. The case of unsuccessful land acquisition for the Ajanta SEZ shows that (1) muscular implementation of land acquisition by the state, usually working in favour of private capital, can be subverted; (2) resistance is strongest when it is multi-scalar and multipronged (legal action, demonstrations and networks); (3) a case of successfully staving off illegal land acquisition does not necessarily derail the larger land-for-industry project through eminent domain. This paper will speak to the two sub-themes of *land deals and (il)legality and failed land investment and their trajectories*.

4. OANE VISSER



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Oane Visser is Associate Professor in Rural Development Studies. His current research interests revolve first of all around land acquisitions, farm investment and rural development in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet countries. He recently received a European Research Council (ERC) starting grant. This project (2013-2018) studies land investment strategies and their effects, looking at food security/sovereignty, labour issues and rural development. Furthermore, it studies the role of rural social movements in land governance. The research takes place in Russia and Ukraine. The project includes also a PhD student, Natalia Mamonova (2013-2016), who focused especially at responses of rural social movements to land investment. This project is conducted in collaboration with Judith Pallot (Oxford University) and Tatyana Nefedova (Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow).

Visser also supervises research projects in other post-socialist countries such as Tajikistan, Romania, and Cuba. Furthermore, Visser conducts research on financialisation and crisis in Eastern Europe and the West. A third line of research is on ethnopolitics in Eastern Europe.

Oane Visser (ISS) - Land deals, finance and the paradoxical trajectories of superlarge land deals

'World's biggest farm up for sale' was the headline in *the Telegraph* in 2011. The megafarm Ivolga, cultivating 1.5 million hectares of grain in Kazakhstan and Russia, quickly rose to fame as the biggest farm on earth, but this status was short-lived, as it soon plunged into severe financial difficulties.

The debate on the global farmland rush has focused on deals in which land from relatively small family farms (or 'unused' state land) is converted into large-scale private farms. However, the trajectory of land deals often doesn't stop there. As the case of e.g. Russia shows, large farms themselves can be subject to land grabs or hostile take-over by super large

farms. This presentation asks; In what ways are such super large (private) land deals different from earlier land deals? What kind of actors are brokering and financing such deals? And, importantly, what drives such super large deals? The latter question is topical in the context of the instability of particularly the super large land deals and farms (Lander & Kuns n.d.; Kuns, Visser & Wästfelt 2016, Visser 2015, 2017).

Why do farmland investors engage in new deals, and expand their super large farms further, while many of them are unprofitable or have unsustainable debts? An important explanation for this lies in the perverse effects of new links between the financial sector and agriculture through the financialisation of agriculture. Farmland is key to get new credit lines and equity, which gives megafarms a continued incentive to expand. Due to their super large scale some of these farm companies, I contend, have become 'too big to fail', in analogy with the financial sector, which impedes bank and/or states to declare failing megafarms bankrupt. Therefore I argue that financialisation of agriculture not only transforms farming (Fairbairn 2014, Isakson 2014) but it is a 'two-way street' also impacting finance in unexpected ways.

ROUNDTABLE

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She has contributed to a number of books, including the Handbook on International Political Economy of Production (Edward Elgar, 2015) and peer reviewed academic journals including the Journal of Peasant Studies. She is the lead author of an official European Parliament commissioned study on land grabbing in Europe.

She has over two years of experience of direct engagement with the Committee on World Food Security in Rome, where she participated in the negotiations on the Principles on Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems. She is regularly asked to present her research at international conferences including at the University College London, the International Institute of Social Studies, and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.