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Without Rain or Land, Where Will Our People Go? Climate Change, Land Grabbing, and Human Mobility: Insights from Senegal and Cambodia

Sara Vigil

International Institute of Social Studies (ISS)
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Without Rain or Land, Where Will Our People Go? Climate Change, Land Grabbing, and Human Mobility: Insights from Senegal and Cambodia¹

Sara Vigil

Abstract

Whilst the human rights consequences of land grabbing have been well documented, and the study of the connections between climate change and mobility have made substantial progress, very little attention has been given to the interactions between (in)direct climate change impacts, land grabs, and (im)mobility. Despite the connections between land rights and migration, and some references to displacement and migration in the existing literature on land grabbing, the complex relationship between these issues still remains theoretically and empirically underexplored. Based on a multi-case and multi-sited qualitative study in both Senegal and Cambodia, involving more than 150 participants in semi-structured interviews and focus groups affected by four different agribusiness projects, this paper will show how these three major contemporary challenges are interrelated, and why addressing them together can advance global governance. Notwithstanding context specificities, findings across all areas show that 1/ when land transactions fail to follow a human rights-based framework with full consideration of existing land rights, they result in added socio-environmental pressures that deeply affect forced (im)mobility outcomes, and that 2/ fragmented research areas and governance structures hinder the possibility of effective responses to these challenges. Based on Global Public Goods Theory, and drawing on some of the most recent advances in climate, migration, and land governance, the paper will finally explore how and why considering land as a global public good could foster integrated cooperation and response.

¹ Working Draft – Please do not cite or circulate without permission.

Introduction

Research on the relationship between climate change and migration has proliferated and shown the multi-causal nature and complexity of human mobility as it relates to environmental changes. Yet, despite important advances, research in this area still tends to be over-deterministic often overlooking the importance of the socio-political context. Moreover, both researchers and policy-makers concerned by these matters are still failing to acknowledge two important issues: 1/ the indirect effects of climate change on mobility through land intensive climate change mitigation policies (eg. biofuels and carbon sequestration projects) and 2/ the impacts of the recent wave of land acquisitions on the environment – that also has the potential of changing migratory dynamics. As a result, the question of land and resource grabbing as a direct or indirect consequence of climate change has been neglected in climate negotiations and so have its impacts, including migration and displacement. There is still no mention of land or resource grabbing in climate agreements, nor in regional or global forums dedicated to migration, and they remain absent from the debate of climate-induced migration. Moreover, despite some references to displacement associated with recent large-scale land acquisitions provided on a case-by-case manner by intergovernmental organisations, NGOs and donors, and the rich literature on land grabbing², the extent to which recent land acquisitions affect migration still remains underexplored with the allusions to human mobility being relegated to a secondary level. The aim of this paper is to analyse how these issues interrelate in very different socio-economic contexts in order to show why the fact that they are still being treated, at best, in pairs undermines a holistic comprehension that translates into inadequate governance mechanisms. The first part of the paper gives a quick overview of the empirical and theoretical links and gaps between these issues. Secondly, the paper describes recent findings from Senegal and Cambodia providing empirical evidence from four case studies to show how these issues interconnect in practice. Thirdly, the paper draws upon the empirical findings to analyse the results concomitantly whilst exploring some of the variables that best explain differentiated migratory outcomes. Finally, the last section of the paper enters a more conceptual discussion on why considering land as global public good can illuminate pathways towards collective action not only in land governance, but equally in climate change and migration arenas.

1 Links and Gaps

Climate Change and Migration

Even if migration linked to environmental degradation is far from being a new phenomenon, anthropogenic climate change has added new dimensions of responsibility and justice into the equation. It is since the creation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988 that the climatic question has entered the political agenda with force. In its first assessment report, the IPCC already warned that: ‘The greatest single impact of climate change could be on human migration’ (IPCC 1990). Since then research on the relationship between the environment and/(or) climate change and human mobility has proliferated (Bates 2002; Renaud et al. 2011). Whilst the first studies were largely deterministic in trying to isolate the environmental variable, later advances in have shown the multi-causal nature and complexity of human mobility as it relates to environmental changes (Black et al. 2011; Foresight 2011). Furthermore, since environmental changes increase the vulnerability of people making them less able to migrate, we can also expect increased immobility (Carling 2002, Foresight 2011). However, whilst the literature on so-called ‘environmental migration’ grows, its placement within mainstream migration studies and social theory remains weak. Moreover, the indirect effects of climate change on mobility through land intensive climate change mitigation

² Not all case studies in this paper can be considered as land grabs. I do not enter a conceptual discussion on the term, but I am guided by the following **working definition**: ‘Land grabs are land deals that are one or more of the following: 1) In violation of human rights, particularly the equal rights of women; 2) not based on free, prior and informed consent of the affected land-users; 3) Not based on a thorough assessment, or are in disregard of social, economic and environmental impacts, including the way they are gendered; 4) Not based on transparent contracts that specify clear and binding commitments about activities, employment and benefits sharing, and ; 5) Not based on effective democratic planning, independent oversight and meaningful participation.’ (Tirana Declaration 2011).

policies, and the impacts of land grabs on the climatic system and on human (im)mobility have not been analysed.

Climate Change and Land Grabbing

The main factors that have contributed to the recent wave of land grabbing stem from a combination between the spike in oil prices and the needs for renewable energy, food insecurity concerns of rich net-food importing countries, and the need for private investors to diversify placements in an increasingly unpredictable market (Borras et al. 2011; Borras and Franco 2012; Deninger et al. 2011). If we were to compare the phenomenon of the recent ‘rush for land’ to colonial times, the fact that climate change is seen as a legitimiser of many acquisitions is a main novelty. On one hand, current and projected climate change impacts have steered a wave of climate change mitigation policies that, despite their well-intentioned motives, can actually lead to added pressures on the land of the most economically, environmentally and socially vulnerable groups of developing societies. This occurs when policies aimed at biofuel production or carbon sequestration projects (eg. REDD+), incentivise the acquisition of large tracts of land in what has been referred to as ‘green grabbing’ (Fairhead et al. 2012). On the other hand, the passage from small-scale family farming to large-scale industrial agriculture can have devastating effects on the environment leading to increased climate change impacts. The agro-industrial sector accounts for up to five billion tonnes of CO₂, and is greatly responsible for land-use changes that result in one quarter of all anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions (IPCC 2014). Moreover, climate scenarios that consider bio-energy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS) as a mitigation strategy actually show that the land-use change emissions of BECCS are comparable to those of the highest emissions scenarios without them (Betts et al. 2015). There is thus increasing evidence to show that these ‘solutions’ might not be the ways forward to either protect the environment or to safeguard the most vulnerable populations that depend on land for their livelihoods.

Land Grabbing and Migration

The intellectual idea of displacement linked to land dispossession goes back to Marx’s notion of ‘primitive accumulation’, which is based primarily on the expropriation of the peasantry (Marx 1867). In this sense, land grabs can be conceptualized as a continuing process of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ (Harvey 2005) through which ‘enclosure-induced displacement’ results in dispossessed peasantries that become ‘a potential reserve army of migrant labour’ (Araghi 2009). Out-migration can thus be explained by the disruption that direct foreign investment brings in developing countries (Sassen 1988). Although Marxist political economy and World Systems analyses (Wallerstein 1974; 1980), are the framework that can best explain migration as it relates to land grabbing, the agency of social actors also needs to be taken into account. Rather than solely a macro-structural constraint that would make migrants ‘passive victims’, households also use migration as a risk-diversification strategy that can allow them to adapt to change and improve their well-being (Stark and Bloom 1985; Ellis 2003; Scoones 2009). Moreover, when analysing out-migration from rural areas it is essential to take into account migration transition models (Zelinsky 1971) that would allow to explain if out-migration should be considered a consequence of the migration transition rather than a result of land dispossession. Studies on the effects of land ownership (or access) on migration often arrive at non-linear and contrasting results (VanWey 2005; Mendola 2008; Barbieri 2005). Although they tend to confirm the negatives effects of lack of land assets on out-migration, land ownership can also increase out-migration by providing the assets needed to make the move (Grey 2008). Migration is indeed a very complex phenomenon that transcends purely economic rational choice push-pull models (Lee 1966; Harris and Todaro 1970; Todaro 1980). Human mobility can be propelled by poverty, or encouraged by wealth, embedded in economic transformation or on cultural changes, it can narrow inequalities and improve well-being, or on the contrary increase them and lead to further marginalisation (Rigg 2007). In order to assess the explanatory value of the many strands of social, agrarian, development, and migration theories, in studying land acquisitions in a world where today’s ‘great transformation’ (Polany 1944) is globalization, more empirical evidence still needs to be collected. Despite some references to forced displacement associated with recent large-scale land acquisitions provided on a case-by-case manner by intergovernmental organisations, NGO’s and

donors,³ and the growing literature on ‘land grabbing’ – that gives some important insights into the issue (cf. Li 2009 and 2011; Makki and Geisler 2011; Siciliano 2014, etc.) – the allusions to displacement and migration remain generally relegated to a secondary level calling for more empirical and theoretical work.

2 Insights from Senegal and Cambodia

Research Project

The aim of my ongoing PhD research is to understand how recent land acquisitions, human mobility and environmental changes interact. In areas where both climate vulnerability and competition for land play defining roles in livelihood sustainability, how do these factors interrelate to give way to new migratory patterns and change existing ones? This study concentrates on the specific cases of Senegal and Cambodia in order to better understand how these issues interconnect differently and distinctively depending on extremely different socio-political contexts. The overarching question of my study is thus: How do large-scale land acquisitions influence migration dynamics differently in Senegal and Cambodia, and why?

Methods

The aim of this research is to gain a better understanding of how large-scale land acquisitions affect migratory dynamics through the perspective of those involved and affected by them. In order to achieve this aim, the scarce and often unreliable quantitative data available on large-scale land acquisitions (Land-Matrix, NGO reports, media releases, etc.) and on population movements (national censuses, migration statistics, regional socio-economic data etc.) complement a qualitative research design. Primary qualitative tools include: 1) semi-structured interviews and focus groups with affected populations; 2) interviews with local and national authorities as well as with company representatives⁴; and 3) expert interviews with researchers, local NGOs, journalists, and peasant organisations. Furthermore, and because the nature and consequences of the projects within each country can vary considerably, it is important not to extrapolate the results of a single project to a whole country. This is the reason why my project does not only count on a two-case study (Senegal and Cambodia) but is also multi-sited. Participants are selected through snowball sampling whilst making sure that they are not only affected differently by each project (eg directly or indirectly) but also have different socio-demographic characteristics. Up to now, I have conducted fieldwork in Senegal during June and July 2014 and May and June 2015, and in Cambodia during March and April 2015 with more than 150 participants in total. Though fieldwork is still to be completed during the course of 2016 and 2017, the currently assembled data enables the establishment of general shared perceptions on environmental vulnerability, impacts of large-scale land acquisitions, and migratory trends. In order to protect the identity of the participants their names do not appear.⁵

Methodological Challenges

Although census data on migration is sometimes available, it is not disaggregated at the village level and is of little use for explaining migration dynamics linked to the projects. A qualitative understanding of how climate change and land grabs impact (im)mobility is thus essential, but would need to be complemented by quantitative data collected through questionnaires, which is out of the scope of this research. Moreover, the scale of out-migration has sometimes been exaggerated in order to convey a message of disconformity with the companies. Speaking to a large amount of participants, triangulating data, and conducting a longitudinal study is crucial in understanding the complexity of the situations at stake.

³ Cf. LDPI; World Bank; UNPFII; FAO, Oakland Institute, GRAIN.

⁴ So far this has been done in Senegal, but not yet in Cambodia.

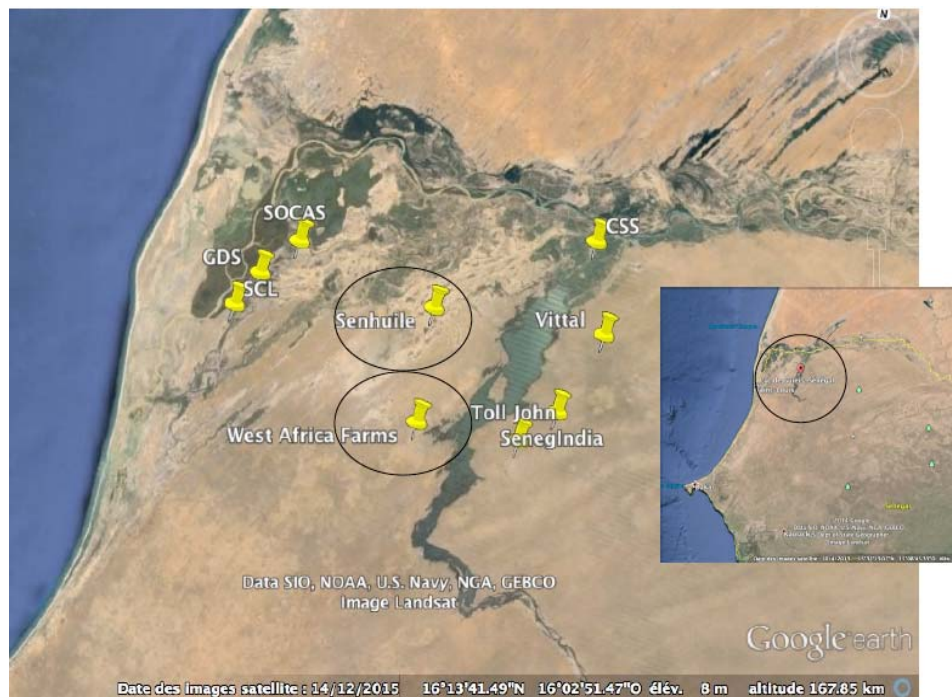
⁵ In Senegal, expert interviews and interviews with French speaking populations took place directly in French whilst others were facilitated by a translation Wolof-French/ Peuhl-French. In Cambodia, interviews in Phnom Penh took place directly in English, whilst in rural communities they were facilitated by a translator Khmer/English.

Senegal

Context

Senegal is one of the most politically stable countries in Africa and has considerably strengthened its democratic institutions since its independence from France in 1960 (World Bank 2015). Yet, and despite its political stability, it still one of the worlds least developed countries.⁶ Environmental changes are having large impacts on fundamental productive sectors such as agriculture and the frequency and intensity of floods, droughts, strong winds, and heat waves has been attributed to global warming (IPCC 2012). Land remains the most fundamental productive asset in a country where over 70% of the population depends directly and indirectly on agriculture for their livelihoods (Crabtree-Condor and Cassey 2012). Environmental degradation has always been an important factor in migratory decisions, with the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s having spanned an unprecedented wave of rural exodus. In recent years, policies have aimed to attract private investment in agriculture, and since 2008 foreign and national investors have acquired approximately 17% of the country's arable land (COPAGEN and REDTAC 2013). These have mostly occurred in the deltaic region and around the Lac de Guiers due to the access to water resources.⁷ Today, the migration dynamics throughout the country are better understood through the lens of multi-causal complexity where the impacts of development choices and land acquisitions still need to be explored.

Figure 1. Visited sites and selected case studies



Before deciding on the specific cases of study, I visited a wide number of projects (indicated in Figure 1). Overall, environmental problems remain of great concern for local populations that notice a much later arrival of the rainy season and a shorter duration of it. Even if their access to fresh water resources (Lac de Guiers and Senegal River), which was facilitated by the construction of two dams in the late 1980s, has allowed some of them to reduce their dependence to rainfall through irrigation

⁶ With a human development index of 0.466– ranking 170 out of 187 countries and having made little progress since the 1990's (UNDP 2015).

⁷ Whilst in the period ranging from 2000-2007 there were six private investment deals concerning 168.964 ha, 30 more deals touching 630.012ha were registered between 2008 and 2011. The total land concerned by large-scale land acquisitions is now estimated at 844.970ha (COPAGEN and REDTAC 2013).

systems, and many returned to the area, family farming still remains difficult due to the lack of access to credit, state subsidies, and adequate means (pesticides, fertilizers, machinery, etc.).

Senhuile

Following the implementation of the national plan on biofuels in 2007 by the Government of Senegal, the Italian company Senethanol – a joint conjuncture between Italian and Senegalese capital – proposed a project with the aim of producing sweet potato for ethanol. The idea was controversial and the company soon changed its name to Senhuile moving towards sunflower production (IPAR 2012, 36). In 2010, allegedly corrupted rural community leaders gave permission to the company to set up their activities in Podor (Saint Louis region). Shortly after, violent protests from the population resulted in two deaths and many people wounded, and former president Wade decided to move the project to the forest and wetland preserve of the Ndiaël (also in the Saint Louis region). Although the State has rights over protected areas and the decision did not need to pass the approval of the rural community, by declassifying the natural preserve and leasing 20.000ha to the company for a period of 50 years, the government overlooked the fact that 37 rural villages composed of 9000 mostly semi-nomadic herder populations relied on this land for their livelihoods and had been living there for over a century.⁸ ‘No one told us anything. One day we woke up and saw Senhuile there. They promised us many things but didn’t keep their promises’.⁹ Indeed, the company agrees that the initial plan was unsustainable both in number of hectares granted and the lack of environmental impact assessment. This was not only problematic for the population, but also for the company that was not aware of the salinity of soils and the impossibility of growing sunflower in the area.¹⁰ The company now grows corn, rice, and groundnut. Although with the change of direction by the company in 2014, infrastructure has been built for the populations,¹¹ the gap between the initial promises and reality continues to create great problems.

‘Why did they (the former administration of the company) promise jobs when we don’t need labour? These are not productions that are labour intensive. The starting plan has gone completely wrong and created terrible problems...100 of the 190 current employers are there for security reasons.’¹²

Although to date only 3000ha have been actually cultivated, populations claim that the company deforested an area much larger than this (up to 7000ha depending on respondents), which has made grazing increasingly difficult. The project has encountered violent reactions from the local populations that fear for an uncertain future and that have seen their water and land resources degraded, and their transhumance routes modified. Pastoralists located within the project boundaries reported that with the parcelling of land, and building of fences they are now obliged to cross greater distances to access grazing land and water for their herds. This is not only the result of Senhuile, but equally of a disregard of authorities towards herding, having prioritised all the other land outside the former preserve for agriculture. According to many of the 49 respondents, the seasonal transhumant mobility of some families has become more permanent, and the participants in the study reported increasing exodus from the area towards other areas in Senegal but equally towards Mauritania. Whilst longer distance and more permanent pastoralist mobility have become a new trend, there are also pastoralists that have become increasingly immobile and ‘trapped’ within project boundaries. Though massive exodus has not occurred, the *Collectif du Ndiael*¹³ is especially preoccupied for what tomorrow will bring. As a member of this group explained: ‘Today there are already many problems. But our big fear is tomorrow. If they continue to exploit this land, what will we do?’¹⁴ In a similar

⁸ For information of the composition of the company, recent p corruption scandals, and mobilisation by communities, cf. Bagnoli et al. 2015.

⁹ Interview with affected herder, June 2014.

¹⁰ Interviews with Senhuile, May 2015.

¹¹ Field visit, May 2015.

¹² Interviews with Senhuile, May 2015.

¹³ The Collectif of the Ndiael is a well organised group of representatives from the 37 villages affected by the project in order to advocate and mobilise for their rights.

¹⁴ Interview with a member of the Collectif du Ndiael, May 2015.

message, another herder showed concern for the future: ‘Without rain or land, where will our people go?’¹⁵ Moreover, their pre-existing vulnerability to environmental changes largely caused by a lack of rainfall has been further compounded by destructive environmental practices. The pollution of water resources and contamination of grazing lands, which have also been reported by Wetlands International¹⁶, increase constraints on already vulnerable livelihoods with considerable impacts on their productivity.

The agriculturalists living outside the project’s boundaries equally reported unsatisfactory impacts. The promises of employment and infrastructure by Senhuile gave hope to populations that initially viewed private investment as a way to improve their resilience to pre-existing environmental and socio-economic vulnerabilities whilst allowing them to stay in their communities of origin. However, out-migration of the neighbouring agricultural villages followed shortly due to populations’ disappointment with the company’s actions and lack of employment opportunities. As one village chief explained: ‘People are leaving because they cannot find a job in the area. This should be the other way around!’¹⁷. As a result, young men in particular continue to leave for Mauritania – especially Nouakchott – Dakar and the city of Saint-Louis. Many of these migrants have difficulties finding employment in these already socially and environmentally vulnerable cities and often have to settle in slums, which can further reduce their resilience to future environmental shocks. The arrival of Senhuile has not only ignited violent conflict between the pastoralist populations living within the project boundaries and the company, but also between pastoralists and the agriculturalists in the area that are competing for increasingly rare arable land. The population has made many complaints to the authorities, and Senhuile will give back 10.000ha to the government in the months to come. However it is still unclear if these 10.000ha will be allocated to the populations, or to other investors. Recent information suggests that 3000ha will be granted to the CSS (Compagnie Sucrière Senegalaise), and that many other hectares would be used to attract new investors.¹⁸

West Africa Farms

The local populations largely perceive the British-owned company West Africa Farms as a success story. In 2010, the company negotiated 200ha of land from the villages of Yamane Khondental, Odabe Altian, and Kher Mourdisaw for an agribusiness aimed at vegetable produce for export to the European market. In return, as was noted in the agreement, they built a canal that enabled the populations to irrigate 200ha of adjacent land.¹⁹ Though environmental factors compounded by lack of access to irrigation were claimed to act as a major determinant of out-migration flows in the past, this is no longer the case for those who have jobs in the farm or access to irrigation. The company has created approximately 800 jobs, with 20 being permanent, and targeted exclusively to people that live in the area.²⁰ Most labour is for women and this has allowed the return of many that had previously left to Mauritania as care workers. Respondents in 2015 largely echoed the following message: ‘Before there was a lot of migration to Dakar and Saint-Louis. But now that WAF is here many men and women have returned and there is not really any out-migration anymore.’²¹

The increased employment opportunities for local women on West Africa Farms, and for men that have access to irrigation, has positively impacted the community and attracted migrants from other regions that now work on the family farms. Here it is interesting to see a reversed tendency concerning environmental migration. The employment opportunities and irrigation facilities provided by the company have made family farming more productive with an increasing need of extra labour on family plots. This has attracted populations from the inner regions of Senegal (mostly Fouta, Kaolack, Casamance, Fatick, Diourbel) that given their sole dependence on rain-fed agriculture, and the shortening of the rainy season, need to find employment during the long dry season elsewhere: ‘Here

¹⁵ Interview with affected herder, May 2015.

¹⁶ Interview with Wetland International in Saint-Louis, June 2014.

¹⁷ Interview with affected peasant, June 2014.

¹⁸ Interview with a member of the Collectif du Ndiavel, June 2015.

¹⁹ Interview with the owner of the company, May 2015.

²⁰ Record of employment facilitated by the company during an interview with its director in May 2015.

²¹ Interview with affected peasant, May 2015.

at least some people have access to irrigation and they can farm all year around. In my village the lack of rain gets worse every year. It is basically impossible to farm during ten months of the year. So a lot of people come here to work during the dry season.’²² Given the low-skilled profile of the migrants, they claimed that job opportunities in the area had become much more satisfying than those available in urban areas: ‘It is very difficult to find a good job in Dakar. I would much rather work here.’²³ With further projected climate change impacts on rainfall variability in the years to come, we can thus also expect greater in-migration from particularly environmentally vulnerable areas.

Though certain community leaders had told me that this was a clear case of land grabbing resulting in massive out-migration during my first field trip in 2014, more thorough investigation in 2015 revealed that these claims were largely unfounded. In fact, everything that was signed in the agreement was respected and the vast majority of the 45 respondents in the area suggested beneficial impacts. The discussion that needs to be had is if the agreement was fair in the first place or not. As one village chief in the area explained: ‘Before WAF came there was no way to exploit the land because there was no water here. Most young people had to leave. The only deal was water, and the water is there! It was never in the deal that WAF should provide machinery.’²⁴ Even if this case is much less controversial than the others examined and would not fit the definition of a land grab, it is interesting to keep it in the study as an example of negative instance sampling where lessons can eventually be drawn to other projects. The model of West Africa Farms is being used as an example to imitate by the World Bank’s funded Sustainable and Inclusive Agribusiness Project (PDIDAS)²⁵ that will also be implemented in the area.

Cambodia

Context

Following a dramatic recent history marred by occupation, conflict, brutal genocide and civil unrest, and after 30 years of rule by Hun Sen, Cambodia is only a democracy in appearance tinted with systems of patronage and severe human rights violations (Strangio 2014; Human Rights Watch 2015). Despite economic growth and a decline in poverty rates in recent years, Cambodia remains one of the poorest countries in the world, with 20.5% of its population living below the poverty line. Moreover, it is the country where the inequalities in terms of the benefits derived from development growth are the most flagrant in the region (World Bank 2015).²⁶ From a climatic perspective, it is one of the most disaster-prone countries in Southeast Asia, affected by floods and droughts on a seasonal basis. Cambodia’s vulnerability to climate change is linked to its dependence on agriculture, with nearly 80% of the population living in rural areas that have already seen their yields suffer significantly as a consequence of floods and droughts (World Bank 2011). The ambiguous nature of state land and the convenient transferability of state public land to state private for ‘development’ purposes has facilitated land grabbing in Cambodia (Sokhannaro 2011). By 2002, over 2 million ha of Economic Land Concessions²⁷ had been granted to foreign investors and influential Cambodians in what represents more than half of the country’s arable land (Neef et al. 2013). Migration in recent history was marked by the Khmer Rouge when approximately 30-40% of the population was uprooted from their origins and all urban areas were emptied out (IOM 2009). Today, landlessness constitutes one of

²² Interview with migrant from Fouta living in the area, May 2015.

²³ Interview with migrant from Kaolack living in the area, May 2015.

²⁴ Interview with one of the village chiefs, May 2015.

²⁵ Interview with the head of PDIDAS in Saint- Louis, June 2015.

At the time of my last fieldwork representatives working for the PDIDAS were conducting meetings with the populations in the area. However, the terms and conditions of implementation, despite having received funding from the World Bank for four years, are still very vague.

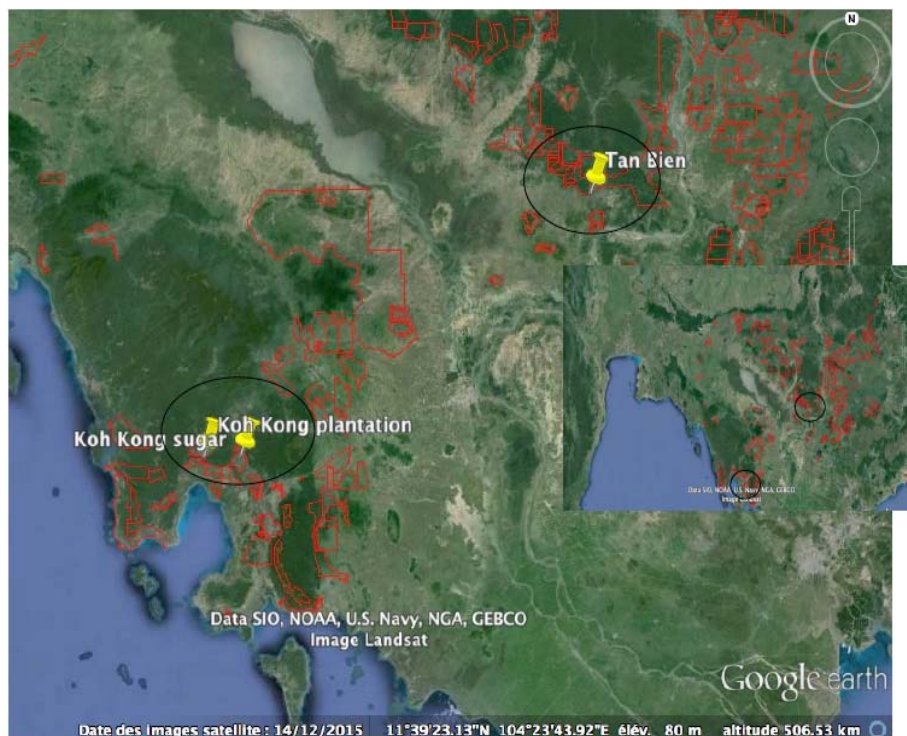
²⁶ Cambodia has a human development index of 0.555, ranking 143 out of 182 countries (UNDP 2015), but it still remains one of the least developed in the region

²⁷ The main legal framework for granting and utilizing ELCs is set out in the 2001 Land Law and *Sub-decree No.146 on Economic Land Concessions*.

the main motives for migration from rural areas²⁸ and the government promotes international out-migration as a means to reduce poverty rates.²⁹

Since land grabs are widespread throughout the country, with field access often difficult for security reasons, pilot fieldwork in Cambodia during March and April 2015 was necessary in order to determine the projects on which I would concentrate for my research. After visits and interviews in five provinces (Preah Vihear, Odder Mancheay, Kampong Thom, Kampong Speu, and Koh Kong), the cases chosen for their relevance and accessibility were a sugar plantation in Koh Kong province and the Tan Bien rubber plantation in Kampong Thom. The red marks in figure 2 show the area that has been granted through Economic Land Concessions (Licadho 2015).³⁰

Figure 2. Selected case studies



Koh Kong Sugar

In 2006, two colliding Economic Land Concessions were granted to Koh Kong Plantation and Koh Kong sugar in the region of Koh Kong. Both companies are actually jointly owned by the Thai KSL group, the Ve Wong Corporation of Taiwan, and a Cambodian ruling party senator and business tycoon – Ly Yong Phat. The concessions cover 9.400ha and 9.700ha respectively and were granted for a period of 99 years (EC and IDI 2013: 23).³¹ Though companies that have bought sugar from the area such as Tate & Lyle do have a biofuel policy, I do not have information on whether the sugar bought in the area was actually used for ethanol production. Villagers in Chuk, Chi Kha Leu, and Trapang Kandaol reported holding possession rights under the 2011 Law, but explained how authorities had repeatedly failed to issue land titles before the companies arrived, alleging that there was no need for documentation in such a remote area. The lack of land titles by the population facilitated the clearance of land by the companies with no previous notice. ‘Nobody told us that they

²⁸ Interview with the International Organisation for Migration. Phnom Penh, April 2015.

²⁹ Interview with the Director of ‘Legal Support for Women and Children’. Phnom Penh, April 2015.

³⁰ Available at : http://www.licadho-cambodia.org/land_concessions/

³¹ Contract available at : <http://www.openlandcontracts.org/search?q=Cambodia>

were coming. They just came with a bulldozer and started clearing the land. They used guns to threaten us if we dared to protest. They brought the police. It seemed like a war.’³²

Participants claimed to have been forced to accept as little as \$300 as compensation, with those having opposed the project failing to receive any compensation at all. In total, 707 families have been affected with the loss of 3000ha of farmland that has left them without livelihood options. Although most residential land was not cleared, 10 families were forcefully relocated. These families live in small plots of land without adequate access to roads or any health or education facilities. Whilst the other families did not lose their residential land and were thus not forcibly relocated in the strict sense of the term, respondents unanimously reported extremely difficult living conditions resulting from the loss of agricultural land. As explained by one of the villagers: ‘With the loss of land, we lost everything that we had. We don’t have money for our children to go to school. Not enough food to eat. No money to pay the interests because for the first time we now have to go to banks. No job opportunities...some people are seriously considering suicide.’³³ Moreover, many of the 42 participants claimed to be scared of accessing the forest to collect non-timber products because they have to pass by the company to have access.

The loss of their livelihoods has led to an exponential wave of out-migration that was unprecedented before the arrival of the company and clearly linked to the loss of land. As they explained: ‘Before there was no migration because people don’t know how to do anything but farm, so the possibilities elsewhere are very scarce.’³⁴ Following their arrival, and according to estimates from the community leader, approximately 30% of the population has left permanently. Almost everybody in working age now migrates, especially women, with the largest cohort of the population remaining being the elderly and the children. The main destinations include the capital city of Phnom Penh, where women have possibilities of employment in the garment factories, whilst others go to Thailand to work in the agricultural and construction services, and to Malaysia as housekeepers. Interviewing during the period of the Khmer New Year allowed me to speak to migrants that were back for the vacation. They reported extremely poor working conditions in destination areas, including sexual abuse, non-payment of salaries and very precarious housing conditions. They equally reported that the gains they used to make with agriculture were substantially superior to the ones they now make in the destination region, with most of them being unable to send any remittances. All of them pointed out that the ‘land grab’ was the only reason they had ‘decided’ to leave: ‘Farming the land is much more profitable than working in Thailand. If we had agricultural land we would not have left.’³⁵

Approximately 50% of those³⁶ who have remained in the villages work in the company as sugar cane cutters, but those jobs are only available three months per year and only two people have been engaged in the factory in stable conditions. The communities are involved in various judicial processes with the help of NGOs aiming to get their land back as well as claiming compensation for the years they were unable to farm. ‘It’s not true that these companies give opportunities to the people. We have to let people know that this is blood sugar.’³⁷ Although not all hope has been lost, if they are unable to get back their agricultural land, the population envisions a massive out-migration as a last resort option. Migration is not seen as livelihood diversifying strategy for migrants and non-migrants alike, with the departure of their relatives being felt as a traumatizing experience rather than as an opportunity.

‘I cry because I miss my children – women crying during the interview – this is not a livelihood strategy...! It’s the only option we have, and it’s a very painful one.’³⁸

³² Interview with the Community Leader, March 2015.

³³ Interview with affected peasant, March 2015.

³⁴ Interview with affected peasant, March 2015.

³⁵ Interview with migrant, March 2015.

³⁶ Cf. EC and IDI 2013.

³⁷ Interview with the Community Leader, March 2015.

³⁸ Interview with affected peasant, March 2015.

*Environmental impacts include the contamination of water resources that not only makes their livelihoods more difficult, but that have equally increased water related illnesses. 'There are chemicals everywhere. On the land, on the water, on the fish...'*³⁹

Tan Bien

In 2007, an Economic Land Concession of 8,100ha was granted to Vietnamese-owned company Kampong Thom Rubber Development Co. in the province of Kampong Thom for a duration of 70 years (Licadho 2010). The area had been populated between 2004 and 2007 by disabled peoples, widows, and orphans that came from all around the country after the leader of the AHADA association (association for disabled peoples) Kum Khien – former member of the military – promised them land in the area with the aim of submitting requests for Social Land Concessions⁴⁰ once the village had been created. Although the government was informed of the situation, they apparently did not respond and the clearance of land went forward. The word quickly spread around Cambodia and 1200 families were granted approximately 3ha of agricultural land and 1500m² of residential land each in what became Bontey Rongang village. The association had no authority to grant land in the area and state forest was cleared illegally. In 2006, the government issued a decree stating that the area of the settlement would be reclaimed back as state land but the majority of populations ignored the decree. The company arrived in 2008 and conflict unfolded in 2009 when they started producing and Cambodian military forces started relocating the populations. In November of 2009, 30 families who were afraid of the military forces agreed to relocate, whilst in December of 2009 all of the remaining families were violently forced to move.

*'The company came with soldiers, bulldozers, tractors, etc. Since the people did not want to move, they used force. You either accepted to move your house, or they burnt it down in front of you.'*⁴¹

Around 700 families out of the 1200 families moved to the current villages that are located approximately 30km away. The remaining 500 families went elsewhere given the unsatisfactory size and location of the new plots granted. The 700 relocated families received plots of 40x20m of residential land and 1ha or 1.5ha of agricultural land, depending on the size of the family. Yet, at the time of my research in 2015, there were still 241 families that had not received any agricultural land. These families claimed that people had been paying the authorities in order to receive agricultural land. With rampant corruption practices, those most vulnerable stand little chance of ever receiving this 'promised' land: 'Those who don't have anything, don't get anything.'⁴² The already granted agricultural land is 10km away from the residential land and since most people do not have a motorcycle, many are unable to use it. Furthermore, all 49 respondents unanimously claimed that the state of the land was extremely poor for farming whilst they are currently in fear of having their agricultural land grabbed once again by a Cambodian business tycoon.⁴³ Although some people have found work within the company, employment is only possible for them during the rainy season with all stable jobs being taken by Vietnamese populations that have even had a village and a school constructed for them within the company boundaries. The complexity of the situation, the deterioration of livelihoods or complete lack of access to them, linked to the lack of prospects and the fear of losing them has spawned increasing out-migration.

*'Nearly all households have migrants. Maybe 30% of families had migrants before and today more than 70%. Only older people and the children stay here. Some women are here because they have small babies, but their husbands have already migrated.'*⁴⁴

³⁹ Interview with affected peasant, March 2015.

⁴⁰ Social Land Concessions are part of a policy launched in 2003 with the aim of transferring land to landless and poor Cambodians. However, they have not been very effective (cf. Licadho 2015).

⁴¹ Interview with the community leader, April 2015.

⁴² Interview with affected peasant, April 2015.

⁴³ They initially wanted to take me to see the agricultural land and the situation there, but decided not to for fear that something could happen to us.

⁴⁴ Interview with the community leader, April 2015.

The migration profiles are similar to those in the Koh Kong case. Whilst many leave to Phnom Penh to work in the garment industry or in the service sector, an increasing number of them have moved to Thailand and Malaysia. Migrants visiting their families at the time of this research also reported that family farming was much more lucrative than their current jobs and that they had left as a last resort option following the loss of their productive lands. As in the case of Koh Kong, the ability to send remittances is very limited. Whilst the villagers do not directly feel the environmental impacts, as they are located 30km away from the company, there is evidence that shows the harmful environmental consequences of rubber plantations in the entire region resulting in important biodiversity losses and widespread deforestation (Ahrends et al. 2015). Since an estimated 1.2 million hectares of forestland in Cambodia has been granted for rubber plantations (Cambodian Daily 2013) the deforestation impacts of this sector are consequential.

3 General Findings: Exploring the Linkages across Areas

In order to fully understand how mobility will be affected by climate change impacts, it is essential to acknowledge how the environment interacts with other factors such as large-scale land acquisitions that can further increase the vulnerability of populations whilst decreasing their resilience to future environmental and socio-economic shocks. As we have seen, the resulting interactions between climate change, environmental degradation, land grabs and (im)mobility depend fundamentally on specific socio-economic and political contexts, as well as on specific projects and how these are implemented. The contextual factors at the macro, meso and micro level can help explain the different outcomes in terms of mobility that each type of land acquisition has produced.

Climate Change or Access to Natural Resources?

Although located in very different geographical zones, both Senegal and Cambodia are located in areas prone to suffering the hardest impacts of climate change. The impacts stem from rainfall variability coupled with increasing periods of drought and floods that translate into agricultural failures in communities that are solely dependent on agriculture and herding for their livelihoods. Indeed, in both Senegal and Cambodia environmental degradation and climate change explain to a large extent the vulnerability of agricultural dependent communities having the potential to contribute to migration flows. Yet, even if both countries suffer the impacts of climate change due concomitantly to their geographical exposure to hazards as well as to their reliance on agriculture, in the communities visited it is more access to natural resources or adequate means for farming that present the gravest problems. Most research aiming to assess the impacts of climate change on agriculture has concentrated on assessing the sensitivity of crop systems to biophysical aspects (CGIAR; Sombroek et al 1996, etc) effectively overlooking the socio-economic aspects, which in turn leads to only a partial reading of climate change impacts. As in other Least Developed Countries, government spending on agriculture has been cut dramatically and so has foreign aid directed to the sector (Bezemer and Heady 2008). Both governments are making substantial efforts to attract foreign direct investment to develop an agricultural sector that has been left to the destiny of the markets. This is of course linked to the structural adjustment programs of the 1990s and to their dependency on aid from financial and development institutions such as the World Bank that have increasingly shaped their development and agricultural policies (Stiglitz 2002).

Whilst rainfall variability is having important impacts on agriculture in the area around the Lac de Guiers in Senegal, those who have access to irrigation can overcome these hazards. In one of the only areas in the country where access to abundant fresh water is feasible, it will be more a question of *who* gets access and what they decide to do with them that will determine the ability of the country to truly develop a pro-poor strategy. The case of West Africa Farms shows that though environmental factors constituted a determinant in out-migration in the past, the construction of a canal by the company and the sharing of benefits of access to this water have allowed the local populations not only to remain in their village of origin but also have attracted internal migrants from the most environmentally vulnerable regions of the country. In Cambodia, although soil erosion and low agricultural productivity is indeed a major problem for both communities, it is the lack of access to land that still

remains the major problem. Indeed, access to irrigation and machinery is also a major constraint, but what does this matter if you have no land to irrigate and no produce to collect?

On the other hand, whilst the justification of access to land resources in the cases examined is not always linked to climate change mitigation practices, the environmental impacts of all the companies (WAF excluded) are on a large enough scale to endanger not only the local environment, but also the climatic system as a whole. Declassifying a natural preserve to transform it into an agro-industrial site, as happened in Senhuile, is a good example of how the search for economic profit by investors and governments is undermining socio-environmental protection across all sites. Besides, deforestation of vast tracts of land for agro-industrial development throughout Cambodia is paradoxically happening at the same as the country is increasingly involved in also controversial REDD+ schemes (cf. Work 2015). Whilst the sugar produced in Koh Kong for export may, or may not, be used for biofuel production, deforestation and water contamination challenge socio-environmental sustainability. Moreover, evidence shows that rubber plantations such as Tan Bien are one of the main causes of large-scale deforestation and of biodiversity loss throughout South-East Asia (Ahrends et al. 2015). The pollution of water resources and contamination of grazing and agricultural lands have added increasing constraints to already vulnerable livelihoods with considerable impacts on their productivity and on their lives.

Even if environmental impact assessments are a legal obligation in both countries, economic interests of the political leaders and agribusiness across most projects overshadow real incentives for environmental protection with impact assessments coming late, not existing, or existing but not being implemented. We see thus through these cases how climate change can be not only a spur the acquisition of land in what has been referred to as ‘green grabbing’,⁴⁵ but can also become a result of unsustainable land investments. While the duration of leases vary, they are so extensive in terms of hectares and duration (from 50 years to 99 years/ from 10.000 to 20.000ha) that we can hypothesize that these land resources, together with nearby freshwater resources, might be completely destroyed by the end of the contracts, leaving already vulnerable nations in an even more difficult situation. The extent to which this will happen will be largely determined by resource conflicts over the already scarce natural resources. Yet as climate change impacts worsen, struggles over use, management and control of land and other natural resources can be expected to deepen. Climate change will also provoke adjustments in the value of natural resources in ways that are hard to predict, whilst simultaneously intensifying human migration and displacement (USAID 2014).

Land Laws, Human Rights, and Freedom: Politics at Play

The environmental and migratory impacts associated with large-scale land acquisitions will logically depend on the scale of the phenomenon in the first place. The great differences in recent history and political context largely explain the great divergences in the scale of land acquisitions ‘gone wrong’ between Senegal and Cambodia. Whilst Senegal has experienced increasing amounts of private investment in agriculture resulting in nearly 20% of the arable land being acquired by investors, in Cambodia it is more than 50% of the land that has been targeted. At the basis of such land transfers, we find a lack of clear land rights and unequal access to land titles. The regulatory framework in Senegal still remains the National Domain Act of 1964 that stated that 95% of the land was under State regulation. In 1972 with the decentralization process it is the rural communities that allocate occupation rights over land under the condition of ‘appropriate use’.⁴⁶ Although formal land laws exist, customary arrangements over land continue to prevail leading to many misunderstandings. Despite having been widely mediatized as a clear case of land grabbing, the example of Senhuile shows that communities living within the preserve of the Ndiel have no legal claims to make over the land they had called home for generations. It may be considered as a land grab in terms of human rights and environmental implications, but the transaction remains ‘legal’ in a strict sense of the term. Conversely, in the case of West Africa Farms where communities had clear occupancy rights that were

⁴⁵ Green grabbing has been defined as the ‘appropriation of natural resources for environmental ends’ (John Vidal 2008). The topic has been extensively explored in the *Journal of Peasant Studies* (cf. Vol 39. Green Grabbing: a new appropriation of nature? 2012)

⁴⁶ The term ‘appropriate use’ has never really been defined and is subject to diverse interpretations.

respected, communities were able to negotiate conditions that can be undoubtedly improved but that nonetheless are perceived as favorable. Nonetheless, many respondents wondered if the benefits would not be much more profound should the installation have been done by the government instead of by a private investor producing for export.

In Cambodia, since private property was reintroduced in 1989, only 14% of land title applications were actually processed and the Royal Government of Cambodia still holds about 75-80% of the country's territory under the status of 'state land' (USAID 2011). Even if both the Land Law of 2001 and the Sub decree of 2005 on Economic Land Concessions provide important socio-environmental safeguards (Oldenberg and Neef 2014, 9), it is their implementation that remains a major challenge, and Social Land Concessions do not really seem to be intended towards developing a pro-poor strategy but rather as a way to instrumentalize donors (Neef et al. 2013; Licadho 2015). Though communities in both cases have been claiming the need for user rights over more land area for years, the deliberations clearly benefit corporations. People have systematically seen their claims to land titles refused even when they could justify possession rights as specified by the Land Law of 2001. Though better land laws in both cases could arguably protect from negative socio-environmental evidence shows that, notwithstanding the importance of land reforms, it is not so much the regulatory framework that ultimately matters, but rather the commitment to respecting it and the commitment to respecting human rights.

Moreover, where the investors come from and where they are exporting to could also explain differences in outcomes. The fact that much of the sugar from Kampong Thom was being exported to the EU through the 'everything but arms agreement', allowed large international mobilization on the case with companies as important as Tate & Lyle and Coca-Cola conducting investigations on the supply chain and deciding to stop buying the sugar.⁴⁷ Another important component is the capacity of local populations to mobilize and protest freely. The case of Senhuile has been mainly put forward by the locals that formed the *Collectif du Ndiael*, and though they were helped and advised by NGOs⁴⁸ they were able to defend their cause freely even meeting with government officials in Dakar and Saint Louis that were open to dialogue and discussion, as well as with the company.⁴⁹ Conversely, in Cambodia many land and human rights defenders have been imprisoned and even killed⁵⁰ and protestors from Koh Kong (including NGO and media having) have been detained⁵¹ in what has become an extremely recurrent phenomenon in Cambodia (Licadho 2015). The ability of communities defend their rights will undoubtedly have consequences on the scale of negative socio-environmental impacts, including forced displacement.

What Does All This Mean for Human Mobility?

The relative political stability of Senegal and democratic safeguards in place can largely explain why land acquisitions by agribusinesses are not necessarily followed by forced relocation and forced displacement. This has also been so even in the most controversial case in the country – Senhuile.⁵² In the cases examined, although mobility patterns and migratory dynamics have been transformed by agribusiness, the forced nature of such movements is to a lesser extent than the one that we find in Cambodia. The political situation of impunity in Cambodia, translates into much more violent outcomes that often lead to the forced displacement of whole communities. The very significant gaps and deficiencies in the Cambodian regulatory framework with respect to evictions (EC and IDI 2013, 47) together with a clear lack of respect towards human rights have caused forced evictions and forcible confiscation of land to become one of Cambodia's most widespread human rights problems with over 400,000 Cambodians being affected by evictions following land grabs since 2003 (Pred and

⁴⁷ For more information see the clean sugar campaign: <http://www.cleansugarcampaign.net/>

⁴⁸ Such as ENDA Pronat, Action Aid, and SOS Faim.

⁴⁹ Personal interview, member of the *Collectif du Ndiael*, 2010.

⁵⁰ See: <http://www.civilrightsdefenders.org/country-reports/human-rights-in-cambodia/>

⁵¹ See: <http://www.licadho-cambodia.org/pressrelease.php?perm=391>

⁵² However in other areas of the country there is evidence that mining has led to human rights violations and forced relocations (Amnesty 2014), showing that there is still a long way ahead before securing rural communities.

Bugalski 2009).⁵³ The consequences of this are thus felt far beyond my communities of study in what has become a recurrent phenomenon of dispossession and expulsion. Although the underlying dynamics and possession of land titles and rights are different in both Koh Kong and Kampong Thom, we see how the loss of farmland and residential land has led to massive waves of out-migration that were rare before the companies arrived. People left without any livelihood options, or having seen these considerably restricted, migrate to Phnom Penh but also increasingly towards Malaysia and Thailand, often illegally. Throughout the rural areas in Cambodia, the higher educated tend to move to Phnom Penh, and the lower educated internationally (CRUMP 2012) which implies better paid low-skilled employment in neighboring countries despite the difficulties that migrants reported in their destination. Work related out-migration explains the vast majority of rural movements (87%) (CRUMP 2012) whose underlying causes can be increasingly explained by land grabs occurring throughout the whole country. Though the same cannot be said for the agribusiness sector in Senegal, the example of Senhuile also shows how land transactions can forcefully transform the inherent mobility of pastoralists from usual transhumance to permanent out-migration. Moreover, we see across cases that the employment opportunities for the locals are often scarce and irregular, and that companies do not tend to prioritize local employment. This is either because they do not need much labour force (Senhuile), they bring their labour with them (Tan Bien), or the employment remaining for locals is limited to a few months (Kampong Thom).

Even if migration transition models (Zelinsky 1971), largely based on modernization theory (Rostow 1960), hypothesized that ‘early transitional societies’ – such as Senegal and Cambodia – as they modernize will see mass movements of rural exodus as people move out of agriculture into industries and service sectors, they are too simplistic in assuming that all societies will follow the same path towards development than western societies have seen. In both Senegal and Cambodia although very significant rural-urban migration flows have occurred⁵⁴, they have coincided with limited industrialization, high unemployment, and poverty rates in urban areas (Goldsmith et al. 2004; CRUMP 2012). In Cambodia, the precarious conditions at both internal and international destinations and the inability of most migrants to send remittances to their communities questions the assumption that migration is an adaptation strategy in these case, showing that it can in fact be a last resource option that does not necessarily improve the well-being of those who leave or of those who are left behind. On the other hand, projects that count on the approval of the local populations, with a reasonable sharing of benefits – such as West Africa Farms – show that moving into agriculture and not moving out of it remains a very important risk diversification strategy and livelihood option. Farmers that have been able to access irrigation for their family plots consistently report higher living standards than those they would expect to find in urban areas choosing thus to farm the land rather than to embark in migration. Furthermore, the fact that it is one of the only areas that does have a certain access to irrigation attracts migrants from the rain-dependent regions of Senegal. This coincides with findings from recent studies on rural development that have refuted the argument that pathways of development are delinked from land and farming and that a beneficial access to land for the poor can play a complementary role in poverty reduction (Sunam and McArthy 2015; Li 2009). Thus, rather than attributing migration to the bifurcation of the labor market within particular economies (Piore 1980) and attributing changes to agricultural, demographic or mobility transitions that highly elude political factors, findings are congruent with World Systems Theory in attributing a higher explanatory value to the penetration of capitalistic economic relations and the search for land, raw materials, labor and new consumer markets in peripheral, non-capitalistic societies as the main motive creating a mobile population prone to internal and international migration (Massey et al. 1993, 444).

Although this view does hold large explanatory value when assessing the impacts of the current land grabs on human mobility, it has been criticised for overlooking the ability of social actors to make independent choices. In some cases individuals are indeed able to make independent choices – as

⁵³ The World Bank even stopped funds to Cambodia over evictions in 2011.

⁵⁴ In Senegal, urbanisation has gone from 34% in 1976 to 40% in 2002 (ANSD 2009), and in Cambodia the rural-urban migration boom has led to a doubling of the population in Phnom Pehn in merely eight years (CRUMP 2012).

hypothesized by livelihoods approaches (Scoones 2009) and the New Economics of Labour Migration (Stark and Bloom 1985) – such as moving elsewhere rather than accepting the relocation site as we saw in Kampong Thom, or leaving to work in urban areas rather than accepting employment in the agrobusinesses, as witnessed in Senhuile. Yet again the relative agency of people affected by land grabs is deeply constrained by forced dispossession and lack of beneficial opportunities in receiving areas. Migration should only be seen as an exit from poverty when these populations actually benefit from migration. Furthermore, the expansion of land enclosures can lead not only to more displacement, but can also result in an increasing number of ‘enclosed populations’ that suffer from ‘in situ displacement’ (Feldman and Geisler 2011) in places where their land is needed but not their labor (Li 2011, 28). This issue is of great importance because we must also consider if most people affected by these projects will be forced to move or, conversely, forced to stay becoming ‘trapped’ or immobile as has been shown to be the case following environmental shocks (Carling 2002, Foresight 2011). Results across all areas also show that migrants are in the young working age and that elderly groups, due to lack of means and possibilities for finding employment, remain increasingly immobile in vulnerable environments.

Through large-scale land acquisitions we can thus see how multiple variables directly and indirectly affect migration and the importance of both structure and agency for a thorough understanding of population movements in highly complex environmental and socio-political contexts. An analysis of land grabbing-induced mobility requires us to move beyond the classical structure-agency impasse still dominant in migration studies and to look at both simultaneously (Giddens 1984; Bakewell 2010), whilst also overcoming the voluntary-forced migration dichotomy by acknowledging that most population movements lay within a continuum. Notwithstanding context specificities, findings across all areas show that when land transactions fail to follow a human rights-based framework with full consideration of existing land rights, they result in added socio-environmental pressures that can indeed deeply affect forced (im)mobility outcomes.

4 Implications for Global Governance: Towards a Global Public Goods Approach?

The fact that there has been little research and little acknowledgement of how climate change, land grabs, and (im)mobility interact translates into these issues being addressed by separate and often isolated governance structures. There is still no mention of land or resource grabbing in climate agreements, nor in regional or global forums dedicated to migration, and migratory issues remain marginal in land governance debate. Yet with increasing evidence on the links between climate change, land grabbing and (im)mobility, and the externalities that they are prone to generate, acknowledging the interconnectedness of these issues is not only an academic endeavor, but one that demands progress in governance.

One of the main reasons that environmental governance, especially in the area of climate change, has made substantial progress in the last decades is due to the increasingly common realization that unless international cooperation mechanisms are in place to mitigate CO₂ emissions, the existence of humanity is endangered. Climate change has spillover effects that go way well beyond national boundaries, impacting not only other countries but also other generations. Thus climate stability has been considered as the global public good per excellence because not only does it have the traditional characteristics of public goods – non-rivalry and non-excludability⁵⁵ – but it also tends towards universality since, if achieved, it will benefit all countries, population groups, and generations (Kaul et al. 1999, 16). Other essential global public goods include peace and security, financial stability, education and research, and equity and justice. But it is precisely because providing such goods will benefit even those who have not contributed in the effort of their provision, that these fundamentally vital goods are underprovided (Barrett 2007), and that incentives for cooperation need to be found. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that most goods are not intrinsically public or private. Rather their characteristics of non-rivalry and non-excludability are shaped throughout policy processes and are thus socially constructed. Moreover, and given the scale of the challenges and the

⁵⁵ As opposed to private goods, public goods are defined as being both non-rival (anyone can benefit without diminishing the quantity available to others), and non-excludable (once provided no one can be excluded from its benefits) (Samuelson 1954).

relevance of civil society and the private sector in providing many global public goods, today we need to move beyond a state centered delivery, realizing that unless *publicness in consumption* is matched by *publicness in decision making*, the resultant provision of the good is likely not to generate *publicness in utility* (Kaul 2009).

Whilst the framing of climate change mitigation as a global public good has contributed to the common realization of the vital role of multi-stakeholder international cooperation on the issue, the same cannot be said for land or migration governance. Of course, the underlying reason for the different treatments of the issues is largely linked to the sovereignty⁵⁶ implications of each. Nonetheless, in an interconnected and globalized world the control and authority of nation states, although necessary, is not enough. In light of resource conflicts that are expected to increase with climate change, how can framing land as a global public good advance not only cooperation in climate change governance, but equally in land and migration governance?

Considering Land as a Global Public Good

Land is intrinsically linked to national sovereignty and is a perfect example of how socio-political choices such as the introduction of private property have modified its characteristics of non-rivalry and non-excludability. Land is thus best described as an impure good in that it neither fits the private good or the public good definition (Kaul) and whose intrinsic meaning and value has been subject to various interpretations throughout history (Li 2014; Zarka 2014). Today we can argue that in a world where the commodification of the commons – often in the name of green environmentalism (McMichael 2009) – is on the increase with subsequent negative socio-environmental impacts, the tragedy of our times is not the *Tragedy of the Commons* (Hardin 1968), but rather the tragedy of appropriation (Zarka 2014, 13). As we have seen throughout the case studies, the commodification and subsequent appropriation of natural resources has been largely unable to deliver social justice because, as is largely obvious and logical, the market is preoccupied not with social needs but with economic profit. It is certainly against capital-logic to presume that private investors would willingly reduce their profits in favour of the most vulnerable (Li 2009), yet placing the blame on capitalistic firms continues to be commonplace.

Although currently understood as having characteristics of excludability and rivalry, land is intrinsically linked to the provision of not only national but also regional and global public goods, and can be considered as an intermediate global public good.⁵⁷ Not only is land indispensable to produce the food on which humanity relies for its existence, but it also encompasses water resources that are equally indispensable. Fundamental human rights including, but not limited to, the right to food, the right to clean water, and the right to shelter are inherently linked to this absolutely essential natural resource. Moreover, when we consider the environment and climate change in the equation, it is simple to observe how important land is to the climatic system as a whole, even if located within the territorial boundaries of a nation state. Natural ecosystems are indeed vital for the conservation of biodiversity and serve ecological functions that are fundamental for the entire planet such as carbon sequestration. There is also extensive evidence to show that land-use activities – in which we can include the resulting consequences of land grabs – are degrading the global environment in ways that undermine ecosystem services, human welfare, and the long-term sustainability of human societies (Foley et al. 2005). Moreover, we know that land-use change accounts for one quarter of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions (IPCC 2014). Thus it can be argued that the protection of land resources, including forests, is intrinsic to climate change negotiations precisely because these negotiations consider land not as question of territory in the sovereign sense of the term, but as an intrinsic component in the delivery of environmental protection and climate stability as a global public good. Yet, and despite evidence that shows that *who* holds this resource in the first place will have consequential impacts, questions of access to and rights over land and other natural resources are still

⁵⁶ The Westphalian system of sovereign states was established in 1648 and is still the dominating principle of international relations. It was based on three pillars: 1/ the principle of state sovereignty, 2/ The principle of (legal) equality of states, and 3/ The principle of non-intervention of one state in the international affairs of another

⁵⁷ Intermediate global public goods are those that contribute to the provision of final global public goods.

largely absent from climate negotiations. In this way, land is being depoliticized and brought down to a natural resource of importance for the climatic system, whilst overlooking the many other global public goods that are inherently linked to it. The fact that the term agriculture has not been mentioned once in the Paris agreement is illustrative in showing how the efforts in climate mitigation still fail to address the underlying causes of unjust food systems not only on the environment, but also on the human rights of the most vulnerable populations. This is related to one of the main failures of climate negotiations, namely that they still attend to response rather than to causality – they seek to identify ‘*who* is vulnerable rather than *why* they are vulnerable’ (Ribot 2014, 669).

Moreover, the understanding on the nexus between climate change and security has gained great momentum (Rifkin, 2002; Barnett, 2003; Barnett and Adger, 2007; Gemenne et al. 2014) and pushed many nations to collaborate on climate issues. Evidence has shown that the way in which land grabs and resource conflicts fit into the equation should not be overlooked (Burnod et al. 2013).⁵⁸ In Senegal for example, the project of Senhuile has led to important conflicts between the community, the company representatives and the government, with some local communities expecting forms of direct violent conflict if their claims are not respected.⁵⁹ Given the sensitive location of Senegal within a region increasingly overtaken by the terrorist group ISIS, the potentiality that resource conflicts and land grabbing have in radicalization and terrorism should not be disregarded. In Cambodia, observers consider the land-grabbing situation as having the potential to overthrow the government (Strangio 2014).⁶⁰ Should these conflicts lead to war-like situations, the implications of land grabbing on not only national, but equally regional and global peace and security should not be underestimated. Moreover, if we consider security more broadly in terms of human security (Barnett and Adger, 2007) (including risks to the environment, and livelihoods), this should justify bringing the issue seriously into arenas of international cooperation.

Even if the reality of land grabbing has been given scarce attention in climate negotiations so far, it has gained some attention in the global governance arena as a response to the concern of the recent wave of land acquisitions. Without entering here into the variety of ways that the international community and that civil society has interpreted and inserted the land grabbing debate in the global governance arena,⁶¹ it can be highlighted that most noticeable instruments to have emerged – the UN Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forest, and the Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment – still fail to question agro-industrial development *per se* (Borras and Franco 2010) failing to challenge the widely held paradigm of ‘development’ that is responsible for such land deals in the first place. Here again we see how the questions of causality are eluded and how thinking that international governance norms, even if translated into domestic policies will actually lead to equal implementation is overlooking the fact that the national or domestic context still has the most decisive influence on how, and if, they will actually be implemented (Twomey 2014). The same is true for governance principles aimed at regulating development-induced displacement and forced displacement such as the Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-Based Evictions and Displacement⁶² (UN 2007), or the Guiding Principles for Internal Displacement⁶³ (UN 1998). If states are unable to see the mutual benefits of addressing the issue in collaboration and finding incentives to do so, all these principles, as important as they are, will remain caught up in what has been referred to as the ‘institutionalisation-implementation gap’ (Betts and Orchard 2014).

Moreover, if securing land rights has become a top priority in governance mechanisms that is echoed by civil society, it can be argued that the increasingly destructive impacts of climate change on the

⁵⁸ Evidence from Madagascar, Siberia, Liberia and has already shown that when communities feel unfairly dispossessed from their lands, the ground becomes ripe for social upheaval and violent conflict.

⁵⁹ The company reports missing equipment and threats that the populations admit.

⁶⁰ Interview with Sebastian Strangio, Phnom Penh, March 2015.

See also: <http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2011/s3316296.htm>

⁶¹ Cf. The Special Issue on ‘Land Grabbing and Global Governance’ (Globalizations 2013).

⁶² Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-Based Evictions and Displacement: http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Housing/Guidelines_en.pdf

⁶³ The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IDPersons/Pages/Standards.aspx>

land of the most socio-economic and environmentally vulnerable segments of humanity means that having access to clear land rights – a worthy cause that seems essential – will no longer automatically assure the livelihoods of the most vulnerable. How will securing the right to land of communities that live in places expected to suffer the burden of higher temperatures and that could ultimately become inhabitable, assure their subsistence and development? Additionally, where will the people increasingly displaced by natural disasters be allowed to settle and develop their traditional ways of life? Since citizenship is intrinsically linked to sovereignty, will those pushed off their lands and nations by climate injustice, unequal terms of trade, and access to natural resources have the same right to food and subsistence as the nationals? (Mairet 2012). Also, the issue of land acquisitions by foreign investors that often bring their national workforce with them, as we have seen in the case of Kampong Thom – but that can be argued for migratory movements at large – challenges the common assumption that the impacts of climate change on a country will have effects on its nationals. Should the current wave of foreign land acquisitions continue, it will be many foreign interests that will suffer its effects rather than local populations that will have, in many cases, already been expelled from their territories. This has not only ethical implications, but should also be considered in exercises that try to model human-induced displacement at different scenarios of warming. As long as we continue to consider land as a natural resource where cooperation is only needed in terms of emissions, it will remain impossible to consider it as a global public good where multi-stakeholder international cooperation on the issue would be in the interest of all nations and segments of society.

This is also exactly what prevents global cooperation on migration and forced displacement issues that nonetheless have important impacts on other nations, and that are increasingly linked to land issues not only through the impacts of climate change but also through the competition over resources that emerge. Although as far from perfect as it is, it is only in the area of refugee protection that there is truly a multilateral system of governance (Betts 2010). Yet political refugees, as defined by the Geneva Convention in 1951⁶⁴ – as important as they are – do not represent the majority of the people on the move.⁶⁵ With the growing number of people forced to flee due to direct and indirect climate change impacts, development projects, economic downturn, and dispossession from their natural resources, the motives of forced displacement are increasingly complex and show the inadequacies of the international system to protect many of the most vulnerable. While cooperation in the area of refugee protection has been perceived as a global public good in terms of the human rights implications and security issues that are linked to it (Betts 2010), we could definitely argue that the same is true for those being forcefully displaced for the aforementioned reasons. Though the terms of ‘climate refugee’ and ‘environmental refugee’ have been increasingly abandoned for having no legal basis, it has been argued that climate change should indeed be considered as a form of persecution against the most vulnerable since climate change is more a political issue than an environmental one (Gemenne 2015, 70-71). The same can of course be argued for ‘land-grabbing induced displacement’, which is largely a persecution from the powerful national or international elites and economic interests on the land of the most vulnerable. Migration governance now needs to take into account the interdependence of migration with other key areas of global relations, including trade, investment, development cooperation, security and international politics (Castles and Van Hear 2012, 301-302).

The questions of land grabs and (im)mobility and how they interrelate with environmental degradation must be included in research and policy debates on climate induced migration. Integrating access to natural resources into existing environmental migration governance mechanisms such as the Nansen Initiative⁶⁶ and the task force created at the COP21⁶⁷ that aim to address the consequences of climate

⁶⁴ The Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees : <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html>

⁶⁵ The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) has recorded an average of 26.4 million people displaced per year by natural disasters. In many years, this is more than the people being forced to flee by conflict. See the latest report here: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/2015/global-estimates-2015-people-displaced-by-disasters/>

⁶⁶ The Nansen Initiative is a state-led, bottom-up consultative process intended to identify effective practices and build consensus on key principles and elements to address the protection and assistance needs of persons displaced across borders in the context of disasters, including the adverse effects of climate change: <https://www.nanseninitiative.org/>. The protection agenda was endorsed in 2015 by 110 countries

change on human mobility, could be a solid way in which to advance the debate. Unfortunately, intergovernmental agencies that have been working on environmental migration such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) have been unable to address such politically sensitive issues. Here the role of NGOs, researchers, and activists becomes crucial. If the issues are presented as interconnected rather than isolated, the debate would be more informative and useful. With both 'land grabs' and 'green grabs' on the rise, we can hypothesize that more and more people will be involuntarily displaced from their lands in the years to come in what I argue should be considered as a new category in the environmental migration/refugee debate (Vigil 2015, 43-45). What we thus need is not more fragmentation and more governance mechanisms, but rather increased consistency between policy domains that can no longer be considered in isolation from each other.

Considering land not only in the terms of Westphalian sovereignty but also framing it as an intermediate global public good on which many other global public goods, such as climate stability and peace and security, depend may allow to move the research and policy agendas forward whilst calling for mobilisation when states fail to protect the human rights that are inherently linked to land such as freedom from forced evictions and food security. Moving from national sovereignty towards 'sovereign responsibility' (Deng 1997) seems more indispensable than ever before. Sovereignty is now better understood in terms of its essence being not as much control and authority, but rather dual responsibility: 1/ Internally, to respect the dignity and human rights of the people within a state, and 2/ Externally by respecting the sovereignty of others (Evans 2004). Given the human rights violations that often occur through land grabs and the spillover effects that they can have on other nations and possibly other generations in terms of environmental impacts, security, and forced cross-border displacement, considering land grabs as a global public bad in which incentives for international cooperation must be found, seems a necessary step forward. This would also allow to limit inconsistencies between policy areas that result in 'solutions' being developed at the expense of aggravating other problems.

Conclusions

The effects of climate change on mobility cannot be isolated to biophysical impacts or to singular outcomes. Even within local communities affected by the same climatic threats such as floods and droughts, their vulnerability and likelihood to migrate is increasingly affected by their ability to access fundamental land resources, as well as their socio-economic status and demographic characteristics. As illustrated by the empirical findings, the pre-existing socio-environmental vulnerabilities of the rural poor are being threatened by the recent wave of large-scale land acquisitions that often overlook human rights. These land transactions are linked directly and indirectly to climate change not only by the justifications being used to acquire land, but also equally by their environmental impacts that can moreover entail destructive externalities to the planet as a whole. Findings show that the interaction between environmental vulnerability and large-scale land acquisitions can have both short-term and long-term impacts on population movements. The complex manner in which such variables interact across environmentally fragile areas show that a more nuanced understanding is needed between a 'win-win' scenario – where rising employment opportunities would reduce rural exodus – and the dispossession and expulsion scenario – where people would be automatically displaced. The main explanatory variable that clarifies differentiated mobility outcomes following land acquisitions in both countries can be attributed the domestic socio-political and economic situation which is largely responsible for the actual implementation of good governance norms and the extent at which land grabs happen. Other variables that are related to this include the effectiveness of the state to respect the human dignity and human rights of its population, including freedom of association, assembly and speech, and the provenance of their investors and markets of their products. However, and notwithstanding very important context specificities, findings across all areas show that when land transactions fail to follow a human rights-based framework with full consideration of existing land rights, they result in added socio-environmental pressures that deeply affect forced (im)mobility outcomes.

⁶⁷ Art. 50 of the Paris agreement: <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/l09r01.pdf>

Continued large-scale land acquisitions that overlook customary rights and fail to develop environmentally sustainable practices whilst providing viable livelihood diversification strategies for environmentally and socio-economically vulnerable populations will increase competition for natural resources whilst decreasing the resilience of rural communities. This will also affect investment viability in the long-term with externalities that go well beyond the local populations and have the potential to impact not only other countries, but equally other generations. Treating land as an intermediate global public good has the potential to enhance multi-stake cooperation and intervention from the international community in what should no longer be treated as an issue pertaining exclusively to national sovereignty. Thinking of land not just as a territory over which the national state possesses sovereign control, but in terms of the intrinsic value it has for human beings elsewhere and generations to come, could help shape incentives for mutually beneficial cooperation. The sovereignty of humanity has to come before the sovereignty of nations.

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**Global governance/politics,
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About the Author(s)

Sara Vigil is an FNRS Research Fellow at the University of Liège in Belgium. Her PhD in political and social sciences focuses on the socio-environmental causes and consequences of large-scale land acquisitions in both Senegal and Cambodia, with a specific focus on their impacts on human mobility. Sara has collaborated in multiple publications and conferences on these issues, and is the Spanish representative for the EU COST Action on "Climate Change and Migration: Knowledge, Law and Policy, and Theory". She lectures at Sciences Po Paris on Global Public Goods, and at the University Paris 13-Sorbonne on International Governance of Migration.