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Resistance against Large-Scale Land Acquisitions: Bougainville's peace process under threat?

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Abstract

Responding to the academic void on resistance and its impact on peacebuilding, I turn to the opposition against large-scale land acquisitions in the post-war context of Bougainville. After independence copper mining triggered civil war on Bougainville - often referred to as the "world's first successful eco-revolution". Nowadays the province faces a new rush on its land and resources, which is embedded into the contemporary global phenomenon of large-scale land investments for mining, agricultural, tourism or green purposes. Promising in terms of reconstruction and economic prosperity, this recent development may entail risks for reconciliation processes and long-term peace prospects though - due to the unjust distribution of negative externalities and benefits. Thus, resistance likely occurs, ranging from nonviolent to violent means. Besides community and state capacities, territory plays an important role in this regard, which is characterized by the dimensions of identity, authority and economic efficiency. Since territory encompasses interactions of social life and power alike, territoriality indicates exclusion and control mechanisms over people in a certain area. Applying assemblage theory, allows to analyze ever-faster social, environmental or technical transformations and changing configurations. Although less considered in peace and conflict studies, yet, assemblage thinking enables alternative perspectives on identity, capacities and power in plural post-conflict societies in times of land tenure shift, resource scarcity and reconciliation. Drawing from findings on the Bougainville case, my papers aims to reveal applied means of resistance and its impact on conflict transformation processes and, hence, to identify, if new (armed) conflicts may emerge along former conflict lines.

Key Words: large-scale land acquisitions, peacebuilding, resistance, Papua New Guinea, assemblage

Introduction

In times of climate change, peak oil, and a combined energy, food and financial crisis (McMichael 2013: 48) access and control over land and certain resources are increasingly contested. Although far from being a new phenomenon contemporary commercial land and resource acquisitions indicate a shift towards new spatial-temporal dimensions (Wily 2012). Since 2007 governments and (foreign) investors alike have facilitated the current land rush - often framed as a progressive development strategy. In order to attract investors and to justify large-scale land commodification, governments either refer to the yield gap (Deininger and Byerlee 2011: xxxv–xxxviii) or declare vast areas as 'idle and marginal' or even "wastelands" (Baka 2013: 411; GRAIN 2014: 58) - whether populated or governed by community law or not. Moreover, host governments offer a variety of economic and legal incentives, while investors, in turn, promise employment opportunities, infrastructure development, technological transfer and contributions to local or national food security (Anseeuw et al. 2012: 1–46; Bloomer 2012). However, displacement, long-term environmental damages and socio-cultural as well as political marginalization give rise to increasing resistance against land grabs[1] in the Global South.

Following Sub-Saharan Africa, a large number of land transactions have taken place in Southeast Asian countries, particularly, although non-exclusively, in countries with weak institutions and poor land tenure (Land Matrix 2015). Increasingly profitable conditions in post-conflict countries[2] attract investors - despite certain risks - to acquire vast areas for agriculture, mining, or carbon offsetting purposes. Yet, struggling to stabilize after years of violent conflict countries like Cambodia, Laos, Papua New Guinea, or the Philippines face a contemporary rush on their lands, forests and mineral resources (Land Matrix 2015). At first glance, promising in terms of reconstruction and economic prosperity (Anseeuw et al. 2012: 41–46), this recent development may, however, entail risks for reconciliation processes and long-term peace prospects due to changing land ownership and the often unjust distribution of negative externalities and benefits. In fact, in many cases local communities face dispossession, lacking compensation, long-term environmental damages, loss of livelihoods and social structures as well as new structural dependencies (Cotula 2013: 125–129; Fairhead et al. 2012: 243–245; Hall 2011; Richards 2013: 24–27). Particularly (anew) displacement or resettlement challenges the fragile stability of post-conflict settings which often adds to already existing violence-induced displacement (Ince 2014). Consequently, resistance against land grabs and its externalities increasingly arises on local or regional level, ranging from demonstrations, lobbying, and sit-ins to clashes with security guards or arguments with local officials. Considering these recent developments, I scrutinize the impact of resistance practices against large-scale land and resource acquisitions on peacebuilding processes.

With reference to historic and contemporary developments, this paper reveals applied means of resistance against land grabbing in post-war Bougainville and analyzes the impact on peacebuilding. Thereby, I place special emphasis on the following question: how far does (violent) resistance against large-scale land acquisitions undermine current conflict transformation and reconciliation processes and accelerate new (armed) conflicts? Selecting the case of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea seems to be interesting for two reasons. First, armed resistance against the negative socio-ecological impacts of the Panguna copper mine in Bougainville triggered a decade long civil war (1988-1998) - referred

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[1] Following the Tirana Declaration (2011) land grab indicates large-scale land acquisitions for commercial purposes associated with at least one of the following issues: human rights violations, lacking participation, information or compensation of affected communities, or a lack of thorough environmental or social assessments. Whereas the terms foreign direct investment, land acquisition or land investment only refer to the commodification of land, water and other resources and will be applied synonymously.

[2] Post-conflict situations are vulnerable political and economic transition phases. According to Badran, "peace failure is likely at any time during the first two decades" (2014: 213).

to as the "world's first successful eco-revolution" (Rotheroe 2000). Second, the prospective independent state of Bougainville (by 2020) will certainly highly depend on revenues from foreign direct investments. Hence, the autonomous government already seeks (external) financing possibilities due to the worsening economic situation.

Thereby, the assemblage approach offers an adequate conceptual framework. Drawing on Deleuze's and Guattari's poststructuralist assemblage theory, I analyze (re)territorialization and deterritorialization processes that contribute to strengthen or destabilize the identity and capacities of assemblages (i.e. communities). The assemblage approach overcomes the human-nature dichotomy as well as the binarity between agency and structure. Instead, assemblage thinking takes socio-spatial relations into account and allows for understanding processes and interactions on different levels and between heterogeneous actors and the environment. This perspective is most helpful in the context of plural post-conflict societies in times of land tenure shifts, resource scarcity and reconciliation.

The structure of the paper is organized as follows. First, I briefly outline the current literature review with emphasis on land grabbing, peacebuilding and (rural) resistance. Building upon this, the theoretical framework of assemblage theory will be illustrated and operationalized. This is followed by an analysis of the Bougainville case scrutinizing the issue of land acquisitions and the emergence of resistance in fragile peacebuilding processes. Thereby, parallels with historic developments, such as early resistance practices against Panguna mine prior to the civil war will be drawn.

Literature Review

Peasant Resistance against Land Commercialization

Resistance and conflicts related to large-scale land use changes and commercial land acquisitions remain largely underexplored in scholarly debates (Brent 2015: 672). *Violent Environments* (Peluso and Watts 2001) offers a starting point with a critical political economy perspective on conflict deriving from resource and power accumulation. While recent studies dealing with the current land rush are often limited to conflicts around displacement or marginalization, yet, little attention has been paid to the impact of emerging resistance and implications for the regional (in)stability[3]. The reasons for lacking emphasis and systematic analysis tend to be manifold. Apart from certain empirical obstacles, i.e. in terms of field access or the political situation, the poor interdisciplinary exchange between the fields of peace and conflict as well as social movement studies appears to undermine synergy effects and a comprehensive analysis (Hennings and Prause forthcoming). In recent publications on land grabbing, as some scholars criticize, peasants tend to be considered victims, whose traditional livelihoods are threatened and who inherently oppose large-scale land acquisitions (Schneider 2011; Adnan 2013). Few exceptions may prove this assumption wrong, such as Mamonova's case of non-resistance of Ukrainian peasants shows (Mamonova 2015: 610). However, most affected communities "react from below" against land grabbing activities in various and complex ways, as Hall et al. put it (2015: 467). Local communities are thereby not passive victims but "powerful and potentially transformative agents" who frame their resistance by interpreting own experiences of marginalization and injustices (Cavanagh and Benjaminsen 2015: 730).

The social movement literature predominantly focuses on case studies dealing with rural resistance in the Global South or with transnational movements, such as La Via Campesina (Borras 2010). Moyo and Yero (2005) present a comprehensive analysis of resistance related to land issues in Africa and Asia. The report "Building Community Resistance against Land Grabbing" (PAN 2013) offers detailed insights into anti-land grab campaigns in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Malaysia and

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[3] The latest JPS publication on land grabbing and resistance is an overdue exciting exception.

the Philippines. From a conceptual perspective most scholars apply framing or mobilization approaches or adopt James Scott's everyday resistance concept (1985). Increasingly, also Scott's weapon of the weak concept is taken up by scholars in order to reveal resistance practices in the context of land grabbing (see Cavanagh and Benjaminsen 2015;Adnan 2013; Malseed 2008). Referring to Kerkvliet's (2009) and Scott's work, Schneider (2011) scrutinizes the complex case of Cambodia and discusses the effectivity of (un-) organized resistance. Accordingly, three kinds of rural resistance can be distinguished: official politics within the respective authorities; everyday resistance which is rather unplanned and indirect; and direct, organized mostly overt advocacy politics. Depending on the external (mainly political) circumstances, resistance may easily transform from everyday to advocacy politics or vice versa. Instances of extreme political repression or marginalization can push peasants to "cross the threshold of fear and insecurity" (Adnan 2007: 214). This either means everyday resistance takes a backseat in favor of more confrontational overt forms of resistance or, in sharp contrast; peasants have to find all the more covert means of everyday politics. These transformational processes illustrate the "dialectical relationship between dominator and resistor that can escalate resistance", as Schneider points out (2011: 7).

This paper considers particularly everyday resistance and advocacy politics and centers around the implications of resistance for peacebuilding processes. Thereby, I refrain from a detailed analysis of resistance against land and resource commodification in Bougainville including framing strategies, organizational structures and resource mobilization. Instead, the paper explores motivations and means of resisting groups and reveals interdependencies with (un)peaceful relations (Menzel 2015) in post-conflict Bougainville.

Land Commodification and Resistance from a Peacebuilding Perspective

Rebuilding a country in the wake of violent conflict generally aims at establishing conditions that enable sustainable peace[4] in the long run. Thereby, peacebuilding addresses four main pillars, each encountering various obstacles: security; justice and reconciliation; social and economic wellbeing; governance and participation (see Woodward 2013; Jarstad und Sisk 2008; Schneckener 2005). Since decades the neoliberal approach has been favored by donors and international organizations alike (Woodward 2013: 141–143). Lately, neoliberal peacebuilding is increasingly taken up by economists who advocate the stabilizing and long-term advantages of corporate peace (Haski-Leventhal and Schippa 2013) which, in turn, legitimizes foreign direct investments. Hence, the social dimension of peacebuilding is disregarded evermore (Menzel 2015: 26); questioning the durable nature of peacebuilding.

Little attention has been paid to the social and symbolic dimension of land or natural resources and its meaning in conflicts (van der Auweraert 2013: 349). Here, Unruh's and Williams' (2013) work on the role of land as well as Lujala's and Rustad's (2012) publication on high-value natural resources in the context of conflict transformation are important contributions. Their findings show while contested access and control over land and natural resources often facilitates (armed) conflicts, the (re-) distribution of land remains a key risk factor during conflict transformation (Unruh and Williams 2013: 536). Likewise, displacement, experienced violence, and food insecurity catalyze social changes and alter societal control and regulation mechanisms. During post-war years governments often continue seeking durable solutions to refugee, land and reintegration issues for years (Elhawary/Pantuliano 2013: 117). UNEP and UNDP (2013) jointly analyzed the natural resource and demobilization,

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[4] Reychler and Paffenholz refer to sustainable peace as a " […] situation characterized by the absence of physical violence; the elimination of unacceptable political, economic and cultural forms of discrimination; a high level of internal and external legitimacy or support; self-sustainability; and a propensity to enhance the constructive transformation of conflicts" (2001: 12).

disarmament and reintegration (DDR) nexus with regard to conflict risks and long-term prospects. Their findings illustrate that natural resources and access to land is not only key to economic recovery but also important in terms of successful reconciliation and social integration of former combatants.

Despite potential risks for peacebuilding processes few scholars have explored the impact of large-scale land acquisitions in post-war countries. Taking land use change, identity and external interests into account Gertel et al. (2014) provide a profound analysis of multi-layered conflict dynamics resulting from land and resource investments in Sudan. Also Gearoid Millar's research contributes to this field by revealing land grabbing implications for post-conflict developments in Sierra Leone (Millar 2015). However, Millar does not consider communal coping strategies or potential synergies between war experiences and means of resistance. Turning to the role of resistance in the context of peacebuilding, the literature is largely limited to resistance against the liberal approach (Mac Ginty 2011), thereby emphasizing the elite's "politics of resistance" (Chandler 2013: 26–27). Parallels may be drawn to the debate on the motivation of armed groups (see Schlichte 2009; Gurr 2012; Collier et al. 2009). Both social movements and armed groups rely more or less on socio-economic or political grievances in order to reinforce internal and external legitimation which is important in terms of mobilization and funding.

Attempts to conceptualize the global land grab are largely limited to macro-level studies. Critical globalization approaches (Margulis and Porter 2013), neo-Gramscian perspectives (Goodman and Salleh 2013), and, to a lesser extent, Modern World System Theory (Baumann 2013) are commonly deployed in theoretical debates on land grabbing and (global) power asymmetries, but often fall to short as they lack explanatory approaches for human-nature relations and respective dynamics. However, deploying assemblage thinking allows a holistic view on large-scale land acquisitions and its impact on ecosystems, communities, socio-cultural institutions, conflict transformation and reconciliation. Inspired by a mainly poststructuralist forest carbon and tenure literature, political scientists such as Sassen (2013) and McMichael (2012) draw on the concept of assemblage to explore impacts and dynamics of land grabbing on macro-level. Thus far largely applied in geography and anthropology, assemblage adds new perspectives to the field of peace and conflict studies, as Hoffman's (2011) differentiated analysis of "war machines" – the role of young men in the Sierra Leonean and Liberian civil war - illustrates.

Conceptualizing Assemblage and Territoriality

Assemblage concepts become increasingly popular to understand new social formations arising in consequence of the multiple crisis of capitalism and climate change (Larner 2011: 332). Setting out constructivist accounts of socio-spatial relations and proposing a non–dualistic understanding of nature and the social, assemblage theory provides an alternative approach to conceptualize the social and natural world. It offers a somewhat radical break from many existing IR theories that struggle to keep pace with ever-faster social, environmental or technical transformations and changing configurations (Acuto and Curtis 2014: 2). Assemblage thinking, thereby, moves beyond anthropocentrism and overcomes the highly debated dichotomy between agency and structure (Anderson et al. 2012: 172). Following Braun's understanding, instead of emphasizing the being assemblage apprehends the making of socionatures "whose intricate geographies form tangled webs of different length, density and duration, and whose consequences are experienced differently in different places" (Braun 2006: 644). This perspective is particularly helpful under circumstances of land tenure shifts, resource scarcity, ongoing territorial disputes and reconciliation, and allows for understanding complex processes in plural post-conflict societies. In contrast, political ecology approaches are often criticized for not taking the agency of nature or local processes sufficiently into account (Bryant 1998; Zimmerer and Bassett 2003). In order to compensate these pitfalls scholars of political ecology

increasingly turn to Latour's Actors-Network Theory (ANT) whereby the above mentioned shortcomings can only be partly addressed (Braun 2004; Mutersbaugh and Martin 2012). Labeled as assemblage light [5] ANT leaves "little room for politics" (Loder 2012) and hence, falls too short to scrutinize resistance against large-scale land acquisitions in politically contested post-conflict settings. Assemblage, on the other hand, can be described as an anti-structural concept that "permits the researcher to speak of emergence, heterogeneity, the decentred and the ephemeral in nonetheless ordered social life" (Marcus and Saka 2006: 101). The notion of assemblage entails a theory of practices and interaction since relations "are made and remade in practices" (Bueger 2014: 62).

By means of assemblage thinking I link various research fields that deal with issues of large-scale land acquisitions, resistance, and peacebuilding. I largely draw on Manuel DeLanda's (2006; 2011) assemblage approach and ontology who delineated Deleuze's und Guattari's poststructuralist ideas[6]. Thereby, I use assemblage less as a theory than a perspective which enables a more comprehensive understanding of resistance strategies against land commodification in complex peacebuilding situations. In the next section, key terms, characteristics and processes of assemblages will be outlined.

Assemblage and Power from a Socio-Spatial Perspective

Following assemblage ontology, each entity can be understood as immanent historically produced; be it a city, a community network or a nation state. The relation between component parts is contingent obligatory as "a historical result of their close coevolution" (DeLanda 2006: 11). Assemblages do not form a seamless whole (Deleuze 1987: 698; DeLanda 2011: 188), but imply emergence resultant from its interacting entities (Li 2007: 264). During the process of emergence, component parts retain their identity and autonomy and, once stabilized, can become component part of another (larger) assemblage. The occurrence of emergent properties depends on interactions that are defined, more specifically, by the entities' capacities (DeLanda 2011: 205). Entities are characterized by a mixture of material and virtual roles, whereby the latter includes linguistic, but also social expressions, such as solidarity, legitimacy or prestige. For instance, the expression of identity through architecture or the symbolic relation to land can be regarded as virtual dimension of rural community assemblage while the material dimension concerns the physical neighborhood, infrastructure, village gatherings, fields, or forest to name but a few.

According to Deleuze, vertical relations are a feature of social space, whereby he understands power as a relation between forces, not between subjects (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 27; Lambert 2006: 143). Force means "*any* capacity [be it physical, socio-economic, legal, mystical] to produce or change a 'becoming'" (Parr 2011: 111, emphasis original). As a consequence, every event or phenomenon results from hierarchical interaction patterns between these forces. Hence, power can be neither apprehended as central governing nor equally distributed but "as a plurality in transformation" (Anderson and McFarlane 2011: 125). Power is also an integral part of territoriality. Often reduced to socially or institutionally occupied space, territory rather encompasses interactions of social life and power. Territory encompasses more than physical tangible land. It rather emerges from claims to land (Gertel et al. 2014: 9) and is characterized by the dimensions of identity, authority and economic efficiency. Accordingly, territoriality is the attempt to control or influence people, phenomena and relations by asserting control over a certain geographic area (Sack 1986: 387–388). Notably, nation states apply this logic (Vandergeest and Peluso 1995; Hassner 1997: 57) but territoriality also matters in armed conflicts when power over a certain area is established or expanded. However, territoriality

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[5] ANT partly draws on Deleuze and Guattari.
[6] Albeit a growing interdisciplinary adaptation of the assemblage approach, scholars in the field of geography (McFarlane 2011), anthropology (Hoffman 2011; Li 2007) or other social sciences refer to Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's poststructuralist work.

cannot be reduced to those who assert control as it may be contested or resisted (see Scott 1998). According to Deleuze and Guattari, politics are in a never-ending state of becoming since"[a] political assemblage [is] continually made anew, continually reinvented" (Hardt 1993: 121). Thereby, new assemblages representing new interests and organizational structures (i.e. resisting groups) capture power and direct it against the state (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Woods et al. 2013: 435).

Assembling the Resistance, Land Commodification and Peacebuilding Nexus

Assemblages are determined along two axes; namely the processes of territorialization and coding. Between these two movements heterogeneous entities come together and fall apart (Anderson and McFarlane 2011: 149)**.** Territorialization concerns the internal homogeneity of an assemblage and can be differentiated threefold – although each entity of an assemblage may be involved in all processes simultaneously (DeLanda 2006: 13-14, 123; Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 703–705). Analyses along territorialization processes allow revealing spatial and material features of territories whilst taking social relations into account. At the same time, these processes are nonlinear, contested and complex. In the following, I illustrate and discuss both processes with regard to resistance in post-war societies and state induced land use changes.

Territorialization stabilizes the identity of an assemblage by strengthening the internal homogeneity and defining its (spatial) boundaries; usually facilitated by the state that "distinguishes the legal from the illegal, the legitimate from the illegitimate, the licit from the illicit" (Hoffman 2011: 8). In this way, the state not only regulates access rights to territory and resources, but also expands its control over respective inhabitants, what Vandergeest and Paluso critically refer to as "property rights over people" (1995: 394). State territorialization implies the exclusion of certain social groups and the monopolization of economic benefits through resource control. Although land commodification and state territorialization are not inevitably linked large-scale land acquisitions can in most cases be understood as an act of state territorialization. State enclosure of natural resources, i.e. the acquisition and (re-)distribution of land, go beyond the mere material appropriation of land and commodities. It is much more an act of gaining control over social, cultural and economic resources benefiting the governing elite and private sector alike[7] (Dina and Sato 2014: 962; Hall 2013). Notably, governments play a key part in the allocation of land as they enforce the property laws that eventually enable transnational capitalism (Gertel et al. 2014: 11; Sassen 2006; Scott 1998). Even though the relation between investors and governments does not build on an equal footing the latter are not only victims "coerced into accessing foreign capital by selling off pieces of their national territory to more powerful economic or political players" (Wolford 2013: 192). More important, the willingness of the government to address resisting claims against land grabbing, to guarantee free prior and informed consent or compensation for affected communities indicates the "genuine" intention of the governing elite. While land allocation for commercial purposes may be an act of state territorialization itself, it is the more if resistance against unequal land distribution and resource injustices is suppressed. Concurrently, opposing groups may be pushed to assemble their forces and strengthen their identity which contributes to territorialization processes within resisting communities.

Deterritorialized assemblages, on the other hand, are rather unstable, heterogeneous and show fuzzy boundaries (Braun 2008). Here, Deleuze distinguishes relative deterritorialization from absolute deterritorialization. The former, *reterritorialization*, refers to destabilizing processes opening assemblages up to change which may yield another identity (DeLanda 2006: 14), i.e. when state-owned land is transferred to an indigenous administration or new resistance movements emerge

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[7] Land grabbing is also defined as „capturing power to control land and other associated resources like water, minerals and forests, in order to control the benefits of its use" (McCarthy et al. 2012: 523).

(Braun 2008; Woods et al. 2013). In contrast, the process of absolute *deterritorialization* shows destructive tendencies and involves a much more radical identity change, i.e. caused by violence or a severe loss of livelihoods. Both deterritorialization processes can occur simultaneously in the wake of large-scale land use changes for commercial purposes. The commodification of land, forests and minerals destabilizes an assemblage since it is contingent upon the separation of land from social meanings and its transformation into valorized capital (Gertel et al. 2014: 10). Hence, the range of interactions between the land and its former owners or utilizers inevitably changes and will be replaced by a primarily economic motivated relation with resemblances to exploitative patterns. Confronted with eviction and dispossession communities need to find coping strategies, which may facilitate both re- and deterritorialization. If (nonviolent) resistance succeeds, alternative coping mechanisms do no harm to other communities or the environment, or in case new negotiation opportunities open up, one can speak of reterritorialization. By contrast, as I have noted earlier, in instances of extreme state repression, often (in) directly supported by investors or donors (Fairhead et al. 2012), communities may be pushed to engage in more confrontational and riskier forms of resistance (Kerkvliet 2009: 34). Accordingly, violence easily escalates and undermines state authority which further accelerates absolute deterritorialization. This may entail destructive long-term impacts particularly in vulnerable post-conflict societies, disrupt peace and reconciliation processes or even lead to new armed conflicts (Hoffman 2011: 9).

Complementing territorialization, coding sharpens and maintains the identity of assemblages. Often facilitated by the media, (de-) coding processes are closely related to the material and virtual dimensions of assemblage entities. Hereby, type and acknowledgement of legitimate authority plays a key role. Highly coded assemblages usually occur in very formal environments. If rules may be weakened, for instance as a result of war, assemblages can be referred to as rather decoded. However, many social assemblages are neither highly coded nor territorialized (DeLanda 2006: 15). Interactions of resistance are regarded as not yet encoded. Referred to as "non-place" in spatial terms, resistance suddenly emerges "within historical arrangement(s) of power relations" on the margins of an assemblage (Lambert 2006: 143–144). Created at the edge, where the "entity experiences an outside" (Sutton and Martin-Jones 2011: 6), resistance may transform the whole assemblage. Whether resistance succeeds is contingent upon the response of the addressed legitimate authority, be it negotiation, repression or ignorance.

Territorialization and Resistance Politics in Post-Conflict Bougainville

Papua New Guinea ranks among the top ten target countries of large-scale land acquisitions. So far, more than 5.2 million hectares land have been leased mostly to foreign investors (Land Matrix 2015) covering roughly 12% of the total surface. Affected communities were left largely uninformed and excluded from negotiation or participation (Global Witness 2014: 1-2) which allows the governing elite to largely benefit through state-induced territorialization. Investors are not only interested in PNGs rich mineral resources but also in commercially untouched rain forest areas, that are suitable for agro-industrial plantations. Meanwhile, however, the government faces various challenges that are (in)directly linked to the land lease rush, such as illegal logging, massive soil and water degradation, displacement and increasing food insecurity (Mousseau 2013). In mid-2014 a court decision revoked a third of the Special Agricultural Business Leases (SABL) due to ongoing discrepancies with existing community land tenure. Notwithstanding, the judicial review of the other SABLs is still pending while the federal court stopped the implementation of the court decision in early 2015.

Meanwhile the commodities of Bougainville that is exempted from any SABL regulations due to its autonomous status increasingly attract investors. In the wake of the secession war a debate on (sustainable) mining and alternative ways of foreign direct investments started in the early 2000s.

After seven years of negotiation the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) passed a new interim mining act in August 2014 that specifically addresses Bougainville's needs. According to the new bill, minerals are now owned by traditional landowners who also have veto power over exploration licenses, while the ABG owns minerals of non-customary land (PNG Mine Watch 2014). However, critics claim the new law paves the way for long contested Panguna mine[8] to re-open and, moreover, privileges former operator BCL in negotiating new mining licenses in the area and, thus, strengthens the powerful position of the governing elite. Other opponents have come up with alternative suggestions, such as subsidies or infrastructural support for artisanal mining and small-scale farming (Allen 2014). Amid this controversial discussion of long-term sustainable investments, peacebuilding [9] and low financial capacities the Bougainville Inward Investment Bureau was established recently. Aiming to invite responsible investment by meeting Bougainville's specific context and needs, the BIIB developed ethical principles and identified four key investment sectors including agriculture, tourism, fisheries, and mining (BIIB 2014). Still, the BIIB needs to proof its commitment and needs to involve Bougainvilleans into the negotiation process of utilizing the country's commodities. It remains to be seen, if the government is willing and able to implement sustainable investments in Bougainville's land, forests and mineral resources. The pending re-opening of Panguna mine, the allocation of further exploration licenses and increasing agro-industrial monocultures indicate a contrary development though. This points to increasing state territorialization which is closely linked to broader dynamics of Bougainville's state formation and consolidation (Cavanagh and Benjaminsen 2015: 726; Corson 2011).

In consequence, growing discontent and public resistance against the allocation of land to investors and commodity commercialization occurs. For instance, affected communities that have occupied the plantations since the Bougainville crisis opposed the unjust allocation of land to foreign investors in Tinputz (Laukai 2009); since 2011 protests against the Torokina palm oil plantation and related cases of corruption have been reported (PNG Exposed 2014). These and other examples reveal that rural resistance in post-war Bougainville is fairly well organized despite decentralized and weak political structures (Simili and Chand 2013: 3). Since autonomous Bougainville can be referred to as neither highly coded nor territorialized it enables overt and public forms of resistance. As such, opposing groups address their claims directly to responsible authorities by means of advocacy politics like demonstrations, sit-ins or legal means. This indicates processes of nonviolent reterritorialization although history and the outbreak of civil war shows that community resistance may easily turn into armed resistance. Back then, initial protest against the socio-ecological impacts of Panguna copper mine mingling with the idea of secession turned into a full armed conflict. From an assemblage point of view, years of resistance politics "on the margins" successfully transformed, and in this case de- and reterritorialized, the whole assemblage. Certainly, the roots of war are much more complex but the legacy of the conflict and particularly Panguna mine grievances remain present and influence contemporary politics (Ipp and Cooper 2013: 8). Shortly after the war, affected communities kept claiming pending compensation payments by legal means. In 2000 a group filed a human rights suit in the USA against the Panguna mine operator RioTinto/BCL, but lost the case in 2013. While Panguna remains a symbol of social injustices in Bougainville the envisaged re-opening, eagerly promoted by President John Momis ("Panguna will be reopened by force" (PNG Mine Watch 2015)), is highly contested. The autonomous government provokes a new armed conflict if it continues ignoring the grievances[10] and growing frustration of the population.

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[8] More detailed information on the socio-ecological impact of the Panguna copper mine see Vernon (2005).

[9] For further information on the peacebuilding process see Braithwaite et al. (2010); Regan (2002).

[10] According to Melanesian culture there is a deep human-land relation. Moreover, land has a social key function in terms of compensation payments. "Land is marriage – land is history – land is everything. If our land is ruined our life is finished" (Perpetua Serero 1989, PLA chairperson, cited from May 2004: 273).

Contemporary means of non-violent resistance against foreign land investments, such as demonstrations, sit-ins, petitions or public media campaigns, resemble with advocacy politics and mobilization efforts during the 1960s and 1980s prior to the outbreak of armed conflict (EJOLT 2014; May 2004: 278). Analyzing the early years of opposition, it becomes clear that Port Moresby's ignorance and the continuing marginalization of indigenous and peasant populations largely contributed to transform applied means into more confrontational violent resistance and, hence, slowly facilitated deterritorialization. During the exploration phase, the government confronted with claims of the resisting Panguna Landowners Association (PLA) offered compensation and an unpopular revenue sharing scheme (Ipp and Cooper 2013: 4). However, respective payments never materialized. Adding on this, growing health issues and the results of the environmental assessment published in late 1988 eventually triggered the shift from protest to armed resistance (May 1990: 174). Francis Ona, leader of the militant PLA wing and former BCL employee, adopted the post-colonial and anti-missionary critique of the Hahali and Dameng movements[11] in order to legitimize violent dissidence within the population (Regan 2002). In sharp contrast to the common assumption Bougainvilleans are "a united people, resisting colonialism, mines, and, later, Papua New Guinea" (Ibid.), opinions on grievances, means of resistance or separatism vary widely depending on colonial experiences (individual or on community level) and on socio-economic status[12]. Francis Ona realized the importance of unity, a strong internal identity (one could speak of territorialized resistance) and, thus, linked the struggle against Panguna mine with independence claims: "We are not part of your country any more […] We belong to the Republic of Bougainville and we are defending our island from foreign exploitation" (Francis Ona 12 April 1989 cited in May 2004: 274-75). The early territorialization of the resistance movement manifested the wish for national identity in Bougainville. This, in turn, facilitated a still ongoing reterritorialization on societal and political level. Within this process access to power and the distribution of resources in the emerging national state remain continuously negotiated and contested. Moreover, in consequence of the war, the mode of coding changed to the benefit of traditional authorities (i.e. council of elders[13], community auxiliary police) that filled the institutional void after PNG's state authority withdrew. Ever since traditional authorities have become again key institutions in communal decision making and conflict resolution processes (Braithwaite et al. 2010: 136; Regan 2002).

Against this backdrop, large-scale land acquisitions seem to be an all the more sensitive issue in contemporary Bougainville. The threshold to take up rather violent everyday means of resistance is relatively low. Reasons tend to be manifold but may be subsumed to a generally higher readiness to stand up for one's rights, the frustration about the lost Rio Tinto/BCL trial and the overall difficult socio-economic situation in Bougainville (Ipp and Cooper 2013; Jennings and Claxton 2013). Moreover, the disarmament process lead by the peacekeeping mission was not successful; still a large number of weapons continue circulating (Ipp and Cooper 2013: 13; Spark and Bailey 2005). Some villages, ex-combatants and gangs kept their weapons to guarantee self-protection in case of anew land- or resource grabs facilitated by an (ignorant) state and powerful corporations (PNG Mine Watch 2015). Growing discrepancies between governmental decisions and the population's interests add to slowly deterritorialization. The allocation of land to investors, thereby, remains one of the core

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[11] Dameng has supported the armed struggle since 1989 while criticizing Panguna mine in three respects: the degradation of land that is the key to all social relations; the negative impact of money that was introduced as means of payment in a previously egalitarian society; the scale of labor migration. For more information on post-colonial movements and resistance in Bougainville see Griffin (2005).

[12] During the course of war this lead to separations within the resistance movement. Consequently new conflict lines between rivaling groups occurred.

[13] The council of elders facilitates a "symbiotic relationship between customary authority and state authority" Regan (2002). Elected or based on heredity, elders could be church, women or youth leaders. In 2007 all 40 councils had at least one female representative Braithwaite et al. (2010: 39).

challenges to Bougainville's future as "land lies at the heart of Bougainvillean culture" (Regan 2002). Threats to ownership imply far reaching socio-cultural implications and could easily escalate local conflicts, legacies from colonial times aggravated during war (Ipp and Cooper 2013: 5-6). Whether the destructive impact of deterritorialization materializes will depend on the government's response to current claims of groups resisting against land commodification and the overall consideration of the social peacebuilding dimension. Even more important, the government's willingness to negotiate will influence whether resisting groups pursue currently applied advocacy strategies or shift to everyday resistance including violent means. For the time being, the immanent independence from Port Moresby appears to be a catalyst for a united peaceful Bougainville which slows deterritorialization down. Nonetheless, critiques are concerned that the continuing land allocation to investors and the re-opening of Panguna mine can severely undermine the peace and reconciliation process (Ipp and Cooper 2013: 9).

Conclusion

The findings reveal how crucial empirical research on the resistance, land grabbing and peacebuilding nexus with focus on post-war identities and power asymmetries is. The assemblage approach thereby enables new perspectives on current developments in Bougainville and related peacebuilding obstacles. It becomes apparent that reterritorialization started already as early as post-colonial movements and early protests against Panguna mine emerged that took up the idea of independence to legitimize their struggle. Concurrently, deterritorialization tendencies gain strength although decelerated by Bougainville's continuing struggle towards independence and the reconsideration of traditional authorities during war times. Depending on the government's willingness and ability to implement its sustainable development policy deterritorialization may challenge the newly independent nation. The analysis shows that parallels can be already drawn between contemporary resistance against the commodification of land, forests and mineral resources and the early protest against Panguna mine. The high weapon prevalence and the population's readiness to enforce their claims of social justice and compensation, if necessary by force, add to existing tensions.

In the aftermath of civil war, the development of an (inclusive) post-war identity and the consolidation of power are crucial. The young nation Bougainville will rely upon foreign direct investments due to lacking available financial resources. The autonomous government started an early debate on sustainable development which is why the BIIB was established. It remains to be seen, whether the people and the environment will benefit from foreign investments in land, forests and minerals; not least due to Bougainville's weak political and economic position towards powerful investors from Asia, such as China or Malaysia. The plans of re-opening Panguna mine against the backdrop of Bougainville's own history, however, seems to be unreasonable. Without local consent, Panguna's re-opening or similar large-scale projects would certainly induce violent outbreaks of resistance. Non-consensus based agro-industrial projects or mining would offend and pose a threat to Bougainville's very identity which is closely connected with (ancestral) land, the trauma of Panguna and the civil war. Hence, resistance would not only address "visible" socio-ecological impacts. In turn, the dwindling threshold to take up violent means would cause serious harm to continuing reconciliation and peacebuilding. It is not yet clear which role former conflict lines and actors would play as this depends on reconciliation progress and future state territorialization efforts in Bougainville. For now, government elections are underway that will determine Bougainville's path towards the independence referendum and also negotiate prospective economic and territorial state interests.

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