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The Many Faces of the Investor Rush in Southern Africa: Towards a Typology of Commercial Land Deals

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The popular term ‘land grabbing’, while effective as activist terminology, obscures vast differences in the legality, structure and outcomes of commercial land deals and deflects attention from the roles of domestic elites and governments as partners, intermediaries and beneficiaries. As multilateral institutions debate regulatory frameworks, competition grows over defining the terms of the debate. A recent paper by Borras and Franco (2010) usefully distinguishes between two paradigms: ‘securing land rights’ through ‘good governance’, with an emphasis on procedural guarantees and efficient administration; and a ‘food sovereignty’ and ‘land sovereignty’ approach, which questions not only the processes through which land uses are transformed and land rights transferred, but also the direction of agrarian change.

This paper reviews experiences of recent land deals which have curtailed rural communities’ access to land and water in Southern Africa. As a work in progress, it summarises initial evidence of the characteristics of this new wave of deals on public lands and land held under customary tenure, and maps the distribution of these investments across the region. It draws attention to their diverse manifestations – to questions of scale and duration; initiation and negotiation processes; production sectors; employment; natural resource use; determination, payment and distribution of compensation; investment partnerships and repatriation of profits; and end users. It adopts a schematic analytical framework for distinguishing between different types of land deals in the region and argues that this is important for considering the implications for unfolding future trajectories of agrarian change.

Introduction

> *My view is that you want government to be as small as possible. In a sense, Africa can start with a clean slate… Listen, I want to control that ground. I don't want someone saying, 'Thank you for your investment, now get out'. I want a country that's weaker. There's a cost to dealing with strong countries: resource nationalism. People forget that.*
>
> Phil Heilberg, US investor with allocation of one million acres in Southern Sudan (cited in Funk 2010, 62)

> *We are concerned about the foreign investors: can you tell us when, where, how, and by who these deals are being made? We are now formulating policies and some land grabbers are already getting the land. We might be too late.*
>
> Government of Southern Sudan participant at Sudan Land and Property Rights Training Course, Juba, Southern Sudan, 2 September 2010

The two quotes above epitomise the contradictory interests at stake as African states finally get what they have so long sought – foreign investment – but in forms and on terms that are exposing fractures and division among African societies, within communities, and between citizens and states. In Southern Africa, as elsewhere on the continent and in the developing world, mounting pressures towards the commercialisation of land have in recent years been accelerated, transformed and overtaken by the widespread leasing or sale of public lands to foreign companies and governments for food production, for tourism developments, for biofuel production, and for other commercial agricultural uses. These pressures are part of a global phenomenon that dates to the oil price spikes of the mid-2000s, accelerated rapidly in the wake of the 'food price crisis' of 2007-2008, and gathered further momentum with the crisis in world financial markets in 2008 and the onset of global recession into 2009. The outcomes in Southern Africa are not without historical precedent in this region of settler colonialism and anti-colonial struggle. At the same time, they are distinctive, as new global 'drivers' are refracted through the particularity of current configurations of land relations and political economies of countries in the region. What forms, then, does what one might term 'new-wave land grabbing' take in Southern Africa, and how does it differ from similar processes elsewhere or in the past? This question motivates this exploratory paper.

'Land grabbing' or 'the farms race' in Africa has been described as a new neo-colonial push by foreign companies and governments to annex key natural resources. Critics charge that 'rich countries are buying poor countries' soil fertility, water and sun to ship food and fuel back home, in a kind of neo-colonial dynamic' (Leahy 2009). The vast majority of these investments are thought to be for production of food crops for foreign markets, while about a quarter of the investments are understood to be for plantations of crops for biofuels (IFPRI 2009). The deals typically involve the leasing or other concessions (rather than sale) of large areas of land usually for production for foreign markets, by foreign companies and governments concerned with hedging against the threat of food price increases on global markets, which leave developed countries with a low natural resource base vulnerable to food shortages for their populations (Cotula and Vermeulen 2009a).

China, South Korea, India and the Gulf States are among those at the forefront of this agricultural expansion, as they seek to produce food overseas for their growing populations (IFPRI 2009). According to the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), 'China now has extensive holdings in Africa including pending or attempted deals for millions of hectares in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Uganda, and Tanzania, with many thousands of Chinese workers brought in to work on these lands' (Leahy 2009). In 2009, IFPRI estimated that that deals on 15 to 20 million hectares of farmland in developing countries were under negotiation between 2006 and 2009 (von Braun and Meinzen-Dick 2009). It also pointed to the substantial attrition between deals under negotiation and concluded deals, which indicates that these figures may over-represent the scale of land deals, however this estimate was largely based on investments by governments. Other studies point out that most deals are private investments (GRAIN 2009b), which are thought to account for as much as 90 percent of the total land area involved and are much less susceptible to monitoring (IIED 2009). Among these are European and North American banks and financial investors seeking alternatives to volatile international financial markets. The International Institute for Environment and Development's (IIED) quantitative inventory of five African countries found just under 2.5 million hectares allocated in such transnational deals between 2006 and 2009 (Cotula *et al.* 2009), also suggesting that IFPRI's global estimate may have under-represented the scale of such acquisitions.

Mounting evidence shows that leases or concessions have been granted on communal land that is already claimed, occupied and used by local people (Cotula *et al.* 2009, Sulle and Nelson 2009, World Bank 2010). Even though land laws to secure such rights are in place in most countries in the region, these deals potentially threaten the livelihoods of farming households and the prospects for the continent's 80 million smallholder farms, which contribute 30 percent to Africa's gross domestic product and 40 percent to its exports and sustain many of its poorest citizens. They may also precipitate new, or aggravate existing, contestations over land and related natural resources (especially water) when private investors, sanctioned by national governments and other authorities, divert these natural resources for their own commercial uses (Duvane 2010, Matondi 2010).

This paper is a response to an unease over the media-driven understandings of 'land grabbing' that have enormously over-simplified what appear to be variegated and complex processes of agrarian change, some of which reflect historical continuity, while others of which may involve qualitative redirections in processes of agrarian change or the intensification or speeding up of such processes – but may also involve countervailing trends. It aims to build on Borras and Franco (2010a), who, with similar motives to my own, developed a schematic characterisation of the range of directions of change in both (i) land use and (ii) land-based social relations, many of which have been lumped under the catch-all phrase 'land grabs'. Theirs was a bold initiative to map these varied trajectories at a global level, and to illustrate them with references to processes underway in Asia, Africa and Latin America. My paper is a a response from a Southern African perspective: a first attempt to draw on Borras and Franco to propose an initial typology of these trends as they manifest in the region, based on available information, desk-based research and interviews with some key informants.

A Broader View of the Global Land Grab

The notion of land grabbing makes claims about direction, pace and extent of change – that these are, respectively, unidirectional (towards intensive food and fuel production), rapid, and massive. Borras and Franco (2010a) identify four directions of land use change associated with recent large transnational land deals (see Figure 1 below). Types A and B represent the displacement of food production largely for consumption and domestic exchange by either commodified food production (for the domestic market or for export) or biofuel production (for the domestic market or for export), while types C and D represent an intensification of land uses, often from forest or marginal ('idle') lands to cultivation of food or biofuel crops, respectively (again, either for the domestic market or for export).

Figure 1. Main directions of land use change today

Type A *Food to Food*	Type B *Food to Biofuels*
Type C *Nonfood to Food*	Type D *Nonfood to Biofuels*

Source: Borras and Franco (2010a, 13).

Within each quadrant, a great diversity of change is occurring, including changes which run counter-current to 'land grabs' and involve the subdivision of estate agriculture into smallholder plots, such as redistributive land reforms in Brazil and the past decade under Zimbabwe's fast-track land reform programme. Yet these are outliers. Within the ambit of what is now being called 'land grabbing', the most objectionable changes in land use are those related to, within Type A, the conversion of food production for consumption or domestic sale to production of food for export (especially in countries with chronically food insecure populations); within Type B, conversion of food production to production of biofuels for export; within Type C, indigenous forest clearance for food production for export; and within Type D, indigenous forest clearance for production of biofuels for export (Borras and Franco 2010a, 13–19). The contested 'vacant land', 'idle land' and 'wasteland' discourses – which characterise acquired land as unoccupied and unused, or at least under-utilised – suggest that new investments have not displaced local land uses and users (Hall 2010). It appears then that Type A deals are widely justified by presenting them as Type C, while Type B deals are similarly characterised as Type D (Borras and Franco 2010a, Cotula *et al.* 2009, Hall 2010).

But changes in land use may or may not involve changes in social relations of production, and it is largely these than underpin protest and contestation over land deals, rather than land uses *per se*. Recognising this, Borras and Franco (2010a, 25–8), as shown in Figure 2 below, further distinguish between four directions of change in land-based social relations: Type A is *redistribution* of land property relations, through a 'zero-sum' reform process that alters the relative shares of landed and landless (or near-landless) classes in society; Type B is *distribution* of land to the landless for free or for marginal cost, through a 'positive-sum' reform in which landed classes are fully compensated, as in market-based reforms; Type C is *non-(re)distribution* where, even if a land policy is in place, it formalises inequality, restores ownership but not control, or privatises public lands; and Type D is *(re)concentration* which may involve elite or corporate capture of resources in processes of reversing previous redistribution or 'perverse' redistribution as in titling schemes, lopsided joint ventures and land leases.

Figure 2. Flow of land-based wealth and power

Type A *Redistribution*	Type B *Distribution*
Type C *Non-(re)distribution*	Type D *(Re)concentration*

Source: Borras and Franco (2010a, 25).

These two related schematic frameworks present a basis for distinguishing between the currents of agrarian change underway in Southern Africa, and I return to them later.

Southern Africa: under-utilised and opening up for business?

No composite dataset exists on major transnational land-based investments across the Southern African Development Community (SADC) – the large and diverse region comprised of Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Where information about the terms of such acquisitions has come into the public realm, it is frequently partial, the result of local resistance and investigative journalism; indeed, the secretive nature of such deals, as well as of the identities of the investors and the terms of the deals (and the distribution of rents from them), is a feature of 'land grabbing' globally, partly because of the contested authority of states to allocate lands to which citizens might have a prior competing claim (see for instance Alden Wily 2010). For these reasons, the analysis presented here is necessarily patchy and represents a work in progress, drawing on published and unpublished sources to which, it is hoped, several initiatives by academics and civil society organisations will add, so as to generate over time a much more comprehensive understanding. This section starts with some data from global studies, and then moves to illustrating the spectrum of what might be termed ‘land grabbing’ in the region as a basis for the later attempt to characterise the wider array of instances known into a typology.

In the latter half of 2010, two major studies with ambitions of summarising the ‘land grab’ phenomenon at a global level were being finalised: the World Bank’s report was released on 8 September, while the study by the International Land Coalition (building on Taylor and Bending 2009) is in draft form and undergoing processes of internal review prior to publication. The Bank report defines much of sub-Saharan Africa, including SADC states like Zambia, as falling within its own Type 4 (‘suitable land available, high yield gap’) where, it argues, rainfed cultivation could be massively intensified. Its concern with ‘yield gaps’ underscores its overriding concern with production efficiency (World Bank 2010, 65), a concern also evident in its other recent report, *Awakening Africa’s Sleeping Giant*, which posited a ‘vast underused land reserve’ in the Guinea-Savannah zone covering much of West, Central, East and Southern Africa, and proposed an intensive process of agricultural commercialisation across this region (World Bank 2009, critically assessed in FAC 2010).

As in *Awakening Africa’s Sleeping Giants*, the World Bank’s latest offering, *Rising Global Interest in Farmland*, recognises claims to land but focuses on low productivity (and yield gaps) as justification for a procedural approach to regulating land deals in such a way as to facilitate the transfer of land rights from less to more efficient producers – the logic underlying its market-based land and agricultural reforms over the past two decades. Both reports agree that, in this region, low population densities and low mobility prevail, which suggests that agricultural intensification will require larger farm sizes – a conclusion derived from aggregate data (World Bank 2010, 64). This position deviates from the Bank’s professed adherence to an ‘inverse size-productivity relationship’ favouring small farms (Deininger and Binswanger 1992, Binswanger *et al.* 1995).

The Bank report confirms the massive scale of commercial land deals, and also the substantial proportion of deals that are small in extent individually, but cumulatively very significant – in some cases as significant as the big deals. The Bank commissioned fairly detailed studies in 14 countries, of which just two are in Southern Africa: Mozambique and Zambia. For Mozambique, the Bank’s country inventory study found 2.67 million hectares were allocated between 2004 and 2009 (suggesting that not only IFPRI but also the IIED estimates seriously understate the scale of grabbing). This comprised 117 larger projects exceeding 1.27 million hectares in total, and a further 259 deals for which national approval processes were required (those exceeding 1,000 hectares), yet it noted that no implementation data had been collected on any of these projects by the leasing authority: the government of Mozambique (World Bank 2010, 40). In contrast, the inventory in Zambia yielded evidence of a total of 130 projects over 500 hectares (World Bank 2010, 41). Compared to Mozambique, in Zambia there were fewer deals and they were typically smaller and largely not for agricultural production, as only 15 percent of the projects had conducted environmental impact assessments (EIAs) which are prerequisite for new agricultural developments (World Bank 2010, 41).[1]

Biofuels everywhere, but not enough to eat

The rapid expansion of investments to secure land to produce biofuels was what initially drew public attention to the rush for Southern Africa's farmland. This was driven in part by companies seeking to meet the demand for renewable fuel stocks in the North, particularly in the European Union (EU), which committed to a target of 10 percent by 2020, sometimes at the direct cost of food production (Oxfam 2008). This interest converged with shifts in energy policy among Southern African countries which recognised the possibility of meeting future energy needs from their own natural resources, limiting dependence on future oil imports and limiting exposure to the price volatility these necessarily involve (Sulle and Nelson 2009). This has taken the form of the expanding production across the region of *jatropha curcas*, the Latin American shrub from whose seeds oil can be extracted and refined to produce biodiesel.

The conflict between 'food and fuel' in the region is exemplified in the failed Daewoo Logistics deal for 1.3 million hectares in Madagascar (over half the arable land of the country) for maize for food and palm oil for biofuel, through a long-term lease; this was among the factors that, in early 2009, contributed to the overthrow of the government. Daewoo is a South Korean commercial group that, despite being deeply in debt, enjoys political support and is diversifying from transport and logistics infrastructure into natural resources, food products and biofuels (Ramiaramanana 2010). Its purpose in the deal was to secure future fuel stocks and boost Korea's food security by providing half of its maize imports from Madagascar alone (Ramiaramanana 2010). China also reportedly seeks 2.8 million hectares in DRC for biofuels, and 2.8 million hectares in Zambia.

Mozambique has without doubt been the frontrunner in embracing biofuels from the 2004 election when the ruling FRELIMO party urged all farmers to plant jatropha on all marginal and unused lands to ensure that Mozambique could become an 'oil exporting country' (Schut *et al.* 2010). Despite poor performance, and evidence that the 'miracle crop' could not withstand harsh agro-ecological conditions, this drew the attention of investors who initiated processing facilities for the production of biodiesel from jatropha, and established large-scale sites for cultivation, but also entered into contract farming arrangements (Bijman *et al.* 2010). Following directly on the rapid spread of jatropha, and its uneven performance, was the conversion of existing sugarcane production systems to ethanol, and the expansion of sugarcane cultivation to increase supply to processors (Schut *et al.* 2010). After at least four large land deals for jatropha production were concluded, and following outcry from civil society organisations and a one-year moratorium on new biofuel deals, the government adopted a biofuels policy in 2009 which aims to promote the industry while limiting negative outcomes. It also cancelled one contract in which the investor had not abided by stipulated conditions, and revived negotiations with investors for new land allocations (Schut *et al.* 2010). Just 17 large

[1] This may indicate that few were agricultural projects, but equally could mean that EIA requirements were not enforced.

investment proposals had been put to the Mozambican government by 2010 (two-thirds for biodiesel crops like jatropha, and one-third for bio-ethanol crops like sugar), but typically these are very large projects (Schut *et al.* 2010, 5153). None of the implemented projects have met their promised targets for job creation and most have focused on supplying external markets rather than the domestic market (Schut *et al.* 2010, 5165).

The widespread uptake of jatropha and sugarcane (for ethanol) has been seen across the region, in Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Angola, Madagascar and South Africa. Both crops are grown by smallholders supplying processing companies, as well as in larger estate forms of agriculture. These biofuels therefore involve very different social relations of production, and different trajectories of change. Although in much of the region the introduction of jatropha and sugarcane (for ethanol) has caused the displacement of food production systems, in some cases they have replaced other commercial cash crops, such as tobacco and citrus in a 245,000 hectare development in southern Mozambique (Duvane 2010).

In the past two years, oil price volatility has called into question the economic viability of large agrofuel initiatives. Crude prices spiked in 2007/08, but later declined to \$70 a barrel in 2009/10. The World Bank report agrees with the scepticism about the economic coherence of investments in jatropha (and other biofuels) in view of more recent oil price trends. The initial rush for land on which to grow biofuels (largely jatropha, sugar and maize) has waned substantially as oil prices dipped, and also as the costs of producing, refining and transporting them became more apparent and drew into question the economic viability of the industry (Cotula *et al.* 2008). Yet political reasons for pursuing the biofuels route may explain the continued insistence of some governments in the region on biofuels as part of their national energy strategies, as best exemplified in the case of what Matondi (2010) terms the 'wacky fuel-economics' of Zimbabwe, discussed below.

Meanwhile, the development of a small-scale processing industry to enable local farmers to generate fuel from their own feedstock – to provide for the energy needs of rural households – has been slow to emerge. As Borras and Franco (2010a, 16) note, 'It is generally assumed that all the recent initiatives around biofuels are corporate-driven and are for export. Where this is so, then the radical critique holds. Yet the critique fails to fully capture situations where the biofuels produced were for use and/or for the local market'. Yet the nationalist arguments in favour of harnessing natural resources for energy generation to contribute to meeting national energy demand appear to have given way to a reality of corporate refining for external markets. Overall, the direction of biofuels in Mozambique in particular appears to have been largely diverted away from the vision of smallholder production and refining.

The conversion to biofuel production is being spurred by the growing demand for feedstock, not only by the EU but also by South Africa as it tries to meet its commitments to shift towards renewable fuel. In 2010, South Africa's new Industrial Policy Action Plan increased targets for renewable content in the national fuel supply from 2 to 10 percent by 2020 (matching the EU targets) (RSA 2010, 68). The state-owned Industrial Development Corporation is an investor in all four biofuels initiatives so far in the country, and the South African government expects that mandatory blending will create demand-side certainty, providing investors with assurance sufficient for the roll-out of biofuels projects, which are located largely in the communal areas of the Eastern Cape

(RSA 2010, 68–69). These areas, like much of the rest of the region, are under customary tenure regimes.

Extractive industries: mining and forestry

Extractive industries represent a second dimension of land deals in Southern Africa. These might be understood as engaging in non-sustainable forms of resource extraction that are repatriated as profits to corporations (or governments) outside the locality. Foremost among the cases of land acquisitions for natural resource extraction are the mining and forestry sectors. While new mining investments are planned or underway in most countries in the region, this form is exemplified in the case of Angola, where local communities have been forcefully dispossessed to make way for mining, as well as oil and natural gas exploitation, and where such processes are highly militarised, being enforced through state military or private paramilitary forces employed by mining corporations (Chanda 2010). Acquisitions in the past few years have included those for aluminium mining in Bathucarta; natural gas projects by consortia of international companies in Soyo, close to the border with Congo, to deliver two million barrels per day by 2013; silver mining in Dondo by the Portuguese; copper and gold mining by the Chinese in Damba; and diamond mining in Lunda, among others (Chanda 2010).

Elsewhere, as in Angola, recent years have seen the continuation and in places the intensification of contestations between mining companies, national governments granting prospecting rights or mining permits, local and traditional authorities that act as gate-keepers and deal-makers, and communities on whose land such developments are envisaged. These trends are evident in the growth of uranium mining in Zambia (Machina 2010). They are also evident in South Africa, where major new platinum mines are being established in the northern regions of Limpopo province, in particular, by a variety of mining houses including Anglo Plat, and several more are in the planning stages. While purchase of white-owned farms for new mines is proceeding (though being held up in some instances by pending land restitution claims), many of the new mining developments are on communal land falling in the ex-Bantustans of Lebowa, Gazankulu and Venda. These have provoked violent clashes with police, acting on orders from political leaders, and led local communities to form solidarity groups with other mining-affected communities under the rubric of the 'Jubilee South Africa' campaign and with legal support from human rights organisations (Dolo 2010). In early 2010, this took the form of people from seven villages being involved in violent altercations with police brought in by local councilors who, they allege, had been paid by mining companies to facilitate their forced removal from their land (Jubilee Mokopane Platinum Committee 2010).

Forestry deals present similar opportunities for resource extraction, given the substantial indigenous forest cover and valuable hardwoods in some countries of the region. Several such deals also include longer-term plans for new (exotic) plantations and processing mills for pulp and paper. In her aptly-named *Chinese Takeaway* report on forestry in Mozambique's Zambézia province, McKenzie (2006, vi) found that 'Asian timber buyers, local business people and members of the Government of Mozambique and their forest services are colluding to strip precious tropical hardwoods from these slowgrowing, semi-arid and dry tropical forests at a rate that could see the resource exhausted in 5–10 years'. Duvane (2010) claims that most indigenous forest in Zambezia has now been concessioned. Similar processes of logging are underway in at least three other provinces. Here, the private interests of public officials in the forestry, wildlife and agriculture sectors constitute a 'timber mafia', who use their authority in government to allocate annual logging licences and manipulate regulations while extracting rents and outright bribes, and in some instances even investing in logging companies themselves, with the apparent (at least tacit) support of national party leaders. A follow-up study entitled *Tristezas Tropicais* (Tropical Sadness) demonstrated that, while China might be the destination of the takeaway, those doing the taking away were mainly of other nationalities – Indian, Korean, South African, Taiwanese – and several multinational companies (McKenzie 2009). More generally, it may be that widespread perceptions of the role of 'the Chinese in Africa' originate at least in part in the roles of many non-Chinese actors who recognise and capitalise on growing demand in China, and seek to supply it. Distinguishing between grabbers, investors and destination markets remains a conceptual and empirical challenge in this area of research.

Sulle (2010) has also shown how forest clearance forms part of non-forestry land deals, including, in the case of Tanzania, large allocations of indigenous forest for biofuel cultivation. With the value of forest resources being grossly under-calculated, and with compensation being diverted largely to local authorities (district government) rather than to existing land (and forest product) users, such acquisitions have offered a cheap route to extraction of forest products. At Kilwa, for example, a 34,000 hectare allocation of indigenous forest for jatropha production prompted a biofuels investor to install the largest sawmill in the region, harvesting up to 800,000 cubic metres of timber (more than the total harvested in the whole of southern Tanzania at the previous peak of logging in 2003), all in pursuit of a 'pilot' jatropha plantation – though obviously the change in land use was irreversible. Once-off compensation of US$ 9.50 per hectare was distributed on a ratio of 60:40 to the district and to the village (the legal manager, under customary tenure) (Sulle 2010).

Reversals and state capitalism in Zimbabwe

In Southern Africa, the term 'land grabs' was widely invoked to describe the illegal occupation of commercial farms (largely) by poor people since 2000. In this context, the term denoted a redistributive process which, for all its violence, messiness and (initial) illegality, altered the pre-existing agrarian structure in ways that sought to unravel and reverse the impacts of colonial land grabbing by white settlers and their governments (Cousins 2010). Scoones *et al.* (2010 forthcoming) have shown how, at least in Masvingo province, empirical evidence on land uses by the 'grabbers' challenges the pervasive and media-driven myths about unproductive land uses, low investment and resource capture by political elites. Household survey data show that beneficiaries were mostly local, poor households, were investing in their new land and were deriving substantial livelihood benefits. These patterns may be quite locality-specific, yet more recent data also confirms that, elsewhere in the country, the productivity of land uses post-fast track reform has recovered somewhat.

Now it appears that this land grabbing may be giving way to countervailing trends, some of which may undo previous reforms to redistribute or secure rights in land. Land grabbing ‘from below’ such as was seen during the 2000s may have dismantled a system of private property rights, but in the absence of political and legal momentum behind granting tenure rights to land occupiers, this renders what Scoones *et al.* (2010 forthcoming) characterise as the ‘new smallholders’ vulnerable to second-wave elite (and state-sponsored) land grabs. Such a reversal appears underway in the case of Chisumbanje in Zimbabwe’s Manicaland, and extending to the Sabie River basin, where a deal has been concluded for 40,000 hectares of sugarcane for ethanol generation (Kawadza 2010) through a public-private partnership involving former South African rogue businessman Billy Rautenbach and ZANU-PF – the party with which he is so closely associated that the European Union and United States include him among the individuals listed for targeted sanctions (Sibanda 2010). The Chisumbanje deal is to take the form of a partnership with the parastatal Agriculture and Rural Development Authority (ARDA). Also planned is an ethanol plant at an expected cost of US$600 million. At Chisumbanje, while the government considered what compensation would be required – and officials made assurances that villagers would be allowed to harvest their standing crops prior to removal – traditional leaders were allowed to determine whose names would be put forward to become suppliers to the new ethanol industry, and therefore (instead of being displaced) be accommodated as small cane growers alongside the central estate.

> *Headman Marega said, while the traditional leadership welcomed the project, people were afraid of the consequences. ‘The people would want to know what they are going to benefit from the project. We are, however, glad that Government is engaging the leadership for the locals to be accommodated in the project’. On the project, he said: ‘The project is welcome. There is no one who is against investment of any kind and we want the project to go ahead to create jobs in the area’. Under the programme, each headman would provide a list of beneficiaries.* (Kawadza 2010)

These developments have produced discursive reversals: now, the ‘settlers’ being threatened with removal are those black Zimbabweans who occupied farms in the early 2000s and have spent some years (re)building their livelihoods on them. Allegedly, some of the settlers being targeted and threatened with removal are those in the Tsvangirai faction of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC-T) constituencies. A second case, in Nuanetsi at Mwenezi, also in Masvingo province, follows a similar model of a major domestic investor partnering with a state institution. In both, foreign companies are involved as contractors for engineering and other technical services, but the investments themselves are domestic. Matondi (2011 forthcoming) even suggests that some of the domestic investors involved in such deals are former white commercial farmers finding new forms of investment in agriculture, now with the blessing of the state. These emerging forms of accumulation can be considered narrow accumulation by party-connected political elites.

The next Great Trek? South Africans head north

South Africa's (still almost exclusively) white commercial farmers have over the past two decades experienced dramatic changes in their political and economic situation. A combination of pressures has put these farmers – once a primary political constituency of the National Party apartheid government – into new difficulties, both objective and subjective. These pressures have been well documented and arise from agricultural deregulation, including the removal of direct and indirect subsidies, state-controlled marketing boards with floor prices and pan-territorial pricing, cheap credit and tax breaks; the rapid liberalisation of trade in agricultural products; and sharp increases in the prices of key farming inputs, particularly diesel and electricity (Bernstein 1996, Vink and Hall 2010, Williams *et al.* 1998). Further pressures adding to the actual and perceived difficulties of pursuing commercial farming include the introduction for the first time of basic labour rights for farm workers in the 1990s, and since then also minimum wage regulations, the extension of tenure rights to farm workers and their families (Atkinson 2007) and the placing of historical land claims to large areas of commercial farmland by former black occupiers, owners and tenants, in terms of the Restitution of Land Rights Act, 22 of 1994 (Walker *et al.* 2010).

These pressures have elicited a number of responses on the part of South Africa's white farmers. One response has been the decision by many to exit farming, sell their farms and invest in new careers in other sectors of the economy. A second response has been diversification into non-agricultural sectors, or into up- or downstream activities. A third response has been either individually or collectively to move out of South Africa and elsewhere on the continent. While for the past decade at least small numbers of South African farmers have moved to Zambia, Mozambique, Nigeria, and several other countries (Hammar 2010, Sjaastad 2010), this trend seems to be undergoing both a quantitative and a qualitative shift. On the one hand, as of early 2010 Agri South Africa (AgriSA), the dominant commercial farmers' association, was engaged in discussions with 17 African governments concerning investments in those countries.[2] Chief negotiator for the commercial farmers is Theo de Jager, deputy president of AgriSA, who has led numerous delegations of farmers to meet with agriculture and foreign affairs ministers of countries offering land deals. As of mid-2010, among the proposed deals were allocations of land for sugarcane production in Mozambique and in Sudan's Nile Delta, horticultural expansion in Egypt, and land for food production in Libya (while Libya itself was itself moving to conclude its own land deals for food and fuel in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and even the Ukraine) (Groenewald 2010). The major constraint on further deals is the absence of bilateral investment treaties to secure investors' assets and the right to repatriate profits (Cotula and Vermeulen 2009b). From a South African agribusiness point of view (a view shared with other members of the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions, which largely represents the interests of commercial farmers), this is the precondition for implementation that has scuppered (or at least delayed) several in-principle agreements for allocation of farmland in other countries in the region (SACAU 2010).

On the other hand, it appears that whereas in the past they migrated largely individually or in small groups, now their migration is being more centrally organised

[2] Interview with Karin Kleinbooi, Researcher, PLAAS, University of the Western Cape, South Africa. Cape Town, 6 April 2010.

and coordinated, through AgriSA, enabling large concessions for newly formed consortia and agribusinesses. Existing South African agribusinesses are extending their operations into neighbouring countries in Southern Africa, and in some cases further afield. But the capital behind these deals is not exclusively South African. Cooperative deals are underway between South African farmers and Chinese investors, apparently paving the way for partnerships in which commercial farmers will expand into neighbouring countries with the support of Chinese capital (including state-owned enterprises), for production of raw materials to meet the Chinese demand for food and fuel in the long-term. ‘Agri SA deputy president Theo de Jager also said the farmer’s group would within the next two months visit China to conclude an agreement over joint investment ventures with Chinese public firms in agriculture on the African continent’ (Shacinda 2010).

As well as these ‘push’ factors, there are ‘pull’ factors. African governments are creating conducive conditions and offering favourable terms in return for new agro-investments. Skills transfer, technology transfer, investment in infrastructure, creation of new employment opportunities and increase in domestic food supply are among some of the envisaged benefits for host countries cited by South Africa’s Agribusiness Chamber (Maluleke 2009). This also means that South African investor interests increasingly extend beyond ‘agriculture’ and ‘farmers’ to other economic sectors; the South African agribusinesses partner with construction, engineering and financial institutions to expand into grain storage, road construction, and financial services (Donnelly 2009). Less visible is the degree to which financial speculation and investment are driving South African capital into African farmland. As part of a growing trend, two asset management firms established a R3 billion investment fund, offering ‘access to stable, long-term returns within the context of continuing development in the agricultural sector’ (Reuters 2010).

The most significant recent deal offering African farmland to South African farmers was in the Congo (Brazzaville). In October 2009 the government of the Congo signed an agreement with AgriSA in which it allocated to a consortium of South African commercial farmers an initial area of 200,000 hectares of former state farms, with the option of expanding to 10 million hectares – an area twice the size of Switzerland. The country imports 95 percent of its food requirements, and its Agriculture Minister claimed that the deal would stimulate agriculture as part of its New Plan of Action (SAPA 2009). Although initially mooted as a 99-year lease, from available information it appears that a renewable 30-year lease was signed, according to the terms of which no rent is payable, and which contains guarantees regarding the tariff-free importation of agricultural inputs, and unlimited rights to export produce (planned to include vegetables and poultry), and for these rights to be heritable.[3] A Congolese human rights organisation alleges that communities in the affected areas, which hold customary land rights, were not adequately consulted,[4] though official sources claim that the land was vacant and unused, while also promising that local people will benefit from employment (SAPA 2009).

Also expanding are South African agribusiness and processing industries, prime among them the oligopolistic sugar industry. South Africa’s two sugar giants, Illovo and

[3] Personal communication with Roch Euloge N’Zobo, Director, Observatoire congolais des droits de l'Homme, Congo. February 2010.

[4] Personal communication with Roch Euloge N’Zobo, Director, Observatoire congolais des droits de l'Homme, Congo. February 2010.

Tongaat-Hulett, are both involved in major expansion in estate and outgrower schemes for sugarcane (much of which is for ethanol production) in a number of SADC countries, and both are subject to extensive land claims in South Africa. The two companies are expanding further into Mozambique, Zambia and Tanzania, among others (Richardson 2010). A major target for Illovo in particular is Malawi, at Intshalo Sugar in the south and Dwangwa Sugar in the north. Interests in the expansion of sugar production in the region extend beyond these two companies, to the South African government, which cannot meet its target for renewable fuel content from local supply; individual commercial farmers; and a substantial industry involved in the construction and management of new sugar mills and related estates and outgrower schemes. The South African engineering firm PGBI has been commissioned by the International Finance Corporation (under the World Bank Group) to produce a guide for investors in the sugar industry, including information on how to address land, social, and environmental issues, and has itself also obtained contracts for building sugar mills and ethanol plants in a number of African countries.[5]

Although land acquisitions elsewhere in the region have been spearheaded by organised agriculture, the South African government has brokered these deals through state-to-state negotiations as part of its longer-term strategy of assuring food (and fuel) supply while pursuing regional integration. As of late 2009, talks were underway with Angola, DRC, Sudan, Uganda and Zambia, and bilateral investment agreements were already in place in several other countries in Southern Africa and further afield. As Minister of Agriculture Tina Joemat-Pettersson assured the AgriSA congress, ‘If we can't find opportunities for white South African farmers in this country, we must do it elsewhere in the continent’ (Hoffstatter 2009). This she characterised as ‘an equal relationship between people of the African continent’ (Joemat-Pettersson cited in Hoffstatter 2009).

South African expansion in the region is not only for farming (or mining) but also for tourism, taking the form of coastal developments (including some illegal fencing) in Mozambique and Tanzania in particular, which exclude local people from beaches and marine resources, and game farms and safari and hunting operations in several other countries through the region (Piliso 2010). Enclosures for conservation and recreation have their own long history in this region, involving large areas and provoking (sometimes violent) contestations over resource rights.

Where is the food?

If ‘land grabbing’ is a response to volatility in global food markets, as is widely claimed, then what is striking in Southern Africa is the prevalence of land acquisitions for purposes other than food production. While modest numbers of South African and Zimbabwean farmers have invested in horticulture and livestock production in Zambia, Mozambique and elsewhere, large food production deals seem scarce indeed.

The major food commodity being promoted by foreign investors in the region is rice, and rice expansion has taken several different forms, as the examples of Madagascar and

[5] Interview with Martin Eweg, Consultant, AgriCane, and former research specialist, South African Sugar Association. Cape Town, 6 July 2010.

Mozambique illustrate. Ironically, in Madagascar the Rajoelina government that came into power on the back of the 2009 coup prompted by the failed Daewoo biofuels deal has since acceded to two alternative deals, one with Daewoo and a second with another South Korean company, Varun. The deals, not yet implemented, involve the companies contracting with 13 farmer associations for rice cropping – in the livestock producing areas of the West, hence displacing food production for local markets, and in the East, which is largely covered by indigenous rainforest and protected areas (Ramiaramanana 2010). In total, this would affect about half of the area initially foreseen in the stalled Daewoo deal, this time achieving similar objectives through different institutional forms, now through contract farming for the most part rather than their own estates.

In a second example of rice expansion, the case of the 20,000 hectare Mauritian rice deal in Mozambique, what appeared an intraregional deal turned out to involve the onward transfer by the Mauritians of the land rights they acquired for rice cultivation, the ultimate investor being a producer of hybrid rice – Singaporean biotech company Vitagrain – eager to extend its client base (GRAIN 2009a). This partnership includes joint research and development on hybrids, capital investment for production by Vitagrain, and securing of concessions in the region by the government of Mauritius through its various diplomatic missions. The Mauritians and Singaporeans (and in turn their Australian financial backers) are not alone in seeing Mozambique as a prime location for seed development. Chinese and Vietnamese farmer settlement in parts of Mozambique – Tete and Zambezia – may also focus on testing hybrid rice varieties (GRAIN 2009a). All the deals envisage large-scale and capital-intensive production.

Towards a typology

Making sense of the diversity of deals described above requires addressing the size, duration and source of the investments; the commodities and the business models through which they are implemented; the tenure arrangements and resources accessed; the terms of leases and compensation; the degree of displacement; labour regimes and employment creation; and changes in settlement and infrastructure. This initial review suggests enormous variation among these, as illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The many faces: dimensions of land grabbing in Southern Africa

Dimension	Range of experiences documented
Size of investment	Focus of studies is on deals over 1,000 hectares; huge variation ranging up to deals of 500,000 hectares and plans of deals up to 10 million hectares
Duration of investment	Short- to medium-term, but mostly long-term, as in 15-25 year (often renewable) leases, and up to 50- or 99-year leases
Source of investment	Domestic private investors, foreign private investors (both individuals and large companies), parastatals, foreign sovereign wealth funds
Commodity	Jatropha, sugar, rice, other foods, forestry, various minerals, also tourism experiences
Business model	Large commercial estates, nucleus estates with outgrowers, outgrowers and processor, smallholder model

Tenure arrangements	Purchase (rare), lease, concession, illegal enclosure
Resources accessed	Land, water, minerals, marine resources, wildlife, forestry *(and labour)*
Lease / compensation payments	Vary according to value, method of calculation, timing (once-off or repeat, e.g. annual payments) and distribution to local communities; traditional leaders; and local, district, provincial and national government
Degrees of displacement	'Vacant' and 'unused' land, claimed land, grazing land, cultivated lands, lands used for natural resource harvesting
Labour regimes	Locally hired labour, imported labour, self-employment as outgrower
Settlement	Changes in settlement (eg. villagisation), de-agrarianisation
Infrastructure	Investment in infrastructure for production, processing, and transport (roads, ports), and social infrastructure (schools, clinics)

The purpose here is to not to make any claims to what is typical, but rather to illustrate the variety of land deals (i.e. major transnational land acquisitions) in the region, and to make a judgement about the dominant types. Applying this framework to the empirical data on Southern Africa draws attention to the predominance of land use changes of Types B and D over Types A and C (i.e. towards biofuels rather than towards food).

A gap in the framework, though, and a significant trend in the region, is the conversion of land use from food to non-food (other than biofuels), as in the displacement of local food production for consumption or the domestic market, as in the mining, tourism and (plantation) forestry deals. This suggests the need for a third column, 'to Nonfood' with Type E (Food to Nonfood) and Type F (Nonfood to Nonfood).

Figure 3. Main directions of land use change

To Food	***To Biofuels***	***To Nonfood***
Type A **Food to Food** Very little; some rice and some cultivation and livestock by SA and Zimbabwean farmers	**Type B** **Food to Biofuels** Very substantial, in Mozambique, Zambia, Angola, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Madagascar, Tanzania (but slowing down?)	**Type D** **Food to Nonfood** Displacements of people and their land uses (i.e. whole settlements) for mining and tourism deals

Type C Nonfood to Food	Type D Nonfood to Biofuels	Type E Nonfood to Nonfood
Rice expansion in Mozambique and as above; degree of displacement of local food production difficult to ascertain	Widespread, especially through forest clearance for plantations, as well as through 'in-filling' of unused land surrounding cultivated fields	Widespread enclosures for forestry (including plantations), mining and tourism deals

Figure 4. Flow of land-based wealth and power

Type A **Redistribution** Fast-track in Zimbabwe	**Type B** **Distribution** Faltering land reforms in SA and Namibia
Type C **Non-(re)distribution** Some co-management and joint ventures; various tenure reforms	**Type D** **(Re)concentration** Reconcentration in Zimbabwe; all other countries experiencing large land acquisitions

What the schema above helps to illuminate is how these trends are unravelling the modest gains made in the region towards securing and redistributing rights to land. A variety of land reform initiatives are still unfolding alongside concentration – which is either reversing such reforms (as in Zimbabwe) or affecting different populations (as in South Africa). These dynamics of land grabbing are less pronounced in South Africa, where land grabbing took place decades and even centuries ago, and where private title over most of the territory means that new investors must engage with formal land markets where prices have risen quite rapidly since 1994. For this reason, South Africa and also Namibia, where private land ownership dominates, are not the focus of land grabbing (as commonly conceived) yet are experiencing rapid concentration in ownership of existing titled lands (Type D) (Odendaal 2010). In the case of South Africa, the number of commercial farming units decreased from approximately 60,000 in 1996 to under 40,000 in 2007 (NDA 2010, 6). In the communal areas of the ex-Bantustans and ‘coloured’ reserves, where land users have insecure forms of tenure, conditions lend themselves to grabbing of resources by state authorities and private companies. Here, similar processes are threatening the rights of some black South Africans who were either forcibly removed from ‘white’ South Africa into apartheid-era Bantustans, or endured growing overcrowding in these dumping grounds, and are now being threatened with eviction. The typology, then, is useful in connecting processes of ‘land grabbing’ underway in the region and in more limited ways in communal areas of Namibia and South Africa (also Type D) with both countries’ faltering initiatives to redistribute ownership of commercial farms in the former white agricultural heartland (Type B), initiatives which are increasingly giving way to more narrow forms of transferring whole commercial farms from one individual owner to another without wider changes in farm sizes, land uses, production technologies or employment, and without altering unequal class relations (as in Type A).

However, the scheme proposed by Borras and Franco (2010a) does not address the institutional forms, or business models, through which these social relations are perpetuated or transformed, and in what direction. The focus on ‘land relations’ is limiting, and needs to be expanded to ‘agrarian class relations’.

Building on these observations, I would like to propose (somewhat tentatively) a five-fold typology of the business models through which land grabbing is taking place in Southern Africa, in the hope that this will serve as a basis for future investigation, criticism and elaboration. First, an *extraction model* involves the stripping of resources without longer-term investment or production, and is by definition an unsustainable business model. Second is an *enclave model* as described by Ferguson (2006), involving outright takeover of land and related resources (perhaps displacing others) and the construction of related infrastructure, partly to provide inputs to and process output of a commercial enterprise, but also to provide the social and physical infrastructure required for commercial operations. These are what Ferguson (2006) terms ‘enclave economies’ that are poorly integrated into their surrounding society and economy. Third is a *colonist model* involving the introduction of commercial operators who take over a block or area, as has been seen in parts of Mozambique and Zambia, for instance, with the introduction of white commercial farmers from Zimbabwe and South Africa (Hammar 2010, Sjaastad 2010). Fourth is an *outgrower model*, involving the development of processing facilities (usually with a core commercially-operated estate), through which small producers are incorporated into commercial value chains. Fifth is a model of *commercialisation in situ*, in which small producers and other land users are incorporated into new or transformed commercial value chains in the absence of any core estate or sometimes even any processing facility – in which case the form of commercialisation is primary commodity production with resonances to past modes of accumulation.

These may be seen as points along a spectrum representing the degree to which land-based social relations are altered through exclusion of local users and others with claims to the natural resource base. Although the discourses of land grabbing suggest extraction and enclaves (1 and 2 above) – for instance the rumours of the Chinese bringing in all their input supplies including (prison) labour, even though little evidence is yet available to corroborate such a view – much of what we do know is underway in the region is along the lines of an intensification of existing trends of colonisation programmes for the settlement of commercial farmers (3), and the massive expansion of outgrower schemes and the commercialisation in situ of smallholder agriculture (4 and 5). The latter have been driven by the demands not of national governments for food security, but of agroprocessors for commodity supplies and feedstock.

Reflecting on these trends: what fresh insights?

Attracting foreign investment is not a new priority for governments in Southern Africa; indeed the orientations of state investment policy demonstrate more continuity than change. This is a demand-side boom for which governments – and citizens – in the region were poorly prepared. Understandings of 'land grabbing' in Southern Africa may now need to be moderated, taking into account the degree of attrition involved between proposed deals and concluded deals; concluded deals and actual investment; actual investment and displacement of local people and their land uses. Simultaneously, and paradoxically, media-driven depictions of the rush for farmland for food and biofuels by the Chinese and Koreans with the backing of their governments and by Western corporations may be missing the mark.

First, if countries with a poor track record of protecting the land rights of their citizens are those that attract the strongest interest from foreign investors – as the Bank study claims – then this confirms that the current investment rush is riding a tide of state-sponsored grabbing of resources from citizens. The lessor is frequently not the holder of land rights, having failed to legally extinguish pre-existing customary land rights – thus the 'grabber' is usually the state rather than foreign investors (Alden Wiley 2010). Efforts towards decentralising the administration of land rights has pitted poor local communities against global capital, with local, provincial and national state authorities playing a combination of sometimes contradictory roles. Yet, as inconclusive as it may be, the hiatus on new deals in Tanzania, in response to evidence of negative impacts on local people, shows that democratic pressure can be brought to bear (Sulle 2010).

Second, and following the point above, the investor rush has produced stalemates and reversals in the land reforms underway in the region. The flurry of land rights law and policy development of the 1990s in the region has given way to deeply ambivalent positions of states on the question of citizens' land rights vis-à-vis state authority over land. Mozambique exemplifies this tension: with a progressive land rights framework and law giving statutory recognition to *de facto* land rights, yet also a centre of grabbing, as the current government appears intent on dismantling much of what is innovative and progressive about its legal framework. Others, like Angola and Zambia, appear chronically unable to conclude their protracted processes of developing national land policy and law.

Third, in Southern Africa the lessees are often not the investors, as onward transfers of leases, concessions or other acquired rights is widely practiced, spurred in large part by increasingly diverse and speculative interests in land. Whether investment is domestic or transnational, then, may be obscured. According to the Bank's study (World Bank 2010, xiv), the domestic share of Mozambican land allocated is 53 percent, suggesting that about half of major land transfers are to domestic investors; anecdotal evidence shows though that much of this ostensibly domestic investment involves onward transfers of rights for resource extraction and utilisation. Similar patterns might explain the surprisingly high domestic shares of large land acquisitions elsewhere, in countries like Ethiopia (49 percent), Sudan (78 percent) and Nigeria (97 percent), as reported by the World Bank (2010, xiv).

Fourth, the presumption that ‘land-grabbing’ produces ‘development-induced displacement’ of smallholder farmers may obscure the degree to which, in parts of Southern Africa at least, it incorporates smallholder producers in new social relations and patterns of accumulation. In biofuels, initial models of large estate agriculture appear to have given way to smallholder production, largely through outgrower schemes. Similar patterns are emerging with respect to the (largely South African) sugar rush, though in this case the substantial fixed capital investments associated with establishing new sugar mills necessitates a core estate to assure supply for processing in addition to small cane growers.[6] The conversion from independent producer to contract farmer to labourer involves rapid rural proletarianisation. Here, de-agrarianisation is not the gradual outcome of long trajectories of change – such as the widely observed trends of rural-to-urban migration and growing rural demand for goods and services considered by Deborah Bryceson (1996, also Bryceson and Jamal 1997) – but rather an abrupt interruption of such processes.

Conclusions

A growing body of evidence is addressing the nature and scale of land deals in the Southern African region, yet it falls far short of a comprehensive picture of these dramatic changes in land rights and use that are unfolding. This paper, too, is very far from comprehensive. The purpose here is to highlight selected trends and contribute to the task of establishing ‘analytical signposts’ in the literature on land grabbing. This, it is hoped, might assist in differentiating amongst land acquisitions in Southern Africa in order to determine deeper underlying drivers of the trend, to uncover the (contradictory) interests at work within the region, and also to contribute to an agenda for research. A central analytical question for such an endeavour is, **What are the factors that shape how actors – from local to international – make decisions and policy around these land deals, what are actors’ interests and agendas, and what ideologies and discourses of legitimation are employed in favour of these deals?**

Underlying the diversity is nevertheless a common direction of agrarian transformation – towards the ‘South Africanisation’ of the region, not in the literal sense of South Africa becoming the coloniser of the region (though elements of that view may indeed be true!) but rather in the sense that the changes underway – concentration of control over land, labour and value chains (capital) – are rendering the agrarian structure of several countries more like that of a settler state like South Africa. The outcome of these enclosures and concentrations of control over land may be a narrowing of the contrast between those countries with a history of settler colonialism and those without.

These perspectives draw into question the (political) purpose of responses from international financial and development institutions, which have tended to prioritise procedural safeguards to curb the excesses of ‘grabbing’ in the forms of a ‘code of

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[6] Interview with Martin Eweg, Consultant, AgriCane, and former research specialist, South African Sugar Association. Cape Town, 6 July 2010.

conduct' or 'principles to guide responsible agro-investment' (FAO *et al.* 2010, criticised in Borras and Franco 2010b, among others), rather than questioning the paradigm of development that promotes such deals, and the directions of agrarian change that they precipitate.

The focus of the land grabbing discourse on 'mega' land deals obscures the multi-layered processes underway that both confirm concerns about 'land grabbing' and yet which defy the associations of that term with (i) illegality, (ii) large-scale acquisitions, and (iii) displacement of local people. While such grabs are indeed in evidence these are relatively isolated instances and – in response to media attention, civil society mobilisation and pressure from the international aid and development community – may be on the wane as in the case of Tanzania, where a moratorium on further allocations for biofuels has been put in place. In contrast, the rise of pro-smallholder and green revolution policy discourses may present a route by which these trends are accelerated.

This review exposes the degree to which established conceptions in international political economy – of the global North and global South – founder when confronted with dynamic adjustments in the face of threat and opportunity brought on by the multiple crises in food, fuel and financial systems. This paper suggests that the perceptions of 'land grabbing' (and the innuendo of the term itself) require some nuancing in response to the complex realities unfolding in Southern Africa. First, **what is being grabbed is not only the land** but also the water and the minerals and, I would argue, the cheap labour with which to exploit these. Second, although the concept has been consistently linked to 'foreign' investors, in this region at least, **it is clearly *not* all transnational**; indeed many of the processes described above involve domestic investors, intra-regional grabbing or domestic investors in partnership with parastatals and other regional investors. Third, and perhaps in contrast with trends elsewhere on the continent, **it is largely legal** – even if this requires changes in law to bring it in line with practices of state land allocation.

The diversity among investors themselves is something which civil society organisations mobilising in response have scarcely grappled with: some require a degree of disorder to bypass regulations and rely on local deal-brokers to capture resources, while others, especially those with longer timeframes to make good the return on their investments, have a vested interest in political stability, legal clarity on and transparent adjudication of land and other property rights.

If Africa and Southern Africa in particular are the hottest targets for land grabbing, why is this the case? The first of the two most common reasons advanced is that this area is the 'vast under-utilised reserve' – because its natural endowment lends it to intensive cultivation and it is not being used (World Bank 2009) – though why that is a major attraction to investors is wholly unclear. But the alternative and more compelling explanation is that it is cheap. The reason it is cheap is, as economists would point out, 'externalities', in this case the fact that the property rights of those with uses and claims on the land are not recognised either in law or in practice. Rather, the terms of deals are being struck by government authorities. As Alden Wily notes (2010), it is governments rather than investors that are grabbing the land and, in this sense, the willingness of national as well as local authorities to displace rural populations in favour of 'development' is not new.

> *Remedy lies in… legal acknowledgement that customary and other longstanding unregistered land tenancy amounts to a real property interest, registered or not… Without this change, majority rural landholders remain little better than squatters on their own land, a condition already wrongfully endured for a century or more… While hardly new, the current wave of state-to-state backed leasing hardens an already dangerous dichotomy between the interests of governments and their people.* (Alden Wily 2010, 1)

The term land grabbing – while mobilising – patently fails to capture the range of actual experiences. It is not so much that the term lumps together 'apples and oranges'; it is more like 'apples and combine harvesters'. Is the term useful, then, in the analysis of major (trans)national land-based investments in Southern Africa? Insofar as it precipitates questions about what is being grabbed, by whom, from whom, for what, and with what effects, and draws attention to injustice and elite capture of resources, it remains a relevant concept. Yet I would argue that it draws attention away from trends that involve not the mere capture of land but the capture of labour, water, and most of all, the adverse incorporation – rather than exclusion – of smallholder agriculture into new value chains, patterns of accumulation, and the wider transformations in agrarian structure and agro-food systems that these precipitate. In Southern Africa, then, among the areas for further enquiry is the nature of this adverse incorporation. This implies addressing questions not only about how these deals come to be, their implications for displacement and impacts on livelihoods – but also **asking what land grabbing *produces*: what new social relations, land politics, labour markets and modes of accumulation are being produced?**

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Appendix A

Table 1: Major transnational land deals in selected Southern African countries

Country	Sector	Context	Location
Mozambique	Rice	Mostly large-scale (>10,000 ha upwards) deals; actors include Chinese and Japanese (through Vietnamese contractors); some approved; Mozambican government as partner in at least one	Zambezi valley, Limpopo valley (1/4 of agricultural land), Matutuine – the river valleys
Mozambique	Tourism	Many deals; mostly coastal, mostly small hectares, mostly illegal; diverse investors (mostly South African, but increasingly multinational)	Maputo through to Beira Angoche Pemba Nacala Quirimbas archipelago
Mozambique	Biofuels (*jatropha*)	Many actors in Mozambique, from 10-70,000 ha per deal	All over (expanding from dry south to more fertile central north – more densely populated and more agricultural land uses being displaced)
Mozambique	Biofuels (ethanol)	For sugar exports and for ethanol – but changing towards the latter, and expanding (will be 90% ethanol). Big and growing over colonial sizes: over 100,000 ha in Mozambique already, 50,000 ha in the pipeline.	The major river valleys
Mozambique	Forestry	Plantation forestry affects a huge area – the biggest of all the sectors making land deals	Manica, Zambezia, Niassa (mostly the plateau), with best rainfall, soils
Mozambique	Dams	Proposed construction of six hydroelectric dams in Mozambique	Six river valleys to be affected
Angola	Biofuels (*jatropha*)	Statoil (Norwegian company) is the only actor so far; rapid expansion to date, and further expansion possible	Kwando Kubango (least populated areas for now – but IDPs returning from war may be unable to resettle)
Angola	Biofuels (ethanol)	Sugar largely for ethanol	Melange, Kwanza Sul

Country	Sector	Context	Location
Angola	Mining	Diamond industry in Angola is least documented. Huge numbers of alluvial miners (small) and now more big deals: De Beers and ENDIAMA (parastatal), the Israelis, other mining companies	Lundas (substantial logistical and security challenges in conducting research here)
Angola	Dams	Hydroelectric dam development proposed in two regions of Angola	Two river valleys to be affected
Zimbabwe	Biofuels (*jatropha*)	Public Trust established on 360,000 hectares, prompting protest from local communities, reversal of gains made through land reform; foreign investors appear to be fronted by local elites	Mwenezi
Zimbabwe	Biofuels (ethanol)	Sugar for ethanol for local power generation, as part of import substitution / sanction busting strategy, but involving foreign private sector investors in partnership with state and party interests	Chisumbanje
Tanzania	Biofuels (ethanol)	Sugarcane for export of ethanol on 22,000 hectares, with a further 500,000 under negotiation; outgrower model proposed, with block large-scale farming as an alternative. Forest clearance and high environmental impacts.	Bagamoyo, coastal forest and national park
Tanzania	Tourism	Gulf states in large hunting safari deal, encroaching on village lands; deal negotiations with government in progress with reported displacement and alleged intimidation of villagers	Loliondo, Masaailand
Madagascar	Rice	Estate rice production on 130,000 ha of lowland communal land, with 50-year lease in place with South Korean investor – despite collapse of Daewoo deal following political opposition to it, culminating in the 2009 coup	Northwest regions, including 13 river valley farming systems

Country	Sector	Context	Location
Malawi	Mining	Uranium exploration by Australian company on customary land, with some displacement of local people, and reportedly with a 15-year tax holiday	Karonga, Northern Malawi
Malawi	Cotton	Cotton production and processing plant by Chinese companies on customary land, deal concluded two years ago and production underway	Southern and Central Malawi
Zambia	Biofuels (ethanol)	Expansion of existing South African sugar company land to meet demand in EU market, through outgrower scheme, but with unclear land rights for new outgrowers on communal land	Mazabuka district in Southern Zambia
Zambia	Mining	Expansion of copper mining alongside proposed biofuel production, with potential impacts both for local livelihoods and labour migration, including physical displacement and labour displacement	North-Western province
South Africa	Biofuels (*jatropha*)	Planned expansion of biofuel production on one million hectares of so-called under-utilized land in poorest rural districts, through contracts with domestic and foreign investors – for the first time giving commercial access to communal areas where land rights remain unclear and contested	Communal areas, especially former Transkei bantustan
South Africa	Biofuels (ethanol)	Planned expansion of sugar production for ethanol in high rainfall regions under customary tenure through contracts with the two established sugar mills (not transnational)	Communal areas, especially former KwaZulu bantustan
Namibia	Dams	Proposed construction of hydroelectric dam on Namibian-Angolan border, to be implemented by Brazilians, displacing Himba, and with high costs likely in terms of livelihoods, especially for pastoralists, and an end to a way of life	Baynes Falls on Kunene River, Namibian-Angolan border

Country	Sector	Context	Location
Namibia	Mining	Uranium and platinum rush and issuing of prospecting licences, and in one case so far, a long-term lease, for land held under customary tenure and without prior consent, displacing cultivation and destroying gravesites	Orongo region, among others
Various	Various	Expansion of South African commercial farmers into various countries in the region and into Central and West Africa, including concessions by governments of up to 10 million hectares (Congo); largely for production of food crops for export to EU and with supply contracts to South African processing and retail companies	Focus on country of origin (South Africa) of groups of commercial farmers

Source: Author's own summary of cases of major transnational deals, as discussed at the PLAAS Regional Workshop on Commercialisation of Land and 'Land Grabbing' in Southern Africa, Cape Town, 24-25 March 2010.