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Rethinking investment dynamics: An alternative framework of the global land rush

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Abstract

Despite growing interest in "land grabbing," the literature remains biased in several key ways, failing to capture the full diversity of land investments that have occurred in the last decade. In particular, this paper identifies and analyzes three analytical blind spots in the comparative literature on land grab: a) the failure to incorporate non-productive investments, including speculation, b) the misguided focus on investor nationality, as opposed to capital flows, and c) the tendency to ignore how domestic actors shape the terms of a land deal. In drawing attention to these limitations, this paper constructs two typologies of land investment—one describing physical changes in *land use*, and another mapping *interactions* between investors and developing country actors. Working in conjunction, they help to explain why land deals occur where they do and how they change not only the land itself, but also people's relation to the land. Building on the work of Borras and Franco (2010) and Hall (2011), who examine how land use changes, the first typology accounts for nonproductive and speculative investments, which were often ignored in early land grab research. The principal contribution of this paper, however, is a second, novel typology, which maps the complex interactions between investors and a host of domestic actors—including the government and civil society organizations. This paper thereby calls for a more nuanced analysis of the bargaining processes that underlie every land deal and also of the potential policy alternatives that may attract investment without sacrificing the livelihoods or lands of vulnerable local populations. [1]

Introduction

Beginning in the mid-2000s, foreign investors started acquiring "under-cultivated" agricultural lands across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the former Soviet Union (Hall 2011; Anseeuw et al 2012). In developing regions like Africa, where only 2-10 percent of land is formally tenured (Deininger 2003), this so-called "global land grab"[2] has had devastating consequences on the local communities that live off land that does not formally belong to them. Land acquisitions often generate higher local food prices, create fewer jobs than advertised, expel people from their ancestral lands, destroy natural resources and habitats, exacerbate ongoing disputes over land, and disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, including women (Anseeuw *et al* 2011; Berhman *et al* 2011; Daley 2011; World Bank 2011).

[1] DRAFT: PLEASE DO NOT CIRCULATE OR CITE WITHOUT PERMISSION

[2] The term "land grab" is in itself controversial. As Borras *et al* (2011b) point out, it has become a "catch-all" for a wide variety of phenomena. The word is highly politicized and may not give investors credit where it is due. For these reasons, I prefer to talk about the "global land rush" or "large-scale land acquisitions in developing countries," although I will occasionally use the word "land grab" for clarity.

Much of this initial investment was in agricultural land, spurred by the growing food insecurity problems of powerful foreign states like the Gulf States and China after the food price crisis of 2008 (GRAIN 2008). Mineral, water, and forest resources have also been affected (Zoomers 2010). Many projects are also designated for biofuels production, although the distinction between food and fuel is blurry; roughly 40 percent of investors turn to "flex crops" that can be used for both or designate the same parcel of land for the cultivation of several crops (Anseeuw et al 2012). The term global *land* grab also obscures the role played by water, as large-scale agriculture often competes with and intensifies existing water use, sometimes generating conflicts around surrounding water resources (Anseeuw et al 2012; Kay and Franco 2012; Woodhouse and Ganho 2011; Woodhouse 2012).

Foreign investors frequently obtain long-term leases ranging up to 99 years from local governments (Cotula 2011), although private purchases and conservation acquisitions are also common. Often plagued by corruption, these deals rarely involve coordination across government institutions and rarely compensate local populations for the resulting loss of access to resources (Vermeulen and Cotula 2010a).

Estimates for the scale of these land acquisitions vary dramatically, ranging from 45 million hectares (World Bank 2011) to over 200 million hectares (Geary 2012). Though difficult to quantify (Cotula 2012), this scramble for land is likely here to stay. Food production must double by 2050 to meet the globe's growing food needs, and much of this increased production will need to occur in developing countries (FAO 2008, cited in Borras and Franco 2010a). In monetary terms, this means 80 billion dollars of investment *per year* (Blumenthal 2013). Large-scale agriculture provides one avenue to meet this growing demand, but more inclusive business models also exist, including: contract farming, leases and management contracts, tenant farming, farmer-owned businesses, and upstream and downstream business links (Vermeulen and Cotula 2010b).

The recent land rush is distinct from other instances of neo-imperial influence in a few critical ways. These new investments have attracted new types of investors—in particular, investors with little experience in agriculture—and are refocusing on countries with weak governance, many of which received little foreign investment until the 1990s (Cotula *et al* 2009; World Bank 2011). Furthermore, these deals share an immediate trigger—the food-price crisis of 2007-2008—although long-term price expectations, population growth, and resource demand will likely sustain it in the long run (Anseeuw et al 2011).

Although our knowledge of land grab has deepened considerably since 2008, there is still much to learn. This paper focuses on *transnational* land grabs (excluding purely domestic agrarian

transitions) and notes three limitations in current comparative research: a) the lack of attention paid to *nonproductive* investments, including speculation, b) the failure to examine capital flows and how foreign investors may be involved indirectly in "domestic" projects, and c) the tendency to ignore why and how local governments and civil society organizations may attract, condone, or oppose such investments. Although individual case studies have dealt with some of these issues, there has been little comparative work—on either a regional or global level—that addresses these three factors.

Yet, to what extent have these omissions in the literature biased the extant research agenda? In order to get at this question, I propose using two new typologies to map the interactions between investors and domestic actors, as well as to describes changes in land use. These typologies are necessarily simplifications and are no substitute for rigorous case study analysis. Rather, they allow for primitive accounting of what has been studied in the literature thus far and suggest cases that may have been overlooked previously. In this way, these typologies have the potential to reveal undiscovered patterns in the terms of land purchases or lease agreements, to call for increased research on capital flows, and to restore agency and accountability to oft-overlooked domestic actors.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, I analyze existing models of land grab, showing how they have advanced our knowledge of land investment, and also how they have fallen short. I then present two typologies of land investment, which together describe the changes in *land use* and *investor-domestic actor interactions*. These typologies are then used to analyze two case studies—the paper pulp industry in Brazil and sugar cane ethanol in the Philippines. Finally, I conclude by discussing the economic, political, and ethical issues highlighted by the typology. This shift in perspective not only reveals analytical blind spots in the current land research agenda, but it also raises important questions about how we should define justice—and by extension, injustice—in the land grab debate, calling for a more nuanced understanding of what truly constitutes a "grab."

A model that falls short

The literature on the global land grab has come a long way since researchers began studying the phenomenon in earnest in 2008. Many early assumptions—for example, that food insecurity alone drove the investment—have since been relaxed or discredited. In particular, there has been a proliferation of thoughtful case study analysis, as well as increased investigation into green grabbing, water grabbing, and other non-agricultural land purchases. Nevertheless, despite this wealth of case study knowledge, the comparative literature on land

grab—especially existing typologies—remains insufficient, often failing to incorporate the diverse and at times contradictory discoveries made by empirical researchers.

This paper attempts to bring global models of land grab up to date with the case study research, in addition to highlighting where case study analysis itself could be improved. In this section, I address a handful of limitations of current land grab frameworks—namely, the failure to integrate domestic actors into causal explanations; the overemphasis of African cases; the failure to analyze capital flows; and the lack of attention paid to speculative and other nonproductive investments.

First, causal explanations have focused almost exclusively on market demand. The prevailing model claims: rising food and fuel prices have made food and energy security a vital concern for many foreign states. Looking to capitalize on these rising prices and/or secure food sources for the future, foreign investors have turned to under-developed lands in the developing world. Despite the truth in this claim, more attention must be paid to the role played by host countries in seeking out and attracting foreign investment in agricultural land. What do local states have to gain from selling under-developed land? How do cultural differences inform the extent to which a state seeks out investment? How do domestic elites shape land politics? Such questions are implicit in most land grab discussions, but few global models take them into account.

Second, the literature has overemphasized African cases. The most egregious violations of land rights do occur in Africa and the continent is home to anywhere between 62 percent (Anseeuw et al 2012) and 70 percent of land acquisitions (World Bank 2011). Nevertheless, this process is occurring elsewhere—in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Eastern Europe—under very different conditions (Baquero and Gómez 2012; Borras *et al* 2012; Wolford 2010a). In order to adequately assess the scope and effects of the global land rush, we first need to document and analyze the full spectrum of variation, not just the types of deals occurring in Africa.

Third, there is little to no aggregate information about who is investing, where they are obtaining land, and at what cost. Many recipient countries lack land registries, making such research logistically difficult (Cotula *et al* 2009). Moreover, some companies obscure this information, further compounding the difficulty of research into investors. Even so, the focus of the literature has been on foreign "investors," instead of foreign capital. The most important distinction between investors is *not* their nationality, but rather, their source of capital. International firms or intergovernmental investors in fact fund some "domestic investors," making them more similar to their foreign counterparts.

Fourth, speculative land investment appears to be rampant, but it is rarely, if ever, studied as a phenomenon unto itself. Although many agrarian researchers assume that all purchased land is ultimately put to *some* productive use, some investors are in fact buying large plots of land merely for the relative security of the investment and the high returns they can earn in comparison to traditional asset classes (De Schutter 2010; Geary 2012; Liu et al 2012; World Bank 2011). To date, only 21 to 27 percent of land deals have led to any "implementation activity" or production, with the rest remaining idle (Anseeuw et al 2012; World Bank 2011). Although some of these tracts will eventually see agricultural production, this cultivation may not happen in the near term, and in the interim, local farmers are often denied access, inhibiting their own farming (Hinshaw 2011).

In light of these biases in the comparative literature, we are in need of an alternative framework that better captures the full variation of land deals. In this paper, I propose a new typology that maps the interactions between investors and recipient country actors, thereby underscoring the bargaining processes that lead to a land deal, be they advantageous or detrimental to local interests. In addition to this *interactions* typology, I amend an earlier typology by Hall (2011) to incorporate nonproductive and speculative investments, which may account for up to three-quarters of all land projects. Through the careful selection of a few variables that characterize the full variation of global land deals, these typologies shed light on underlying patterns in land investment that are particularly noteworthy or have been hitherto ignored by comparative researchers.

Why typologies?

As an analytic tool, typologies allow us to draw comparisons between different cases and make predictions about unknown cases based on combinations of a given set of variables. Typologies are necessarily limited because they focus on a select group of variables and specify the parameters of those variables. For example, there are a host of potential variables that contribute to the variation in land grab: land use change, the type of investor, the extent to which the land is cultivated by local farmers, the business model of the incoming company, the domestic state's political and economic agenda, the degree to which the land is populated, the amount of "available" land nationwide, and the land's suitability for cultivation. A typology singles out particular dimensions, or a small number of variables, with the hope of shedding light on underlying patterns that are particularly noteworthy or have been hitherto ignored.

With the "right" variable selection, a typology reveals fundamental causal configurations. That is, it not only answers the questions of *who*, *where, when*, and *how*, but also gets at *why* a given outcome occurred. A well-defined typology also balances the competing goals of explanatory

power and simplicity and can make sense of a complex phenomenon without ignoring variation. For a global phenomenon like land acquisitions, a typology thus bridges the gap between the too-general and the too-specific tendencies of the literature to date. The following typologies are tools to correct misconceptions in the current academic literature and thus may facilitate better comparative research in the future.

Perhaps the most important feature of a typology is the so-called "empty case." In any typology, some categories will occur much more frequently than others, and some will appear to be empty—that is, some variable combinations may, seemingly, not exist. These empty cases raise a very important question: are they theoretically impossible combinations, or do they represent a gap in our knowledge that must be filled? In this way, a typology not only highlights what has been understudied by land grab researchers, but also allows us to see which variables, which sets of circumstances, are correlated with the *absence* of land grab. In so doing, a typology may suggest ways to improve policy in order to prevent or dampen the harmful effects of a land deal.

What a typology cannot do is provide detailed information about case studies or address the full complexity of a phenomenon like land grab. It does not reveal much about the variables it overlooks (which will always be many), so its use is limited. Where typologies can inform future case study research is by highlighting important variables, suggesting combinations worth investigating, and allowing cross-case comparison between similar "types." The following typologies will raise questions about the extent of speculation in land deals, about the nature of the bargaining processes underlying land deals, and about the possibility for effective policymaking to prevent land theft, the destruction of livelihoods, environmental degradation, and more. In the end, they will raise more questions than they can possibly answer. My hope, then, is that those questions may lead to more thoughtful, more targeted research in the future.

Analyzing existing typologies

Borras and Franco (2010a), Hall (2011), and Deininger and Byerlee (2011) are among a handful of authors who have built typologies of land deals, providing a solid foundation for the new framework presented in this work. These existing typologies do overcome a flawed assumption of the early literature, which is that land grab *only* represents a transition from small-scale to large-scale agriculture. Moreover, they acknowledge that not all land deals fit neatly into the "food security" discourse promoted by early researchers. Nevertheless, these typologies fall short because they a) do not account for speculative and nonproductive investments, b) ignore

how foreign capital may fuel domestic agricultural investment, and c) downplay the bargaining processes that take place between investors and host countries.

Typologies by agrarian researchers

Building upon Borras and Franco (2010), Hall (2011) develops a typology of land use change, dividing into six types.

	To Food	*To Biofuels*	*To Nonfood*
From Food	**Type A** *Food to Food*	**Type B** *Food to Biofuels*	**Type C** *Food to Nonfood*
From Nonfood	**Type D** *Nonfood to Food*	**Type E** *Nonfood to Biofuels*	**Type F** *Nonfood to Nonfood*

Figure 1: Hall (2011).

In Type A (*food to food*), the land is still used for food production, but this production may have intensified and its goals may have shifted, perhaps from domestic exchange to food production for export either regionally or internationally. In Type B (*food to biofuels*), land that was formerly used for food production or to feed the local population has been converted to biofuels production with the hope of meeting rising energy needs, usually of the developed world. Type C (*food to nonfood*) often involves displacing local communities in order to carry out mining or tourism projects, whereas In Type F (*nonfood to nonfood*), "unused" land is converted into tree farms, mines, or ecotourism sites. Type D (*nonfood to food*) refers to land that was not *primarily* used for food production, but now is. Finally, Type E (*nonfood to biofuels*) represents lands that were formerly "unused" in some capacity and that are now targeted for biofuels production.

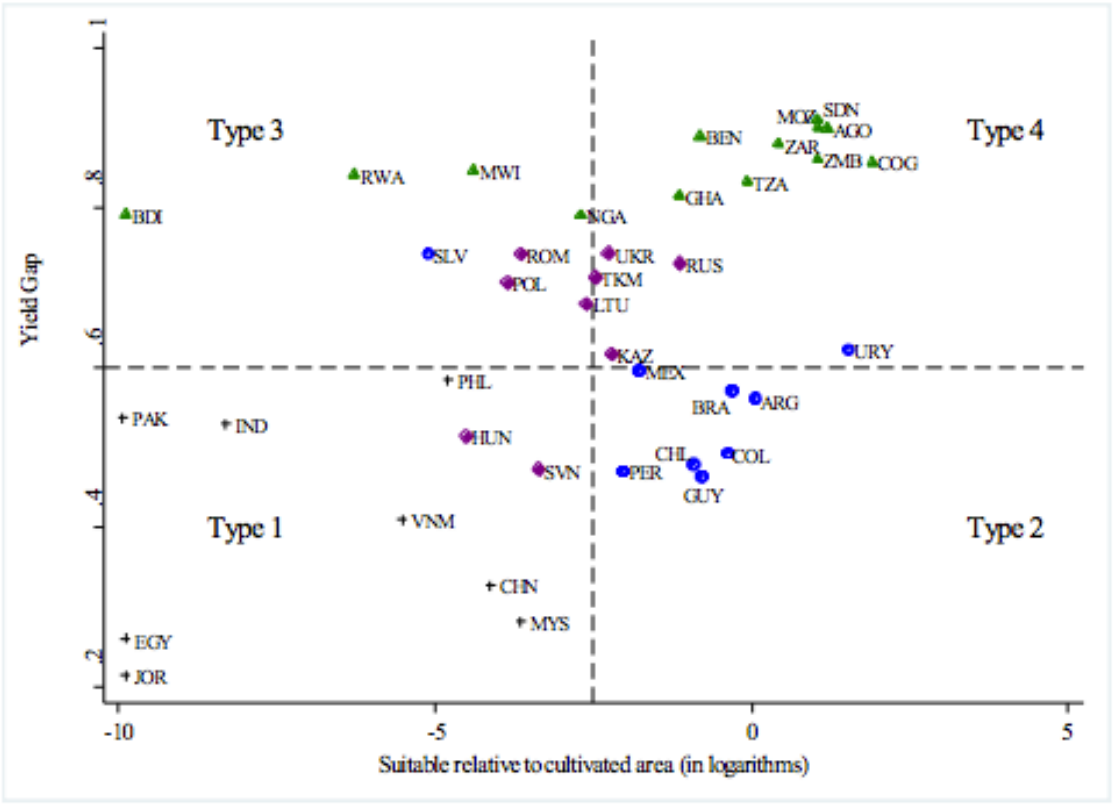
This typology's primary utility is that it allows for an accounting of the net change in land use. Since it operates on the level of individual projects, regardless of scale, we can tally different types and determine whether given regions, countries, or continents are experiencing more or less food production than before. In this way, the typology demonstrates the extent to which land grabbing may not only result from, but also cause, food insecurity.

Still, this typology is imperfect because it combines both productive and nonproductive land use into the "nonfood" category. By nonproductive, I mean land that is not productive of food, fuel, or other natural resources. Taking tourism as an example, we see that such "nonproductive" land might still create jobs or income, but it neither produces nor extracts resources from the land, as would occur with other types of "nonfood" uses (e.g. forestry). This *nonproduction* will have distinct effects on the physical and social landscape, whether by preserving natural ecosystems or creating few agricultural jobs. Likewise, other nonproductive investments, especially speculative ones, do not fit neatly into any of the above categories.

Typology by the World Bank

Representing another group of land grab researchers, reports by the World Bank tout the need for foreign investment in developing countries as a way to boost productivity in the face of food security concerns. Broadly speaking, such reports focus on the market allocation of land resources and the developing world's need for foreign direct investment. Although this framework does incorporate investor motivations, it ignores the roles of host countries in attracting, condoning, or opposing foreign agricultural investment.

Deininger and Byerlee's (2011) typology epitomizes the World Bank perspective, focusing on two salient and measurable variables—the availability of uncultivated land and yield gaps. Here, a yield gap is the "difference between possible output and what is currently attained" and reflects "the extent to which gaps in technology, institutions, or other public goods (e.g. infrastructure) prevent existing cultivators from realizing there[sic] potential" (Deininger and Byerlee 2011).



Note: Dashed lines indicate average yield gap and 50th percentile for relative suitability.
Source: Deininger et al. 2011

Figure 2. Deninger and Byerlee's typology.

As the above diagram illustrates, countries fall into respective types based on the relative availability of uncultivated land and their current yield gaps. In particular, Deininger and Byerlee note that the types loosely correspond to geographic regions. Type 1, which represents low yield gaps and low availability (i.e. high population density), is predominantly in Asian countries. Type 4 is at the other extreme, representing high quantities of available land and high yield gaps. In the land deals documented by the Land Matrix Project, a full 58% of land deals are Type 4, with many of these being in countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Anseeuw et al 2012). Type 2 is populated by several Latin American countries, which have lower yield gaps but still have large quantities of uncultivated land. Finally, Type 3 represents high yield gaps, but low availability, which is the case for "most developing countries" according to Deininger and Byerlee (2011).

Unlike the typologies by Borras and Franco (2010) and Hall (2011), this model only operates at the country level and cannot be applied to specific projects. As such, it loses much of the domestic variation that occurs across different provinces, different types of investors, and

different industries. Moreover, the typology uses population density bright lines (e.g. 10 or 25 persons/sq. km) and yield bright lines (60 percent of the potential yield for a crop) in order to determine land that would be "suitable" for cultivation. In this way, this framework ignores the thorny question of what land should really qualify as available and suitable. Population density says little about the extent of cultivation, since some crops are more land intensive than others; some crops can be cultivated at densities above 25 persons/sq. km whereas others require a significantly lower human presence in the area. Furthermore, any such bright line wholly ignores a variety of non-agricultural uses for land resources; for example, a tract of land may be a ritual or ceremonial site, provide access to other natural resources like water, or be used for hunting and gathering. Such lands would quality as "suitable" for cultivation under this typology, although their socio-cultural importance would render such cultivation unpalatable to local communities.

An alternative framework of land rush

Even though these existing typologies cover a wide range of land deals, they remain imperfect. I here argue that their three principal limitations are: a) the failure to incorporate nonproductive investments—those investments that do not extract resources from the land in order to produce food, fuel, or another natural resource; b) the lack of attention paid to investor characteristics, in particular sources of capital; and c) the tendency to focus on outcomes instead of investigating the bargaining processes that shape the terms of a given land deal.

In the following sections, I construct a novel *interactions* typology that unpacks investor dynamics, including capital flows, and regulation by host countries. Compared to existing typological frameworks, this work constitutes a shift in perspective, since both investors and domestic actors are to blame when and if land deals harm local populations. In so doing, it restores agency to oft-ignored domestic actors, such as national and local governments and civil society organizations.

In the search for an alternative framework of land rush, I will also amend Hall's *land use* typology to deal with another bias of the existing literature—the dismissal of nonproductive investments, including conservation, tourism, and speculation. Although allowing for nonproduction is an improvement, this revised typology will remain insufficient to explain why land deals occur where they do, necessitating the creation of the *interactions* typology.

Typology 1: Directions of land use change

First, in order to account for land that has transitioned to *nonproduction*, I add a fourth column to the land use change typologies by Borras and Franco (2010) and Hall (2011).

	Food	**Biofuels**	**Nonfood (extractive industries)**	**Nonproduction**
From food	*Type A* Food to food	*Type B* Food to biofuels	*Type C* Food to nonfood (extractive industries)	*Type D* Food to nonproduction
From nonfood	*Type E* Nonfood to food	*Type F* Nonfood to biofuels	*Type G* Nonfood to nonfood (extractive industries)	*Type H* Nonfood to nonproduction

Figure 3: My own typology of land use change.

These broad strokes do not capture the diversity of land acquisitions, with further variation occurring within each category. I thus divide the two added categories (Types D and H) into sub-types with the goal of better explicating the different axes along which such transformations occur.

Sub-type	**From**	**To**
D: Food to Nonproduction	Food production	Nonproduction
D1	Food for consumption	Idle land, financial investment
D2	Food for consumption	Land conservation, protected land
D3	Food for consumption	Land conservation, ecotourism
H: Nonfood to Nonproduction	Non-food	Nonproduction
H1	Forest lands	Idle land, financial investment
H2	Forest lands	Land conservation, protected land
H3	Forest lands	Land conservation, ecotourism
H4	‘Marginal,’ ‘idle’ lands	Idle land, financial investment
H5	‘Marginal,’ ‘idle’ lands	Land conservation, protected land
H6	‘Marginal,’ ‘idle’ lands	Land conservation, ecotourism

Figure 4: Sub-types of land use change.

Type D: land use change from food to nonproduction

Type D (*food to nonproduction*) involves lands once devoted to agricultural production for food consumption, which are then transformed for nonproductive uses. "Nonproduction" here is a broad category for land that is no longer being cultivated or tapped for its natural resources. That is, there is no agricultural production for food or for biofuels, nor are other resources extracted, such as mineral wealth or timber. This category thus captures several different trends: speculative investment, conservation, and ecotourism, to name a few.

D1 involves settings where production has come to an end on formerly cultivated land, and the plots themselves do not see any kind of continued investment. That is, investors are letting the lands sit idle with the hopes of recuperating the original price (and then some) a few years down the line. These investors are unlikely to be driven by food security concerns, but rather, are capitalizing on the accompanying food price spikes in order to resell land and earn sizable returns on their investment. In some cases, the investor has plans to grow crops, but that production has not started and indeed may never occur.

For example, in 2008, the government of Mali gave 100,000 hectares of land for free to Muammar el-Qaddafi of Libya, conditional on ongoing agricultural investment (GRAIN 2012). After the agreement, local farmers were forced off the land and their houses were leveled, but the land has still not seen agricultural production, neither before nor after the collapse of the Qaddafi regime (GRAIN 2012; MacFarquhar 2010). As is often the case, researchers may be unable to determine whether the investor's intentions were speculative, but the failure to initiate production within a few years is a good indication of nonproduction. Even in cases where infrastructure investment and production eventually begin, the interim period of nonproduction often has devastating consequences on the food security and livelihoods of local communities.

The two remaining subtypes, D2 and D3, both involve land that is now dedicated for some brand of environmental conservation. Whereas D2 represents land that is preserved purely for conservation and may severely limit tourism, D3 may attempt to restore ecosystems with the express goal of building an ecotourism industry. We thus may expect that D3 will entail more infrastructure investment, enable ongoing cash flows into the country, and create more jobs, although locals may not have access to them. These two subtypes, D2 and D3, may in fact be uncommon or empty cases, since cultivated land is less likely to be marked for environmental preservation, when compared to forest land or other pristine landscapes. As such, the creation of this typology raises an important question: to what extent are formerly cultivated lands converted into conservation or ecotourism projects? Might this be an "empty case"?

Type H: land use change from nonfood to nonproduction

As a category, Type H (*nonfood to nonproduction*) represents land settings that were not used primarily for food production in the past, but that are now "nonproductive." Importantly, "nonfood" is at times an amorphous category and may include lands that are used for some food production, for harvesting, for ceremonial purposes, or for other communal functions. That is, taking these lands out of production may still have tangible and real effects on local populations beyond the mere transfer of ownership. Still, one would generally expect the effects to be less drastic in this case than they are for Type D.

H1, H2, and H3 are all categories in which forested land was purchased or leased and then put to some nonproductive use. Whereas H1 is likely to be speculative, H2 captures the environmentalist's desire to preserve what remains of the globe's rapidly dwindling forested land. In H3, investors are trying to capitalize on a growing ecotourism industry while meeting some conservation goals. Such deals are rampant in both the Chilean and Argentinean Patagonia, where outdoors outfitters and travel agencies are buying large plots for conservation, tourism, and personal use. For example, Doug Tompkins, co-founder of North Face, and his wife Kris, the former CEO of Patagonia, together own over 2 million acres in Patagonia, while former U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson lays claim to 640,000 acres (Pearce 2012).

The remaining subtypes, H4, H5, and H6, depict nonforested land that has been identified by the domestic government as "idle" or "marginal" and thus expropriated, leased, or sold. These sub-types all hinge on the existence of idle lands, which are often misclassified. In the case of H4, investors may have made unfulfilled promises to boost agricultural productivity. H5 and H6 are probably less common because these marginal lands have likely seen some human intervention and thus may be less suitable for conservation projects. Nevertheless, some cases do exist, such as the proposed Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Park in Zimbabwe. This conservation project sits on the ancestral lands of the Chitsa people, where they have sited graves, perform initiation and circumcision ceremonies, and believe the spirits to reside (Scoones et al 2012). Despite numerous attempts to evict them, the Chitsa community continued to fight for restitution of its ancestral lands, and in 2011, a deal was reached whereby the Chitsa community retained access to some of the lands in question, but would be strictly forbidden from poaching or grazing in the adjacent park (Scoones et al 2012). This attempted eviction illustrates the need for careful definitions of "unused" land and the potential for conservation projects to have adverse effects on local communities.

Why do both speculation and conservation belong to the same category?

Some might object that speculative land acquisitions and conservation projects do not belong to the same category. While speculative investment suggests foreign investors taking advantage of cheap resources abroad in order to turn a profit, conservation projects are often framed as socially and environmentally necessary in order to preserve ecosystems for future generations. Indeed, organizations like the World Wildlife Fund and Conservation International continue to view conservation projects in developing countries as "unequivocally good," despite growing evidence to the contrary (Kelly 2011). In reality, these two seemingly disparate phenomena are similar in that they dispossess local populations of access to land, putting a halt to agricultural production altogether (Benjaminsen and Bryceson 2012, Fairfield *et al* 2012). Moreover, resulting social and environmental effects will be remarkably similar across nonproductive cases. Like purely speculative investments, conservation projects fail to generate new jobs or even a labor reserve, instead appropriating lands for the physical spaces themselves (Li 2009). Likewise, designating land for conservation may involve forcible expropriation of land, sometimes violent removal of people from the land, destruction of livelihoods, and a restructuring of the labor sector (Fairfield *et al* 2012). Neither speculation nor conservation will in itself generate the same resource depletion that characterizes food production, biofuels, and the extractive industries. Indeed, conservation and tourism projects may experience ongoing investment to preserve fragile, natural ecosystems. Although all of these similarities merit the single category of *nonproduction*, there is considerable within-category variation and engaging the subtypes will better illuminate the unique risks and benefits of a given project.

Typology 2: Interactions between investors and domestic political economy

The *land use* typology, coupled with the schematic representation of *land relations change* proposed by Borras and Franco (2010a), is still insufficient as a framework for land grab. First, both the *land use* and *changing land relations* typologies are best at explaining differences in the effects of various projects, illuminating how the changes engendered by land deals have lasting impacts on the local socio-political and environmental landscape. However, they do little to explain why land deals occur where they do and under what conditions. That is, they tell us very little about the *causes of land grab.*

The land grab literature has largely failed to deepen and challenge the prevailing assumption that international investors take advantage of countries with weak governance in orchestrating land deals. By most accounts, weak governance—namely, its failure vis-à-vis the rural poor and

smallholder agriculture—is to blame for the costs borne by impoverished rural populations after a land deal (Anseeuw et al 2012). This "victim-oppressor" interpretation of land grab overlooks the complex interactions that occur between national governments, local governments, civil society organizations, small-scale farmers, and the investors themselves, be they domestic or foreign. While many land deals do occur in countries with weak governance, it is not a hard and fast rule.

I thus create a second typology with the goal of restoring agency—and therefore, accountability—to domestic actors and differentiating between categories of foreign investors. This typology represents a shift in perspective about land deals, calling for greater attention to the diversity of actors and to their implicit and explicit roles in shaping the terms of a land deal. Where land deals result in unacceptably grave costs, the blame does not fall on the investors alone, but on a whole range of individuals and organizations that either turned a blind eye or actively pursued policies at the expense of local populations or the environment.

This typology has two variables: the nature of the investment and the nature of any land deal regulation. As such, not all categories will be equally exploitative, eventually creating a space for potentially just and beneficial land deals.

REGULATION, IF ANY

TYPE OF INVESTOR	**Little to no regulation**	**Government-enforced regulation**	**Civil society regulation**
Foreign public	Type A *Foreign public investment, little to no regulation*	Type B *Foreign public investment, government-enforced regulation*	Type C *Foreign public investment, civil society regulation*
Foreign private	Type D *Foreign investor, little to no regulation*	Type E *Foreign investor, government-enforced regulation*	Type F *Foreign investor, civil society regulation*
Mixed (domestic investor with foreign capital or joint ventures)	Type G *Mixed investor, little to no regulation*	Type H *Mixed investor, government-enforced regulation*	Type J *Mixed investor, civil society regulation*

Figure 5: My own typology of investor-host country interactions.

Investor type

The first variable is the *type of investor*, which may be a foreign public investor, foreign private investor, or mixed domestic-foreign investors. Each investor "type" considers not only the investor's nationality, but also whether their source of capital is foreign or domestic. Importantly, domestic investors with *purely* domestic capital are deliberately omitted from the categories of this typology. Since this paper will focus on land grab as a *globalized* phenomenon, the focus on foreign capital is warranted. Although land may be in transition from small-scale to large-scale agriculture, even with purely domestic projects, that is beyond the scope of this paper.

In particular, investments by purely domestic investors with domestic capital are distinct in several ways. First, they are governed, at least in principle, by only local and national laws. Second, they reflect intra-country power dynamics between elites and rural populations, as opposed to power and resource differentials across countries. Third, although states must compete to maintain local investment, this competition is distinct from the intense competition they face for foreign investment. Fourth, capital flows remain within the country, whereas foreign capital brings with it hopes (whether false or true) of spurring development.

The first category of the typology, *foreign public investment*, includes all public sector actors using public funds to seek land acquisitions, be they governments, sovereign wealth funds, or other state-owned companies. Although these investments have drawn considerable attention in the past, states are increasingly moving away from direct investment, preferring to minimize their risk by investing in private companies, guaranteeing loans, and providing tax rebates or other forms of assistance (Liu et al 2012). Moreover, this category blurs somewhat with foreign private investments (Cotula *et al* 2009). For example, does a partially state-owned Chinese company behave more like a fully state-owned company or a private enterprise? When the son of Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia signs a lease for 105,00 hectares in South Sudan, is he acting as a private individual or an emissary of the state, and what exactly is the distinction (GRAIN 2012)?

Foreign private investment comprises the bulk of agricultural investment (Land Matrix Project). It may involve one foreign company investing on its own, or a partnership across several different foreign companies. Importantly, private sector acquisitions often involve significant assistance from home country governments in the form of subsidies, soft loans, guarantees, and insurance to private companies pursuing land investment abroad (Cotula 2011).

Mixed investment is perhaps the most complicated category because it encompasses all projects where there is at least some domestic ownership, funded at least in part by foreign capital. I further divide these investments into two categories: purely domestic investors with foreign capital and joint ventures. In the first case, the entire project is owned by a domestic company or individual, but they receive significant funding from international or transnational sources. For example, most authors cite Peru as a case of purely domestic investment (Anseeuw *et al* 2012; Deininger and Byerlee 2011), despite the fact many projects receive significant foreign funding. Domestic investors—with or without foreign capital—account for the majority of land transactions worldwide, suggesting the need for closer analysis of capital flows in order to understand the role of foreign investment in these so-called domestic acquisitions (Liu et al 2012).

In the second case, several companies—some domestic, some foreign—jointly own, lease, or operate the project. Joint operations are especially common in countries that put limits on foreign land ownership, such as in the Philippines (Borras et al 2011a). What sets these joint partnerships apart from purely foreign investment is that domestic partnerships tend to reduce administrative transaction costs (Anseeuw et al 2012). Furthermore, domestic investors are better equipped to navigate local bureaucracy and engage corrupt officials, which has been characterized as one of the more efficient paths to settling a land deal (World Bank 2011).

Additionally, I draw attention to an oft-ignored distinction: the difference between foreign investors and foreign capital. The tendency in the literature is to talk about "foreign" and "domestic" investors, often ignoring how capital flows may make some domestic investors more similar to their foreign counterparts. I argue that capital is the more salient distinction, hence my inclusion of purely domestic investors with access to foreign capital. What enables land grab is developing countries' desire—and often, need—for foreign funds to create growth. In competing for such land deals, countries are often forced to make offers that sacrifice livelihoods or the environment for the sake of boosting productivity and attracting additional funds. Capital alone is sufficient to create this pressure on states, and so, it should be focus of our discussion, in addition to the nationality of the investors themselves.

Extent of regulation

These investors do not act in a vacuum, instead interacting directly or indirectly with a variety of actors within the recipient country. By focusing on regulation by domestic actors, this typology does not excuse them from protecting the land rights and interests of rural populations, simply because they are perceived as weaker and poorer. Rather than fall into the trap of victimizing developing countries, I put domestic actors at the forefront, holding them

accountable when they fail to regulate or correct the disadvantageous terms on which many land deals are settled and implemented.

The first category, *little to no regulation*, can be construed as the absence of any meaningful effort on the part of any actor to ensure that local populations and environments do not suffer adverse consequences under a land transfer, whether that is dispossession of the land, reduced access to resources, environmental degradation, or destruction of livelihoods. Unfortunately, this is the de facto reality under which many land deals occur. Even in this category, there may still be some legal protections in place, but the spirit of the law is rarely, if ever, heeded. Likewise, there may be some activism on the part of rural social movements, but it is disorganized or weak.

In some cases, *little to no regulation* may entail governments actually seeking out and enabling international investment. Across the globe, governments have explicitly sought out "idle" lands with the goal of attracting increased agricultural investment. For example, in 2009, the Ethiopian government set aside 1.6 million hectares that it could offer up for agribusiness investment, with the option to extend it again to 2.7 million hectares (Reuters 2009, cited in Cotula 2011).

The second category, *government-enforced regulation*, accounts for those cases where national, provincial, or local governments protect the land rights of local peoples and attempt to reduce adverse effects, at least to some extent. Importantly, these protections need not be legal, although they often are. This regulation must involve some degree of enforcement; the mere existence of laws governing land grab is insufficient. Moreover, the regulation may come from any level of government. Local officials in particular often fail to act in the community's best interests when allocating land resources (Anseeuw et al 2012). In Ghana, most of the investment appears to occur on customary land, not state-owned land, with investors "exploit[ing] the ignorance" of the councils of elders who manage customary land at the local level (German et al 2011). In contrast, the national government does not seem to engage in negotiations with investors and has not used its right to eminent domain in order to reallocate land to investors.

Moreover, government regulation may emerge out of practice, rather than through explicit policymaking, and may manifest itself in the absence of land grab. For example, in a study on Vietnamese tree plantations, Sikor (2012) highlights how government agencies have accommodated local land rights and set up a bank to increase access to rural finance. Partly as a result of these government practices, rural households continue to own and operate many of

the country's tree plantations, while transnational corporations have struggled and largely failed to take control.

The final category is *civil society regulation.* In cases where the government has failed to regulate international acquisitions—especially in the case where it fails to enforce laws already on the books—civil society organizations may rise to fill the gap, articulating their demands through protests and occupations. This category requires that civil society organizations be sufficiently strong not only to mobilize local communities, but also to force governments and/or the companies themselves to reevaluate the terms of the land transfer.

Civil society regulation is often not purely domestic in nature, but instead linked, either formally or informally, to a transnational network of activist organizations. In some cases, the organization itself may be transnational, such as the international movement of small farmers Via Campesina. Furthermore, such transnational movements may compete with or contradict each other in the positions they take vis-à-vis land investment, as illustrated by Borras, McMichael, and Scoone's analysis of La Via Campesina and the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (2010). Even relatively powerless domestic organizations may gain influence and legitimacy by positioning themselves in the context of larger social movements (Hertel 2006). Moreover, activist groups may overcome stalemates with domestic actors by seeking out international allies who put pressure on that state from outside (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Indeed, an Oakland Institute brief on South Sudan's largest land deal and the resulting media coverage helped to mobilize local communities against the deal, who successfully halted the project by appealing to the central government (Oakland Institute 2011). Through engagement with transnational activist networks, civil society protests not only better ensure their own success, but can have a precipitating effect on social movements in other countries in the region or around the world.

Although excluded for the time being, this typology creates a space for international regulation, should it one day come into existence. International Codes of Conduct have been proposed as a way to protect local populations and govern the process of land deals in developing countries, all while allowing them to capitalize on foreign investment (FAO et al 2010; FAO 2012; Foljanty and Wagner 2009; von Braun and Meinzen-Dick 2009).[3] Should such agreements come to fruition and become the norm, a fourth column could be added. Such international regulation would be distinct from the other categories in that third-party organizations or the investors themselves would likely be the ones to implement and enforce it. It is worth adding that this typology illustrates how a Code of Conduct is far from the only route to more "just" land deals.

[3] The premises behind a Code of Conduct, as well as the solutions promised, have been questioned and are far from universally accepted (Borras and Franco 2010b).

Regulation can come from a host of different actors and interactions, suggesting that the present focus on a Code of Conduct ignores other potential sources of regulation.

There is one more category of regulation that this typology omits: regulation by companies themselves. For various reasons, some investors attempt to self-regulate their projects in order to ensure that livelihoods and environments are preserved. In practice, this may be difficult, given the complexities of how governments define unused lands and what little or misconstrued information some investors may receive. Still, a variety of company commitment instruments do exist, but endorsement is limited (Zwart and Novib 2011). Such voluntary regulation is exogenous to the typology because it will only apply to specific projects and/or companies and cannot be generalized to industries or countries. Therefore, observing company regulation in one case will tell us little about whether to expect similar regulation in other cases. Without this predictive power, it is not a useful variable in the typology.

Illustrative cases

In the following section, I demonstrate how the typology operates by presenting two illustrative cases of land acquisition. The goal is to depict the general characteristics of each type and engage with some of the difficulties in categorization. In each case, the renewed focus on investor-regulatory actor interactions raises unexplored normative, political, and economic questions.

A. Paper industry in Brazil

In land use typology: mix between Types C and G (food/nonfood to nonfood)

In interactions typology: Type F (mixed investor, civil society regulation)

Land deals by the domestic and international paper industry in Brazil's Bahía region demonstrate how civil society organizations may step in when the government fails to respect de facto land rights and, in so doing, change the outcome of the land deals themselves. I will focus on the Veracel plantation case, which belongs to Type F in the *actor interactions* typology, representing domestic investors with foreign capital and a deal regulated by civil society organizations.

Veracel began with a Brazilian business conglomerate, but in 1997, a new company Veracruz was formed with Swedish Stora, which then merged with Finnish company Enso, of which 60 percent belongs to the state. In 2000, the conglomerate Odebrecht sold many of its shares to Aracruz (Kröger and Nylund 2011). This case thus epitomizes the complexities of categorizing investor type. Joint operations like Veracel more closely resemble their foreign counterparts in

that they are at least partially financed by international funds. Yet, with significant domestic input, they are better able to capitalize on local expertise and networks to navigate bureaucracy and strike deals with local officials and communities. As such, they can be considered a "mixed investor."

Tree plantations like Veracel are not new to Brazil's landscape, but in the last decade, they have increasingly pushed into state lands, spurring protest movements by local activists (Kröger 2012). In 2004, activists from Brazil's landless movement MST uprooted several hectares of eucalyptus and staged an occupation of the land. Kröger (2011) notes that the government "response to the occupation and its results were swift." The government soon gave the MST 30,000 hectares in settlement promises and ordered Veracel to uproot an additional 47,000 hectares. Slowing the Veracel project was only one of MST's many successes. Throughout the region, their protests have slowed or terminated several plantation expansion projects, which would have infringed upon agricultural lands with varying degrees of cultivation (Kröger 2011).

But, where is the Brazilian government in all of this? It seems that the institutional weakness of INCRA, the Brazilian Land Reform Institute (Kröger 2011; Kröger and Nylund 2011; Wolford 2010b;) has enabled the rise of civil society movements and effective regulation by them. Not only is INCRA grossly underfunded, but roughly half of all land in Brazil is not registered with the agency (Reydon and Fernandes 2013). Wolford (2010b) argues that it is precisely INCRA's weak technical capacity and lack of resources that have created an opportunity for MST and similar civil society organizations to dispute and shape the terms of Brazilian agrarian policies. Although Kröger (2011) argues for a much more interactive process depending only in part on INCRA's weakness, the critical role of MST in shaping and halting these land deals is uncontested. Land expansions have occurred at slower rates, often with more just terms, or been cancelled altogether. In the Brazilian case, civil society regulation has emerged as an effective means of protecting local landowners and holding the government accountable for legal protections it has been unable to provide.

Notably, even nonviolent protests, such as those organized by MST, run the risk of turning violent and resulting in more harm than gains. In other cases of MST protest, police have broken up protestors' camps wearing full riot gear. Had the activists not removed roadblocks, the military may have intervened, with potentially violent consequences (Kröger 2011). Civil society activism over proposed land deals does sometimes turn violent, making the decision to protest a difficult one. Since peaceful resolution of the problem is far from guaranteed, analysis of civil society regulation must take into account the cost-benefit scenarios they face.

This case sheds light on an underexplored puzzle in the comparative literature on land grab: the role of civil society organizations in preventing land deals. Type F (*mixed investor, civil society regulation*) is not an empty case, since civil society protests are not 100% effective, but it may be that egregious land deals are much less common under this set of circumstances. Are civil society organizations more or less effective at regulating land deals when some of the investors or capital is domestic? In other words, how does investor identity shape the rise of and effectiveness or civil society regulation? By examining this case through the typological framework, we can begin to ask these more targeted comparative questions.

Moreover, this case touches upon the occurrence of land deals in relatively strong states. Weak governance is a common feature of land grabs, but acquisitions also occur in states with strong institutions. For example, Brazil has strong institutions on the whole, but INCRA is the worst funded and most under-staffed agency among them (Wolford 2010b). Future research would thus benefit from investigating two separate categories of land deals: those occurring in states with overall weak governance, and those occurring in countries with relatively weak land regulation *vis-à-vis* the entire state apparatus. The distinction between overall and relative institutional weakness is an important one, in part because it will likely have implications beyond the extent of government regulation. Based on the events of the attempted Veracel expansion, we might predict that civil society organizations in strong states will be dissatisfied with weak land regulation, have higher expectations for protection of their land rights, and possibly take the responsibility to regulate upon themselves. In this manner, the typology's renewed focus on land regulation may guide us to new research questions, probing the assumption of weak governance and demonstrating the conditions under which different types of regulation occur.

B. Green Future Innovations sugar cane ethanol in the Philippines
In land use typology: Type B (food to biofuels)
In interactions typology: Type G (mixed investor, little to no protection)

Whereas the Brazilian case has seen effective regulation, the sugar cane ethanol industry in the Philippines has not. The contrasts between the two outcomes shed light on the importance of regulation and the ability of mixed investors to potentially inhibit effective regulation by the government or even by civil society organizations. This case thus demonstrates the need to focus on investor's source of capital, thereby separating mixed investors from both their foreign and domestic counterparts.

In recent years, the Philippines has sought out international land investment, primarily for biofuels projects. The search for available "idle" lands is ubiquitous, with targeted food and

energy investments in nearly every province nationwide. One such example is the Green Future Innovations project in Isabela province, where a consortium of foreign and domestic capital has begun acquiring some of the 11,000 hectares promised to the project by the Filipino government. Green Future Innovations has Taiwanese, Japanese, and American companies doing most of the processing for ethanol production, while the Filipino corporation is a "consolidator of land" (Borras et al 2011a). It has become a special project of the president and is expected to become the country's largest producer of ethanol.

In the case of the Philippines, a handful of laws exist to regulate foreign investment, including the Republic Act 8179, which puts limits on foreign ownership of corporations and lands (Borras *et al* 2011a). These limited regulations seemingly do little to protect local populations. Instead, they encourage that foreign firms seek out partnerships with domestic capital, as occurred with Green Future Innovations. Although further investigation is necessary, this joint partnership seems to have strengthened the project's position in the country. In particular, the project seems to be centered in San Mariano for "no other reason…than it is the apparent pet project of the current mayor" (Franco *et al* 2011). Additionally, the domestic partners have close ties to some of the major players in tobacco, grains, and sugar in the Philippines, further equipping them to handle the land acquisition and consolidation processes. In other words, the domestic partnership has allowed the foreign investors to tap local networks and situate themselves within the complex, historical dynamics of elite control.

Moreover, this case demonstrates some of the social consequences of a government's failure to regulate sufficiently. The government's consistent overstatement of the availability of "idle" land has forced officials to go searching for new lands to hand over to the project. These new lands are often used for corn production by small shareholders, and several officials have expressed concern that the lease rate is too low and that people will lose lands that are rightfully theirs (Borras *et al* 2011a). This problem is further exacerbated by a lack of formal land titling in the Philippines, putting the lands of local farmers at risk.

What is intriguing is that civil society organizations have not risen to fill the gap. In another case of potential land grab, the Chinese and Philippine governments struck up a deal to allocate up to 1.3 million hectares for food exports to China, including some private lands. The ensuing civil society protest and media uproar put a prompt end to the project (Borras *et al* 2011a). Thus, it is worth asking why civil society organizations mobilized around this project and have not done as much for biofuels projects like the one in Isabela. Is exporting foods uniquely troublesome, given that the Philippines is the world's largest rice importer? Is it a question of scale—the difference between 1.3 million and 11,000 hectares? Is there something more unpalatable about the Chinese as investors than a joint operation between Filipinos and foreigners? Do

foreign public and mixed investors see differential rates of protest in response to their land deals? Why and when do researchers encounter "fear and/or silence" from local residents, as they did with the Green Future Innovations project (Franco *et al* 2011)?

Perhaps most importantly, the typology enables comparison across space and time—for example, between the Brazilian paper industry and the Filipino sugar cane industry. In light of what happened with Veracel in Brazil, it seems that civil society regulation can be effective at halting or slowing land deals. That in itself raises another question: why do we see civil society regulation in Brazil and not in the Philippines? Is it the result of the relative strength of civil society organizations in each country? Or is there something different about a mixed investor that constitutes a joint venture (as in Brazil) and one where a domestic investor is backed by foreign capital (as in the Philippines)? By focusing on the typology's two salient variables—investor type and extent of regulation—we are forced to examine an oft-understudied aspect of land deals, the bargaining process itself. In this way, these typologies guide case study analysis to the difficult questions about *why* land grab occurs and *why* given deals have the results they do. These typologies cannot answer such questions, but rather, they shift the debate away from a one-sided focus on the *effects* of land grab, encouraging more comparative analysis between existing and future case studies.

Discussion

In this analysis, I have pinpointed and examined three biases in existing typologies of land grab: a) the disregard for capital flows and the large category of "mixed investors," b) the failure to account for speculative and nonproductive investments, and c) the tendency to downplay or ignore how domestic actors, including government and civil society, help to decide land deals.

In order to counteract these biases, I have proposed two typologies that, working in conjunction, question why land deals occur where they do and how they change the land itself. I first amend the Hall (2011) typology to include nonproductive land uses, calling for better research on how speculation and conservation projects differ from agricultural or biofuels production in their effects on community dynamics and physical geography.

A second typology maps the interactions between different categories of foreign investors and domestic actors, ranging from civil society organizations to local leaders to national governments. This typology rejects the tendency to focus exclusively on investor nationality and proposes that future research should focus instead on capital flows as a driver of foreign investment. Moreover, this typology identifies a wide variety of mechanisms with the potential to foster effective regulation, a Code of Conduct being only one of many. In so doing, this work

restores agency to oft-excused domestic actors, better accounting for their role in promoting, condoning, or discouraging foreign land investments.

As a highly stylized model of the global land grab, these typologies will do little to explain variables exogenous to the model and cannot explain every facet of land grab. For example, they do not incorporate the business models of new projects, nor do they explicitly address their impacts, including job creation, the effect on the environment, etc. Although reality is always more complex and contradictory, the typologies' descriptive and predictive power lie in their simplicity. Typological analysis is thus no substitute for rigorous case studies, but rather, should inform that analysis by illuminating which cases are representative of a more general pattern and which are genuinely anomalous.

Crucially, by focusing on the investors and regulatory actors themselves, this analysis leads us to hitherto unanswered or undiscovered questions about the global land grab. This discussion explores, in turn, the economic, political, and normative implications of this shift in perspective. Although it is far from an exhaustive list, I hope to show some of the frictions with which future research might engage and how this new framework can be employed to expand and refocus the research agenda on land grab.

Perhaps the most important contribution of this paper will be its call for better analysis of investor types and the existence of purely speculative land deals. Up until now, very little analysis has been done on the investors themselves—who they are, what motivates them, and how they negotiate land deals. For example, what portion of "domestic" investors rely exclusively on domestic funding? Additionally, can we better document investor intent to conduct purely speculative land deals?

By bringing the state back into focus, this work also deepens questions of how recipient country political systems encourage, condone, or discourage large-scale land investments by foreign investors. Most of the literature focuses on a demand spike after rising food prices, but some states play an active role in seeking out and competing for land investment, such as when the Rwandan government passed a law to bring all marshes under state control with the goal of attracting more intensive agriculture (Lankhorst 2011). Other states, however, may passively allow investment to occur. At what level does government enforcement break down? It is not merely a question of enforcement of legal frameworks, but rather, a complex web of political motivations, existing legal frameworks, institutional funding priorities, and the relative strength of institutions governing land grab.

Furthermore, I question the prevailing assumption that land deals in Latin America occur under strong institutional oversight. Although the strength of national and local government institutions will certainly retain a geographic component, under what conditions are the terms of land deals in so-called "stronger" states like Brazil and Argentina more or less favorable to rural populations and small-share agriculture? Are civil society organizations better organized and more likely to engage in land conflicts in more powerful, wealthier states? Intra-regional and inter-regional analysis is necessary to test how much institutional strength and the level of economic development affect the scope and gravity of land deals. Brazil is a particularly promising case study for future research because it is both a source of land investment in other countries, like Bolivia, and a site for land deals by other foreign companies (Liu et al 2012).

Beyond the state, engaging with this typology has the potential to clarify the role of civil society organizations and social movements. In particular, when compared to mining industries, land deals for agriculture and biofuels seem to prompt fewer and less cohesive protest movements. Land deals do spark resistance, whether it is the mob in Uganda that killed an Indian man over proposed rainforest clearing or the protestors in Sierra Leone who blocked access to an investment site (Kugelman and Levenstein 2013). Still, protest is not the norm. Why have we not seen greater mobilization by peasant movements worldwide? Is it a function of the weakness of civil society organizations vis-à-vis investors and state? What are the conditions that enable effective civil society regulation—existing laws to which to appeal? Strong community support? Receptive media sources, as occurred with the *Financial Times* negative coverage of South Korean investments in Madagascar (Kugelman and Levenstein 2013)?

Moreover, by refocusing the discussion on the interactions between investors and domestic actors, I hope to call attention to the ways in which land deals are settled. Some have suggested that corruption and bureaucratic maneuvering are more effective routes to completing a land deal than formal legal and political processes. For example, Kenyan elites have illegally and/or irregularly accessed public lands for personal gain, despite the fact that they were earmarked for the public interest (O'Brien 2011). In another case, a Kenyan City Commission served as a broker and secured public use land for a foreign company (Klopp 2000, cited in O'Brien 2011). Globally, how often and under what conditions do foreign companies use elites to secure land, just as has been documented in Kenya? Corruption is likely to be a significant factor at all levels of government and needs to be better incorporated into the literature's discussion of the causes of land grab.

Finally, when we examine and discuss land grab regulation, as in this typology, we must engage with the question of justice in land grab. Defining—if only abstractly—what a just land deal looks like will help us to gauge how other deals measure up. The biases outlined herein provide

useful insight into how future research might proceed. They bring into focus a host of ethical questions, only some of which have been discussed in the literature. These include: (i) What are the state's responsibilities vis-à-vis local populations? (ii) In the face of food security issues, is imposing environmental conservation on cultivated lands—or forests used for harvesting and game—morally acceptable? (iii) Do governments have a right to expropriate land for the sake of the common good? Who is to judge what serves the common good? (iv) To what extent are investors responsible for investigating and avoiding the ill effects caused by their projects? (v) Are some categories of the typologies (for example, food to nonproduction) more problematic than others? (vi) For states and/or investors seeking to remedy ills caused by land grab, must the process have a retributive or redistributive component?

Beyond broadening the scholarly research agenda, however, this paper may also facilitate improved policymaking around the global land grab. In particular, this model helps us to identify high-risk areas for land grab—where regulation is weak, where speculative investment is rampant, or where lands were previously used almost exclusively for food production. By taking the project as its unit of analysis, it also helps us to predict, albeit broadly, the causes and effects of unknown cases by drawing comparisons to similar projects of the same type. Perhaps most importantly, this typology opens new avenues for just land distributions by focusing on the various routes to effective investment regulation. Rather than envisioning a world where a growing resource problem will not necessitate some foreign investment, I accept this fact to be true for the foreseeable future. Therefore, the policymaker's challenge is to determine what types of regulation are most effective and how the international or domestic system can foment organic regulation processes in a frenzied investment environment. This task demands the attention of researchers and policymakers alike, and it requires acceptance of the need for increased cultivation and/or improved land yields if future hunger and food insecurity are to be avoided. I only hope that we are able to move past polemical debates about "land grab" and focus on the task ahead of us, for it is an arduous one.

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Food Sovereignty:
A Critical Dialogue

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
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FOOD SOVEREIGNTY: A CRITICAL DIALOGUE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE PAPER SERIES

A fundamentally contested concept, food sovereignty has — as a political project and campaign, an alternative, a social movement, and an analytical framework — barged into global agrarian discourse over the last two decades. Since then, it has inspired and mobilized diverse publics: workers, scholars and public intellectuals, farmers and peasant movements, NGOs and human rights activists in the North and global South. The term has become a challenging subject for social science research, and has been interpreted and reinterpreted in a variety of ways by various groups and individuals. Indeed, it is a concept that is broadly defined as the right of peoples to democratically control or determine the shape of their food system, and to produce sufficient and healthy food in culturally appropriate and ecologically sustainable ways in and near their territory. As such it spans issues such as food politics, agroecology, land reform, biofuels, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), urban gardening, the patenting of life forms, labor migration, the feeding of volatile cities, ecological sustainability, and subsistence rights.

Sponsored by the Program in Agrarian Studies at Yale University and the Journal of Peasant Studies, and co-organized by Food First, Initiatives in Critical Agrarian Studies (ICAS) and the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague, as well as the Amsterdam-based Transnational Institute (TNI), the conference "Food Sovereignty: A Critical Dialogue" will be held at Yale University on September 14–15, 2013. The event will bring together leading scholars and political activists who are advocates of and sympathetic to the idea of food sovereignty, as well as those who are skeptical to the concept of food sovereignty to foster a critical and productive dialogue on the issue. The purpose of the meeting is to examine what food sovereignty might mean, how it might be variously construed, and what policies (e.g. of land use, commodity policy, and food subsidies) it implies. Moreover, such a dialogue aims at exploring whether the subject of food sovereignty has an "intellectual future" in critical agrarian studies and, if so, on what terms.

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