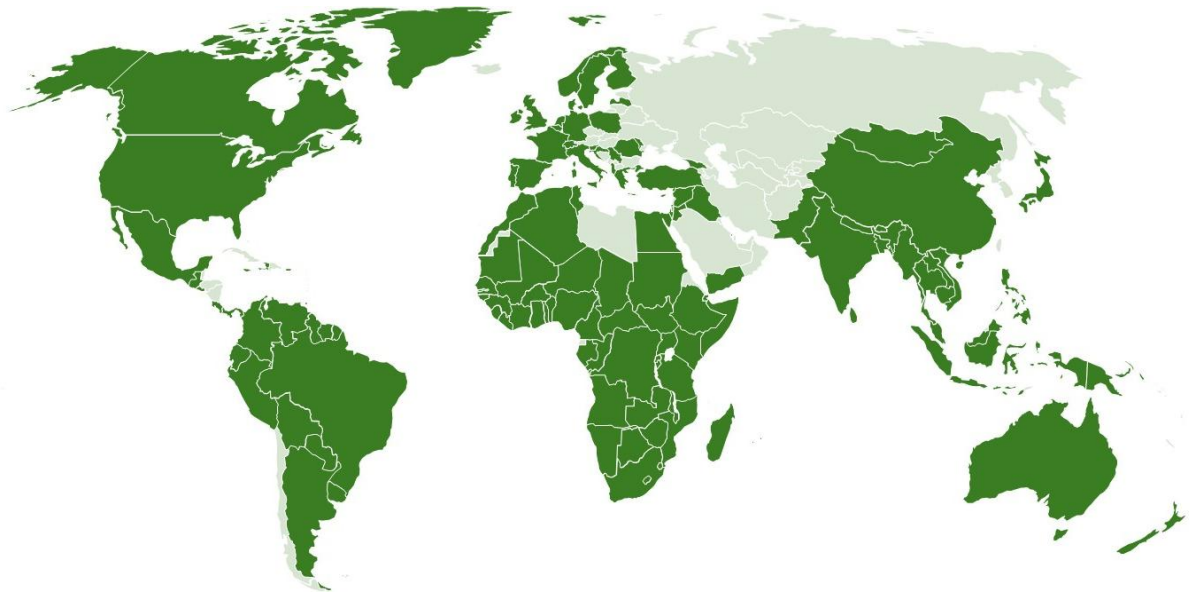
5th International Land Management Conference

Book of Abstracts

3-4 March 2026, London, UK

This year we hosted nearly 50 speakers, we had over 400 attendees and 1,100 registrations from 128 countries including representatives of governments and public bodies, NGOs, professional bodies, academics, students attendees and countless practitioners.



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1. LINK - Land International Network for Knowledge

About LINK

The Land International Network for Knowledge (LINK) was established in 2021 and is hosted by the University of the West of England, Bristol, UK. It exists to promote knowledge exchange, evidence-based research, and professional development across the land governance development space. It aims to build collaboration, promote peer-to-peer learning and networking worldwide. It has a special focus on improving knowledge exchange between academia, professional bodies, and both the public sector and private practice.

5th International Land Management Conference

This is document provides a book of abstracts from the 5th International Land Management Conference. The two-day conference was organised by LINK and delivered in partnership with the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) funded Land Facility and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), with funding from UK International Development and media support from the Land Portal Foundation. The conference was held on the 3rd and 4th March 2026. We covered the following four thematic sessions:

Theme 1: Improving understanding of the political economy factors that influence land governance

Theme 2: Power and agency in land governance

Theme 3: Widening perspectives for land governance

Theme 4: Changing approaches to the economics and financing of land governance

Each thematic session had a dedicated half-day session and was facilitated by a lead facilitator who is experienced and well-known in that sector. The aim was to stimulate discussion and identify challenges and opportunities so ample time was allocated for discussion.

Contact LINK

LINK is a non-profit and voluntary initiative. You are welcome to contact the practice leads below:

Research and Evaluation	Professor Jessica Lamond	jessica.lamond@uwe.ac.uk
Academic and Professional Development	Grazyna Wiejak-Roy	grazyna.wiejak-roy@uwe.ac.uk
Knowledge Exchange and Business Development	Robin Bloch	robin.bloch@abtglobal.com
General queries:	contact@landinternational.network	

2. Conference Themes

While land governance frameworks and institutions need to evolve to meet changing economic, social and environmental goals, from economic development and poverty alleviation to climate and disaster risk resilience, they are bounded by and rooted in existing political and economic realities. Lasting transformation requires understanding of the wide range of socio-cultural, political and economic factors that influence how land is supplied, used, administered, managed, governed, and of how land markets operate. In any given context, these factors are informed by a range of economic and political interests, power dynamics, institutional characteristics and ideological perspectives.

Practitioners engaged in land governance reforms have long been aware of the political and economic nature of their work and the importance of considering political economy. A growing field of research on the political economy of land explores the factors that shape why approaches to land governance succeed or fail within given contexts. Land governance grounded in analysis of political economy has the potential to enable increasingly inclusive, equitable, economically productive and environmentally sustainable pathways to development. There is much more to be done to agree on approaches, methods and tools that support economically effective and politically realistic reform of land governance.

The 2026 5th International Land Management Conference builds on these understandings with a call that highlights work that engages with and yields insight on the political economy of land governance under 4 interrelated themes:

Theme 1: Improving understanding of the political economy factors that influence land governance

We seek to explore how analysis of political, economic and social factors impacting land governance can improve practice. We are interested in identifying evidence on topics such as land governance reforms that pave the way for long lasting changes.

Theme 2: Power and agency in land governance

Engagement of a variety of stakeholders is important to increase agency, transparency, participation, equity and ultimately the sustainability of land governance. Thus, we seek to explore examples of how analysis of political economy can help identify and address the underlying tensions perpetuating exclusive land governance.

Theme 3: Widening perspectives for land governance

Isolating land governance interventions from broader developmental and climate goals can frustrate effective land governance. Integrated approaches that consider the broader political economy can lead to improved land governance and wider developmental progress. We welcome case studies and research exploring these perspectives.

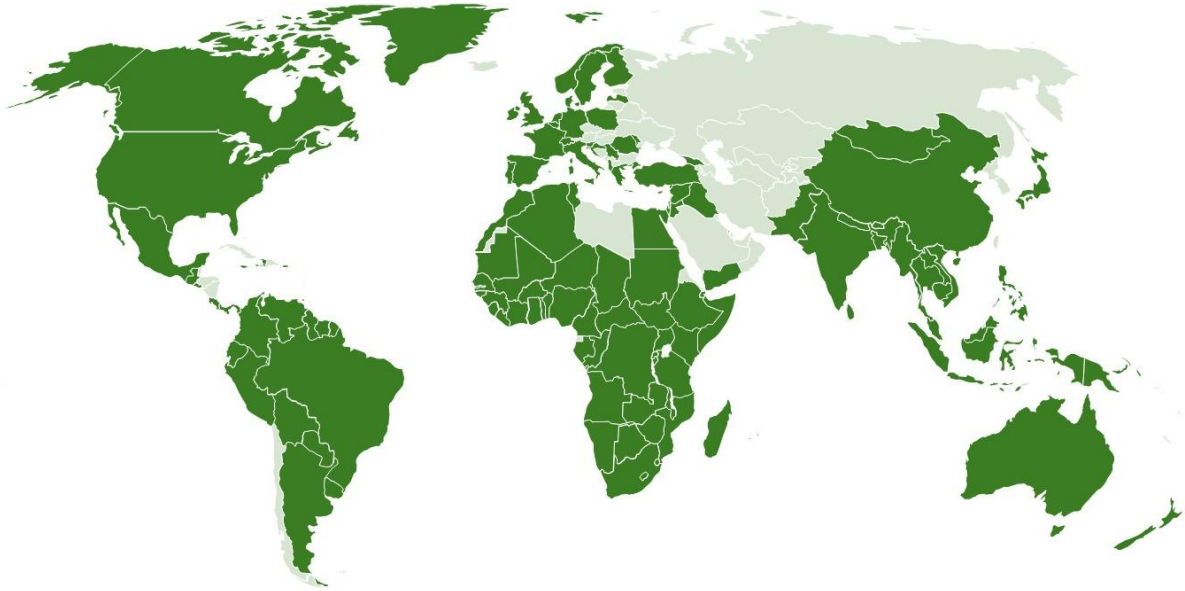
Theme 4: Changing approaches to the economics and financing of land governance

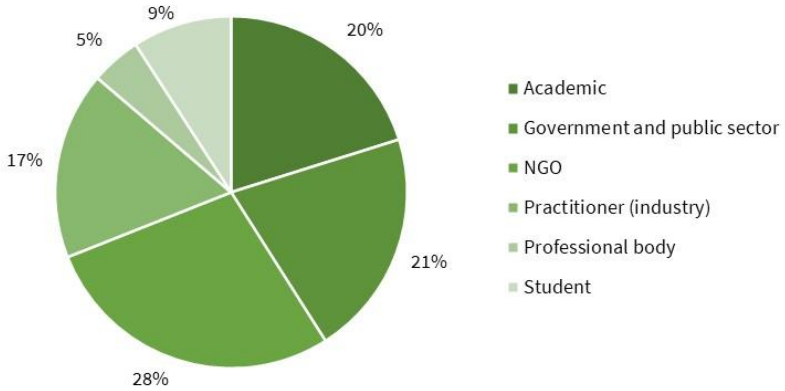
Traditionally, assessments of financial value and anticipated returns help to shape the economic and political interests in and commitment to land governance reform. However, there is increasing

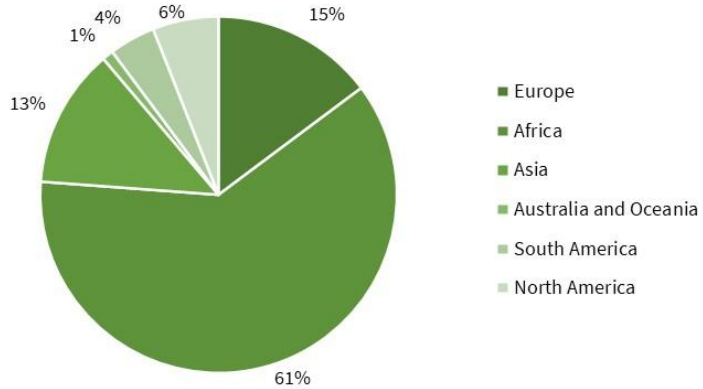
attention to the need for adaptation and sustainability considerations due to acute issues around food and energy security, climate change and disaster management. A more balance economic outlook would recognise the value of land in preserving biodiversity, sustaining natural capital and supporting diverse land uses. This session welcomes papers that explore how changing value systems and priorities are impacting the economics and financing for land governance.

3. Participation Statistics

This year we hosted nearly 50 speakers, we had over 400 attendees and 1,100 registrations from 128 countries including representatives of governments and public bodies, NGOs, professional bodies, academics, students attendees and countless practitioners.







4. Conference Committee

Prof. Jessica Lamond

Professor in Real Estate and Climate Risk; College Dean of Research and Enterprise, College of Arts, Technology and Environment, UWE Bristol

Jessica is currently a Professor in Real Estate and Climate Risk at the University of the West of England Bristol, UK. Her research interests include the fields of flood and climate risk management, real estate, land and property valuation and land management and she has recently led projects for a wide variety of funders including EPSRC, DFID, Defra, RICS and Flood Re. Jessica led the land planning and management of the DFID funded Urbanisation Research Nigeria research programme which spanned land planning and registration, climate resilience, municipal service delivery and valuation of urban development.

At LINK Jessica is responsible for the Research stream. If you are interested, please e-mail jessica.lamond@uwe.ac.uk, Jessica Lamond (UWE profile) or visit our LINK Research page.

Dr Robin Bloch

Urban Development and Planning Specialist, Team Leader, Land Facility Decision Support Unit, Visiting Professor at the University of the West of England, Bristol, UK

Robin Bloch is an urban planner who specialises in spatial and land use planning and management at all territorial scales, in local economic and industrial development, and in environmental management, sustainability and urban resilience, with emphasis on flood risk management. He has a 35-year planning career with experience from over 30 countries across four continents, leading diverse teams for the majority of multilateral and bilateral development partners. These teams have worked with a wide range of counterparts and stakeholders at municipal, regional and national government levels, as well as those within the private and community sectors. He is a Visiting Professor at the University of the West of England, Bristol, UK.

Dr Grazyna Wiejak-Roy

Senior Lecturer in Urban Economics and Real Estate, UWE Bristol

Grazyna is a Senior Lecturer in Urban Economics and Real Estate at the School of Architecture and Environment at the University of the West of England. Her research is on investment strategies, transaction risk, real estate market idiosyncrasies and land management. She carries nearly 20 years of experience in real estate consultancy gained at EY, PwC, and KPMG in the UK, Europe and Australia. She is a Fellow of the Royal

Institution of Chartered Surveyors, Chartered Valuation Surveyor, RICS assessor, member of the UK South West Regional Board and past member of RICS governing bodies in Poland and Australia, and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, Vice-President Europe of CASLE and Trustee of Aubrey Barker Fund. She holds PhD in Real Estate, MA in Economics, MSc in Property Appraisal and Management and PGCert in Academic Practice.

At LINK Grazyna is responsible for the Education and Professional Development stream. If you are interested, please e-mail grazyna.wiejak-roy@uwe.ac.uk or visit our Education Page.

Niki Palmer

Political Economy Advisor, Land Facility Decision Support Unit, UK

Niki provides political economy advice to the Decision Support Unit of the Land Facility, an innovative UK programme supporting land governance globally. She has 25 years of experience in international development, spanning programming, research and policy roles in conflict affected and fragile contexts including Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia and the occupied Palestinian territory. She is a specialist in political economy analysis, which she has applied to many issues related to land governance including climate change adaptation and resilience, disaster risk management, social protection, and land and environmental rights. Niki is also a Principal at The Policy Practice, where she is part of the training team for a short online course, Political Economy Analysis for Climate Action.

James Kavanagh

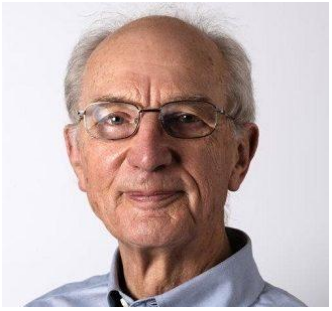
Director of Land and Resources, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, UK

James, MRICS C.Geog is a Chartered Surveyor & Chartered Geographer. James is head of Land & Resources with The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). James is chair of the International Land Standard (ILMS) Coalition, Secretary General of CASLE (Commonwealth Association of Surveyors and Land Economists) and vice chair of FIG Commission 9. James is working on further research, insight, and standards on issues of valuation within informal settlements, on customary land issues, land acquisition and compensation, and the process of land and property rights formalisation.

Esther Obaikol

Land Governance Advisor, Land Facility Decision Support Unit

A Ugandan lawyer with thirty-one (31) years of accumulated work experience in with twenty (20) years in leadership positions at national, regional, and global levels. Esther has twenty-six (26) years' experience in land governance, twenty-one (21) years in piloting innovations in gender, land, and tenure security, sixteen (16) years' experience in organizational development & management, partnership, and network building; and five (5) years' experience in environmental governance focusing on legal and social research, monitoring and evaluation, and policy advocacy. Esther currently works as the Deputy Team Leader/Gender and Institutional reform Specialist for Land Equity International's Land and Gender Project in Maseru Lesotho as well as the Gender and Land Lead in the FCDO's Decision Support Unit to the Land Facility.



Geoffrey Payne

Geoffrey Payne & Associates, UK

Geoffrey Payne is a housing and urban development consultant with more than five decades of experience covering all regions of the world. His consultancy, Geoffrey Payne and Associates has undertaken research, consultancy and capacity building assignments for the World Bank, UN-Habitat and other international development agencies, governments and academic institutions. He has published widely and his latest book ('Somewhere to Live: Rising to the global urban land and housing challenge', Practical Action Publishing, 2022) addresses these issues in the context of increasing inequality and the climate crisis.

5. Acknowledgements

This year for the first time we were able to open the first day of the conference for in-person participation. This was possible with the support from the Land Facility's Decision Support Unit, UK International Aid, , and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, UK. This year our communication partner was the Land Portal. We would like to thank all colleagues from these institutions for their collaboration with us and last but not least we thank UWE Bristol for ongoing support of the LINK initiative.

UWE Bristol is a modern, career-focused university with over 35,000 students, known for strong industry partnerships, practical, and highly-rated teaching. With a Gold TEF rating for student experience, it provides future-facing learning, particularly via its large Frenchay Campus, focusing on employability and research. At UWE Bristol, we are focused on solving global challenges through outstanding learning, world-leading research and a culture of enterprise. We are proudly supporting LINK.

The Land Facility is a global programme, funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth &Development Office (FCDO), that partners with governments to strengthen land governance. As the Land Facility's learning partner, the Decision Support Unit (LF-DSU) facilitates knowledge production and exchange to support adaptive and evidence-informed decision making for land governance.

Founded in 1868, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors is the world's leading professional body for qualifications and standards in land, property, infrastructure and construction. RICS works at a cross-governmental level, promotes and enforces the highest international standards in the valuation, management and development of land, real estate, construction and infrastructure.

The Land Portal is a premier digital hub dedicated to gathering and democratizing fragmented land governance data. It acts as a one-stop information ecosystem for land-related SDG indicators, research, and thematic portfolios, connecting policymakers, researchers, and civil society to secure land rights and promote open data.

6. Conference Agenda

Day 1 - Tuesday, 3 March

Opening | Prof. Jessica Lamond, University of the West of England/LINK, UK

Welcome to the conference | Robin Bloch, Land Facility Decision Support Unit, UK

Welcome to RICS | James Kavanagh, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, UK

Introduction | Will Hines, Humanitarian Director, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), UK

Keynote | Ward Anseeuw, Lead of the Land Tenure Team, Food Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Italy, The Status of Land Tenure and Governance (SLTG) Report

Session 1: Improving understanding of the political economy factors that influence land governance

Introduction | Niki Palmer, Land Facility Decision Support Unit, UK

Renée Chartres (Land Equity International, Australia), Imelda Evinani (Land Equity International, Australia), Dian Aryani (Independent Consultant) and Kate Fairlie (Land Equity International, Australia), ID: 64, The Political Economy of Land Management Rights in Indonesia: Case Study from Kampung Naga

Kate Rickersey (Land Equity International, Australia), Stuart Ling, Cecilia Luttrell, Davone Bounphasouk and Arnaldo Pellini, ID: 84, How multi-year, multistakeholder engagements shape policies and regulations for good land governance in Lao PDR

Cecilia Luttrell (Independent Consultant), Why context matters: a political economy lens on the lessons from the Mekong Region Land Governance Programme, and the Lao PDR and Indonesia case studies

Session 2: UK support for international land governance

Introduction | Will Taylor (Governance Head of Profession, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), UK)

Panel discussion | UK support for international land governance

Chris Penrose-Buckley (Deputy Head Food Security, Agriculture and Land, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, UK); John Meadows (Land Facility Lead Supplier, UK); Pam Whitham (Ordinance Survey, UK); James Kavanagh (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, UK); Geoffrey Payne (Geoffrey Payne & Associates, UK)

Session 3: Power and agency in land governance

Introduction | Emily Hayter (Land Facility Decision Support Unit, UK)

Lead Presenter | Prof. Catherine Boone (London School of Economics, UK) National land registration trial and error: things seen and unforeseen in Côte d'Ivoire

Hon. Saleh Maalim Alio (County Government of Mandera, Kenya), ID: 3, Political Economy Drivers of Land Governance in Kenya: Lessons from Frontier Counties for Sustainable and Inclusive Reform

Ope Simpson (King's College London, UK), ID: 14, Mind the gap: Elite mediation, legal pluralism, and spatial variation in land violence in Nigeria (not presented)

Baltazar Atangana (For Greening, Cameroon), ID: 31, Gendered pathways to inclusive land governance: Women's leadership and resilience in African territories (not presented)

Netsanet Genene, Christian Mesmer and Rahel Hailu (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, Germany/Ethiopia), ID: 28, Engaging religious leaders as sympathizers for advancing women's land rights

Liz Alden Wily (Leiden University, The Netherlands), ID: 131, Finding paths beyond impunity: The new land governance challenge

Session 4: Widening perspectives for land governance

Introduction | Saskia Simonson (Lead Country Coordinator, Land Facility, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), UK)

Lead Presenter | Diane Dumashie (President, International Federation of Surveyors (FIG)/RICS, Denmark/UK) FIG Network diversity and leverage – multi-stakeholder approaches

Christelle van den Berg (Kadaster International, Netherlands), ID: 47, Unlocking the value of land: Financing governance for sustainability

Francisco Carranza (Global Action for Land, Italy), Charl-Thom Bayer (Land Portal Foundation, Netherlands), Washe Kazungu (TMG Research, Kenya), ID: 51, Bridging perspectives: Multistakeholder and digital platforms for intersectional land governance

Robert Home (Anglia Ruskin University), ID: 49, Interdisciplinary approaches to African land policy

Lars Brugman (Kadaster International, Netherlands), Jan Rouwendal (Vrije Universiteit, Netherlands) and Hans Wisman (Kadaster International, Netherlands), ID: 54, Public versus private land sellers: Divergent pricing strategies in Dutch residential development

Day 2 - Wednesday, 4 March

Welcome | Grazyna Wiejak-Roy (University of the West of England/LINK, UK)

Session 1: Theme 2: Power and agency in land governance

Introduction | Geoffrey Payne (Geoffrey Payne & Associates, UK)

Asrul Sidiq (Universitas Syiah Kuala, Indonesia / Australian National University, Australia), ID: 35, Growing trees, losing land: Power, accountability, and local resistance to land commodification in Aceh, Indonesia

Kato Mayanja (Kyambogo University, Uganda) and Ronald Ssengendo (Makerere University, Uganda), ID: 77, Power dynamics and land governance: A political economy analysis of elite capture in Uganda's land sector

Dinelago Mutota (Namibia University of Science and Technology, Namibia), ID:116, The 2018 land conference and beyond: Power, agency and informal settlements in Namibia

Session 2: Theme 1: Improving understanding of the political economy factors that influence land governance

Introduction | Esther Obaikol (Independent Consultant, Uganda)

Daramola Olapade and Damilola Agbalajobi (Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria), ID: 55, The political economy of land reform in Nigeria: Interplay of national and sub-national interests

Claudia D'Andrea, Katrin Kuhlmann, Vanessa Adams, Worlali Senyo, Cecilia Shardey, Tara Francis and Aaron Adu (Land Facility, UK), ID: 48, Land Facility strengthening women's rights through shea value chains in West Africa gendered political economies of shea: Global market expansion, customary tree tenure, and women's land rights in West Africa's shea parklands

Eunice Adwoa Sarpong (University of Parakou, Benin/Georg-August University of Göttingen, Germany) and Prof Dr Nikolaus Schareika (Georg-August University of Göttingen, Germany), ID: 111, Navigating rural land reform: Insights from Fulani agropastoral communities in northern Benin

Session 3: Theme 4: Changing approaches to the economics and financing of land governance

Introduction | Grazyna Wiejak-Roy (University of the West of England/LINK, UK)

Kashi Kafle (Texas A&M University, US), Soumya Balasubramanya (World Bank, US) and Kodjo Barnor (Texas A&M University, US), ID: 50, Private land restoration in smallholder systems: Implications for rural wellbeing

Agnès Tatiana Omengue Edoa (University of Yaounde 2 / Association of Young Experts on Land Issues, Cameroon), ID: 81, Responsible land investments in agriculture: Rethinking structured and sustainable projects for local communities

Tatiana Gumucio (Landesa, US), Cininta Pertiwi (Landesa, US), Juan Robalino (Landesa, US) and Tanvir Ahmed (Shushilan, Bangladesh), ID: 98, Linking governance, climate resilience, and sustainable development for enhanced policy over mangrove ecosystem management in Bangladesh and Indonesia

Shewakena Aytenfisu Abab (World Bank, US), ID: 25, Who owns the 45 billion trees planted by Ethiopia's Green Legacy Initiative? Challenges, opportunities, and pathways

Session 4: Theme 3: Widening perspectives for land governance

Introduction | Robin Bloch (Land Facility Decision Support Unit, UK)

Devie Chilonga (Former Permanent Secretary: Ministry of Lands and Housing, Malawi) and Euphemia Bota (Former Deputy Commissioner: Ministry of Lands and Housing, Malawi), ID: 109, Evidence from integrated agricultural and watershed programmes

Marina Cromberg and Anne M. Larson (Center for International Forestry Research - ICRAF, Kenya), ID: 36, The political economy of jurisdictional REDD+: A case study in Pará, Brazil

Ritah Kemigisa (Stand for Her Land Campaign, Uganda and Uganda Community Based Association for Women and Children Welfare, Uganda), Caroline Kayanja (Uganda Community Based

Association for Women and Children Welfare, Uganda) and Jonathan Ochom (Tenure Advisory, Uganda), ID: 83, Women's Land Rights in Uganda's 2026 Presidential Elections

Simon Peter Mwesigye (Land, Housing and Informal Settlements Section, UN-Habitat / Kyambogo University, Uganda), Augustus Aturinde (Kyambogo University, Uganda) and Geoffrey Okeny (Kyambogo University, Uganda), ID: 100, Participatory land pooling and readjustment for integrated peri-urban land governance in Uganda

Session 5: Theme 4: Changing approaches to the economics and financing of land governance

Introduction | James Kavanagh (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), UK)

Hansika Agrawal (Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment, US), Esther Akwii (Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment, US), Rose Mosi (International Institute for Environment and Development, UK) and Amaelle Seigneret (formerly International Institute for Environment and Development, UK), ID: 60, Responsible land governance for a just energy transition: Strategies from Indonesia and Zambia

Ece Ozmen (Manisa Celal Bayar University, Turkey), ID: 107, Governing the urban limit: A fuzzy logic approach to balancing political economy and environmental capacity in Turkish metropolitans

Sinan Güneş and Harun Tanrıvermiş (Ankara University, Turkey), ID: 129, Exploring land readjustment for urban resilience and housing solutions: The case of Karataş, Türkiye (not presented)

Dionysia Georgia Perperidou (University of West Attica, Greece), ID: 113, Transfer of development rights as a financing mechanism for heritage protection and social inclusion policies

7. Conference Sessions – Extended Abstracts and Author Bios

Opening Session: Welcome and Keynote presentations

Title: **Welcome**

Author: **Jessica Lamond**

Organisation: **University of the West of England, UK**

Presentation: **Welcome session**

Opening talk

For the opening address please see the sides and conference recordings.

Author's details:

Prof. Jessica Lamond - Professor in Real Estate and Climate Risk; College Dean of Research and Enterprise, College of Arts, Technology and Environment, UWE Bristol

Jessica is currently a Professor in Real Estate and Climate Risk at the University of the West of England Bristol, UK. Her research interests include the fields of flood and climate risk management, real estate, land and property valuation and land management and she has recently led projects for a wide variety of funders including EPSRC, DFID, Defra, RICS and Flood Re. Jessica led the land planning and management of the DFID funded Urbanisation Research Nigeria research programme which spanned land planning and registration, climate resilience, municipal service delivery and valuation of urban development.

At LINK Jessica is responsible for the Research stream. If you are interested, please e-mail jessica.lamond@uwe.ac.uk, Jessica Lamond (UWE profile) or visit our LINK Research page.

Title: **Welcome**

Author: **Robin Bloch**

Organisation: **Land Facility Decision Support Unit, UK**

Presentation: **Welcome session**

Opening talk

For the opening address please see the sides and conference recordings.

Author's details:

Dr Robin Bloch - Urban Development and Planning Specialist, Team Leader, Land Facility Decision Support Unit, Visiting Professor at the University of the West of England, Bristol, UK

Robin Bloch is an urban planner who specialises in spatial and land use planning and management at all territorial scales, in local economic and industrial development, and in environmental management, sustainability and urban resilience, with emphasis on flood risk management. He has a 35-year planning career with experience from over 30 countries across four continents, leading diverse teams for the majority of multilateral and bilateral development partners. These teams have worked with a wide range of counterparts and stakeholders at municipal, regional and national government levels, as well as those within the private and community sectors. He is a Visiting Professor at the University of the West of England, Bristol, UK.

Title: **Welcome to RICS**

Author: **James Kavanagh**

Organisation: **Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors**

Presentation: **Welcome session**

Opening talk

For the opening address please see the sides and conference recordings.

Author's details:

James Kavanagh - Director of Land and Resources, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

James, MRICS C.Geog is a Chartered Surveyor & Chartered Geographer. James is head of Land & Resources with The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). James is chair of the International Land Standard (ILMS) Coalition, Secretary General of CASLE (Commonwealth Association of Surveyors and Land Economists) and vice chair of FIG Commission 9. James is working on further research, insight, and standards on issues of valuation within informal settlements, on customary land issues, land acquisition and compensation, and the process of land and property rights formalisation.

Title: **Opening Address**

Author: **Will Hines**

Organisation: **Humanitarian Director, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, UK**

Presentation: **Welcome session**

Opening talk

For the opening address please see the conference recordings.

Title: **Status of Land Tenure and Governance Report**

Author: **Ward Anseeuw**

Organisation: **Lead of the Land Tenure Team, Food Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, Italy**

Presentation: **Welcome session**

Opening talk

For this presentation please see the sides and conference recordings.

Abstract:

This first global report on the Status of Land and Governance generates, compiles and critically assesses innovative data, in view of documenting the state and tracking progress with regards land tenure systems and governance frameworks.

By bringing together tenure- and sex-disaggregated data and analyses from a wide range of sources — including governments, civil society and academia — and across multiple levels, from local to global, it establishes a robust evidence base for action. The report supports progress toward numerous Sustainable Development Goals, promotes the uptake of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT), and contributes to the implementation of other key international frameworks, including the CFS Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (CFS-RAI) and the Rio Conventions.

It is intended to serve policymakers, intergovernmental organizations, civil society, the private sector and academia as a clear and authoritative reference point on land tenure and governance data and analysis. Above all, the report seeks to underscore and mainstream the central importance of secure and equitable land tenure for inclusive and sustainable development.

Author's details:

Dr **Ward Anseeuw**, a development economist and policy analyst, is a senior land tenure officer and lead of the Land Tenure Team at the Food and Agricultural Organization of the Unites Nations (FAO). Previously, as a senior research fellow at the Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD), he was seconded from 2016 to 2023 to the International Land Coalition as the Global Lead Technical Specialist responsible for Data, Research, Knowledge Management and Learning; and from 2005 until 2016, he was seconded to the University of Pretoria, as a senior research fellow to the Post-Graduate School of Agriculture and Rural Development and as the co-director of the Center for the Study of Governance Innovations (GovInn) – which he founded in 2012. His work focuses mainly on issues of land and policies, agrarian and land reforms, large-scale land acquisitions as well as to participatory approaches of

data generation, governance and advocacy regarding land. He has published extensively on these issues in scientific journals and with renowned publishers; including Land, transition and compromise (with Chris Alden, Palgrave, 2009), The struggle over land in Africa – Conflicts, politics and change (with Chris Alden, HSRC Press, 2010), South Africa's Agrarian Reform (In French, Editions Universitaires Européennes, 2011), South Africa's Agrarian Question (HSRC Press, 2016) and Inclusive Businesses in Agriculture (SunMedia Press, 2017).

Author: **Niki Palmer**

Organisation: **Political Economy Advisor, Land Facility Decision Support Unit, UK**

Presentation: **Introduction - Session 1: Improving understanding of the political economy factors that influence land governance**

Opening talk

For the opening address please see the conference recordings.

Author's details:

Niki provides political economy advice to the Decision Support Unit of the Land Facility, an innovative UK programme supporting land governance globally. She has 25 years of experience in international development, spanning programming, research and policy roles in conflict affected and fragile contexts including Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia and the occupied Palestinian territory. She is a specialist in political economy analysis, which she has applied to many issues related to land governance including climate change adaptation and resilience, disaster risk management, social protection, and land and environmental rights. Niki is also a Principal at The Policy Practice, where she is part of the training team for a short online course, Political Economy Analysis for Climate Action.

Title: **ID064 – Strengthening Land Use Management Rights to Support Customary Tenure, Cultural and Economic Development, Environmental Protections and Livelihoods in Indonesia**

Authors: **1. Imelda Evinani, 2. Dian Aryani, 3. Renée Chartres, & 4. Kate Fairlie**

Organisation: **1. Team Leader, Land Facility (LF) Indonesia Country Support Programme (CSP), 2. Policy and Gender/Advocacy Specialist, LF Indonesia CSP, 3. Senior Land and Legal Specialist, LEI & 4. Land Administration Specialist, LEI /Project Director LF Indonesia CSP**

Abstract:

Originally intended to grant regional authorities and agencies the rights to negotiate with third parties for the economic development of state land, land management use rights 'hak pengelolaan lahan' (HPL) is attracting growing interest as a mechanism to provide tenure protection and support the economic development and environmental stewardship of customary communities across Indonesia. Designation by the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency (Kementerian Agraria dan Tata Ruang/Badan Pertanahan Nasiona or ATR/BPN) of an area with HPL status provides the customary community with land management and use rights – i.e. a right of control (not an ownership right). HPL holders can manage, plan, allocate and use the land, and enjoy certain public-authority powers such as cooperating with private sector entities to promote development in designated areas. HPL land utilisation must, however, consider the interests of the community and environmental sustainability. In the customary context, HPL confers a statutory right of management that enables communities to manage and utilise land in accordance with customary practices.

Importantly, HPL provides a pathway for customary communities to gain formal legal protection over land without requiring prior recognition as a customary law community (*Masyarakat Hukum Adat* or MHA). This contrasts with alternative approaches to recognise customary land tenure, such as *hak ulayat* (i.e. the grant of communal ownership rights) which require as a precondition the formal recognition of the customary law community. In this context, HPL can serve as a complementary or transitional mechanism for strengthening tenure security in situations where MHA status or the other conditions necessary for *hak ulayat* tenure are not feasible.

While HPL's application to customary lands has not been without controversy, given its increasing designation to non-forested customary land, important questions arise as to how the HPL should work in customary contexts, and how it can be strengthened to improve tenure protections for Indonesia's customary communities, while also supporting improved economic development and livelihoods for Indonesia's customary groups.

To this end, in December 2025 Land Equity International (LEI) undertook a field study to investigate the impact of HPL in Kampung Naga - a traditional settlement in Naga Hamlet, within Neglasari Village, Tasikmalaya Regency in West Java. This work was conducted as part of the broader Indonesia Country Support Project (CSP), which forms part of The Land Facility, implemented by Tetra Tech, LEI and partners, and funded by the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

Whilst Naga Hamlet spans approximately 85 hectares, and the recognised MHA extends across parts of Tasikmalaya and Garut regencies,1 the HPL area that was formally designated in May 2024 covers only 1.39 hectares. Over the course of several days, the LEI research team collected qualitative and quantitative data with Kampung Naga community members and national, regional and district government officials with a view to: (i) understand the impact, if any, of HPL designation on livelihoods, economic development and cultural preservation in the area, as well as the general socio-economic conditions; and (ii) develop insights for the Government of Indonesia on the optimal policy model for HPL, and within this model, how HPL processes and functions could be strengthened to support better outcomes for customary communities and economic development.

The research findings reveal the strengths and weaknesses of HPL designation, while also providing some key insights on the policy objectives HPL should aim to achieve. Select findings and policy insights from the research are presented below:

First, although respondents highlighted that HPL designation provided them with improved perceptions of tenure security, there were no reported significant changes in livelihoods in the 18 months following the designation of HPL in the area. This suggests that HPL status has not impacted local economic development – despite economic development being one of HPL's existing policy objectives. The research indicates that household income remained the same before and after the issuance of the HPL certificate and confirmed that main livelihood sources remain the same – income is derived from agricultural sector and from limited tourism.

Second, the small size of the HPL area, covering only the human settlement, undermines tenure security protections and limits the development potential offered by HPL issuance, because the land surrounding the HPL remains vulnerable to development pressures and land use change. Respondents highlighted that if this land were, for example, to be sold to outside investors, the livelihood risks for the Kampung Naga community would be significant. External pressures, including the construction of a national toll road near customary ritual sites outside the HPL area, further reduced the sense of tenure security and sense of customary 'security'.

Related, the research revealed that HPL could be more effective in protecting and promoting cultural landscapes and customary value systems. Kampung Naga's customary spatial management approach aligns closely with principles of sustainable spatial planning and environmental protection, with customary practices (such as the regulation of prohibited and sacred forests), restrictions on the number of dwellings, and restrictions on land use changes based on the Sudanese Tritangtu philosophy of maintaining ecological balance, local food security, and supporting the hydrology of the Kampung Naga area. The narrow area covered by HPL, however, does not reinforce this balance. At the same time, while customary rules are practiced regularly and religiously, they are not inscribed into village (administrative) laws. This means that they are not binding on third parties and respect for customary rules by outsiders is optional rather than legally required.

From a policy perspective, the research demonstrates that HPL has strong potential to act as a cross-sectoral policy instrument to preserve customary rights and local wisdom, maintain ecological balance, ensure sustainable resource use and support local economic development. Immediate steps to realise this include extending the physical area covered by HPL and reinforcing its status through land use recognition within spatial plans. This could involve (i) synchronising HPL

designation with the district spatial plan, and (ii) developing a detailed spatial plan (RDTR) for the HPL area that reflects the different land use functions under customary rules within and adjacent to the HPL area. The core value of HPL in protecting cultural practice and supporting economic development can be best realised by ensuring the designation covers not only settlement areas but also livelihood zones and culturally significant sites, to better align statutory rights recognition with the community's in-practice management of the landscape.

Government support and collaboration with HPL-rights holders should also be strengthened. Once HPL status is recognised, ongoing programs are needed to promote inclusive, land-based local economic development – improving livelihoods by supporting key commodities, revitalising traditional agricultural cooperatives, facilitating access to environmentally-responsible financing and developing pond-based freshwater fisheries – while avoiding excessive commercialisation. Village and District governments have a key role to play, and an Integrated Development Plan, developed by the customary community with government support, could be a valuable instrument to leverage the local economy to support local food security.

Overall, the research findings call for a more adaptive and integrated policy approach to customary lands, underpinned by the management rights provided by HPL. To be effective, HPL must be implemented by applying a sustainable, protective, inclusive and customary-based land use model that recognises the need for development focused not on physical modernisation, but on strengthening land functions, safeguarding customary values, and improving community welfare in harmony with nature, in accordance with customary norms. Under this model, the issuance of HPL on customary lands could include additional requirements that the holders of HPL manage the land in such a way to integrate traditional knowledge, customary law, and sustainable practices of indigenous peoples with conservation principles. The research conducted in Kampung Naga suggest that this holistic approach will also bring economic development and livelihood improvements to Indonesia's customary communities, with many of the research respondents proposing new ideas to support economic development and cultural preservation.

Author's details:

Imelda has a Bachelor of Science degree with forestry major and brings 15 years of experience working on multi-stakeholder engagements at national and sub-national governments, multi-donors, international and national NGOs/CSOs, private sectors and universities, in land-use planning/spatial planning, democratic and governance, education, water and sanitation, health, and agriculture. She has successfully implemented short-term land use planning/spatial planning projects in multiple target locations in NTB, NTT, Jambi and Riau provinces, involving multiple stakeholders from national through provincial and district levels. Imelda has proven to be effective in building mutual trust and understanding and maintaining stakeholders' expectations.

Dian has extensive experience in community and social development programs with a focus on gender and social justice for more than 10 years . She has worked for more than seven years as a consultant for ACCESS partners in Eastern Indonesia, with a focus on community Learning Assessment and Planning Process (CLAPP) and Gender Social Inclusive (GSI) for CSOs. She has rich experience in developing the capacity of CSOs and more than five years designing monitoring and evaluation and has worked as both as a consultant and a trainer. She has a Bachelor Degree from the Institute Pertanian STIPER (INSTIPER) Yogyakarta, Faculty of Agronomy.

Renée has 15 years' experience working on governance, climate change, land rights and gender equality, Renée is passionate about supporting land systems that help to address the challenges of our time – including action on climate change, inequality, and poverty. An experienced and innovative researcher, lecturer and program implementer, Renée has provided strategic technical advice on various land, gender equality, climate resilience, and justice sector reform projects in West and East Africa, the Middle East, Western Europe and South and South East Asia. She has a Masters in Law (Georgetown) and a Masters in International Relations (Sciences-Po).

Katie is a land administration specialist with expertise that combines urban land issues, technology, youth and environment. Kate Fairlie brings a dynamic, interdisciplinary perspective to LEI's projects. Kate frequently provides strategic institutional and systems-level advice to governments through projects for the World Bank, UK government, UN-Habitat, FAO and national governments. Her ongoing and past work includes assisting Nauru in implementing land tenure and master planning solutions to mitigate urbanisation and climate change, developing a roadmap for national urban cadastral reform in Ethiopia, developing action plans to improve property registration and cadastre management in Indonesia and Egypt and designing low-cost methods and processes for issuing Certificates of Rights of Occupancy in Tanzania. As an experienced researcher, writer, and facilitator, she has been instrumental to the development and promotion of a number of key land administration tools, including co-authoring the World Bank Emerging Technologies Guide on Fit-For-Purpose Land Administration, adapting the Costing and Financing of Land Administration Systems (CoFLAS) tool for implementation, supporting LEI's Land Administration PPP work and most recently co-authoring a State of Practice White Paper on Land Information and Transaction Systems and decision-tool for land IT system investment. Kate holds a Bachelor Eng (Surveying and Spatial Information Systems) from the University of New South Wales, Australia and MSc in Sustainable Urban Development (Distinction) from the University of Oxford. She is active in the International Federation of Surveyors and current vice chair of the Commission 7 Working Group on Women's Land Rights.

Title: **ID084 - How multiyear, multistakeholder engagements shape policies and regulations for good land governance in Lao PDR**

Authors: **1. Kate Rickersey, 2. Stuart Ling, 3. Davone Bounphasouk, 4. Dr Cecilia Luttrell and 5. Dr Arnaldo Pellini**

Organisation: **1. Managing Director, Land Equity International, 2. Independent Consultant, 2. Independent Consultant, 3. Independent Consultant, 4. Independent Consultant, and 5. Director and Co-founder of Capability Oy**

Abstract:

The Political Economy of Land Management Rights in Indonesia: Case Study from Kampung Naga

Authors: Imelda Evinani, Team Leader, Land Facility (LF) Indonesia Country Support Programme (CSP), Renée Chartres, Senior Land and Legal Specialist, LEI Dian Aryani, Policy and Gender/Advocacy Specialist, LF Indonesia CSP and Kate Fairlie, Land Administration Specialist, LEI /Project Director LF Indonesia CSP

Originally intended to grant regional authorities and agencies the rights to negotiate with third parties for the economic development of state land, land management use rights 'hak pengelolaan lahan' (HPL) is attracting growing interest as a mechanism to provide tenure protection and support the economic development and environmental stewardship of customary communities across Indonesia. Designation by the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency (Kementerian Agraria dan Tata Ruang/Badan Pertanahan Nasiona or ATR/BPN) of an area with HPL status provides the customary community with land management and use rights – i.e. a right of control (not an ownership right). HPL holders can manage, plan, allocate and use the land, and enjoy certain public-authority powers such as cooperating with private sector entities to promote development in designated areas. HPL land utilisation must, however, consider the interests of the community and environmental sustainability. In the customary context, HPL confers a statutory right of management that enables communities to manage and utilise land in accordance with customary practices.

Importantly, HPL provides a pathway for customary communities to gain formal legal protection over customary lands. While HPL's application to customary lands has not been without controversy, given its growing designation to non-forested customary land, based on 2024 regulations, important questions arise as to how the HPL should work in customary contexts, and how it can be strengthened to improve tenure protections for Indonesia's customary communities, while also supporting improved economic development and livelihoods for Indonesia's customary groups.

To this end, in December 2025 Land Equity International (LEI) undertook a field study to investigate the impact of HPL in Kampung Naga - a traditional settlement in Naga Hamlet, within Neglasari Village, Tasikmalaya Regency in West Java. This work was conducted as part of the broader Indonesia Country Support Project (CSP), which forms part of The Land Facility, implemented by Tetra Tech, LEI and partners, and funded by the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

Whilst Naga Hamlet spans approximately 85 hectares, and the recognised MHA extends across parts of Tasikmalaya and Garut regencies, the HPL area that was formally designated in May 2024 covers only 1.39 hectares. Over the course of several days, the LEI research team collected qualitative and quantitative data with Kampung Naga community members and national, regional and district government officials with a view to: (i) understand the impact, if any, of HPL designation on livelihoods, economic development and cultural preservation in the area, as well as the general socio-economic conditions; and (ii) develop insights for the Government of Indonesia on the optimal policy model for HPL, and within this model, how HPL processes and functions could be strengthened to support better outcomes for customary communities and economic development.

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First, although respondents highlighted that HPL designation provided them with improved perceptions of tenure security, there were no reported significant changes in livelihoods in the 18 months following the designation of HPL in the area. This suggests that HPL status has not impacted local economic development – despite economic development being one of HPL's existing policy objectives. The research indicates that household income remained the same before and after the issuance of the HPL certificate and confirmed that main livelihood sources remain the same – income is derived from agricultural sector and from limited tourism.

Second, the small size of the HPL area, covering only the human settlement, diminishes perceptions of tenure security protections and limits the development potential offered by HPL issuance, because the land surrounding the HPL remains vulnerable to development pressures and land use change. Respondents highlighted that if this land were, for example, to be sold to outside investors, the livelihood risks for the Kampung Naga community would be significant. External pressures, including the construction of a national toll road near customary ritual sites outside the HPL area, further reduced the sense of tenure security and sense of cultural security.

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From a policy perspective, the research demonstrates that HPL has strong potential to act as a cross-sectoral policy instrument to preserve customary rights and local wisdom, maintain ecological balance, ensure sustainable resource use and support local economic development. Immediate steps to realise this include extending the physical area covered by HPL and reinforcing its status through land use recognition within spatial plans. This could involve (i) synchronising HPL

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Government support and collaboration with HPL-rights holders should also be strengthened. Once HPL status is recognised, ongoing programs are needed to promote inclusive, land-based local economic development – improving livelihoods by supporting key commodities, revitalising traditional agricultural cooperatives, facilitating access to environmentally-responsible financing and developing pond-based freshwater fisheries – while avoiding excessive commercialisation. Village and District governments have a key role to play, and an Integrated Development Plan, developed by the customary community with government support, could be a valuable instrument to leverage the local economy to support local food security.

Overall, the research findings call for a more adaptive and integrated policy approach to customary lands, underpinned by the management rights provided by HPL. To be effective, HPL must be implemented by applying a sustainable, protective, inclusive and customary-based land use model that recognises the need for development focused not on physical modernisation, but on strengthening land functions, safeguarding customary values, and improving community welfare in harmony with nature, in accordance with customary norms. Under this model, the issuance of HPL on customary lands could include additional requirements that the holders of HPL manage the land in such a way to integrate traditional knowledge, customary law, and sustainable practices of indigenous peoples with conservation principles. The research conducted in Kampung Naga suggest that this holistic approach will also bring economic development and livelihood improvements to Indonesia's customary communities, with many of the research respondents proposing new ideas to support economic development and cultural preservation.

Author's details:

Kate Rickersey is the Managing Director of LEI with over 20 years' experience across the full lifecycle of land administration projects, Dr Kate Rickersey is a driven and energetic leader with a passion for translating policy into action. Having been Team Leader between 2014 and 2018, and since backstopping as Project Director of the Mekong Region Land Governance project, Kate has held close insights into the evolution of the project along with the changes in adaptive management, innovative actions that lead to reforms. Combined with her more recent engagement as Project Director of LEI's Transformative Land Investment project, led by CIFOR and implemented in Laos with RECOFTC, Kate has a strong appreciation of the interplay between private sector, government and community capacity as reform agents.

Stuart Ling has been working with family farmers in Lao PDR since 1996 when he moved there as an Australian volunteer. Most of that period has been spent in rural areas, including ten years in the northern province of Bokeo as Country Director of a Belgian NGO, and 16 years as an independent consultant in agriculture, forestry and land governance. These assignments, which have included those for ACIAR, FAO, the World Bank and international NGOs, have given him experience throughout the country and developed his research and facilitation skills in a cross-cultural setting. Stuart completed a Master of Economics in 2015 and has several publications in peer reviewed journals.

Davone Bounphasouk began her career with GIZ as an agricultural advisor before moving to an international NGO to manage a responsible agricultural investment (RAI) project which included advocating for the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT). Since 2021 she has been an independent consultant specialising in agriculture, forestry and land management issues for international development organisations including the World Bank, FAO, AFD and UNDP. Davone has a master's in development studies from Switzerland and is married with one son.

Cecilia Luttrell is a natural resource governance and climate policy specialist with 25+ years' experience working globally at the intersection of land tenure, forest governance and inclusive climate action. She works as an independent consultant and is a Senior Associate with CIFOR-ICRAF, The Dala Institute and Capability-Oy, as well as a visiting researcher at the University of Helsinki. She applies political economy and institutional analysis to help programmes navigate contested reforms, strengthen rights-based governance, and improve equity in land and climate outcomes. Recent work includes a learning review of the Mekong Region Land Governance (MRLG) programme; strategy work with the Ford Foundation and the Climate and Land Use Alliance; and various analyses of ESG standards and deforestation-free commodity approaches. She has supported donors, governments and civil society, primarily in Southeast Asia and Africa, and contributes to FAO's forest and climate work. She holds a PhD from UEA and MSc/BA (Oxford).

Dr Arnaldo Pellini is an experienced researcher and development practitioner with over two decades of experience in the international development sector. His expertise lies working alongside teams in problem-driven political economy analysis, designing change strategies, and co-designing MEL systems for adaptive management. He has lived and worked for extended periods in Nepal, Cambodia, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Arnaldo holds an MPhil in Economic Development from the University of Glasgow and a PhD in Education from the University of Tampere (Finland). His extensive portfolio of publications across academic articles, book chapters, working papers, research briefs, blog posts, and opinion pieces underscores his commitment to promoting evidence-based policy and practice.

Title: **ID204 – Why context matters: a political economy lens on the lessons from the Mekong Region Land Governance Programme, and the Lao PDR and Indonesia case studies**

Author: **Cecilia Luttrell**

Organisation: **Senior Associate with CIFOR-ICRAF, The Dala Institute and Capability-Oy, and visiting researcher at the University of Helsinki**

Abstract:

This presentation uses lessons from the review of the MRLG programme as an overarching storyline, drawing on the Lao PDR and Indonesia papers to illustrate each thematic insight. The MRLG review examined a decade of MRLG's strategies, outcomes, and ways of working across Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam. This presentation aims to show how the same political economy mechanisms take different forms depending on the governance context, and how this shapes feasibility, influence, bottlenecks and risk.

The presentation begins by summarising MRLG's cross-country experience and the political economy lessons distilled from the review. Over ten years, MRLG operated across four countries with different political systems, institutional cultures and development pressures. The programme's work spanned technical land administration support, customary tenure recognition, civil society strengthening, learning platforms and policy dialogue. Across all of these areas, MRLG treated political economy not as an external variable but the underlying environment.

The MRLG review highlights five cross-cutting lessons. First, political space is dynamic, not fixed. MRLG experienced periods of narrowing civic space and windows of opportunity. This required continual adaptation rather than a static theory of change. Second, evidence is political, and its influence depends on timing, relationships and institutional acceptability. Even technically robust evidence struggled to gain traction if it challenged dominant narratives or existed outside recognised decision-making channels. Third, institutional incentives matter: ministries, district authorities and planning agencies have competing mandates that shape how they respond to community claims or technical proposals. Fourth, land governance is tied to development models- particularly investment-led agricultural modernisation - which shape what forms of recognition or protection are politically feasible. Fifth, MRLG learned that influence often occurs through administrative routines rather than headline policy reforms, requiring attention to how decisions are made in practice.

The first part of the presentation introduces the broader context: the same political economy mechanism looks different because the governance context is different. Across MRLG's four countries, governments were promoting large-scale concessions and investment-led agricultural modernisation. At the same time, MRLG faced rising resistance to civil society dialogue and foreign engagement, shaping what was feasible. In Cambodia, for example, the expansion of economic land concessions coincided with heightened scrutiny of civil society. It increased sensitivity around land disputes, shifting reform entry points toward more technical framing rather than rights-based claims. In Myanmar, even before the 2021 coup, land governance reforms were highly politicised because customary and ethnic land rights intersected with national territorial control, creating

openings for technical dialogue but resistance to recognition of collective rights. In Vietnam, the state's push to stimulate investment in agriculture and forestry coexisted with tightly managed civic space, where engagement was possible but had to align with state-led narratives of modernisation and productivity. Together, these cases illustrate how similar investment pressures produced different political constraints, reinforcing the need for tailored strategies even when facing common structural drivers.

A second factor concerns where bottlenecks sit. Across MRLG countries, bottlenecks often lie in political feasibility and the shrinking or expanding space for dialogue. In the Lao PDR case, bottlenecks arose from feasibility constraints: who can be in the room, what can be said, and how evidence enters government workflow. Political sensitivity shapes sequencing and messaging. In Indonesia, the main bottleneck is institutional coordination from recognition to real protection: recognition must be followed by registration and mapping, then integrated into planning systems, and carried into implementation. Additional bottlenecks arise from competing policy priorities, such as food security, that may conflict with the preservation of customary land.

A third factor is what influence looks like. Across MRLG countries, influence often involved shifting narratives away from land grabbing and the impacts of large-scale investment and toward smallholder-oriented, community-based alternatives, while adapting to political realities. In the Lao PDR case, influence is defined by keeping access open, shifting internal procedures and workflows- where the process itself becomes part of the outcome - and gradually widening participation. In Indonesia, influence means making recognition operational and enforceable beyond a small, designated area, in ways that align with customary practices and are binding within planning and administrative systems.

The MRLG review shows that influence often takes subtle forms. In Cambodia and Myanmar, internal changes within ministries - such as the adoption of new approval workflows or dispute-handling procedures - were often more meaningful than formal policy statements. In Vietnam, evidence that aligned with state priorities helped reframe certain aspects of community forestry, enabling incremental shifts within the system. These examples support the interpretation of influence observed in the Lao and Indonesia cases: influence is not only about policy wins but about incremental changes that accumulate through relationship-building, trusted evidence and strategic timing. A fourth factor addresses what risk looks like. Across MRLG, tightening space and backlash rise shrunk the feasible set of options. In the Lao PDR case, there is a risk that political space will close or reform will stall if engagement is not carefully sequenced. In Indonesia, the key risk is recognition without protection if recognition is not binding in planning and administrative systems, or if there is insufficient political buy-in to protect customary spaces.

MRLG's experience highlights that a combination of political sensitivities, institutional incentives and ongoing development projects shapes risk. In some settings, risk stemmed from public visibility and the potential for misunderstanding or misinterpretation. In others, it related to the possibility of undermining relationships with key government counterparts. In yet others, risk emerged from the uncertainty created by large-scale infrastructure or agricultural investments. These dynamics required MRLG to adopt a risk-aware approach that balanced the need for influence with the need to protect partners, maintain access and avoid unintended consequences.

These factors are then explored through four themes that emerged in the MRLG review. The first theme, alliances as political infrastructure for influence, highlights MRLG's finding that alliances matter everywhere, but the balance between inclusiveness and effectiveness shifts with political constraint. Alliances carry influence by connecting actors, coordinating strategy and sustaining engagement over time, even as broad participation may dilute focus and slow decisions. In the Lao PDR case, alliance-building centres on sequencing participation and maintaining safe political access through a multi-year process. In the Indonesian case, the need for alliance-building is to coordinate across fragmented institutions so that recognition becomes usable in practice, beyond registration, to include legal recognition, mapping, planning integration, and local government capacity.

The second theme, government engagement as strategy, reflects MRLG's experience that constructive engagement was often the only practical entry point for influencing land governance, but also involved trade-offs. Greater access often required softening or reframing messages, with two associated risks: dilution of rights-based messages and risks to independence or credibility if programmes were perceived as too close to government. In the Lao PDR case, political feasibility and sensitivity shaped all aspects of engagement, requiring careful management of evidence, participation and credibility. In the Indonesian case, post-recognition tensions between national, regional and customary priorities, together with development agendas such as food security, reshape what recognition means in practice; trust becomes the central political economy issue.

The theme of evidence-informed advocacy from MRLG suggests that evidence is political, relational, and contingent on timing. Across MRLG, evidence had to be coproduced, tailored, and attuned to institutional cultures, sometimes serving as technical credibility, sometimes as narrative leverage, and sometimes as practical guidance for implementation. Evidence works when it is trusted, shared at the moment decisions are made, and delivered through relationships that protect it from being ignored. In the Indonesian case, the diagnostic evidence highlights mismatches between perceived tenure security gains and limited livelihood changes, pointing to design fixes such as broader coverage and tighter integration with planning systems. In the Lao PDR case, evidence needed to be politically usable inside the government workflow, with timing and sequencing determining what it could achieve.

The fourth theme, around the investor/development interface, suggests that reforms must engage economic power, not only policy texts. Land governance reflects investment models, concessions and development pressures, and reforms succeed when they alter incentives and accountability for powerful actors. In the Lao PDR case, the investor interface was explicit: concessions, leases and crop investment approvals sit at the heart of reform, requiring safeguards, rules and investor buy-in. In the Indonesian case, the interface is indirect, operating through planning and development decisions that can override customary protection unless recognition is made binding administratively and spatially.

The presentation concludes by reflecting on the politics of adaptive programming. Programming is political: the same political economy mechanisms around investment pressure, state authority, and Institutional fragmentation looks different in different contexts. Strategies evolve as political space expands or contracts, continually balancing influence, feasibility and risk.

Acknowledgements

This presentation draws on the following papers:

Luttrell, C., & Pellini, A. (2025). Navigating land reform in the Mekong: lessons from a decade of adaptive policy engagement. Capitalisation of Experience Series #3. Vientiane: MRLG. https://www.mrlg.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Capex-CaseStudy-Navigating-land-reform-in-the-Mekong-16092025_updated-1.pdf

Luttrell, C., & Pellini, A. (2025). Lessons from a decade of policy engagement in the land governance sector in the Mekong Region. Brief, Capitalisation of Experience Series #4. Vientiane: MRLG. https://www.mrlg.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Capitalisationof-Experience-Brief-01-.pdf

Luttrell, C., and Pellini, A. (2025). Lessons from MRLG for the design of land governance programmes. Brief. Capitalisation of Experience Series #5. Vientiane: MRLG. https://www.mrlg.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Capitalisation-of-ExperienceBrief-02_updated-small-1.pdf

Author's details:

Dr Cecilia Luttrell is a natural resource governance and climate policy specialist with 25+ years' experience working globally at the intersection of land tenure, forest governance and inclusive climate action. She works as an independent consultant and is a Senior Associate with CIFOR-ICRAF, The Dala Institute and Capability-Oy, as well as a visiting researcher at the University of Helsinki. She applies political economy and institutional analysis to help programmes navigate contested reforms, strengthen rights-based governance, and improve equity in land and climate outcomes. Recent work includes a learning review of the Mekong Region Land Governance (MRLG) programme; strategy work with the Ford Foundation and the Climate and Land Use Alliance; and various analyses of ESG standards and deforestation-free commodity approaches. She has supported donors, governments and civil society, primarily in Southeast Asia and Africa, and contributes to FAO's forest and climate work. She holds a PhD from UEA and MSc/BA (Oxford).

Title: **UK support for international land governance**

Panel discussion:

Moderator: **Will Taylor, Governance Head of Profession, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), UK**

Panellists:

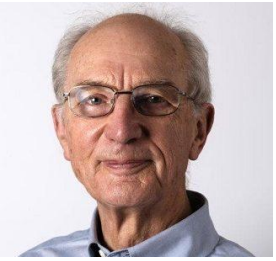
Chris Penrose-Buckley, Deputy Head Food Security, Agriculture and Land, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, UK

Chris Penrose-Buckley advises on land policy at FCDO and holds an MSc in rural development and agricultural economics from Imperial College, London. He has over 20 years of experience in land governance, agriculture and natural resource management in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Pam Whitham, Customer Development Manager, Ordnance Survey

Pam, with over 25 years of experience in the geospatial industry, leads strategic collaborations and initiatives with public and private sector customers that drive value from Ordnance Survey data and which underpin key policy areas in the Land and Property Sector. As Sector lead Pam helps customers understand how OS data can be used, how it can unlock value to their organisation and particularly how data and data analysis can support business decisions and policy development and delivery.

Geoffrey Payne



Geoffrey Payne is a housing and urban development consultant with more than five decades of experience covering all regions of the world. His consultancy, Geoffrey Payne and Associates has undertaken research, consultancy and capacity building assignments for the World Bank, UN-Habitat and other international development agencies, governments and academic institutions. He has published widely and his latest book ('Somewhere to Live: Rising to the global urban land and housing challenge', Practical Action Publishing, 2022) addresses these issues in the context of increasing inequality and the climate crisis.

John Meadows, Land Governance Advisor to the Land Facility

John Meadows, Land Governance Advisor to the Land Facility, is an **experienced land governance**, administration and registration specialist, who has worked in both the public and private sectors. He has provided technical oversight and expertise on many rural, forestry and urban land administration, governance and reform programmes, from advising legal counsels on changes to legislation to supporting technical requirements of land administration system business processes and technology. His work has taken him to Africa, South East Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and the Caribbean.

James Kavanagh - Director of Land and Resources, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

James, MRICS C.Geog is a Chartered Surveyor & Chartered Geographer. James is head of Land & Resources with The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). James is chair of the International Land Standard (ILMS) Coalition, Secretary General of CASLE (Commonwealth Association of Surveyors and Land Economists) and vice chair of FIG Commission 9. James is working on further research, insight, and standards on issues of valuation within informal settlements, on customary land issues, land acquisition and compensation, and the process of land and property rights formalisation.

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Presentation: **Introduction - Session 3: Power and agency in land governance**

Author's Details:

Emily is the Deputy Team Lead of the Land Facility Decision Support Unit (DSU), where she has a particular focus on the learning mandate of the DSU, including through convening the project's Political Economy Advisory Group. She has over 15 years of experience in public sector capacity strengthening and institutional reform, with a focus on evidence use in decision making. Her experience includes projects and consultancy assignments funded by DfID/FCDO, Sida, the EU, Open Society Foundations, Jacobs Foundation and UNICEF. She has worked with parliaments, government bodies, civil service training institutes, think tanks, bilateral and philanthropic donors in a wide range of policy contexts largely in Africa and also in South Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. She has written, presented and delivered training workshops on topics including government engagement, evidence use, research uptake, organisational learning, institutional capacity/capability, parliamentary strengthening and applied political economy. She holds a MA in African Politics from SOAS (2011).

Title: **ID201 – National Land Registration Trial and Error: Things Seen and Unforeseen in Côte d'Ivoire**

Author: **Catherine Boone**

Organisation: **London School of Economics and Political Science, UK**

Abstract:

Côte d'Ivoire like many African countries has been pushing land registration programmes for over three decades, aiming to bring customary land into the direct purview of both the state and the market. Will this registration drive secure the property rights of small scale farmers, or promote the development of land markets? Why has reform, begun in the 1990s, encountered so many obstacles and contributed to civil conflict of a magnitude that was unimaginable at the start of the process? This brief presentation reviews complications "seen and unforeseen" at the start of the land administration reform in the 1990s, highlighting lessons learned as land certification efforts have adapted, been transformed in unanticipated ways, and gradually picked up speed over time.

Authors' details:

Catherine Boone is Harold Laski Professor of Political Science at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She holds a PhD in Political Science from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her research focuses on questions of comparative political economy, and especially on questions of institutional change and economic development. Her books include Inequality and Political Cleavage in Africa: Regionalism by Design (2024), Property and Political Order: Land Rights and the Structure of Conflict in Africa (2014); Political Topographies of the African State: Territorial Authority and Institutional Choice (2003). She was elected to the British Academy and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2020. At the LSE, she convened the MSc in African Development and has led the LSE-UCL Land Politics Working Group since 2015. Her current work on land registration focuses on Côte d'Ivoire.

Title: **ID003 - Political Economy Drivers of Land Governance in Kenya: Lessons from Frontier Counties for Sustainable and Inclusive Reform.**

Authors: **Hon Saleh Maalim Alio**

Organisation: **County Executive Committee Member for Lands, Physical Planning, Housing, Urban Development, Circular Economy, Solid Waste Management, and Sanitation in Mandera County, Kenya, and the Chairperson of the Land Sector Forum under the Frontier Counties Development Council**

Abstract:

1. Introduction

Land governance in Kenya has long been recognized as a politically charged and economically consequential arena, deeply intertwined with questions of power, identity, resource control, and state legitimacy. Despite significant legal and institutional reforms over the past decade—most notably the 2010 Constitution, the Community Land Act (2016), and the devolution framework—land-related conflicts, tenure insecurity, and governance challenges persist, particularly in historically marginalized and frontier regions.

This extended abstract applies a political economy lens to examine how formal institutions, informal power structures, and socio-cultural systems interact to shape land governance outcomes in Kenya. Drawing on first-hand policy and administrative experience as Sub-National Minister for Lands and Physical Planning in Mandera County and Chairman of the Land Sector Forum for Frontier Counties, the paper analyses how political incentives, elite interests, intergovernmental relations, and community dynamics influence the design, implementation, and sustainability of land reforms at the sub-national level.

Frontier counties—characterised by vast communal lands, mobility-based livelihoods, weak tenure security, fragile institutions, and porous cross-border environments—offer a particularly instructive context for understanding the real-world operation of land governance reforms. These regions reveal both the constraints of technocratic reform approaches and the opportunities that emerge when reforms are aligned with local political and socio-cultural realities.

2. Political Economy and Land Governance in Kenya

Political economy analysis emphasizes that land governance is not merely a technical or legal process, but one shaped by competing interests, power relations, and incentives operating at multiple levels. In Kenya, land has historically functioned as a tool for political patronage, elite accumulation, and ethnic mobilisation, leaving a legacy of dispossession, inequality, and mistrust between communities and the state (Boone, 2014; Klopp, 2000).

While constitutional and legislative reforms have sought to address these structural issues, implementation remains uneven. National-level policies often assume stable institutions, clear tenure systems, and high administrative capacity—conditions that are frequently absent in frontier counties. In such contexts, informal institutions, customary norms, and political negotiation often matter more than statutory rules in determining land access, allocation, and dispute resolution.

Understanding land governance outcomes therefore requires attention to:

a) Political incentives shaping decision-making by elected leaders and administrators;

b) Elite capture and brokerage, particularly in land allocation, survey, planning and allocation processes;

c) Intergovernmental dynamics between national and county governments under devolution;

d)Community–state relations, including trust, legitimacy, and participation;

e) Socio-cultural institutions, especially customary tenure and conflict management systems.

3. Frontier Counties as a Governance Lens

Frontier counties in northern and north-east Kenya, includes Mandera, Wajir, Garissa, Tana River, Lamu, Isiolo, Marsabit, Turkana, West Pokot and Samburu, present distinctive land governance challenges and opportunities. These areas are characterised by:

1) Predominantly unregistered communal land with no tenure systems;
2) Pastoralism and agro-pastoralist livelihoods dependent on mobility and shared resources;
3) None or weak cadastral coverage and limited planning, Survey and land registration;
4) High exposure to climate stress, conflict, and cross-border dynamics;
5) Historical marginalization from state-led development and service provision.

In these settings, land governance is inseparable from questions of security, peacebuilding, and social cohesion. Political economy dynamics are particularly visible, as land decisions intersect with electoral politics, clan relations, and resource competition. For example, land allocation for urban expansion, public infrastructure, or investment projects often becomes a site of contestation between local elites, communities, and different levels of government.

4. Decentralization and Intergovernmental Relations

Devolution has fundamentally reshaped Kenya's land governance landscape by assigning the 47 counties key responsibilities in spatial planning, land administration support, and community land facilitation. However, land remains a partially devolved function, with significant authority retained at the national level through institutions such as the Ministry of Lands, the Survey of Kenya, and the National Land Commission (NLC).

This hybrid arrangement has produced both opportunities, delay and tensions. On the positive side, counties are closer to communities and better positioned to understand local land-use patterns and land-governance needs. In frontier counties, devolution has enabled innovations in participatory planning and dispute resolution that were previously absent.

At the same time, unclear mandates, coordination gaps, and political competition between national and county actors often delay implementation, create duplication, or undermine accountability. Political economy analysis reveals that these challenges are not merely technical but are driven by struggles over authority, resources, and control of land-related rents.

5. Historical Injustices, Elite Capture, and Community–State Relations

Historical land injustices remain a powerful undercurrent in frontier regions, where colonial and post-colonial governance systems disrupted customary land arrangements without providing secure alternatives. This history has shaped deep scepticism toward formal land registration and state-led planning initiatives.

Elite capture is a persistent risk, particularly where information asymmetries and weak oversight allow politically connected individuals to influence land allocation, boundary demarcation, or compensation processes. In such contexts, community trust in land institutions depends less on formal legality and more on perceptions of fairness, inclusion, and transparency.

Strengthening community–state relations therefore requires more than legal compliance; it demands deliberate engagement with customary institutions, elders, women, youth, and other marginalized groups. Political incentives for inclusion—such as reducing conflict risks or enhancing electoral legitimacy—can play a crucial role in encouraging leaders to adopt more participatory approaches.

6. Emerging Innovations and Reform Experiences

Despite structural constraints, frontier counties have begun to demonstrate promising land governance innovations. These include:

a) Participatory land use planning processes that integrate customary mobility

b) Multi-stakeholder land governance forums, such as the Land Sector Forum for Frontier Counties;atterns and climate considerations;

c) Community land registration initiatives supported largely by Non State Actors, by County Government facilitation and local leadership engagement;

d) Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms combining customary practices with statutory frameworks;

7. Digitization and Digitalization of land records and services, improves transparency, , reduces disputes, fraud, enhances record-keeping and improves service delivery.

These experiences suggest that reforms are most effective when they:

i. Align with local political incentives;

ii. Strengthen county-level institutional capacity;

iii. Incorporate inclusive and culturally grounded participation;

iv. Are supported by credible data and decision-support tools.

8. Implications for Policy and Practice

Applying political economy analysis to land governance highlights the importance of realism and adaptability in reform design. Rather than assuming linear implementation of national policies, reform efforts must engage with existing power structures and seek to gradually reshape incentives and behaviours.

Key recommendations emerging from this analysis include:

1).Strengthening county–national Government coordination mechanisms to clarify roles and reduce conflict;

2).Supporting community-driven governance models that build legitimacy and trust;

3).Creating political incentives for transparency and accountability, including public disclosure and participatory oversight;

4).Investing in decision-support tools and data systems to improve evidence-based planning and reduce discretionary decision-making.

9. Conclusion

Frontier counties in Kenya offer valuable lessons on the political economy of land governance in a complex nomadic/pastoralist and marginalised communities settings. They demonstrate that land reforms cannot succeed through legal and technical solutions alone but must engage with the political, economic, and socio-cultural realities shaping land relations.

By applying political economy analysis and drawing on grounded sub-national experience, this paper contributes practical insights for designing land governance reforms that are equitable, conflict-sensitive, and sustainable. These lessons are relevant not only for Kenya but also for other countries grappling with land governance challenges in frontier/cross border regions with Nomadic/Pastoralist that have long standing traditional land governances structures and contexts.

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Title: **ID014 - Mind the Gap: Elite Mediation, Legal Pluralism, and Spatial Variation In Land Violence In Nigeria**

Author: **Ope Simpson**

Organisation: **Doctoral Candidate at King's College London, UK**

Abstract:

Introduction and Conceptual Gaps

Land-related violence remains a persistent obstacle to state consolidation and inclusive economic development across Sub-Saharan Africa. Within the academic discourse, the genesis of communal and ethnic violence has traditionally been anchored by two competing, yet ultimately insufficient, paradigms: the Greed hypothesis and the Grievance hypothesis.

However, both frameworks exhibit profound explanatory deficits when applied to the spatiotemporal variation of violence in deeply pluralistic, decentralised federations like Nigeria. The Greed paradigm, which attributes conflict to economic incentives and climate induced resource scarcity, suffers from a severe over-estimation deficit. Resource and climatic pressures are prevalent across the Sahelian belt, yet violence remains highly concentrated in specific geopolitical pockets. Conversely, the Grievance framework emphasises historical injustices and entrenched cultural incompatibilities. By treating ethnic animosity as a static constant, it fails to explain why culturally distinct groups often coexist peacefully for decades until specific political transitions trigger catastrophic violence.

Theoretical Framework and Novelty

To bridge these explanatory gaps, this research introduces a novel, overarching causal mechanism: statutory-customary divergence. Distinct from, yet structurally complementary to, the grievance perspective, this framework locates a central explanatory factor for violence in the structural divergence between the formalised statutory land tenure systems of the state and the deeply embedded customary norms of indigenous populations.

The core theoretical novelty of this paper lies in transposing constructs from strategic management literature into the realm of domestic political economy.

The concept of legal distance is adapted to measure divergence between statutory land law and locally recognised tenure systems. In this model, divergence in customary land law provides an observable institutional expression of broader socio-cultural differentiation and the severe misalignment of strategic objectives among the political elite. Therefore, when the federal centre advances governance frameworks that diverge sharply from the customary realities of subnational actors, it generates immense institutional misalignment rather than mere administrative resistance.

Because political officeholders in Nigeria are typically selected from the elite strata of their respective ethnic groups, their governance styles are deeply informed by customary backgrounds. Legal distance, therefore, quantifies the gap between formal land law and local customary norms as experienced by elites. High legal distance indicates a sharp institutional mismatch; consequently,

federal land frameworks often struggle to achieve local legitimacy, as they are disconnected from the customary realities of the governed. Because governors and federal executives derive authority from different tenure logics, they arbitrate land claims using incompatible legitimacy frameworks, thereby producing competing centres of authority over the same asset. Consequently, local actors frequently abandon formalised dispute resolution channels, resorting instead to informal enforcement and violent self-help militias to defend their customary domains.

Methodological Innovations: NELTT and NLTSM

To move beyond qualitative historical assumptions and empirically test this hypothesis, this study engineers two robust, novel datasets. The empirical foundation is the Nigerian Ethnic Land Tenure Taxonomy (NELTT), an original dataset that standardises and codifies the heterogeneous customary land systems of Nigeria's indigenous populations. Utilising historical archival data and pre-colonial ethnographic mappings, the NELTT rigorously scores the 11 largest ethnic groupings across five critical land tenure dimensions: Land Ownership Structure, Inheritance Practice, Land Sales and Transfer Rights, Women's Land Rights, and Religious and Cultural Use. Furthermore, to prevent demographic omission bias and ensure comprehensive national coverage, minority ethnic populations are systematically incorporated into the taxonomy. To accurately map these minority populations onto the 11 primary macro-clusters, they are evaluated against three core characteristics: Linguistic and Cultural Closeness, Political Control, and Geographical Proximity.

These qualitative scores are subsequently aggregated to produce the Nigerian Land Tenure Similarity Matrix (NLTSM). The NLTSM computes the absolute normative difference between any two ethnic groups, translating customary heterogeneity into a normalised pairwise legal distance score (ranging from 1 to 5). To longitudinally track the spatiotemporal evolution of conflict, this metric is operationalised at the state-month unit of analysis by calculating the institutional distance between the incumbent Federal Executive (the President) and each Subnational Executive (the State Governor), serving as a precise, time-varying proxy for elite political alignment.

Nigerian Land Tenure Similarity Matrix (NLTSM)												
	Igbo	Ibibio	Urhobo	Bini	Yoruba	Tiv	Nupe	Jukun	Kanuri	CNEC	H-Fulani	Statutory Law
Igbo	1	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	5	5	4
Ibibio	2	1	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	5	5	4
Urhobo	3	3	1	2	2	3	3	4	4	4	4	4
Bini	3	3	2	1	2	3	3	4	4	4	4	3
Yoruba	3	3	2	2	1	3	3	4	4	4	4	4
Tiv	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	5	4	5	4
Nupe	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	4	3	4	4
Jukun	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	1	4	4	5	4
Kanuri	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	1	3	3	4
CNEC	5	5	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	1	3	4
H-Fulani	5	5	4	4	4	5	4	5	3	3	1	3
Statutory Law	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	1

TABLE 1: NIGERIAN LAND TENURE SIMILARITY MATRIX (NLTSM)

Empirical Strategy The estimation strategy utilises the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), isolating highly specific land-related events, defined strictly as agrarian, grazing, territorial, and extractive resource disputes, between 1997 and 2025. Employing a state-month unit of analysis, the primary estimation relies on a Log-Linear Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) specification equipped with temporal, seasonal, and state fixed effects.

Crucially, because this methodology relies on observational panel data equipped with rigorous fixed effects rather than quasi-natural experiments, the model strictly indicates causal

directionality and correlates historical trends. The model systematically introduces sequential controls, including local Ethnic Fractionalisation (measured as the probability that two randomly selected individuals within a state belong to different ethnic groups) and short-run resource shocks (commodity price indices), to isolate the structural relationships.

Results and Robustness

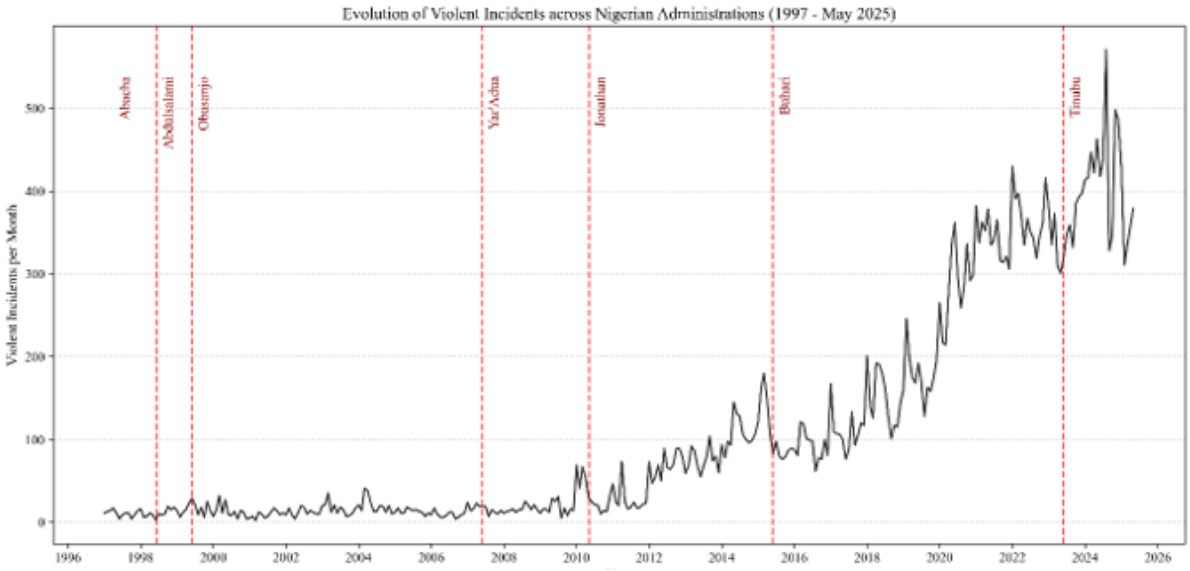
The findings derived from the Log-Linear OLS regressions provide robust empirical evidence for this framework of institutional misalignment, suggesting a re-weighting of recognised conflict drivers:

• Confirmation of Institutional Misalignment: Legal Distance appears as a highly significant, positive explanatory variable for the incidence of land-related violence. The derived elasticity suggests that a widening in the legal distance between the federal centre and a state periphery strongly correlates with an increase in localised land violence. Elite institutional misalignment emerges as a robust structural correlate of conflict.

• Re-evaluating the Greed Hypothesis: Variables representing short-run economic shocks, specifically, global commodity price volatility, are not statistically distinguishable from zero in this specification when controlling for legal distance. This suggests that land violence is primarily a structural, institutional problem rather than a phenomenon purely driven by short-term opportunity costs.

• The Universality of Divergence: The analysis rejects the "Tinderbox Hypothesis", which posits that high local ethnic fractionalisation alone drives violence. For example, Zamfara State is 85% ethnically homogenous but experiences catastrophic intra-ethnic violence because high federal legal distance has collapsed internal dispute mechanisms. Conversely, the highly diverse Lagos State avoids broad communal warfare because the supremacy of statutory capital markets forcibly lowers functional legal distance.

• Inertia and Path Dependence: The sequential inclusion of autoregressive variables confirms immense path dependence. Past violence indicates a substantial independent increase in current violence, demonstrating that once institutional misalignment ignites conflict, the ecosystem becomes autonomous.



GRAPH 1: NIGERIAN MONTHLY VIOLENCE EVOLUTION LINE CHART

To confirm that the correlation between legal distance and violence is an authentic structural dynamic rather than a statistical artifact of OLS limitations, the research conducts comprehensive robustness checks. The Negative Binomial (NB) and Poisson Pseudo Maximum Likelihood (PPML) tests detailed in the appendix support the OLS results. By explicitly accounting for the extreme over-dispersion and zero-inflation inherent in count data, the NB and PPML specifications confirm that the positive, highly significant correlation between legal distance and violence remains structurally intact.

Conclusion and Relevance

As global forums increasingly emphasise the vital need to understand the complex political economy factors, power dynamics, and agency shaping land governance, this research provides a timely theoretical intervention. By operationalising legal distance through the NELTT and NLTSM, this paper quantitatively demonstrates that elite political misalignment generates intense statutory-customary divergence. The escalation of land-driven violence in Sub-Saharan Africa is fundamentally a product of this institutional misalignment, suggesting the need for policy approaches that better align statutory reform with locally legitimate tenure arrangements to bridge the gap between the sovereign centre and customary peripheries

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Ope Simpson is a Doctoral Candidate at King's College London, researching the political economy of property rights in sub-Saharan Africa. His work investigates how perceptions of weak tenure security limit Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), driving investors towards portfolio investments that offer easier exit strategies in volatile environments. By examining the local drivers of property rights, Ope aims to understand their impact on investment opportunities and broader economic outcomes. His research seeks to inform policy improvements, particularly within decentralised states characterised by pluralistic ethnic identities, to strengthen tenure security and encourage the long-term investment in critical infrastructure necessary for regional development. He holds both an MBA from Warwick Business School and a BSc in Economics from the University of Lagos.

Title: **ID031 - Gendered Pathways to Inclusive Land Governance: Women's Leadership and Resilience in African Territories (Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso)**

Author: **Baltazar Atangana**

Organisation: **Gender Expert Certificate in Ecological Transition**

Abstract:

1. Introduction

Land governance in Africa remains a central axis of development, justice, and resilience. Across the Sahel and Central Africa, land is not only an economic resource but also a cultural and political anchor. Yet, governance structures often reproduce gendered inequalities, marginalizing women's voices in decision-making and limiting their access to secure tenure. This paper explores how women in Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Burkina Faso are reshaping pathways to inclusive land governance through leadership, resilience, and collective action. It situates their struggles within broader debates on gender justice, climate adaptation, and institutional reform, highlighting both structural barriers and transformative practices.

2. Conceptual Framework

The analysis draws on feminist political ecology and intersectional governance theory. Feminist political ecology emphasizes how gendered power relations shape access to resources, while intersectionality underscores the overlapping dimensions of identity—ethnicity, class, age, marital status—that mediate women's land rights (Agarwal, 2010). Inclusive land governance is defined here as a system that ensures equitable participation, transparent institutions, and recognition of customary and statutory claims, particularly for marginalized groups (Daley & Pallas, 2014).

Women's leadership is examined not only in formal institutions (parliaments, local councils, land commissions) but also in informal community networks, cooperatives, and advocacy coalitions. Resilience is understood as the capacity to adapt to shocks—climate variability, conflict, displacement—while sustaining agency and collective solidarity (FAO, 2018).

3. Regional Contexts

a. Cameroon

Cameroon's dual legal system (statutory and customary) creates overlapping claims that disadvantage women. Customary norms often restrict women's inheritance and ownership, while statutory frameworks remain poorly enforced (World Bank, 2020). Yet women's associations in the Centre and Far North regions have mobilized to negotiate collective land leases for agricultural cooperatives. Their leadership demonstrates how grassroots organizing can circumvent patriarchal gatekeeping, while also pressing for reforms in municipal land allocation (ECA, 2025).

b. Chad

In Chad, pastoralist and agro-pastoralist dynamics complicate land governance. Women in nomadic communities' face exclusion from clan-based decision-making, yet they play critical roles in

resource management and conflict mediation. Recent EU-funded initiatives have supported women mediators in land disputes, recognizing their capacity to de-escalate tensions between herders and farmers (EU Delegation Reports, 2022–2024). These interventions illustrate resilience in fragile contexts, where women's leadership is both a survival strategy and a governance innovation.

c. Niger

Niger's land governance is shaped by demographic pressures and climate stress. Women's access to land is constrained by customary hierarchies, yet resilience emerges through collective farming groups and savings associations. Women leaders in Maradi and Zinder have successfully lobbied for inclusion in local land commissions, ensuring that gender perspectives inform adjudication processes (IIED, 2014–2022). Their advocacy highlights the importance of institutional entry points, even within conservative settings.

d. Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso has pioneered legal reforms recognizing women's land rights, yet implementation remains uneven. Women leaders in the Centre-Ouest region have leveraged decentralization policies to secure community land for food security projects. Their resilience is evident in navigating political instability and climate shocks, while sustaining collective ownership models (Kevane & Gray, 2008). These experiences underscore the interplay between statutory reform and grassroots agency.

4. Key Themes

a. Structural Barriers

- Customary norms: Patriarchal inheritance systems limit women's ownership.
- Statutory gaps: Weak enforcement of progressive laws undermines women's rights.
- Institutional exclusion: Women remain underrepresented in land commissions and councils.

b. Women's Leadership

- Grassroots mobilization: Cooperatives and associations negotiate collective access.
- Conflict mediation: Women act as brokers in disputes, leveraging trust and neutrality.
- Policy advocacy: Women leaders influence reforms through coalitions and networks.

c. Resilience Strategies

- Collective solidarity: Savings groups and cooperatives buffer against shocks.
- Adaptive practices: Women diversify livelihoods, combining farming, trade, and mediation.
- Institutional engagement: Entry into formal structures strengthens legitimacy and visibility.

d. Transformative Pathways

Inclusive land governance requires both structural reform and cultural change. Women's leadership is not merely additive but transformative, challenging patriarchal norms and reconfiguring

governance logics. Resilience is not passive endurance but active agency, enabling women to reshape institutions from below (Toulmin, 2009).

5. Comparative Insights

Across Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Burkina Faso, women's pathways to inclusive land governance share commonalities: reliance on collective action, negotiation within hybrid legal systems, and resilience in fragile contexts. Yet differences emerge:

- Burkina Faso demonstrates stronger statutory frameworks, though unevenly applied.
- Niger illustrates institutional entry points through local commissions.
- Chad highlights women's role in conflict mediation within pastoralist settings.
- Cameroon underscores grassroots mobilization against dual legal constraints.

These variations suggest that inclusive land governance must be context-specific, aligning statutory reforms with customary practices while foregrounding women's agency (IIED, 2014–2022).

6. Policy Implications

1. Strengthen statutory enforcement: Laws recognizing women's land rights must be operationalized through accessible mechanisms.
2. Institutionalize women's participation: Land commissions and councils should mandate gender quotas and capacity-building.
3. Support grassroots resilience: Cooperatives, savings groups, and mediation networks require sustained investment.
4. Bridge customary and statutory systems: Hybrid governance models must integrate women's voices to ensure legitimacy.
5. Regional collaboration: Cross-border learning among women leaders can amplify resilience and advocacy (ECA, 2025).

7. Conclusion

Women's leadership and resilience are central to inclusive land governance in African territories. In Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Burkina Faso, women are not passive beneficiaries but active architects of governance transformation. Their pathways—marked by negotiation, solidarity, and adaptation—offer critical lessons for global debates on land, gender, and justice. As climate change and demographic pressures intensify, women's agency will remain indispensable to building equitable and resilient land systems.

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Baltazar Atangana is a gender and development expert, working primarily in Central and West Africa. He has regularly served as a technical assistant on projects funded by donors such as Global Affairs Canada, the European Union, and GIZ, focusing on women's access to land, ecological transitions, global health, and biodiversity and forest conservation. He is the author of several books and articles, including *Luttes de Femme* (2025) and *Lignes de résistance* (forthcoming in 2026).

Title: **ID028 - Engaging religious leaders as sympathizers for advancing women's land rights**

Authors: **Netsanet Genene, Christian Mesmer and Rahel Hailu Kassaye**

Organisation: **Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH**

Abstract:

Land is a key resource that configures human relations. It is a valuable object of property and the basis for livelihood strategies, agro-pastoralism and agriculture. The way in which land is understood as property can vary depending on these livelihoods, actors' perceptions and the social organization of society as a whole. Different levels of law may set different terms of use and control for the same land. Different actors, such as donors, policymakers, investors, and farmers, may also have different understandings of the ontology of land, access to, and control over, a particular parcel.

Globally, women own less land and have less secure land rights than men. Despite women having a crucial role in agriculture, food production, and land-based livelihoods. There is no consistent national or global data on the full scope of women's land rights or access to land to enable them to monitor and enforce their rights. Land and agrarian reform, allocation, and titling or registration programs often target the household, or assign ownership to the "head of household" most frequently defined as a man. Because women are typically not considered as landowners.

Women face distinctive barriers to land rights when statutory and customary systems coexist. Customary rights are often undocumented and male-biased in inheritance and control, resulting in women's exclusion from ownership, decision-making, compensation, and land markets. Even where legal frameworks recognize equality, high transaction costs, weak administrative capacity, and cumbersome procedures limit effective enforcement.

Women's land rights are human rights, like the right to life, work, education and development. Like other human rights, gender equality, including with regard to land, must be constantly fought for, protected and promoted. An important goal of gender equality is to effectively respect, protect and promote the human rights of both women and men and to take the necessary measures to enable all people, regardless of gender, to fully enjoy these rights. Gender equality is recognized as both a human right and smart economics - both essential for sustainable development and a pillar of social transformation. The promotion of human rights is a widely agreed goal and thus provides a useful rallying point for addressing violations of women's human rights, including gender-based violence and women's land rights. Several international and regional frameworks explicitly protect women's land rights, including several frameworks adopted and ratified by the Government of Ethiopia.

Women in Ethiopia constitute half of the country's population, and the majority of them live in rural areas. Despite this, most of them lack independent access to production resources, particularly land. Women's contribution to agricultural production and household food security is very significant, though not valued in economic terms. Age-old patriarchal beliefs and practices in society have disadvantaged women in the socioeconomic and political spheres trapping women in poverty.

Ethiopian law allows that women may have land rights recognized by state law, but customary practices and lack of enforcement limit their ability to benefit from the land. Of course, a body of Ethiopian laws (including the Constitution, Land Policy and Proclamations) recognize women land right, although in practice there has been a lack of enforcement.

It is well recognized that gender-equal land rights are often not realized in practice, particularly in rural areas Ethiopia where customary norms prevail. These norms frequently restrict women's ability to access, use, inherit, and control land, even in cases where national laws support such rights and when women possess formal titles to land.

Evidence shows that secure land rights for women increase empowerment: joint certification raises women's participation in household and community decisions, improves knowledge of rights, strengthens perceived tenure security, and increases willingness to defend those rights. However, formalization efforts can miss women's customary claims if gender-sensitive provisions and safeguards are not embedded and implemented. Persistent challenges include entrenched social norms, limited representation of women in land institutions, and gaps in protecting absentee or vulnerable women. Effective responses couple robust legal guarantees with inclusive adjudication, proactive outreach to inform women of their rights, and mechanisms that recognize joint and individual claims.

In response to these entrenched challenges, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) Ethiopia and Djibouti, has initiated and implemented program that primarily engages Ethiopian Christian mainly orthodox and protestant religious leaders as allies to ensure and enhance women's land rights through its land governance project, in collaboration with implementing partners and faith-based organizations. By involving and empowering religious leaders to advocate for women's land rights, a transformative change could be achieved, given their influence, respect within the community, and their capacity to interpret and convey biblical scriptures that advocate for gender justice in land governance.

The project emerged from a clear and persistent challenge: despite Ethiopia's progressive legal frameworks guaranteeing gender-equal land rights, these rights often fail to materialize at the local level, where customary law continues to dominate land-related decision-making. In many rural areas, land inheritance, access, and control are governed by unwritten rules deeply rooted in community traditions, often to the detriment of women's ability to claim and protect rights to land that are guaranteed in Ethiopian law. Yet, while customary norms are powerful, they are not immutable. They coexist and sometimes conflict with religious values. Unlike customary practices, which are human-made and historically contingent, Abrahamic religions such as Christianity assert the authority of a revealed, divine truth. This gives religious norms a unique capacity to challenge cultural practices that are unjust, including those that discriminate against women. The project builds on this insight: by aligning advocacy for women's land rights (WLR) with Christian teachings, it seeks to root gender justice not in foreign or secular logic, but in the moral authority of scripture as interpreted in a national and local context. Central to this Christian-focused approach is the engagement of clergy priests, pastors, and other religious leaders. In a society as deeply religious as Ethiopia, clergy are among the most trusted and influential figures in any community. Virtually every person, man or woman, has some relationship with a religious leader. Because clergy are seen as custodians of divine truth those who interpret and communicate God's will they possess a moral

authority that extends far beyond the pulpit. This makes them uniquely positioned to question harmful traditions and promote new norms grounded in faith. Their influence is amplified by their long-term presence: unlike project staff or government officials who may rotate frequently, clergy often serve the same congregation for decades. This longevity is vital for shifting deeply entrenched social norms, which rarely change overnight. The overarching aim of the project was therefore twofold: first, to explore whether biblical teachings could genuinely support women's rights to land; and second, to pilot whether clergy could be effective and efficient allies in translating these theological insights into community level change.

In the cultural contexts where this project was implemented, clergy occupy a threefold role in the resolution of disputes related to women's land rights (WLR). First, they possess deep knowledge of local cultural norms and how these norms are applied in land-related matters. As some of the most respected figures in their communities, clergy are frequently approached to mediate land disputes in accordance with prevailing customary practices. Their involvement is typically seen as authoritative and often leads to the successful resolution of conflicts. Indeed, most participants in the clergy training reported that they were involved in land-related dispute resolution at least once every six months. Second, while clergy are generally familiar with the Bible and regularly preach on core themes such as Jesus Christ and eternal life, few have received systematic theological training. As observed during the project, biblical principles are rarely applied by clergy to promote gender justice in relation to WLR. Rather, prevailing cultural norms tend to take precedence over religious teachings and determine their opinions.

Lastly, as prominent local actors, clergy are regularly called upon by local government authorities to participate in land governance, including the mediation of land disputes. According to Ethiopia's federal rural land proclamations, dispute resolution is expected to begin at the community level, often involving local elders among whom clergy frequently serve. Moreover, even decisions issued by formal courts are typically implemented with the cooperation of kebele administrators, elders, and clergy. For women, particularly those in rural areas who face considerable barriers in accessing the formal justice system, clergy often served as an essential entry point to justice in ensuring women land right.

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Project-Synthesis-WLR-from-the-perspective-of-Ethiopian-Christianity

Reference Guide_ WLR from the perspective of Ethiopian Christianity

Authors' details:

Netsanet Genene is a dynamic and driven professional currently serving as an Organizational Development Advisor and Gender Focal Point for the Support to Responsible Agricultural Investment Project (S2RAI II) at Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Plant Science and a Master of Arts in Environment and Sustainable Development, equipping her with a diverse skill set to effectively support the sector and local communities. Her passion lies in enhancing the livelihoods of these communities, with a particular emphasis on empowering women and bolstering their self-esteem. Netsanet has dedicated herself to strengthening the capacity of communities to address land-related disputes and advocate for their land rights, especially for women, ensuring their ownership is recognized and secured. Furthermore, she has implemented targeted entrepreneurship training programs that have significantly contributed to women's engagement in income-generating activities. As a testament to her efforts, many of the women who participated in her training have successfully embarked on ventures that enhance their economic independence.

Christian Mesmer is a project manager at the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. Currently, he is responsible for several land governance-related projects and strategic change management in Ethiopia. He has been working on integrated land and water resource governance from grassroots to policy level with governments, civil society organizations and private sector entities in developing countries for over 11 years. He holds an MBA in International Management, a postgraduate 'water degree' from the University of Oxford and he has been attending executive courses at the Harvard Law School.

Rahel Hailu Kassaye is the Deputy Project Manager for the Support to Responsible Agriculture Investment (S2RAI) project at the German International Development Cooperation GmbH (GIZ)-Ethiopia and has over 15 years of experience in the land administration sector in Ethiopia. Prior to joining GIZ, Rahel worked in the Ministry of Urban and Infrastructure in various positions ranging from expert to managerial and contributed to the establishment of the urban cadastre. Her focus is on land registration and administration, land information systems and good land governance. Rahel holds an MSc in Geoinformatics from the University of Twente in the Netherlands.

Title: **ID131 - Finding Paths Beyond Pushbacks and Impunity: New Land Governance Challenges for Community Landholders**

Author: **Dr Liz Alden Wily**

Organisation: **Independent land Tenure Specialist**

Abstract:

Africa is a good example of increasing legal recognition of customary land rights as lawful and registrable property interests in their own right. This paper will present the facts. These derive from a year-long study of especially land, but also forest, rangeland, and water laws in force in all 55 African states. 'Customary' means that the landholding regime derives from the community itself, sustained by majority consensus. Some of the norms are longstanding, others are adjusted as land availability and uses alter. 'Community land' is now often used as a descriptor for customary lands, conveniently expressing its community basis as distinct from private and public land descendant from state-based definition, registration, and administration.

Over recent decades the community land sector has come to the fore as an acknowledged thriving sector of critical importance to usually the poorest and most land and resource dependent sector and which, despite predictions or intentions has failed to disappear into the private and state land sectors. In fact, community land remains the single largest landholding regime in several continents including in Africa, where it covers an estimated 80 percent of Africa's lands. Coincidentally, around 80 percent of the rural population constitute the community landholding constituency. Their recognition in national law as owners of these land has been the major task of the present era of land reform, begun around 1990, and for which progress is presented here.

A singular feature of community domains is that most if not all include significant rangelands, forest/woodlands or, in fewer states, swamplands. These have proven over centuries until the present just as important to the way of life and livelihood as farming for communities. There are exceptions, where almost land is converted into villages and farms, familiar in fertile montane and coastal zones. Often residual commonage is devoted to ritual sites and forests, for example very common along coastal west Africa. At the other extreme, pastoral and hunter-gatherer communities exercise traditional rights over large areas, in which seasonal mobility to limit overuse is the norm. Recognition has grown that commonage is not only often the main source of livelihood but the foundation of the identity, culture, and social organization and support systems of communities.

As to the nature of communities in Africa, the majority are settled farming communities at an estimated 700 million people, along with up to 300 million pastoral and agro-pastoral communities and dramatically fewer hunter-gatherer societies. Together these communities are defined as Indigenous Peoples (IP) as so profoundly linked to local land domains to be considered eco-societies. Over the last decade in particular the role and potential of communities as owner-guardians of threatened natural resources has also been globally recognized, applied in a number of African states.

This paper opens with an overview analysis of the status of customary, community land rights in Africa as determined by the substance of national/federal laws in force in each state. Assessment is aided by scoring against ten indicators, each of which has several sub-indicators. For example, the study is interested not only in the legal status of customary rights but also in whether the commonage owned in undivided shares are included, and additionally, how far these rights are of equivalent legal force and effect (protection) as private rights secured under the state regime. The indicator of governance not only measures identifies is the legal manager is the community, but also whether this is through decision-making inclusive of all adults. Scoring also enables the 55 states to be classed into groups as those with laws which most positively, partly positively, or least positively support the liberation of customary/community-based rights as property interests. Table 1 presents the overall breakdown, both the characteristics of each category and finding by indicator elaborated in the paper. Cross-cutting analysis is also provided, such as by region, language group, and dominant land and resource type. Main conclusions are listed. For example, trends are sufficiently positive to conclude that reversion to denial of community property rights is unlikely to occur.

Table 1. Customary Land Tenure: Most Supportive to Lease Supportive Land Laws in Africa

MOST SUPPORTIVE LAW **Scores: 1.0-1.9**	**PARTLY POSITIVE LAW** **Scores: 2.0 – 2.9**	**LEAST POSITIVE LAW** **Score: 3.0 – 4.0**
Angola (2004)	Benin (2013, 2017)	Algeria (1990, 2020)
Dem. Republic of Congo (2025)	Burkina Faso (2009)	Botswana (2018)
Equatorial Guinea (2009)	Burundi (2011)	Cameroon (1974)
Ethiopia (2024)	Comoros (1987, 2023)	Cape Verde (2024)
Guinea Bissau (1998)	Eritrea (1994)	Central African Republic (1964)
Kenya (2016)	Eswatini (1916)	Chad (2018)
Liberia (2018)	Gambia (1995)	Ivory Coast (1998, 2019)
Mozambique (1997)	Ghana (2020)	Djibouti (1991, 2018)
Niger (1993)	Guinea (1992)	Egypt (1958)
Sierra Leone (2022)	Lesotho (2010)	Gabon (2012)
South Africa (1996)	Madagascar (2006)	Libya (2015)
South Sudan (2009)	Malawi (2016)	Mauritania (1983)

Tanzania (1999)	Mali (2017, 2020)	Mauritius (1982)
Uganda (1998)	Morocco (1919, 2019)	Rwanda (2021)
	Namibia (2002)	Saharawi Arab Republic. *no land law*
	Nigeria (1990)	Sao Tome & Principe (1991)
	Republic of Congo (2004, 2011)	Senegal (1964)
	Sudan (1984)	Seychelles (1991)
	Togo (2018)	Somalia. *no federal land law*
	Tunisia (1964, 2024)	Zimbabwe (1982)
	Zambia (1995)	
14 (25.5%)	21 (38.1%)	20 (36.4%)

Source: Liz Alden Wily, January 2026.

Progress is not however, the whole story. For example, it is concluded that commonages are, in all regions, still less recognized and protected than individuals homestead and farm lands, with ominous implications for all aspects of community land security in affected states.

These bring the paper to its second objective to explore drivers in this trend and to consider how far reluctance to move forward and pushbacks could be countered by modified strategies within what tangibly remains a continuing battle over the commons, often tangible among catalysts to violent conflict and even civil war. Trends in land grabbing are examined. The legal lens is sustained, accepting that some limitations are technically lawful in poorly drafted or unreformed land administration, titling and natural resource laws. While ancillary to new basic land laws, they can prove to be obstructive to the delivery of those main land laws.

What constitutes public purpose itself needs rethinking when new tenure paradigms are introduced, even in countries where governments have recognized community lands as properties, but resist and renege on the consequences such as which may limit state powers in ways not previously noted, or possibly purposely ignored. The case of unreformed compulsory acquisition laws is examined in particular. These widely fail until the present to recognize that communities lose a great deal more than the market value of their commons when forcibly acquired; market values limited further by the purposely undeveloped nature of these common rangelands and forests, such as signalled by clearing and cultivation. This can reach crisis point where administrations refuse to even implement the orders of their own judiciaries or regional courts, suggesting troubling impunity, and complex to challenge. With limited means and legal literacy many communities have minimal recourse. Sometimes this has been a trigger to land parties in

other regions, but hardly so in Africa thus far. This paper takes the opportunity to list the most essential legal changes required towards a more equal and peaceable playing field for communities and governments to negotiate the future of their commons. Increasingly common offers of resettlement and/or some benefit share where the intention is to use their property for commercial enterprise may not be sufficient – or just. Inter alia, it is concluded that *state* land governance needs much closer attention in the next decade than has been the case so far.

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Author's details:

Dr Liz Alden Wily (PhD. Pol. Econ.) is an independent land tenure specialist focused on customary land rights in agrarian economies. She is both a scholar and practitioner. Liz has assisted in the drafting of new national land policies and/or laws in ten African states and three Asian states. She has also contributed significantly to developing community owned and managed forest reserves in nine countries. Some foci of her advisory work over the last 30 years have been in development of simple forms of collective entitlement, inclusive and accountable community land administration schema, conservation-conditioned restitution strategies for Indigenous Peoples, and unpacking the links of violent conflict and civil war in contested land relations. Liz lives mainly in Kenya. She is a Fellow in several international bodies, has served as an expert witness in six court cases challenging land injustices in several countries.

Author: **Saskia Simonson**

Organisation: **Lead Country Coordinator, Land Facility, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), UK**

Presentation: **Introduction to Session 4: Widening perspectives for land governance**

Opening talk

For the opening address please see the conference recordings.

Author's Details:

Saskia is the Country Coordinator for the UK's Land Facility programme. She brings over 6 years' experience in the UK Government, specialising in land governance, food security and climate change. She has a background in programme management, policy coordination, and international engagement, representing the UK with governments, civil society, and multilateral partners.

Author: **Diane Dumashie**

Organisation: **President of the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG)**

Presentation: **Reflections on Widening Perspectives in Land Governance**

Abstract:

For the presentation please see the conference recordings.

Author's Details:

Dr Diane A Dumashie FRICS, CEDR serves as President of the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG), representing land and built environment and geospatial professionals across more than 110 countries. As leader of this UN-recognized NGO, she champions a global community spanning national associations, government agencies, academia, and the private sector.

With a distinguished career in corporate leadership, international consultancy, and independent practice, Diane brings deep expertise in land policy, governance, and stakeholder engagement. Her work—particularly across Africa—advances institutional strengthening, sustainable development, and inclusive regeneration in sectors including health, housing, and infrastructure.

Founder of Dumashie Ltd, she has advised public and multilateral agencies such as UN-Habitat, the World Bank, FAO, and the Commonwealth Secretariat. Her consultancies have supported ministries in Ghana, Mozambique, Tanzania/Zanzibar, and Kenya, and engaged land professionals across more than 14 African nations.

A committed advocate for gender equity, she co-led initiatives promoting secure land rights for women, earning a lifetime achievement award. She served on the UN-Habitat Advisory Group on Gender Equality, shaping pragmatic governance approaches.

Diane is a Trustee of LionHeart and a former two-term RICS Governing Council member. She holds a Doctorate in Land Policy Planning & Integrated Coastal Management and a BSc in Land & Property Management.

FIG President, (http://www.fig.net/organisation/council/index.asp)

Director Dumashie, Ltd Director Dumashie, Ltd https://dumashie.co.uk/

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Former FIG Senior member roles; FIG Vice president, FIG Commission chair, FIG Task Force Chair, FIG Africa Regional network Founder and Chair,

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(http://www.rics.org/uk/about-rics/who-and-what/meet-our-teams/governing-council1/whos-who-on-governing-council/), Former Board Member; UN Habitat, Advisory Group on Gender Issues (AGGI)

Title: **ID047 - Unlocking the value of land information: financing the foundations**

Author: **Christelle van den Berg**

Organisation: **Regional Manager at Kadaster International, the Netherlands**

Abstract:

Changing global priorities are reshaping how land is valued, financed, and governed. While land governance has traditionally been justified through assessments of financial returns and economic efficiency, growing challenges related to climate change, food security, environmental sustainability, and conflict prevention demand a broader economic perspective. My presentation examines how evolving value systems are influencing approaches to the economics and financing of land governance, with particular attention to the role of land information as a public good.

A central paradox motivates this discussion: despite land information driving prosperity and sustainability for societies and natural resources, the land agencies responsible for collecting and managing this information remain severely underfunded. This reality is drawn from Kadaster International's experience gained through its work across the globe. The disconnect reveals a critical gap between the recognised value of land data and the financial support provided to those who steward it. Land agencies carry an enormous responsibility to gather and maintain accurate, up-to-date land information so that it can be trusted and effectively leveraged to support the Sustainable Development Goals.

In many countries, reliable land information is lacking. At its most basic level, essential land information consists of a public register of, for example, deeds in which people's land rights are formally recorded. In practice, such registers often do not exist, and where they do, they are frequently incomplete, outdated, or poorly maintained. Moreover, there is often no effective connection between such a register and the corresponding cadastral map.

Cadastral maps show the geometry of land parcels—their boundaries and spatial extent— and ideally link each parcel to its precise location on the ground. Without a clear and functional link between legal records and spatial data, uncertainty arises about who holds which rights to which piece of land. In short, there is a significant need for reliable land information systems that clearly establish the relationship between people and their land, including the rights they hold. Such systems are fundamental to legal certainty, economic development, and social stability.

In many developing countries, these challenges are particularly acute. Reliable and up-to-date land information is either incomplete, outdated, or entirely absent. Cadastre systems are often fragmented, paper-based, or limited to urban areas, while large parts of rural land remain undocumented. As a result, governments struggle to clearly define property rights, manage land use effectively, prevent disputes, or support sustainable development. The lack of accurate land records undermines investment and reduces public trust in land governance institutions.

Even in countries with some form of land information system, structural challenges persist. The limited revenues generated through land registration fees, property taxes, or service charges are frequently transferred directly to the central state treasury. While this may strengthen overall public finances, it often leaves land administration agencies underfunded and dependent on uncertain

budget allocations. Without the ability to retain and reinvest part of the income they generate, these agencies face chronic capacity constraints. They struggle to maintain and update land records, invest in digitalisation, train staff, or expand services to underserved areas.

At the same time, what we observe in practice is that substantial funding is often available for large-scale data acquisition projects. Significant resources are mobilised for systematic surveys, mass registration campaigns, and the rapid collection of spatial data. Likewise, considerable investments continue to be made in developing sophisticated and expensive IT systems to support land information management. These are, in themselves, highly valuable and often necessary investments. Reliable data and robust digital infrastructure are essential components of modern land administration.

However, the sequencing of these investments could be reconsidered. Too often, technology and data collection are prioritised before institutional frameworks, governance structures, and sustainable financing mechanisms are firmly in place. Political considerations might play a role in this. Large-scale data acquisition projects and visible IT investments tend to produce tangible, short-term results that can be showcased during electoral cycles or reported as concrete achievements to parliaments and donors. New digital platforms, satellite imagery, and mass registration campaigns are easier to communicate as progress than gradual institutional reform, capacity building, or legal harmonisation.

As a result, decision-makers may favour initiatives that deliver quick, visible outputs over those that require sustained, long-term commitment. While understandable from a policy perspective, this emphasis on immediacy can undermine the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of land information systems. Without parallel investments in governance, human capacity, and financial autonomy, even the most impressive technological achievements risk failing to deliver a durable impact. In practical terms, this means that without clear mandates, sound legal foundations, trained staff, adequate maintenance budgets, and long-term financial autonomy, even the most advanced systems risk becoming underutilised and outdated, ultimately unsustainable. Data rapidly loses its value if it cannot be continuously updated, validated, and integrated into decision-making processes.

This creates a vicious cycle: weak land information systems generate limited revenue, and the limited revenue that is generated does not return to the institutions responsible for improving the system. Meanwhile, externally funded projects may deliver impressive short-term results but fail to ensure long-term institutional resilience. Consequently, land administration agencies remain unable to fully fulfil their mandates.

Addressing this challenge requires not only technical improvements in data collection and system modernisation, but also institutional and financial reforms. Sustainable land governance depends on strengthening organisations first: clarifying responsibilities, investing in human capacity, ensuring financial sustainability, and establishing accountability frameworks. This ensures that technological and data investments can deliver lasting impact.

A crucial element in this regard is that land agencies operate under a sound financial business plan aligned with and formally endorsed by the national government. Such a plan should clearly define the agency's mandate, expected service levels, investment needs, revenue model, and long-term

financial sustainability. Alignment with national public finance frameworks is essential to ensure political backing, funding predictability, and, in turn, accountability.

Different financing models exist. Some land agencies are fully funded by the government budget. This model can work effectively, provided that clear, multi-year agreements are in place that guarantee sufficient and predictable resources, including room for long-term investments in system maintenance, digital innovation, and capacity development. Without such agreements, agencies risk remaining dependent on annual budget negotiations that hinder strategic planning.

Other models are based partly or largely on cost recovery through tariffs, such as fees for land registration, the provision of data, or related services. When well-designed and socially balanced, such models can strengthen financial autonomy and create incentives for efficiency and service quality. However, tariff-based systems must be carefully regulated to ensure accessibility, affordability, and alignment with the public-good character of core land information.

Also, a combination of these models may work. Ultimately, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. What matters is that the chosen financing model is coherent, transparent, and sustainable, and it enables land agencies to fulfil their public mandate over the long term. Only then can land information systems function as true public goods: foundational infrastructures that underpin economic growth, social stability, environmental stewardship, and long-term development.

Author's details:

Ms. Van den Berg is the Regional Manager at Kadaster International, where she plays a key role in sharing the organization's expertise with countries working to develop and modernize their land administration systems. Her work involves close cooperation with ministries, embassies, universities, global businesses, and financial institutions. In this role, she leads expert teams operating across multiple countries and serves on the board of Benin's national land administration modernization program. Ms. Van den Berg represents Kadaster on both national and international stages. In addition, she is the Director of the School for Land Administration Studies—a partnership between ITC (University of Twente) and Kadaster—aimed at advancing knowledge and capacity in the field of land administration. She also serves on the board of the Dutch Professional Association for Geo-Information. Ms. Van den Berg holds a Master's degree in Forestry and Nature Management. From 2010 to 2016, she was a member of both the local and provincial parliaments in the Netherlands, where she acted as spokesperson for spatial planning and the new Environmental Act.

Title: **ID051 - Bridging Perspectives: Multistakeholder and Digital Platforms for Intersectional Land Governance**

Authors: **1. Francisco Carranza, 2. Charl-Thom Bayer, and 3. Washe Kazungu**

Organisation: **1. Coordinator for the Global Action for Land initiative, 2. Team Lead of the Land Portal, and 3. Land Governance specialist**

Abstract:

Introduction

Despite the growing use of Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (MSPs) as a mechanism for intersectional land governance (Biloa and Gaarde, 2024), many struggle to move beyond dialogue to enable tangible policy and implementation outcomes (Ratner, Rivera and Fiorenza, 2019). Power asymmetries, siloed land governance, and fragmented information systems can undermine their effectiveness (Ratner, Larson et al, 2022). This paper is conceived to spark debate, reflecting on the authors' experiences with MSPs and digital platforms in the land governance sector alongside relevant literature. It considers how the integration of MSPs with digital public platforms can enhance greater planning coherence, transparency, and accountability, and invites reflection on how such integration might move land governance initiatives beyond participatory dialogue toward more structured, evidence-based, and enforceable reforms.

Beyond Participation: The Governance Role of Multi-Stakeholder Platforms

MSPs may take diverse forms (Singulube, Ross-Tonen et al, 2023) but share a common purpose: to enable different actors to collectively address complex cross sectoral problems. Larsen and Baerletti (2022) define MSPs as "*purposely organized interactive processes that bring together a range of stakeholders to participate in dialogue, decision making and/or implementation, with the aim to address a common problem or achieve a common goal*".

MSPs enhance planning coherence by bringing together actors from across the land sector, including environmental and mining interests, rural communities, civil society and government organisations into structured platforms. MSPs help to align competing mandates and reconcile siloed governance arrangements (Lah 2025).

Regular engagement, open information sharing, clear decision rules, inclusion of marginalized voices, and follow through on commitments build trust. However, trust depends on predictable institutional behavior; without it, even active participation and dialogue cannot prevent rapid erosion of trust. MSPs are often composed of actors with different positions about topics discussed — and these stakeholders may not trust each other. Those that are more experienced in negotiation environments and have the capacity to build alliances will win advantages. MSPs need the critical role of a neutral facilitator or a facilitating team that has technical knowledge but also the emotional intelligence to understand stakeholder dynamics. Their objectivity and guidance are critical to promote dialogue and trust.

While MSPs may be formal or informal, their effectiveness depends on alignment with institutional or administrative procedures to build trust and influence policy and decision making. Strongly

embedded MSPs are recognized in legislation, linked to government ministries, have dedicated budgets, clear reporting obligations, and formal roles in policy formulation. While stronger embedding increases the potential for meaningful policy impact, it also introduces higher political constraints and requires careful navigation of bureaucratic and political dynamics. When MSP outputs feed into formal decision-making channels, they can meaningfully influence planning and reform while building trust. If not, MSPs risks becoming participatory theatre: spaces for performative dialogue with no real impact.

The sustainability and accountability of MSPs depend on their funding model and institutional mandate. Donor-funded mechanisms that function as an MSP are typically accountable upward to donors. State-funded or legislated MSPs benefit from more stable resources and are accountable to parliaments, ministries, or public oversight bodies. Informal MSPs without formal recognition may rely on reputational accountability, which limits their capacity to enforce commitments or sustain long-term influence.

MSPs contribute to accountability by establishing mechanisms that link commitments to oversight and follow-through. This includes developing monitoring frameworks, enabling civil society scrutiny, creating reporting obligations for participating institutions, and tracking the implementation of agreed actions. Through these mechanisms, MSPs can shift from being spaces of dialogue to platforms of mutual responsibility.

MSPs have the potential to reduce information asymmetries that often characterize land governance systems. When supported by digital public goods, such as open data platforms, transparency becomes embedded in governance processes rather than dependent on voluntary disclosure. MSPs supported by open digital platforms contribute to equalizing power imbalances by virtue of being equal on the platform and having the same information base from which decision-making is taking place.

From Information to Influence: The Role of Digital Public Platforms

This paper will primarily examine digital public platforms through the prism of land data. A digital public data platform such as the Land Portal enables the collection, standardization, and open dissemination of land governance-related information. Digital data platforms are not merely repositories of information; they have the ability to structure how knowledge is organized, accessed, and used. By creating a common evidence base and reducing information asymmetries, digital platforms support more coordinated governance processes when linked to MSPs.

When linked to MSP processes, an open data infrastructure allows stakeholders to deliberate, align policy priorities and identify contradictions across regulatory frameworks using consistent information (Tumpa and Naeni, 2025). In this way, digital platforms strengthen the analytical foundation upon which coherent planning decisions are made. Making governance-relevant information systematically accessible rather than selectively disclosed institutionalizes transparency, reducing information asymmetries among stakeholders. Open publication of MSP discussions and decisions transform a discretionary practice into a structural feature of governance for enhanced credibility and legitimacy.

Enabling traceability between commitments, decisions, and implementation outcomes strengthens accountability. Monitoring dashboards, progress indicators, and verifiable knowledge

contribute to a public record against which institutional performance can be assessed. Civil society actors, researchers, and oversight bodies can use this information to identify gaps in policy commitments and implementation.

Operationalizing a digital public data platform requires sustained technical and institutional investment. Interoperable data standards, metadata protocols, secure hosting infrastructure, user-friendly interfaces, regular data updates, and governance arrangements that define data stewardship and quality control are costly. Beyond the technical architecture, platforms require sustainable funding models, partnerships, and clear mandates to enhance reliability and neutrality. Without long-term resourcing, digital platforms risk becoming static repositories rather than dynamic governance tools.

Despite their potential, digital public platforms do not automatically equalize power or guarantee legitimacy. Digital divides, data literacy gaps, and unequal internet access may reproduce existing inequalities in participation. Data selection and curation processes also reflect institutional bias, shaping which narratives and indicators gain visibility. Transparency without political responsiveness may expose governance failures without correcting them.

Going beyond convening

MSPs and digital public data platforms play distinct but complementary roles in land governance. MSPs create structured spaces for deliberation, negotiation, and coalition-building across sectors and interest groups. Digital platforms organize, standardize, and disseminate the information that underpins those deliberations. Individually, each can enhance dialogue and transparency. Yet neither is sufficient to generate sustained governance impact and trust-building. Moving from convening to consequence requires their deliberate and mutually reinforcing integration.

MSPs without robust data infrastructures risk becoming arenas of negotiation shaped by unequal leverage and access to information. Power asymmetries often manifest through informational advantage: actors with technical expertise or privileged data sources influence agenda-setting and framing. Digital public platforms mitigate this imbalance by establishing a shared and accessible evidence base. Open standards, interoperable datasets, and transparent documentation reduce information gatekeeping and allow stakeholders to deliberate from a common factual foundation. In this sense, digital infrastructure strengthens the procedural legitimacy of MSPs by embedding transparency directly into their functioning.

Conversely, digital platforms without institutionalized deliberative mechanisms risk remaining descriptive repositories. Open data alone does not generate policy change; it must be interpreted and translated into governance decisions. MSPs provide that interpretive and political function. They transform data into negotiated priorities, policy recommendations, and reform pathways. Thus, digital transparency becomes impactful only when connected to structured multi-actor processes capable of absorbing and acting upon evidence.

Examples at different scales illustrate this interdependence. At the multinational level, initiatives such as Global Action for Land (GAL) that function much like MSPs demonstrate how they can mobilize diverse actors around shared reform agendas. Their influence, however, depends on credible information systems that support evidence-based advocacy and tracking. Impact derives

not from convening alone, but from embedding deliberation within a shared digital evidence infrastructure and pushing for political commitments.

To move beyond convening, three reinforcing conditions are required. *First*, institutional embedding: MSP outputs and digital monitoring systems must connect to formal policy cycles and administrative procedures. *Second*, sustained resourcing: both deliberative processes and digital infrastructures require stable funding and technical stewardship. *Third*, accountability integration: transparency tools and dashboards must be linked to review mechanisms capable of triggering corrective action.

MSPs generate deliberative legitimacy, while digital public platforms generate informational legitimacy. Impact emerges when these forms of legitimacy converge within institutional decision-making structures. Without integration, MSPs risk becoming consultative forums and digital platforms risk becoming passive repositories. Together, however, they can shift land governance from episodic dialogue to structured, evidence-based, and accountable reform.

Conclusion

MSPs and digital data platforms each play a critical role in improving land governance, yet their effectiveness depends on their deliberate integration. Individually, they improve understanding and visibility, but alone, they cannot ensure policy change or implementation. When combined, digital infrastructure enhances the legitimacy, equity, and accountability of MSP deliberations, while MSPs translate data into negotiated priorities, policy recommendations, and actionable reforms. Operational impact requires institutional embedding, sustained resourcing, and mechanisms linking transparency to accountability. Collaboration between platforms like GAL or traditional MSPs, and digital platforms such as the Land Portal, suggests a potential pathway for integrating deliberation and evidence, demonstrating how we can move beyond convening toward structured, evidence-based, and enforceable land management reforms.

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Francisco Carranza is currently the Coordinator for the Global Action for Land initiative that aims to place the important topic of secure access to land in other development agendas. He has 18 years' experience in land governance and has been managing large scale projects in Africa and Latin America during his tenure at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Francisco has extensive experience in local development, communal access to land, land use planning, and policy design and implementation.

Charl-Thom Bayer is the Team Lead of the Land Portal, working at the intersection of open land data and inclusive land governance. He manages global programs focused on transparent data governance, open data standards, and strategic partnerships. His work at the Land Portal is informed by direct experience in agriculture and beef production in his native country of Namibia.

Washe Kazungu is a land governance specialist with over thirteen years' experience in project implementation and programme management in international non-profit organizations, UN specialized agencies, and research institutions. Washe currently works as a Senior Research Associate with TMG Research and has previously worked with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Title: **D049 - Interdisciplinary approaches to African land policy: Case study of Nigeria, obstacles to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in land**

Author: **Robert Home**

Organisation: **Emeritus Professor in Land Management at Anglia Ruskin University, UK**

Abstract:

The African Union has recognized the importance of land policy in its 2009 Declaration on Land Issues and set up an African Land Policy Centre (ALPC) with regular conferences. Related networks include Experts in Land Governance in Africa (NELGA), UN-Habitat Global Land Tenure Network (GLTN), and the Framework for Effective Land Administration (FELA). The African continent generates many disputes over land, between and within states, and its prospects depend not only upon the performance of land governance institutions and professions, but increasingly interdisciplinary and regional initiatives. African land governance still operates under inherited colonial and competing legal systems (communal land regimes, land titling programmes and foreign direct investment), with different official languages often remote from their populations. While the AU Land Policy Guidelines advocate equal legal status for customary and 'modern' property rights, the separation of powers in African states is weak, making compliance with AUC determinations poor in complex land cases. This paper explores new approaches to land governance and interdisciplinary research, with a case study of Nigeria's land management issues in the context of the ECOWAS regional body.

Nigeria dominates the ECOWAS 12-member states with official languages that include five French, five English, and two Portuguese. Nigeria's population (2023 figures) is the largest in the region at 232 million, the next two being Ghana (34 million) and Ivory Coast (32 million). ECOWAS has ambitious principles and aims, and this Nigerian case study focusses on the unreformed Land Use Act of 1978, which limits inward investment in the land sector and makes difficulties of access to land for the basic housing needs of a young and rapidly growing population. Although land policy is unmentioned in the ECOWAS commission work programme, the underperformance of foreign direct investment (FDI) in land is a key priority area, attributed to the lack of an enabling governance environment.

A legal historical approach confirms the importance of the colonial legacy, deriving from the Northern Nigeria Land and Native Rights Ordinance 1910 and in Southern Nigeria received English law. After the Nigerian civil war the federal military government, through the infamous Land Use Act of 1978 extended the system in the North to the rest of the country, vesting all lands in state governors, and this system was later incorporated into the 1999 national constitution, making reform much harder, while minerals (including oil and gas) stayed under direct federal control. The 1978 Act remains unreformed, with state governors' powers over land including grant and revocation of certificates of occupancy, inconsistent with the operation of a free market economic system and democratic practices. Title security is a key factor for a foreign investor in determining whether to invest, and the Acquisition of Land by Aliens Law inhibits foreign ownership of lands, although some large-scale land acquisition by foreign investors has occurred (over 100,000 ha documented) with little or no compensation payable. The monopoly of the state land

administration system contributes to widespread corruption, lack of transparency, political instability, and inefficiency. A multidisciplinary approach would include empirical legal research into variations in land governance between the 36 states (and federal capital authority).

Nigeria's property market is fraught with procedural delays, typically arising from bureaucratic bottlenecks and legal disputes. Litigation processes in Nigeria are notoriously slow, sometimes lasting over a decade. Corruption creates higher transaction costs and inequitable access to land. problem of weak enforcement and lack of trust in government processes, which may lead to double allocation issues and frequent land disputes, making the country being perceived as high-risk for land-related investments. Title registration in Nigeria has long waiting times, complex procedures, and costly transfer fees, causing much public dissatisfaction, requiring navigation through poorly maintained registries and manual records, delays and uncertainties. Revocation of the right of occupancy for breach of covenants is a power sometimes used arbitrarily, underscoring the fragility of property rights of occupancy.

Investors need to be confident that they are protected against forced evictions without compensation, but governors can easily dispossess political opponents by expropriation, coercive power used arbitrarily by state officials or politically connected individuals to expropriate private property. without the protection of a uniform administration and implementation policy. If potential foreign investors fear that their land titles can be revoked or expropriated without warning or just cause, they will be deterred from investing in real estate. The constitution does not define what it means by 'adequate compensation' nor provide a standard for its calculation, and the committee advising the Governor on quantum of compensation is final. Compensation is grossly inadequate, limited to unexhausted improvements (if paid at all), and non-payment or inadequate payment of compensation. Nigeria uses incentives to attract FDI, such as tax credit, special custom regimes and rebates to promote investment, but basic land use policies and security of title continue to discourage foreign investors.

Access to land for housing is a major issue in Nigeria, with an estimated over 28 million housing deficits in 2023 and an annual housing requirement of an additional 720,000 units to keep up with the growing population and urban migration. Informal communities, often affected by climate change through flooding or fire, live precariously without road infrastructure and basic social amenities. Property and land-based rates and charges in Lagos State increase transaction costs in land and real state. Investors prioritize security (legal certainty of title and basic security of life), but government's failure to adequately address these issues continually undermines the country's investment climate. Nigeria is experiencing violent conflicts (Boko Haram insurgency and banditry) and protests over unemployment and tenure insecurity, all of which discourage FDI.

The paper argues for a wider interdisciplinary research approach that includes legal history and empirical legal research, along with anthropical/ethnographic and sociological research.

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Robert Home is Emeritus Professor in Land Management at Anglia Ruskin University, UK. He holds a PhD in Geography from the London School of Economics), a master's in history from Cambridge University, and a Diploma in Town Planning from Oxford Brookes University, and is also a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute). He has published books and articles on African law, legal history and urban development, undertaken research consultancies in Africa, and supervised or examined some fifty related PhDs.

Title: **ID054 - Land Pricing, Institutional Objectives, and the Capitalization of Development Intensity: Evidence from Dutch Building Plot Sales**

Authors: **1. Lars Brugman, 2. Jan Rouwendal and 3. Hans Wisman**

Organisation: **1. Researcher at Kadaster, the Netherlands' national land registry and mapping agency, 2. Professor of Real Estate Economics at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU Amsterdam), and 3. Researcher at the Kadaster the Netherlands' national land registry and mapping agency, the Netherlands**

Abstract:

1. Introduction

Land prices are seen as an important determinant of housing affordability and development feasibility. In the Netherlands, residential building plots for owner-occupied housing are sold both by municipalities and by private developers. These actors operate under different institutional objectives. Developers are generally profit-maximizing firms whose pricing decisions are guided by expected returns, financing constraints, and market demand. Municipalities, in contrast, combine financial objectives with spatial planning goals and housing affordability concerns. This dual institutional structure provides a valuable empirical setting to examine how institutional incentives shape land pricing behavior under a shared regulatory framework.

Urban economic theory conceptualizes land prices within a residual land value (RLV) framework, in which land value equals expected housing revenues net of construction costs, development costs, and required returns (DiPasquale & Wheaton, 1996). However, in regulated land markets, pricing may diverge from strict residual logic if institutional objectives constrain capitalization. Municipalities may moderate prices to achieve affordability or spatial quality targets, whereas developers may fully capitalize development rights into land values.

Despite the importance of land pricing for public finance and housing policy, systematic empirical comparisons of municipal and developer pricing behavior remain limited. This study addresses that gap by analyzing 185,506 building plot transactions for newly constructed single-family homes between 2014 and 2024. The analysis investigates whether developers charge higher land prices, whether observed differences reflect quality or cost structures, whether differential capitalization of development intensity explains the price gap and how the construction of affordable housing shapes land prices.

2. Institutional Context and Conceptual Framework

The Dutch land development system has historically been characterized by active municipal land policy, under which municipalities acquired, serviced, and sold land for development (Buitelaar, 2010). Over time, private developers increasingly acquired land directly, often supported by contractual arrangements known as building claims, which grant development rights following zoning changes (Buitelaar, Segeren, & Kronberger, 2008; Meijer & Buitelaar, 2023). As a result, both municipalities and private developers operate within the same spatial planning system but under distinct financial and institutional constraints.

Higher allowable density, typically measured by the Floor Area Ratio (FAR), increases potential revenue per square meter of land, raising residual land value, holding costs constant. In profit-maximizing equilibrium, developers choose the FAR that maximizes land value. If developers adhere more closely to profit-maximizing behavior than municipalities, one would expect stronger capitalization of FAR into land prices and systematically higher land prices when development potential is high (DiPasquale & Wheaton, 1996).

In addition to development intensity, municipalities may use land pricing as an instrument to pursue affordability objectives. Within the residual land value framework, this implies that municipalities may deliberately accept lower residual values for projects that target specific income groups or fall under affordability thresholds. If so, affordable plots should be priced below comparable market-rate plots, reflecting an intentional moderation of capitalization rather than differences in construction costs or development potential.

3. Data and Empirical Strategy

The analysis uses transaction-level data from the Dutch Land Registry (Kadaster), covering 185,506 residential building plot sales between 2014 and 2024. Transactions include detailed information on land price, location, parcel size, seller identity (municipality and market actor), transaction timing, and dwelling characteristics. Project identifiers are constructed by clustering new-build dwellings spatially and temporally, allowing the inclusion of project-level controls such as project size, density, apartment share, and social housing share.

Development intensity is measured as FAR, defined as dwelling floor area divided by parcel area. For a subset of 10.158 trasactions, the dataset is enriched with extracted construction contract sums from notarial deeds, and land acquisition timing information. Additionally, 24,380 resale transactions are matched to original sales to assess quality differences.

The empirical strategy relies on ordinary least squares regressions of log land price per square meter, including neighborhood and time fixed effects to ensure comparisons within similar spatial and temporal contexts. Standard errors are clustered at the project level.

4. Baseline Land Price Differences

Baseline regressions indicate that developer-sold plots are substantially more expensive than municipal plots. Without extensive controls, the difference exceeds fifty percent. Introducing neighborhood fixed effects reduces the gap considerably, indicating that location sorting explains part of the difference. However, even after controlling for neighborhood, time, parcel characteristics, and detailed project attributes, a persistent premium of approximately thirteen to fifteen percent remains.

This finding demonstrates that developers charge systematically higher prices for comparable plots within the same local markets. The magnitude of the premium is economically meaningful, corresponding to tens of thousands of euros for a typical parcel.

5. Quality and Cost Explanations

One potential explanation for the developer premium is higher dwelling quality, not reflected in our data. If developer-sold homes have unobserved superior quality, resale prices should reflect this

difference. Analysis of 24,380 resale transactions reveals no statistically significant resale premium once housing characteristics, location, and time are controlled for.

Alternative explanations focus on cost structures. Developers may face higher land acquisition costs or construction costs. However, including land ownership duration and construction cost indices does not eliminate the developer premium. Furthermore, analysis of a subset of transactions containing both land prices and construction contract sums shows that development models in which municipalities are the legal sellers do not offset lower land prices by charging higher construction costs. Combined land and construction prices remain lower for municipal sales. These findings indicate that cost-based explanations cannot account for the observed price gap.

6. Capitalization of Development Intensity

Land prices increase significantly with Floor Area Ratio for both seller types. However, the responsiveness of land prices to FAR is substantially stronger for developer-sold plots. Interaction models indicate that developers attribute a higher marginal value to additional development intensity. This difference is consistent with profit-maximizing behavior in which development rights are fully internalized into land value.

A counterfactual simulation applying developer-level FAR responsiveness to municipal plots increases predicted municipal land prices by roughly nine percent. In other words, part of the observed price gap reflects differences in how substantial development rights are priced.

7. Affordability Pricing and Policy Implications

Using a national affordability threshold for the period 2020–2024, plots under affordable houses are priced approximately twenty percent lower than comparable market-rate houses. The affordability discount operates directly through land pricing rather than through adjustments in construction contracts. However, resale evidence suggests that this affordability benefit does not persist in secondary markets, as prices converge to prevailing market levels. This suggests that municipal price discounts create a one-time affordability gain for first buyers rather than reflecting permanent quality differences.

Overall, the findings indicate that institutional objectives and development intensity play an important role in shaping land pricing behavior. Developers consistently charge higher prices and exhibit stronger capitalization of development intensity into land values. In projects where municipalities act as sellers, pricing appears more restrained, with land values adjusted to support affordability objectives.

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Jan Rouwendal graduated in spatial economics at Erasmus University Rotterdam in 1983 and received his PhD at VU Amsterdam in 1988 on a thesis about discrete choice models and housing market analysis. He is currently a professor of Real Estate Economics at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU Amsterdam). He is also affiliated as a research fellow to the Tinbergen Institute and the Amsterdam School of Real Estate. Economic analysis of cultural heritage has been an important research area in recent years, and current research concentrates on spatial aspects of property markets.

Hans Wisman is a researcher at the Kadaster, the Netherlands' national land registry and mapping agency, specializing in housing market analysis. He works on empirical studies that use comprehensive property and transaction datasets to explore trends in the Dutch housing sector, such as market concentration and land-use dynamics. He has contributed to research and reports for national policy development. His role involves interpreting complex administrative data, contextualizing it for policy discussions, and applying quantitative methods to illuminate patterns in property ownership and construction activity.

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Presentation: Welcome to Day 2

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Grazyna is a Senior Lecturer in Urban Economics and Real Estate at the School of Architecture and Environment at the University of the West of England. Her research is on investment strategies, transaction risk, real estate market idiosyncrasies and land management. She carries nearly 20 years of experience in real estate consultancy gained at EY, PwC, and KPMG in the UK, Europe and Australia. She is a Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, Chartered Valuation Surveyor, RICS assessor, member of the UK South West Regional Board and past member of RICS governing bodies in Poland and Australia, and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, Vice-President Europe of CASLE and Trustee of Aubrey Barker Fund. She holds PhD in Real Estate, MA in Economics, MSc in Property Appraisal and Management and PGCert in Academic Practice.

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Session 1: Theme 2: Power and agency in land governance

Introduction | Geoffrey Payne (Geoffrey Payne & Associates, UK)

Title: **ID035 - Growing Trees, Losing Land: Power, Accountability, and Local Resistance to Land Commodification in Aceh, Indonesia**

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Abstract:

Several global and national initiatives link tree-growing and ecosystem restoration with land tenure reforms to strengthen local rights and promote sustainable land use (FTFG, 2024; World Bank, 2024b; CBD, 2022). Yet, a systematic review of 18 studies across the East Asia and Pacific region finds that such formalisation yields mixed results for forest outcomes, challenging the universality of this logic (Childress et al., 2025). Policymakers implement agrarian reforms with tree-growing programs in forest areas to encourage reforestation, promote rural livelihoods, and reduce conflict. Key objectives include improving the management and protection of natural resources and reducing poverty. However, when these two policy approaches intersect in practice, their outcomes often become complex, contradictory, and varied, an intersection that remains insufficiently understood. This raises a central puzzle: what happens when these two policy approaches occur together? How do these intersecting initiatives shape land management, socioeconomic, and environmental outcomes in contexts of overlapping tenure and legal pluralism? And why do similar policy interventions produce such divergent outcomes?

Indonesia exemplifies this policy convergence. Between 2017 and 2024, certified land parcels more than doubled, from 46 million to 112 million (Yudhoyono, 2024), coinciding with an aggressive national push for tree-growing initiatives. However, when these two policy approaches, land formalisation and tree-growing, intersect on the ground, their outcomes often become complex and contradictory (Aggarwal et al., 2021; Sandewall et al., 2015; Childress et al., 2025).

To consider these questions, this thesis investigates how land formalisation and tree-growing approaches shape land management and socioeconomic and environmental outcomes in Indonesia, where state-backed tree-growing initiatives and agrarian reform (Tanah Objek Reforma Agraria/TORA) programs coincide. The thesis considers the case of Aceh, Indonesia, where overlapping tenure, legal pluralism, and elite-favoured resource control occur together. Methodologically, this study adopts a qualitative case study approach, utilising ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth interviews to explore the processes and dynamics shaping outcomes in landscapes with broadly similar contextual and structural conditions.

This thesis focused on the case of Mukim Lamteuba, which consists of eight villages with different trajectories and scenarios. While land formalisation programs have been implemented across all villages, Anthocephalus cadamba (jabon) tree-growing initiatives were only in Gaseh village, and these two approaches intersect in Gaseh. Through this study, I identified four distinct scenarios across the villages within the mukim: (1) villages experiencing land commodification, (2) a village showing clear pushback to land commodification upheld in village regulation, (3) a hybrid case where pushback exists but has not yet been legalised in village regulation, currently upheld through the formal authority of the village leader, and (4) a village exhibiting neither commodification nor

pushback, largely due to its geographic remoteness, which limits both accessibility and external influence. Among these, this thesis focuses in particular on two contrasting scenarios: the commodification and pushback/resistance scenarios.

Land formalisation has led to two primary scenarios, specifically commodification in Gaseh village and pushback in Teupat village. These scenarios are not random, but rather shaped by complex patterns of socio-political, economic, and environmental change (McCarthy et al., 2023). Commodification refers to the process by which land is transformed into a marketable commodity, meaning its value is increasingly determined by its exchange potential rather than its traditional, social, or subsistence uses (Hall et al., 2011). By contrast, pushback refers to a spectrum of strategic responses, ranging from everyday acts of defiance to formal mobilisation, used by rural communities and marginalised groups to contest and negotiate power in response to land dispossession and agrarian change (Hall et al., 2015; Borras & Franco, 2013; Scott, 1985). This thesis uses the term 'resistance' to capture these diverse and situated efforts, particularly where actors do not explicitly challenge state or corporate authority but nonetheless engage in shaping the outcomes of agrarian change.

This research has specifically focused on understanding the reasons for the variation of these scenarios. Why do similar policy interventions produce such divergent outcomes in the same landscape with broadly similar contextual and structural conditions? This required exploring how small-scale processes, connected to wider dynamics, influence which rural actors gain or lose in different settings and how these interactions shape broader land dynamics.

The thesis sought to answer these questions through an in-depth, comparative case study of Lamteuba's villages, utilising ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth interviews to trace how tree-growing and land formalisation initiatives were implemented, negotiated, and contested. This analysis identified a spectrum of outcomes, but two paradigmatic scenarios plus mixed cases stand out: a commodification scenario, where formalisation and reforestation programs facilitated elite capture and speculative land accumulation; a resistance scenario, where strong local institutions, customary norms, and collective mobilisation enabled communities to defend land rights and reassert moral authority, and mixed cases, where power struggles produced collusive networks that were partially constrained by countervailing forces such as community oversight or strong local leadership.

Yet, hybrid governance does not produce uniform outcomes. Mixed results tend to emerge where power is actively contested. Collusive networks, linking local elites, brokers, and state actors, may persist, but their influence is often counterbalanced by community oversight and strong local leadership. In several villages, such as Sadar, outcomes were mixed: collusive networks continued to operate, but active community monitoring, credible local leadership, and internal social sanctions partially restrained their influence to some degree. These mixed outcomes typically arose in contexts where villagers actively contested power.

The divergent trajectories observed in Lamteuba illustrate that similar structural and policy conditions can yield very different outcomes depending on local governance capacities and relational dynamics. This thesis argues that the relational dynamics involving economic interests, political connections, and power structures shape land governance. Evidence from global cases reinforces this insight. In Vietnam, decentralisation combined with investor-driven programs has

produced hybrid governance arrangements that could reinforce elite control and, in some cases, undermine local land and resource rights (Sikor & Baggio, 2014). These patterns align with findings from a systematic review of 18 studies in the East Asia and Pacific region, which shows that formalising land rights produces mixed effects on forest outcomes and resource management (Childress et al., 2025).

The literature suggests that secure land and tree tenure, reliable markets, sensitivity to local land-use histories, inclusive participation, supportive socioeconomic contexts, and coherent governance frameworks with appropriate incentives and institutions enable successful smallholder tree-growing. While this thesis concurs with these findings, it shows that when tree-growing and land formalisation occur within contexts of overlapping tenure, legal pluralism, and elite-favoured resource control, they can generate widely divergent outcomes depending on local governance capacities and relational dynamics. In such settings, tree-growing initiatives can morph into forms of land grabbing. This occurs where investors and brokers can exploit and consolidate control over land. Conversely, in other cases, strong communities mobilise customary institutions, historical memories, moral frameworks and effective leadership to defend alternative (adat) land regimes and enforce accountability. In these circumstances, communities uphold communal norms and protect equitable land relations, curbing the excesses of land commodification. Where collusive networks of elites, brokers, and officials weaken accountability, the same reforms facilitate land commodification and the erosion of communal rights. This divergence reflects an underlying tension between commodification and resistance, or in Karl Polanyi's framework, disembedding liberalising forces and counter movements to the 'disembedding' of land tenure from customary systems. Hence, the thesis demonstrates that land governance outcomes emerge as relational processes shaped by accountability and power influence policy intentions and shape implementation pathways.

This study enriches the understanding of how tree-growing and land formalisation programs unfold amid overlapping tenure, legal pluralism, and elite-favoured resource control. It shows how elite and brokerage networks adapt to state-led reforms to turn them into opportunities for accumulation; why similar policies produce divergent outcomes through the mediating roles of relational power, social cohesion, and accountability; how communities draw on customary authority to resist commodification; and how the strength of adat governance lies less in legal recognition than in its adaptability within evolving power relations. The findings suggest that the success of tree-growing and land formalisation initiatives hinges on strengthening local accountability and addressing power asymmetries, adapting reforms to specific socio-political contexts, rather than assuming neutral institutional conditions.

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Title: **ID077 - Power Dynamics and Land Governance: A Political Economy Analysis of Elite Capture in Uganda's Land Sector**

Authors: **1. Kato Mayanja, 2. Ronald Ssengendo**

Organisation: **1. Department of Quantity Surveying and Property Valuation, Kyambogo University, Kampala Uganda, 2. Makerere University, Department of Geomatics and Land Management, Kampala, Uganda**

Abstract:

Background of the Study

Global Context

At the global level, land governance has been transformed by a "spectacular land rush" driven by the convergence of food, energy and financial crises (Borras & Franco, 2024). Scholars observe that transnational capital increasingly targets land in the Global South for large-scale agricultural investment, carbon offsets, and mineral extraction. This global trend is framed by neoliberal policies that promote land commercialization and formalization to "unlock dead capital," often at the expense of communal and customary tenure systems (Haller et al., 2019). A political economy analysis suggests that international governance frameworks such as the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT) frequently fail to prevent "global land grabbing" because state actors prioritize market-driven growth over local land rights (Borras & Franco, 2025).

Regional Context

Across Africa, land remains the most critical pillar of political power and economic status for state elites. Regional research indicates that many African governments have introduced "good governance" reforms that ironically facilitate elite capture by centralizing control over land administration while claiming to decentralize it (Boone, 2014). In many jurisdictions, political elites use their proximity to state machinery to manipulate land registries, often inciting communal tensions to secure private holdings. This dynamic creates a resource scramble where the legal capacity to acquire private tenure is concentrated among a few, while the majority of rural populations remain tenure-insecure (Lund, 2021).

National Context

In Uganda, the "land question" is the defining political issue of the 2026 electoral cycle (HotBot, 2025). Despite the 1995 Constitution vesting land in citizens, the sector is plagued by elite capture, with security agencies and powerful politicians frequently implicated in illegal evictions and fraudulent titling (ISER, 2022). The Ministry of Lands' Strategic Plan IV (2025/26–2029/30) and the 2025 Revised National Land Policy aim to modernize administration through digitization and the Government Land Inventory System. However, critics argue these technical fixes do not address the underlying political economy of kleptocratic accumulation, where laws are disregarded by those with political connections. With land-related crimes rising by 46.5% as of 2026, the gap between statutory protections and the lived reality of the 75% of Ugandans on customary land continues to widen (MLHUD, 2025).

Problem Statement

Despite strong legal safeguards under the 1995 Constitution and the Land Act (Cap. 227), land governance in Uganda continues to be eroded by elite capture, where politically connected actors exploit state authority for personal gain. Although the government is implementing the 2025 Revised National Land Policy and a digital Government Land Inventory System to improve transparency, these initiatives suffer from serious implementation weaknesses that limit their effectiveness on the ground.

At the heart of the challenge is a kleptocratic political economy in which land administration is used to secure regime loyalty and stability. Land-related crimes have risen sharply, fueled by fraudulent titling and unlawful evictions involving powerful officials. This disconnect between legal ideals and practice has dispossessed communities reliant on customary tenure, while neoliberal land commodification further deepens inequality and exclusion

Objectives of the Study

a) To analyze mechanisms by which elites influence land governance,
b) To assess socioeconomic impacts of these practices on communities
c) To propose policy-relevant recommendations to enhance equity and accountability in land sector.

Methodology

To assess the power dynamics and elite capture in Uganda's land sector, a robust research methodology was used majorly focusing on the interplay between formal legal frameworks and informal political interests.

Research Design

A Mixed Methods Case Study Design was appropriate. In mixed research design, Qualitative Component utilizes an Exploratory Qualitative approach to uncover "how" and "why" elite capture occurs through In-depth Interviews (IDIs) and Thematic Analysis. Political Economy Analysis (PEA) Framework was adopted using the DFID/ODI Sectoral PEA tool to analyze structural features (e.g., historical land legacies), institutions (e.g., Land Act enforcement), and actors' incentives.

Target Population

The population included stakeholders with direct involvement in land administration or those affected by governance failures:

Government Officials: Staff from the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development (MLHUD), District Land Boards and Area Land Committees; **Legal & Civil Society:** High Court judges (Land Division), land rights lawyers, and NGOs like Witness Radio or ISER and there literature was reviewed,; **Affected Communities:** Smallholder farmers and customary landholders (representing the 75% of the population) in high-conflict zones like Nakaseke or Amuru.

Sampling Method

Purposive Sampling: specifically targets "Key Informants" such as senior land officers and policy experts who possess specialized knowledge of systemic corruption; **Snowball Sampling:** was

useful for reaching "politically connected" individuals or victims of illegal evictions who may be hesitant to speak openly.

Data Collection Methods

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): Conducted with policy makers and legal experts to map power relations; **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** Organized with community members to capture collective experiences of dispossession (Nakaseke and Amuru). **Document Review:** Analysis of the 2025 Revised National Land Policy, court rulings on fraudulent titling, and MLHUD Strategic Plans.

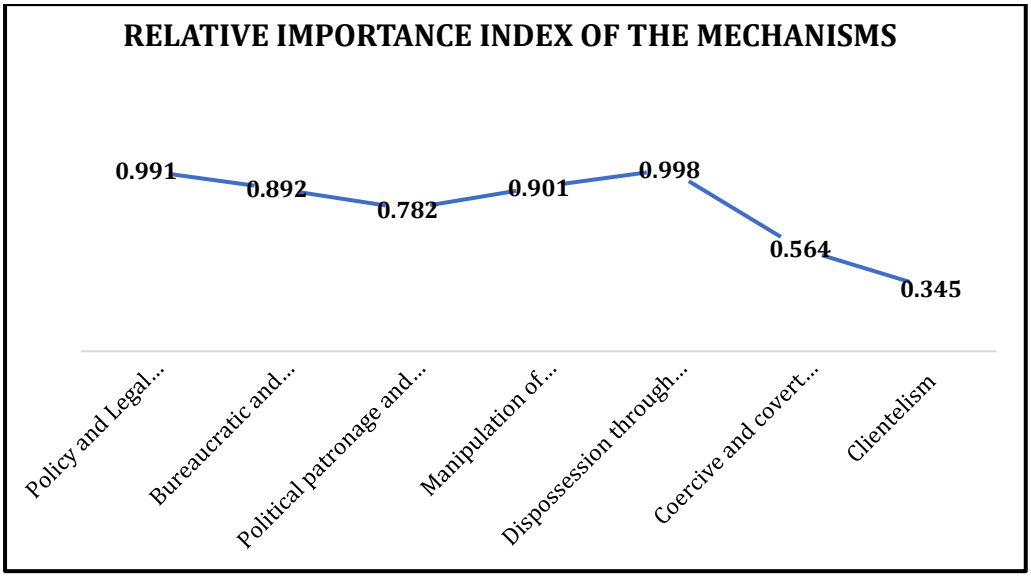
Data Analysis

Qualitative: Use NVIVO software for inductive thematic coding to identify recurring patterns of elite maneuvers. **Quantitative:** Descriptive statistics (using SPSS) for land crime trends and titling rates.

Results and Discussion

In analyzing the mechanisms of elite influence in Uganda's land sector for 2025/2026, research identifies a shift from overt land grabbing to more sophisticated "legalized" and "institutionalized" maneuvers. These mechanisms allow elites to manipulate state machinery to maintain political loyalty and economic dominance.

Objective One: To analyze mechanisms by which elites influence land governance



Source: (Primary data, 2026)

1. Policy and Legal Manipulation

"Stealing through Policy": Elites utilize their control over the legislative process to draft policies that appear developmental but facilitate private accumulation. The 2025 Revised National Land Policy and the tenfold growth targets are often framed by critics as tools that prioritize neoliberal commercialization over the rights of the 75% of Ugandans on customary land.

Institutional Fragmentation: Power is exercised through the deliberate creation of overlapping mandates among ten institutional bodies (e.g., MLHUD, Uganda Land Commission). This "institutional instability" allows elites to exploit gaps in oversight and "forum shop" for favorable decisions.

2. Bureaucratic and Administrative Control

Weaponization of Digitization: While the National Land Information System (NLIS) aims for transparency, elite actors often manipulate digital records to create "overlapping titles" or "double titling." This technological control effectively locks out those without the digital literacy or political connections to verify their claims.

Selective Law Enforcement: Agencies such as Resident District Commissioners (RDCs) and security personnel frequently intervene in land disputes without clear legal authority, often acting to protect the interests of "power-connected" individuals over court orders.

3. Political Patronage and Security Involvement

Land as Political Currency: In the lead-up to the 2026 elections, land is used as a tool for patronage. High-level corruption enables the government to "cement the loyalty" of state leaders by facilitating their access to lucrative land for investment or infrastructure projects.

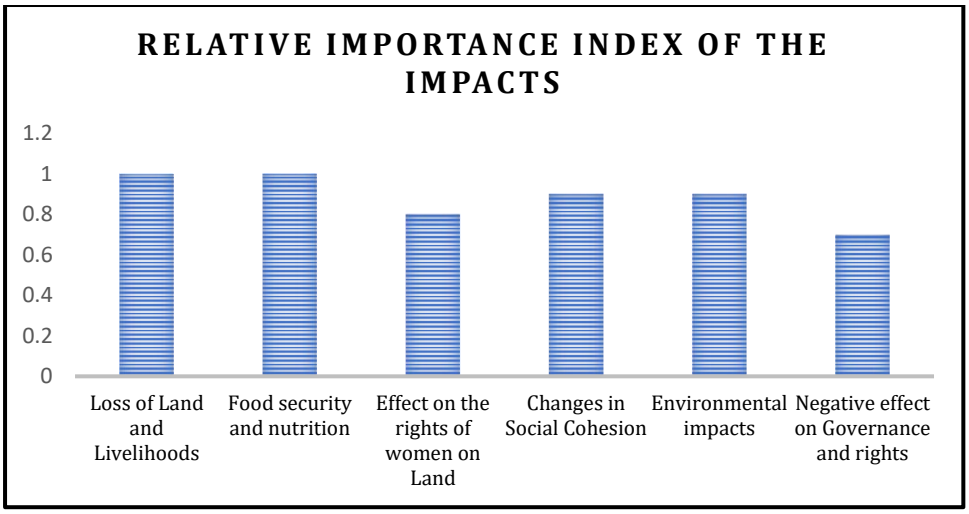
Militarized Evictions: The involvement of security agencies in land evictions has become a standardized mechanism. These actors use intimidation to bypass Article 237 of the Constitution, transforming land from a resource for the common good into a "weapon for political control".

4. Manipulation of Identity and Crisis

Ethnic and Regional Favoritism: Governance reforms are frequently undermined by perceptions of "ethnic bias," where land allocations in areas like Buganda or Northern Uganda are manipulated to favor specific political coalitions. Crisis Exploitation: Elites capitalize on displacement crises (such as those involving the 1.5 million refugees in Uganda) to squeeze customary landholders, using the "emergency" or "security" context to bypass standard land acquisition procedures.

Objective Two: To assess socioeconomic impacts of these practices on communities

In order to assess the social economic impacts of the practices, the indicators for the empirical analysis included; Land transaction data, Displacement metrics, Livelihood indicators, Food security, Gender indicators, Governance indicators and Environmental indicator.



Source: (Primary Data, 2026)

Socioeconomic impacts on local communities

Livelihoods and income

Loss of customary land and access to natural resources (water, pastures, forests) has undermined subsistence farming and fishing. Smallholders lose collateral and productive assets; risk of increased poverty and debt (World Bank, 2016). Cash crops or large-scale investments may offer limited local employment; benefits skewed to a few elites or external contractors. Price volatility and land-derived rents shift wealth within the community, often raising inequality.

Food security and nutrition

Displacement or creeping land loss has reduced food production, increasing household food insecurity. Dependence on purchased food rises; dietary diversity can decline if land-use changes reduce staple production (World Bank, 2016).

Gender dynamics

In Uganda, women traditionally relying on land access face greater insecurity; land grabs often exclude women from decision-making and titling. Increased unpaid labor (water/wood collection, transport) to compensate for lost productive land. Displacements have raised gender-based violence risks and reduce women's bargaining power (FAO, 2019).

Social cohesion and security

Perceived or real exclusion creates conflict within households and communities. Splits along village or ethnic lines if elites co-opt some groups or divide communities for easier capture. Erosion of trust in local governance and formal institutions when authorities are implicated.

Recommendations

The actionable recommendations for this research included;

- There is need to Ground in political economy and elite capture theories (Grossman, Acemoglu, want to connect to land governance). This promotes Access to data and political sensitivity; anticipate resistance from powerful actors
- There is need to Integrate land tenure security, governance legitimacy and displacement/production linkages.
- Build a multi-level frame: national policy, district actors and community-level impact.

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Title: **ID116 - The 2018 Land Conference & Beyond: Power, Agency and Informal Settlements in Namibia**

Author: **Dinelago Mutota**

Organisation: **Namibia University of Science and Technology**

Abstract:

More than seven years after the historic 2018 Second National Land Conference, Namibia stands at a critical juncture in its quest for equitable urban land reform. The conference, a landmark multi-stakeholder forum, produced 176 resolutions that acknowledged the acute crisis in the country's rapidly expanding informal settlements and charted a path toward inclusive and secure tenure for all. Yet, for the hundreds of thousands of Namibians living in these settlements, the promise of 2018 remains largely unfulfilled. This research investigates the implementation gap between these progressive policy resolutions and the lived realities on the ground, using the Havana Informal Settlement in Windhoek as a focused case study. The central argument is that while the 2018 resolutions provide an essential and comprehensive blueprint, their transformative power is systematically undermined by deep-seated power asymmetries and the constrained agency of informal settlement residents. Consequently, achieving sustainable and equitable urban development requires a fundamental shift from top-down service delivery to a paradigm of genuine power-sharing and community-led co-production.

The urban land challenge in Namibia is most starkly illustrated by its patterns of urbanization. Windhoek's population, estimated at approximately 520,000 has been shaped by decades of rural-urban migration. This demographic shift has resulted in the proliferation of informal settlements, which now house nearly half of the city's residents. Areas like Havana, one of Windhoek's largest and most established informal settlements in the northwest of the city, are not anomalies but rather emblematic of a national phenomenon. Home to over 15,000 residents, Havana is characterized by a complex interplay of challenges: extreme tenure insecurity that fosters a perpetual fear of displacement, inadequate and unreliable access to water, sanitation and electricity, significant environmental and health hazards and limited livelihood opportunities. These physical deprivations are compounded by a deeper, more structural issue: the systemic exclusion of residents from the planning and decision-making processes that directly shape their daily lives. This exclusion points directly to the concepts of power and agency which are central to understanding the post-2018 landscape.

Land governance in Namibia has historically been dominated by a top-down approach, with the state, municipal authorities and entrenched elite interests holding a near-monopoly on decision-making power. Within this framework, informal settlement residents possess severely constrained agency. They are frequently reduced to the role of passive recipients or at best, consulted as an afterthought in planning processes. This power imbalance is not merely a procedural flaw; it is the primary obstacle to effective implementation. When projects are designed and imposed without the meaningful participation of the community, they are often met with resistance, mistrust and delays. This dynamic ensures that even well-intentioned interventions can fail to address the actual needs of the community, perpetuating a cycle of exclusion, poverty, and contested development.

The 2018 Second National Land Conference was convened to dismantle these very inequities. Held in Windhoek in October 2018, its inclusive format, bringing together government, traditional leaders, civil society, women, youth and farmers, was itself a recognition of the need for broader participation. The 176 resolutions adopted at its conclusion represented a powerful political and social consensus. For urban areas, the outcomes were particularly significant. The conference declared living conditions in informal settlements a national humanitarian emergency, signaling an urgent need for action. It mandated the accelerated rollout of the Flexible Land Tenure Act (FLTA) to provide secure, affordable tenure through innovative instruments like starter titles and land hold titles. It called for the large-scale upgrading of informal settlements with basic services including water, sanitation, electricity and roads. The conference also resolved to abolish the willing seller-willing buyer principle in favour of accelerated expropriation with just compensation, and crucially, it mandated a fundamental enhancement of community participation, transparency and equity in all land allocation and delivery processes. These resolutions were not merely suggestions; they were a blueprint for transforming the nation's urban landscape.

The case of Havana Informal Settlement, however, reveals the profound tension between this ambitious blueprint and the persistent realities of implementation. Recent development interventions in Havana such as the N$381 million infrastructure project involving road expansion and the construction of culverts, a market and a taxi rank serve as a powerful illustration. While the project necessitated the relocation of over 43 households and a church to new serviced plots in Havana Extensions 8 and 11 in late 2025 as part of the broader Informal Settlement Upgrading Project, the process was fraught with the very challenges the 2018 conference sought to eliminate. The relocations were met with resistance from residents demanding firm guarantees of secure tenure and basic services before agreeing to move, exposing the deep-seated mistrust that decades of top-down governance have cultivated. The slow and fragmented rollout of the FLTA, the very instrument designed to resolve tenure insecurity, fuels this skepticism and entrenches the perception of the state as a dominant, unresponsive actor. This situation exemplifies how colonial legacies and institutional barriers continue to shape urban land governance, maintaining the power of state and municipal authorities while limiting the voice of residents.

The pathway beyond the 2018 conference, therefore, must directly confront and seek to dismantle these entrenched power asymmetries. The solution is not more sophisticated technical plans or increased funding alone but a fundamental renegotiation of the relationship between the state and the urban citizen. This involves a deliberate strategy to redistribute power by scaling up community-led initiatives and learning from organizations like the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia which have demonstrated the efficacy of community-managed savings and upgrading schemes over many years. It requires forging multi-stakeholder alliances that create institutionalized platforms where informal settlement residents have an equal voice alongside government and private sector actors in all stages of planning and implementation. Such alliances must be underpinned by a commitment to transparent processes that build trust rather than erode it. Most critically, it demands an urgent acceleration of the FLTA rollout, treating secure tenure not as a final reward for compliance with state-led plans, but as a foundational right that empowers residents to become active stakeholders and investors in their own communities and advocates for their own development.

In conclusion, the experience of Havana serves as a poignant reminder that the legacy of the 2018 Land Conference will be defined not by its eloquent resolutions but by the tangible changes in the lives of Namibia's most marginalized urban citizens. The blueprint for equitable land reform exists. The missing link is the political and administrative will to challenge the status quo and actively foster a more democratic and inclusive urban governance paradigm. The goal must be to transform residents from passive subjects of top-down decisions into active agents of their own development, with the power, security and voice to shape the future of their communities. Only by redistributing power through genuinely inclusive processes can Namibia hope to bridge the persistent implementation gap and realize the vision of 2018 for all its people, creating greater equity, meaningful participation and sustainable development in its informal settlements.

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Dinelago Mutota is an emerging governance analyst and a dedicated advocate for inclusive urban development. She holds a Bachelor of Public Management (NQF7) and is currently pursuing her Honours degree in Public Governance (NQF8) at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). Her academic and research interests span across public policy, institutional accountability, participatory governance and social justice with a particular focus on how marginalized communities engage with state institutions. She is passionate about amplifying the voices of ordinary citizens and believes that sustainable development is only possible when those most affected are active agents in shaping solutions. She has a strong passion for governance, community representation, social welfare and the equitable delivery of public services. Guided by the belief that good governance begins with inclusion, she aims to contribute to policy reforms that prioritize transparency, equity and meaningful citizen engagement in Namibia and beyond.

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Organisation: **Land Governance Advisor, Land Facility Decision Support Unit**

Presentation: **Session 2: Theme 1: Improving understanding of the political economy factors that influence land governance**

Author's Details:

Esther is a Ugandan lawyer with thirty-one (31) years of accumulated work experience in with twenty (20) years in leadership positions at national, regional, and global levels. Esther has twenty-six (26) years' experience in land governance, twenty-one (21) years in piloting innovations in gender, land, and tenure security, sixteen (16) years' experience in organizational development & management, partnership, and network building; and five (5) years' experience in environmental governance focusing on legal and social research, monitoring and evaluation, and policy advocacy. Esther currently works as the Deputy Team Leader/Gender and Institutional reform Specialist for Land Equity International's Land and Gender Project in Maseru Lesotho as well as the Gender and Land Lead in the FCDO's Decision Support Unit to the Land Facility.

Title: **ID055 - The Political Economy of Land Reform in Nigeria: Interplay of National and Sub-National Interests**

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Abstract:

Land is a fundamental asset in Nigeria, central to economic development, social stability, and political power. With a total land area of approximately 923,768 square kilometres and a population of about 240 million people, there is an increasingly high demand for land on the progressively reducing supply of land in the country as a result of population increase and urbanisation. However, the country's land administration system is characterised by inefficiencies, conflicts, and a significant lack of formal registration. For instance, over 90% of land in Nigeria is unregistered. This results in an estimated $300 billion in dead capital, as land cannot be easily used as collateral or transferred efficiently. The pressure on land and poor land governance in the country have also resulted in protracted litigation, violence, increasing informality, undocumented titles, tenure insecurity, and limited access to land. Numerous initiatives have attempted to address these challenges with limited success. For instance, efforts to review the main land policy instrument in the country, the Land Use Act, 1978 has not been successful. Also, successive land registration initiatives since 1999 (after the reintroduction of democratic government) have struggled to achieve anticipated outcomes. There is also recurring conflicts between federal and state authorities over land control and revenue generation. These challenges are deeply rooted in the political economy of land, which resonates with the competing political agendas and institutional fragmentation between governance tiers and state-level political considerations. The political economy of land reform in Nigeria involves a complex web of national and sub-national interests, institutional legacies, and power struggles that often undermine efforts to establish a transparent, equitable, and efficient land governance framework. This paper dissects these political economy factors, analysing their influence on land reform initiatives and offering a nuanced understanding of the obstacles to effective land governance.

Recent literature emphasises that land governance is inherently political, embedded within broader social and economic power structures. This connotes that land governance issues cannot be treated as a purely technical exercise, but it is inseparable from the broader political economy. The effect of political economy on land governance in the literature can be categorised into three. First, land governance reform is fundamentally political, shaped by elite bargains and institutional configurations. Second, inclusive and sustainable land governance requires credible political commitment, capable state institutions, and strong legal infrastructure. Third, reform approaches that ignore power relations and rent dynamics risk reinforcing exclusion rather than expanding tenure security. Therefore, understanding and engaging with political economy constraints is central to achieving inclusive land governance. Burns et. al. provides empirical evidence of how political economy constraints affect land reform projects in practice, such as rent competition between state and customary authorities in Ghana, bureaucratic resistance and data hoarding in

Indonesia, reluctance to enhance tenure security for the poor in Laos, and political opposition to property valuation reform in Thailand. While these cases illustrate how corruption, patronage, rent-seeking, clientelism and elite capture undermine land reform efforts, similar studies in Nigeria is rare. Earlier studies5,6 on Nigeria land reform have been on the technical and administrative aspects without consideration for the political economy of land reform, hence this study.

This study employs a qualitative approach that combines a desktop review of policy documents, government bulletins, and key informant interviews (KII) with government officials providing land administration services. A total of 19 officials from both Federal and State Government including the Land Bureau, Surveyor General Office, Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development, Ministry of Waterfront Infrastructure Development, Ministry of Justice, Lagos State Agricultural Land Holding, New Town Development Authority, and Lagos State Property Development Company, were interviewed. Data extracted from the KII and the secondary data from government documents were subjected to thematic analysis.

The study discovered that the entrenchment of the Land Use Act (LUA) of 1978 (the principal land legislation in the country) in the Nigerian Constitution (Section 315(5) of the 1999 Constitution) makes its amendment or repeal exceptionally difficult, requiring a two-thirds majority vote in both the National Assembly and State Houses of Assembly. This constitutional protection has largely shielded the LUA from significant reforms, despite widespread calls for its review and three attempts by the national assembly to include it as part of the constitutional review item. The political resistance to amending or removing the LUA from the constitution highlights the deep-seated interests that benefit from the existing land regime. Governors, in particular, wield immense power over land allocation and control under the Act, a prerogative they are often reluctant to relinquish. Governors often mobilise their constituency members in the national assembly to oppose constitutional review relating to LUA. Also, when an attempt to amend the section of the constitution relating to the LUA gets to the State House of Assemblies, the governors are able to exert significant political leverage to block such an attempt. Another reason for the resistance was the fears across the regional divide of the country that a review of the LUA could strengthen one region over the other. In southern Nigeria, there is the fear that nationalising land administration would give the federal government more power and could facilitate policies like Ruga (grazing reserves), which they do not want. In northern Nigeria, the resistance revolves around the fear that such reform might weaken the power of the state and dismantle the administrative structures established since the colonial era. These resistances demonstrate how sub-national political interests can effectively obstruct national reform efforts. Again, the control of land in the state by governors created a powerful incentive for state governments to resist reforms that might diminish their authority or land-derived revenue streams. This leads to significant institutional fragmentation, where federal initiatives often clash with state-level priorities and entrenched interests.

Another important finding from the study was that there have been three different national land registration initiatives since 1999, when the country returned to democratic government. One of such initiatives was the Systematic Land Titling and Registration (SLTR), which was piloted in two States, Kano and Ondo States, in the country. While the programme has achieved great progress in Kano State, with over 150,000 parcels of land registered, it was not so successful in Ondo State, where the SLTR project had ceased to continue as a result of a lack of political will in the state to

continue the programme. Also, at the national level, the programme has been replaced with the Nigeria Land Titling, Registration and Documentation Programme, which has no implementation framework like the SLTR. This also shows that competing political agendas between governance tiers and policy somersault fragmentation can hamper reform efforts.

The study also revealed that conflicts between federal and state authorities over land control and revenue generation are common, reflecting deeper structural issues within Nigeria's political settlement. Specific instances of this tussle are evident in the relationship between the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and the Lagos State Government. These include the persistent denial of FGN land requests by the state for national projects, despite provisions in the LUA for such acquisitions. Furthermore, disputes arise over land-based taxation, such as the Lagos State Land Use Charge, which includes ground rent, leading to claims of "double taxation" by federal agencies that also collect ground rent from lessees of federal properties. The state also mandates the "regularisation" of FGN-granted titles with the state before building approvals can be obtained, a practice viewed by federal officials as an illegal assertion of state power and an undue financial burden on citizens. All these demonstrate that the political economy of land reform in Nigeria is a complex interplay of historical legacies, institutional frameworks, and competing national and sub-national interests.

In conclusion, effective land governance reforms in Nigeria must acknowledge and strategically address these political economy dynamics. A purely technical or administrative approach will be insufficient without confronting the underlying political obstacles. Therefore, we propose the following strategies to mitigate political bottlenecks and foster collaborative governance: Promoting Collaborative Federal-State Engagement, Incentivising State-Level Reforms, Strengthening Institutional Capacity and Transparency, Public Awareness and Advocacy and using the National Council of States to make regulations to make the Act more functional.

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Title: **ID048 - Gendered Dynamics of Shea: How Digital Mapping and Global Market Expansion Are Reshaping Tree Tenure and Women's Rights in West Africa's Shea Parklands**

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Abstract:

Shea (Vitellaria paradoxa) parklands support one of the world's largest women-centered forest economies, with roughly 16 million women collecting and processing shea across 21 countries in the Sudano-Sahelian belt (Elias & Carney, 2007). Historically, customary tenure systems distinguished between land ownership (typically male-dominated) and tree-use rights (often female-dominated), creating layered systems characterized as a "feminized subsidy from nature" that enabled women's long-term ecological stewardship and independent income.

With the shea industry exceeding $2 billion USD in 2025, global market expansion alongside climate change and resource competition are fundamentally transforming women's access to trees. Following the 2000 EU trade reform allowing shea to partly replace cocoa butter in chocolate (EU Directive 2000/36/EC), export volumes increased 600 per cent (Questiaux & Pouliot, 2025, 2026). Pressures from commercial agriculture, charcoal production, mining, and population growth are reducing women's parkland access.

As competition intensifies, institutional ambiguity that once enabled flexible access is increasingly exploited to consolidate control among male landowners. Recent research in Burkina Faso and Northern Ghana confirms women are losing tree access—what Questiaux and Pouliot (2026) term "dispossession without displacement" as women remain in communities but lose effective control over resources. Without recognized rights, women cannot access credit or protect parkland systems. Opoku-Mensah's (2023) assessment confirms systematic gender stratification: women remain "at the base of the chain" using traditional methods while "mid-stream actors were all males."

In 2025, the Global Shea Alliance partnered with Farmerline, New Market Labs, and Level4International to launch a digital dashboard documenting women's shea tree rights in Ghana, Togo, and Benin. Leveraging over 800 members across West Africa, this initiative strengthens community-led advocacy for inclusive land policies and demonstrates how local actors can reshape power relations.

Digital Mapping: Closing Policy-Practice Gaps

The initiative pursues three interconnected objectives. First, digital tree mapping makes invisible rights visible, transforming customary practice into documented evidence of women's agroforestry management, economic value generation, and environmental services provision. Women's tree

rights rarely appear in formal registries, allowing policymakers to treat women's claims as marginal. These maps show how counting trees can make women count.

Second, because women co-produce data, mapping builds digital literacy, organization, and confidence, shifting women from passive beneficiaries to active participants in negotiations with chiefs, authorities, companies, and policymakers. Mapping documents contributions representing 12% of household income and 32% of household cash, challenging narratives framing women's work as "informal" or "supplementary." Mapping also becomes a basis for knowledge sharing about rights and resources.

Third, spatial data feeds directly into land reforms in Ghana, Benin, and Togo, supporting proposals for legal recognition of customary tree tenure, gender quotas in governance bodies, and safeguards against exclusionary transactions. The initiative connects local evidence to international frameworks (VGGT, CEDAW, SDGs), increasing leverage with governments to harmonize strategies protecting shea parklands and women's rights.

Theoretical Framework

The case employs integrated political economy and political ecology frameworks to analyze how material interests, institutions, power relations, and knowledge politics shape women's tree tenure. Political economy examines who profits from commercialization, what incentives drive actors, and how benefits distribute across gender, class, and ethnicity. As land values rise, those with formal ownership gain bargaining power while informal use rights holders face exclusion.

Political ecology adds attention to discourse, historical trajectories, and scalar dynamics. Colonial land policies introduced individual titling excluding customary rights and privileging male ownership; post-independence nationalization and structural adjustment further undermined customary tenure. Contemporary narratives framing parkland agroforestry as "traditional" and "low-productivity" legitimize conversion to monocultures eliminating shea trees, while women's ecological expertise is dismissed.

Together, these frameworks reveal how tree tenure insecurity results from systematic power asymmetries across scales and institutional arenas. In West Africa, women lose access to trees when male landowners leverage formal property law; customary authorities tend to perpetuate patriarchal traditions; agricultural extension frequently promotes intensive farming; and titling programs often formalize male ownership without explicitly finding ways to protect women's use rights. Participatory digital mapping enables less powerful actors to gain agency and shift attention to the evidence on the ground.

Findings and Contributions

Preliminary findings indicate women's harvest areas are geographically extensive and overlap with men's farms, confirming layered tenure; women maintain detailed knowledge managing trees as long-term assets; threats intensify in regions with the highest commercial value and land scarcity; and communities with stronger women's networks show greater tenure security. These align with Questiaux and Pouliot's (2025) survey showing 85% reported increased competition. Exclusion mechanisms are multiple and overlapping: policies fail to protect women's tree rights; modernization narratives justify conversion, transforming women into laborers to their formerly accessible trees; inheritance systems favor male heirs; land titling registers land in men's names,

erasing layered use rights; and export-driven incentives support mechanization marginalizing small-scale women processors.

The documentation of nearly 100,000 trees linked to 7,000+ women's use rights reveals the emergence of diverse strategies. The volume of documented producers carries weight for demonstrating why collective sustainable management practices deserve formal recognition. It also demonstrates the power of collective organizing through cooperatives and federations; alliance-building with NGOs, researchers, and ethical companies invested in capturing more value through local processing. This mapping initiative, combining spatial data with documentation of use rights, substantially strengthens women's claims and could become new practice for the industry

The study makes four key contributions. First, gender-disaggregated analysis is essential—aggregate "community tenure" analyses obscure implementation gaps affecting men and women differently. Second, global market integration creates new challenges for implementing policies protecting customary rights. Third, participatory digital mapping can close policy-practice gaps through integration into land administration systems. Fourth, formal legal rights are insufficient without implementation mechanisms and organized constituencies demanding enforcement.

Conclusion

This case demonstrates how global trade policies and domestic power structures interact to redefine women's access to land-based resources. Mapping women shea producers' trees and customary tenure is both documentation of rights and a deliberate strategy to challenge gendered power asymmetries in land governance systems.

Digital mapping illustrates how evidence production bridges policy-practice gaps. As markets expand and ecological pressures intensify, shea parklands' future depends on whether formal protections translate into actual access security. Without deliberate institutional reform, commercialization will likely deepen gender and class inequalities despite progressive policies. But when combined with organizing, advocacy, and multi-scalar alliances, participatory mapping can help ensure women's access rights become recognized rights.

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Worlali Senyo, a seasoned expert in agriculture and ICT will now be leading Farmerline's mission to empower farmers in his new role as Country Manager, Ghana. With over 15 years of experience in developing and implementing technologies that benefit farmers, Worlali has been instrumental in helping Farmerline reach over 1.7 million farmers and partner with over 3,000 organizations across 48 countries. As a key member of Farmerline's leadership team, Worlali has been a driving force behind the company's mission to empower farmers through innovative solutions at the last mile. His expertise lies in building lasting partnerships to develop, sustain, and scale solutions in education and behavior change, climate resilience, financing, and markets. Worlali's passion is reflected in his drive for the digitalization of agriculture and empowering smallholder farmers to contribute to a healthier planet. With a Master's degree in ICTs for Development from the University of Manchester, UK, and a Bachelor's degree in Agricultural Science majoring in Economics from the University of Ghana, Worlali brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the table as the Country Manager. As a respected thought leader in agritech on the African continent, Worlali is a frequent speaker at industry conferences, and his insights and expertise have been featured in numerous publications. Worlali is passionate about developing technologies and partnerships that benefit farmers and contribute to a healthier planet.

Claudia D'Andrea is a natural resource and governance expert with over 20 years of experience designing, delivering and assessing international development programmes across a range of energy, climate, and environment sectors. Working with partners including USAID, MCC, UK's FCDO, and civil society organizations, she explores power dynamics through a range of political economy analysis tools and research methods to understand complex problems and improve how we tackle them. Claudia is currently serving as Political Engagement Advisor for TetraTech, UK's Land Facility project and as Political Economy Advisor to the Land Facility's Shea Tenure Mapping Project for Level4International. She supports analysis of political economy, climate and biodiversity financing, and indigenous rights in Land Facility work in Mexico, Indonesia, and the Congo Forest basin. She also serves as a mentor for WWF International in Bolivia and Myanmar, and Southern Kenya and Northern Tanzania to strengthen conservation impact with tools to address political economy barriers. She supports Global Green Growth Initiative efforts to facilitate Green Climate Fund finance for Just Transition work.

Title: **ID111 - Navigating Rural Land Reform: Insights from Fulani Agropastoral Communities in northern Benin**

Authors: **Eunice Adwoa Sarpong and Prof Dr Nikolaus Schareika**

Organisation: **University of Parakou, Benin/Georg-August University of Göttingen, Germany**

Abstract:

Introduction

This study examines how rural land reform, particularly formalisation processes, shapes land tenure relations and social structures among Fulani agropastoral households. Benin's rural land reform often posits an implicit hierarchy between so-called customary and statutory tenure systems. Formalisation is thus framed as an institutional innovation that harmonises ownership and use rights across customary and statutory systems, promising tenure security for landholders through standardised registration and titling. These processes are expected to strengthen tenure security, boost economic development, and reduce conflict. Customary tenure is often critiqued as informal and insecure, whereas statutory tenure is associated with legality, clarity, and security through formal registration and titling. However, framing these systems as binaries obscures their interdependence in practice and risks reproducing a false dichotomy, rather than addressing the complexities of tenure realities. We argue that customary tenure systems are not static or "pre-modern" alternatives to state systems; rather, they are reconstituted through interactions with statutory law, administrative procedures, and the practices of local actors. These engagements produce institutional hybridity, in which tenure is constituted through social practice, manifesting a dynamic arena in which diverse actors negotiate, reinterpret, and contest rights. We analyse how formalisation interacts with overlapping tenure arrangements in agropastoral households and how these interactions reconfigure authority, access, and exclusion. Reform implementation is therefore examined not solely as a technical exercise in mapping and certification, but as a social process embedded in local practices.

Context

The primary analytical focus is on Fulani agropastoral households. These households are organised as patrilineal extended families that pool labour and resources, combining livestock rearing and crop cultivation to participate in both pastoral and agricultural networks. Land access is shaped by lineage membership rather than market transactions, with collective holding arrangements that fosters social cohesion and tenure security. Importantly, households are not homogenous or unitary actors; they are characterised by internal differentiation and negotiation. Land allocation and parcelling are managed through lineage-based mechanisms, typically under the authority of household heads. However, rights to use or inherit land shift over time due to events such as marriage, inheritance, divorce, remarriage, or generational change. Men, women, sons, wives, husbands, and widows have use rights that are contingent on marital status and social position, rather than statutory logics of ownership. These internal dynamics shape how households navigate and respond to formalisation processes.

Methodology

This study is based on ethnographic fieldwork that utilises a mixed-methods design. Data collection methods included participant observation, conversations, farm visits, interviews with state authorities, participatory tenure mapping and land registration exercises. By combining narrative and network analysis, we document tenure practices as they unfold within interconnected institutional arenas. This approach foregrounds local perspectives and situates them within the broader context of land reform processes.

Findings and Discussions

The empirical findings complicate linear narratives of tenure security. While formalisation introduces mapping, measurement, documentation, and certification procedures intended to stabilise rights within defined boundaries and identifiable right holders, land rights in agropastoral contexts remain layered, overlapping, and relational. Multiple actors have differentiated use rights to the same parcel, such as the rights to cultivate, graze, inherit, borrow, or pass, which are essential to agropastoral livelihoods. Registration procedures tend to simplify land relations, privileging defined ownership that aligns with statutory categories and recognises a primary right holder while marginalising relational and seasonal rights. This simplification affects rights embedded in social relationships—often held by women, youth, migrants, and herders—that are difficult to codify within singular ownership models. The processes risk reproducing social hierarchies, which reinforce or transform existing inequalities.

During land measurement and certification exercises, households navigate decisions about which parcels to register, under whose name(s), and how boundaries are demarcated—decisions that reflect internal power relations. Household heads or members with greater authority may leverage registration to strengthen their rights, but this rarely translates into notions of absolute or exclusive ownership. Instead, certification is interpreted locally as a means of strengthening stewardship and responsibility. The involvement of external actors such as surveyors, land committees, and administrative officials shapes these negotiations, privileging particular configurations of rights at specific moments in time.

Intra-household differentiation is particularly visible in the positions of women and sons. Wives do not have uniform rights; their access often depends on marital status, years of marriage, and the number and ages of their sons. Women and youth rarely have land registered in their names, yet they exercise use rights that are essential to household subsistence. Rendering these rights invincible in formalisation processes further erodes their negotiating power and tenure security. Adult sons increasingly seek registration of specific plots to secure future inheritance, thereby shifting authority within the household. While registration strengthens their rights, it also diminishes flexibility for future renegotiation among siblings and other family members. Thus, formalisation reconfigures internal power dynamics, even as collective lineage ownership is maintained.

Furthermore, engagement with state and development actors is essential for households to secure recognition and support. For many households, participating in formalisation processes provides documented evidence for resolving disputes or claiming compensation. Formalisation evolves from a top-down approach into a contested and negotiated process for asserting rights. As land becomes

enclosed and boundaries are established, patterns of use rights often shift, which can adversely affect social groups that rely on relationships, mobility, and seasonal land use.

Conclusion

We discuss formalisation as a social process shaped by household structures, lineage, social networks, and interactions with both state and non-state actors. Statutory procedures and local practices are mutually constitutive. Policy frameworks and research that frame tenure systems as binaries and households as unitary risk, reinforcing power asymmetries and overlooking how rights are negotiated and reconfigured through social relations. Inclusive land reform must recognise that rights are layered, overlapping, and continually shaped through social processes.

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Title: **ID050 - Private land restoration in smallholder systems: Implications for rural wellbeing**

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Abstract:

Land degradation imposes substantial costs on the global economy, with estimated annual losses equivalent to 10 to 17 percent of global GDP (ELD, 2015). These losses fall disproportionately on smallholder farmers in low-income countries, where agricultural land productivity is central to rural livelihoods (Dabalen et al., 2024). Restoring degraded agricultural land is therefore a development priority, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa where smallholder agriculture remains the dominant source of rural employment. Yet the relationship between land restoration and household well-being is more complex than policy discussions typically acknowledge.

Yield improvements from restoration activities take time to materialize, as soil health responds slowly to intervention (Shiferaw and Holden, 1998, 1999; Beyene, 2015; Gebregziabher and Soltani, 2019; Finch, 2020; Arneth et al., 2021; Teng et al., 2024; Constenla-Villoslada et al., 2022), while the labor and land costs of restoration are borne immediately. Understanding this temporal mismatch, and what role social protection programs can play in bridging it, is essential for designing effective land restoration policies that do not inadvertently deepen agrarian distress in the short run.

This paper examines the effects of land restoration activities on smallholder household wellbeing, land productivity, and labor productivity in Ethiopia, one of the countries with the largest and most ambitious land restoration programs in the world. We make three related contributions. First, we estimate the contemporaneous effects of land restoration activities on multiple dimensions of household well-being. Second, we examine whether public social transfer programs moderate these contemporaneous effects, providing a bridge for households during the transition period before productivity gains materialize. Third, we extend the analysis to examine the medium-term effects of land restoration on land productivity using a longer panel constructed from remotely sensed data.

Conceptual Framework

The net effects of land restoration on smallholder well-being depend on how restoration activities affect both land productivity, measured as harvest value per hectare, and labor productivity, measured as harvest value per labor day. Some restoration activities, such as terracing and contouring, are highly labor-intensive. These activities increase labor inputs per unit of land in the short run without a commensurate contemporaneous increase in yields, mechanically reducing labor productivity. Other activities, such as fallowing and exclosures, reduce cultivated area in the short run, lowering both output and land under production, with yield improvements expected only once the land is returned to cultivation. In either case, the contemporaneous effects on land and

labor productivity are likely to be zero or negative, while the medium-term effects, conditional on soil health improvements, are expected to be positive. This temporal structure implies that households undertaking land restoration activities may experience a reduction in well-being in the short run even when the long-run returns to restoration are positive. The provision of social transfers during this transition period may therefore be a necessary condition not only for encouraging adoption but also for preventing restoration from deepening poverty among participating households.

Setting and Data

Ethiopia provides an unusually informative setting for this analysis (Taddese, 2001; Solomon et al., 2024; Gashaw, 2015; Gebreselassie et al., 2016). Between 2011 and 2016, the country successfully encouraged widespread adoption of land restoration activities among smallholder farmers, with dominant practices including terracing and contouring and fallowing and pasturing (Arslan et al., 2014; Crossland et al., 2021). The costs of restoration were borne by households, while government extension services provided knowledge and technical support through local training programs. Nationally representative studies have documented that these activities reduced soil erosion, a necessary precondition for the medium-term productivity gains the program sought to achieve (Constenla-Villoslada et al., 2022; Bayissa et al., 2023).

Our primary data source is Ethiopia's Living Standards Measurement Study, Integrated Sur2veys in Agriculture (LSMS-ISA), a nationally representative longitudinal household survey collecting detailed socioeconomic data from the same households across three waves between 2011 and 2016. We focus on agricultural households defined as households in rural areas or small towns that cultivated at least one crop or maintained livestock in the twelve months prior to interview.

We measure well-being along five dimensions: total consumption expenditure, food expenditure, non-food expenditure, a multidimensional well-being index, and relative deprivation of consumption expenditure, the latter capturing how households fare relative to others in their community. We measure land restoration activities both as a binary indicator of adoption and as a continuous measure of the area of land under restoration, since households frequently adopt restoration on only a subset of their plots and the intensity of adoption varies substantially across households and over time.

To examine medium-term effects on land productivity, we construct a longer panel extending from 2011 to 2018 by overlaying the LSMS-ISA survey data with remotely sensed data on vegetative indices and rainfall. This extension is motivated by agronomic evidence suggesting that meaningful improvements in land productivity from restoration typically require four to five years to materialise, making the three-wave survey panel insufficient to detect medium-term gains.

Empirical Strategy

We estimate contemporaneous effects using the two-way fixed effects estimator, which controls for time-invariant household-level unobservables and common time trends. This approach is well-suited to our setting given that fewer than two percent of households were engaged in any land restoration activity at baseline in 2011, limiting concerns about preexisting trends contaminating identification. We estimate effects both without distinguishing between types of restoration activity

and separately by activity type to examine whether effects differ across labor-intensive and less labor-intensive practices.

Results

Our findings paint a nuanced picture of the effects of land restoration on smallholder households. On well-being, we find that land restoration activities increased non-food consumption expenditure at conventional significance levels and modestly increased total consumption expenditure. These effects are consistent with households reallocating resources in response to restoration, potentially drawing on savings or transfers to maintain consumption during a 3period of reduced agricultural productivity.

On contemporaneous productivity, however, the picture is less favorable. Land restoration has a negative and statistically significant effect on both land productivity and labor productivity at the household level, consistent with our conceptual framework. Labor-intensive activities such as terracing and contouring drive much of this effect, as households invest substantial labor in restoration without commensurate immediate yield gains. These results confirm that the contemporaneous costs of restoration are real and economically meaningful, and that households absorb productivity losses in the short run even as they maintain or modestly improve consumption through other means.

The role of social protection programs emerges as a critical moderating factor. Re-estimating the effects of land restoration on well-being with an interaction between restoration adoption and receipt of social transfers, primarily through Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Program, we find a positive and statistically significant interaction for both binary and continuous measures of restoration, and across disaggregated activity types. Households that undertake land restoration while receiving social transfers fare meaningfully better in terms of well-being than those undertaking restoration without transfer support. This finding holds consistently across the multiple dimensions of well-being we examine and is robust to different specifications. It suggests that social protection programs serve as an effective bridge, compensating for the short-run costs of restoration and enabling households to adopt productivity-enhancing practices without bearing the full welfare cost of the transition period.

Contributions and Policy Implications

This paper makes several contributions to the literature on land restoration and rural development. We are among the first to jointly estimate contemporaneous and medium-term effects of land restoration on both land and labor productivity, providing a more complete picture of the welfare trajectory facing households that adopt restoration practices. By using nationally representative longitudinal data alongside remotely sensed productivity measures, we combine the household-level welfare detail of survey data with the temporal coverage needed to detect medium-term agronomic effects. We also contribute to growing evidence on the complementarity between productive investments and social protection, showing that transfer programs can play a crucial enabling role in facilitating the adoption of welfareimproving but short-run costly technologies.

The policy implications are direct. Land restoration programs that impose contemporaneous 4labor and productivity costs on smallholder households risk generating agrarian distress and undermining adoption without adequate accompanying support. Our findings suggest that pairing

restoration programs with social transfer mechanisms such as the Productive Safety Net Program can effectively compensate for short-run costs while preserving the long-run productivity gains that make restoration valuable. Designing land restoration policy in isolation from social protection policy is therefore likely to be both less effective and less equitable than integrated program design that treats the two as complements.

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Title: **ID081 - Responsible Land Investments in Agriculture: Rethinking Structured and Sustainable Projects for Local Communities**

Authors: **Agnès Tatiana Omengue Edoa**

Organisation: **University of Yaounde 2 / Association of Young Experts on Land Issues (AJEF), Cameroon**

Abstract

Traditionally, agricultural land investment financing has relied on economic planning models that frequently overlook the "social risk" engendered by land tenure insecurity and community exclusion. Currently, evolving economic models in land governance necessitate a paradigm shift: the long-term bankability and sustainability of investments are intrinsically linked to local food security and community well-being. Drawing on concrete land governance experiences in Africa, this paper examines the Rapid Planning Toolkit as a critical de-risking instrument. By empowering communities to co-design land use plans, this tool bridges the gap between customary rights and statutory investment frameworks. We observe that when communities are integrated from the project planning phase, they transition from passive beneficiaries to active guardians of the ecosystem. This participatory approach extends beyond mere conflict prevention or resolution; it underscores the value of land in preserving biodiversity, sustaining natural capital, and ensuring investment viability. By securing community land rights and aligning project objectives with local food production needs, we establish a sustainable economic framework that safeguards both investor capital and the community's future. We conclude that responsible financing must prioritise such structured, community-led mechanisms to achieve genuine resilience in the face of climate change and food insecurity.

I. Social Risk in Investment Projects

For decades, economic planning models in Central Africa have treated local communities as external variables rather than stakeholders to be integrated. The total disregard for community rights in granting land concessions to investors and the failure to respect free, prior and informed consent is a real obstacle to development, as it is impossible to develop a locality without its community.

Negative consequences arise when investment policies do not respect local land rights. Firstly, land insecurity is created by the migration of local populations to agricultural land in neighbouring villages. We saw this when the Cameroon Wood Industry and Equipment Company (SCIEB Company) banned agricultural activities in Somakek in 2021. This is also the case with the Apouh A Ngog community in its land dispute with Socapalm in Edea. Furthermore, rural exodus to large cities is also a consequence of land insecurity.

Secondly, land, which is now increasingly regarded as a commodity, is the subject of numerous legal battles in the courts. Indeed, land disputes account for around 70% of cases pending before Cameroon's administrative and traditional courts. Protests, which in most cases pit communities against investors, cause considerable delays in the launch of projects and also increase the "risk premium" for investors, a situation that often leads to projects being abandoned.

Finally, the exclusion of communities from land management leads to a lack of interest in protecting the natural ecosystem, resulting in the rapid depletion of natural capital (FAO, 2024). In Central Africa, where land is the main safety net, losing access to ancestral land is not only an economic loss; it is above all a loss of cultural identity and a violation of the social contract (Edoa, 2024).

II. Sustainability as a Condition for Bankability

We are witnessing a global shift in land governance. Modern investors must recognise that sustainability is the new bankability. A project is only bankable if it can survive a 25- to 50-year land lease without being derailed by social unrest. Economic models are evolving to recognise that if an investment project threatens local food security, it inherently threatens its own viability. Communities facing food insecurity are more likely to encroach on concessions (e.g., HEVECAM and SOCAPALM) or engage in conflicts over resources (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2023). Conversely, when project objectives align with local production needs through contract farming models or shared infrastructure, the community becomes a true protector of the investment.

III. Implementation of the Rapid Planning Toolkit (RPT)

The Rapid Planning Toolkit (RPT) serves as a technical bridge between the "informal" customary world and the "formal" statutory framework. Unlike traditional land-use planning, which can take years, the RPT focuses on high-speed, high-impact participatory mapping and negotiation. The toolkit has been implemented in a project in Sierra Leone, and its impact has been positive.

More than just a tool, it involves all stakeholders in the construction of new sustainable cities. Its key functions can be summarised in three points:

Co-design: Communities are not simply 'consulted'; they help define investment boundaries, landowners, and areas reserved for community livelihoods and biodiversity.

Validation of boundaries: Using GPS technology and community verification, the RPT creates "socially legitimate" maps that reduce the risk of future boundary disputes (University College of Estate Management, 2023).

Integration of customary rights: It translates oral traditions and historical land use into a format recognised by land registries and bank auditors.

By involving communities in the co-design of land use plans, we mitigate the "information asymmetry" that usually exists between a multinational corporation and a village council. When community tenure is secured, the role of communities' changes. They shift from being passive beneficiaries to active guardians. Instead of waiting for donations or the implementation of genuine CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) policies, they protect the ecosystem as customary owners because it is *their* capital. They fight against illegal logging and protect the society built by the investor without expecting anything in return. (Muchunguzi, 2022). This participatory approach goes beyond simple conflict resolution; it is an investment in Natural Capital. Secure community rights are the most effective way to preserve social peace, biodiversity and achieve real climate resilience (Metternicht, 2018).

IV. Recommendations

To achieve responsible financing and sustainable property investments, the following actions are required:

For national governments, the Rapid Planning Toolkit should be integrated into the official land planning and allocation process. Participatory mapping should also be made a legal requirement for any agricultural concession exceeding 50 hectares. Community land certificates should also be recognised as legal titles that can be used for co-investment models (Lawry et al., 2017). This work has already begun in Cameroon, and we encourage other states to follow suit. Indeed, Circular Letter No. 0002/MINDCAF/CAB/LC of 9 February 2024 from the Minister of Land Registry and Land Affairs established the "Certificate of Possession of Administratively Recognised Customary Land Rights". In the same vein, on 26 December 2025, it also adopted Circular Letter No. 006/MINDCAF/CAB/LC of 26 December 2025, establishing a "letter of no objection" from the Head of the Traditional Command Unit of the first or second degree with territorial jurisdiction for the validation, at the departmental level, of applications for direct registration or concession of national domain dependencies with an area equal to or greater than ten (10) hectares. This letter recognises certificates of recognition of customary land rights and peaceful enjoyment of land as intermediate land title documents as evidence of an objection or non-objection by traditional authorities to a land registration procedure for 10 hectares in a single block or cumulatively. It also provides an opportunity for communities wishing to express their opposition to a project on the basis of fears of encroachment on their living spaces (GIZ ProPFR).

For private investors, it is necessary to develop co-investment plans. In reality, instead of building schools, vineyards or wells, consideration should be given to involving communities in the capital or granting them structured agricultural and agroforestry contracts. The cost of implementing the RPT and securing community land should also be included in the project's initial CAPEX (capital expenditure).

For development support institutions, it will be necessary to finance only sustainable projects that take into account the rights of communities and for which a genuine environmental and social impact assessment has been carried out.

V. Conclusion

Rethinking investment projects in Central Africa by incorporating the rights of local communities is a major challenge for the success of these projects. Numerous actions have already been undertaken, but real implementation and collaboration between all stakeholders is needed for this to be effective.

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Title: **ID098 - Linking governance, climate resilience, and sustainable development for enhanced policy over mangrove ecosystem management in Bangladesh and Indonesia**

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Abstract:

Since 2022 Landesa has been carrying out the Coastal Livelihoods and Mangroves Project, an ambitious initiative in the Bay of Bengal and Southeast Asia to lay the foundation to strengthen law and policy over coastal tenure and resource rights of up to 73 million of the most at-risk people living in or adjacent to the region's mangrove forests. The project aims to influence national and subnational policy change that promotes sustainable management of mangrove forest ecosystems, leading to better conservation and restoration of the 4.6 million hectares of mangrove forests where these communities live and make their livelihoods. The project applies a gender equal and socially inclusive (GESI) approach across all efforts.

Fundamental to the project's theory of change is the assumption that truly robust tenure and governance reforms should enhance communities' climate resilience and promote their sustainable livelihood development. Most, if not all, of the project's beneficiary communities are vulnerable to climate and environmental stressors, including coastal inundation, land degradation, flooding risk, rising temperatures, and increased precipitation variability (Landesa 2025a, 2025c). They are also subject to increasing external pressure on mangrove forests and their resources, detrimentally affecting the viability of their livelihood options and further limiting their resilience to climate and environmental shocks and stressors. A main component of the project's work concerns, together with communities and state planners, identifying the context-specific opportunities for tenure security and governance to address barriers to sustainable development and climate resilience, and then systematizing solutions through law and policy reforms.

The project's approach to engagement of community and government stakeholders is multi-pronged. At one level, it seeks to enhance community understanding of how policy and programming can address their sustainable livelihood development needs; at another, it aims to advance government actors' understanding of how community-inclusive governance, tenure security, and GESI can enable sustainable mangrove ecosystem management. Activities to catalyze collaboration between communities and state planners on sustainable mangrove ecosystem management are also critical to the project's theory of change.

Project experiences in Bangladesh and Indonesia, two of the five project countries, provide examples of approaches to enhance mangrove ecosystem governance and tenure security for sustainable development and climate resilience. Although both cases concern engagement of multiple stakeholders, the Bangladesh example illustrates an approach with emphasis on

engagement of community stakeholders, and the Indonesia case highlights engagement of state planners. In both examples, we explain the approach and its progress thus far.

Bangladesh

Implemented through local civil society organization Shushilan, the project in Bangladesh seeks to advance local knowledge concerning the links between mangrove conservation, sustainable livelihoods, and climate resilience to enhance co-management of mangrove ecosystem resources. As part of pilot interventions in the Sundarbans, the project formed smaller, more numerous sub-groups of the Village Conservation Forum (VCF), a local body instated by the Forest Department for community participation in mangroves conservation and protection, to encourage community members' more meaningful engagement in forest governance, women especially. Despite the VCFs' intent, early project scoping found that the VCF average size is 300 members, limiting the opportunity for inclusive discussion and decision-making on community stewardship and mangrove conservation. Due to local socio-cultural norms, women are also less likely to participate in VCF meetings, further inhibiting the VCF's capacity to represent community interests.

To address the VCF's shortcoming and strengthen community-inclusive governance in the Sundarbans, the project facilitated discussion-based trainings for the sub-VCF groups, based in a multi-component curriculum that addresses community advocacy, climate change, climate-resilient livelihoods, and women's empowerment. Additionally, the project facilitated targeted trainings for women community members identified as change agents. The trainings were designed to strengthen the change agents' technical understanding of climate change impacts, local adaptation practices, and advocacy skills so that they could play a more active leadership role within their communities.

In addition to community knowledge advancement, the project has helped create venues for local government to interact directly with community members on mangrove forest governance. The project facilitated local government officials' participation in the newly formed sub-VCF groups, and it has also promoted coordination meetings wherein community members can engage with higher tiers of forest governance in the Sundarbans, such as the Co-Management Committee (CMC).

Progress thus far shows that discussions in sub-VCFs on local communities' rights to land and natural resources, their role in forest conservation, and the existing avenues for communities to engage with and advocate to varying government offices have enhanced their awareness of legal and policy issues that affect their livelihoods. Community members who have participated in the sub-VCFs and advocacy-focused meetings facilitated by the project team now recognize the need for change in government processes to promote more effective and equitable land allocation, forest benefit-sharing, and support to sustainable livelihoods. Trained women change agents facilitate climate-related discussions within Sub-VCF platforms and raise livelihood resilience issues in local forums, helping promote gender-responsiveness of the sub-VCFs and Sundarbans forest governance.

The opportunities for improved coordination between government officials and local communities have enabled local government provision of funding and inputs for a communally managed mangrove plantation. They have also resulted in government trainings and access to government facilities in support of villagers' livelihood diversification and shifts to livelihoods that reduce mangrove degradation risk. Advocacy by Shushilan and community leaders aims to raise

government awareness of the need for policy reform to restructure the VCF and instate a minimum women's participation quota.

Indonesia

The project's approach in Indonesia's intended new capital city, Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN), concerns evidence generation, technical advice, and advocacy that links tenure security with ecosystem services and climate resilience. Through a previously established working relationship with IKN Authority officials, the project identified their interest in promoting coastal community tenure security as a pre-requisite for policies addressing community-inclusive management of coastal land with mangroves.

In response, the project supported a mangrove ecosystem services valuation study to inform the IKN Authority's development of regulations on coastal management, protected areas, and planning of Core Development Zones. The valuation study sought to address the need for updated information on the amount and condition of mangroves in IKN and the lack of defined pathways to incentivize community demand for tenure formalization and governance of mangrove-forested land. The study included assessment of current status and spatial extent of mangrove ecosystems across IKN; quantification of ecological, economic, and social values of key ecosystem services provided by mangroves; and recommendations for integrating mangrove ecosystem services valuation into IKN's spatial planning. Findings show households' strong conservation support, including high mangrove ecosystem service recognition (Landesa, 2025b). Correspondingly, the study illustrates the feasibility of a payment for ecosystem services (PES) as a mechanism to incentivize community members' stewardship of the ecosystem, as well as community members' formal tenure recognition as an imperative precondition for community members' participation and benefit from PES.

Progress shows how project technical advice and advocacy is helping promote both local development goals and environmental safeguards planning for the intended new capital city. IKN officials have enhanced understanding that, for truly effective policies on sustainable coastal management, tenure security over land with mangroves or with potential for mangrove restoration is important. Regulation drafts also include provisions for linking traditional management rights to mechanisms such as PES and preventing felling of standing mangrove forests of value for local communities.

Lessons learned

Although differing in their approaches, the two project experiences provide helpful lessons for promoting law and policy change that strengthens community-inclusive governance, climate-resilience, and sustainable development through engagement of varying community and government stakeholders:

Promoting knowledge development on climate change can help enhance community capacities to contribute to sustainable mangrove ecosystem management. Coupling the targeted knowledge development with advocacy capacity-strengthening helps position community institutions to influence services, programming, and law and policy reform that responds to their sustainable livelihood development needs. In Bangladesh, facilitated sub-VCF group discussions on climate change and mangrove conservation were reinforced through trained community change agents.

Sub-VCF discussions on land and resource rights and pathways for government engagement have also helped community members identify and voice their needs to government officers, concerning support for climate-resilient livelihoods and inclusion in local decision-making platforms.

Identifying state planners' knowledge gaps on the links between tenure security, climate resilience, and sustainable development, and facilitating evidence generation to address them, promotes effective policy advice. Critically considering state planners' knowledge gaps and priorities can be particularly key, given that stakeholders can have limited understanding of how tenure security contributes to climate resilience. In Indonesia, the mangrove ecosystem service valuation study provided IKN officials needed information on local community members' support for conservation and helped identify viable pathways for tenure security and PES to support community stewardship of the mangrove ecosystem, as part of IKN's sustainable development planning.

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Title: **ID025 – Who owns the 45 billion trees planted by Ethiopia's Green Legacy Initiative? Challenges, opportunities, and pathways**

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Abstract:

Ethiopia's Green Legacy Initiative (GLI), launched in 2019, has planted more than 45 billion trees, making it a global leader in afforestation. However, the long-term impact of GLI depends not only on the number of trees planted but also on tree survival, stewardship, and the equitable distribution of benefits. The central issue is ownership: who owns the trees—state, communities, or individuals—and how does this influence sustainability? This summary analyzes the interplay between tree and land tenure, institutional arrangements, and policy frameworks, identifying challenges and opportunities for securing tree ownership, equitable benefit-sharing, and embedding GLI within Ethiopia's climate resilience agenda.

1. Introduction

GLI aims to address climate change, restore degraded ecosystems, and improve rural livelihoods by planting trees at an unprecedented scale. However, tree tenure and land tenure are legally and socially distinct, meaning that rights to plant, harvest, sell, or destroy trees may belong to different actors than those who own the land. This "rights decoupling" is a barrier to sustainable forest management and climate action, as recognized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Bank Group (WBG). Secure tenure—including community tenure—is foundational for rural development and sustainable outcomes.

Core Questions

- Who owns the trees planted under GLI?
- What challenges and opportunities arise from current ownership arrangements?
- What pathways can ensure equitable and sustainable outcomes?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Bundle-of-Rights and the "Two-Asset Problem"

Secure land tenure is a prerequisite for stewardship, but in practice, rights to land and trees are layered and distributed among multiple actors. The bundle-of-rights approach highlights access, withdrawal, management, exclusion, alienation, and duration as key elements. The Schlager–Ostrom framework and FAO guidance stress that clarity and enforceability of these rights are essential for real tenure security. In African contexts, tree rights (planting, harvesting, transferring products) are often distinct from land rights, affecting incentives for investment and stewardship.

2.2 Legal Pluralism and Implementation Gaps

GLI operates within a context of legal pluralism: statutory laws, customary norms, project rules, and conservation regulations often overlap. This can enable locally legitimate practices but may also cause confusion and conflict. Implementation gaps—such as weak capacity, unclear mandates, and

contradictory laws—can undermine tenure security. Gender and social equity concerns are also prominent, as women and marginalized groups often hold more negotiated or informal rights, affecting their ability to benefit from tree planting.

3. Methodology

The study draws on policy and legal analysis (reviewing Ethiopian land and forest laws), literature review, GLI reports, legal documents, and interviews with forestry experts.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Why Tree Tenure–Land Rights Nexus Matters

GLI's reported planting scale is unmatched, but the real measure of success is survival and management. Ownership and tenure arrangements determine who can plant, retain, protect, manage, harvest, market, and claim benefits (including carbon credits). Unclear tenure undermines incentives for stewardship and maintenance.

4.2 Shift from Mobilization to Stewardship

GLI's initial success was built on mass mobilization, but long-term stewardship requires negotiated tenure arrangements. If communities perceive that trees are controlled by the state or external actors, their incentives to protect and maintain trees weaken, increasing mortality and risk of conversion.

4.3 Fragmented Tenure Regimes

GLI operates across private farmland, communal lands, community forests, and urban spaces. Ethiopia's constitutional land framework, rural land law, forest law, and customary arrangements interact, producing legal complexity. The Rural Land Administration and Land Use Proclamation (No. 456/2005 and No. 1324/2024) and Forest Proclamation (No. 1065/2018) establish frameworks for land and forest tenure, but implementation gaps leave many GLI sites in legal limbo, undermining stewardship and benefit-sharing.

4.4 Equity and Legitimacy

Tenure security is distributive. Women and marginalized groups often have weaker rights, affecting their ability to benefit from trees and participate in governance. GLI's employment and nursery expansion offer opportunities, but legitimacy depends on whether these groups have secure rights to future benefits. Unclear benefit flows and restrictions can erode local perceptions of fairness and weaken collective action.

4.5 GLI–REDD+/Carbon and Benefit-Sharing

GLI is increasingly linked to climate objectives, including restoration and carbon benefits. Ethiopia's National REDD+ Strategy emphasizes programmatic implementation, but unclear tenure and user rights hinder benefit-sharing mechanisms. Achieving climate outcomes requires clarity on who can claim, measure, and receive payment for emission reductions, and how these rights relate to community and association forests recognized under the forest law.

4.6 Evidence from Tenure Reforms

Land certification has been shown to stimulate tree growing on private plots. Panel evidence from Amhara and Tigray demonstrates positive impacts of tenure security, though restrictions and land classification affect investment decisions. For GLI, moving from “quantity planted” to “quality established” requires the use of tenure Official Use Only

instruments (certification, demarcation, community/association forest recognition) to incentivize post-planting management.

5. Challenges, Opportunities, and Pathways

5.1 Challenges

- Ambiguous tree rights on communal/exclosure lands reduce incentives for protection and maintenance.
- Institutional coordination gaps between land administration and forest management authorities leave GLI sites in legal limbo.
- Legitimacy and equity risks: Without clear benefit allocation, collective stewardship may weaken.
- Carbon/benefit-sharing uncertainty: Unclear tenure/user rights can obstruct benefit-sharing legitimacy, risking future GLI-linked carbon schemes.

5.2 Opportunities

- The 2018 Forest Proclamation enables community/association forest ownership, securing rights over GLI restoration sites.
- Sustainable Forest Landscape Restoration (SFLR) processes can serve as platforms for coordinated land-use planning, demarcation, and negotiated rules.
- REDD+ provides a framework to link restoration with climate finance, contingent on clarified tenure and benefit-sharing rules.
- Land certification evidence suggests tenure security increases tree investment on private plots, supporting farm-forestry components of GLI.

5.3 Recommended Pathways

- “Tenure first” for communal and restored landscapes:
- Convert suitable GLI sites into legally recognized community cooperative or association forest management arrangements under Proclamation 1065/2018, with demarcation, registration, and certification to operationalize exclusion and benefit rights.
- Harmonize land and forest administration for SFLR corridors:
- Create joint procedures at woreda/regional levels for land classification, mapping, and certification so GLI restoration blocks are not undermined by contradictory land-use decisions.
- Build stewardship incentives through equitable benefit rules:
- Embed benefit-sharing arrangements (timber/non-timber product revenue, fruit-tree proceeds, grazing tradeoffs) into local by-laws and institutional mandates, with explicit attention to women/youth rights and participation.
- Treat carbon as part of tree tenure:

- Align GLI monitoring with REDD+ requirements and clarify how rights to emission reductions and benefits attach to private, community, and association forests.

Conclusion

GLI's long-term impact is best understood as a governance and incentive system. The scale of tree planting creates biophysical opportunities, but tenure security enables stewardship, and stewardship is essential for sustainable forest landscape restoration and climate outcomes. Clarifying ownership is not only a legal necessity but also fundamental for sustaining the ecological and socio-economic gains of GLI. Policy reforms, institutional coordination, and inclusive benefit-sharing are required to realize the full potential of Ethiopia's historic afforestation effort.

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Presentation: **Introduction to Session 4: Theme 3: Widening perspectives for land governance**

Opening talk

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Title: **ID109 - Widening Perspectives for Land Governance in Malawi: Integrating Tenure, Infrastructure, and Landscape Governance in Agricultural Transformation.**

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Abstract:

Land governance reform in sub-Saharan Africa, has long been dominated but efforts to formalize individual property rights, through statutory titling, cadastral mapping, and legal harmonization, of customary and statutory tenure systems. These reforms have been influenced by dominant development theories that link secure, individualized land tenure, to increased agricultural investments, enhanced access to credit and improved productivity. However, over the past there decades, empirical evidence and theoretical debates, have increasingly challenged the effectiveness, and sufficiency of parcel-based land reform models. Scholars and Practitioners have pointed to the persistence of customary tenure arrangements, the social political embeddedness of land relations and the ecological interdependence of land, water and forestry systems as critical factors that complicate linear tenure reform trajectories. Moreover, acerating climate change, hydrological variability., agrarian commercialization and complex multilevel institutional arrangements have further exposed the limitations of narrowly conceived land governance frameworks.

In Malawi recent large-scale donor supported development program namely the Agricultural Commercialization Project (AGCOM), the shire valley transformation program and the Malawi Watershed Services Improvement Project represent a significant departure from traditional parcel-based land reform paradigms. These programs integrate land tenure governance, with irrigation infrastructure development, watershed management, agricultural value chain upgrading, and climate resilient strategies, rather than treating land governance as discrete legal and administrative domain, these interventions embed land governance with broader territory development architectures that span multiple sectors, spatial scales and institutional levels. This paper examines how these programs broaden land governance perspective in Malawi and identifies the institutional mechanism through which such broadening occurs. It draws on a qualitative institutional analysis of project appraisal documents, environmental and social safeguards, stakeholder engagement plans, resettlement policy frameworks, grievance redress mechanism, implementation progress reports, and national policy and legal instruments. Document analysis is employed to trace how land governance concepts are articulated, operationalized, and institutionalized. Within program design. And implementation frameworks. The analysis focuses on institutional mandates, procedural rules, spatial governance units and standardized government templates that structure land related decision making, across the three programs.

The findings reveal four interlinked processes through land governance is widened in Malawi's cotemporally interventions, first, land tenure governance is functionally intergraded with productive investments in irrigation, agricultural commercialization and environmental

restoration. Tenure security is framed as an enabling condition for participation in irrigation schemes, contract faming arrangements and payments for ecosystem services initiative, repositioning land governance as infrastructure support for economic transformation rather that a stand-alone legal reform agenda. Second, land governance is partially rescaled from individual parcels and village boundaries to irrigation blocks, catchments and basin-level palming units. This spatial rescaling aligns governance structures with hydrogeological and ecological systems reflecting land scape governance principles and challenging the dominance or parcel- level cadastral approaches. Third, procedural institutionalization embeds environmental and social safeguards, standardized consultation processes, compensation frameworks, and multi-tier grievance redress mechanism within project governance structures. These procedures formalize participation, accountability, and disputes resolution, inland related decision making, reshaping governance practices at local and national levels. Forth, standardized governance templates including Environmental and Social Management Frameworks, Resettlement Policy Farmwork and operational manuals are diffused across programs, contributing to institutional layering, bureaucratic learning, and consolidation of national land governance practices

The analysis contributes to contemporary debates on polycentric governance, landscape approaches, and the political economy of agrarian transformation. It demonstrates that larger scale development projects function as experimental governance laboratories in which global governance norms, national legal frameworks and local customary institutions are assembled into hybrid institutional architectures rather than replacing existing customary and statutory systems, these programs layer new procedural and spatial governance mechanism into existing structures, produce polycentric governance arrangement characterized by overlapping centers of authority across scales. This layered architectural enhances coordination across land, water, agricultural and environmental sectors but also introduces institutional complexity, coordination challenges, and potential conflicts between statutory and customary authorities.

Despite evidence of institutional consideration and innovation, persistence ambiguities in land allocation rules, risks of elite mediation, during land consolidation and resettlement processes, capacity constraints at district and customary levels and uncertainties regarding post project suitability, underscore the contingent and political nature of land governance reform, safeguard and grievance mechanisms provide formal accountability structures, but remain dependent on administrative capacity, political will and sustained financing. Spatial rescaling, to basin-level governance enhances ecological alignment but generates jurisdictions or tension between customary authorities, local government and newly established project institutions.

Overall, this paper argues that land governance reform in Malawi, is being reconstituted through infrastructural embedding, spatial scaling, procedural formalization and institutional standardization, moving beyond narrow parcel-based formalization, towards territorially integrated governance architecture. By situation land governance within irrigation infrastructure, watershed management, agriculture commercialization, and climate adaptation strategies, these programs illustrate how land governance is co-produced, with territorial development processes, the Malawian case highlights both the promise and limits of integrated land governance reform and offers insights into how land governance paradigms are involving under cotemporally pressures of climate change, commercialization, and multilevel governance in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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Title: **ID036 - The political economy of jurisdictional REDD+: a case study in Pará Brazil**

Authors: **1. Marina Cromberg and 2. Anne M. Larson**

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Abstract:

Climate change is one of the biggest threats facing Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IP and LCs), but the jury is still out on how mitigation efforts can best constitute an opportunity for forest peoples rather than an additional threat. Mitigation strategies, such as REDD+, are presented as technical solutions, but they are deeply embedded in the political economy, from global to local scales.

In recent years, jurisdictional carbon programs (JREDD+) have been increasingly promoted to scale up climate action, align with national commitments, and offer higher integrity than fragmented, project-based approaches (Sarmiento et al., 2025). They are frequently framed as more inclusive and better positioned to address leakage, permanence, and social safeguards (Sarmiento et al., 2025). However, despite claims of engagement with IP and LCs in the design and implementation of jurisdictional programs, empirical evidence remains limited on how participation unfolds in practice, whose knowledge is prioritized, and how power asymmetries shape outcomes. This case study contributes to these debates by examining how political-economy dynamics influence IP and LC participation in the design of Pará's JREDD+ program in the Brazilian Amazon, with particular attention to access to information and learning processes.

Pará, Brazil's second-largest state, offers a compelling case for exploring the intersections of land governance and climate finance. The state combines ambitious climate commitments with a long-standing history of deforestation, land concentration, tenure insecurity, and rural violence. It has also been a testing ground for innovative governance approaches, including municipal-level initiatives to curb deforestation and hybrid arrangements involving state actors, civil society, and private interests (Viana et al., 2016; Brandão et al., 2020). In 2020, Pará launched its Climate Change Policy and the Amazônia Agora State Plan, signaling an intent to reduce deforestation while promoting sustainable land use. In 2021, the state further positioned itself within global carbon markets by submitting a letter of intent to the LEAF Coalition and initiating the design of a jurisdictional REDD+ system aligned with the ART–TREES standard, supported by international finance, including Norwegian funding.

As part of its JREDD+ engagement strategy, the Pará state government formally involved three organizations representing IP and LCs: the Federation of Indigenous People (FEPIPA), the National Council of Extrativists (CNS), and Malungu, the Coordination of Associations of Quilombola Communities of Pará. Together, these organizations represent groups with constitutionally recognized collective rights to land and territory, including Indigenous Peoples, extractivist communities, and quilombolas—Afro-Brazilian communities descended from escaped enslaved people. These organizations have played a central role in advocating for rights such as Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). However, the state's consultation process, launched in May 2025, quickly revealed significant shortcomings. While meetings were formally open, information about

dates, locations, and agendas was not consistently or widely disseminated. In addition, technical documents were often shared with limited advance notice, constraining the ability of community leaders to analyze proposals, conduct internal consultations, and formulate collective positions.

At the core of these challenges lies a deeper issue central to land governance: unequal access to knowledge and decision-making power. For many IP and LC communities, climate change and carbon markets remain abstract or poorly understood, particularly when information is conveyed through highly technical language disconnected from local realities. Without accessible, culturally appropriate, and timely information, participation risks becoming performative, reproducing existing power asymmetries rather than enabling communities to exercise self-determination over their territories.

To explore alternative pathways for strengthening agency and participation, this case study draws on insights from an interactive capacity-building workshop conducted in September 2025 in Abaetetuba, Pará, as part of the project "Developing Capacities for Equitable JREDD+." Designed by the first author in partnership with a quilombola association, the workshop brought together community leaders to engage with topics such as climate change, REDD+, safeguards, land rights, and FPIC through experiential learning, artistic activities, and community-based theater.

Rather than focusing solely on information transfer, the workshop sought to foster collective reflection, critical analysis, and the translation of technical concepts into locally meaningful terms. In this case study, we share selected activities developed for the workshop and illustrate the kinds of reflections they generated.

The workshop methodology deliberately departed from conventional training formats. Participants engaged in hands-on experiments to illustrate the greenhouse effect, connecting global climate processes to lived experiences such as changing rainfall patterns, declining agricultural yields, and health impacts linked to rising temperatures. Group discussions and drawings explored the meaning of forests beyond carbon, emphasizing their role as sources of food, culture, knowledge, and collective identity. These exercises foregrounded contrasting perspectives: while forests may be framed by states and markets as financial assets or policy instruments, for communities they constitute the foundation of life projects rooted in their territories.

Creative methods proved particularly effective in unpacking the risks and promises of REDD+. Through theater, participants staged scenarios in which carbon project developers entered their communities, highlighting issues such as inadequate implementation of FPIC, unequal bargaining power, unclear benefit-sharing arrangements, and unresolved land tenure claims. These performances revealed a high level of political sophistication, as participants wove technical concerns—such as safeguards, permanence, and governance—into narratives grounded in everyday experience. Theater functioned as an important learning tool, creating a space for critical inquiry and collective sense-making.

Building on this foundation, participants examined national legislation on carbon markets and traced the evolution of Pará's JREDD+ initiative. A mock public consultation enabled them to rehearse participation, articulate concerns, and refine questions directed at the state. By the end of the exercise, participants had collectively formulated 25 detailed questions addressing benefit-sharing mechanisms, representation in governance bodies, transparency of key documents, and the implications of newly created institutional arrangements for carbon commercialization.

Land tenure emerged as a cross-cutting concern. Participants questioned how rights would be protected in a context marked by persistent delays in land regularization, ongoing territorial conflicts, and land invasions by external actors. They also raised broader political economy questions, asking how Pará—historically one of Brazil's leading states in forest loss—could credibly reduce deforestation and deliver tangible benefits to their communities, given their historical lack of access to state policies and public investment in their territories.

Participants expressed strong appreciation for the workshop, noting that it was the first time they felt able to fully grasp the implications of REDD+ and carbon markets. Many had already been approached by private-sector project developers and, more recently, by the state government, yet reported that prior to the workshop they did not clearly understand the risks of these initiatives or their connections to land tenure and territorial rights.

This case study underscores several implications for broadening perspectives in land and climate governance. First, it challenges narrow interpretations of participation that prioritize formal consultation over substantive engagement. In contexts marked by asymmetries in information, resources, and bargaining power—core features of the political economy of carbon markets—participation cannot be reduced to procedural compliance. Meaningful participation requires sustained investment in learning processes that recognize diverse forms of knowledge and enable communities to critically assess complex policy proposals, contractual arrangements, and their long-term implications for territorial governance.

Second, the case highlights the centrality of knowledge exchange methods in mediating these power relations. The ways in which information is produced, translated, and shared profoundly shape who is able to participate and under what conditions.

Thus, achieving social integrity in jurisdictional climate initiatives depends on shifting toward frameworks that actively strengthen community agency and territorial governance. The workshop demonstrates that when communities are supported in unpacking the technical dimensions of carbon markets, they are better positioned to critically assess the implications of JREDD+ and other carbon-related initiatives. This requires rethinking FPIC not as a one-off procedural requirement, but as an ongoing, relational process embedded in broader struggles over land, rights, and development pathways. Without addressing entrenched inequalities in access to information and in the ways knowledge is produced and shared, JREDD+ risks reproducing patterns of exclusion—even as it claims to offer inclusive, "high-integrity" solutions.

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Title: **ID083 - Women's Land Rights in Uganda's 2026 Presidential Elections**

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Abstract:

Introduction

Uganda's 2026 presidential elections marked a critical juncture for advancing women's land rights, which remain a cornerstone of gender equality, poverty reduction, and sustainable development. Despite progressive constitutional and statutory frameworks, women continued to face systemic barriers to land ownership and control, driven by entrenched cultural norms, weak institutional capacity, low legal literacy, limited access to justice, and fragmented grassroots voice (Kamusiime, 2022). The Stand for Her Land (S4HL) campaign identified these five barriers as priority areas (UCOBAC, 2022) for reform, and they provided the lens through which the manifestos of the leading presidential candidates were assessed.

Methodology

The analysis was conducted through a desk review of the manifestos of four of the eight presidential candidates namely, Yoweri Tibuhaburwa Kaguta Museveni of the National Resistance Movement (NRM), Mugisha Gregory Muntu Oyera of the Alliance for National Transformation (ANT), Kyagulanyi Sentamu Robert of the National Unity platform (NUP), and Nandala Mafabi James Nathan of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC). The manifestos were evaluated against the five S4HL pillars: transforming social norms, allocating financing, enhancing legal literacy, guaranteeing access to land justice, and amplifying women's voice and agency. In addition, four parameters were applied to deepen the assessment: the specificity of pledges related to women's land rights, the presence or absence of budgetary commitments, the implementation mechanisms proposed, and the accountability or monitoring frameworks outlined. Findings were validated through a stakeholder consultation meeting, which provided feedback and consensus-building among civil society actors and advocacy groups.

Findings

Uganda's 2026 presidential manifestos revealed varying degrees of commitment to advancing WLRs. While all four parties acknowledged land governance as a critical development issue, their approaches differed significantly in specificity, depth, and alignment with women's land rights based on the S4HL campaign priorities.

NRM's manifesto recognized cultural norms that deny women inheritance rights and pledged mass land titling, issuance of Certificates of Customary Ownership (CCOs) and Certificates of Occupancy (COOs), and improved access to justice through strengthened LC Courts and ADR mechanisms. It also promised public awareness campaigns on citizens' rights. However, it lacke explicit financial commitments, accountability measures, and strategies to enhance women's voice in land

governance. Overall, NRM demonstrates moderate commitment, with strong potential for advocacy around its recognition of discriminatory norms and justice reforms.

The ANT manifesto recognised the centrality of land as "life, culture, and livelihood" and pledged tenure security, justice for vulnerable groups (including women), and gender-responsive budgeting. However, its commitments remained broad and rhetorical, with no clear mechanisms or resources dedicated to WLRs. While ANT acknowledged historical injustices and promised gender mainstreaming, it failed to address entrenched social norms or guarantee women's participation in governance. Its alignment with S4HL priorities was weak, except for a general nod to gender budgeting and justice.

NUP's manifesto generally focused on stopping land grabbing, securing customary rights, and modernizing land registration through modern technologies like blockchain. It emphasized community education and protection for land rights defenders, which can indirectly benefit women. However, it did not explicitly tackle patriarchal norms or ensure women's agency in land governance. While NUP proposed systemic reforms and awareness campaigns, its silence on gender-specific strategies limited its manifesto's transformative potential.

FDC stood out for its explicit pledges to enforce laws protecting women's land ownership and inheritance rights, ensure women's participation in land governance, and establish special desks for vulnerable women seeking land titles. It also promised massive sensitization against harmful cultural practices and institutional capacity building. Despite these strengths, FDC's manifesto lacked detailed financing plans and accountability frameworks. Nevertheless, its manifesto offered the most comprehensive alignment with S4HL priorities among the four parties.

Overall, from the above analysis, FDC led in specificity and gender-sensitive commitments. NRM offered moderate opportunities through justice reforms and recognition of cultural barriers. NUP and ANT remained largely broader, with limited actionable strategies for women's land rights. More importantly and worryingly, none of the manifestos adequately addressed financing or accountability for women's land rights, signaling a critical advocacy gap.

Lessons for WLRs Advocates

The 2026 presidential elections in Uganda revealed both opportunities and shortcomings in how women's land rights were positioned as a political issue. For advocates, several lessons emerge that can shape future strategies.

All parties acknowledged land governance as a development issue, which could demonstrate that to some extent, advocacy has succeeded in pushing land into the political spotlight. However, only FDC explicitly and substantively integrated women's land rights into its manifesto. This demonstrates that visibility alone is insufficient. Advocates must press parties to move from broader acknowledgment to specific, measurable commitments that show the impact of their commitments on the land rights of both women and men.

Additionally, linking women's land rights to broader justice and development agendas creates entry points. For example, NRM's justice reforms and NUP's anti-land grabbing agenda provided indirect openings for advocacy, even if they lacked gender specificity. Advocates can learn to strategically reframe such general land governance promises through a gender lens, pressing parties to

articulate how both women and men benefit. This approach ensures that WLRs are embedded in mainstream political narratives rather than siloed as niche concerns.

Furthermore, financing and accountability are the missing links in the quest for women's land rights. None of the manifestos provided clear financial commitments or monitoring frameworks for women's land rights. This demonstrated that politicization without resource allocation risks reducing issues to symbolic campaign gestures. In the future, advocates must learn to demand gender-responsive budgeting and accountability mechanisms as non-negotiable elements of serious political pledges.

Call-to-Action

Considering the above lessons and in alignment with the S4HL priorities, we call on all presidential candidates in the future to commit to the following measures during the election period to promote women's land rights.

1. To Address Entrenched Social Norms and Cultural Practices

- Integrate gender-transformative strategies into their land governance strategies.
- Undertake to partner with cultural and religious leaders to champion women's land rights.
- Commit to fund community sensitization programs to challenge discriminatory norms.

2. To Allocate Financing and Strengthen Institutional Capacity

- Commit to introduce gender-responsive budgeting for land programs.
- Pledge to allocate specific funds for training all land administration and management institutions on women's land rights and equip them to deliver gender-sensitive services.

3. To Enhance Legal Literacy and Awareness

- Commit to integrate gender and women's land rights into civic education
- Promise to use mass media and grassroots networks to disseminate information on gender-inclusive land laws.
- Support CSOs in community-based legal literacy programs.

4. To Guarantee Women's Access to Land Justice

- Commit to enhance and fund Local Council Courts' capacity to deliver gender-inclusive land justice and institutionalize ADR.
- Commit to pass supportive policies that provide legal aid for especially women in land disputes e.g. the National Legal Aid Policy.

5. To Amplify Women's Voice and Agency in Land Governance

- Undertake to support grassroots women's networks to participate in policy dialogues.
- Commit to institutionalize gender audits in land governance processes.

Conclusion

The treatment of women's land rights in Uganda's 2026 presidential elections revealed both progress and persistent gaps. While all the four parties analysed acknowledged land governance as a critical development issue, only one (FDC) offered explicit and gender-sensitive commitments, demonstrating that specificity can elevate WLRs into serious campaign priorities. NRM provided moderate openings through justice reforms and recognition of cultural barriers, while ANT and NUP remained largely broad, with limited actionable strategies. More importantly, none of the manifestos addressed financing or accountability, underscoring that politicization without resources risks reducing issues like women's land rights to symbolic gestures. For advocates, the key lesson is that visibility must be coupled with concrete pledges, resource allocation, and monitoring frameworks. Embedding women's land rights into broader justice and development agendas, while demanding financing and representation mechanisms, will be essential to ensure that WLRs become not just campaign talking points but enforceable commitments in Uganda's future presidential electoral cycles.

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Title: **ID100 - Participatory Land Pooling and Readjustment for Integrated Peri-Urban Land Management in Uganda: Evidence from Vvumba Parish, Zirobwe, Luwero District**

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Abstract:

Uganda is experiencing rapid demographic growth and urban expansion, with the urban population rising from 12% in 2002 to 26% in 2023 and projected to exceed 40% by 2040 (World Bank, 2023; UN DESA, 2022). Much of this growth is occurring beyond the core of Greater Kampala, particularly in peri-urban districts such as Wakiso and Mukono, where over 60% of recent expansion has taken place, largely in unplanned and low-density forms (UBOS, 2022; Vermeiren et al., 2016). These areas are characterised by fragmented land ownership, overlapping tenure systems, weak neighbourhood-level planning, and limited infrastructure provision. The result has been incompatible land uses, encroachment on wetlands and agricultural land, and the proliferation of informal settlements, which now accommodate more than 70% of residents in the Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area (UN-Habitat, 2020; World Bank, 2021).

Conventional land-use planning and compulsory land acquisition have proven insufficient in this context. Customary and mailo tenure systems account for nearly 90% of landholdings (MLHUD, 2018), complicating land assembly and compensation processes. Compensation-related disputes contribute to more than half of delays in urban infrastructure projects (Office of the Auditor General, 2022). In peri-urban areas, highly fragmented plots, often smaller than 300 m², further constrain coordinated infrastructure provision and increase the cost of retrofitting services (NPA, 2020).

Urban expansion is no longer confined to the immediate Kampala periphery but is extending into secondary growth centres such as Zirobwe Sub-county in Luwero District. Vvumba Parish illustrates this trend, where predominantly rural land is rapidly being subdivided for residential purposes without adequate planning, infrastructure, or environmental safeguards. Although Uganda has declared the entire country a planning area, detailed local planning remains limited, and implementation capacity is weak. As a result, development frequently proceeds outside effective regulatory control.

This study draws on mixed empirical research conducted in Vvumba Parish between 2024 and 2025, including spatial analysis, cadastral mapping, and household surveys (n = 186). Built-up land increased by approximately 38% between 2015 and 2024, with more than 420 acres undergoing active subdivision. About 67% of newly created plots since 2018 are smaller than 300 m². Only 8% of subdivided land has been reserved for roads, significantly below the recommended 20–30%, and approximately 85% of recent subdivisions lack designated land for schools, health centres, or public open space.

Basic infrastructure provision is limited. Approximately 72% of surveyed households lack access to planned roads of at least nine metres in width. Most households rely on pit latrines (81%) and boreholes or shallow wells (76%), with 18% reporting seasonal water shortages. There is no structured stormwater drainage system in most newly developed areas. These deficiencies reflect weak integration between physical planning and infrastructure investment, as well as limited enforcement capacity.

Environmental degradation is also evident. Wetland and seasonal drainage coverage declined by about 14% between 2015 and 2024, while tree cover decreased by approximately 21% as agricultural land was converted into residential plots. Nearly 29% of households report periodic flooding, particularly in low-lying areas where natural drainage channels have been obstructed. The absence of reserved environmental corridors has increased vulnerability to climate-related risks.

Tenure fragmentation further complicates land management. In Vvumba Parish, 44% of landholders occupy kibanja interests on mailo land, while 68% hold private mailo titles, often resulting in overlapping or subdivided claims. This fragmentation discourages voluntary land reservation for public purposes and increases the likelihood of disputes. Nationally, infrastructure development is frequently delayed by insufficient funds for land acquisition and resistance to expropriation, challenges that are increasingly visible in Zirobwe.

Participatory land pooling and readjustment (LPR) offers a practical alternative to compensation-based acquisition. Land readjustment reorganises fragmented parcels into a planned layout, with landowners contributing a proportion of their land for public infrastructure. Land pooling enables unified planning and servicing of consolidated areas. Under this incentive-based approach, landowners receive reconstituted, serviced plots that typically increase in value due to improved accessibility and infrastructure. International experience shows that up to 40% of land can be reserved for public infrastructure through readjustment, with significant land value gains.

To illustrate feasibility, this paper models the development of a 100-acre site in Vvumba Parish involving approximately 85 landowners with an average holding of 1.2 acres. Through a participatory framework facilitated by local authorities and technical experts, landowners voluntarily pool their land into a single planning unit. A Land Pooling Committee oversees spatial planning, including road alignments, public facility sites, and environmentally sensitive areas.

A 30% land contribution rate is proposed. Of the 100 acres, 30 acres are allocated for public purposes: 18 acres for a hierarchical road network, five acres for a primary school and health centre, four acres for green spaces and drainage corridors, and three acres for neighbourhood commercial and community facilities. The remaining 70 acres are reconstituted into serviced residential and mixed-use plots. A landowner who initially held one acre would receive approximately 0.7 acres of serviced land with secure access and improved configuration.

Infrastructure financing would combine the sale of selected reserve plots, service levies, and potential local government co-financing. If raw land values increase from UGX 60 million to UGX 120 million per acre after servicing, the value of 0.7 serviced acres (approximately UGX 84 million) would exceed that of the original unserviced acre. This mechanism allows landowners to benefit from urbanisation while contributing equitably to infrastructure provision.

At scale, LPR could increase road reserve coverage in Vvumba Parish from 8% to 25–30%, secure 10–15% of land for social services and public amenities, reduce flood risks through protected drainage corridors, and raise land values by an estimated 50–100%. By internalising infrastructure costs within the development process, the approach reduces reliance on public compensation and distributes the costs and benefits of growth more fairly.

The case of Vvumba Parish highlights the need for tenure-responsive and participatory land management tools in Uganda's peri-urban areas. Despite existing planning legislation, limited capacity and fragmented tenure systems have allowed unplanned development to expand. Participatory land pooling and readjustment provides a feasible and scalable model that integrates spatial planning, infrastructure provision, and land value capture to support sustainable peri-urban transformation.

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Title: **ID060 - Responsible land governance for a just energy transition: Lessons and strategies from Indonesia and Zambia**

Authors: **1. Hansika Agrawal, 2. Esther Akwii, 3. Rose Mosi, and 4. Amaelle Seigneret**

Organisation: **1. Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment, 2. Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment, 3. International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), 4. formerly IIED**

Abstract:

1. Introduction

The global energy transition is accelerating, but it is highly land intensive, reshaping land use through mineral extraction, renewable energy, biofuels, and associated infrastructure.1 These pressures are especially acute in the Global South, where transition investments intersect with weak tenure systems, historical inequalities, and contested land governance.

Drawing on the Advancing Land-Based Investment Governance (ALIGN) project's experience ins Indonesia and Zambia, this presentation offers a practice-based contribution that centres land governance as foundational to just energy transitions. These contexts show that the fairness, legitimacy, and durability of transition-linked investments depend on how land is governed, including the recognition of land rights, decision-making processes, and the distribution of benefits and burdens.

The presentation synthesizes applied lessons from civil society action, including community-based approaches and engagement in policy reform processes. It identifies practical strategies that governments, practitioners, and civil society can use to strengthen land governance in support of just energy transitions.

2. Why land governance matters for just energy transitions

While being driven by technology, industrial policy and finance, the energy transition also reorganizes how land is allocated, controlled, and used. Transition-linked investments can compete with existing land uses such as farming, grazing, fishing, housing, and cultural practices. When land governance systems are weak or poorly integrated into transition planning, these pressures can deepen inequality, trigger conflict, undermine food security, lead to missed opportunities for local co-benefits, and erode the social legitimacy of energy transition policies.

In this presentation, a "just" energy transition is viewed through three interrelated dimensions: (i) equitable distributional outcomes; (ii) inclusive decision-making processes; and (iii) the extent to which historical and structural inequalities are addressed.2 Land governance shapes each dimension, as it determines whose tenure rights are visible and protected, who benefits from investments, whether communities can meaningfully influence decisions affecting their lands, and whether transition investments reproduce or address historical injustices. Responsible land governance is a precondition not only for fairness, but also for the feasibility and durability of energy transitions.

3. Country focus: Indonesia and Zambia

Indonesia and Zambia offer complementary insights into the land governance challenges of energy transitions. Both countries are positioning themselves as key suppliers of transition-relevant minerals and energy resources, while also pursuing broader industrial and development objectives. At the same time, both face deep-seated land governance challenges that risk undermining just transition outcomes.

In Indonesia, the energy transition is unfolding across land-intensive sectors aligned with long-standing development priorities, including nickel mining for batteries, palm oil for biofuels, and industrial forest plantations for biomass.3 In regions such as Central Kalimantan and Southeast Sulawesi, the rapid expansion of these sectors has intensified pre-existing land conflicts, undermined Indigenous and community tenure, degraded ecosystems, and heightened livelihood insecurity. Despite a comprehensive legal framework governing land, forests, mining, and spatial planning, governance in practice remains fragmented. Overlapping mandates, incomplete spatial data, weak recognition of customary (Adat) tenure, and centralized decision-making limit the capacity of land governance systems to manage transition pressures equitably.

In Zambia, the government is pursuing mineral-led growth as a core pillar of its energy transition and economic recovery strategy.4 Land-intensive investments in copper, renewable energy, and regional infrastructure corridors intersect with Zambia's dual land tenure system, in which most land is held under customary tenure. Weak implementation of customary land rights, opaque conversion of customary land to state land, limited requirements for community consent, and under-developed safeguards for displacement and resettlement have heightened tenure insecurity and community mistrust in areas targeted for transition-linked investments.

Across both contexts, land governance considerations remain secondary to investment facilitation, industrial policy, and macroeconomic objectives. As a result, transition planning is proceeding within land governance systems that are not yet equipped to ensure equitable outcomes.

4. Key lessons and strategies for responsible land governance

The report distils lessons and strategies across four interrelated elements of land governance that are particularly consequential for and reinforce the three dimensions of just energy transitions: tenure security, spatial planning, responsible approaches to scaling investment, and coordination and subnational leadership.

4.1 Tenure security as a foundation for equitable processes and outcomes

Tenure security is central to just energy transitions. Where legitimate tenure rights, whether formally recognized or socially accepted, are unclear or insecure, communities face heightened risks of displacement, exclusion from decision-making, and unequal benefit-sharing. Stronger tenure security, by contrast, can support meaningful participation, reduce conflict, and improve environmental stewardship.

Experiences from ALIGN show that advancing tenure security in fragmented or discretionary systems often requires a dual strategy: local-level strategies such as participatory mapping and legal empowerment to make customary land claims visible, alongside national legal and institutional reforms to formally secure tenure at scale.

A key lesson is that tenure should be clarified before land is allocated for transition-linked investments. Where concessions already exist, recognition remains essential for facilitating participation, benefit-sharing, and land rehabilitation and closure responsibilities.

4.2 Spatial planning as a tool to manage competing land uses

Spatial planning is an important tool for managing competing land demands across energy, agriculture, conservation, infrastructure, and community livelihoods. However, in both Indonesia and Zambia, planning regimes often fail to reflect local land uses, customary tenure systems, or ecological constraints.

ALIGN partners' experience shows that even within constrained systems, participatory mapping and community-generated data can make local land uses and environmental risks visible, enabling bottom-up evidence to inform formal planning processes. Strategic engagement with plan revisions and stronger subnational government capabilities to use spatial data can improve the quality and legitimacy of outcomes.

Experience from Indonesia underscores that shaping land-use decisions at the planning stage is critical, rather than relying solely on downstream safeguards after concessions are granted. This highlights the need to formalize links between bottom-up and top-down planning processes.

4.3 Responsible use of investment-scaling approaches

Governments increasingly rely on policy reforms, investment promotion, and legal frameworks to rapidly scale transition-linked investments. While such approaches can mobilize capital, they also risk prioritizing speed and certainty over social and environmental safeguards.

Zambia's experience illustrates that responsible scaling requires embedding participation, tenure protection, and benefit-sharing directly into climate, mining and investment laws, strategies, and contracts. Consultation that occurs only at the project approval stage is insufficient. Instead, communities must be able to influence the design of policies and frameworks that shape investment trajectories from the outset.

Legally binding benefit-sharing mechanisms such as community development agreements are particularly important to ensure that scaled investment delivers tangible and durable local benefits, rather than discretionary or short-term gains.

5. Coordination and subnational leadership

Just energy transitions cut across multiple sectors and levels of government, making coordination essential. Fragmented mandates, discretionary decision-making, weak information-sharing, and limited subnational authority undermine governments' ability to balance competing land uses and manage social and environmental risks.

Experience from ALIGN partners in Indonesia and Zambia shows that coordination is most effective when linked to concrete decisions, supported by clear mandates, and grounded in community-level evidence, including through dialogue platforms and civil society engagement. Strengthening subnational authority, capacity, and access to data is particularly critical, as many land-use decisions affecting communities are made at provincial or district levels.

6. Conclusion

This presentation demonstrates that land governance is a foundational pillar of just energy transitions. In Indonesia and Zambia, weak tenure security, exclusionary planning processes, investor-centric scaling approaches, and fragmented coordination risk reproducing inequality and conflict, undermining the legitimacy and effectiveness of transition pathways.

At the same time, the lessons from ALIGN's work show that these outcomes are not inevitable. By intervening early in decision-making processes, making legitimate land users visible, embedding participation and benefit-sharing in binding frameworks, and strengthening coordination across scales, energy transition pathways can be aligned with sustainable development and environmental sustainability.

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Title: **ID107 - Governing the Urban Limit: A Fuzzy Logic Approach to Balancing Political Economy and Environmental Capacity in Turkish Metropolitans**

Authors: **Ece ÖZMEN**

Organisation: **Assistant Professor, Manisa Celal Bayar University, Salihli Vocational School, Real Estate Management Programme, Salihli, Manisa, Turkiye**

Abstract:

Effective land governance requires balancing economic imperatives with environmental thresholds. In rapidly urbanizing contexts like Türkiye, growth pressures often overshadow ecological limits, leading to "urban saturation"—where infrastructure and natural capital fail to support further densification. This study introduces a multi-dimensional "Fuzzy Urban Saturation" framework to quantify this complex phenomenon across 30 metropolitan municipalities (approximately 77% of Türkiye's population). Unlike binary planning tools, we employ Fuzzy Logic (Mamdani) inference to synthesize uncertainty across physical density, infrastructural capacity, socioeconomic resilience, and environmental quality. Istanbul emerges as "Critically Saturated" (0.742), exemplifying governance crisis where agglomeration benefits are negated by ecological deficits. This framework serves as a political economy tool, enabling evidence-based growth boundaries and fostering inclusive, resilient urban futures.

Introduction

Rapid urbanization intensifies concerns about metropolitan carrying capacity globally (Seto et al., 2012). Contemporary challenges encompass resource scarcity, urban heat islands, air pollution, and biodiversity decline (Özmen & Yirmibeşoğlu, 2023; Ramachandra et al., 2012). In Türkiye, Law No. 6360 (2012) transformed metropolitan governance by aligning municipal boundaries with provincial borders. As of 2024, 30 metropolitan cities accommodate 76.85% of Türkiye's population (TURKSTAT, 2025), creating unprecedented pressures on urban systems.

"Urban saturation" represents the critical threshold where physical, social, economic, and environmental capacities reach limits (Wei et al., 2015). This concept interweaves with urban carrying capacity—sustainable limits of population, infrastructure, and ecosystem services—and urban density. As densities increase, cities risk zoning saturation or functional obsolescence (Wei et al., 2020). Unchecked growth manifests as urban sprawl, stretching infrastructure (Bhatta et al., 2010), while compactness strategies steer development inward. Infrastructure capacity and environmental thresholds constrain expansion (Stolz et al., 2025).

This research addresses a methodological gap by developing a comprehensive fuzzy logic framework integrating physical infrastructure, socioeconomic dynamics, and environmental sustainability. Research questions: (1) How can urban saturation be objectively measured multi-dimensionally? (2) What spatial patterns exist across Turkish metropolitans? (3) How do saturation levels correlate with accessibility challenges?

Methodology

This quantitative study employs full enumeration of 30 metropolitan municipalities. Data sources include TURKSTAT (demographic/socioeconomic, 2018-2024), CORINE Land Cover (land-use patterns), municipal administrations (infrastructure), and ministries (environmental quality). The framework employs four indicator dimensions: Physical indicators (population density, built-up ratio, per capita green space, urban growth rate); Infrastructure indicators (transportation capacity, water availability, sewerage coverage, energy adequacy); Socioeconomic indicators (per capita income, unemployment, education index, healthcare access); Environmental indicators (air quality PM2.5/AQI, noise levels, waste generation, water resources).

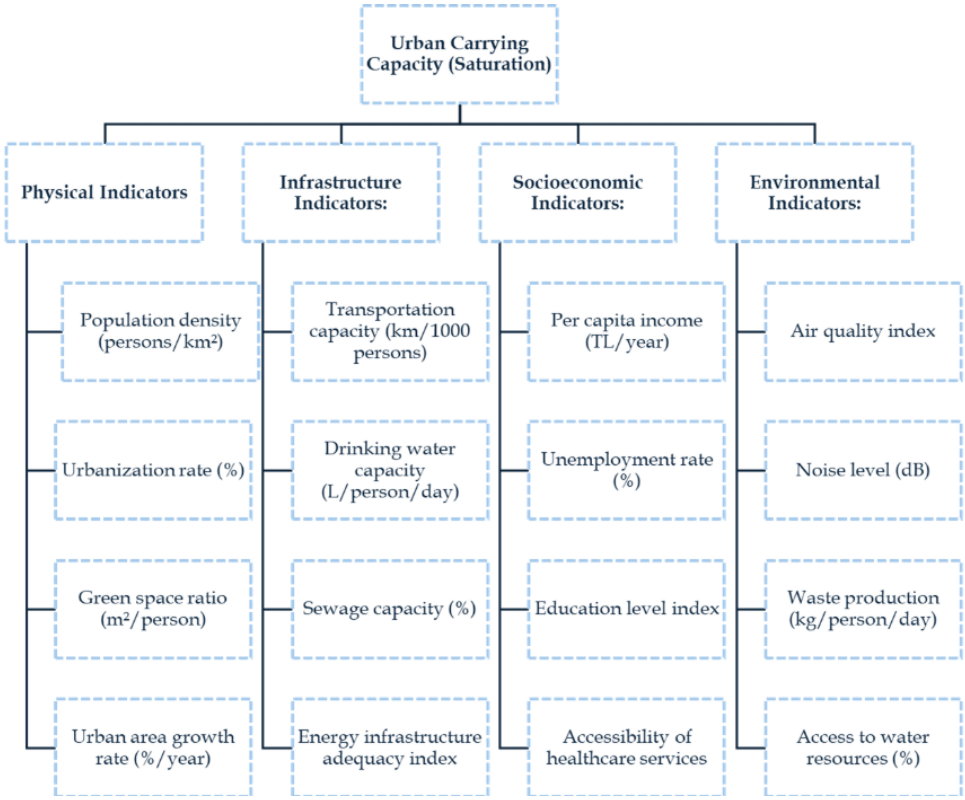

Figure 1. Urban Carrying Capacity Indicators

A Mamdani fuzzy inference system with trapezoidal membership functions was constructed using MATLAB (Ross, 2010; Zadeh, 1965). Saturation levels: Low (0.00-0.30: sustainable), Medium (0.30-0.50: monitoring), High (0.50-0.70: intervention), Critical (0.70-1.00: urgent action). The fuzzy rule base incorporated 81 inference rules derived from expert knowledge (Mamdani, 1975). Hypotheses:

H1: High density correlates with high saturation.

H2: Infrastructure deficits increase saturation risk.

H3: Fuzzy logic provides superior reliability over traditional methods.

Results

Analysis reveals significant heterogeneity across Turkish metropolitans. Results for three largest cities are presented, with comprehensive findings for all 30 cities in the full paper.

Istanbul: Critical Saturation (0.742)

Istanbul exhibits critical saturation requiring urgent intervention. Extreme population density (2,965 people/km^2), severely limited green space (6.2 m^2/person vs. WHO standard 15 m^2), and poor air quality (AQI 82, PM2.5 53 µg/m^3 vs. WHO guideline 25 µg/m^3). Despite strong socioeconomic indicators (0.89) and adequate infrastructure (0.76), physical (0.68) and environmental dimensions (0.71) create critical pressures negating agglomeration benefits. This demonstrates economic prosperity cannot compensate for environmental capacity constraints, directly impacting residents' access to healthy environments.

Ankara: Controlled High Saturation (0.574)

Ankara maintains controlled high saturation, representing monitoring scenario with intervention opportunities. Favorable physical conditions: low density (224 people/km^2), adequate green space (18.5 m^2/person). Strong socioeconomic indicators (0.88) and reasonable infrastructure (0.68) provide solid foundation. Air quality improvements (AQI 65, PM2.5 38 µg/m^3) and infrastructure enhancements remain priorities. Moderate saturation suggests potential for proactive planning preventing critical threshold crossing.

Izmir: High Saturation (0.634)

Izmir demonstrates high saturation requiring systematic intervention. Manageable density (374 people/km^2) and better air quality (AQI 58-68, PM2.5 32 µg/m^3), balanced infrastructure (0.71) and strong socioeconomic performance (0.81). However, green space (12.8 m^2/person) remains concerning. Coastal location provides environmental advantages, yet monitoring urban growth patterns is essential preventing critical deterioration.

Hypothesis testing: H1 partially supported (complex non-linear relationships). H2 confirmed (infrastructure deficits correlate with elevated risks). H3 strongly supported (fuzzy logic captures nuanced interactions binary methods obscure).

Discussion and Policy Implications

The multi-dimensional framework provides nuanced understanding supporting evidence-based planning for accessibility and inclusion (Liu et al., 2017). Critical saturation in Istanbul reflects urgent need for transformative interventions: urban growth boundaries, green infrastructure development, air quality management. The case exemplifies that economic prosperity cannot compensate for fundamental environmental constraints impacting residents' environmental accessibility (Lefebvre, 1991).

Tiered policy recommendations:

(1) Immediate actions for critical areas—strict growth boundaries, green infrastructure investment (15 m^2/person WHO standards), emergency air quality measures including low-emission zones, mandatory environmental impact assessments (World Bank, 2018).

(2) Medium-term strategies for high-saturation cities—polycentric development distributing pressures, enhanced public transport with integrated land-use planning, affordable housing in well-served areas, climate adaptation addressing heat islands and flooding (Reckien et al., 2014).

(3) Proactive planning for controlled areas—sustainable growth frameworks with capacity monitoring, climate resilience through nature-based solutions (Kabisch et al., 2016), inclusion-focused zoning ensuring equitable service access, smart city technologies for resource optimization (Bibri & Krogstie, 2017).

Conclusion

This research advances urban planning methodology demonstrating fuzzy logic's superiority in capturing urban complexity while maintaining interpretability—crucial for planning practice and policy communication. The framework's adaptability enables application to other national contexts, contributing to international sustainability research and supporting the conference theme of bridging disciplines for accessible and inclusive environments.

Limitations include reliance on cross-sectional data. Future research should expand to all 30 metropolitans with temporal modelling, integrate participatory planning dimensions, and develop real-time monitoring for adaptive management. Comparative international studies could validate framework transferability.

Evidence-based findings suggest sustainable urban development requires sophisticated capacity assessment frameworks prioritizing accessibility and inclusion. The proposed framework serves as a political economy tool, making invisible over-development costs explicit and empowering policymakers to implement growth boundaries fostering inclusive, resilient urban futures. As metropolitan areas worldwide confront intensifying urbanization pressures, such computational tools become indispensable for bridging urban theory with planning practice, advancing the global sustainability agenda.

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Title: **ID129 - Exploring Land Readjustment for Urban Resilience and Housing Solutions: The Case of Karataş, Türkiye**

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Abstract:

1. Introduction

Rapid urbanization in developing countries often outpaces the capacity of cities to provide adequate housing, services, infrastructure, and public spaces. This unplanned expansion exacerbates poverty, unhygienic living conditions, and informal economies, disproportionately affecting vulnerable groups such as women, children, youth, and migrants (UN Habitat, 2012). A critical issue is the lack of serviced land connected to urban infrastructure and services. Many cities struggle with limited planning and lack the tools and capacity to facilitate sustainable urban development, hindering local authorities from undertaking inclusive urban development processes and financing necessary infrastructure.

The concept of resilient cities is integral to sustainable urban development. Resilient cities can absorb, recover from, and prepare for future economic, environmental, social, and institutional shocks while promoting sustainable development, well-being, and inclusive growth (OECD, 2016). Housing affordability is a key aspect of urban resilience, involving the ability of households to meet basic needs while paying for housing. In many developing countries, low-income families struggle to access adequate housing due to high costs and limited resources, often leading to informal settlements with poor living conditions.

The recent Kahramanmaraş Earthquakes in Türkiye highlighted the urgent need for resilient housing solutions. This study aims to discuss the feasibility of housing production through land readjustment techniques in contributing to the solution of housing problems and the evolution of structures towards the resilient city concept. Using a case study conducted in Karataş Neighborhood situated at the urban-rural interface in Türkiye, solutions for mitigating the housing access problem and fostering resilient cities are formulated.

2. Literature Review

Land readjustment (LR) involves collaboration among neighboring landowners to share and develop their land collectively, ensuring fair distribution of project costs and benefits. This method allocates land for infrastructure and public spaces and occasionally sells parcels to cover infrastructure expenses (De Souza et al., 2018). LR has been proposed as an effective approach to combat urban poverty, improve slum conditions, and promote inclusivity, safety, resilience, and sustainability in developing countries.

Key benefits of using LR for affordable housing and resilient cities include enabling planned urban settlements, fair distribution of costs and benefits, minimizing public funding needs, improving public safety and community coherence, and supporting post-disaster reconstruction (Hong & Brain, 2012; Mugisha et al., 2024). Case studies from various countries demonstrate LR's effectiveness in securing land for public facilities and housing. However, LR faces challenges including ecological costs, complex valuations, and the need for inclusive policies considering both technical and social aspects (Turk & Korthals Altes, 2011; Shrestha et al., 2017).

Housing affordability in urban areas is a multifaceted challenge involving factors such as urbanization, restrictive zoning regulations, high infrastructure costs, regulatory delays, financing issues, social inequality, and environmental sustainability (van Doorn et al., 2019; Minott & Selby, 2022). The global housing affordability crisis aligns closely with SDG Target 11.1, with many cities struggling to provide adequate, safe, and affordable housing (Patel & Burnside, 2023).

3. Methodology

The study employs a mixed-methods approach focusing on housing affordability, resilient city concepts, and land use planning in Ankara, Türkiye. Karataş Neighborhood, located in the Çankaya District of Ankara Province, was selected as the case study area due to its position at the urban-rural interface, offering a suitable site for implementing land readjustment practices. The neighborhood is in a transitional zone between the urban center of Ankara and its rural surroundings, encompassing both urban and rural land uses.

Data collection included housing affordability indicators (house price index, inflation rate, homeownership rate, urbanization rate, GINI coefficient, household income expenditure, population, price-to-rent ratio, and average household size) and resilient city concept datasets (number of buildings, building types, area distribution by usage type, earthquake-risk buildings, housing sales, and building permits). Min-max normalization was applied to compare variables across different scales. The OECD's Resilient City framework, which defines urban resilience through economy, governance, society, and environment categories, was used to assess land readjustment potential

4. Results and Discussion

Analysis revealed a steady increase in housing prices across Türkiye and Ankara, largely attributed to inflation and economic conditions. Between 2018 and 2024, housing prices increased approximately 11-fold, with a significant positive correlation between inflation rates and housing price indices. The pandemic-induced rapid price-rent ratio increase significantly affected housing affordability negatively. While homeownership rates in Türkiye have been declining since 2014, the share of housing expenditures in household income has shown a downward trend.

Land use change analysis in Çankaya District between 1990-2018 showed that build-up territories increased by 106.67% while agricultural areas decreased by 31.27%. The study area's residential zones occupy approximately 53.62% of the total area, with recreational areas comprising 21.38%. Despite Çankaya District experiencing 12% population growth over the last decade, Karataş Neighborhood saw a 23% population decrease, though recent years show a 6% increase as the urban center expands toward this area.

Land readjustment demonstrates significant potential to enhance city resilience across OECD indicators. Economically, LR promotes new housing and infrastructure projects, creating employment opportunities. Socially, it improves migration and poverty levels by offering accessible housing for low-income groups. Environmentally, LR promotes sustainable development by preserving green spaces and reusing brownfield sites. In governance terms, LR increases community and local government participation, leading to more equitable decision-making processes.

5. Conclusions

Applying land readjustment in the Karataş Neighborhood offers a promising strategy for addressing critical housing affordability and urban resilience issues. LR can reorganize informal settlements, provide secure land tenure, and improve access to essential services for low-income families. By facilitating construction of affordable housing units and development of vital infrastructure and public spaces, LR can help alleviate housing shortages and enhance quality of life for residents.

For Türkiye's DOP (Düzenleme Ortaklık Payı) application, four primary recommendations are proposed: implementing a value increment share within implementation zoning plan areas, imposing real estate value increment tax and betterment charges on increased-value parcels, transitioning from area-based to value-based DOP applications, and focusing on financing sharing through efficient land use via land readjustment. These financial strategies aim to ensure equitable distribution of urban development costs and benefits.

The successful implementation of LR in Karataş can serve as a model for other urban-rural interface areas in Türkiye and beyond. It demonstrates how innovative urban planning techniques can address complex housing and resilience challenges. By promoting equitable and sustainable urban development, LR can help create cities that are more affordable and resilient to future shocks and stresses, aligning with global development goals and enhancing the well-being of urban populations.

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Title: **ID113 - Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) as a Financing Mechanism for Heritage Protection and Social Inclusion Policies**

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Abstract:

Introduction

The preservation of cultural heritage, within modern and complex urban landscapes is a persistent challenge in land governance but also a financial challenge for governments and public bodies [1]. This challenge is perplexed by a "financing paradox", which is defined official act of designating a property as a heritage site, but at the same time not compensating it. Thus, instead promoting the historical importance of a listed building and the reuse of it, property's market value is suppressed, mainly due to the fact of its development restriction, and at the same time the maintenance costs are extremely high. This financing paradox was, for the first time, delt in the USA, where Costonis developed a framework under which Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) were used to save architectural landmarks from demolition in cooperation with developers, in new or under development urban areas [2], [3], [4], [5]. In economically constrained environments, such as Greece, this tension often results in property abandonment and urban decay and legal conflict between private owners and the state. [1]. Herein TDR is evaluated as a land use re-organization land value capture mechanism, designed to resolve the tension between listed properties owners and the Greek State, by decoupling the "right to build" from the physical land parcel. By treating these rights as distinct, securable, and transferable assets, TDR allows the development potential of a restricted heritage site (the "sending area") to be realized in a different location (the "receiving area") where higher density is urbanistically appropriate. At the same time the receiving areas downgraded areas, need of regeneration, and their new urban aspect could be the one of social housing, as to address the housing "paradox" especially of younger generations.

DR – TDR and the financing paradox

The theoretical core of TDR lies in the "bundle of rights" concept of property ownership, where the right to develop could turned into a "transferable component" of that bundle, in those cases when the State imposes non-development regulation for cultural protection purposes. In many urban centers of historical cities, heritage designation acts as a "wipeout" of these development rights, creating an imbalance that the state often lacks the fiscal capacity to compensate through direct expropriation [6], [7], [8], [9].

The economics of the Value Capture lies in:

- The **increased land value** due to location and **decreased property value (especially for buildings)** due to conservation expenses and location taxes
- **Public involvement** through the **meditation** between the market stakeholders: developers/ contractors, property owners, via the creation of Public Driven and Controlled procedure, leveraging private capital for extensive urban regeneration

- **Social Externality,** upgrading urban areas of dense cultural heritage stock, and upgrading underdeveloped or downgraded urban areas via TDR e.g. for social housing.

The Athens Historic Center case study – paradigm

Greece introduced a TDR scheme, known as the "Transfer of Building Factor" (Metofora Syntelesti Domisis), originally through Law 880/1979. It was intended to compensate owners of listed buildings in historic centers, particularly in Athens [1].

Judicial and Technical Deficiencies

The various efforts (and TDR programs) was repeatedly judged unconstitutional by the Council of State (CoS), Greece's supreme administrative court. The failure was attributed to:

1. Lack of Receiving Zones: The state failed to define where the transferred rights could be exercised, leading to "vertical sprawl" and environmental degradation.
2. Violation of Article 24: The court ruled that transfers without a rational urban plan violated the constitutional mandate for sustainable development.
3. The "Air Rights" Trap: Owners were granted "titles" that they could neither sell nor build upon, yet they were frequently taxed on the "presumed value" of these unusable rights.

The Athens Historic Triangle (Omonoia, Syntagma, Monastiraki) contains a dense concentration of ancient, Byzantine, and Neoclassical monuments. The area faces unique spatial constraints imposed by the State, notably visual ones for protecting views of the Acropolis purposes and preserving cultural heritge, restricting vertical growth and withholding development rights.

Volumetric Analysis of Rights

To implement TDR effectively in this context, the research suggests a 3D classification of property volume:

- **Actual Constructed Built-Volume:** The physical space occupied by the heritage structure.
- **Virtual Development Rights:** The total volume permitted by general zoning.
- **Transferable Development Rights:** The differential between virtual and actual volume.

The accurate 3D visualization of these rights is essential for reducing disputes and establishing a TDR liquid market affected by the magnitude of the location – “the Acropolis location” and the “Acropolis view” paradoxes, whereas the proximity to a monument of this global magnitude, suppresses the full property exploitation including the vertical one.

Integrating Social Inclusion and Social Housing

A critical innovation in modern TDR policy is linking the mechanism to social inclusion. By designating "social housing zones" as TDR receiving areas, the state can leverage market-driven densification to provide affordable units.

“Social” Zoning and Density Bonuses

Social housing ties the creation of below-market-rate units to new developments. In such a model:

- Developers in receiving zones, guaranteed by the State via urban planning, purchase TDRs from heritage owners .
- In exchange for a density bonus (e.g., 30% extra floor area), developers are required to dedicate a percentage of the new building to social housing or pay into a social fund for social housing undertaken by the State.
- This addresses the "financing paradox" by leveraging and using private capital to support both cultural resilience and social equity under the guarantee and the supervision of the State.

Smart Cadastre and Spatial Data Infrastructure

The success of TDR is ultimately contingent upon the integrity and interoperability of the underlying spatial data infrastructure (SDI). A "Smart Cadastre" is required to transition from 2D maps to a multidimensional system capable of modeling 3D volumetric rights and the complex "Rights, Restrictions, and Responsibilities" (RRRs) of heritage land [1] based upon in rigorous, accurate and firm cadastral data/ spatial data .

Advanced Technologies for Trust

Trust is a measurable belief that an entity will behave in expected ways. In TDR markets, trust is guarantee via:

- **3D-4D-nD data:** Exact and accurate representation of 3D urban space, 3D DR and TDRs, spatiotemporal changes, land use, land values
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** Used for predictive modeling of land use trends and optimizing receiving zone designations.
- **Digital Twins/BIM:** Provide real-time 3D representations of urban density and heritage condition.

7. Institutional Readiness and Policy Recommendations

The efficacy of TDR in the Athens Historic Triangle depends on "institutional readiness"—the ability of the State to act on the data and spatial it sees. The recent Law 4759/2020 attempts to modernize Greek planning by mandating specific "Development Rights Transfer Zones" to align with judicial requirements.

Key Recommendations:

- **Establish a TDR Bank:** To buy, hold, and sell rights, providing liquidity to heritage owners.
- **Standardize Interoperability:** Ensure that cadastral data, building permits, and heritage registries are integrated into a single source of truth.
- **Mandatory Social Contribution:** Link TDR density bonuses directly to the provision of social housing units in urban regeneration zones.

Conclusion

The "financing paradox" of heritage preservation can be resolved by transforming development rights into securable property assets within a transparent market. For the Athens Historic Triangle, the failure of past models provides a roadmap for a more resilient future. By underpinning TDR with

a Smart Cadastre and integrating it with social inclusion policies, the state can protect its past while financing an equitable future. This transition requires a shift from reactive monitoring to a predictive, data-driven governance model that balances private rights with the public good.

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