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European colonization from the 16th to the 19th centuries was justified in part by *terra nullius* – a principle of international law that assumes land not defended by a sovereign nor owned according to the logic of exclusive property rights could be acquired in an effort to make the land productive. One consequence of *terra nullius* was the Scramble for Africa, which culminated in the Berlin Conference of 1884. During this conference European powers infamously consolidated previous acquisitions under colonial governments and erected borders that redefined communities and disrupted local political and economic relationships. These actions furthered the expropriation of land from locals by classifying them as occupants with limited ability to derive economic assets from their land. Although 20th century independence movements engendered political change, most states continue to benefit from land tenure systems that generate profit for the state rather than for those who live off the land. Consequently there is concern that new modes of appropriation will further marginalize citizens and thwart any societal transformation attempting to rectify past injustices and establish equitable land tenure systems. In the *Handbook of Land and Water Grabs in Africa*: *Foreign and Direct Investment and Food and Water Security*, editors Tony Allan, Martin Keulertz, Suvi Sojamo, and Jeroen Warner and their fellow contributors analyze large-scale land acquisitions (LSLAs) in an effort to understand the discrepancies between foreign demand and local need. Yet by characterizing these agreements as part of a "grab," the contributors readily invoke Africa's experience with European colonization and suggest that LSLAs are indicative of a neocolonial dynamic that is reminiscent of *terra nullius*. But do such agreements simply replicate colonialism or is there something more egregious underfoot?

Given that the handbook has thirty-two chapters, in this review I address the short- and long-term political, social, and economic consequences of LSLAs and analyze unique juxtapositions that emerge from an edited volume. In the introduction, Allan outlines new conditions that are engendering more LSLAs: a) global power relations are evolving faster than before; b) new powers (Gulf countries and the BRICS) are asserting themselves in land markets; and c) human rights and international law are greatly informing questions of land and justice (6). These conditions are examined throughout the entire collection, which is interested in determining whether such tectonic shifts within the global economy will translate into the long awaited Green Revolution in Africa. Such a revolution would generate greater agricultural output, reinvigorate tenure systems and the rule of law, and facilitate infrastructure and technology transfers. The chapters are organized into five subsections: history of land grabs and contradictions of development; investors' profile and current investment trends; political economy of water and land grabs; environment; and livelihoods.

Given the complexities of LSLAs, it is best to focus on land's primary use and how that relates to the aforementioned subsections. The contributions in the first section explore the history of tenure systems and the various benefits from land – such as a home, sustenance, or livelihood. Colonial governments extended their dominion by taxing these gains, reclassifying inhabitants as occupants, and claiming land for settlers. It is this appropriation that created the contradictions of development. Even though land yielded tremendous resources that were necessary for the production of consumer products in Europe and the United States; profits were funneled to merchants and colonial officials, either as taxes or through the confiscation of commodities produced from the land. This decimated Africans ability to transform their wealth in land to assets that could provide a foundation for their community's financial stability. This appropriation also engendered the legal quandary between customary and civil land title; members of ethnic communities have title that is based on their historical claims and are likely poorly documented. Communities with undocumented or suspicious claims are the most susceptible to being kicked of the land for the creation of LSLAs. Consequently the primary legal issue today is what constitutes adequate compensation for those indigenous communities whose ancestors' land was appropriated by colonial states (see Hahn; Potts; Wily).

The second section addresses land that is primarily used for investment and the complexities that arise when foreign investors acquire agricultural lands for their domestic consumption. Unlike investments that reap monetary returns, investments in land are primarily meant to yield agricultural commodities and natural resources. Such investments allow foreign investors to displace the environmental costs associated with their land use; especially those countries feeling the negative effects of climate change (the Middle East) and population pressures (China and South Korea) (see Baumgartner; Bräutigam). While African countries have a comparative advantage in blue (groundwater) and green (rainfall) water now, these investments are starting to curtail citizens' access to water and small-scale farmers' ability to produce for their needs and local markets (see Allan, Chu, Kizito et. al, MacDonald et. al). The final three subsections address the political and social consequences of land dispossession from marginalized communities. Given that a majority of land holdings across the continent are still small-holders with customary title or dubious civil title, foreign investments often require governments to consolidate these holdings. But when governments consolidate land into larger holdings and reap the economic benefits of renting land; they rarely transfer any assets to the communities where these acquisitions are located. Rather they hope that any knowledge transfers and jobs created by foreign investment will placate communities (see Anseeuw et. al; Greco). Contemporary LSLAs are more damaging than historical land appropriation because industrialization in the global north has generated environmental degradation that is now undermining the sustainability of future industrializations, especially food production and mineral extraction. Yet the primary comparative advantage developing countries have is land and its commodities; and in order to further attract investors states must downplay any environmental costs associated with LSLAs and compromise their environmental regulations. Thus contemporary African states are still undermining the development of assets as well as shouldering the environmental burdens of the global north.

The juxtaposition of these chapters makes clear that the historical inequities of international land markets have reemerged. Those who live off the land must shoulder a disproportional share of the environmental risks of investments, while investors' returns are agricultural commodities and essentially exclusive land rights. The shift in *who* invests in LSLAs has generated renewed interest in foreign investors, as there is hope that more equitable relationships will emerge. There is the possibility that China's experience with agricultural industrialization can provide important lessons and technology transfers. Yet China's record on human rights could negatively impact political and social relations. Whereas there is the potential for Gulf countries and their investments in Sudan and Egypt to draw on cultural and historical ties to generate investments that could be beneficial for all of the Middle East. But given the political and social turmoil in the region, it is unclear who benefits from foreign investments and whether they are sustainable. Such predictions about the short- and long-term effects are unclear as the politicization of these investments, especially from China, are based on real and manufactured fears associated with the decline of Anglo-American and European economic powers. However, as Bräutigam suggests, more often than not the effects of Chinese investments are based on media distortions that focus on the creation of such deals but rarely follow-up on their progress (44). While investors from outside of Africa receive more media attention, there are countries within Africa, especially Egypt and South Africa, investing in LSLAs. But such investments, especially from South Africa, are more about the displacement of South African landowners rather than the political interests of assisting regional neighbors (Warner et. al). Finally, there is also domestic investment in LSLAs as businessmen and government officials are interested in the opportunities LSLAs could generate for urban communities. But even these investments are plagued with problems of secure title and deteriorating infrastructure, as Hilhorst and Nelen note. Projects spearheaded by outsiders, even if they are from a nearby city, promote the notion that outsiders are necessary for internal development. Consequently, such relationships discount local farming knowledge and undermine the future of farming communities as residents opt to move or pursue more lucrative careers (151). It is this insight on the relationship between insiders and outsiders that is an implicit problematic of any "foreign" (i.e. outsider) investment. The immediate concern being whether "outsiders" and the returns to the communities they promote – knowledge transfer, jobs, infrastructure build-up, and the rule of law – are actually beneficial or perpetuating the exploitation of African resources and labor.

It is easy to understand the trepidation associated with LSLAs, as they are often touted as a reliable solution to current food insecurity and African development. However, LSLAs are similar to historical models of agricultural industrialization that were based on large-scale farms and specialization in cash crops for export rather than staple crops for domestic consumption. The consolidation of small farms into larger farms seems reasonable; given that rural populations are dwindling and it is becoming easier for states to acquire land via eminent domain. However, such consolidations are more pernicious than historical grabs: first, states are promoting LSLAs as the most viable and only economic solution given their states' comparative advantage in agricultural and mineral commodities. Second when foreign investors control both the land and the commodities produced, states are creating internal zones that are effectively alienating locals from communal lands and funneling profits and assets outside the country. Finally there are fewer opportunities for contestation now despite the discourse of liberal democracy and civil society; and there is incontrovertible evidence that environmental degradation is a direct consequence of industrialization. But even if outside investments in LSLAs were terminated for political reasons, it is clear that farmers and states cannot simply exit the market in hopes of pursuing an ethical model of growth that will resolve historical exploitation. There would still be pressing issues of food security and the development of African economies. Consequently there would be a shift of investments to regions that can capitalize on technical and tenure innovations in order to replace African agricultural commodities. If African states are to maximize their comparative advantage in land; the solution, as Riddell suggests, is to develop and resuscitate tenure arrangements that capitalize on different sizes of land holdings (160-163). This would allow individual and collective farmers to control the terms of the investment. By directly engaging with farmers there is also the potential to diversify crops and invest in commodities that will be needed by both domestic and global markets. The diversification of crops and tenure arrangements can empower farmers by transferring knowledge and building infrastructure. More importantly it can help farmers develop assets rather than merely subsisting on such arrangements.

The breadth and complexity of land tenure across the continent could never be fully captured in a single volume; however, the editors have offered a valiant effort in bringing together an array of topics that highlight the key issues associated with foreign investments and LSLAs. The contributors make the economic issues accessible based on a thorough investigation of empirical evidence rather than rely on the political discourse of neocolonialism. While it is clear that historical colonization curtails contemporary political and economic development in Africa; there is a more equitable solution than African states mirroring European models of economic growth. The real solution, as the contributors make clear, is developing multiple modes of agricultural industrialization that are based on small and large scale holdings. Modes that are geared towards equitable political and social relationships that stem from the creation of local assets and economic growth.

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