

Announcements

Multinational Working Group Land Grabs and Food Sovereignty in Africa

Launch: November 2012

The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) is launching a call for proposal for all interested researchers and academics in its Multinational Working Group (MWG) on a theme titled: "**Land grabs and food sovereignty in Africa**". MWG is one of the flagship research vehicles that is employed by CODESRIA to promote multi-country, multi-disciplinary and inter-generational reflections on critical questions of concern to the African social science research community. Each MWG will be led by two coordinators who have different specializations and possibly constitute a gender mix. The size of a single MWG should utmost be fifteen researchers. An independent selection committee will screen the proposals and select those that have a relatively better quality and depth. The life span of the project will be 18 months during which time all aspects of the research process should be completed and the final manuscript submitted for publication in a CODESRIA book series.

Land grabbing is not a new phenomenon. The exploitation of land and natural resources in Africa went through distinct epochs that have had profound impacts on land tenure and the state of natural resources in the continent. The scramble for African farmlands and natural resources reached its height in 19th century with the partitioning of the continent and the plundering of its land and natural resources by European colonizers. This had left in its wake a gruesome legacy that is characterized by a series of land and resource conflicts, land litigation, loss of peoples' control over land and natural resources, exposition to alien land tenure systems and natural resources management. Yet the on-going global land grabs risks creating a reinvigorated neo-colonial system that enhances the power of cash-rich nations and transnational corporations at the expense of smallholder peasants and indigenous communities who are displaced and dispossessed. The scale, magnitude and discourse around the current global rush for farmland makes this moment unique in history.

With the emergence of food and financial crises in 2008, the acquisition of fertile land for outsourced food and fuel production, viz. land grabbing, has been occurring at an astounding pace across the globe. Incidentally, the virtual collapse of the global financial markets occurred nearly contemporaneously with the global food crisis. Triggered by the inter-related forces of skyrocketing food prices and the global economic meltdown, the land grab trend has demonstrated how fertile lands can be turned into a "new strategic asset" for governments seeking food security and for profit-driven financial firms hunting safe havens for their investment funds. Cash-rich nations such as China, Saudi Arabia, Japan, South Korea, and some Gulf States are pursuing food security strategies that seek to secure control of millions of hectares of fertile lands in target nations in the South, most particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. In

short, land scarcity and volatility of food prices in the world market have led the richer countries that are dependent on food imports to acquire large amounts of land in the South to produce food for their domestic needs.

Africa is hence once again facing a new scramble for the accelerated exploitation of its rich land and natural resources facilitated by the forces of globalization and neo-liberalism. The governments and ruling elites in Africa are offering up large swathes of agricultural land at rock bottom prices for large-scale farming. This renewed scramble under various economic agreements is already leading to increasing conflict, land dispossession, eviction and displacement and deepening poverty amongst various groups, including smallholder farmers, pastoral herders and fisher folks on the continent. Favourable terms for foreign investors in recent deals include low process on purchases and low rates of remuneration on long-term leases, all justified under the "win-win" rhetoric of modern agricultural development. Some governments are also liberalizing property ownership laws to facilitate the influx of foreign capital. Research by the World Bank and others suggests that nearly 60 million hectares – an area the size of France – has been bought or leased by foreign companies in Africa in the past four years.

The land deals are often couched in a "win-win" language, with the presumption that target nations in the South could secure the following benefits: obtain funds for infrastructure improvements and rural development; overcome decades of underinvestment in the agricultural sector; create a sizable number of jobs and bring in new technology to the local agricultural sector. Conversely, some studies have revealed that large-scale farmland acquisitions by foreign actors' raise a litany of human rights concerns for impoverished people in the South, the most important of which include the undermining of local food production systems, extraction of short-term profits at the cost of long-term environmental damages, the forced displacement of smallholder peasants and indigenous people, diminished access to resources by the rural poor, and the expansion of the export-oriented, agro-industrial complex. In addition, deforestation & environmental degradation, the erosion of cultural and labour rights and the potential for civil unrest are also matters of great concern, as is the general lack of transparency and accountability. Some fear that unrestrained land grabbing could produce scenarios where heavily guarded foreign-owned farms ship food overseas while starving locals look on helplessly. Research proposals that will be prepared in the framework of this MWG should try to come up with innovative ways of conceiving "land grab" through a systemic analysis that could capture the diversity, complexity and controversy of this phenomenon. An inquiry can also be made to uncover the geopolitical and geostrategic dimensions of land grabbing in Africa. Furthermore, a particular attention should be paid to the historical roots of contemporary land grabbing.

The commoditisation of land does also reflect the transition from a rural society characterized by a large number of subsistent small-holder peasants to one that is increasingly based on the expansion of capital-intensive production enterprises to feed the rising urban population. This phenomenon can also be seen as a type of land grabbing in which governments together with foreign investors are promoting the dispossession of farmland that in turn evokes rural-urban migration. So far, not much is known about land grabbing that is induced by rural-urban migration-cum-urbanization. Put another way, rapid urbanization grabs massive land in Africa or is gobbled up by cities. This issue can stir up the attention of prospective MWGs to establish the type and strength of the relationships between land grab, migration and urbanization.

The failures and inequities of the world food system have spurred a new vision for the democratization of the food system based on a set of principles known as food sovereignty. The most fundamental pillars of food sovereignty include: the recognition and enforcement of the right to food and the right to land; the right of each nation or people to define their own agricultural and food policies; respecting the rights of indigenous peoples to their territories and traditional fisher folks to fishing areas; a retreat from free trade policies, with a concurrent greater prioritization of production of food for local and national markets, and an end to dumping; genuine agrarian reform and peasant-based sustainable agricultural practices. Land grabs deny land for local communities, destroy livelihoods, reduce the political space for peasant oriented agricultural policies and distort markets towards increasingly concentrated agribusiness interests and global trade. Without national and international measures to defend the rights of people living in poverty, this modern-day land-rush looks set to leave too many poor families worse off, often evicted from their land with little or no recourse to justice. The global land grabs dispossess peasants not only the land per se but also the social, political and economic entitlements and freedom that come with it. That is why it remains a direct threat to the foundations of food sovereignty. The mobilization against land grabs, which ipso facto denotes the movement for food sovereignty, is a reflection of the present food regime's geography and demographics in which over half of the world's food is produced by small scale farmers making up one-third to over seventy percent of producers in the global South. Researchers in this MWG should assess the degree to which land grabs present a threat to the food sovereignty of peasants in Africa.

Proponents of land grab deals do often characterize the land involved as "idle" or "underutilized" or "marginalized". However, according to a report by the FAO and the International Institute on Environment and Development, lands that are so perceived by government and large private operators do, in most cases, provide a vital basis for the livelihoods of poorer and vulnerable groups. In actual fact, they have a real purpose: they may support corridors for pastoralists; dispense fallow space for soil recuperation; provide access to limited water sources; set aside plots for future generations or enable local farmers to increase production. Participants in this MWG can probe deeper into these issues to repudiate the flawed and misleading ways on which land grabbing is grounded in Africa. The research findings that are derived from such studies can either clarify or nullify misleading analyses on land use and land cover in Africa. The recommendations that would come out of such analyses are

expected to generate alternative models of managing land use while addressing food and energy security needs and respecting land rights.

For women all over the world, lack of access to and control over land is a major determinant and outcome of gender inequality. Evidence from research on land grabs in Africa suggests that women are getting a raw deal or unfair treatment. To begin with, women's land rights are less secure and more easily targeted. They also depend more on secondary uses of land, which tend to be ignored in large-scale land acquisitions. Furthermore, although women comprise the majority of farmers in Africa, men effectively control the land and the income derived from it at the expense of the fruit of women's labour. In practice, a new commercial opportunity often means that men assume control of the land at the expense of women's access. The new competition for land between biofuels and food crops, leading to less availability of food and higher prices, is also likely to affect women more than men, as the former tend to take responsibility for feeding the family. Given this state of affair, forthcoming MWGs are expected to pay special attention to the gender dimensions of land access and land grabs in Africa.

The prospective MWGs can also look into the global interest in biofuels and the impact they have on global warming/climate change. It is stated that a range of biofuel crops now being grown to produce 'green' alternatives to oil-based fossil fuels release far more CO₂ into the air than what can be absorbed by the growing plants. In spite the precipitating effects of food-based biofuels on global warming and climate change, many countries are inadvertently promoting biofuel alternatives that are worse than the fossil fuels they are designed to replace.

Sub-themes

- The political economy of land grabbing and resistance
- Remaking the maps of food production and distribution in Africa
- Transnational agricultural investments and the human rights to food in Africa
- The impact of land grabs on food sovereignty of peasants
- The historical roots of contemporary land grabbing in Africa
- Biofuel production, global warming and climate change in Africa
- Land grabs and women in Africa (the gender dimension)
- The discourse and contested meanings of land use/cover classifications
- The ecological threats of large-scale land acquisition
- The geopolitical and strategic dimensions of land grabbing in Africa
- Land grab, urbanization and migration nexus
- Any other related issue

For more details on how to apply visit: <http://www.codesria.org/>

For additional information:

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Child and Youth Institute 2012

Youth, Social Transformation and Development in Africa

The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) is pleased to announce its 2012 Child and Youth Institute that will be held for three (3) weeks, from 3rd to 21st September 2012. The institute is one of the components of the Child and Youth Studies Programme and is aimed at strengthening the analytic capacities of young African researchers on issues affecting children and youth in Africa and elsewhere in the world. The institute is designed as an annual interdisciplinary forum in which participants can reflect together on a specific aspect of the conditions of children and youth, especially in Africa.

Objectives The main objectives of the Child and Youth Institute are to:

- encourage the sharing of experiences among researchers, civil society activists and policy makers from different disciplines, methodological and conceptual orientations and geographical/linguistic areas;
- promote and enhance a culture of democratic values that allows to effectively identify issues facing children and youth on the African continent; and
- foster the participation of scholars and researchers in discussions and debates on the processes of child and youth development in Africa.

Organization The activities of all CODESRIA Institutes centre on presentations made by African researchers, resource persons from the continent and the Diaspora and participants whose applications for admission as laureates have been successful. The sessions are led by a scientific director who, with the support of resource persons, ensures that the laureates are exposed to a wide range of research and policy issues. Each laureate is required to prepare a research paper to be presented during the session. The revised versions of such papers will undergo a peer review to ensure that they meet the required standard for publication by CODESRIA. The CODESRIA Documentation and Information Centre (CODICE) will provide participants with a comprehensive bibliography on the theme of the institute. Access to a number of documentation centers in and around Dakar will also be facilitated. The CODESRIA Child and Youth Institute will be held in French and English through simultaneous translation.

The theme for this year e 2012: "**Youth, Social Transformation and Development in Africa**" seeks to bring together scholars to dig deeper into theoretical and empirical ways of understanding the role played by youth in transforming the social, economic, and political spheres or arenas in Africa. Conceptualizing, defining, and representing youth and their worlds has become an important focus of scholars seeking to examine how research itself has constructed youth as distinct social groups that are often presented as disruptive to an otherwise coherent social order and social institutions. Studies that have looked at youth as delinquent, misguided, as causing social crises, as being coerced into mischief, or as subjects rather than agents of their

own lives, have provided interesting insights into perceptions and constructions of the youth. Similarly studies by scholars who insist that youth in Africa be regarded through theoretical and empirical lenses that go beyond these stereotypical notions of rebellion and vulnerability have shown how recent advances in technology, the intensification of global processes, and the continued weakening of the nation-state, are contributing to new and complex ways of understanding what it means to be youth in Africa today. Indeed, questions of what constitutes youthhood and the degree to which the lives of youth can be deeply understood have been marred by definitions and research questions often derived from socio-cultural and politico-economic contexts external to the direct experiences of most African youth. It is imperative for scholarship on youth in Africa to not only challenge any one-sided or simplistic explanations of the lives of the youth but also contend with the fact that they are a large and steadily growing population who undergo changes and also influence changes as the society itself keeps transforming.

Demographically Africa is a young continent with up to forty percent of its population aged between fifteen and twenty-four and more than two thirds below thirty years. This conspicuous size of the youth has contributed to the complex and at times vicarious place they occupy in Africa today and hence demands a deepened approach to research and analyses capable of capturing this complexity of youth identity, lives, ambitions, and the critical role they play in transforming their societies. New ways of regarding this complexity are critical because classical sociological views of society that see it as being reproduced through a linear and chronological process marked by stages of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, will not suffice simply because such views tend to promote the "youth as a problem" approach, often seeing practices such as participation in combat operations or failure to marry at "the right time" as chaotic and deviationist from social order. While these perceptions fit very well with a traditional African social worldview shaped by gerontocracy where cultural and political power are wielded by those with accumulated experiential knowledge, youth demographics and their desire for broad social changes can no longer be wished away. Today, as some small but growing body of scholarship that favors culture making as a creative, contested, and complex process of social (re)production, has shown, youth are actively shaping society through such strategies as the invention of new forms of language; creative contributions to economies through popular culture; reconstituting political movements through participation in armed rebellion or non-violent demonstrations; and the reshaping of public discourse through social media and expressive culture, among many. The "Arab Spring" is a good illustration of such vitality and creativity with youth at the forefront of public protest movements that have led to regime changes in both Tunisia and Egypt. Through activism sparked by this generation's increasingly interconnectedness brought by social media and technology, these youth, like many of their counterparts in other parts of Africa, are responding to the reality

of low wages, high unemployment, and poor governance, all closely tied to economic issues.

The relentless socioeconomic and political changes propelled by Western financial institutions and governments have contributed, for instance, to a gradual transformation of the African terrain through a process that has weakened the state apparatus and heightened the place of youth at the centre of public life as witnessed in some of these movements. Development strategies for the continent that have largely been predicated upon strict austerity measures propelled by the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) of the 1980s and sustained by continued economic liberalisation and marketisation into the 2000s have had some notable negative effects on Africa's youth. But there are signs of positive change as well. Growth in GDP in countries such as Angola, Ethiopia, Ghana and Equatorial Guinea by the end of 2010 reflects the 6% economic growth experienced across the continent before the 2008 global economic recession. Previous studies have also shown that youth labour can play a significant role in the development process, especially in countries where rural societies are predominant. Today, we know that with the progresses made in science and technology the youth population is well prepared to assimilate and master the scientific and technological tools that are necessary to propel development. However, such development is often unaccompanied by growth in infrastructure as well as democratic processes. In many parts of the continent, the standard of living has improved but the gap between the rich and poor continues growing, unemployment remains rampant and the youth are adversely affected. And to be sure this is not limited to Africa but is noticeable globally. The 2008 financial crisis and its social impacts in the North, for instance, show that youth issues and social change have become a global challenge in the context of what some call the 'crisis of capitalism' or what others see as the 'end of capitalism'. Manifestations of outrage and disappointment such as those exemplified the "occupy wall street" movement show youth seeking to arrest a social system by demanding more social justice and equality and in turn forcing youth issues to cross many boundaries. While these issues are more critical in Africa mainly because of the youthfulness of Africa's population and the many challenges faced in such areas as education, training, employment, and health, they call for an awareness

among scholars for the need to critically position youth at the center of any analysis of social transformation and development both locally and globally.

The preceding discussions invoke a number of research questions that can be taken up by the participants for further scrutiny: How do we reconcile and understand all the competing socioeconomic and political realities in Africa today? How can the youth as a demographic majority wield power, transform their world marked by high unemployment levels and within a context of inconsistent economic growth by using new patterns of communication and technology to? What role, if any, are youth in Africa today playing in transforming their societies and how are these transformations in turn shaping overall development? What are the roles of decentralized grassroots movements instigated by youth and what they portend for socioeconomic and political changes in their countries given the example seen in Egypt where a more established party (Muslim Brotherhood) garnered enough support to take over political leadership and left many youth involved in the initial movement disenfranchised? Are youth in Africa transforming their societies or are their movements too loosely put together falling short of making lasting changes in their societies? What is the place of global processes and connections in shaping and sustaining socioeconomic and political development for youth in Africa today? What are some of the ways youth have been involved in democratic processes in their countries or communities and how has this participation shaped youth identities and political ideas? Is social media going to determine the ways in which youth will engage with their societies and the larger world and if so to what end? What does the gendered dimension of youth struggles to transform their societies look like? Are there some examples of youth engagement in economic and technological innovations that are influencing national and regional trends in business and investment? Participants at this year's Institute are expected to address these and related issues and queries.

For more details on how to apply visit: <http://www.codesria.org/>

For additional information:

E-mail: child.institute@codesria.sn

Gender Institute 2012 **African Sexualities**

Dakar, 4-22 June 2012

The 2012 edition of the Gender Institute will study African sexualities by exploring the links between the human body, gender and sexuality. This issue is not to be considered on the sidelines of development because it is one of its facets. Indeed, it is about the life of men and women, their privacy and desires, their relationships with their bodies and the social standards that govern the latter, their identities and the recognition of rights that go with anything that refers to policy, society and law.

Patriarchal society, the colonial and post-colonial contexts show that the male body and the female body bear cultural meanings and representations that reflect power relations within society. How then, from a constructivist perspective, can we dispense with African epistemologies of the body by breaking away from a legacy that still bears the imprint of some anthropological vision of African sexualities, with a whiff of ethnocentrism or even racism. The issue of African sexuality can be considered as the matching piece to the discourse on the Other, the way it

was imagined, invented and represented, as shown by the illustrative example of Sarah Bartmann. It is necessary, as part of a theoretical re-appropriation, to not confine ourselves to a bio-medical and inevitably simplistic framework imposed by the issue of reproduction and which has been overwhelmed by the issue of AIDS.

From a methodological point of view, how can the postcolonial or feminist theory, Marxism or postmodernism help to deconstruct stereotypes in order to better analyze the complexities of African sexualities? How can we go beyond the binary system postulated by gender to understand sexual diversity? How can we account for the changing representations of sexuality when it results from several factors: contact with other cultures, urbanization or exile, or even the pervasiveness of television, film or the Internet on the lives of African people today? Furthermore, the role of the crisis in this dynamic vision of sexualities has transformed family structures or compelled men and women to engage in various practices, including sex

trade sometimes. How can one understand not only the role played by law in maintaining a gendered society in which women are subordinate to men, but also all the ideological forms that justify the social control over sexualities and inform the strategies to fight against the AIDS pandemic?

Analyzing African sexualities also means revisiting the issue of genital mutilation, gender-based violence based and homosexuality. The context of globalization that takes a critical look at the universal sphere, by giving greater visibility to the demand for and recognition of diversity and by crystallizing identities and traditions, makes this debate essential in Africa. Can the dissemination of a culture of human rights globally content itself with the objection to homosexuality on behalf of African culture? Indeed, this context of male domination which poses heterosexuality as a dominant normative framework should not obscure the issue of secondary sexualities.

For more details on how to apply visit: <http://www.codesria.org>

Environmental Politics Institute

Climate change and Environmental Politics in Africa

Dakar, 6-18 August 2012

The CODESRIA Environmental Politics Institute is an interdisciplinary forum which brings together African scholars undertaking innovative research on topics related to the broad theme of environmental politics.

The aim of the Institute is to promote and sustain the development of coherent social sciences engagement with environmental issues in Africa. The Institute will promote research and debates on issues related to environmental politics especially as they relate to democratic decision making in climate change adaptation and mitigation policies and programs on the continent. The Institute will be launched in 6 August 2012 and subsequently held annually in Dakar, Senegal. It will serve the critical functions of forging links among a younger generation of African intellectuals and meeting the scientific needs of these intellectuals in terms of access to recent documentation, participation in current debates, the retooling of their research capacities, and the updating of their conceptual, theoretical and methodological approaches. The Institute will also seek to engage African policy intellectuals and civil society activists, thereby permitting a judicious mix of researchers, activists, and policy makers to be achieved in the admission of participants. It is anticipated that a total of fifteen African researchers drawn from across the continent and the Diaspora, and a few non-African scholars will participate in the Institute each year.

Objectives

The main objectives of the Environmental Politics Institute are to:

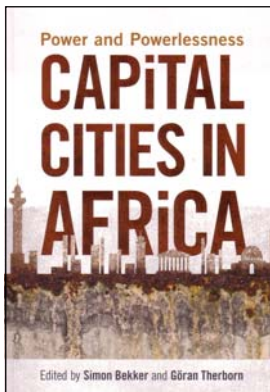
- Build the capacity of young African scholars in Social Science research into environmental politics issues;
- Catalyze the development of a core of an epistemic community of social scientists engaged with environmental issues;
- Encourage the sharing of experiences among researchers, activists and policy makers from different disciplines, methodological and conceptual orientations, and geographical/linguistic zones on a common theme over an extended period of time;
- Promote and enhance a critical inter-disciplinary engagement in a manner that allows Africans to effectively identify and tackle the environmental issues confronting their continent; and
- Foster the participation of scholars in discussions and debates about the environment taking place in Africa especially in the context of the global climate change discourse.

For more details: <http://www.codesria.org/>

POWER AND POWERLESSNESS CAPITAL CITIES IN AFRICA

Edited by
Simon Bekker and Göran Therborn

Capital cities today remain central to both nations and states. They host centres of political power, not only national, but in some cases regional and global as well, thus offering major avenues to success, wealth and privilege. For these reasons capitals simultaneously become centres of 'counter-power', locations of high-stakes struggles between the government and the opposition.



This volume focuses on capital cities in nine sub-Saharan African countries, and traces how the power vested in them has evolved through different colonial backgrounds, radically different kinds of regimes after independence, waves of popular protest, explosive population growth and in most cases stunted economic development. Starting at the point of national political emancipation, each case study explores the complicated processes of nation-state building through its manifestation in the 'urban geology' of the city - its architecture, iconography, layout and political use of urban space. Although the evolution of each of these cities is different, they share a critical demographic feature an extraordinarily rapid process of urbanisation that is more politically than economically driven. Overwhelmed by the inevitable challenges resulting from this urban sprawl, the governments seated in most of these capital cities are in effect both powerful- wielding power over their populace - and powerless, lacking power to implement their plans and to provide for their inhabitants.

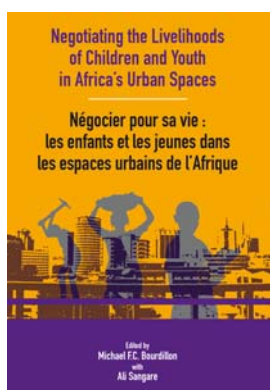
Negotiating the Livelihoods of Children and Youth in Africa's Urban Spaces

Négocier sa vie : les enfants et les jeunes dans les espaces urbains d'Afrique

Edited by
Michael F.C. Bourdillon
with
Ali Sangare

This book deals with problems facing children and youth in African cities today. African populations have high growth rates and, consequently, relatively high proportions of young people. Population growth in rural areas has stretched resources leading to urban migration and a rapid growth of cities. Economies have not grown apace with the population; and in some countries, economies have even shrunk. The result is a severe lack of resources in cities to meet the needs of the growing populations, shown in high unemployment, inadequate housing, poor services, and often extreme poverty. All the essays in this book draw attention to such urban environments, in which children and youth have to live and survive.

The title of this book speaks of negotiating livelihoods. The concept of 'livelihood' has been adopted to incorporate the social and physical environment together with people's responses to it. It considers not only material, but also human and social resources, including local knowledge and understanding. It, thus, considers the material means for living in a broader context of social and cultural interpretation. It, therefore, does not deal only with material and economic existence, but also with leisure activities, entertainments and other social forms of life developed by young people in response to the dictates of the environment.



The book contains country-specific case studies of the problems faced by youths in many African cities, how they develop means to solve them, and the various creative ways through which they improve their status, both economically and socially, in the different urban spaces. It recognizes the potentials of young people in taking control of their lives within the constraints imposed upon them by the society.

This book is a valuable contribution to the field of child and youth development, and a useful tool for parents, teachers, academics, researchers as well as government and non-government development agencies.