

Land appropriation for Biofuels in Tanzania: Whose Sustainable Development?

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Biofuels are premised to promote sustainable development by addressing two related global problems: climate change and poverty alleviation in developing countries. It is argued that biofuels could balance conservation and sustainable development by combating climate change while also creating job opportunities to improve local communities' livelihoods. Certainly, developing countries, including Tanzania, have in recent years promoted investments in biofuels production. Nonetheless, based on findings gathered through qualitative methods in Kisarawe district, Pwani region, this paper maintains that land acquisition for biofuels is best explained by David Harvey's (2003) concept of accumulation by dispossession – that, the process of transferring land rights from marginalized local people to biofuel investors involved the use of threats, force and manipulation. This has heightened resource conflicts given that biofuels production has tended to exclude resource interests of local communities. Thus, it suffices concluding here that neo-Liberal capitalism is hiding itself in the discourse of climate change to legitimize control over resources in the Global South.

Key words: *biofuels, conflicts, land appropriation and sustainable development*

Introduction

The dominant discourse of sustainable development that was born out of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil purports that poverty and environmental degradation reinforce each other: environmental degradation that heavily affects poor people causes poverty, while it is also caused by poverty (World Bank (WB), 1996). The UNCED that is known as Rio Summit declared:

Without improving environmental management, development will be undermined, and without accelerated development in poor countries ... the environment will continue to degrade (Ibid, 1996, p. xi).

Sustainable development thus seeks to integrate the environment into the pursuit of development to alleviate poverty in developing countries. According to the WB (1996), for example, even though Sub-Saharan Africa is endowed with valuable resources, such as rivers, minerals, forests and good land, it has not been able to translate that into sustainable development because of extreme poverty and rising environmental degradation coupled with a large population depending heavily on natural resources. Ironically, the WB claims to help African countries to achieve environmentally sustainable development to address current unsustainable development practices.

The concept of sustainable development connects to current debates about biofuels, which are premised to balance conservation by combating climate change (Fargione, *et al.*, 2011; Heimlich, *et al.*, 2008), while also promoting development, such as the generation of jobs and energy security in the Global South (Diof, 2007). Indeed, in its 2011 report entitled *Rising Global Interests in Farm Land*, the WB supports large-scale land deals since they transfer land from less efficient to more effective occupants capable of responding to both development and environmental considerations. Similar arguments appear in earlier reports of the WB (e.g. 2008, 2009 and 2010; Deininger, *et al.*, 2011).

In particular, the 2011 report of the WB claims that if well managed and promoted, large-scale land deals, such as those involving biofuels, can play three major roles in poverty alleviation. First is the creation of wage employment opportunities, which is “a key avenue for local people to benefit from outside investment because for bulk commodities, it is at the production rather than processing stage that employment is generated” (Deininger, *et al.*, 2011 p. 38). This is reiterated in a 2007 study of the UK Department for International Development (DFID) on biofuels, which consistently cited Brazil as a success story in which biofuels production has been able to create jobs and contribute to poverty alleviation (Peskett, *et al.*, 2007).

A second reason in support of biofuels is that they generate contractual employment by promoting markets for small-scale out growers entering in farming contracts with investors. This arrangement is said to equip small-land holders with new farming techniques from investors. And, the third contributory role is that of generating capital through the lease and sale of idle or unutilized land to investors. The WB report purports that investors target idle or unutilized land, which is eventually turned into use through biofuels production. Also, the WB report assumes that fair compensation is provided to allow landowners to start new entrepreneurial activities away from farming and that small-scale holders leasing their land could share profits with investors. This, according to the WB report, has been successful in Argentina.

It should be noted, however, that there is a lot to question about the generalization that biofuels production is necessary to address climate change and poverty alleviation. The neo-Liberal and Modernization approaches to environmental problems present the market as a blind scale capable of balancing the interests of investors and those of local people, while also addressing environmental problems, such as climate change. In practice, this depoliticized way of looking at reality is questionable considering that it fails to explain the hidden interests, power relations and political and economic forces involved in the operation of a neo-Liberal market.

Li (2011) reminds us that countries wanting to attract investors should be prepared to sacrifice the rights of rural communities by selling their land at token prices or giving it for free because investors choose to invest where they can make the highest possible profit. Also, White and Dasgupta (2010) caution that large-scale plantations in the Global South have historically been ‘zones of poverty’ and conflicts, as opposed to prosperity. It is not also always the case that investors create jobs – there are, for example, many instances in which investors acquired land for speculation (Li, 2011). Also, Kothari (2005) reminds us about the dominant neo-Liberal

ideology, which is hiding itself in the discourse of climate change to appropriate resources. Similarly, Jangdeesh Rao (2002 in White and Dasgupta, 2010, p. 595) reminds, “[...] agrofuel is replacing one problem with another. It is passing the middle class burden onto the poor. The fuel needs of the middle class with their consumerism – and rising demand for energy – is going to be met by further marginalizing the poor people.”

According to Escobar (1996), the dominant discourse of sustainable development assumes that “sound ecology is good economics” and that poverty and not growth is a basis and outcome of ecological problems (Ibid, p. 53). Here, the responsibility for ecological problems and poverty shift away from economic growth to marginalized communities. This gives way to the promotion of economic growth in which the resources of poor people are commoditized and enclosed. Accordingly, capitalism takes a ‘conservationist stance’ to legitimise command over resources through what Hall (2011) would refer to as primitive accumulation. This control of nature, Escobar argues, is integral to neo-Liberal capitalism turning nature into capital.

Accordingly, several studies on land grabbing criticized agrofuels production for being responsive to a fundamental accumulation crisis of neo-Liberal capitalism (Fairhead *et al.*, 2012; White and Dasgupta, 2010; McMichael, 2012; Hall, 2011; Birch *et al.*, 2010; Baird, 2011). Biofuels production operates in a neo-Liberal logic of commodification of nature (Fairhead *et al.*, 2012) and liberalization of nature (Birch, *et al.*, 2010) to justify new forms of primitive accumulation or what Harvey (2003) refers to as ‘accumulation by dispossession’. This comes at the expense of marginalized communities whose livelihood alternatives are compromised due to resource enclosure with little or no compensation (White and Dasgupta, 2010).

This paper, addresses the land question and biofuels in Tanzania. It originated from a study conducted at different times in Kisarawe district, Pwani region from 2013 to 2014. Kisarawe was particularly worthwhile studying because of being one of the prime targets of land acquisitions. Indeed, the Sun-biofuels project, which was the primary focus of this study, acquired more about 8,211 hectares of land from 11 villages. Nonetheless, data collection took place in Mtamba, Kului, Mtakayo and Marumbo villages where a significant portion of land was transferred to the investor. In these representative villages, 8 key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with village chairpersons and Village Executive Officers (VEOs). Also, 6 interviews with district government officials, such as the District Executive Director (DED), District Administrative Secretary (DAD), land officers, and land valuation officers were conducted. Equally, one interview with a Member of Parliament (MP) for Kisarawe constituency was conducted. Interviews at the village levels also covered two representatives of the Sun-biofuels project. At the national level, two interviews were conducted with officials of the Ministry of Lands and the Tanzania Investment Center (TIC).

Further, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with participants in the representative villages were conducted to uncover the collective points of view of local people regarding land acquisition. The FGDs involved members of the village land committees, groups of women and youth. A total of 12 FGDs (3 from each village) were conducted. Additionally, data was collected

through a document review method involving the review of research reports, newspapers, official letters, legal and policy frameworks, official speeches and village minutes on land acquisitions. The selection of participants for KIIs and FGDs was based on the understanding that they are familiar about the contested Sun-biofuels project. The analysis of data involved in the first place transcribing and reflecting on the data collected on a daily basis during fieldwork by re-writing notes in a computer. Secondly, it involved making sense out of collected data by categorizing it on the basis of themes related to the research questions. The themes were placed and analyzed in the broader picture of research questions and the theoretical framework in which the paper is located. Lastly, the researcher made sense out of the major themes and categories by interpreting them and coming up with conclusions.

Following this introduction, the next section of the paper provides discussions on actors and motivations for biofuels at international level, Africa and Tanzania. A section that follows draws on a case study in Kisarawe districts to analyse land appropriation for biofuels. The analysis focuses on three dimensions: mechanisms employed to enclose land; levels of compensation; and the operation of the investor after acquiring land. The conclusion is provided thereafter.

Growth of land acquisitions for biofuels – actors and motivations

Biofuels continue to dominate recent land acquisitions due to growing concerns about energy security and climate change, which are the greatest challenges in the 21st century (Teeffelen, 2013). As Anseeuw *et al.* (2012) reveal, land acquisitions for biofuel has become predominant to the extent that it constitutes about 57.85% of ‘cross-referenced global’ land acquisitions by sector. Responding to the growing environmental and developmental importance of biofuels, states have progressively put in place policy incentives to promote biofuels. In Europe, for instance, the 2009 Renewable Energy Directive (RED) of the EU sets a legal binding target of 20% renewable energy. It also establishes a mandatory target of 10% of transport oil supplied from renewables by 2020 (Teeffelen, 2013). The EU and its member states provide subsidies to stimulate biofuels investments to meet the target on renewables (Mitchell, 2008; Teeffelen, 2013). According to Anseeuw *et al.* (2012), fulfillment of the EU target on biofuels requires the acquisition of approximately 20 to 30 million hectares of land. Thus, more cases of land deals should be expected in developing countries that are major targets of acquisitions.

Owing to increasing land acquisitions for biofuels production, which has been accompanied by the conversion of food crops, such as maize, cassava and rice to ethanol and biodiesel, global food prices doubled in the last two decades (Anseeuw, *et al.*, 2012). As such, major oil producers (‘Gulf states’), such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Qatar also embarked on land acquisitions in Africa and Asia to outsource food production (CHR and GJ, 2010; Kantai, *et al.*, 2012). Qatar, for instance, acquired 40,000 hectares of land along Tana River in Kenya, while the UAE and Saudi Arabia acquired 750,000 and 42,000 hectares in Sudan (Olanya, 2012). The same can be said about emerging economies, such as South Korea, India, Singapore and China, which embarked on land acquisition (Anseeuw, *et al.*, 2012) to address concerns over food and land scarcity, and energy security (CHR&GJ, 2010) and to increase their scope of political and economic influence in developing countries

(Charles, 2012; Ingwe, *et al.*, 2010). South Korea, for instance, acquired about 700,000 hectares in Sudan (Olanya, 2012; Vidal, 2010). This complex state of affairs leading to a scramble by different actors to control land is what Pearce (2012) associates to a current war over land in the Global South.

Gulf Sheikhs, Chinese state corporations, Wall Street speculators, Russian Oligarchs, Indian microchip billionaires, doomsday fatalists, Midwestern missionaries, and City of London hedge-funds slickers are scouring the globe for cheap land to feed their people, their bottom lines, or their consciences. Chunks of land the size of small countries are exchanging hands for a song (Pearce, 2012, p. vii).

As a result, cases of land deals in the world increased significantly in the last decade. The 2012 study of the International Land Coalition (ILC) estimated, for example, that from 2000 to 2010 there were land deals covering 203 million hectares equivalent to 8 times the size of the United Kingdom (UK) (Oxfam, 2012; Anseeuw, *et al.*, 2012). Africa has become the prime target (CHR&GJ, 2010) in which out of the 203 million hectares of land deals, which took place in the last decade, 134 million (66%) happened in Africa, 43 million (21%) in Asia and 19 million (9%) in Latin America (Anseeuw, *et al.*, 2012). Regarding land acquisitions for biofuels, Anseeuw *et al.* (p.25) argue:

In Africa, 66% of cross-referenced acquisitions are for biofuel production (compared with 15% for food crops), whereas food crops tend to be more important in Latin America (27%), as does mineral extraction (23%).

In its 2009 and 2010 reports, the WB postulates that African countries experienced many cases of land acquisitions because they have vast unutilized land. According to the WB, for example, there are about 201.5 million hectares of unutilized land in Sub-Saharan Africa. In the view of the WB, idle land is the one, which is targeted by investors wanting to invest on biofuels and food production (Hall, 2011).

However, it is worthwhile pointing out that the presence of more unutilized land does not seem to be a strong explanation for the presence of more cases of land acquisitions in Africa. Instead, what is happening in Africa is tandem to the underlying power of the dominant neo-Liberal driven market based economic arrangement, which African states embraced from the mid-1980s. Neo-liberalism promotes a free market economy, such as private sector investments (McMichael, 2012), including the commoditization of natural resources (Olanya, 2012). Thus, for many states in the Global South, biofuels production is viewed as an opportunity to promote private sector development by attracting investors (Ingwe *et al.*, 2010). Also, powerful actors are attracted to acquire land in Africa where land acquisition is relatively cheap and easy because the customary land entitlements of many local people are not virtually recognized in legal terms (McMichael, 2012). It is on this basis that many land deals in Africa have been marred by complaints over issues, such as low or no compensation. Indeed, from 2000, for instance, Africa lost USD 100 billion from land deals (Kantai, *et al.*, 2012) due to fraud contracts and low or no compensation (Sulle and Nelson, 2009).

For Tanzania, the promotion of biofuels should also be understood from forces stemming from national and international levels. Internationally, the growth was motivated by the push from developed countries, in particular Europe. Certainly, in 2005, the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ), for example, commissioned the first study examining the potential and implications of biofuels in the country. Based on this study, the government formed the National Biofuels Task Force (NBTF) in 2006 to promote and develop legal and policy frameworks on biofuels. Recommendations of the GTZ study were indeed reflected in the Petroleum Act (2008) in which the minister responsible for energy is empowered by Article 54 to “make regulations prescribing the use of food crops and the use of land for production of biofuels.”

Nationally, the promotion of biofuels coincided with the new agricultural policy famously known as *Kilimo Kwanza* (Agriculture First) intending to relieve the country from food insecurity (Mousseau and Mittal, 2011). Most importantly, the promotion of land acquisition for biofuels and food production coincided with the Big Results Now (BRN) initiative, a multi-sectoral development program housed in the Prime Minister’s office to implement ‘the Vision 2025’ intending to make Tanzania a country with a middle income economy by 2025. The modernization of agriculture is one of the priority areas expected to allow Tanzania to achieve ‘the Vision 2025’ (URT, 2013).¹

The state in Tanzania that have power and authority over land matters continues to retain a dominant position in terms of interventions to promote biofuels by welcoming investors and assisting them to acquire land (Kantai *et al.*, 2012; Kweka, 2012; Shemdoe and Mwangoka, 2011; Mshandete, 2011). Senior state officials, such as the President and the Prime Minister (PM) portrayed Tanzania as having vast unutilized land to support investments in biofuels and food production.² When addressing the World Economic Forum on Africa on May 4, 2010 in Dar es Salaam, President Jakaya Kikwete emphasized, for instance, “Tanzania has huge agricultural potential and we want to partner with the private sector to invest in this area heavily.” More specific to biofuels, during his 2006 visit to Canada, the then PM, Edward Lowassa highlighted the following when inviting Canadian investors to invest in Tanzania:

With the continued rise in the global demand for fuel and consequently the upward pressure on oil prices, bio-fuels are increasingly becoming alternative fuel sources. In Tanzania we have plenty of land for growing the relevant crops. We are, therefore, keen to see further investments in palm-oil, jatropha, and sugarcane for ethanol and we welcome interested partners (Mwami and Kamata, 2011, p. 5).

Concurrently, PM Lowassa emphasized the following during his speech to the National Assembly on April 20, 2007:

Honorable Speaker, there are many benefits of using renewable sources of energy that is friendly to the environment. Different ongoing studies here in the country confirmed that we have many great opportunities that if developed can promote the use of renewable energy at affordable cost. Those studies are about the production of crops

or plants that can be used to generate biofuels. Those crops include sugarcane, palm, jatropha, sunflower, cashew, cotton and sesame seeds. Because of this great opportunity, Honorable President Jakaya Kikwete during his recent visit in Sweden met several investors in that country who demonstrated willingness to invest on sugarcane production in the country. Jatropha farming that does not have huge expenses in production has shown great potential to generate bio-diesel. The biggest challenge that we leaders have is to encourage citizens to see the importance of planting jatropha. This is a great blessing. We should not wait anymore. Let us cultivate this plant to be able to achieve development (URT, 2007, p. 4 and 5).

One key point arising from the quotation above is that biofuels are viewed as a significant alternative sector to promote development. It is expected, for instance, that biofuels will allow Tanzania to generate about 4,010 million liters of bioethanol from sugarcane, maize, cassava, sugar beets, corn, wheat and sorghum and 1,726 million liters of biodiesel from sunflower, jatropha, soya, palm and coconut. Through biofuels, the country expects to export nearly 3,442 million liters of ethanol and 840 million liters of biodiesel (URT, 2008a). To accommodate this new priority sector, the government identified and allowed land enclosure for biofuels in related crops and plants in several places, including Kisarawe districts. The Sun-biofuels project, which is a case study that the present paper focuses on, is a point of reference. The next section analyzes the process of land acquisition by the Sun-biofuels.

Land enclosure for biofuels in Kisarawe: whose sustainable development?

Sun-biofuels, based in Britain, acquired about 8,211 hectares in 11 villages, namely Mtamba, Muhaga, Marumbo, Paraka, Kidugalo, Kurui, Mtakayo, Vilabwa, Mitengwe, Mzenga 'A' and Chakaye villages, Kisarawe district in 2009 for biofuels. Kisarawe district, which is located along the Indian Ocean, can support irrigation farming due to the presence of important water sources, in particular the Ruvu River. This has made it one of the key targets for land acquisitions; Sun-biofuels is a point of reference. However, as findings in the subsequent section suggest, land acquisition in Kisarawe is best explained by Harvey's (2003) concept of accumulation by dispossession – that the transfer of resources from local communities comes in the form of robbery – involving the use of threats, manipulation and violence. The resulting tensions between local people and the investor needs being understood as struggles against dispossession.

The analysis of land acquisition by the Sun-biofuels focuses on three aspects – namely mechanisms in which land was acquired; levels of compensation; and operation of an investor and reactions of local people. The sub-section below begins by analyzing mechanisms of land acquisitions.

Mechanisms of land enclosure for biofuels: threats, manipulation and violence

The mechanisms used to transfer land entitlements from local people to Sun-biofuels remain controversial; hence, rising tensions between local people on one hand and the investor and the state on the other hand. Local communities and their leaders complained that the transfer of land to Sun-biofuels was marred by the use of what Ribot and Peluso (2003, p. 164) would call

“the rights-denied mechanism of access.” Indeed, according to local people, the District Council and political elites used threats, coercion and manipulation, to transfer land rights to the investor. During an interview on October 2, 2013, the Member of Parliament (MP) for Kisarawe constituency, for example, reiterated the Swahili statement that *wanakijiji walihusishwa badala ya kushirishwa* (villagers were merely informed rather than being involved). The MP claimed:

During land acquisition by Sun-biofuels and afterwards the establishment of a jatropha plantation, consent was not sought from villagers in all the eleven villages. Villagers were merely informed and introduced to the investor by the District Council and the former Member of Parliament. Attendance of villagers during meetings to introduce the investor was interpreted by the government as consent to justify transfer of villagers’ land to the Sun-biofuels.³

Villagers of Mtamba, Muhaga, Kurui, Mzenga ‘A’ and Marumbo and their leaders accused District Council officials of using threats and divide and rule mechanisms to soften local people during the process of land acquisition by Sun-biofuels. The village chairperson of Muhaga claimed, for instance, during an interview on May 6, 2014:

District officers and our former Member of Parliament came here in 2006 to tell us that they had secured an investor who would be very advantageous to us and the other ten villages surrounding us. They told us that all other villages had accepted the investment proposal with the exception of our village, which they had visited last. We did not resist the government’s proposal fearing to lose the opportunity that other villages had endorsed. But later we realized that it was all a lie because this is the same thing that villagers in other villages were told.⁴

Local people of Mtamba, where the headquarters of Sun-biofuels is located, raised similar complaints. They claimed that they had not been informed about the acquisition of their land until they complained about district land officers who appeared in the village on March 23, 2006 to survey their land for the investor. After villagers’ complaints, the former MP, representatives of the investor and district officials convened a meeting in Mtamba village on August 23, 2006 to introduce the proposed investment. During the meeting, villagers were informed that the proposed project had been accepted in other villagers and that if Mtamba resisted it would lose the opportunity.⁵ The opportunities promised to villagers included the creation of more than 5000 jobs, construction of a biodiesel factory, distribution of jatropha seeds, promotion of out growers of jatropha and the provision of clean and safe water to every village.⁶ The complaints of local people against the investor are reflected in the 2013 study commissioned by the Ministry of Lands to assess the status of land ownership in Tanzania. The study revealed:

Some few elites and canny rich people obtained land through lobbying, in which case villagers were not involved in land allocation. Lobbying practices included using unfulfilled promises and tips to village governments/villagers as it was the case of

Bioshape Company in Kilwa district, and Sun-biofuels Company in Kisarawe district (United Republic of Tanzania – URT, 2013, p. 67).

Important to note is that the government study originated from a 2012 motion of the Shadow Minister for Lands, Halima Mdee, asking the government to stall ongoing land acquisitions in order to determine the amount of land already in the hands of investors. This, according to the Shadow Minister, would help to avoid 'land grabbing'. The government study established, however, that land acquisition in Tanzania does not warrant being called land grabbing and that only a small portion of about 1 million hectares is in the hands of foreign investors. Nonetheless, the study acknowledged the existence of irregularities during land acquisition for several investment projects, including Sun-biofuels.

Villagers in Kisarawe also complained about manipulation and threats during the valuation process, which excluded villagers. Villagers and their leaders claimed that less than 15 days were accorded for the whole process of valuation in the 11 villages.⁷ This is supported by ActionAid (2009) positing that the 11 days allocated to conduct the valuation of about 9000 hectares in 11 villages were insufficient to inventory all properties found in local people's farms and identify all land owners. Certainly, ActionAid (p. 31) observed that the valuation process in the 11 villages "was done in a rush, physical inventory of property in each farm was not done properly but estimated, also owners were not informed which properties were recorded for compensation." This, according to village leaders, the MP, Haki Ardhi and ActionAid (2009), disadvantaged local communities who had no financial power and authority to hire independent valuation consultants to conduct another valuation to counteract the one conducted by the government and investors.⁸

Owing to problems embedded in the valuation process, villagers claimed that they do not know the amount of land acquired by Sun-biofuels from each respective village and individual land owners. The quotations below, which were drawn from FGDs and KIIs in Mtamba, Marumbo and interviews with villages in May and October 2013 summarize:

What is hurting me is that act of not being informed about the amount of our land that the investor acquired from my village (FGD in Marumbo).

When we asked them to tell us the amount of our land they responded with rudeness (saying) that we villagers have no reason to ask because we do not know anything about land matters (KII in Mtamba).

We asked the land officer to tell us the amount of land they took away from our village, but he also said that he does not know because the investor was brought by higher authorities (KII in Marumbo).

These claims suggest that local people received compensation for an amount of land they did not know, as their land was never surveyed before. Equally, the complaints question the basis

used to determine the amount of compensation – suggesting that the government itself is unaware of the amount of land transferred to the investor.

On the other hand, officials of Kisarawe District Council and those of Sun-biofuels rejected allegations about using illicit mechanisms during land acquisition. The Acting Plantation Manager of Sun-biofuels claimed that consent was sought from individual land owners and that Ardhi University was hired as an independent consultant to work with district valuation officers to conduct the valuation. He also noted that Sun-biofuels would not be granted title deed and certificate of incentives by the Tanzania Investment Center (TIC) and the Commissioner for Lands if due procedures had not been followed.⁹ Equally, when responding to similar accusations raised by Friends of the Earth and Oxfam, the Director General of Sun-biofuels, Richard Morgan claimed:

We spent two years talking to villagers, eleven thousand people all together. We spoke to everyone we could find. The villagers decided what land we should have, and we paid compensation for what we took. Yes, sometimes small people do get trampled on. They are sitting at their desks in London, having never visited the farm, and criticizing us for land grabbing. Why aren't they pleased that we are protecting the forests from the charcoal burners? (Pearce, 2012, p. 259).

In a similar vein, the district land officer posited that Sun-biofuels legally acquired land. According to the land officer, villagers had consented to transfer 20,000 hectares, but the District Land Allocation Committee reduced it to 8,211 hectares to avoid leaving villagers without enough land for farming.¹⁰ Also, the district valuation officer posited that the process of valuation closely involved villagers and their leaders who accepted to transfer their land after being satisfied with the valuation process.¹¹ The same position was held by experts from Ardhi University who stated that the valuation process would hardly miss any individual land owner since each village was visited more than twice, and that village leaders were involved (Kitabu, 2011).¹²

Even so, neither the District Council nor the investor revealed the data indicating the amount of land acquired from individual land owners and villages. The district land officer and Sun-biofuels maintained that 8,211 hectares were acquired from the 11 villages, but they never revealed figures regarding the amount of land acquired from each village and individual land owners.¹³ This dilemma continues to heighten tensions between the investor and villagers who are demanding to know the amount of land acquired. Villagers are surprised by the fact that the valuation team was able to count and calculate the amount of compensation for mango trees and cashew nuts in individual farms of villagers, but refuse to disclose the amount of land alienated for each village. As such, villagers who lost nearly 50% of their arable land (Kitabu, 2011) suspect that the investor acquired more than 8,211 hectares, the officially known amount.¹⁴

Why would the state and its agencies employ illicit mechanisms to transfer land rights to biofuel investors to the detriment of citizens? Two observations are worthwhile noting here.

First is the aspect of differential power relations over access to land between local communities, investors and the government. Here, capital that defines and shapes structural and relational mechanisms over access to resources allow investors to buy property rights from local people and to buy support from influential people with authority at the community, district or national levels. Indeed, local people alleged that the former MP and government officials at the district level sided with the investor at the expense of local communities since they received a share of money.

However, important to note is that local communities should not be labeled passive actors just because they do not possess power in terms of authority and capital. Here, as Ribot and Peluso (2003) would argue, local communities possess other forms of social relational power, such as identity defined in terms of tribes, social groups and social networks allowing them to maintain and command access to their resources in situations when their resources are taken away through illicit mechanisms. Bundles of local community power can be used through violent or non-violent means. Thus, whereas biofuel investors possess legal and political license and sometimes illicit manipulations to gain access to land and water resources, they lack social license at the local level. The outcomes of this state of affairs are perpetual tensions between investors and the government on one hand and local people on the other hand. The tensions are especially inevitable because the legitimacy status of investors at the local level is questionable.

The second observation is that acts of the state and its agencies to use illicit mechanisms to transfer land to Sun-biofuels should also be understood within a dominant neo-Liberal development agenda adopted by Tanzania since the mid-1980s. Statecraft in Tanzania has in the last two decades been geared towards attracting foreign investors in different sectors, especially agriculture and mining. This has been reinforced by the new legal and policy frameworks on land matters, for example, the Land Policy (1995), the Land Act (1999) and the Village Land Act (1999), which promote private land investments. Thus, as Kothari (2005) would argue, illicit mechanisms of land acquisitions for biofuels are tandem to neo-liberal capitalism shaping the development agenda in Tanzania. According to Kothari, neo-Liberal ideology hides in the discourse of climate change to legitimize control of resources in favor of private biofuels investments and carbon trading. This is what Felli and Castree (2012 in Arnal, 2014) would call the neo-liberalization of climate change to facilitate the appropriation of resources held by marginalized communities in the Global South. The following sub-section analyses problems arising from compensation during the transfer of land rights to Sun-biofuels.

Land acquisitions for biofuels and the compensation impasse

The foregoing sub-section unveiled complaints of local people about the manipulation of the valuation process. As a result of problems embedded in the valuation process, Sun-biofuels is in conflict with more than 400 villagers who claim to not have received compensation. Village chairpersons and the VEOs of Mtamba, Muhaga, Kurui, Marumbo and Mzenge 'A' maintained that the complaints of the 400 villagers are genuine, and that those villagers are residents from villages where Sun-biofuels acquired land. In Mtamba village alone, for instance, about 30 villagers registered complaints about not receiving compensation. Individual land owners who never received compensation claimed that the investor and the District Council promised to pay

compensation in two different phases. They, therefore, expected to be paid during the second phase, but they have kept on waiting since 2009.¹⁵

The district land officer and Sun-biofuels confirmed that they have received a list of more than 400 villagers claiming compensation, but they maintained that the complaints of those villagers are baseless since none of the plaintiffs identified the land that he/she owned. They similarly denied claims of local people that compensation would be paid in two different installments. They argued instead that only four individual land owners were erroneously skipped during the valuation and compensation exercise in 2009 and that those four land owners were later compensated in 2010.¹⁶

Yet, individual land owners who received compensation complained that the amount of compensation was miniscule and did not allow local communities to engage in alternative livelihood activities after the enclosure of their land. During FGDs on October 3 and 4, 2013 in Mtamba and Muhaga villages, for instance, three of the participants furiously stressed:

They took away all land that I inherited from my parents. I received very little cents to buy salt and anchovy. I never wanted to receive those cents, but I am too weak a person to confront the *Mzungu* (the investor) and the government. I had to receive those cents anyways. I tell you our former Member of Parliament must have received a lot of money to sell our land. See now, we have become beggars of everything. Even water that used to be in our own land, we now beg from the investor.¹⁷

I cannot remember how much I received since it was very little cents. The little cents I received were not even enough to open a bank account in Kisarawe. For me, I see Sun-biofuels as the enemy who has come to conquer the development that we have been making through our ancestral land.

It was a sad moment when we received cheques. Ask anyone in all the surrounding villages, no one was satisfied at all with amount of compensation. That investor is a *bedui* (ruthless). He is the number one killer. He took away our land and he left us with nothing.

Similar to complaints in the quotations above, local people complained that the amount of land acquired by Sun-biofuels from individual landowners was never unveiled nor reflected during compensation.¹⁸ Table 3 below reveals.

Table 3: Compensation of selected individual land owners in Kisarawe district

Value of crops	Value of land	Disturbance allowance	Value of buildings	Rent allowance	Loss of business	Total compensation
134,200	771,200	30,848	-	-	-	936,000
173,800	333,900	13,358	-	-	-	512,000
141,600	1,777,000	71,080	-	-	-	1,989,700
43,000	92,700	3,708	-	-	-	140,200
117,000	117,000	4,680	-	-	-	238,9000
204,800	100,700	4,028	-	-	-	309,500
214,400	92,000	3,700	-	-	-	310,600
221,800	254,000	10,180	-	-	-	486,500
118,000	306,200	12,248	-	-	-	435,200
176,600	70,200	2,808	-	-	-	249,600
139,800	437,000	17,480	-	-	-	594,300
233,600	478,000	19,200	-	-	-	730,000

Source: Compensation register, Kisarawe district, October, 2013.

According to table 3, apart from not indicating the basis for compensation, like the amount of land acquired from individual land owners, the amount of compensation was generally too low, so much so that more than 75% of individual land owners received between 100,000 (approx. USD 70) to 1,000,000 Tshs (approx. USD 700).¹⁹ In total, Sun-biofuels was required to pay 838,943,655 Tshs (about USD 552,464) for all hectares it acquired. In this respect, each hectare was sold at the price of 98,215 Tshs (about USD 61) (Kitabu, 2011; WWF, 2008; Mousseau and Mittal, 2011; ActionAid, 2009).²⁰

According to villagers, the compensation was far lower than what they earned annually from the same land. Local people claimed, for instance, that one hectare of land planted with cassava earned them between 700,000 (about USD 450) to 1,000,000 Tshs (approx. USD 700). Therefore, about 9000 hectares acquired by Sun-biofuels could generate between 6.3 billion Tshs (approx. USD 3,937,500) to 9 billion (about USD 5,625,000) annually if cultivated cassava. This implies that the compensation paid is below 9% of what local people would earn annually by cultivating cassava. Also, each hectare of maize in Tanzania can yield three to four tones. One tone of maize if sold at peak price can attract 500,000 Tshs (about USD 312) (ActionAid, 2009). Thus, if maize was cultivated in all 9,000 hectares, not less than 13.5 billion Tshs (approx. USD 8,424,000) would be generated. Again, this suggests again that the total amount of compensation paid would be generated annually by only 225 hectares of cultivated maize.

In connection to the controversy surrounding compensation, villagers and their leaders further complained about the government transferring land rights to Sun-biofuels before it finished paying compensation in full. The total amount of compensation for all the land was Tshs 838,943,655 (about USD 524,339.8). Of this amount, Tshs 261,234,785 (about USD 163,271.7) was to compensate 152 individual land owners and the remaining was to compensate land that was never owned by individuals (bare land). About 152 individual land owners received their compensation, but compensation for the bare land was never paid. Yet,

the government went ahead to issue the title deed against Article 34 (2) (v) of the Land Act (1999) which requires “Prompt payment of full compensation for loss of any interests in land and any other losses that are incurred” before land transfer.

Sun-biofuels maintained that compensation for open land was never paid following contradictions over which government agency, between the District Council, village councils and the Ministry of Lands, was eligible to receive. Accordingly, an official of Sun-biofuels claimed that the Commissioner for Lands instructed Sun-biofuels to transfer compensation for open land to the Ministry of Lands, but the District Council insisted to be given the same since the land in question belonged to its 11 village councils. Village councils, at the same time, pressurized the investor to pay compensation into their accounts. As such, Sun-biofuels stalled the processing of compensation for the open land to allow the Ministry of Lands and the District Council to resolve their differences.²¹

However, the TIC and the Ministry of Lands claimed that when issuing the Certificate of Right of Occupancy (CRO) and the Certificate of Incentives (CI) to Sun-biofuels, they were unaware that the investor had not paid compensation in full. According to officials of TIC and the Ministry of Lands, the Kisarawe District Council, through its land officer, misinformed the Commissioner for Lands and the TIC by indicating that the investor had paid all compensation.²² In the view of the TIC and the Ministry of Lands it is possible that officials of the District Council colluded with the investor to shorten the process of land acquisition. The legal officer of the TIC claimed during an interview on April 30, 2014 in Dar es Salaam:

We were surprised to see representatives of villagers in our office. They came to complain about compensation while we had already issued all land documents to the investor. Looking clearly at what happened in Kisarawe, it is obvious that the land officer was bribed to shorten the process. It was not empty I think. He must have received something from the investor. I am sure he was not alone; there must be other district officials behind him.

However, it should be noted here that putting all blame on the land officer, who was demoted and transferred following accusations about collusion with the investors, is a narrow way of looking at controversies arising from land compensation by Sun-biofuels. The controversies should instead be understood in their complex form by considering power relations among the actors involved. According to the Land Act (1999) and the Village Land Act (1999), village land cannot be transferred to investors unless the President converts it to general land. “When the President receives our requests and recommendations to convert village land to general land, he seeks consultation with the Regional Commissioner and the District Commissioner to find out whether there are complaints from land owners”, noted a land officer in the office of the Commissioner for Lands during an interview on April 30, 2014 in Dar es Salaam.

It certainly came out during an interview with the current MP and conversations with some district officials that the land transfer to Sun-biofuels was pushed from above by higher authorities, which the investor approached first before going to the district level. It equally

came out that the former MP, who was accused of being behind the project, threatened district level government officials that he would report them to the State House if they delayed a project that had already been endorsed by higher authorities. Under this complex situation, the DC and the RC, who were supposed to report malpractices, also endorsed the controversial compensation given to individual land owners leave alone the fact that the compensation was not paid in full.

In this situation where the land rights of local communities are transferred to investors with little or no compensation and coupled with malpractices, the use of civil disobedience and even violence became key mechanisms for local communities to command access. As the next subsection reveals, cases of intrusion in the property of the investor are beginning to emerge in Kisarawe due to the controversial operation of the investor and failure to respond to villagers' complaints.

Controversial investor operations and reoccupation by local people

During its three years of operation (2009-2011), Sun-biofuels created less than 750 jobs as opposed to the 5,000 promised. It similarly cultivated about 2000 trial hectares of jatropha. However, in 2011 the investor unexpectedly closed the operation.²³ According to Sun-biofuels, the operation was closed because of a severe shortage of water affecting production. The company similarly experienced a shortage of funds since a lot of money was invested in fighting fungus and bacteria diseases. "They realized that jatropha was not a viable project. They didn't do research correctly", claimed the Farm Manager of Sun-biofuels during interview on May 6, 2013.

When the investor stopped the operation in 2011, leaving the property in the hands of security guards, local people mobilized themselves to form a task force to follow up pending compensation to the TIC and the Ministry of Lands.²⁴ They also demanded back their land by asking the government to revoke the title deed of the investor on the ground that the process of land acquisition did not follow due procedures.

Nonetheless, tensions between Sun-biofuels and local people have deepened in complexity as they gained new actors and interests compromising the demands of local communities. In the last three years the property was transferred twice to different investors who all confirmed ownership. In 2011, for example, villagers were caught by surprise when it came out that Sun-biofuels transferred its shares to another investor known as the 30 Degrees East (TDE).²⁵ "We are part of a consortium that purchased the shares of Sun Biofuels Tanzania. Given that we are currently in the process of raising additional funds, I am not at liberty to discuss publicly or off the record about our long-term plans" claimed one of the shareholders of the TDE during interview with *The Guardian* on September 29, 2011 (Carrington, 2011).

Nevertheless, no representative of TDE has appeared in Kisarawe since 2011. The property instead remained under the protection of private security guards supervised by a local Acting Plantation Manager. In October 2013, the Acting Plantation Manager of Sun-biofuels confirmed the transfer of the property to the TDE. Surprisingly, in May 2014, it was uncovered

that the property was under another investor known as the Mtanga Farm, which is said to have leased it from Sun-biofuels. The Farm Manager of Mtanga Farm claimed during interview on May 6, 2014 in Kisarawe:

I am not sure about the actual owner between the Sun-biofuels and the Thirty Degrees East. Right at the moment this farm is owned by the Sun-biofuels, but it is now leased to the Mtanga Farm Limited, but it has changed land use from jatropha production to cattle keeping and other crops. But all I can say is that this farm belongs to the Sun-biofuels, and I understand that my company wants to buy this property. We primarily want to do cattle keeping and other crops like cassava, maize and sorghum for food and biofuels.

In order to make peace with angry villagers, in February 2014 the Mtanga Farm paid pending compensation for the open lands. District Council officials and the TIC confirmed this during interviews in April 2014. Village chairpersons and VEOs of Mtamba, Mzenga 'A', Muhaga, Marumbo and Kurui similarly confirmed it. The compensation for open land was distributed to the 11 villages to finance social welfare projects like the construction of dispensaries, village offices and water infrastructures.

After pending compensation was paid, Sun-biofuels wrote to the Kisarawe District Council expressing its intention to change the land use plan from jatropha to livestock keeping. Its letter to the DED of Kisarawe on February 5, 2014 reads:

Further to the completion of land compensation payment the investor now intends to review its activities and we refer you to our letter dated 1st July, 2013 where we requested your confirmation that the Kisarawe District Council will; a) Support an official change/amendment in the land use of the Farm to include all aspect of agricultural activities, specifically to include, but not limited to, livestock and arable farming activities; b) Supports an official name change of the company, Sun-biofuels; c) Avails itself to meet with Sun-biofuels co-investors to confirm its support of the company and its renewed activities; d) In public forums, confirm its support of the company and its renewed activities.²⁶

As of May 2014, the new investor had brought in more than more than 360 head of cattle and employed about four youth from the Maasai tribe in Arusha to tend the cattle. Responding to concerns about changing land use plans without involving local communities, the investor claimed that it has a title deed empowering it to use the property and where possible to change land use plans. The Farm Manager of Mtanga Farm claimed during interview on May 6, 2014:

When you sell a bicycle, you cannot go back later in five years to say that the price was not good enough. I think villagers were happy to sell their land and get the money, but they never wanted the buyer. We have assisted the Sun-biofuels to pay compensation, but villagers do not seem to appreciate. All we are getting is resistance.

It seems villagers and village leaders are not happy to see cattle here. This farm has a title. Villagers have no power to intervene in what we are doing.

On the other hand, local people believing that they still have entitlement to the same property have started to sabotage the activities of the investor. From May 2014, for example, local communities attempted to block the entry of cattle to the property. To resolve this tension, in May 2014, the Kisarawe District Council asked the investor not to bring more cattle until a new land use plan is approved. The Farm Manager of the Mtanga Farm complained “The problem is that Sun-biofuels did not do land use change properly. We have been disallowed to bring in more cattle here because the change of land use has not been made.”²⁷ Local communities are especially worried about the change of land use plans from biofuels to livestock keeping, which is not labor intensive. Equally, since local communities in Kisarawe are not livestock keepers, they are worried that outsiders who have experience with livestock keeping will take the jobs generated through livestock keeping.

Thus, for local communities allowing a new investor to proceed with cattle keeping equals sacrificing the jobs and promises given by Sun-biofuels during land acquisition.²⁸ Also, allowing the new investor to proceed implies sacrificing the demands of more 400 villagers claiming that they were never compensated. Furthermore, allowing the new investor to continue with operations would imply sacrificing the demands of about 700 former employees of Sun-biofuels claiming that they were never paid their fringe benefits after retrenchment in 2011. Even worse, the Mtanga Farm does not recognize the promises of Sun-biofuels leave alone complaints of individual land owners skipped during the valuation or the complaints of former employees of Sun-biofuels about payment of fringe benefits.²⁹

Thus, given the risks placed on local communities and the controversial operations of investors, the use of such mechanisms as non-violent direct actions has become the ultimate solution for local people to maintain and command access to their prime land. As this section revealed, local people in Kisarawe sabotaged the new land use plan of the new investor to push their demands. Thus, accumulation by dispossession in favour of biofuels runs tandem to deepening struggles over resources.

Conclusion

Biofuels are premised to address concerns over climate change, energy security and poverty alleviation. The current paper addressed the land question and biofuels in Tanzania. More specifically, it analysed the process of land enclosure for biofuels in Kisarawe district. The paper uncovered that the process of transferring land rights from local communities to a biofuel investor involved the use of threats, force and manipulation in favour of an investor. The controversial transfer of land has left local communities in a dilemma given that they have lost both their land and the promises for a better future have not been realized. This, however, needs to be understood as being integral to the neo-Liberal logic, which Harvey (2003, p. 127) refers to as ‘accumulation by dispossession.’ This, as Harvey (2009, p. 178) argues, is ‘the turn of universalistic rhetoric of human rights, dignity, sustainable ecological practices, environmental rights, and the like, as the basis of oppositional politics.’ Accordingly, capital is hiding itself in

the name of climate change to legitimate the transfer of land from the local communities to private interests. Growing tensions over resources should, therefore, be viewed as struggles to counter dispossession.

End Notes

1. Launched in 2013 through financial support of development partners, the BRN initiative adopted the Malaysian model of development. The BRN initiative is centred on six priority sectors: energy and natural gas, agriculture, water, education, transport and mobilization of resources (URT, 2013).
2. Tanzania has about 94.5 million hectares of land of which 44.4 million hectares are suitable for farming. Even so, less than 20% of land suitable for farming is under effective use (Lugoe, 2008).
3. Interview with the MP of Kisarawe constituency on October 3, 2013 in Kisarawe.
4. Interview with the village chairperson of Muhaga on May 6, 2014 in Kisarawe.
5. Minutes of the Mtamba Village Assembly, August 23, 2006 during visit of the MP, representatives of Sun-biofuels and officials of the District Council to introduce the investment. The minutes were retrieved from office of the VEO on October 5, 2013.
6. Interviews and FGDs with villagers, the MP, village chairpersons and VEOs of Mtamba, Muhaga, Marumbo and Kurui villages in Kisarawe, October 2013 to May, 2014.
7. Interviews and FGDs with villagers and village leaders of Muhaga, Mtamba, Marumbo and Kurui villages in Kisarawe, October, 2013 to May, 2014.
8. Interviews with the MP of Kisarawe and the Director of Haki Ardhi on October 3, 2013 and on March 12, 2014 in Kisarawe and Dar es Salaam.
9. Interview with the Acting Plantation Officer of Sun-biofuel on October 3, 2013 in Kisarawe.
10. Interview with the district land officer on October 2, 2013 in Kisarawe.
11. Interview with the district valuation officers on October 3, 2013 in Kisarawe.
12. Interview with one of the lecturers from Ardhi University who was involved in the valuation of the Sun-biofuels project, April 16, 2014 in Dar es Salaam.
13. Interviews with the Acting Plantation Manager of Sun-biofuels and the district land officer in October 2013 in Kisarawe.
14. Interviews and FGDs with villagers and village chairpersons and VEOs of Mtamba, Muhaga, Marumbo and Kurui villages, October 2013 to May, 2014.
15. Interviews with village chairpersons and VEOs and FGDs with local people of Muhaga, Marumbo, Kurui, Mzenga 'A' and Mtamba in October, 2013 to May, 2014 in Kisarawe.
16. Interviews with Acting Plantation Manager and the Project Manager of Sun-biofuels on October 3, 2013 in Kisarawe.
17. *Mzungu* is a Swahili word implying a White person. Local communities frequently mentioned *Mzungu* to refer to Sun-biofuels, whose official representative was a Whiteman.
18. Interviews with the district land officer, the Acting Plantation Officer of Sun-biofuels and village chairpersons of Mtamba and Muhaga villages in October, 2013 and May 2014.

19. I retrieved the compensation registrar from the office of the district land officer and offices of the VEOs in Muhaga, Marumbo, Kurui, Mzenga 'A' and Mtamba, in October, 2013 to May, 2014.
20. Interview with the district land officer on October 2 and 3, 2013.
21. Interview with the Acting Plantation Manager, the Project Manager and the Farm Manager of Sun-biofuels in October 2013 and May 2014 in Kisarawe.
22. Interviews with the legal officer of the TIC and the land officer in the office of the Commissioner for Lands on April 30, 2014.
23. Interviews and FGDs with local people and village leaders of Mtamba, Mzenga 'A', Muhaga, Marumbo and Kurui villages in Kisarawe, October 2013 to May 2014.
24. Interviews and FGDs with members of the task force October 2013 and May 2014 in Kisarawe.
25. Interviews with the MP, village chairperson and VEOs of Mtamba, Mzenga 'A', Muhaga, Marumbo and Kurui villages in Kisarawe, October 2013 to May 2014.
26. The letter was retrieved from the Kisarawe District Council on May 5, 2014.
27. Interview with district livestock officer on May 7, 2014 in Kisarawe.
28. Interviews with villagers and leaders of Marumbo, Mtamba, Mzenga A and Muhaga villages in October 2013 to May 2014, Kisarawe.
29. Interviews with the Farm Manager and the Acting Plantation Manager of Sun-biofuels/Mtanga Farm, October 2013 and May 2014.

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