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Man and Land: Competing Ontologies, Colonial Legacies, and the Quest for Food Sovereignty

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Man and Land:

Competing Ontologies, Colonial Legacies, and the Quest for Food Sovereignty

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Abstract

Land is an ontological reality, which is at the center of different relationships to land. These relationships are situated in and a product of historical and spatial process that have an underlying power geometry. These different understandings of land tenure can create conflict when they intersect with competing interests in the same space. In Cameroon, this is currently the case in the form of large-scale land acquisitions, which often conflict with local communities as multinational corporations and local elites acquire land concessions with facilitation by the government in the name of development. This paper aims to understand this issue in Cameroon by contextualizing the phenomenon within its colonial and global history, working from the bottom up using the case study of CATAC in Nanga Eboko, and by using a spatial analysis to prove that this conflict over land is part of a broader agrarian transformative process.

La terre est une réalité ontologique, qui est au centre de différentes relations à la terre. Ces relations sont situées dans un processus historique et spatial qui a une géométrie de puissance sous-jacente. Ces différentes conceptions du régime foncier peuvent créer des conflits lorsqu’elles se recoupent avec des intérêts concurrents dans le même espace. Au Cameroun, c’est actuellement le cas sous la forme d’acquisitions foncières à grande échelle, souvent en conflit avec les communautés locales, les multinationales et les élites locales acquérant des concessions foncières avec la facilitation du gouvernement au nom du développement. Cet article vise à comprendre cette problématique au Cameroun en contextualisant le phénomène dans son histoire coloniale et globale, en travaillant de bas en haut en utilisant l’étude de cas du CATAC à Nanga Eboko et en utilisant une analyse spatiale pour prouver que ce conflit sur la terre fait partie d’un processus de transformation agraire plus large.
Acknowledgements/Dedication

I would first like to thank the SIT staff especially Christiane, Serge, and Nathalie for all of their support and hard work throughout the program. This abroad experience and independent project would not have been possible without them, especially from their support throughout my fieldwork. I would also like to express my gratitude to Clémence at RELUFA who supported me as well throughout my fieldwork. I would also like to thank the local contact\(^1\) so much for all of the coordination that you did with interviews in Nanga Eboko and Mbanjdock with local communities, government officials, and CATAC and thank you for sharing your perspectives with me. I would also like to thank my advisor Yvonne Takang for all of the words of wisdom and critiques that you have given to me to make this project stronger. Rachel Finn, thank you so much for choosing me to be part of your Ford Scholars project for the summer of 2017. Without that opportunity, I do not know if I would have come into this program knowing and wanting to do an independent study project in relation to issues of food sovereignty in Cameroon. I would also like to thank my family in the US, my homestay family here in Cameroon, and my friends – Pertulla, Aisha, Norman, and Clarke – I could not have done this without you all as well. Finally, I would like to thank everyone who took time out of their day to discuss with me during interviews and I would especially like to thank the chiefs, dignitaries, and communities who I dedicate this work to and who opened up to me about their local realities and shared their voices, which I will always remember and are at the center of this work.

\(^1\) I am not using their name for confidentiality and anonymity purposes.
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**Key Terms**

**Agricultural Inputs** – all substances or materials used in the production or handling of organic agricultural products: feedstuffs, fertilizers, cleansing agents, tractors, etc.

**Developmentalism** – economic theory that states that the best way for Third World countries to develop is through strong and varied internal markets and imposing high tariffs on imported goods

**Food Sovereignty** – the right to food; the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through socially just and ecologically sensitive methods; the right of local communities to make decisions and define their own food systems (La Vía Campesina)

**Land Tenure** – the relationship, whether legally or customarily defined, among people, individuals, groups with respect to land; institution with rules constructed by society to regulate behavior with who can use land and how it can be used (FAO)

**Land Grabbing** – the acquisition of land for speculations, extraction, resource control at the expense of farmers, agro-ecology, land stewardship, human rights, and food sovereignty

**Large-Scale Land Acquisitions** - defined as the leasing or selling of large tracts of land to foreign investors and/or domestic elites by the government typically in the name of development through the production of food and biofuels, transfer of technology, the increase in agricultural productivity, infrastructure projects, and/or job creation

**Large-Scale Land Investments** - the de-politicized oppositional word to “land grab” as it was “introduced and popularized by mainstream development institutions and governments” while being appropriated by those who rewrote it to be a phenomenon to increase capitalist agro-industry to eradicate poverty and create ecologically sustainable economic development with conditions of a “code of conduct” to create win-win outcomes (Borras and Franco 35)
New Enclosures – fencing in of land, pastures and woodlands, which is intertwined with complex socio-economic processes mediated by the incorporation of “abstract space” into market land

Ontology – the branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being; a set of concepts and categories in a subject area or domain that shows their properties and the relations between them

Land Ordinance law of 1974 – Cameroon’s land tenure system that regards all unoccupied land as national land and recognizes land ownership based on acquisition of land title

Customary Land Tenure – unofficial law in short; long-established customs (standards of community) of a particular place or locale that the general law regards as a legal practice

Statutory Land Tenure – term used to define written laws usually enacted by legislative body

Smallholder Farmers – farmers owning small-based plots of land on which they grow subsistence crops and one or two cash crops relying almost exclusively on family labor (NPA)

Long-term Lease – long-term rental of land that should enable the tenant to invest in its productive use

Standard Lease – assigned to a taker who wants to rent land for a period of up to 18 years and must make productive use of land and comply with current land and tax legislation and state controls
Introduction

Land is defined as a part of Earth’s surface that is not covered by water. Yet, it is also defined as a country or state or all physical elements in a nation or state bestowed by nature in the air, on the ground and within it. At the same time, it is viewed as property and a primary input of production and can been seen as listed underneath the subheading “Equipment, Land, and Plant” on an accounting balance sheet. But land is also central to identities, sense of place and self, and life. These different definitions reflect different orientations, ontologies, and understanding of land, which are situated in and are a product of historical and spatial processes with an underlying power geometry. When these different orientations towards land and ideas of ownership compete within the same place, this creates conflict, one of which is securing land tenure, especially within the context of Cameroon.

Defining Land Tenure

Land tenure, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization, is explained as “the relationship, whether legally or customarily defined, among people, as individuals or groups, with respect to land”. Land, in this sense, also includes other natural resources like water, trees, minerals, and crude oil. When thinking of land tenure, it is best to be understood as an institution or a socially constructed mechanism that transcends individuals in a community and regulates or governs behavior. This institution defines property rights, conditions of land allocations, as well as access for “use[age], control, and transfer” along with “responsibilities and restraints.” The terms of this institution varies according to context and lends itself to be a multi-dimensional and complex facet of society because it can be found at the intersection of sovereign states, local

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communities, indigenous and autochthonous groups with overriding, overlapping, complimentary, and competing interests as each player brings to the table “social, technical, economic, legal, and political motivations” in the same space.\(^4\) For example, this conflict between different understandings of land tenure can be seen in Cameroon in the context of “land grabs” or, its depoliticized counter-part, “large-scale land investments.” The term global land grab has become highly politicized and describes the exponential increase in (trans)national commercial land transactions mainly around the large-scale production and exportation of food and biofuels.\(^5\)

It implies that countries from the Global North or domestic elites work with governments in the Global South who enclose communal lands, typically in the name of development at the expense and dispassion of local farmers, local communities, indigenous, and autochthonous groups. Although this term rightfully so brings into the picture a way to frame the situation and motivate political action to resist enclosures and dispossession, it can at times have its limits as it prescribes conflict instead of giving nuanced and in-depth explanations of logics.

On the other hand, large-scale land investments is the de-politicized oppositional word to “land grab” as it was “introduced and popularized by mainstream development institutions and governments” while being appropriated by those who rewrote the narrative to be a phenomenon to increase capitalist agro-industry as a solution eradicate poverty and create ecologically sustainable economic development with conditions of a “code of conduct” to create win-win outcomes.\(^6\)

Whether you call this phenomenon a land grab or a large-scale land investment, it has created problems between local communities, the state, and multinational corporations in Cameroon. In this paper, the term “large-scale land acquisitions” or LSLAs will be used in

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reference to this issue and it will be defined as the leasing or selling of large tracts of land to foreign investors and/or domestic elites by the government, typically in the name of development, for the production of food and biofuels, to transfer of technology, to increase agricultural productivity, infrastructure projects, and/or job creation.

To fully understand this issue in Cameroon, instead of working within one of the two oppositional frameworks, the aim of this paper is to study how each player and/or group “shapes, perceives, and acts upon structurally based opportunities, rather than seeing opportunities for action as structurally given.” From here, the consequences can be understood because, as it is argued in The Politics of Evidence: Methodologies for Understanding the Global Land Rush, not enough attention has been paid to understanding what actually occurs on the ground to understand the overall impacts, whether positive, negative, or neutral. Therefore, an in-depth, bottom-up qualitative assessment of the socio-economic impact is needed through an ethnographic or historical and spatial analysis. People’s political reactions to large-scale land acquisitions or LSLAs must also be comprehended by seeing the ways in which the “axis” of conflict or contrasting and competing interests, ideas, and perceptions create issues between local communities, the state, and investors, which is set against the backdrop of a broader agrarian transformative process. This study, therefore, hopes to fill in this gap by working from the ground up with qualitative data by using the case study of CATAC in Nanga-Eboko to understand how this phenomenon of large-scale land acquisitions plays out in Cameroon.

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Cameroon’s Colonial Past and Present

Beginning with Cameroon’s colonial past, in Colonial Legacies, Land Policies, and the Millennium Development Goals: Lessons from Cameroon and Sierra Leone, Njoh and Akiwumi connect the colonial land tenure policies to the present and link this issue of land tenure to the development of Cameroon. Beginning in 1884, Cameroon was annexed as a German colony and many actions occurred with implications for land tenure. On July 15, 1896, the Crowns Land Act converted “vacant and unoccupied lands” in the territory into the property of the German Overseas Dominion. This mechanism is often described as terra nullius, meaning belonging to no one and in need of reclamation, which failed to recognize different types of land ownership that existed in the same space. This marks the beginning of the creation of governable spaces in Cameroon for capitalistic exploitation as the land was possessed through a legal framework that dispossessed indigenous populations so that raw materials from plantations could flow to the Global North, be processed, and sold as a finished product on the market. After World War I, the territory was converted to the Mandate Territory of the League of Nations under the Versailles Treaty of 1919. France and Britain divided the territory into two unequal parts. France took 80% of the territory and Britain claimed 20%. Under the League of Nations Mandate Agreement, each colonial administration was supposed to respect indigenous cultures and institutions, especially in relation to land tenure. This is exemplified in the UN Mandate Agreement of December 13, 1947, which stated:

In framing the laws relating to the holding or transfer of land and national resources, the administering authority shall take into consideration native laws...

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and customs, and shall respect the rights and safeguard the interests, both present and future of the native population.¹¹

The way each administration abided by this mandate has impacted current land tenure law and the phenomenon of large-scale land acquisitions presently. Beginning with Britain, this colonial administration used indirect rule, which is the “incorporation of traditional or indigenous structures into the colonial politico-administrative machinery” in their claimed called the British Southern Cameroons, which was administered as an appendix of Nigeria.¹² Britain’s use of indirect rule is exemplified in the Land and Native Rights Ordinance of 1910 and the Southern Cameroons House of Chiefs in 1957. The policy implemented here was more in line with allowing traditional institutions to retain some of its power and integrity. France, on the other hand, used direct rule, assimilation policy and paternalism.¹³ French colonial policy barely complied with the UN Mandate Agreement as metropolitan legislation was imported. In 1921, the La legislation d’attente extended the law of 1855 to Cameroon, which was followed by the creation of the 1924 Colonial Government Decree. This created two systems of land laws: one for l’indigénat or unassimilated members of the ‘native’ population and another for those who have assimilated or les évolutés. In On January 12, 1938, there was a decree that made all unoccupied and unused land the property of the state and, in 1946, Ordinance No. 38 gave colonial governors power over all native land.¹⁴ These laws demonstrate how colonial Cameroon was occupied by the French colonial administration, which did not recognize, disavowed, and

¹³ Paternalism can best be understood as the carrying out of policy by authority figures on behalf of people in a way that restricts freedom and responsibilities and subordinates people for their “best interest.”
dispossessed the native people of their land and the political institutions that governed it. The definition by the French of unoccupied and unused land must also be critiqued as this definition was based on their understanding of the terms, rather than how local communities viewed land use. This allowed the French to determine lands as “empty” even though it might not have been. Also, even though the British administration used indirect rule, the fundamental purpose of the colony prevailed. In both contexts, the appropriation of land through the mechanism of possession through dispossession was for plantation development purposes for the benefit of Britain and France. The North-South flows also began at this time as raw materials were extracted, sent to France and Britain, transformed into finished product to add value there, and then ship it back out into the world market and domestically for profit. These land laws created governable spaces and land that was viewed as the private property of the state. In front of the dehumanization, disavowal, and dispossession for capitalistic exploit was the colonial paternalistic narrative of a benevolent “civilizing mission” as the indigenous and native Cameroonians were pitted as “primitive” and “backwards” against “progressed” European “enlightened” culture.

“Post-Colonial” Cameroon

The legacy of this history can be seen in its neo-colonial form in post-colonial Cameroon’s current land tenure regime headed by the state. The francophone part of Cameroon gained independence in 1960 and the British Southern Cameroons gained independence a year later in 1961 to become part of the Federation of Cameroon. The Francophone majority adopted francophone leadership, policies, and principles for governance and enacted land laws that undermined and dismounted the role of traditional institutions as well as obligating assimilation.
This is personified in Decree No. 63-2, which was established on January 9, 1963 and “nullified all laws that attributed any role in [the] domain of land to traditional authorities [and]…all claims of entitlement to land back by customary institutions.” In 1972, the Federal system was abolished for a unitary state and the following year in July 1973 Law No.63-3 authorized the “Head of State to establish rules governing land tenure throughout the whole country,” which was later revised in 1976. Part I Section 1(2) makes the state the guardian of all lands in the country and Part III allows the government to convert lands with no officially issued certificate into the private property of the state. People in urban areas had 10 years to get a land title and those in rural areas had 15 years. After 1989, customary claims were null and void.

This shows how currently, the state of Cameroon does not recognize the importance of land in the traditional African framework as Western notions of private property are privileged over customary land ownership and traditional institutions like chieftaincies, which are still relevant and valued today in Cameroon by local communities but are at the bottom of the hierarchy in the administration of the nation-state of Cameroon. These local communities have a collective approach to land and believe that it “must remain in the family lineage, and that land belongs to the dead, living, and the unborn,” rather than that of private ownership. Current land law reflects that of its colonial history as the state can be seen as a neo-colonial consequence. So this

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issue of large-scale land acquisitions today echoes that of the colonial era and the current land tenure framework is used as a tool for means to this end.

**Legal Framework for Land Transactions**

There are currently three categories of land in Cameroon: public land\(^{19}\), private land\(^{20}\), and national land\(^{21}\). Most rural communities live on national lands where they practice subsistence agriculture, hunt, fish, and harvest. These communities claim the land through customary rights, but the state has the ultimate power can give itself private ownership to do a it pleases. For land allocations, they are usually investor driven and state assets become privatized before hand, which is a result of the structural adjustment program. This demand-led dynamic where investors determine the location and amount creates flexibility and the government gives the ultimate yes or no. Allocations for large-scale agricultural development projects are processed by and launched with MINADER and land can be acquired from the state, from a company that holds land rights, and from communities. Making land available can happen through a sale, an assignment, or allocation rights through a standard or long-term lease from 18 – 99 years, which is mostly the case in LSLAs. The state carries out bilateral transactions with those wanting to rent and rights are granted to companies\(^{22}\) that typically are privileged over the rights of the community due to classification procedures that transfer land from the national domain into its

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\(^{19}\) Public land includes “all land that cannot be acquired and which is therefore excluded from large-scale land transactions (Nguiffo and Watio 38).

\(^{20}\) Privately owned land is “land which is registered in the name of private (natural or legal) persons or legal persons under public law (that state and communities)” (Nguiffo and Watio 38).

\(^{21}\) National land “includes all land that is not privately appropriated. This is the default regime for land in Cameroon, and includes far more rural land than any other category” (Nguiffo and Watio 38).

\(^{22}\) Rights Granted to Companies: (1) Commercial Rights Beyond Land, (2) Rights allowing the company to make savings at the expense of the state and/or communities, (3) Option rights assigned to the company, and (4) Rights intended to protect the investment.
own estate. This is the legal framework through which LSLAs occur. Now we must see what, in global history, caused this demand to erupt.

Food and Oil Crisis of 2008

Large-Scale Land Acquisitions began in 2008 after the Global Food and Financial Crisis. Nations that are financially strong, have a high population pressure, but are poor in natural resources who suffered from soaring prices of staple foods have been securing land with crop-producing potential. Private investors also are part of this trend as LSLAs are seen as a source of financial gain. International financial institutions like the World Bank and the IMF also have a hand in this phenomenon as they put forward recommendations that promote LSLAs. The demand is also for agro-fuels as oil-dependent countries have targets for production that incorporate biodiesel and bioethanol with traditional transport fuels. Since there is still fear of another crisis and a lack of food security in emerging countries like South Korea, Japan, India, and China, these governments and private corporations from these countries seek to stabilize supply by securing land in other countries. For example, Qatar has only 1% of its land suitable for farming and has purchased 40,000 hectares in Kenya, land in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Sudan. In Cameroon, according to the March 2015 Research Report on Agro-Industrial Investments in Cameroon conducted by the Center for the Environment and Development, there are thirty-six companies in Cameroon who are seeking or holding land concession, which

23 Rights of Community from Article 12 of Decree 76-166: (1) Property rights to spaces covered by land titles held by individuals or local communities, (2) The right to use national land and, under more limited conditions, to use state land.
24 International Financial Institution recommendations: (1) scaling up social safety nets, (2) eliminating tariffs on key food items, (3) encouraging private investment in agriculture in the wake of the food crisis, (4) encouraging land leases and purchases by assisting private investors in agribusiness to invest in developing countries, and (4) encouraging large-scale and capitalistic agriculture.
25 Land in Cambodia was purchased for rice production.
26 Land in Sudan was purchased for the production of oils, wheat, and corn.
includes companies from India, France, the United States, Malaysia, Russia, Brazil, etc.\textsuperscript{27} For this paper, in the context of CATAC in Nanga Eboko, China also falls into this category of being food insecure and with domestic resource pressures. China has one of the largest populations in the world and accounts for roughly 23\% of the world population, which is projected to reach 1.6 billion by 2030. This population pressure, characterized by the One Child Policy, is a concern as cultivable land in China has been shrinking since the 1980s as the cultivation rate is at 10\% and cultivated land per capita is 0.086 hectares. With water shortage issues that threaten agricultural production coupled with increased urbanization,\textsuperscript{28} industrialization, and the concern for another crisis that could cause food commodity prices to soar, the People’s Republic of China has participated in securing land abroad, especially in Cameroon, but not without the hand of the GoC\textsuperscript{29}, which has its own interests.

\textit{Cameroon’s Current Agriculture Climate and Development Strategies}

According to the FAO, Cameroon has 6.2 million hectares of arable land and only 1.3 million hectares have been cultivated. Agro-ecological diversity, access to seaports, and irrigation potential makes Cameroon a very attractive country for LSLAs. Since agriculture makes up about 22.3\% of the country’s GDP and around 70\% of the country’s labor force, Cameroon has adopted an economic development policy that invites foreign direct investment in the agricultural sector for growth to jump start its vision of Second Generation Agriculture.\textsuperscript{30} Cameroon opened

\textsuperscript{27} Ngouiffo, Samuel, and Michelle Sonkoue Watio. \textit{Agro-Industrial Investments in Cameroon: Large-Scale Land Acquisitions Since 2005}. International Institute for Environment and Development, 2015.

\textsuperscript{28} Increased urbanization has contributed to the decrease in agricultural production that makes up GDP. For example, between 1978 and 1999, urbanization increased from 17.92\% to 30.89\%.

\textsuperscript{29} GoC or the Government of Cameroon

\textsuperscript{30} Second Generation Agriculture in Cameroon is defined as an agrarian transformation that involves the modernization of farming, providing better training, taking advantage of scientific agricultural technology, and innovative financing. This transformation also includes the processes of raw materials to add value within the country, increasing exportation, reducing imports, and creating new jobs.
its doors began in 2008, which corresponds with the economic crisis, and China\textsuperscript{31} has been in partnership with Cameroon. The partnership between Cameroon and China began in 1972 with the signature of agreement and economic and technical cooperation in Beijing. The year 2009 marked the launch of short-terms and long-terms projects by China in Cameroon. This developed into JEICAC\textsuperscript{32} where the objective is for China and Cameroon’s private sectors to merge, development in Cameroon increased through Chinese inputs, the creation of joint-ventures and technology transfers, and Cameroon’s products being sent to Chinese customers. The benefit to the Chinese is projected to be an increase in the stock of capital goods through cheap capital imports, increased production of goods and services as lower cost, export of commodity foods to China, and employment opportunities.

One of the results of this agreement is IKO, which is a Chinese company that is a state-owned conglomerate called Shaanxi State Farm. First operated through IKO Ltd., a local company was established called Sino-Cam Ltd., which has numerous projects and agricultural ventures in Cameroon. The IKO project is located on a rehabilitated rice farm in Nanga Eboko that originally was owned by a Taiwanese corporation in the 1960s, but was abandoned when China changed to the People’s Republic of China. In January of 2006, a $120 USD million investment agreement was signed between IKO and GoC\textsuperscript{33} for a long-term land concession for 99 years\textsuperscript{34} for the production of rice, maize, and cassava. At the moment where the IKO project is location,

\textsuperscript{31} The People’s Republic of China
\textsuperscript{32} JEICAC or Journées Economiques, Industrielles et Commerciales du Cameroun en Chine
\textsuperscript{33} GoC or Government of Cameroon
\textsuperscript{34} According to an agreement between the government of Cameroon and the company, Sino Cam Iko Agriculture will receive 6,000 hectares of land in the Upper Sanga Division (1,000 hectares in Mbanjdock for cassava production, 2,000 hectares in Nanga Eboko for rice production, and 3,000 hectares for the production and processing of cassava). See http://cameroon-info.net/stories/0,27126,/@,enquete-sur-la-rizculture-chinoise-a-nanga-eboko.html.
there is a CATAC\textsuperscript{35}, which was implemented with the support of CHINA AID.\textsuperscript{36} As of now, it is 100 hectares pilot project launched with MINADER with administrative and educational buildings for the experimentation and transfer of seeds to the local community. It is said that there is an administrative block on the legal status of the land for the IKO project, but it is also said that CATAC has replaced IKO.\textsuperscript{37} It is here where the conflict over land tenure will be used as a case study for this paper.

This introduction has showed how colonial land tenure policies have been re-inscribed into Cameroon’s post-colonial state through its legal framework for land tenure. What also has been shown is how current development strategy of agrarian transformation paired with food-insecure countries like China creates an environment where the state encloses land for foreign-direct investment, which mimics the North-South flows of colonialism. This context is the backdrop against which the conflict in Nanga Eboko and Mbanjdock must be understood.

**Methodology**

*Site Selection*

This study was conducted in Yaoundé and with eight communities between Nanga Eboko Mbanjdock, which includes Nkoambang, Mengang, Ndjore, Minkouma, Eden-Angong, Akak, and Etog-Nang. These specific locations were chosen due to current conflict with land tenure between local communities, the state, and the Chinese corporation CATAC and logistical factors were also taken into consideration when making this decision due to distance, time, and available funds.

\textsuperscript{35} CATAC or the Center for the Application of Agricultural Technology

\textsuperscript{36} CHINA AID – Chinese Development Aid

\textsuperscript{37} The contract between the government and Shaanxi has not been made public for confirmation.
Target and Sample Selection and Justification

The target population for this study includes local and national administrative authorities and officials, civil society organizations, the management of agro-industrial enterprises, and smallholder farmers. The sample selection for smallholder farmers, chiefs, and dignitaries as previously mentioned includes seven communities between Nanga Eboko and Mbanjdock. In total, about seventy smallholder farmers were interviewed including chiefs and dignitaries. The civil society that was interviewed on this issue was RELUFA (Le Réseau de Lutte Contre le Faim). For local authorities in Nanga Eboko were interviewed including the Mayor, MINDCAF (Ministère des Domaines du Cadastre et des Affaires Foncières), MINEPDED (Ministère de l’Environnement de la Protection de la Nature et Développement Durable), Sous-Préfet, and Préfet and at the national level, a technical advisor to the Minister of Agriculture was interviewed within MINADER (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development) was interviewed. The management within CATAC was interviewed as well. The reason why the sample population targeted a range of people was due to the fact that there are many stakeholders within this conflict and for this study, it is important to give and understand the perspectives from each player to enrich the depth of analysis.

Entering the Field and Establishing Rapport

For fieldwork in Nanga Eboko and Mbanjdock, RELUFA shared their local contact there. The local contact scheduled and organized dates and times when I would visit local chiefs, dignitaries, their communities, and smallholder farmers. When I arrived in Nanga Eboko, I

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38 One community was a settled autochthonous group.
received authorization to be present at réunions in the villages to ask questions there from the Sous-Préfet and Préfet after submitting my research proposal and interview questions. Then, when we visited each community, the local contact and I would re-explain the project and my objectives from the study and would hand out consent for the participants. For local authorities, I used the contacts that RELUFA shared with me to gain access to them and introduced myself a week before via phone calls, SMS, and emails to let them know who I was, why I was coming, and to schedule interviews. For interviews and discussing with RELUFA, this relationship was developed through SIT. As for CATAC, the local contact and I stopped by and the manager, owner, and administrator happened to be there and were willing to be interviewed after I introduced myself, the project, the information that I wanted from them, and why. For securing interviews in MINADER in Yaoundé, I gained a contact with a cabinet member who was willing to help me schedule interviews within high-ranking members in the ministry.

*Settings of Study*

When interviewing with chiefs, dignitaries, and smallholder farmers, the setting was reunions\textsuperscript{39} at the Chefferie\textsuperscript{40} in each community. Either inside or outside, the interviews took place in groups ranging from small to medium\textsuperscript{41} as this reflected the collective nature of the communities and their collective voice. For local administration and authorities, national administration and authorities, and RELUFA, interviews took place in their respective offices and the interview with the mayor of Nanga Eboko occurred over the phone due to the fact that he was out of town, but

\textsuperscript{39} Reunions are meetings within a chiefdom with the chief, dignitaries, and the people within the community the chief is responsible for to discuss what is going on in the community, discuss issues, etc.

\textsuperscript{40} Chefferie is defined as a political organization of traditional society, family-based or clan-based, that is built around the chief.

\textsuperscript{41} Groups ranged from 4 – 20 people.
still willing to discuss. As for CATAC, the interview happened at the school for agricultural experimentation in Nanga Eboko.

Data Collection Procedures and Justification

For all interviews that took place face to face, an explanation of myself, the project and objectives were given and verbal consent was given by participants to record as well as consent forms in English and/or in French, which were signed and a copy was left for participants with my contact information. The interviews were semi-structured as I had a set of questions for each stakeholder, which allowed flexibility depending on the nature of the conversation. For the interview conducted over the phone, I received verbal consent to record. Also, at the end of each interview, participants had an opportunity to ask me questions.

Storing, Sorting, and Coding of Data

The interviews, when permitted, were recorded on a smart phone and transcribed. The transcriptions are stored on a password-protected laptop and then coded for six themes: ontological understanding of land, perspective on Land Conflict, view of CATAC, role of the government of Cameroon in conflict, future for land, and development in the agricultural sector. After the information had been analyzed, it was triangulated to identify the different points of view that emerged that contribute to the current conflict with large-scale land acquisitions and to determine their impacts now and for the future.

Data Analysis – Spatial Perspective

For data analysis, qualitative data was coded and then separated into comparative tables after being transcribed and classified. After, the information was triangulated to see different points of
view and how they created conflict and their consequences in this case study using a spatial analysis.\textsuperscript{42}

\textit{Ethical Concerns and Human Subjects}

This study followed the guidelines of SIT IRB and consent forms were signed and copies were left with participants. When not possible due to interviews taking place over the phone, verbal consent was given. Participants were notified of their rights of privacy, anonymity, confidentiality through consent forms, and their ability to hold the researcher accountable if compliance is not met.

\textit{Reliability, Strengths, and Limitations}

As a researcher from the United States who is an African-American woman from middle-class America, I acknowledge that I bring with me many biases and an inability to fully understand the context of this study and I recognize how my presence has an impact on responses to interview questions. The strengths of this research is that is coming from a bottom up approach using a spatial analysis that attempts fills in the gaps in existing literature. Another strength of this methodology is that interviews were semi-structured so that they can be guided instead of rigid and the framework could be revised if necessary. The limit to this research is that this one case study does not represent all large-scale land acquisition conflicts across the country and in the world, so the information cannot be generalized, but it may be transferrable. Another limit to this study is that it does not focus on women specifically. Even though men take part in producing

\textsuperscript{42} A spatial analysis is a way to understand contentious politics by illuminating the connections between daily life experiences and broader social, political, and economic processes and it “demonstrates how spatial constitution and context shapes political collective action” (Martin and Miller 143).
cash crops like cocoa and coffee, land tenure also impacts women disproportionately because they represent over 50% of the population and make up a majority of the subsistence farming for household. Also, due to time and funding restraints, I was not able to locate people who worked for CATAC.

**Presentation of Findings - Small – Holder Farmers and Local Communities**

The intentions of these questions were to understand how local farmers viewed land, their perspectives on the conflict, and how they would like to develop the agricultural sector in Cameroon. From interviews with smallholder famers, local communities, chiefs, and dignitaries, the responses to the questions were rather consistent. When referencing IKO/CATAC, not every community understood who I was referring to, but understood when I said “the Chinese.”

1. **What does your land mean or represent to you?**

   In general, each community had a strong connection to land describing it as their base of life, source of livelihood, their home, where they hunt, produce, cultivate, guard as it is passed down generation to generation with natural barriers that delimit the space. Also, every community had tombstones and graves of their family members who had passed away next to the homes that they lived in. Often land had been in the family since before independence. Each community responded with similar and insightful responses to this question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Quotes/Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community #1</td>
<td>&quot;Nos terres c’est nos vie. Sans la terre, nous ne peuvons vivre.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Nous ancêtres sont nés [là et] ils sont morts&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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43 This is a legacy of colonialism, which changed the divisions of labor. Traditionally, women participated in agricultural activities, which became re-casted as men being associated with cash crops and women just participating in subsistence agriculture.  
44 Observation.  
là... c’est n’est pas finir.”

Community #2  “[La terre est] notre patrimoine naturel.”

“Elle est sacré.”

Community #3  “On est riverant.”

Community #4  “[La terre est] un Bonheur.”

Community #5  “Elle est un domaine naturelle...pour bien être.”

“[Nous avons] un relation de complicité avec la terre...sans la terre, il est rien.”

“[La terre est pour] manger, m’exprimer, et partager avec mes frères.”

Community #6  “C’est patrimoine pour nous.”

“C’est notre richesse.”

Community #7  “La terre pour nous c’est la vie...notre vie...”

Community #8  “La terre est notre vie.”

Local Contact  “Sans la terre, il n’ya pas de vie.”

2. Do you have a land title?

This question was a follow up to the first question and every community said that they did not have a land title, which followed with explains and expressions about how difficult it is to get one, which is personified by the followed quotes:

- “[Nous n’avons pas d’]un possibilité [pour un titre foncier].” 59
- “C’est très difficile pour obtenir un titre foncier…il faut avoir de l’argent.” 60

Again, land in each community was handed down generation to generation and the traditional institution of the chefferie was also used to handle land issues and conflicts amongst the community and divide land as well.

3. Have you confronted any conflicts over land tenure?

Every community except one said they had conflict with the Chinese. The community that did not have a conflict said it was because they were not close enough for it to impact them.

<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community #1</td>
<td>This community described how the company came in with GPS systems and set boundaries without consulting the community, who are autochthonous. When the community confronted IKO, the company said that they did not have to talk with them because they worked with the government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community #2</td>
<td>“Nous ne sommes pas d’accord.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“[Nos ancêtres, ils sont mortés pour la terre” pendant colonialisme et imperialisme.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community #4</td>
<td>“Il n’y a pas de personnes pour nous defender.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Ils sont venus par force parqu’ils ont l’autorités...[et] ne contacte pas la bas people dans la village.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community #6</td>
<td>“On n’était pas sensibilizer.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. How have the Chinese/IKO/CATAC helped and/or hurt your community?

Every community responded by saying that the community only hurt them because of the land acquisition, which threatens the future for their children. Each community described how the company invaded without consulting the local community and how now they are forced to deal with their presence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community #1</td>
<td>“Ils sont entrés dans notre forests sans autorizé.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community #2</td>
<td>“IKO ne fait rien. Il blesse beaucoup.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community #3</td>
<td>“Il n’ya pas de contacte.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. **What role should the government play with land tenure?**

Two out of the eight communities laughed in response to this question and each community mentioned that the government should consult and sensitize the community beforehand, confirm that the company consulted the local community, act as a facilitator, and “protéger nous…la population par contre ce n’est pas ça” because “c’est nous qui habitons [sur] le terrain.” The local contact mentioned that “le régime foncier actuelle du Cameroun n’est bien fait…c’est à l’avantage de l’état” and there are a lot of contradictions further explaining how the state does not play the role that it should as it “exerce leur pouvoir sur le terre.”

6. **Are you afraid of being evicted in the future?**

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The response to this question was unanimous. Every community had fear for being evicted in the future.

7. *How can land be secured better?*

For this question, many communities explained how land could be better secured with transparency and participation with the population. For example, Community #1 described how “le gouvernement est qui peux mieux sécurisé la terre avec la participation…avec la population” and si l’authorité respecte le loi, nous ne voyons pas IKO…sans consultation.”

8. *How can you better gain from your work?*

The response to this question was consistent.

<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community #1</td>
<td>“Regarde bien. En fait, humanité…c’est travail qui fait la civilization dans la monde” and agriculture is the way to develop because it is already how people are living.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Dans le village, nous faisons encore l’agriculture traditionelle…archaic. Nous n’avons pas des machines. Nous travaillons avec les mains…nous sommes malade parce que nous travaillons manuellement…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Si un jour l’état decide donner les machines” it would help because he expressed if a moan only works with his arm, tu vas faire combine de hectares? Par rapport, ce qui travaille avec des tracteurs, il fait” hundres of hectares.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community #4</td>
<td>“Mechanizer c’est bon…Nous voulons faire le developpement [for increased salar)...[mais] nous sommes bloquer par rapport la mechanization”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community #6</td>
<td>“Mechanization est très bien.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Every community spoke about how they wanted mechanization and inputs like tractors, fertilizer, better infrastructure, and other agricultural inputs to increase yields so that they could raise themselves out of poverty and move beyond working with their hands and a

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machete, but they also described how it is difficult because they do not have the means. Community #8 discussed of needing a farmers bank in order to access credit that they need to purchase inputs. The only community that is against mechanization said that it is because mechanization is not good for their forests.

**Presentation of Findings – National and Local Government**

The government of Cameroon currently is taking action to develop through an agrarian transformation process, which is the backdrop of this case study. These questions were aimed at understanding the logic of national and local officials about the development sector as a whole and as well as their perspectives on the conflict in Nanga Eboko and Mbanjdock.

1. *What actions have and have not been working when it comes to the development of the agricultural sector?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MINADER - Yaoundé</td>
<td>“So farmers have small pieces of land and they cannot really mechanize their agricultural practices...even when land is available, access to that land is a big big problem.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We have inputs, which we don’t produce around like fertilizers and pesticides.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seeds: “Capacity to produce and satisfy all farmers is still limited” when it comes to the seeds and seedlings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Cash crops” have been promoted successfully, “bringing youth into agriculture” and “diversifying agricultural products.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Official #1</td>
<td>“So the state gives land out like their...participation to development.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Official #3</td>
<td>“Farmers are not using inputs and do not know about them.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From local and national officials, the challenges that were identified include access to land for farmers, the use of inputs, and seed distribution. The identified strengths were the
incorporation of youth into agriculture, diversification, promotion of cash crops and giving out land for foreign investors.

2. How does the project in Nanga Eboko specifically benefit or hinder the development of Cameroon?

In general, national and local officials thought that the project is beneficial to Cameroon.

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MINADER – Yaoundé</td>
<td>“Financial assistance because taking care of their technical staff who are giving us assistance. So it is helping Cameroon to produce more rice and employing Cameroonians there, and of course, I can say it is benefiting Cameroon. I don’t want to look at the bad.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“People are complaining that rice has been produced here in Cameroon, but not benefiting Cameroon because most of it goes back out.” (unofficial perspective)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Official #2</td>
<td>“[CATAC] helps by transfer[ing] technology to local community to optimize yields”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Are there conflicts between and smallholder farmers when it comes to land ownership and land use?

The response to this question was consistent. Each government official began by describing how all land in Cameroon belongs to the government. Only two officials acknowledge the situation and the rest either avoided the answer or said there was not a problem.
### Government Official | Quotes/Responses
--- | ---
MINADER – Yaoundé | “Land in Cameroon is owned by the government.”
| “People go ahead and say that they are taking land and give it to them and they’re producing the rice, which is not benefiting Cameroon. That is how people are looking at it.”

Local Official #1 | “…the problem is that…so many investors come and they go straight to the field and try getting in touch with the villagers. That complicates situations.” And “…they say they were not consulted…they cannot say they weren’t consulted. Now there had been a lot of sensitization. Though I was not directly involved, but I know there had been sensitization…[and] evaluations.”

Local Official #2 | The only problem is communication. Yes there are land conflicts, but IKO/CATA is using state land with the objective of improving the condition of the people. (Paraphrase)
| “S’il l’état consulte venir ameliorer bien être des populations…l’état ne va pas hésiter pour…un…apporter son accueil au project.”

Local Official #3 | Responded with saying that there were no conflicts between villagers and the company.

### 4. What investments strengthen rural people’s land rights and promote the diversification of food systems?

From the responses, in general, officials at both levels discussed the need to change the laws and invest directly into small farmers. One official responded by saying investments that valorize local community’s land rights are needed because “la population…pour elle, ce n’est pas evident d’avoir un titre foncier sur les terres.”\(^{65}\) Also, Local Official number #3 described how small farmers do not have a lot of power so change laws to favor the land rights for the small farmer.\(^{66}\)


5. How can international trade systems be incentivized to create a conducive environment for more stable and affordable local food systems?

From the responses, the answer to this question included market liberalization, increasing the salary of farmers, and moving local farmers into industrialization to develop agriculture.

<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MINADER – Yaoundé</td>
<td>“…if we can have an open-market system, especially for the inputs that are coming in, so that there will be competition…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Official #2</td>
<td>“Development of agricultural system to become more powerful due to differences between two countries” (Paraphrase).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Local Official #3        | Increase the salary of farmers and have a politics that transforms the local context (Paraphrase).  
                          | Sustain the local people and move to industrialization so international investment can support and take advantage of demand (Paraphrase). |

6. Under what circumstances and for whom is increasing smallholder agriculture productivity more cost-effective at reducing poverty than the expansion of large-scale commercial agriculture?

Most officials preferred large-scale commercial agriculture in terms of foreign direct investment over increasing smallholder productivity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government Official</th>
<th>Quotes/Responses</th>
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</table>
| MINADER – Yaoundé       | “I for one would prefer large-scale because when you produce you know large-scale, you cut down on the cost of production and what do you have. But unfortunately it is such that it is difficult because of our farmers who are still old who are bringing in young ones now who stick to their little parcels, bits and pieces of land.”  
                          | “They prefer to produce on their small parcels of land. They…the small-scale farmers. They are sure of their land and there is a difficulty that |
we’ll have to address.”

“The government is already making way to give land to big multinationals, but to the small farmers, they still have roadblocks to acquiring land for farming.”

Local Official #1

When I asked if agro-industrial projects strengthen rural people’s land rights as a follow up to clarify his answer he responded with “effectively.”

Local Official #4

Thinks that increasing smallholder farmer’s productivity is cost effective at reducing poverty than foreign direct investment.

Presentation of Findings – CATAC

From this interview, a manager of CATAC\(^67\) described the project as an experimentation facility for the transfer of technology or seedlings to the local population to the benefit of Cameroon because seeds were being given out for free. When asked to describe the project, one person in the management of CATAC said:

“So this project has an aim of improving uh…the agricultural system in our country in Cameroon. So yeah this project consists of Chinese expats in agriculture coming to transfer agriculture technology to Cameroon and expats from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Cameroon” for cassava, rice, and corn (Corporate Management).

He further described the work force for CATAC:

“We usually have about 100-200 workers working here…and all of our outputs we send to the…agricultural delegation in Nanga Eboko…where they share their seedlings to the

\(^67\) Centre d’Application des Technologies Agricoles
farmers who are ready to have new hybrids from China and who are willing to have the new species” (CATAC Management).

When asked in CATAC has faced any conflicts over with local populations he responded with challenges in terms of productivity:

“...we have people who...while working are learning...how to differentiate the different varieties which makes the productivity to be low/slow. If they were already used to the different varieties our product would be very high” (CATAC Management).

When asked about the working conditions of the local population he responded by saying that they about 150-200 local people are hired during the planting season and receive about 60% of minimum wage. 68

**Analysis and Consequences**

All social processes transpire in space and over time. 69 These factors are inseparable, as they mutually constitute. It is argued that spatial perspectives “illuminate actions between daily life experiences and broader social, political, and economic processes” because it is essential to understanding how and why groups make claims to land, the relationship between space constitution and identity formation, the means of transnational social movement organizations, alliance building, and the integral attribution of threats and opportunities. 70 This is the framework through which the conflict in Nanga Eboko and Mbanjdock will be understood as

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CATAC, the government, and smallholder farmers make claims to land that create conflict and local communities and civil societies take actions to reclaim their food sovereignty.

Beginning with scale, it “clarifies the scope or extent of places and social relations,” is not fixed, and is part of conceived and lived space. Scale in this context is the result of uneven patterns of development on a jurisdictional hierarchy: national government, local government, and chefferies. Each scale on this hierarchy “represents a semi-cohesive political territory with semi-institutional powers.” The national government in terms of land tenure is above all else and it has the capacity to claim all land theirs under the Land Ordinance Law of 1974. Transferring land power to the multinational corporation IKO/CATAC can be seen like an extension of state power due to the company neglecting to consult local communities and not having to hold themselves accountable. Local government officials are beneath the national government and work within the framework in this conflict, which is why each local official began with explaining how land laws worked in order to explain the CATAC case. Even if local officials acknowledged the conflict, their positions do not put them in the same power as lets say the Minister of MINADER or the President of the Republic. Chefferies are at the bottom of the jurisdiction and local communities are subjects under the sovereignty of local authority, the national government and IKO/CATAC due to land tenure.

The next axis is place, which is “the terrain where basic social practices…are lived out…[or] where everyday life is situated” and it represents “interaction, interruption, or settling” that is

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shaped by flows, signs, and meanings that are negotiated in a location. Land is the location of daily life for the communities past, present, future generations as tomb stones of generations before are inscribed into the landscape next to homes with the present generation that raises the future ones to inherit the land customarily. Land as place can be said to be one in the same with identity of these communities as descriptions of the significance of land went beyond a source for food, a house, and other resources. It is their life, it is sacred, and something to revere. The same sense of place is not transferrable to the government and IKO/CATA as the land in this conflict is seen as a place for capitalistic exploitation and the exercise of state sovereignty. So in Nanga Eboko and Mbanjdock, there are conflicting ontologies of place.

Space is an ontological reality that has evolved and changed overtime. Global capitalism has created geographies of unevenness where there is a split: Global North vs. Global South, modern vs. tradition, have vs. have-nots, etc. Space has become important in terms of contemporary economic organization. In the context of LSLAs in Cameroon, land is the conceptual space and profit-motivated agribusiness companies and local elites are taking advantage of land and political instability of Cameroon to supply an increasing global demand for food security in the world as the global capitalist system further creates disjuncture. Individuals and communities troubled with “the integrity of traditional cultural spaces may resist economic restructuring” and the increased social regulation is managed through the state to “organize, regulate, and surveil spaces” like labor markets, the internet, information flows, [and land tenure].” It is these disjunctures in space of the greatest contention. In the context of Cameroon, the government is

working within a framework that sees the land as a space that can be enclosed, where sovereignty can be exercised, is lacking productivity, and needing capitalistic exploit for development and creation of Second Generation agriculture in Nanga Eboko. The narrative the government has written echoes colonialism as misconceptions through the Land Tenure law of 1974 view vast tracts of land as not being used productively or empty, disavowing local communities in Nanga Eboko and Mbanjdock of their lands. This narrative also includes that local communities are stuck in their ways and trapped in the past and in need of foreign direct investment to achieve this vision in this space. IKO/CATAC in this situation follow the same logic of the state. All of this is occurring while local communities want to increase productivity and use agricultural inputs in the space, but on their own terms, maintaining their complex and nuanced familial networks.

So it has been demonstrated how different understandings of space, place, and scale create this conflict, but there are also consequences that must be discussed. Since the government is not reconciling its logic with the local communities, the communities are worse off and are not benefiting from the development strategy in Nanga Eboko because the CATAC project is not providing meaningful technical or financial support. First, the customary landownership of the majority of the communities is not fully recognized so their lands that they live off of are being threatened, there was no Free and Prior Informed Consent before the arrival of CATAC, no one from the local communities reported to have worked for CATAC, and none of the communities claimed to have benefited. Taking away land without the consent of the population weakens extensive social networks for the future and takes away from the livelihood of the people. This contradictory logic also brings up other questions. What is the point of receiving seeds from
CATAC when the land small farmers are producing on is being taken away from them? What is the point of receiving seeds when local farmers do not even have access to more land and cannot afford it in the first place? The government has given land away to international companies like Herakles who paid $1 USD/hectare for thousands of hectares for foreign direct investment, yet the government of Cameroon cannot give land titles to its people who have lived on and cultivated that land since before Cameroon became “post-colonial.” These conflicting logics are all due to the current understanding of land tenure and have been only hurting the people in Nanga Eboko and Mbanjdock. Overall, the government wants Second Generation Agriculture to come into fruition but is working within a framework that puts its energy and time into multinational corporations instead of into its people directly. Even though local and national officials try to say small-holder farmers are stuck in their ways, after listening to their voices, it is clear they want more for themselves and their children. They want development, but on their terms.

Conclusion

In conclusion, land is a contentious space in Cameroon as the government, domestic elites, transnational agribusiness companies, and smallholder farmers have orientations towards the land that overlap, override, compete, and compliment. Large-scale land acquisitions have become the means to the government of Cameroon’s end of developing the country through a broader agrarian transformative process, which echoes colonialism as land is created by seeing it as empty or in need of capitalist productivity, the creation of governable spaces, disavowal, and possession through dispossession all under the guise of benevolent development as companies and countries impacted by the 2008 food crisis seek to secure land for their food security through
North-South economic flows. This paper attempted to make sense of this issue by working from the bottom up by using the case study of CATAC in Nanga Eboko and Mbanjock to give an in-depth qualitative assessment using an ethnographic and spatial analysis.

**Recommendations**

From this study, it is first recommended that the government practice good governance with transparency, accountability, and proper management of resources. This includes making contracts with transnational companies public and accessible. Secondly, the government needs to reform land tenure laws in a way that protects local farmers and allows them further access to acquiring land. The first step for this is reconciling the Land Tenure of 1974 to the present and reforming the process to get a land title so that it favors the smallholder farmer and local communities instead of defaulting all land to the government. Also, the government can either fully recognizing customary land ownership or use chieftaincies to their advantage and distribute land title through this means. Third, if development in this country is going to happen through an agrarian transformation, the government needs to seriously rethink its current strategy for achieving this. The argument for this transformation is that if the small famer mechanizes, specializes, and increases yields, the small farmer will make more profit and move out of poverty while developing Cameroon. If this is the logic, why is the government investing in multinational corporations who ship out raw materials from Cameroon to be processed within their own countries to and value there and putting its energy into other governments coming to develop agriculture instead of investing directly into its own people? This is especially in the case of Nanga Eboko and Mbanjock where every community has testified to being worse-off from foreign direct investment. Subsidies for inputs, giving local communities land titles through
chieftaincies, increasing access to land through policy reform, re-opening farmers banks, sensitizing farmers to international standards for exporting, creating farmers groups or corporations, etc. are all actions the government can take and that the people want. Cameroon has a huge comparative advantage as the country is in supply with natural resources that many countries in the world have an increasing demand for. Due to this Cameroon has the potential to produce and conduct trade on its own terms. This means Cameroonianians can specialize and produce food and biofuels on a larger scale instead of subsistent farming to increase yields and diversify food systems, transform them in the country to add value, and sell them on the world market. Investing in local farmers\textsuperscript{75} to eradicate poverty and develop the country can be done in a sustainable way and is more cost-effective at reducing in this context. Also, increasing market liberalization does not help, especially for food commodities. For example, in Zambia and Ghana, when the markets became more liberalized, locally produced commodities and products could not compete with international ones that were flowing into the country, which wiped out local competition, making these countries worse off. It is not about closing door for open markets completely, but it is about being selective with who and what comes in. Furthermore, the country does not need to import so much of its food needs when they can be produced domestically. If and when the government decides to use foreign-direct investment, there needs to be Free and Prior Informed Consent\textsuperscript{76} to make sure that the local people agree and benefit. A system needs to be put in place that ensures the rights of all actors and identifies and protects them. Until this happens, the government might want to consider halting land allocations. Also, if land transactions are to occur, land values need to be clarified, corporation policies of

\textsuperscript{75} This investment includes educating farmers about standards for international markets, how to use agricultural inputs, agricultural techniques, etc.

\textsuperscript{76} Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) emerging standard for effective access to information and participatory right of indigenous people and forest dependent communities insofar as the implementation of project developments are concerned.
emerging countries and investments in Cameroon need to be monitored, companies should pay local workers at least 50,000 CFA/month, considerations for the environment needs to be accounted for, and zoning plans need to be created that divides arable land into spaces for agro-industrial activities and/or small-scale farmers. I also recommend further qualitative studies from the bottom up of large-scale land acquisitions in Cameroon, especially with land tenure’s impact on women. Overall all, the current conflicts over land tenure coupled with the Global Food Crisis has revealed the shortcomings in the structure of food production and distribution processes at the local, national and global levels and Cameroon has to realize its food sovereignty to know how to engage with this system in a way that does not re-inscribe capitalism. This begins and ends with land tenure because land is the space through which a new vision for development in Cameroon is possible.

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**Secondary Sources**


Food Sovereignty for Africa: A Challenge at Fingertips. La Via Campesina, 2008.


The Second and Third periodic report (Art. 1-15) of Cameroon to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN Doc. E/C.12/CMR/2-3).


Appendixes

CATAC Facilities
Interview Questions – Smallholder Farmers
1. What does your land mean or represent to you? / Qu’est-ce que votre terre signifie pour vous?
2. How is land inherited in your community? / Comment la terre est-elle héritée dans votre communauté?
3. Do you have a land title? How is the process? / Avez-vous un titre foncier? Le processus, comment va-t-il?
4. Have you confronted any conflicts over land tenure? If so, have there been conflicts with the Chinese? / Êtes-vous confronté à des conflicts fonciers? Si oui, est-ce qu’il y a des conflicts entre le Chinois?
   Follow Up: Where you informed before the Chinese came in? / Avez-vous consulté avant que le Chinois soit entré?
5. How have the Chinese/IKO/CATAC helped and/or hurt your community? / Comment est-ce que le Chinois/IKO/CATAC aider et/ou blesser la communauté?
6. In the event of disputes, how are they resolved? / En cas de litige, comments sont-ils résolus?
7. What role should the government play with land tenure? / Quel role le gouvernement devrait-il jouer dans le régime foncier?
8. Are you afraid of being evicted in the future? / Avez-vous peur d’être expulsé à l’avenir?
9. How can land be secured better? / Comment la terre peut-elle être mieux sécurisée?
10. How can you better gain from your work? / Comment pouvez-vous mieux tirer profit de votre travail?

Interview Questions – Management of Corporations
1. How did your company secure land in Cameroon?
2. Why did you decide to secure land in Cameroon?
3. What existed on the land before you secured it?
4. Where do you sell your yields? Domestically or abroad?
5. What technology do you use?
6. Who are your workers? (Age, ethnicity, gender, etc.)
7. How do you pay your workers and how much do you pay them?
8. Do you face land conflicts?
9. How should they be addressed?
10. In what ways has Cameroon benefited in terms of development from your company?

Interview Questions – Government Officials
1. What is your role and responsibility? / Quel est votre role et votre responsabilité?
2. What actions have and have not been working when it comes to the development of the agricultural sector? / Quelles actions ont et n’ont pas fonctionné en matière de développement du secteur agricole?

3. How does the project in Nanga Eboko specifically benefit or hinder the development of Cameroon? / Comment est-ce que le project à Nanga Eboko bénéficière-t-il ou entrave-t-il le développement du Cameroun?

4. Are there conflicts between and smallholder farmers when it comes to land ownership and land use? (Ex: customary vs. formal law) If so, how are they managed? / Est-ce qu’il y a des conflits entre le Chinois et les petits agriculteurs/petits propriétaires en ce qui concerne le régime foncier et l’utilisation des terres? (Ex: loi coutumière vs loi formelle). Si oui, comment sont-ils résolus?

5. What investments strengthen rural people's land rights and promote the diversification of food systems? / Quels investissements renforcent les droits fonciers des populations rurales et favorisent la diversification des systèmes alimentaires?

6. How can international trade systems be incentivized to create a conducive environment for more stable and affordable local food systems? / Comment inciter les systèmes de commerce international à créer un environnement propice à des systèmes alimentaires locaux plus stables et plus abordables?

7. Under what circumstances and for whom is increasing smallholder agriculture productivity more cost-effective at reducing poverty than the expansion of large-scale commercial agriculture? / Dans quelles circonstances et pour qui augmenter la productivité de l’agriculture paysanne est-elle plus rentable pour réduire la pauvreté que l’expansion de l’agriculture commerciale grande échelle?

Interview Questions – Civil Society

1. How do you understand issues of land grabbing in Cameroon?
2. What are the impacts of multinational corporations land grabbing in Cameroon?
3. What should be the role of the government?
4. How should different understandings of land ownership be managed in Cameroon?
5. What policies and laws should be changed?
6. How does the international economic climate contribute to land grabbing?