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Bureaucrats, investors and smallholders: contesting land rights and agro-commercialisation in the Southern agricultural growth corridor of Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

Since the triple crises of food, fuel and finance of 2007/8, investments in agricultural growth corridors have taken centre-stage in government, donor and private sector initiatives. This article examines the politics of the multi-billion dollar development of the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT). The corridor's proponents aim to create an environment in which agribusiness will operate alongside smallholders to improve food security and environmental sustainability, while reducing rural poverty. Based on three case studies, comprising one of a small-scale dairy company and two large-scale sugar companies, all operating with smallholders, this paper interrogates the political dynamics that shape the implementation of SAGCOT on the ground; in particular, the multiple contestations among bureaucrats, investors and smallholders over access to land and other resources, and contending visions for agricultural commercialisation. Despite the widespread support it received from government, donors and investors, the paper argues that SAGCOT's grand modernist vision of the corridor, centred on the promotion of large-scale estates, has unravelled through contestations and negotiations on the ground.

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Agricultural growth corridors have a long history in Africa, linked to colonial planning, the promotion of growth poles and spatial development.[1] While in the past, corridors were mostly state-led, contemporary investments are often driven by state-capital alliances, supported by donor finance – as is evident in the case of the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT) launched at the World Economic Forum Africa held in Dar Es Saalaam, Tanzania in 2010.[2] Initially, the key driving force behind SAGCOT's implementation was the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, commonly known as the New Alliance, an initiative launched in May 2012 by the Heads of G8 countries in collaboration with six heads of African states.[3] It aimed to foster private sector and development partners' investment in African agriculture and lift 50 million people out

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of poverty by 2022.[4] The implementation of SAGCOT was further aligned with that of the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme's (CAADP) Maputo Declaration – Africa's policy framework for agricultural transformation, wealth creation, food security and nutrition, economic growth and prosperity.[5]

These regional and international initiatives provide a platform to galvanise global investors, multi-national companies, international aid donors, state bureaucrats and politicians in a grand modernist vision for the transformation of agriculture.[6] Both local and national elites have welcomed large-scale initiatives by foreign and national capital because they create opportunities for rent-seeking and direct engagement through lease agreements and/or directly accumulating land.[7] In the implementation of SAGCOT, many competing interests collide, resulting in sustained contestation over both the overall vision, and the practical implementation of investment projects on the ground. Based on the exploration of three case studies, examined during fieldwork in 2017–18, this paper investigates the dynamics of this process, exploring the politics of contestation[8] at the centre of corridor-making. An examination of the interests of different actors situates the analysis in a broad agrarian political economy analysis that asks: 'Who owns what? Who does what? Who gets what? And what do they do with it?'.[9]

Over time, configurations of interests change, as projects shift during implementation. The paper examines the consequences of this for different actors, unpacking the actions of the state, government bureaucrats and the diverse rural smallholders with whom they interact. This suggests a focus on the micro-politics of corridor implementation, uncovering the contests and contradictions that emerge as state authority and the power of capital are challenged.[10] These unfolding dynamics reveal different trajectories of social differentiation and accumulation, with winners and losers emerging from corridor-making; even when plans change and implementation is at best partial.

In particular, the paper highlights how the original plans for large-scale estate investments have changed towards a greater focus on outgrower schemes. A number of commentators have raised the question of how and on what terms smallholders are incorporated into these investment plans, especially through outgrowing schemes.[11] Agricultural growth corridors, such as SAGCOT, apart from being investments in agricultural commericalisation in a geographical area, alongside investment in key transport infrastructure, including railways and roads,[12] they are also political constructs that are largely subject to national and local political dynamics. Tanzania has a long history of state-led large-scale agricultural investments, from the colonial 'groundnut scheme' in central Tanzania[13] to independent Tanzania's wheat and livestock schemes, which have either failed or never met their targets.[14] SAGCOT is somewhat different because of its scale (see Figure 1) and because it is led by both public and private sector actors, each with competing visions and interests. Located in a wider, global political economy of investment following the financial crisis of 2008, SAGCOT represents an important case study of what some have described as externally-driven 'land grabbing'.[15]

However, the story is more complex in practice than the simple 'land grabbing' narrative. Outcomes on the ground emerge from complex, site-specific negotiations among diverse actors. Despite being framed as high-modernist, top-down approaches,[16] giving opportunities for private capital and for rent-seeking on the part of politicians and senior bureaucrats, little investment has been seen on the ground. The slow implementation of SAGCOT is the result of changing priorities among the ruling elites. For

Figure 1. The map of Tanzania showing SAGCOT area.

example, while the previous government of President Jakaya Kikwete prioritised agriculture and formulated various initiatives, the current government of President John Magufuli focuses more on an industrialisation agenda.[17] In addition, local dynamics – such as the role of an active civil society and arrangements around land-rights that promote the interests of smallholders – have produced complex and varied outcomes. These dynamics foreground the importance of a political economy approach in understanding the politics of corridor-making, where particular attention is placed on the variegated interests, practices and outcomes in particular sites of investment.

These themes emerge from three case studies within the corridor. These are the Kilombero Sugar Company Limited, the largest sugar producing company in Tanzania, largely owned by Associated British Foods plc; Mkulazi Holding Company Limited (MHCL), a joint venture of the two Tanzanian pension funds; and Njombe Milk Factory, whose largest shareholder is a milk producers' cooperative society. All three companies operate with outgrowers. The case studies were purposely selected to uncover diverse characteristics of ongoing investments within the corridor.

The article draws on intensive field research carried out between October 2017 and September 2018, with 65 key informant interviews, and six focus group discussions.

Four discussions were held in Kilombero and one each at Njombe and Mkulazi. Key informants were drawn from farmers' groups, women's groups, the Sugar Board of Tanzania (SBT), regional and district officials, company representatives, civil society organisations, researchers and academics. In each site the aim was to draw out the dynamics of contestation and the role of different interest groups in the context of understanding how the different investments played out through the implementation process.

The paper is organised as follows: the next section introduces the histories, narratives and imaginaries of SAGCOT. It examines the main agricultural commercialisation models promoted across the corridor and identifies the main actors. This is followed by the analysis of the three contrasting case studies. The paper then discusses ongoing contestations and negotiations around corridor-making on the ground, revealing compromises and shifting positions. This allows an analysis of SAGCOT's changing focus, the implications for different actors and explores what the corridor means in practice. The article concludes that the high-modernist vision of SAGCOT promoted by its state-capital alliance proponents is complicated and reshaped by national and local politics in the process of corridor-making.[18]

SAGCOT: history, narratives and imaginaries

SAGCOT is the first initiative in contemporary Tanzania to set ambitious targets for large-scale agricultural plantations and ranches through private sector agricultural investment. Launched in May 2010, SAGCOT is touted as the 'Kilimo Kwanza' [Agriculture First] slogan in action. Kilimo Kwanza itself is an initiative articulated by the Tanzania National Business Council (TNBC) in 2009, which has the overarching objective of transforming agriculture through enhanced productivity. TNBC is co-chaired by the President of the United Republic of Tanzania and the President of the Tanzania Private Sector Foundation. The area labelled as the corridor initiative covers about a third of mainland Tanzania.[19] The area lies alongside Tanzania's central railway, power backbone and a highway that runs from the port of Dar Es Salaam to the country's border posts with the Democractic Republic of Congo, Malawi and Zambia (see Figure 1).

SAGCOT was first promoted by Yara, a Norwegian fertiliser company, as part of an initiative to popularise agricultural growth corridors.[20] Yara presented its idea at the UN General Assembly in 2008 and later at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2009 in Switzerland.[21] SAGCOT enjoys widespread support from state and private actors, and regional and international organisations. It aims to produce 'inclusive, commercially successful agribusinesses that will benefit the region's small-scale farmers, and in so doing, improve food security, reduce rural poverty and ensure environmental sustainability.'[22] Supporters include the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), bilateral development agencies, financial institutions, such as the World Bank, and domestic banks, along with the domestic, regional and international private sector, dominated by the multinational corporations dealing with fertiliser and seed production and supply.[23]

Currently, SAGCOT's plans have merged with those of domestic, regional and international initiatives such as Kilimo Kwanza, CAADP and the New Alliance. One of the ten pillars of Kilimo Kwanza is to make land policy and other legislative reforms in Tanzania. Private sector actors have argued that accessing land, particularly village land,[24] is extremely difficult. Under the proposed National Land Policy, the government plans to set aside land for large-scale investments. However, since the change of government and the leadership of Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), the party in power following the 2015 general election, there have been a number of changes in policy priorities and allocation of resources. In turn, such changes have had impacts on donors and investors' views of the country's business and investment environment.[25]

There is a significant difference between the current government priorities and policy approaches compared to the previous government under President Kikwete, which had ushered in initiatives to boost private sector investments in agriculture as demonstrated in both Kilimo Kwanza and SAGCOT. Unlike Kikwete's government, President Magufuli's government has emphasised a strong state presence in all sectors. According media reports and other outlets such as Africa Confidential, it is widely reported that the head of the Matching Grant Facility, Thomas Herlehy, who resigned in January 2019, made it clear that the government of Tanzania was not ready to issue matching grants to private agribusinesses and it issued the request to amend the agreement in 2018.[26] The government has argued that if it were to issue such support to private agribusinesses, it should be in the form of a loan instead of a grant and that at some point in the future, infrastructure developed by such agribusinesses should be transferred to local district authorities which will hold them on behalf of smallholders. However, anecdotally, the current government appears to object that some of the investments earmarked to receive matching grants were either wholly or partially owned by foreign private entities and or individuals. Moreover, the Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives emphasised the government's decision to withdraw from its previous commitments on SAGCOT, stating that '[i]mplementing the project that had been delayed for more than three years would be of no benefit. We have therefore decided to review it to suit our present environment'.[27]

Despite these significant national political factors, SAGCOT's development was heavily influenced by the wider global financial crisis from 2008.[28] For example, hedge funds and social security funds are heavily invested in SAGCOT.[29] Investments in agricultural land in developing countries are viewed as a way to generate greater returns than had been available in stagnating Western economies. Indeed, unlike Kenya's Lamu Port, South Sudan and Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor,[30] which was designed by state bureaucrats, SAGCOT's blueprint was drawn up by private consulting companies, namely Prorustica and AgDevCo from the United Kingdom, which have also been involved in the design of Mozambique's Beira Corridor.[31] Since its inception in 2010, SAGCOT has attracted many domestic and international private investors. SAGCOT's blueprint states that, in over 20 years, it will invest about \$1.3 billion emanating from government and donor partners in order to attract \$2.1 billion from local and international private investors.[32]

Currently, within SAGCOT, two main forms of agricultural investment are in place. The first involves the acquisition of land rights, often through long-term leases or concessions for either nucleus estates or plantations.[33] In some areas, large-scale land acquisitions associated with direct or indirect displacement of rural communities have been reported, for example in Songea and Rufiji districts – both of which are located within proposed SAGCOT clusters.[34] The second involves a variety of arrangements (outgrowing and contract farming) between small-, medium- and large-scale producers and/or processors.[35] The two forms of investment have differentiated impacts on rural livelihoods, land rights and the country's economy at large.[36]

The government promotes a modernisation vision for the corridor. The 2013 National Agricultural Policy, for instance, states that the government considers SAGCOT as an important means of attaining its aim 'to bring about a green revolution that entails transformation of agriculture from subsistence farming towards commercialization and modernization.'[37] Smallholder farmers are incorporated into mainstream commercial agribusiness through contract farming and outgrower schemes.[38] Within SAGCOT, the government and its partners aim to

> bring 350,000 hectares of land into profitable production, transition 100,000 small-scale farmers into commercial farming, create 420,000 new employment opportunities, lift two million people out of poverty, and generate 1.2 billion dollars in annual farming revenue by 2030.[39]

The SAGCOT blueprint, however, notes the constraints to investment due to high risk, and recommends reducing anticipated costs and risks for investors.[40] To minimise investors' costs in the early stages of their investment, the blueprint proposes to grant soft loans to local investors that intend to partner with smallholder farmers and outgrowers in the corridor area.[41] Hence, SAGCOT established a 'Catalytic Fund', with funds extended to the agribusinesses that incorporate smallholder farmers in their value chains.[42] Following some delays, in March 2016, the World Bank approved $70 million in new financing 'to support Tanzania's agriculture sector and strengthen it by linking smallholder farmers to agribusinesses for boosting incomes and job-led growth',[43] with funding directed towards implementing SAGCOT. In May 2019, the government withdrew from its financing agreement with the World Bank. SAGCOT related businesses (established before or after the formal launch) continue to operate. Nonetheless, the secretariat and the corridor's proponents will likely need to turn to other financiers and donors to sustain it.[44]

SAGCOT initiatives did not start from scratch as some commentators have suggested,[45] but often rather build on existing projects. Its blueprint states that it

> aims to facilitate the development of clusters of profitable agricultural businesses within the southern corridor. Building on existing operations and planned investments, the clusters are likely to bring together agricultural research stations, nucleus larger farms and ranches with outgrower schemes, irrigated block farming operations, processing and storage facilities, transport and logistics hubs, and improved 'last mile' infrastructure to farms and local communities.[46]

While guided by investment frameworks, plans, and regulations, SAGCOT in practice is implemented through particular agricultural investment projects. These differ in scale and consequence. In the next section, three case studies are discussed; they are drawn from three clusters (see Figure 2) carefully selected to represent different business models, and types of investors and shareholders. The study explored the terms of incoporation of smallholders in the projects, the way the projects have been negotiated and re-negotiated on the ground through the playing out of contentious politics[47] among different interest groups and how, in practice, diverse impacts emerge, with different pathways of agricultural commercialisation being promoted under SAGCOT.

Case studies

This section explores the characteristics of each of the three selected investment projects (see Figure 3), asking who are the investors, who gains and who loses from such investments,

Figure 2. The map of six clusters of SAGCOT.

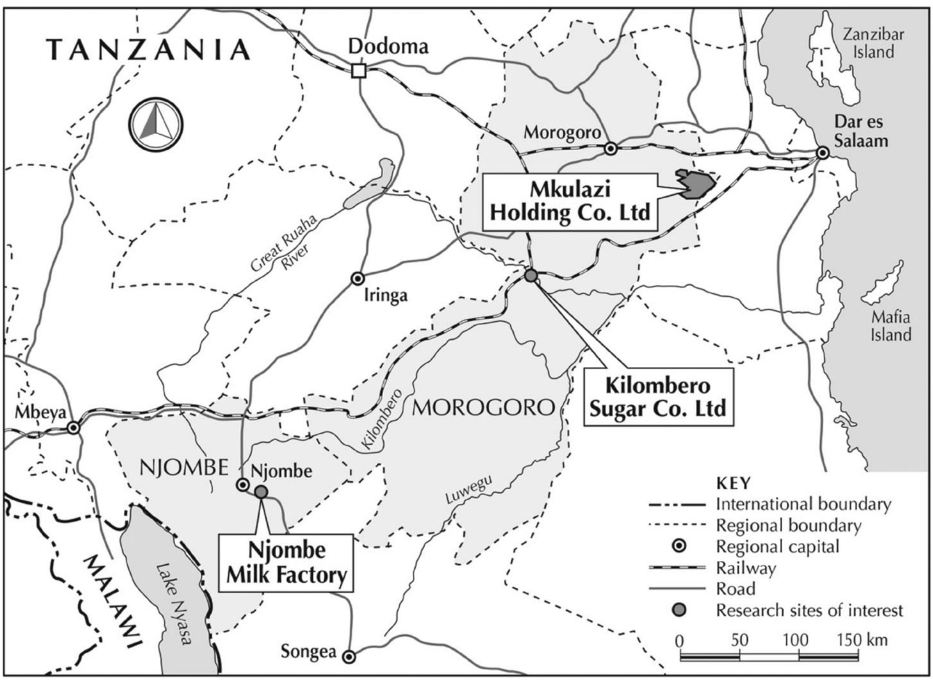

Figure 3. The three case study sites within SAGCOT region.

how the investment was designed, and its impacts on land rights, and the outcomes of these investments. The study also explored how the implementation of each of the selected investment project shaped local politics and, in turn, how such project plans have changed through implementation, as a result of local and national level contestations.

Kilombero Sugar Company Limited

The Kilombero Sugar Company Limited (KSCL) is often referred to as a 'success story' in Tanzania's sugar sector.[48] The company was recently accepted as a SAGCOT member[49] and its model, which combines estate and outgrower production, is set to be replicated in the SAGCOT to foster increased sugarcane production with outgrowers as a core component.[50] As noted earlier, not all investments under SAGCOT are new. For example, KSCL established its first factory in Msolwa area in the 1960s.[51] It was funded by the International Finance Corporation, the Commonwealth Development Corporation, Standard Bank and two Dutch financial organisations. KSCL was nationalised in 1967 after the implementation of the Arusha Declaration, which saw the government retaking management of industries of high economic value. The company was later privatised in 1998, with 55% of the shares sold to the South African Company, Illovo Sugar Group. Illovo Group is currently fully owned by Associated British Foods Plc. The government has maintained 25% shares in KSCL; the remainder of the shares are owned by ED&F Man, a British commodity trader.[52] From its inception, the company worked with outgrowers, leasing about 9,562 ha from the central government, 8,000 ha of which is under sugarcane, with the remaining land used for factories, offices, staff houses and social amenities. The company runs two sugarcane crushing and processing facilities in its compound.[53]

The company engages with outgrowers through a Cane Supply Agreement (CSA), which stipulates the division of proceeds between the company and the outgrowers. There are about 8,500 registered outgrowers supplying about 45% of total sugarcane processed by the company.[54] As of 2017/18 the outgrowers received TZS 103,000 ($44.50) per tonne of delivered fresh sugarcane, before adjustments for sucrose levels and actual sales are made. Once all the processed sugar is sold, the company and outgrowers share their proceeds at a rate of 40% for outgrowers and 60% for the company because the company on its own produced more cane than outgrowers.[55]

Both key informant interviews and focus group discussions with sugarcane farmers highlighted that the amount of cash revenue received from both the fresh sugarcane delivered and the final proceeds vary from one outgrower to the other. Sugarcane with a high sucrose level receives a higher price, but for decades, farmers have complained about lack of transparency on how their delivered sugarcane is weighed and the sucrose level is determined by company staff. Allegations of corruption against the staff are also well documented.[56] The lack of transparency remains a key source of contestation between outgrowers and staff.

In a focus group discussion, members of the Msolwa Agricultural and Marketing Cooperative Society (AMCOS), previously known as Msolwa outgrowers association, who supply sugarcane to KSCL, explained that the company is the sole judge of the quality of sugarcane that farmers deliver to its factories. They insisted that outgrowers receive less money than they feel they are entitled to because the company often claims that they deliver sugarcane that has overstayed (i.e. more than 72 h since it was burned).[57]

As a result of this combination of factors, there are mixed impacts of sugarcane farming at the household level. Despite increased sugarcane production in Kilombero over time, few families have diversified their economic activities.[58] Families that wholly depend on sugarcane production remain vulnerable to many other potential risks such as price fluctuations, low records of sucrose levels for sugarcane delivered to the company, and the recorded weight of tonnage delivered.[59] Opportunities for employment have changed too, with declining permanent employment in the estate/processing plants, especially for women.[60]

Land relations, market dynamics and processes of local land privatisation

Sugarcane production in Kilombero Valley is a lucrative business attracting wealthy individuals who are currently taking advantage of other businesses associated with cane production, such as cane loading and transportation.[61] In the focus group discussions, it was pointed out that another consequence of sugarcane mono-cropping is the declining land area for food production, which is forcing poor families to commute from their sugarcane-producing villages, sometimes to distant villages so as to access farming plots for food crops.[62] This commute has major impacts on families who have to incur travel costs, wasted time in travel, and lost opportunities to take care of their children. As a mother of three children stated

> when my husband and I temporarily move to our rice farm in Signali Village, far from Msolwa Village, we either move along with our kids or leave them with relatives in Msolwa Village. If we move with them, they will have to miss schools, but if we leave them with relatives, they sometimes do not go to school or miss proper parenting, but we have no more alternatives, over the past two years we keep using both options.[63]

Some previous studies in Kilombero Valley have also reported that school dropouts and teenage pregnancies are on the increase in the area.[64]

The lack of land for food production affects family members differently. For example, women focus on producing food for family consumption and some extra for sale, while men dominate sugarcane production and its related businesses.[65] But the increasing scarcity of land creates new relations and power dynamics around ownership among large-scale sugarcane growers and poor outgrowers who are squeezed out.[66] Field observations show that rich farmers are able to combine sugarcane production with other activities, including running bars, restaurants and guest houses in the area. However, outgrowers in general have very limited involvement in trade, distribution and marketing of final sugar products, as downstream activities are controlled by the company, while distribution of sugar is also carried out by few traders, mostly with foreign origins.[67]

Local political responses

For years, communities living around KSCL have engaged in farming sugarcane and other crops.[68] Immediately after it took control of the company, the Illovo Group wanted to reclaim all the land registered in its lease from the government. The company also wanted to expand its sugarcane plantations.[69] However, company plans were halted not only by the area's mountainous features, but by smallholders' unwillingness to give up their land for the company's plantation.[70]

Even when the company attempted to open up new plantations in two distant villages (Ruipa and Mpofu), especially in the former land owned by the Sugar Board of Tanzania (SBT), villagers were not ready to give up on their land.[71] Although the government claimed that villagers had invaded the land, villagers took the matter to the courts, where they won the case because SBT had never developed the land.[72] The court found that they only need to vacate the land if they are paid full compensation. However, instead of compensating communities, SBT decided to incorporate communities as outgrowers whenever sugarcane production takes place in the area.[73]

The actions of villagers resisting the expansion of the company into their land, and outgrowers' questioning of the company's lack of transparency and their terms of incorporation need to be located within an understanding of the broader political economy. Kilombero Valley, as one of the central areas of SAGCOT, has attracted the attention of civil society organisations (CSOs) and academics working on land and natural resources rights. Land in these areas is increasingly central to political mobilisation and resistance among villagers and it is often used as a central campaign theme. For example, addressing the public in front of President John Magufuli in Kilombero, the Member of Parliament for Kilombero Constituency, Peter Lijualikali, urged the President to give back underdeveloped lands currently held by investors.[74] He complained that, while investors hoard such lands, his constituency members are left without land.[75] On their part, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working on land rights have also increased their presence within SAGCOT area, raising awareness around land and resource rights among villagers. As one of the NGO representatives highlighted:

> Our role as a land rights NGO is to ensure people are aware of their rights and risks associated with the development driven state-capital alliance initiatives like SAGCOT. After educating people, we leave them to decide on their own, and we see the impact of our engagement as people are resisting investments they believe marginalises them.[76]

In addition, the company's attempt to expand its estate was resisted by smallholders, whose struggles are supported by CSOs and politicians. Local villagers are incorporated into an expanding outgrower scheme, but with differentiated impacts. Some, especially those with land, benefit from a new relationship with the company, and are able to develop business opportunities around sugarcane cutting, loading and transportation from farm fields to factories.[77] But others must balance new engagements as outgrowers with food growing, in the context of less and less land.[78] Therefore, as the company continues to mobilise more farmers to join outgrowing schemes, the contestation between local interests and the company has become more complex.

In the context of a changing political dynamic around corridor-making, land access remains a key issue, and local discontent continues among poorer families whose grievances are increasingly articulated by CSOs. Thus, the investment – focusing more on a plantation approach, involving locals as labourers – has evolved through these processes of contestation to one that includes outgrowing and selective incorporation of smallholders into the company enterprise.[79] The resulting differentiation has led to success for some, while the losers must seek new land for food growing elsewhere.[80]

Mkulazi Holding Company Limited (MHCL)

The second case focuses on the Mkulazi Holding Company Limited (MHCL), which was founded and run by two state-owned pension funds, and aims to produce sugarcane on state-owned prison farms. The company was officially inaugurated by the Tanzanian Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa on 4 September 2017.[81] Although the facility is still under construction, it initially planned to plant and manage sugarcane production on 38,000 ha and a complementary area of 3,000 ha was to be used by cane outgrowers from neighbouring villages.[82] All outgrowers' cane will be used by the MHCL. The company plans to use the remaining area of 20,000 ha to grow a variety of crops, mainly sorghum, paddy and sunflower. Overall, the project will depend not only on rainwater, but on irrigation, using the Ruvu and Ngerengere rivers for dam construction in the area.[83]

Despite the strong political support the project enjoys to date, as well as the potential financial boost, as of December 2018 sugarcane was planted on only 1,000 ha, out of 38,000 ha. This had been planted by a combination of many outgrowers surrounding the factory. The company is slowly constructing sugar processing factories, expanding sugarcane estate areas and initiating outgrowing schemes in Mbigiri Area (Mkulazi II). However, in the farmland area of Ngerengere (Mkulazi I) no work has begun.[84] A senior official of the company explained in an interview that they have not made much progress in the area due to lack of key infrastructure, such as roads and bridges. He elaborated:

> Although we want to stand up on our own, financing infrastructure for a large investment like ours is expensive. We know even successful companies like Kilombero Sugar Company Limited got support to build infrastructure. European Union funds the maintenance of roads within the sugar producing areas of Kilombero. Tanganyika Planting Company – a sugarcane company based in Moshi uses railways within its sugarcane estates for transportation.

Due to these realities and potential bureaucractic delays, at the time of writing, only farm boundaries and the clearing of roads were completed in Mkulazi I or Ngerengere area.[85]

Although the company is primarily using land owned by the Tanzanian Prison Services set aside since 1975, the land lacks clear boundaries and three subvillages have been established within what has been deemed general land. Interviewed villagers in two subvillages of Tungi and Kizanda explained that, although they were not resisting the government ownership claims, since they relocated to occupy the empty area over 12 years ago, they had never seen any boundaries and some of them were allocated land by the village government. These residents' claims are acknowledged by local authorities. For example, according to Mkulazi Ward Executive Officer,[86] people who reside in and use the land for 12 consecutive years will be compensated. However, until August 2018, there was no evaluation carried out to determine such compensation. Indeed, authorities do not give much room for communities to claim their rights over this land, but villagers may have a claim since the land was not properly demarcated and, as noted elsewhere in the country, villagers are often negatively affected by developmental projects like this.[87] This situation has become a source of contestation between the authorities and villagers, who have occupied the land for some time and so demand their rights to compensation and resettlement.[88]

Land relations, processes of local land privatisation and local responses

As a result of these investments, land around Mkulazi I and II is becoming scarce and expensive. Most land around Mkulazi II, for instance, has been acquired by urban elites from as far as Dar Es Salaam or those with large sugar farms in Kilombero valley.[89] In Mvomero District, most land is owned by 'absentee landlords' and some of these landlords are connected to the ruling elites and or former senior officials.[90] Pastoral communities around these investment areas are also concerned that further expansion of sugarcane production in the area, without taking into consideration livestock pastures and migratory routes, will negatively affect their livelihoods.[91]

District officials and communities in Mvomero have some legal misconceptions and conflicting priorities. For example, while district officials have insisted on individual titling among pastoralist communities as the solution to land-based conflicts, pastoralists want recognition of communal lands.[92] Unfortunately, pastoral communities' resistance to individual titles is interpreted by district officials as resistance to village land use planning.[93] District officers stressed that, because village land use planning was a participatory process, most decisions that lead to such plans are made at the village general assemblies dominated by farming communities. For a variety of reasons, such as participating in livestock markets or taking livestock to grazing areas, pastoralist communities have difficulty attending village assemblies[94], which approve village land use plans. They are thus denied opportunities to identify their grazing lands and routes including ways to access water. However, pastoral communities have initiated several fora to ensure their complaints are heard.[95] They are at the forefront of ensuring that peace committees, established from the village to the regional level, are functioning and that these committees have their own constitutions.[96]

Unlike Kilombero, the MHCL is a new company that aims to develop a sugar business on state land. It has found it difficult to establish its operations quickly because of inadequate financing and technology, as well as poor infrastructure. While notionally unused state land, the land earmarked for the estate was being used by local farmers and pastoralists. Farmers had long been using the land and resented eviction.[97] Meanwhile, pastoralists make use of land for grazing and migration routes. The lack of involvement of mobile pastoralists in village land use planning processes meant that they were excluded from decisions. The complexity of land use rights in the area has therefore led to contestation between the company, local farmers and pastoralists.[98]

Njombe Milk Factory Limited

The third case, Njombe Milk Factory Ltd., located in Njombe Town in the southern highlands of Tanzania was among the first five winners of the SAGCOT centre Catalytic Funds. Unlike the previous two cases, this case is not a land extensive operation, and is focused on milk processing in a single plant, linked to an intensive dairy farm of 33 ha. The factory is located in SAGCOT's priority cluster of Ihemi (see Figure 3). Registered as a limited company, the company collects raw milk from about 1,200 dairy farmers.[99] At present, farmers are represented by their cooperative society called Njombe Livestock Farmers Association (NJOLIFA). They receive payment every two weeks, which helps them to make bulk purchases and/or significant investments, rather than spending the money they previously collected from daily milk sales.[100]

The factory, was initially championed by Heifer International and other partners, including Cefa, an Italian NGO, and Njombe Catholic church. Unlike the two cases above, in which either investors and/or the government ran the business and owned the majority of shares, Njombe factory's major shareholder is the farmers' cooperative NJOLIFA (20%), followed by Granarolo (the Italian Company) (16.25%), the Catholic Diocese of Njombe (9.75%), Njombe Town Council (9.5%), and Njombe District Council (9.5%) respectively.[101]

Land relations, market dynamics and processes of local land privatisation

The company has had a right of occupancy over its factory land since August 2017. It has not acquired any land from communities; instead, its farm land was allocated by Njombe District Council, the local government authority. All members of local communities supplying milk to the company use their own land to graze livestock and conduct other agricultural activities.[102] Given the increasing milk businesses in the district, land value around the industry is high, compared to other areas.[103]

Using Italian and French agricultural technologies, the company is producing fresh milk, cheese and yoghurt. All of the company's produce is sold in various regions of Tanzania, but fresh milk is mostly sold in nearby districts and regions.[104] Currently, the company has employed 49 workers – 19 women and 30 men. Both men and women workers are employed under one-year contracts and are paid about TZS 165,000 ($73) per month – an amount that is more than government's minimum wage of TZS 150,000 ($66).[105] However, discussion with the company's workers revealed that they work long hours and lack other fringe benefits and incentives, apart from annual financial awards given to the two best-performing workers.

Local political responses

Unlike the two case studies above, Njombe milk factory does not seem to attract any significant negative reactions from local communities, apart from complaints about its poor sewage and waste management system.[106] In terms of land rights, the lack of contestation can be explained by the fact that the company does not pose any significant threat to communities' land and other resources.[107] Also, unlike the other two cases, at the moment, the association of milk producers is the largest shareholder in the company.

Nonetheless, despite being the majority shareholder, farmers remain price takers for the milk they supply. This situation is also causing some farmers to side-sell their milk to Asas Diaries Ltd. – the largest dairy company in Tanzania, based in Iringa municipality.[108] The company management has complained that there are too many regulatory bodies, which demand different but relatively interrelated compliance, such as business permits and annual fees.[109] According to the Tanzania Confederation of Industries, the food-processing sector must deal with about 15 regulatory bodies, which have overlapping responsibilities.[110]

Because Njombe Milk Factory has smallholder livestock keepers as its largest shareholders, there seems to be few challenges of local and foreign actors operating together. However, the long-term sustainability of the company remains unclear. Since the largest shareholders are price takers, the business and partnerships are tricky, especially if the offered price remains lower than prices offered by other buyers such as Asas Dairies. Striking the balance among and between shareholders in milk production, company management and decision-making bodies is crucial to equitable representation of all actors with a stake in the company. Like Kilombero Sugar Company Limited, the terms of incorporation of livestock keepers or milk producers is also the source of contestation in the Njombe Milk Factory.

Negotiating a corridor on the ground: compromises and shifting positions

The three cases highlight the tensions and contradictions inherent in the process of corridor-making. The first two cases – Kilombero and MHCL – are premised on land-extensive production, focusing in each case on sugarcane. A mix of state and international capital combine to invest in expanding estate land, together with investments in infrastructure including processing plants. The vision is one of large-scale commercial production, generating employment alongside opportunities for smallholders as outgrowers. While MHCL is yet to take off to the extent planned, Kilombero is a long-established operation. However, both are facing challenges over acquiring land for expansion, and Kilombero is shifting its expansion strategies towards incorporating more outgrowers. Despite operating on what is deemed state land, conflicting use claims by villagers (both smallholders and pastoralists) is causing land disputes in the MHCL case, with pastoralist groups feeling particularly aggrieved by the decision that would see them leaving their grazing land, without any clarity of where they could re-settle and or whether they would be compensated.[111] By contrast, the Njombe Milk Factory, because of its small land requirement, has generated fewer conflicts and, through a mixed shareholder model, has incorporated smallholders into the core of its operation.

In all cases, the involvement of local people is selective; for example, with local elites benefiting in the wider commercial operation of Kilombero. Thus alliances between external and endongenous capital become important in generating new patterns of differentiation, excluding some from the benefits of corridor development, such as pastoralists in MHCL and small-scale producers requiring land for food production in Kilombero. Such contests, and resultant processes of differentiation, mean that the simple, grand visions of large-scale estate farming must be adapted, with outgrower schemes in particular being a route to selective incorporation of local interests, which in turn acts to diffuse resistance.

Such shifts are increasingly being recognised by the management of SAGCOT. For example, the SAGCOT secretariat comprised of several staff (who lead the initiative), has opened its operations branch in Iringa Region as part of its attempt to decentralise its services.[112] Through its small-scale farmer training programmes, the SAGCOT secretariat has recruited several companies, especially those that received grants, to train farmers. SAGCOT has also built eight storage warehouses for smallholder farmers in three districts (four at Mbarali District, two at Iringa rural, and two at Kyela).[113]

With political changes at the national level since 2015, some of the big policy initiatives that framed the modernist vision of SAGCOT previously have been abandoned. For example, former President Kikwete's initiative – Big Results Now, which aimed to fast-track public and private sector delivery, especially on large-scale commercial estates or nucleus farms for sugarcane and rice[114] – has been shelved by President Magufuli.[115] SAGCOT may therefore be changing its overall policy position, as it tries to negotiate the making of a corridor in a highly contested landscape, with many competing interests. For example, a senior SAGCOT secretariat official argued that the current leadership is new, with a different outlook. The official explained that, unlike in the past, the current leadership is pro-smallholders. He confirmed this change stating that '[s]mall-scale farmers/smallholders can surpass large-scale farmers in some high value crops because smallholders not only put knowledge, but love … they feel farming is part of their life."[116] Yet, based on the field observations and analysis highlighted above, it is unclear whether the SAGCOT secretariat's new outlook will fully shift from its current focus on developing nucleus estates with outgrowers schemes towards more pro-smallholder farming investments.

Conclusion

As Tania Li has shown in her critique of James Scotts' book 'Seeing Like a State', grand modernist visions are not merely designed and implemented by the state. Rather, such visions are designed, implemented and shaped by various actors, often with diverse interests. SAGCOT is a classic example of how different actors participated in corridor design and implementation, and how the top-down SAGCOT visions, driven by state-capital alliances, were reshaped through national and local resistances and contestations. Currently, SAGCOT remains a site of contestation between state bureaucrats, donors and financial institutions, investors and smallholder producers over land and resources rights, as well as over directions and terms of incorporation in agricultural commercialisation. The grand modernist vision of the corridor, centred on the promotion of large-scale estates, has unravelled through contestations and negotations on the ground. But, as the different cases show, such unravelling happens in different ways. Smallholders living near the two estates, for example, aim to ensure that they remain producers, rather than labourers on the estates, while smallholder milk producers have become shareholders in the Njombe milk factory.

As the cases show, understanding land rights is a key factor in enabling and/or constraining any land-based investment. Hence, despite the strong political support and significant financial backing SAGCOT received from the previous government, it has yet to achieve its ambitious plans of establishing large-scale estates with outgrowing schemes across the corridor.

The lack of available land is a key challenge for SAGCOT. As the case of Kilombero Sugar Company Limited has shown, most of the targeted land is village land, with land users objecting to the expansion of estates, and mobilising opposition.[117] As an official from the Sugar Board of Tanzania explained, government's plans to offer land for sugarcane estate development had to be abandoned because villagers not only resisted, but took court action to reverse government and investors' plans. The implementation of SAGCOT has thus revealed tensions between the local politics of resource use, control and ownership on the one hand, and state-capital alliances on the other.

But there have been shifts in position, and adaptations of strategy over time. SAGCOT's initial focus of establishing large-scale plantations did not materialise because of the difficulties in accessing village land. Coupled with local contestation and then growing opposition in the area, new investors are shifting their focus from enclave estates to smallholder outgrower schemes. As the Kilombero case shows, the shift towards the nucleus-outgrower model provides opportunities for rich and well-connected farmers to benefit, but the terms of incorporation in these investments are contested, limited and differentiated. As a result, the impact of partnerships between outgrowers and large-scale processors are highly differentiated, including on gender lines, with only a few low quality jobs on offer at the plantations and few of these jobs going to women.[118]

Given the poor policy, legal and institutional frameworks governing nucleus-outgrower schemes and large-scale land-based investments, such investments are likely to benefit investors and elites, and may have significant negative implications for marginalised land users such as pastoralists and poor outgrowers.[119] As the cases show, the change from enclave estates[120] to outgrowing[121] is not accidental; rather it reflects embedded class interests and has significant consequences for gender dynamics, equity and livelihoods. Yet, the focus on establishing large-scale estates and a combination of nucleus estates and outgrowers in the SAGCOT region remains. It is in the interest of local and national elites to welcome large-scale initiatives promoted by foreign and national capital because they create opportunities for rent-seeking and direct benefits through lease agreements and/or directly accumulating land.[122] However, given the ongoing political and civic transformation at local and national levels, these plans will continue to be challenged by local communities concerned about their land and resource rights.

The SAGCOT case thus not only contributes to wider debates about resistance to and incorporation in agricultural investments,[123] but also to an understanding of corridor-making as a contested political process, and how grand modernist visions[124] are designed and implemented by various actors, often with diverse interests,[125] and are so reshaped through local agency and contested negotiations on the ground. Future studies need not only to perceive and understand corridor as an investment in a geographical area, but rather a political construct that is subject to wider political circumstances, internationally, nationally and locally.

Notes

1. Smalley, “Agricultural growth Corridors”; Gálvez Nogales and Webber, *Territorial tools*; Dannenberg et al., “Spaces for Integration”.
2. Gálvez Nogales and Webber, *Territorial tools*; Dannenberg et al., “Spaces for Integration”.
3. See New Alliance Progress Report, http://new-alliance.org/sites/default/files/resources/072814_NewAlliance_FinalC_508.pdf [Accessed 13 February 2019].
4. Sulle, “Land grabbing”; Sulle and Hall, “Reframing the New Alliance”.
5. Approved in 2003 by heads of states and governments, CAADP’s main objective is to ensure each African country allocates at least 10% of its total budget to agriculture.
6. See Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.
7. Sulle, “Land Grabbing”; Chinsinga and Chasukwa, *The Great Belt Initiative*; Hall, “Land Grabbing in Southern Africa”.
8. Hall et al “Resistance, Acquiescence or Incorporation?”, McAdam et al., *Dynamics of Contention*; Hickey, “The Politics of Staying Poor”.
9. Bernstein, *Class Dynamics of Agrarian Change*, 22.
10. See Hansen and Stepputat, *States of Imagination*; Tsing, *An Ethnography of Global Connection*.
11. Sulle, “Land Grabbing”; Sulle and Smalley, *The Role of the State*; Massimba et al., *Consultancy Services*.
12. See Smalley, “Agricultural growth Corridors”.
13. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.
14. Coulson, *Political Economy of Tanzania*.
15. Bergius, “Expanding the Corporate”; Twomey et al., “Impact of Large-scale”.
16. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*; Li, “Beyond ‘the state’ and Failed Schemes”.
17. URT, *Development Vision 2025*; Khalifa Said and Ephrahim Bahemu, “President Magufuli out to leave mega projects legacy”, *The Citizen*, 6 November 2018, https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/News/President-Magufuli-out-to-leave-mega-projects-legacy/1840340-4838814-3kiq94z/index.html [Accessed 2 February 2019].
18. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*; Li, “Beyond ‘the state’ and Failed Schemes”.
19. *SAGCOT Investment Partnership Program: Opportunities for Investors in the Sugar Sector,* 2012. www.sagcot.com.
20. Paul and Steinbrecher, “African Agricultural growth Corridor”.
21. Paul and Steinbrecher, “African Agricultural growth Corridor”; Laltaika, “Business and Human Rights”.

22. See http://www.sagcot.com/ [Accessed 11 December 2018].
23. Bergius, "Expanding the Corporate Food Regime".
24. Village land means land within the boundaries of a village registered in accordance with the Local Government Act of 1982 administered through Village Land Act No 5 of 1999.
25. See https://www.tanzaniainvest.com/industrialisation [Accessed 2 February 2019]; Said and Bahemu, "President Magufuli", op. cit.
26. Rosemary Mirondo, "Tanzania Government Cancels Sh100bn Sagcot Scheme." *The Citizen* May 17, 2019, https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/News/Tanzania-government-cancels-Sh100bn-Sagcot-scheme/1840340-5119582-qvi1siz/index.html; Africa Confidential, "Farming Gamble Fails." 22 March 2019. https://www.africa-confidential.com/article/id/12602/Farming_gamble_fails
27. SAGCOT Catalytic Trust Fund, "Govt to Redraft Stalled SAGCOT Scheme." July 19, 2019, https://sagcotctf.co.tz/2019/07/19/govt-to-redraft-stalled-sagcot-scheme-2/ [Accessed 21 January 2020].
28. Brunnermeier, "Deciphering the liquidity"
29. Bergius et al., "Green economy"; Ouma, "From Financialization to Operations of Capital"
30. Browne, "The History and Politics".
31. See Gonçalves, "Beira and Nacala".
32. See AgDevCo and Prorustica, cited in Maganga et al., "Dispossession through Formalization", 16.
33. Sulle, "Biofuels Boom and Bust"; Vermeulen and Cotula; *Making the Most of Agricultural Investment*.
34. Twomey et al., "Impacts of large-scale"; Massay and Kassile 'Land-based Investments'; Belair, "Land Investments in Tanzania"
35. Hall, "The Next Great Trek"; Cotula and Leonard, *Alternatives to Land Grabbing*.
36. Sulle, "Land Grabbing".
37. URT, *National Agriculture Policy*, 8.
38. Maganga et al., "Dispossession through Formalization".
39. See http://sagcot.co.tz/index.php/sagcot-investment-project/#1532685674247-2ea69550-8ffc [Accessed 15 November 2018].
40. SAGCOT. "Southern Agricultural Corridor: Investment Blueprint." 2011. Retrieved at: http://www.sagcot.com/uploads/media/Invest-Blueprint-SAGCOT_High_res.pdf.
41. Ibid.
42. See http://www.sagcot.com/newsdetails/article//catalytic-trust-fund-funding-opportunity-advertisement-call-for-business-concept-proposals/ [Accessed 4 August 2017].
43. See West and Haug. "Polarised Narratives and Complex Realities"; World Bank, "New Project to Link Farmers to Agribusiness in Tanzania." *Press Release*, March 10, 2016, http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2016/03/10/new-project-to-link-farmers-to-agribusiness-in-tanzania [Accessed 5 August 2017].
44. Africa Confidential, "Farming Gamble Fails", op. cit.
45. Dannenberg et al, "Spaces for Integration".
46. SAGCOT, "Southern Agricultural Corridor," 17.
47. Hall et al., "Resistance, acquiescence or incorporation?" McAdam et al., *Dynamics of Contention*; Hickey, "The Politics of Staying Poor".
48. *SAGCOT Investment Partnership*, 17; Smalley et al., "The Role of the State".
49. Discussion with SAGCOT official, Dar Es Salaam, 6 May 2018.
50. URT, *Development Vision*; Nshala and Locke, "A proposed Land for Equity Scheme".
51. Baum, "Land use in Kilombero Valley"; Smalley and Sulle, "The State and Foreign Capital".
52. See https://www.illovosugarafrica.com/About-us/Group-Overview/Structure [Accessed 2 February 2019].
53. Illovo Sugar Ltd, "Integrated Report 2013." www.illovosugar.co.za/Financial/Annual_Reports/Annual_Report2013.aspx [Accessed 20 September 2018].
54. Ibid.
55. Personal communication with the cane growers association official, 1 February 2019.

56. see Sprenger, *Sugarcane Outgrowers*; Sulle and Smalley, "The State and Foreign Capital".
57. Focus group discussion, members of Msolwa outgrowers association, 14 May 2018.
58. Sulle and Smalley, "The State and Foreign Capital".
59. see Sulle and Smalley, "The State and Foreign Capital"; Sulle, "Social Differentiation".
60. Dancer and Sulle, "Gender Implications"; Hall et al., "Plantations, Outgrowers and Commercial Farming in Africa".
61. Sulle and Smalley, "The State and Foreign Capital".
62. Ibid; Dancer and Sulle, *Gender Implications.*
63. Interview, a mother of three children, Msolwa Ujamaa Village, 15 May 2018.
64. Sulle and Smalley, "The State and Foreign Capital"; Nombo, "Sweet Cane, Bitter Realities"; Dancer and Sulle, *Gender Implications.*
65. Dancer and Sulle, *Gender Implications.*
66. Ibid.
67. Massimba et al., *Consultancy Services*; Sulle, "Social Differentiation".
68. Baum, "Land use in Kilombero Valley";
69. Chachage, "Kilombero Sugar"; Locher and Sulle, "Challenges and Methodological Flaws".
70. Mbilinyi and Semkafu, "Gender and Employment"; Sulle and Smalley, "The State and Foreign Capital"
71. Bergius, "Expanding the Corporate Food Regime"
72. Interview with Sugar Board of Tanzania official, Dar Es Salaam, 19 October 2017.
73. Ibid.
74. *Mwananchi Newspaper*, "Wabunge wa upinzani wamwaga kero zao mbele ya Magufuli", 5 May 2018.
75. Ibid.
76. Interview with land rights NGO representative, Dar Es Salaam, 10 May 2018.
77. See Sulle and Smalley, "The State and Foreign Capital".
78. See Ibid.
79. Milgoom, "Policy Processes of a Land Grab"; Hall et al., "Resistance, Acquiescence or Incorporation?"
80. Sulle and Smalley, "The State and Foreign Capital".
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82. Institute for Resource Assessment (University of Dar es Salaam), "Environmental and social impact assessment report for the proposed Mkulazi sugar farming and processing factory, Morogoro Rural District, Morogoro Region, Tanzania". Unpublished, 12 October 2017.
83. Ibid.
84. Interview, Mkulazi Ward Executive Officer, Mkulazi 7 September 2018.
85. Ibid.
86. In Tanzania a ward is an administrative unit formed by more than one village, while a village itself is formed by more than one subvillage.
87. Mwami and Kamata, *Land Grabbing in a Post-Investment Period.*
88. Focus group discussion, residents in Kizada subvillage, 7 September 2018.
89. Interview, former official, Tanzania Sugarcane Growers Association, Mikumi, 14 May 2018.
90. Chachage and Mbunda, *The state of the then NAFCO.*
91. Interview with pastoralist NGO representative, Morogoro, 14 May 2018.
92. Ibid.
93. Interview, district land official, Mvomero District, 27 July 2018.
94. Interview, district livestock officer, Mvomero District, 30 July 2018.
95. Interview with pastoralist NGO representative, Morogoro, 14 May 2018.
96. Ibid.
97. Focus group discussion, residents in Kizada subvillage, 7 September 2018.
98. Ibid.
99. Interview, company's manager, Njombe, 31 August 2018.

100. Ibid.
101. Ibid.
102. Interview, NJOLIFA member, Njombe, 31 August 2018.
103. Interview, company's manager, Njombe, 31 August 2018.
104. Ibid.
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106. Interview, NJOLIFA member, Njombe, 31 August 2019.
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111. Interview Executive Ward Office, Mkulazi, 31 August 2018.
112. Discussion with SAGCOT official, Dar Es Salaam, 06 May 2018.
113. Policy Forum. "Position Statement Budget 2016/07." http://www.policyforum-tz.org/position-statement-budget-20162017 [Accessed 14 September 2018].
114. URT, *Development Vision 2025*.
115. *The Citizen Newspaper*, "Unanswered Questions as BRN Disbanded." 28 June 2017. https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/News/Unanswered-questions-as-BRN-disbanded/1840340-3990386-11n2ibbz/index.html [Accessed 21 January 2020].
116. Interview with SAGCOT staff, Masaki, 11 August 2017.
117. Boaudreax, "An Assessment of Concerns Related to Land Tenure".
118. Dancer and Sulle, "Gender implications".
119. Shivji, *Accumulation in an African Periphery*
120. Ferguson, "Seeing Like an Oil Company".
121. Sprenger, *Sugarcane Outgrowers*.
122. Sulle, "Land Grabbing"; Hall "Land Grabbing in Southern Africa".
123. Hall et al "Resistance, acquiescence or incorporation?".
124. Jame Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.
125. Li, "Beyond "The State" Failed Schemes".

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