The rush for land in an urbanizing world: from land grabbing towards developing safe, resilient and sustainable cities and landscapes [i]

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Abstract

This article aims to contribute to current discussions about 'making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable' (SDG 11) by linking debates that are currently taking place in separate containers: debates on the 'global land rush' and the 'new urban agenda'. It highlights some important processes that are overlooked in these debates and advances a new, socially inclusive urbanization agenda that addresses emerging urban land grabs. The global land rush debate has ignored not only the fact that large-scale land investments take place in a context of rapid urbanization, but also that these investments are often triggered by urban demand, whereas discussions on the new urban agenda prepared for the latest United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) are typically city-biased, and pay little attention to the role of increasing cross-border investment in land and the transformation of the countryside. Using cases from areas where the global land rush and urbanization are simultaneously intensifying in the global South, we identify four areas that should be prioritized in current debates, namely the impacts of land investments on intra-city dynamics, peri-urban dynamics, and the emergence of new cities and new infrastructure corridors.

Key words: large scale land investments, global land rush, land grabbing, new urban agenda, urbanization, Habitat III, SDG11.

Introduction

Over the last decade, land governance has appeared as a prominent topic on the agenda of policymakers and academics alike. What started as a media-driven hype about 'global land grabbing' has developed into a well-established field of scholarly research and an important domain for policy intervention, focusing on how to deal with increasing pressure on land and various competing claims. Land, long considered as a local asset of crucial importance for people's livelihoods, is increasingly seen as a global good necessary for solving the global food, energy and climate crises. In addition, land is equally claimed for nature conservation, mining and urban expansion. Large numbers of academic publications and media reports have analysed this global land rush, showing the opportunities and limitations to achieve sustainable inclusive development.

While the global land rush discussions focused on large-scale investments in agricultural land and the large-scale land conversion of rural areas, a separate debate emerged around global urbanization and issues relating to urban growth. As is highlighted in many reports and websites, urban growth in the global South, especially in Asia and Africa, is taking place on an unprecedented scale and is set to

continue in the coming decades. As stated in the World Urbanization Prospects (United Nations 2014), 'the proportion of the world's population living in urban areas is expected to increase, reaching 66 per cent by 2050'. In order to meet the challenge of 'inclusive, resilient and sustainable' cities (and achieving Sustainable Development Goal 11), enormous financial flows are expected to be mobilized for investment in housing, infrastructure, energy, and economic development in support of the realization of the 'new urban agenda' of the latest United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) (UN Habitat 2016; Sheppard et al. 2015). Land is one of the key issues at stake in this agenda that seeks to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable urban development by promoting security of tenure, sustainable land use and responsible land governance (Wehrmann, 2016).

What is striking is that debates on the global land rush and the new urban agenda are taking place in separate containers. The global land rush debate has mainly focused on the rural sphere, ignoring the fact that large-scale land investments are made not only in farmland and forestland, but also in urban areas. It has also largely ignored the fact that investments in the rural sphere take place in a context of rapid urbanization and are often triggered by urban demand. Discussions about Habitat III, on the other hand, are typically city-biased, and pay little attention to the role of increasing cross-border investment in land and the transformation of the countryside, even though both affect the urbanization processes. Both debates have their own policy discourses, preferred concepts, analytical frameworks and academic discussions, and involve largely separate communities of scholars and practitioners.

This article aims to contribute to the new urban agenda and current discussions about 'making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable' (SDG 11) by presenting a comparative review of these two debates. An analysis of the global land rush from the perspective of the urban 'turn' (i.e., the fact that the majority of the world population is projected to be urban), and vice versa, clarifies the connections between the rural and urban spheres, both of which are facing large-scale land investments. The focus is on cases from ongoing research in parts of Africa, Latin America and Asia that have experienced the global land rush as well as rapid urbanization,[ii] and we illustrate different patterns of inclusion and exclusion as new land acquisition and urbanization processes take place. By doing so, we delineate the scope for cross-fertilization between the two debates and suggest what a new socially inclusive urbanization agenda should look like in order to address 'urban land grabbing'.

This article first reviews the global land rush and the Habitat III debates separately, as each has produced a large volume of studies and media reports. The review is followed by a comparative analysis that reveals contradictions and blind spots. The article then identifies four areas of cross-fertilization, namely impacts of land investments on intra-city dynamics, peri-urban dynamics, and the emergence of new cities and new infrastructure corridors. In conclusion, the article argues that current investments in land and infrastructure are transforming global landscapes in complex ways that blur the rural–urban divide and require a conceptual update. By mapping out topics that are insufficiently highlighted in each of the debates, the article contributes to the prioritization of issues that are directly linked to inclusive and sustainable landscapes and societies.

Background (1): The global land rush debate

Over the last decade, the global land rush – the phenomenon of domestic and transnational companies, governments and individuals buying or leasing large tracts of farm land – has emerged as an important issue especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Large-scale land investments turned into a hype in around 2007, when the phenomenon became known as the 'global land grab'. Driven by rising commodity prices, capital-rich countries with limited possibilities to produce their own food (such as China, South Korea, Japan, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States) as well as investors from Europe, the United States and other countries such as India, South-Africa and Brazil, started to buy and lease large tracts of land overseas, especially in Africa, mainly for the production of food and biofuels.

In the beginning of the debate there was a heated discussion about the impact of such investments. On the one hand, large scale land investments were expected to bring benefits: it would help (African) countries enhance economic growth; it would bring technology, employment etcetera, while also contributing to solutions for the energy and food crises (Cotula et al. 2009; Deininger and Byerlee 2011). On the other hand, organizations such as Via Campesina, the Oakland Institute and the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food (until 2014, de Schutter), showed the many adverse effects for local communities, mostly from a human-rights perspective (e.g., de Schutter 2009). Large-scale land investments in Africa would harm local populations who were often not informed, or displaced (also Wolford et al. 2013; Borras and Franco 2013).

These discussions generated a rush for data and empirical evidence (Oya 2013; also Scoones et al. 2013a; Zoomers et al. 2016b). Since 2008, many efforts have been made to quantify the volume of the global land rush. Estimates of the total area affected by large-scale land investments in food and biofuel vary considerably in time and between different sources. In 2009 the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) estimated that between 15 and 20 million hectares of farmland in developing countries had ended up in the hands of external investors since 2006. The World Bank report claimed 57 million hectares worldwide. Friis and Reenberg (2010) reported between 51 and 63 million hectares in Africa alone; and the GRAIN database published in January 2012 quantified 35 million hectares, although stripping out more developed economies reduced the amount in the GRAIN database to 25 million hectares (www.GRAIN.org, November 2013). There is no doubt that large-scale land investments involve millions of hectares globally, and large-scale land investments still take place. The Land Matrix shows an increase from 62 million hectares in August 2015 to 72 million hectares in October2016 (including intended and failed deals), and the figure is still on the rise (www.landmatrix.org, accessed 8 October 2016).

Since the beginning of the debate, we now know much more about the volume of large-scale land investments, and about the drivers and consequences of land acquisitions (Archambault et al 2016; Borras and Franco 2010 and 2012; Cotula et al. 2009 and Cotula 2012; Deininger and Byerlee 2011; Evers et al. 2013; Zoomers 2010; Kaag and Zoomers 2014; Hall et al. 2015). The body of case studies from around the world has shown that we are looking at the tip of the iceberg: land grabbing affects not only farmland for biofuels or crops, but also claims for nature conservation (e.g. 'green grab', including REDD+[iii]), tourism and large-scale infrastructure such as dam construction. It has become clear that in addition to mega-deals by foreign actors, local land markets are under pressure from various competing claims and a large variety of actors. It has become clear that large-scale land deals

labelled as land 'grabs' are often legal, and national governments often play an active role in land acquisition and giving away land to foreign and domestic investors. At the same time, however, even in the case of 'legal' land transfers, the term 'grab' might still be justified by the fact that the process of acquisition often involves the use of illegal means (Kaag and Zoomers 2014). While land exchange might be legal, methods to clear the land are often not: many legal land deals are unfair and unjust, as they do not involve the local people in a proper manner or do not adequately compensate those affected. The process often takes place at the expense of those who lack the power to claim their rights and negotiate equitable deals. In Ethiopia, for example, large-scale land acquisition is legal and part of formal state policies. The land is owned by the state, and governments allocate land according to policy goals that range from economic growth to modernization and food security. The rights and interests of local groups are often not respected. In many countries, national governments actively attract investors by offering them land previously used by local groups (Wolford 2013; Bräutigam and Zhang 2013). This is partly an outcome of donor policies pushing for 'good governance', that is, encouraging governments to privatize landholdings and establish free land markets, thereby creating business-friendly environments that will attract foreign direct investments (Zoomers and van Westen 2013).

Thus, there is now a growing consensus that until now large scale land investments have not generated many benefits for local populations. Even in cases where employment is created in the form of salaried work on the plantation or at outgrowers, working conditions are often poor and many local groups are bypassed. Some are even physically forced to move away from where the business takes place or lose access to common pool resources. Furthermore, large-scale land investments have gone hand in hand with large environmental costs, since they often contribute to the rapid expansion of large-scale mono-cropping. Moreover, the investments generally target more fertile soils in areas with sufficient rainfall or good irrigation potential and where there is better access to markets (Cotula and Vermeulen 2009). Losing such land obviously has a huge impact on the food security and livelihoods of local populations. Even though investors and governments tend to portray the areas for investments as underused or empty lands, many of these areas are used by various groups for grazing, gathering fuelwood and medicinal plants, which contribute to local livelihoods and wellbeing (Borras et al. 2010; Kaag and Zoomers 2014; Schoneveld 2013). In addition, large-scale land acquisition often takes place at the expense of forest areas, and it is increasingly affecting ecologically fragile land. In general terms, the inflow of large-scale land investments has led to the loss of biodiversity and the destruction of landscapes (Schoneveld et al. 2015; Zoomers et al. 2016a, 2016b).

Acknowledging the problematic side of large-scale land acquisition, policymakers and international organizations (World Bank, FAO) as well as NGOs have become actively involved in preventing land grabbing by promoting and implementing 'good' land governance. In fact, countries such as Mozambique have relatively progressive land laws that recognize that all the land is public land and is primarily for local communities to use, and that oblige investors to consult and negotiate with communities about their business plans (Otsuki et al. 2016b). Such a move towards mandatory consultation processes has intensified since 2012, when governments and international organizations agreed to support the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land and Fisheries (www.fao.org). These guidelines have received global recognition by the G8, G20 and Rio +20, and international organizations, including the World Bank, which emphasizes the need for more transparency.

In addition to these voluntary guidelines, donors and governments pay a lot of attention to land titling and administration, including the registration of customary rights and collective titles, and helping local populations to protect their right to be consulted by establishing principles of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC; specifically with respect to indigenous people). And finally, there is a rapid growth of interventions in the field of 'responsible business', such as the Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investments (RAI), certification of standards and multi-stakeholder platforms such as the Round Table on Responsible Soy, Round Table on Sustainable Palm Oil, etc. Models of 'inclusive businesses' are promoted, to include smallholders in the business models of investors and develop new mechanisms for benefit sharing (Schoneveld forthcoming). Interventions including emission rights (e.g. REDD+), tourism and nature conservation are aimed at providing local communities with new opportunities for income generation through investments.

In sum, while processes of dispossession and displacement have continued, e.g., in Ethiopia and Mozambique, there seems to be increasing pressure to consult with local communities and to develop new modalities for benefit sharing. However, as will be further elaborated in the next section, few of these discussions come back in urban land debates as reflected in the new urban agenda prepared for Habitat III.

Background (2): The new urban agenda

The global debate on large-scale land acquisitions in the rural sphere coincides with the current call for a new urban agenda, brought up in the context of Habitat III. Many sources highlight the enormous growth of cities in the global South. According to the African Development Bank, 'More than 90% of future population growth will be accounted for by the large cities in the developing countries. In the developing world, Africa has experienced the highest urban growth during the last two decades at 3.5% per year and this rate of growth is expected to hold into 2050' (http://www.afdb.org/access 30-1-2016). Asia and Africa are the world's least urbanized regions, and also the areas of fastest urban growth, with the share of population living in urban areas increasing by 1.5 and 1.1 per cent per annum, respectively (United Nations 2014). Such urban growth projections have mobilized a wide range of actors – states, city and regional leaders, international development donors, UN programmes and civil society organizations – to formulate a new urban agenda for the next 20 years, in order to meet the challenges and achieve inclusive and sustainable urban development.

Over the last decade, the urbanization debate (UN-Habitat 2012; Klaufus and Jaffe 2015) has strongly emphasized the speed and scale of urban growth. It is clear that rapid urban growth threatens to greatly exacerbate problems related to increasing urban poverty and a lack of housing, services and infrastructure, as well as health and environmental conditions. This, combined with huge inequalities and the fact that much urbanization takes place informally in settings of weak institutions, is cause for serious concern (AfDB, OECD and UNDP 2016; Cohen 2016; Pieterse and Parnell 2014; UN-Habitat 2013, 2014, 2016, Habitat III Issue Papers (http://unhabitat.org/issue-papers-and-policy-units/). The 'dramatic character of urbanization' (Potts 2012) is most visible in megacities – which are now typically located in the global South – which draw much of the attention. But it is also visible in smaller and intermediate cities where urban growth is increasingly concentrated (United Nations

2014) and that maintain strong connections with rural hinterlands. Some 37 per cent of the world's population now lives in urban areas with less than half a million inhabitants (Satterthwaite 2007).

The expansion and multiplication of urban spaces in the global South increasingly attracts both foreign and domestic investors. The investment flows often result in struggles over the control of and access to living space. Prompted by the new investments, 'neoliberal urbanization' is seen as leading to displacement and exclusion (Brenner et al. 2012; Sheppard et al. 2015). Urban 'denizens' worldwide are reclaiming the 'right to the city'. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's seminal essay (1968): they claim the right to participate in decision-making that affects the quality of their lives in the city (Marcuse 2009). The right to the city debate focuses on the creation of harmonious cities, where inhabitants have equal access to urban spaces and facilities (Marcuse 2009; Brown and Kristiansen 2008; Fernandes 2007).

However, the right to the city approach is at odds with developments that take place in urban areas, such as gentrification, the redevelopment of central areas into commercial zones, and exclusionary expansion projects on the urban fringe (Slater 2006; Evans 2003; Warde 1991). Thus, advocates of this approach have striven to put civic rights and responsibilities in exploding cities on the international agenda, especially since the fifth meeting of the World Urban Forum organized by UN-Habitat in March 2010 in Rio de Janeiro. The right to the city is now incorporated into Brazil's and Colombia's constitutions and inspires social movements to attempt to reconstruct a just urban society 'from below'. Reality, however, has revealed the principle's pitfalls (e.g. Caldeira and Holston 2015).

One of the core issues in these debates is the need for adequate housing and sustainable human settlements, which has led to upgrading programmes in informal settlements and 'slums'. Many such programmes have followed the prescriptions of the assisted self-help school, focusing on formalizing land rights and introducing basic infrastructure and services, after which the residents are expected to realize gradual improvements according to their abilities (Bredenoord and Van Lindert 2014; Mathéy 1992). This strategy of formalizing the informal economy and thus enabling the poor to capitalize on 'dead capital' was boosted by the influential ideas of De Soto (2003) on the scope for turning the informal assets of the poor into capital that would enable them to partake in the market economy. De Soto's ideas have been criticized, as formal land holdings are more likely to be lost by poor people than informal ones precisely because they are marketable. Yet despite criticism, rights to the city approaches have evolved around the formalization of urban land tenure and the notion of inhabitancy as the main criterion for the right to the city. Meanwhile, security of land tenure is now viewed more broadly, as obtaining land titles is not the only way to achieve *de facto* livelihoods security.

In the new urban agenda for Habitat III, much attention is now focused on the need to create a mutually reinforcing relationship between urbanization and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Overall, a positive link is usually observed between urbanization and economic growth, resulting from economies of scale, specialization and agglomeration effects (Spence, Clarke Annez and Buckley 2009). Cities are presented as 'development enablers', the major drivers of national economies (http://citiscope.org/habitatIII/). They are also arenas where other development goals can be pursued: enhancing democratic development and respecting human rights; creating healthy and sustainable environments; improving equity in the face of globalization, ensuring the safety and

security of all residents, of any gender and age; as well as risk reduction and enhancing resilience against climate change. In exploring how to achieve these goals, the focus is on turning megacities into smart cities, where diverse people live together in high densities without burdening the environment, and where agglomeration economies enable prosperity without widening social and economic cleavages, which is made possible by means of advanced technology applications.

In practice, new climate policies as well as the SDGs mean that the world will see enormous investment flows into construction, infrastructure and the provision of urban services. Both public and private sectors in many countries are gearing up for a major effort to support urban expansion in the years ahead. Governments are often interested in pursuing a modernization agenda that will boost both the economic performance of their countries and their prestige, and this is invariably framed in urban features. Meanwhile, financial institutions and private investors are keen to jump on this bandwagon as they are desperately looking for new investment opportunities. The trend will also be strengthened because of the policy discourses that emphasize the crisis of climate change (UN Habitat 2016). Since existing mitigation measures are increasingly seen as insufficient, more and more investments and efforts will be directed towards adaptation interventions, essentially translating into investments in infrastructure designed to manage shortages or excesses of water (contain water in reservoirs, keep floods out) and to relocate vulnerable populations and activities to safer locations. This wave of climate-related investment is likely to influence the new urban agenda focusing on smart cities and will work in favour of concentrating people in cities. Yet, the new urban agenda makes few references to the potential impacts of the 'urban land rush' on local communities caused by the new investment projects.

In sum, all indications are that voluminous and aggressive amounts of investments will be channelled into urban development in the years ahead: efforts to attain the new Sustainable Development Goals, commitments to realizing the Climate Change adaptation targets in the wake of the 2015 Paris agreement, and private sectors keen on securing new investment opportunities in the face of a possible new accumulation crisis will all contribute to a surge of investment in the new urban agenda. The conventional rights to city approaches that centre on the creation of harmonious cities will need to vigorously pressure policymakers and development professionals to consult with local communities, negotiate with governments and investors, and develop new modalities for benefit sharing.

Addressing the urban land rush

Reviewing the separate debates on the global land rush debates and those leading to the new urban agenda, it becomes clear that both debates ignore each other, even though targeting similar goals (i.e., achieving inclusive and sustainable development) and dealing with similar processes (i.e., the impact of large investment flows and land conversion).

On the one hand, the global land rush debate has been largely blind to the fact that large-scale land investments will often trigger urbanization (e.g. Budidarsono 2014, in the case Indonesian oil palm); the global land rush, taking place in a context of rapid urbanization, is partly a consequence of increasing urban demand and the restructuring of value chains. Little attention has been paid to the role of land acquisition for urban development, even though land grabbing and displacement

happens on a considerable scale for urban real estate and infrastructure development (Steel et al. forthcoming). Moreover, cities themselves act as major 'land grabbers', as they expand due to population growth, the spread of middle class lifestyles and suburbanization, speculation and new city development. Initiatives to design inclusive business models usually aim to optimize local benefit sharing by integrating smallholders and rural workers into value chains that that are largely designed and managed by urban-based actors, and can only be understood when taking a perspective that transcends the rural–urban divide.

The new urban agenda, on the other hand, focuses exclusively on how to deal with rapid urbanization ('in the next thirty years, the urban population of the world will increase by at least 2.5 billion people'; UN Habitat 2016). Displacement and commercial pressures highlight the relevance of the right to the city movement, but policies still focus on the formalization of urban land tenure, an approach that is less and less realistic and not always necessary. The discourse rarely considers the role of cities for rural people or for those who commute to the city on a daily basis, or the many with multi-local livelihoods. Most attention is paid to transforming megacities into smart and climate-resilient cities, which leads to policy debates on how to enable diverse populations to live together in high densities without unsustainably burdening the environment. This overlooks the importance of bottom-up urbanization in rural areas and the role of lower-order urban centres, which are now the fastest growing part of the settlement hierarchy (United Nations 2014) and where timely intervention may prevent problems from getting out of hand. Even though cross-border investment in urban land and real estate is increasing as much in cities as in the countryside, this is hardly noticed. Nor is much attention paid to how the transformation of the countryside is affecting urban growth.

This lack of attention to the actual connectivity between rural and urban spheres is unfortunate, since no policy tools are currently available to address either the increasing land rush in urban areas or the impact of rural land investment on urbanization. True, both debates emphasize the importance of inclusivity and the protection of civic rights in land governance, but they ignore each other's lessons. Rights-based approaches in the rural sphere, such as the voluntary guidelines and principles of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), are rarely applied to stop the emptying of urban space or displacement from city centres. Since they focus on indigeneity, their frameworks are not easily applicable to the semi-uprooted populations of urban areas. Nonetheless, their emphasis on setting up conditions for people to participate in deciding on how investments should be made on their land could fruitfully ally with urban concepts such as the right to the city. Likewise, inclusive business initiatives, which are generally aimed at inserting smallholders in extensive value chains, could advance the alignment of the context of agricultural production and value chain conditions defined in urban areas. The smart solutions emphasized in the new urban agenda could be viewed through ties between the rural and the urban environmental conditions.

One way to advance the connection both conceptually and at policy levels can be found in thinking about the future of rural people. The land rush debates usually depart from an assumption that rural people will continue to live in a rural setting, or intend to do so. Development interventions therefore aim at preserving this rural status. Looking at reality, however, in situations of land scarcity and relatively high population densities, resettlement and the effective restructuring of livelihoods in rural settings will become steadily less feasible, and people will have little choice other than to move to cities, either freely or under coercion. While lifeworlds of older generations are often framed in

rurality, there is ample evidence that rural youths are often interested in moving to cities (Bah et al. 2003; Christiansen et al. 2006; Leineweaver 2008; Steel and Sosa 2014; Van Blerk and Ansell 2006). Livelihood opportunities are increasingly dependent on people's access to rural-urban connections. This is also reflected by the fact that the resettlement of remote villages linked to hydro dam construction in Vietnam proved to be most successful in cases where the new settlements were located within convenient reach of urban labour markets, thus significantly enhancing the opportunities to build alternative livelihoods (Pham Huu 2013; 2015). Given the shortage of suitable alternative farmland for resettlement – a condition more and more likely to prevail in rural resettlement questions – communities relocated close to cities did much better than those moved to remote alternatives. This does not mean that one can downplay the negative impact of displacement and dispossession associated with rural land-related investment, or dismiss the right of people to stick to their habitat, but it does imply that the analysis and search for solutions need not be confined to the rural sphere.

Conversely, discussions about the urban agenda tends to present the 'move to the city' as inevitable. True, rapid economic growth concentrated in cities has encouraged city-ward migration in countries like China and India, both of which had relatively low levels of urbanization until recently. But in much of sub-Saharan Africa, which is labelled 'the most rapidly urbanizing part of the world' (UN Habitat 2016), urban expansion largely results from in-situ natural growth and the reclassification of rural areas as urban, and less from rural–urban migration (Potts 2009, 2012; Satterthwaite 2007). The experiences of individual countries vary widely, with some seeing counter-urbanization (e.g. Zambia, Ivory Coast and Mali), some having weak city in-migration (e.g. Ghana, Benin and Mozambique) and some having high net-migration to cities (e.g. Tanzania, Kenya and Niger) (Potts 2009). In many African countries, rural populations are actually still growing, albeit not as fast as urban populations. For these people, the future is not necessarily urban, especially not in the short term.

The rural growth is in fact having a profound effect on the expected boost in urbanization. In several African countries, there is an increasing trend of 'villagization' or collectivization of small-scale farmers (Young 1998; Agergaard et al. 2010). Villagization policies implemented in countries such as Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania (in previous times) and Rwanda (currently) have led to the resettlement of considerable numbers of people. The aim is to promote economic development and improve service delivery, as well as create centres for the development of non-agricultural income generation. These policies accelerate the trend of small town development and the urbanization of the countryside (Bolay and Rabinovich 2004; Hinderink and Titus 2002; Owusu 2008). In line with the global call for more inclusive urban development, much hope is pinned on these service hubs, spurring increased attention to their economic role and governance capacity, as well as in their impact on rural transformations (McGranahan and Satterthwaite 2014). The rural transformation process physically links sprawling cities to intermediate towns, creating mega-regions, urban corridors and city-regions whose economic, social and political geographies defy traditional conceptions of the 'city'. Both the land rush debate and the new urban agenda will have to address these new trends in urbanization while paying attention to exclusionary processes that may take place at the frontlines of these new cities that are shaped in both rural and urban spheres.

Four priority areas

At this point, we turn to specific areas to clarify what the emphasis on the conceptual rural–urban connectivity seeks to highlight. In essence, we need to develop a new, socially inclusive urbanization agenda that meets the challenge of developing, inclusive, resilient and sustainable cities without involving land grabs (Nguyen Quang 2016). As large investments in urban spaces and infrastructures are being mobilized (Otsuki et al. 2016a), more attention needs to be paid to large-scale land investments within and around cities, including emerging cities and urban infrastructure extended into the rural sphere. Here, we briefly review the impacts of such investments in the following areas: intra-city dynamics, peri-urban dynamics, the emergence of new cities, and new infrastructure corridors.

(I)   Intra-city dynamics: urban renewal and rural land use in inner cities

As argued above, inflows of land-related investments will likely reshape the nature of cities. These investments will trigger urban renewal, real estate and housing projects, and infrastructure development. These urban-based flows and their consequences for the urban poor are under-researched in the land rush debates, and they are not even mentioned in tools to identify land acquisitions, such as the Land Matrix (www.landmatrix.org). What do we know about local communities' involvement or urban resettlement when displacement occurs? Who are the investors, and what kinds of partnerships are involved, and how do these investments relate to emerging notions of responsible business?

Here we can look at the case of Khartoum, the capital of Sudan. Petro-dollars and foreign investments are rapidly transforming the city. As the government elaborates plans to turn Khartoum into 'Dubai on the Nile', the city has attracted several waves of Asian and Gulf-based real estate investments to both central and peripheral areas of the capital (Crombé 2009). Partly in response to currency issues, as the American boycott forbids all kinds of international money transfers, the investors try to acquire land for the construction of new residential areas and business districts.

In 2004, the Alsunut Development Company invested more than 4 billion US dollars to develop a 65 hectare area in downtown Khartoum at the confluence of the White and the Blue Nile. When completed, this prestigious Mogran development project will comprise 63 hectares of office space, 1100 villas and 6700 apartments, allegedly providing housing for 40,000 residents and visitors, and jobs for 50,000 Sudanese (Choplin and Franck 2015). Unlike similar flamboyant urban projects in the global South, the Mogran project has not yet led to the expropriation and relocation of poor residents and other 'undesirables' (such as informal workers, beggars and street children) (e.g. Swanson 2007) but seems more similar to rural land grabs: the project, carried out on formerly agricultural lands, affect the livelihoods of urban farmers, many of them migrants, as it put an end to their fishing, grazing and farming opportunities. As such, the socioeconomic outcomes are quite similar to other gentrification processes in inner city areas. Yet, we need an insight into how this gentrification also affects food security and fishery or agricultural practices in the inner city.

The investment has also led to increased land prices, resulting in a wave of land grabbing all over Khartoum. Thus, such large urban development projects affect the livelihoods of poor people who

are not directly involved in the project. The increased competition for urban land has sparked conflicts and tensions related to the use of, access to and compensation for land (Steel, Klaufus and Noorloos, forthcoming).

Another example can be drawn from the port city of Beira, Mozambique. In 2013, a Dutch private sector consortium presented its Beira Masterplan: 'Vision for 2035 for port development'. The masterplan is essentially a set of business proposals for Dutch and other investors to invest in climate-smart urbanization and industrialization. The masterplan is currently financed by the Business Agency of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The plan includes the improvement of a port access road. The site where the access road is planned is a floodplain, used by small-scale farmers for sweet potato and rice cultivation. The masterplan does not present a clear vision on the future of these farmers – people losing land due to the construction of public infrastructure will receive compensation of about 3000 *meticais* (around 60 US dollars) per plot. This is not sufficient for farmers to re-establish their livelihoods elsewhere. In some instances, farmers have been offered new plots instead of financial compensation, but this is less likely in this context of an expanding urban area. If farmers give up farming and try to find another source of income, their prospects are grim as unemployment is quite high in Beira and the informal sector is overcrowded (Otsuki et al. 2016a).

In addition, one can wonder whether these planned city renewal projects will actually materialize. Many ambitious projects such as the Mogran case have stagnated in the development phase (Barther 2015), creating a number of empty spaces in central areas of the city while displacing the original inhabitants. They become 'ghost towns', a term used to denominate private-sector new city initiatives across the African continent (such as Konza Techno City and Tuti City in Kenya and Ghana's Appolonia and Hope city, see Watson 2013).

In sum, the current approaches to both the land rush and the new urban agenda do not offer policy tools to deal with the rural elements – nature reserves and farmlands – within cities that are affected by the city planning and investments.

(II)   The peri-urban dynamics: livelihood change and compensation

Land loss and dislocation among farmers is even more common in peri-urban areas, where urban expansion and sprawl cause the large-scale conversion of rural land into urban land. This typically affects rural populations, often established for generations, but may also harm poor urban people seeking cheaper housing options, often informal, away from central areas. While the problem of land conversion and dislocation linked to urban expansion is familiar enough, it is interesting to see how differently it is viewed from the perspectives of the debates on rural land grabs and on the new urban agenda, respectively.

The new urban agenda sees the peri-urban area as a frontier, a semi-void area surrounding the city and into which it gradually expands. This view is favoured by developers and investors, the harbingers of change, as well as by most governments eager to pursue high modernist agendas. In many cases, this misrepresents a reality of densely occupied rural settlement and land use, interspersed with urban facilities and uses. With some luck, it is acknowledged that some form of

compensation and resettlement is needed for rural residents who lose their land, but this tends to be seen as a relatively minor problem. After all, the land use changes from low-return (rural) to high-return (urban), which should be able to cover the compensation, and besides, lingering ruralists are offered a fast-track transformation from the rural past into an urban future with corresponding opportunities in terms of jobs and amenities.

The rural land grab discourses may have some more consideration for compensation issues and also envisage some modality of being informed and consulted, but its rural analytical framework is less effective on the fringes of an expanding city. Unlike individual agribusiness projects, urban expansion initiatives can claim to serve 'the general interest' and are therefore much more difficult to challenge. Rural consultation initiatives quickly evaporate in the face of an advancing urban invasion. Compensation schemes are likely to follow rural practices, however, and these are also unlikely to be effective on urban peripheries. Opportunities for receiving compensation in the form of alternative farm plots rarely exist in localities close to cities. In most cases, financial compensation will be based on rural land conditions: the value of the land as a rural asset which at face value seems reasonable since it is farmland that is being acquired, but which more often than not is not sufficient to enable livelihood reconstruction on the periphery of cities.

This process can be seen at work in Hué, a secondary city in central Vietnam (Nguyen Quang 2016). Thanks to Hué's dynamic local economy, young people may well succeed in becoming urbanites and landing new jobs. They often actually enjoy the benefits of urbanization. However, the realization of other, urban livelihoods tends not to be possible for older people who are accustomed to farming their lands based on customary rights, which are usually not documented. The ways compensation are calculated have not been clearly revealed, and in many cases, compensation is based on the loss of harvests without compensation for the loss of land (as the farmers are not formally owners but enjoy use rights). Since the monetary value of such semi-subsistence farming is often very modest, this may result in compensation packages that are insufficient to create alternative sources of livelihoods. But even when they are compensated for the value of land lost, the amount received rarely enables them to acquire alternative farmlands – even if they are available in localities not far from urban areas. Therefore, there is a need for an integrated view, including linking compensation with realistic livelihood opportunities.

In desakota-type settings[iv] (McGee 1991), combinations of rural and urban livelihood sources may be possible, with relatively smooth transformations from an agricultural to a manufacturing and services-led existence, often by generational succession. The problems of land loss are then mitigated. In other settings, peri-urban areas are more like battle grounds between different lifeworlds, and reallocation and conversion is perceived more as a zero-sum game, even if tempered with compensation packages. Peri-urban areas are zones of transition, where different types of land use and the corresponding stakeholders meet or, more accurately, find themselves in close proximity but often without much mutual connection. This mix of different uses and users is typical of peri-urban areas, as is their fragmented nature with a limited local logic – as the functional links of different land uses are often elsewhere in the urban centre or beyond. And peri-urban areas are typically zones of continuous transformation, where land is developed and converted into other types of uses, with corresponding changes in users. Change here is further encouraged because greenfield developments in the peri-urban areas are usually more convenient and cheaper than redoing and cleaning up old urban localities. The question is how to deal with the reallocation and

conversion process, and how to compensate users for their displacement. This will require a linking of rural land grab and urban agenda discourses.

(III)   Emerging cities: urbanization effects in the rural sphere

Large-scale land investments often trigger urbanization processes in predominantly rural areas, through the establishment of plantations (e.g. oil palm) or urban hubs for such land uses as tourism, mining, trade and service delivery. The concentration of employment and business opportunities in such localities, along with mobile populations settling and the need for resettlement towns for displaced people, lead to new processes of urbanization. At the same time, entirely new cities emerge in formerly rural areas as part of new private sector-led strategies of master-planned tabula rasa 'smart city' building. Both processes result in the advance of 'planetary urbanization' (Brenner and Schmid 2014) by introducing new urban infrastructures as well as lifestyles into hitherto rural areas.

Such new cities in Africa are often based on questionable assumptions, such as the possibility of a slum-free world ('cities without slums', anti-urban strategies) and the 'enormous rise' of the African middle classes (UN Habitat 2016). As a result, the displacement of rural populations is once more regarded as a necessary evil for the greater good. In the hybrid, complex rural–urban interface where many new cities are built, land market transformation and speculation in the context of informal land rights form an explosive mix (Goldman 2011; De Boeck 2014). Further criticisms deal with the privatization and neoliberalization of governance in new cities, which are frequently governed by 'managers' rather than mayors (Moser 2015; Watson 2013). Finally, the tendency to totally remake or escape the existing complex city (tabula rasa urbanism) is frequently challenged as an old-fashioned, anti-poor and unrealistic method of planning (Cirolia 2014; Watson 2013).

Another aspect of urbanization in the rural sphere is seen in industry-driven urbanization linked to mining, agriculture and tourism development. In Costa Rica, the traditional cattle farming region of Guanacaste was converted into an urbanizing hotspot for tourism and real estate. The development of larger-scale forms of tourism and the introduction of international hotel chains was followed by the creation of an intense real estate market, directed at the growing market of lifestyle migrants or residential tourists who buy properties as permanent or second homes and/or for speculative purposes. They are mostly from the US and Canada, as well as Costa Ricans from the Central Valley. The increasing demand for individual houses and plots gave rise to an extensive real estate industry consisting of residential projects and urbanizations, converting the coastal area into a transnational urbanized hub. Even though still small in scale, this rapid development was remarkable, particularly between 2001 and 2006 when the area of new constructions increased by 159 per cent (Santa Cruz canton) and 66 per cent (Carrillo canton) per year (van Noorloos 2012, p.173). The developers and investment capital mainly originate in the US and Canada, although there is also much domestic investment; in addition, collaborations between North American and Costa Rican investors are common (van Noorloos 2012, 2014).

Lifestyle migration to a region such as Guanacaste introduces new privileged populations and hence inevitably creates social inequalities, which are clearly marked in the landscape. This is particularly visible in the prevalence of gated communities: about half of the completed developments on

Guanacaste's coast are advertised as such. Real estate growth and the influx of new elites have caused some direct displacement of local populations, but this displacement is mediated by various local factors (van Noorloos and Steel 2015; van Noorloos 2012, 2014). The main exclusion mechanism of local populations is the increase in property prices: the influx of new high-income transnational investors and lifestyle migrants, as well as domestic investors, decreased financial accessibility to housing for large parts of the local population. In the coastal area of Guanacaste, land and house prices increased greatly especially between 2000 and 2011 (17.7 per cent and 24.3 per cent annually respectively for land and houses; Van Noorloos 2012, 2014). Such gentrification has also led to indirect displacement (van Noorloos and Steel 2015). Guanacaste is a peculiar case, however, with mostly private individual land rights and strong state institutions and legal frameworks in place (van Noorloos 2015). In other contexts where lifestyle migration has surged, rapid real estate investment booms often cause more intense societal impacts.

New towns and cities thus emerge in rural areas where large-scale land investments take place, and at quite some distance from existing cities in the case of master-planned new cities. Both phenomena are transforming more and more rural and semi-rural areas into urbanized hubs, with serious consequences for land tenure relations. These supposedly liveable and harmonious urban environments are also increasingly jeopardized by the growing investments of transnational elites such as foreign investors, expatriates and tourists (Steel 2013). Although they are often regarded as liveable and harmonious places that offer the potential for prosperous urban development (Bolay and Rabinovich 2004; Hinderink and Titus 2002; Owusu 2008), small towns and incipient urban areas are also subject to urban transformations such as socio-spatial segregation and urban fragmentation. They are places where current trends of urbanization, growing inequality and the creation of physical class barriers – formerly almost exclusively associated with metropolitan centres – are becoming very obvious (van Noorloos and Steel 2015).

(IV)   Large-scale investments in urban infrastructure and corridor construction

Finally, little attention has been paid to large-scale investments in environmental or energy infrastructure and the realization of development corridors, which link urban and rural spheres through roads, railways and similar infrastructure, even though these corridors are one of the main drivers of landscape transformation. Such projects are often presented as a necessary element of economic growth and climate resilient development, even though this might come at the cost of local populations and common pool resources. In particular, governments in the global South and international investors and donors are increasingly using development corridors as a tool for economic development and the integration of areas into the global economic system. The corridors are believed to be able to make effective use of economic geography towards the combination of regional economic integration and inclusive growth, whereas they have been implemented with strong implications for the environment and local populations.

Mozambique is one of the countries that actively implement corridor development (Kirshner and Power 2015). In 2010, Mozambique created two large-scale development corridors: the Beira Agricultural Growth Corridor (with financial support from the DFID as well as the Norwegian and Dutch embassies in Mozambique) and the Nacala Corridor in the north (with heavy investment from a Brazilian mining company and the Japan International Cooperation Agency). These corridors consist

of transport infrastructures such as highways and railways linking the major port cities of Beira (in the east of Mozambique's central region) and Nacala (in the northeast) and the major coal mine in inland Tete in the western part of the country, and further to Malawi and Zimbabwe. Along the corridors, agricultural development projects have been introduced, including irrigation schemes and free economic zones to open up millions of hectares of unexploited land (African Development Bank 2011; Beira Corridor Initiative 2016).

From the perspective of land rush debates, the corridor development essentially takes place in the rural setting. In the case of the Nacala Corridor, the fear of 'land grabbing' was already pointed out in 2013/14 by scholars and activists supporting the region's smallholders (UNAC 2015; Classen 2016). They argued that the development model benefits large-scale agribusinesses that are attracted to the area as infrastructure is developed, while squeezing out smallholders. Similar concerns have been voiced with respect to the Beira Growth Corridor, not only by smallholders but also by artisanal miner groups affected by the corridor development.

These concerns address the protection of land rights for smallholders exposed to new investors attracted to the corridors. However, little attention has been paid to how the infrastructure development along the corridors is transforming the entire region, being accompanied by urbanization and generating indirect consequences for various local communities, especially in relation to the expanding port cities such as Nacala and Beira. As seen above, in Beira, intra-city dynamics are already affected by increased investments in the city, indirectly linked to corridor development.

The usual argument is that the infrastructure development will lead to the expansion of employment opportunities, which will absorb the redundant farmers as the entire city-region is developed through the infrastructure. For this to become a reality, however, there needs to be a long-term plan for and inclusion of local businesses into the infrastructure implementation and maintenance, as well as training of the farmers so that they can be fully engaged in the city's development. The skilled labour in Beira is currently imported from foreign or Maputo-based firms that have no interest in incorporating farmers or informal local labourers. Establishing the analytical and policy linkages between affected farmers and city development is key to addressing these problems.

All four topic areas discussed so far show the risk of displacement underpinned by new types of 'urban land grabs' that affects vulnerable rural populations as well as city dwellers. Advocacy civil society movements are trying to address the issue of fair compensation, insisting on the need to carefully calculate the *de facto* value of land that each person is required to give up. Beyond the value of lost assets, though, the real issue of land loss is enabling displaced people to reconstruct alternative livelihoods, at the very least at the level they enjoyed before their loss. Applying the right to the city approach to the rural sphere, the mechanism of justice-seeking needs to go beyond the compensation. Farmers affected by city planning are usually disconnected from the masterplan, or the farmers turned informal city dwellers are often invisible when urban opportunities are not addressed effectively in the advocacy for the farmers. The rights of these people struggling in spaces on the rural–urban frontiers need to be respected so that they can choose livelihoods in rural and/or urban areas and hold investors and the government, as well as the advocacy organizations,

accountable for their choices. To this end, we need to envision new connections between cities, farms and infrastructure projects that simultaneously take place in the urban and rural spheres.

Conclusions: Towards a new, socially inclusive urbanization agenda

This article has argued that in order to achieve inclusive and sustainable development it is necessary to link the debates about the global land rush to those of the new urban agenda, as they currently take place in separate containers. We first looked into the way in which each debate has evolved: over the last decade, the global land rush discourse has focused mainly on the rural sphere, highlighting the consequences of investments in food and biofuels, as well as in bio-reserves and nature conservation (the 'green grab'). This global land rush has taken millions of hectares of agricultural land, with important implications for landscapes and the livelihood of local people. On the other hand, driven by SDG 11 and the Habitat III conference, huge efforts are currently being prepared to create inclusive, resilient and sustainable cities. In fact, the challenges faced by financial institutions and private investors in finding a 'safe haven' for their capital assets may well prove an additional force working in favour of urban expansion. Excessive investment in production and low returns on capital have haunted global finance since the financial crisis of 2008 in the North and the more recent slowdown of emerging economies (World Bank 2016). Low returns on equity and negative interest rates in parts of the world may compel a flight of capital into land and real estate, which often provide a refuge in times of uncertainty. This, in combination with policies aimed at realizing the SDGs, attempts to mitigate or adapt to climate change, and programmes in support of the new urban agenda, will lead to huge waves of investments in urban development and related infrastructure in the near future. These investments will step up the ongoing processes of emptying and converting land, likely displacing more people than in the recent past. Moreover, increasing investment in land in both cities and rural areas will trigger the commodification of land where this had previously been limited, and increase land prices. This in turn will lead to further displacement and emptying of spaces, and indirectly move people to cities and out of favourable parts of urban areas.

Rapid urbanization and urban sprawl confront rural people with new types of 'urban land grabs' that are much more difficult to stop than private business investments in agribusiness: rural areas are simply incorporated into urban masterplans or acquired for the sake of the public good. In addition, the renewed popularity of developing entirely new cities from scratch, and the popularity of mega-infrastructural projects (dams, business parks, etc.) adds to the complexity of land issues at the interface between rural and urban. Rural–urban land conversions are highly contested and difficult to control.

Yet, in current debates, cities are presented as nodes of innovation, capable of helping to solve world problems. We have argued that both debates are largely overlooking the fact that city development is not only a major driver of rural land grabs, but also often directly causes land grabbing by creating intra-city dynamics, peri-urban dynamics, new cities in rural areas and extended infrastructures. For this reason, even more rural land grabs can be expected in the future, especially in the vicinity of cities where the interests of displaced people are less likely to carry much weight. The instruments now being developed to address displacement or resettlement, such as responsible business standards and principles of FPIC in the land rush debate and the formalization of land tenure or housing, are not likely to be effective in cases of land grabs related to urbanization and infrastructure

in ensuring that displaced people should be able to reconstruct their livelihoods. It is the very interconnectedness of these processes in urban and rural areas that makes us conclude that both debates need to be linked. Interventions in one sphere directly and indirectly affect conditions in the other, and both debates share a preoccupation with land governance in support of protecting basic rights of vulnerable groups.

Even if significant emphasis has been placed on consultations and rights-based approaches, local communities in both rural and urban spheres are often not consulted about new plans or are forcibly displaced. Providing people with freehold tenure and individual land titles might help them to better defend their rights and/or be considered in such processes, but will also contribute to further commoditization: as soon as land prices go up, gentrification-induced displacement will be stimulated. Therefore, in order to achieve socially inclusive urbanization, we need to envision new tools for addressing the urban land rush that pay sufficient attention to the connectivity between rural and urban spheres as they evolve in the face of investment flows and land conversions.

One major issue is how the decision-making processes can be reframed so that all citizens in cities and the countryside have a right to participate in urbanization agendas. For example, rural dwellers are forced to move as a consequence of the global land rush, but their 'right to stay' is very much dependent on their land rights, and many of those who are forced to move to cities to work with temporary contracts (as construction workers, domestic servants, etc.) are often overlooked in participatory urban planning. Staying in the city on only a part-time basis, they are not sufficiently represented as part of the urban citizenry. Rather than focusing mainly on cities or the countryside, attention should focus on developing inclusive, resilient and sustainable *landscapes* and *territories* that involve responsible governance arrangements.

Current investments in land and infrastructure are transforming global landscapes in complex ways that blur the rural–urban divide. Looking at rural-urban connections in inner cities, peri-urban areas, new cities and infrastructural corridors helps us to get an overview of the landscapes and stakeholders of urbanization processes, which are far more complex than currently imagined in the global land rush and the new urban agenda debates. For this new research agenda, it is imperative to look at how people caught up in this complexity - actively shape the landscape through their survival and coping with the everyday effects of displacement and livelihood changes, and how governance arrangements can effectively deal with new types of rural-urban land scapes and newly emerging competing claims.

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[iii] REDD+ stands for countries' efforts to **r**educe **e**missions from **d**eforestation and forest **d**egradation, and foster conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/what-redd, accessed 20 october 2016).

[iv] Desakota-type of regions are areas in the extended surroundings of large cities, in which urban and agricultural forms of land use and settlement coexist and are intensively intermingled (McGee 1991).