

The role of the state in facilitating land grabs in Ethiopia

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Summary

This thesis deals with what is known as land grabbing. In recent years researchers and institutions have been alarmed that vast tracts of land that are being sold or leased to investors. While, as one argument goes, this may have the potential to integrate less developed countries more productively into global economic markets, it can also have a devastating effect on the livelihoods of local communities and notably of those that are displaced from their land. Land grabs also occur against the background of many countries being chronically food insecure; this raises the question why these countries are participating in the allocation of land from smallholders to local and foreign investors.

Most publications on the processes and dynamics of global land grabbing have paid attention to the role and impact of foreign investors on local communities. This thesis will in attempt to re-empathize the significant role of the host states in processes of land grabbing and what this entails, pursue the following question as follows: What is the role of the state in facilitating land grabs? The focus of this thesis will be on land grabs in Ethiopia.

To write this paper, I consulted and reviewed the relevant literature on land grabbing. Some articles were more general, others were specific to Ethiopia. Our theoretical background is based on articles from Borras & Franco et al. (2012) and *Seeing like a state* from James Scott (1998). Combining both scholarly work and perspectives allowed me to define what land grabbing is and involves but also get a clearer picture on how to handle land grabbing theoretically and the role of the state in particular.

I found that the underlying tension in the global land grab debate is due to contrasting and conflicting views of land, its use and meaning. Land appears as a contested resource which is subject to various social struggles. The state emerges in the struggle over land as a mediator between facilitating land grabs by investors and legitimizing its actions towards the local communities, but at the same time pursuing its own interests. The notion that land that is being leased to investors is unused, is a major underlying motive for facilitating land grabs. The lands can then be more productively used generating opportunities for employment and commodities. We will then elaborate on the three ways in which the state actively participates in land grabbing. The first role of the state is its ability to simplify land based relations. This will show that there is a gap between how land use is interpreted by the state and how it is actually used by different communities. The state uses this simplification to change existing land practices by leasing the land to the investors. In Ethiopia this transfer of land is aided by the fact that land is state owned, and the lack of formal rights severely limits the ability of local communities to claim compensation. Secondly, we will focus on the expansion of the state into non-state spaces. In the lowlands of Ethiopia, the state has traditionally found it difficult to integrate the interests of the pastoral communities with the smallholders in the highlands. Allowing investors into these areas as a means of bringing “development”, benefits the socio-economic interests of the government agenda. Finally, the state can resort to coercion to allocate land to investors. Ethiopia is currently undergoing a new round of resettlement

programs to clear land for investment. These three state actions show that land grabbing can serve as a way for the state to tighten control within its own territory.

These findings have shown that the state is an important actor involved with land grabbing. To ensure fair land deals in Ethiopia, we must envision the relationship between the state, the local communities, and the investors. Once we have identified how the state plays an active part in securing land deals, we can look at how state actions can be re-organized to manage the negative impact land grabbing has on local communities. To improve the research on land grabbing in Ethiopia, we advise that further research should be done on how the displacement of communities through resettlement will change the class system in Ethiopia.

Introduction

In the era of globalisation, the focus has changed from one on the role of nation states to global networks and actors. Research on land grabbing has remarkably enough mostly paid attention on the influence of foreign investors on local communities. However, ignoring the authority and sovereignty of nation states is a simplification of the complex relations involved with land grabs. The state should be acknowledged as an important actor which mediates between different perspectives of its subjects and the investors, pursues its own interests, and tries to expand its control. Therefore, the aim of our research is to bring back the role of the host states in the discussion on land grabbing. To achieve this, we have consulted the relevant literature on land grabbing and created a literary study.

Before we focus on the role of the state specifically in Ethiopia, we will place land grabbing within a wider context. We will show the difficulty of trying to capture the complexities of land grabbing within a definition. Secondly, we will discuss how different institutions have different opinions on how land acquisitions may or may not promote development. Finally, we will put forward that the struggle over land is fuelled by conflicting or sometimes contrasting ideas of land use. A clear manifestation of land grabs or more neutrally - land acquisitions – is that that land ownership or control over land shifts from small land holders to a new category of land users that are associated with the global food regime. To legitimize such a transfer of ownership and shift in land use the state had to construct a new paradigm so that it could continue to use land grabbing to pursue its own interests.

After discussing these different definitions, visions and interpretations of land grabbing, we will introduce our case study. In the second chapter, we will give a brief overview of how land grabbing is shaped within Ethiopia. Our case study will demonstrate how land grabbing is not a homogenous process, but one should consider the different localities. Of course, state ownership of land, development programmes aimed at pastoralists and resettlement campaigns are not unique to Ethiopia, but its local dynamics and motives differ from other countries in Africa. An additional argument to focus on Ethiopia is it has a long history of food insecurity.

The main focus of this research paper is the role of the state in facilitating land grabs. In their article, Borras & Franco et al. (2012) identify three different roles of states involved in land grabbing based on theories of James Scott (1998). We will elaborate on those roles by answering the following questions: How does state simplification of land rights influence land grabbing? How does the state expand authority over non-state spaces in the context of land grabs? And lastly, how does the state force local communities to give up land to investors? For our case study, I have chosen to focus on Ethiopia. This means that we will apply theories of state simplification, non-state spaces and coercion on different elements of Ethiopia's national agenda..

Towards the end of the thesis I will formulate a few new topics for research. These will relate to the new resettlement programs and whether and how these will lead to

displacement. A major question is whether displacement leads to new class structures in Ethiopia. With our paper we hope to contribute to a new outlook on the issues that are associated with land grabbing. In recent years, guidelines and codes of conduct have been created to regulate how investors operate in foreign countries. This may be a step forward, but land grabbing will continue unless host states are acknowledged as capable actors that should be addressed to ensure fair and honest land deals.

1. Land grabbing: Different definitions, visions and interpretations

In recent years, attention has been paid to large land acquisitions which are taking place around the globe. Both globalization and a dominant neo-liberal policies that aim to facilitate a smooth performing market economy have encouraged these large scale land acquisitions. Scholars refer to the trends and processes involved with acquiring land on a large scale “land grabbing” or land deals. It is important to note that land grabbing has a negative connotation implying that these land acquisitions have a negative effect on nature and societies. Referring to this trend as “land deals” implies a more neutral stance on the current situation. In the following section we will show that there is no consensus on a single definition, view or interpretation of land grabbing. On global, national and local scale, actors interpret land grabbing in their own way. Processes of land grabbing occur within a multitude of conflicting and contrasting realities. In the first section we explain that there are different definitions of land grabbing. The definition that we will use throughout this paper will give a deeper insight into various aspects of land grabbing such as the difference between control grabbing and land grabbing, the scale of hectares vs. capital, different actors involved, different crops, and the drivers of global land deals. Secondly, we will show that there is no consensus between various institutions on how land grabbing affects development. Finally, we will show how different interpretations of land use between actors shapes the land grabbing debate. Next, we explore how the state uses its own one dimensional view of land grabbing to facilitate its own national agenda.

1.1 Different definitions of land grabbing

While consulting relevant literature, a common definition of land grabbing puts emphasis on the role of foreign investors who engage after the acquisition in the production of agricultural commodities. In reality, land grabbing is done by a range of actors, both foreign and domestic, and the land acquired is not solely used for the purpose of agricultural production. This common definition is as follows: *large scale land acquisition, be it purchased or lease, for agricultural production by foreign investors*” (GRAIN 2008, Cotula et al., 2009, Daniel & Mittal 2009, quoted in Graham 2011:2). This rather general definition, however, does not pay attention to the complex nature of the different localities and actors that are involved with land grabbing. Land grabbing is about more than land, it has the potential to reorganize social structures because of inequalities between investors and those that are displaced. The following definition tries to capture these social dimensions of land grabbing, and we will continue to highlight the important aspects of this definition:

“Contemporary land grabbing is the capturing of control of relatively vast tracts of land and other natural resources through a variety of mechanisms and forms that involve large scale capital that often shifts resource use orientation into extractive character whether for international or domestic purposes as capital’s response to the convergence of food, energy,

financial crisis, climate change mitigation imperatives and demand for resources from newer hugs of global capital” (Borras and Franco et al. 2012:851).

This thesis will center on the notion of land grabbing as presented by Borras and Franco (2012). This will allow for a broader understanding of the complexity of this issue, in terms of different actors, land use, resources and reasons, thereby moving away from simplified notions of large scale land acquisitions. Of course, land grabbing is always embedded within a specific locality, shaping up differently in all parts of the world. In addition to emphasizing the differences in land grabs, this definition leaves room to discuss the importance of the host states. The role of the state in Ethiopia will focus on control grabbing, because the state acts as a mediator to decide who has access to the resources available. Secondly, besides the foreign investors, the state is also actively buying land in Ethiopia. Previously, land was distributed equally through redistribution, among the population, but the end of the socialist regime shows how new powerful domestic investors are on the rise and how the state deals (or creates?) new class inequalities.

Borras and Franco et al. (2012) propose to see land grabbing as “control grabbing”. This means that land grabbing is not only about the acquisition of land, but about controlling access to important resources such as capital, labour, markets, nutrients, energy, etc. Access involves a power struggle between relevant actors about who can use different resources within a territory, how to use these and for what purposes. Resources can be extracted from the land for domestic and foreign markets (Borras and Franco et al. 2012). For example, land grabbing can also be about who has access to water sources that are located within a certain territory (Borras and Franco et al. 2012). But control grabbing also involves how certain actors can influence the current food regime. These powerful actors have claimed the right to decide what is food, how it should be produced and to whom it should be sold.

The authors see land grabbing in terms of both scale of land acquisitions as well as scale of capital involved. (Borras and Franco et al. 2012) Land can be used for a wide range of purposes. Depending on the land or resource use the capital required may differ accordingly. Incorporating capital into this framework shows that while the size of land acquisition involved may differ, in terms of capital, the scale of an investment may be similar (Borras and Franco et al. 2012). Importance and effect of land grabbing instances should not be judged solely on how much land was sold/leased, but also on how much investment, new models of land use and modern technologies. (Borras and Franco et al. 2012).

In an attempt to move away from the notion that land grabbing only occurs for food or biofuel production, Borras & Franco (2010) identify four broad categories of production systems which are present in current land grabs. These categories will show that the debate is not centered solely on food and biofuels. The first two categories involved with land grabbing are the traditional food commodity production which is labeled “food to food” production and “food to bio-fuel” (Borras & Franco 2010). The third and fourth categories are “non-food to food” or “non-food to bio-fuel” land uses. Land that was previously used for activities other than agricultural production, is converted and made suitable for food production or biofuel production (Borras & Franco 2010). This process involves the clearing

of forestlands, but also lands that are considered marginally suitable for agricultural production (Borras & Franco 2010). These categories will prove important when discussing different notions of land, including marginal, “unused” lands which are identified by the Ethiopian government to legitimize land grabs.

In most of the literature on land grabbing, attention has been paid primarily to the role of foreign investors, and unlike the first definition, Borras and Franco do not limit themselves only to foreign investors. Such focus would only simplify the analysis. This is not to deny that foreign investors originating from China, Gulf States, India and the EU are major partners in the land grabbing activities (Zoomers, 2010). However there are many instances, where land grabs occur by domestic investors such as private companies, the state, and NGO’s. The Ethiopian cases we will explore urges us to not limit the debate on land grabbing to only foreign investors. Both the state and local elites are heavily involved in land grabbing. as it would simplify the wide variety of actors involved. In relation to our study on Ethiopia, we will discuss.

Land deals are not a new phenomenon but there are two main global drivers of land grabbing, food vs. fuel, which places this debate in its current context (McMichael 2012). Firstly, the food crisis of 2007-2008, caused a rise in food prices making agriculture a potentially good investment. Countries which cannot produce sufficient foods for their population are now seeking land overseas to secure their food production. Secondly, the emergence of biofuels has given countries which rely heavily on import of fossil fuels, an incentive to produce alternative energy sources (Borras and Franco et al 2012). However, land grabbing should always be analyzed within a specific context, and this allows us to see that there are many other drivers of land grabbing, such as environmental protection, climate change mitigation, exploiting scarce resources and the search for new capitalistic markets (Borras and Franco et al 2012).

1.2 Opposing views on land grabbing

In our thesis, we have focused on the definition of land grabbing as proposed by Borras and Franco et al (2012). Definitions of land grabbing range from a negative connotation to a more positive interpretation of land grabbing. This means that different actors and institutions while use a definitions which is in accordance with how they assess the potential risks and benefits of land grabbing. In the following section we will highlight how the international community is divided on the subject of land grabbing. The potential benefits and dangers of large scale agricultural investments are best portrayed by two opposing views. Firstly, the global governance institutions such as the World Bank have promoted a more positive view of global land deals in two reports, *Rising Global Interest in Farmland (2011)* and in *Principles of Responsible Agricultural Investment (2010)*. However there many organizations and movements such as the UN through Special Rapporteur De Schutter who has serious concerns about the claims of these benefits and warns for the potential dangers that are

associated with land grabs stipulated in *Responsibly Destroying the World's Peasantry*. We will explore both views in the following section.

The World Bank stipulates that large scale land investments in developing countries can lead to rural development and poverty alleviation through employment and compensation for land (World Bank quoted in Li, 2011: 281). This can be done by incorporating farmers into these new business ventures or through contract farming so that farmers are able to sell their products. Secondly, poverty would be reduced by helping national economies through payments of taxes and fees (World Bank quoted in Li, 2011; ...). These large scale land deals would also encourage food security by providing host countries with infrastructure, communication and agricultural technologies (such as irrigation) (De Schutter 2011). The principles for responsible agricultural investment offer a wide range of governance tools for ensuring that these deals become win-win situations, including securing tenure rights, transparency, participation, good governance, social and environmental sustainability (Stephens, 2011).

One of the principle critiques on the standpoint of the World Bank and others, is that their principles for responsible agricultural investment is disingenuous. This is because the World Bank has a tendency to encourage developing countries to accept foreign investment and facilitate them by speeding up administrative barriers (De Schutter 2011). Another argument against the view of the World Bank is that while they claim large land deals may promote rural development; this tends not to be the case. De Schutter (2011) argues this is primarily because most investment are meant for export, meaning that most developing countries are becoming less self-sufficient thereby threatening their food security. In addition, the highly mechanized, mostly monoculture agricultural production does not offer the employment possibilities that the World Bank envisions (De Schutter 2011). The World Bank argues that farmers will be compensated for their land, but the reality is that land is being given for almost nothing, making it a sound investment (Li 2011), especially where land is state owned (such as Ethiopia). This leads to many rural populations losing access to resources which they had before the arrival of these investors (De Schutter 2011). With contract farming, farmers become depended on the international market thereby exposing themselves to volatile prices and strengthening unequal power relations with the buyers (De Schutter 2011). Unequal power relations are equally important between developing countries and powerful developed countries. Often eager to receive capital from foreign investments, developing countries tend to lower their standards in order to attract investors and exclude competition from other developing countries (De Schutter 2011). In conclusion, De Schutter offers for a more rights-based approach towards global land deals instead of a global governance approach through guidelines and principles as proposed by the World Bank. Until now we have looked at the global complexities of land grabbing, but in the following section we will discuss how land grabbing occurs in Ethiopia.

1.3 Interpretations of land use in relation to land grabbing

Besides conflicting definitions and visions on land grabbing, there are also contrasting interpretations of land use which underline the land grabbing phenomenon. There are many complex economic, social and cultural dimensions of land which define the relation between the state and other global or local actors in the context of land grabbing. Understanding how these views conflict or overlap, will help us understand how the state mediates and adapts to these three central views: global economic actors which view land as a commodity, national institutions which see land as unused, and local communities which rely on the multipurpose of land use for the survival of their livelihoods. These views should not be seen as separate or static but are interacting and dynamic within different global, national and local arenas. While the central focus of this paper will be on the role of the state, these different views will influence how the state reacts to the land grabbing phenomenon.

1.3.1 Land as a commodity

With processes of neoliberal globalization, land is increasingly seen as an economic asset by international investors. As a consequence, the socially embedded character of land is often forgotten (Akrhram Lodhi, 2007). Neo-liberal reforms imposed by global financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank, in addition to the free trade policies of the WTO have led to an increase in capitalistic modes of production in developing countries and an integration of those countries within global markets, Ethiopia included (Akrhram Lodhi, 2007). Unlike reforms proposed by those institutions, Ethiopia did not privatize property relations. However the influence of neoliberal globalization processes in Ethiopia led to a more market based approach. After some disappointing outcomes from policies focusing on the commercialization of small holder agriculture, Ethiopia is currently attracting more export-oriented agricultural investments by foreign and domestic investors (Lavers, 2012). In doing so, Ethiopia is becoming more integrated within the global market leaving it vulnerable to speculation by investors and financial institutions in agricultural commodities. .

Financial institutions and investors view land as a commodity, and land grabbing has continued to promote this view (DeSchutter, 2011). Large agricultural investments are not only driven by a desire to produce more agricultural commodities for the current market but land grabbing is also occurring based on the speculation that food, water and energy will become increasingly scarce in the future (Mann & Smaller, 2010). This means that agricultural companies are securing production inputs for the future and that land and water rights are becoming an attractive investment opportunity. Crops and biofuels are not the only commodities that are being produced through land grabbing but investors are putting forward a view in which land itself is seen as a commodity. (Mann & Smaller, 2010). The developed countries are faced with rising costs of agricultural inputs, like water, energy, which will most

likely continue to rise due to climate change and population growth. Therefore land grabbing is also based on long-term security instead of short term economic gains (Mann & Smaller, 2010). Land grabbing is associated with the re-organization of the global food regime (McMichael 2012). Land grabs are in this view thus part of the parcel of the struggles between the increasing power of corporate food empires and the attempt of small holder farmers to shape the food regime according to their interests and views. McMichael 2012) argues that the struggle in essence is about scarcity instead of surplus.

The commodification of land has some serious threats to rural livelihoods. Firstly, it pays no attention to the way land shapes different social landscapes within these communities. Secondly, treating land as a commodity for speculation means that land is bought without the goal of production, yet access to land/water is being denied to local communities (DeSchutter, 2011). Instead of subjecting land to the global market, host governments should focus on providing local communities with rights to protect them from these opportunistic investments (DeSchutter, 2011). Unfortunately, host governments are currently using the notion of land as unused to facilitate investments instead of protecting local rights.

1.3.2 Land as unused

The World Bank has created a report in which they analysed how much land there is still available for production of biofuels or agricultural production. The criteria for this land is that it has a low population density, it is not forested and currently uncultivated (Nalepa, 2011). The goal of this report was to stimulate competitive agriculture for the world market(Nalepa, 2011). It should be noted that these databases often simplify interactions between humans and their environment. This leads to an overestimation of the amount of available land because a variety of alternative practices are disregarded (Nalepa, 2011). A distinction should be made between land that is unused and marginal land. The notion of marginal land entails that land is of poor quality and will have a low crop yield but with enough investment and resources, large mechanized farms for the production of (mostly) biofuels can be feasible. In this sense, marginal lands are often unused, but not all unused land is marginal. One of these countries identified in the World Bank report is Ethiopia. The Ethiopian federal government has identified how much land there is available in different regions. The government says it will only lease unused lands to investors, but does not disclose how land is categorized as unused (Nalepa, 2011). In addition, there are some doubts about the reliability of those reports. As an example, in Gambella the amount of land identified as unused and thus suitable for investment, exceeds the total area of the region (Nalepa, 2011). This implicates that the reality is different than the administrative framework which government authorities work with, meaning that there is a gap between theory and practice.

Countries that are identified as potential sources for biofuel or agricultural investments may embrace these simplified notions of unused land for the sake of attracting investors, in an attempt to increase productivity in rural areas (Nalepa, 2011). Another reason

for embracing the notion of unused land may be to legitimize the state's role in subjecting land to international markets and foreign investors. As mentioned earlier, land in Ethiopia is state owned, so claiming that land is unused makes it easier to deny that shifting access from local communities to investors will have negative impacts for the surrounding communities. The biophysical aspects of the highlands of Ethiopia support settled agriculture and are much more densely populated than the lowlands. Therefore the notion of unused land is mostly targeted in the lowlands (Lavers, 2012a). The government claims that groups which are active in this area lack the resources to develop into a more productive areas (Lavers, 2012a). Much of the land in this region has been deemed marginal due to poor soil quality, however there are other factors such as rainfall patterns, lack of irrigation possibilities, strong customary rights which makes these regions difficult to cultivate (Abbink, 2011). To turn these areas into economic productive regions, the government believes that large mechanized commercial farms should be established (Makki & Geisler, 2011). This is a top down process in which the government imposes which land uses are deemed appropriate for these regions. In reality, this view overlooks the wide variety of practices that are taking place, because most of this unused land is actually communal grazing land or land for shifting cultivation. However, because these groups have no formalized land rights, these uses go unnoticed and the government can enforce land uses that they deem appropriate (Vermeulen & Cotula 2010). This means that claims of unused lands often originate because land uses are seen as unproductive, or alternative land uses are overlooked (or ignored) by the state (Lavers 2012b). The government view is in contrast with how local communities view land, because in practice land can have many different functions.

1.3.3 Land as multifunctional

In contrast to the notion that land that is leased to investors is unused, local communities have a wide variety of socio-economic practices associated with land. This leads to a different notion, that land is multifunctional. Designating land to investors has a significant impact on the livelihood activities of the local communities, such as water extraction, a decrease in flora and fauna species used by locals, decline in grazing pastures and pollution (Abbink, 2011). Yet in many cases the local communities are not part of the decision making processes, or this is viewed merely as a formality (Abbink, 2011). Besides a variety of practices related to food production land also has a different social and cultural purpose in Ethiopia.

Dominant western agricultural practices include mono cropping, a high reliance on machinery, and commercially oriented. In Ethiopia, land uses are much more diversified, and consist mostly of subsistence farmers. Farmers that practice settled agriculture often grow a wide variety of crops for home consumption and/or sale for local markets, but there are also farmers that practice shifting cultivation as well as a large number of pastoralists (Lavers, 2012a). Besides plots that are for private use, there are plots which are used for communal purposes such as grazing land, collecting wood, and bee keeping (Abbink, 2011). Communities that live in proximity of forests have also adapted to benefit from the plant and

animal species that their environment provides. For example, the shea trees located in these forest are used to make cooking oil (Abbink, 2011). Investors often control access to water within a certain territory, excluding farmers from using water for subsistence farming and other household purposes.

Land also has many social and cultural purposes besides food production. Land plays a part in the construction of identities and rituals (Akrhram Lodhi, 2007). For example, if the government continues to lease grazing pastures to investors, it would deeply impact the traditions of the pastoralist communities and their migration patterns (Abbink, 2011). This means that what qualifies as acceptable land use also differs across different ethnic groups, strengthening their identity. The quantity of land and livestock also has important functions in terms of social capital, the more display of wealth often leads to enhances social status. In addition, asserting ownership over land within a community is also part of a social and cultural interactions. Ownership of land is often determined through heritage, passing from one generation to the next for many years. The transfer of local knowledge and how communal lands such be managed are also part of the daily interactions which take place within these communities (Abbink, 2011). Land also has important religious attributes. For example, in certain cases, land allocated to investors contain burial sites and forests contain sacred churches which are part of traditional belief systems (Abbink, 2011). Land grabbing will strengthen grievances because it will create tensions between local communities that consider land as theirs due to cultural, social and historical values it symbolizes versus the invasion of outsiders which establish commercial farms it. (Zoomers, 2011).

In this chapters we have outlined how conflicting definitions, visions and interpretations of land grabbing and land use influence state actions. Land grabbing is about more aspects than leasing land to foreign investors. The definition that we have discussed at length shows that there are many different aspects of land grabbing that take different form in different localities. We have attempted to show that land grabbing should not be seen as the cure for development challenges in less developed countries. These types of investments should be assessed carefully to identify the potential risks and benefits. At last, we have shown that land grabbing occurs due to different interpretations of land use. The state mediates between the a more global view of land as a commodity and a local view of land as having multiple purposes. In an attempt to serve national interests, the state legitimizes its role in land grabs by stating that land which is being leased is unused. This way it can reap the socio-economic benefits of land grabs while denying the impact on local livelihoods. This state –centric perspective will serve as the main underlying cause as to how the state in Ethiopia can facilitate investments through state simplification, expansion into non-state spaces and coercion. These roles of the state will be discussed in depth. Before we focus on the role of the state, the next chapter will give an overview on how land grabbing occurs in Ethiopia.

2. The role of the state with land grabbing

In this section, we will elaborate on how the state deals with land grabbing, and how it positions itself within these different interpretations, visions and definitions of land grabbing. Against the background of all these conflicting and contrasting ideas on land grabbing, the state continues to implement policies from its own one dimensional view of land grabbing. The position of the state may at times overlap with those of investors, and other times conflict with those of the local communities. The state should not be seen as a neutral mediator between different interests, but as an actor which has an ambiguous role with land grabbing to promote its own interests. The state actions which we will discuss, are an expression of the way in which the state tries to expand its control within its territory. To answer our research question, we will look at three state actions that facilitate land grabs according to Borras & Franco et al. (2012). We will elaborate on these actions, and apply them to the situation in Ethiopia. The first action is state simplification, particularly in terms of land tenure. The state simplifies local realities and relations by allocating, recording, and monitoring use rights. In the case of Ethiopia, state ownership of land leads to power inequalities, a false notion of unused land and a paradox in terms of legitimizing land grabs. Secondly, land grabs allow the state to extend its power into states that were previously “non -state spaces”. In Ethiopia, the lowlands are inhabited by pastoral population who are seen as backward. The state allows investors to settle in these areas as a means of “development”. The state can use investors as a way to implement land uses which they deem appropriate. Finally the state can use different means of coercion to facilitate land grabs, though not limited to physical violence. The current resettlements in Ethiopia are an expression of how the state can force compliance to state simplification projects. As a result, further research should be done on whether resettlements will lead to displacement brought on by land grabs in the lowlands of Ethiopia.

2.1 Land grabbing in Ethiopia

To take into account the local complexities of land grabbing, our study will focus on how land grabbing has evolved in Ethiopia. For many years, Ethiopia has always believed in small scale agricultural production as a development strategy but recently the government seems to embrace large agricultural investments. There are a number of reasons for these new policy changes. Firstly, large global financial institutions have put more pressure on many developing countries to commercialize their agricultural sector (Lavers, 2012). Secondly, the government is less depended on achieving food security through self-sufficiency and relying more on a trade-based approach (Lavers 2012). Finally, past policies have not lead to significant increase in food security, supporting a continued dependency on food aid. The Ethiopian government is trying to reduce this dependency on food aid and the requirements to receive this aid, such as good governance (Abbink, 2011). However it is important to note that these new development objectives are not the same within all regions of Ethiopia. In the highlands, the goal is to attract investments that are labor and capital intensive, while in the lowlands investments that are large-scale and mechanized are more dominant (Makki 2012). These new changes in agricultural policies show that the government has a new notion of how to achieve rural development and food security. The difference between the lowlands and the highlands also shapes the land grabbing debate in Ethiopia which we will discuss in depth at a later stage. In the following section we will give a brief overview of which investments are taking place, how these investments are managed and under which conditions investors operate.

When looking at the official figures, we see that the scale of these land deals is worrying. According to the Ethiopian government there are 2.9 million hectares of land requested and the planned capital expenditure is 2.2 million US dollars from foreign investors (Makki, 2012). Additionally the government has identified 4.8 million hectares of land which is suitable for agricultural investment in Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People (SNNP) and the Afar region (Makki 2012). Currently there are a few foreign investors active in Ethiopia. There are two large Indian investors, the largest investor, Karuturi, an Indian investor which has acquired large tracts of land (100,00 hectares initially and adding on 200,00 hectares) for the production of wheat and the Ruchi Group which has been awarded land for the production of biofuels (Makki, 2012). There is also the Saudi Star Agricultural Development which is a mixed Saudi Arabian/Ethiopian company which obtained land for cultivating rice for the Saudi market (Makki, 2012). There are also some smaller investments made by Dutch, German, Israeli, Italian and Chinese producing flowers, biofuels, grain and other products (Makki and Geisler, 2011). In total 1,100 foreign investors have registered since for investment however only 64 are active at the moment (Makki 2012). Besides private foreign companies, there are also states involved in these large land deals. Around 22,000 hectares of land has been leased to the National Bank of Egypt and a few thousand hectares has been leased to Djibouti to gain access to their ports, and thereby the sea (Makki and Geisler 2011). However there is also a significant amount of domestic investors. These domestic investors are of a class of wealthy Ethiopia that resides within the

country or in the diasporas (Makki 2012). Finally, there is the state of Ethiopia which has used land for large sugar plantations (Lavers 2012).

As of 2008, for investors to lease land they must apply for an investment license through the Ethiopian Investment Agency, which is part of the federal government (Abbink 2011) This way the government can select which investments fit within the national priorities (Lavers 2012) Land is leased out for a fixed amount of time, only transferring the use rights because the government still retains legal ownership of the land (Lavers 2012) After receiving the investment license, investors discuss with the regional authorities which pieces of land are available. The federal government places pressure on the regional authorities because they have to show how many investors they have attracted and what the returns of the investments are that are taking place within their district, this means that environmental and social aspects come in second place (Abbink 2011). There are sanctions for those who fail to perform in the way the federal government expects (Abbink 2011). There is also evidence that in certain regions the government has completely taken control of allocating land to investors, by identifying land that the federal government deems suitable for potential investment, thereby placing land directly under control of the federal government instead of the semi-autonomous regional institutions (Lavers 2012). One of the reasons which was given by the federal government to remove power from the regional authorities is corruption, and there has been evidence to support this claim (Abbink 2011). This struggle between regional and federal authorities leaves room for investors to get the best deal, which may not benefit the interest of the people living within these communities.

There are many economic incentives for companies to operate in Ethiopia. Based on their location, the crops, and whether it is intended for domestic or foreign market, companies can receive tax holidays which can go up to about 5 years and can import materials for upgrading their investment projects without paying import taxes (Makki 2012) The government is leasing out land for extremely low rent prices (Makki, 2012) and in some cases for free. There are no extra fees for water which makes it easy for investors to control access to water which is necessary for irrigation (Makki 2012). Finally, there is evidence that the environmental impact assessments which are necessary for approval on investment projects according to the law, are often waived (Makki, 2012). These incentives are making Ethiopia an attractive place for investment which can be seen by the steady increase in Foreign Direct Investment in the last couple of years (Makki&Geisler 2011). However, it should be noted that these incentives might have a negative impact on social, economic and environmental structures in the long run.

These land deals are becoming an important part of the Ethiopian government's economic policies. The government hopes to attract these investors with economic incentives so that it will lead to a reduction of food assistance. Most importantly, it has shown the scale of these land deals and that the government is clearing more land for the future. However, the state is not only facilitating land grabs for economic reasons, but as a way to expand its control.

2.2 Simplification of land-based relations

As briefly mentioned above, the first state action that is relevant with land grabbing, is the state's ability to simplify complex social relations of land use through allocating land rights. In order to govern the state has to make land uses legible and this is done through recording and re-classifying of land uses. In the following section land rights in Ethiopia are briefly explained, those imposed by the federal government and the role of customary rights in local communities. Then the notions of state simplification and legibility (Scott, 1998) will be further explored and how these notions relate to Ethiopian land grabs.

2.2.1 Land rights in Ethiopia

To understand land rights in Ethiopia, we must look at how previous governments influenced how land rights are organized today. During the military socialist regime, de Derg, land was state owned. This socialist regime changed the rural landscape drastically by introducing numerous unpopular measures such as collective farms, resettlement campaigns and villagisation (Rahmato, 2009a). After the fall of the regime, many expected the new government called the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) to privatize property rights because it has embraced many other neo-liberal policies. Those who supported private allocation of land rights believed that this would increase the incentive for farmers to invest in their land, thereby achieving higher productivity levels. However the state retained the ownership of land on the basis that this would ensure fairness and equity (Crewett & Korf, 2008) This meant that the state would make sure that land was distributed among the rural peasants and not concentrated among an elite group of land owners (Crewett & Korf, 2008). It was also seen as a means to avoid any political unrest by protecting farmers from displacement and avoiding migration which could cause ethnic conflicts or urban unemployment (Lavers 2012b). State ownership has caused the peasantry to be depended on the state for their livelihood, and the state has made it very clear that there is no space for debating these land policy issues (Crewett & Korf, 2008). State ownership of land means that the population receives use rights, but ultimately the state can allocate land as well as the natural resources it possess as it sees fit and peasants cannot exchange or sell land (Rahmato 2009a). Terms of land use are stipulated in Article 40 of the Ethiopian Constitution:

“The right to ownership of rural land and urban land, as well as of all natural resources is exclusively vested in the state and the peoples of Ethiopia. Land is a common property of the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia ”(FDRE, 1995, article 40).

This article shows some important improvements in terms of land tenure security after the fall of the Derg regime. Firstly, the current government has allowed the leasing of land which was not possible at first. Secondly, during the Derg regime, peasants were not allowed to hire labour, but after 1995 a labour market was created for the rural economy. Finally, peasants are now entitled to compensation if land use expires. However the government retains the

possibility to withhold land use rights if it serves national interests , for example mining projects or electricity plants (Crewett & Korf, 2008).

This does not mean that land use rights are homogenous across Ethiopia. On the contrary, besides the federal government of Ethiopia, there are many regional semi-autonomous ethnic administrative institutions. These regional bodies can to a certain degree, formulate their own land policies as long as they are in accordance with the federal law. (Crewett & Korf, 2008). In addition, much of the federal land policies are aimed to fit the needs of the sedentary agricultural practices of the highlands (Crewett & Korf, 2008). In these areas, the state has started to register use rights, implying some protection against state expropriation and greater land tenure security (Rahmato 2009a). But in areas where pastoralists and shifting cultivators reside this is not the case. There are numerous administrative challenges in registering land to pastoralists and shifting cultivators therefore they do not have land certificates and cannot claim their historical connection to land (Lavers, 2012b). In these areas, land often reclaimed for different purposes , because the constitution does not have clearly defined user rights for these groups (Abbink, 2011).

Besides formal institutions that govern land rights, there are many customary laws at local level which govern land use and solve disputes. Inheritance is the primary process by which peasants are given the right to use land. It has been acknowledged that in the case of conflicting claims to land, communities prefer to settle disputes through elders appointed by the village instead of formal institutions (Rahmato2009b). In the case of disputes with the state, peasants know that they have no legal basis to challenge the state authority (Rahmato 2009b). These disputes often arise because of the amount of compensation paid or receiving land that is of poor quality (Rahmato 2009b). Hence, peasants can settle disputes through customary law, but have little legal standing within formal institutions.

2.2.2 State simplification and legibility

The themes of state legibility and simplification are a central part of James Scott's work *Seeing like a State* (1998). In this section we will define and explain both terms before applying them in the context of land grabbing in Ethiopia.

State legibility is when the state records simplified realities into an administrative grid in order to render its population legible and thus governable (Scott 1998). In particular with land tenure, legibility of property relations is crucial because this allows the state to collect more tax revenue (Scott 1998). The state faces some challenges, in particular when locals derive their livelihoods from fishing, hunting or gathering. Turning land into common property is fiscally a lot less attractive and, due to scarcity, the value of common resources is on the rise.

State simplification is when the state tries to reduce the complexity of local practices and relations by standardizing and thereby creating categories that could be recorded and monitored. This way the state was better equipped to control or govern its subjects.

Customary tenure systems are much more adaptable to its local context. When the state simplifies customary tenure relations, much of this adaptability and locality is lost (Scott, 1998). This means that if a peasant would like to claim its right to land, he must do so with state documents and through formal institutions, rather than through customary dispute settlements. Through recording and titling a uniform property regime is created : *“The cadastral survey and the title deed are a rough, often misleading representation of the actual existing rights to land use and disposal”* (Scott, 1998, :76) .

During the process of simplification data becomes distorted, inaccurate and due to its political interpretation, it can be corrupted . Besides the fact that state simplification is necessary for state officials to monitor its population, Scott claims that :

“the modern state, through its officials attempts with varying success to create a terrain and a population with precisely those standardized characteristics that will be easiest to monitor, count, assess and manage” (Scott, 1998: 82).

This means that the state encourages the reduction of local differences in order to serve national interests. State simplification of land rights, ultimately is a way of the government to control society. The current land grabs in Ethiopia will only intensify this phenomenon.

2.2.3 Land rights and state simplification in the context of land grabbing

The current property regime in Ethiopia based on state ownership was implemented to promote equity and smallholder agriculture. However, in reality this is quite the contrary. State ownership of land has actually disadvantaged small farmers and facilitated land grabs. The state has the ultimate power to decide how land should be used. This leads to land being leased to investors and these actions are disguised as serving national interests. The state had always claimed that land should not be concentrated in the hands of an elite group of landholders, because they feared that economic power may translate into political leverage. In fact, this is exactly what is occurring. Investors, both foreign and domestic are not only claiming the right to land, but are also powerful actors who can influence the agricultural landscape of Ethiopia. This means a shift away from small holder agricultural and maximizing profits through mono cropping and mechanized agriculture. Between these global and local interests, the state has an ambiguous role as land broker, on the one hand claiming to serve the interests of smallholders but in reality facilitating land grabs by investors.

In fact, the interests of investors partly overlap with those of the state. Multifunctional agriculture is illegible and thus difficult to govern. As discussed in the previous section, multifunctional agriculture consists of complex social economic relations, that are embedded in particular local realities. It is in the interest of the state to create policies and regulations that favor land uses that are easier to record and monitor and eliminate land uses that are illegible. A bias towards sedentary, preferably commercial agriculture is constructed, leaving

little room for variation in agricultural practices that have traditionally been present in Ethiopia. Legibility also implies that the state: “*eliminates local monopolies of information and creates a kind of national transparency through the uniformity of codes, identities, statistics, regulations and measures*” (Scott, 1998 p. 78). When local knowledge is undervalued, it creates a power shift from local actors to the state and investors who have access and an understanding of this state created format. It is important to note, that this state created format is also the only language understood in formal dispute institutions, therefore the power of the state and the investors remains unchallenged. Thus the state and the investors can influence land use trajectories in these areas to serve their interests.

The categorization of land as unused, is a state simplification of the actual complex land based relations that are occurring at local level. In addition, by claiming land is “unused” the state is legitimizing its role as land broker for investments. If land is unused, this implies that the state is not interfering with small holder agricultural practices in favor of large agricultural investments, thereby justifying land grabs (Lavers, 2012a). In these areas of unused lands, agricultural productivity is often low, either used for pastoralism, gathering resources or shifting agriculture or other practices that are invisible to the state (Lavers, 2012b) By inviting investments in these areas, state authority is expended through legibility while at the same time serving national economic interests. This is what Scott calls “expansion into non-state spaces” and we will discuss this in the following section.

2.3 Expansion into non-state spaces

Next, we will look at how the notion of state and non-state spaces (Scott 1998) relate to land grabbing in Ethiopia. Expansion into non-state spaces is legitimized by the state through the notion of development. The settlement of large investors in the lowlands of Ethiopia, is part of the national agenda for agricultural development. The lowlands, which are mostly occupied by pastoralist communities, has seen many development programs through the years as an attempt to incorporate them into state structures. This can be seen as an expression of the unequal relationship between the high lands and the lowlands, in which the lowlands are exploited for the benefit of the highlands. This history of inequality is likely to be continued through allowing investors to settle on “unused ” land which many pastoralists call their home.

2.3.1 State and non-state spaces

Another major theme in *Seeing like a State* (Scott, 1998) is the difference between state and non-state spaces. State spaces are territories where there is a high population density and where mostly settled agriculture is practiced which leads to both production and labor surpluses. The social and economic practices of the population in these areas are legible by the state. Non state spaces are areas in which there is low population density and populations practice shifting cultivation or pastoralism. The state has always promoted policies for settled agricultural practices and has had a bias against mobile populations. The lifestyle of these nomadic populations are organized so that the state is kept at a distance. They have strong ethnic identities and kinships, move around in places that are geographically challenging and adopt economic practices that do not allow for taxation. These factors lead to a strong aversion against incorporation within state structures. The role of the state then becomes to create policies which allow for expansion of the state into non state spaces. These policies often revolve around the notion of “bringing development” into “underdeveloped” non-state spaces.

State spaces are also modified to be more suitable for the market economy, therefore Scott (1998) also notes that the state often prefers large holder over smallholder agriculture because it requires less effort and capital to record and monitor a few large businesses than a lot of small ones. Large holder are more efficient in terms of taxation, political control and labor surveillance, but may not always be more efficient than smallholders in terms of production.

In the following section, we argue that in Ethiopia, the highlands represent the state spaces and the low lands are the non-state spaces. The highlands have a climate and terrain that is suitable for the production of cereal crops. The highlands are much more densely populated and has a strong political basis. The lowlands region, such as Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz, Oromiya, Afar, and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region

(SNNPR), is about 60% of the total land area of Ethiopia. In the lowlands, 93% of the population practice some form of pastoralism, and the rest are considered hunter-gathers or cultivators (Kassa, 2000). Many pastoralists have diversified income sources, such as wage labor or cultivation. Pastoralists that combine livestock with sedentary agricultural practices are called agro-pastoralists (Kassa, 2000). The regions that have been identified as pastoralist zones, are often in the proximity of water. These areas have attracted domestic and foreign investors to set up irrigation schemes and commercial farms (Makki, 2012).

2.3.2 Different agricultural development strategies in Ethiopia

For many years, the main national development strategy in Ethiopia has been through the commercialization of smallholders. This strategy is outlined in the Agricultural Development Led Industrialization (ADLI). The focus was on internal production linkages, and little attention was paid on the role of foreign trade. This entailed the expansion of labor intensive agriculture alongside better agricultural technologies such as seeds, fertilizer and irrigation (Lavers 2012a). The ADLI had only limited success and Ethiopia remains one of most food insecure countries of the world (Lavers, 2012a). Due to the limited success of the ADLI, the government is now focusing on trade-based development through the facilitation of investments, both foreign and domestic (Lavers 2012a). For years, the Ethiopian agricultural landscape consisted of an equal class of smallholders, and currently it is exposing itself to new inequalities between smallholders and large land holders. State ownership of land is severally limiting the potential of smallholders to expand themselves, while at the same time investors have unlimited potential to develop economically. On a national level, inequalities between smallholders and investors are exuberated through land grabs. Yet on a regional level, between lowland and highland regions, inequalities have dominated the agricultural development strategies for a long time, and this trend is continued through large agricultural investments.

Most state led development strategies are to the benefit of the population living in the highlands and at the expense of those (agro) pastoralists living in the lowlands. The government has always promoted the expansion of sedentary agricultural practices in these areas. Sedentary agricultural has been seen as “modern” while pastoralism has always been portrayed as “backward”. Interestingly, Ethiopia is created on the basis of ethnic differences, this is why it is divided into semi-autonomous ethnic regions. Yet the federal government has continues to transform pastoralism in what it deems “legitimate” agricultural practices in order to serve national interests (Lavers 2012a). Ultimately development strategies in the pastoralist regions are aimed at the integration of these communities into the modern state politics and capitalist modes of production (Hagmann & Mulugeta, 2008). The problems associated with the development of pastoralists has been due to their inefficient production systems and their mobility (Kassa, 2000). Therefore the government has started several settlement programs for pastoralists and the forced creation of peasant associations, as a way to assert state authority over these groups, and to provide basic services (Kassa, 2000). However, pastoralists have a tendency to keep to government at a distance. Through tax

aversion and lack of a strong political representation at a national level, pastoralists have tried to prevent integration into the national politics and economy (Arsano,2000). This also means that pastoralists do not have a strong political or economic basis to protect the resources that are vital to their livelihoods (Arsano, 2000). The revised constitution of 1995 does state that pastoralists cannot be displaced from their grazing land, but without any by laws or ways for reinforcement, the state continues to lease large tracts of land for commercial agriculture (Arsano,2000). For example, the government set up different irrigation schemes in the Awash Valley. This led to a new environment that created work which was suitable for highland migrant workers, the production and processing of sugar and cotton (Behnke & Kerven 2013). Through this project, the government implemented what they deemed “legitimate” land uses and excluded pastoralists from land and water resources. Overall, the state led development programs have led to a decrease in livestock mobility, promotion of sedentarisation or mixed agricultural practices, shorter migration routes and lack of access to water (Hagmann & Mulugeta, 2008).

2.3.3 The incorporation of non-state spaces in the context of land grabbing

With the recent change in policy attitude towards more export oriented agriculture through investment, the state has envisioned to separate development paths for the highlands and the lowlands. In the highlands, less land is being leased to investors. The few projects that are taking places in these areas are often labor intensive and there is hardly any displacement, because smallholders can be incorporated into the agricultural businesses as wage laborers. The Ethiopian government has implemented policies in support of smallholders for many years, and the settlement of a few investors in the highlands is not an expression of development. In these state spaces, the arrival of large commercial farms are motivated by a desire of legibility. It is easier to monitor and record a few large farms instead of a lot of small farms. Yet the population in the highlands have more political power than the populations in the lowlands, and therefore the impacts of land grabbing will be limited in these areas, because the government cannot afford to lose support.

In the lowlands, the state uses the notion of development to expand into non state spaces. Land grabbing should be seen as a way for the state to modernize areas which have been dominated by pastoralists. The settlement of large investors into the lowlands has several benefits. Because they practice settled agriculture, they are easier to record and monitor, both for control and taxation purposes, than pastoralists. The Ethiopian government has a long history of trying to change pastoralists lifestyles, even before the arrival of capitalists modes of agricultural production, but this has not always been successful. Now, instead they are displacing pastoralists and allowing investors to settle, hoping this will be more successful than changing pastoralist lifestyles. This is partially because of the incompatibility and the aversion against state structures that define pastoralism. The land uses practiced by pastoralists are seen as unproductive and are often illegible to the state, therefore it is in the lowlands that large tracts of land have been identified as “unused”. These investments are characterized by mechanized agriculture, land uses which the government have deemed

appropriate in these areas. The pastoralist populations in these areas lose access to land and water for grazing and no other alternative source of income is offered (Makki&Geisler, 2011). Communities in these areas are being resettled, and while the government claims that the resettlement programs and investments are unrelated, the land that is cleared through resettlement is used for investment projects (Lavers, 2012b). The government is trying to develop the lowlands through large capital injections and is replacing pastoralists with investors. While the relationship between pastoralists and the state is a difficult one, investors are dependent on the state for resources and allocation of labor, therefore this relationship will likely develop in terms of mutual assistance (Lavers, 2012a). In conclusion, the commitment of the state to the development and “modernization” of pastoralist communities is being continued through the facilitation of land grabs in these regions

2.4 Enforcing compliance to state simplification through coercion

Throughout this article, we have described Scott's notions of state simplification and legibility. In this section, we will convert theory into practice, and demonstrate how resettlement programs are a practical expression of state simplification. Forced resettlement and villagization are tangible attempts of the state to re-organize society to fit into the administrative grid, rather than vice versa. In contrast to previous resettlement schemes we will argue that there is enough evidence to suggest that the land which is cleared through the current resettlement schemes is being leased to investors. We will discuss how the state uses tactics of coercion to facilitate these investments and that the involuntary nature of these resettlements define the situation in Ethiopia in terms of land grabbing rather than land deals. Finally, we will identify the potential influence of displacement caused by land grabbing on the social structure of Ethiopia and encourage further research on this topic.

2.4.1 Coercion

The use of violence as a means of coercion, can be used by the state to force communities to comply with state simplification projects, however violence is not always exclusive. In their article, Borrás & Franco et al. (2012) describe this last role of the state as using "*coercion through police and (para)military forces to enforce compliance, extend territorialisation, and broker for private capital accumulation*" (ibid. 2012: 858). When discussing the role of the state, it is important to emphasise that the state has a monopoly on legitimate use of violence because this will distinguish the state from other actors involved in land grabbing. However, this view on coercion is simply too narrow.

The government of Ethiopia claims that the resettlements are voluntary but communities in the Gambella region have stated that they were forced to move, through deception, intimidation and violence (HRW, 2012; Pearce, 2012). The state deceives communities, by providing them with false information about their new settlement. Officials inform communities that the reason for the resettlement programs is to provide them with better access to facilities. However upon arrival, communities realize that this was not true, land is often of lesser quality and there is no water, electricity or clinics as the officials has previously promised (HRW, 2012). In these instances, the resettlement may seem voluntarily, but it is based on deception. Besides the use of physical force, the state officials also use intimidation by implying that violence may be used. Therefore, we will prefer to use the following definition of coercion: "*Coercion includes all concerted application, threatened or actual, of action that commonly causes loss or damage to the persons or possessions of individuals or groups who are aware of both the action and the potential damage*" (Tilly, 1990: 19). State officials that visit villages to announce the resettlement programs are accompanied by the police or military forces. Communities are too scared to voice their concerns due to fear or reprisals.(HRW, 2012). Those who have refused resettlements have been beaten or incarcerated. In conclusion, we want to make two distinctions when

discussing the role of coercion. We extend our definition of coercion to both the actual use of violence or the threat of violence. It should be emphasized that even when violence is not used to force resettlement, it does not mean that resettlement occurs voluntarily.

2.4.2 Resettlement programs in Ethiopia

The first resettlements took place during the late 1980's under the socialist regime. Scattered populations were settled into state planned villages, a process called villagization. In addition, populations from the overpopulated highlands were relocated to the lowlands. The purpose of resettlement was to provide population with basic facilities, increase agricultural production and modernize Ethiopia (Scott, 1998). Communities tried to resist resettlement, but their resistance was met with state violence and many fled to neighboring countries. Opposition to the Derg regime continued to grow, and eventually collapsed, along with the resettlement programs.

The current resettlement programs have begun in Gambella since 2010, but are planned to extend into Benishangul-Gumuz, Somali, and Afar regions. At this moment, there is only a limited amount of sources that have begun to report on the incidents occurring in the Ethiopian lowlands. Most of our information will be based on the Human Rights Watch Report (HRW) on violations occurring in Gambella. The areas targeted for resettlement are the same areas that have been identified by the government authorities as unused land which can be leased for investment (HWR, 2012). The government of Ethiopia denies that the resettlement programs are connected to the large land deals occurring in these areas. However, many of the communities that have been displaced, as well as some local authorities, have stated that people are being removed from their land so that it can be given to investors (HRW, 2012 ; Pearce, 2012). State officials try to persuade communities to move voluntarily by promising that there will be schooling, water, clinics and other facilities available in the new villages. If communities do not move voluntarily, the state officials return with police or military forces. In most cases this is merely an intimidation tactic, but there have been reports of people being arrested or beaten for speaking out against the villagization programs (HRW, 2012). Once the communities arrive at their new villages, there are no such improved facilities that the government has promised them. They have lost the land which has been part of their social and cultural lives for generations (Pearce, 2012). In return, they are given no compensation of the land lost, or given land of poor soil quality (HRW, 2012). Certain communities which have previously been shifting cultivators or pastoralists, are now forced to practice settled agriculture. Within these cultures, there is a lot of valuable knowledge on alternative land practices and adapting to specific local circumstances, which will go to waste due to forced settlement (Scott, 1998).

2.4.3 Coercion and resettlement in the context of land grabbing

Resettlement schemes are not a new feature in Ethiopia. By comparing the previous and current resettlement schemes we can see resettlement has been influenced by land grabbing. In theory, both schemes are an expression of state simplification, settling populations to enhance legibility (Scott, 1998). But state ideologies which shaped intervention are different. During the Derg regime, the resettlement programs were in part carried because of socialist ideologies which were in favor of smallholder agriculture. The current resettlements are motivated by capitalist modes of production, and inequalities between investors and locals might change the social structure in Ethiopia. Communities during the Derg regime were organized in co-operatives because at the time it was thought that this would increase agricultural production (Scott, 1998). Currently, the state is also re-organizing agricultural practices in the lowlands. This time, co-operatives are no longer deemed appropriate land practices, but instead land is being leased to investors because the government feels this will increase agricultural outputs. While the means to achieve productive agriculture are different, the goal remains the same. Finally, on both occasions, the government claims that resettlements are voluntary because communities want access to better facilities such as water, schooling and electricity. The reality is that very few resettlements happen voluntary, mostly communities are intimidated and violently coerced into these new villages (HRW, 2012).

The use of coercion is what sets the state apart from other actors involved with land grabbing. The state is the only institution which has a monopoly on violence, and thus can facilitate land deals in a way that investors cannot. When communities are unwilling to give up their land, or when powerful actors refuse to acknowledge the rights of local communities, coercion is the only means in which land can be handed over to investors. The observant reader may have noticed that while discussing the situation in Ethiopia the term land grabbing has been used rather than land deals. The involuntary transfer of land from local communities to investors makes that we should speak of grabbing rather than leasing. In conclusion, coercion is a distinct feature of land grabbing, because people are forced to give up their use rights rather than bargaining an arrangement in which all parties are considered equally.

2.4.4 Further research on the effects of displacement

Due to the fact that the resettlements in the lowlands are so recent, it is difficult to analyze how these displacements will influence the social structure in Ethiopia in the future. While consulting the literature on displacement caused by land grabbing, we can identify some potential outcomes of these resettlements, but more research should be done on this topic, especially in Ethiopia, to be more conclusive. The resettlements in Ethiopia are an expression of displacement, rather than dispossession, in the sense that farmers are not landless, but are given new land at a new locations (often of lesser quality). It remains to be seen whether these farmers will be able to continue farming at these new locations or have to search for new

sources of income. There are many problems which could impact the survival of the communities that were forced to relocate. The communities were forced to move right before harvest time, which meant communities did not have any food reserves (HRW, 2012). The government said it would clear land for farming, provide food assistance and agricultural inputs, yet many of these promises were not kept (HRW, 2012). Faced with serious threats to their food security, it is possible that communities will abandon farming or combine it with other income sources. Due to the problems communities faced in their home country, some people have gone to refugee camps in Kenya and South Sudan (HRW, 2012). The World Bank has stated that large land deals will offer new job opportunities to the local communities, but evidence has shown that this is not the case (Li, 2011). In Gambella, when an investor was questioned on the employment opportunities for locals, he responded that they mostly employed workers with a technical background from the highlands of Ethiopia (Pearce, 2012). Most of the farmers that have been displaced cannot be absorbed into these agricultural companies, because these investments are based on mechanized farming. This is what Li (2009) identifies as surplus populations. Often this occurs in places where the resources are more valuable than the people that reside on it (Li 2009). These populations cannot be absorbed into other economic sectors and are thus surplus to the needs of capital. The question that should be answered through further research is: If these displacements lead to surplus populations, how will this affect the social structure in Ethiopia?

3. Conclusion

In this thesis, the different actors and perspectives of land grabbing have been discussed. The different definitions, views and interpretations of land grabbing and land use have influenced the role of the state with land grabbing. When investors see land as a commodity to be traded in the global economy, and local populations believe land can provide many cultural, social or economic benefits, the state forms its own view on land grabbing. In Ethiopia, the state claims that land that is being sold to investors, is unused and therefore does not threaten local livelihoods. This way, the government can legitimize land grabs towards local communities but also pursue its own interests. In this sense, state forms its own perspective on land grabbing to expand its control through simplification, expansion into non-state spaces and coercion.

Our main focus has been to identify the role of the state in facilitating land grabs. Firstly, land rights in Ethiopia are organized around state ownership of land. The lack of secure tenure rights for local communities means that this severely endangers their livelihoods. The state allocates land rights on the basis of state simplification and legibility. The complex land based relations are reduced to a simplified administrative reality. In the context of land grabbing, this means that the state may categorize land as unused, even though this is not a reflection of actual local practices. Due to the illegibility of local agricultural practices, land is being given to investors because large mechanized farming is easier to monitor and record for state administrative purposes. The shift from smallholder agricultural to intensive farming through investors will change the agricultural landscape of Ethiopia. Secondly, the state can use land grabs to expanded into non-state spaces. In Ethiopia, the cultural and agricultural practices of pastoralists and shifting cultivators of the lowlands have been seen as “backwards”. There have been many development programs throughout the years to encourage sedentary agricultural in these areas. Currently, the government has envisioned different development paths for the high lands and the lowlands. The government feels that the agricultural practices of the communities in these areas are not appropriate and therefore land has been deemed as unused. The lowlands will be the main site for investors to settle because the government wants to change the agricultural practices in these areas. This will allow the government to achieve a higher level of control in these areas. As a result, the livelihoods of shifting cultivators and pastoralists will be endangered. Thirdly, the state can enforce compliance to state simplification projects through coercion. Currently, the state is forcing communities in the lowlands to resettle so that land can be cleared for investors. In order to force these communities to resettle, the government makes false promises of better facilities in these new villages, but also uses the intimidation or violence if communities refuse to move. The facilitation of land grabs by the state has slowed the state to expand its control within its territory/.

In conclusion, there have been several limitations to our research. In order to give more definitive conclusions, our literary study could be supported through field research. This may give a more accurate representation of the current situation in Ethiopia. In addition, the information on the new resettlements that are currently happening in the lowlands of Ethiopia,

has been limited. Therefore we advice the scientific community to conduct more research on these resettlements and on the effects of displacement on the social structure of Ethiopia.

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