

The Political Ecology of Agrarian Change in Ethiopia: Institutional dynamics and trajectories of differentiation of agrarian land investments, land governance and land-use change in the Oromia region's East Hararghe zone.

Problem and Context

- Development policy of 'agricultural commercialisation' includes smallholders & investors
- 1.19 million ha of land leased to trans-national investors (2004-9) for large-scale farming.
- Institutional change took place in form of 'top-down' re-scaling of federal governance of land.
- Lack of 'land deal' transparency and reliant data on land-use change. So the extent and effects of actual land-use change in Ethiopia is speculative. Empirical study of agrarian institutions is required at all political scales of land governance.



Aims and Objective

- Establish a typology of agrarian land investments and rural property relations changes, and how they shape(d) the institutional context of land-use/access of farmers in the agricultural frontiers of the Oromia region.
- Explain how the state-led development strategy of agricultural commercialisation and the re-scaling of federal land governance is changing institutional arrangements of land access for different rural actors in the East Hararghe zone.
- Contrast the political, socio-economic and social-ecological livelihood impacts of agricultural commercialisation and its institutional change to land-use/access for different classes of rural labour.

Gap in the Literature

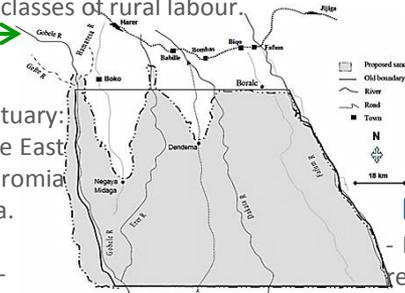
- PE explains global trajectories of socio-ecological agrarian change in relation to the politics that dialectically shape and are shaped by dynamic local ecologies.
- PE can employ the agrarian Political Economy analytics of property (who owns what?), labour (who does what?), distribution (who gets what?).
- PE can incorporate institutional analysis to explain complex, context-specific determinants of institutional change to 'politics of scale' in resource governance regimes.

Research Questions

- RQ1)** What is the historic & contemporary typology of changes to rural property relations and land-use in the agricultural frontiers of the Oromia region, that is subject to trans-national agrarian investments?
- RQ2)** Why, how and to what effect is the state-led strategy of agrarian commercialisation and re-scaling of federal land governance changing institutional arrangements of land-use and access for different rural actors in the East Hararghe zone of Ethiopia?
- RQ3)** How do different agrarian institutions ('contract farming' and 'large-scale farming') differentially impact upon land-use & -access related economic & ecological livelihoods of local actors in the Babilie Sanctuary?

Case Study

- Babilie Elephant Sanctuary: a conservation site in the East Hararghe zone of the Oromia regional state of Ethiopia.
- In 2008 a German agro-investor leased 56,000Ha land in the area (87% of farm-plots inside the park), cleared woodlands, established large-scale farms to produce castor plants and employed local wage-labourers.
- After conflicts with local actors, formal and informal institutions of land governance changed. Conservation borders were re-drawn. Some smallholders were re-settled or contracted by the same investor as outgrowers.



Theoretical & Conceptual Framework



Methodology

- Historical analysis, archival research and literature review of 'land investment' in Ethiopia (secondary literature and land-use datasets).
- Qualitative in-depth, semi-structured interviews with different actors at different scales. Expert-interviews with NGO and development agency representatives.
- Contrastive (livelihood) impact assessment of smallholder out-growers and farm wage-labourers (questionnaires and life-history methods).