

Extended Abstract

In Nigeria and Africa generally, land ownership among communities and individuals has been the basic guarantee of their sustainability and livelihood throughout history. (Odoemene, 2012a; 2012c; Daniel and Mittal, 2009; Oxfam International, 2011; 2007). In southern Nigeria, where land is scarce due to population explosion (Nwoko, 2011), land possession and accumulation among communities and individuals reflects their level of socio-economic wellbeing. It also secures crucial sources of livelihoods in rural area mainly for food and livestock grazing just like in other areas of Africa where locals depend on it for subsistence (Hall and Paradza, 2012; Future Agriculture, 2011). For the various communities and individuals in this part of Nigeria, land is a treasured possession which is seen as the only enduring legacy an individual or community could bequeath posterity. The socio-economic and cultural importance attached to land has been a major cause of inter-communal conflicts not only in this part of Nigeria, but also in other parts where land holding has both socio-economic and cultural significance, (Otite and Albert, 1999).

In the post independence period, the need for unhindered development in Nigeria necessitated the enactment of the Land Use Act of 1978 which gave both the federal and state government unrestricted access to land for public use and purpose. During this early period of the Act, the rate of land dispossession and forceful displacement of individuals and communities was minimal as well as the people's resistance to such dispossession. The reason was because the people saw those projects on their land as their own as well as the fact that they were compensated most times and the developments on the land impacted lives positively. However, in modern times, globalisation and the increased pressure on governments desperate for foreign investments have tripled the allocation of this resource to private and corporate entities for investment purposes; construction, mining, communication and other industrial purposes. This meant that this scarce resource became a source of nightmare and restiveness for the communities and individuals concerned. This is partly due to concerns that compensations now take years to be effected or worse, cornered by politicians or traditional rulers who claim to represent such communities. Further, the land resources acquired by these investors are usually the fertile and cultivable areas on which locals and their livestock depend on for food, this thus, exacerbates food insecurity, poverty, hunger and destitution amongst the various communities in the region; the impact of the activities of these investors; multinational cooperation, international partners of the federal and state governments, etc., are not felt in these communities where their operations are sited, thus, painting a picture of 'wealth in the mist of poverty'.

This contradictory posture has elicited criticisms especially that the critical issues centre around the local peoples' right to food and livelihood, especially as this development dispossess them of their land in order to create wealth which was most times expropriated (Borras and Franco, 2011:515). Further in the

southeast, the people's problems are further aggravated by the effects of gully erosions and landslides caused by environmental changes and activities of these investors on available cultivable land. This study therefore investigates the attendant effect of unregulated land acquisition by governments and investment partners, forceful dispossession and displacement of individuals and communities in the era of globalisation and wealth creation by increasingly capitalist regimes in southern Nigeria. The investigation of the trajectory of wealth and conflict resulting from this phenomenon is the key focus of this research.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this research:

- (1) What are the construction of 'title' and 'authority' especially in the context of land ownership, rights, access and usage in Nigeria?
- (2) What constitute the major issues of conflicts associated with land use for development, investment/commercial land use and mechanisms of land acquisition by government in southern Nigeria?
- (3) What policy directions and theoretical perspectives could emerge from the study of effective strategies for managing these conflicts, especially within the context of the agrarian question in peasantry societies subject to globalization and neoliberal capitalism?

Methodology

Owing to the conflict of interests in the Land ownership versus development in southern Nigeria, there is need for a balancing of the various interests for a proper management of the ensuing conflicts. The present research sets out to achieve this. It attempts to develop more effective strategies for engagement and cooperation between the various interests on land acquisition and use which would aid policymakers and institutions in the country in dealing with the effects of increased land acquisition and use in the era of globalisation and increased development in ways that would benefit the local populations, as well as enhance the interests of the government and their investment partners. The study would analyze the Land Use Act, varied land issues, tensions, conflicts, backdrop of resistance and alternative (opportunities) amongst the parties and then through this process, explore productive strategies for mutual cooperation and benefits.

This is a study in history and political economy. The qualitative method and within it the historical method is adopted. The methodology covers data collection, analysis and presentation. On data collection, the research will employ primary sources which include oral information from the community leaders, community spokespersons, Local and State government officials, and relevant government and international agencies and newspaper reports. Focused Group discussions (FGDs) by some member of

affected communities shall also be used. Secondary sources are also employed. They include chapters in books, journal articles, from the relevant disciplines, theses and dissertations, seminar and conference papers amongst others. The work also draws approaches from relevant disciplines such as law, history, sociology, food science, economics, political economy etc. In analysis and interpretation, the research employs theoretical explanations from across the various relevant disciplines; hence it adopts the multidisciplinary approach in terms of data analysis and interpretation. In presentation, the study employs the thematic, analytical and chronological style. The fieldwork includes visits to some of the communities, acquired and contested lands in some of the southern states. In all these fields, relevant data shall be collected, including interviews with the relevant officials, indigenes of the various communities, etc.

References

- Borras S. M. and Franco, J. C., (2011) *Political Dynamics of Land-grabbing in Southeast Asia: Understanding Europe's Role* (Amsterdam: Transnational Institute).
- Edeh E.(1985) *Towards an Igbo Metaphysics*,Chicago:Loyola University Press
- Edike, T.(2011) "Land dispute: Community accuses Enugu govt of violating court order" Vanguard 30 January, at <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2011/01/land-dispute-community-accuses-enugu-govt-of-violating-court-order/> (accessed Feb. 3 2014)
- Future Agricultures. (2011) "Land Grabbing in Africa and the New Politics of Food", Policy Brief 041 (June). www.future-agricultures.org (accessed on 26 January 2012).
- Statement made by Mazi Ezekiel Okwu (60 years) in a group discussion at Okwu's Compound Enugu Ngwo community in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State 2 June 2013.
- Hall R. and Paradza, G., (2012) "Pressures on Land in sub-Saharan Africa: Social Differentiation and Societal Responses" (European Report on Development), http://erd-report.eu/erd/report_2011/documents/dev-11-001-1researchpapers_hall-paradaza.pdf (accessed on 27 October 2012).
- Igbintade and Oyeweso,(2013) "Land Use Act turns tool of oppression of hapless Nigerians" *National Mirror*, 26 September 2013 at <http://nationalmirroronline.net/new/land-use-act-turns-tool-of-oppression-of-hapless-nigerians/> (Accessed 3 Feb. 2014)
- James R.W. (1987) *Nigerian Land Use Act, Policy and Principles* Unife Press.
- Kalu, O.U. (1978), "Precarious Vision: the African's Perception of his World" in O. U. Kalu (ed.), *Readings in African Humanities: African Cultural Development* Enugu, pp. 40-41
- Lasabi, B., (2014) "Governors abuse powers under Land Use Act" *Daily Independent*, March 2014 at <http://dailyindependentnig.com/2014/03/governors-abuse-powers-under-land-use-act-lasabi/> (accessed 21 July 2014)

- Mendie, A., Atser J., & Ofem, B., (2010) "Analysis of Public Lands Acquisition in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria" *Journal of Human Ecology*, 31(3): 197-203
- Nnamani, (1989) *The Land Use Act 11 years after GRBPL*
- Nwoko, K.C., (2011) "Labor Migration, Economic Practices and Cultural Identity among the Igbo in Modern Nigeria" in Apollos Nwauwa and Chima J. Korieh (eds.) *Against All Odds: The Igbo Experience in Postcolonial Nigeria* Trenton, NJ: Goldline and Jacobs Publishing, pp.239-256
- Obioha, E.E., (2008) "Change in Tenure Pattern and Customary Land Practices among Igbo Community in Southeastern Nigeria" *Anthropologist* 10(1), pp. 45-53
- Odoemene, A. (2012) "Land grab conflicts in Africa: Engaging landscapes of resistance and alternatives", research proposal presented for the African Peacebuilding Network (APN) fellowship competition of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), New York (June).
- Odoemene. A. (2012) "White Zimbabwean Farmers in Nigeria: issues in "New Nigerian" Land deals and the implications for food and human security," *African Identities*, 10 (1) (February).
- Omotola J.A., Law and Rights: Whither Nigeria? Being inaugural lecture delivered at the University of Lagos on Wednesday June 29th 1988 Lagos.
- Omotala J. A., (1985) Does the Land Use Act Expropriate? 3 JPPL.
- Onyeuwku, I. (2012a) "Area K Land Dispute" *Imo Trumpeta* 13 May, 2012 at <http://www.imotrumpeta.com/?p=363> (accessed Feb. 3 2014)
- Onyeuwku, I. (2012b) "Imo Govt Vs Owerri Land Owners We Have Paid Compensations – Commissioner Nwosu No, You Have Not – Land Owners" *Imo Trumpeta* 27 June, 2012 at <http://www.imotrumpeta.com/?p=7364> (accessed Feb 3 2014)
- Oseni, B. (2012) "Summary of the Land Use Act Decree No. 6 of 1978 in Nigeria" in *Environment of Nigeria* at <http://nigeriaenvironment.blogspot.com/2012/11/summary-of-land-use-act-decree-no-6-of.html> (accessed 21 July 2014)
- Otubu, T. "Land Reforms and the Future of Land Use Act in Nigeria" *Nigerian Current Law Review 2007 - 2010*
- Oxfam International (2007) "Bio-fuelling Poverty: Why the EU Renewable-Fuel Target May be Disastrous for Poor People." (*Oxfam Briefing Note* (November 1).
- Rasak, S. M., (2011) 'The Land Use Act of 1978: Appraisal, Problems And Prospects' A Long Essay Submitted to the Faculty of Law, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria
- Smith, D. and A. Mittal (2009) *The Great Land Grab* (Oakland, CA: The Oakland Institute).