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The paper explores the character and dynamics of land grabbing in Uganda and the trajectories of agrarian change. It also examines the dialectic between emerging patterns of land and labour commoditization and underlying political and social struggles. This research paper therefore tries to shed light on causes and contexts, national and international, that are driving protracted processes of land grabbing while at the same time understanding the nature of social struggles. This is crucial to understand how different patterns of land and labour commoditization impact on the character of social conflicts generated by neo-liberal globalization. Understanding the constitutive processes of land grabbing, its discourses and practices, will help to display wider class conflicts manifested in political, economic and ideological forms over the control, access and use of land in Uganda. The paper explores the socio-political and economic dynamics of land grabbing and its impact on agrarian social structure in northern Uganda. This requires, on one hand, a contextual understanding of the political economy of the new enclosures and the labour regimes that emerge, on the other, a complex exploration of the character of social struggles that resist such processes. It is therefore important to explore how everyday struggles are shaped by as well as in turn shaping the mechanisms for uneven capitalist development. Framing social struggles over land at the core of social analysis furthermore helps to interpret the dialectical character of processes of accumulation, dispossession and resistance, that is shaped by contestation and class formation which are at the hearth of which is accumulation but which do not simply automatically determine the dynamics of resistance. . The focus on the persistent character of accumulation by dispossession and the ensuing social struggles embodied in the politics of land capture reveal the wider terrain of socio-political structures and practices that constitute the core of the agrarian political economy.

The paper enquires these issues through an agrarian political economy perspective. This allows us to ask how is production organized and at what level of productivity; what are the property relations and how is the extracted surplus redistributed and utilized (Bernstein, 2010: 22-23). The analytical tools utilized in order to grasp the social transformation refer to the category of land-based social relations, i.e. land use and land property rights (Borras and Franco 2012). The unit of analysis used is the household, considered as an unit of production, consumption and social reproduction. The focus on the household allows us to interpret gender as a feature of both production and physical or social reproduction. It moreover helps

to situate the role of women within struggles over land. This paper thus attempts to go beyond the nevertheless important issue of documenting land grabs to explore the social and political consequences of it and how social relations of production and reproduction are shaped by it. A further aim of the paper is to understand the reasons concerning the "why" and "how" land grabbing is occurring in this specific socio-political milieu.

The paper thus examines the terms of rural people's inclusion, dispossession or adverse incorporation. How are enclosures implemented and resisted? Who are the agents of resistance? How do they organize their praxis of resistance? How are praxis of struggles articulated discursively? How social struggles impact the trajectories of social change.

The paper argues that land grabbing has to be understood as a persistent process of capitalist primitive accumulation driven by the power interests of (inter) national agri-business. It locates land grabbing within the long-term context of neoliberal, corporate driven, transformation of agriculture in Uganda started in the late 1980s with the first structural adjustment programmes plans (SAPs), continued with the Plan of Agricultural Modernization in 2001. Predicated on the logic of economic growth and poverty reduction these plans have contributed to further polarization, consolidating a class of politically well connected, commercial farmers mostly oriented to the production of monocultures for export and marginalizing the majority of small scale peasant food producers.

The case study of the recent and ongoing struggle between the Acholi peasant communities and the Ugandan government, which allocated 40.000 ha, of land in the Amuru district to the Madhvani Group, to implant a large-scale sugar plantation, represents an enlightening entry point to explore these issues further.

The first section of the paper analyses the driving social forces and main political and economic dynamics at work in the political economy of land grabbing in Uganda in general and in northern Uganda in particular by interrogating the role of the state and domestic elites in enhancing land grabbing opportunities. The second part is dedicated to exploration of the complexities around the forms of community resistance.

Practices and Discourses in the Political Economy of Land Grabbing in Uganda

Although land grabbing is predominantly a global phenomenon, the African continent is being particularly affected by the assault of many states and transnational corporations avidly in search of profitable investments and "idle" land. On the African continent furthermore Eastern and Western Africa register the higher numbers of commercial land deals (Friis and Reenberg 2010). In particular in the case of Uganda, commercial land deals, which involve foreign corporations or states, represents, without considering the nationally "branded"

forms of land dispossession, 14.6% of the national agricultural land (Friis and Reenberg 2010: 12).

The multitude of forms of land grabbing in Uganda include foreign states and (Trans) National Corporations acquisitions for food and bio-fuel productions, land enclosures driven by the REED carbon capture schemes and forestry creation, demarcations and securing of conservation areas and game reserves for tourist purposes, domestic elite and state-driven acquisitions often to the benefit of high rank government and military officials or to the advantage of locally (nationally) influent capitalists mostly in the form of commercial agriculture and cattle ranching schemes. This trend is driven and consolidated by an ideology that portrays Africa as a continent endowed with abundant and unutilised land.

The complexity of land grabbing emerges through a quick look to the different sources and documents available. The Land Matrix, a public database funded by organizations as the International Land Coalitions with an interest in promoting transparency and accountability on land/agricultural deals, reports six medium/large scale agricultural deals, between 1000 and 40.000 ha. This involving mainly European companies from Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Germany and Norway, the participation in forms of joint ventures of the Ugandan government and the support from major global financial players as HSBC, the International Finance Corporation and the World Bank. The intent is developing commercial timber plantations, mainly pines and eucalyptuses, as well as growing palm oil and coffee for the export market (http://landportal.info/landmatrix/get-the-detail/by-target-country/uganda?investment_natures=A#). Other sources report the involvement of big agri-business companies as the Agri SA, the association of South African capitalist-corporate farmers and Heibei Company from China involved in large scale land acquisitions which amount to 170.000 ha in the first case and 40.000 in the latter (Friis and Reenberg 2010). In 2009 The Ugandan government reportedly leased 840, 127 ha, 2.2% of Uganda's total area, in various parties of the country to Egypt so that the Egyptian private sector can produce wheat and meat and export it to Cairo (Graham, A., Aubry, S., Kunnemann, R and Monsalve Suarez, S. 2009).

Reports from local NGOs campaigning for social and environmental justice and human rights as Uganda Land Alliance, the National Association of Professional Environmentalists and the Advocates Coalition on Development and the Environment warn that its extent and diffusion represents a challenge to social and environmental sustainability of the country. The most stricken areas are especially those located in the central, western and northern regions, which were traditionally relatively marginal in the colonial political economy where the spread of capitalist relations has been relatively negligible. This area played only a minimal role in the expansion of commercial and capitalist farming and cattle ranching. The mushrooming of land grabbing, evictions, localized struggles of resistance and related incidents are daily reported by media and civil society activism: In Mubende in center-west Uganda the UK's NFC and the Germany's Neumann Kaffee setting of coffee plantations

determined evictions of 24.000 people (FIAN, 2009); Mount Elgon and Luwunga Forest Reserves, the Bukaleeba, and Mabira Forest have been and are the locus of intense struggles between international afforestation companies, mainly from UK and Norway, and local populations. The various projects supported by the Uganda Wildlife Authority involved the displacement of thousands of indigenous people who mostly live from collecting wild fruits and food from the forests (NAPE, 2011); In Kamwenge in the western part of the country the government evicted 30.000 people to establish commercial ranching schemes (The Independent 2012); in Kalangala an island on the Victoria Lake, the United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Bank are actively promoting deforestation and people's displacement by sponsoring the development of palm trees and its transformation into palm oil by BIDCO and Wilmar International (NAPE 2012); in Amuru, the establishment of sugar plantation on a surface of 40.000 ha by the Madvani Group, an Uganda-based company funded with Indian capital, is pushing government to threaten of eviction 20.000 Acholi people. The plurality of land grabbing episodes and the heterogeneity of its manifestations should not detract from a deeper understanding of its inner causes, the social and economic driving forces, politico-ideological contexts and legal mechanisms.

A quick glance to the newspapers and TV in Uganda, irrespective of their political orientation and editorial direction, reveals an escalating interest in land issues. Civil society organizations, NGOs, think tanks and associations of various genre are promoting a renewed debate on land grabbing through the construction of forums for public debate, the production of reports, enquiries and analyses. This combined effort, coupled with the lived experiences and living memories of land dispossession, produced a certain degree of awareness among people in Uganda as more detailed information reached the public space. Within the academic domain, one of the few terrains where a relative freedom of speech can be reached without threats of censorship or menaces of violent assault by state organs, the thematic is being vigorously discussed at various extents.

The re-invigorated interest in land questions is surely welcomed as it opens the terrain to a multiplicity of discourses, entry-points, characterizations and explanations, policy solutions. A scrutiny of existing discourses on the national arena is of particular interest as it allows deciphering the various arguments and unravelling competing discourses around land grabbing. On the other it helps to place these discourses in relationship with those social groups, actors and interest from which these emanate.

Dr. Julius Kiiza of the Department of Political Science, Makerere University, for example, argues that the root cause of the problem is demographic. In his view, Uganda's population explosion, which moved from 16 to 32 millions in the last 25 years, and the persistence of an agricultural-based national economy, created the pre-conditions of rampant land grabbing. This discourse, which is very pervasive within development studies, re-proposes the question of the imbalance between the geometric growth of population and the arithmetic growth of

agricultural production. The way forward is represented by a move towards a high tech agro-industrial economy that would enhance increased food production and combine with manufacturing and services (Kiiza, 2012). This view is shared also by the Ugandan political establishment, which similarly, envisages Uganda to enter the group of middle-income states by 2020. A recent study, which looked at escalating land grabbing in post-conflicts northern Uganda, individuates in the weak judicial system and obscure and obsolete land governance structures the key reason for the flourishing of this cancer (Mabikke, 2011:19, 21). The argument is that given the centrality of land for livelihoods strategies and poverty reduction, it is unavoidable for it to become the locus of major conflicts and disputes. According to the author the practical measures to stop land grabbing reside in the switch from less secure customary forms of land tenure to a more secure tenure system which is presumed to be synonymous with titling, individualization and private property (2011:22). These measures are also based on the idea that although land is allegedly held under customary tenure, in reality " most families own their farm as private property" (Ibid.).

Another observant, the historian Ron Atkinson who has written extensively on the formation of Acholi ethnic identity (see 2010), seems to contrast the previous view by arguing that land rights are overwhelmingly articulated within the customary or communal domain, not private, and are vested in localized patriarchal clans and sub-clans. According to him one efficient way to limit land grabbing could be mapping clan or communal land boundaries and establish an Acholi Communal Land Trust with the support of local governments, cultural leaders, local community knowledge of historical clan boundaries and technical expertise in geographical information systems, remote sensing and large scale data collection (2008:11-12). For Atkinson the issue is therefore one of absence of "rationalization" and the antidote is to formalize customary land tenure systems in the form of Certificates of Customary Ownership (CCOs) or through Communal Land Associations.

Some of the issues debated here are re-cast in the form of a controversy among NGOs in Uganda specifically between ULA (Uganda Land Alliance) and LEMU (Land and Equity Movement in Uganda). The former supports a strategy based on developing a statutory legal regime in the form of a universal, formalized, individualized and freehold title. The latter instead emphasizes the need to formalize the customary land tenure regime and recognize identifiable authorities, in the form of legal or juridical entities so as to guarantee fair access and appropriate management of land. The underlying set of assumptions in this literature incorporates a reduction of the complexity of land issues, including control, access and use of land, land based social relations, systems of authority over land, to an issues of legal systems of land tenure. In this perspective of enquiry land conflicts often take place between individuals and within and among communities and are often manifested in ethnic and religious conflicts. The historical nature of this approach furthermore does not help to explain the pressures on customary land tenure systems by processes of land commoditization and privatization while at the same time assuming the problem to be internal to customary land

tenure. It also neglects the underlying class character of conflicts whose appearance takes often regional, ethnic or religious vests. These struggles within classes and between classes, as well as between different social categories as age/generation, gender, ethnic she argues, "are precisely the social and cultural modes of differentiation, of the simultaneous creation of privilege and penury, wealth and poverty, political power and powerlessness, that are central to class formation" (Peters, 2004: 285). This does not mean that class exhaust the space of social analysis. Rather it is important to recognize that class cleavages interact with and work through gender and ethnic structures. Mainstream social science moreover purports the debate in terms of the binary opposition between customary law, which is inherently traditional, backward and static, and the statutory law, which is modern and characterized by more productivity efficiency and responsiveness to market inputs. The former is associated with pre-capitalist and non-market instances as it allegedly prevents the expansion of markets in land while the latter is linked to capitalist investments as freehold property is seen as the engine of rural development.

The absence of formal title and the mechanism of credit it enables are the principal reasons for the failure of capitalist development outside the West (De Soto, 2000: 5-6). The solution to the "mystery of capital" lies therefore in the introduction of an apparatus of representation and western forms of property in order to promote, we are told, the security of capitalist investments, and bring "life into a dead asset". This body of scholarship, which misunderstands social relations with things, embodies an underlying assumption according to which the lack of exclusive rights to land inhibits permanent investments on land and threatens security on land. This view is discredited by the fact that, on one hand, "vernacular" rural land sales and land rental markets have copiously emerged in Africa on the other, customary tenure systems did not represent an hindrance to the development of commodity relations as the experience of small scale agricultural producers in West Africa clearly shows (Chimowu and Woodhouse, 2007; Amanor, 2011). It could not therefore explain the expansion of small-scale farmers in the 1960 and 1970s across the continent under customary tenure regimes. Furthermore there is a Eurocentric supposition that land in African customary land tenure is owned as property and confers exclusive control to the holder. In contrast in customary land tenure regimes the concept of ownership is absent. According to Archie Mafeje, African customary law recognized a right of possession determined by prior settlement, use-rights of land subordinated to social labour and membership in specific social groups (2003:2). In other words, what was transferred to the landholder, who could have been the clan, the lineage, the household, but never the individual, was not the soil in itself but mostly the products of its use. Similarly the use of grazing and hunting grounds, access to water sources, trees for firewood and building and thatching of grass are not allocated to individuals but to particular production and consumption units, i.e the extended family. Rights to land are therefore not claimed on an individual basis, rather they are subordinated to the membership of specific groups and the reiterated use of land by specific productive units. This in turn tell

us that small scale farmers, women and men, enjoy a *de facto* security of tenure which is in many extents much more relevant than the *de jure* security.

Therefore the notion that individual tenure is a necessary condition for development of agriculture, irrespective of its cultural contexts and historical peculiarities may be traced back to a set of presuppositions based on European historical experience. These are rooted in methodological individualism, which presumes, individualized, titled and formalized land to be the only possible mode of social organization for agricultural production in a capitalist market. This recurrent emphasis on law, on the framing of appropriate and conducive legal frameworks produced the (un)intended consequence of abstracting the debate from land redistribution and land-based social inequities and exclusionary practices of access to land (Manji, 2006). These legalistic discourses on land law tenure reforms are therefore restricted to the form of land tenure rather than with its content. They tend to treat land as a thing neglecting the more salient aspect of land based social relations. The intrinsically normative character of the analysis, the technicist nature of the debate, the increasing emphasis on the legal architecture, the focus on appearance rather than substance, amounts to a de-politicisation of land issues. Global development institutions, in primis the World Bank, are framing the debate in syntony with principles, anchored in development economics, which interpret land mainly as an economic asset. This has the effect of abstracting the socially embedded character of land as well as ignoring the socio-relational, political and cultural character of land (Mafeje, 2003:13; Borras and Franco, 2012: 270-271).

State-corporate discourses on land grabbing reflect the modernist and technicist stance of land debates. Agricultural and land policies embody this vision and articulate politically and ideologically the modernization precepts. Land grabbing is therefore seen as a "development opportunity". Specifically, it is argued, that it increases the rate of commercialization of agriculture - the main objective of the current policies and target of international development institutions and donors - promotes infrastructural development, creates employment opportunities. The development of land markets would enhance the mobility of factors of production working as propellent of economic development.

As denounced by civil society organizations however large-scale land acquisitions dramatically impacted on local populations and eco-systems in a multitude of ways: destruction of natural habitats, eco-systems simplifications through monocropping, destruction of bio-diversity and wetlands, increasing use of fertilizers and pesticides, pollution of Lake Victoria, decline of fish in the lake, loss of livelihoods, erosion of indigenous knowledge and values, loss of medicinal plants, declining food and water security and rising poverty among displaced rural populations.

In this paper I argue that, land grabbing has to be read from the prism of capitalist enclosures, it represents a form of primitive accumulation. Through the case study of the lease of 40.000 ha of land by the Ugandan government to the Madvani Group to develop a large scale sugar

plantation I will detail this argument and I will underline the contextual trends, national and international, economic and political, as well as the mechanisms of land grabbing.

Land Grabbing as Primitive Accumulation

It was the forceful separation of people from their means of production and their transformation in landless proletarians which according to Marx sanctioned what he called primitive or original accumulation. Marx characterization of rural enclosures in England in the sixteenth century is revealing because it deals with what he called the pre-history of capital and the transition to the capitalist mode of production. In a radical critique of classical political economy Marx focused on the inherently conflictual and violent nature of the development of the capitalist mode of production to counter the "idyllic" argument of the harmonic origins of capitalism constructed by Smith analysis of "previous accumulation of stock" (Smith, 1776:277). There is nothing of natural in the process of selling the labour power as the only means for survival, Marx says. Primitive accumulation Marx writes "is written into the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire" (1858:669) and is driven by capital endless spur for accumulation.

Then he argued:

> "The expropriation of rural producers, of peasants and their expulsion from the lands constitutes the foundation of all the process. Its history has different nuances in different countries and it goes along different phases in diverse successions and in different historical epochs " (Marx, 1867: 882?).

In other words:

> "the divorce between the conditions of labour on one hand and the producers on the other that forms the concept of capital arises with primitive accumulation and it subsequently appears as a constant process in the accumulation and concentration of capital bringing to the centralization of capitals already existing in few hands and the decapitalization of many" (1894:354-355).

Differently from Marx, Rosa Luxembourg instead made a clear argument according to which capitalism developed into a non-capitalist social environment that she saw in non-capitalist social stratums in Europe and non-capitalist countries. In her view while capitalism lives by exploiting its non-capitalism contour at the same time it destroys it, that is it brings it within the capitalist economic orbit:

"Historically, the accumulation of capital is a kind of metabolism between the capitalist economy and those pre-capitalist methods of production without which it cannot go and which in this light it corrodes and assimilates. Thus capital cannot accumulate without the aid

of non capitalist organizations, nor on the other hand can it tolerate their continued existence side by side with itself. Only the continuous and progressive disintegration of non-capitalist organizations makes accumulation of capital possible" (Luxembourg, 1960:415?).

In the search of a modus operandi of capital, she underlined that capital accumulation embodied two tendencies, that is, accumulation of surplus value by economic means and that of appropriating values from outside the capitalist production process by extra-economic force:

"Capital is faced with many difficulties because vast tracts of the globe's surface are in possession of social organizations that have no desire for commodity exchange, or cannot because of the entire social structure and the forms of ownership, offer for sale the productive forces in which capital is primarily interested. The most important of these productive forces is of course land, its hidden mineral treasure, and its meadows, woods and water, and further the flocks of the primitive shepherd tribes. Hence derives the vital necessity for capitalism in its relations with colonial countries to appropriate the most important means of production… Accumulation with its spasmodic expansion can no more wait for, and be content with a natural internal disintegration of non-capitalist formations and their transition to commodity economy…Force is the only solution open to capital; the accumulation of capital, seen as an historical process, employs force as a permanent weapon, not only at its genesis, but further on down to the present day" (Luxembourg, 1960:365-366).

By emphasizing the role played by land enclosures in the transition from feudalism to a capitalist mode of production the concept of primitive accumulation has been turned by orthodox Marxist interpretations into a corner-stone to build a monumental "stage theory" obscuring that this separation occurs continuously, at any time, even within a mature capitalist mode of production when the conditions for an ex novo separation are posited (De Angelis, 1999). In a similar vein Bonefeld emphasized the foundational character of extra-economic violence and its persistence:

"The principle of primitive accumulation, that is separation, is the constitutive presupposition of accumulation and that this principle constitutes the essence of capital. The historical presupposition of primitive accumulation inverts thus into the premise and precondition of capitalist accumulation. The result is that the separation of labour from its means has to be posed continuously in capitalist accumulation rendering the separation the premise and the result of accumulation proper… It does not refer to specific chronology but is rather a process of continuously re-constituted beginnings" (Bonefeld, 2002: 4-5).

Interestingly however the process does not involved only the inter-play of extra-economic means with the "dull compulsion of economic forces", it involved the imposition of a new definition of property formidably biased in favour of landowners which was aimed at eradicating agrarian use rights not juridically defined and at expanding the enclosures

movement (Thompson, 1971). According to Ellen Meiskins Wood in her study on the "agrarian origins of capitalism", traditional conception of property had to be replaced by new capitalist conceptions of property – property not only as private, but as exclusive, literally meaning excluding other individuals and the community. It had to be forged according to the Lockean postulate of profitable utilization of property, and its improvement which practically meant the imposition of market imperatives which gradually eliminated village regulations and restrictions on land use by extinguishing common and customary use rights on which many people depended for their livelihood (2000:32-33). David Harvey labelled the resurgence of coercive mechanisms, in its legal, political and military forms, to processes of capital accumulation, as a process of accumulation by dispossession. The centrality and persistence of violence and coercion in the contemporary dynamics of capital accumulation, an aspect that according to Harvey emanates from the crisis of capital accumulation and discloses the fallacy of the neoliberal ideology, manifests concretely into:

"Commoditisation and privatization of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations, conversions of various forms of property rights, suppression of rights to the commons; commoditization of labour power and the suppression of alternative indigenous forms of production and consumption". (2003:74).

We can now see how this theoretical discourse is articulated and concretized in Uganda. The contribution of this paper is to account for this and to document it. The attempt by the Ugandan state to dispossess 40.000 ha in Acholiland and lease it to the Madhvani Group to promote the development of a sugar plantation and processing factory epitomizes the many facets of this process. Behind the appearance of what is termed "a private-public partnership" the Amuru Sugar Projects conceals e profound involvement and investment by the state itself. Although unsuccessful so far it has in fact deployed its usual arsenal of violence and bribery in an effort to evict the inhabitants and secure the land for the company. The Madhvani land grab is indeed characterized by alliances between private capital holders and state violence. This political conformation promotes a particular state-capital relationship embodied in what we may term rentier politics. This politics, which is based on extracting rents from national and international capitalist as a mechanism to access land and its subsoil resources, is centred on the use of land as a means of patronage. In time it has in fact generated state structures that embodied vested interests linked to resource extraction. It also explains why it is easier for dominant classes to secure access to ready made wealth in the form of rent and for the state to become increasingly autonomous from society at large. Rentier politics can in fact emerge where the balance of class forces shaping state policy pursues the easy route of revenue generation from resources rents, often because there is little control over the state. The Madhvani Group, one of the largest Ugandan-based conglomerate funded with Indian capital, is the larger processing company in Uganda. It has a long history of presence in the country since the 1930s when after having obtained 800 ha of land from the Busoga kingdom and the colonial government established in the 1930 the Kakira Sugar Factory. The Indian

elite with interests in commercial activities became a partner, together with the African petty bourgeoisie, of the colonial government in the enterprise of developing a cash-crop economy (Mamdani, 1976). The Madhvani Group is today an empire in East Africa with interest in sugar, energy, insurance, floriculture and construction.

The Amuru Sugar Project is a joint-venture between the Madhvani Group and the Government of Uganda. The preferential relation of Madhvani with the Ugandan political establishment paved the way for the hoarding of the contract. Notwithstanding better commercial credentials of the proposal of the NileCan, a Canadian company who tendered for the contract, the deal was signed with Madhvani. NileCan's project, which declared immediate financial availability through Londsdale Private Equity, estimated the production of 200.000 metric tons of sugar per annum from 20.000 ha of land supplemented by independent outgrowers . Madhvani proposal, on the other hand, which involved 40.000 ha, of which 10.000 would be leased to outgrowers, estimated a production of 2.500 metric tons per day, aimed to seek government assistance to identify development agency funding. The role played by the state is therefore not limited to create the necessary legal and physical infrastructure to attract capital investments through fiscal exemption, preferential land lease - at no cost - and retreat from the market sphere. Its action rather enhances and actively shapes the formation of markets and their functioning. In accordance to the dictates of political reforms of decentralization in land governance, Land District Boards, which replaced the national Land Commission previously constituted to deal with land affairs, have mostly unlimited and unchecked rights of land management. By constituting a set of institutions and bodies of governance, which are parallel and antagonistic to the customary forms of authority over land, the centralized state is expanding its reach in the process of regulating control, access to and use of land. The Amuru Sugar Project plans to create employment to over 7000-8000 people and additionally to give a livelihood to 7000-10.000 outgrower farmers. Outgrower farmers would be housed in labour camps each on 10 ha of land, with 8ha under sugarcane and 2ha for food crops. Madhvani would supply equipment to clear, plough, arrow and furrow the land as well as distribute "treated cane seeds" and give technical advice on agricultural matters. Outgrowers will pay unspecified rents on the 10ha piece of land, housing in the outgrowers villages and meet cost for education and medical treatment. The plan estimates that average outgrower households will earn Shs 340.800 net per month, a misery in condition of rampant inflation and increasing cost of living.

The model would be similar to Kakira Sugar Limited in Busoga where the same number of people is employed. Kagira Sugar Limited is known in the country to have been one of the first projects to embark on a programme of renewable energy. It in fact already produces on a regular basis 22MW of power and sell 12-13- MW on 24-hour basis to the main grid. Similarly the Amuru Project will emulate this pattern of power generation, which will come from bagasse, the dry pulpy residue left after the extraction of juice from sugar cane.

The production of bio-fuel might have been at the core of this revival of land investments. In the apex of skyrocketing oil prices, new demands for bio-fuel production mounted. At the international levels in new energy policies of the European Union foresee that an increasing share of the energy needs would come from energy of re-newable content. South Africa's new industrial policy increases its target for renewable content in the national fuel supply from 2 to 10% (RSA, 2010:60), The International Sgency predicts that ethanol alone may make up to 10% of world gasoline use by 2025 and 30% by 2050 (Zoomers, Jhohnson and Macdonal, 2012: 178) On the other hand souther governments as Tanzania aims to rise to 10% the contribution of biofuels to national energy security policy by 2020 (Sulle and Nelson, 2009). Sulle and Nelson estimate that Tanzania has 44 million ha of arable land, yet only 10.2 million ha is currently under cultivation (2009:15). Some companies are therefore proposing biofuel projects involving initial investments of up to US$ 1 billion, or several billion US dollars over the next 10-20 years (Sulle and Nelson, 2009:3). The land requested has yet to be acquired, the rush for biofuels is changing the agricultural geography of Tanzania giving space to crops like jatropha, oil palm and sugar. In Uganda, where 14% of land has been acquired by foreign companies and probably a bigger rate by local capitalists, the gvoernment is making particlar efforts to reconvert forest and allegedly unused land into production of bio-fuel. The development of biofuel industry is also supported as it reduce the dependence of southrn government from oil and other expesnive sources of energy. The Uganda Ministry of Energy published a Renewable Energy Policy, which set a goal of blending 20% of biofuel into all gasoline fuel (Zoomers, Jhohnson and Macdonal, 2012:179). With promises of infrastrctural development, wealth creation, employment biofuel projects which are mushrooming throughout the country, are described as bringers of develpmetn bonanza. President Museveni himsel supported the projects arguing that "every sugar plantation is an oilfield" (Child 2009, 248-249). The push for sugar and biouelf production seem to follow similar trend of corporatization of agriculture and its interpenetration with finance capital as underlined by Richardson (2010) and Hall (2011) in the cases of Eastern Africa and Southern Africa respectively. The configuration of new set of economic and political relationships appear to be also related to global contextual trends as the anticipation of food security and new forms of resource extraction for fuel security (White, Borras, Hall, Scoones, Wolford (2012: 627-628). The transformation of the world food system and its approximation to a food for fuel regime (McMicheal, 2010) or to a corporate food regime (McMicheal, 2009a) with its profound impact on pattern of land use, has also been a major driver of the consolidation of agri-business power on the global scene.

The project, it is argued, will improve the standard of living condition and livelihood of thousands of individuals in Amuru District. A recent study conducted in 16 villages near Budongo Forest, enquired, by interviewing 821 households, the relationship between poverty and participation in sugar production. It argues that the majority of households, who depend primarily on environmental goods and services for their livelihoods, benefited least from the presence of the factory, which instead undermined access to natural resources and benefited

only a limited minority of wage labourers (Zoomers, Johnson, Macdonald 2012: 191-192). It is therefore clearly simplistic to portray the expansion of the sugar industry and development of biofules production as an economic goldmine. Weldman and Lanckorst studied a case of sugar production in the rural areas of Kigali in Rwanda where in 1997 the state, aiming to encourage more intensive forms of agriculture, leased 3100 ha of land to Madhvani Group in the Nyacyonga and Nyabarongo marshes. The study highlighted the increasing rate of dependence of outgrowers from Madhvani, which is the only buyer, determines non negotiable prices, decides when the cane is ripe and prevents outgrowers to be present when the harvest being weighed. (2011:8). Many outgrowers have got indebted while the majority of those working as rural salaried considered themselves to be worse off than before the takeover.

The implementation of the plan threatens the evictions of 20.000 Acholi peasants from their land. The displacement from and dispossession of land, i.e. the process of divorcing people from the objective conditions of realization of their labour power, land, is the constitutive process of capital. Capital in the Marxian sense is not a thing, but a social relation, one between owners of means of production and owners of labour power who have nothing to sell but their labour power to reproduce themselves. In this sense the process of land dispossession and privatization interconnects with capitalist dynamics of labour commoditization. Large scale sugar plantations would promote the creation of underpaid and over-exploited rural (semi)proletariat as the high composition of organic capital and the labour unfriendly technologies of mechanization do not allow for absorption of labour power. It would rather create a surplus population of the dispossessed (Lee, 2009). The consequences of this rural crisis and systematic land dispossession are already being seen in Gulu the main town in the North. The Amuru district has in fact been at the core of land enclosures: in Apaa, the creation of a conservation area and game reserve for tourist purposes over an area of 20.000 ha took the precedence over the rights of local populations. After being displaced, their main source of livelihoods extinguished. In the surrounding areas, exploiting the absence of people who had been interned in refugees' camps, the Land District Board fraudulently allocated 10.000ha to the general Julius Oketta and 1.000ha to Harriette Aber the wife of Salim Saleh, president Yoweri Musevni's brother. The population of Gulu which was below 40.000 by the early 1990s dramatically increased to 150.000 (Branch, 2012). Meanwhile, according to local government reports, employment opportunities are decreasing. Of the population of over 150,000 (of which approximately half are over 15 years old), fewer than 1200 are employed in formal sector, while just over 4000 are engaged in small businesses. While there are no official statistics on unemployment and underemployment, it is said to be extremely high, even by Ugandan standards—which has a youth unemployment rate nationally of over eighty percent! (Branch, 2012:22).

This lack of employment and the swelling population has led to increasing poverty since the end of the war. Nationally, the proportion of people below the poverty line decreased from

2004 until 2011 (from over 50% to 32%); in Gulu, between 2004 and 2007 the proportion similarly decreased (from 50% to 42.8%), only to spike immediately after the war, rising to 69% in 2009/2010. Poverty's increase has occurred in tandem with the expansion of slums. Over seventy percent of Gulu's population lives in huts or other types of makeshift housing, and the Municipal Council reports that informal and illegal structures are "mushrooming" (GMC 2011).

Another potential effect especially for outgrowers, might also be what we might term adverse incorporation. As we have seen, the terms of market integration are highly negative reproducing relation of dependence and subordination. Land dispossession would also bring with itself a new codification of land property rights in this case land would change its legal status from communal to leasehold tenure for a period of 99 years. The forced acquisition of land and registration would allow the expropriator to use it as a collateral to borrow money. This superficial change in tenure embodies however a deeper principle, the transformation of land from use value to exchange value. The use of land would be therefore hugely altered, as the simple and ecologically suitable techniques of agricultural production of small-scale farmers would be replaced by chemical and energy intensive technologies proper of the transformation of agriculture in a domain capitalist accumulation. Rather than food crops planted for the household consumption and exchange needs at the local level the outcome is production of cash cops or biofuels for the export market and further integration within the circuit of national and international agro-business. This provokes accumulation of the few and impoverishment for the many dispossessed and precariously or adversely integrated within agribusiness as under-paid rural proletarian or as outgrowers.

Finally but probably most importantly the encroachment of agri-business and the dispossession that ensue represents a threat to food sovereignty of peasant households in the Amuru district, who still use for consumption, in aggregate terms, three/quarters of their agricultural production, who would see undermined the chances for self-provisioning. Capitalist land enclosures furthermore prevent access to the commons who still play a crucial role in the strategy of social reproduction for peasant households.

Land grabbing however is not just an epiphenomenon of capital accumulation and neither does it occur in a vacuum. Although it involves new practices and a new set of actors, it is the outcome of long-term, systemic dynamics. I argue that land grabbing represents a continuation, although in the form of a qualitative leap, of the long term trend of consolidation of the agro-industrial complex propelled by neoliberal economic and political reforms. For land grabbing it to take place a set of legal and political mechanisms as well as new economic dispositions and social configurations are necessary. I argue that neoliberal agricultural and land reforms in Uganda and the economic and political relationship that created represent an effort to strengthen the development of agri-business and therefore enhance the development of land dispossession. The next session will explore the contextual trends that spurred escalating land grabbing in Northern Uganda.

Contextual Trends

Land grabbing in northern Uganda is driven and consolidated by an ideology that portrays Africa as a continent endowed with abundant and unutilised land. A business report, issued at the peak of the land grabbing crystallization, affirmed that the African continent has become the preferred target of large scale land acquisitions as sixty per cent of the planet's remaining "uncultivated" land is in Africa while it contains 40% of the global gold reserves and 10% of its oil resources (Oilprice.com, 2 September 2010). Defining African land as "empty", "idle", "unutilized", clearly mirrors the juridical principle, established under the Dutch hegemony in the 17th century by the philosopher Hugo Grotius, of *terra nullius*, which codified through law the legitimacy of Europeans to occupy and annex land in the Southern hemisphere. This Eurocentric lens on land ownership and land use clearly does not take into account the multiple patterns of land use articulated in African land communal/customary systems. Here land is not considered as a property nor is it entirely utilized for agricultural purposes. Land customary systems in fact provide land for present and future generations, so whereas land might appear empty, it is, in many cases, preserved for allocation for future generations. The persistence of shifting cultivation as it is the case of Northern Uganda moreover shows that although land is not used in its totality this is because of the permanence of practices that allow the soil to rest and the regeneration of the cycle of soil nutrients. Furthermore agricultural production is not the only activity, land in communal tenure systems is in fact also allocated for grazing and hunting. Access to land also provides local communities with access to sources of energy (fallen wood branches), water, clay, wild fruits and herbal medicines. Therefore describing African land as unutilized not only undermines local indigenous modes of subsistence and social reproduction and increases the category of poor and landless people in Africa, but it also spurs an ideological attack towards local and informal land tenure systems.

There is little doubt that the majority of land grabbing episodes is occurring on communal land managed within the terms of customary land tenure system. This objective reality is pushing many NGOs and academics to interpret land grabbing as determined by the lack of transparency in land governance and tenure security. They propose individual forms of secure, private property as a form of legal protection against land grabbing. And yet in many cases of land grabbing in Uganda although some people got title deeds this did not secure them from dispossession and displacement. Ironically these analysis and policy measures, which misinterpret causes with consequences, tend to strengthen one of the main factors which is stimulating land grabbing, i.e. commoditization and privatization of land.

The abundance of land, the low rate of population densities and the scattered nature of human settlements, poverty and displacement may have been among other factors attracting national and international agri-business interests. The northern districts in fact have been at the core of a twenty-year period of war between the National Resistance Movement and the Lord Resistance Army led by Yoseph Kony. The Acholi population, displaced from their land and contained in refugee camps, is gradually returning to their ancestral land. Given the

decimation of the large cattle herds held by Acholi before the war and the deep poverty into which life in the camps cast most of the rural population, land remains the only resource left for most.

I situate the assault to people land sovereignty and to self-provisioning in the form of land privatization and "commoditization of subsistence" (Bernstein, 2010) in the context of neoliberal transformation of agriculture, which started in the late 1980s. I argue that neoliberal agricultural and land reforms by enhancing the emergence of more commercially oriented, large scale, farming and agri-business paved the way for the current wave of large scale land acquisitions.

The Ugandan economy is portrayed by International Financial Institutions as a success story reaping continuous benefits from structural reforms started in the late 1980s. In per capita terms, Uganda's income growth averaged 4.0 per cent from 1980 to 2010 while in aggregate terms growth accelerated from 6.3% in the 1990s to an average of 7.0% per year during 2000s (World Bank, 2012: 9). The World Bank report "*Uganda: Promoting Inclusive Growth*" shows that Uganda has been able to sustain one of the fastest growth rates in the world over the past two decades above the average in Sub-Saharan Africa and below the lower middle-income group of developing countries. The growth, it is argued, the result of strict macro-economic policies, investments from the private sector and an increase in export especially in the last decade. Under the pressures of international donors – IMF and WB - the Ugandan government accepted a market reform programme, involving devaluation of the currency, a reduction in budget deficits, liberalization of the marketing system and privatization of many parastatals (Brett, 1998:324). Plans of Structural Adjustment, which were implemented under the rhetoric of restoring economic stability and rehabilitating the country's productive and social infrastructure, however neglected the poverty dimension and the social character of public expenditure predominantly focusing on macro-economic indicators.

In the last couple of decades through the Poverty Eradication Programs (1997/98 -2008/09 and the Plan for Modernization of Agriculture (2001-09) supported enterprise development, agricultural zoning, and support to large scale agriculture. Increased commercialization of agriculture proceeded through diversification and specialization.

The last report by the World Bank states that contribution to GDP from different economic sectors comes in these percentage: 50% from services industry, 25% from Agriculture,11% from the construction sector, less than 10% from manufacturing (World Bank, 2012:13). The report is particularly silent about the fact that the growth has been mostly produced by a huge inflow of financial aid coming mostly from the United States, reaching up to today almost 60-70% of the total state expenditures. This aggregate information furthermore does not tell us a lot about the distribution, geographical (urban and rural – north and south) and social (rich and poor – men and women) of this enhanced income. The report further argues that with

economic growth also poverty substantially decreased from 75% to less than 45%. (World Bank, 2012:20). The problem with the poverty estimates calculated between 1992/1993 and 2009/2010 is that they have been based on a poverty line derived on a 1993 consumption basket as a basis for computing the costs of basic needs in Uganda. Since then the price of basic commodities increased enormously so the data is misleading also in aggregate terms. A major study on rural poverty by Deininger and Okidi (2003) demonstrated that in spite of improved economic growth, poverty and inequality increased in rural areas as well as in specific regions, especially in northern Uganda, which has only recently emerged from two decades of prolonged armed conflict between Museveni-led National Resistance Movement and the rebel group of the Lord Resistance Army led by Joseph Kony.

Income inequality as measured by the Gini coefficient increased from 0.365 in 1992 to 0.408 in 2005/2006 and to 0.426 in 2009/2010 (Makoba, 2011:48; Ssewanyana, 2010:11). Also the World Bank agrees that in northern districts notwithstanding the recent improvements at national level, consumption levels and growth in the region remains below the national average for all but the richer 10% in the rural North (World Bank, 2012:21). The majority of poor people in fact concentrate in rural areas in the North. As a result of war and inhuman living conditions in "concentration" camps, malnutrition and poverty have increased. These developments moved some critics to talk of growth without development and equity (Makoba, 2011:55-56). The Human Development Index of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) ranked Uganda 161st of 187 countries in 2011 (UNDP, 2011). Beside war, policies of agricultural liberalization, one of the main focuses of the plans of structural adjustments which coalesced around the Berg Report, supported enhanced processes of social differentiation in the countryside by favouring the thriving of a tiny minority of politically well connected and commercially oriented medium and large scale farmers in Uganda. The WB, report which focused on a substantial retreat of the state in the agricultural production activities, the elimination of price controls and subsidies on agricultural commodities, intensification of commodity production among those privileged farmers who have the necessary resources and political representation, subordinated the reception of aid to the implementation of these "conditionalities".

The privatization of African land was to be the first task of Structural Adjustment Programmes, which the IMF and the WB demanded. Conditionalities written into thse programmes – the shift from food production to export oriented agriculture, the opening of African Lands to foreign investments, the privileging of cash crops over subsistence agriculture – were presumed on the success of a new privatization drive, which was to formalize land tenure through individual titling and registration. In the light of these agricultural reforms grounded in the market ideology the government has progressively reduced its public spending in agriculture from 10% in 1980 to 3.7% in 2008/2009 (Okello, 2009:13). This tiny minority of politically well-connected individuals, monopolized the remaining fragments of state support in agriculture especially in the sector of coffee production and other cash crops for export.

The former has remained the largest receptor of state funds and the biggest earner of foreign currency in the balance of payments. Museveni's National Resistance Movement launched in 2001 the Plan for Agricultural Modernization to enhance commercialization of agriculture. According to Okello the NRM pledged Shs 60 billion to support agricultural mechanization and agro-processing as well as Shs 30 billion in order to establish an agricultural credit facility to be accessed by commercial farmers and agro-processors (Okhello 2009:15-16). However the majority of what are termed subsistence farmers who produce mostly for household consumption and use to sell the surplus, when it is available, on local market has been structurally marginalized from subsidies, better market prices and inputs support. Museveni's politics of neo-liberalization cum neo-patrimonialism did not improve real income of small farmers nor did it tackle rural poverty, it rather provided new avenues for economic opportunities for those capitalist farmers and agri-business companies who had financial resources to positively engage with market.

The turn to neoliberalization, according to Harvey, "indicates the crucial role played by class struggle in either checking or restoring the elite class power" (Harvey 2005:200). In war-affected areas specifically under the label of reconstruction and development in war-affected areas, the government for example funded the consolidation of the Amuru District Commercial Farmers Associations. Constituted by a group high rank military officials and MPs from both the government and the opposition, it lobbied for the preferential allocation of large tracts of land which amounted up to 20.000ha, and huge sums of public funds (Atkinson, 2008). State preferential intervention and its institutions at local levels have been representing the extended arm of the state intervention within rural affairs cementing the politics of land capture and the use of land for political patronage.

The 1998 Land Act recognized the existence of different land tenure systems: communal, *mailo* (as its had been measured in miles initially), leasehold and freehold. Land activists and NGOs welcomed the recognition of customary ownership in the act, incorporated also in the latest World Bank vision on land tenure regimes. Behind this recognition, which may have been led by the understanding of the existence of dynamics informal land markets, it is concealed a vehement effort at mapping and titling land and formalizing land tenure systems. Recognition of customary land tenure was also aimed at transforming large communal tenure systems into individually owned certificates of customary ownership (CCS). However the general trend and recent policy efforts have in fact pushed towards the uniformation of land tenure regime towards private property (Batungi, 2008). When the title is issued the value of the property tends to increase. It comes for speculative investment. Large owners and speculators gain immediately from the increased value of property. Small owners of property see no benefit from increased value. By 1990s only a small percentage of African communal land had been registered because small farmers saw no need to it assuming that they already owned access to land and not being willing to pay the high fees and taxes that titles and registration require.

Formal property systems corrode forms of local knowledge of land management by linking ownership into more abstract, and certainly more distant forms, which can be accumulated, managed and made source of rent by outsiders. As Mitchell notes, "the creation of formal legal title and property registration becomes a machinery for transferring property from small owners and concentration it into larger and larger hands (Mitchell, 2005: 29). This process of privatizing the "customary" begun with Amin Land reform act of 1975 which assumed all land to be state land and held in leasehold. In doing so it opened up customary land tenure systems to pressures of privatization and concentration (Mamdani, 1987). According to Mamdani the 1998 Act aims of recognizing customary land tenure must be seen as latest phase in the modern state endeavour to colonize society. It is aimed not at reinforcing it but to target it for immediate control and eventual elimination (Mamdani, 2012). The 1998 Land aim is to expand the logic of 1900 Buganda Agreement to the entire country. It created a class of local notables among the Baganda oligarchy: a landed gentry chosen by and dependent from the colonial masters (Mamdani, 1976: 41). This Land Settlement, which parcelled out land throughout the entire hierarchy of Buganda chiefs, involved the recognition of "occupied" land as belonging to the natives whereas "waste and uncultivated" portions would be labelled as Crown Land available for sale or lease to incoming settler planters or farmers (Wrigley, 1959:23). The total amount of allocated land among "tribal" groups was 9.000 square miles nearly half the supposed total area of the Buganda chiefdom. The redesign of the landholding structure had profound impact on the class structure of the colony by consolidating the power of the chiefs and transforming them into a class of landlords. These landlords were actually not involved into direct production rather they represented a rentier class extracting rents from a tenant peasantry.

As late as the end of the 1950s, colonial officials still perceived Acholiland to bea n area in the development of which commercial enterprise has so far played only a negligible part. (Branch, 2011: 50). By 1963, there were only 445 African traders versus 7,704 teachers and civil servants in Acholi out of a population of 340.000 (Mamdani, 1976: 208-209). Without a large landowning class and without a significant private sector, the petty bourgeoisie in Acholi was a product of the state, made up mostly of civil servants and teachers and depending on state resources for their positon (Branch 50). A group of emergent progressive farmers usually take up farming for profit often after a period of salaried employment. But in 1964 it was estimated that there were fewer than ten success full farmers of this kind in Acholi". (Leys, 1966: 50). Acholi peasants depended on family labour and had few incentives to produce cash crop surpluses. The result was low cotton production and a small cash economy (Mamdani, 1976: 46).

Neoliberalism therefore with its plethora of new economic dispositions and political reforms created enhanced conditions for the uneven appropriation of the social surplus and land commoditization. Land market however necessitates a set of specific technologies of power and obligation as property and contract, which enforce new disciplines and new coercive

mechanisms. Rather than seeing capital and on capital as a tiny line, it is a frontier. This boundary turns into a terrain of negotiations and contestation, the definition and claiming of rights, the production of relations of power, attempts at encroachment and exclusion (Mitchell, 2005: 31). Practices of resistance to dispossession, which participate to the determination of the uneven and incomplete character of capitalist development, emerge vehemently in the context of rampant and protracted attempt at enclosing territories and excluding people. Land grabbing in this context in fact might also interpreted as a response to the failure of market mechanisms to enhance the penetration of capitalist social relations and to people resistance, which will be the object of the next and last section.

Resisting Dispossession

Threat of dispossession is leading to political action across the district: small-scale women farmers attacking the Madvani caravan of surveyors and technicians attempting to enter the area, people in Paboo tearing up the boundary makers put down by the Uganda Police Defense Force, continuous skirmish with game wardens and rangers of the Uganda Wildlife Authority in Apaa.

The first of these cases is particularly instructive to explore the character and significance of land struggles. Land for most vulnerable groups in society as returning refugees after 20 years of reclusion constitutes the single, most important productive asset they have access to. Of course for many of these people land is much more than that. It is a way of life, a territory, geographical and symbolic, of huge historical and cultural relevance. Local communities are mobilizing themselves in order to counter these persistent attempts to force land dispossession and evictions. In Kololo and Lakang, where the fieldwork has been conducted, residents, both men and women, mainly peasants and petty commodity producers, resurrected to sustained forms of local organization and mobilization and inter-community solidarity. Notwithstanding pressures coming from the central government and the army since 2007 and most vigorously this year - the president himself visited the district at least three times this year - people are vehemently clinging to the land, as their most precious source of life. As a consequence of war, displacement, cattle dispossession and land grabbing, poor, subsistence peasants and petty commodity producers mostly inhabit the area beside a group of emerging capitalist farmers.

On Wednsday 18th April this year, the Resident District Commissioner Milton Odongo, Madhvani representatives and local councillors escorted by soldiers, travelled to Lakang village to convince the people to vacate land. People organized a manifestation of protest by physically preventing them to enter the area. Eighty Women were taking the lead as they were at the forefront of the protest while men occupied the second rows with spears. In an interview with a local woman activist, she reconstructed what had happened and was happening in the area: " We lost 7 people and 25 arrested in Apaa and Adjumani struggles. In the day of

protest, they came with four vehicles of armed soldiers, we stopped them, then we undressed telling them we would die in our ancestral land, bury us here". According to local mores when a women undresses it is a serious business. It is the sign of hunger and displeasure but also an invitation to respect moral obligations towards women in their capacity to give life and nurture. Acts of resistance here manifested at different interconnected levels, material and symbolic. Symbolic resistance here backs up and consolidate physical resistance by providing it with an ideological justification, a whole of beliefs and social norms embedded in local culture. In occasion of a visit of President Museveni in the area on May 9th this year protests mounted over his dictates and controversial statements among which the claim that the land in object of the controversy was not communal land but "unoccupied" land. Voiced concerns were addressed to the president but he disregarded them labelling local people as ignorant and incapable to understand the virtues of modernized agriculture. A peasant reports to have been told by the president who further threatened to evict them if land was not vacated: "don't you use sugar in your tea? So why don't you want other to do the same". He then replied: "people here don't use sugar, but those who use it can stop taking it, if we do so then other can do the same". Few days after president Museveni left, the area was subject to militarization. It was constantly patrolled, movement in and out of the area checked, the local school was occupied by soldiers and a general sets of intimidations were undertaken. Community members of the other side developed regular community meetings dealing with the interpretation of the actors and powers, developing their own narratives of resistance and measures of permanent alert to be undertaken, strategies and tactics. In one of these meeting to whom I had the chance to take part, one of the leaders argued:

"Government says: land does not belong to us after we came back from camps. Government is fighting us, they sent the army, the police and the game reserve rangers. They are all fighting us. This has become the norm here. They are destabilizing the education of our children. Turning a school environment into a garrison, into a military outpost, turning desks into something to prepare their meals. The Resident District Commissioner came in, they wounded people two years ago. When a journalist from the Monitor reported it, they were taken to court by the government and the journalist was harassed. They burned people's huts, destroyed crops in the gardens and illegally destroying people's property and houses. We have not treated as human beings but as animals"

Another speaker at the meeting, which involved the participation of people from neighbouring clans and locations, put this set of dominant forces in historical perspective:

"This is our ancestral land. President Museveni allowed the interest by Madhvani. We lodged the case in court, we won. The second appeal said that the land does not belong to us. We were surprised. We are living as illegals. Human Rights organizations were coming here as well as Acholi religious leaders to help us but Madhvani wants to grab our land. Museveni in the past took our cattle. He gave guns to the Karamojong, now he wants land. Where would we go? If he is a president he should take care of the Acholi people".

Practices and narratives of resistance relied upon a common memory of colonial resistance. Notorious in this sense is the Lamogi rebellion of 1911which represented on of the most resilient struggles of contestation of British authority in Acholiland. The causes of rebellion, according to Adimola (1952: 169), must be seen in the attempt by British colonial administrators to require and register firearms in possession of Acholi clans as well as in the attempt to recruit forced labour in the form of porters for public services and traders' caravans. In observance of the Brussels Act of 1890 on the registration of firearms, the Provincial Commissioner of the Northern Province issued a policy proposal of enforcing the Firearms Ordinance with military rigour. Orders were issued to the effect that "natives west of 33 meridian east were to be informed that the Government desired to register all native firearms" (Adimola, 1952: 170). As a result the total number of guns registered in Gulu and Nimule in 1911 was 2,823 while the number of rifles confiscated in Southern Acholi approached to 1000 (Op.cit.). While the Sothern Acholi had been disarmed the northern Acholi remained in possession of bith registered and unregistered arms. The colonial government argued that weapons were used to loot and not for protection. On their hand the Lamogi, following rumours of what happened in Bunyoro where guns once taken had not been returned, openly refused to bring in their guns. In the same as they did when attacked by slave raiders, they prepared to war by holding war dances and fortified the Guruguru hills and stocked them with food. The hills contained caves so that it represented a natural fortress for them. This act of open defiance to the colonial authority represented a catalyst for the malcontent of other clans as the Patiko and the Pugwenyi who opposed the policy of guns registration and tax collection by joining the Lamogi in order to further distance themselves from colonial arm of law (Op. cit.:174). The conflict was unavoidable. After a long preparation the colonial government decide to intervene between January and February 1912. The dry season represented the most difficult moment for the Acholi in general as agricultural activities could not be undertaken. The government assembled an armed force of 130 officers while the estimated number of Acholi fighting men was 800 mostly armed excluding men and women who were far more numerous. Memories of local residents recall that the colonial army poisoned the caves' water by generating a escalation of dysentery and diarrhoea on a very large scale. Many of them also made reference to the use of gases in order to flush out the fighting groups out of the caves. Although no confirmation exists within the available literature or colonial archives this hypothesis is highly probable especially in the light of the mounting use of chemical weapons as tear gar and mustard gas during the First World War. Approximately 700 people died of dysentery, from bullets or starvation according to local chiefs more than 1000 were deported and imprisoned while the police reported two death and eight wounded officials (Adimola, 1952: 175). They were deported to Keyo 20 miles distant from Gulu, the larger settlement of the district. According to local informants the exodus to Keyo caused more death than the fight itself as many clans wanted to join the police in sharing the spoils of war. Many women were raped and killed, twenty-six elders were sentenced to imprisonment and a communal fine of 200 head of cattle was imposed (Op. cit. 176). The event more importantly is alive in the memory of people and it

is still central in the process of elaboration of their world-views. The praxis of resistance in this sense is knowledge productive. It enhances the interpretations of facts and the formation of localized, autonomous forms of knowledge production.

This retrospective glance on the struggles of resistance in the colonial period is not a mere sciolistic or academic exercise. It rather inspires our understanding of the historical dynamics of rural politics and of the character of peasant households. The movement of resistance in fact emerged as an instance of the wider attempt of refutation of the imposition of the colonial authority and its demands in the forms of taxes, forced labour and land requisitions. It can be interpreted as a moment in the more complex and long-term confrontation with external political and economic forces, to maintain the political and economic sovereignty over a specific geographical territory and social group. The recrudescence of struggles over land brings to the fore the centrality of land questions in the strategies of social reproduction of rural households as well as a resurgence of rural mobilizations. Resistance to processes of land dispossession and commoditization has often been strongest among pastoral and peasant communities in northern Uganda. These localized struggles do not detract from the significance of broad based transnational agrarian movements, rather they help to explore the different patterns of commoditization and praxis of resistance. Notwithstanding the recognition of the existence of intrinsic tensions and contradictions within struggles of resistance (Bernstein, 2004), recent agrarian scholarship recognized that: their stubborn persistence, in the face of a developmental model geared towards the extinction of peasants and small farmers, is contesting processes of de-peasantization and stimulating the re-creation of peasantries (Desmarais, 2007:195; Moyo, 2008); they nevertheless provide an important counter to law's dominance in the field of land reform and more broadly of development resisting through oppositional politics the dominance of legal discourses to bring about economic and social development (Manji, 2006:118); the emergence of new rural movements suggests the renewed social and political significance of land and agrarian reforms (Moyo, 2008:122); peasant struggles over land embodied an important recognition of the centrality of food (Mcmicheal, 2009b); they are shaping people's relation to communal resources and the role gender is playing within them (Federici, 2004:42). These acts of resistance do not happen in a vacuum nor are these just episodic in character. I argue that more open manifestations of struggle, although stimulated by the threat of land dispossession, cannot be related mechanically to it. Instead I situate the current wave of local struggles against land grabbing as the culminating and cumulative moment of everyday peasant resistance. In Scott's formulation: "the prosaic but constant struggle between the peasantry and those who seek to extract labour, food, taxes, rents and interest from them: foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigner ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage and so forth" (1985:29). These forms of resistance, which are intended to mitigate or deny claims made by super-odinate classes, have ordinarily to do with a material nexus of class struggle, the appropriation of land, labour, taxes, rents and so forth. (Scott, 1985: 32-33).

Utilising the peasant households as unit of production, consumption and social reproduction, I aim to uncovering the character of those everyday struggles against commoditization. This helps to expand the focus of analysis beyond wage labour and commodity production and include struggles that are structured around land claims, conflict over food production, and the terms of integration into the market. Households from this angle represent the socio-economic infrastructure that works as a link with the wider social formation. By looking at the forms of production of the peasant household we can trace the relationship between the household and the social formation. Social formations provide the context for reproduction of units of production and in combination with the internal structure of the unit, determine its conditions of reproduction, decomposition and transformation. Social formations are however diversely integrated in within the international division of labour of the world capitalist system. It derives therefore that households act as a fulcrum between world system penetration and local economies and cultures (Pickering, 2003:202).

Acholi peasant households have a long history of interpenetration and autonomy *vis a vis* market and state forces. This area was at the crossroad of many distinguished political and economic influences. From North the Arabic slave raiders and traders, which emanated from centralized state structures of the Sudanic states, from South Swahili merchants which extended the exchange chains from the Sultanate of Oman. Predatory raids by Arab slavers and traders made the environment very uncomfortable so war and defence were at the core of the social organization of the village unit. Age classes of Acholi males from 15 years upwards formed the fighting organization of the people and were organized on a territorial basis (Girlings, 1960: 75). Mukrejee termed them military democracies in the light of the segmented character of their political organization and the absence of paramount chiefs (Mukrejee, 1956: 77). The Arabs traded with them in guns and ivory and encouraged them to make raids on neighbouring people to capture slaves for them. The Acholi regularly traded with merchants of Bunyoro-Kitara, with which they traded a surplus of sesame, animal's skins and ivory in exchange for iron hoes and clothes. As many Nilotic people the Acholi have a long tradition of both agriculture and cattle keeping. In a context of great availability of land, low population densities, low technological development, sparse settlements and distance from the main trading centres, the Acholi agro-pastoralist communities developed many forms of mutual help and collective labour. All land in northern Uganda is Crown land according to the Uganda Agreement of 1900. As such it has been managed according to local custom in each district. In the past land for cultivation was allocated to a lineage by the *Rwot*, more recently however cultivation rights may be established in any area by clearing the bush, breaking the ground and planting crops (Girling, 1960: 184). Clan lands was therefore at disposal of households use so long as they required or claimed it. Rights in cultivation descent from father to son and they are subordinated to the continue use of the soil and membership of the clan. Women used to access land through their husband although they were in charge of those plots dedicated to food crops close to the house. Each wife or mature women of the households, *min ot*, hut mother as known in Acholi, maintains two

fields of millet, one field of sesame, a small plot each of beans, pigeon peas, ground nuts, spinach (Op. cit: 191). She had to make sure that the supply of food is yearly available for the reproduction of the households. After marriage women used to come with seeds brought from the father's household to begin cultivation. She also possessed rights in termite hills, mud holes for making pots, plants used for fibres and other for stupefying fish. The practice of shifting cultivation, aimed at using land without undermining the process of regeneration of soils nutrients and to adapt to soil deterioration, demanded mobility and movements. Any village had the liberty to occupy uncultivated land or land which had been cultivated but has since been abandoned. Security of tenure was therefore guaranteed by the permanent use of land. Such forms of occupation however did not imply permanent ownership but grants the usufruct for such period as it required and utilized (Parsons, 1956:13). Shifting cultivation moreover demanded the constant clearing of new strips of land for agricultural activities. In condition of harsh, rocky environment and forested savannas, where land is plentiful and population sparse, with rudimentary technologies (the wooden hoe still represented the main agricultural implement), the necessity of common work was imperative. *Atak*, in Acholi language, these collective work parties were constituted by members of the village to till each other plots (Girling, 1960: 59). The *rwot kweri*, literally the chief of the hoe, was the person in charge of constituting the group and ensuring the full participation of all those concerned. At the end of the working day the participants were compensated with food and millet beer, *kwete*, made by the women of the household. *Atak*, were also deployed to clear communal piece of land, generally separated from the households plots, suitable for the cultivation of cotton, sesame and millet (Parson, 1956: 15). Ensuring the participation in the labour of maintenance of the *Atak* was mandatory. Controlled burning performed the task of clearing the ground in preparation for cultivation by reducing the weeding. Hunting also represented a domain of particular interest. Communal hunts were also organized especially in the dry season from November to February. Traps, nets, grassland burning techniques and spears were all utilized and the hunt was collectively performed. Its booty was redistributed according to elaborate social norms that connected the individual household with the village. Food supply was ensured by planting in this specific succession millet, sesame, pigeon peas, sorghum, cassava. Meat was not rare as it was assured through hunting. Fish are caught in the rivers or swamps. Cattle, which was once abundant and central to the welfare of the household as value storing, in society with few monetary ties, was not abundant as the result of cattle raiding from neighbouring groups and by Sudanese slave and ivory raiders in the late nineteenth century (Mamdani, 1976: 22; Girlings, 1960:14). Each activity was companied by rituals and ceremonies performed by headmen. Of particular interest in the narratives of local respondents, were the rituals, which beat time of agricultural and hunting activities. Ceremonies were performed at the seedling and harvesting season, before hunting. for the soil fertility, rain making and so on. Rites also assured social cohesion through a network of practices of social obligation. Mutual help, obligation to the group, the centrality of the household and village were all emphasized. Material distinctions between people were of little importance. Relations of production were cooperative not antagonistic. Appropriation

was of nature in the course of production without social appropriation (Mamdani, 1976: 21). Use value on land and its importance were cemented in a common ethic and social responsibility in the use of land. Through customary land tenure regimes people also were guaranteed grazing rights, hunting rights, water rights, rights over ant-hills and shea butter-nut tress (Parson, 1956:14). These articulated regimes of land rights combined and articulated both the individual and the collective rights in non-conflictual ways.

When cotton was introduced in the area in the late 1930s by colonial authorities it did not monopolize farming. It played an important part to the social reproduction of the household as it allowed paying colonial taxes and other monetary duties. Nonetheless it never supplanted food production; rather it was integrated within the usual cycle of production, which placed at the core in this sequence food staples as millet, pigeon peas, sesame, sorghum and cassava. Rather than a transition from subsistence to cash crops, the Acholi peasants opted for a combination of the two, although they gave large priority to food crops. The introduction of cotton enhanced the creation of a minority of "progressive" medium and large-scale farmers who used to plant it with commercial intents. Although social differentiation was in motion through accumulation from below, it did not affect the existing landowning pattern as the majority of peasant households could still access land through customary land tenure systems and cotton production occupied only few acres and always coexisted with other food crops. Private sector was marginal and employment mostly came from the public sector in 1961.

The average peasant household planted two acres with cotton. The work involved was intermittent but hard, clearing, planting, singling, four weeding, two or three spraying and picking from April-May to November-March. At the same time the family must have cleared, planted and weeded enough food crops to live on for the next year. The harvest was on average 400 lb and costs were very low, seeds were provided free by the co-operatives and insecticide was highly subsidized by the government. 450 shillings per year was the revenue, in 1964 the price to the grower was fixed at 56 cents (Leys, 1966: 49-50). The aim was to acquire a cash income to meet various needs, in particular to pay his personal tax, to pay school fees, to buy clothes, coking utensils and have a few extra as sugar, soap, bicycle repairs and have something in hand for the emergence. Depending on the size of his family somewhere between 400 and 1000 shillings a year would cover these needs, there is not so much incentive beyond this. Acholi peasants depended on family labour and had few incentives to produce cash crop surpluses. The result was low cotton production and a small cash economy (Mamdani, 1976: 46).

In post-independence period, Acholi peasants were only partially integrated within the market economy. By replicating the effort of the colonial state, the central state attempted to extract surplus produce from peasants through the exaction of taxes, the establishment of Marketing Boards which had the monopoly of purchasing cash crops, and taxes to exports. And yet although under a set of conjunct pressures market and state pressures, Acholi peasant households could still manage to negotiate the terms of market integration. The absence of

high mobility of factors of production and the fact that peasant households could still access land, labour other means of production through non-market mechanisms prevented the objectification of market-compulsion imperatives. The deviances and oscillations of global market prices for cash crops as cotton, sugar and coffee plus the draconian measure of state control through the Marketing Boards spurred many of small-scale peasants in Uganda and Tanzania to retreat to food crops for local exchange (Gibbon, 2004). This mechanism was furthermore consolidated by plans of structural adjustments and neoliberal restructuring of agriculture which gave overwhelming priority to production of agricultural commodities for export. This represented peasants' responses to the devouring mechanisms of the global market and to the extractive logic of the state via export taxes and agricultural prices. Peasant retreat into food crops and local market exchanges had also the aim to evade state taxation and control. Acholi peasants in fact tend to sell between 10% to 20 % of their agricultural production (Bureau of Statistics, 2010a) and use the remaining part for different forms of productive consumption - food consumption and what Wolf would call ceremonial and replacement funds (Wolf, 1960). In Acholi moreover 80% of the population practices shifting cultivation (Atkinson 2011) and the average land holding for is 1,8 ha). With an average availability of two hectares per households, peasant households still produce in the same way a basket of food crops – finger millet, pigeon and cow peas, sesame, sorghum and cassava which are aimed at ensuring self-provisioning (Bureau of Statistics, 2010b). The involvement within national markets in Acholi is the lowest of the country. The low degree of monetization of economic relationship and the low mobility of factors of production provide a form of resistance to capitalist commoditization. This does not mean that peasants could retreat in complete isolation from negative external pressures. The same notion of peasants bears an understanding of peasant embedded relations into powerful and exploitative political, social and economic networks. In this condition peasants could still be reached by the squeezing mechanisms of uneven exchange with local merchants and middlemen or through farm-gate prices but they could still maintain their sovereignty over the mobilization and use of labour and land as well as deciding which channels to use to market their agricultural surplus. Peasant households switched to the supply of local food markets as these provided avenues for cash income, which were less exploitative than export crops.

Informal markets, petty trade, petty commodity production forms of bartering within the community, links of reciprocity and mutuality all provide an opposition to the effect of internationalization of capital and the struggles over the commoditization of subsistence. Simple acts of exchange in fact do not necessarily require competitive production and profit maximisation. Wood distinguishes between capitalist and peasant markets (2009). In the former, land and labour are commodities while in the latter producers own or securely possess non market access to land and sell their surpluses as a supplement to their own production for subsistence or to pay taxes and so on. The dictates in the latter case are more related to the immediate consumption needs rather than requirements of commercialization and profit maximization. Even when peasants respond to market rationality, they do it differently from

capitalist responses to market imperatives. The need to produce surpluses for exploiting classes or states, to pay rents, did not transform the method of production. There was moreover no systematic compulsion to enhance labour productivity. By determining which crops to plant, which seeds use, what things have to be purchased on the market, by constructing social relations that counter market consumption, households can play a significant role by shaping the economic potential and impact of market within their local area (Bush, 2007: 194). Resistance to penetration of capitalist social relations therefore begins with the mechanisms used by households to pursue economic self-provisioning and social reproduction.

Commoditization, as process of deepening commodity relations within the cycle of production, shows the extent to which households are severed by social ties of reciprocity, for renewal of means of production, and come to be increasingly dependent on commodity relations for reproduction. If household reproduction rests on reciprocal ties, then reproduction resists commoditization. If access to land, labour and credit and product markets, is mediated through direct non monetary ties to other households or classes, if these ties are reproduced through stable institutional mechanisms, then commodity relations are limited in their ability to penetrate the cycle of reproduction (Friedmann, 1980: 163). Limited competition among households removes pressures for development of the productive forces and for increases in the organic composition of capital. The absence of pressures on land allows for subsistence production, usually with village organization. Village organization and cohesion, maintained through a set of rituals, customs and mores of marriage, reciprocity with neighbours and kinship groups, allowed for limited penetration of market imperatives as social reproduction could be enhanced through non-market practices. The attempt to coerce, to push for continued commodity production when prices fall, testifies to the economic ability of independent household to withstand market pressures.

Resistance to commoditization, which represents a limitation in the operation of the law of value, implies lack of integration into markets for renewal of means of subsistence (Op. cit.: 173). The action of peasantry in this case has changed or narrowed the policy option available to the state and surplus appropriators of various *genre*. In this way the action of peasantry has changed or narrowed the policy option available to the state. It is in this fashion, Scott argues, and not through revolts,, let alone legal political pressure, that the peasantry has classically made its political presence felt (1985:36). The study of moments of revolt, on the other hand, according to the social historians who founded Subaltern Studies on a critical reinterpretation of Gramsci, reveals the existence of a separate political domain which elite domination and hegemony has been unable to superseded or suppress (Arnold, 1984; Guha, 1983a). Rebellion was not therefore merely the automatic reflex action to external economic or political stimulus: it was peasant praxis, the expression through peasant action of the collective consciousness of the peasantry (Guha, 1983b). Peasant collective consciousness emerge from common experiences. Peasant solidarity develops from other collective activities. Guha showed how the language and organization derived from hunting and fishing

in rural India could provide a natural basis for peasant cooperation in insurgency. These insights could have important relevance for the deepening of our understanding of peasant agency. Debates over the relationship between materiality and forms of consciousness are however beyond the scope of this study. For what concerns the line of argument of this paper, the two moments of resistance, hidden or open, daily or occasional, work as a continuum of social struggles whose form changes as conditions to which they respond have been altered. The emergence of episodes of rebellion lays on a substratum of daily social struggles. Having recourse to more violent and manifest forms of physical or symbolic resistance signals that the largely covert forms of struggle are failing or have reached a crisis point which does not allow them to be effective against new challenges that emerge. Such declaration of open war normally comes only after a protracted struggle on a different terrain.

Grassroots struggles have been increasingly centred on the role of women. Women have championed both kinds of struggles as they are the true agricultural producers in the communities and they respond to pressure to commoditize self-provisioning. These struggles highlight attempts to retain control of household's assets as land, food production and access to the communal resources. Women refused the proposal to be integrated as out-growers in the Amuru Sugar Project as it, in their words "would have transformed us into slaves". As before when cash crop production had marginalized their authority over households' decision-making and left the control of agricultural produce in the hands of men, women struggled to preserve the food security of the households. Women struggled over land as this represents their system of social security (Federici: 2005:49). Women lack of access to land has therefore less to do with tradition than with the pressures resulting from the commercialization of agriculture and the consequent loss of communal land. The pattern of accumulation by dispossession is confronted by communal ownership of resources as it denies that private property rights are universal in human society (Hall and Feiner, 2003: 174). Women can indeed negotiate better deal of access to land than what would be left to them in a system of private property rights. Struggles over land, women argue, are more important than struggles over law.

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