The Impact of Communal Land Relations on Land Privatization Outcomes in Burkina Faso: Chiefs, Farmers, Businessmen

Elizabeth Gardiner
PhD Candidate in Anthropology, US Borlaug Fellow
The Ohio State University

LANDac Conference (Utrecht, Netherlands 2017)
I ask:

- How are social land relations, born of communal land systems, impacting privatization outcomes?

Land grab narrative asks:

- How is privatization impacting farming communities and households?
Better understand stakeholders’ roles in the enactment of private land policies (i.e. how and why they vary), and we will be able to better predict outcomes of new land policies.

*Milgroom 2015
Comparative Study of 3 Villages (A, B, C)
Social Roles that carry out both:

Communal Land Tenure & Private Land Enactment

Generalized Process of Privatization

Seller (farmer or chief)

Chief (village & land)

Buyer (outsider or local farmer)

CVD President

Land Official (mayor)
Buyer First

- Land Buyer uses friendships to contact Chief or CVD
  - Professional from city, wants land for status and insurance
    - Little to no benefit for village
  - Migrant farmer currently borrowing land, buys small plot from chief
    - New land rights and security, like planting trees

Seller First

- Land Seller seeks a buyer
  - Chief
    - To cover expenses such as travel, medical, funeral, tuition, moto
  - Chief’s male family members, with permission
    - Done in urgency, often to pay for medical or funeral
Land Officials
Generalized Process of Privatization

Social Roles that carry out both:

- Communal Land Tenure
- Private Land Enactment

- Seller (farmer or chief)
- Chief (village & land)
- CVD President
- Buyer (outsider or local farmer)
- Land Official (mayor)
Social Roles that carry out both:
Communal Land Tenure & Private Land Enactment
Final thoughts:

Variation in what it means to be chief, farmer, migrant, etc. can help to account for how the same land policy can have such variable outcomes...who benefits from privatization, and who does not.

When looking to promote land security via land tenure policy, first assess stakeholders identified in policies. Then, come to understand the on-the-ground roles of, and attitudes towards, these stakeholders, village to village. Finally, revise policies so as to leave less ambiguity in implementing policy.
Thank you for your attention!

Research supported by:

- Office of International Affairs at Ohio State University
- Mershon Center for International Security Studies
- NSF Research Experience for Graduate Students
- AED Environmental Policy Initiative at Ohio State University
- West African Research Association Fellowship
- U.S. Borlaug Fellowship in Global Food Security (Feed the Future)