

28th April 2020

Concept note IFG 3: Sustainable Rural Transformation in the context of increased commercialisation and resource scarcity

Thematic overview

Africa's rural areas are facing tremendous challenges including persistent poverty, demographic pressure, an eroding resource base, and climatic change. At the same time, the natural resources of the continent receive reinforced interest of foreign and domestic investors, acting either independently or in tandem. For example, since 2000, foreign investors alone have secured concessions for more than 10 million hectares of farmland in Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, many countries are experiencing an emerging medium-scale farming sector that is complicating the agrarian political economy. Agriculture competes for land to be used for pasture, housing and conservation and the increased pressure on resources is not limited to land, but extends to water, natural forests and mining resources.

The increasing competition for resources affects the lives of rural populations in multiple ways. For example, the expansion of commercial land uses and the associated enclosures and land-use changes threaten local livelihoods, in particular, smallholder production, pastoralism and hunting and gathering activities. This is because land acquired by investors rarely lies idle and such acquisitions can directly deprive people of the foundations of their livelihoods. Further, huge negative external effects on natural environments may result from these processes. Land conversion may affect biodiversity-rich areas, particularly tropical forests, and intensified agricultural production often goes hand in hand with monocultures and heavily increased use of chemical inputs and water resources. The increased competition over land and the resulting land scarcity and dispossession of smallholders, pastoralists and other land users has resulted in increasing social differentiation and inequalities as well as social conflicts involving a range of protagonists and other actors within civil society and the state, which raise fundamental questions about citizenship.

On the other hand, the commercialization of agricultural production can provide new opportunities, e.g. through increased productivity, out-grower schemes, wage employment and the upscaling of smallholder agriculture. These opportunities extend beyond agriculture and include the entire value chain of agro-processing, with ramifications for agrarian transformation. However, many of these opportunities have not yet been grasped and the terms and conditions of rural transformation have often not delivered sustainable livelihood outcomes. Instead they have exposed smallholders to the vicissitudes of global commodity markets. A sustainable transformation of rural Africa simultaneously addresses economic, social and environmental dimensions of the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the AU's Agenda 2063. It fosters synergies and avoids or manages trade-offs between the different dimensions of agrarian transformation.

Draft conference program (all times are GMT)

26 May 2020

Time and event	Speakers
13:00 - 13:30: Welcome	Abena D. Oduro (Director MIASA & University of Ghana) Gordon Crawford (Director MIASA & Coventry University) Lisa Hoffmann (MIASA Fellow & German Institute for Global and Area Studies) Peter Narh (MIASA Fellow & University of Ghana)
13:30 – 15:30: Keynote speeches	Keynotes Ruth Hall (Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies, South Africa) Paris Yeros (Federal University of ABC, Brazil) Inputs Jann Lay (MIASA Principal Investigator IFG3 & German Institute for Global and Area Studies) Dzodzi Tsikata (MIASA Principal Investigator IFG3 & University of Ghana)
15:30 - 16:00	Break
16:00 – 17:30: Panel 1	Panel 1: <i>Internal mobility and rural transformation</i> (15 minutes per presentation, 10 minutes per discussant, 30 minutes Q&A) Presenters Maya Turolla (MIASA Fellow) Lothar Smith (Radboud University) Discussants Joseph Kofi Teye (University of Ghana) Issaka Kanton Osumanu (University for Development Studies)



27 May 2020

Time	Event
10:30 – 12:00: Panel 2	<p>Panel 2: <i>Resource conflicts, violence and rural transformation</i> (15 minutes per presentation, 15 minutes discussant, 30 minutes Q&A)</p> <p>Presenters Melina Kalfelis (MIASA Fellow) Osman Alhassan (MIASA Fellow & University of Ghana)</p> <p>Discussant Gordon Crawford (Coventry University)</p>
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch break
13:00 – 14:30: Panel 3	<p>Panel 3: <i>Large-scale land acquisitions and livelihoods</i> (15 minutes per presentation, 8 minutes per discussant, 10 minutes Q&A)</p> <p>Presenters Uchenna Efobi (MIASA Fellow & Covenant University) Evans Osabuohien (MIASA Guest Researcher & Covenant University) Lisa Hoffmann (MIASA Fellow & German Institute for Global and Area Studies)</p> <p>Discussants Jann Lay (German Institute for Global and Area Studies) Alhassan Karakara (University of Cape Coast) Sebastian Prediger (KfW Germany)</p>
14:30 - 15:00	Break
15:30 – 17:30: Panel 4	<p>Panel 4: <i>Environmental and resource impacts, technology and agriculture</i> (15 minutes per presentation, 10 minutes per discussant, 30 minutes Q&A)</p> <p>Presenters Michael Jacobson (MIASA Fellow & Penn State University) Prince Osei-Wusu Adjei (MIASA Fellow & KNUST Ghana) John Boateng (MIASA Fellow & University of Ghana) Peter Narh (MIASA Fellow & University of Ghana)</p> <p>Discussants Christopher Gordon (University of Ghana) Samuel Adjei-Nsiah (University of Ghana)</p>
17:30 – 18:00	Closing session



Panel descriptions

Panel 1: Internal mobility and rural transformation

Exponential demographic growth and fast urbanization in Africa increased pressure on the agri-food sector and the labour market: these need to feed and employ a growing (urban) population. These socio-economic transformations resulted in various patterns of internal migration, whereby youths are the most mobile social group. Scholarly attention and development concerns have particularly focused on youth rural-to-urban migration, which lead to rural transformation on the one hand, and fast urbanization on the other. In this panel, we will discuss the ways in which internal mobility impacts rural transformation, with a particular focus on Ghana, and on the social category of youth.

Panel 2: Resource conflicts, violence and rural transformation

Conflicts amongst competing users of natural resources are common phenomena in West Africa. Demographic pressures, environmental changes, identity politics, competition and contestations over land and water resources have intensified the frequency and scale of the clashes including farmers/herders conflicts. These developments pose challenges to rural transformation processes, as well as slow national progress. Affected states in the West African subregion, have at one point or the other, adopted both local and national measures to mitigate the conflicts and violence associated with these conflicts. Regrettably, these efforts have only yielded modest gains as the conflicts and violence become protracted. These developments call on researchers and policy analysts to intensify studies in order to unearth the fundamental causes and dynamics of these conflicts and better conflict resolution measures. In this study, case studies from Ghana, Nigeria and Burkina Faso focus on herders/farmers conflicts, illegal mining and vigilantism, and conclude by proffering some policy options that might transform rural communities into hubs of rural transformation and development.

Panel 3: Large-scale land acquisitions and livelihoods

This panel addresses how large-scale land acquisitions affect rural structural change and livelihoods in Africa. This is crucial as millions of hectares of land are transformed annually from smallholder production and community use into large-scale commercial farms. Since 2000, approximately 50 million hectares of new land concessions have been granted to investors, and many of these projects are now becoming operational. The advent of a large-scale land investments (LSLAs) constitutes a massive external shock to individuals and households in host and nearby villages, which reduces the amount of land available for other (non-) agricultural activities. Such external shocks can be associated with numerous spillovers (positive or negative) – in terms of effects on employment, income, food security, the environment, and conflict. In this panel, we discuss how LSLAs affect rural socio-economic structures and rural livelihoods, in particular employment, the distribution of land and conflict.

Panel 4: Environmental and resource impacts, technology and agriculture

Rapid population growth, foreign capital investments and agricultural intensification in sensitive natural areas strongly affect biodiversity. In this panel, the nature and impacts of environmental changes on resource utilization and sustainability in sub-Saharan Africa shall be explored. Emphasis will be put on

dynamics of agricultural practices – expansion and intensification but also on rural resource dispossessions and their impacts on local and global food production and consumption. From environmental perspective, the constituents of water-energy-food nexus in terms of how these resource interactions are impacted by large-scale land acquisition and related foreign and domestic investment projects in places predominantly used by small-scale food and cash crop production will be examined.