This Is My Grand Pa’s Land: Land, and Development Projects and Evictions along Morogoro Highway, Tanzania

Rehema Kilonzo

1Department of Development Studies, The University of Dodoma, Dodoma, Tanzania.

Correspondence: Rehema Kilonzo, The University of Dodoma, P.O.Box 395, Dodoma, Tanzania. E-mail: kilonzo_rehema@yahoo.com; kilonzo@udom.ac.tz

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Abstract
This article addresses one of the most contentious development and political issue facing Tanzania and many Southern African countries. The focus is on privatization of land as a result of neo-liberal economic reforms, evictions and conflicts generated. The study was conducted along Morogoro highway, in Dar es Salaam and Pwani regions. The study employed qualitative approaches where archival information, interview observations and focus group discussions were used to collect data. Key findings indicate that there is a gap between laws and policies of land, which are designed to protect customary land rights of indigenous communities and individuals, and the actual practices regarding land on the ground. Despite the multi-party system democratic reforms, ordinary people have not turned their elected representatives at the local, regional levels or NGOs as allies in the efforts to resist land evictions. To understand development as a concept and its outcome when translated into action, to see what is happening on the ground, I draw part of my arguments from Social Movements theories to understand local people’s reactions toward development programs that result into their evictions. The study also explored the relationship among key land stakeholders in Tanzania and analyzed how uncoordinated relationships and the state officials lead to conflict. The study revealed that there is gender inequality in land access and ownership and how women used their position as women to frame resistance and attract not only media but also government and international community. A central argument in this study is that for land development program to benefit the targeted population, all land actors from grassroots to top should be involved in the process.

Keywords: local people, resistance, dispossession, land

1. Introduction
The study of resistance to land eviction provides a way of uncovering meanings that people associates to land. Showing that people not only belong to that land for economic purposes but also have cultural beliefs that they associate with a specific piece land that they are living on. Through conflict over land, evictees and potential land holders have learned to organize themselves, organize their political will, raise funds for their organizations, and deal with the legal system while struggling for their land rights.

This study introduces new territory for exploration of land conflict studies in Tanzania (Palmer, 1997; Mugabi, 2013). Previously land conflict studies focused on rural areas of Sub Sahara African countries (Yamacho, 2005; Kilonzo, 2008; Mwamfupe, 2015). However, land conflict studies need to include areas that connect the rural and the urban. Additionally, the examination and connections to the legal system, land issues, and people’s belief about land and development, and the social forces that Tanzanians experience in their everyday lives are part of this article’s analysis.

The study that led to this article began by becoming familiar with the existing literature on land tenure, conflict over land, land disposition in rural and urban areas, and social movements in various countries. A wide variety of key stakeholders in land conflicts have arisen during the construction and expansion of one of the Tanzania’s most important highway. This is the road that connects the commercial and administrative capital of Dar es Salaam to the town of Morogoro and other parts of Tanzania, the Morogoro highway. Through the fieldwork, various responses from evicted land occupants were mapped out to acquire, the justifications and rationales of officials responsible for the evictions, and the strategies, tactics, and shared identities of those who had collectively resisted land dispossession (Sassen, 2010). The approach allowed allow more room in paying close
attention to some recurring issues involving highway dwellers, administrators, and state institutions dealing with land and infrastructure development. It further allowed counter checking the documented information by searching for relevant data and information in the interview findings.

The main questions addressed in the study were: What are the patterns of land access and ownership in Tanzania? What meanings do people attach to land? Are those meanings gendered or generational? How do people living in both rural and urban areas respond to evictions? Do their responses differ by location, age, gender and occupation? If so what accounts to their differences?

To address these questions of access to and ownership of land in Tanzania, the study sought to understand key land stakeholders relationship along the Morogoro highway and their connections to social movements to better understanding local resistance to evictions. Moreover, the exploration was not limited to regional issues. The social and political implications of holding land in Tanzania were also examined together with the dynamics of interaction among key land stakeholders (see figure 1). Changes in the government’s policies as they relate to national development strategies have affected accessibility, utilization, and ownership of land in Tanzania due to associated dynamics. These dynamics have produced social and political conflicts between the primary land users and government institutions.

The study paid special attention to two regions where this road passes, Dar es Salaam and Pwani. The focus was primarily on Dar es Salaam and Pwani for a variety of reasons. First, the inhabitants of Dar es Salaam and Pwani who live along the Morogoro highway are particularly concerned about eviction, because that jeopardize their livelihood. The two regions also provide a good environment for research because the highway passes through both Dar es Salaam and Pwani. And Dar es Salaam and Pwani are regions that massive demolition and evictions happened during the expansion of highways compared to other part of the country.

2. Materials and Methods

The research that resulted into this article employed different methods of data collection. Methods included Archival and document analysis, interviews, observations and focus group discussions. Data were analyzed by
synthesizing through: Archival data, interview transcriptions, and field notes were then classified into emerging themes and sub-themes of the research to facilitate organization and the presentation of the findings. This was an intellectually rewarding process as it allowed mapping the entire study, as well as synthesizing the information with the relevant theoretical framework guiding it.

Land conflict and evictions are not new phenomena in sociological scholarship, but the study of land by a road that connects urban and rural settings is an area that has not received much attention, since rural and urban people have different meanings that they attach to land (Greider and Garkovich, 1994). The specifics of this research raised multiple issues, such as how people in urban and rural owns land, differences in the way people in urban and rural settings frame their grievances during resistance, the role of the legal system and consequences of legislation in the eviction of local people’s from their land. It also raised concerns about the lack of involvement of NGOs and civil society in finding the solution to land conflict, the Ministry of Land not being directly involved in the conflicts, and limited security for local people with formal right of occupancy to land. Table 1 below indicates categories of people involved in this study.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Respondents in Pwani and Dar es Salaam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Pwani</th>
<th>Dar es Salaam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government Officials</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judicial officials</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee of Social Movements</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local People</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Mobilization Strategies and Cultural Dimensions

To understand people’s mobilization strategies – when they resist the government from taking away “their” land for development projects – it is important to understand cultural symbols attached to land. In other words, land is often not only a basic resource for economic development and existence but also a source of shared meanings and social relations within society.

Land resources are essential for development of the people and their infrastructure in Tanzania and a part of people’s cultural beliefs (Greider and Garkovich, 1994). Culturally, land holds important meanings and beliefs – it is used as a place of prayers, burial, and initiations. This makes access to land an important asset for local people in raising their economic standards through farming, and as cultural asset (Greider and Lattle, 1988). Local people attach cultural meanings to land resources, in Pwani and Dar es Salaam regions, and use these meanings as a source of their mobilization to resist evictions, through the framing of their resistance messages.

Land is viewed by local people, particularly in Sub Saharan Africa, as a scarce resource. Further, land is also one resource that everyone in society needs to have access into in order to meet basic requirements of shelter, food, and income (FAO and EarthSan, 2011. Thus, people often have strong identification with land. Land is not only an essential source of livelihood for ensuring production in rural and urban areas; it is more generally a central element in the complex social relations within Tanzanian society (Saul, 1974). Land combines strong economic and cultural values and emotional attachments as it determines one’s status, and provides a sense of belonging and identity.

3.2 Meanings that People Attach to Land

The essence of development is to improve human life, but it has also become a key threat to the access and ownership of natural resources by local people (Geraffi and Fonda, 1992). Furthermore, land is a cultural resource for the people of Pwani and Dar es Salaam, it is a principle way in which the social and cultural identities that shape the powerful and powerless within rural societies are formed. Land combines strong economic interests, cultural values, and emotional attachments with people’s behavior in relation to land reflecting the general state of interaction among members of society (see also Prill-Brett, 2009). Political power is connected to cultural beliefs and other aspects in society. For example, when the state or a developer
demolishes a house, they not only remove the physical building but may also challenge the culture and beliefs of inhabitants. These are some of the reasons why land “owners” may resist vacating their places (Morris, 2004; Godwin and Jasper, 2004). An example of local strong meanings attached to land was revealed by one of the respondents, a 75-year-old man, In Visiga, during the interview:

“…This land is my history, in my tribe if a very old man dies, we don’t make them rest far from where we live, we bury them close to our houses, around the lawn. We, bury our loved ones close to our houses and plant a tree that will always remind us of that person. We use the burial places for our prayers, as our ancestors can hear our prayers. So land is part of our culture, we believe on land. It is difficult for us to transfer or just leave it, how can we do that, how can we leave the spirit of our ancestors behind us? Anyone who is going to have our land will face some problems. The spirit of our ancestors’ will deal with them…”

Learning from this narration, it is important to understand local people’s perceptions of land. What people perceive and believe about land can be one of the reasons for their resistance to evictions. A traditional belief and challenge like this needs to be understood by developers before the implementation of development projects. Prior knowledge will help to strategize with the community involved. The imposition of a new culture may either have a damaging effect on the self perceptions and understandings of the recipients, or the recipient might decide to ignore or embrace the new development culture. Local people believe in the meanings they attach to their land (like that of burying old man close to their residential houses).

Resistance to evictions stems from beliefs that people attach to land. Many development theories (i.e. modernization) and their associated practices do not consider these beliefs in analyzing the implementation of public policies (Cooper, 2001). Some scholars (Ogot, 1999; Goldschmidt, 1981) argue that the problem is a result of not involving the local people while planning for development projects. Local people understand development in their local way according to what they do, see, and experience in their everyday lives. People have their own beliefs and concepts of development that need to be considered when imposing development projects (Scott, 1998). Moreover, people’s identifications need to be analyzed in greater detail to understand local people’s reactions toward development projects, in order to have positive results on how best projects can be implemented.

3.3 Identification to Land: Gender and Generational

In order to have development meaningful to local people at a specific location, together with people’s perceptions that they attach to land, it is equally important to see how land use is gendered, particularly in rural areas of Tanzania. Land is an important asset for women (Manji, 1996). Women spend more time on land than men even though men are the “owners” of land (see also Omari and Shaidi, 1992). This makes land the most important resource for women, which carries a more important meaning than other forms of property for poor Tanzanians. To understand the close relationship of women to land, how identification to land is gendered, and to make an explicit conceptual connection to control, management, or ownership, drawing on Agarwal’s (1994) argument on gender relations and the position of women in the family or community. The relationship between women’s status and property (i.e. land) shows that women have no rights to own family land from their clan or their married families. A woman’s position is determined by her power to negotiate within the family (Kandiyoti, 1988). However, her ability to negotiate varies according to the setting (whether urban or rural), and level of education (Furuta and Salway, 2006). For instance, greater land access and ownership for women has impacted poverty reduction and food security for their families. Women’s access to land is a fundamental structural concern for development. Moreover, given the position of women in their families and society at large, women have little support from government institutions and structures when it comes to land property ownership. Even for those women who own land, their life becomes more vulnerable when the government takes their land away for national development purposes.

Older women are also suffering from losing land to development projects, especially when they have grand children to take care. Findings from this study indicate that women and men who have lived in both the socialist and neoliberal eras have more knowledge of land and that land means more to them than younger people who have only experienced the neoliberal era (Note 2). However, this older group is also more passive when it comes to resistance, organization and framing, although they are actively giving relevant information to young and energetic people who organize for resistance. The explanation for their passive participation might be their age, and that most of them are acting as advisors to their younger family members who are now working on their family land. In other words, they think that it is young people’s turn to fight for their rights. For instance, a 62 years old female in Mkuza, narrated:
… I don’t know where to go. I have a sick daughter with three grand children to take care. I wish I could stand and tell the government about my suffering, but I have no more energy to do that. My time is over. Young people can do that but not people of my age. Our time is over.’"

When talking to men about their perceptions on how they identify themselves with land, a 41 year old male at Miembesaba said:

…I don’t have anything to worry concerning land. I own this land. When it comes to evictions however, women suffer more than I do. Women are responsible with taking care of the family. For the example, when I go to do my small business; my wife goes to the farm. And if problems like this happen, some men might decide to leave their family behind to go to other places looking for life alternatives. Where do women go…?"

These narratives indicate that women suffer the consequences of evictions more than men. When the land they use is taken away for development purposes, women have nowhere to go, especially those with young kids. It is interesting that although women use land in their daily life and identify themselves with land more than men, they are more passive when it comes to resisting or organizing against government directives on taking away their land. The reason for women’s lack of participation in protest can be due to Tanzanian culture and gender orientation that socializes women to be listeners rather than taking actions on issues affecting their lives (see Kitunga and Mbilinyi, 2006). Findings from this study indicate that in Dar es Salaam and Pwani, women were the least to join the land movement committee; even though they said they are affected more by land seizures. Men are more active in resisting and organizing. The explanation for this might be that men perceive themselves and are perceived by society as head of the families and the ones who have a say over their land. Hence, identification with the land and resistance to development projects is very much gendered. While people are losing their land to development projects and women suffering more, the government structures hardly consider or favor women in the case of taking land, regardless of what the land policy insists concerning women and their relations to land (Tanzania National Land Policy, 1995). Women’s participation in resistance is not based on how they are affected, but rather their subordinate position in society. While old people’s involvement is based on their knowledge, they remain passive and do not participate in resistance. Young people use knowledge of the older generation to organize resistance.

3.4 Frames, Networks, Organizations and Strategies for Movements

The state may face problems when local peoples’ expectations of improved life are not met and individuals or groups respond by resisting state orders. In order to understand how local people reacted to the shift of land policies that changed how they access and utilize land. The study focused on grievances and interests, capacity based in, organizations and networks, opportunities, and framing to analyze what is happening on the ground.

According to the social movements’ scholarship, protest is most likely to occur whenever significant social interests are not incorporated in a stable structure of the political system (Tarrow, 1998). When there is misunderstanding and inequality between different groups over natural resources access and possessions (i.e. the state versus local people; women versus men; foreigners versus citizens), resistance is likely to occur (Godwin and Jasper, 1988; Tilly, 2003; Gamson, 1988). Social movement scholarship highlights the importance of social networks through which people are mobilized into movements (Tarrow, 1998).

Findings from this study indicate that after realizing they were going to lose their land and residential houses, people organized themselves in different ways to put pressure on the government to change the existing system. In reacting against evictions people living along the Morogoro highway in Dar es Salaam and Pwani regions used different frames, networks, organizations, and strategies. Those living close to Morogoro highway realized that their houses were going to be demolished to make room for highway construction.

People refused to leave their houses even after receiving defined notice to vacate their area to leave room for highway expansion. Resistance to the demolition of their houses could not help since the government is more powerful than individual citizens. However, while this is happening, there could be a possibility that the government could work otherwise, if affected people were organizing and lobbying for assistance. The outcome of this conflict illustrates Meyer’s (1996) argument that social movements bring about policy changes that address people’s grievances and injustices through creative framing strategies, such as the adoption of a refugee frame by citizens displaced by urban removal.

Social movements are deeply involved in the work of “naming” grievances, by connecting them to other grievances and constructing larger frames of meaning that will resonate with a population’s cultural
predisposition and communicate a uniform message to power holders and others in society. Following his argument, the Ubungo people oriented their frames in a particular way that sent a powerful message to those in power to take the right action (Note 3).

At Kibaha, Pwani region, local people organized themselves in a different way, but used the same frame as in Jangwani, the citizenship (Note 4) frame. People have always come together in groups, both religious and secular. They formed a “special committee” aimed at standing against eviction of people living along the Morogoro highway who were accused by the government of having encroached the road. The special committee, united people together based on communalities and made them more powerful. Local people had very strong ties among themselves and their leaders. The reason was because their ties were not based on religion or political background but rather on the shared threat they were all experiencing, evictions. The committee’s work started by negotiating with the government at the district and regional levels. The people sought opportunities at higher levels to advance their claim, but the political opportunity structure was not in their favor. The government established a way to deal with people whom the government officials considered troublesome through repression and village government leaders join in the protest (Note 5).

Social movements depend on political opportunities, but the state is not monolithic, which means that different institutions within the state offer protestors different opportunities to pursue their claims. After failing to persuade state officials, the Kibaha land special committee decided to take the case to the high court of Tanzania (Note 6). The decision was made by the leadership of the committee and supported by all members. There were two main reasons why they make this decision. First, the leaders and all the members thought the court was an open institution that would deal with the case and that the decision would be the final. Second, taking the case to the court would give them more time to go through documents on land and learn about their rights. Members of the committee knew that once a matter was in the court, all construction activities along the highway would have to stop (thought the court order) until the ruling on the case.

3.5 Women’s participation and Framing

Why did women participate less in resistance to evictions than men? Is it because women are not as strong as they should be? Is it social structures within the country that do not favor their empowerment? Women are strong enough, but the problem is the social structure. Most women do not know the land laws of the country. They are not aware of their rights and yet they are the ones who spend more time on land in their daily lives and who suffer the most during crises. Historically, Tanzanian women are more passive, even when their rights are at stake. During collective action to deal with a specific situation, women wait for men to initiate and they join the movement later in the process.

Theoretically, development processes are supposed to support women, helping them come out from their poverty. Although most women are hardly aware of their rights over land, one significant finding of this research indicates that women are the ones who are more affected by evictions from their land for development projects. However, women are not the most active when it comes to resistance to government directives. This can be partly a result of gender structures that prevent them from being active (see Kumah, 2000). Further findings from this study indicate that older people (over 50 years) have more knowledge regarding land than younger people. These are the people who lived in both eras (socialism and liberalization). However, this group too is not active in organizing social movements; their participation is very passive, although they provide advice and useful information for younger people who are more involved in organizing. The younger people are the ones who see and use political opportunities in organizing the movement. In sum, local people in Tanzania react to the changes in land policies differently and their resistance is gendered, since the position of women prevents them from being active where as men are active because they perceive themselves and are perceived by others as heads of family. In addition, local people in Dar es Salaam and Pwani used different strategies of resistance in seeking redress for their grievances, including violent confrontation with the police, petitioning/negotiation with government authorities, and judicial appeal.

Local people used creative framing to resist against government taking away their land. The different strategies used were based on the immediate situation before them (i.e. violent confrontation with police, after realizing that police were at their area ready to start demolishing houses without informing the owners). The outcome and participation in terms of gender and generation differed from one strategy to another. The local people who used confrontation with police to prevent demolition of their houses, including stoning police and their car, were mostly young men while older men and all women were passive participants. This was not a surprise, especially for women, since in Tanzania women are socialized to be “tranquil,” and was not expected to participate in the confrontation with police. The outcome for violent confrontation in Jangwani was positive. The act
(confrontation) drew the attention of the regional leaders, forcing them to sit together and find a solution to the problem.

Since violent confrontation can only work in some situations, petitioning to higher authorities was another strategy. This strategy was successful depending on how participants framed it. In the part of Dar es Salaam, residents along the highway creatively framed their resistance by calling themselves refugees to draw the attention of higher authorities fearful of adverse publicity. In this incident, more women participated than men. Although the families had their houses demolished, the government offered them with new land plots and assisted in building new houses. The Kibaha people framed their resistance in a different way as citizens demanding their rights. More old men with a few young women were actively involved in organizing and participated in the petitioning. However, it was older and young men who went held a meeting with the district and region authorities. The opportunity structure of the government executive branch did not favor them, which resulted in their decision to use the judicial system instead.

Having realized that the government through the district and region was not in the favor, the Kibaha people decided to pursue a different strategy- going to the court. Middle age men were more active participants in the court process compared to both women and older men. Younger women lacked time and resources to devote to the committee efforts, while the older generation (both men and women) offered their knowledge on land whenever it was needed.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The notion of development practices have its positive on the one hand and challenges on the other especially during the implementation. The positive side is when it brings changes towards optimistic at all levels from individual to the nation, while the latter leads to complaints of unsatisfaction. This situation of unsatisfaction brings blame, ill and in some incidences some close their eyes and pretend not to see the truth. In any case there is a lesson to learn, any development plan and implementation, as good as it may sound, need people's participation. The recognition of existence of people’s culture is equally importance and participation can make both state implementers and the communities intended for development reach a common ground and make implementation smooth. Additionally, implementation of development projects has implications to the lives of the people and it comes with some challenges. However, with all challenges, there are long term and sustainable development when both sides participate on discussions and agree on how best they should implement development projects.

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References


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**Notes**

Note 1. People who interact with land in their everyday lives including farmers and most Tanzania citizens.

Note 2. There are two groups of people, those who experienced the Arusha Declaration that led to the socialist era in Tanzania (1967-early 1990s) and younger people who did not experience socialism but neoliberal era.

Note 3. In this frame, people’s identity is strongly tied to land ownership and when faced with a threat of not having land they felt like their citizenship had been challenged and they no longer belong. In the end, they refer to themselves as refugees, simply because of not having the right to keep their land.

Note 4. In this frame, people’s identity is also closely tied to land ownership. They expressed strongly that for them to be treated justly as citizens, they need to be allowed to own land and retain any land resources that has been under their ownership.


Note 6. The Tanzania high court has a department of land; this was established to deal with land dispute cases that were increasing around the country.

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