

# Ethnography of Smallholder Food System Engagement in the Mount Kenya Region

Towards Food Sustainability: Reshaping the Coexistence of Food Systems



application of agro-chemicals by smallholders



maize varieties



animal drawn ploughing

## Smallholders in the Mount Kenya Region

Since the independence of Kenya in 1963 large-scale colonial ranches in the Mount Kenya Region have been transformed into small-scale farms. On these farms, smallholders grow maize, beans, potatoes and vegetables for self-consumption and sale. Production of these crops depends on access to land, sufficient rain, seeds, agro-chemical inputs such as fertilizer and pesticides, workforce, services, knowledge, and access to markets.

My study looks at how smallholders organize their access to land, knowledge, inputs for production and markets in this specific local to global context and how they influence this context.

Smallholders' acquisition of former colonial lands, purchase of agro-chemical inputs, dependence on science-based knowledge, and sale of products to national markets, makes that they are parts of economic, social, political and ecological systems that reach beyond the region in which they live.

Other former colonial lands in the region have been transformed into horticultural export-oriented farms and large-scale wheat and beef farms. Smallholders interact with these productions as labour-force or in competition for resources. As such, they are also linked with the food systems in which these productions are involved.



preparation of food for local consumption



regional food market

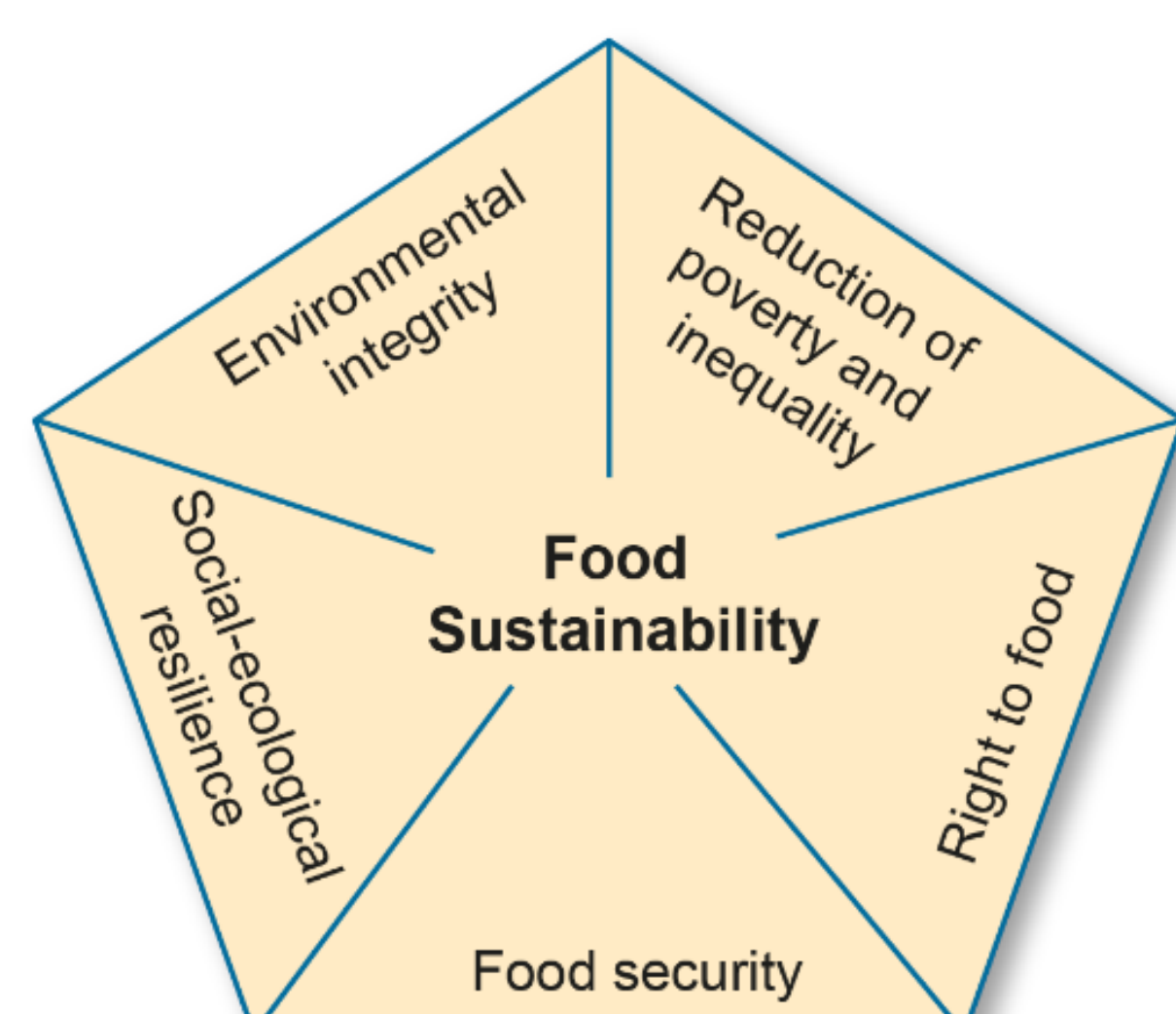
## Food Systems

“Food Systems are interdependent networks of stakeholders such as companies, financial institutions, public and private organizations [...], participating directly or indirectly in the creation of a flow of goods and services geared towards satisfying the food needs of one or more groups of consumers”

Colonna et al. 2013

## Food Sustainability

Our interdisciplinary research project looks at the sustainability of food systems and their interactions.



## Partner Organizations

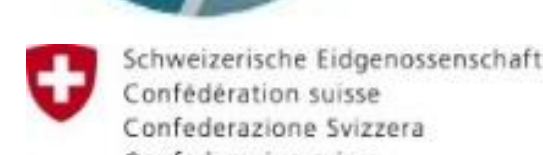


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# Large-Scale Land Acquisitions and Gender in Africa:

## The Impact of Institutional Change and Land Investments on Gender Relations and Food Security

Prof. Tobias Haller (Institute of Social Anthropology) and Prof. Jean-David Gerber (GIUB)

In partnership with IZFG (Prof. Sabine Strasser, Dr. Michele Amacker)  
and Swiss TPH (Dr. Sonja Merten); Funding SNSF 2015-2017

**Aim:** Comparative project (cases from Ghana, Malawi, Morocco, Tanzania) with focus on gender relations and their transformations in cases of LSLA/land Grabbing. A New Institutionalism/Neo-Marxist approach is used for the analysis of tenure changes in the commons.

### Research Questions:

- transformations of customary gender relations as institutional change, and impact of investments on these already transformed gender relations regarding resource tenure and food security.
- impacts on *household mode of production* and strategies of men and women on a household level.

**Methods:** *qualitative and mixed methods in Social Anthropology and Human Geography*

**First Results:** LSLA leads to more or less obvious land grabbing processes, as communal/clan land and resource rights are transformed into private or state property. This process undermines resilience and food security for vulnerable women, but is legitimized by companies and elite groups as development and justified by legal claims (institution shopping). At the same time, compensations and corporate social responsibility programs (CSR) of companies/states lead to “new commons” (e.g. funds, development schemes etc.) to which, however, marginal women often do not have access.

### GHANA: A large-scale land acquisition in the food system: How institutions and gendered power relations shape LSLA outcomes By Kristina Lanz

An international rice production scheme in the Volta Region in Ghana is researched, where educated local chiefs emerge as powerful actors in the new investment context as they ‘translate’ the investment logic based on private property and discourses of ‘modernity’ and ‘development’. They perform institution shopping (i.e. switching between statutory and customary institutions) to increase their bargaining power in order to change the customary into private tenure system. From these processes elite women also profit, while poor women lose access and are further marginalized.

### MALAWI: The Impacts of Large-scale Sugarcane Outgrower Schemes on Gender Relations in Dawangwa. By Timothy Adams

Research focuses on the impact of large-scale sugarcane outgrower expansion on local communities’ livelihoods and changing gender relations. Outgrower-scheme institutions provide access to land for only a few richer households. This undermines matrilineal customary institutions providing access to clan land for women, because outgrower land is held under a Trust supported by the state (institution shopping). Whilst some few women may participate in the scheme, the majority of the remaining women are transformed into a labor force to be exploited for cash, while for them the hardship of reproductive activities remains.

### TANZANIA: Large-Scale Land Acquisitions for forest plantations and gender in Kilolo district, Iringa region, By Désirée Gmür

Research is done on recent investments in forest plantations by a British-based investor (New Forests Company (NFC)) in Kilolo district. The company buys land, or evicts people from land and commons, via use of state conservation laws. Women are especially impacted as their ability to fulfill their care work is reduced by loss of access to land and related common pool resources (e.g. fruit trees and water). These are essential for subsistence and market opportunities, while access to new commons is limited and badly adapted to local needs.

### MOROCCO: The effect of Large-Scale Green Energy Investment on Gender Relations in Ouarzazate By Sarah Ryser

This PhD looks at the world’s largest solar project (3000 ha), “Noor” in Ouarzazate, operated by the parastatal company MASEN. Land was a former common property of the Berber Aït Ougrou. Payments for the commons were low based on a wasteland discourse. However, the territory was a pasture and cash source for women (collecting shrubs for fodder). But women were not directly involved in the land deal. MASEN provides compensation and development projects based on CSR-policies, but access to these “new commons” is unequally distributed.



# Constitutionality: Bottom-Up Institution Building and Resource Governance

Prof. Dr. Tobias Haller in collaboration with Prof. Stephan Rist (CDE, University of Bern) and Prof. Gregory Acciaioli (University of Western Australia)

**Constitutionality** is a new approach for analysing bottom-up institution building processes for the management of the commons. There is little research on how local actors *themselves* view an institution-building process and the impact this has on resource management. We contrast this approach from Arun Agarwal's notion of environmentality by arguing for a conscious institution building process separate from state institutions.

Based on four case studies (*fisheries in Zambia; pasture and forestry in Mali; forestry in the lowlands and highlands of Bolivia; agricultural land and forestry in Indonesia*), self-driven processes have been analysed that we label **constitutionality**.



The **cases** highlight how local actors with different bargaining power crafted their own institution based on six principles:

- 1) **Emic recognition of pressing resource problem**
- 2) **Pre-institutional setting available**
- 3) **External actors help provide equal platform**
- 4) **Recognition of local knowledge**
- 5) **Development of sense of ownership of new institutions**
- 6) **Addressing higher level recognition and support**

**Constitutionality** is defined as a conscious process of institution building from below, free of top-down imposed processes of democratisation, decentralisation and “participation” often based on elite capture.  
(see Haller et al. 2016 in *Society and Natural Resources*).

## Three PhD projects used this approach with new findings

### Managing the Forest by the People: Constitutionality, Citizenship and Representation in two Decentralization Initiatives in Senegal's forestry sector

By Papa Faye, *Institute of Social Anthropology* (supervision T. Haller)

Research focuses on a comparative study of two decentralization initiatives in Senegal's forestry sector: PROGEDE (with World Bank funding) and WULA NAFAA (with USAID funding). Their impact on local democracy and constitutionality is analysed: The first shows imposed intervention for charcoal production and weak local partnership with the Rural Council. The second is based on voluntary intervention and strong recognition of the Rural Council. In the first case reasons for failure and resistance give way to new institution building. In the second, strength and weaknesses of the development of local conventions for the management of forests and its non-timber forest products lead to new informal institutions.

### Decentralizing the Universal: Constitutionality and Participatory Conservation in Two Protected Areas in the Mediterranean

By Ramez Eid, *Institute of Social Anthropology*, (supervision T. Haller)

The project compares two different experiences of two UNESCO protected areas in the Mediterranean (Mount Carmel Forest, Israel and Serra de Tramuntana, Mallorca, Spain). In both cases new local institutions of participatory conservation and resource management were developed from below following weak state conservation activities under UNESCO principles. In Mount Carmel the failure of government to fight the destruction of forests by fire triggered local institution crafting. In Mallorca, corrupt local government unable to protect areas not yet suffering from mass tourism pushed locals to set up new institutions. Local groups in both cases use the UNESCO label and the opportunity for bottom-up institution building.

### Constitutionality in the Bolivian Lowlands – The Case of Indigenous Territories

By Helen Gambon, (CDE), (supervision: St. Rist & T. Haller)

The project focuses on the consolidation of historic land rights and territorial autonomy of indigenous peoples in *Territorios Indígena Originario Campesino* (TIOCs). These grant inhabitants exclusive rights to renewable resources and autonomy. Research in the *Pilón Lajas Indigenous Territory and Biosphere Reserve* in the Northern La Paz/Beni departments displays, since the 90s, a unique system of co-management between the local indigenous organization and the national service of protected areas. It requires ongoing re-negotiation and positioning of the indigenous peoples vis-à-vis the state, and gives them a sense of ownership and enables local institution building.