

Understanding the relationship between large-scale land acquisitions and land inequality: A systematic review

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Introduction

- Growing interest in farmland in numerous regions worldwide [1] reflected in large-scale land acquisitions (LSLAs)
- Existing reviews treat LSLA impacts as uniform, but recent work shows outcomes are highly heterogeneous across community members [2-5]
- In Africa 60 % of agricultural land belongs just to 10 % of owners [6]
- Focus: **Systematic review of LSLA effects on land inequality in Africa**

Methods and study characteristics

- Followed PRISMA guidelines for systematic reviews [7; 8]

→ Screened 1,422 titles and abstracts → coded 163 relevant papers with a systematic coding scheme → **identified 38 core studies, representing 11 African countries**

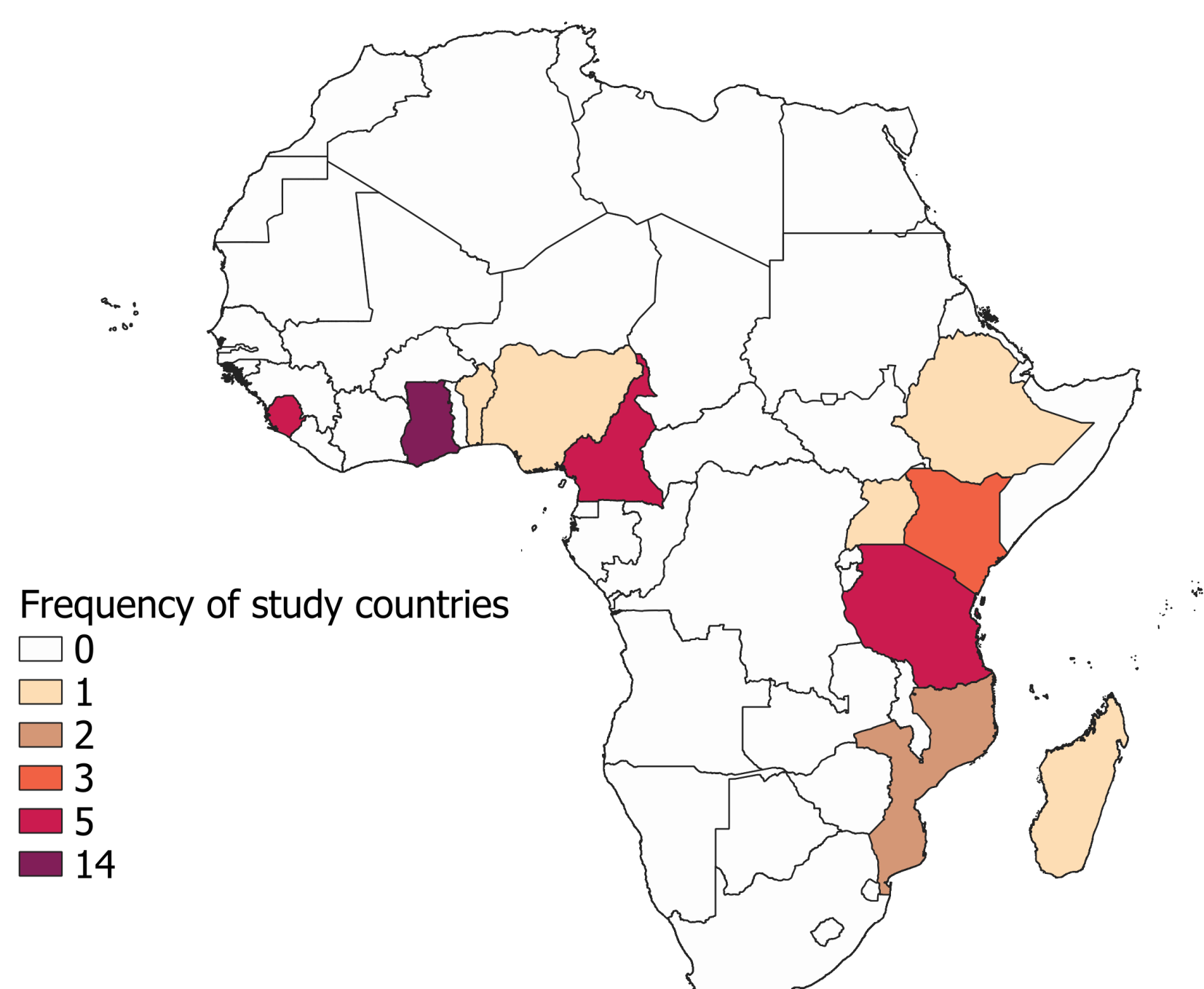


FIG. 1: Frequency of countries represented in the core papers.
Source: Own elaboration.

- Majority of articles (82 %, n = 31) published after 2016 and appeared in 27 peer-reviewed journals

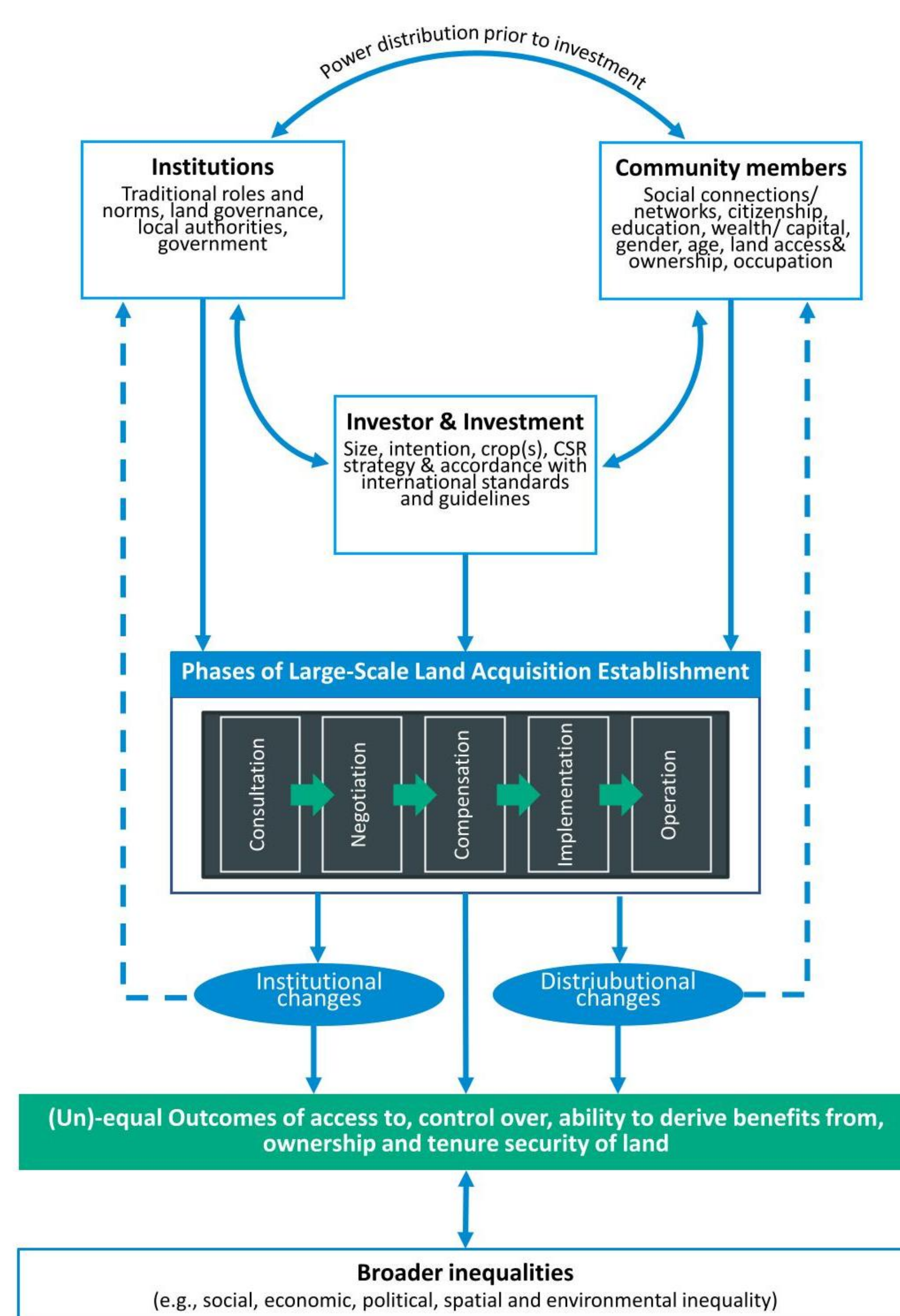


FIG. 2: Theoretical framework explaining the relation between large-scale land acquisitions and land inequality.
Source: Own elaboration.

Take-away Messages

- Elite-driven facilitation and systematic exclusion of marginal groups (e.g., women, youths, pastoralists, migrants, land poor households) take place in all stages of LSLA processes → leading to unequal outcomes of LSLAs and reinforce existing land inequality
- Intersectional identities (e.g., “female migrants”) strongly shape the winners and losers of LSLA processes
- LSLAs alter land inequality through two pathways: institutional and distributional change

→ Beyond overall LSLA outcomes, researchers and policymakers should address land inequality

Results

Consultation, Negotiation, Compensation

- Local politicians, chiefs and well-connected elites capture decision-making and benefits and keep the investor-elite arrangements opaque [9; 10]
- Women, youths, pastoralists, migrants and land-poor households are left out or given only partial, superficial information in consultations [11-14], have no voice in negotiations [15; 16], and are rarely named as beneficiaries in compensation schemes [11; 12; 17-20]

Implementation

- Women and migrants receive little or no advance notice before field clearing, forcing them to abandon crops and lose harvests [17; 21]

Operation

- Powerful elites often benefit: they are able to sell or lease land at high rates, and receive priority access to wage labour at the LSLA [18; 22; 23]
- Migrants and sharecropper either lose the plots they have cultivated for years or are forced to pay higher cash-rents or larger crop-share fees [18; 22]
- When men lose larger fields to the LSLA, they often take over women's plots [20], women intensify other activities to compensate income loss [24], and walk farther distances to marginal fields, as well as to collect water, firewood and non-timber forest products [15; 21; 25]

References

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