

EuroSEAS 2021 Conference

Panel Proposal

Comparing Regimes of Dispossession: States and Corporate Land Acquisition in Southeast Asia

Bernardo Almeida

(b.ribeiro.de.almeida@law.leidenuniv.nl, +31633501278)

Across Southeast Asia economic growth is spurring conflicts over land. Much of that economic growth is highly land-intensive, as the expansion of corporate activities in the sectors such as mining, hydropower, big agro-business (like palm oil or sugar cane), infrastructure or real estate development generate complex processes of land-use change. This expansion is having a massive impact on patterns of land tenure as private corporations as well as government agencies acquire control over land previously used by rural communities. As a growing literature on 'land grabbing' details, these processes of land acquisition often proceed without informed consent nor adequate compensation of affected people.

By bringing together studies of land dispossession from a range of different countries, this panel aims to engage in a comparative discussion of the relationship between states and private capital in the acquisition of rural land. So far, the growing literature on land grabbing has paid limited comparative attention to regional and sectoral variation. Yet there are many indications that the 'regimes of dispossession' (Levien 2018) through which private capital acquires land differs markedly between countries and sectors. State dispossession is, to start, facilitating diverse economic sectors and trajectories of growth in different regions: in some places focused on agriculture and mining, in others urban-industrial land uses. The law is similarly playing a varied, ambivalent role: while protecting communal land rights in some contexts, legal provisions elsewhere are facilitators of land dispossession. Laws and policies affecting compensation are similarly varied, often reflecting both existing land tenure arrangements, proposed land use changes and the depth of political opposition. And finally, while state-led expropriation is dominant in many contexts, elsewhere corporate actors are more directly involved, sometimes through coarse forms of coercion and fraud, and sometimes in connivance with various decentralized agents (mafias, paramilitaries, and so on). Such variation calls for a comparative analysis of the role of the state in land dispossession. In particular we aim to generate reflection on the causes and consequences of this variation, and its implications for resistance to land grabbing.

Presenters:

- 1- Neil Loughlin (KITLV, Netherlands)- Dispossession in Cambodia
- 2- Ward Berenschot and Ahmad Dhiaulhaq (KITLV, Netherlands)- Dispossession in Indonesia.
- 3- Bernardo Almeida (Van Vollenhoven Institute, Netherlands)- Dispossession in Timor-Leste
- 4- TBD.

Discussant:

TBD.