

DISCUSSION PAPER

GENDER AND LAND DISPOSSESSION:

A Comparative Analysis



No. 15, July 2017

MICHAEL LEVIEN

FOR THE WORLD SURVEY ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT 2014

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SUMMARY

This paper seeks to advance our understanding of the gendered implications of rural land dispossession. It does so through a comparative analysis of five cases of dispossession that were driven by different economic purposes in diverse agrarian contexts: the English enclosures; colonial and post-colonial rice irrigation projects in the Gambia; large dams in India; oil palm cultivation in Indonesia; and Special Economic Zones in India. The paper identifies some of the common gendered effects of land dispossession, showing in each case how this reproduced women's lack of independent land rights or reversed them where they existed, intensified household reproductive work and occurred without meaningful consultation with—much less decision-making by—rural women. The paper also demonstrates ways in which the

gendered consequences of land dispossession vary across forms of dispossession and agrarian milieu. The most important dimension of this variation is the effect of land loss on the gendered division of labour, which is often deleterious but varies qualitatively across the cases examined. In addition, the paper illustrates further variations within dispossessed populations as gender intersects with class, caste and other inequalities. It concludes that land dispossession consistently contributes to gender inequality, albeit in socially and historically specific ways. So while defensive struggles against land dispossession will not in themselves transform patriarchal social relations, they may be a pre-condition for more offensive struggles for gender equality.

RÉSUMÉ

Ce document vise à améliorer notre compréhension des répercussions sexospécifiques de l'expropriation par le biais d'une analyse comparative de cinq cas d'expropriation rurale aux fins de la réalisation de différents objectifs économiques dans différents contextes agricoles : les « enclosures » anglaises, les projets coloniaux et post-coloniaux d'irrigation du riz en Gambie ; les grands barrages en Inde ; la culture de l'huile de palme en Indonésie ; et les zones économiques spéciales en Inde. Ce document commence par recenser certains des effets sexospécifiques les plus connus de l'expropriation. Dans chaque cas, il démontre que l'expropriation a débouché sur une carence de droits fonciers indépendants pour les femmes ou les a inversés ; qu'elle a intensifié les devoirs familiaux au sein du ménage ; et qu'elle n'a donné lieu à aucune vraie consultation avec les femmes rurales, donc à aucune prise en compte de leurs décisions. Deuxièmement, ce document

montre comment les conséquences sexospécifiques de l'expropriation varient selon les formes d'expropriation et selon le milieu agricole. La dimension la plus importante de ces variations est l'effet des expropriations sur la répartition du travail en fonction des sexes, qui est souvent délétère, mais varie qualitativement selon les cas examinés. Ce document révèle également des variantes importantes au sein des populations expropriées étant donné que la dimension genre s'ajoute aux problématiques de classe sociale, de caste et d'autres inégalités. Cet article conclue que l'expropriation contribue systématiquement aux inégalités des sexes, par le biais de modalités sociales et historiques spécifiques cependant. Ainsi, même si les luttes défensives contre l'expropriation ne permettent pas l'évolution des relations sociales patriarcales, elles seront peut-être une condition préalable à la conduite de davantage de luttes offensives en faveur de l'égalité des sexes.

RESUMEN

Este informe tiene por objetivo mejorar nuestra comprensión de las implicaciones que tiene la expropiación de tierras desde el punto de vista del género. Lo hace a través de un análisis comparativo de cinco casos de expropiación de tierras rurales motivada por diferentes fines económicos en diversos contextos agrarios: las enseñadas inglesas; los proyectos coloniales y poscoloniales de irrigación de arroz en Gambia; las grandes presas en la India; el cultivo de aceite de palma en Indonesia; y las zonas económicas especiales en la India. En primer lugar, el informe identifica algunos de los efectos más habituales que tienen las expropiaciones sobre la cuestión del género. En cada caso se demuestra que la expropiación de tierras perpetúa la carencia de derechos independientes de las mujeres sobre las tierras, o que estos derechos se han invertido en el caso de que hayan existido; que la expropiación ha intensificado el trabajo reproductivo en el hogar; y que la expropiación se ha producido sin con las mujeres de las zonas

rurales. En segundo lugar, el informe demuestra las maneras en que las consecuencias de la expropiación de tierras sobre la cuestión del género varían entre diversas formas de expropiación y medios agrarios. La dimensión más importante de esta variación es el efecto de la pérdida de tierras sobre la división del trabajo a partir del género, que a menudo es perjudicial, pero que difiere cualitativamente entre los casos estudiados. El informe también ilustra la importante variación que se da entre las poblaciones expropiadas en la medida que el género se interseca con la clase, la casta, y otras desigualdades. El informe concluye que la expropiación de tierras contribuye sistemáticamente a la desigualdad de género, aunque de maneras específicas en los planos social e histórico. Así, si bien la lucha defensiva contra la expropiación de tierras no conllevará por sí misma una transformación de las relaciones sociales patriarcales, puede ser una condición previa para llevar a cabo luchas más decididas en pos de la igualdad de género.

1.

INTRODUCTION

Rural people across the Global South are confronting increasing demands on their lands for a variety of economic purposes. Whether for Special Economic Zones (SEZs), dams, mining, industry, urban real estate or transnational agricultural investments, rural land dispossession is now a central feature of economic accumulation and political contestation in many countries. This paper seeks to advance our understanding of the gendered implications of such dispossession. It does so through a comparative analysis of five cases of rural land dispossession driven by different economic purposes in diverse socio-historical contexts.¹

An adequate understanding of the implications of land dispossession, or ‘land grabbing’,² for gender and other dimensions of social inequality has never been more pressing. The fact that land grabs are now attracting unprecedented attention is no mere intellectual trend but rather a belated response to concrete political-economic forces. While different economic sectors are driving land grabs in different regions, and there is great variation in the politics surrounding them, it seems possible to say three things about land grabs at a global level. First, they

appear to be increasing. While governments do not keep track of the numbers of people they uproot from their land, and recent attempts to quantify just agricultural ‘land deals’ have been controversial,³ few doubt that the neoliberal period—and perhaps particularly the first decade of the 2000s—has been accompanied by an increase in land dispossession.⁴

Second, in addition to increasing, land grabs are changing in character. For most of the twentieth century, the majority of ‘development-induced displacement’ in the Global South came from public sector infrastructure (e.g., dams), industry and extraction. As they have moved to economic models prioritizing growth through private investment, however, states have increasingly used their coercive powers to transfer land from farmers to private companies. In China and India, state-backed

1 For their insight and help in preparing this paper, I would like to thank Sara Berry, Melissa Leach, Shahra Razavi, Seemin Qayum, Ben White, the UN Women staff and participants in their 2014 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development workshop.

2 In what follows, I use ‘land grab’ as a lay synonym for ‘land dispossession’ and restrict both to instances in which states make people relinquish their land involuntarily. This includes instances in which people are dispossessed of landed resources they own or use irrespective of whether the land is under formal or informal tenure (including customary land and commons). It interprets any land acquisition undertaken without prior and informed consent to be involuntary, whether or not the dispossessed receive compensation. It excludes, however, incidences in which land is voluntarily sold on the market. Admittedly, the line between voluntary sale and coercion is not always clear; sales can be forced not only by States but also by decentralized or ‘intimate’ actors in ways that fall beneath the radar (Hall et al. 2011; Hall 2012; Li 2014). While blurred at their edges, these categories are nevertheless important for distinguishing between the large number of cases that clearly involve coercive dispossession (often exercised through ‘eminent domain’) and those that involve willing sellers on the market. This definition corresponds with how most policymakers and scholars have historically operationalized ‘development-induced displacement’.

3 Cf. Rulli et al. 2013; Scoones et al. 2013; Edelman 2013; Oya 2013.

4 While most attempts to measure the scale of land grabs have focused on agricultural projects that are primarily located in Africa and Latin America, it is probably in India and China, which together contain 45 per cent of the world’s rural population (World Bank 2012), that the majority of the world’s land dispossession is occurring. While we should also treat these numbers with caution, scholars estimate that in China between 50 and 66 million people were dispossessed for various kinds of development projects between 1980 and 2002 (Hsing 2010), and that over 43 per cent of Chinese villages have experienced compulsory land acquisition since the late 1990s (Landesa 2011). In India, the most comprehensive study has estimated that 60 million people have been displaced from their land for development projects since independence and that the rate of displacement has increased post-liberalization (Fernandes 2008).

dispossession has been increasingly used in recent years to facilitate private industry, real estate and mining, as well as public-private partnerships (PPP) in infrastructure.⁵ In many parts of Africa, Latin America and South-East Asia, meanwhile, governments have been handing over large swathes of land to international finance and agribusiness capital (and, to a lesser extent, other states) for agricultural and bio-fuel plantations.⁶ Third, this increasing scale and changing character of land grabs has been met with increasingly widespread opposition. Opposition to land grabs has not been explosive everywhere,⁷ but it has been documented in many countries across Africa, Latin America and South-East Asia⁸ and has become particularly explosive in China⁹ and India¹⁰. Land struggles will likely be a central feature of the political economies of many developing countries in the twenty-first century.

If the growing significance of land dispossession makes understanding its gender implications all the more pressing, scholars have recently argued that we know very little about what those implications are.¹¹ Behrman et al. identify a “current lack of empirical evidence on the differential effect that large-scale land deals have on men and women” and, more generally, “limited information on how local populations are affected by eviction and resettlement”.¹² Given this lack of information, they suggest, we should be agnostic about the implications of large-scale land deals for women. They remain optimistic that, “If large-scale land investments are properly executed with appropriate attention to gender dimensions, land deals can provide transformative opportunities for both women and men through the introduction of new employment and income generation opportunities, new technologies, and new services”.¹³

There is some truth to this assertion. Scholars have paid far more attention to the gendered dimensions of land *tenure* and land *reform* than land *dispossession*. But if we know a lot more about women’s existing land rights than about the consequences of taking them away, we should not overstate our ignorance. While research on the gender implications of some of the newest forms of land dispossession—such as transnational agricultural deals or SEZs—remains slender (largely because they are so new), there already exists a range of important studies of the gender implications of land dispossession under earlier historical regimes, from the English enclosures to the large infrastructural and agricultural projects of state-led development. Such scholarship has already identified many of the gendered consequences of land dispossession that scholars today are beginning to observe, and it provides important points of comparison to illuminate what is actually new about contemporary forms of dispossession. To my knowledge, however, such a comparison has yet to be undertaken.

The purpose of this paper, then, is to consolidate some of the main existing findings about the gendered implications of land dispossession and to interrogate them for comparative insights. It draws on five in-depth case studies of land dispossession driven by different forms of accumulation in distinct socio-historical contexts: capitalist farming and sheep-raising in early capitalist England; colonial and postcolonial rice cultivation projects in the Gambia; large dams under state-led development in India; and oil palm plantations and SEZs under neoliberal regimes in Indonesia and India, respectively. While the first three cases represent dispossession under earlier periods of capitalist development (one distant, two near), the last two are drawn from recent research on the newer forms of dispossession that are at the centre of contemporary political conflict. While I draw from already published studies for the first four cases, the fifth draws on my own ethnographic research on a SEZ in Rajasthan, India.

5 Hsing 2010; Levien 2013a.

6 cf. White et al. 2012; Fairbairn 2014. For the best analysis of the financial underpinnings of the recent farmland rush, see Fairbairn 2014.

7 Hall et al. 2015.

8 Borras and Franco 2013.

9 Hsing 2010.

10 Levien 2013b.

11 Behrman et al. 2012; Chu 2011.

12 Behrman et al. 2012, 72.

13 Ibid., 71.

My goal in comparing these cases that are so different in multiple respects (time period, type of project, agrarian social structure and gender relations) is two-fold. First, I try to identify some of the very common gendered effects of dispossession that we observe across radically different contexts. This serves to show how much, in fact, we do know about the likely consequences of contemporary land grabs for women and gender equality. And what we know is so overwhelmingly negative that we have far more reason to be critical than agnostic about the implications of contemporary land grabs for gender equality. In all the cases discussed, land dispossession—often coupled with gender-blind compensation policies—reproduced women’s lack of independent land rights or reversed them where they existed; intensified household reproductive work; and occurred without meaningful consultation with—much less delegation of decision-making power to—women.

My second aim, however, is to go beyond the generic finding that women are disproportionately affected by land grabs and to show how some gendered consequences of dispossession vary across forms of dispossession and socio-historical contexts. As different forms of dispossession refract through diverse agrarian social structures, including specific gendered forms of property ownership and divisions of labour, they produce qualitatively different patterns of inequality and disadvantage. Perhaps the most important dimension of this variation is the effect of

land loss on the gendered division of labour, which is often deleterious but varies qualitatively across the cases examined. It also varies within dispossessed populations as gender intersects with class, caste and other inequalities. The paper demonstrates, in sum, the ways in which land dispossession under specific historical forms of capitalist accumulation consistently contributes to gender inequality, albeit in socially and historically variable ways.

A few of the cases provide limited evidence of positive changes in some dimensions of gender disparity, mostly in education (but accompanied by very serious retrogression in other dimensions). Although limited, these findings should not be dismissed but rather serve as a reminder that a critical understanding of land grabs must also avoid the trap of rural romanticism. Neither modernization nor romanticism is an adequate guide to the interaction between various historical forms of capitalist dispossession and the specific—and often deep—inequalities of particular agrarian milieu. Grasping such interactions requires, rather, a comparative and ethnographic perspective grounded in a critical and engendered agrarian political economy.¹⁴

Finally, the cases considered also illustrate the myriad ways that women have challenged dispossession. While such challenges have often been unsuccessful, I suggest that supporting them in the future will be crucial to opening up more equitable trajectories of social change.

14 Razavi 2009.

2.

CASE 1: THE ENGLISH ENCLOSURES

The English enclosure movement is often considered the ‘classic’ case of dispossessing peasants. In a slow and uneven process that stretched from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the great mass of the English peasantry was dispossessed as their ‘commons’ were privatized and enclosed for ‘improved agriculture’.¹⁵ In its early phases, enclosure often occurred through the independent initiative of lords, and it was slowed down for several centuries by protective legislation. With the adoption of parliamentary enclosures in the mid-eighteenth century, however, the pace of expropriation vastly accelerated with full legal sanction—what Marx called the “parliamentary form of robbery”.¹⁶ By 1840, most of England’s common land had been enclosed¹⁷ and its peasantry all but eliminated.

While the consequences of this forcible transformation of England’s rural property relations have long been debated,¹⁸ recent historiography has demonstrated that it was devastating for the rural poor. First, through the process of enclosure, small peasants, cottagers, rural labourers and artisans lost access to the commons. While often dismissed by supporters of enclosure, historians have meticulously demonstrated that the common rights available to the pre-enclosure rural poor (or ‘commoners’) contributed very significantly to rural incomes, well-being and autonomy.¹⁹ These rights included pasturage (grazing rights), tillage (cultivation of open fields), turbarry (digging of turf and peat), estovers (rights to cut wood), gleaning (grazing on the post-harvest stubble), quarry and the collection of wild plants, fruits, herbs and shrubs.²⁰ Enclosure extinguished these rights, depriving commoners of means of subsistence and increasing their wage dependence. Second, enclosure undermined the private arable holdings of small peasants, who could least afford the substantial costs associated with enclosure (mainly tithe payments

and fencing) and who were consequently replaced by a class of larger, commercially oriented tenant farmers.²¹ The enclosures thus played a large role in transforming the English peasantry into the English working class.²²

What were the effects of the enclosures on women and gender relations? Several historians have persuasively shown that enclosure disproportionately impacted women and expanded gender inequalities²³—in ways, moreover, that are strikingly similar to more contemporary cases of dispossession.

A starting point in each case should be to ask: Who decides to dispossess people of their land? Typically, this is done by states, which justify dispossession with the claim that it serves the ‘public’ or ‘national’ interest.²⁴ Indeed, the prolonged public debates over enclosure were also conducted in these terms.²⁵ And what we see in the English enclosures—and across our other cases—is that it is very rarely women who determine this interest. But it is also rarely the dispossessed: The enclosures proceeded against the will of the majority of

15 Neeson 1993.

16 Marx 1977, 885.

17 Neeson 1993, 5.

18 cf. Hammond and Hammond 1913; Chambers 1953.

19 See Snell 1985, Humphries 1990, Neeson 1993 and Federici 2004.

20 Humphries 1990.

21 Neeson 1993.

22 Dobb 1947; Thompson 1966.

23 See Neeson 1993, Snell 1985, Humphries 1990 and Federici 2004.

24 Reynold 2010.

25 Neeson 1993.

commoners in general. To receive parliamentary assent (I focus here on the later parliamentary enclosures), acts of enclosure informally required local approval in the form of petitions, but signees were weighted according to landholdings or tax contributions, giving greater say to the largest landowners (who typically supported enclosure) rather than the majority of landholders. When these petitions reached parliament, they fell on the sympathetic ears of fellow landlord parliamentarians. In its early stages, enclosure did not enjoy unanimous elite support and was widely debated; it was often feared that enclosure would create 'depopulation' and social 'disorder'. Consequently, commoners could occasionally find liberal sympathizers to advance their cause. But by the late eighteenth century, "commoners no longer found anyone to speak for them at the centre of government".²⁶ Counter-petitions drafted by commoners were rarely successful, even when villagers could muster the resources for legal representation. Although commoners resisted enclosures, as we will see, the intractable hostility of parliament towards their concerns channelled this resistance into informal and extra-parliamentary forms.

A second question to ask is how (if at all) states decide to compensate the dispossessed. In general, the enclosure of the commons went un- or under-compensated; calls to provide proper compensation to dispossessed commoners went unheeded.²⁷ What compensation did exist usually took the form of leaving aside small pieces of wasteland or establishing small funds that parish 'guardians' could distribute on a discretionary basis to the 'deserving poor'.²⁸ Only a minority with legal property rights received any cash compensation, and often this went to covering the costs associated with enclosure, which prompted many smallholders to sell out before enclosure proceedings even began.²⁹ Humphries suggests that it was sometimes drunk away at the alehouse,³⁰ as men were likely to control any monetary compensation that did exist. We will see that male control over compensation is a common feature of land dispossession in many times and places.

26 *Ibid.*, 46.

27 *Ibid.*

28 Humphries 1990, 20.

29 Neeson 1993.

30 Humphries 1990, 20.

In the absence of explicit policies to prevent it, it is a common outcome of the intersection between dispossession and patriarchy.

Since lack of deliberation and poor compensation were fairly generalized, however, the central issue is how the enclosure of the commons disproportionately affected the livelihood and autonomy of women and had dramatically deleterious consequences for the gendered division of labour. Women were centrally involved in most of the livelihood activities supported by the commons in early modern England. Women not only participated in cultivation, harvesting and grazing but were also the principal gatherers of fuel, wild produce and raw materials for household production; they prepared peat; and they gleaned after the harvest. Humphries argues that this work offered significant returns compared with the low wages women received as hired workers (half to two thirds of men's wages), and that "many gathering, scavenging, and processing activities were relatively rewarding".³¹ Self-employment was easier to combine with child-rearing than waged employment, and cow-keeping on the commons served as social insurance for widows.³² Federici underscores the social and economic importance of the commons for women, arguing that, "The social function of the common was especially important for women, who, having less title to land and less social power, were more dependent on them for their subsistence, autonomy, and sociality".³³

Loss of the commons entailed a dramatic transformation in the gendered division of labour. First and foremost, enclosing the commons made women increasingly dependent on men's wages. Humphries argues that, "Since women and children were the primary exploiters of common rights, their loss led to changes in women's economic position within the family and more generally to increased dependence of whole families on wages and wage earners".³⁴ Snell's meticulous study of seasonable employment patterns before and after enclosure in the late eighteenth century demonstrates that enclosure generated a "long-term reduction in female work" in

31 *Ibid.*, 37–39.

32 *Ibid.*, 37–38.

33 Federici 2004, 71.

34 Humphries 1990, 21.

agriculture, and that the waged female work that did exist was increasingly seasonal and differentiated from men's".³⁵ He concludes, "Enclosure accelerated changes in the sexual division of labour, leaving women more precariously positioned on the labour market, their real wages falling".³⁶ Such findings led Federici to argue that enclosure was the key historical moment through which productive and reproductive work became divorced; the first became male and socially valued, the latter female and devalued.³⁷

The particular significance of the commons for women is attested by the large-scale participation of women in anti-enclosure protests. Resistance to enclosure began as early as the fifteenth century and included large-scale peasant rebellions—such as Kett's Rebellion of 1549—as well as the ubiquitous practice of levelling hedges and ditches used to enclose fields.³⁸ In 1607, 37 women led by 'Captain Dorothy' attacked coal miners working on village commons; in 1608 40 women "caste down the fences and hedges" of an enclosure in Waddingham; and in 1609, a group of 15 women assembled at night to destroy the hedges and ditches on a manor in Dunchurch.³⁹ Resistance to the parliamentary enclosures of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was also widespread. Commoners "contested enclosure Bills with petitions, threats, foot-dragging, the theft of new landmarks, surveys and field books; with riotous assemblies to destroy gates, posts and rails; and with more covert thefts and arson".⁴⁰ While men may have been largely responsible for writing formal petitions, women played major roles in the more common—and effective—informal methods of opposition. In Wilbartson, "three hundred men and women tried to prevent the fencing of the common" after failing to prevent enclosure with a counter-petition.⁴¹ In Raunds, "led by the village women and some shoemakers they pulled down fences, dismantled gates, lit huge bonfires and celebrated long into the night".⁴² Women evidently felt strongly enough about enclosure that they

35 Snell 1985, 155.

36 *Ibid.*, 218.

37 Federici 2004.

38 From which derived the name for the seventeenth century 'Levellers'.

39 Federici 2004, 73; Manning 1988.

40 Neeson 2003, 321.

41 *Ibid.*, 278.

42 *Ibid.*

participated in militant struggles against it over the course of several centuries.

Although remote in time and geography from present land grabs, the case of the English enclosures helpfully illustrates many of the gendered aspects of dispossession that continue under more contemporary guises. First, women were excluded from decision-making or consultation over land acquisition; something that stands out more sharply in circumstances—still rare—in which male landholders or users are themselves consulted. Second, patriarchal control over economic resources within the household was intensified by channelling compensation to men—something that becomes more gender-specific in subsequent cases when compensation is more significant. Third, women lost access to resources that enabled them to earn livelihoods, undertake meaningful work and maintain some autonomy. These gender-specific and gender-intensified⁴³ consequences of expropriating common resources are repeated in almost all the examples that follow. In the English case, dispossession was accompanied by a simultaneous exclusion of women from much of the waged work generated by 'improved' agriculture—which was anyway less than supporters claimed for it.⁴⁴ Marginalized or employed on discriminatory terms, women were forced by enclosure into a subordinate position in a deepening gendered division of labour.

While we will see that dispossession transforms gendered divisions of labour differently depending on the pre-existing social structure and the ensuing form of economic activity, these transformations appear generally deleterious in the cases examined. The 'classic' case of the English enclosures thus demonstrates many of the reasons why land dispossession is almost always particularly harmful to women, even if that harm takes socially and historically specific forms. This is undoubtedly the reason why we often see women centrally and even militantly involved in opposing dispossession. Our next four cases illustrate variations on these basic themes. We now move forward a hundred years after the end of enclosure to the autumn of British colonialism in Africa.

43 Kabeer and Murthy 1999, 179.

44 Snell 1985.

3.

CASE 2: WETLAND RICE PROJECTS IN GAMBIA

While large-scale land grabs for transnational agricultural investments are currently attracting much attention across Africa, there are to date few detailed empirical studies of these newer projects and their gendered effects on dispossessed populations. We can, however, examine existing studies from previous phases of land dispossession as a starting point for anticipating the likely consequences of this current phase. I turn here to one of the most exhaustive and sophisticated analyses of land dispossession from an explicit gender perspective: Carney and Watts' study of late-colonial and post-independence projects to expand irrigated rice production in Gambia.⁴⁵

Gambia is a long, narrow country consisting mainly of a fertile river valley, and its agro-ecological context is important for understanding the gendered consequences and overall fate of these projects. There are roughly two major agro-ecological zones: highlands suitable for growing cereals and groundnuts; and riverine wetlands used for rice production. Peasant households cultivate land in both zones, and this cultivation is part of a gendered land tenure system and household division of labour. Members of extended polygamous households have access to lands that are classified either as *kumanyango* or *maruo*—the first refers to individual land that entitles the family member to cultivate it on their own account; the second refers to household land whose proceeds accrue to the extended patrilineal family unit (controlled by male household heads). Under the pre-colonial division of labour, there was a less clear gendered division of labour between upland and lowland production: Men worked on wetland rice plots while women also worked on upland cereal plots. It was only with the commercialization of groundnut production in the highlands—forced on peasants by colonial taxation—that men focused their labour on upland groundnut production while women were

left responsible for raising subsistence crops in the wetlands. While forced commercialization intensified the gendered division of labour, women significantly held on to *kumanyango* rights to wetland rice plots (in addition to cultivating rice on *maruo* fields), providing them with discretionary income and security within extended kinship units.⁴⁶

The shift to commercial groundnut production resulted in rice shortages, which provided the first impetus for expanding irrigated rice production in the Gambian wetlands. Under the auspices of the British Colonial Development Corporation, colonial authorities sought to expand smallholder rice productivity by draining mangroves, building irrigation canals and distributing improved seeds and technology. But expanding rice production through double cropping required an intensification of labour, and colonial authorities soon realized that men were unwilling to work in lowland rice production. Intensifying rice production thus required intensifying women's labour. Appropriating women's wetland rice plots allowed the authorities to capture that labour in the next phase of the project in the 1940s. The project was, however, an "expensive disaster" plagued with

45 Carney and Watts 1990; Carney 2004.

46 Ibid.

design flaws and mismanagement; it was brought to its knees by peasant resistance, which involved among other things the widespread pilferage of rice—it was said that the peasants “were taking the rice because the whites had taken their land”.⁴⁷

After independence in 1965, the Gambian government continued efforts to increase wetland rice productivity with financial support from China, Taiwan and the World Bank. The Jahaly-Pacharr project studied by Carney and Watts in the 1980s was the latest in this series of less than successful projects. Financed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), its purpose was to expand irrigated rice production by peasant households in the Mandinka region, again transforming women’s subsistence wetland rice cultivation into double-cropped commercial production. Watts and Carney provide a detailed micro-sociological account of the gendered effects of this endeavour.

The Jahaly-Pacharr project involved appropriating the land rights women held to the wetland rice plots and then renting the land back to their households. While women had previously controlled some of these rice plots under *kumanyango* tenure, under the project, “the control of land rights was centralised through a thirty-year state appropriation; use rights were subsequently distributed to growers in the form of long-term tenancies”.⁴⁸ Peasants were not displaced but dispossessed of land rights *in situ* and turned into tenants on their own land. Their land rights were now contingent on serving as contact growers under the scheme, cultivating rice “under conditions rigorously specified and regulated by the project management”.⁴⁹ In the absence of a local landless class, this arrangement effectively controlled the labour and labour process of Mandinka peasant households.⁵⁰

As in the early phases of irrigated rice expansion, this labour would come from women. Men still refused to apply their labour in rice production,

and double-cropping thus required a doubling of female labour. Carney and Watts explain, “The production strategy strikes to the heart of family relations because it imposes new and demanding claims on household labour; skilled female family labour in particular is critical to fulfilling production targets”.⁵¹ After the project began, men’s agricultural work in the wet season decreased while women’s total agricultural work increased.⁵² The result was that, “Women naturally experience mechanised rice production as radically new claims on their bodies and the imposition of enormously demanding work routines”.⁵³

Increased demands on their labour were accompanied by diminished control over the product of that labour. Men resisted having plots registered in the names of women, arguing that this would alienate family land in the case of divorce, and were successful in convincing authorities to classify the wetland rice plots as belonging to the household (*maruo*). This “enabled the household head to make claims to women’s unpaid labour ... for personal accumulation”.⁵⁴ By transferring land rights from women to men, the state thus dispossessed women of their means of production and effectively turned them into proletarians within the household.

Women resisted this dispossession of their land rights and intensified intra-household exploitation in several ways. First, they opposed the classification of the wetland rice plots as *maruo* and asserted their *kumanyango* rights. In some cases, they demanded *kumanyango* plots in the highlands in exchange. Where these efforts proved unsuccessful, women demanded remuneration (in rice) from their husbands for work on the rice plots, using their structural bargaining power as the project’s labour force to challenge patriarchal family relations.⁵⁵ Second, in some instances, they withdrew their labour altogether, refusing to work on the scheme during periods of high labour demand, reducing the productivity of the plots and the project

47 Carney and Watts 1990, 212.

48 Ibid., 215.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid., 215–216.

51 Ibid., 223.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid., 226.

as a whole. In some instances, this forced men to increase their labour in rice cultivation.⁵⁶ Finally, they organized into collective work groups to provide the labour on a cash basis, using their leverage to bargain up wages. Carney and Watts show how the project thus “manufactured dissent”, unleashing a gendered struggle over the conjugal contract and household division of labour. This dissent, in turn, undermined the aims of the project on its own terms.

The Gambia case has commonalities with several other cases in our sample. First, women were in no way consulted in the initial stages of the project, which was experienced as an imposition by state authorities with the compliance of men. Second, the project was experienced as a diminution of women’s land rights, with deleterious consequences for their independent control over household income.

What makes the case somewhat different is the in situ nature of the dispossession, which did not transfer land and commons wholesale from peasants to outside actors but redistributed superordinate rights to the state and subordinate rights to men within the household. The consequence was that men did not

substantially lose from dispossession. While women often experience dispossession in gender-intensified ways, dispossession in this case was gender-specific⁵⁷ as men benefitted from the project with increased incomes relative to their work. So while the project involved subsuming peasants to agro-commercial capital and its production regimes, conflicting gender interests channelled dispossession politics within the household. Instead of peasants fighting state encroachment on their land rights, members of households fought each other over the remaining rights. What further distinguishes this case is the tenacity and variety of forms with which women resisted their expropriation and exploitation.

Although the Gambia case may be specific in certain respects, it also illustrates some of the modalities of gender inequality that we can expect from today’s large-scale ‘land deals’, which also often involve transferring rights to customary land and incorporating dispossessed peasants as contract growers. These findings will be reinforced in our fourth case, which examines land grabs for Indonesian oil palm plantations. But first we turn to the largest source of dispossession in the twentieth century.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 229.

⁵⁷ Kabeer and Murthy 1999, 179.

4.

CASE 3: LARGE DAMS IN INDIA

Large river valley projects were cornerstones of national development efforts in the twentieth century. They were also the largest source of dispossession, not only in post-independence India⁵⁸ but throughout the developing world.⁵⁹ In comparison to other forms of dispossession, the social and ecological effects of large dams are well studied. This is undoubtedly due to their being at the centre of political conflict and public debate over involuntary displacement since the 1980s. While powerful social movement resistance to large dams made them a central focus of a policy literature on ‘development-induced displacement’,⁶⁰ their specifically gendered consequences were long neglected.⁶¹ That is no longer the case, and in this section I will draw on the particularly rich research conducted on dams in India. Because of this richness, I will use findings from multiple dams rather than focusing on one particular dam.

A plethora of studies have demonstrated the devastating economic, social, cultural and health effects of displacement for large dams in India. While dams delivered the benefits of irrigation and electricity to farmers in the plains and to urban consumers,⁶² they disproportionately displaced *adivasis* and Dalits, the most marginalized groups in Indian society.⁶³ Because the Indian government did not recognize customary land rights, thousands of families were displaced without compensation from land their families had cultivated for generations. Even with formal land rights, compensation was kept

extremely low⁶⁴ and was usually not enough to allow the displaced to buy alternative land. “Land for land” compensation demanded by displaced people was rarely forthcoming,⁶⁵ and the dispossessed were rarely compensated for common pool resources (CPR) such as forests, grazing lands and water bodies.⁶⁶ Beyond compensation, there was hardly any framework in place for ‘resettlement and rehabilitation’, the first term referring to the mere provision of an alternative living site and the second to a more substantial effort to restore the dispossessed to their previous quality of life.⁶⁷ Banerji et al. found that less than a quarter of dam projects offered the displaced replacement land for housing and less than half provided for basic amenities such as water, schools, health clinics, road access or electricity.⁶⁸ Resettlement sites were

58 Fernandes 2008, 91.

59 WCD 2000. For China and India and alone, the estimates are 10 million and 16–28 million respectively. These figures only include those displaced by reservoirs, and not the millions more displaced by downstream effects, canals and related infrastructure.

60 Cf. Fernandes and Thukral 1989; Fernandes and Paranjpye 1997; Cernea 1999; Cernea and McDowell 2000; Fernandes 2004; Singh 2008.

61 Thukral 1996; Mehta and Srinivasan 2000; Mehta 2009.

62 Cf. Dwivedi 2006; Nilsen 2010.

63 Fernandes 2008, 91–92.

64 Those dispossessed for the Nagarjunasagar Dam in the 1950s, for example, were offered Rs.100 to 150 (about US\$2–3 at the time) per acre (Singh and Samantray 1992, 69). As late as the 1990s, oustees of the Tehri dam in what is now Uttarakhand were offered Rs.12,000 (US\$274 at the time) per acre of irrigated land (Kedia 2008, 121).

65 Banerji et al. 2000, 222

66 Ibid., 220; Fernandes 2009.

67 Ibid.

68 Banerji et al. 2000, 221–22.

sometimes in culturally alien environments amidst hostile villagers.⁶⁹ In some cases, farmers refused to move to unviable resettlement sites, preferring to shift their homes to marginal hill land above reservoirs.⁷⁰ In other cases, they simply migrated to urban slums to join India's informal proletariat. Studies almost unanimously show that the dispossessed were excluded from the benefits of dams and further impoverished. Aggregate poverty increased in dam-affected districts,⁷¹ and the physical and mental health of the displaced often worsened.⁷² Added to this was the violence often inflicted by the state on recalcitrant villagers, including assault, murder, rape, pillaging of homes and the sudden flooding of villages without warning.⁷³ What Nehru called the 'temples of modern India' were experienced as impoverishment and brutal state violence by the millions of people they dispossessed.

As universally traumatic as they were, the negative effects of large dams were experienced by women in gender-intensified and gender-specific ways. As the World Commission on Dams concluded, "The general impoverishment of communities and the social disruption, trauma and health impacts resulting from displacement have typically had more severe impacts on women."⁷⁴ The elements of these gendered consequences are well studied.

First, women have in almost all instances been excluded from formal decision-making over displacement and resettlement for large dams.⁷⁵ While such exclusion is often general, as Dewan notes, "even in the few instances where participation does occur, women are generally left out of the entire debate."⁷⁶ In India, state laws and policies regarding land acquisition and resettlement and rehabilitation treat 'project-affected families' as adequately represented by male

'heads of household'.⁷⁷ India's Land Acquisition Act even prevents government officials from delivering acquisition notices to anyone but male members of the household.⁷⁸ Such gender discriminatory laws and policies marginalize women from decision-making over whether to accept compensation and from negotiations over the terms of resettlement. As Mehta describes the process of identifying relocation sites for the Sardar Sarovar Project, women "were consulted neither by officials nor by their husbands in the process of land allocation and selection."⁷⁹ This marginalization of women by both the state and male family members has impacted attempts by villages to resist their dispossession.⁸⁰

Once decisions are made and projects move forward, compensation—whether cash, replacement land, housing or jobs when available—is inevitably allocated to male household heads. Even when women do have independent land rights, there are cases in which the government has registered compensation plots in the names of their husbands, as with the Tehri Dam in Uttarakhand.⁸¹ As one widow displaced for the Tehri Dam put it, "When we got displaced, I did not get any compensation. Two of my sons have got land. If tomorrow they refuse to take care of me, where will I go?"⁸² For the purposes of deciding who constitutes an independent family entitled to compensation, state governments typically only include the families of 'major sons' and not daughters.⁸³ Discriminatory compensation policies thus reproduce women's lack of land rights or reverse them where they exist.⁸⁴

69 Singh and Samantray 1992, 72.

70 Viegas 1992, 49.

71 Duflo and Pande 2007.

72 Kedia 2008.

73 Viegas 1992, 45–46; Singh and Samantray 1992, 66; Khagram 2004, 51; Sangvai 2002; Palit 2009; Ramkuwar 2009; Bhanot and Singh 1992, 101; Thukral 1992, 15.

74 WCD 2000, 115.

75 Mehta and Srinivasan 2000; Mehta 2009.

76 Dewan 2008, 137.

77 Thukral 1996; Mehta and Srinivasan 2000; Mehta 2009.

78 Mehta 2009; Dewan 2008, 136.

79 Mehta 2009, 17. Men later admitted to Mehta that, had they consulted women, they probably would have identified the problems with the resettlement sites and rejected them.

80 For example, Ramkuwar, a woman displaced for the Man Dam in the Narmada Valley, describes the village *sarpanch* (elected head), who was co-opted by the government, trying to prohibit the participation of female family members in the anti-dam movement. Remarkably, however, his niece left home and joined the movement as a full time-activist (Ramkuwar 2009, 271).

81 Thukral 1995, 25; Dewan 2008, 137; Bisht 2009, 313–14.

82 Quoted in Bisht 2009, 314.

83 Dewan 2008, 136; Mehta 2009, 17–18.

84 Mehta 2009.

While facing institutional discrimination in the allocation of compensation and resettlement, women have been disproportionately hurt by the loss of common resources submerged by large dams.⁸⁵ Similar to the scholarship on the English enclosures, Dewan argues, “It is around these common property resources that women interact, exchange information, get employment, develop solidarity structures and also gain access to resources required for own sustenance and that of their families.”⁸⁶ As women are often primarily responsible for livestock rearing, and have a greater chance of controlling income from it, they are particularly hurt by the large-scale loss of animals.⁸⁷ Women also lose income-generating activities from minor forest products and raw materials for craft production.⁸⁸ In addition to losing access to these sources of income, women have to cope with diminished access to fuel, water and other resources, which make their reproductive work more challenging.

Furthermore, women are often disadvantaged in the labour markets they face after displacement. In the Gujarat resettlement sites for the Sardar Sarovar Project, Mehta found that women were increasingly dependent on male wages and had lost significant control over household income.⁸⁹ In the Korba Dam project in Chhattisgarh, however, Thukral found the reverse: Men were unwilling to move into wage labour, putting the burden of low-waged and dangerous work onto women.⁹⁰ In other contexts, men leave for migrant labour, placing the entire household burden onto women.⁹¹ Summarizing several studies, Dewan concludes that women rarely received employment from dam projects and that what they did receive was usually low-paying and irregular.⁹² However, there was a class-caste difference: While upper-caste women

were often confined to the household when they lost agricultural work but faced purdah restrictions on labour force participation, lower-caste poor women were often forced into waged (sometimes migrant) labour.⁹³ In sum, whether women are unemployed, confined to the household by men or forced to work for low wages seems to vary across locations and by class and caste. What we might say in general is that while dams destroy resources that support remunerative activities by women, they do not replace them, leaving women at the mercy of the patriarchal power relations that structure labour markets.⁹⁴

Ultimately, existing research suggests that being displaced for large dams has very serious and disproportionate effects on women’s food security, health and nutrition.⁹⁵ It is a common finding that alcoholism and domestic abuse increase in the wake of displacement.⁹⁶ This increased vulnerability to male violence is compounded by the fact that displacement often results in women being resettled far from natal villages, removing the security this exit option can provide.⁹⁷ Establishing dams in the face of local opposition has also often involved extreme state violence against women, including rape, beatings and mass jailings.⁹⁸ Sexual violence and human rights violations, repeatedly tolerated by multilateral lenders such as the World Bank, have accompanied displacement for large dams not just in India but throughout the world.⁹⁹

While there is a great deal of evidence that displacement for dams has been particularly harmful

85 WCD 2000, 114.

86 Dewan 2008, 130.

87 Pandey and Rout 2004, 21; Dewan 2008, 130.

88 Mehta 2009, 19–20.

89 *Ibid.*, 5.

90 Thukral 1996, 1502

91 *Ibid.*

92 In the case of dams in Africa, Braun’s (2011) research shows the ways in dam construction sites are themselves characterized by discriminatory employment that marginalizes women in the informal economy.

93 Dewan 2008, 128–29.

94 This is also demonstrated powerfully by Tsikata’s (2006) exhaustive study of Ghana’s Volter River Project. 2000. ‘nion at least if you talk to men and women in the same householdle more discussion ness of government officials to them.x

95 For a review, see Dewan 2008, 133; Mehta 2009, 21–23.

96 cf. Thukral 1996, 1502; Dewan 2008, 135; Thukral 2009, 86; Fernandes 2009, 124.

97 Mehta 2009, 25; Palit 2009, 285.

98 Baviskar 1995; Palit 2009; Sangvai 2002; Dwivedi 2006.

99 For a particularly brutal (but not isolated) case of how World Bank-funded dams intersected with reactionary dictatorships supported by the United States Government during the Cold War, see the study of Guatemala’s Chixoy Dam by Johnston (2005).

for women, this does not rule out that it can have some positive effects on gender inequality. In her study of the Sardar Sarovar Project, Srinivasan argues that women did gain some new freedoms in the resettlement sites and that their access to education increased.¹⁰⁰ Thukral similarly argues that more girls started going to school after displacement for the Tehri Dam and that purdah declined.¹⁰¹ In a more recent study of those displaced for the Tehri Dam, however, Bisht found that women were increasingly marginalized from economic activities and confined within the home.¹⁰² What I think we can extract from this mixed evidence is that under some circumstances, displacement can lead to some increased freedoms for women, especially when it leads to greater educational access or relative urbanization. However, the evidence of women becoming empowered through dispossession for large dams remains scant compared to evidence for the contrary.

The significant threats to women posed by large dams help to explain why women have often been in the forefront of social movements opposing them. In India, there have been a number of such movements, most famously the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* (Save the Narmada Movement). Women have played a key role in such movements as both leaders and rank and file participants.¹⁰³

Such movements against large dams were the first to politicize 'development-induced displacement' and put it on the agenda of development agencies and scholars. Land grabs for large-scale agricultural investments have recently rekindled the issue in international policy circles. We now turn to the case of oil palm plantations in Indonesia for insight into the gender implications of this recent 'farm-land rush'.

100 Srinivasan 2007.

101 Thukral 1996, 1502.

102 Bisht 2009, 311.

103 See Baviskar 1995; Sangvai 2002; Palit 2009; Ramkuwar 2009.

5.

CASE 4: OIL PALM PLANTATIONS IN WEST KALIMANTAN

Since the 1980s, the expansion of oil palm plantations has been a major cause of land dispossession and deforestation in many South-East Asian countries. This process has greatly accelerated in the past decade with the bio-fuels boom, in which palm oil has figured centrally.¹⁰⁴ Indonesia is the world's largest producer of palm oil, for which it has been rapidly clearing forests. These forests are mostly held under customary tenure and cultivated by rural populations, who depend on them for their livelihoods but whose claims are legally unrecognized by the state. The gendered consequences of dispossession for oil palm cultivation have been carefully studied by Julia and White and Li, both in West Kalimantan.¹⁰⁵ Julia and White studied a village of 240 Hibun Dayak households, which they called Anbera Hamlet. One third of Anbera's land had been expropriated for oil palm plantations. Li led a research team that studied 20 hamlets—comprising Dayaks and Malays—in the same district that were affected by two large oil palm plantations. The two studies provide largely congruent evidence that oil palm plantations have expanded gender inequalities in several important ways.

In the case of Anbera, the provincial government granted long-term land use concessions (HGUs) for the village's land, previously held in customary tenure, to private companies for establishing oil palm plantations. The concessions were granted for 35 years with the option of extension; upon their termination, the land will revert back to the state rather than local villagers.¹⁰⁶ The Government instituted several compensation schemes for dispossessed villagers, the most common of which involved incorporating them into oil palm production as contract growers on small plots surrounding the 'nuclear' plantation, which is cultivated with hired labour. Under this scheme, farmers surrender their customary land in exchange for land planted with palm

oil on either a 2:5 or 2:7 ratio.¹⁰⁷ Farmers receive these plots on credit, with payments deducted from their monthly income. In addition to these deductions for the (re)purchase of their land, money is deducted for infrastructure, transportation and inputs. Farmers must sell their produce through the company. Under a second scheme, they can become non-cultivating partners with a 30 per cent share in the income of plots cultivated with hired labour.¹⁰⁸

The villages studied by Li were first affected by a 5,630 acre public sector plantation established in 1980 and then by a privately owned plantation in 1990. In addition to a 9,000 hectare core, the latter included an 18,000 hectare outgrower scheme similar to the one

104 Borrás et al. 2010.

105 Julia and White 2012; Li 2015.

106 Julia and White 2012, 999.

107 Ibid.

108 Ibid., 1000.

in Anbera but linked to a large transmigration scheme that brought families from Java and Bali. After protests by locals, the public sector plantation was also forced to adopt an outgrower scheme. While the plantations created a general 'land squeeze' in the area, Li studied a range of villages from those that still had remaining land to those rendered almost entirely landless and "squeezed into enclaves between plantations".¹⁰⁹

Previous to the oil palm plantations, local livelihoods in both cases came from 'mixed-farming systems' of rubber and upland rice.¹¹⁰ Li stresses the importance of rubber cultivation, which was not only relatively lucrative for smallholders but provided women with independent sources of income.¹¹¹ Importantly, in both regions land tenure was relatively gender equal, with swidden land held jointly by spouses and inherited equally by children.¹¹² Despite having land rights, however, women were excluded from formal politics—an exclusion that facilitated the arrival of the oil palm plantations.

In Anbera, as in our other cases, the process of dispossession began with negotiations in which women played no part:

When establishing the plantation, the company approached community leaders, customary leaders and other figures (teachers, religious leaders, etc.) who were all male, to do the public relations or information dissemination to the other community members. Usually, these formal and informal leaders received incentives (cash, promise of a smallholder plot, etc.) for this work, or for the number of community members who sign up as smallholders.¹¹³

The exclusion of women from local decision-making structures helped to preclude substantive deliberation among the affected population and made it easier for the Government to co-opt leaders and divide the village.¹¹⁴

109 Li 2015, 8.

110 Julia and White 2012, 1001.

111 Li 2015, 15.

112 Julia and White 2012, 1001; Li 2015, 12.

113 Julia and White 2012, 1000.

114 *Ibid.*, 1014.

While the state's negotiation process reinforced existing patriarchal norms, its compensation policies reversed the property rights that women had previously enjoyed. Ignoring women's independent land rights, the government registered only 'household heads' as smallholders in the palm oil outgrower scheme. Except in a few cases of divorced or widowed women, husbands were declared the household head: Only 6 of 98 registered smallholders were women.¹¹⁵ The consequence was that men held most of the titles for the new plots, controlled the credit made available to plot-holders and were members of the smallholder cooperative established by the project. While Li found, in contrast to Julia and White, that this "did not diminish women's sense of co-ownership",¹¹⁶ she notes that the issue was still "abstract"¹¹⁷ for women in her study villages because so few titles had been given out. She concurs, moreover, that this "bureaucratic bias"¹¹⁸ could ultimately make women less secure in case of divorce and give men greater control over income and decisions such as selling or mortgaging land.¹¹⁹ Male-dominated cooperatives, moreover, meant that "women had no voice in running an institution that played a central role in their livelihoods".¹²⁰

Both studies conclude that the effects of oil palm on the gendered division of labour were pernicious, though with some differences. While Li argues that the relatively balanced gendered division of labour in agriculture persisted on the smallholder oil palm plots,¹²¹ Julia and White emphasize that women were responsible for the most labour-intensive work on those plots.¹²² Similar to the Gambia case analysed by Carney and Watts, they argue that the project thus intensified women's labour while attenuating their land rights. This led to escalating domestic conflict and violence over the control of oil palm income.¹²³ They also found that women—and particularly older women—continued to

115 *Ibid.*, 1002.

116 Li 2015, 7.

117 *Ibid.*, 14.

118 *Ibid.*, 32.

119 *Ibid.*, 14.

120 *Ibid.*

121 *Ibid.*

122 Julia and White 2012, 1003.

123 *Ibid.*, 1010.

do most of the labour on subsistence plots,¹²⁴ and that women's reproductive work was made more difficult by the enclosure of common property resources that had previously furnished fruit, vegetables and materials for craft production.¹²⁵

Both studies emphasize the unequal gendered division of labour on oil palm plantations. Jobs created by the plantations were, in general, scarce relative to the local population. But while both men and women were absorbed to a limited degree as a casual plantation labour force, men (mostly migrants) received the better-paying formal jobs while plantation managers "relegated women to lower paid casual jobs".¹²⁶ The wages from women's casual labour compared unfavourably to income from rubber tapping—which dispossession for oil palm plantations made scarce—and even to wages paid by oil palm smallholders.¹²⁷ Women were concentrated in the most hazardous work, such as spraying and fertilizing fields without safety equipment.¹²⁸ Access to work depended on contingent ties to men.¹²⁹ And that work was becoming more precarious with the deepening casualization of labour on both public and private sector plantations.¹³⁰

Another way many women interacted with the palm-oil plantations was informally, through *berondol* scavenging—the gleaning of fallen oil palm fruit. Women earned income by collecting the fallen fruit and selling it at a discounted price. This livelihood strategy was, however, ultimately prohibited by the companies, whose security guards harassed and abused the scavengers.¹³¹

In both sites, political mobilization has focused on demanding smallholder plots, though relegation from the public sphere meant that women played a limited role. In Anbera, grievances mounted over the failure to deliver compensation plots; villagers blockaded and harvested part of the plantation and filed a court

case. Although women were excluded from formal political arenas, Julia and White observe that they were informally active in asserting their rights. These efforts resulted in a number of villages receiving their compensation plots but not much more. Li, on the other hand, found little ongoing opposition in the villages after initial protests demanding smallholder plots and argues that the gendered and spatial segmentation of the workforce prevented labour organizing. She observes that, "Women workers from the enclaves who reported they cried at home every night with injury, exhaustion and quiet fury at their abuse felt they had no way out".¹³²

Oil palm brought some benefits to local people in both cases, including access to wages and incomes as smallholders. But surrendering land for oil palm plantations was a highly unequal exchange. Wages on the plantations did not compensate for lost access to land for rubber tapping; and waged labour in oil palm compared very unfavourably to the income that could be gained through smallholder cultivation (to which the Government has shown insufficient commitment). The many costs of customary land loss were, moreover, disproportionately born by women. In Julia and White's summation, therefore, "formalisation [of land tenure] has been accompanied by masculinisation (of oil palm plot ownership, of membership in producers' organizations, and of access to credit sources linked to land titles) undermining the position and livelihoods of women in this already patriarchal society".¹³³ They conclude that, "Oil palm plantation expansion has strengthened the patriarchal system of the state and the Hibun Dayak community".¹³⁴

Dispossession for oil palm has thus not only reproduced patriarchal social relations but, as in Gambia, undermined more gender equal ones—significantly, women's independent land rights. We now turn to rural North India to examine the intersection of another new form of land dispossession—SEZs—with a different and more severe 'regional patriarchy' (Kandiyoti 1988; Sangari 1995).¹³⁵

124 *Ibid.*, 1003.

125 *Ibid.*, 1011.

126 Li 2015, 21, 32.

127 Li, 2015.

128 Julia and White 2012, 1006.

129 Li 2015, 26.

130 *Ibid.*, 25.

131 Julia and White 2012, 1007.

132 Li 2015, 30.

133 Julia and White 2012, 1015.

134 *Ibid.*, 1014.

135 Kandiyoti 1988; Sangari 1995.

6.

CASE 5: SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES IN INDIA

While large dams were once synonymous with ‘development-induced displacement’ in India, the shift to a neoliberal economic model over the past two decades has led to increasingly privatized forms of dispossession. In the 2000s, SEZs became the cutting edge of such dispossession, and the epicentre of so-called ‘land wars’. Catalysed by a policy in 2000 and a parliamentary act in 2005, SEZs marked an important departure from previous forms of industrial infrastructure. First, they were much larger, some of them requiring up to 10,000 acres of land. Second, they could be developed by private companies and not just government agencies. And third, only half of their land had to be used for export-oriented production, which meant that SEZs would not be old-fashioned industrial zones but satellite cities with lucrative high-end housing. The opportunity they created for obtaining cheap land in the midst of a real estate boom generated an SEZ rush, with almost 600 approved between 2005 and 2008. State governments began acquiring land for these zones using India’s Land Acquisition Act, which empowered them to acquire private property for a ‘public purpose’. This generated widespread farmer protests against land acquisition, which were surprisingly successful in stalling and cancelling many of India’s largest proposed SEZs.¹³⁶

Beginning in 2009, I studied one of the first large private SEZs to be established in north India: the Mahindra World City (MWC) outside of Jaipur, Rajasthan. Developed by the real estate subsidiary of the US\$16 billion Mahindra and Mahindra Company, this 3,000 acre ‘multi-purpose’ SEZ was designed to include five sector-specific zones, including the country’s largest information technology and services (IT/ITES) zone. For most of my fieldwork, the only operational businesses in the zone were Infosys and Deutsche Bank, both running business process outsourcing (BPO) hubs that employed educated urban youth to do back-office work from glass and steel campuses carved out of former grazing land. While slowed by the global financial crisis, Mahindra was preparing to use 1,000 acres to build a ‘Lifestyle Zone’ with upscale residential areas, shopping malls, schools, hospitals and recreational space.

Establishing the MWC involved dispossessing 2,000 acres of private farmland and 1,000 acres of public grazing land from nine villages. These mixed-caste, majority Hindu villages were highly dependent on rain-fed agriculture and livestock rearing—especially for milk production—supplemented by wage labour in Jaipur and surrounding towns. Under the Rajasthan government’s compensation package, families with land acquired were given the option of receiving small commercial-residential plots adjacent to the SEZ that were one fourth the size of their previous land. While analogous to the palm oil plots we encountered in the Indonesia case, these plots had no agricultural value. The idea was that these ‘developed’ plots would have far more value as real estate than the original agricultural land and thus incorporate farmers into the SEZ-generated growth. This compensation policy did not elicit consent but divided farmers by absorbing them into a speculative land market on an individual

¹³⁶ Sampat 2010, 2015; Levien 2012, 2013b; Jenkins et al. 2014.

basis. The result was that the Rajasthan government was able to acquire land for the MWC without a 'land war'. Between 2009 and 2011 (and with short revisits in 2012, 2014 and 2016), I sought to examine the consequences of the MWC for a village I call Rajpura, which had lost most of its land to the SEZ. In addition to ethnography, I conducted a random sample survey of 94 families in Rajpura and three adjacent villages.

Land dispossession deprived these villages of private farmland and common grazing land, destroying agricultural incomes and food security. The SEZ, meanwhile, failed to generate significant employment for local people; only 18 per cent of dispossessed families had one member receive a job in the SEZ, and this was almost universally a low-waged and temporary position as gardener, janitor or security guard or in construction (survey by author). As an enclave of the 'knowledge economy', the SEZ also generated few productive linkages within the surrounding villages. While the government committed to providing the SEZ with pipeline water (projected to eventually reach half a million gallons per day), villagers lost wells to the SEZ and were forced to purchase water of dubious quality from tankers. The main contribution of the SEZ to the surrounding villages, then, was a booming real estate market, which farmers were able to profit from to a very unequal extent. All told, my survey found that 65 per cent of displaced families reported having less income after the SEZ, 50 per cent reported having less food and 75 per cent felt they had lost more than they had gained. However, things were much worse for the land-poor lower castes, called Scheduled Castes and Tribes (SC/STs) in India, who—compelled by debts, lured by misinformation and cheated by brokers—often sold their compensation plots quickly and cheaply. At the time of my survey in 2011, 82 per cent of SC/ST families had sold their plots compared to only 18 per cent of general (upper) castes (most of whom were Brahmins). When they did sell, SC/ST families received on average US\$12,000 less per hectare. They were consequently much less likely to come out of the process with productive assets and alternative livelihoods. A full 88 per cent of SC/ST families reported having less income, 75 per cent reported having less food and 88 per cent felt they had lost more than they had gained.

While dispossession for the SEZ thus magnified existing class and caste inequalities, it also intersected in deleterious ways with a starkly patriarchal agrarian order. Rajpura's gender ratio of 897 women to 1,000 men in 2001 put it below the state average, itself below the national average.¹³⁷ In 2001, only 29 per cent of women in Rajpura were literate compared to 59 per cent of men (and 46 per cent of rural women in India overall).¹³⁸ Gender segregation prevailed in everyday life and women were largely marginalized from the public sphere of political decision-making. Perhaps most pertinently, Rajasthani villages are organized into patrilocal familial units in which women rarely have independent land rights. Women's lack of inheritance rights is ostensibly compensated by dowries, but these moveable assets are typically controlled by in-laws and husbands.¹³⁹ Even as widows, women's inherited land rights are likely to be de facto controlled by male relatives.¹⁴⁰ This patriarchal system of land ownership places decisions over land—as well as the proceeds from land sales—in the hands of men, which became highly consequential after the SEZ's arrival.

Although legally excluded from patrilineally inherited land, women had some limited control over livestock earnings.¹⁴¹ However, they carried a heavy burden of productive and reproductive work. Aside from overseeing the reproductive needs of the household, women did the most exhausting work in agriculture. Outside of the household economy, the gendered division of labour varied markedly by caste. Upper caste men confined women to the home and family agricultural fields as a point of honour, as did those aspiring households who could afford to forego women's wages. Lower caste men could not afford this distinction, with poverty forcing both women and men of these households to do casual waged labour. When they did work, women were concentrated in the

137 The state-wide average for Rajasthan was 906 women to 1,000 men, itself below the national average of 927 (Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner 2001; World Bank 2006, 11).

138 Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner 2001.

139 Agarwal 1988; Agarwal 1994.

140 Ibid.

141 Brara 2006, 184–187.

lowest paid and most precarious forms of construction and agricultural labour.

While the decision-making process for the SEZ was universally exclusionary, the compensation system and the resulting real estate speculation had deeply gendered consequences. As landowners, men received the rights to most of the compensation plots allocated by the Rajasthan government. Women's informal influence over the disposition of these plots varied by household; but ultimately the decision of whether or not to sell rested with men. It was men who negotiated land deals, acted as brokers, registered land sales and ultimately received the cash. Even when women (such as widows) owned compensation plots, male relatives negotiated their sale. The sale of land and plots thus put unprecedented sums of cash in the hands of men who were often, at the same time, rendered unemployed. The consequence was that women complained that men misspent these earnings in a variety of ways. This included alcohol, which many women informants insisted was leading to an increase in domestic abuse—a finding that appears with depressing frequency in studies of displacement.¹⁴² So while the SEZ's main contribution to the local economy was a speculative land boom, women were almost entirely excluded from the real estate market by virtue of their lack of property rights and of patriarchal norms that relegated them to the private sphere. And this appears to have worsened power inequalities within many households.

Meanwhile, women acutely felt the loss of farmland and common grazing land. Dispossession eliminated the limited economic autonomy provided by the livestock economy. And women—as well as many men—constantly spoke with regret of the grain, vegetables, lentils, milk, buttermilk, curd and butter that they no longer received from fields and livestock and that they could not afford to buy in similar quantities—much less quality—from the market. This was made worse by the drastic food price inflation of the late 2000s.

142 E.g. Colson 1999; Mehta and Srinivasan 2000.

While women universally regretted the loss of agricultural products, the effects of dispossession on the gendered division of labour were complex and varied by class and caste (which closely align in these villages). Certain forms of reproductive labour—such as gathering fuel—became more difficult, except for those (few) who could afford gas stoves. Other items—such as edible and medicinal shrubs—simply became unavailable, reducing the work burdens associated with them but having deleterious consequences for those families who could not afford substitutes. Losing agricultural land did unburden women of their disproportionate share of agricultural work; however, most were more concerned about the loss of grain and dairy products that fed their families and repeatedly complained that they were now “unemployed” (*berozghar*).¹⁴³ For upper caste women, this “unemployment” meant almost complete confinement to the home (*purdah*), since working outside of the house was both economically unnecessary and considered to be beneath their caste status. Thus when I asked Puneeta, a college-educated young Brahmin woman, if there was any benefit in not having to work so hard in the fields anymore, she acknowledged some ambivalence: “Yes, there is both a loss and a benefit. We’ve got some rest, but it’s a bigger loss. We used to get grain, fodder, everything from the fields.” Matters were less ambivalent in poor, lower caste households for whom “unemployment” in agriculture meant precarious under-employment in unskilled casual labour. When I asked Kamla Devi, a lower caste woman whose family lost all of their modest land holdings to the SEZ, whether they had ‘got some rest’, she replied, “What rest? We carry stones under the hot sun”.¹⁴⁴ She worked with hundreds of other women from the *panchayat* on the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) scheme, which was supposed to guarantee every rural family 100 days of work at Rs.100 (less than \$2) per day. Many other lower caste women combined work on NREGA (when it functioned) with waged labour on private construction gangs, for which they were paid approximately 20 per cent less than men. So, although the loss of common land was universally detrimental,

143 For similar findings, see Mehta 2009, 24.

144 Fieldnotes, 10 March 2010.

it was unevenly so: wealthier families could purchase market substitutes for fodder, fuel and food. And while the loss of agricultural land turned many upper caste women into unemployed 'housewives', it left lower caste women increasingly proletarianized. Dispossession thus initiated caste- and class-inflected changes to the gendered division of labour.

The real estate boom also drastically ratcheted up dowry levels and wedding expenses. Increasingly lavish weddings by those profiting from land sales put a squeeze on the 'losers', who had little savings and income but felt compelled to take massive loans from moneylenders to maintain status. As one Dalit man explained, "Before people would pay Rs.20,000 to 30,000 (US\$400–600) for an excellent wedding. Now it's at least 10 lakhs (US\$20,000). They'll want a four-wheeler, cooler, gold and silver. The boy will want a motorcycle. Before dowry was five kitchen utensils (*barthan*) and some clothes... For the poor man, marrying [one's children] has become difficult. If there are three or four girls, he'll die."¹⁴⁵ As the last comment indicates, escalating dowry levels increase the financial cost of girls, a worrying development in a region that already had one 'missing' women for every ten men – and whose gender ratio worsened over the 2000s.¹⁴⁶

It is possible that as urbanization in these villages progresses, some forms of patriarchal social relations might attenuate. The main evidence I found to support this was from the census, which reported an increase in female literacy in Rajpura from 29 per cent in 2001 to 46 per cent in 2011, which was 6 per cent more than the increase in rural Rajasthan during the same period.¹⁴⁷ My ethnographic evidence, however, otherwise pointed in the other direction. Instead of eroding rural Rajasthan's notoriously rigid gender relations in a tide of modernization, the arrival of an SEZ containing the most advanced sectors of India's 'new economy' had reproduced these patriarchal relations, reduced women's autonomy and well-being (particularly in lower caste families) and widened gender inequalities in important respects. The MWC's

sponsoring of a 'self-help' group for village women—in which they were taught to sew and make soap and given loans at the same interest as the village moneylender—was a farcical footnote to these profoundly negative transformations.

While the Rajasthan government's market-based compensation model largely divided the village, women were involved in some of the resistance that did occur. In Rajpura's one holdout family, women physically clashed with police and government officials when they tried to forcibly fence their land. On another occasion, the women let their cattle loose into their field as assembled dignitaries tried to inaugurate a State Bank of India office on it. More broadly, women participated in forms of "everyday resistance",¹⁴⁸ such as grazing livestock within SEZ boundaries through breaches in the perimeter fencing. Poor women also engaged in the proverbial 'war of words', what Scott calls the "small arms fire" of class struggle,¹⁴⁹ slandering those—like the village brokers and village *sarpanch*—who had profited from the project at their expense.

Nevertheless, like the men, the women of Rajpura did not organize collectively to oppose the SEZ or demand concessions from its developers or the government. Aside from one brief protest organized by village leaders and brokers to demand the delivery of compensation plots, Rajpura's residents were not able to form a collective organization to advance their interests despite the majority harbouring significant grievances. Incorporation into speculative land markets individualized and fractured the interests of women along with men, transforming potential solidarity into internecine feuds and jealousies over land proceeds and the magnified inequalities these generated not just between castes but within castes and even families. Many women mentioned the decline of unity (*ekta*) and relations (*rishta*) not only within the village but among women specifically. Their solidarities were fractured along with men's, and this further undermined their capacity to stem the regressive social transformations unleashed by the SEZ.

¹⁴⁵ Fieldnotes, 20 December 2010.

¹⁴⁶ Census of India 2001, 2011.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Scott 1985.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

7.

CONCLUSION

Together, the five cases presented above paint a sobering picture of the implications of land grabs for rural women. We encountered, to be sure, ambiguous and even positive changes for women in the wake of some of these projects: oil palm plantations created some income opportunities for the Hibun Dayak women; displacement for dams sometimes led to women having greater educational opportunities in the regions where they resettled; following dispossession for an SEZ in Rajasthan, upper caste women saw their agricultural labour reduced while there was a slightly-larger-than-average uptick in female education. Nevertheless, these rare and limited gains were overwhelmed by a confluence of gendered exclusions and inequalities that shaped the process and outcome of dispossession. Several of these regressive consequences recur with remarkably regularity across project type and social context.

Commonalities

First, in none of our cases did women have any decision-making power in the planning of projects or in negotiating the details of resettlement and rehabilitation. Second, discriminatory compensation and resettlement almost universally reproduced women's lack of land rights (e.g., in early modern England and India) or undermined them where they actually existed (among the Mandinka in Gambia and the Hibun Dayak in Kalimantan). Third, given their greater dependence on common resources for work and income, women were disproportionately hurt by the enclosure of the commons and resulting losses of livestock. Given what we know about the relationship between control over income and intra-household welfare disparities,¹⁵⁰ such articulation of patriarchal social relations and discriminatory state policies—what Mehta calls the “double bind”¹⁵¹—ensure that women experience the impoverishment following dispossession in gender-intensified ways. Fourth, while the causal link between land dispossession and domestic violence and alcoholism remains underspecified—male control over compensation and the socio-psychological consequences of

male unemployment are plausible intervening variables—the increase of both has been observed in innumerable studies of displaced populations. Fifth, since dispossession entails removing people from land against their will, States often resort to violence to push projects through, creating situations in which women's physical security becomes particularly compromised. The record of ‘development-induced displacement’ is replete with examples of sexual violence and other human rights abuses perpetrated by police, army or hired thugs. Finally, in all cases, women played important roles in both overt opposition—as in the English enclosures, the Gambia rice project and the large dam projects in India—and in more ‘everyday’ forms of resistance,¹⁵² such as the gleaning of fallen palm nuts in Kalimantan (considered poaching by the company), ‘trespassing’ within the SEZ boundaries to graze animals in Rajasthan and vehement participation (possibly in all of our cases) in the everyday ‘war of words’.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Kabeer 1994.

¹⁵¹ Mehta 2009.

¹⁵² Scott 1985; Hart 1991.

¹⁵³ Scott 1985.

Variation

The experience of dispossession also varied for women along several dimensions. The most dramatic variation appears to be the consequences of dispossession for the gendered division of labour. This variation turns on at least two axes. The first is the type of economic activity driving dispossession and whether it absorbs the labour of dispossessed women. In the cases of the English enclosures, large dams and SEZs, dispossession created little to no employment for women. In the agricultural cases—rice cultivation in Gambia and oil palm plantations in Indonesia—women’s labour was absorbed to some extent into the resulting project. This was particularly true for the Gambia project, where the dispossession of women’s land rights was instrumental to capturing their labour for double-cropped (household) rice production. Following the loss of their independent land rights, women experienced this intensification of work as heightened intra-household exploitation. The Indonesian case was more ambiguous: Some women received wage labour on the plantations, but this was limited and paid less than what men received. Men, moreover, controlled the outgrower plots of oil palm while women saw their land rights reversed, lost income-generating activities and were subject to a greater work burden. Nevertheless, agricultural plantations absorb more labour than the ‘knowledge economy’ and real estate speculation driving India’s SEZs, creating a better chance that dispossessed women will be exploited rather than simply marginalized.

We also saw, however, that dispossession created different changes in the household division of labour for women of different classes and castes. This was particularly clear in the India cases, in which there was a marked divergence between outcomes for upper and lower caste-class women. This underscores the importance of examining how class, caste and gender intersect in shaping the outcomes of land dispossession. Neither ‘peasants’ nor ‘women’ are homogenous categories, and it is imperative to understand how dispossession refracts through the specific and multiple inequalities of different agrarian milieu.

The evidence of these case studies does, however, suggest one conclusion about land dispossession and the gender division of labour. While it may be the case that decent paying and organized work can have positive effects on women’s position within the household,¹⁵⁴ none of the forms of accumulation examined here made such work available. This may reflect not only gendered exclusions but also the structural limitations of late industrialization in large parts of the Global South.¹⁵⁵ But regardless of whether women’s labour was marginalized or increasingly exploited after dispossession, in none of the cases was women’s well-being and social position clearly improved by ‘the development projects’ for which they gave their land. Indeed, the diverse patriarchal social relations that structure women’s work within and outside the household were arguably strengthened in each case. This suggests that the implications of land grabs for the gendered division of labour should be at the centre of contemporary debates.

Implications: The gendered politics and policies of dispossession

What political and policy conclusions should we draw from these findings? First, while women fared particularly poorly in all cases of dispossession analysed here, it is important to recognize that the consequences were also typically poor for men. Only in the Gambia case, and to a lesser extent the Indonesian case, did a majority of men obtain significant benefits from the projects that dispossessed their land. The answer, then, cannot be simply to make dispossession gender equal, which would amount to equalizing proletarianization and impoverishment. While some policy analysts suggest that resettlement and rehabilitation provisions can prevent impoverishment,¹⁵⁶ the cases analysed here provide little evidence of that possibility—especially among the poor and marginalized. This suggests that, in the common formulation of ‘development-induced displacement’, it is the first term that needs further interrogation.

154 Kabeer 1994, 152–53.

155 Cf. Razavi 2009, 215; Bernstein 2004, 204; Li 2011.

156 Cernea 1999; Cernea and Mathur 2008.

Since the English enclosures, governments have justified the forcible dispossession of rural producers as serving the public or national good; in the last century this has been expressed through the language of development. But development is a political and not a technical concept, and the utilitarian calculations typically used to justify dispossession for large-scale capital projects beg the question of rights and distributional justice.¹⁵⁷ Who determines what development is, and who gets to use the state to redistribute society's resources? These are questions that the opponents of enclosure, the Mandinka women, anti-dam movements and the protagonists of today's 'land wars' have all raised in their own ways. Asking these questions takes on greater urgency in the neoliberal era, as states increasingly dispossess land for the use of private corporations in the name of the 'public good'. This study thus points to the need for maintaining narrow and democratically determined definitions of the 'public good', limiting forcible acquisition to public projects with widespread benefits to poor households and to women within those households, and making 'prior and informed consent' a pre-requisite for private projects that require land. It should go without saying that such consent should be obtained from all members of affected populations (including those without formal land rights) and not simply 'household heads': This would also help to ensure that only those projects from which women can expect to benefit would move forward.

Although forcible land dispossession would decrease under a more democratic determination of the public interest, there is still a pressing need to make national compensation and resettlement and rehabilitation policies gender equal.¹⁵⁸ Resettlement and rehabilitation should be used as an opportunity to correct women's lack of land rights where they do not exist and should protect them where they do.¹⁵⁹ This can be accomplished simply by giving women joint and preferably independent rights in any land or plots allocated as compensation. Other forms of compensation—whether cash or jobs—must also be distributed to women on an equal or

preferential basis. Probably the best possible outcome of dispossession for women would be to receive secure, well-paying, formal sector jobs. While this is probably utopian in the context of neoliberal growth trajectories, resettlement and rehabilitation policies should at least ensure that the jobs that do exist are distributed fairly.

These changes will have to be achieved through political struggle at the national level. Even if multilateral lending agencies were not losing relevance to private capital in financing land-consuming projects, the dreadful track record of institutions such as the World Bank in supporting projects opposed by local communities, and in utterly failing to ensure adequate resettlement and rehabilitation of displaced populations, disqualifies them as a force for change. Proposals such as voluntary international guidelines to 'govern' land grabs¹⁶⁰—euphemistically called transnational agricultural investments—are also misplaced on at least three levels. First, they are of limited relevance since they are intended to apply only to cases of foreign investment in farmland, neglecting both other kinds of land grabs and those financed domestically. Second, and more importantly, 'voluntary guidelines' beg the fundamental question of who gets to decide whether people are dispossessed for a given project and promise little more than involuntary dispossession with gestural corporate social responsibility. Third, to give rural women the power to make decisions about the disposition of their land, and even to ensure that they are fairly compensated when they are dispossessed, requires challenging the interests of corporations, states and, to some extent, men in general. To think that such a powerful nexus of interests could be checked by 'voluntary' guidelines is at best naïve.

With bleak prospects for 'reform from above', we should instead look to 'pressure from below' and particularly the collective organization of rural people. Such organization is not difficult to find as anti-dispossession struggles are now proliferating across many countries of the Global South. Women have often been in the forefront of such movements, putting themselves at great personal risk to defend

157 Cf. Dwivedi 2006.

158 Thukral 1996; Mehta 2009.

159 Agarwal 2002, 10, 19.

160 FAO et al. 2010.

their land and homes. It is undoubtedly the case that patriarchal social relations pervade these movements, and that women may often be used for protests while being excluded from negotiations and strategic discussions.¹⁶¹ But there are also many cases of women taking leadership roles in anti-dispossession struggles. Where this is not the case, feminist groups can play an important role in pushing anti-dispossession movements to become more gender equal in their organization and demands.

It is also true that securing land rights for women is no panacea¹⁶² and that stopping dispossession will not in itself transform the patriarchal social relations that structure the everyday lives of rural women. But the cases above suggest that forced dispossession rarely makes things better for rural women, and in most cases it makes things worse. Defensive struggles against dispossession may, consequently, be a precondition for more offensive struggles for gender justice and equality.

¹⁶¹ Campbell 1996.

¹⁶² Jackson 2003; Razavi 2003.

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