



Actors, Stakes and Stakeholders in the Land Question in Uganda

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1. Introduction

This is a discussion of the Human Rights and Peace Centre (HURIPEC) “*Status Report on Land Rights in Uganda*”; a report that was formally launched on Thursday, 9th November 2017, at Hotel Africana in Kampala, during a HURIPEC convened “*National Stakeholders Convening on Land, Justice and Governance in Uganda*.” On request from HURIPEC, this discussion focuses on the “*Actors in the current land question in Uganda*”, with a focus on agents of land grabbing and special groups (such as women and children).

Originally, the intention was that the arguments in this discussion would be carried by exploring the question: “*What is the value of my ancestors’ graves?*” The hypothesis was that one can tell who the current actors in Uganda’s land question are by how they answer the question: “*What is the value of my ancestors’ graves?*” The discussion was going to centre on such aspects of how I might be forced to value my ancestors’ remains and their graves when a particular kind of “development” comes to their resting places.

- How should I value the worth of my ancestors’ remains and therefore the value of the land that is their resting place?
- Should I value my ancestors’ remains on the basis of the cost incurred for the burial; or perhaps, the number of mourners that attended the funeral; or perhaps, the cost of relocation and reburying?

There is evidence to support the argument that a certain kind of “development” usually takes priority over the resting places of our ancestors. The difference, though, is in how the bones of our ancestors are treated when that kind of “development” descends upon their resting places. It is those differences and the attitude towards those differences that shows you who the actors in Uganda’s current land question are, I hypothesised. There are precedents in other parts of the world that one can draw from for a comparative analysis.

Take for instance, the manner in which the remains – the bones – of the Kings of England are treated when it is discovered that “development” descended on their resting places. According to The Telegraph (Sawer 2016), in 2012, the bones of King Richard III, for example, were found under a car park in Leicester in England. The remains of the King were exhumed from underneath the car park. In 2015, the bones were ultimately reinterred at Leicester Cathedral, following genetic testing that confirmed that the bones were of the king. The reburying of the King’s bones was with significant pomp and ceremony and no doubt, it was with significant financial cost to The State. The BBC (2015) reported that:

“During the service, The Rt Rev Tim Stevens, Bishop of Leicester, said: “People have come in their thousands from around the world to this place of honour, not to judge or condemn but to stand humble and reverent.” From car park to cathedral...Today we come to give this King, and these mortal remains the dignity and honour denied to them in death.”

The first discussant of The Report, Mr. Kalundi Serumaga, eloquently discussed examples of the manner in which my ancestors’ bones are treated when a particular kind of “development” descends upon their resting places. He pointed out how cultivation machinery is cutting through and crushing the bones of my ancestors, because “development”, in the form of sugarcane plantations, has come to their resting places. In the name of “development” it is the norm that the mortal remains of my ancestors are not accorded the dignity and the honour that they deserve. They are not re-located at the cost of The State, instead, and knowingly, in the name of “development”, the bones of my ancestors are crushed to dust and are compacted by wheels of graders; turning them into manure for growing sugarcane. The difference is glaring.

You may have already deciphered that I like stories and that I find it effective to engage others through story telling. As I prepared to discuss The Report, I had a change of mind several times about which story I should use to carry the arguments in this discussion. Eventually, I chose to use a story of the living. I finally settled on a story that I happened on, on social media. But first, what is an actor in the context of this discussion?

2. Actors in Uganda's current Land Question

According to an online dictionary, The Free Dictionary:

“(An) actor is a person who behaves in the manner of a character usually by reciting scripted dialogue, in order to entertain an audience, especially in a play, movie or television show.”

The Free Dictionary further defines an actor as follows:

“(An) actor is one who takes part, a participant.”

A Government of Uganda (GoU) Minister who participated in The Convening nicely encapsulated these definitions of an actor.

2.1. The Government of Uganda Minister

The Minister of Lands, Housing and Urban Development of the GoU, Hon. Amongi Betty Akena, in her speech and in her actions, during The Convening, was spot on and she nicely embodied *“a person who behaves in the manner of a character usually by reciting scripted dialogue.”* She left many at The Convening befuddled when after she agreed to participate in the ceremonial launch of The Report – signing the dummy; being photographed doing so; standing besides The Report - and then immediately afterwards, in her speech, she vigorously rejected The Report, right from its title? To many at The Convening, indeed, the Minister appeared as an actor who forgets her role and her scripted dialogue; realises so; and then improvises so as to rectify and get back on course; hoping that the audience does not realise her misstep.

While delivering her speech, the Minister seemed as though she was reciting a rigidly scripted dialogue and that which is characteristic of a particular school of thought, some observed. It appeared as though the script from which the Minister read was so rigid that it did not allow her to constructively engage the views of The Report that she had just participated in launching, nor the views that a short while prior had been expressed by the discussants of The Report, including those that are contained herein. The content of her speech and the manner in which she delivered it, in addition, was consistent with what subsequent Speakers at The Convening considered as arrogant, disrespectful and insensitive. It is justified to conclude that just like those cultivation machines, the graders clearing the land for sugarcane plantations, the Minister's attitude and her speech seemed firmly located within a paradigm that promotes the crushing of my ancestors' bones in the name of “development”.

Whereas, the Minister was physically present and she participated in The Convening, some at The Convening were left wondering if the Minister truly participated in The Convening as a rational human being in her own right. This is because, it seemed more like the Minister was ‘participated’ in The Convening - as in her participation in The Convening was seemingly that of one who has received ‘orders-from-above’, in order to participate, as opposed to one who attends on her own original initiative and intention to participate. While she delivered her speech, after all, the Minister seemed as though she were acting out her assigned part, voicing a script that she seemingly did not write or even participated in writing. It was assessed by some at The Convening that the Minister seemed like she was reciting scripted dialogue and that she seemingly did not fully understand the implications of what she uttered; the encoded message, particularly. Yes, some, at The Convening, did question the free will or the human agency, if you will, of the Minister only on the basis of her actions and the content of her speech at The Convening.

2.2. The 50 year old Mutuba tree

As of the morning of The Convening, Thursday, 9th November 2017, the chosen story that is carrying the arguments in this discussion was available on the 'Face Book wall' of the senior citizen of Uganda. The first part of the story is this photo and its caption:



“I planted these Mutuba trees as a fence in 1967 while my peers were dancing and enjoying life in Mbarara.”

(Note: It is assumed that the photo is not ‘photo-shopped’ and that the caption to the photo is a direct quote from His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, the current long-serving President of the Republic of Uganda (1986 to date))

When I saw the photo of the Mutuba trees, trees that are reportedly growing at the Rwakitura farm of the senior citizen of Uganda, and when I read the caption, I immediately thought: “development”, the kind that is promoted by a particular ‘neoliberal-commercialisation-of-land-for-modernisation’ school of thought, is very slow arriving at the Rwakitura farm of the senior citizen. This is because, that kind of “development” is generally incompatible with 50 year old trees, let alone trees such as the Mutuba. When that kind of “development” comes, the trees must go, the two cannot co-exist.

The global-western scientific name of Mutuba, according to Afri-Root Collective (2014), is “*Ficus Natalensis*” and the tree holds very high cultural significance to the first nations of Uganda – after all, it is from whence bark cloth or in Luganda, the language of the largest first nation of Uganda, *olubugo* is made. *Olubugo* is the traditional dress for the first nations of Uganda. One may recall the botched attempt of one of the presidential candidates in the 2016 Uganda Presidential Elections to appropriate the significance of *olubugo* by dressing in it for the historic globally televised second Uganda presidential debate. She looked positively hideous. The Daily Monitor (2016) beautifully captured that image of her; it has archived it; and continues re-using it for posterity.

In present day Uganda, *olubugo* continues to ceremoniously feature at official functions, such as coronation of kings and chiefs and as part of the regalia of the official garments of kings and chiefs. *Olubugo* is often symbolically used by fashion designers so that they may market their ‘modern creations’ as being ‘African-Ugandan’. This, even though, the central-logic is exogenous in origin for the bulk of their ‘modern creations’ that are symbolically adorned with *olubugo* or that are made from *olubugo* – the ‘modern creations’ are seemingly global-western centric in design. But then again, global-western designs have been known to also be significant appropriations of non-global-western cultures.

Relating to the original question: “*What is the value of my ancestors graves?*”, that may have carried the arguments in this discussion, in the past, *olubugo* played a significant role as the main fabric that the first nations of Uganda used to wrap the remains of the deceased in preparation for burial.

It is, therefore, befitting that there should be plenty of Mutuba trees growing all over Uganda. It is in fact valid to ask: why aren't Mutuba trees growing all over Uganda? Or are they growing all over Uganda except for places where “development” has arrived? Shouldn't the Mutuba trees be among protected species of Uganda and for multiple purposes – aesthetic value, spiritual value, environmental conservation, commerce – bark cloth production and value addition; the list is potentially long.

2.3. African indigenous knowledge – rotational grazing

The second part of the chosen story to carry the arguments herein is another photo with its caption; it is also a photo of the senior citizen that was also posted on his ‘Face Book wall’:



“This is to show how tall the grass can grow after letting this paddock lay fallow for four months. Grass grows by itself when you leave it for about four months.”

(Note: It is assumed that the photo is not ‘photo-shopped’ and that the caption to the photo is a direct quote from His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, the current long-serving President of the Republic of Uganda (1986 to date))

The two photos and their captions are insightful. They instantly plunged one's thoughts into thinking of the irony of the normalisation in Uganda of the roots of colonialism. The photos inspire one to question why discuss actors, while at a national stakeholders convening? Why limit discussion on those, like the Minister, who seemingly recite rigidly scripted dialogue, instead of those who write the scripts; or those who direct the drama; or those who finance the productions that sustain a particular ideology? Why not discuss the stakes and the stakeholders in Uganda's land question? Who are the stakeholders and what are the stakes in the land in Rwakitura on which the senior citizen's farm sits and by extension, who are the stakeholders and the stakes in Uganda's land?

2.4. Stakeholders in Uganda's Land Question

A government document on land that I read, a document that was commissioned by the current administration of the GoU, the National Resistance Movement Organisation (NRMO), through one of the GoU Ministries, a document whose production was funded by those the NRMO Administration considers as 'development partners' of the GoU – foreign bi-lateral and multilateral governmental agencies and that was reportedly authored by a Consultant, presumably a highly paid one, defined stakeholders in Uganda's land as:

“Persons within a system who affect, and/or are affected by, the policies, decisions and actions of the system; they can be individuals, communities, social groups or institutions of any size, aggregation or level in society... The term thus includes policy makers, planners and administrators in government and other organizations, as well as commercial and subsistence user groups... Broadly, the land stakeholders can be categorised as the State and Government, non-state actors, development partners and the public.”

Hon. Amongi Akena and President Museveni, as part of the State, are clearly defined as stakeholders in Uganda's land; while the owners of Uganda's land, the citizens of Uganda, are not specifically mentioned in that definition as being among the stakeholders – they are vaguely lumped in as *“the public.”* How is it that the chosen definition used in a GoU commissioned document refers to the owners of Uganda's land in vague terms as *“those affected by policies, decisions and actions of the system”* or *“commercial user groups”* or *“subsistence user groups”* or *“non-state actors”* or *“the public”*? Why not clearly specify them as the owners of Uganda's land? After all, the definition is very specific in stating *“development partners”* as among the stakeholders.

There are alternatives to the chosen GoU problematic definition. A Google search of “stakeholder” resulted in this definition at the top of the search results: *“(In gambling) an independent party with whom each of those who make a wager deposits the money or counters wagered.”* When it is applied to Uganda's land, the answers to the following questions are interesting and valid to know:

- Who are those that are making wagers that have impact on Uganda's land?
- Who are those who have received the deposits of the money for the wagers?
- Are the recipients of current and future wagers truly independent parties?
- Most importantly, who are they exactly who are the recipients of wagers on Uganda's land?

The second definition of “stakeholder” that appeared in Google search results was: *“A person with an interest or concern in something especially a business”*. And the third, a legal definition of “stakeholder”: *“A person holding property or owning an obligation that is claimed by two or more adverse claimants and who has no claim to or interest in the property or obligation.”* Using these three alternative definitions of “stakeholder”, the owners of Uganda's land would be at the centre of those who would genuinely fit within the categorisation “stakeholders” in Uganda's land. Let us take a moment to discern from the Rwakitura farm, the stakes and the stakeholders. They, at least, should include:

- **The remains of our ancestors** that were laid to rest on that land, if at all – before and after the present day Rwakitura farm (the physical bones; the spirits or the souls of those resting in peace – the spiritual value, that is; the economic value and the environmental conservation value of the burial grounds).
- **Nature** – the land itself and its intrinsic value, including the vegetation – trees, grass and other crops - growing on it, including the 50-year old Mutuba tree; the animals grazing on it and others as well that depend on it in other ways, including humans; and that which is in the underbelly of the land – minerals, oil, etc., if at all; and also underground water sources.

- **Mr. Museveni** - as a citizen of Uganda; as a custodian of his ancestors' remains and burial grounds; as an individual economic investor; as an elder descended from the peoples of Ankole and therefore a custodian of Banyankole knowledge systems; and as the President of the Republic of Uganda and therefore the chief custodian of 'Black-African-Ugandan' knowledge systems.
- **Previous occupants of the land** – descendants of the first nations, particularly the Banyankole, who occupied the land pre and post colonisation of Uganda by the British.
- **Those fenced out** of the land, including those that first occupied it and or those that did not occupy it, but had access and user rights to it and through it.
- **Mr. Museveni's peers** who were enjoying life in Mbarara in 1967, presumably now regretting their 'ill advised ways', for they are part owners of the land that is the Republic of Uganda.

The case of the Rwakitura farm is easily extrapolated to be representative of many parts of Uganda, perhaps, the majority of Uganda, in fact. Be that as it may, a particular stake of which often many are sub-conscious is "The Script" that manipulates how the different stakes and the different stakeholders interact at a given time.

2.5. The Dominant Script in Uganda's Land Question

The Report in discussion begins around 120 years ago, when the territory now known as Uganda was declared a protectorate by the British. This is one of the structural discourse traps that those discussing Uganda's current land question often fall into. The territory that the British annexed and named Uganda was originally occupied by the first nations of Uganda – peoples of Black-African descent. So, why does HURIPPEC begin its report 120 years ago? How then will The Report foster discourse on the restoration of the rights of the first nations of Uganda to the lands that were annexed from them by the colonialists?

If one agrees, as I do, that the declaration of ownership of Uganda by the British, and their subsequent 'return' of ownership of Uganda to The State was and remains problematic, then this is a major issue that needs to be resolved. For one, the British returned ownership not to those from whom they grabbed the land in the first place, but to The State; a state that was borne in Lancaster House in London and without genuine representation of all of the first nations of Uganda. The first discussant, Kalundi, explored this eloquently. The boundaries, international and internal, claimed by the British were not in the interests of the diverse first nations that previously occupied and owned the territory before the British came.

So, why are we stuck with those boundaries? Where is the justice in that, for the first nations of Uganda – the Iteso, my people, who are the fifth largest and the largest non-bantu; the Baganda, the largest; the Banyankole, the second largest; the Basoga, the third largest; the Bakiga, the fourth largest; and all the other 50 plus first nations of Uganda? By starting 120 years ago, The Report inadvertently normalises the colonial period by subconsciously endorsing the 'let-us-forget-the-colonial-past' smokescreen. The colonial past is not relevant now, let us instead 'modernise' and catch-up to be like our colonisers, so goes the logic of that smokescreen. By subconsciously endorsing that smokescreen, the culturally imperialistic interpretation of John Locke's Second Treatise is unintentionally also normalised by The Report.

In the version published by The University of Chicago, in his Second Treatise (1689), Locke argued:

“God gave the world to men in common; but since he gave it them for their benefit, and the greatest conveniences of life they were capable to draw from it, it cannot be supposed he meant it should always remain common and uncultivated. He gave it to the use of the industrious and rational... For I ask whether in the wild woods uncultivated wast (waste) of America left to nature, without any improvement, tillage or husbandry, a thousand acres will yield the need and wretched inhabitants as many conveniences of life as ten acres of equally fertile land doe (does) in Devonshire where they are well cultivated?”

A culturally imperialistic interpretation of Locke's Second Treatise, indeed, forms the basis and the justification of colonialism. The colonialists, in this context the British, elevated themselves to be the ones **"industrious and rational"**; while dehumanising those that they colonised, in this context, Black-African first nations of Uganda, as **"wretched inhabitants."** Because of greed, the British who colonised Uganda circumvented the idea that **"God gave the world to men in common"**, as in the world is for us all and we humans should use it for the greater good of us all. They classified humans and argued that one class of humans, the **"wretched inhabitants"**, the Black-African first nations of Uganda, were irresponsible anyway, for letting the land **"remain common and uncultivated... wild woods uncultivated... left to nature, without any improvement, tillage or husbandry."**

The wisdom behind planting of Mutuba trees as fences is age old wisdom of the first nations of Uganda – the Iteso, the Baganda, the Banyankole, the Basoga, and likely all others. The practice of rotational grazing embodies the very essence of the environmental conservation wisdom of pastoralist first nations of Uganda, including the Iteso and the Karimojong. A major component of the practice of rotational grazing is letting grazing lands fallow for months, in order to allow for the vegetation – grass and shrubs – to regenerate. As one part of grazing land is left to fallow another is utilised to graze the animals, and the cycle continues. The only difference is that for some pastoralists, perhaps such as The Report includes in the category **"individual actors with political backing and the sufficient funds to pursue illicit agendas"**, they practice rotational grazing within fenced grazing farm lands that stretch for miles; while others, such as the Karimojong pastoralists, they do so in commons.

How ironic that within the confines of the current dominant script in Uganda's land question, when Mr. Museveni does rotational grazing, a common practice among pastoralist communities in Uganda, it is considered 'progressive' for he is considered among the **"industrious and rational."** He is doing rotational grazing in a 'modern' way, the argument goes, for he is doing it within fenced 'modern grazing farmlands' that stretch for miles, presumably. When plots on his grazing lands in his Rwakitura farm are left to fallow it is celebrated and it is not considered **"woods uncultivated... left to nature, without any improvement, tillage or husbandry."**

When Karimojong semi-nomadic pastoralists practice the age old wisdom of our forefathers, rotational grazing, they are vilified. They are labelled as Uganda's **"wretched inhabitants"** who do not know how best to utilise God's gift to man, are 'backward' and 'unproductive.', because they are practicing within the ethos of humanity, sharing the world in common. This business of owning large herds of animals and moving them from one place to another is not sustainable, a GoU official, one too many, has argued. And moreover, that argument is often accompanied with inappropriate policy and programming for Karimojong, in order to force them to abandon their pastoralist way of life and to become sedentary crop farmers.

By starting The Report 120 years ago discourse on Uganda's land question is directed away from the Machiavellian schemes that are the structure that holds and sustains the root causes of Uganda's current land question. Greed-driven Machiavellian schemes, which justify the removal of Ugandans off their land in the name of making way for "development." Schemes that are rooted in culturally imperialistic interpretations of Locke's Second Treatise, such as Edgar and Sedgwick (2008), assert **"can be traced at least as far back as the burgeoning of mercantile capitalism and the accompanying development of the ideology of liberal individualism in eighteenth-century Europe."**

Such Machiavellian schemes are the real reason why the promoters of the 'neoliberal-commercialisation-of-land-for-modernisation' school of thought ensure that Ugandan citizens are not defined as the owners of the land that is Uganda. And so they go to great length to categorise us, Ugandans, as: squatters, bonafide occupants, vulnerable people, poor people, peasantry in the negative, peasants in the negative, landless on own land. Machiavellian schemes often cannot be sustained without insider collaboration, hence the creation of a class of Ugandans, akin to the 'one-percent' in the global-west, who are labelled as 'investors'. The 'investors' are encouraged to accumulate long stretches of land, enclose it and claim absolute ownership rights over it. Arguably, the Ugandan insider collaborators are among those that The Report describes as the **"individual actors with political backing and the sufficient funds to pursue illicit agendas."**

2.6. Land Grabbers

The Report under discussion, seemingly, promotes a perception that land grabbers and special groups can be identified quite easily and that we are all equally conscious of them. Valid questions come to mind:

- Can one easily deduce who the land grabbers are from the Rwakitura farm story or are there none, and all is well there?
- Can one easily deduce from the Rwakitura farm story the special groups with a stake in the land on which the farm spreads?
- And by the way, what land ownership rights did Mr. Museveni have in 1967 when he planted the Mutuba trees?
- Is the land on which the Mutuba trees grow still under the same land tenure system or has the tenure system changed?

If Mr. Museveni planted the Mutuba tree while the land on which it grows was under customary tenure, as was the majority of Uganda's land at the time, and the tree survives 50 years later, it debunks the dominant argument that customary tenure and 'progress' or 'modernisation', if you will, are inconsistent and incompatible. Or perhaps, it is the case that the land is now governed under another type of tenure. If at all, it would likely be tenure consistent with the global-western view of individual ownership of land with absolute rights over it. If the land on which Mr. Museveni's Mutuba trees continue to grow 50 years later has changed tenure systems, say to leasehold or to freehold, it would be interesting to find out the reasons why. It would also be interesting to find out the degree to which all stakeholders in that land agree or not on whether the change was good or bad. If those with a stake or are stakeholders in the land on which the Rwakitura farm spreads do not all agree with the changes, then it follows that land grabbing likely took place.

Land grabbing can be overt and it can be covert. The overt kind, in which people are physically removed off their land or attempts are made to physically remove people off the land, often gets significant publicity from the media – in the case of Amuru, of Soroti, of Mabira, and of Kalangala. Basically, this kind of overt land grabbing is justified by a culturally imperialistic view that advocates for Uganda's smallholder farmers, who feed the nation, to be removed off the land and to be replaced on the land by large scale farmers. Large scale farmers in this context are often viewed as those, like Mr. Museveni in his capacity as owner of Rwakitura farm, among others. Large scale farmers, perhaps, are among those whom The Report describes as possessing *“political backing and the sufficient funds to pursue illicit agendas.”* It is they who have the capacity to produce large quantities, usually through mono-cropping and through the use of high technology – including machinery, artificial fertilisers, pesticides, and perhaps, even genetically modified crops. In the name of “development” large-scale farmers, the ‘investors’, are perceived as being sanctioned by The State to crush my ancestors bones and to turn them into manure, while the ‘investors’ are in the pursuit of ‘modernisation’ of agriculture.

The kind of land grabbing, however, that is more widely spread in Uganda is covert. Covert land grabbing is when people are not necessarily removed off their land; they continue to occupy it somewhat; but their authority over the utilisation of their land is taken away from them. Covert land grabbing goes on barely scrutinised, and rarely makes it into the news, as does overt land grabbing. This is because primary covert land grabbers come dressed in a saviour complex – he is the ‘investor’ and ‘the developer’ that is coming to make the land much more ‘productive.’ What is the definition of productive? In this context it is as defined by the ‘neoliberal-commercialisation-of-land-for-modernisation’ school of thought, which aims for Uganda to be ‘modern’, like Britain. A culturally imperialistic rationale sells the covert land grabber, the ‘investor’, as the *“industrious and rational”* one who can better utilise the land to generate Locke's *“many conveniences of life”* for the *“wretched inhabitants”*, as likened to the manner that less quantities of Locke's *“equally fertile land does in Devonshire for they are well cultivated.”*

Examples abound of covert land grabbing thriving under the smokescreen of the fallacy that there is a need to modernise Uganda's agriculture. Ugandans are encouraged to divert their land to grow 'modern' crops, such as *Epuripur* sorghum or palm oil or vanilla; to become commercial farmers; because commercialization of agriculture is better utilisation of Uganda's land, the reasoning goes. The factoid of the "***industrious and rational***" investor is sold through false claims that Uganda's land is currently underutilised by the majority of its owners, the citizens of Uganda. This falsehood is supported by more falsehoods such as claiming that those who are not Mr. Museveni, like Karimojong, who let land fallow for months, in order that it may regenerate grazing lands, are "***wretched inhabitants***" currently not utilising the land productively and are incapable of doing so. They need an 'investor' to come and enslave them on their land and so he can put the labour of the "***wretched inhabitants***" to better use; the falsehood is peddled.

An alternative offered to smallholder farmers for not being removed off their land is to be enslaved on their land mono-cropping 'modern crops' in order to supply a particular investor with cheap raw material. It is the norm for such an 'investor' to enter into contractual obligations with the farmer using unfavourable terms of trade, which transfer all the risks that come with rain-fed agriculture to the farmer. The investor loans the farmer the necessary inputs for producing the 'modern' crop and the deal is that the farmer will produce the crop and in-lieu of payment for his produce, his loan with the investor will be settled. Note that the investor pre-negotiates the farm-gate price to his advantage, as well. In addition to being economically exploitative, there is evidence that covert land grabbing of this nature, for the purpose of growing 'modern crops' damages the land and also indigenous foods systems.

A classic example is *Epuripur* sorghum which caused changes in land utilisation in Teso from growing of sorghum as a food crop for home consumption to growing sorghum as a cash crop; effectively changing sorghum from being a 'woman's crop' to a 'man's crop'. The knock on effect was that the land on which sorghum for home consumption was previously grown was diverted to growing *Epuripur* sorghum to supply to Nile Breweries, as a cheap material for making bottled beer. The major staple food of the Iteso, *atap*, is dependent on sorghum. Since *Epuripur* sorghum cannot be consumed as *atap*, there is no doubt that the *Epuripur* sorghum investor contributed to food and nutrition insecurity in Teso. And moreover, scientists confirm that *Epuripur* sorghum is a high feeder of nutrients, which if the farmer grows consistently without letting the land lie fallow, damages the land. There is evidence that *Epuripur* did so in Teso. Ironically, though, the introduction of *Epuripur* is heralded as an excellent example of an exceptionally successful public private partnership project.

Changes in the way that agricultural land is used have a knock on effect of changing the status of farmers to something else - the change of status from being a farmer to something else, such as, like changing livelihoods and becoming an urban-dweller-service-provider, such as being a cutter of nails and eyebrows. The problem is that the long term impact of the change in status of farmers to other livelihoods as urban dwellers is rarely and is scantily accommodated within the dominant discourse of the 'modernisation' story. What is the long term impact on Uganda's farmers of 'modernisation' interventions which change the way in which Uganda's agricultural land is used?

3. Conclusion

The Report does capture global-western cultural imperialism when it discusses the manner in which the ways of doing things of the first nations of Uganda are subjugated within and by statutory law. But the problem is that it then takes a tone of purposeless lamentation that does not take the necessary step to demand for the necessary overhaul of statutory law and to subjugate current global-western-centric statutory law to the laws of the first nations of Uganda. How is it, for example, that Ugandans continue to accept a definition of "development" or "modernisation" as being equal to being like Britain? To be like Britain, in the context of Uganda's land question, is to ultimately endorse Ugandans to become landless citizens. It is a fact that the majority of the British are landless. If Ugandans, therefore, buy into the 'neoliberal-commercialisation-of-land-for-modernisation' school of thought, then success is when the majority of Ugandans are landless. We need to think about such implications and The Report does not clearly address them.

The quest, to make Ugandans landless citizens, is justified by obnoxious culturally imperialistic views that falsely claim that the ways of the first nations of Uganda, of our ancestors, the pre-colonial owners of the territory now known as Uganda, are inferior and backward. The time is now for us, the descendants of Black-Africans, the first nations of Uganda, to give back life, dignity and honour to the ways of doing and the knowledge systems of our ancestors. Let the Mutuba tree – with all its potential environmental conservation value, economic value and spiritual value – become Uganda’s signature attraction to the rest of the world; while at the same time generating multiple benefits for Ugandans.

Uganda’s Black African heritage is superior to the bastardised version of English culture now prevalent in Uganda. All we have to do is to revive and formalise the use of the knowledge systems of our ancestors, including the definition of land ownership. Our forefathers defined land ownership in a superior way, on the basis of land use rights. The premise of ownership within the land tenure systems of nearly all the first nations of Uganda was user rights. There is evidence to show that land tenure systems that are based on user rights are more egalitarian and accommodative for all citizens, including women. This is the case within the genuine wisdom of the Iteso. In Teso the word for marriage is “*adukokin*”; which is derived from the word “*aiduk*”, which means build. In Teso, therefore, when a man and a woman are united in marriage, they necessarily vow to build a home together. Within Iteso wisdom the honour of ensuring the food and nutrition security of the family is bestowed upon women. And it is clearly provided for within Iteso tenure systems - land ownership rights for women are clearly provided for, through the tradition of allocating user rights over land, for the purpose of food production for domestic consumption.

Let it be clear that user rights in Teso confer absolute rights over the produce from the land that those with such rights produced with their labour. In which case, the notion, that is implied by The Report that 51 percent of Uganda’s population, women, are among the special groups that need special charitable attention, should be absolutely rejected. Within the wisdom of the Iteso, the wisdom of the other first nations of Uganda, and as Customary Tenure stipulated in the Constitution of Uganda, women are the majority owners of Uganda’s land; for they are the majority citizens of Uganda. The notion, in fact, of special groups, as a whole, within the discourse on Uganda’s land should be rejected for it is oxymoronic in its premise that there are Ugandan citizens, such as women, who are not joint owners of Uganda’s land, as are all citizens of Uganda.

It is the land tenure systems that are exogenous in origin and that are part of the ‘neoliberal-commercialisation-of-land-for-modernisation’ school of thought that define land ownership as having the absolute right over land to buy and sell it; that at a stroke of a pen renders people landless. Such exogenous land tenure systems and all other oxymoronic bastardised English laws need to be weeded out from Uganda’s statutory laws. Let us revert back to the age-old wisdoms of our ancestors, to elevate and celebrate them by making them the norm for all Ugandans to practice and to be proud of the tradition of growing Mutuba trees and of rotational grazing, as does Mr. Museveni.

Let us write our own script at best; or at least heavily edit the current dominant one, the one of the ‘neoliberal-commercialisation-of-land-for-modernisation’ school of thought, that has been thrust upon us. It is time for the learning of our knowledge, the knowledge of the first nations of Uganda, and its practice to be what Uganda considers as the formal; and to relegate the bastardised version of English knowledge systems that currently dominate Uganda to become the informal.

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