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Large-scale Land Acquisitions and Institutions: Patterns, Influence and Barriers in Zambia

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Abstract

Large-scale land acquisitions (LaSLAs) have been a common feature of neoliberal transformation in which state entities facilitate foreign investments; yet the related governance dynamics remain poorly understood. This paper combines policy analysis and interview data to investigate governance dynamics of LaSLAs and analyses competing authority and power relations between national actors mediating land access for the case of Zambia. Our findings show that corporate interest, donor and regional support drive LaSLAs, but national factors predominate. Whilst possibilities for LaSLAs are created by state institutions, the state agencies seeking to administer land-based resources also limit their potential through competing authority and agendas. The demand for land and water, accompanied by government and donor resources, heighten tensions among state entities over decision-making and creation of new frontiers of resource control. By focusing on state and non-state actors and their articulation in LaSLAs, our study shows that the top-down nature of governance of land, labour and water resources is problematic for long-term sustainable agriculture and rural development. The paper highlights the importance of state entities and their control, legal extensions and governance practices in relation to local subjects in delivering LaSLAs and facilitating the emergence of a more locally-rooted agro-vision for agriculture for sustainable and socially-just rural development.

Keywords: Large-scale land acquisitions; governance; institutions; land-grabbing; sub-Saharan Africa; Zambia

1. Introduction

Much has been written about large-scale land acquisitions (LaSLAs) in the past decade (LaSLAs) (e.g. Fairhead et al. 2012; White et al. et al. 2012), but perspectives on how investments draw upon and restructure national state governance processes are limited (Wolford et al. 2013). The politics within state institutions, extensions of political power, and relationships among different actors mediating land access, remain peripheral to the ‘land-grabbing’ debate, which has particularly focused on national governance of the land sector and tenure security (Arezki et al. 2011). Of concern is that LaSLAs coincide with poor governance (German et al. 2013), unclear property rights (Deininger and Byerlee 2012) and heightened competition in determining land access (Burnod et al. 2013). Negative aspects of LaSLAs such as dispossessions, corruption and lack of transparency require improved governance systems, with much support in multi-lateral organisations focused on strengthening of legal and bureaucratic frameworks within which LaSLAs take place (Stephens 2011). For analysis of LaSLAs to be comprehensive, there is a need to explore and understand the nature and motivations of state and non-state actors themselves, their interactions, authority as well as the power and influence they exert (Burnod et a. 2013; Fairbain 2013).

In Zambia, LaSLAs have been a constitutive feature of neoliberal transformation in which state entities have provided the underpinning for foreign investments since the 1990s. Large tracts of land have been enclosed for tourism, conservation, mining and agriculture (Sitko and Chamberlin 2016). In dealing with such interests, the government has established territorial reserves for LaSLAs such as the Mkushi Farm Block (e.g. wheat, maize, soybean) and the ‘Sugarbelt’ regions respectively of the central and southern provinces, facilitating corporate land access for national and rural development (GRZ 2017). In the absence of a clear national land policy, state entities draw on different sorts of authority in bringing together capital and land, and creating new frontiers of land control. Converting customary land into state land, a practice in which state and traditional relationships combine in negotiations and legal frameworks allows foreign ownership of land (Nolte 2014). Land control and ownership by LaSLAs highlight institutional and political processes that, for over a decade, have shaped access, claims and exclusion (Peluso and Lund 2011). For instance, the Ministry of Land and Natural Resources allocates¹ land and defines resource access, but frequently operates in close collaboration with foreign investors and multi-lateral donors. Land authorities play dual roles

¹ Acronyms are listed in the Glossary provided as section A of the Supporting Information

as facilitators and regulators of LaSLAs but also as rent seekers, invoking questions about state capacity, authority and influence. The Lands Act of 1995 provides the legal, bureaucratic and regulatory framework for LaSLAs and for protecting local land rights (Nolte 2014). The Act recognises both customary and statutory landholding but ministries and state agencies permeate both spheres.

This paper examines the role of state institutions, and how wide-ranging multi-level actors interact with each other to shape the outcomes of LaSLAs. It explores tensions between policy and development actors involved in LaSLAs with respect to sugar investments and land acquisitions in Zambia, and the opportunities for institutional cooperation and collaboration. The specific objectives are to: 1) examine trends and patterns of LaSLAs and how the actors and institutions influence investments in Zambia; 2) explore different drivers and political narratives shaping LaSLAs in Zambia; and 3) explore cooperation and collaboration practices among state agencies involved in land acquisitions and policy in Zambia.

2. Large-scale Land Acquisitions in the National Context

LaSLAs and resource scarcity concerns have both made visible the role of the state and its relationships to investors and the local population. Detailed analysis of LaSLAs requires that we explore motivations and interactions of state and non-state actors, and how they shape governance dynamics. To do this, we draw on concepts from political ecology to examine how national and sub-national actors interact in multiple relationships and in the context of the environment, economy and state; and how they shape discourse concerning LaSLAs (Robbins 2004).

The state never operates with a collective voice, as agencies articulate different kinds of power to shape access to land. Wolford et al. (2013) stress that government is about ‘processes, people and relationships’ and, drawing on a collection of papers that unpack the complexity of land deals, provide a way of conceptualising governance that we exploit in our paper. They argue that this complexity requires understanding territory, sovereignty, authority, subjects and subjectivities (Wolford et al. 2013, 193). They highlight that these tend not to be ‘fixed’ but ‘are relationships and, as such, shaped by constant struggle embodied in everyday practices and discourses as much as in formal institutions’ (ibid., 194). Hence territory is not just about places bounded on a map but also includes ‘legal extensions of state power on the ground,’ whilst sovereignty relates to formal bodies and rulers but also how they ‘control their own reproduction.’ Authority is about actors, multi-scale governance and legal practices, and subjects and subjectivities refer to how different actors relating to land are able ‘to make claims

on the state' (Wolford et al. 2013). Political ecology tools and analyses of the state provide a nuanced and necessary perspective on the relationship between LaSLAs and the state. This is necessary in understanding the 'highly variable form and content of LaSLAs' and the nature of participants in the property changing relationships (Wolford et al. 2013, 189). Thus, LaSLAs depend on the competencies of state bureaucracies, their embeddedness in society and their territorial reach and capacity (German et al. 2011).

Integrating macro-level policy and institutional practices with micro-level experiences in land access and control make visible the constitution of territories for LaSLAs, and the associated elements of sovereignty, authority and subjects. In Zambia, the government legitimises its own facilitatory role – as development-oriented land broker – through investment promotion institutions (Nolte 2014). Through ideological and political narratives, the drive for LaSLAs is perpetuated and reproduced through state authority. However, new power and property relations created in host communities raise questions about sovereignty and autonomy in resource access and decision making (Rutten et al. 2017). The idea that only 7% of the country's total arable land is currently cultivated alongside an estimated 423,000ha (88%) deficit in irrigation potential has increased state expectations of LaSLAs, and its authority and claims on certain territories (GRZ 2016, 16). It has also heightened the role of the state and competing agendas within state agencies seeking to administer land resources for various motivations (Nolte 2014). For instance, about 2.5 million hectares have been marketed for LaSLAs (Oakland Institute 2011; World Bank 2011, 65), highlighting the active role of ministries and state agencies, some of which are closely linked to external or private interests. Recent studies show these processes have eroded customary land tenure from 94% of Zambia's total land area in the 1960s to 54% in 2016 (Sitko and Chamberlin 2016, 49).

There is a low threshold under which state institutions can alienate land, which means that the scope for expropriation has somewhat widened in the presence of LaSLAs. In this context, the state has facilitated land deals to different clients, many of which are foreign (Nolte 2014). About 60% of Zambia's population is rural, characterised by acute poverty levels (77% of the rural population), and dependent on agriculture (GRZ 2013a). Promises of employment and rural development associated with LaSLAs have legitimized the state's role in facilitating foreign land acquisitions (Table 2). New state institutions involved in linking foreign investments to priority areas (e.g. agriculture) have emerged, including the Zambia Development Agency (ZDA) which provides One-Stop services to investors, and the Industrial Development Corporation Limited (IDC, an investment holding company for state-owned

enterprises since 2014) which catalyses private sector investments through legal and institutional frameworks. Thus, state entities can draw on different kinds of actors and authorities to facilitate deals.

Much research in Zambia has until now narrowly focused on impacts of LaSLAs such as local participation in LaSLAs (Hichaambwa and Jayne 2012), economic impacts (Ahlerup and Tengstam 2015), and small-holder productivity (Sipangule and Lay 2015). However, over-reliance on micro-level analyses has led to limited insights into the wider governance dynamics, and how state agencies actively shape new frontiers of land control and make LaSLAs visible. This necessitates a departure from conventional descriptions of the national state as weak, fragile, corrupt and non-transparent (Arezki et al. 2011) to considerations of the state as a stage on which key decisions about LaSLAs are made and contested (Osabuohien 2014). LaSLAs relate to state capacities, and specifically to the nature and quality of its institutional frameworks, since land deals and land governance depend on the prevailing institutional context as well as the extent to which institutions work or act together for the common purpose (ibid.). Institutions that make land available and determine access/utilisation thus influence social and economic development.

There is no necessary character to LaSLAs, which are investments framed ‘more broadly as embedded in complex multi-scale webs of relationships shaped by power, property, and production’ (Wolford et al. 2013, 199). Recent studies have shown the dangers of advancing an inevitable agro-industrial future for sub-Saharan Africa, or indeed an idea that governance and accountability are the silver bullets for LaSLAs (Peters 2013; Ruth et al. 2015). The broader significance in our framing emphasises the importance of place, time and context and how they shape practices, and discourses of territory, sovereignty, authority, and subjects. It acknowledges that the viability of investments depends on the nature of the ‘choice set’ presented by institutional and policy provisions (North 1990).

3. Research Design and Methods

This study combines policy analyses and interviews with diverse actors at national, district and community levels. Key policies were identified first through an Internet search for policy documents shaping LaSLAs (February 2015), yielding 23 documents. The search sought to identify policies related to agriculture, major actors and institutions connected to LaSLAs. Scoping research then identified state and non-state actors and institutions shaping LaSAIs, and ascertained priority issues in Zambian agriculture. Interviews identified policies and

strategies related to LaSAIs and filtered the preliminary Internet search list to 12 key documents (Table 1). Questions for respondents focused on trends, patterns, and drivers of LaSLAs as well as governance processes at different levels.

<i>Document</i>	<i>Description</i>
Vision 2030 (V2030)	Long-term development plan
National Agricultural Policy (NAP)	Agricultural policy
National Agricultural Investment Plan (NAIP) – 2014-2018	Investment plan
Strategy for Industrialisation and Job Creation (IS)	Industrialisation strategy
National Irrigation Policy and Strategy (NIPS)	Irrigation policy/strategy
Fifth National Development Plan (5 th NDP)	Development plan
National Energy Policy (NEP)	Energy policy
National Water Policy (NWP)	Water policy
Sixth National Development Plan (6 th NDP)	Development plan
Revised Sixth National Development Plan (R6 th NDP)	Development plan
National Resettlement Policy (NRP)	Resettlement policy
Seventh National Development Plan (7 th NDP)	Development plan

To obtain information on the governance dynamics of LaSAIs, institutions and multi-level actors, 34 semi-structured interviews were undertaken with individuals in state institutions, academic institutions/think tanks, donors and NGOs at national level (November 2016 to February 2017).² We categorised the respondents as national, regional, district and sub-district level actors to investigate a range of perspectives, to gain a broad representation, and to explore how a wide range of state and non-state actors interact to shape outcomes of land deals (Figure 1). National interviews considered decision making around LaSLAs and how state agencies actively create new frontiers of land control to facilitate investments.

District and sub-district interviews were focused on southern province of Zambia, particularly the ‘sugarbelt’ district of Mazabuka as a hot spot province for LaSLAs (Sipangule and Lay 2015) (Figure 1). Mazabuka district has become effectively a territorial reserve for LaSAIs in sugar-cane, particularly as land deals for the same crop elsewhere have been slow. Political and economic reforms of the 1990s brought to Mazabuka LaSLAs in sugar-cane by the South African-based Illovo Sugar Plc which operates as Zambia Sugar Plc (ZaSPlc) (since

² Details of interviews are listed in section B of the Supporting Information; in the text, references to the interviews are identified by the interview code and date (e.g. P1.05.01.16).

2002). ZaSPIC commands over 17,500 hectares of agriculture land directly and over 13,000 hectares indirectly, through commercial farmers, outgrower companies and small-holders.

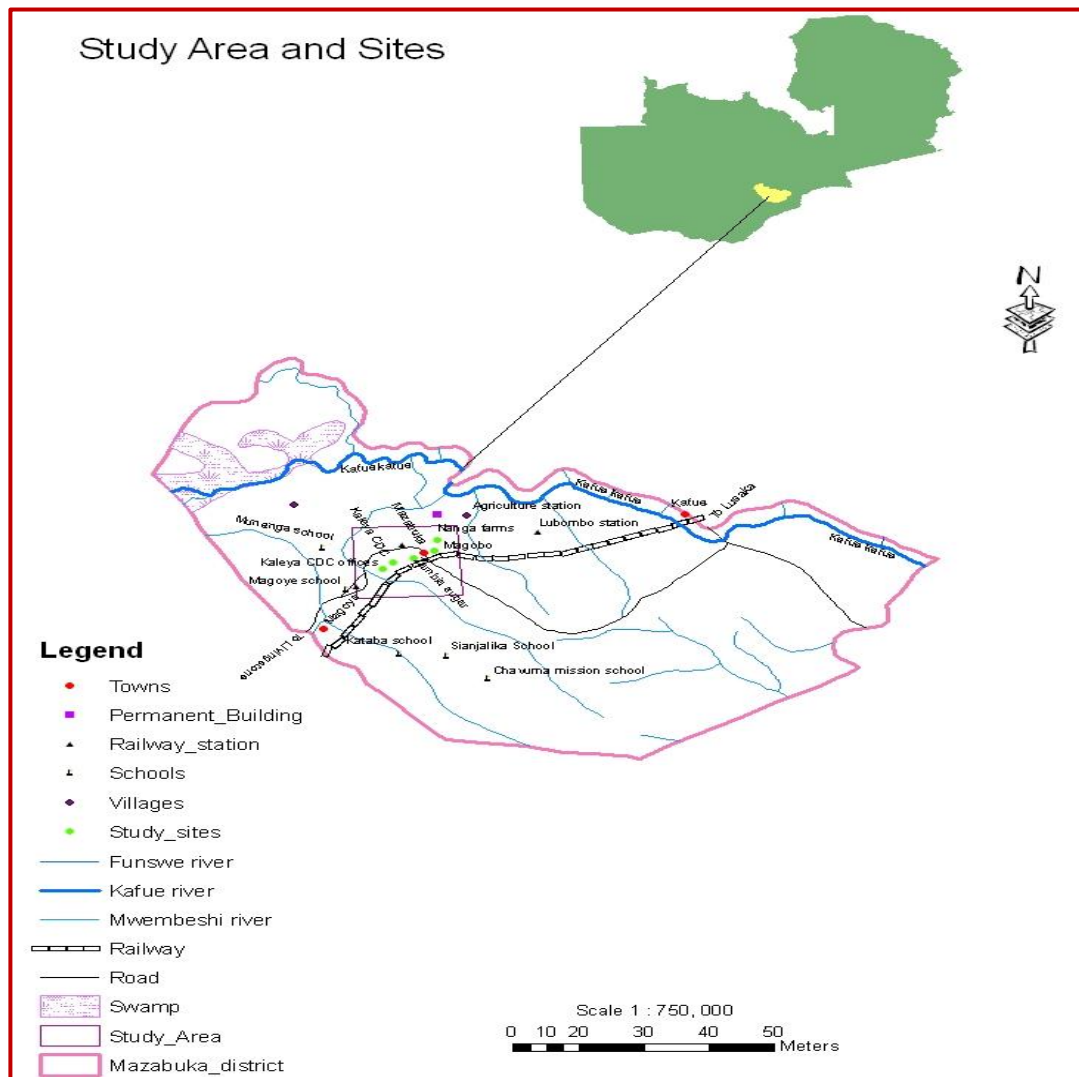


Figure 1: Study area and sites (Drawn using ArcMap)

District interviews were conducted with government officials, NGOs, commercial bank representatives, and private actors connected to the sugar industry. Sub-district interviews drew from the three-main small-holder outgrower schemes supplying ZaSPIC: Manyonyo, Kaleya and Magobbo. Manyonyo has 555 hectares and 160 small-holders (operating since 2010); Magobbo with 432 hectares and 80 small-holders (operating since 2008); whilst Kaleya has 1,100 hectares and 160 small-holders (operating since 1984). On average, small-holders hold 6.5ha, 5ha and 4ha of land in Kaleya, Magobbo and Manyonyo respectively. Other local experiences such as those in the Mkushi farm-block in Central Province were drawn from national level interviews and verified through literature search. Local level respondents include

chiefs, community informants and sugar-cane associations. Interviews focused on regional land access and control and the roles of different actors in determining access. District and sub-district interviews discussed land and water access and control, permitting us to link macro-institutional and policy processes to local outcomes, and to measure drivers, outcomes and challenges to investment.

Policy documents and strategies were analysed for content (Elo and Kyngas 2008), by analysing textual data (Creswell 1998). A comprehensive list of themes and headings was developed during the reading stage, collapsing similar and overlapping headings (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). Dominant narratives, emphasised, less emphasised or missing aspects were highlighted, producing thirteen major categories linked to LaSLAs (Table 2). Content analysis considered policy enablers of LaSAIs and agro-expansion, and how foreign investments have been promoted in national institutions. Knowledge fragmentation about LaSLAs in Zambia means that manifest content categories were derived inductively, permitting us to link policy provisions to practice as highlighted in interviews (Cole 1998).

Qualitative data were organised as interview and field notes. Data were coded manually and using NVivo to produce varying themes and categories in relation to research objectives (Bazeley 2007). Specific relationships between and among key national and local actors were mapped out drawing on stakeholder narratives and experiences (Welsh 2002). These were analysed to expose coordination of LaSLAs and the role of different state agencies, their authority, legal extensions and governance practices in relation to the local population.

4. Results (i): LaSLA trends, patterns and actors

Interviews with investment promotion officers and the Zambia National Farmers Union (ZNFU) confirmed an increase in LaSLAs since 2000, reporting the acquisition of existing companies as well as resource, market and efficiency-seeking practices among foreign companies. Significant agro-investments were reported in primary production and output markets (e.g. transport and storage), inducing growth in export commodities such as wheat and soybeans. Analysis of interviews identified five key trends in LaSLAs: (i) diversification by existing, and entry of new companies into agriculture; (ii) increased demand for land, water and electricity; (iii) increased tax receipts; (iv) growth in soy and other food crops shaped by wider private-enterprise growth; and (v) growth in agro-processing.

However, state departments made contradictory claims about sources of investment, agreeing on Zimbabwe and South Africa as key drivers, rather than China and Brazil. Lack of

readily available data alongside poor monitoring systems make it difficult to account for actual investments (Land Matrix 2016). Despite entry of new foreign investors, relatively few large companies were engaging in agriculture at a significant scale, highlighting the centrality of domestic actors. NGOs and donor actors argued foreign LaSLAs were creating a new dynamic of land control and access that reconfigures small-holder engagement in agriculture. Limited rural infrastructure development means investments align to main roads and rail networks, where favourable agro-ecological conditions are traditionally associated with commercial farming.

State and political power frequently emerged in interviews as driving a commodity focus to investment, by advancing a departure from maize cultivation. This includes promotion of non-traditional agricultural products (e.g. sugar, wheat, citrus and barley) and biofuels, which were also viewed as *'presenting empowerment opportunity for growers and for rural economies'* (P1:05.01.16). However, empowerment framed as rural employment and linked to larger agri-businesses has had variable outcomes. In the sugar-cane outgrower schemes, this includes heavy reliance on low paying casual/temporary work and exclusion of youths and women. Meanwhile, despite massive promotion of biofuels and a lot of rhetoric about LaSLAs, hesitation and inaction from state agencies has led to disappointing results (see Giles 2017). A senior official in the MoA related this to public fears of having to convert huge tracks of land to non-food commodities such as *Jatropha curcas*, which can lead to a 'land-grabbing' (Z1:29.06.15). However, state national institutions and actors continue to place higher expectations on LaSLAs, i.e. growth and employment opportunities.

Our analysis of institutions and actors shaping LaSLAs starts with the multi-level list of institutions in Figure 2, drawn to contextualise actor interests and influence. The broader significance of this analysis lies in its attempt to 'unbundle' national actors, their motivations and capacity in shaping LaSLAs.

State agencies are generally agreeable to LaSLAs, motivated by prospects of rural development. Agencies articulate models through which investments unfold, and policies in agriculture and related sectors (energy, water, and land) permit the government to exploit abundant resources. Policy and legal frameworks allow power to alienate customary land and draw territorial zones for LaSLAs, with changes in customary law widening scope for appropriation. These define investment guidelines (e.g. minimum requirements) and influence decision making in land availability, access and utilisation.

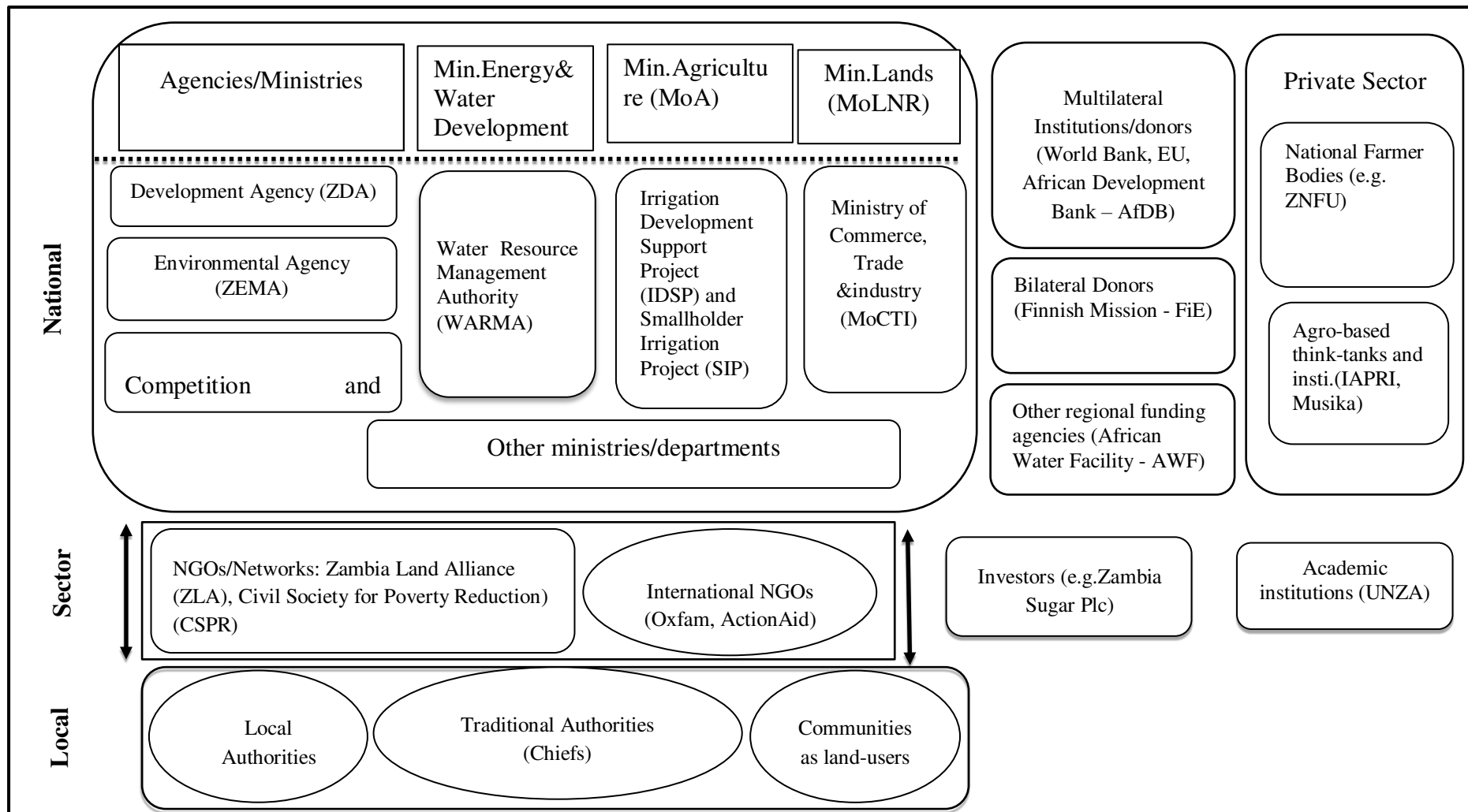


Figure 2: Actors in LaSLAs as they relate to study participants

Multi-lateral/bi-lateral donor agencies provide funding and technical assistance in value-chain development, whilst improving mechanisms through which LaSLAs take place. Donors fund agricultural irrigation schemes, infrastructure development involving private-public partnerships and models such as outgrower schemes (Matenga and Hichaambwa 2017). However, despite promoting agricultural schemes and funding infrastructure for LaSLAs, donors raised concerns about what they describe as '*chaotic land allocation and conversion*' happening across the country, which has heightened in the presence of LaSLAs (K1:18.06.15). Multi-lateral organisations expressed opinions that Zambia needs improved legal and bureaucratic structures for governing land access and utilisation as well as shaping LaSLA outcomes.

NGOs are diverse, with varying areas of focus, politics and orientation. Some focus on poverty reduction specifically through land rights, tax justice and livelihoods, but their scale is limited (ActionAid 2011). Their local and sectoral concentration means their influence in LaSLAs remains low. One officer at the Zambia Land Alliance (ZLA) blamed limited NGO efforts on the regional focus of strategies for implementation of protocols around LaSLAs, accompanied by '*missing country-specific strategies*' (Q3:10.05.16).

Local and traditional authorities administer land, bolstered by economic opportunities represented by increasing demand for land. However, expanding central state influence alongside LaSLAs as new actors means local communities have little representation in national committees and have limited capacity to evaluate consequences of LaSLAs. This partly relates to the multiple pathways for land acquisition, i.e. through: 1) state institutions, 2) local/traditional authorities or 3) private individual citizens. Land acquisition pathways taken by investors highlight varying motivations, but the absence of a strong legal framework or procedures for enforcement means that investor and state negotiations have limited regulatory constraint (see Nolte 2014). Private-sector actors including national farmer bodies encourage LaSLAs and negotiate policy for business emphasising the access to markets. They encourage state agencies to limit their involvement in agriculture, exerting a new industrial agro-vision. In practice, land acquisition often bypasses local actors. Low levels of education, and a lack of resources and power place communities in a weak position in consultations, leading to exclusion and poor commitments to rights and local livelihoods.

State institutions exert enormous influence on LaSLA governance, driving erosion of community property systems. Multi-lateral institutions encourage state efforts through

ideological emphasis on trade and investment and their links to issues such as employment, sustainable livelihoods and rural development. Multi-level interactions between state and non-state actors show variations in capacity to influence key decisions in LaSLAs. However, these processes show how a state-level policy frame influences spaces for manoeuvre around different models through which land deals unfold in Zambia.

5. Results (ii): Factors driving large-scale land acquisitions

Our second objective focused on drivers of LaSLAs. Analysis of interview data identified LaSLA drivers at three levels (Figure 3).

First, interviews with donor and state actors show that multi-lateral and bi-lateral agencies fund and facilitate LaSLAs in various parts of the country. Projects range from 57ha to 5000ha in area, labelled variously as rural development, empowerment and climate-smart agriculture. As part of upscaling small-holder commercialisation, donors expressed plans to facilitate the acquisition of about 9200 hectares of land for agriculture under the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (AWF 2016). Under the climate-smart agriculture initiative, the Africa Water Facility of the African Development Bank reportedly lined-up 25 feasible irrigation sites by 2018 which would bring an additional 9560ha under irrigation with a broader climate-adaptation strategy targeting 200,000ha by 2030 (Z1:29.06.15) (AWF 2016). Availability and access to cheaper credit from donor agencies means public officers are buoyed by possibilities of actualising agro-programmes and rent-seeking (Z1:29.06.15). This was exemplified by the Nansanga farm-block where state representatives were accused of acquiring land at the expense of marginal small-holder populations. One interviewee from a research think-tank alleged that “while plans for LaSLAs can be good, implementation is problematic in that selection of participants permits *‘civil servants to acquire or buy land in Nansanga farm-block and not local farmers’* (G2:18.12.15). The use of bureaucratic positions to access land linked to LaSLAs exacerbates local dispossession. LaSLAs are being deployed as vehicle for exerting different authorities and as avenues for ‘access control’ for the extraction of rents.

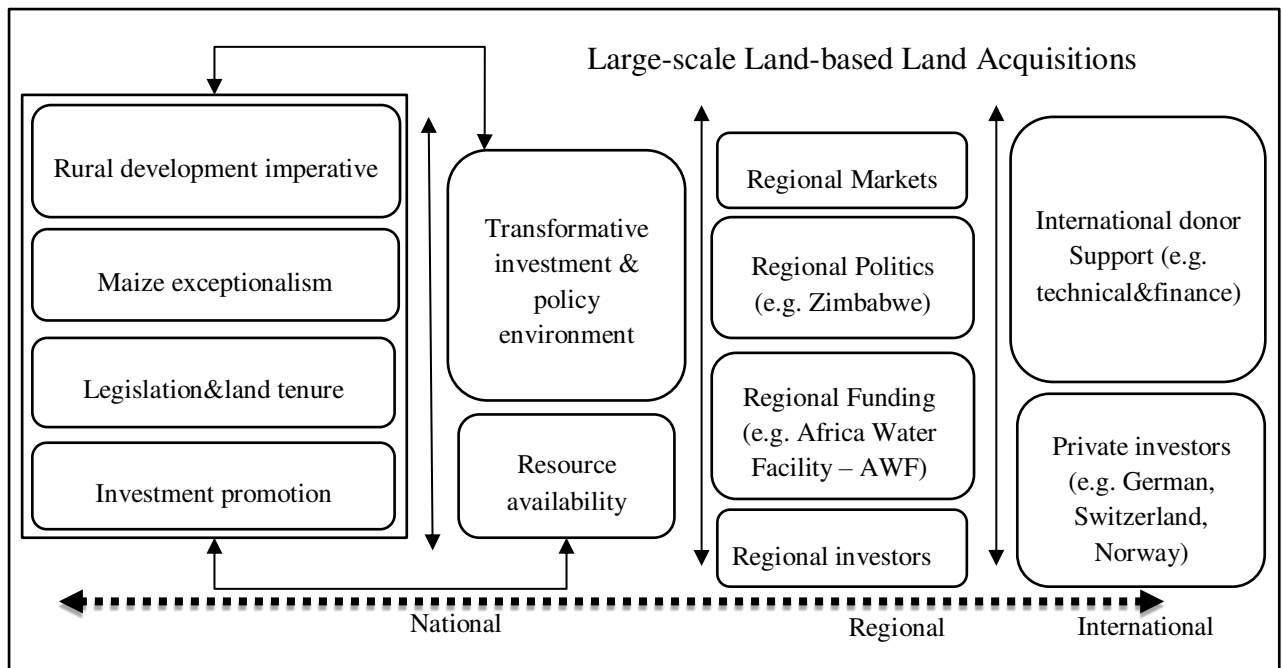


Figure 3: Drivers to LaSLAs in Zambia. Arrows show interacting levels (Derived from interview data)

Second, regional dynamics in markets, politics and funding opportunities frequently emerged in interviews as drivers. National interviews showed regional investments have been expanding and in regional markets such as COMESA and SADC. A respondent from the World Bank argued that the growth in demand in ‘*regional markets is sufficient to drive investments*’ (K3:16.12.15). Political and economic tensions in neighbouring Zimbabwe also added to the drivers as one Senior Agriculturalist at the World Bank remarked: ‘*Zambia has benefited from problems in Zimbabwe*’ (K3:16.12.15). As earlier intimated, regional donor funding opportunities such as the Africa Water Facility strengthen regional drivers for agriculture and water resource development (Z1:29.06.15) (AWF 2016).

However, thirdly, interview data analysis revealed major drivers of LaSLAs were largely at the national level. Below, we discuss five key domestic factors frequently cited in interviews as conditioning LaSLAs in Zambia.

5.1 Maize exceptionalism: cause and driver of diversification

LaSLAs have been encouraged to diversify from maize. Since independence in 1964, public policy defined agriculture in terms of maize, leading to a culture among small-holders that identifies agriculture as maize cultivation. A government concern is that dependency on maize and on rain-fed agriculture could induce serious livelihood struggles, particularly with climate variability.

Political narratives often suggest LaSLAs are necessary for agriculture and economic diversification. However, NGO actors expressed opinions that agriculture/economic diversification currently excludes small-holders, focusing instead on agro-processing which prioritises commercialisation and value-added processes at a large scale. To one respondent at Oxfam, current efforts in *'diversification have not been prioritised at small-scale level'* (Q2:07.01.16), despite small-holders forming the backbone of Zambia's agriculture (see Colebrander and Koppen 2013). The MoA is aware of these challenges and argues that whereas it seeks more participation in LaSLAs and value-chains, small-holders should take the lead: *'we are not inviting corporations to run these schemes'* (Z1:29.06.15). In practice, however, corporations such as those in the sugar-cane sub-sector exert enormous influence in determining local participation, which is compounded by missing national strategies for small-holder value-chain inclusion and weak farmer associations at district level.

5.2 National Politics and the Rural Development Imperative

One consistent theme in national interviews was that LaSLAs reflected government policy on rural development and empowerment defined as *'employment creation and income distribution'* (Z1:29.06.15). Organising small-holders in state-driven, typically large-scale outgrower schemes respond to these social-economic imperatives and enhances the state's territorial reach. However, the size and quality of employment opportunities induced by LaSLAs have been disappointing with fewer than expected numbers of small-holders participating (Namutowe 2014). For some respondents, these disappointing results of LaSLAs are linked to the national policy on taxation, which offers preferential treatment for certain companies and sub-sectors as highlighted in tax exemptions (see Richardson 2010 with respect to sugar-cane). These practices arguably waste opportunities for Treasury contributions which can feed into rural development, as one Inspector at the Revenue Authority remarked: *'much as there might be inflow of huge FDI, tax yields are not proportional'* (Z6:22.12.15). A wider perception is that land investments are not profitable for corporations and that any rural development and economic benefits require reconsideration given weak tax laws. Similarly, NGOs highlight that the way in which profits are declared lead to low tax contributions (ActionAid 2011).

5.3 Legislation and Land Tenure System

Legislation and land tenure systems facilitate conversion of customary land to state land, and this is happening at an increased rate. District interviews in Mazabuka reported rapid sugar-

cane expansion since 2001 but also revealed land scarcities and dispossession in host communities. One Chief highlighted that *'expansion of small-holder fields is difficult because of being surrounded by plantations'* (D4:27.11.16). Donors expressed opinions that *'resource scarcity is not fully acknowledged in policy and institutional practices'* (K4:10.12.15). With a long-standing deadlock on the national land policy, NGOs fear this lack of acknowledgement can affect interpretation, translation and enactment of LaSLA policies and commitment to local rights (Q3:10.05.16).

Interviews also show that rural land conversion reflects state expansion of infrastructure such as roads, electrification and telecommunications (as well as irrigation structures). Since 2000, successive governments have sustained rural infrastructure expenditure, accelerating with the current Patriotic Front government since 2011. Consequently, *'unreachable pieces of land 4-5 years ago are now accessible and up for grabs'*, remarked one Officer at the MoLNR (Z4:15.12.15). The role of traditional authorities in facilitating LaSLAs has attracted attention. Chiefs present customary land as a new investment frontier, so that public officers describe traditional leaders as *'very cooperative.'* However, exploiting customary land, chiefs are seen as facilitating land-grabbing among diverse investors without clarity and transparency on rural livelihoods. With significant small-holder farmland already trapped in land deals, an Agricultural Specialist at the World Bank believes *'chiefs have been careless in allocating land to investors and the impact of that might be evident in a few years'* (K3:16.12.15). Some senior officials in the MoLNR agree but suggested *'these deals may be illegal'* (Z4:15.12.15). However, this focus on chiefs should not exonerate other parties including, as one NGO explains, *'the government through state-house and local private land-grabbers for own and on behalf of foreigners'* (Q:10.05.16).

5.4 Transformative investment and policy environment

Place and time are important aspects in capturing policy practices and discourses shaping LaSLAs. To understand factors fostering LaSLAs fully, a policy assessment was conducted, drawing out key themes and the extent to which they are emphasised (Table 2).

Table 2: Drivers to LaSLAs as identified in policy documents

	NWP	NIPS	V2030	5 th NDP	NEP	NAP	6 th NDP	NAIP	IS	R6 th NDP	NRP	7 th NDP
<i>Drivers to LaSLAs</i>	1994	2004	2006	2006	2007	2011	2011	2013	2013	2013	2015	2017
High-value crops/value-addition		Black	Grey	Black		Grey	Black	Black		Black		Black
Economic/agricultural diversification		Black	Grey	Black		Black	Black		White	Black		Black
Rural development, job-creation, empowerment & poverty reduction		Black	White	Black	Grey	White	Black	Black	Black	Black	Grey	Black
Irrigation expansion/infrastructure development	Black	Black	Black	Black	Grey	Black	Black	Black	White	Black		Black
Production, productivity & mechanisation	Black	Black	Black	Black	Grey	Black	Black	Black	Black	Black		Black
Farm-block development/commercialisation		Grey	White	Black		White	Black	White	Black	Black		Black
Rural & investment promotion		Black	Black	Black	Black	Grey	Black	White	Black	Black	Grey	Black
Investor-friendly policies		Black	Black	Black	Grey	Grey	Black	Black	Black	Black	White	Black
Expanding cultivation area		Black	Black	Black	White	Black	Black	White	White	Black		Black
Private-sector participation/competitiveness		Black	Grey	Black	Grey	Grey	Black	Black	Black	Black	White	Black
Water access for irrigation/agriculture	Black	Black	White	Black	White	Black	Black	Black	White	Black	White	Black
Agricultural land-use/utilization		Grey	Grey	Black	White	Black	Black	Grey	White	Black	Black	Black
Energy diversification	Grey	White	Black	Black	Black	White	Black	Black	White	Black	White	Black

Coding: *Black*=emphasized; *Grey*=not emphasized; *White*=Not mentioned

Content analysis reveals that diverse cross-sector policies facilitate water and land access for LaSLAs. Emphasis has been placed on: 1) agriculture-related infrastructure development, 2) agricultural production, and 3) mechanisation of agriculture. This is followed by expansion of area under cultivation and facilitation of water access for agriculture. Nationally, these dynamics are viewed as a suitable strategy for agricultural expansion, commercialization, rural development and poverty reduction (GRZ 2017, 62). For instance, the Vision 2030 policy seeks to triple crop-land to 900,000ha by 2030 whilst ensuring increased small-holder productivity through expansion of outgrower schemes that are linked to LaSLAs (GRZ 2006, 62). The NRP provides for resettlement whilst facilitating agricultural land-use expansion, allowing for evictions, expropriations and dispossessions (NRP 2015, 21). Whilst most policy documents seek to expand agriculture and attract foreign investment, there is a striking silence in policy documents on capacity-building of public institutions that can ensure safeguards including social-economic and environmental sustainability.

Central to these documents is the theme of resource endowment as a driver of LaSLAs, but inner workings of state agencies show divergences. For instance, whilst economic institutions such as the ZDA under the MoCTI, the MoA and farmer membership bodies (e.g. ZNFU) aim to exploit resource abundance, ministries such as those responsible for land (MoLNR) and water (MoEWD) point to land scarcities and water depletion in specific regions. Divisions of opinion within the MoA were identified, as one representative in the Ministry, corroborated by NGO representatives, called for an integrated approach to LaSLAs, arguing that *'diverse sectoral issues, overlapping elements and how sectors shape each other remain less understood'* (Z3:04.01.16).

5.5 Investment promotion

In the past decade, state institutions have vigorously promoted foreign investments in Zambia. While the ZDA is the main promotion hub, interviews with different state departments show multiple entry points including the Ministry of Tourism, farmer bodies (ZNFU) and the IDC. Insights from interviews and policy documents reveal that investment promotion produces many unintended consequences, including defining investors in terms of foreign actors. For example, at the heart of the ZDA Bill (2006) and the Investment Act (Chapter 385) lies investment promotion and guarantees which have seen government enter into Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements with agri-businesses. In practice, these have avoided wide consultation, and have a clear foreign bias. Most NGOs argue that whilst FDI in

agriculture is necessary, concessions waste opportunities to generate economic benefits, or at least *'have not helped the country achieve sector-specific objectives'* (Q2:05.01.16). There appears to be limited follow-through in agro-investment with the agricultural sector (2007-2014), which ranks third at a 25% rate of actualised investments compared to mining (53%) and manufacturing (27%) (Namutowe 2014). An officer at ZDA agrees: *'investment in agriculture have been slow despite massive promotion'* (Z7:16.06.15).

6. Results (iii): Institutional cooperation and coordination

This final empirical section focuses on institutional cooperation and coordination practices between and among state agencies, and what this means for prospects of LaSLAs. Findings are mapped in relationships highlighted as R1-R9 in Figure 4.

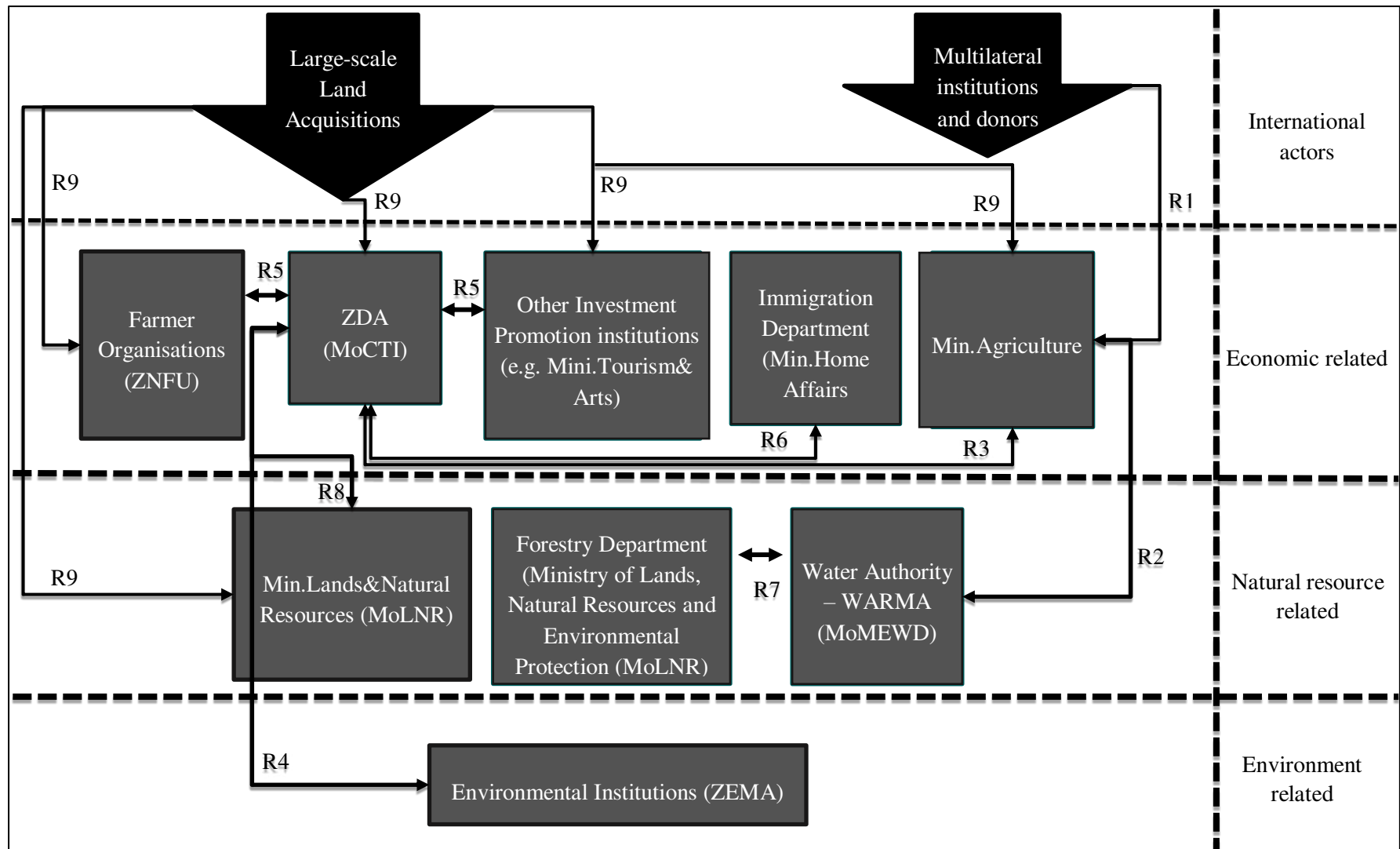


Figure 4: Stakeholder interaction and collaborations. Arrows shows identified cooperation and relationships

Analysis of state agency relationships reveals a deficit in inter-sectoral cooperation and coordination around LaSLAs. Horizontal cooperation among economically related institutions was observed to be stronger, but cooperation and interaction with natural resource and environmental related institutions was poor. Vertical cooperation among multi-level national institutions remains less developed, affecting knowledge sharing and decision making such as those on environmental sustainability and resettlement. Overall, key decision making around LaSLAs lies in economically related institutions that shape narratives on ‘agriculture for development.’ State agencies and ministries exploit unevenness in influence on land and water and efforts to improve coordination and develop broad-based collaboration and capacity remain limited, for the three main reasons discussed below.

6.1 Relationship between donor institutions and the Ministry of Agriculture

Donors raised concerns about weak bi-lateral links, low interest and ownership levels on the part of public officials, ‘*when government institutions are not holding project funds*’ (K1:18.06.15) (R1). For instance, despite government rhetoric about agricultural expansion, expansion of accompanying irrigation has been advanced by a single unit in the MoA, causing project delays (e.g. Manyonyo sugar-cane project took over 5 years) (K1:18.06.15). This is compounded by a lack of policy guidance on investment implementation.

However, public officers in the MoA complained that while donors claimed they did not influence decisions around land allocation and LaSLAs, they supported projects in environmentally delicate areas such as the Mkushi farm-block. They alleged that donors saw LaSLAs as inevitable, a vision that implies that state agencies should legitimise rather than hamper investments. They also alleged that donors stress the volume of investment and overstate potential employment opportunities which they then use to legitimise LaSLAs to the exclusion of local consultation. In contrast, respondents in the MoA believe ‘*challenges are better known and understood by local experts*’ (Z3:04.01.16). A case in Mkushi where a syndicate of six large-scale commercial farmers (supported by donors) has come against small-holders is emblematic of wider tensions. MoA sources argue that there are serious water management issues, with ‘*over-subscribed water rights*’ in this area (Z3:04.01.16), corroborated by the Water Authority (WARMA) (Z5:12.01.16). A respondent at Oxfam believes that Mkushi has ‘*now become a bad example on LaSLAs and water management*’ (Q2:05.01.16).

Donors and public officials were agreed on policy challenges associated with LaSLAs. Some of these relate to unclear guidelines on commercialisation of farm-blocks (e.g. Mkushi and Mazabuka sugar-cane outgrowers). One senior officer in the MoA remarked: *'when dealing with donors, I have no policy reference and am often accused of making things up'* (Z3:04.01.16). Poor policy consultation is also an issue, as an officer at Oxfam said that *'an agricultural policy does not demonstrate that (architects) consulted experts elsewhere'* (Q2:05.01.16). One consequence has been an inability to perceive agriculture in an integrated manner and a lack of coherence and interlinkages between sectors.

6.2 Tensions within public institutions

Analysis shows that the social and environmental outcomes of LaSLAs are affected and shaped by and within state institutions. For a long period, water resource development prioritised hydro-power generation under the Ministry of Energy (MoEWD). Furthermore, MoA officials believe that the water authority (WARMA) prioritised commercial as opposed to small-holder farmers. However, deepening interest in agriculture raises tensions between the two ministries about control and authority over water resources (R2). To one irrigation expert, WARMA was stifling MoA projects: *'water applications from MoA to WARMA should be more than enough (for WARMA) not to interfere'* (Z3:04.01.16). Ministries have overlapping responsibilities, as WARMA has focused on boreholes and dams whilst MoA designs dams and sometimes receives water rights applications. It is unclear which institution does what, making donor resources even more challenging to obtain. On criticisms of poor water resource management, WARMA insists *'(their) role is to regulate usage'* but admit that it may be too late given *'activities already established in delicate locations such as Mkushi'*. WARMA added that illegal water use has occurred because actors did not *'follow our channel, preferring to go through investment promotion agencies'* (Z5:12.01.16). *'Rampant deforestation reshapes the hydrological cycles'* (R7), which is compounded by *'unplanned infrastructure development by local authorities,'* WARMA argued (Z5:12.01.16).

Whilst some of these challenges relate to mutual mistrust between Ministries, the environmental authority (ZEMA) was specifically identified as problematic. Various interviewees gave examples of where appropriate investors were refused permission to operate whereas others rejected by the Environmental Impact Assessment were issued with certificates (R4) (Z7:16.16.15; N5:10.12.15). A representative from the MoA discussed Lumwana where *'investors have built a dam with no proper documentation from ZEMA,'* and have since been

fined (Z3:04.01.16). ZEMA has been criticized for responding slowly to environmental matters, only having recently built up capacity to monitor agro-chemical utilisation and disposal following donor investment (Njombo 2015). Whilst ZEMA has responsibility to slow things down and act as a constraint, the concern among respondents was that decision making seems to be driven by political imperatives and rent-seeking behaviour from state officers as opposed to a genuine desire to conserve.

Facilitation and implementation of LaSLAs present public officers with opportunities to negotiate, oversee and determine project standards. However, funding and increasing access to resources heightens contestation between various implementing entities. This can threaten the job security of some officers, and causes disagreements about implementation processes (R3). For instance, in highlighting contestations between implementing agencies one senior officer in the MoA who reported job threats argued that *'other state departments wanted the small-holder irrigation project under the MoA to be implemented by ZDA which is linked to the MoCTI'* (Z1:29.06.15). Multiple investment entry points present tensions for coordination and monitoring. On investment promotion, ZDA believes they *'know the investment climate better'* accusing other ministries/departments of *'lacking the legal mandate'* (R5) (Z7:16.16.15). However, the MoLNR reports tokenism by ZDA in monitoring investor activities and land-use dynamics (R8). Whilst agreeing that the MoLNR has no monitoring capacity, our informant maintained: *'[we] cannot allocate (land) and at the same time monitor land-use dynamics'* continuing to place any failure to monitor investor activities and LaSLAs on ZDA (Z4:15.12.15). Meanwhile an anti-investor narrative has emerged, particularly against inward investment with a perception that it displaces local businesses and limits jobs for local people. The investment promotion agency (ZDA) has been blamed in particular for allowing non-technical staff follow foreign investments. This has resulted in complaints about reduced social and economic impacts of foreign investments at local level. ZDA responds to these criticisms by referring to their investor guidelines, which permits lead consultants, facilitators and agents to follow foreign investments. In their defence, they have shifted the blame to the Immigration Department, which they believe has not been *'serious in screening who actually comes into the country'* under the guise of foreign investments (Z8:16.06.15) (R6). However, who qualifies as lead consultants, facilitators or agents under the ZDA investor guidelines remains less clear, raising divergencies with the immigration department.

6.3 Investors as part of wider taxation and economic development

Disappointing experiences with foreign investors in agriculture and elsewhere means there is a lingering suspicion towards investors, who have often been accused of declining to declare profits accurately (ActionAid 2011). Some of these reflect the lack of capacity and robust systems in Zambian ministries, leading to information asymmetry about the nature and character of investments and their impacts. For instance, a senior official in the MoA believes that the presence of an investment contributes to the *'proliferation of uncontrolled construction of dams'* witnessed in many parts of the country and sanctioned by different authorities (Z3:04.01.16). And that this was in part because investors exploit multiple investment entry points (R9), and receive backing from donors. Donors are seen as *'always defending water resource development for agriculture and the issuance of water rights to investors'* (Z3:04.01.16). Donors and foreign investors have both been accused of promoting uncontrolled expansion and issuance of water rights, which is seen as limiting sustainability and economic development.

Overall, LaSLAs in Zambia expose competing authorities, weaknesses in governance of LaSLAs and a serious lack of cross-sectoral collaboration in public institutions. Scale, impacts and implications of LaSLAs seem not to have been fully grasped by different implementing agencies. Collaboration and coordination weaknesses suggest systems are insufficient to manage LaSLAs and any further resource use and agro-expansion will require a serious rethink.

7. Discussion: cooperation and coordination deficits

This paper highlights the importance of looking beyond simplistic narratives of land grabs, suggesting that whilst land is being allocated to investors it does not follow a simple trajectory which means that prospects for LaSLAs, both positive and negative, are not as assured as claimed in the dominant land-grabbing literature.

LaSLAs enable various institutions to express different sorts of authority, and influence investment and resource decisions. However, the public dominance of agro-expansion comes alongside poor capacity in institutions, resulting in poor coordination (Arezki et al. 2011). Donors advance an agro-industry perspective which argues for strong links between LaSLAs and small-holders, but neglect multi-stakeholder and multi-sector interaction that enhances institutional support and coordination. Through control of funds and direct support to investors, donors also shape policy pathways through which LaSLAs unfold, such as those on small-

holder agricultural models (e.g. in sugar-cane). Visible power relations among national actors illuminate whose interests are advanced, and the implications of this. However, state efforts continue to be foisted on weak institutions without a clear strategy for small-holder participation, raising questions about state capacity (German et al. 2013).

The occurrence of LaSLAs create possibilities for diverse actors to influence land access. However, active creation of territorial zones for agricultural investment jeopardizes land access for rural dwellers (Sitko and Chamberlin 2016). Legal and bureaucratic frameworks enable foreign ownership of land, but also allow various actors to exert their authority and influence in land allocation, access and utilisation (Burnod et al. 2013). Weak cooperation between state agencies in LaSLA implementation leads to dispossession, displacements and poor protection of local rights (Giles 2017). Whilst supporting LaSLAs remains an important development agenda in Zambia, participation by small-holders in these projects remains limited. In many instances, local land users are marginalized and lose access to land with land scarcities reported in LaSLA hotspots such as the sugarbelt regions of Chief Naluama and Mwanachingwala in Mazabuka, raising questions about sovereignty and autonomy (Nolte 2014). Outcomes for LaSLAs in rural areas, as well as local participation, depend on how traditional authorities shape negotiations with investors as well as manage divergences with government. New employment opportunities remain minimal in mitigating the loss of land and livelihoods. While new governance mechanisms have been advocated for governing LaSLAs, and to guide the development of national policies aimed at improving land governance, these have been insufficiently articulated in national policies such as those on land, water and forestry (Kalaba et al. 2013).

Our research emphasises national and to some extent intra-regional dynamics as driving LaSLAs, as opposed to international influences (Cotula 2012). Commercialisation, diversification and biofuels are some of the factors that are shaping the nature of LaSLAs in Zambia. Investment concentration on commercially dominant commodities such as sugar-cane however suggests transitional challenges for small-holders in the emerging *agro-vision* (Peters 2013). Value-chain commodities such as sugar that require specialised production knowledge and respond to global dynamics means the level of small-holder interaction with these crops remains peripheral (Dubb 2015). The extent to which farmers see new crops in this vision as the basis on which to build sustainable livelihoods, as well as their willingness to work under new contractual arrangements, becomes crucial (Di Matteo et al. 2016). In Zambia, such small-holder interaction and integration into value-chains have occurred due to policy development

(Table 2). Our research highlights the limited extent to which regional and global guidelines are being articulated in Zambia's policy on land tenure and water, and elsewhere. It also speaks to the limited extent to which wider governance mechanisms help address overlaps, gaps and conflicts between and within various state actors in policy and decision making around LaSAIs (Kalaba et al. 2013). However, the rhetoric about potential for small-holders is remote from the realities of day to day experiences of producers who face threats of appropriation of land and water.

Interaction among state and non-state actors matter in the governance of LaSLAs. Increased attention to land and water by national actors, accompanied by public and donor resources, promotes tensions between and among various state institutions (Burnod et al. 2013). Strong horizontal cooperation among economically related institutions highlights a dominant discourse of agricultural growth which can be exclusive and potentially environmentally damaging (Peters 2013). However, a neglect of interaction between multi-level natural resource and environmentally related institutions on the one hand and local level practices on the other highlights the limits of the agricultural growth agenda with respect to production, raising questions about sustainability (Kalaba et al. 2013). A deficit in inter-sectoral cooperation and coordination is evident, raising the need for enhanced inter-linkages and coordination of efforts among sectors. In Zambia, these elements have heightened sectoral politics and resource control. Claims that the MoA is better suited to control water resources than MoEWD reflect resource-based tensions, and could be interpreted as a desire to monopolise government and donor resources, raising fears that resulting power struggles and stakes in control of resources might prevent progressive reforms (Faye 2016). Sectors monopolise decision making in resource access in an attempt to consolidate their respective mandates, but this is often to the exclusion of key stakeholders in LaSLAs, which signals a negative implication for development outcomes. However, this analysis highlights the poor stakeholder engagement and the consequences of sectoral approaches to governing inter-linked resources that have been reported (see Atela et al. 2016 with respect to Kenya).

Overall, outcomes of LaSLAs will depend on how national institutional and policy actors organise and coordinate investments to maximise outcomes. Given multiple stakeholder voices within the national context, harmonising policy and institutional processes is difficult. Our case shows that mistrust, lack of transparency and hence lack of cooperation and collaboration between and among state institutions makes it difficult to clarify mandates, remove overlaps and enhance decision making around resources and investments. It also shows

that greater multi-stakeholder partnership working would allow the integration of knowledge across various institutions and actors. This requires changing the top-down nature of LaSLAs to encourage cooperation and inclusiveness, ensuring integrated actions across multiple sectors.

8. Conclusions

This paper has argued that possibilities of LaSLAs are limited by national institutions and policy processes in coordinating LaSLAs and state capacity in Zambia. National, regional and international factors drive investments but ensuing demand for land and water accompanied by government and donor resources heighten tensions among economic, natural resource and environment-related institutions over resources and decision making. Economically related institutions exert considerable influence on the emergence and consolidation of the national policy on LaSLAs, but there is poor cooperation and collaboration with natural resource and environmentally related institutions, which challenges sustainable resource use. The associated top-down nature of governance of land, labour and water resources is problematic for long-term sustainable agriculture and rural development. This points to the centrality of state power and bureaucratic extensions and governance in shaping relationships with local populations as well as outcomes (Wolford et al. 2013).

Our research offers important lessons for informing and improving sectoral and cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination of LaSLAs. It connects the debate about LaSLAs and rural development to state capacity and institutions as a stage on which the outcomes and destiny of investments are determined. The empirical material presented reinstates the national actors who are often absent in analyses of LaSLAs, and problematises investments as top-down, and driven by narrow sectoral interests. It highlights how LaSLAs influence the emergence and consolidation of a national policy on foreign investments that re-organises agri-dynamics in favour of agri-businesses. Analyses of this nature demonstrate that studying the dynamics of institutions and policy practices makes more visible the interactions that shape state capacity and the potential effects of LaSLAs. By going beyond simplistic narratives of LaSLAs as they link to land-grabbing, the paper asserts that the dominant argument of LaSLAs will be won or lost within improved national institutional cooperation and coordination efforts by state and non-state actors.

Supporting Information

A. Glossary of acronyms

AWF	African Water Facility
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CPCC	Competition Protection and Competition Commission
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GRZ	Government of the Republic of Zambia
IDC	Industrial Development Corporation
IDSP	Irrigation Development Support Project
LaSLA	Large scale Land Acquisition
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoCTI	Ministry of Trade, Commerce and Industry
MoEWD	Ministry of Energy and Water Development
MoLNR	Ministry of Land and Natural Resources
NRP	National Resettlement Policy
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SIP	Smallholder Irrigation Project
WARMA	Water Resource Management Authority
ZDA	Zambia Development Agency
ZEMA	Zambia Environmental Management Agency
ZNFU	Zambia National Farmers Union
ZRA	Zambia Revenue Authority

B. Details of interviews conducted between June 2015 and February 2016.³
 Interview codes: Z = public institutions; G=research institutions; P=private-sector experts;
 Q=NGOs; N=farmer organisations; K=donors; and D=district/sub-district.

Code	Position/Institution	Date	Place
Ministries/departments/agencies			
Z1	Snr. Official a – MoA	29.06.15	Lusaka
Z2	Policy Analyst – MoA	04.01.16	
Z3	National Coordinator b – MoA	04.01.16	
Z4	Snr. Official – MoL	15.12.15	
Z5	Officer – MoEWD/WARMA	07.01.16	
Z6	Director (Non-Mining Unit) – ZRA	22.12.15	
	Snr. Inspector – ZRA		
Z7	Investment Officer – ZDA	16.16.15	
Z8	Policy Analyst – ZDA	16.06.15	
Z9	Official – MoCTI	11.2015	
Z10	Snr. Investigators (2) – CPCC	18.12.15	
Z11	Snr. Inspector – ZEMA	14.12.15	
Z12	Engineer – MoEWD/WARMA	12.01.16	
Research think-tanks/institutions			
G1	Officer – Centre for Trade Policy&Devpt.	08.01.16	Lusaka
G2	Research Fellow, IAPRI	18.12.15	
G3	Research Fellow, IAPRI	14.06.15	
G4	Professor, UNZA	15.06.15	
Private agricultural experts/consultants			
P1	Agriculture/Sugar Expert – AnChiCon	05.01.16	Lusaka
International/national NGOs			
Q1	Officer – ActionAid	21.12.15	Lusaka
Q2	Officer – Oxfam	05.01.16	
Q3	Officer – ZLA	10.05.16	
Q4	Officer – CUTS	09.12.15	
Q5	Snr. Official – CSPR	07.01.16	

³ Respondent's names are concealed to guarantee anonymity.

Code	Position/Institution	Date	Place
Farmer-based national bodies/organisations			
N1	Official – ZNFU	04.12.15	
N2	Official – ZNFU	04.12.15	
N3	Economist – ZNFU	15.12.15.	
N4	Officer – Musika	10.12.15	
Multilateral/bilateral institutions/donors			
K1	Official – Finnish Embassy.	18.06.15	Lusaka
K2	Agricultural Expert – AfDB	18.06.15	
K3	Agricultural Specialist – Wold Bank	16.12.15	
K4	Official – EU	10.12.15	
District/sub-district			
D1	Agricultural Officer	11.2015	Zimba
D2	Member of Parliament	11.01.16	Mazabuka
D3	Chief	27.11.16	

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