



# Populism-in-state-practice under neoliberalism: Museveni's ad-hoc squads to 'halt all evictions' from land in Uganda

Rose Nakayi & Jörg Wiegratz

To cite this article: Rose Nakayi & Jörg Wiegratz (16 Oct 2024): Populism-in-state-practice under neoliberalism: Museveni's ad-hoc squads to 'halt all evictions' from land in Uganda, Journal of Eastern African Studies, DOI: [10.1080/17531055.2024.2412883](https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2024.2412883)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2024.2412883>



© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 16 Oct 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

# Populism-in-state-practice under neoliberalism: Museveni's ad-hoc squads to 'halt all evictions' from land in Uganda

Rose Nakayi<sup>a</sup> and Jörg Wiegratz<sup>b,c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>School of Law, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda; <sup>b</sup>School of Politics and International Studies, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK; <sup>c</sup>Department of Sociology, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa

## ABSTRACT

Populism in Africa has been studied as political rhetoric, strategy and performance, with focus on ethnicity, nationalism, mobilisation and elections. Less attention has been given to populism-in-practice, specifically populism-in-state-practice (PISP): how a populist rhetoric by an actor in power gets translated into an administrative/executive intervention, and how this fares on the ground. This paper uses the case of populist interventions of President Museveni in neoliberal Uganda to address rampant land conflicts in the 2010s – specifically his ad-hoc initiatives aimed at 'helping the poor' by 'stopping' evictions – to explore characteristics of PISP. We thus contribute to the literature through an analysis of the implementation of a populist measure under neoliberalism. Using land laws, decided court cases, government statements, and media reports, our analysis shows that although somewhat helpful in the interim, the initiatives unleashed new turmoil, extended land (tenure) insecurity, advanced a Presidentialisation of justice delivery, deepened institutional impasse and suspended institutional efforts that could advance pro-poor change. PISP did not address the root causes of the problems that it set out to tackle, and failed to alter the legal insecurities, and perilous power position of the declared beneficiaries. Yet, it enhanced political legitimacy of the President and state.



## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 9 March 2022  
Accepted 30 September 2024

## KEYWORDS

Neoliberalism; populism; land; evictions; state; East Africa; Uganda

The academic debate on populism in Africa has centred on issues of ethnicity, political mobilisation, elections, and particular political leaders. Interventions noted that in the context of competitive electoral politics, populism can be a useful political tool in societies characterised by rapid change, high inequality, weakened political organisation, significant economic and political exclusion and unmet grievances of large sections of the population (i.e. the subaltern/poor, or reform losers), thus, a crisis of political representation.<sup>1</sup> Relatively few analyses focus on populism-in-practice (PIP),<sup>2</sup> more specially on

**CONTACT** Jörg Wiegratz  j.wiegratz@leeds.ac.uk  School of Politics and International Studies, University of Leeds, Leeds, LS2 9JT, UK

© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

populism-in-state-practice (PISP) and the Populist-in-Office (PIO), that is, the dynamics around the implementation of populist state initiatives, especially in matters of the economy.

This article addresses this gap and contributes to the analysis of actual populism under neoliberalism, by exploring particular land interventions of Uganda's President, Yoweri K. Museveni. It focuses on the unstudied impermanent Presidential committees on land as a populist state measure. The paper offers an analysis of a populist measure by a long-standing powerholder who is invested in neoliberal reform and has used populism repeatedly during his nearly 40 years in power. The study thus shows how and to what effect populism is used to govern neoliberal-capitalist society and further particular political and economic interests. It analyses the dynamics, tensions, achievements and limits of populism at implementation level in such a context. Specifically, we study a populist initiative that is carried out by a government that has advanced neoliberalism in the past, and continues to be committed – for reasons of power reproduction and class interests, among others – to the major aim of the neoliberal project, i.e. the creation of a fully-fledged market society.<sup>3</sup> The question thus arises: How does a populist state initiative play out in a neoliberal political-economic setting that is not only partly of the government's own making but also questions and runs counter to, and thus renders difficult its populist move, especially at the implementation level?

Such a study of PISP and PIO broadens the predominant scholarly enquiry in the African context on populism as ideology, rhetoric, election tool, performance or emotive state (in political affairs generally), to actual state interventions and the broader issue of populism in contemporary capitalism. The populism scholarship in the African context, we argue, requires a more extensive and comparative analysis of PIP, especially PISP and PIO, that is, populism as (i) a practice of power and rule and (ii) an aspect of capitalist political economy, transformation and development. The latter is about the relation between capitalism and populism, including the role of populism in (governing) capitalist social order.<sup>4</sup>

Setting up the study of populism under neoliberalism in this way is analytically interesting: What happens to the status quo when populist political rhetoric, strategy, mobilisation or programme flourish in a neoliberal society? How does populism interact with other key features of a neoliberal polity: militarisation, corruption, elite rivalries, inequality, class specific power asymmetries, party politics, political competition and violence? How is the populist measure designed and implemented; what are its results, conflicts, ambiguities (e.g. class ambiguities<sup>5</sup>) and shortcomings and how are its controversies, contradictions and shortcomings handled by the populist? In what way does PISP affect the overall neoliberal order, i.e. its day-to-day structures, processes, relations, practices and outcomes? What difference does PISP make and what is its political meaning and significance?

Uganda is a key case for such an enquiry due to: (i) the entrenched character of neoliberalism and the speed and magnitude of reform-induced changes over the past four decades and their various regressive societal effects – heightened inequality, entrenched corruption and fraud, and widespread economic marginalisation, vulnerability, precarity and insecurity – that provide fertile ground for the employment of populist strategies in various sectors including land<sup>6</sup>; (ii) the NRM government's intriguing combination of significant pro-poor and anti-poor rhetoric and actions over its period of rule since

1986, and its longer lineage of (often election-related) popular rhetoric and measures to maintain power during that period;<sup>7</sup> and (iii) the existence since the late 2010s of the broad-based populist People Power Movement related to the artist-activist-politician Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, also known by his stage name Bobi Wine. Kyagulanyi leads the Movement's party, the National Unity Platform (NUP) – currently the biggest opposition party in Parliament – and was runner up in the Presidential elections in 2021 (with a declared vote share of about 35%).

During Museveni's administration, various land-related interventions have been undertaken. They have ranged from formal policy formulation, legislative enactments and reforms over a period of many years. Museveni has also invoked executive authority to set up committees or other temporary bodies to address land-related matters including evictions. The first such committee was headed by Gertrude Njuba (from 2006). There is no clear information about the membership of her committee, although she executed her work with staff. Though referred to as a committee, at times it was atypical for its unclear composition and the fact that power was vested in her and not the entity. The name given to her position and outfit has been changing over time. During 2008-2014, Njuba was referred to as Director of land matters in state house,<sup>8</sup> and in 2017 she was referred to as 'head state house land department'.<sup>9</sup> Another committee headed by Aidah Nantaba was established during 2012-2013, through which land evictions were supposed to be stopped. The composition, membership and terms of reference were set by the appointing authority (the President). The recurrence of evictions called for new "solutions": the President, on the basis of a law,<sup>10</sup> thus set up a third entity in December 2016, the Commission of Inquiry into the Effectiveness of Law, Policies and Processes of Land Acquisition, Land Administration, Land Management and Land Registration in Uganda which worked from 2017-2020.<sup>11</sup> He nominated Members of the Commission under the same Act. This paper is focused largely on the Nantaba Committee. Cases of evictions were central to both the Nantaba Committee and the Commission of Inquiry.

The first author was a Commissioner on the 2017–2020 Commission of Inquiry. In writing this article, she engaged in self-critical introspection and assessment, paying attention to her participation in a relatively similar initiative and the possible influence it may have to analyses and interpretations of information. She thought of her position at the Commission and the extent to which she remains accountable for it, while also addressing the question how her actions and choices will perpetuate her thought patterns, beliefs and assumptions held about land evictions and the role of land justice institutions, while still at the Commission. In this regard the author considered that there are other different realities and conceptualisations of evictions outside what she knew. The author did not avoid theoretical framings that are at odds with her knowledge. In terms of positionality, a degree of subjectivity therefore guided the research design, choice of methods and cases to be analysed. For enhanced objectivity in analysis, the cases chosen for this paper are those arising from the operations of the Nantaba Committee and not the Commission. Having been a Commissioner gives the first author an insider's contextual and background understanding of the subject and operation of such institutions, which offers a backdrop against which the working of the Nantaba Committee is analysed without being conflicted.

Finally, the repeated establishment of temporary institutions to stop evictions without success led to assertions among sections of the public that the Commission was

perfunctory and just another such body that may not deliver change. This presents a limitation to the first author especially in the face of perceptions: on what moral authority should she analyse a failed Committee when she was part of another body whose fruits have not yet been enjoyed? The first author overcomes this by maintaining a rigorous approach to analysis of the Committee's work. The changing nature of evictions, the power disparities between perpetrators and evictees, the difficulties in resolving them as identified with the Nantaba Committee were among the key issues the first author noted at the Commission. So, promising to stop evictions once and for all, as Museveni did (see below) can be a tall order. However, this perception does not dispel the rigorous analytical stance used in this paper.

The remainder of the article – after an explanation of the empirical focus – discusses the literature on populism and carves out the intervention and contribution of the paper, then gives an overview of key dynamics in neoliberal Uganda that set the context and shape (presidential) populism in the country, and finally proceeds to the analysis of PISP in the land sector.

## The scholarship on populism

Populism can be seen as a political ideology, rhetoric/discourse, strategy and performance. It responds to and takes advantage of a situation where a large section of people in a given social order is and/or feels exploited, marginalised, excluded, and disempowered, for example in terms of resources, rights, identity, or voice. It articulates that a particular set of powerful social actors – e.g. the wealthy, the powerful, the elites, the experts, the corrupt – is responsible, and has advanced, caused and directly benefited from the former group's decline and deprivation. The populist discourse sets up (as discursive units) “the people” against “the other” (that is, two homogenous groups) in an *antagonistic* relation – for example, “the pure people” vs. “the corrupt elite” – and thus reinforces relevant preexisting and/or creates new discourses. It typically includes an anti-elitism, anti-establishment, or anti-system ethos.

The populist promise is solidarity with, social inclusion of and advanced well-being of the deprived, via addressing their grievances and rectifying the identified problem. It claims to capture and express the “general will of the people” (that is, respond to their common sense) via particular policies, programmes, practices, or referenda. The measures and changes suggested are rather of a (supposedly) simple and quick than complex, ambiguous, incremental and sustainable nature. Populism tends to be a highly personalised and emotional affair, where an often charismatic, popular individual leader, in power or opposition, has (or claims to have) a close, direct, unmediated, yet hierarchical relationship with “the people” that s/he sees as “my people” and claims to represent as a “(wo)man of the people”. Populism tends to target broader social groups (e.g. operate cross-ethnicity and class), including the politically “unorganised” income-poor.<sup>12</sup>

Much of the literature is built on the classic definition of populism as thin ideology and consequently often amounts to analysing speeches of populist figures for their use of phrases that fit the core criteria of the definition (“the people”, etc.).<sup>13</sup> Other strands in the literature are about right-wing vs. left-wing populism (Hungary, Venezuela), populism and affect, and authoritarian populism.<sup>14</sup>

In the African context, interventions in the scholarly debate include Larmer and Cheeseman's notion of ethno-populism.<sup>15</sup> The latter is an example of research that explores what sort of populist strategy can help a politician to win elections.<sup>16</sup> Case studies of post-election populism include Fraser's study of Zambia, and Resnick's analysis of the effect of populist leaders on democracy in South Africa and Zambia.<sup>17</sup> These studies tend not to: (i) focus on PISP/PIO or (ii) frame their cases as populism in a neoliberal-capitalist setting; i.e. they do not interrogate explicitly the link between populism and neoliberal transformation and/or political economy.<sup>18</sup> The analytical concern is rather how populism sits within and shapes the character of politics in terms of democracy, elections, authoritarianism, or political style. The latest scholarship has analysed the cases of, for example, Ghana (Rawlings), Tanzania (Magufuli), Uganda (Kyagulanyi), Zambia (Sata) and South Africa (populist campaigns) and anti-authoritarian populism (of democracy movements in Tanzania and Zimbabwe).<sup>19</sup>

### Setting up the study of PISP and the PIO

The above-mentioned features arguably make populism a suitable political tool – as rhetoric, performance, mobilisation, policy and programme – for politicians operating in unequal, divided, crisis-ridden capitalist societies in Africa and beyond. Such societies have stark power asymmetries between social groups and classes. They grapple with public concerns about the agendas and actions of the powerful, and the future trajectory of the deprived group(s) and the country at large. It is a potent tool in a neoliberal (ising) society characterised by a type of capitalist transformation that is rapid, comprehensive, turbulent and disruptive for large sections of society. One that involves significant advancement of particular classes at the expense of others (characterised by high levels of displacement, dispossession, inequality, injustice, exploitation, division), major transformations of power structures and social hierarchies, public discontentment and critique of aspects of the neoliberal change and/or their powerful promoters and beneficiaries, and respective demands for change. This scenario applies to the Ugandan case (see below).

Fitting with (and at times driving) this aspect of public discourse, the PIO – in our case Museveni – does not keep silent about inequalities or elite corruption in capitalist society but approaches them from a particular angle: in terms of the suggested causes and solutions to the problem. S/he offers a public critique, however limited, of the processes or actors that lay at the core of popular discontent: for example, dispossession. This is distinct compared to earlier phases of neoliberal rule – especially but not only in Uganda – during which critiques from prominent state officials/reform promoters of aspects of capitalism (e.g. certain practices of investors or tycoons) were generally taboo. Although the populist's appeal might well short-circuit a rigorous challenge to the existing power structure, s/he nonetheless presents himself as the saviour, and frontrunner of the desired pro-poor agenda: state-administered justice, redress, prosperity, and security for the sub-altern and transparency in the affairs of both state and economy. Our case exemplifies this aspect: against the background of rampant land disputes and evictions – i.e. with thousands of people displaced – Museveni declared the intent to “stop all evictions”.

Indeed, populism's core promise is significant and socially progressive change, but within the system: taking on and defeating the powerful forces of the unjust, impoverishing, corrupting status quo; overcoming business as usual; bringing improvements to the

deprived in terms of inclusion, empowerment and living conditions. Populism articulates and links the issues of power, societal antagonisms, crisis, and change within capitalism in a very peculiar manner. It makes a statement about the relational underpinnings of poverty, wealth, and inequality (e.g. the rich advance by exploiting and dispossessing the poor) and includes the powerful and rich in the analysis and critique. It is a particular representation and interpretation of capitalist social reality resonating with the everyday experiences of the “downtrodden”.<sup>20</sup> Thus, it opens up a Pandora’s box of class relations, inequality and conflict, and makes the promise to significantly address some of those class-related aspects of people’s grievances, via redistribution, nationalisation of resources, or punishment of “wrongdoers”. This constellation of populism under neoliberalism is analytically interesting, especially for the case of an actor who is in power (and highly resourceful) as well as neoliberal and populist. A major part of the action mix of a populist neoliberal government will arguably be straightforwardly in line with the market society trajectory, e.g. the promotion of the interests of (especially foreign) capital. Yet, for various political reasons – legitimacy, elections, pressure to deal with people’s grievances, conflict containment – the government will at the same time speak to, formulate and act out in part a populist agenda. Notably, populism is a long-standing feature of Museveni’s repertoire of rule of the political and economic realm.

In sum, the prototypical neoliberal PIO we are concerned with analytically: has advanced – and is thus invested in – the social formation that brings about the problems that s/he critiques and promises to tackle; and continues to advance forms of societal change that fuel the conditions which drive the rise of populism (i.e. rapid capitalist development backed by a significantly authoritarian, anti-poor neoliberalism). The actor also plays the populist card and advances the idea that s/he is in a win-win, harmonious relationship with the deprived and is ready to carry out measures for and in defence of the poor or “the people”,<sup>21</sup> and address the decried conditions. The PIO’s promise of redress and change – in a conflict-laden, entrenched neoliberal political economy – is the core of the appeal and tension of neoliberal populism, especially if advanced by long-term power holders. It takes in view issues such as dispossession and poverty; articulates a path for change; and positions the PIO/government as – in popular speak – the “good guys” that want and can sort out the identified “bad guys”.

This set-up brings about contradictions, dilemmas and tensions for the PIO at ideological, rhetorical and implementation level. The PIO is likely to fall short of action that can deliver the promised substantive change. This may be due to the PIO’s role and interest in the existing structure of power and accumulation and the class agenda that underpins it. A question is thus: how is this under-delivery managed? Finally, we can expect that neoliberal populism could be used to contain demands for radical change – e.g. Kyagulanyi’s people power movement in Uganda’s case – that could alter the power structure in a way that would threaten the PIO and relevant allies, and their interests. This outline of the problematique of populism under neoliberalism informs our analytical interest regarding the case in focus and beyond.

### **Neoliberal Uganda: fertile ground for populism by the incumbent**

Uganda has undergone an extensive restructuring since the 1990s aimed at institutionalising neoliberal capitalism. The state had a decisive role in promoting rapid capitalist

development, advancing and mediating the process of adjusting the structure of power and wealth (including resource ownership) towards capital, at the expense of labour and peasantry. It has a strong alliance with connected domestic businesses and outside forces including international capital and donors.<sup>22</sup> Not dissimilar to previous decades, “the masses” regularly experienced the state as the instrument of the powerful to advance an agenda that was hostile to their interests and rights.<sup>23</sup> Corruption and fraud – particularly of members of the elite and ruling class – have become extensive, affecting the poor and generating volumes of media coverage.<sup>24</sup> Sections of the official structures of accountability, policing and justice have been compromised. The police and courts seem to be regularly serving the rich and powerful at the expense of the poor. Intra-elite wrangles are rife. Scholars have characterised Uganda as a case of: a presidentialised type of semi-authoritarian democracy; heightened patronage and personalised, autocratic rule; and extensive de-institutionalisation and institutional paralysis.<sup>25</sup>

Uganda has further characteristics conducive for a more explicit and heightened populist response: high inequality, wealth concentration, militarised and commercialised politics, public sector crumbling, social injustice, economic insecurity, un-/under-employment, dispossession, marginalisation, impoverishment, and – in the face of people’s discontent and resistance – state repression.<sup>26</sup> These processes have diminished government’s authority; also due to its hesitant and uneven response to (i) the economic plight that the vast section of the population faces, and (ii) to demands for improved state accountability.<sup>27</sup> Sections of the population have for years demanded social reform and progress.

The demands articulated the insight that the attainment of the key winners of the reform and its politics is relationally connected to the dismal existence of a large section of people. That said, the country has experienced economic growth, poverty reduction and various societal improvements. This has boosted government legitimacy, particularly in the earlier phase of its rule. Significantly, throughout the decades, government, donors and capital run discourses and programmes that had already a certain populist flavour: pro-poor growth, poverty reduction strategies, wealth/prosperity for all and so on. They suggested that the reform-induced transformations and Ugandan capitalism more generally are compatible and reconcilable – e.g. via some government or presidential push and tweaking – with the interests of the poor. As mentioned, there is a longer history of Museveni and his relationship with populism which date back to his liaison with African socialism, his later endorsement of a people-centred “no-party democracy”<sup>28</sup> and interventions in the agricultural sector that resemble agrarian populism.<sup>29</sup> The studied case is thus one of the latest iterations of Museveni’s populism, thus, of populism in Uganda under neoliberalism. The case is further one of an established PIO, not of a first-time populist or a recent turn to populism.

The early 2010s saw a series of renewed efforts of people to demand for change, including strikes and demonstrations.<sup>30</sup> The government was inventive in adjusting its reactions to this stalemate so as to regain momentum and advance its interests. It responded at first with increased distaste for critical debate and protest,<sup>31</sup> but later tried to enhance its legitimacy via giving its rule a renewed appeal of modernisation (Uganda becoming a middle-income country), and a religious and patriotic undertone. The government also advanced a discourse and programme of zero-tolerance-to-corruption, integrity, transparency, accountability, and wealth-for-all. A number of these



interventions can be understood to be part of neoliberal populism: in order to deal with the crisis, the government did not just demonstrate and strengthen its coercive powers but also tried to extend its rule by consent. It sought to renew its appeal – and that of Museveni – as a political force of and for the common people, a movement that is connected with the grassroots, listens and responds to people’s demands, empowers people, tackles fundamental societal problems, delivers a better society and is thus worthy of receiving voters’ support to remain at the helm. These are important continuations and reconnections with some of the long-standing more broad-based, inclusive political strategies of both Museveni and the NRM.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, in recent years, the government has had to contend with a new populist oppositional challenger in Kyagulanyi. As Melchiorre has argued, Kyagulanyi has deployed a form of generational populism, a mobilising political discourse which frames the struggle between “the people” and “the elite” in generational terms, by defining the former in relation to their status as youth, and in antagonistic opposition to an elite, which is depicted as defending a gerontocratic political order. Contending with this popular threat has arguably shaped Museveni’s evolving populist politics since the late 2010s.<sup>33</sup>

### **The empirical focus: PISP in the land sector**

To run the analysis the article uses selected cases (reported or decided by courts), land laws, government statements, TV news footage, and newspaper articles from five different national English-speaking media outlets.<sup>34</sup> The main cases discussed later were selected as reflective of wider trends of the case dynamics on land in Uganda. They exemplified the vertical nature of conflicts (between the powerful and the poor), contestations on land ownership vs. use rights, and varying degrees of security of occupancy rights to land. The types of debates that emerged in several cases concerning the Nantaba Committee engagements are widely reflective of larger sector dynamics: parallel execution of institutional power, localised populism on the ground, neglect of formal law and procedure, problematic (e.g. illusory) solutions for the poor parties to land conflicts, etc.

The choice allows for analysis of cases arising from different land tenure systems such as *mailo*<sup>35</sup> and freehold. Land cases have been chosen for this paper due to the particularly populist response of Museveni to the increasing number of contestations on land at times leading to evictions. These have arisen in various contexts: (i) the post armed conflict in the north;<sup>36</sup> (ii) activities aimed at re-structuring/controlling cities;<sup>37</sup> (iii) oil extraction in the Albertine region; (iv) increased international demand for agricultural land;<sup>38</sup> and (v) tenure insecurity. Evidence also points to escalating evictions due to increased interest to take land for development and business projects.<sup>39</sup>

Courts of law have also sanctioned evictions. In *Baleke Kayira Peter and others vs. Attorney General of Uganda*,<sup>40</sup> people in four villages were evicted in 2001 to avail the land to a German coffee company to grow coffee. The case indicated that the evictees were approximately 4000 people. It is particularly chosen here for it portrays the heightened tenure insecurity and vulnerability of everyday occupiers and users of land, in the face of big investors, collaborating with the PIO to pursue FDI-based, large-scale agro-commercialisation (a version of capitalist economic development that is propagated and rolled-out by the government across the country). The case reports procedural

impropriety in land acquisition, common in cases of eviction. Property was destroyed; the eviction was allegedly carried out by the military and did not follow a compensation and relocation plan.<sup>41</sup> The court found the eviction wrongful. Similar dynamics have been reported in cases such as that involving London-based New Forest Company acquiring land mainly for environmental conservation and evicting many people in Kiboga and Mubende.<sup>42</sup>

The authors have not found official up-to-date disaggregated data on evictions in Uganda, showing those resulting from judicial processes and those that do not. Available information however shows that between 2007 and 2009, 59,000 people were evicted.<sup>43</sup> These represented 8,445 families in more than 10 districts across the country leading to homelessness of 59,115 people.<sup>44</sup> More recently, there have been reports on individual cases of evictions, for example in Tilenga in the oil region.<sup>45</sup> Evictions continue despite official public condemnation and criminalisation under the Land (Amendment) Act 2010. According to the Uganda National Land Policy, that is more so since ‘implementation is in its infancy’.<sup>46</sup> Since various actors and interests are affected in such cases, land – particularly land conflicts and evictions – has remained a focal point for politics, public debate and official presidential statements.<sup>47</sup> Despite that, evictions continue. The Museveni administration established the Nantaba Committee in 2012, promising to deal with the problem “once and for all”. This aim was not realised over a decade later: during the Heroes Day celebrations on 9 June 2024, the president’s speech was interspersed with the renewed promise to stop evictions.<sup>48</sup>

### **The land sector: conflict, crisis and the perfect storm for a populist intervention**

Land is a precious asset. Capitalist development imperatives have led to attempts at land law and tenure reform in a number of African countries.<sup>49</sup> Uganda’s reforms have attempted to transform tenure relations and security, bringing about increased conflicts since the 2000s.<sup>50</sup> Conflicts have also been a result of pressure on land due to population growth, rapid urbanisation, increased value of land for various kinds of buyers, including the salaried class, firms in the housing/property sector, tycoons, speculators, and the corrupt. Uganda’s economy is agro-based; land is of high use to millions of subsistence farmers as well as larger commercial farms. The majority poor are land dependent. Consequently, land politics affects all sections of society, from peasants to kings, and is a decisive field of politics, not only before elections. The desperation of conflict victims for quick yet official, legitimate solutions make these conflicts apt for populist interventions.

For years, the land sector has been characterised by dubious sales of state-owned land, corruption, title fraud, evictions, interpersonal violence, intensifying land-related hostilities and insecurities – producing temporarily “ungovernable” spaces. The crisis of land conflicts built up in the 2000s and escalated in the early 2010s. This led to evictions, clashes and land-related criminality such as corruption, killings and attacks on intervening officials. The land office had to close for months in 2012–2013 to allow for the electronic update of the title registry, in an attempt to reduce corruption.<sup>51</sup> Forgeries and allegations of corruption continued, as revealed in a number of cases reported before the Commission of Inquiry into land allegedly involving top officials or their frontmen.<sup>52</sup> Some public

servants allegedly regularly provide help to the powerful in advancing the land deals/evictions and respective intimidation. Justice for those affected by land conflicts is elusive due to deficits in both state and customary dispute resolution institutions which creates uncertainties for users. Coupled with wanting land administration approaches, case backlogs, tenure insecurity, access and delivery of land justice becomes complicated.<sup>53</sup> This furthered a system of de-facto land governance that produced individualised, unstable, conflict-ridden “solutions” in increasingly commercialised, zero-sum and violent political economies of land where power and resources are decisive to move a case.<sup>54</sup>

Against this background, around 2010, the government declared to fight the crises, and restore justice and order with new verve, through law reform, policy initiatives and strategic plans of action. The National Land Policy provides for a re-institution of Land Tribunals to offer efficient and affordable land dispute resolution,<sup>55</sup> with appeals going to higher levels of justice institutions.<sup>56</sup> The Land Sector Strategic Plan II stipulates the intervention strategies for reforms, including implementation of the land laws.<sup>57</sup> At the executive level, special units were created to implement the President’s initiative of fighting land grabbing and illegal evictions to which we turn further below.

### ***Historical background to contemporary land conflicts***

Historical dynamics related to a land system left by the British colonialists partly explains the deep-rooted land conflict between landlords and tenants on *mailo* land. The system was shaped by colonial interventions: (i) introduction of private interests in land, and issuance of title deeds; (ii) undermining the rights of customary land occupiers; (iii) promoting freehold type tenure.<sup>58</sup> This resulted in conflicting claims to the same land by title deed holders and customary occupiers<sup>59</sup>; with the title holder having better land rights and power to evict the tenant with unsecure and unregistered title.<sup>60</sup>

Land conflicts – and personalised, informal dispute resolutions – are thus not new but have more recently been exacerbated by capitalist restructuring, and a related commercialisation and politicisation of land. At its inception in 1900 and through its evolution in 1928, the *mailo* system of landholding denoted co-existence of landlord and tenant; none of them claiming exclusive rights to land against the other, as is the case today.<sup>61</sup> The customary tenant with lesser interests on the registered land are to either be lawful or bonafide occupant on land<sup>62</sup> – referred to as *kibanja/bibanja* holder(s).<sup>63</sup> The Land Act 1998 recognises and offers them security on paper<sup>64</sup>; they are still in a precarious situation in reality, conflicting with landlords. This is coupled with the weak and selective enforcement of existing laws (in favour of the powerful) and malfunctioning land management institutions.<sup>65</sup> The protection of the tenants, (who are the majority) on paper has been described as a populist fight against sections of the landlords, for political gain (e.g. re-election), and an attempt to address the “moral indebtedness” and revitalise the pro-poor credentials of the NRM government.<sup>66</sup> These changes did not overcome landlord-tenant frictions.

### ***Increased land evictions since the late 1990s and their potential for populism***

There have been various efforts aimed at land law reform since the late 1990s, with the 1998 Land Act a key landmark. Nevertheless, evictions increased since 1998<sup>67</sup> due to: the

increased value of land and formalisation of property rights to feed into the commercial land market<sup>68</sup> (a World Bank agenda); the existence of a powerful politically connected class, willing to purchase this land, evict tenants and use their positions to elude the law; a transforming social/moral fabric, wherein people care less about how they treat others; and increased international demand for agricultural land.<sup>69</sup> Evictions thus reinforce class dynamics leaving the poor tenants dispossessed of their land, livelihoods, voice and ability to enforce their rights through judicial institutions and obtain legal remedies. The effects of evictions have been devastating to many of the poor (especially in rural areas); landlessness has contributed to poverty and hunger.<sup>70</sup>

The propensity of eviction in the case of *mailo* land involves three categories of actors: the landlords struggling to enjoy their ownership rights, the tenants in dire need of protection on that land (i.e. from eviction), and the officials with power to do something about the situation of “their people” and ensure re-election. In terms of election politics, the numbers of minority landowners are not big enough to be of weighty effects at the polls. There is however the political weight of large landlords such as the Buganda kingdom, or the Church, that can be electorally decisive. The relationship between Museveni, the Baganda and the Buganda Kingdom has had a lot of political and social implications. It has been a schemata for populism for Museveni, attempting to develop policy to protect the poor tenants with hidden implications: the potential to politically (and socially) weaken the landlords and the Buganda Kingdom’s power generally and over land.<sup>71</sup> PISP in land is thus a matter of both rural and urban politics.

A key item that poor tenants have as leverage is their vote and their capacity to cause trouble to “public order” via occupations or demonstrations. Museveni has identified with this grievance and presented himself as their saviour. This situation creates (i) an opportunity for the politically powerful to neglect/undermine land justice institutions in dispute resolution; (ii) a fertile ground for populist politicisation of land issues; and (iii) the possibility to undermine a lawful decision of a court, even if it is relatively fair, but does not serve the populist agenda. This introduces a neoliberal populist form of justice and justice delivery.

### **Land dispute settlement institutions as conduits of populist settlements**

This paper argues that land dispute settlement institutions are generally weak; increasing the propensity of the populists to use them with ease to achieve their agenda, or ignore them with impunity and still achieve the agenda using other populist institutions.

Uganda has an extensive structure of institutions mandated to handle cases arising from contestations over land. These include Magistrate Courts, and courts of judicature right from the High Court to the Supreme Court. Also important is the Uganda Police Force. These institutions are embedded in the neo-patrimonial state. The state benefits from a weakened land justice system which produces desperate masses who are in turn in need of “help” from the state. Despite the existence of laws and land justice institutions the state does not fully facilitate and utilise them. Limited facilitation affects institutional efficiency and opens up the space for populist measures. The state goes for more patrimonial approaches, whose characteristics include personalised political authority, weak checks on private appropriation of public resources and pervasive clientelism. Clientelism or personalised political authority is evoked to offer solutions to the poor

landless in return for their political support. The landless resort to that relationship, judging that they would most likely lose if they resorted to the formal justice institutions for their justice needs.<sup>72</sup> This weakens land justice institutions. Coupled with struggles over land between the minority landowners and majority tenants, it creates a wider space within which “pro-poor politics” plays out to occasionally appease the poor majority voters who would most likely not afford formal institutional justice.

Courts are thin on the ground (some inaccessible to some remote rural poor), have budgetary constraints and backlogs, and experience corruption all of which affect their effective operation.<sup>73</sup> Land Tribunals are provided for in the Land Act of 1998 to operate within the decentralised structures at the District level but are not yet in place.<sup>74</sup> Through Presidential Directives, parallel institutions – in form of Committees or Units – have been established to handle land matters alongside the legally established institutions.

Due to increased cases of evictions and crime arising from land conflicts, a Land Desk at the Criminal Investigations Department, to investigate such cases was set up within the police in 2008.<sup>75</sup> By Presidential Directive to the Inspector General of Police (IGP) then, Kale Kayihura (a top military official and a long-term, close aide of Museveni), the Desk was turned into a Police Land Protection Unit (PLPU), launched in 2008 to operate country-wide. The official impetus behind the Directive was to among others deal with an increase in evictions of poor tenants.<sup>76</sup> Its official functions included protection of tenants on land from eviction, ensuring the enforcement of lawful orders of court and mediating between disputing parties on land.<sup>77</sup> Among the mandates of the High Court is to conduct Alternative Dispute Resolution.<sup>78</sup> The effect is parallel yet uncoordinated execution of authority, inter-institutional competition instead of cooperation between the PLPU and the High Court, leading to weakened justice delivery.<sup>79</sup> This approach also goes against the belief that land rights are better protected by institutions that wield long-term authority – in this case those established under the regular judicial arm of the state, not ad-hoc units.<sup>80</sup>

The PLPU’s initial operations were concentrated in some districts in the Central (Buganda) Region where *mailo* land is predominant.<sup>81</sup> Up to the 2021 elections, Museveni enjoyed a strong hold in Buganda in terms of vote-share. This, coupled with the timing of the launching of the PLPU close to a presidential election in 2011, suggests that the creation of this unit was partly motivated by electoral considerations. Political manoeuvring, corruption and an inability to engage with land issues arising country wide are among the reported reasons for the low success rates of the Unit.<sup>82</sup> The PLPU’s approach exacerbated institutional populism (pro-Big Man) and did not tackle the corruption and militaristic approaches of the police to land conflicts. Rather than empower the mainstream institutions, units such as the PLPU and the Nantaba Committee were created. These are in line with Uganda’s trends of institutional multiplicity, informal modes of governance and a political order characterised by highly personalised and multi-levelled set of bargains negotiated.<sup>83</sup>

### **Neoliberal populist institutions: the case of the presidential committees on land**

Systematic and other state-politics-induced failures of existing institutions set up in law to deliver justice have contributed to the making of an impasse that is ripe for “creative”

political initiatives to address the problem. As mentioned in the introduction, this approach led to two successive Committees to deal with land issues. The 2006 Committee was headed by Gertrude Njuba<sup>84</sup> – an NRA bush war veteran in the 1980s whose later career spanned multiple positions including deputy minister, presidential advisor in addition to heading the State house land directorate. Measured by its official aims of ending land disputes, the Committee was not a success due to insufficient funding and political support. It was frozen on establishment of another Committee in February 2013 (with a reported mandate only until June 2013<sup>85</sup>), headed by then junior state minister for Lands Aida Nantaba, Kayunga Woman Member of Parliament. This Committee can be regarded as a result of the President's expressed frustration about the continuing evictions despite previous efforts to curb them: he publicly expressed his support, hope and agenda to stop-all-evictions through the Committee.

### **The Nantaba Committee**

In a press conference after the establishment of the Committee, reported about in TV news, Museveni stated the following (which we analyse further below):

All evictions are halted. There will be no more evictions, especially in the rural areas. All evictions involving *peasants* [extra pronounced] are halted ... If anybody involves himself in those evictions, he will be handled severely according to the amended Land Act ... [The Nantaba team] will go around, village by village where there is a contention, to take ... people back to their land. Because we don't want people to take the law into their own hands and say 'we are coming back by ourselves'. No, No, No, No. ... Let the team come, village by village, listen to the cases and decide to take you back; so that things are done properly. We don't want citizen-on-citizen conflict.<sup>86</sup>

The committee had neither legal powers (other than the President's directive), nor the number of staff appropriate for the official task. Nantaba's age (born 1979), limited previous experience in land matters and the controversy surrounding her appointment to the Committee further raised the issue of the politics of the Committee. Nantaba was appointed State Minister for lands only a short while earlier (August 2012) and in controversial circumstances. Some members of Parliament's vetting Committee tried to block her approval as Minister on allegations that her academic qualifications (and her character) were questionable.<sup>87</sup> She holds a Bachelor's Degree in tourism from Makerere University (2003), had worked as a Tourism Officer of a tours and travel company (2003), before joining elective politics in 2010, whereupon she won the seat of Kayunga Woman Member of Parliament in 2011.<sup>88</sup>

Besides Nantaba, there were eight members: a member of the NRM and woman member of Parliament for Wakiso District, representatives of the office of the President, of the Ministries of (i) Lands Housing and Urban Development, and (ii) Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Police and Army and the Judicial Service Commission.<sup>89</sup> The members were mostly lawyers drawn from institutions which, except for the army, have a mandate to deal with land issues. Theoretically, such composition of the committee might have advanced coordination roles of the institutions represented. Selecting people that have institutional affiliation may be confirmation by the head of state that such institutions have a major role to play in land matters. However, it was never clear whether the individuals represented the interests of their respective institutions

or were accountable to them. They were directly appointed by the President. The advantage of this set-up for the appointing authority is that it can control the Committee's actions and their outcomes (thus institutionalising Presidential "good will", or bias), and use it to promote clientelism. The official justification for the Committee centred on the need to protect the peasants and the poor (on *mailo* land, which is mostly in the central region) from eviction. Its mandate was to:

1. Halt evictions involving peasants; 2. Those who have been illegally evicted will be assisted by the Government to go back to their *bibanja*<sup>90</sup>; 3. The Committee ... will go area by area returning people, illegally evicted back to their *bibanja*; 4. If there is anybody who got an authenticated eviction order against encroachers on his/her land through courts of law, the Registrar of the High Court will verify and authenticate the Court Order and the Government will assist him/her to implement the eviction ...; 5. All corrupt officials that have been effecting illegal evictions will have punitive action taken against them ...<sup>91</sup>

Note that this statement, and the statement to the press cited earlier, gave the impression that government had the ability to judge the (il-)legality of all cases, and the capacity to return all illegally evicted, advance all legal evictions, and punish all wrong-doers. Such statements grossly misrepresent both the capacity and workings of the neoliberal state. Despite that, in the context of the above statement, there is logic and justification for dealing with eviction perpetrated against the poor, for justice should not be a "cloistered virtue" exclusively for those that can afford it, but all who need and seek it.<sup>92</sup> Notably, the literature on the law of land and pursuit of justice for the poor advocates for the use of bottom-up rather than top-down approaches.<sup>93</sup> The former involves efforts to empower poor people to be in a position to detect violation of their rights, and pursue justice from established institutions which offer sustainable solutions.<sup>94</sup> This potentially makes them self-sufficient and in charge of their land justice needs.

The appointment of the Committee instead was thus arguably a problematic top-down approach: (i) it was a narrow political answer to a substantial political-economic and socio-legal issue; (ii) it bypassed established state institutions with structures for accountability; and (iii) the Committee helped the evicted return to their land by all means, without resolving the underlying conflicts between landlord and tenants, thus making a future eviction imminent. At the same time, the conflict had potential to hamper "quiet enjoyment of land" by the tenant. Taken together, this hampered the effectiveness and sustainability of the measures.

### ***Unpacking Museveni's stop-all-evictions declaration***

At the press conference announcing the Committee, Museveni spoke to one of his core voter targets, the rural poor, and framed the state and his initiative and power as: first, all-resourceful – i.e. uniting all (well-meaning) state agencies, stopping 'all' evictions immediately (by sorting out the bad actors and their corrupt dealings) and sorting all wrong-doing ('anybody', 'village by village') – and, second, the agent of justice, orderly social relations and development and the rule of law. He also gave the impression that there would be no legal or any other challenges when people are being returned to 'their *bibanja*' – a gross simplification of social and legal reality. Also, no standard legal institution is mentioned to be important: it is all reduced to the Nantaba team,

the president's unit. Museveni sold a narrative that via presidential declarations and committees he can actually influence and recalibrate at the micro level the workings of neo-liberal capitalism as it plays out on the land.

According to official rationale, the initiative was also driven by the insight that the government is interested in protecting property and sorting out property conflicts which is good for economic growth. The president in his published view makes a correlation between an improved investment environment and economic development, and evictions from land. Land being a factor of production means that economic opportunities push a number of people into evicting the poor in order to tap into this potential. To the president, such opportunities are grand (and related orderly evictions acceptable). The challenge however is 'Bayaye-minded, nouveau-rich, pseudo capitalists, corrupt local leaders, Police and Courts; and a still unsensitised peasantry'.<sup>95</sup> Here, the president suggests that the problem is certain institutions, practices, norms and values, i.e. those that foster corruption. It is not the structure and operation of capitalist political economy, the neo-patrimonial state, the government's policy mix, rapid urbanisation or Uganda's role in the global economy. The president elevates corruption to the top explanation for the ills of capitalist society and economy – a typical populist framing. Museveni distinguishes between pseudo and genuine capitalists, as well as between good government and corrupt officials. A news item published by State House in February 2013 on its Facebook page reported:

[...] the majority of the victims are Ugandans from Buganda region who have been evicted by people he [Museveni] described as, 'bayaye' who live in towns and those who obtained money from the government in wrong ways. He noted that these people pretend to be investors and developers but collude with the RDC's, Police, and Magistrates among others to evict the people in spite of the government warnings against evictions. He said genuine investors negotiate with the people to buy land on a willing buyer, willing seller basis.<sup>96</sup>

The political economy of corruption remains unexplained: how the two types are interconnected; in what category the government's allies in the business sector fall and why; the connection between the state and the corrupt; the structures and dynamics including actors' motivations that underpin land fraud and corruption. Genuine investors, according to this narrative, do not evict or use other under-handed methods. The ideological figure of the good capitalist and the construction of the willing-buyer-willing-seller model are retained. There is no structural problem that needs tackling; only a few wrong-doers that need sorting out. This discourse is a continuation of a long-standing argument of the President that corrupt and lazy bureaucrats (alone) are *the* problem and stand in the way of development. The President also declares some evictions proper – for example, evicting "encroachers" trespassing private property – and the government will aid carrying them out, given a court order has been secured.<sup>97</sup> Thus, by setting up the Committee, the President situates himself with the deprived or those at the risk of illegal evictions. He is declaring to take their side – but against whom? Against the incumbent government that had the authority to curb illegal evictions in the first place?

Paget's recent conceptualisation allows us to interpret Museveni's discourse as a variant of populism: elitist plebeianism.<sup>98</sup> This variant hybridises populism with elitism. It breaks up the bifurcation of (good) common people vs (corrupt) elite and



offers a trifurcation of society that adds a particular middle stratum that gets vilified: the greedy technocrat or investor, often referred to simply as “the corrupt”. So part of the elite-in-government are friends of “the people”, then there are the powerful enemies of “the people” and then there are “the people” or as Museveni tends to refer to them paternally, “my people”. This allows Museveni to distinguish between good vs. bad powerful actors, gloss over the political-economic connections between the two and government’s implication in the (re-)production of “bad” actors, and run, as the most resource-full in-power actor in the country, a discourse against a section of the powerful, thus resolving or minimising some of the tensions and contradictions of neo-liberal PISP.

### **The Committee’s relationship with (judicial) institutions**

PIP can undermine and at times reject the role of the judiciary as a caretaker of democracy, law and the constitution and be ‘anti-judicial constitutionalism’,<sup>99</sup> i.e. be anti-judicial review, constitutional courts and tribunals when the judiciary is seen to act counter to the populist agenda and interests of the PIO and “the people” of concern.<sup>100</sup> This insight is relevant for understanding the relationship between the Committee and judicial institutions of land dispute resolution. The Committee operates alongside institutions mandated by law to deal with cases of evictions and deliver land justice. One can expect inter-institution competition and undermining. The existence of a complicated and overlapping institutional landscape is however key for political gain to be obtained for a populist agenda from the operation of the Committee along other institutions: the President is portrayed as a father that resolves institutional impasse. Further, it is these other institutions that have to be disempowered and presented as non-performing and non-cooperative, and the Committee portrayed as the actual or potential saviour of the poor from failed institutions.

The Presidential Directive on evictions could also cause conflict within an institution. For example, the Registrar of the High Court has powers to verify a lawful order issued by the High Court authorising eviction.<sup>101</sup> This places authority in the Registrar to check the High Court Judge that issued the order in the first place, which, technically should be higher than the Registrar. The Committee got involved in cases that were pending before courts of law, thereby undermining the courts’ authority. This suggests that PISP here is not resolving but, in part, deepening, institutionalising and prolonging institutional impasses. This is in turn used for flexible manoeuvring and gain-making for the appointing authority. The cases analysed below reveal further PISP characteristics in land justice delivery.

### ***Specific case analysis***

Persistence of evictions is connected to a structural issue intrinsically rooted in Uganda’s history and her land tenure system. Thus, the promises made at the setup of the Committee were too big to be delivered by the unit of its kind. The outcomes were limited, mainly due to lack of legal backing, financial constraints, limited cooperation from other arms of government working on land matters and high expectations from the public.

### ***The Nantaba Committee in Mukono***

In the two cases below, the class element and the nature of right claimed to land by either party suggest where each goes for solutions between courts and politicians. The investors with financial resources and defensible legal rights in form of land titles resort to courts of law as first choice, while the poor resort to “their” politicians, who are looking for popularity among their constituents. As will be made evident below, the Committee seems to have appreciated more cases of the poor as compared to the lawful claims by defendants who do not belong to that category. For example, requiring a defendant to compensate a person evicted in circumstances where compensation was already made to them prior to reporting the case to the Nantaba Committee or involving a local politician.<sup>102</sup>

First is the Buziranjovu Development Company Limited case. This case was selected for a number of reasons; it shows that with PISP, legal enactments and contractual obligation can be undermined, the problem of evictions and PISP are not only associated with mailo land (which presents complex overlapping rights), but leasehold tenure as well, despite its contractual nature and relative clarity of rights. The firm claimed to have acquired a 99-year lease over 1,423 acres of vacant land in Mukono District in 2005.<sup>103</sup> Squatters entered upon it in 2006 and 2007. The investor paid them 1 billion Uganda shillings to re-secure vacant possession of the land.<sup>104</sup> However, the squatters complained to Nantaba about alleged unlawful eviction and destruction of houses and property, for which they were compensated already.

Second is the case of RIIS Coffee Limited belonging to Danish investors who acquired 158 acres of land in 2011 in Buikwe district to run coffee business. The former occupants of the land had been compensated and agreements to that effect signed but complaints were lodged to the Committee. The Company had all the necessary legal documents including titles pointing to their rights on the land.<sup>105</sup> The Committee disregarded these, undermined RIIS Coffee’s legal rights by encouraging people (who had already been compensated to leave the land) to return to it, asserting claim. This was contrary to the law.

### ***... and in Kayunga***

Kayunga is located in Central Uganda and offers evidence to show that in the context where populism reigns, courts are undermined. Besides chairing the Committee, Nantaba’s other base of authority was in the fact that she was a woman Member of Parliament for Kayunga and land cases offered political capital for her. In some cases, court orders meant to be binding upon all persons were trumped by populist politicians, for example where Nantaba assisted more than 100 tenants to return to a respondent’s (Paul Kiwanuka’s) land, contrary to a court order.<sup>106</sup> Her intervention offered only temporary solutions to the poor. A number of land cases were filed in court against the minister in person, for allegedly aiding *bibanja* holders to take over contested pieces of land against the will of land owners.<sup>107</sup> Despite knowledge about such cases, Nantaba did not appear in court.<sup>108</sup> This foments a culture of official impunity and is likely to imply that “all people” including investors eventually need to turn to the President – and/or his trusted aides to seek “rescue”.<sup>109</sup>

The Kayunga cases detailed below are about landlords-tenants conflicts which often resulted in violent evictions.<sup>110</sup> The cases portray combative approaches to land conflicts, high levels of politicisation, and inter-institutional undermining between the

junior minister (Nantaba) vs. national institutions such as Police, security personnel, Local Councils and Courts of law.<sup>111</sup> One such case involved Moses Karangwa (at the time of writing the NRM party chairperson for Jinja District) who allegedly evicted people from land he acquired after giving them miniature compensation.<sup>112</sup> Nantaba helped some of them to forcefully return to their land. This case shows: first, a populist measure can partially intervene in societal processes and change their course and outcome, e.g. re-open supposedly settled cases.<sup>113</sup> Second, the outlined style of intervention to bring about “justice” rather further fuelled the conflict. Third, PISP has potential to trump laws by indiscriminately returning all evictees (genuine and not) to land. The Land Act protects perpetual occupancies on land for lawful and bona fide occupants of land except: where (i) one fails to pay annual ground rent and the landlord obtains a court order for eviction<sup>114</sup>; (ii) the tenant abandons the land for 3 or more years<sup>115</sup>; (iii) the tenant opts to sell his/her occupancy to the landlord<sup>116</sup>; or (iv) landlord and tenant enter into a mutual agreement to share the land or jointly hold it.<sup>117</sup> There is no explicit provision allowing the landlord to compel the tenant to accept compensation in lieu of occupancy of land. Rather, the Act protects security of occupancy for the recognised tenants.<sup>118</sup> Landlords have however disregarded the law to offer (oftentimes inadequate) compensation to tenants to vacate the land, and this has thrived in the absence of a compensations policy. In return strategies of PISP have benefited some tenants not entitled in law.

### ***Populism, political infighting and life of the committee***

In this populist set up, land has become a playground of interpersonal (and inter-institutional) conflicts, adding another layer of complexity to the problem and opening up room for the president to score. The land conundrum is political capital for politicians: s/he that stands out as more relevant to the cause gets support from the people.<sup>119</sup> Land issues offer an arena in which internal conflicts among members of the same political party are portrayed to the public.

The fights between Nantaba and the IGP over the Kayunga land wrangle, and especially those involving Karangwa, are a case in point. Nantaba accused the police chief of protecting Karangwa and having personal interest in Kayunga land, although Kayihura denied any such interest.<sup>120</sup> A major argument was about who has authority from the president to deal with the issues. The matter was not about evocation of powers from their respective institutions but from the president: who had he put in charge to deal with the problem. This led to clashes among different neo-patrimonial state units. With presidential backing, Nantaba did not fear a clash with the person who commands the national Police which is officially in charge of protection of people and their property.

Appearing on a local television on 15 August 2013, Nantaba accused the IGP of undoing the good work she had done and asserted that the president did not authorise the IGP to go to Kayunga. She threatened to resign as minister of lands if the IGP did not stop going to Kayunga to get involved in the land wrangles. In a counter attack, through the same medium, Kayihura accused Nantaba of defamation, threatened to sue her and insisted that the police have a right to intervene in land cases no matter what or where.<sup>121</sup> Elsewhere, Nantaba is quoted accusing Kayihura to be in ‘bed with land grabbers’ to the disadvantage of peasants, while Kayihura accused Nantaba of ‘uttering falsehoods and

using unlawful methods to solve Kayunga's land problems' and 'escalating land wrangles in the district that have pitted tenants against landlords because of her underhand methods'.<sup>122</sup> This is a fight between statutory and executive power.

Nantaba halted the committees' operation in May 2013 before the mandate ended, arguing that various government institutions and officers (e.g. police, lands) and landlords were uncooperative and sabotaged the committee.<sup>123</sup> Note the official cause of the problem: specific institutions and individuals – not the structure and operation of capitalist society and political economy. Also, 'that due to lack of legal backing, the Justice Law and Order sector institutions, such as; the Director of Public Prosecution and Police frustrated the committee's activities'.<sup>124</sup> Note the severity of the legal and institutional problems of this key populist unit.

## Conclusion

Uganda's neoliberal transformations have produced conflicts and crises in many sectors and for large sections of the population, especially the subaltern. These crises concern livelihood, social reproduction and political representation and are linked to class and accumulation dynamics as the country undergoes capitalist transformations. Importantly, powerholders committed to neoliberal reform have promoted this transformation as a moral project and neoliberal governance as moral leadership that makes central the striving for a better society, state, justice and order, for all.<sup>125</sup> Neoliberal-populist measures emerge in that context. They are useful as a response to crises and conflicts as well as change-course-calls by both, significant sections of society and political competitors with traction. The measures are also relevant when the need arises to explain crises and conflicts (and blur political responsibility) and to craft political responses to them. Neoliberal-populist narratives can help to regain some discursive momentum (on core opposition themes such as corruption, inequality, injustice and poverty), move out of impasse and restore aspects of legitimacy (however temporary), and, by and large, continue with neoliberalism as usual.

Within an overall neoliberal ideology and policy trajectory, measures such as land committees or commissions are officially drafted in the name of championing the cause of the poor (against "the other"). Populist state rhetoric and measures are thus a recent, partly recycled, iteration of neoliberalism as moral project. Museveni's attempts to personally deal with evictions leads to the establishment of a parallel system of direct presidential intervention that runs according to logics that are different from normal land justice institutions. This constitutes a continued power shift, away from normal institutions to president's executive units such as the Nantaba Committee. Though helping some of the poor in the short-term, the initiatives overlap with and almost obscure potentially more effective and durable legal, policy and institutional changes.

Our analysis shows that the initiatives were not adequate to address the immediate causes of the specific problems, the structurally embedded land tenure insecurities, and respective structural matters of political economy. Rather, the committee was, amongst other things, a platform for political fights and blackmail among powerful individuals positioning themselves to benefit from the context and dynamics presented by PISP. In the studied case, the initiatives did not end the problems, but instead deepened

them and unleashed new ones. PISP here is a continuation of the politics of personalisation, institutional turmoil, divisions, and insecurity, as well as authoritarian neoliberalism – thus constituting a form of authoritarian populism. However, it is also combined with elements of pro-poor and pro-justice political rhetoric, promise, policy, institutional innovations, legal initiatives (rule-by-law), and spectacle. It helps (re-)produce a discourse that quick, relatively small fixes can bring about redress, justice, and safety for the at-risk-of-evictions poor, while rapid capitalist development – the historic accelerator of evictions – is promoted relatively un-inhibited. The poor remain at an imminent risk of evictions. The studied case has important similarities with cases of PIO/PISP elsewhere.<sup>126</sup>

The creation of such populist (presidential) units could become routine in Uganda, and indeed, more state house units were established recently: to protect investors, fight corruption, etc. The government needs them to govern its conflict-ridden political economy, to somehow address on-the-ground problems, and to portray a concerned, active and able state that responds to calls for addressing crises and conflicts, i.e. matters of “ills” of market society: injustice, inequality, corruption, bad individuals. Crucially, Museveni and the NRM benefit from a key aspect of populism; that it allows them to “[aggregate] disparate and even competing and contradictory class and group interests and demands into a relatively homogenized voice”<sup>127</sup> and narrative. This feature of populism – its class-crossing, multi-class element<sup>128</sup> – combined with its ‘generic character that is open-ended and flexible’<sup>129</sup> makes populism a strong fit with the long-standing ideology, discourse and insistence of the NRM to be a political force, have a political offer and do politics “for all”. Against this, populism is likely to shape the discursive framings and policy agendas for – and politics of – the future Uganda of both the NRM/Museveni and key opposition actors, in the coming era of petrostate Uganda and heightened emphasis on infrastructure [infrastructure- and FDI-led development] and FDI-led development.<sup>130</sup>

It is significant in that regard that, with 1.5 years to the next general election (January 2026), by September 2024 (the time of finalising this article), Museveni had put dealing decisively with land evictions (as well as corruption) and protecting people from evictions yet again high on the NRM agenda: A *New Vision* frontpage headline states ‘President vows to fight land evictions’. The *Daily Monitor* titles a news piece: ‘Blame your leaders for land evictions – Museveni’.<sup>131</sup> Further, Museveni has advised his party to adhere to and prioritise ‘mass line principles’. A Presidential Press Unit piece published on the *State House website* in August has as the summary sentence: ‘President Museveni recounted the party’s long-standing commitment to inclusive policies such as immunisation for all, education for all, prosperity for all, and security for all’. A few weeks later, in a speech to local government leaders, Museveni emphasised ‘the importance of adhering to the mass line, which prioritises the needs and rights of the masses over those of the elite’.<sup>132</sup> This pre-election setting up of this particular populist grammar – within the context of today’s Ugandan capitalism – is remarkable and could result in heightened populist state activity in the months to come.

Finally, this empirically informed analysis of PISP extends the populism in Africa scholarship to the matter of materially concrete state interventions. It offers ground for comparative analysis regarding other cases of (i) PISP and PIO and (ii) the relationship between capitalism and populism in the contemporary era, in Uganda, Africa and

beyond. That scholarly path requires us to focus more than to date on the actions of populists in power at the level of law, policy, programmes and institutional reforms, i.e. on what the PIO actually does, post-rhetoric. In short, how the populist agenda is acted out and implemented on the ground, where (rural vs. urban, etc.), by whom, why and to what effect.

## Notes

1. Resnick, "Populist Strategies in African Democracies"; Resnick, *Urban Poverty and Party Populism*; Cheeseman and Larmer, "Ethnopolitism in Africa"; Carbone, "'Populism' Visits Africa"; Kagwanja and Southall, "Introduction: Kenya"; Gunner, "Jacob Zuma"; Melchiorre, "Generational Populism".
2. E.g. Goodfellow and Titeca, "Presidential Intervention"; see for respective analyses in other regional and global contexts e.g. Tushnet and Bugarič, *Power to the People*; Fabbri, "What Does Populism Mean for Democracy?"; Cohen, "What's Wrong with The Normative Theory".
3. Harrison, "Economic Faith, Social Project"; Beeson, *Environmental Populism*.
4. See e.g. Bernstein, "Unpacking 'Authoritarian Populism'".
5. Ibid.
6. Wiegatz, "Fake capitalism?", *Neoliberal Moral Economy*; Wiegatz, Martiniello, and Greco, *Uganda*.
7. Kasfir, "The Uganda Election"; Carbone, "'Populism' Visits Africa"; Carbone, *No-Party Democracy?*.
8. Darius Magara, "State House Probes Kabale land rows", *New Vision*, February 10, 2008. Accessed June 14, 2024. <https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1196525/house-probes-kabale-land-rows>; NTV, "Njuba the Bush War Heroine." YouTube, June 10, 2014.
9. Jonathan Kamoga, "Mubende Evictions: Curbing Illegal Mining or and Grabbing Ploy?" *Observer*, October 3, 2017. Accessed June 14, 2024. <https://observer.ug/businessnews/55229-mubende-evictions-curbing-illegal-mining-or-a-land-grabbing-ploy>.
10. Commission of Inquiries Act Chapter 31.
11. Legal Notice No.2 of 2017.
12. Resnick, "Populist Strategies in African Democracies," 1; Cheeseman and Larmer, "Ethnopolitism in Africa," 26–7; Dean and Maiguashca, "Did Somebody Say Populism?"; Melchiorre, "Generational Populism".
13. Dean and Maiguashca, "Did Somebody Say Populism?".
14. See e.g. Bernstein, "Unpacking 'Authoritarian Populism'"; Tushnet and Bugarič, *Power to the People*.
15. Cheeseman, "Populism in Africa".
16. See Cheeseman, "Populism in Africa"; Resnick "Varieties of African Populism"; Resnick "Populist Politics in Africa"; Haynes, "Revolutionary Populism" for overviews of populism scholarship on Africa.
17. Frazer, "Post-Populism in Zambia"; Resnick, "The Influence of Populist Leaders".
18. See however, e.g. the study of Haynes ("Revolutionary Populism") on Rawling's rule in Ghana.
19. Paget, "Mistaken for Populism"; Beresford et al., "Conceptualising the Emancipatory Potential"; Melchiorre, "Generational Populism"; Sishuwa, *Party Politics and Populism in Zambia*; Haynes, "Revolutionary Populism"; Paget, "The Anti-Authoritarian Populisms".
20. Dean and Maiguashca, "Did Somebody Say Populism?".
21. Fabbri, "What Does Populism Mean for Democracy?".
22. Booth et al., *East African Prospects*; Barkan, *Uganda*; Barkan et al., "The Political Economy of Uganda"; Golooba-Mutebi and Hickey, *Investigating the Links Between Political Settlements*.

23. Finnström, *Living with Bad Surroundings*; Mamdani, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda*; Wiegratz, *Neoliberal Moral Economy*; Wiegratz, Martiniello, and Greco, *Uganda*.
24. Tangri and Mwenda, *The Politics of Elite Corruption in Africa*.
25. Tripp, *Museveni's Uganda*; Mwenda, "Personalising power in Uganda"; Khisa, *Autocratization in Contemporary Uganda*.
26. Rubongoya, *Regime Hegemony in Museveni's Uganda*.
27. Macartan and Weinstein, "Policing Politicians".
28. Carbone, *No-Party Democracy?*, "'Populism' Visits Africa"; Kasfir "The Uganda Election".
29. Kjær, "Political Settlements"; Borras Jr., "Agrarian Social Movements".
30. Kalyegira, "Walk-to-Work: Uganda's Year of Protest." *Sunday Monitor*, April 28 2011.
31. Sserunjogi, "Was the Current Protest Mode Switched on by Buganda Riots?" *Daily Monitor*, September 9, 2012.
32. Golooba-Mutebi and Hickey, *Investigating the Links Between Political Settlements*; Kjær and Therkildsen, "Elections and landmark policies in Tanzania and Uganda"; Carbone, "'Populism' Visits Africa". See Wilkins and Vokes, "The Presidential Rally in Uganda", for an account of relevant aspects of Museveni's rallies in the run up to the 2016 election.
33. Melchiorre, "Generational Populism".
34. These are *Daily Monitor*, *New Vision*, *The Observer*, *The Independent*, *Red Pepper*; TV - *NTV Uganda*.
35. The word 'mailo' is coined from the measuring system 'square miles' and originates in the historical Buganda- British relations over land, starting with the 1900 Buganda Agreement.
36. Rugadya, *Northern Uganda Land Study*.
37. Kagenda, "KCCA's Night Raiders".
38. Cotula et al., Land Grab or Development Opportunity?.
39. National Association of Professional Environmentalists, "A Study on Land Grabbing Cases in Uganda".
40. Civil suit No179 of 2002. <http://www.ulii.org/ug/judgment/high-court/2013/47-0>.
41. *Ibid.*, paras 32–36.
42. Grainger and Geary, *The New Forest Company and its Uganda Plantations*.
43. Tibajjukira. "60,000 Evicted in Last Two Years." *New Vision*, October 23, 2009. Accessed May 10, 2024. [https://www.newvision.co.ug/new\\_vision/news/1203064/-evicted](https://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1203064/-evicted).
44. *Ibid.*
45. *The East African*, "Court Orders 42 Uganda Families Evicted to Make Way for Oil Project." 16 December 2023. Accessed June 10, 2024. <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/business/court-orders-42-ugandan-families-evicted-to-make-way-for-eacop-4466332>.
46. Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development (MLHUD), "The Uganda National Land Policy".
47. *NTV Uganda*, "President Museveni Orders an End to Evictions." Accessed June 10, 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xuM2WrnozPM>; Kirunda, "President Museveni Bans Land Evictions." Accessed June 10, 2024. <https://www.mediacentre.go.ug/media/president-museveni-bans-land-evictions>.
48. *Ibid.*
49. Amanor and Moyo, *Land and Sustainable Development in Africa*.
50. Rugadya, "Escalating Land Conflicts in Uganda," 21–3. Deininger and Castagnini, "Incidence and Impact of Land Conflict in Uganda"; Akello, "Land Fraud Threat." *The Independent*, August 9, 2013.
51. Hunt, "Unintended Consequences of Land Rights Reform".
52. Njoroge, "Temangalo Scandal Consumes Nation." *The Independent*, December 25, 2008.
53. Ravnborg et al., "Land Tenure under Transition".
54. Rugadya, "Escalating Land Conflicts in Uganda," 21–3.
55. See Government of Uganda, *The National Land Policy*, 2013, at 114–16.
56. See Policy 116 (vi).
57. MLHUD, *Land Sector Strategic Plan II 2013–2023*.
58. West, *Land Policy in Buganda*, 11, 19.

59. Ibid.
60. Medard and Golaz, "Creating Dependency".
61. *Land Act*, Chapter 236.
62. Ibid.
63. Singular *kibanja*; plural *bibanja* - Luganda words for plot(s). See *Land Act*, Chapter 236, sections 31 (on security of tenure for the tenant), and 35 (on rights to transact in the land); and *Land (Amendment) Act 2010*, sections 32A and 35 (as amended).
64. Now *Land Act* Chapter 236 (Laws of Uganda), sections 47–69: land management institutions include the Land Commission, District Land Boards, Land Committees and Courts of Law.
65. Ibid.; Medard and Golaz, "Creating Dependency," 549–50.
66. Mulira, "Government Needs to Work with Landlords to Solve Evictions".
67. Ravnborg et al., "Land Tenure under Transition".
68. Ibid.
69. UN Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur"; also see Uganda Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, *The Poverty Status Report*.
70. Center on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), *Housing and Property Restitution*, 3–5.
71. Laurianne, "A 'Hot Cake'".
72. For example, they lost when they went to court in Hon. Ocula Michael & others vs Amuru District Land Board and others.
73. The constitution of Uganda, Article 139 (1) giving the High Court of Uganda 'unlimited original Jurisdiction in all matters.
74. *Land Act*, sections 75-833 and *The Land (Amendment) Act 2004*, Section 29 (Available at: <http://www.ulii.org>), providing for District Land Tribunals.
75. Ngabirano, "Policing Land".
76. Ibid. 11.
77. Ibid.
78. *Judicature (Mediation) Rules of 2013* (Uganda).
79. Mwangi, "Bumbling Bureaucrats, Sluggish Courts".
80. Sikor and Lund, "Access and Property".
81. Ngabirano, "Policing Land".
82. Ibid.
83. Golooba-Mutebi and Hickey, "The Master of Institutional Multiplicity?".
84. Cyprian Musoke, "Museveni Speaks Out on Land." *New Vision*, May 23, 2013; *NTV Uganda*, "Museveni Outlaws Land Evictions".
85. *New Vision*, "Museveni Gives Orders; A reprint of a Statement issued by Yoweri Museveni on Land Grabbing in Uganda." 25 February 2013.
86. Musoke, "Museveni Speaks Out on Land".
87. John Semakula, "Nantaba Land Committee Awaits New Mandate." *New Vision*, October 21, 2013. Accessed September 18, 2024. <https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1333783/nantaba-land-committee-awaits-mandate>.
88. Mulema Najib, Profile: Aidah Nantaba: Museveni's 'untouchable' Minister. <https://www.watchdoguganda.com/news/20170628/22250/profile-aidah-nantaba-musevenis-untouchable-minister.html> (accessed 12 June 2024).
89. *The Uganda Gazette* Vol. CVI No. 27, 27th May 2013. <https://gazettes.africa/archive/ug/2013/ug-government-gazette-dated-2013-05-27-no-27.pdf> (accessed 19 January 2022).
90. A *kibanja* is a usufruct kind of tenure that grants the holder perpetual occupancy of land on payment of a non-commercial prescribed rent to the landlord under the law. It is unique to Uganda and its roots can be traced in the historical laws (Busulu and Envujjo Law of 1928), which attempted to protect *kibanja* holders' homes and the land they cultivated.
91. *New Vision*, "Museveni Gives Orders".
92. Newbold P, in *Omari Musa and others vs Republic* (1970) East Africa (E.A) at 42.
93. Hackmann, "Legal Empowerment of the Poor".
94. Ibid.



95. *New Vision*, “Museveni Gives Orders”. *Bayaye* is a Luganda word for ‘rascal’ and other close words are ‘deceptive’ or ‘liars’ or ‘crooks’.
96. State House Uganda, “No More Land Evictions.” *Facebook Page*, February 27, 2013. <https://www.facebook.com/statehouseug/posts/484937804907165> (see also *New Vision* “Museveni Gives Orders”).
97. *Ibid.*
98. Paget, “Mistaken for Populism”.
99. Fabbri, “What Does Populism Mean for Democracy?,” 2.
100. *Ibid.*, 2, 10.
101. Musoke, “Museveni Speaks Out on Land”.
102. Njoroge, “Nantaba in Trouble Over Private Land.” *The Monitor*, December 3, 2012, 6.
103. Betty Ndagire, “Nantaba Blocked.” *The Monitor*, February 27, 2013.
104. *Ibid.*
105. Njoroge, “Nantaba in Trouble”.
106. Okuda and Muzaale, “Museveni Wants Two Weeks to Fix Kayunga Land.” *The Monitor*, July 5, 2013, 1, 5.
107. Wekesa, “Five Months into Office Nantaba, Faces 10 Suits.” *The Monitor*, April 18, 2013, 7.
108. *Muganzi Vs. Nantaba*, Miscellaneous Cause No. 21 of 2013.
109. One online commentator noted in *The Observer*: ‘Personality occultism has overshadowed institutions in Uganda! E.g., because of ... violent land evictions around the country; of recent, instead of appealing to Mr. M7, Gen Kayihura was becoming the new demigod. many desperate Ugandans appeal to Gen Kayihura to come to their rescue’ ([http://observer.ug/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=29712:muhoozi-presents-a-dangerous-scenario&catid=37:guest-writers&Itemid=66](http://observer.ug/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=29712:muhoozi-presents-a-dangerous-scenario&catid=37:guest-writers&Itemid=66) (accessed 22 January 2024)).
110. Sserunjogi, Erias Mukiibi “Kayunga Tenants, Landlords Clash.” *The Monitor*, July 5, 2013.
111. *Ibid.*
112. *Ibid.*
113. *Ibid.*
114. *Land Act*, section 29, *Land (Amendment) Act 2010*, section 32A.
115. *Land Act*, section 38(2) (b).
116. *Ibid.*, section 36.
117. *Ibid.*, section 37.
118. *Ibid.*, section 31(1).
119. Mwangi, “Bumbling Bureaucrats, Sluggish Courts,” 717, 727.
120. Nsubuga and Walusimbi, “Kayihura in Bed with Kayunga Land Grabbers.” *The Observer*, August 20, 2013.
121. *Bukedde Television* (local news in Luganda) at 10pm “agataliiko nfuufu”, 15 August 2013.
122. Matsiko, “Museveni’s War within NRM.” *The Independent*, August 30, 2013. <http://www.independent.co.ug/cover-story/8163-musevenis-war-within-nrm>.
123. *New Vision*, “Museveni Calls Kayihura, Nantaba.” 25 August 2013.
124. Semakula, “Nantaba Land Committee Awaits”.
125. Wiegatz, Salverda and Lanzano, “Moral Economies”.
126. See e.g. Bernstein, “Unpacking ‘Authoritarian Populism’”.
127. Borras, “Agrarian Social Movements,” 5.
128. Bernstein, “Unpacking ‘Authoritarian Populism,’” 1535.
129. Borras, “Agrarian Social Movements,” 5.
130. See Wilkins and Vokes “Transition, Transformation, and the Politics” for context.
131. *New Vision*. “President Vows to Fight Land Evictions.” 12 August 2024; Wandera, Dan. “Blame Your Leaders for Land Evictions.” *Daily Monitor*, 13 August 2023. Note the long-running character of this issue: a *New Vision* headline from 2007 reads: ‘Govt to fight land evictions’ (Jaramogi, Patrick. “Govt to Fight Land Eviction.” *New Vision*, October 2, 2007. Accessed August 19, 2024. <https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1218330/govt-fight-land-evictions>).

132. *Presidential Press Unit*. “President Museveni Urges NRM Caucus Members to Prioritise Mass-Line Principles Over Elite Interests.” State House, 17 August 2024. Accessed September 18, 2024. <https://statehouse.go.ug/president-museveni-urges-nrm-caucus-members-to-prioritise-mass-line-principles-over-elite-interests/>; *New Vision*, “Museveni Urges Leaders to Prioritize Mass Line Principles.” 9 September 2024. Accessed September 18, 2024. [https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/news/museveni-urges-leaders-to-prioritize-mass-lin-NV\\_195532](https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/news/museveni-urges-leaders-to-prioritize-mass-lin-NV_195532).

## Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the anonymous reviewers and the entire Editorial Team at JEAS, whose comments have greatly shaped this paper. To Jason Mosley, your remarkable patience and editorial support is highly appreciated. We also thank Alex Beresford, Luke Melchiorre and Daniel Paget for their important comments on earlier drafts. We remain responsible for the opinions expressed here and any errors.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Bibliography

- Amanor, Kojo Sebastian, and Sam Moyo. *Land and Sustainable Development in Africa*. London: Zed, 2008.
- Barkan, Joel. “Uganda: Assessing Risks to Stability.” Center for Strategic and International Studies Report. Washington, DC, 2011.
- Barkan, Joel, Kayunga Simba S., N. Ng’ethe, and J. Titsworth. “The Political Economy of Uganda: The Art of Managing a Donor-Financed Neo-Patrimonial State.” Background paper for the World Bank. Washington DC, 2004.
- Bath, Tony. “Court Petitioned to Disband ‘Nantaba Committee’ On Land.” Uganda Radio Network. October 8, 2013.
- Beeson, Mark. *Environmental Populism: The Politics of Survival in the Anthropocene*. Singapore: Palgrave, 2019.
- Beresford, Alex, Nicolle Beardsworth, Kyle Findlay, and Simon Alger. “Conceptualising the Emancipatory Potential of Populism: A Typology and Analysis.” *Political Geography* 102 (2023): 102808.
- Bernstein, Henry. “Unpacking ‘Authoritarian Populism’ and Rural Politics: Some Comments on ERPI.” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 47, no. 7 (2020): 1526–1542.
- Booth, David, Brian Cooksey, Frederick Golooba-Mutebi, and Karuti Kanyinga. *East African Prospects: An Update on the Political Economy of Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda*. London: ODI, 2014.
- Borras Jr., Saturnino M. “Agrarian Social Movements: The Absurdly Difficult But Not Impossible Agenda of Defeating Right-Wing Populism and Exploring a Socialist Future.” *Journal of Agrarian Change* 20, no. 1 (2020): 3–36.
- Carbone, Giovanni. “Populism’ Visits Africa: The Case of Yoweri Museveni and No-Party Democracy in Uganda.” Crisis States Research Centre Working Papers Series 1, 73, LSE, London, 2005.
- Carbone, Giovanni. *No-Party Democracy? Ugandan Politics in Comparative Perspective*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2008.
- Center on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE). *Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons*. Geneva, 3–5, 2007.

- Cheeseman, Nic. "Populism in Africa and the Potential for "Ethnically Blind" Politics." In *Routledge Handbook of Global Populism*, edited by Carlos de la Torre, 357–369. Routledge, 2018.
- Cheeseman, Nic, and Miles Larmer. "Ethnopolitism in Africa: Opposition Mobilization in Diverse and Unequal Societies." *Democratization* 2, no. 1 (2015): 22–50.
- Cohen, Jean L. "What's Wrong with the Normative Theory (and the Actual Practice) of Left Populism." *Constellations (Oxford, England)* 26, no. 3 (2019): 391–407.
- Cotula, Lorenzo, et al. *Land Grab or Development Opportunity? Agricultural Investment and International Land Deals in Africa*, 3–5. London: IIED/FAO/IFAD, 2009.
- Dean, Jonathan, and Bice Manguashca. "Did Somebody Say Populism? Towards a Renewal and Reorientation of Populism Studies." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 25, no. 1 (2020): 11–27.
- Deininger, Klaus, and Raffaella Castagnini. "Incidence and Impact of Land Conflict in Uganda." *Journal of Economic Behaviour & Organisation* 60, no. 3 (2006): 321–334.
- Fabbrizi, Valerio. "What Does Populism Mean for Democracy? Populist Practice, Democracy and Constitutionalism." *Ethics & Global Politics* 16, no. 4 (2023): 1–14.
- Finnström, Sverker. *Living with Bad Surroundings: War, History, and Everyday Moments in Northern Uganda*. Durham: Duke UP, 2008.
- Fraser, Alastair. "Post-Populism in Zambia: Michael Sata's Rise, Demise and Legacy." *International Political Science Review* 38, no 4 (2017): 456–472.
- Golooba-Mutebi, Frederick, and Sam Hickey. "Governing Chronic Poverty Under Inclusive Liberalism: The Case of the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund." *The Journal of Development Studies* 46, no. 7 (2010): 1216–1239.
- Golooba-Mutebi, Frederick, and Sam Hickey. "The Master of Institutional Multiplicity? The Shifting Politics of Regime Survival, State-Building and Democratisation in Museveni's Uganda." *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 10, no. 4 (2016): 601–618.
- Golooba-Mutebi, Frederick, and Sam Hickey. *Investigating the Links Between Political Settlements and Inclusive Development in Uganda: Towards a Research Agenda*. Manchester: Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Centre, 2013.
- Goodfellow, Tom, and Kristof Titeca. "Presidential Intervention and the Changing 'Politics of Survival' in Kampala's Informal Economy." *Cities* 29, no. 4 (2012): 264–270.
- Government of Uganda. *Judicature (Mediation) Rules of 2013 (Uganda)*. Entebbe: UPPC, March 15, 2013.
- Grainger, Matt, and Kater Geary. *The New Forest Company and its Uganda Plantations: Oxfam Case Study*. Oxford: Oxfam, 2011.
- Gunner, Liz. "Jacob Zuma, the Social Body and the Unruly Power of Song." *African Affairs* 108, no. 430 (2009): 27–48.
- Hackmann, Christina. "Legal Empowerment of the Poor and its Relation to Pro-Poor Growth." In *Poverty Reduction and Pro-Poor Growth: The Role of Empowerment*, edited by OECD, 201–244. Paris: OECD, 2012.
- Harrison, Graham. "Economic Faith, Social Project, and a Misreading of African Society: The Travails of Neoliberalism in Africa." *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 8 (2005): 1303–1320.
- Haynes, Jeffrey. "Revolutionary Populism and Democracy in Ghana." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 60, no. 4 (2022): 503–526.
- Hunt, Diane. "Unintended Consequences of Land Rights Reform: The Case of the 1998 Uganda Land Act." *Development Policy Review* 22, no. 2 (2004): 173–191.
- Kagenda, Patrick. "KCCA'S Night Raiders." *The Independent*, August 18, 2014. Accessed October 8, 2024. <https://www.independent.co.ug/kccas-night-raiders/>.
- Kagwanja, Peter, and Roger Southall. "Introduction: Kenya - A Democracy in Retreat?" *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 27, no. 3 (2009): 259–277.
- Kasfir, Nelson. "The Uganda Election of 1989: Power, Populism and Democratization." In *Changing Uganda*, edited by Holger Bernt Hansen, and Michael Twaddle, 247–248. Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1991.
- Khisa, Moses. ed. *Autocratization in Contemporary Uganda: Clientelism, Coercion and Social Control*. London: Zed, 2024.

- Kjær, Anne Mette. "Political Settlements and Productive Sector Policies: Understanding Sector Differences in Uganda." *World Development* 68 (2015): 230–241.
- Kjær, Anne Mette, and Ole Therkildsen. "Elections and Landmark Policies in Tanzania and Uganda." *Democratization* 20, no. 4 (2013): 592–614.
- Macartan, Humphreys, and Jeremy Weinstein. "Policing Politicians: Citizen Empowerment and Political Accountability in Uganda - Preliminary Analysis." International Growth Centre, Working Paper, London, 2012.
- Mamdani, Mahmood. *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda*. Kampala: Fountain, 1976.
- Medard, Claire, and Valerie Golaz. "Creating Dependency: Land and Gift Giving Practices in Uganda." *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 7, no. 3 (2013): 549–550.
- Melchiorre, Luke. "Generational Populism and the Political Rise of Robert Kyagulanyi - aka Bobi Wine - in Uganda." *Review of African Political Economy* 50, no. 176 (2023): 212–233.
- Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development (MLHUD). *Land Sector Strategic Plan II 2013–2023*, 111. December 20, 2013. <http://www.gov.ug/ministry/ministry-lands-housing-urban-development>.
- Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development (MLHUD), "The Uganda National Land Policy, 2014." February 2013. Kampala. <http://www.ubos.org>.
- Mugala, Jane. "Muganzi verses. Nantaba, Miscellaneous Cause No. 21 of 2013." Uganda Legal Information Institute, July 5, 2013.
- Mulira, Peter. "Government Needs to Work with Landlords to Solve Evictions". *New Vision*, March 4, 2013.
- Mwangi, Esther. "Bumbling Bureaucrats, Sluggish Courts and Forum-Shopping Elites: Unending Conflict and Competition in the Transition to Private Property." *European Journal of Development Research* 22 (2010): 717–727.
- Mwenda, Andrew. "Personalising Power in Uganda." *Journal of Democracy* 18, no. 3 (2007): 23–37.
- Nakayi, R. "The Dynamics of Customary Land Rights and Transitional Justice. The Case of the Acholi Sub-region of Northern Uganda." 524. University of Notre Dame, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, May 2012.
- National Association of Professional Environmentalists. "A Study on Land Grabbing Cases in Uganda." April 2012. [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full\\_Report\\_3823.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full_Report_3823.pdf).
- National Development Plan for the period 2010/11 to 2014/15. April, 2010. Kampala: National Planning Authority.
- Ngabirano, Dan. "Policing Land: The Role of the Uganda Police Land Protection Unit in Confronting the Elusive Land Question". Policy Brief, 10, 11. Kampala: Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment, March 2012.
- Paget, Dan. "Mistaken for Populism: Magufuli, Ambiguity and Elitist Plebeianism in Tanzania." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 26, no. 2 (2021): 121–141.
- Paget, Dan. "The Anti-Authoritarian Populisms: Ideologies of Democratic Struggle in Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Worldwide." *Government and Opposition* 59, no. 3 (2024): 866–887. doi:10.1017/gov.2023.42.
- Public Order Management Act. "Government of Uganda." 2013. <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5200a77c4.pdf>.
- Ravnborg, Helle Muk, Bernard Bashaasha, Rasmus H. Pedersen, Rachel Spichiger and Alice Turinawe. "Land Tenure under Transition– Tenure Security, Land Institutions and Economic Activity in Uganda." DIIS Working Paper, Copenhagen, 2013.
- Resnick, Danielle. "Populist Politics in Africa." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, edited by William R. Thompson. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2019. <https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-699>.
- Resnick, Danielle. "Populist Strategies in African Democracies." UNU-WIDER Working Paper No. 2010/114, 1. Helsinki, 2010.
- Resnick, Danielle. "The Influence of Populist Leaders on African Democracy." In *Routledge Handbook of Global Populism*, edited by Carlos de la Torre, 267–280. New York, NY: Routledge, 2018.

- Resnick, Danielle. "Varieties of African Populism in Comparative Perspective." In *The Promise and Perils of Populism: Global Perspectives*, edited by Carlos de la Torre, 317–348. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2015.
- Resnick, Danielle. *Urban Poverty and Party Populism in African Democracies*. New York: CUP, 2013.
- Rubongoya, Joshua. *Regime Hegemony in Museveni's Uganda: Pax Musevenica*. New York: Palgrave, 2007.
- Rugadya, Margaret A. "Escalating land conflicts in Uganda." International Republican Institute (IRI), June, 2005.
- Rugadya, Margaret A. "Escalating Land Conflicts in Uganda: A Review of Evidence from Recent Studies and Surveys." Report for the International Republican Institute and the Uganda Round Table Foundation, 2009.
- Rugadya, Margaret A. *Northern Uganda Land Study. Analysis for Post Conflict Land Policy and Land Administration: A Survey of IDP Return and Resettlement Issues and Lesson from Acholi and Lango Regions*. Kampala: World Bank, 2008.
- Sikor, Thomas, and Christian Lund. "Access and Property: A Question of Power and Authority." *Development and Change* 40, no. 1 (2009): 1–22.
- Sishuwa, Sishuwa. *Party Politics and Populism in Zambia: Michael Sata and Political Change, 1955–2014*. Oxford: James Currey, 2024.
- Tangri, Roger, and Andrew Mwenda. *The Politics of Elite Corruption in Africa: Uganda in Comparative African Perspective*. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Taylor, Liam. "How Land Reform Became Uganda's Most Controversial Problem." *Dispatch*, October 15, 2021. Accessed October 8 2024. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/10/15/uganda-buganda-kingdom-land-reform-debate-museveni-colonialism-indigenous-power/>.
- The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995. Article 129, Article 212(a), Article 139 (1). <http://www.ulii.org/>.
- The Inspectorate of Government. "Sarah Kulata Basangwa Commissioner Land Registration Before Anticorruption Court". November 2, 2011. <http://www.igg.go.ug>.
- Tripp, Aili Mali. *Museveni's Uganda: Paradoxes of Power in a Hybrid Regime*. London: Lynne, 2010.
- Tushnet, Mark, and Bojan Bugarič. *Power to the People: Constitutionalism in the Age of Populism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022.
- Uganda Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. *The Poverty Status Report*. Kampala: Government of Uganda, 2012.
- UN Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing as a Component of the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living and on the Right to Non-Discrimination in This context." Miloon Kothari 67 U.N.Coc. A/HRC/7/16.
- West, Henry W. *Land Policy in Buganda*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1972.
- Wiegatz, Jörg, Giuliano Martiniello, and Elisa Greco. eds. *Uganda: The Dynamics of Neoliberal Transformation*. London: Zed Books, 2018.
- Wiegatz, Jörg. *Neoliberal Moral Economy: Capitalism, Socio-Cultural Change and Fraud in Uganda*. London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016.
- Wiegatz, Jörg, Tijo Salverda, and Cristiano Lanzano. "Moral Economies of Capitalism in Africa." *Critical African Studies* 16, no. 1 (2024): 1–16.
- Wiegatz, Jörg. "Fake Capitalism? The Dynamics of Neoliberal Moral Restructuring and Pseudo-Development: The Case of Uganda." *Review of African Political Economy* 37, no. 124 (2010): 123–137.
- Wilkins, Sam, and Richard Vokes. "The Presidential Rally in Uganda: Ritual, Drama and Multiple Axes of Communication." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 61, no. 3 (2023b): 357–375.
- Wilkins, Sam, and Richard Vokes. "Transition, Transformation, and the Politics of the Future in Uganda." *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 17, no. 1–2 (2023a): 262–279.