

The infrastructures of Land Inequalities in Cameroon

By

Samuel ASSEMBE-MVONDO & Grace WONG, Research Institute for Humanity and
Nature, RIHN, Tokyo, Japan;

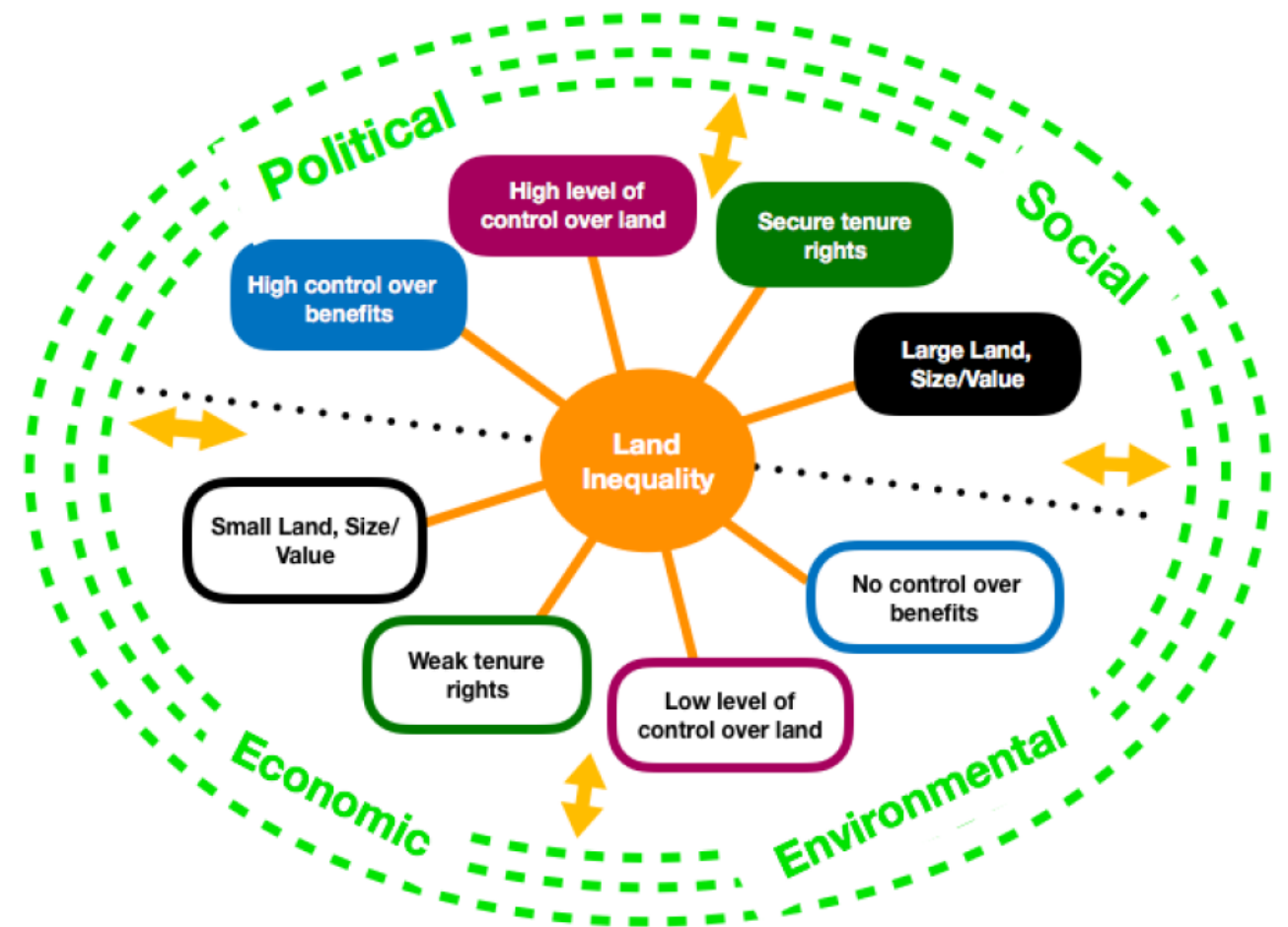
*Presentation for Working Group on “Forest, Politics and the Infrastructures of
Inequality”, Development Day, 17-18 February, Helsinki, Finland*

Presentation outline

- ❑ Land inequalities : An analytical framework(1);
- ❑ Methods and analytical framework of land inequalities in Cameroon (2);
- ❑ Evidence of land inequalities and related impacts (3);
- ❑ Preliminary conclusion (4)

1. Land Inequalities: An analytical framework

- Land inequality is about the *differences in the size of land area that people can access and have rights to and the strength of the tenure rights they have to that land* (Wegerif & Guereña, 2020)
- *is also about the ability to control the use of land and the benefits from that land and what is produced on it*



1. Land Inequality in Cameroon

- ▶ Land inequality is also very important due to a current trends of Land Grabbing in global south, notably in Cameroon (Sonkoue & Nguiffo, 2019);
- Key information of Cameroon (MINEPAT, 2020):
 - Macroeconomic policy is articulated around the concept of the emergence of the country by 2035;
 - One of the objectives is to significantly reduce rural poverty through the productivity growth through intensified agribusiness and modernization of farms driven by demand from agro-industries;
 - In this perspective, it is planned, the Government will complete the land reform process with the aim of facilitate agricultural and industrial investments while providing project promoters with the legal certainty necessary for a return on investment
- ▶ The contribution of the agricultural sector to Cameroon's GDP is 22 per cent;
- ▶ The poverty rate has experienced a significant decrease in urban areas from 12.2% in 2007 to 8.9% in 2014, while it increased in rural areas, from 55.7% to 56.8% on the period; In addition, nine (9) out of ten (10) poor people live in rural areas in Cameroon;
- **In the framework of this presentation, we argue that *land inequalities in Cameroon have root cause in colonial legacies and a related agro-industrial infrastructures***

2. Methods and analytical framework of land inequalities in Cameroon

- ❑ Data sources:
 - Literature review, notably colonial archives (*historical approach*)
 - National legislation in force and colonial decrees review (*historical approach*)
 - Interview with key experts: NGOs, INGOs, development project
 - Interview with officers of land and investment administrations
 - Focus group discussion with local communities and indigenous people in neighborhood of agro-industries
 - Field visits
 - Participant observation during field trips
- ❑ The approach of this paper, therefore, involves four axes along which to analyze land inequality (Wegerif & Guerana, 2020):

3. Evidences of land inequalities: Colonial infrastructures of inequalities

- ❑ **German colonial government** and expropriation of land for agriculture plantations
 - Legislation to establish ‘native reservations’. According to the legislation, each native family was assigned an area of about 1.5 hectares for habitation and cultivation;
 - Enactment of Crown Lands Act on 15 July 1896 that officially converted so-called vacant and unoccupied lands throughout the territory into property of the German overseas dominions
 - Creation of a land register, the *Grundbuch*, to record all transactions in land
- ❑ **The French Colonial Decree** of 4 October 1924 operated two systems of land law in their territory: one to govern lands belonging to, and controlled by the unassimilated ‘native’ population or *les indigènes*, and the other to govern European residents and assimilated members of the indigenous population (*les assimilés* or *les évolués*);
 - The Decree on 12 January 1938 that declared all land left unused or unoccupied (*terres vacantes et sans maîtres*) for a period of 10 years to be the property of the colonial state

3. Evidences of land inequalities: Colonial infrastructures of inequalities

- ❑ The **British imperial government's** decision to adopt in British Southern Cameroons the land laws of colonial Northern Nigeria instead of those of colonial Eastern Nigeria
 - Proclamation No. 25 of 1920 converted into property of the British colonial government of Nigeria all of the 264,000 acres around Mount Cameroon that were in the hands of the German colonial government and private entities
 - The second, Ordinance No. 39 of 1946 established the Cameroons Development Corporation (CDC) as a statutory body to assume control of the plantations
- ▶ **Cameroon independence:** The enactment of Decree No. 63-2 of 9 January 1963, effectively reversed the 1959 colonial law that re-established the supremacy of customary entitlements to land
- ▶ The two 6 July 1974 ordinances have confirmed all the colonial principles by making the State **the guardian of all lands throughout the country**

3. Evidences of land inequalities: Agro-industries and local communities

- ❑ **The Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC)** is an Agro-Industrial Complex that grows, processes and markets tropical export crops, 41 000 Ha plantations, mainly around the Mt Cameroon: Banana, Rubber, Palm oil, Tea; **more than 70 villages** ; These plantations were created by German colonial administration after the Berlin Conference in 1884;
- ❑ **Pamol:** Pamol Plantations which produces palm oil and rubber in an area of 11 449 ha; **with 56 503 local people**;
- ❑ The two Agro-industries are part the German of legacy. The German colonial government moved rapidly to expropriate land for agricultural plantation purposes in the fertile region on the slopes and at the foot of Mount Cameroon.
- ❑ **Socapalm:** is an Agro-industrial plantations which produces Oil palm and rubber, with more than 58 063 ha areas, in five sites. This multinational subsidiary (French-belgo) is produced 140 349 tons of crude palm oil. **There are than 40 villages in neighborhood of these plantations**;
- ❑ **PHP :** This Banana plantation is a subsidiary of a French multinational called *Compagnie Fruitière* , it produced more than 130 000 t of banana and White Pepper; occupied more than 7000 ha areas in two sites, ;
- ❑ **HEVECAM:** is one of two subsidiaries of Corrie MacColl Limited multinational based in Cameroon which produces Rubber, more tan 22 000 ha; This former State owned enterprise was privatized in 1998; **more than 20 villages, 5 tribes**;

3. Evidence of Land inequalities: Four axes of inequalities

- ❑ **The size and/or value of land that people access** : Even if the value of is increasing in neighborhood of the 5 Agro-industries mentioned here, but the size of land possession or access of land by Local communities/Indigenous people are considerably diminished (1, 5 ha/family around CDC and Pamol)
- ❑ ***the level of security of tenure that people have including the ability to defend their lands***: There are evidence of tenure insecurity of local community live around the Agro-industries sample (Minfede Koe, 2017; Ndi & Baterburry, 2017)
- ❑ ***The actual control that people have, which includes their decision-making power over land***: Currently, local communities are not involved in decision-making entities. But there are only local consultation meetings
- ❑ ***Their control of the benefits from the land, i.e., the ability to appropriate value from the land***: There is no land fees paid by those agro-industries, except for Socapalm for one its (sites). The others land concessionaires are not paying any benefits to the surrounding local people.

4. Conclusion

- ❑ We highlight that land inequalities in Cameroon are both a consequence of colonial infrastructures that have set pathway dependencies into postcolonial policies, practices and development strategies
- ❑ Colonial and postcolonial infrastructures have focused on claiming land for production at the expense of customary and traditional rights and practices, neglecting wellbeing local people.
- ❑ Therefore, such a historical injustice should be corrected to the current land law reform process in Cameroon; For example:
 - Establishment of customary land concession belongs local community/indigenous people;
 - Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) any case of land concession for Agro-industrial;

Kiitos

Thank for your kind attention

Merci beaucoup