



LARGE SCALE LAND ACQUISITIONS WITHIN NAIPs : THOUGHTS ON A POORLY MANAGED PHENOMENON IN CAMEROON



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NELGA KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE – NEX

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PLAN

1. Introduction

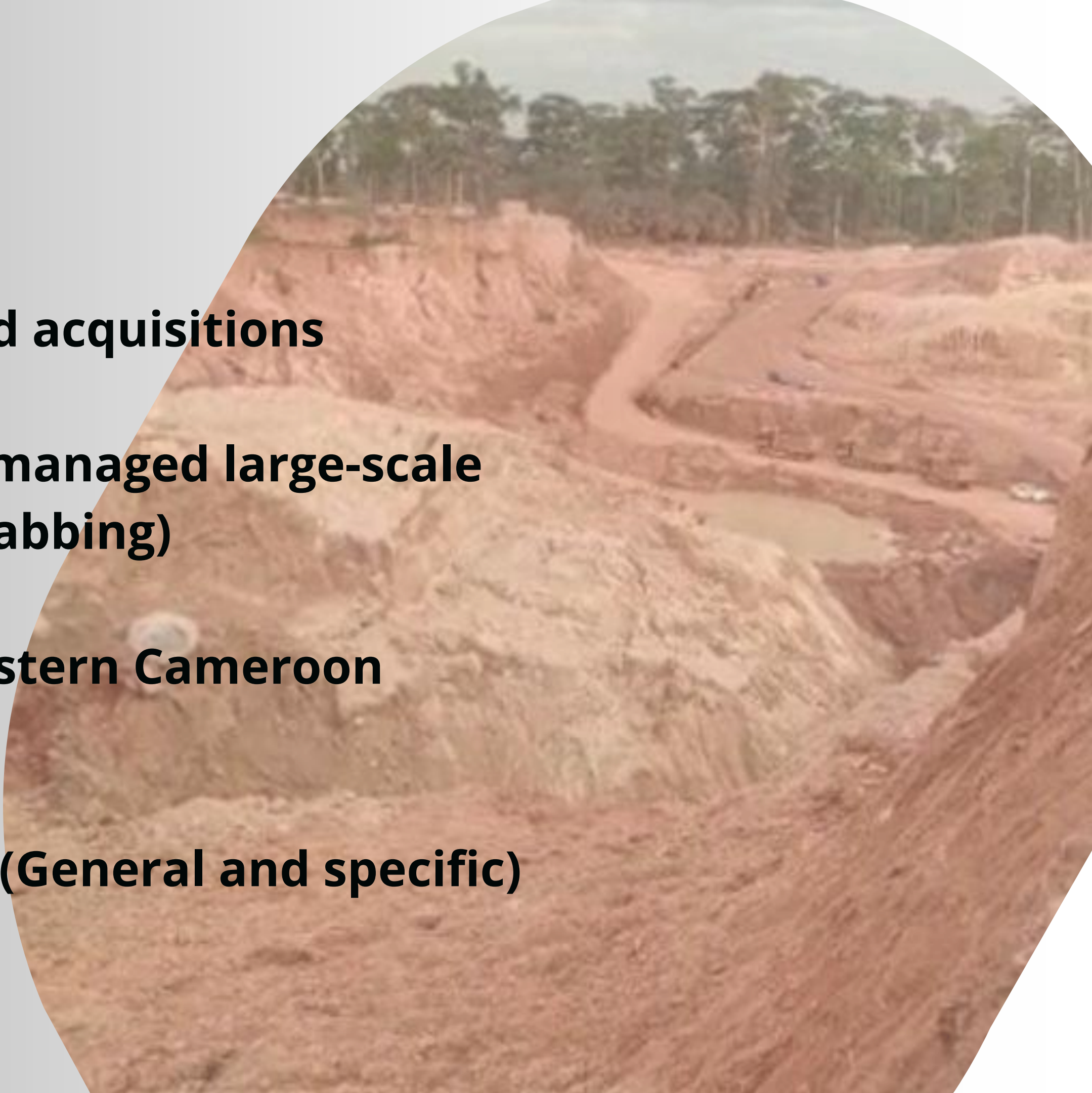
2. Causes of large-scale land acquisitions

3. Consequences of poorly managed large-scale land acquisitions (Land grabbing)

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1. Introduction

- Land is an essential production factor in agriculture, which in Cameroon is more of a food source than an income generator.
- The implementation of National Agricultural Investment Plan (NAIP) with the aim of fulfilling the commitments of the 2014 Malabo Declaration and Cameroon's Vision 2035, is accompanied by incentives for investment in agriculture.
- The result is an increase in the pressure on land that we are already experiencing as a result of Rapid urbanization, Population growth, the implementation of investment projects, The phenomenon of environmentally displaced people due to repeated climate shocks in the northern regions, the phenomenon of internally displaced people with the NOSO war (limiting access to land for them and for the host populations).



1. Introduction (*to be continued*)

- In order to increase agricultural production for e.g, large tracts of land will increasingly be required whereas there is no regulation or policy that addresses the issue of Large-scale Land acquisitions (LSLA) as a whole in Cameroon. The process works on case-by-case basis, based solely on fertility, accessibility and profitability criteria.
- LSLA refers to a Unilateral and direct acquisition of a large tract of land or consolidation of small pieces of land acquired from different owners. The size is context specific.
- **Relevance of the topic:** Cameroon is in the process of implementing NAIP 2 and lessons must be learned from phase I, one of the reasons for the modest results of which was the difficulty of accessing and securing land. Also, Cameroon must encourage investment in key sectors (As agriculture...) to participate in intra-African trade (AfCFTA) while protecting human rights.



2. Causes of Large-scale land acquisitions

- Infrastructure building
- Logging
- Mining
- Conservation
- Agribusiness
- Speculation

These actions are facilitated by:

- The non recognition of customary tenure in modern law (made it easy for local people to be displaced from their land)
- The perception that there is a lot of unused land



3. Consequences of poorly managed large-scale land acquisitions (Land grabbing)

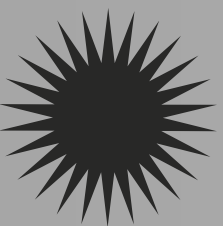
- Lack of transparency in the procedures for making land available for investment projects (leading to overlapping land use rights and conflicts)
- Poor involvement of the affected communities
- Bullying of local populations
- Eviction of small landowners and small-scale activities
- Hasty sales of land at prices below those on the land market (poverty, intimidation)
- Poor compensation in the event of land dispossession
- Unsustainable land use (harmful substances polluting soil and water causing environmental degradation)

The result is a decline in the social acceptability of the project, exposing it to the risk of boycotts/destruction and many other.

4. Case studies from the Eastern Cameroon Region (Batouri/Kambélé)

Field visits during the May AUC Mission (Cameroon 2023), provided an insight into land grabbing realities experienced by local communities for mining operations.

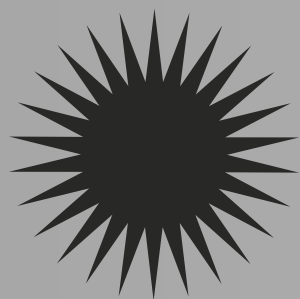
- **Case of Batouri** : Chinese investment land grabbing; the use of mercury and arsenic to optimize washing operations on extracted ores and for gold refining, mainly in riverbeds and tributaries.
- **Case of Kambélé** : a whole village is going to be destroyed, leading to massive dislocations of local communities who are going to lose everything permanently, the planned destruction of a school, the removal of human remains and much more. There is neither transparency along the process and nor support to these communities in obtaining fair compensation.



5. Some recommendations

General recommendations

- Complete the land reform initiated a decade ago
- Adopt and implement the pastoral code
- Guarantee effective decentralization for an inclusive land governance
- Strengthen environmental laws and procedures



5. Some recommendations (*To be continued*)

Specific recommendations

- Adoption of harmonized guidelines for LSLA (including taxation criteria)
- Setting up a governmental mediation between several land uses in the same areas and Completing the elaboration of a land use plan
- Ensure the participation of all interested parties in the land release procedures
- Monitoring systems for large-scale land investments to ensure that companies are complying with their commitments i.e: incorporation of smallholder farmers by large companies (Good practice implemented by The Cameroon Agro-Pastoral Unit in Penja)
- Stop large-scale land transactions until the land reform intervenes
- Cautiously conversion of temporary concessions into permanent concessions
- Set up alternative local conflict resolution systems to overcome the difficulties of accessing state justice and encourage the rapid handling of complaints from affected populations



5. Some recommendations (*To be continued*)

- Facilitate the procedures for registering customary land rights, which until now have been unfavourable to certain social groups
- Strengthen community land education and raise awareness of the need to protect their rights in order to avoid ill-considered land sales;
- Modernize the outdated system of compensation for expropriated rights so that it takes into account: all categories of rights (cultural rights, forest use rights, etc.), whether or not the expropriated property generated income and inflation in the intervening period.

Finally, priority should be given to relocating communities (when it is possible), or to assisting them in their resettlement to avoid the distraction of sums paid in compensation.

6. References

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