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THE LANDS USE PLANS AND THE VILLAGES' SUBDIVISIONS IN THE GLOBAL LAND RUSH: THE CASE OF THE RUIPA SITE IN THE KILOMBERO VALLEY, MOROGORO REGION, TANZANIA

Adriana BLACHE

Introduction

In Tanzania, the struggle for space and resources is embedded in a long history of accumulation by dispossession, shaped by a large web of multi-scalar powers of exclusion. Tanzania is considered a country rich in natural resources, with considerable 'idle' and 'unexploited' lands by international and national institutions. The former concepts are taken up locally by those who help implement estates, and rhetorically in advocacy discourses during negotiations. In the Kilombero district, more than 80% of the land that covers the Kilombero valley and the surrounding mountains are already enclosed for environment conservation, mining extraction, hydro-power plants or large-scale plantations purposes. Nevertheless, the SAGCOT (Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor) program identified 182,198 ha (28% of the village lands) "that could be offered for investment" (SAGCOT, 2012b: 12). On top of that, a complex and institutionalized land demarcation and valuation process is being undertaken: from the introduction of the Certificate of Customary Rights of Occupancy in 2004, the Land Use Planning Act No. 6 of 2007 which "provides procedures related to the preparation of village land use planning in a sustainable and participatory manner" (*ibid*, 2013: 126), the Tanzania-G8 Land Transparency Partnership (TLTP) in 2013, to the Land Tenure Support Program (LTSP) launched in partnership with the Denmark's development cooperation (DANIDA), the British Department for International Development (DFID) and the Swedish

International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) in 2016, several huge and heavily-financed programs aim at formalizing land rights and clarifying village borders and plans. In this paper, I will focus on the Ruipa Site, one particular area of the valley which is highly coveted and is one of the latest "interstices" of environmental conservation. While the establishment of a RAMSAR site¹ denies access to the wetlands on the east, and the expansion of the Kilombero Nature Reserve (KNR) restricts access to the forest on the west, the central and district governments plan to revive a sugar cane plantation project of 10,000 ha that is highly contested by local inhabitants. During the negotiations for land enclosures, different powers play in the struggle for space and resources. I will first show how the Village Land Use Plans (VLUPs) are used as one of the powerful tools by District and Village leaders to impose their planning objectives. Then I will underline that this plan, anchored in the Local Government Act and the Village Land Act of 1982 and 1999 respectively, highlights the necessity to think about the definition of a "village" and its legal recognition in the "global land rush" in Tanzania².

A revival based on an historical map

In 1976, in the same way, the Nyerere government established the Mngeta farm on 5,848 ha (60 km south-west of the valley) in cooperation with the Korean government; the Sugar Development Corporation (SUDECO³) with the

¹ The RAMSAR Convention is an international treaty adopted in Ramsar (Iran) in 1971 for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands, which was signed by in August 2000 by Tanzania.

² This paper is part of my PhD thesis which analyzes the Kilombero Valley and its surrounding mountains as a "system" in which different actors evolve at multiple scales. In that sense, the Valley as a "cluster" is one component and representation of this "system". It can be understood as a space that is polarized both by its own resources and geophysical characteristics and open to national and international scales, observing its historical and contemporary *production* and the subsequent *power relationships* involved (Lefebvre, 1974). My fieldwork took place during a total of 13 months, focusing on the whole valley and then subdividing my analysis at a village level to understand the declension of powers of exclusions at intermediary and micro scales in the "interstices of the firm" (Chouquer, 2011).

³ SUDECO is now known as the Sugar Board of Tanzania (SBT).

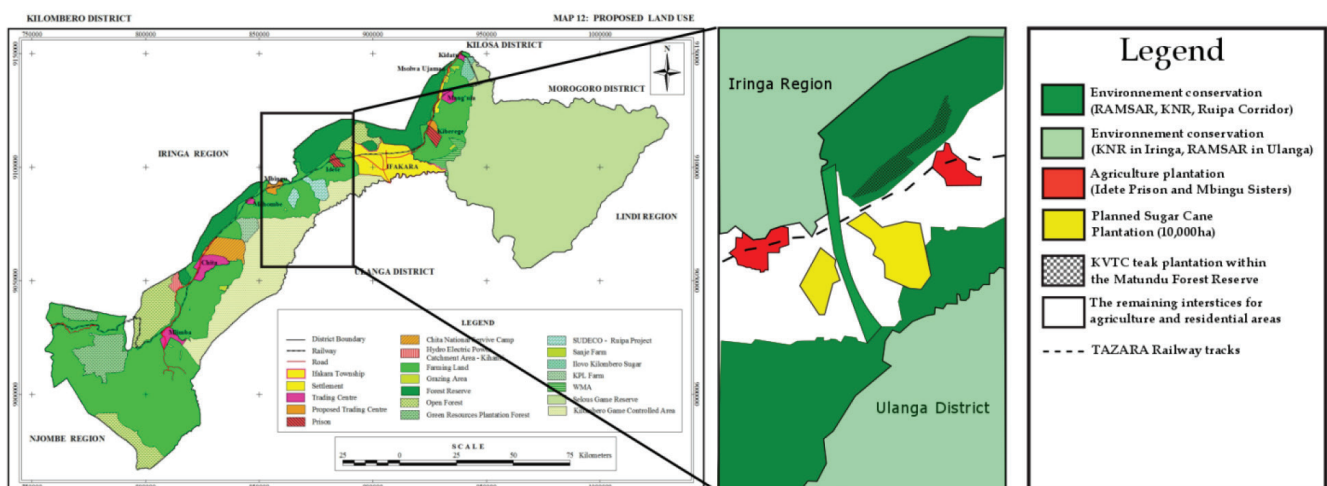
help of the British Booker Tate Company⁴, surveyed and demarked around 10,000 ha⁵ of land in the Ruipa valley to establish a sugar cane plantation. Some elders in the villages relate that Cubans initiated the establishment of the sugarcane plantation, using beacons to delineate the borders. Others claim that it had already been demarked by the Boers in 1953 during colonization and the first NGOs reports (Haki Ardhi, 2007) claimed it was surveyed in 1984. Nevertheless, the only historical and tangible evidence of the demarcation is a map representing the blocks of the intended plantation (LHRC & Haki Ardhi, 2009), on which the district bases its current Land Use Plan (Fig. 1). Because 400 parastatal companies went bankrupt in 1976, the sugar cane plantation as a national enterprise was not implemented (Chachage, 2010). The first villages created in the area were Mofu and then Mbingu, Namwawala and Idete grew up along railway tracks. The implementation of the TAZARA and *Ujamaa Vijiji* schemes played an important role in the geography of population that still influences the relationships in current negotiations⁶. In the 1990s, estate privatization led to the displacement of large numbers of pastoralists and farmers. In the Kilombero Sugar Cane Plantation in the North of the valley, people were forced to move from the Msolwa-Rwembe area when the Illovo Group started investing and most of them moved to Ruipa, where plenty of “free lands” were available. A new wave of immigration – essentially Maasai and Sukuma – started in early 2000s due to the privatization of rice estates in the Mbeya region, Mbarali district (Tenga *et al.*, 2008; Maganga *et al.*, 2009). Those new comers, who had no clue about the sugar cane project, were given land far away from the railway tracks, on the demarked land.

In 2005, the government and the Sugar Board of Tanzania wanted to reallocate the “ownership” of the land to the Illovo Group through district officers. Nevertheless, in 2012, Illovo pulled out of the “multi-billion deal due to endless conflicts” (Rugonzibwa, 2012). Seeking for a new investor under SAGCOT, the government presented the land as “free for investment” and as a final stage of “site preparation to promote and lease it to qualified investors” (SAGCOT, 2012: 30), as well as a “proposed irrigation scheme” of 7,298 ha financed by USAID (SAGCOT, 2013). However, according to observations on the field and villagers’ reports, the area is densely populated nowadays. Land scarcity led to severe local land conflicts, and no irrigation scheme for small-scale farmers has been implemented yet.

The VLUP and “the valuation process”

Up to now, the validity of the government ownership over this land has not been proved by the law and the only evidence is a map dating from 1976 (Haki Ardhi, 2009). Besides, while the “participatory” process in land transfer is being promoted through the G8-Tanzania Transparency Partnerships on Land and Extractives, various events have highlighted the arbitrary exercise of power and coercive consultations of villagers. Even if villagers disagreed during a village assembly in 2005, the district authorities used different forms of power to force the implementation of this plantation⁷. Three tools have been essential for district authorities to impose their objective: the spatial and ecological valuation process for compensation, the drawing and validation of the VLUPs based on the “historical maps”, and finally, the (non)recognition of the local government of the new villages.

Fig 1. The Ruipa site enclosed between large-scale environment conservation



Source: Blache A., 2017, based on the Kilombero Land District Department’s datas

⁴ “Food Processing Africa, accessed on line on 15/08/2017: <http://www.foodprocessingafrica.com/booker-tate-knows-about-sugar/>

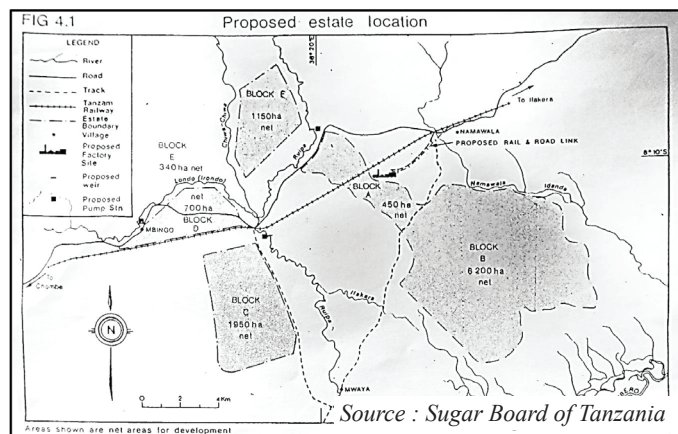
⁵ As we will see, the figures vary between 9,367.39 ha and 10,047 ha for the initial project.

⁶ Indeed, most of the people coming into the area from the 1970s were TAZARA workers or people who came to grow rice and transport it to Iringa or Dar es Salaam thanks to the railway (Monson, 1996). The *Ujamaa* villagization scheme brought scattered populations together close to the main transport routes and social services established by missionaries.

⁷ For a detailed presentation of the different events from 2005 to 2010, see LHRC & Haki Ardhi, 2009; Chachage, 2010; Bergius, 2015.

According to an undated and hand-drawn map (Fig. 2), the project was divided into 6 blocks. Blocks D, E and F were later abandoned by SUDECO. The removal of block D is mainly due to the fact that missionaries had already demarcated 2,246 ha of land in Mbingu (representing 44% of the current village) and the requests from Mbingu villagers to “retain residential and farming area from the Sugar Farming Project (SUDECO)”⁸. In 1987, the *Usafirishaji Mikoani Union* acquired 2,404 ha in Chiwachiwa village (block E⁹) but did not implement it. Up to 2017, a committee of villagers constituted mainly of elderly men challenged this at the High Court and at a District level in order to regain ownership over *their* lands. They won the case in February 2017 because no investment had been implemented by the so-called investor since 1987, and President John Magufuli recently revoked this owner’s title deeds (Nditi, 2017).

Fig 2. Undated map showing the intended blocks



Those four villages are in the national register, which officially gives villagers the *right* to control their lands. However, the drawing of the District Land Use Plan (DLUP) as well as the use of the VLUP under the necessary “land regulation” program is one of the strongest tools of powers of exclusion. In December 2008, district authorities asked for a village meeting in Namwawala where they presented a new VLUP, showing that 62% of the village would be allocated to a sugar plantation and 10% for the RAMSAR site (Fig. 3). The same process was applied in 2012 to Mofu and Kisegese villages. In Mofu, the 2012 VLUP showed that the area demarcated for the sugar cane

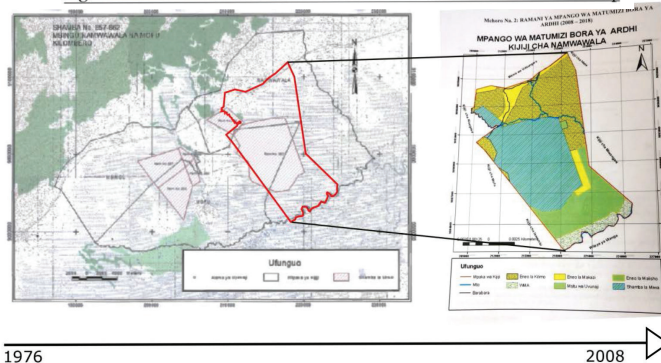
⁸ Letter from the Mbingu Village Council, 2010.

⁹ Interestingly, if one compares the “proposed estate location” map (Fig. 2) and the map untitled “Locality Ruipa Farm n°6 L.O. 79511 on 2404 ha”, one can see the concordance of the two blocks, except from the fact that the first map shows “1,150 ha net” while representing the same area.

¹⁰ For further examples of the top-down process of the PVLUP, see Bergius, 2016; Greco, 2015; Chachage, 2010; Kauzeni *et al.*, 1993.

¹¹ Apart from the District authorities, international companies and funds are also financing the VLUP of the villages bordering their plantations, as is the case in other villages of the Kilombero Valley. For example, Green Resources Ltd. in the south-west of the district financed the VLUP of the villages surrounding the pine and eucalyptus plantation; the BTC and the European Union finance the VLUP of the villages surrounding the RAMSAR; and KVTC in the central Kilombero valley financed the VLUP of nearby villages; World Wide Fund (WWF) financed the villages surrounding the Udzungwa mountains; etc.

Fig.3 The Namwawala 2008 VLUP based on the 1976 SUDECO map



1976 2008
Source: Blache A., 2017, based on Sugar Board of Tanzania (1976) and Kilombero District Land Department (2008)

plantation, under the name *uwekezaji* (investment in Kiswahili) on 1184,46 ha (16,64% of village land) and 2173,39 ha (30,55% of the village lands) reserved for the RAMSAR site, i.e. a total of 47.19% of the village lands were enclosed. In the Kisegese VLUP, a “*shamba* [farm] SUDECO Kisegese” of 704 ha represented 13.43% of the total village land.

In Tanzania, the Village Assembly and the Village Council have to agree to the VLUP, under a so-called “participatory” process. Nevertheless, whereas SAGCOT promotes initiatives such as: “(...) linking local land use planning with national and sub-national development planning to ensure coherent allocation of land and water, protect against land grabbing, and empower communities in negotiation processes” (SAGCOT, 2011: 2), one realizes that local consultancies and transparent decision-making seem to be only rhetorical tools and not really put in practice¹⁰. Indeed, the power of the district authority is strong when it comes to draw and validate the VLUP¹¹, especially when a large-scale project is planned. Furthermore, among villagers, some people can use their financial and social capital to enhance their power by controlling the decision-making process (Bierschenk, Chauveau & Olivier de Sardan, 2000). In the case of the Namwawala VLUP, the Village Assembly first disagreed with the VLUP. Nevertheless, forged meeting minutes were produced by one of the village council members, using names of deceased people, children and foreigners to provide district authorities with the necessary documentation (interviews in Idandu, 2015; Bergius, 2014).

On January 2009, Namwawala villagers learned through a local Radio that they would have to accept a future valuation process, if they were not to lose their promised compensation after the evictions. Using photos and GPS, district authorities, police officers with the National Land Use Planning Commission and Valuers started to evaluate lands in the three hamlets concerned, providing land and crops evaluation papers for future compensation. Agreeing with the valuation process amounts giving his agreement for eviction, some tried resisting or hiding in the forest to steer clear of officials, but were threatened by policemen (LHRC & Haki Ardhi, 2009; interview in Idandu, 2015).

The force and violence used by district authorities alerted the Namwawala villagers, who started to organize themselves in a committee on 31st January 2009 during a Village Assembly that was planned right after the radio announcement. They gathered with some villagers from Mofu, Kisege to make a follow-up on the validity of this land transfer and asked to national NGOs to help them in this process. The RAMSAR site implementation and the 2012-2013 evictions of pastoralists and their cattle were also catalysts for actions of resistance¹². Again, through the National Newspaper, district authorities warned them that those “who would go against the national interest would be punished” (Venanc, 2009, quoted by Bergius, 2015: 97). Since then, it happened on regular basis that active members of the committee get arrested and interrogated (interview in Idandu, 2016). Several cases of corruption occurred during the negotiation process, involving both village and district authorities as well as members of the resistance committee¹³. The resistance committee launched a first case in 2010, which was dropped by a corrupted committee member. A second case identified as N°40/2012 is still pending at the High Court of Tanzania¹⁴.

Village subdivision and the process of registering a village

All powers used by district officers are based on geographical tools as well as land law interpretations. Therefore, one of the main issues raised is law interpretation: what is a “village” and what does it represent? Village lands are “within village boundaries”. But the delimitation of

“village boundaries”, the definition of a “village” itself and its formal registration must also be taken into account in the negotiations. Since 1988, the valley experienced 117% population growth (National Bureau of Statistics Tanzania, 2012). When the number of people represented is geographically and economically expanding, local government organs must evolve and alter their shapes and structures: from the *wilaya* (district), the *tarafa* (divisions), the *kata* (wards), the *kijiji* (village) to the *kitongoji* (hamlet), frontiers of authority must change. Nevertheless, the political recognition of the new village from its hamlet status doesn't depend on legal characteristics only, such as the number of households, streets, school and village office. It is mainly its geographical location which determines if the district would allow or not the village to elect its government and therefore become a “full village”. The village can be recognized as a village and being registered at the TAMISEMI¹⁵, but district authorities don't necessarily accept that the new village elects its own village government, which retains it under the authority of the “mother-village”. Indeed, to register a village, villagers have to elect a Village Council and then must agree together with the Village Assembly on a VLUP, along with district officers (URT, 1982). This VLUP allows the village council to allocate customary rights of occupancy.

In the Ruipa case, the four main villages mentioned above were constituted of at least two *vitongoji* (hamlets). According to documents from SAGCOT, the site is said to have been “resurveyed recently to account for local villages growth” (SAGCOT, 2012a). In reality, several villages have been subdivided since January 2010 and it affected both the VLUP process and the sugar cane plantation negotiations. Namwawala village, registered in 1993, was composed of four sub-villages: Namwawala A, Namwawala B, Kichangani and Idandu. Mofu was composed of Ihenga, Mofu, Ikwambi and Myomboni. Ikwambi and Ihenga were recognized as villages and got their village governments in 2014. Nevertheless, Idandu and Myomboni - the two hamlets mainly affected by the project - are still waiting to get “full” recognition through an elected local government. Indeed, looking at the 2008 and 2012 VLUPs and the RAMSAR map representing new village borders nearby the RAMSAR site, the total

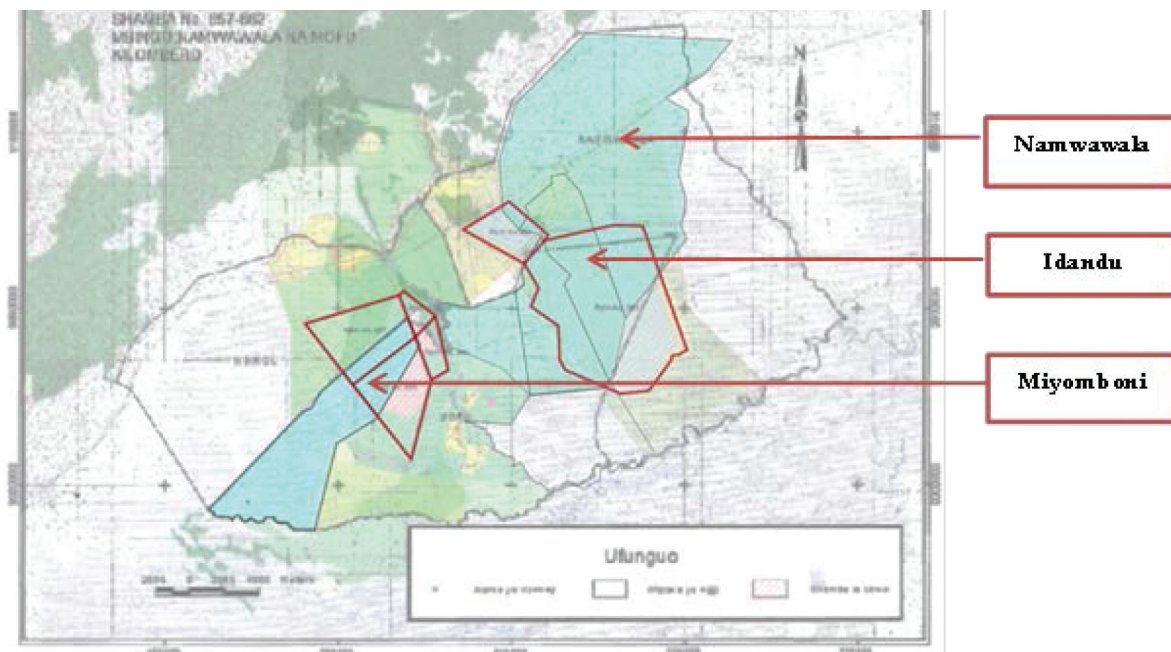
¹² “It is estimated that 486,736 out of an estimated total of 500,000 livestock were seized and removed (...) [and] around 5,000 people (pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and a few farmers) were moved out of the districts due to the eviction exercise” (IGWIA, 2013: 1).

¹³ Interferences between Kilombero District MPs, SBT board members and village leaders or even intertwined interests and status cannot be detailed in this paper, nevertheless they were important components of power relationships during negotiations.

¹⁴ During my three years on the field, committee members went several times to the High Court in Dar el Salaam, but appointments were either cancelled or the final judgment postponed.

¹⁵ *Tawala Mikoa Serikali Mitaa*, i.e the Regional Administration & Local Government.

Fig. 4: Overlapping the 1976 map, the 2008 and 2012 VLUPs and the 2016 RAMSAR map



The Red lines show the borders of the plantation project based on the 1976 map. The blue areas show the new villages based on the 2016 RAMSAR map. On the 2012 Mofu and Kisegele VLUPs, the investment area is represented in pink and blue, respectively. Source: Blache A., 2017, based on data from Sugar Board of Tanzania (1976) and KILORWEMP (2017) data

project would in fact represent (Fig. 4):

- Block A: 863.53 ha – 704 ha in Boma Mzinga hamlet (Kisegele) and 159,53 ha in Idandu and Namwawala B
- Block B: 6032.55 ha - 90% would be in Namwawala B and Idandu
- Block C: 2376.46 ha - on the 2012 VLUP of Mbingu, nothing evidences any investment plan for the sugar cane; nevertheless, Mofu represents 1184.46 ha and Miyomboni 1192 ha.

The actions led by villagers to contest the sugar cane plantation were first to gather people from all the villages and hamlets concerned. When the issue of village subdivision (and “hamlets” recognition as “villages”) started, the organization was split and started to become more concentrated in the concerned hamlets. The majority of the members of the resistance committee are actually living in the hamlets mostly affected by the potential land loss that have already experienced evictions in the past and consider themselves as “investment refugees” (interview in Idandu, 2015-2016). From villagers’ representation, full registration is a way to steer clear of the influence of “mother-villages” and escaping central governments’ decisions, whose objectives differ: the later are mainly formed of individuals who do not own land on that area, where leaders are more inclined to welcoming the

investment, hoping for “new employment opportunities, market access and infrastructure development” (focus group, Mofu, 2015). Miyomboni villagers are asking for a full registration of their village, arguing that Mofu leaders validated the VLUP without their consent and never invited them to attend political debates, village assemblies and village councils.

Recognizing the hamlets as villages would mean considering the lands as village lands and therefore, not owned by SUDECO. Villagers argue that it is the reason why District authorities didn’t allow Miyomboni and Idandu to elect their own local government. Village subdivision stopped the land use planning process and therefore the implementation of the plantation. Again, district authorities’ contradictions showed the complexity of these negotiations. With an official letter sent in 2013, by removing the validity of the Namwawala VLUP of 2008 because of village subdivision, district authorities argued that the previous plan “had been registered in government magazine” whereas the village assembly disagreed. Secondly, through this letter, the Kilombero Land District Director recognized the existence of Idandu village. However, Idandu villagers still are not allowed to elect their own local government and rely on Namwawala decisions, as it is the case for Miyomboni hamlet and Mofu village.

Conclusion

We have seen how local elites exploit the existing institutional land governance framework and village local government recognition to force the establishment of enclosures through coercive consultancy. The Village Land Use Plans drawn from the top are strong power tools used in the large-scale land transfers, either for agriculture or environment conservation objectives (Vandergeest & Peluso, 1995: 387). Furthermore, the Land Tenure Support Programs - of which the pilot sites are the villages of the Kilombero valley - started before the land tenure conflicts were solved at the High Court. Finally, one can see that “the colonial project [which] has materialized at first in the spatial dimension of setting boundaries for investment in productive space by the codes and standards of the regionalized state” (Charlery de la Masselière, 2014) is still guiding these developmental policies through a rational representation of the space.

Biography

Adriana Blache is a Ph.D candidate in human and social geography at the University of Toulouse, LIIST Laboratory and lecturer at the Geography department. Her thesis is oriented towards the continuities of the colonial process of territorialization in Tanzania.

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