

Ethnography of Land Deals

Local Perceptions of a Bioenergy Project in Sierra Leone

–Expectations of Modernity, Gendered Impacts and Coping Strategies–



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To Franziska Conteh and the People of Worreh Yeama



Abstract

In the last decade we have witnessed a rise in large-scale land acquisition projects on a global scale. Despite increased research activity, data on concrete implementation processes and perceptions of *different* groups of affected people remain sparse. This thesis aims to address this research gap by providing empirical in-depth knowledge on the investment case of the Swiss-based company Addax Bioenergy in Sierra Leone.

The four-month fieldwork addressed questions of consultation, perceptions, impacts on livelihoods and coping strategies. Findings reveal gendered impacts on access to land and resources and adverse effects on livelihood strategies of women who have been marginalised through the formalisation of customary land rights. However, evidence shows that women and other groups of affected people are capable of organizing within a complex institutional setting. Through alliances with various actors they manage to influence the outcomes of the Bioenergy project through acts of resistance and therewith prevent further deterioration of resilience of livelihoods.

Key Words: Large scale land acquisition, local impacts, land rights, gender, development, resistance.

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List of Abbreviations

AA	Acknowledgment Agreement
ABSL	Addax Bioenergy Sierra Leone Ltd.
AfDB	African Development Bank
AFLUA	Affected Land User's Association
AOG	Addax and Oryx Group
APC	All People's Congress
BfA	Bread for All
CDE	Centre for Development and Environment
ESHIA	Environmental Social and Health Impact Assessment
EC	European Commission
FDP	Farmer Development Program
FDS	Farmer Development Services
LLA	Land Lease Agreement
LOC	Land Owners Committee
LSLA	Large-Scale Land Acquisition
MoA	Memorandum of Agreement
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NASSIT	National Social Security and Insurance Trust
RSB	Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SiLNoRF	Sierra Leonean Network on the Right to Food
SLIEPA	Sierra Leone Investment and Export Promotion Agency
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
UNCTAD	United Nations Organisation Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNO	United Nations Organisation

1. Introduction

Since the beginning of the new millennium we can witness a global increase in so called large-scale land acquisition (LSLA) projects. The phenomenon has become an intensely debated topic among scholars of social sciences and economy alike.

While some are underlining the importance of so-called *Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) projects* in the struggle against poverty and underdevelopment in the global south (Byerlee 2011), others perceive such investments as land grabbing, exploiting the poorest of the poor and threatening their livelihoods (De Schutter 2011, Bread for All 2011). The rise in LSLA has led to a considerable growth of research activity and publications (Oya 2013).

In chapter 1, I will discuss theoretical perspectives that move beyond the works of the initial phase of research on LSLA and address issues such as ownership and control of resources, gender, labour, power and resistance to give an overview of the state of the art. This outline will also identify research gaps on two different levels. First, we still lack data on concrete implementation processes of LSLA projects on the local level, (changing) perceptions of the heterogeneous group of affected people as well as coping strategies people develop to deal with the transformed situation. Second, we lack vertical knowledge about the formation of investing companies, business models, ideologies and discourses, which are used for the projects' legitimation. In order to address these research gaps, the Institute of Social Anthropology and the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) of the University of Bern have set up the interdisciplinary research project *Ethnography of Land Deals*. The project researches three different cases of LSLA on two different levels: A student of human geography conducted his research on the so-called *vertical level*, which concentrates on the investor. The guiding research questions here are the following: For which reasons did the company decide for a particular product and the specific country for its operations? How did the deal pass through several levels of state, provincial and district levels, and who was acting as broker, translator or facilitator of the process? Which ideologies and discourses were used to legitimate the deal on different levels?

The anthropologists in the project conducted a research on the so-called *horizontal level* of the land deal, which is informed by the following research questions: How was access to land structured before the implementation of the deal? How was a land deal proposed to affected people, and what were the possibilities of participation? What are the emic

perceptions and the emic narratives of the heterogeneous group of affected people (in terms of age, gender, class, social status, etc.)? Did the perceptions change in the course of the implementation process? How do people frame their life experience, and how does the land deal fit into their concerns and expectations of development? What kind of strategies do affected people develop in order to cope with the transformed situation? My thesis is based on a four month fieldwork in the operational area of the Swiss-based company Addax Bioenergy Ltd. in Northern Sierra Leone. There, Addax Bioenergy has leased an area of 57'000 hectares to grow sugarcane, process it into biofuel and export it to the European market (English & Sandström 2014). The investment case is labelled as *best-practice example* by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), as the company conducted prior assessments and consultations and established compensation schemes that aim at mitigating possible negative impacts on the people affected by the project.

My in-depth research in an affected community followed the commonly established research questions for the horizontal level outlined above with an additional focus on gendered impacts and their implication for the emergence of resistance. For the analysis of my data, I relied on approaches of political economy and political ecology as well as New Institutionalism theory.

This thesis is divided into three parts. The first part consists on the theoretical outline (chapter 2) and a detailed description of the research project and the methodology applied in the field (chapter 3). The second part gives an overview on the broader research context of Sierra Leone (chapter 4) and the setting where I conducted my fieldwork (chapter 5). In chapter 4, I will trace historical developments and its impact on (post-) colonial administration and customary land tenure and look at the development of investor-friendly policies adopted by the government after the civil war. Subsequently, the reader will be introduced to Addax Bioenergy and learn about the project design and the involved actors. Chapter 5 is based on empirical findings and literature alike and addresses local, social, political and religious institutions that have decisively shaped the way the impacts of the Addax Bioenergy project manifest in local realities. It is followed by the political ecology of land use as it was structured before the arrival of the company that will help the reader to embed the empirical finding that will be presented in the third part of this thesis (chapter 6). The findings reveal shifting perceptions of different groups in time and reveal shortcomings in consultation processes and compensation schemes. Further evidence suggests gendered impacts on

land use and economic opportunities. Based on that, it will be examined how affected groups organised the opposition to the company's attempt of another sugarcane field on village land.

2.Theory

2. 1. Naming and Framing the Phenomenon

2.1.1. Preliminary Definition of LSLA

Large-scale land acquisition (LSLA) is not a new phenomenon, as it has been occurring since the era of colonialism (White et al. 2012: 623, Peluso & Lund 2011: 672, Alden Wily 2012). However, scholars from various disciplines assert that there has been a massive rise in commercial land transactions since the beginning of the new millennium, specifically after the triple-F crisis between 2007/08 (finance food and fuel), with changes in scale, pace, key drivers and shifts in power and production in the global political economy (De Schutter 2011, Borras et al. 2011, Deininger and Byerlee 2011).

The so-called rush for land aroused interest from the public and scholars alike, and coincides with what Edelman (2013) calls a 'rush for publications'. The positions and expectations of economists, scholars from social sciences and civil society activists towards LSLA vary considerably and reflect in the choice of different terminology linked to different discourses:

Large-Scale Land Acquisition (LSLA) is a relatively neutral term describing the phenomenon primarily in relation to the size of the investment. *Foreign Direct Investment* (FDI) mirrors the attitude of economists relying on development discourses (cf. chapter 2.3.) and expecting largely positive impacts from job creation and economic growth. The denomination *Land Grabbing* focuses on asymmetrical relations between different actors, potential injustices and structural violence linked to the process of land acquisition and anticipates exploitation and expulsion of local people and the destruction of rural livelihoods. *Land Grabbing* however suggests a unilateral appropriation of land, although land acquisitions typically involve contracts (Cotula 2013:11). This is especially true for Addax Bioenergy (cf. chapter 4.2.2.) and I therefore opt for the more neutral term of LSLA for my thesis.

LSLA consists of a myriad of factors and changing dynamics, and is therefore not easy to define. Former Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier de Schutter broadly

defines the phenomenon as „the acquisition or long-term lease of large areas of land by investors“ (2011:249). Albeit the definition is not inadequate, it fails to address certain aspects of LSLA: First, it does not comment on the purpose for which the land is acquired. Second, it analyses the phenomenon merely in terms of scale, although “one hectare may not be equal to another” (Edelman 2013: 485), means that quality, use and benefits of the land vary can vary from one patch of land to the other. The author argues that economic value of land is more decisive in both the investor’s decision whether to invest or not and in the assessment of the impacts on affected people. Third, drawing on Mehta et al. (2012), pointing out that LSLA is not only about land but also about associated resources such as water, it is necessary to amplify the analytical framework. I suggest doing so by adopting the work-in-progress definition by Borrás et al. (2012):

“The contemporary land grabbing is the capturing of control of relatively vast tracts of land and other natural resources through a variety of mechanisms and forms that involve large-scale capital that often shifts resource use orientation into extractive character, whether for international or domestic purposes, as capital’s response to the convergence of food, energy and financial crises, climate change mitigation imperatives, and demands for resources from newer hubs of global capital” (2012: 851).

Hence, LSLA can be analysed as control over land, resources, and people with the aim of responding to the multiple crises of the present-day world. But what are these crises and why did they emerge? What exactly is triggering the rise of global large-scale land transactions?

2.1.2. Driving Forces

In the first stage of reporting about LSLA, reports almost invariably portrayed financially strong countries like the Gulf States, China and South Korea as driving forces behind LSLA. Reports spread about how these governments acquired arable land in Sub-Saharan Africa to boost food production so as to achieve food security for their rapidly growing populations. Identified target countries were mostly located on the African continent, where land is cheap and seemingly abundant (GRAIN 2008, Cotula 2013, Oxfam 2011). In this sense, the rise of LSLA was explained with the food crisis climaxing in the years 2007 – 2008 (Saravia-Matus 2013, De Schutter 2011, FAO 2013). Back then, prices for wheat, maize and other food crops had tripled since 2003 (Von Braun 2008:3), leading to protests and anti-government demonstrations in more than 60 countries

(White et al. 2012: 627). These developments motivated governments of the above-mentioned countries to buy land for agricultural purposes, but also presented lucrative business opportunities for private ventures and agro-food companies in search of a vertical integration of global food chains. While the former were trying to secure the food supply of their countries, the latter started to produce food crops on leased land for the export on the global market, as high prices promised high profits. Rising global food prices, an enhanced profitability and security for investment as well as speculation¹ accelerated the phenomenon (Anseeuw 2012b: 28, White et al. 2012: 629). However, other publications soon complemented the food-centred explanations and drew a more diversified picture of the drivers behind LSLA: Nowadays, it is a truism that a considerable part of the acquired land (66% of land acquired in Africa between 2000 and 2011²) serves for the production of biofuels (Anseeuw et al. 2012b). The volatile global oil prices and the limitedness of fossil fuels push industrial countries to search for alternative energy sources that would neither damage the environment nor hinder the economic growth³. At the same time, renewable energy from biofuel would reduce the dependency from the unstable oil producing countries in the Middle East currently shaken by uprisings and conflicts sparked by the so-called Arab Spring (Borras et al. 2010: 576). Furthermore, the omnipresent narrative of climate change also results in what Fairhead et al. (2012) term *Green Grabbing*: Land is leased for the sake of

¹ Many of the announced projects have never been implemented in reality. De Schutter takes that as an indication for the merely speculative character of LSLA where acquiring land is a promising way to secure assets (2011:253).

² Data about the scale of land deals have to be taken with a degree of caution, as it often remains unclear how data has been gathered and which timespan it reflects. Data relying on international reviews based on media and research reports tend to be overstated, as they rely on public announcements made by investors or governments. However, these plans do often not materialize in reality or are implemented on a much smaller scale than announced. For databases such as the Land Matrix, it is very difficult to keep track of the developments, as scale and implementation can change quickly (Cotula 2013: 37-40). On the other hand, data stemming from national inventories often underestimate the area of acquired land since they tend to be incomplete or unsystematic (ibid. 41-42).

³ The price of oil has declined considerably since 2008 and might reduce the demand for biofuels. However, with the background of diminishing supplies of non-renewable energies and the 'green' paradigm of global policies, biofuels are likely to remain on the international agenda for longer term (Cotula & Vermeulen 2009:56).

environment protection, biodiversity conservation, bio carbon sequestration, ecosystem services and ecotourism (ebd.:237).

Considering all this, the massive rise of LSLA can be interpreted as an answer to the convergence of multiple crises, which are: the food, energy, climate and finance crisis (Borras et al. 2012: 846). The increasing cultivation of *flex crops* is taken as indication of the attempt to handle these multiple crises: *Flex crops* have multiple uses that can be easily and flexibly interchanged. Depending on demand and market price, soya can be processed into food, feed or biofuel, sugarcane into food or ethanol, palm oil into food, biofuel or commercial or industrial products and corn into food, feed or ethanol (Borras et al. 2012:851). However, it is important to note that LSLA are not only the result of market rationales, but that these processes are often policy driven, as the above-mentioned *green grabbing* illustrates. The commodification and appropriation of nature is pushed through programs such as REDD+⁴ (Fairhead et al. 2012). The boom for biofuels in Europe is induced not by market forces alone, but is highly influenced by the legislation directing a certain percentage of energy to come from renewable sources (EC 2009, Borras et al. 2010, Cotula 2013: 81).

Another issue of interest for both the academic world and the wider public is the geographic location of the “target countries” that lease out large areas of land. Whereas easily accessible newspapers might leave the impression that the one and only target is Africa, in reality, uncountable cases in Latin America (Ballve 2011, Balletti 2012, Kröger 2011, Ojeda 2011, Oliveira 2011, Bernasconi 2014), South East Asia (Baird 2011) and Eastern Europe (Visser & Spoor 2011) have been detected and investigated. This is an indication that we are facing a truly global phenomenon where there are not only classical ‘North-South’ dynamics at play, but also ‘South-South’ alliances, both public and private (White et al. 2012: 628), as will be discussed below.

We equally have to widen the angle when it comes to the origin of the investors. It is certainly correct that Arab countries have acquired land for food production for the domestic market, and that China is an important player in the construction and mining

⁴ Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) is an effort to create a financial value for the carbon stored in forests, offering incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands and invest in low-carbon paths to sustainable development. "REDD+" goes beyond deforestation and forest degradation, and includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks" (UN-Redd Programme, www.un-redd.org).

sector in Africa (Cotula 2013: 60). However, Cotula considers the scale of their roles to be largely overestimated. Against it, he raises awareness for the crucial role India, Brazil and South East Asian companies play in the rush for land, especially in the production of palm oil and soya and, to a lesser extent, of cotton and rice (ibid. 63-65).

Finally, and most importantly, he points out that European and North American companies are key players in the rush for land. Making reference to various reports (Anseeuw et al. 2012a, Benjaminsen et al. 2011, Graham et al. 2010, Schoneveld et al. 2011 and Oakland Institute 2011), he emphasizes the exposed role European and North American companies play in the range of investors, especially in the production of biofuel and the financialization of land in Africa⁵ (Cotula 2013: 66-69). However, transnational corporations and foreign governments are not alone in dealing with transactions of large areas of land: A significant share of the land is acquired by domestic or regional players or by members of the diaspora (Levien 2012). Still, the distinction between domestic and international is not always clear, as “transnational companies typically operate through local subsidiaries. Nationals may facilitate land access for foreign investors, acting as intermediaries or partners” (Cotula 2013:54).

Some operations are initiated by governments and NGO’s that are responding to climate change by fostering crops such as *Jatropha*, as has been shown by colleagues in our research project for the case of India (Scheidegger 2014, Pock 2014). Regardless of whether the investor is international, national, private, regional or domestic, the role of the government of the target country is absolutely crucial (Alden-Wily 2012) and must therefore be part of the analysis of LSLA. Many states in the Global South are weakened by civil wars, economic adjustment programs and corruption, and are incapable of meeting the most basic needs of their citizens (White et al. 2012: 624). These governments actively attract investors by creating specialized agencies and investor-friendly policies including tax exemptions (Toulmin 2008: 14) as they expect the deal to bring what the country is lacking: infrastructure, employment, health services, capital.

In case there are no significant settlements or agricultural productivity, the governments label the land as idle or as wasteland and make it available for domestic, foreign or transnational corporations (Borras et al. 2012: 858, Li 2011). Additionally, the state creates the base for land sales and land concentration with what Scott calls

⁵ According to Schoneveld et al. 2011 European countries accounted for 40% and North America for 13% of land acquired in Africa in the period from 2005 to 2011.

'simplification processes' (1998:11): The formalisation of land (and user) rights and their registration in cadastral map excerpts reduce the complexity of highly dynamic ownership and user structures and increases the legibility of the land (see chapter 2.4.). Not formally privatized land is often considered state land and sometimes, especially in settings characterized by on-going conflicts, used for nation-building projects such as the creation of national parks that should offer recreation and security to the nation (Ojeda 2011).

In post-war countries, investor friendly policies are part of the liberal peace-building model that promotes the idea that sustainable peace is dependent on economic and private investment (Millar 2015:1701). Cotula adds that along with national governments, local elites are often closely involved in promoting land deals “on the ground” and are “perhaps the most important reason for the pervasive lack of transparency surrounding the deals” (Cotula 2013: 54).

This chapter has illustrated how the increased demand for food and fuel, as well as for financialisation and environment protection, is driving large-scale land acquisitions. However, after a careful examination of the origin of the investors, it has to be noted that the root driver of LSLA cannot simply be the global population growth as sometimes suggested (Seto et al. 2010) but rather has to do with consumption patterns. Cotula rightly states that “it is not ‘them’, the Chinese or the ‘greedy capitalists’, but ‘us’ – our collective expectation of ever rising living standards, coupled with the aspiration of the rising middle classes in emerging economies to enjoy similar levels of material consumption (2013:11). The opening of markets and the indebtedness of developing countries coupled with state control, alliances between state officials, local elites and domestic and foreign investors have created new opportunities for the satisfaction of this increased demand by appropriating and controlling land and natural resources. The recent rise in LSLA is characterized not only by the changes in ownership structure, but also by new actors getting involved on the land and completely transformed production systems. How this revolutionary transformation of agricultural systems and land use is impacting affected people is the subject of discussion of scholars from different disciplines with different point of views. The most relevant for the analysis of my case study will be outlined in the next subchapters by further elaborating on the tendencies illustrated above.

2.2. The Development Discourse

“This is the expansion of capitalism...but here they call it development”⁶

The neoliberal development perspective advocated by World Bank economists and national development agencies observed a “rediscovery of the agricultural sector by different types of investors” (Deininger & Beyerlee 2011:xxv), especially in Africa and Latin America, where agricultural systems are seemingly underdeveloped and land appears to be most plentiful (ebd.: XXVIII). This rhetoric recalls discourses⁷ of development, which emerged after World War II and were articulated through the modernisation theory of Rostow (1960) and others during the 1950s and 60s. It understands development as a transition from a traditional society to a modern one through the elimination of tradition and the advancements of technology, the introduction of democracy and market liberalization. The discourse defines Western capitalist industries as the ‘normal’ and describes everything differing from it in “categories of abnormality: illiterate, underdeveloped, malnourished, landless peasants, and the like” (Lewellen 2003:193).⁸ Ferguson compares this classical development discourse with an anti-politics machine that is “systematically misrecognizing and depoliticizing understandings of the lives and problems of people living in what has long since come to be known as the third world” (1999: 249-350). After a decade of disastrous structural adjustment programs on indebted countries in the Global South in the 1980ies⁹, the discourse was channelled into the paradigm of ‘*sustainable development*’ after the end of the Cold War.

⁶ Personal Communication 14.09.13

⁷ Smalley & Corbera 2012 define discourse “*as a certain way of seeing and giving meaning to the world. (...). Discourse is given expression through narratives, rhetoric and argumentation and, over time, becomes naturalised and accepted as truth (...). Discourse is a key means to produce categories of knowledge and justify forms of intervention and control over natural resources*” (2012: 1043).

⁸ The concept has been criticised at length by dependency theorists that put emphasis on *external* instead of *internal* factors. The reason for underdevelopment is thereby located in the colonial structures that forced countries of the Global South in a peripheral role in the global economic system and deprived it of its possibilities of development (Frank 1969).

⁹ The neoliberal structural adjustment programs were imposed on indebted countries by global regulatory institutions, notably the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO in the 1980s, and prepared the ground for what would culminate in transactions of huge parcels of land triggered by the finance, food and fuel crisis in 2008 (ebd. 2011: XXX, Sassen 2010: 27ff, Peters 2013: 551).

Accordingly, investors and donors do not frame LSLA as mere business opportunities, but move within the ideology of modernity and integrate land deals in the mainstream development discourse by claiming it would foremost benefit the rural poor. In this way, LSLA is no longer depicted as a necessity, but has been turned into a virtue (Borras & Franco 2010a: 510). According to the discourse, large-scale, highly mechanized and highly capitalized agricultural projects optimize the allegedly low productivity of small-scale agriculture¹⁰ and boost the food production for the global and the domestic market (Deininger and Byerlee 2011: XXXVII ff; Von Braun & Meinzen-Dick 2009). Adherents of this perspective are convinced of the positive effects those agricultural projects have on the target country and its poor population – providing that they are managed well. In such a case, a land project would bring infrastructure, employment possibilities, access to markets and technology for local producers, as well as tax revenues, economic growth and poverty reduction for the country on a national level (Deininger and Byerlee 2011, World Bank 2008).

Despite this positive vision, the World Bank acknowledges possible negative socio-economic impacts on the local population due to a failure in recognizing local land rights. The institution equally avows dangers for the environment because of the decline of biodiversity caused by large monocultures (Deininger and Byerlee 2011: XXVIII ff, Peters 2013: 555). In order to address these challenges and transform the risks into opportunities for all the stakeholders involved, the World Bank, FAO, IFAD and UNCTAD jointly developed seven voluntary *Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment* (PRAI). If investors and host governments comply with the principles listed below and the civil society acts as a watchdog, so the narrative, it becomes possible to reduce potential negative impacts to a minimum and to achieve a *win-win-win situation* for investor, host country and affected people. The principles are the following: 1) Recognizing and respecting land and resource rights; 2) ensuring food security; 3) ensuring transparency and good governance; 4) consultation and participation of affected people and records of the outcomes; 5) respecting the rule of law of the country

¹⁰ Productivity is not easy measurable. However, Netting (1993) states that smallholders have a higher diversification of crops and therefore higher risk minimation, provided they have access to needed resources.

and reflecting the industry's best practice standards; 6) social sustainability, i.e. generating desirable social and distributional impacts and 7) environmental sustainability (unctad.org).

The PRAI have been subject of fierce criticism from human rights activists, scholars and social movements alike (De Schutter 2011, Borras & Franco 2010a, Dhanarajan 2015, Smaller and Mann 2009, Li 2011, La Via Campesina 2010 to name a few). The following assumptions underlying the PRAI are continuously questioned in the literature:

First, many authors criticize the *voluntary nature* of the PRAI and the thereto-related lack of accountability. Peters is convinced that the voluntary RAI Principles “prove weak in the face of powerful economic and political interests” (2013: 548) and Borras & Franco fear that the PRAI are not blocking, but instead facilitating further land grabbing (2010a: 521).

Second, the notion of unused, 'idle' and 'available' land underlying the PRAI is critically scrutinized by many authors (White et al. 2012, Borras & Franco 2010a, Cotula & Vermeulen 2009, Li 2011). In their studies, they show that there are various forms of land use by local people on these allegedly empty lands. The land is used for grazing animals, gathering firewood or medicinal plants, or for shifting cultivation (De Schutter 2011: 260, White et al. 2012:632, Cotula 2012). Cotula and Vermeulen argue that the concept “reflects an assessment of productivity rather than the existence of resource uses” (2009:62) and Borras & Franco add that “these uses tend to be undervalued in official assessments because they are not marketed, but they can provide valuable livelihood sources, especially for the poor” (2010a: 512). If this land is leased out to any kind of investor, it suppresses agricultural activities, which are crucial for the livelihoods of different groups of local people, especially the most vulnerable ones (De Schutter 2011: 260).

Third point of criticism is the role the PRAI assign to target countries in establishing '*good governance*'. De Schutter raises serious doubts about the host government's capacity to strengthen the institutional and governance framework in order to protect the rights of the affected population (ebd.267). The principle ignores the fact that many governments do not want to provide protection to certain groups or ethnicities, and are often actively involved in land dispossession (Greco 2012: 460). Some governments welcome investment projects that evict these people or stop their so-called backward agricultural or poaching activities. It should, however, be stated that even if

governments want to impose performance requirements for the protection of its citizens and environment, they are bound by investment treaties and regional or international free trade agreements. In addition to that, there is considerable competition among low-income countries in attracting new investors, a fact that leads governments to lower the requirements in order to prevent the investor from going to a country offering more favourable conditions (ebd. 264, Li 2011: 287).

The last point of critique is the principle of participation. Borrás & Franco (2010a) question its effectiveness because

“often in such situations, the rural poor have little opportunity to set the record straight, while other, more powerful stakeholders have little interest in ensuring that oppositional voices are even heard, much less taken into consideration, if doing so could mean scuttling the deal altogether. Different social groups join the negotiation table with different degrees of political power” (2010: 519).

The authors consider the representation of social groups as politically contested because local elites, with the prospect of benefitting from the investment, claim to represent a community while they are solely articulating their own interests (ebd., Peters & Richards 2011: 393). However, literature on participation indicates that the limits of participatory processes are not only due to conscious manipulation, but are to be located in the technique itself: Even if all the stakeholders can be brought together in order to reveal local knowledge and subjugated opinions, the historically constructed forms of control, power asymmetries and macro-structural inequalities such as gender, ethnicity and class will persist during the meetings (Kothari 2001:140; Cleaver 2001). Especially the public and formal¹¹ nature of the participatory meetings can be a constraint for some groups, for example women, who are, in certain contexts, excluded from public happenings or decision-making processes¹² (Mosse 1994: 512). Additionally, the public tends to „emphasize the general over the particular (individual, event, situation etc.), and towards the normative („what ought to be’ rather than ‚what is’), and towards a unitary view of interests which underplays difference“ (ebd.: 508).

¹¹ Although the outsider may perceive them as informal events, participatory meetings are often perceived as highly formal by participants because held in a public place in the presence of outsiders, where their voices are sometimes even recorded (Mosse 1994: 508).

¹² However, a women’s access to the public or decision-making area depends on her age, marital status, residence (native village or village of marriage), religion and class (Mosse 1994: 513).

Moreover, the presence of outsiders (maybe even a highly respected foreigner) with a certain identity or agenda can distort the revelation of 'local knowledge' as participants aim to obtain a benefit or avoid a cost (Cleaver 2001:51). Another limiting element is the economic selectivity that is often at play in poor rural contexts. It means that those without money cannot afford the cost of transportation or to take a day off to attend a meeting in another town (Blaikie 1985).

In order to overcome these shortcomings, De Schutter (2011) and Borrás & Franco (2010a) argue for the adoption of a human rights framework that calls into question the broader pattern of food and energy production and consumption. According to the authors, particular attention needs to be paid to the right to food, the right to land and the careful examination of opportunity costs. De Schutter further argues that improving access to land and water for local farming communities would benefit them to a much greater extent than large-scale investment on land. He pleads for the strengthening of small-scale farming that would mean less opportunity costs and a better conservation of the environment, because it does not depend on the application of fertilizers and herbicides as large mechanized monocroppings do (2011: 260). He and many other human rights activists hold that labour-intensive but low-input small-scale farming that produces large volumes at relatively low cost (ibid.) would be a better option in the struggle against rural poverty than large scale agriculture.

2.3. The Political Economy of LSLA

2.3.1. The Labour Question

A more systemic and radical critique of the neoliberal development perspective promoting LSLA is coming from scholars focusing on labour issues. They define LSLA as the appropriation of land and resources resulting in the dispossession and displacement of rural communities and the emergence of a landless proletariat – the equivalent of what Marx described as '*primitive accumulation*': The separation of the people from the means of production transforms them into proletarians who have to sell their labour power for survival (Marx 1962 [1867]: 741). However, Harvey considers the term 'primitive' as inappropriate for a process that is on-going through large-scale land leases, and therefore substitutes Marx' term with the contemporary *accumulation by dispossession* (2005: 144). Operating with this term, Harvey examines contemporary class based processes through which capital is accumulated in the hands of those who

already possess capital (Harvey 2005, cited in Fairhead 2012: 243). He identifies the complex interactions of the processes of *privatization* and *financialisation*, the *management and manipulation of crises* (particularly the discursive emphases on multiple 'scarcities' in policy debates) and *state redistribution* (whereby states close rank with capital business interests) as driving forces behind large-scale and long-term land leases. He asserts that the State, with its monopoly of violence and definition of legality, plays a central role, as it supports the process with activities of simplification and new legislations (Harvey 2005: 145). In consequence, the new tenants are able to make a profit from these resources while former users are excluded, resulting in a situation that Sassen describes as "a savage sorting of winners and losers" (2010).

However, Li holds that most rural people would welcome a transition from more subsistence-based production to well-paid secure wage labour, but, as she states "what makes it hard for landless people to accept their *de facto* proletarian status is that there is no sign that they can move into a proletarian future" (2011: 296). Indeed, today's land projects are large-scale, mechanized monocrop plantations that are labour saving, in contrast to earlier agricultural plantations of colonial times that could only be managed with large quantities of manual labour (White et al. 2012: 633). Today's target countries are not about to experience an industrial revolution producing thousands of jobs for dispossessed farmers as it was the case in 18th century (Tanner 2010:125). This results in a situation in which LSLA do not create as many jobs as predicted (Li 2011, Anseeuw et al. 2012, Oakland 2011, IIED 2011, White et al. 2012, Franco et al. 2010) – a fact that is, interestingly, even acknowledged by World Bank economists (Deininger & Byerlee 2011:xx). The investments are not capable of absorbing the dispossessed farmers into the newly emerged economy, because "their land is needed but their labour is not" (Li 2011: 286). They are then turned into what various scholars call 'surplus people'¹³ (Li 2009, Araghi 2010, Bernstein 2004, Peters 2013, Ferguson 2015). The availability of 'surplus labourers' and their competition for jobs allows the capitalist sector to employ people under precarious working conditions with minimum salaries and maximum working hours (Marx 1962 [1867]: 657-672). Under these conditions, workers are

¹³ The term 'surplus people' does not refer to the Malthusian or neo-Malthusian concept of absolute overpopulation (Niephaus 2012:32ff), but refers to Marx' description of 'surplus to capital's requirements for labour' (1977: 519ff).

periodically expelled and have to turn back to the subsistence sector, which offers social security and can be said to subsidize the capitalist production (Meillassoux 1973:89) by providing an already fed reserve army of labour. This alimentary function of the subsistence sector undermines its own resources: The agricultural work has to be done by less people as the subsistence sector loses workforce to the capitalist production (Meillassoux 1976).

The labour perspective has illustrated how LSLA radically restructures agrarian economies. However, as the question about processes of appropriation and dispossession has not been answered, we will turn to new institutionalism and land rights theory for further investigation

2.3.2. New Institutionalism Theory

The perspective of political economy has highlighted consequences of the peasants' dispossession of their land and resources. However, in his time Proudhon had already challenged the analytical constraints of analysing property on its own (1993 [1849]: 13). According to Ribot and Peluso (2003) benefitting from land is not only possible through its possession, but can also be achieved through *accessing* it. Hereby, the authors sketch property as "the rights to benefit" (ibid.:158), and define access as "the ability to benefit from things – including material objects, persons, institutions and symbols" (ibid.: 153). This ability to benefit from resources with or without possessing them can be described with the notion of power (ibid. 155). Structural or relational mechanisms (ibid.: 164-172) such as access to technology, capital, markets, labour opportunities, knowledge (power to produce categories of knowledge through ideological control and discursive practice), social identity (including age, gender, ethnicity, religion, status, profession, place of origin, education, etc.) and social relations (friendship, trust, reciprocity, patronage, dependence, obligation etc.) shape the ability to gain, control and maintain access to resources.

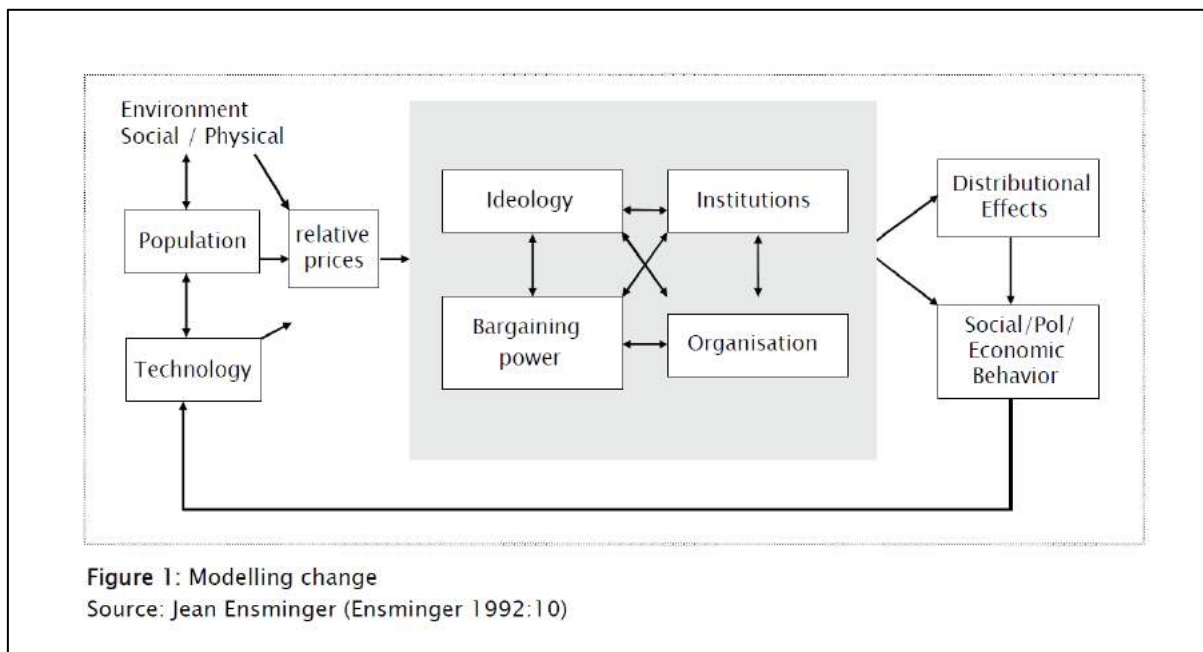
Representatives of New Institutionalism, a theory uniting social science and economy, label the structures and regulations organizing access to land and resources as *institutions*. They are "the rules of the game" that structure actions and interactions, including production and exchange relations (North 1990: 3). Institutions can be defined as "normative frameworks that include codified law as well as informal codes of conduct, norms and conventions" (Lesorogol 2008: 2). They prescribe the behaviour of a

group of people and embody sanctions for those who break the rules (ebd.). Institutions defined by the state are named *formal*, whereas non-state institutions, informed by the 'custom' of a local community, are called *informal*.¹⁴ These customary laws are embedded in the culture of specific groups of people (Haller 2013: 16). Both formal and informal institutions reduce the cost of transactions, because they enable people to anticipate behaviour and actions of other social actors, and the society to produce and reproduce with a greater degree of efficiency (Lesorgol 2008: 3, see also Ensminger 1992, Haller 2007, 2013). The issue of formal and informal is partially an external discourse embedded into roman law pushed by colonial states, and later on embedded into modern nation states which claims state and private property on land as formal, whereas communal land ownership is claimed to be informal, and so-called customary and therefore not a real property right (see Peters 2013). For a long time, the management of common pool resources (CPR) managed in customary common property regimes came under serious scrutiny from many colonially biased scholars: According to Hardin's view, common property management systems would necessarily result in what he termed '*the tragedy of the commons*' (Hardin 1968), since he perceived local groups as incapable of developing rules regulating resource use in a sustainable way, and pictured common property regimes or institutions as open access. Consequently, the precious natural resources would be notoriously overused and eventually be completely depleted (ebd.: 1244). His solution for what he considered to be a problem was to shift ownership and control over common property resources to the government property, or to private property (Haller 2007: 7). However, on the basis of anthropological studies, Ostrom (1992) has re-launched the discussion by demonstrating that common-pool resources are sustainably managed by local institutions adapted to the local context. She disproves Hardin's open access scenario by illustrating that commons are not open to everyone, but in ownership of specific groups destined for their use at specific times (Ostrom 1992, Haller 2013: 89; Alden-Wily 2008: 44). Ostrom developed eight design principles for robust institutional arrangements out of comparative empirical studies

¹⁴ Distinctions between 'formal' and 'informal' institutions can be problematic because customary, or informal institutions can, in specific cases, be even more formalised than institutions defined by the state (Haller 2007: 13). Nevertheless, the terms will be used, as they reflect tendencies towards the one or the other meaning.

from social anthropology, political science and human geography. These principles include boundaries and membership as well as monitoring and sanctioning aspects, thus elements for reduction of transaction costs. But in addition, common property institutions also include not just the issue of membership, monitoring and sanctioning but also clearly defined and environmentally adapted rules of who (member and non-members invited), when (timing, seasonality) and how (technology, intensity) common pool resources can be appropriated. Many of these elements include coordination and thus the aspect of information (see Haller 2007, 2013).

Ensminger (1992) and Haller (2013) have complemented the rather depoliticized theory of Ostrom by the element of power to explain how institutions evolve and how they change over time. Power can thereby be understood as “an ability to influence the behaviour of others and/or gain influence over the control of valued actions” (Cohen 1970:31). Ensminger’s model (figure 1), explains institutional change as a consequence of the complex interaction of the *internal factors* of ideologies, institutions, organizations and bargaining power with the *external factors* of environment, demographics and technology (Ensminger 1992: xx).



These notions shall be briefly explained here: *Institutions* are, as seen above, formal or informal rules that structure values, norms and constraints. They enable cooperation and reduce transaction costs. However, institutions “rarely represent the most efficient

outcome for a society as a whole (ebd.: 22)¹⁵, but rather serve the interests of those with the most bargaining power (ebd.: 20 ff). *Ideology* is defined as values and beliefs that shape people's goals and choices. The choices can be contradictory and can reflect both self-interest as well as concerns for the well being of fellow people (ebd.:5). At this point, a reference is due to Haller (2013), who enlarges Ensminger's notion of ideology with the crucial roles of discourse and narratives that legitimize ideologies and influence *bargaining power* (ebd.: 23). The latter is the ability of actors to shape institutions that benefit them most. Bargaining power is social power that derives from wealth, a social position or the ability to manipulate others (Ensminger 1992:7). The term *organization* refers to a group of people who formed an organization to create or change institutions according to their interest through collective action (ebd.:6). These internal factors mutually influence each other, but are also affected by changes in relative prices that make certain resources suddenly more valuable than others and affect the bargaining power of actors (Haller 2013:24). According to Ensminger, relative prices depend on the environmental, demographical and technological developments, but Haller suggests to enlarge the list of external factors by adding "the political and economic environment (pacification, new urban centers and new markets, monetarisation), state control (laws police, administrators), and infrastructure and transport systems (lowering costs for marketing or access by other groups, etc.)" (Haller 2007: 16).

Relating this debate to LSLA, it can be assumed that the land deals and agricultural, energy or environmental projects are likely to affect external factors, such as changes in environment and technology, as well as relative prices through the commodification of land and associated resources. This in turn will influence the internal factors and lead to an institutional change, not only in terms of who owns the land, but also of who has the power to access land and related common pool resources such as pasture, wildlife, fisheries, forestry, non-timber forest products and veldt products. I argue that the amalgamation of Ensminger's and Haller's institutional change theory with Ribot & Peluso's theory of access and their notions of power, institutions and ideology enables us to understand how institutions were organized before the implementation of a land

¹⁵ It should not be suggested that groups are homogeneous and boundaries are natural and clear. It is acknowledged that categories such as ethnicity overlap with other categories such as age, gender, class etc. and are therefore highly complex.

deal, and to access the impacts and changes in a more comprehensive manner than an exclusive focus on property would. In what follows, I will outline the institutions of land rights and access in Sub-Saharan Africa, the actors involved, and the debates linked to it.

2.4. Gendered Land Rights and the Politics of Belonging

2.4.1. What is Customary Law?

In West Africa, formal documents about owner and user rights exist only for 2-3% of existing land. This titled land is mostly located in urban or development areas (Toulmin 2008: 12), whereas in rural regions, customary land tenure prevails. Customary tenure consists of arrangements derived from “the ‘communal reference’ - the fact that local community, not state is the source of decision making, norm making, regulation and enforcement” (Alden-Wily 2008: 46). However, Peters (2013, 2009) holds that customary land tenure is not a native concept as the term might suggest, but has been co-produced by British colonial rule. The colonial authority in Africa initially aimed at privatizing the backward landholding systems in order to ensure the transition from barbarism to civilisation and modern progress (2013:3) – an idea that found its continuation in the modernization and development discourses in the second half of 20th century. However, the British recognized that “individual ownership of land is quite foreign to native ideas. Land belongs to the community, the village and the family, never to the individual” (Chanock 1991: 65 quoted in Peters 2013: 3). Individual property, so feared the colonialists, would lead people to detach themselves from ‘the tribe’ and would undermine the authority of the chief as crucial pillar in the system of *indirect rule*; in brief, it would threaten their very own political control (ebd.). As a way out, the British created customary land tenure that shifted authority over land upwards, “from family heads, lineage elders, and town chiefs to ‘paramount’ or ‘territorial’ chiefs” (ebd.:4). The land management under the institution of chieftaincy reinforced the link between political authority and authority over land, and increased the competition over land by multiple types of authority (Peters 2013:4 and 2009: 1317). For Zambia, Southern Province, Haller describes concretely how the British colonial officers created chiefs for local indirect rule administration. Previous leaders who exercised power before colonial times in the form of big men (attracting followers by distributing access to resources) were co-opted or replaced by previously dependent individuals who became chiefs and suddenly were supplied with new means of power for tax collection.

These new political elites were the ones now controlling use and access to the land labelled as customary (Haller 2013). In other cases for example in Western Africa (French and British colonies) the construction of new power distribution focuses on the debate of the so-called first comers and late comers groups (see Haller ed. 2010).

Under this institution of customary tenure¹⁶ the group disposing over property rights (though not exclusive private property in the Western sense) is drawing legitimacy from its belonging to the *first-comers* by matrilinear or patrilinear descent. The *first-comers* were those who cleared the bush and converted it into a field or a village. They are believed to have established a special relationship with the spirits of the land by offering sacrifices to ensure the fertility of the land and the well being of the community. Later immigrants, or strangers¹⁷, were then allowed to use the land, build houses and bury their dead (Kuba & Lentz 2006: 8, see also comparison of six case studies in African Floodplains in Haller 2010). Exclusive ownership is thus not the right term, it is rather the combination of owner and stewardship with coordination functions by which access to land and related common pool resources are redistributed. Membership to a group gives in this sense from an emic perspective a sense of co-ownership (see also Haller 2007, Haller ed 2010.) Thus the first comers are not exclusive land and resource owners but embedded in complex layers of “secondary rights”, and claims for co-ownership and for a rightful share, allowing non-owning people such as women, migrants, pastoralists or members from adjacent communities to access and benefit from resources, which is a highly critical contribution to the resilience of their livelihoods¹⁸. The same is valid for the commonly used grazing land, woodlands, ponds and fisheries, which, according to Alden-Wily, “need to be seen as possibly the only capital asset of the poor” (2008: 46) or

¹⁶ As described by Peters (2009, 2013), pre-colonial customary tenure has been transformed into today’s understanding by the colonial administration. Despite of this historical discontinuity, I will use the term ‘customary tenure’ to refer to the concept created during colonial rule for the fact that it has become the institutional reality for the rural communities.

¹⁷ In the following, I will refer to first-comers as landowners and immigrants as strangers, as those are the established terminologies in Northern Sierra Leone that I will turn to in the next chapter.

¹⁸ *Resilience* can be defined as “a range of capabilities, assets, and activities in order to off-set risks and cope with stresses and shocks such as drought, disease and loss of employment (Chambers and Conway 1992 cited in Cousins & Scoones 2010: 42). *Livelihood strategies* are institutionally mediated and influence the vulnerability or robustness of livelihood strategies (Cousin & Scoones 2010: 42ff)

formulated differently from an emic perspective of members with the right to a share of the local cultural landscape with all its resources (see Haller et al 2013). These structures are upwardly embedded, with the Paramount chief acting as customary authority. They administer the land and act as mediators in case of land disputes (Toulmin 2008:14, Behrmann et al. 2012: 54).

Of course, there is a gender dimension to that: In West Africa, customary land tenure is usually inherited through the male line, whereas women are subject to structural discrimination since they cannot hold land¹⁹. Through the pattern of inheritance they are confined to a non-owning status, and have to rely on secondary user rights. Depending on their marital status, women have access to land in relation to men as wives, mothers or daughters. In some settings, these user rights are well established, and allow women a *de facto* management of associated resources (Rocheleau & Edmunds 1997:1355). Another element for understanding the gendered nature of land rights is the focus on gendered spaces and places in the rural landscape, “in which women exert relatively more control over resource management decisions and from which they are more likely to derive personal benefits” (ebd.). This can be *in-between spaces* such as the small garden plots next to the house, fallow land or common-pool resources where firewood, medicinal plants and wild food can be found (ebd.). In order to identify these spaces it is necessary to examine which products are produced and controlled by women and which by men (ebd.1357). This may vary seasonally, and access to land and associated resources may vary according to the season, depending on when the crops grow. A patch of land may not be benefitting women as long as it is in use (by men), still, when it is fallow, they can harvest the medicinal plants and wild foods (ebd.)

Summing up, it follows that customary land and access rights are “a series of overlapping claims, dependent on customary use, season and negotiation” (Toulmin 2008: 12). Land tenure institutions depend on social relations that are “interwoven and

¹⁹ Even if women usually have stronger rights under statutory law, their implementation is limited, since women often lack the legal know-how or enforcement mechanisms (Behrmann et al. 2012: 52, Daley & Pallas 2014), or/and many countries apply customary law when it comes to family law and land tenure (Lastarria-Cornhiel 1995: 1321).

related to other societal structures and institutions, including family structure, marriage and inheritance systems (...): If there is a change in one of them, the other often modifies and adjusts to that change” (Lastarria-Cornhiel 1995: 1317-18). Patterns of access are highly complex and dependent on the users' identities. Political, economic and ecological conditions cause shifting alliances that, together with changing laws on local and national level, shape, reinterpret or reject access and control of different groups of people to land and associated resources (ebd., Rocheleau & Edmunds 1997: 1358).

2.4.2. Privatization of Land and its Effects

The customary structure co-shaped by colonial rule has largely been reproduced by the post-colonial state until the ‘land reform decades’ spanning from the early 60ies to the 80s (Peters 2013: 4-5, 2009: 1318). Although older and newer studies (Bromley 2008, Coldham 1978, Lastarria-Cornhiel 1995, Lund 2000) reveal the failure of many of these titling programmes, and although Hardin admitted his erroneous interpretation of the functioning of commons by modifying the famous label ‘The Tragedy of the Commons’ to ‘The tragedy of the unmanaged commons’ (Hardin 1991), the land titling idea is again prioritized in development agendas (Deininger & Beyerlee 2011, Peters 2009, Alden-Wily 2012, Toulmin 2008). Especially since the rediscovery of the agricultural potential in Africa in the context of the 2008 food, fuel and finance crisis, tenure security through formalisation of land is promoted again. The justification remains the same as during colonial time – more efficient use of land and facilitation of investment and agricultural development – but a pro-poor discourse has been added of late, claiming titling to protect the poor from dispossession by large-scale land investments (De Schutter 2011). In Sub-Saharan Africa, on the contrary, formalisation processes in various countries revealed many shortcomings and did not produce the desired results, as they were often too costly and too slow: In some cases, people could not afford to get their land titled or to register changes in land tenure as they were not able to bear the costs of transport, communication or the registration of the land itself. Consequently, the land registers, if existing at all, become rapidly out-dated, limiting the potential positive effects outlined above. Evidence from Ivory Coast illustrates that conflicts over land are sometimes

increased significantly through the titling process (Toulmin 2008: 15, De Schutter 2011: 270, Benjaminsen 2008, Haller 2001, 2013).²⁰

The outcomes of the titling process depend on discursive practices of different stakeholders who legitimate their authority over land with discourses and narratives of belonging (Berry 2006, Toulmin 2008, Ribot & Peluso 2003). For example, claims for land can be substantiated by the discourse of customary authorities, who are drawing their legitimacy to administer land from the 'tradition' that is said to be applied from time immemorial (Haller 2013 on chiefs, Berry 2008, Kuba and Lenz 2008). The *landowners*, on the other hand, assert ownership through discourses of 'belonging to the land', by being 'sons of the soil', and therewith delegitimize claims of later-arrived strangers. The conflicting structures and different systems of authority with different kinds of power include a range of institutions, such as community councils, patrilineal hierarchy, local government and traditional leadership. This can lead to so-called 'institution shopping' – a term derived from Benda-Beckmanns 'forum shopping' – that describes the process "in which people try different options, to see which institution is more likely to rule in their favour" (Toulmin 2008: 13, see also Haller et al 2013 with reference to related discourses). They do it through discourses that translate „certain indigenous property concepts into the language of ownership and may tend to strengthen the element of exclusivity to the benefit of the primary right holder“ (Benjaminsen 2008: 34). This provides the impression of legality, but excludes the position of weaker actors with secondary user rights in the context of decentralisation policies. If we transfer these insights to the situation of women in rural communities, it becomes clear that they are often unable to claim formal ownership via discourses of belonging and of traditional ownership, as their access to land is indirect and dependent on a male relative. In consequence, the title is given to the household head (husband, father, brother) the woman 'belongs to', and she is stripped off her customary user rights (Peters 2010, Lastarria-Cornhiel 1995: 1326, Haller 2013). The institutional change from common property to state property and privatization has also highly

²⁰ This is not to suggest that land titling cannot have positive outcomes at all, but according to Peters (2013) it needs a range of other conditions, including access to capital and credit, to be effective. Former Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food De Schutter proposes the adoption of anti-eviction laws (derived from the human right to adequate housing) in combination with the registration of user rights based on customary law (2011: 271).

gendered effects. Resources previously managed by the community become fragmented and are managed by different ministries. A market for different elements of the CPR has emerged where investors can buy water rights and the like (Mhlanga 2014). This has serious consequences for now non-landowning women (and other non-owning groups) who used to benefit from access rights to CPR and cash generation linked to the resources. They are likely to be most affected by the loss of firewood, water and medicinal plants, which were of primary importance for assuming women's personal, household and community responsibility (Behrmann et al. 53-54, Rocheleau & Edmunds 1997: 1355).

This subchapter has revealed that titling processes supposed to offer security tenure to local people reinforce patterns of unequal rights to land based on gender, age, ethnicity and class. It has shown that the investigation of changes in ownership is capital. In addition, Behrman et al. (2014) remind us that compensation (e.g. monetary, investments in local infrastructure, public goods and labour) and changes in production structure (e.g. resettlement, introduction of new technologies, crop choice, export/domestic market) need to be considered in the assessment of impacts on women and other groups of affected people.

2.5. About Hopes and Strategies from Below

In *Expectations of Modernity* (1999), Ferguson describes the rise of the Zambian economy and the urbanization of the country occurring from the 1920s to the 1960s due to the copper the world was demanding and the country was extracting. This economic boom has been accompanied by legitimate hopes for a better life, a Western-style modernity that was believed to translate in material possessions and 'progressive' forms of life-style. The shrinking demand for copper in the 1970s, however, led the country into economic decline, leaving many of the formerly proud workers of the copper mines unemployed and struggling for survival. With the deteriorating economy, people experienced the promises of development and prosperity as a betrayal, resulting in the re-emergence of Africa as a category of abjection, even, or especially, in the self-perception of many Zambians. Ferguson describes how, despite all the sense of despair and decline, the faith in development, "in its very absence, [was] somehow present" (...) since the story of urban Africa has for so long been narrated (2010: 599-600, see also Haller & Merten 2008 for fishing and trade).

I argue that LSLA framed with the discourse of modernity trigger similar expectations of modernity in many African countries today. I further argue that these expectations, in case they fall short, trigger a range of coping strategies that span from the return to traditional ways of agriculture, as described by Ferguson for the copper belt (1999: 250), over everyday forms of resistance as described by Scott (1985), and to the 're-appropriation' of land through formally organised collective action as described by Borrás & Franco (2010b). By saying this, I am not suggesting that investment projects are necessarily 'bad' for (all) the local people, nor that they are always seen as something that must be struggled against. In many cases however, farmers or certain other groups of local people are dispossessed of their lands while at the same time being deprived of their livelihoods, and therefore resist the operations in many different ways, as will be illustrated through the example of Addax. For this reason, overt and covert forms of resistance will be theoretically outlined.

Overt forms of social resistance express competing views over land deals, and demand the recognition of land rights or environment protection measures through "moments of active political participation in which the people affected directly or indirectly by land dispossession take an active stance against the state-sanctioned enclosures of land" (Greco 2012: 456). But how does resistance emerge, and how is it organised? Generally, it can be said that every case is shaped by country-specific social conditions and political dynamics interacting with each other (ibid. 459). However, in *Fossil Fuels, Oil Companies and Indigenous Peoples* (2007), Haller et al. provide a suitable analytical framework by identifying four factors contributing to the formation of resistance (see Figure 2):

Ecological aspects and their influence on subsistence production interact with endogenous aspects such as local institutions and local knowledge. Exogenous aspects like company performance and legislation, as well as civil society actions, create synergies, play together and impact the ecological and endogenous factors. McKeon (2013) puts a major emphasis on the importance of the media and NGO's: Since the 1990s, the latter

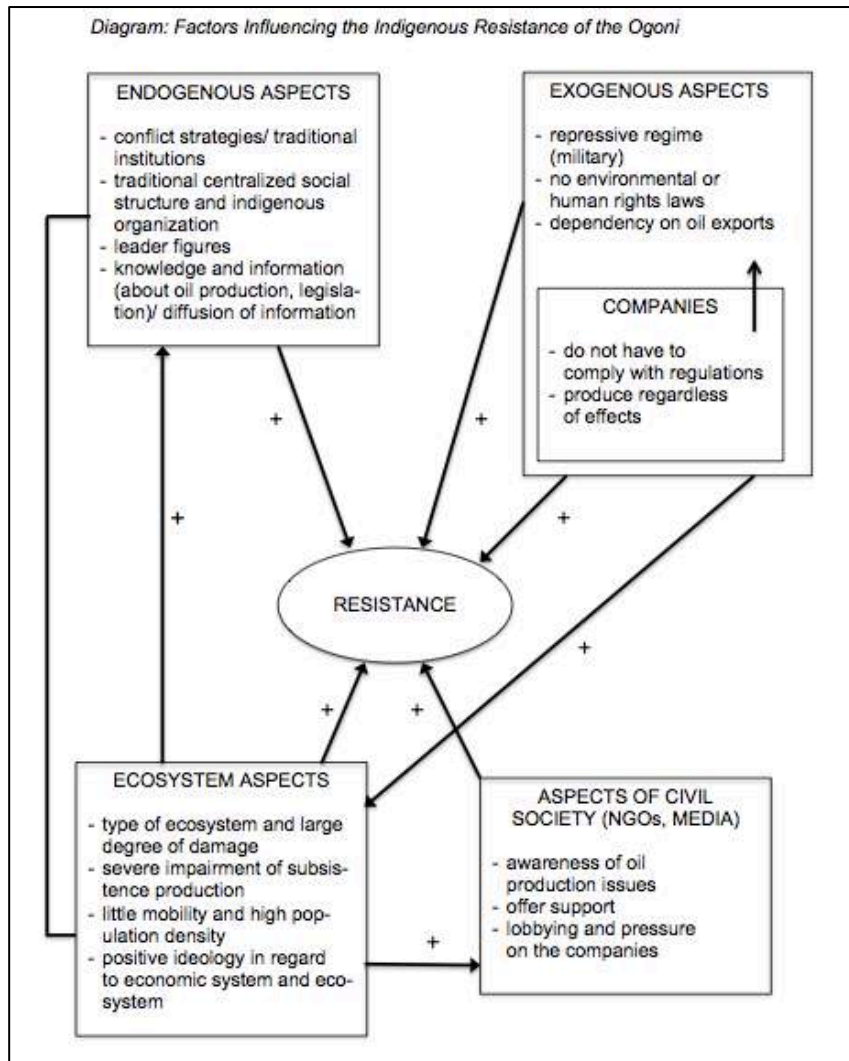


Figure 2: Factors influencing the resistance of the Ogoni (Haller et al. 2007: 549)

have managed to enter institutional spaces like the UN and develop alternatives to the neoliberal productionist paradigms by putting concepts like indigenous land rights, *buen vivir* or the right to food on the international agenda. According to the author, alliances with NGO's are crucial for people offering resistance, since NGO's can provide financial resources, proximity to global forums, decision-making processes, language and analytical capacities, access to strategic information and documentation *local people* may be lacking (ebd.111). If *local people* and the NGO's manage to frame the issues with the newly established human rights paradigm – or with the more traditional development discourses – and articulate the demands in global policy spaces, the outcomes of the protests are likely to be successful.

However, not all the vulnerable social groups are able or willing to connect with these formal organisations for a variety of reasons. Although the objective is to undermine the

existing system of appropriation of resources, institutionalized politics are avoided because public opposition might be repressed with violence and the cost would exceed the benefits (Greco 2012: 463). In this case, people prefer to engage in covert forms and disguised practices of contestation of hegemonic actors. These everyday forms of resistance can be of rhetorical nature and include “rumor, gossip, disguises, linguistic tricks, metaphors, euphemisms, folktales, ritual gestures, anonymity” that allow for “a veiled discourse of dignity and self-assertion within the public transcript” (Scott 1985: 137). However, the ‘weapons of the weak’ also consist of concrete actions such as foot-dragging, theft, arson, non-compliance with rules, slander, illegal night-harvesting or hunting inside reserved areas (Scott 1985: 5). Although these acts of resistance are covert and silent, they can cause considerable losses to the landlord, the state or the company, and have to be understood as an indication “that power belongs not only to the chiefs or to the state or those that control official discourses, but also inheres in the general populace” (Lewellen 2003: 127). Overt and covert forms of resistance are not mutually exclusive, and are often applied simultaneously. However, evidence – especially but not exclusively from conservation contexts – shows that hidden resistance, non compliance with rules or the simple continuation of former livelihood strategies in newly demarcated or protected areas can lead to a negative labelling of certain groups of local people as ‘conservative’ or backwards in case they resist the imposition of certain operations (Peters 2013: 550). Neumann (1992) describes these processes in his papers on the Mount Neru region in Tanzania, in which he shows how local peasants were excluded from using resources through the establishment of the Arusha National Park. The only way of accessing natural resources was found in everyday forms of resistance and alliances with professional poachers. In consequence, the state labelled local people as a threat to conservation and criminalized them for hunting, herding cattle and gathering honey within the parks' boundaries. Another case of negative labelling is documented by Ojeda (2011). Taking the example of Tayrona National Park in Colombia, she shows how ecotourism and its subsequent transformation of resource politics translated into criminalization, exclusion and eviction of community members identified as *eco-threats*, despite the fact that they had lived and worked in the park for decades (2011: 25).

In the course of this theoretical outline I have shown that LSLA is basically to be conceptualised as control of land and related (extractive and human) resources as

response to a convergence of multiple crises. However, it has also revealed methodological shortcomings and research gaps that will be addressed below.

2.6. Knowledge Gap

The last chapter has identified the drivers behind the increase of LSLA and the theoretical perspectives most relevant for the analysis of my data. Whereas a first phase of research on LSLA mostly focused on the size of the acquired areas in terms of hectares, a second wave of research followed the call of Oya (2013) and Edelman (2013) to put more emphasis on the qualitative implications of LSLA. New analytical frameworks have emerged, covering issues such as labour, ownership and control of resource, gender, power and resistance. But still, concrete knowledge on implementation processes, (changing) perceptions of *different groups* of local people and coping strategies remains sparse. Borrás & Franco (2010b: 33) emphasize the necessity “to go beyond polarized positions and critically examine heterogeneity of positions.” Based on that, Peters recalls that “more emphasis needs to be placed by researchers on who benefits and who loses” (2010:1320), and calls for “detailed and careful historical, political economic and ethnographic analyses (...) to explore the social dynamics at work” (ibid. 19).

In addition to the research gaps on the implications that LSLA have for affected people, there are gaps concerning the perspective of the investors. Companies and the like are often ignored by researchers of social science, thus reproducing the dichotomy of the ‘poor affected people we care for’ versus ‘the bad company that intends nothing else than maximizing profit and exploiting local people’. Thus, we clearly lack insights into business models, ideologies and motivations of the investors.

Summarized, we have identified gaps relating to knowledge and data about the emic perspectives of the heterogeneous group of local people and the emic perspective of the company in the context of institutional change. The interdisciplinary research project *Ethnography of Land Deals* aims to fill these gaps and will be presented below.

3. Research Project

The research project *Ethnography of Land Deals* is a collaboration between the Institute of Social Anthropology and the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) of the University of Bern under the lead of Prof. Dr. Tobias Haller and Prof. Dr. Stephan Rist. The aim of the project is to fill the research gaps identified above through in-depth fieldwork of three different cases of LSLA in India, Kenya and Sierra Leone. In order to be able to address both gaps, the research consists of a horizontal level dealing with the perspective of affected local people and a vertical level examining the perspective of the investing company. In what follows, the general research questions of *Ethnography of Land Deals*²¹ will be outlined.

The *vertical level* is researched by a student of human geography. The objective is to generate knowledge about the way a LSLA project was realised on the *vertical level*. The guiding research questions are the following:

- For what reasons did the company decide for a specific country or a specific region?
- Which actors are involved in the implementation process?
- How did the deal pass through several levels of state, provincial and district levels, and who was acting as broker, translator and/or facilitator?
- Which ideologies and discourses were used to legitimate the deal on different levels?

The *horizontal level* of a land deal is researched by a student of anthropology. The common research questions for the horizontal level of each case were the following:

- How was land use structured before the implementation of the deal?
- How was a land deal proposed to affected people, and what were the possibilities of participation?
- What are the emic perceptions and the emic narratives of the heterogeneous group of affected people (in terms of age, gender, class, social status)? Did the perceptions change in the course of the implementation process? How do people

²¹ The research design has been jointly elaborated by Prof. Dr. Haller and Prof. Dr. Rist and the students participating in the project. A description can be accessed on the webpage of the Institute of Social Anthropology of the University of Bern. (Haller, *Ethnography of 'Land deals'* , www.anthro.unibe.ch)

frame their life experience, and how does the land deal fit into their development concerns and expectations?

- What kind of strategies do affected people develop in order to cope with the transformed situation?

All the participants of the project established their own research design based on the common research question and complemented it with own fields of interest. Subsequently, everyone did a three to four months fieldwork in the operational areas of the respective LSLA projects. Romy Scheidegger and Leonie Pock conducted research on an abandoned biofuel project in India, Elisabeth Schubiger and Anna Von Sury investigated a investor producing rice in Kenya and Fabian Käser, Samuel Lustenberger and I did research on the Addax Bioenergy Project in Sierra Leone. While Samuel, student of Human Geography addressed the vertical level; Fabian and I conducted fieldwork in two different communities on the local level. We conducted our fieldworks independently from one another but benefitted greatly from a fruitful exchange during the process of data evaluation and in the preparation of joint presentations and a joint paper. Thanks to Prof. Dr. Haller we had the opportunity to present preliminary findings of our research at the General Conference of the European Political Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) in Glasgow in September 2014, the Conference on the Swiss Society on African Studies (SGAS) in October 2014 and on the European Conference of African Studies (ECAS) in July 2015 in Paris. Data from all three fieldworks are compiled in the Paper *Local Perceptions and Vertical Perspectives of a Bioenergy Project in Sierra Leone* that is accepted for publication in the PPE journal *Homo Oeconomicus* (forthcoming).

In the next section, I will introduce the reader to my part in the project *Ethnography of Land Deals* through an outline of preliminary research questions and theoretical choices.

3.1. Research Questions and Preliminary Hypotheses

The base of my fieldwork were the research questions listed above, that are, broadly speaking, questions of perceptions, consultation, impacts on livelihood and coping strategies. Besides these general research questions, my own fieldwork is informed by two additional fields of interest: The focus on gendered experiences, perceptions and impacts, and the impact they have on the emergence of local resistance.

Although being aware that gender implies both women and men, I will primarily (though not exclusively) investigate women's transformed access to land and resources. As women in West Africa are often subjected to macro-structural discrimination in customary land tenure systems, especially in the context of formalisation (2.4.), I consider *women* to be a legitimate analytical category. However, by using this category, I am not suggesting that all women have the same interests, just as I do not depict the community as a homogenous category. I am well aware that interests and positions of women and their willingness to participate in decision-making processes certainly vary with their age, marital status and wealth.

Relying on the theoretical outline in the second chapter, I develop two hypotheses that will be tested in the course of the thesis.

First, I argue that the Addax Bioenergy project contributes to the situation of legal pluralism by formalising land rights. Through a misreading of 'customary' land rights, the company transforms customary *landowners* with obligations of sharing into exclusive *landowners* in a Western sense. This process is highly problematic because it excludes groups with mere 'secondary rights' and institutionalizes unequal gender patterns in land rights. I argue that this change in institutions and bargaining power has adverse effects on the distribution of benefits of land (Ensminger 1992), especially in terms of gender.

Second, I argue that women and *landusers* deprived of livelihoods shop around different institutions in order to cope with the transformed situation (Toulmin 2008, Haller 2013). This institution shopping enables them to develop a collective action strategy to claim land back and prevent further deterioration of livelihoods.

3.2. Mixing Methods and Evaluating Data

Before commenting on the procedures used to approach social reality, I would like to comment on the choice of the case study. In the course of the elaboration of the research project *Ethnography of Land Deals*, the team was searching for land acquisition cases with a minimum of documentation and accessible operational areas. Via the *landmatrix*²² and the CDE we discovered the case of Addax Bioenergy Sierra Leone (ABSL), and deemed it highly interesting for the controversy surrounding it. Labelled as

²² See Land Matrix (www.landmatrix.org)

'best practice example' by some (e.g. UN Food and Agricultural Organization) and dubbed as exploitative 'land grabbing' by others (NGO's like Action Aid or SiLNoRF and journalists like Baxter), the case called for an in-depth analysis. Second, the Swiss NGO Bread for All (BfA) and its partner NGO Sierra Leone Network for the Right on Food (SiLNoRF) are conducting annual monitoring on the case since the year 2011 (brotfueralle.ch). The NGO provided us with valuable knowledge and documents, and put us in contact with SiLNoRF in Makeni. . Last but not least, Addax is a Swiss-based company and the choice can also be seen as a contribution to the contestation of "us" vs. "them" when it comes to the driving forces and the origin of investors (cf. 2.1.2.).

Let us now turn to the *methods* that were applied during the fieldwork in order to gain insights into the social reality of project-affected people and the implications of the biofuel project on the local level. As the aim was to document the *emic* views of the project-affected people, the fieldwork at the project site is the most important part of the research process. The empirical material gathered during the fieldwork constitutes the core of this thesis. However, the beginning consisted of an extensive literature review. Through the seminary *Land Grabbing: New Tendencies and Debates* at the University of Bern, I was already acquainted with the discussion surrounding the phenomenon of LSLA. For a specific preparation for the field, I went through literature relating to Sierra Leone, its recent history and the investment policies promoted since the end of the civil war. I also went through Addax' project descriptions (CES 2009, AfDB n.d.), as well as critical reports on the project produced by BFA (2011) and other NGO's (ALLAT 2013, Action Aid 2013).

In the end of August 2013 I travelled to Sierra Leone, where I conducted fieldwork until the end of December. SiLNoRF, the partner NGO of BFA in Makeni, facilitated my access to the field. I conducted expert interviews with SiLNoRF members and was taken to the project area by field staff that kindly introduced me to chiefs and people of villages that were of potential interest for my research. I then selected the village of Worreh Yeama as it best matched my research design for the occurrence of resistance and the role women played in it. Once I moved to the village, I conducted my research independently from the agendas of BFA and SiLNoRF. During the four months of fieldwork, a mix of the following methods was applied in order to collect relevant data to answer my research questions as "thickly" (cf. Geertz 1988) as possible.

Participant observation, the methodological approach that characterizes the empirical fieldwork of social anthropology, requires living in proximity with the people. Therefore, I resided in the teacher's room of the school on the edge of the village, not far from my host's hut. Participant observation covers a whole spectrum of different engagements of the researcher, from rather active to more passive forms (Hauser-Schäublin 2003a: 34). Nonetheless, it principally marks a quite inconspicuous role, but means physical proximity and social relations in any case. The method urges the researcher into a balancing act between the contradictory/ambivalent behaviours of proximity and distance. While participation means proximity (the researcher is attempting to act as someone belonging to the setting), observation means distance (the researcher maintains the perception of an outsider) (ebd. 38).

Participant observation is crucial in the explorative phase at the very beginning of the research. It allows the researcher to get used to the context and assess the relevance of research questions, reformulate them if necessary, and plan a more systematic observation. The observations can lead the researcher to frame other questions too. As for me, I was also confronted with facts that appeared during the participant observation on the rice fields. There, people often got very agitated when they explained to me the differences in yield between FDP plots and the 'normal' plots. Initially not intending to focus on the FDP, I became aware that the FDP was much more important to the people than I thought, and added it to the topics I wanted to investigate. Nonetheless, participant observation is not confined to the explorative phase, but remains important during the whole fieldwork, as it helps to understand daily processes, social interactions and the behaviour of people at work, within the family or at public meetings (ebd.45). It further allows the anthropologist to witness unpredictable events, and presents opportunities to talk to people outside of a planned and somehow artificially created interview situation.

In order to formalize my observations, I used to write them down in my research diary as soon as possible. Adapting Wohlrab-Sahr's system of observation protocols, I not only penned down the observation itself, but included additional information on time and place, context information given by third parties, methodological reflections and, if possible, theoretical reflections (2014:49-53). Besides the participant observation, different qualitative interview techniques allow for concrete data collection: During *informal and unstructured interviews*, interviewees are asked to talk about a broadly

defined topic. Straying from the subject should not be interrupted, as it indicates which (other) issues are considered to be important by the interviewee. Analogous to participant observation (see above), this can be helpful to reveal important research topics, and is a step towards a deeper understanding of the *emic* perspective (Schlehe 2003: 77-78).

Semi-structured interviews ensure that all the topics of interest are covered, and guarantee a greater comparability of different interviews. For this purpose, the researcher creates a list of questions that need to be asked. However, she displays flexibility when it comes to the succession of the questions. She can spontaneously deepen a certain aspect of the recount, or allow slight digressions from the topic and lead back to it later on (Schlehe 2003: 79).

During *biographical interviews* (Rosenthal 1995 and Schlehe 2003), informants talk about what they consider important happenings, periods or relations in their lifetime. Hence, their memories, interpretations and identities can be located in time and space, and can help retracing the changes in certain institutions such as agricultural techniques, resource use, food cultivation and the like.

A useful tool in learning about the opinion or the experience of a specific group (e.g. farmer's opinion on new tractors) is the *Focus Group Discussion* (Crang and Cook 2007: 90-). For focus groups, the researcher normally does not intend to show the heterogeneity of the research context, but composes the group according to a certain criterion, for example the same profession (e.g. paddy farmers), similar background or similar experiences. These selected people then meet and discuss a certain topic (e.g. new variety of rice) under the lead of the researcher. Besides competing individual opinions, a focus group discussion also reveals group-specific views, structures and negotiation processes. I have noted that opinions of the same person sometimes differ in individual interviews and in focus group discussions. I observed that the women I interviewed made much more nuanced statements on a topic during an individual interview than they did during the focus group discussion. The latter tends to emphasize the general over the particular, as pointed out for the limits of participation in chapter 2.3., and in this way possibly becomes a 'space of resistance' in which participants can explore and enable their social agency and collective knowledge production (Crang & Cook 2007: 90-103).

Qualitative interviews do not aim to depict an objective truth, but want to create access to the emic perspectives, local knowledge and personal experiences of the interviewee (Schlehe 2003: 73). Every non-standardized interview is unique and is influenced from the constellation, the relationship between the interviewer, the interviewee and the context (ebd.:71). Hence, in the ethnological praxis, the researcher is often unable to stick strictly to the specific forms of interview techniques, but often mixes and adapts them to the present situation (ebd.77). The combination of interviews and participant observation reveals the differences between ideals or norms (as perceived and formulated by the informant) and the reality (the observed behaviour), and allows to problematize the relationship to each other (Hauser-Schäublin 2003b: 119). The openness of the ethnographic fieldwork allows documenting shades of grey of social reality that go beyond established categories of black and white, and allow grasping relations, contestations, ambivalences and contradictions. However, the openness implies that observations and interviews are not arbitrarily repeatable, and put certain limits to generalization and comparability (cf. Przyborski & Wohlrab-Sahr 2014: 35).

During my fieldwork, I conducted a total of 60 interviews with community people, NGO representatives and member of Addax' upper management. Most interviews were semi-structured, 5 were biographical interviews and two were focus group discussions with two different groups on the same topic. For data on census, ethnicity and household budgets I initially planned to conduct a standardized household survey as described by Sökefeld (2003). In the course of my fieldwork however, two different outside parties conducted surveys in Worreh Yeama²³. One researcher told me that it was very difficult for the people to answer basic questions about their income and their harvest. Talking to the people, I noticed some fatigue/annoyance concerning the surveys, and so I relinquished the idea for ethical reasons.

As my acquaintance with the local language Temne was limited to simple standard conversations, the interviews were translated from Temne (or Krio in two cases) into English. I theoretically had a male translator for the interviews with men, and a female translator for the interviews with women. As I feared that women might not speak out in the presence of a male translator for reasons of local social organisation and/or

²³ The first team consisted of SiLNoRF field staff making a household survey for the research of its founder. Some time later, a Swedish research team was sent to the same village by SiLNoRF and conducted another standardized survey with the people.

hierarchies, I insisted on having a female translator too. However, as she was not always available, I often ended up conducting interviews with women with the help of my male translator, and it seemed that the presence of the other sex did not matter in publicly discussed issues, as women spoke out quite freely. My male translator also acted as my research assistant and was invaluable for his knowledge of the local context and the people in the village. Most interviews were recorded and transcribed. When I was not allowed to record, as it was rarely the case, I took minutes and summarized the content of the interview in my research diary as soon as possible.

For the *evaluation of the data*, the inductive grounded theory approach (Strübing 2008) was adopted. With the methods of *coding* and *memoing* (Emerson et al. 1995 and Crang & Cook 2007), the researcher systematically reads her field notes as a data set. Different themes and ideas are identified by *open coding*, and serve as analytical dimensions or categories (Emerson et al 1995: 154). Departing from those codes, themes for the thesis are selected. I gave priority to topics that were at the intersection of what would best answer my research questions and what people considered significant to them (ebd. 157). With *focused coding*, the selected topics were then distinguished in sub-themes and subtopics, and related to each other by *integrative memos* (ebd. 160-162). By asking where the established categories overlap, where they differ or where they contradict each other, codes were regrouped and sometimes renamed. The relevant bits were finally marked with *theoretical memos* making reference to matching theories (Crang & Cook 2007: 142-146). Fetterman describes this process as ‘triangulation’, in which different patterns are contrasted and compared, and sources are tested against one another to increase ethnographic validity (1998: 93 ff). The inductive way of data processing differs from deductive methods where scientists start from theory and try finding data that proves or disproves theoretical presumptions. However, it would be inappropriate to dichotomize theory and data, as anthropologists do work inductively, but not exclusively. Emerson et al. (1995: 166-167) asserts that every researcher has theoretical knowledge and commitments, which cannot be ignored during the analysis of empirical data.

3.3. Reflections on Fieldwork

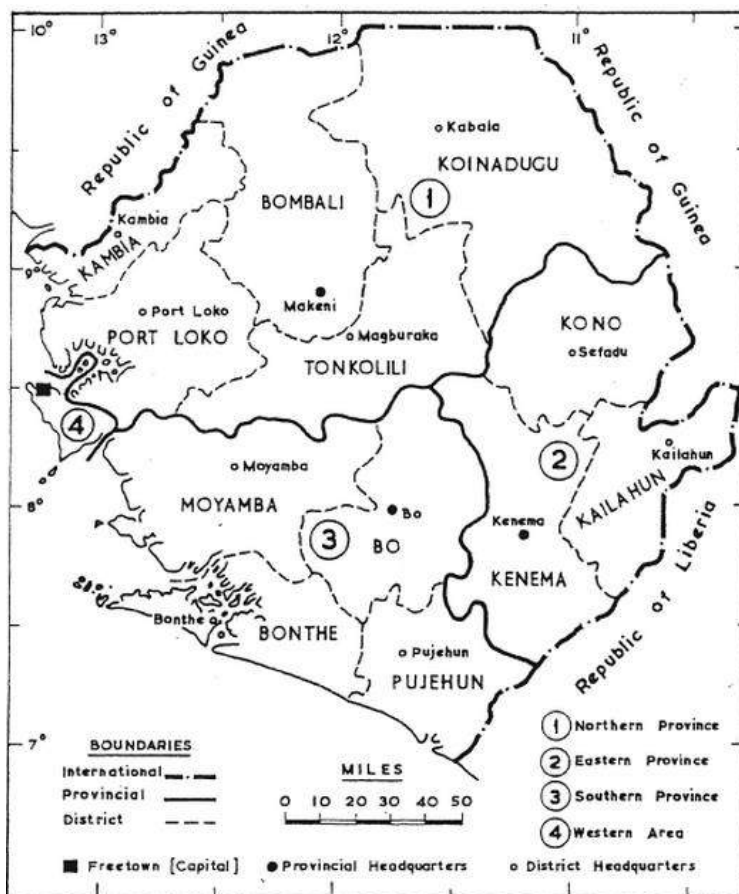
“Going to the field does not mean to enter a clearly defined territory with a range of controllable variables” (Strauss 1973 cited in Przyborski & Wohlrab-Sahr 2014: 39).

The researcher has to be aware that the field, of whatsoever actors and institutions it may consist, is connected to other fields in manifold ways. Institutions are linked to other institutions, and are permeated and overlaid by them. Social processes do not have spatial borders, no absolute beginning and no absolute end (Wohlrab-Sahr 2014:53). This setting means that the role of the researcher in the field is not comparable to the one in a laboratory experiment: The researcher cannot keep clear distance, as she is participating even if she merely observes. She enters in a process of communication with a certain gender, social relations, individual characteristics, theoretical knowledge, social resources et cetera. As these factors influence the research process considerably, and cannot be eliminated nor ignored, the researcher needs to engage in a continuous process of self-reflection (Monika Wohlrab-Sahr 2014:58). He or she must take into account that the relationship between researcher and informant is central, and that it is characterized by power asymmetries and (sometimes) diverging interests. These imbalances and expectations – be they personal, economical or political – are often reflected in the answers given during the interview. This complicates the interpretation of an allegedly ‘emic’ category, as the answer might be influenced by “how the respondents tried to present themselves to us in ways they thought matched our interest” (Crang & Cook 2007: 140). By asking who gives which information to whom under which circumstances, we can reduce what Willis (1997) criticised as “naïve empiricism” (cited in Spittler 2001:5). I argue, however, that long field stays and participation can help reducing this bias, as people get used to the researcher and behave and answer more unselfconsciously²⁴. For the sake of my ‘integration’ into the community, and the fact that “collecting evidence on people’s lives, labour, land and so on is a complicated and extremely time-consuming task” (Oya 2013: 505), I am glad to

²⁴ At the beginning, I was perceived as an NGO representative and confronted with all kinds of expectations. However, as I participated in daily activities on the field, e.g. in the rice harvest, those perception started to change slowly. One day, a woman came up to me and said: „You know, all the other white people I met so far came in Jeeps, distributed some questionnaires and then left again. But you are different, you are living like us.“

have decided to conduct fieldwork in one single village, and not as I initially thought, or as the company wanted me to do, in two or more villages.

Finally, I will briefly reflect on what this case study ought to be, and what it is not: This research depicts local perceptions and strategies of different groups of a community in a specific locality at a specific moment in time. I do not claim these findings to be representative for the ABSL project area or for regions in other parts of the world that are affected by LSLA. The impacts of the bioenergy project are unfolding in a process that spans over time, and this work does not attempt to develop a definitive account of the effects of LSLA, but tries instead to find a means to understand the interrelations of multiple versions of reality (Crang&Cook 2007:149). This study is an in-depth research that identifies the concerns of project-affected people. It is a well-documented groundwork for longitudinal research, and can be used as baseline for eventual quantification of the collected data.



Map 1 Administrative Division in Sierra Leone (Fyle 2006:xiv)

4. Sierra Leone: Research Context

This chapter provides an overview of the historical developments of Sierra Leone and their implications for land tenure and administration systems. This knowledge base will enable the reader to become familiar with the broader research context and embed the Addax Bioenergy project in wider political and economic dynamics.

The country, located on the Atlantic Ocean between Guinea

and Liberia, is a relatively small with a territory measuring 72'180 km² and a population size of 6,3 million people.²⁵ Sierra Leone consists of four regions (Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western Area) that are subdivided into twelve Districts. The Districts in the Northern, Southern and Eastern Areas are subdivided into 149 chiefdoms as basic unit of administration.

The population consists of various ethnicities, with the Mende and the Temne being the largest, accounting for approximately 63% of the total population. In terms of numbers, they are followed by the Limba and the Kono, and nine other minor ethnic groups: The Susu, Yalunka, Loko, Sherbro, Krim, Gola Gallina, Koranko, Kissi and the nomadic Foulah. The Creole people (ca.4% of the population) living in the Western Area in and around Freetown are descendants of freed slaves and generally regarded as non-indigenous (Renner-Thomas 2010: 6). The political party system is highly ethnicized, with the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) representing the Mende in the South, and the All People's Congress (APC) standing for the interests of the Temne, the Limba and the Kuranko in the Northern part of the country (Pham 2006). About 60-70% of the people identify as Muslims (Sunni, Shia and Ahmadis) and 20-30 % as Christians (Methodists, Evangelists and Catholics)²⁶. However, most people, especially in the rural areas, engage in a syncretism with traditional religions with a cosmology consisting of different spirits (Peterson 1969: 230). The country is rich in natural resources such as diamonds, iron ore, bauxite, rutile, titanium, gold and brown coal (UNDP 2007: 15). Sierra Leone is home to some of the richest fishing grounds in Africa and recently, oil has been discovered off the coast of Freetown²⁷.

Hereafter, the history of Sierra Leone and its effect on administration and land rights will be outlined. This is to explain why traditional authorities and representatives of decentralised political bodies were chosen to sign the land lease agreement with Addax Bioenergy, what scope and what limitations their power has, and who has been marginalized in the processes on the vertical level.

²⁵ UNCTAD (<http://unctadstat.unctad.org>)

²⁶ Bielefeldt, Statement at the conclusion of the visit of Sierra Leone (<http://www.ohchr.org>)

²⁷ Offshores. University of Huston (www.offshore-mag.com)

4.1. Development of (Post-)Colonial Administration and Customary Land Tenure

After the Portuguese circumnavigated Africa in the fifteenth century, they occupied strategic parts of the African coast. One of them came to be known as Serra Lyoa, since the mountain range by the seaside reminded discoverer Pedro da Silva of a lion (Alie 1990: 4). Of course, people have been living in the ethno-linguistically diverse Upper Guinea Coast as far back as 2500 BC. At the intersection of the trans-Saharan and Atlantic commercial systems, smaller migratory movements took place (Fanthorpe 2001: 374). Besides, people were organized in small communities, working with stone, wooden tools, growing rice, cassava, and yams in the inland and relying on fishing and salt-manufacturing along the coast (Alie 1990: 26).

However, in 1495, the Portuguese built a trading post on the territory that would later become Freetown and the region was connected to the wider transatlantic trade system. The Europeans soon discovered that the most precious goods were not gold and ivory, but human beings, and so the transatlantic slave trade began to develop. The Dutch, the French and the British soon joined in, as their expanded colonial empires were in urgent need of large numbers of labourers for the development of the newly established rice and cotton plantations across the Atlantic. In cooperation with local leaders, they traded thousands and thousands of slaves in exchange of clothes, weapons, liquor, tobacco, sugar, copper and so on (Pham 2006: 3). In late 19th century Europe however, the ideas of the Enlightenment philosophy made certain British philanthropists feel very uneasy about the slave trade, prompting them to take up the fight against the human trafficking (Pham 2006: 4). In 1878, a group of abolitionists founded the settlement of Freetown that provided a new home for slaves from Nova Scotia, who had been promised freedom for their fight alongside the British in the American Revolutionary War (Pham 2006: 4). Although the British officially outlawed the slave trade in 1807, it continued for more than a century (ibid.9)²⁸. In order to enforce the ban on the slave trade, Freetown became a British Crown Colony in 1808, and in 1896 the so-called hinterland was added as a protectorate²⁹ – effectively laying the base for “two nations in the same land” (TRC 2004: 5).

²⁸ Slavery in the Protectorate would not be outlawed until 1926 (Alie 1990: 151).

²⁹ The British were reluctant to take the hinterland for a long time. However, the competition with France in partitioning West Africa and the possibility of accessing agricultural, material and human resources

This configuration finds expression in a dual system of land rights and government structure that persists until present-day modern Sierra Leone. Whereas in today's Western Area (the former colony of Freetown) land can be privately bought and sold according to British statutory law, in the rural Eastern, Northern and Southern provinces, customary land tenure and a 'native administration' system prevail to this day (Renner-Thomas 2010). As the Addax Bioenergy project is located in the Northern Province, where customary land tenure applies, the received English law dominating land transactions in the Western province will not be subject of this investigation. Instead, the development of *indirect rule* established by the British will be outlined below, because colonial structures constitute the foundation of the land transaction to Addax Bioenergy, the overall design of the Bioenergy project and its complex reimbursement schemes. However, this excursus will also make it clear, that some aspects of pre-colonial land rights still inform today's access to land (applies to non-leased land), although they have been seriously weakened by British *indirect rule*.

In the 19th century, Sierra Leone was a land consisting of numerous *countries* headed by *kings* and *queens*. These countries consisted of fortified settlements and attached villages that were in competition in attracting traders, but at the same time cooperating in ritual, political-juridical affairs and mutual defence (Fanthorpe 2001: 374). In these complex arrangements, powerful individuals organized initiation rites for a large number of people and created fiefdoms that the historian Arthur Abraham calls '*personal-amorphous states*', which Fanthorpe considers as "forerunner of modern patrimonial regimes" (ibid.: 379). When the British decided to take the hinterland, they opted for a protectorate with indirect rule, as this was a much cheaper solution than a direct administration with countless European officials. They decided to use the traditional institutions, which, however, had to be modified in order to meet British needs of peace and stability (Alie 1990: 133, cf. chapter 2.4.1). Hence, in this colonial 'native administration', the former *countries* were dissolved into chiefdoms that serve as basic units of administration, and the former queens and kings from the *ruling houses*³⁰ were transformed into paramount chiefs, as there could only be queen Victoria to rule

pushed the British to add the hinterland, however not as a colony, but as a cheaper protectorate (Pham 2006: 18).

³⁰ *Ruling houses* are descent groups whose ancestors are reputed to have „founded“ the chiefdom (Renner-Thomas 2010: 13).

the Protectorate (ibid.:134-138). The paramount chiefs ruled the chiefdoms as primary custodians of the Protectorate land with the support of a governing council (Tribal Authority, renamed Chiefdom Council after independence).

In 1898, the imposition of a five-shilling tax on every household led to the *Hut Tax War*, a ferocious guerrilla revolt against the British led by northern warrior Bai Bureh. As a consequence of the rebellion, the British created new chiefdoms and divided them into *sections* in order to make the units easier to control. They further turned the paramount chiefs into colonial civil servants by charging them with the collection of taxes and the recruitment of people for public labour³¹ (Alie 1990:140). Obviously, this had an altering effect on the relations between the chiefs and their subjects: Whereas it used to be a relationship of patronage in pre-colonial times, mainly based on political allegiance and supply of military services, the taxation scheme transformed it into an economic relationship of landlord and tenant (Amanor 2012: 19). Before the establishment of the Protectorate, the expressions '*native*' and '*non-native*' were unknown to customary law and provincial land could be granted to anyone, whether to a member of the chiefdom or a stranger. *Strangers* seeking access to land were included by the *firstcomers* as this helped increasing their legitimacy and political power (ibid. 15-16). Initiation into the local secret society served as an inclusionary mechanism for the *strangers* and secured their loyalty towards the *natives* who controlled the spirits (for a more detailed description see chapter 5.2.2. and 5.2.3.).

However, things changed with the adoption of Provinces Land Act Cap. 122 in 1927, when access to land became restricted in order to regulate the occupation of Protectorate land by settlers from the adjacent Colony. An exclusionary distinction between '*natives*' and '*non-natives*'³² was introduced, and conditions for accessing land for *non-natives* were established. Although the chiefdom council and the district officer were identified as direct negotiating partners, the landowners were regularly involved in the negotiations despite of the absence of a title (Renner-Thomas 2010: 240-250).

³¹ The British rewarded them with gifts and made corruption endemic in a system they had created themselves (ibid., Fanthorpe 2001: 380).

³² 'Native' applies to individuals with hereditary rights of provincial land by customary law. Non-natives are non-indigenous people (government excluded) that are denied that right and need to purchase a lease to be granted access to land by 'natives'. This dichotomy does not only apply to questions of land but were also extended to areas such as marriage, divorce, succession and right of residence (Renner-Thomas 2010: 240-41).

This colonial machinery of regulating access of *non-natives* to provincial land remains in full force to this day. In 1937, the *Native Administration Scheme* was introduced and the small chiefdoms were amalgamated in the name of administrative efficiency (Fanthorpe 2001: 380). In 1946, the colonial administration introduced a second tier of local government by establishing District Councils, and thus creating what Ekeh (1975) called 'two publics'. Vested with executive powers and originally destined to replace the Native Administrations, they suffered from corruption scandals and could not assert themselves. They coexisted with the chiefdoms until they were suspended in 1972 (UNDP 2007:53, Fanthorpe 2005: 35).

The Colony and the Protectorate were divided administrations until they were united under a single constitution in 1951 (Fanthorpe 2001: 382). After the peaceful transition to independence in 1961, the newly created republic of Sierra Leone inherited the chiefdoms in the provinces and hardly modified the colonial structures. However, it soon became clear that the post-colonial politics were marked by crises of legitimacy, corruption and perhaps most importantly, the absence of a national identity. Pham describes insightfully that the post-colonial country was divided along several fault lines:

"The newly independent country was otherwise divided against itself across several fault lines that quickly made themselves manifest: the Krio descendants of the original Freetown settlers and recaptives versus the indigenous peoples of the interior, the Mende-dominated southern and southeastern regions versus the Temne-dominated northern region, the economically-dominant Lebanese and Afro-Lebanese versus the African population and the modern, mostly urban, educated classes versus the traditional, primarily rural, chieftains and tribal groups, among other" (2006: 32).

In this situation of disunity, the traditional patrimonial patterns inherent to the local social and political system gained momentum and became institutionalized by the practices of the post-colonial governments (ebd.). Richards defines patrimonialism as "redistributing national resources as marks of personal favour to followers who respond with loyalty to the leader rather than the institution the leader represents" (Richards 1998: 34-35). Especially under the rule of Siaka Stevens (1971-1985), the most important sectors of the national economy, namely diamonds and foreign exchange, were converted into patrimonial resources: Mining licenses were distributed as political

favours (Fanthorpe 2001: 363) and monthly rice vouchers were handed out to a selected group of parliamentarians and upper-level civil servants through the Rice Purchasing Authority (Pham 2006: 61)³³. Despite of the wealth of its natural resources and human capital, the country was run down, both economically and politically, and by 1990, offered no perspectives and no employment to its citizens any more (Pham 2006: 77).

Against this background, a group of young and angry men formed the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) with the support of the Liberian dictator Charles Taylor. In 1991, the RUF invaded the Eastern Provinces of Sierra Leone with the aim to “*remove a rotten system*” (Krijn 2011: 25), triggering a decade long civil war that was characterised by extraordinary brutality and complexity. A great number of actors – namely the RUF, different fractions of the Sierra Leone Army (SLA), various groups of Civil Defence Forces (CDF) formed from secret hunting societies and local militias as well as foreign mercenaries – fought in frequently shifting alliances, targeting mainly civilians whom they accused of supporting their enemies (cf. Pham 2006: 78-126).

When the war ended in 2002, more than 70'000 people were killed and 2.6 million people, more than half of the country's population, had fled to neighbouring Guinea and Liberia or were internally displaced (Pham 2006: 153). The economy and the infrastructure that were already in miserable conditions before the war were completely devastated at the end of it. The agricultural sector had become nearly inexistent, because people had fled their villages and farmers abandoned their fields, afraid of being caught by rebels searching for food. When they returned after the war, they found their land overgrown, their tools broken and their seed stock looted (Bolten 2009). The country figured at the absolute bottom of the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI)³⁴ and the government was incapable of rebuilding the country.

³³ This was not only an illegitimate means of buying political loyalty, but also undermined the local rice production and increased dependence on rice imports (ibid.).

³⁴ The HDI is composed of the dimensions *health* (indicator is life expectancy at birth), *education* (indicator are mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling) and *living standard* (indicator is gross national income per capita) (Human Development Index, www.hdr.undp.org). In 2014, Sierra Leone was ranked 183 out of 187 (UNDP 2014: 162).

In consequence, Sierra Leone was flooded by international aid organizations that provided relief to the suffering population. The government on its part embraced a liberal peace agenda promoted by international donors, including economic growth through the opening of markets (Millar 2015) and decentralization politics (Fanthorpe 2005). The latter measure is grounded in the internationally recognized assumption that the root causes of the civil war are to be located in the exploitation and political marginalization of the youth by the customary chiefs (Richards 2005, UNDP 2007). The solution to this problem is believed to lie in the devolution of functions from central to local government, which would weaken the customary institutions and disempower the allegedly corrupt chiefs (Fanthorpe 2005: 34). The process of decentralization started in 2004 with the adoption of the Local Government Act that foresaw the creation of new District and City Councils, which are destined to enhance participation and promote democracy on the local government level (UNDP 2007: 54).

However, Fanthorpe presents a contrasting assessment of the traditional institutions: He argues that people in the provinces prefer the traditional elite (the chiefs) to the newly elected politicians and bureaucrats, as the former are more accountable towards the local people than the latter (2005: 45). He asserts that the funding structure of the new councils is almost identical to the old disposed councils, and criticizes that “decentralization will simply create new platforms for the old politics” (2005: 46). Fanthorpe illustrates the prevailing confusion about the distribution of competences and funds between government, district and chiefdom level. Convincingly pointing out the limits of liberal peace, he urges for a reform at chiefdom instead of district level (ibid.) that eventually acknowledges the crucial role the chiefs continue to play in the social and political identification of rural people (2001: 382).

The other pillars of the ‘sustainable peace agenda’ are market liberalization and other measures that should enhance the growth of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In 2007, the Sierra Leone Investment and Export Promotion Agency (SLIEPA) was founded with the aid of the World Bank, the International Trade Centre and the International Development of the United Kingdom (UNCTAD 2010: 29). On the SLIEPA website, Sierra Leone is advertised as “Africa’s new investment destination”, providing “arable land in abundance”³⁵. The government offers favourable conditions for investment by providing very cheap land (from 5\$ for 1 ha per year), flexible labour regulations, free utilization

³⁵ Sierra Leone Investment and Export Promotion Agency (www.investsierraleone.biz)

of water and resources (i.e. open access according to Hardin 1968), and very attractive tax exemptions (Oakland 2011: 14). The agency further provides personalized information and services to potential investors in the sectors of agriculture, marine resources, mining and tourism (UNCTAD 2010: 29). This strategy turned out to be successful, and several long-term, large-scale land leases could be contracted. One of these large-scale investment projects is operated by Addax Bioenergy Sierra Leone and will be presented in the next subchapter.

4.2. Addax Bioenergy Sierra Leone

Addax Bioenergy Sierra Leone (ABSL) is a Swiss-based company with registered office in Geneva. In 2010, ABSL leased an area of 57'000 hectares for the period of 50 years. The company develops sugarcane fields for the production of biofuel destined for export to the European market. The project consists of 10'100 hectares of sugarcane plantations and an ethanol factory that is expected to produce 90'000 m³ of ethanol per year and 32 MW of electricity from a by-product called bagasse. 15 MW of the produced electricity are going to be sold to the national power grid (AfDB n.d.: 2) and will constitute an important complement to the Bumbuna dam, which produces 50 MW of hydroelectric power per year.

Electric power is desperately needed in Sierra Leone as only about 5% of the population has (irregular) access to electricity (unctad.org). The project area is inhabited by approximately 25'000 people and according to company representatives, the project will provide a great number of job opportunities whereby local workers, women and disabled people will be favoured³⁶ (English & Sandström 2014: 43). In addition to that, the company will build roads that can be used by the project-affected people (PAP) as well (AfDB n.d.).

4.2.1. The Formation of the Company

But how did the idea of a biofuel project in Sierra Leone actually take shape? Lustenberger (2015) conducted the research on the vertical level and identified an assemblage of five pillars – Sierra Leone as a place of operation, biofuel as a product, the

³⁶ The number of jobs created varies according to the source. The website of the state house of Sierra Leone talks about 4000 jobs (State House, The Republic of Sierra Leone, www.statehouse.gov.sl) the Addax homepage mentions 3600 workers (addaxbioenergy.com). At the time of research, 2200 people were employed (Personal Communication Multistakeholder Meeting 28.09.13)

mother company Addax and Oryx group, the European Union as demander and the Development Finance Institutions as donors – that met at the intersection of the development and the biofuel discourse and fostered the idea of ABSL.

The biofuel discourse emerged in the 1980s along with the discourse of climate change. Biofuels were depicted as a green, renewable alternative to gasoline – and if linked to the development discourse – are believed to increase revenues, create employment and enhance rural development. In addition, the reduction of dependency from oil-producing countries was promoted through the discourse of ‘energy sovereignty’ (Borras et al. 2010: 578ff). In the meantime though, the biofuel complex has met fierce criticism from scholars and activists such as La Via Campesina. It is said to have devastating social and ecological consequences, and is believed to threaten food production and food sovereignty of small and medium scale farmers (Borras et al. 2010: 585). Despite this critique, the biofuel/development discourse greatly influenced the legislation of the European Union: The 2009 Renewable Energy Directive obligates the member states to achieve a share of renewable energy sources of 20%, including a 10% target of biofuels in the final consumption of transport energy (in 2003 it was 5.75%) by 2020 (EC 2009). With the new directives and the absence of custom barriers, the European Union created a stable market and a continuous demand for biofuels that greatly influenced the idea of ABSL (Lustenberger 2015: 25).

The mother company Addax & Oryx Group Limited (AOG), founded 1987 in Geneva, is another pillar in the formation of the biofuel project. Focusing on oil and gas trading in Sub-Saharan Africa, it has more than two decades of business experience in Sierra Leone through the collaboration with the Sierra Leone National Petroleum Company (NP). Over time, AOG has established good contacts with influential businessmen and high-ranking politicians (Personal Communication 29.09.13), and is currently completing a new jetty at the Kissy oil terminal in Freetown that should facilitate the transport of oil and ethanol to Europe (ECS 2009: 41). In 2008, Addax Bioenergy was founded as a subsidiary of AOG, taking over its risk-taking corporate culture and benefitting from its experience in doing business in Africa.

Sierra Leone as a place of operation was chosen for the following reasons: First, the region meets all the biophysical requirements to grow sugarcane due to high annual rainfalls, hot temperatures and high insolation. Second, water for irrigation of the plantations during the dry season is available through the nearby Rokel River. Third, the

geographical position of the country is much more favourable for the export of biofuel to Europe than e.g. Mozambique (that was also screened at the beginning) due to a short shipping distance. Fourth, the basic infrastructure for the feasibility of the project was available: The European Union had constructed the Freetown - Makeni highway after the civil war, and AOG was building storage and shipping facilities in Freetown. Last but not least, the political framework for investment is, as already pointed out above, very favourable and prices for land very low.

The necessary funding for the 267 million Euro (FMO: 2011) project largely comes from different development finance institutions (DFI's)³⁷. They could be brought on board through the development discourse in the justification of the project (cf. AfDB n.d.a). Each DFI has its own requirements with regard to social and environmental standards, and ABSL's compliance with all the set standards³⁸ is "reflecting its ambition to become a benchmark in responsible investing" (English & Sandström 2014: 6). Responsible investment also means paying for water used from the local river³⁹, building the factory on-site and generating employment for local people instead of moving the production of ethanol overseas,⁴⁰ as the Vice CEO explained to me (Pers. Comm. 29.09.2013).

Besides the requirement of a marketable product, a suitable place of production and the necessary funding, the *personal relations* were of primary importance for the realization of ABSL. In his analysis, Lustenberger (2015) documents the interconnectedness of European businessmen, diplomats familiar with development politics and development finance institutions, as well as Sierra Leonean tradesmen and politicians born in the

³⁷ This includes The Swedish Development Finance Institution Swedfund, The Netherlands Development Finance Company (FMO), the African Development Bank (AfDB), The German Investment Corporation (DEG), The UK-based Emerging Africa Infrastructure Fund (EAIF), The Infrastructure Fund managed by Cordiant Capital (IDC) and the Belgian Development Bank (BIO) (English & Sandström 2014: 6).

³⁸ The International Labour Organization Conventions, the UN Declaration on Rights of the Indigenous Peoples, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the FAO International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides, among many others (cf. AfDB n.d.)

³⁹ The company has a water extraction license from the government and is paying for the water against local advice not to do so, as nobody in the country does. Still, the company insisted, as it wanted to prevent the misuse of the water by people upstream, and eventually found a water law from 1963 it is now following closely (Personal Communication 29.09.13).

⁴⁰ It has to be noted that sugarcane is highly perishable and needs to be processed within hours (Cotula 2013: 77). Building the factory in the project area is therefore an indispensable condition for the project itself and not (only) due to concerns for the local economy.

operational area (2015: 39-43, 48-50). This interpersonal network was crucial for the realization of a large-scale agricultural investment project – and is a factor that has been neglected in the vertical analysis of LSLA up to now.

4.2.2. The Implementation Process

After the formation of the company and the drafting of the agricultural investment project on paper, the feasibility phase started in 2008 and lasted until 2010 (English & Sandström 2014: 6). Extensive Environmental, Social and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA) were conducted in the future project area. Socio-economic household surveys were conducted in collaboration with the University of Makeni (UNIMAK) and assessed the number of people living in a household and their incomes. Baseline health surveys were conducted in collaboration with the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute and provide a base for epidemiologic monitoring of the project (Knoblauch et al. 2014).

At the same time, the company started to hold meetings with the communities, mostly accompanied by a representative of the local authorities who was advocating the acceptance of this unique development opportunity (cf. chapter 6.1.). ABSL also started engaging with the Paramount chiefs, the Chiefdom Councils and District Councils, and a test plantation including a sugarcane nursery was set up in the surroundings of Lungi Acre.

In October and November 2009, the results of the ESHIA were publicly displayed (cf. Quick View Report) and integrated into the company's Social and Environmental Management Programme (SEMP). Active stakeholder engagement is on-going until today in the form of Village Liaison Committee (VLC) meetings on chiefdom level and quarterly Multi Stakeholder Forums at UNIMAK (English & Sandström 2014: 14).

In February 2010, ABSL signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the government of Sierra Leone concerning the land lease for 50 years, with the possibility of a 21-year renewal. Paragraph 9 of the MoU grants Addax significant tax exemptions for a period of 20 years (MoU 2010: 8) and Paragraph 13 contains what Bürgi calls a “stabilisation clause” (2015:33): In case a law in Sierra Leone is amended in a way that

adversely affects the ABSL project, the Government can grant any exemption necessary to the company (MoU 2010: 12)⁴¹.

As leases of Provincial customary land have to be granted according to the Provinces Land Act Cap. 122, a Land Lease Agreement (LLA) was signed with the Chiefdom Council and the District Councils (decentralized level of the Central Government) in May 2010. The LLA entitles Addax, inter alia, to “stop up or alter the course of any watercourse” and grants the company “exclusive possession (...) over villages, rivers, forests and all other forms of environment” (LLA 2010: 71) within the leased area. The contract further defines the rent for one acre⁴² of land at 3.60\$, which is to be split in 20% to the Chiefdom Council, 20% to the District Council, 10% to the government and 50% to the traditional landowners according to Sierra Leonean law⁴³. However, Addax judged the compensation of the landowners not satisfactory, and introduced a voluntary additional legal instrument, the Acknowledgment Agreement (AA) that fixes an additional rent payment of 1.40\$ per acre per annum for the land under lease (AfDB n.d.: 2, English & Sandström 2014: 18).

The AA required the determination of village boundaries and the identification of every landowner's size of land. With modern technologies such as Geographical Information System (GIS) and Global Position System (GPS), the company mapped and titled the land and conducted what a member of the ABSL upper management proudly called “a land reform”. He explained how long standing conflicts over land could finally be solved in the course of this process (Pers. Comm. 29.09.13). The same person raved over the accuracy and efficiency of the GIS data, and praised it as a tool enabling the company to comply with all the international standards the donors are asking for. He thereby did not seek to hide the monopoly of the company when it comes to the access to maps: “We are doing what governments don’t manage to do. We are gently mapping, surveying, putting

⁴¹ Bürgi (2015) deems these provisions as not sustainable from a perspective of policy coherence and identifies serious gaps in legislation regarding tax regulations and trading rules that need to be addressed by international law.

⁴² Acre is the locally used measuring unit. 1 acre = 0.4 hectares and 1 hectare = 2,5 acres

⁴³ Besides the annual rent and its distribution, the terms of the lease comprise terms of relinquishment, notice on used and relinquished land to the Chiefdom Councils, rights for construction of ethanol plant, revision of rents after seven years, dispute resolution, right to extend the lease if required, right of removal of buildings or fixed structures and installation of roads and removal of vegetation (English & Sandström 2014: 16-17).

a land register with individual landowners in Freetown“ (ebd.). This process of knowledge production is insightfully described by Millar (2015), who was supposed to take part in the ESHIA process, but left the company out of frustration about its proceedings. He describes how GIS and GPS are used to make the land legible to the corporate eye and how it enables the company to produce new, cartographic knowledge about land that nobody else possesses – and how this marginalizes traditional knowledge as will be shown in the course of this thesis.

After the maps were drawn and the contracts signed, eight villages of the pilot phase went into operation in 2010. The company gradually expanded its operations to more villages until 62 villages were included in the operational area by 2013. During the implementation, the company tried to avoid the clearance of sensitive vegetation types such as wetlands, terrestrial/village forest and riparian forests. Ecological corridors and buffer zones were established in order to maintain biodiversity (ibid.4). The economic trees and crops that used to be located on the land cleared for the operation with the company were compensated to the households through a one-off payment (English & Sandström 2014: 24)

Although the company expects largely positive project impacts on local level through the creation of jobs and infrastructure, it acknowledges the possibility of negative impacts on food production and security, as less land is available and an inedible crop, sugarcane, is now being produced. In order to mitigate those effects, especially for *landusers* who are not financially compensated (Coastal & Environmental Services 2009: 102), Addax and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) designed the Farmer Development Programme (FDP). The FDP “will ensure PAP’s have access to sufficient land and appropriate agricultural training to be able to produce enough rice to achieve food security and enhance their livelihoods” (AfDB n.d.: 7-8). A future step the company envisages is the introduction of outgrower schemes. The schemes would provide the farmers a stable market and predictable prices. With the earned money, anticipated the manager, they can “buy ethanol gel and use it for cooking instead of cutting down all the trees” (Pers. Comm. 29.09.13) – a statement that is reproducing once again the narrative of the backward farmers degrading the environment and the modern company providing a viable alternative to the harmful local practices.

As already mentioned, the project is observed and judged by many different parties on the national and international levels. For the government of Sierra Leone, ABSL is a

constitutive part of the 'Agenda for Change' launched by president Koroma, and is believed to enhance the spirit of the nation by raising living standards and the overall level of development (statehouse.gov.sl). The FAO labels the project as 'best practice example' for the extensive ESHIA, the design of the FDP and the established compensation schemes (FAO 2011). In early 2013, the Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials⁴⁴ issued the first certificate for sustainable biofuel production in Africa to ABSL. However, national and international NGO's vehemently criticize the project, accusing it of committing land grabbing through the violation of the principle of 'Free Prior and Informed Consent '(FPIC)⁴⁵, and of making wrong promises to the project-affected people (Action Aid 2013, ALLAT 2013, SiLNoRF 2012 and 2013, Oakland Institute 2011). SiLNoRF (2013) even contested the RSB certification and provoked a re-assessment of the company's performance.

The company refuses to take criticism seriously and always attacks critics of having the wrong methodology, as the manager put it: "I don't respect this behaviour, as long as they [the critics] don't want to use proper methodology, facts, figures, properly talk to us, judge us according to what we are doing and not judging what other people wish we should be doing" (Pers. Comm. 29.09.13). This quote nicely illustrates how the company invalidates criticism from NGO's as well as from critical scholars with the argument of non-scientific proceedings. Company representatives accuse NGO's of inciting people against the company (English & Sandström 2014: 39, Personal Communication 29.09.13) and accuse scholars working with qualitative methods, myself included, of sampling errors and hence, distorted findings (Communication via Email 01.10.13). The manager makes clear what kind of information he considers to be valid: "This [the use of

⁴⁴ Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials (<http://rsb.org>)

⁴⁵ *Free* means free of external manipulation intimidation and coercion. *Prior* means that consent is sought sufficiently in advance of any authorization or commencement of activities and respect is shown to time requirements of indigenous consultation/consensus processes. *Informed* means disclosure of relevant, understandable and accessible information. Information is provided covering a range of aspects, including the nature, size, pace, reversibility and scope of any proposed project or activity; the purpose of the project as well as its duration; locality and areas affected and a preliminary assessment of the likely economic, social, cultural and environmental impact, including potential risks. This process may include the option of withholding consent. Consultation and participation are crucial components of a consent process" (UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioners, www.ohchr.org).

GIS] is why we have the upper hand against everyone trying to criticize us. We know exactly what is going on” (Pers. Comm. 29.09.13). Accordingly, to him and his colleagues, ‘the truth’ lies in the quantitative and ‘hard facts’ the company itself has produced.

But how does this exemplary implementation impact the local level? How is it perceived by project-affected people? How does it impact their access to land and resources, and how does it affect livelihoods? In order to address these questions we will now turn to the local context with the description of the research site and its institutions prior to the arrival of the company.

5. The Local Setting

This chapter aims to introduce the reader to the politico-economic and politico-ecological organization of the community of Worreh Yeama, where I conducted my research. First, I will give an overview of the community and its location, infrastructure, and (dis)connection to basic health and education services. Then (5.2.) I will describe the ‘Moral Economy’ that strongly influences daily life and social relationships, and shapes socio-political and socio-religious organisations and institutions. The knowledge of local bodies of rules and regulations is an indispensable premise for grasping people’s perceptions, expectations and reactions relating to the Addax Bioenergy project. Following that, I will describe the political ecology of the community, focusing on land types, access to land and associated resources and its gendered spaces. At the end of the chapter, I will illustrate the historical developments in the community of Worreh Yeama and will close with the civil war village that, together with other factors, resulted in the investor-friendly position of the people.

5.1. The Community of Worreh Yeama

The community of Worreh Yeama is located in the Yainkissa Section, Makari Gbanti Chiefdom, Bombali District in Northern Sierra Leone. It borders the communities of Madrissa to the North, Lungi Acre to the South East, Romaro to the South and Romaneh to the West. Today, the majority of the population is ethnic Temne with a Limba and a Fulah minority.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ In the early seventh century, the Temne, originating from Futa Jallon (highland region in present-day Guinea) established the Banta Empire in the Sierra Leonean districts of Mayamba, Bonthe and Tonkolili.

The community people⁴⁷ largely rely on semi-subsistence farming (for a detailed description see chapter 5.3) in which large shares of the food consumed by the households are produced in the community. To a lesser extent, people also live from hunting, fishing and gathering a variety of non-timber forest products from the commons. Of course, the subsistence economy has been interwoven with the cash economy for a long time. Although cash has become a necessity for the payment of school fees and uniforms, clothes, food and transport costs, cash is a notorious scarcity in the village. Before the implementation of the Addax Project, the cash was predominantly earned by women who used to sell the surplus of the vegetable harvest as will be pointed out in subchapter 5.3.3. Some men in the village had been trained as tractor drivers, carpenters or electricians and were occasionally hired for some work by 'outsiders'. A tailor sewed and adjusted clothes for the community people, and two blacksmiths produced hoes and cutlasses for agricultural purposes. Especially young men engaged in charcoal production and helped their families paying school fees with the money they earned by selling it. Many households held animals around their houses. The hens were used for the eggs and the goats for trading and exchanging.

Most people in Worreh Yeama would like to escape the hardship of farming and get employed for a regular salary. Unlike some critics of globalization and NGO's may assume, people in Worreh Yeama do not prefer goods produced on small family farms to new products – on the contrary, they prefer imported rice from Vietnam to the locally grown, much healthier '*paddyrice*' because it is white and 'comes from abroad'. The long period of deprivation during the war has intensified the longing for a modern life with foreign products and western comfort.

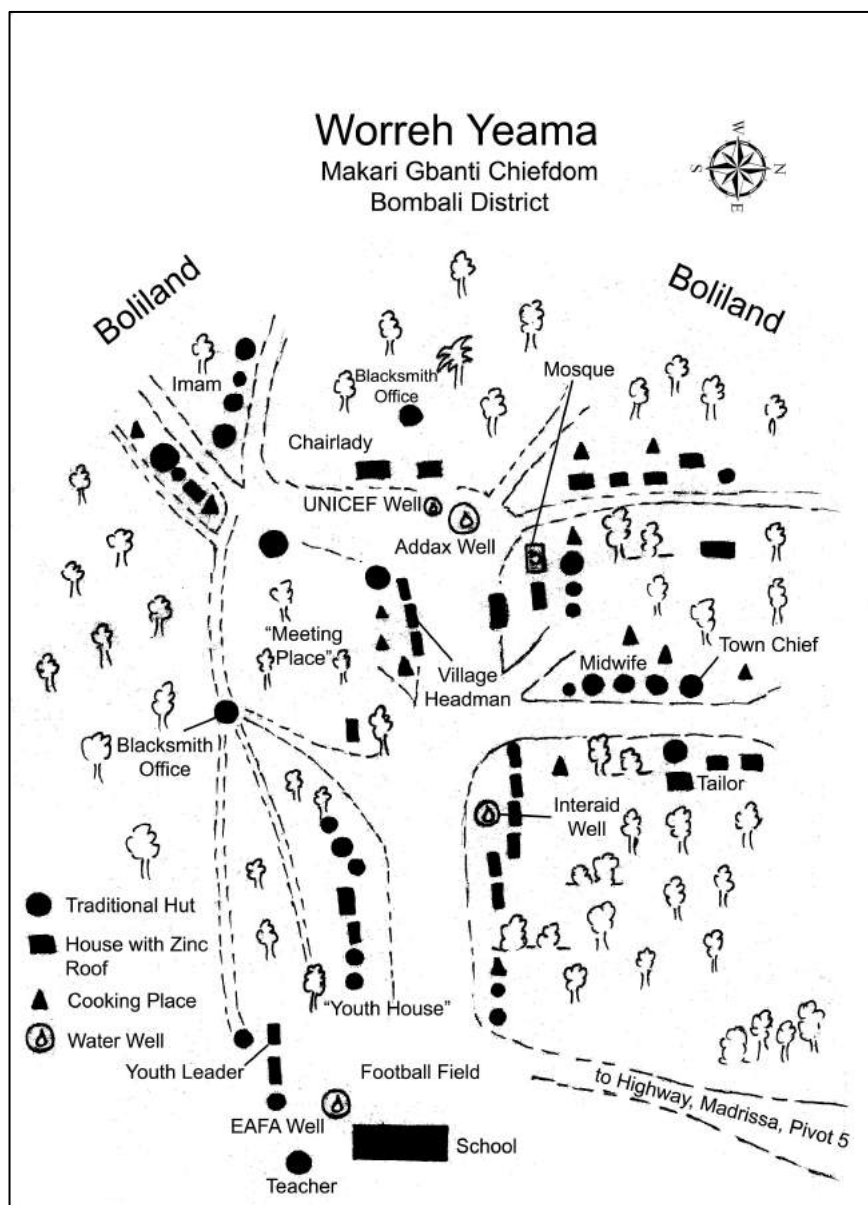
But for now, people in Worreh Yeama predominantly live in traditional huts with walls of clay bricks and roofs consisting of sticks and dried grass. At the time of research, few houses were covered with a zinc roof, which is considered a symbol of modernity and prosperity. Although houses with zinc roofs get warmed up very quickly, they have the

The empire later became dominated by the Mende, which pushed the Temne further back north. The Limba settled in the northern Wara Wara hills in the eight century and the nomadic Fulah equally descended from Futa Jallon, though much later than the Temne, in the 18th century and began to spread Islamic belief (Pham 2006: 2, Fyle 2011: 31-38).

⁴⁷ Although I am aware of the homogenizing connotation of the term, I will use it throughout this thesis, as it is the way local people refer to themselves.

advantage of being more or less waterproof and providing real shelter during the rainy season. Some households have a small kitchen in front of the house, that is, a fireplace consisting of stones covered with a roof-like structure made of sticks and grass. The houses mostly consist of one or two rooms, but have no bathrooms or toilets. Running water and electricity are not available in the village. The mobile network works in some places of the village. Some people have mobile phones on which they exchange the newest music songs, pictures and movies. Twice a month or so, a generator is turned on, and while mobile phones are charging, Nigerian movies are watched by the crowd gathered at the 'charging place' all night long.

The water for washing and cooking is fetched from one of the wells, unless it is the rainy



Map 2: Map of Worreh Yeama, drawn by the author.

season, when buckets are filled by the daily rainfalls

At the time of research, Worreh Yeama had four wells (see map of the village), which is quite luxurious compared to other villages. The well next to the football field was built by the NGO Elisabeth Agricultural Farmers Associations (Eafa) after the war, but has the disadvantage of being dry in March and April. The well in the lower part of the village, which had

been destroyed by the

rebels during the war, was rebuilt by Interaid. In the upper part of the village, there is another well built by UNICEF directly after the war, but the water is not drinkable and the well is dry during the entire dry season. The fourth well has been constructed by Addax in 2011 as a compensation for the water source, as will be explained in chapter 6.2.1. It was mechanically dug and therefore never dries. Apparently, the water quality of this well is better than the water from the other wells, but people are complaining that it is still not pure enough for drinking.

The primary school has equally been built after the civil war in 2008 by an NGO called Children Learning Services (CLS). Unfortunately, CLS did not seem to be familiar with the local school and administration system⁴⁸. It did not register the school with the government and teachers do not have a salary. As the registration process is costly and time consuming, the school remains unregistered until today. Nonetheless, one woman and two young men voluntarily take charge of the teaching and teach the children with a mere blackboard, as books and pens are unavailable. However, if the teachers have other appointments or have to go to the farm, classes are cancelled. In the four months of research, children went to school five half-days. Theoretically, primary school is meant to be free, but in order to overcome this problematic situation, the village meeting decided that the parents must pay a 5000 Le (1.20 \$) fee per child per semester in order to provide at least a symbolic salary to the teachers. However, most parents did not pay the fee, either because they did not have the money or they preferred their children to work on the fields instead of sending them to school.

The Secondary School is subject to charge and few girls and boys have the possibility to attend. The ones attending Junior Secondary School in Mgombsamba (located along the highway in direction Freetown) went the approximately 7 km on foot, the few attending Senior Secondary School in Makeni had to stay in houses of relatives or friends. The literacy rate in the village is low, and in higher age segments estimated to be close to zero.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ In Sierra Leone, children attend six years of Primary School, three years of Junior Secondary School and three years of Senior Secondary School. After that, they may undergo a vocational training or attend college or university.

⁴⁹ World Bank statistics gave 46% overall literacy for the year 2013, but it is likely to be lower in rural areas. All the elders and many adults I talked to were illiterate.

Apparently, an NGO also intended to build a health post in Worreh Yeama, but unfortunately, it was never realized. The next health post is in Yainkissa, located on the highway in direction Makeni, approximately 4 km from Worreh Yeama. Since 2010, the treatment of pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under five is meant to be free since 2010⁵⁰, but in reality the health post is severely undersupplied and clients forced to pay for theoretically free medication. My host has undergone nurse training and disposes over malaria tests and some medication for the emergency cases. Children are born in the village with the aid of a trained midwife, or go to the health post in Yainkissa if they are in time. Community people who cannot afford treatment at healthcare institutions apply traditional medicine consisting of juices and creams made from herbs and roots.

The local diet is simple and the local staple food is rice. Most people eat one meal a day that consists of rice, fish and a palm oil sauce seasoned with vegetables and leaves. Sometimes cassava (yams), beans or eggs are added to a dish.

There are no cars in the village, and at the time of research one person owned a motorbike and another a bicycle. People are used to making the distances to neighbouring villages on foot. However, the location of the community allows for some mobility. The Freetown-Makeni Highway has been rebuilt after the Civil War by the European Union and is easily reached after a half-hour walk through the bush. At the highway, one stops a private car for a ride, as public transport is absent in the country. The driver is paid according to more or less fixed prices (depending on the oil price and the availability of fuel) that were 5000 Le (1,20\$) from Madrissa (the hamlet located at the highway) to Makeni at the time of research. However, for many people the journey is not affordable and it mostly takes quite an effort to borrow the money when someone needs to travel.

Makeni, just a 30 to 40-minute car ride away, seems to be part of another world when coming from the community. Since Ernest Bai Koroma, a native of Binkolo village north of Makeni, was elected president of Sierra Leone in 2007, he has made considerable efforts to develop his 'hometown' Makeni, the capital of the Northern Area. A few months prior to my arrival, three main roads had been paved and some solar-driven streetlights installed. There is a big market with local agricultural products, kitchen items and clothes, carpentry shops, a Western Union office, a post office, three hospitals,

⁵⁰ Health Poverty Action (<http://www.healthpovertyaction.org>)

a handful of restaurants and a small number of hotels, and two Lebanese-owned, very expensive supermarkets. The contrast between Worreh Yeama and Makeni perfectly pictures the uneven distribution of infrastructure between urban and rural areas.

5.2. The Moral Economy

“In the villages, life is a matter of reciprocity – the expectation that what you give in the course of your life will somehow be given back, and whatever you receive will be shared. You respect your elders, parents, and rulers; in return they protect you and see to your welfare. To the lineage from which you take a wife, you give bride wealth in return. And you offer guests food and lodging on the understanding that they will do you no harm” (Jackson 2004: 147).

Departing from this quotation, I will describe the social organization of the community with emphasis on the moral economy that is a model of solidarity or, as expressed above, a mechanism of reciprocity. In my opinion, understanding this traditional institution is key for understanding other spheres of everyday life in the community – ranging from access to land, religion and politics to the attitude and expectations of the people towards the Addax Bioenergy project.

As pointed out by Jackson (see above), the society in Northern Sierra Leone is – roughly speaking – organized along the lines of age, gender and wealth: *Elder* people are more respected than younger individuals and generally have more weight in decision-making processes concerning the community than younger people.⁵¹ Men tend to be more actively involved in public and political decision-making processes than women, although it has to be noted that *gender* and *age* are intersecting categories and, in addition to that, the social position of a person is influenced by his/her marital status. The marriage practices in the patrilinear society are patrilocal, meaning that the woman resides with or near her husband’s family. In Worreh Yeama, marriages are exogamous, meaning that wives and husbands come from different communities. Marital relationships are often polygamous, a custom that is criticized by many women “because the husband is unable to share his love and his resources equally” (Pers. Comm.

⁵¹ However, the position of a person is less fixed than this scheme might suggest. An elder could lose the right to be considered superior if he/she behaves immature. “If he acted like a child, he *was* a child. Superiority (...) derived not only from being born first or from being big and powerful; it also stemmed from the way one behaved” Jackson observed (2004: 46-47).

30.09.13), as a 40 year old divorced woman put it. Many women feel the home is not peaceful” (ibid.).

According to my observations, younger women were less involved and less knowledgeable about topics discussed in the community. Young, recently married women were busy integrating into the family of their husbands, organizing the new household and caring for the children. Older women whose children were grown up had a different position inside the community by reasons of age. They naturally possess more life experience and more knowledge about people and processes in the community. Their position allows them to delegate daily chores to children or grand children or to their daughter in law. Accordingly, they have more time to participate in community meetings and the like.

Wealth is a criterion that shapes acts of solidarity not only within the (extended) family, but also in all interpersonal relations. Emically, wealth is understood as “the ability to accommodate people” (Jackson 2004: 146), means, to provide them comfort and security. Wealthy and successful people have the obligation to support their family and friends, and in return receive loyalty and respect. Scott (1976) theorized this informal institution and called it ‘The Moral Economy of the Peasant’. This model entails the moral obligation of solidarity on the one hand and the right to subsistence on the other. The resource economist Fafchamps explains that these patron-client relationships are “a formal way of organizing the compensation of wealthy individuals for their continued participation in the solidarity system” (1992:160). The wealthier (or more powerful) promise to help the less wealthy (or the less powerful) persons in times of hardship. Since the wealthy have little to gain from such an arrangement, the less wealthy have to reciprocate in some other ways. Hence, they make small gifts, provide labour or pledge full social or political loyalty. Sometimes, the wealthier exploit the less wealthy, and sometimes, the latter may also be aware of the exploitation, but they accept it, since they need the security arising from the relationship with the patron. The solidarity networks have a range of policy implications as they affect rural welfare and behaviour with regards to food aid, prices, risk, technology and new institutions. (ibid.: 165). The institution can be interpreted as mechanism of redistribution, in which everyone can claim his/her ‘rightful share’ (Ferguson 2015).

In Worreh Yeama, this moral economy was observable on an every-day basis. If a man has a job and a salary, he is expected to not only finance the education of his own

children, but his nephew and niece's schooling as well. If someone has a good harvest, he/she is obliged to share it with the ones who had poor yields. Of course, these '*acts of sharing*' are not always voluntary, but rather signify a social obligation people are sometimes trying to escape from. I was told the story of a man who refused a better job with a higher salary because he did not feel like supporting even more people than he already did. I have seen people hiding parts of their rice harvest from family members in other households, so they will not be forced to share it with them, because as soon as some material possession was publicly known, one could not escape the obligation of sharing. Fafchamps, however, does not consider this as a contradiction, but holds that „mutual solidarity can be sustained by existence of lasting relationship between self-interested members“ (1992: 147)⁵². Ensminger (1992) would agree, as she departs from the premise that the behaviour of people can reflect both self-interest (that is ensured through the reciprocal arrangement) as well as concerns for the wellbeing of fellow people (that is expressed through redistributive acts of solidarity). These local ideas about patron-client linkages are scaled up to the regional and national levels, translating into a political system referred to as patrimonialism in the literature (Richards 1998: 34-35). This political organisation, and the clientelistic relationships it implies, is outlined over the next two subchapters.

5.2.1. Socio-Political Institutions

I will start the description of the political organisation in the community from the top of the political hierarchy, which are the traditional leaders, or the *town chiefs*. At the time of research, there was an acting female town chief; her male counterpart has died not long ago. She is at the top of the socio-political hierarchy, but when it comes to government affairs, the *village headman* is the formal representative of the community. Interestingly, both the *village headman* and the *town chief* are original *strangers* to the village, meaning they were not born there. The town chief was crowned in her home village Rotunka, but then got married in Worreh Yeama and took her title along. The *village headman* coincidentally also comes from a village of Rotunka, where he is a *landowner*. His sister was married to a member of the Kanu family, the '*owner*' of the

⁵² Fafchamps is reasserting the work of Posner, who reconciled the apparently diametrically opposed views of Scott (1976) and his critic Popkin (1979). While Scott tended to depict the pre-industrial society as being informed by more altruism and high ethical values than capitalist societies, Popkin presented evidence of the opportunistic behaviour among peasants (cf. Fafchamps 1992).

village, but was unable to bear children. Feeling uncomfortable with the situation, she asked her family to move to Worreh Yeama to stay with her. People liked her brother very much and wanted to make him stay, so they offered him the representative post of *village headman* and he is usually referred to as the *chief*.

The *elders*, or *otim* in Temne, are respected persons in the village, and their voice has considerable weight in community meetings and social affairs. The female elders carry the prefix 'Ya' in front of their first names, for example 'Ya Ami Koroma'. The male elders carry the prefix 'Pa'. The prefixes are a sign of respect and reserved exclusively for the elders. One community member explained me the importance of elders in the community due to their senior age. "Younger people can consult them and seek advice from them, because they youth does not think about the future and lack the experience of life the elders possess" (Pers. Comm. 2.10.13).

The position of the *youth leader* is complementary to that of the elders. He is usually between the ages of 18 and 35, and is elected by the community. He is meant to 'discipline' the youth: "Sometimes, young people are very stubborn and don't listen to the elders. Then the youth leader comes in and puts the young in his position", the *acting youth leader* explained to me (Pers. Comm. 2.10.13). The *youth leader* is supported by the *youth advisor* and the *youth secretary*. He assists the *village headman* when a matter is brought to court or to the *paramount chief*. On the other hand, the *youth leader* has to coordinate the youth's activities, for example when a school has to be built or some other development is about to come. The *youth leader* and the chief know the troublemakers in the village and can easily identify them in offenses like theft, lying or having sexual intercourse with another man's wife. At the time of research, the first *youth leader* was also the second Imam. As the first Imam was suffering from medical problems, the second Imam had to assist the people during prayer and had no time left for his job as *youth leader*. Thus, the second *youth leader* became acting *youth leader* until a new first *youth leader* was elected by the community. Another important position is the one of the *chairlady*. She has the task of representing the women of the community at meetings with 'outsiders'. Subsequently, she informs the women about what has been discussed during the meeting, and what kind of statements she has made on their behalf. Moreover, the *chairlady* assists the *strangers* that come to the village.

The political organisation on the community level is embedded in the regional and national organisation (see table 1) in the two different tiers of administration outlined in chapter 4.1.

President (Chief of State & Head of Government) Ernest Bai Koroma (APC)	
Parliament of Sierra Leone APC (69); SLPP (43)	
Northern Province Provincial Secretary	
Bombali District District Council (Local Council Chief Administrator)	
Makari Gbanti Chiefdom Paramount chief Masayalie N'Tham II Chiefdom Council	Constituency 031 Honourable Martin Ibrahim Bangura
Yainkissa Section Section Chief Abdul P. Koroma	Ward 97 Councillor Gibril Conteh
Community of Worreh Yeama Town Chief Village Headman Elders Chairlady Youth leader/ Youth Advisor/ Youth Secretary	

Table 1: Political organisation of Worreh Yeama upwardly embedded.

The native administration consists of the *section chief* (referred to as *Pa Almami*), who rules over the section, and the *paramount chief*, chosen from one of the *ruling houses*, who governs the people of the entire chiefdom. The current Paramount chief, the Temne Masayalie N'Tham II, has been in power since 1972.

On the decentralized local administration level, democratically elected bodies have been established since 2004 (Renner-Thomas 2010: 11). The *constituencies* and *wards* are on

the same level as chiefdom and section, but defined by population size⁵³. On the district level, native and local administrations are brought together. On the national level, people are represented by the Parliament, which consists of a total of 124 seats. Currently, the APC holds 69 seats and the SLPP holds 43 seats.⁵⁴ In the constitutional republic, President Koroma is head of state, head of government and commander-in-chief of the army and the police. He is elected by popular vote for a parliamentary term of 5 years and appoints a cabinet of ministers that have to be approved by the Parliament.

The political loyalties are deeply intertwined with the ancient religious institution of the secret societies and will be discussed in 5.2.3. after having introduced the reader to the religious organisation in the community in the next subchapter.

5.2.2. Socio-Religious Institutions

People in the Upper Guinea Coast traditionally believe in the powers of the spirit world; a belief in a cosmology that is intimately linked to an ancient cultural institution called secret society. The purpose of a secret society, Fanthorpe explains, “is to canalize and control powers of the spirit world, many of which are captured in masks and other special artefacts. All of these powers are considered morally discerning and thus amenable to control through socialization” (2007: 1). The powers are sex-specific and do not only inhabit the medicine, the dead ancestors and the wild creatures of the bush, but also dwell in men and women. For this reason, girls and boys are initiated in separate secret societies through rituals that symbolize the passage into adulthood and produce fully socialized human beings. The society for women is spread in the whole country and is called *Sande* in the South and *Bondo* in the North. For men, there are different and sometimes superseding societies. The *Poros Society* is present in almost the entire country, whereas the specialized secret societies are to be found in certain areas

⁵³ The population size determines the number of Honourables for the constituency. There is one Honourable for every 43'000 voters. A ward comprises approximately half of the voters and is headed by a local council with elected councillors (Pers.Comm.16.12.13)

⁵⁴ 112 Members of Parliament are elected by popular vote and 12 seats are reserved for the *paramount chiefs* from the 12 Districts. Western Urban Area (Freetown) and Western Rural Area (Freetown Peninsula) constitute the former Colony and do not have Paramount chiefs (Open Government Initiative, www.ogi.gov.sl).

only⁵⁵. In the area of research, the *Poro* and the *Ouje* are coexisting secret societies for men. A young man explained that a man can be initiated into the *Poro* and then into the *Ouje* society, but he cannot become a member of the *Ouje* first and be initiated into the *Poro* later on. Although it is publicly known who belongs to which society, the members swear an oath not to talk about the laws and the rituals taking place within the society to non-initiates. If they do so, the social order is disrupted and they will die (Pers. Comm. 16.10.13). Non-initiates must not witness society rituals taking place in secluded patches of forests and are also warned by loud drumming and singing. However, in the dry season, some societies perform publicly and everyone, regardless if initiated or not, is allowed to witness the masquerades and the dancing.

Girls initiated into the *Bondo* spend several weeks (earlier it used to be months or years) in the bush and cooperatively perform a variety of tasks such as weeding, washing and cooking, and learn to consider them as a characteristic part of female identity. The initiation into the secret society is meant to prepare them for their future roles of mothers and wives (Fanthorpe 2007: 3), and teach them the rules “governing their relations with co-wives, in-laws, potential husbands, Poro graduates and non-members of the Sande [Bondo] and in rules concerning pregnancy and childbirth” (Dennis 1972 in Bledsoe 1984: 457). One of the most important rituals is ‘*the cutting*’, meaning the removal of the clitoris and parts of the labia, whereby women are believed to be invested with fertility. If the clitoris remains uncut, so it is feared, it might uncontrollably grow into a penis. By excising it, all sexual ambiguity is removed and the girls are transformed into women ready for marriage (Fanthorpe 2007: 17). Scholars propose two modes of analysing the political use of *Bondo* ideology: Either as a model of an institution producing solidarity between women through cooperatively performed work, commonly learnt dances and celebrations, and the shared pain of the genital mutilation. This solidarity is said to translate into the capacity to mobilize and influence or block political processes (cf. Little 1949, MacCormack 1975). Other scholars depict it as an institution that rather reproduces social asymmetries, namely the one between the

⁵⁵ The *Wunde Society* specializes in martial training and is predominant among the Kpa-Mende in central Sierra Leone. The *Gbangbani Society* is predominant in the north-eastern part of the country in the Kuranko, Limba, Loko and Temne speaking areas. The *Odelay Society* specializes in hunting and often organizes public masquerades, while the *Oje* Society trains its members in moral discipline and inculcates them with powers to detect and punish criminals (ibid. 8-9).

Bondo leader (*Sorie*) and the new initiates, and the one between girls of different social strata. According to this view, *Sories* use the power of their knowledge of medicine, politics and history to exact labour, money and loyalty in return for protection and wellbeing in the bush (Bledsoe 1984: 460) – which is resembling the patron-clientele relations described in 5.2. The other asymmetry is located among girls from high-ranking and low-ranking families. The former are taught higher knowledge, specialized skills and receive more training for leadership positions, while the latter must work hardest and enjoy the fewer rewards (ibid.461). Bledsoe advocated uniting these two models and considering them as a symbolic duality that relates to women's status in society (ibid.464).

The *Poro Society*, on the other side, has the purpose of training male initiates to become (political) leaders and patriarchs. Secluded in the bush, they are physically trained in competitive tests, but also participate in mock courts and debates in order to learn the skills of chiefs and elders. Analogously to the girls in the *Bondo*, they are instructed in 'male tasks' such as farming, crafting and animal trap making. During the initiation they are symbolically killed and eaten by the spirits and are later reborn as adult men. The scarification of the face symbolizes the teeth and claw marks left by the spirits (Fanthorpe 2007: 3-4).

With the arrival of missionaries in the early 17th century, some parts in the West of Sierra Leone became Christianized (Alie 1990: 101-110). A century later, Fulah merchants brought Islam to the North of Sierra Leone where it rapidly spread and merged with pre-existing spiritual beliefs (ibid.43-46). In modern-day Worreh Yeama, all the people refer to themselves as Muslims. Only one young man had converted to Catholicism in his teenage years. At the same time, roughly 95% of the population are members of the *Bondo* or the *Poro*, and some men are initiates of the *Oujeh*. During my stay in the village, both the *Bondo* and the *Oujeh* performed publicly in the village and the coexistence with Islam was indeed evident. During the ritual performance of the *Bondo*, the *Sourie* entered into contact with the spirits of the dead ancestors. She then had visions of misfortunes approaching the village and the people had to bring her sacrifices so she could appease the spirits. While she was reciting what she was seeing in her visions, people would say 'Amen' at the end of her sentences before joining in a refrain. When the devil of the *Oujeh* society came into the village, he interrupted his dance at sunset, so the Muslims were free to go to prayer. When they finished, he

continued his performance. However, despite this coexistence, some devout Muslims or Christians consider the secret societies as backwards and Islam or Christianity as modern. “These are our customs and traditions but I don’t believe in these customs, I just believe in the Almighty God” (Pers. Comm. 16.10.13), the young Christian said. He claimed he was not interested in the secret society and he would not have joined had he known what was expecting him there. But as he had been initiated to the *Pororo*, he was unable to leave, even if he claims not to believe in it. However, he did not seem to be able to emancipate from the beliefs of the secret society and was following its laws of secrecy. He repeatedly said to have seen ‘*fearful things*’, but when I asked him about it, he said he could not tell me because of the oath, otherwise he would die a miserable death.

5.2.3. The Production of Locality and Loyalty

In this section, I argue that the religious institution of the secret society is deeply intertwined with the socio-political solidarity networks (i.e. moral economy) and constitute a source for (political) identity, belonging and security in rural areas.

In pre-colonial times, *chiefs* and rulers also used to be important secret society rulers. They used their authority over rituals and ritual sanctions to convert settlers and war captives into loyal subjects, and thus had a means to incorporate *strangers* into local communities (Fanthorpe 2007:5, cf. chapter 4.1.). Different scholars argue with different reasons that secret societies gained prominence through the contact with Europeans. Bledsoe argues that back then, people increasingly “sought to attach themselves to powerful leaders who could protect them from intruders or neighbouring groups who threatened to take them as slaves” (1984: 456), while Rodney argues that the “African ruling class, grown rich and powerful through the Atlantic slave trade, used the societies to consolidate their power over the indigenous populations” (Rodney 1970 in Fanthorpe 2007: 5). Hence, the society uses its political power both as a means to protect local interests and to exploit local people – analogously to what Bledsoe has pointed out for the *Bondo*. This is an indication that a secret society does not have a mere religious (controlling the spirits) and social (passage into adulthood) function, but also a pronounced political one.

The absence of state services and state activity in the Provinces has left the *chiefs* with strong political power (Fanthorpe 2005: 40). Even after the gradual disempowerment of the *paramount chiefs* through the creation of a second tier of government and decentralisation politics during colonial, post-colonial and post-war times, they remain

leading political figures in the rural areas.⁵⁶ People expected them to serve as patrons of secret society rites and to make contributions to the cost of initiation rites. “Senior politicians and bureaucrats often play a similar role, which helps to reinforce their credentials as ‘sons of the soil’” (ebd.:10).

Appadurai (1995) analyses the initiation rites as techniques for the material production of locality or the social production of local subjects. Kris Hardin, an anthropologist who did fieldwork in Eastern Sierra Leone in the early 1990s equally observed the spatial bonds the initiation rites creates between initiates and soil and the effects they have on identity and belonging.

“Where someone is born, where they join Sande or Poro, where their ancestors are buried, and where they themselves will be buried work to limit the claims to identity and the rights and statuses available through the descent and kinship system. Rituals associating the individual with particular places are performed at critical junctures. These ritual acts tie individuals to particular places and to the ancestors associated with those places” (Hardin 1993: 93).

Fanthorpe sees this as the reason why only politicians initiated in the localities they wish to represent can win elections. Once in office, they are expected to remain loyal to their home communities, and bring development and provide job opportunities for fellow initiates (2007:7, 10). The politicians on their side are happy to meet the expectations of their brothers and sisters whenever possible, as this assures them political allegiance and allow them to maintain the ties to the sites of their ancestors. In this way, an intimate interconnectedness between secret societies, local authorities and official political parties persists to this day. The fact that vital services are provided not by the state but by local politicians that trace their descent to the pre-colonial *ruling houses* and ancestors makes rural people highly suspicious of the ‘civic government’ (i.e. district councils etc.). They cling to the native administration “governed by traditions of sanctions, self-help, self-government and a high degree of accountability” that grants them local citizenship and rights to land (Fanthorpe 2001 and 2007). This outline is not suggesting that Sierra Leoneans eternally remain bound to traditions, but rather that the

⁵⁶ But of course they also meet opposition from youth that are not willing to re-attach themselves to local communities governed by chiefs. Some authors also deem the rebellion against local exploitative chiefs responsible for the start of the civil war. (Richards 1998, 2005).

modern bureaucratic governance has failed “to capture the imagination and loyalty of the populace and has prompted renewed investment in the notion of local community in a secure moral base from which to engage with agencies of the state” (Fanthorpe 2007:8).

I argue that this production of locality and the loyalty towards the local elites pioneering for Addax was a crucial factor for the approval of the Bioenergy project of affected people. This is especially valid in combination with the horrors of the civil war, that is, according to Fanthorpe, not unrelated to what has been discussed in this chapter. According to the scholar, the war was not only caused by post-colonial economic decline, but rather through the tension produced by the conflation of pre-colonially rooted rural loyalties and the failing post-colonial state producing

However, the acceptance of the Bioenergy project was not only fuelled by this feeling of locality and loyalty towards local elites pioneering for Addax, but by its combination with the horrors of the civil war. According to Fanthorpe (2001), the war was not only caused by post-colonial economic decline, but rather through the tension produced by the conflation of pre-colonially rooted rural loyalties, the exclusionary mechanisms of administration (native vs. strangers) created through colonial rule and the failing post-colonial patrimonial state producing masses of young people lacking both, local patronage and state protection.

The effects of the decade long civil war and its impact on the community of Worreh Yeama will be outlined in the sub-chapter 5.7, the subject of which is the history of the community.

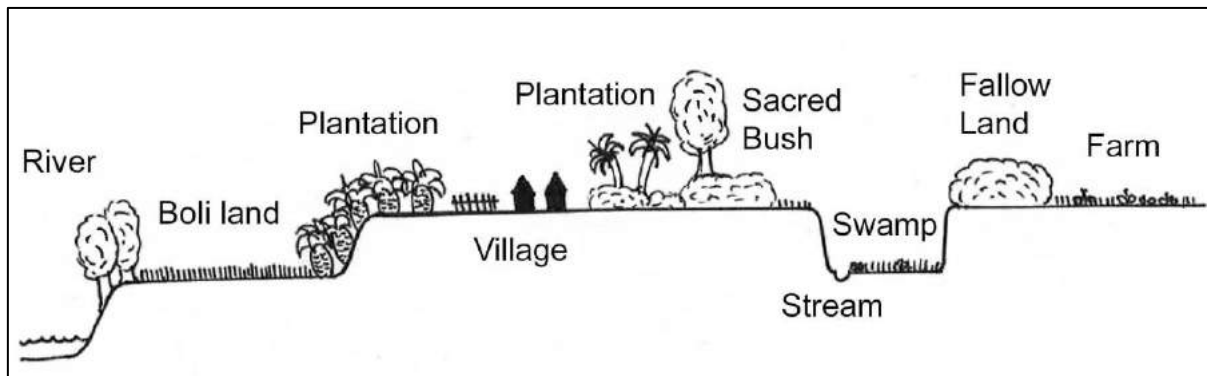
5.3. Political Ecology of Land Use

5.3.1. Land Types

The Northern Interior of the country is characterized by open savannah woodland or grassland intermingled with swamps and streams coming from the bigger rivers. The climate is characterized by the rainy and the dry season. The rainy season spans from June to October when high rainfalls flood the lower lying fields. The dry season lasts from November to May and makes vegetation and soils drying up almost completely.

Primary use of the land is for agricultural purposes, mainly (but not exclusively) for subsistence-based farming. As mechanical tools are relatively uncommon, the plot of land worked by a family rarely exceeds the size of two acres. Different types of land (cf.

schematic illustration) allow for different types of land use and for the production of different kinds of crops that will be explained as follows.



- (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10)

Schematic illustration 1: Vegetation types in the research area. Drawn by Käser (2014) and adjusted for Worreh Yeama by the author.

Legend:

- (1) River: fish, water, medical plants
- (2) Boliland: wet rice
- (3) Plantation: palm oil from planted trees, mango and banana trees
- (4) Village: corn, beans, pepper, rice etc. from small fenced plots within the village
- (5) Plantation: palm oil from not actively planted trees, beans, medical plants
- (6) Forests and sacred bushes: firewood, charcoal, rituals
- (7) Stream: (drinking) water
- (8) Swamp: pepper, eggplant, potatoes, cassava, tomatoes, watermelon, okra, rice
- (9) Fallow land: firewood, medical plants, hunting
- (10) Farms: upland rice, pepper, groundnuts, cassava, herbs

The dry upland (9 and 10) is worked with a method called shifting cultivation. The FAO defines shifting cultivation as "a system in which relatively short periods of continuous cultivation are followed by relatively long periods of fallow"⁵⁷. After the cultivation of a patch of land, it is left fallow without any form of active cultivation in order to allow the soil to regain its fertility. The cultivation and the fallow period depend on the type of

⁵⁷ FAO Forestry Department (www.fao.org)

crops grown and the fertility of the soil. I was told that the average plantation period for upland rice is two or three years and for cassava and potato between five and seven years before the land is left to recover. In the past, the fallow period used to be 15 to 20 years, but it has been reduced to approximately seven years due to increased pressure on land through population growth. By the end of the fallow period, farmers set fire to clear the bush that has overgrown the land and make way for new plantations. The clearing is a cooperative work and the men of the community assist the person who wishes to cultivate the land. The laborers who do not belong to the family might get paid but if the 'employer' is not wealthy, they might help him for free or get paid with a part of the harvest.

After the clearing, the land is transformed into seasonal farms (10) where pepper, eggplant, cassava, beans, groundnuts, potatoes or rice are grown. Actively planted permanent crops such as improved oil palms, banana and mango trees are called gardens (3) and are distinguished from plantations of naturally grown crops such as local palm trees (5). The land lying fallow (9) is overgrown with bushes and trees, which are home to rodents, birds, snakes and monkeys. In the village (4) women have plots in their backyard that are used for vegetable planting during the dry season. Patches of forest (6) located on the upland outside the village (of which some serve as ritual space for the secret societies), provide wood that is either used as firewood by the women or for charcoal production of the young men.

Worreh Yeama and its surroundings are rich in *bolilands* (2) that are flooded during the rainy season and dry during the dry season. The soil of the *bolilands* is a mixture between sand and clay, and is much more fertile than the areas on the uplands. The *bolilands* are used for rice cultivation whereby the traditional method of transplanting is applied. People in Worreh Yeama also practiced shifting cultivation on the *bolilands* whereby fallow periods are shorter than on the upland. Worreh Yeama's most precious resource however, used to be the perennial water source (7) outside the village. The water flooded the surrounding land even during the dry season and turned it into a perennial swamp (8). A part of the community used the swamp for rice plantation during the dry and vegetable plantations during the rainy season. Although the region is quite rich in *bolilands*, permanent swamps are rather scarce and thus associated with great benefits as will be shown in 'gendered spaces' (chapter 5.3.3).

5.3.2. Land and Access Rights

In the operational area, two different kinds of land tenure determine rights and access to land through complex and interlinked pre-colonial and colonial customary institutions. While the upland is held under family tenure, the more fertile lower lying *bolilands* and swamps, were under communal tenure.

In Worreh Yeama, the Kanu family, the Conteh family, and the Kamara family are said to be the descendants of the founders (*firstcomers*) of the community and became, under the colonial rule, the *landowning* families⁵⁸. Although the upland is under family tenure, the land has never been split between the three *landowning* families, means all of them are a kind of 'shareholders' of the upland. However, as already pointed out in chapter 2.4., ownership of land must not be understood as an exclusive right in the sense of private property as it is known in the Western Area⁵⁹. The *landowning* families are obliged - again in a sense of the moral economy (cf. chapter 5.2) - to grant access to land to *non-landowning* families, as a *landowner* explains with the following statement.

"Landusers are strangers, who settled in the village after the landowners, they came to do their agriculture and there is no way to ignore them or to refuse to give land to them to do their plantations, because they are part of us. (...) But there still is a difference between landowners and landusers, because if a landowner says, 'I want to farm here', nobody can say anything against it but the landuser has to ask for permission. But we [the landowners] thought it is not good to refuse the land to the landusers, because those are the sources of conflict in the village, because the landusers will not be happy" (Pers. Comm. 12.11.13).

This citation illustrates that the strangers are part of the community, because they have decided to farm the same land, joined the same secret society and therefore have the

⁵⁸ 'Family' describes a variety of groupings that Smart divides into two categories: 1) the residential family units or households and 2) the unilateral descent groups, such as clans and lineages. Both are relevant for rights to property but in relation to land tenure, we refer to „*the unilateral descent group, claiming descent from a common ancestor, either, patrilineally or matrilineally, sometimes also referred to as kindred, a lineage, or loosely, as a clan*“ (Smart 1983 in Thomas-Renner 2010: 147).

⁵⁹ *Landowners* is written in italic throughout this thesis to emphasize its colonial coining and to remind the reader that 'ownership' in the customary context is not as exclusive as the term might suggest. As already noted in the theoretical chapter, I use *landowners* instead of *firstcomers*, as people use this English term to describe the institution. The absence of a Temne word can be read as an indication of the colonial coining of the institution.

right to a share of the land and to extract benefit from it. Although the *landuser* needs to ask for permission and the *landowner* has the final say, the statement shows that the reputation of the landowner would suffer and peace in the village would come under threat, if the *landowner* refuses giving the land (he does not need for himself). A rejection of the request would equal the violation of the person's user rights, or the right to his/her share. A possible consequence of such a selfish behaviour could be the refusal of the concerned *landuser* and others to engage in the communal labour assistance for clearance of land or during the time of harvest. This chain of reactions would constitute a threat to the social peace in the village the *landowner* was mentioning in his statement (see citation above) – a scenario the *landowners* generally try to avoid by granting *landusers* access to land and resources. Furthermore, besides complying with the moral obligations, the landowner's benefit is bigger if he shares the land instead of keeping it for himself, because mostly, the size of land owned by a *landowner* exceeds his family's capacity to cultivate it entirely. By lending it out, the landowner gains more prestige than by cultivating it with hired labour or leaving it fallow⁶⁰.

Hence, usually, everyone who wants to farm is assigned a plot. *Landusers* normally use the land for free, but if the size of the land exceeds one or two acres, they may give the *landowner* a bushel of rice (25kg) as compensation. Besides access to land, other land-related resources such as permanent crops were also due to arrangements between *landowners* and *landusers*. According to a general rule actively planted permanent crops belong to the cultivator, even if the land belongs to someone else. In case a *landuser* plants a palm tree on a *landowner*'s land, the palm tree and its fruits belong to the *landuser*. These gardens are normally kept as long as the crop grows and is inherited patrilineally. On the other hand, naturally grown crops such as local palm trees belong to the *landowner*. The seeds of the local palm tree can be processed into palm oil for the preparation of food or for sale. However, other people can harvest the seeds if the landowner agrees. Käser (2014) insightfully describes how the palm seeds constitute an important source of resilience for poorer households in the community of Mabilafu in

⁶⁰ This argument is valid for the case in which enough land is available. If the land comes under serious pressure, *landowners* might be denying the land to *landusers* because they need it themselves and the community would regard this as legitimate act, as the moral obligation applies foremost to surpluses – be that surplus of land, money, food, etc.

Malal Mara Chiefdom. The same principle applies for dead wood lying on the ground that can be collected and used by everyone.

In contrast to the upland, the sacred bushes, common crazing lands, streams, *bolilands*, and the swampland around the perennial water source are under communal tenure and “belong to everyone, to all the landowners and all the landusers” (Pers. Comm. 21.10.13). So even if a *landuser* was unable to get a patch of land for farming, he/she could still benefit from the commons, which are, recalling Haller (2013), the right to a share of the local cultural landscape with all its resources.⁶¹ As the *bolilands* and the swamp were fertile but limited in area, they were highly requested and needed some sort of management. In the case of the swampland around the perennial water source, a *landuser* used to administer the land on behalf of the community⁶² before the land was leased to the company. He was appointed with the task because he had a farmhouse by the water source and went there on a daily basis. The people who wanted to plant vegetables during the dry season had to inform the *landuser* in order to avoid conflict. As he knew exactly which plots were already taken, he allocated the remaining land to the interested farmers. A plot in the wet area just next to the water source tended to be smaller than a plot in a drier part further from the water, he explained to me (Per. Comm. 12.11.13). The *boliland* is common land but it was divided by households some 60 or 70 years back, so the people could use it without asking for permission or make arrangements among themselves.

This chapter has explained the different ways of accessing different types of land. We have seen that although we deal with two different tenure system – family land and communal land –the usage patterns of both types are quite similar and resemble CPR institutions described by Ostrom (1990, cf. chapter 2.3.2.). It has been shown that ‘landownership’ does not imply exclusive property rights but rather the obligation to administer the landowners’ access to land and related resources.

To my knowledge, conflicts only erupted occasionally between the cattle rearing Fulah and the farmers, when the cattle left the grazing land and trampled down the farms. In the dry season, Fulahs sometimes set fire to burn down the dried grass so fresh grass would grow for the cattle. There were cases when the fire grew into bushfire and

⁶¹ The sacred bushes, however, were only accessible for the members of the secret society.

⁶² Land under family tenure was normally administered by the landowning family but the commons could be managed by landusers as they were among the main beneficiaries (Pers. Comm. 26.10.13)

destroyed permanent crops such as groundnuts planted by the farmers. In these cases, the disputes were settled with the mediation of the *village headman*.

5.3.3. Gendered Spaces

As has been noted earlier, women are excluded from the right of ownership of land due to the patrilineal inheritance line. A landowner explained that women also belong to landowning families and therefore also own land – “but not in the same way like men”, as he puts it. He justifies this difference with the exogamous marriage practices:

“The reason is just because they [the women] have to move somewhere else when they marry and then they benefit from the family of the husband as well. But the man only belongs to one family and he does not move, so he is the owner of the land” (Pers. Comm. 12.11.13).

In line with the layout of the landowner, women born into landowning families or married to a landowner sometimes referred to themselves as ‘we the landowners’ for the reasons of belonging to the landowning family by descent or marriage – despite the impossibility to be legally recognized as ‘owners’. Although women have access to land in relation to their fathers, husbands or sons, they exert *de facto* control over specific types of land and resources at specific times (Rocheleau & Edmunds 1997, cf. chapter 2.4.1.). In order to understand the access to land and the benefit of its resources for women– regardless if they come from a *landowning* or *landusing* family - we need to understand the gendered organization of labour informing the sectors of domesticity and agriculture in Worreh Yeama.

In the domestic area, women are clearly responsible for the preparation of food and the childcare. Besides cooking for their own household, they often cook additional food that is brought to the family members living in other households⁶³. In the realm of agriculture, the division of labour is still obvious but less rigid than in the domestic field. Generally, we can state that the men perform physically demanding tasks like the burning, brushing and clearing of the land for cultivation. The women engage in tasks

⁶³ This was a very complex system of exchange and it was not always clear why and in which situation women in one household cooked food for family members in other households or for neighbours or friends. Sometimes it was because a) the other household lacked food, or b) has been busy with agriculture all day long and time for cooking was less, or c) because the wife of a brother has travelled and he is unable to cook, or he does not have another wife or d) because the food giving household had to settle a debt.

like planting, transplanting, weeding and post-harvest processing. The harvest of the rice is mainly done by men, with occasional support of women. If men harvest rice cooperatively, women prepare the food at home and take it to the field in big vessels together with their children. The threshing of the rice is done cooperatively by men and women. Afterwards, the women dry and pound the rice and later remove the husks by lifting the rice corns up and down in a flat braided basket.

The vegetable planting is traditionally in the hands of women as will be illustrated using the example of the swampland around the perennial water source in Worreh Yeama. During the dry season, men and women used to cultivate rice in the swamp as described above. After the harvest, men prepared the heaps and the women nursed and planted different sorts of vegetables such as garden eggs, pepper, potatoes, corns, groundnuts, beans, watermelon, okra and improved oil palms. Women harvested and processed what they planted as they were responsible for the food preparation. Women reported to produce enough vegetables for the household's subsistence needs during the dry season. Some women decided to grow a surplus of vegetables, which they used to sell. A woman explained me:

"Those vegetables are so expensive during that time because not all the people are able to plant them. During the rainy season you can plant them in your backyard, but during the dry season it is very difficult. So when you plant during the dry season you get more money" (Pers. Comm. 11.11.13).

Around 30 women reported, that they used to sell vegetables at the markets in Foredugu or Makeni. They were able to sell for a good price as supply of vegetables was low but request was high in the dry season. This cash income remained under the control of these women. Women said that they used the money primarily to pay school fees and uniforms of their children. In case money was left, they spent it on kitchen items or clothes.

In the rainy season, women create small gardens around the house and plant vegetables there – most commonly corn, eggplant and pepper. Sometimes, they also sold them at the market, but instead of 6000 or 7000Le (1, 40\$ or 1,60\$) for one eggplant in the dry season they would only get 1000Le (25 cents) in the rainy season.

The collection of firewood for the cooking and herbs for the production of traditional medicines also belonged to the responsibilities of women. As already mentioned above, dead wood could be collected freely from commonly used patches of forest but also from

patches of land *owned* by somebody else. The medicinal herbs and wild food are found in the overgrown fallow land where access is free to anyone.

Despite the discrimination of women through gendered land rights under customary land tenure, women in Worreh Yeama have access to upland as members of the community. They also have access to fertile patches of commonly used land and precious water resources due to the status of landusers but also through the gendered division of labour - regardless of their marital status or relationship to anybody else. The result are (sometimes seasonal) gendered spaces granting them not only access to land and associated resources but even to a cash-generating market, through the sale of the vegetable harvest. Many women reported an empowering effect of the income as it enabled them to pay for their children's education in a difficult context of low-income farming.

In chapter 5 I have so far described the socio-political and socio-religious organizations as well as the patterns of land and resource use *prior* to the implementation of the Bioenergy project. In this last subchapter on the local context, I would like to reproduce the emic narratives of the history of Worreh Yeama. The description will close with the civil war to make the reader clear, how the war co-shaped the extremely investor-friendly attitude of local people.

5.4. The History of Worreh Yeama

The community of Worreh Yeama is located in the Makari Gbanti Chiefdom that was amalgamated in the 1930s, when the *Native Administration Scheme* was introduced to make colonial administration more efficient. Before, Makari and Gbanti were two independent chiefdoms with separate *ruling houses*.

Worreh Yeama is the Temne expression for "where I want to herd my cattle". The Imam, one of the elders of Worreh Yeama, recounted that the community was founded by three *houses*: the *house* of the Kanu, coming from a village called Royema, the house of the Conteh, coming from the neighbouring village of Romaneh and the house of the Kamara that had joined them. According to local belief, they offered the first fruits of their harvest to the spirits in the area and managed to bring them under control. Through the connection to these ancestors who founded the village and appeased the spirits, the landowning families (Kanu, Conteh, Kamara) claim their legitimacy.

The Imam also remembered, that Worreh Yeama and its surroundings were well known for its rice production. When diamonds were discovered in Kono District, the people started selling a part of their rice to the workers in the diamond mines. Many strangers came to Worreh Yeama to farm, as the area was known for good rice harvests. With the influx of people, the village extended considerably and consisted of 60 or 70 houses by the end of the 1980s⁶⁴. But then, the civil war started and affected the community severely. In 1995, the RUF rebels erected a checkpoint in Mgombsamba (where children go to junior secondary school today), looted and burnt the houses and killed many people. Sometimes the rebels came to the surrounding villages and recruited people for their works. In Worreh Yeama, they had people beaten up and made them carry heavy loads, and even the elderly were forced to do so. Children did not go to school anymore because schools were either closed or destroyed. As the rebels were always in search of food, they came to Worreh Yeama because they met plenty of rice there. This made the farmers eating their rice right after the harvest, without even drying and processing it. They were afraid that rebels would steal the rice and leave them hungry. A landowner remembers how he and others had to kill the cows in the village for the hungry rebels. "The Fulah people had many cows here but we had to kill them all so the rebels can eat them. We were afraid that the Fulah people would kill us for having killed their cows, which are so important for them. We were really frightened." Eventually in 1998 or 1999, the rebels changed tactics and invaded the community and people fled the village. "Everyone run to the bush. We carried those who were not able to run, like the small children and the elderly people. We hide in the bush and covered ourselves with long elephant grass. We were sleeping in the bush like animals" (Pers. Comm. 23.12.13). Some people also sought refuge at the water source because it offered them access to water. But eventually, everyone has fled to Makeni or Freetown.

When the war finally came to an end in 2002, people started returning to the village. However, many people decided to stay in the refugee camps in the urban centres instead of returning to their villages after the war. In this way, the population of Worreh Yeama decreased to roughly 600 people living in 50 houses. The ones returning encountered nothing but destruction, as a 35-year-old man describes:

"We came back, we had nothing. We lost everything. Houses have been burnt and we were living in abject poverty. We were eating rice without sauce, without salt.

⁶⁴ Based on personal communication, 27.10.13

Nowhere to get soap to wash the new born children. Nowhere to get clothes. No medical facility. No vaccinations. Nothing. Children didn't go to school anymore because there was nowhere to send them to. So when the war came to an end, investors came to lease the land and who will refuse to lease this land to get such benefit? Who will refuse? It was very easy [for the company] to capture land because people were living in abject poverty. The land, they [the people] just had to give it away to get something that would help them survive. After the war, when the investors came, you know, if the investor says we will come tomorrow we would be saying: 'No no don't come tomorrow, come today!' We were desperate to get this benefit" (ebd.).

As this quote illustrates, the war had changed everything. People had difficulties to re-establish agriculture and reported that the soil had lost its fertility without exactly having an explanation. "Really we don't understand it. Before, the rice was doing well. Maybe it is for all the innocent blood that has been shed during this war" a man speculated. A woman said that prices had become exorbitantly high after the civil war and that the few fertilizers they used to apply on the farms before the war had become unaffordable. Whatever the reason, people were in desperate need for a change for the better. The state was unable to rebuild the country and so the hopes for immediate relief and development rested on NGO's and investors. Some time later, the investors came, and they came straight to the village, and people welcomed them with open arms.

6. The Impacts of the Bioenergy Project

Worreh Yeama is located in the western edge of the Addax Bioenergy project area and belongs to the eight villages of the Pilot Phase, where the implementation of the project started in the year 2010. In chapter 6.1., I will present the emic narratives of the experiences of different groups of people, their inclusion and exclusion from consultation processes and the different readings of the landscape due to the production of new knowledge of the company that is used to delegitimize local realities.

Chapter 6.2. deals with the destruction of the swampland and the related water source in the community. The presented findings will also outline why mitigation measures are perceived as inadequate and how their failure impacts livelihood strategies of the people and women in particular. Perceptions and impacts of compensation and mitigation measures are outlined in the chapters 6.3. and 6.4. before we come to the area of employment (6.5.) that constitutes a major issue for the people in Worreh

Yeama. Chapter 6.6. explains how the fear of further deterioration of resilience of livelihoods has led to the opposition of women against another sugarcane field on village land. Findings identify exogenous and endogenous factors and alliances that contributed to the success of the uprising but also indicate that the overall consequences of the 'successful resistance' are not only positive: the company and its helping local authorities now call the community 'enemy of progress' – a negative label that is shaping ambivalent positions among community members towards the company's operations.

6.1. The Implementation Process

During the initial stage, I was not present in the Project Area, so I asked different people from different groups to tell me about the very beginnings of the Addax Bioenergy Project in retrospective. The following chapter is based on these personal accounts and reflect emic and personalized perceptions rather than objective truths.

6.1.1. Promises and Expectations

The first time people in the community of Worreh Yeama heard about Addax was in 2007, probably towards the end of the year, when Martin Ibrahim Bangura had called a community meeting on behalf of Vincent Kanu in Worreh Yeama. Martin Bangura, then Honorable of the Constituency 031 and nowadays Member of Parliament, is a *native* of the neighbouring community of Lungi Acre. Vincent Kanu is the Managing Director of National Petroleum (NP) and has been working in the oil business together with Addax and Oryx Group for a long time. He is a native of Makari village, the main town of the former Makari chiefdom that is located between Worreh Yeama and Makeni. Bangura informed the people about a company called Addax and its intentions to invest in the area. He said that the people of this company are very good friends of their brother Vincent Kanu who had been working with them for a long time in the oil business. Bangura explained the people that Addax wanted to set up a sugarcane nursery in Lungi Acre to grow sugarcane and produce fuel. Part of the fuel would be exported, he said, and a part of it will be used in Sierra Leone, helping the country to overcome its fuel shortage. The Honourable emphasized the necessity of making land available to Addax as people would be going to benefit from the investment. The company would not grab their land but would pay the *landowners*, he continued, and it would generate electricity and jobs for the people, even train their children to become workers. A woman remembers:

“We were glad because he was saying they will come with development. We agreed and said, ‘yes you can come, because you are a son of the soil. We don’t think you will get something that puts us in stress, we think, when you come with something, it is benefitting us.’ He answered, ‘I am sure this will benefit you’ ” (Pers. Comm. 31.10.13).

Some time later, the *village headman*, representatives of the three *landowning* families, the former *chairlady* and the former *youth leader* were invited to a meeting in the community of Makoth. Speaking were, among others, Masayalie N’Tham II, the *paramount chief* of the Makari Gbanti Chiefdom, Honourable Martin Bangura, various senior District Officers, *chiefdom speakers* and *sections chiefs* and the former Addax Managing Director Nikolai Germann. Aminata Kamara, the niece of Vincent Kanu, was translating from English to Temne. One of the landowners recalled Bangura saying it was important for Addax to start its operations in the Makari Gbanti Chiefdom, the home of their good friend Vincent Kanu. The former Youth Leader remembered Nikolai Germann explaining that the government has already approved the idea of an investment project in the area and underlined the importance to meet with the landowners and discuss further steps. The former *youth leader* continued:

“And they [Addax] also promised that they wouldn’t take this land for free without paying them [the landowners], they would compensate them. And when they come to demarcate the pivot, all the wild crops they meet there, they will go to pay for them. The landowners agreed. The other thing told by Mr. Nikolai is that they are going to remove the poverty from us. They also promised to construct hospitals for us, health centres, and those who are uneducated, they are going to train them in different jobs and when time comes for employment, the landowners have priority to get jobs before other people. They will be employed first, except in case they don’t know how to do the particular work. In such case, they will hire extra [non local] people. (...) They also promised to build schools” (Pers. Comm. 12.11.13).

Meetings with more or less the same invitees (in case someone was unavailable they sent someone else to replace him/her) followed in Yainkissa and Lungi Acre. The two people speaking English both attended meetings on the place of someone else and both mentioned (independently from one another) translation problems. But the rest of the invitees was happy, as they got good news, food and transport money, that exceeded their expenses. “They [the company] also prepared food and soft drinks in cans for us.

We got enough food there and sometimes we could not even eat all the rice they prepared!" (Pers.Comm.12.11.13), an elder *landowner* reported satisfied.

Besides that, every single person who ever attended such a meeting, repeated having heard the same promises over and over again: Jobs, hospitals, schools; short development. Some also mentioned promises of building new houses with zinc roofs. What they heard excited them, and happily they went back to the community to report it to the rest of the village. Expectations of a modern life with all amenities associated with it started to rise in the entire community. Nobody could wait to get away from the hardship of farming and the struggles of daily post-war life.

6.1.2. Free, Prior and Informed Consent?

After having held the initial meetings, Addax built a nursery in Lungi Acre and started the Environmental Social and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA). The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government was signed in February 2010 in Lungi Acre and the Land Lease Agreement (LLA) with the District and Chiefdom Councils was signed in May 2010 in Yainkissa. The nursery in Lungi Acre was inaugurated by President Ernest Bai Koroma personally, who, in a symbolic act of approval, planted the first sugarcane seedling. After that, the *landowners* (plus *headman*, *chairlady* and *youth leader*) were called to Yainkissa to sign the Acknowledgement Agreement (AA) that implies an additional payment for the *landowners* (besides the 50% share determined in the LLA, cf. chapter 4.2.2). All of the five people that attended the meetings on behalf of the community of Worreh Yeama were unable to read and write, let alone to read a map⁶⁵. Addax had appointed Franklyn Kargbo as lawyer for the *landowners*. Interestingly, Kargbo is the General Minister of Justice and was chosen by Addax and not the *landowners*. The men who signed the AA reported having seen him only when they signed the AA in Yainkissa and none of the three had ever talked to him. They reported that the AA was read out loud in Temne and the *landowners* were asked to sign. The representative of the Kamara family⁶⁶ remembered having felt pressured to sign. "Our Honourable Martin Bangura told us, that the president of the

⁶⁵ I was told so by all of them personally, except the former *chairlady* who was not in the village during my time of research.

⁶⁶ He was only 26 years old at the time of research and chosen to sign the AA because his elder brothers were living in the town.

country has already signed for Addax to invest, so the landowners should do that, too! They told us to sign by force” (Pers.Comm.13.11.13). When I asked if he was aware of the meaning of the AA, he replied: “All I understood is that if we sign such an agreement, the village will be changed. The village is going to be improved” (ebd.) The *landowner* representing the Kanu family said the *landowners* from the surrounding villages, especially from Lungi Acre where Honourable Bangura comes from, started to sign. They told him the signature does not mean anything, it just means they will benefit. Then, Aminata Kamara came and told him to hurry up and sign, because time was less and they would not get transport costs refunded if the contract was not concluded. So the landowners from Worreh Yeama joined in and signed with their fingerprints, not being aware of the meaning of this contract.

This background shows that the consent of landowners was nor *free* (because there was coercion and manipulation, cf. chapter 6.1.2.) neither *prior* (it was after the contracts required by the law, namely the MoU and the LLA were signed, cf. ibid.) and particularly not *informed*: The information given to the people was *not accessible* to them and participation therefore non-existent. Landowners did not have to possibility to negotiate the terms of the lease and were excluded from *participation* through knowledge they could not access because it was based on written contracts and numbers. The only thing they were able to grasp from this consultation meeting was the term ‘development’, and as this is what they were looking for, they gave their approval. For all these reasons, I conclude that the consultation of the only local group, i.e. the *landowners*, was not in line with the ‘Principle of Free Prior and Informed Consent’. Further, it needs to be emphasized once more, that the other groups of local people, i.e. women and *landusing* men, were not subject to consultation at all.

6.1.3. Participation of Women and Landusers

But what about the women and the landusers in general? Were they consulted by the company, the landowners or in any other way? This subchapter will shed light on their involvement of the negotiation process.

Only the very first community meeting in Worreh Yeama was open to everyone. To the subsequent meetings, Addax invited the heads of the landowners (the later signatories), the *village headman*, the *chairlady* and the *youth leader*. This group of five people would later become the *Village Liaison Committee* (VLC) that attended monthly

meetings with the community, the chiefs, the local authorities and the VLC's from other villages in the same chiefdom. At these meetings, the community representatives of the VLC were informed about the latest developments, grievances and problems occurring in the operational area of ABSL. The *village headman* and *the youth leader* were both strangers, or *landusers* (cf. 5.2.1.), and the *chairlady* was obviously a woman, so one can claim these groups have been represented and informed. Nevertheless, male and female landusers reported not having been consulted nor by the company neither by the *landowners*. The formal *youth leader* said although he witnessed the meetings, he was not given opportunity to speak. He said he did not understand what was going on, but acknowledged having been happy for the promises the Honourable and Addax representatives made.

At the time of research, some women were grumbling because only the *chairlady* was involved in the negotiation process. The *chairlady* shared her view and states that one woman in the VLC is not enough. "Three men and three women would be good", she said, "so we could work together. It would have also been better if I was literate, so I could write minutes. But I am unable to do that and I am unable to remember everything and report it to the women" (Pers. Comm. 27.11.13).

This statement is a further indication for the obstacles affected people were confronted with due to their illiteracy. If one is not able to note key points of a meeting, it will be very difficult to give a complete account of what has been discussed.

Addax also established the Multi Stakeholder Forum (MSF) with meetings taking place quarterly at UNIMAK in Makeni. The MSF is meant to ensure continuous stakeholder engagement on intra chiefdom level and to facilitate the exchange of information between project-affected people, local authorities, civil society organization and the business company. Besides other interest groups, the VLC was also present at the MSF's. During the meetings I witnessed that only women from women rights NGO's were taking the floor as well as two women from Worreh Yeama. If these two women did not attend a particular meeting, no other 'ordinary' woman dared to speak in front of the audience. Despite the physical presence of a woman and two *landusers* at most Addax meetings, their consent was neither needed nor asked for by the company – although they had benefitted from the land and its associated resources along with the landowners. However, Addax seemed to follow the land formalisation scheme and fully concentrated on the colonial institutions of the *paramount chiefs* and the *landowners*

(cf. chapters 2.4.1., 4.1. and 5.3.2.). The project design is strongly oriented towards *landowners*, especially in the areas of decision-making and payments for land.

In the year 2011, SiLNoRF became aware of this drawback and sought to overcome it by founding the Affected Land User Association (AFLUA). As the *landusers* (women always included) are the most marginalised, especially in the context of formalisation processes, the purpose of AFLUA is to give *landusers* a voice and the capability to organize as a group in order to articulate their interests. An active member of the AFLUA explained me, that some *landusers* were not aware of their rights, as their opinion had never mattered in official affairs before. The AFLUA raised this awareness and in the course of three years and by now, *landusers* are even more respected among the *landowners*, especially in Makari Gbanti Chiefdom where it is working better than in Bombali Shebora and Malal Mara Chiefdom. As will be shown towards the end of chapter 6, AFLUA has decisively influenced the impacts of the sugarcane development in Worreh Yeama.

This chapter showed that women and *landusers* were excluded from processes of consultation. Some of them were invited to the MSF's but did not dare to speak up as they are not used to do so. Further, the process of land titling has marginalised them and reduced their bargaining power significantly, as will be shown in the next subchapter. However, this transformed institutional setting has also led to the emergence of new institutions (cf. Ensminger 1992) like the AFLUA through the influx of NGO's and discourses on the right to food.

6.1.4. The Production of Knowledge

Shortly after contracting the Acknowledgement Agreement, an airplane flew over the villages to make aerial photographs. In this way, the land was surveyed with modern technologies such as GPS and GIS. Later, surveyors came to the villages and showed the communities the village borders they had drawn on their maps. Until that moment, borders had not been defined, as nobody had ever considered it to be necessary. Sometimes, village borders were roughly defined by a stream, the beginning of another land type, a plantation or the like. In case of land disputes, the paramount chief was called to mediate between the conflicting parties as he held the land under custody. Naturally, the establishment of permanent village boarders through the Addax

surveyors led to the emergence of conflicts between some villages, and so it did in the case of Worreh Yeama and Lungi Acre.

A woman from a *landowning* family remembers, “they [Addax’ surveyors] entered the bush⁶⁷ and came out with maps. They explained everything on the base of these maps. Although people here are uneducated and don’t understand the documents, they start realising that this boundary is going to be an everlasting boundary” (Pers. Comm. 31.10.13).

Although lacking the capacity to read maps, people were aware of the fact, that maps are permanent and that they will be important in the future. Out of this situation, the dispute over the *boliland* with the neighbouring community Lungi Acre emerged and a complicated process of resolving the dispute had to be started. Because Addax had started a titling process to register the land of the *landowners*⁶⁸, the *paramount chief* could not settle the dispute himself but the matter had to be brought to the High Court in Freetown. As long as the dispute was on-going, the *paramount chief* flagged the land and did not allow for any cultivation. As the land under dispute was meant to be part of the FDP community field, the FDP in Worreh Yeama was suspended for one year until it could be solved in June 2012 (cf. chapter 6.4.).

The company produced maps and numbers of everything. Its field teams counted the people and their radios measured their houses and their fields and classified land and crops. On this basis it calculated the land lease and acknowledgment payments, crops compensation and the size of the FDP fields and anticipated the socio-economic impacts of the Bioenergy project in a particular community. Yet, all this clashed with the world known to the affected people, who, mostly illiterate, could not write a simple letter, let alone read a map. They were used to oral traditions but were not familiar with paper work and numbers. The vast majority of the affected people did not seem to understand what was going on. At the time of my research, *landowners* were not able to tell which land was included in the lease and which land was not, which land would be developed by the company and which parts were left for them to do their farming. The company had produced new knowledge about land that was foreign to them and excluded them from conversations and negotiations.

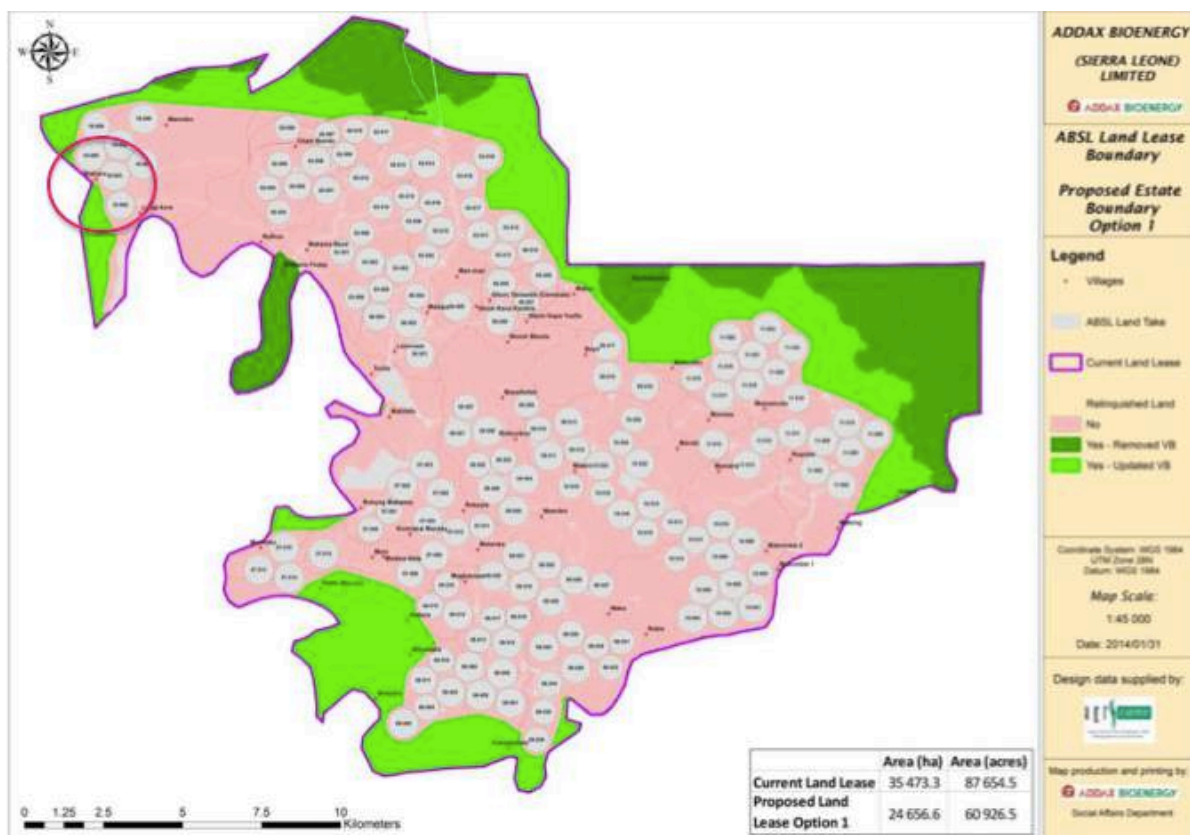
⁶⁷ The term ‘*bush*’ basically refers to all the rural areas that are not occupied by a settlement.

⁶⁸ The *landowning* families in Worreh Yeama got a common title, as the land has never been divided by families.

Those different ways of thinking about land and reading the landscape also produced conflicting views about the impacts of the Bioenergy project on the community of Worreh Yeama that will be subject of the next part.

6.2. The Destruction of the Water Source and the Swampland

Map 3 shows that Worreh Yeama lies in the outskirts of the Addax Operational Area. The community's land is divided by the Western border of the project area. The northern and eastern part of the community land falls within while the southern and western part is outside the project area.



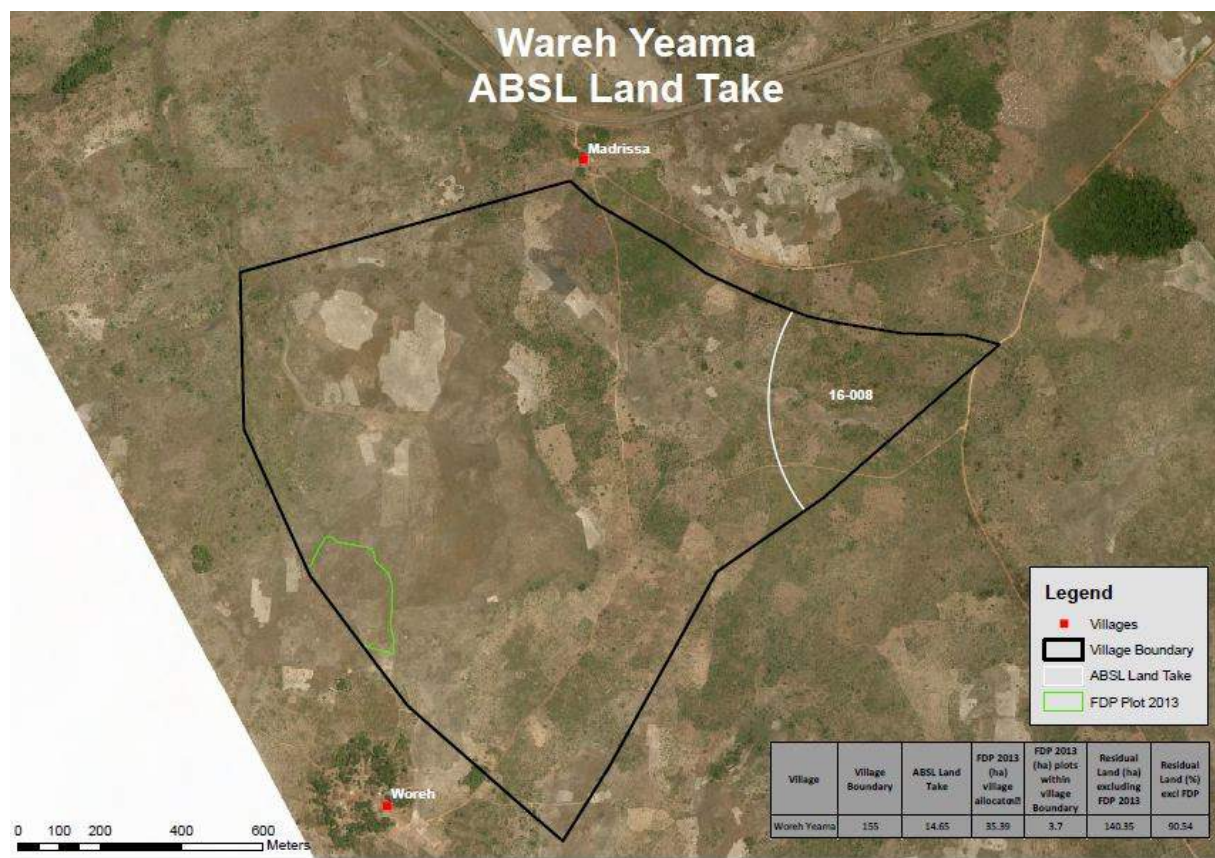
Map 3: Addax Operational Area in February 2014 (Sandström & English 2014: 29)

If we have a look at map 4 we can see that 10% of the leased land is used (where 16-008 is written), meaning 318 acres (127 hectares), which is, compared to the land taken from other villages, a quantitatively small area. This number produced contested perceptions about the overall impact of the Bioenergy project. When I informed the company about my choice of Worreh Yeama as research site, messages from the upper management were sent to me, depicting Worreh Yeama as only marginally affected and

hence, not suitable for a research.

“Only a small area of their land lies within the leased area and the village is not significantly impacted by developments. The village has also chosen to reject one of the proposed pivots (...) but this leaves only a small fraction of one pivot within their area (Comm. via Email 29.09.13).

These quotes illustrate that the company is thinking exclusively within the scale of area. Accordingly, a small part of leased land means few impacts, and a large part of land means more impacts, hence, more development.



Map 4: Land Take in Worreh Yeama.
Source: Addax Bioenergy Sierra Leone Ltd.

The project-affected people, however, have a slightly different view on the matter. As if they were following Edelman’s appeal (2013) to consider quality instead of mere quantity, they were constantly drawing attention to the type of land that is used for the company’s operations. “They took our perennial water source. This is the area where we usually plant our vegetables during the dry season. (...) It would be a lie to say we have no more land left, but the most fertile land is gone now” (Pers. Comm. 18.11.13), an elder woman explains. Indeed, the land Addax used for the sugarcane plantation

comprises the perennial water source and the swampland. As described in chapter 5.3.3., the water source used to provide clean drinking water for the community and surrounding villages and the swamp allowed women to plant vegetables in the dry season and to earn cash by selling the surplus harvest. Nobody in the community knew which land the company was going to use; they just learnt it when Addax staff demarcated the area. But one landowner remembered having asked Addax to renounce the swampland. He recounted that he had explained to the company that although the area was small, it is totally wet during the dry season and therefore very important for the community.

6.2.1. Inadequate Mitigation of the Water Source

The company though, apparently unaware of the importance of the water source and the swamp, took the land and erected a circular sugarcane plantation on it, the so-called Pivot Five⁶⁹. Some areas of the swamp inside the pivot were spared from the plantation because they were too wet to plough with a tractor. However, the area is not accessible any more and the people in Worreh Yeama assume the water to be contaminated by the fertilizers Addax applies on the sugarcane field; a fear that is backed by results of water samples taken by SiLNoRF and Bread for All⁷⁰.

The people of Worreh Yeama did not know which part of the land Addax is going to use, until the women saw the demarcation pegs while fetching the water at the source. A community meeting was held with Addax and the affected people insisted that Addax assured them the implementation of adequate mitigation measures. Specifically, the people were promised two water pumps in the village that should replace the water, plus a dam, where water could be pondered for the planting of vegetables during the dry season. Everyone I talked to repeated these promises over and over again and insisted it was the former Social Manager who gave them his word for it.

⁶⁹ Every pivot has a number and people used to speak about „*the land at Pivot 5*“ in order refer to the water source and the swampland.

⁷⁰ SiLNoRF and Bread for All took water samples of two streams flowing out of a sugarcane field in the communities of Maronko and Mabilafu. The samples were taken to Switzerland and results show that the water is polluted by a herbicide called Diuron (which is forbidden in France due to its toxicity and ecotoxicity and labelled dangerous by the EU) as well as by phosphate (0.06 mg/l in Maronko and 0,3 mg/l in Mabilafu) which is exceeding the value of <0.05 mg/l applied in Switzerland for drinking water (SiLNoRF 2013: 26-27).

One well was built in the year 2011 by a subcontractor of Addax. It has the best water of all the wells but people repeatedly stated that its quality is not comparable to the one of the water they used to get from the perennial water source:

“The water at Pivot Five was good! It is very clean, it’s cold and it doesn’t have taste. Now we are drinking the rain water, but if the rain doesn’t come, we drink water from the Addax pump but it is not good” (Pers. Comm.12.11.13)

This quote shows that Addax has deprived people of clean drinking water, which they were not able to replace by constructing the water well in the village. When the Addax water pump was built, the landowners had already identified an area for the construction of the dam that would guarantee women’s access to water during the dry season. The people working for the subcontractor that built the pump, pledged to inform Addax but “since the time they make this promise to us, they disappear from us and up till now, we never see them again” (Pers. Comm. 23.12.13.), said a woman disappointedly. The people in the village, especially the women that benefitted from the land at Pivot Five, became disgruntled with the company. This marked the beginning of a shift in opinions about Addax’ operations. The head of the swamp states that “this was the moment that discouraged me, the moment they refused all the promises they have made before.”

The company naturally tells another version of the story and denies having made such promises “because dams are simply not part of our mitigation measures” (Pers. Comm. 23.10.13) as the Social Manager put it. He explained that the project design foresees nothing but water wells as replacement for destroyed water sources. According to him, it was Worreh Yeama’s fault if they are struggling with the water, as the community had refused the second well itself. People in the village confirmed having rejected the second water well because they needed a dam. “Because if they construct another pump here [in the village] it will not help the vegetable plantations of the women” the sister of the *chairlady* explained (Pers.Comm. 19.11.13).

6.2.2. Impacts on Livelihood Strategies

The women and men who lost their plantation areas reported they were struggling with financial difficulties, as they had no more vegetables to sell during the dry season. Even

the nursing of the vegetables for the rainy season has become strenuous⁷¹. Women explained that the nursing at Pivot Five used to be simple, because they did not need to water. But now they needed to do the nursing in the village because they can only get the water from the wells (in case they are not dry). However, in the village they need to fence the plots to drive the animals away and they have to water the seedlings several times a day, so that the task has become extremely time consuming. But according to them, this is not the biggest problem they are facing. The real plight is the lack of cash income that is currently preventing women from paying the school fees of their children (Pers. Comm. 23.12.13).

When I asked them if they had an alternative, they largely denied. One woman told me she was going with rich men so they would give her some money. Others said they were 'just sitting down in the village'. All the women I talked to confirm they were compensated for the crops they had planted there, "but the money was not enough" (I will further elaborate on compensation payments in chapter 6.3.2.). "For us, the women, things are really difficult. No more vegetables in the dry season, no employment, no success on the FDP farms. And small compensation money",



Image 1: Worreh Yeama and pivots in the surroundings
Source: Google Earth

summarized a middle aged woman disappointedly (27.11.13). The only thing that could save them, so they agreed, would be if Addax provided some wetland for them.

The *landuser* who used to be allocate the plots on the swamp prior to Addax' operations, has made similar experiences like the women. He had planted more than two acres with watermelon, big pepper, okra, groundnut, potatoes, cassava and improved oil palms. There, he also had poultry with more than 50 hens. When Addax removed him from the land, he was so confused that he left the village for some time, he narrated. He went to Kono where he was digging gold for a living but after six unsuccessful months he

⁷¹ The nursing needs to be done in the dry seasons so the seedling can be planted at the time of the first rains.

returned to Worreh Yeama. Back there, he got employed by Addax for three months and he was happy. “If Addax had not terminated my contract, I would get benefits even though we already lost that land” (12.11.13).

This section has underlined the outstanding importance the water source and the swampland had for the livelihoods of women and some *landusing* men. The statement above is an indication of the overall importance of employment. People mostly put the loss in relation to non-functioning mitigation measures or ended working contracts. The statement of the *landuser* even suggests that affected people could deal with the loss of the water source – but only in case of proper compensation or a steady cash income through a secure job. But on the contrary, jobs are few (cf. chapter 6.5.) and mitigation measures designed for the case of Worreh Yeama, i.e. the well, was not perceived as adequate as it could not make up for the loss the affected people experienced. Furthermore, I heard many people complaining about insufficient land lease and compensation payments and the failures of the Farmer Development and Vegetable Program and this will be subject of investigation in the next chapter.

6.3. Compensation Schemes

In what follows, I will outline how the Land Lease Payment (LLP) and the Acknowledgement Payment (AAP) already addressed in chapter 4.2.2. impact the local context. By asking who is concretely benefitting from the payments, I discovered an interesting method of sharing LLP and AAP which is (to my knowledge) unique in Addax’ operational area. Subsequently, I will address perceptions of the compensation scheme for the destroyed crops as so many people expressed their frustration about the amount of the payments.

6.3.1. Land Lease and Acknowledgement Payment

The *landowners* receive a 50% share of the LLP (1.8 \$) plus the AAP (1.40 \$) as a compensation for the leased land in form of an annual payment. Worreh Yeama has leased an area of 318 acres (127 hectares) of land to Addax and thus received a payment of 4’070’000 Le (951 \$). The signatories of the *landowners* received checks at the Village Liaison Committee meetings and could withdraw the LLP and the AAP at the bank in Makeni. Although the payments are officially destined for the *landowners*, the community of Worreh Yeama shares it between *landowners* and *landusers* on the initiative of the *landowners* themselves. In addition to that, a part of the money goes to

the communities of Royema and Romaneh because they have common ancestors (cf. chapter 3.5). Romaneh gets 400'000 Le and Royema 200'000 Le. The *landowning* families in Worreh Yeama, the Kanus, the Kamaras and the Contehs receive 200'000 Le each and split it among themselves. The rest of the money is distributed among *landusing* and *landowning* families according to the number of people living in a household. Some got 10'000 Le (2.5 \$), some 20'000 Le (5\$) and other 50'000 Le (12\$), whereas the elder benefitted more than the younger. In this way, all households of the community benefit, though unequally, from the payment.

Still, the situation was not always as harmonious as it might seem after the explanation of the shared LLP and AAP. An incident narrated below illustrates how the overreaching expectations of the affected people led to conflicts within the community:

The first LLP and AAP were collected by the heads of the Kanu and the Conteh family in Makeni. When they came back, the money was to be split according to the allocation formula outlined above. "Some of our family members thought they will receive a huge amount of money but we just gave little to them" (Pers. Comm. 12.11.13) one of the landowners remembers. He located the reason for the expectation in the fact that Addax always mentioned land prices in dollars. As people were unaware of the exchange rate, the expectations about the payments were exorbitantly high. "We also thought these payments will take place every month, but it was by year" (ibid.) admitted the *landowner*. Instead of discussing the matter, his elder brothers accused the two *landowners* of 'having eaten the money' and reported them to the police. The two elder *landowners* had to spend the night at the police station and the community had to pay for the release of the two men with the LLP and AAP.

In the year 2012, a big share of the LLP and AAP had to be used to pay transport and court fees for the settling of the land dispute with the community of Lungi Acre, so people could not benefit to the full extent from the payments.

The LLP and AAP is a considerable amount of money in the local context. However, it also causes problems within the families due to unrealistic expectations or it has to be used to solve problems that have only evolved with the operations of the company, namely the settling of the land dispute. The fact that the money is shared among all the community members is a desirable and socially minded way of dealing with the money; unlike the heads of *landowning* families in other villages, who keep everything for

themselves and steadily get richer. At the same time it does not imply an observable increase in wealth in the community as the money is shared among many people.

6.3.2. Crops Compensation

Addax paid compensation to the owners of cash crops and economic trees it destroyed for its operations. The process of compensation was based on the maps, where every single palm, mango, banana or cashew nut tree and economic crops such as cassava had its GPS position. It identified the exact number of such crops and trees and their respective owner (in the sense of cultivator as explained in chapter 5.3.2.) and paid a one-off payment in cash directly to the claimant. People perceived the payments as way too low. A *landuser* complained that he only got 33'000 Le (8 \$) for one improved oil palm that is normally producing palm oil for cooking up to 35 years. A woman added that her small oil palms were not compensated at all. Economic crops such as cassava or pepper and the like were paid according to the crop value and the spatial distribution of the asset. A woman criticized that her pepper farm was rewarded with 20'000 Le (5\$) only. She said she would get 50'000 Le per week by selling the pepper and she would normally be harvesting during two full months.

This illustrates how two different kinds of knowledge collide and cause frustrations and misunderstanding. In the view of the company, a tree is a geographical position on a two-dimensional map. It is only compensated if it has a certain height at the time the land was mapped. The level of compensation payments follows the recommendation of the Ministry of Agriculture and the experts written on the ESHIA reports. For local people however, a tree has been planted, tended and harvested and it has provided food or cooking oil over a certain period of time; sometimes it has also paid the children's school fees (cf. Millar 2015). To them the 8 \$ for this palm tree does not reflect its market value over time.

The affected people were not aware of the fact that the crops compensation was a one-off payment, as this statement of a *landuser* indicates: "And then we asked them, 'how many times are you going to pay us?' That was the time they said they are only going to pay us once. Not even twice" (Pers. Comm. Focus Group 25.12.13). And a woman asked rhetorically: "If you receive forever the 30'000 Le for a palm tree you usually benefit every year, how will the children go to benefit from such?" (ibid.). One could see that people's expectations of the crop compensations fell short and that they were profound

confusion regarding the different frequencies of the different payments. After the first disappointment, they had learnt that LLP and APP were not paid monthly but annually, so how should they understand that the crops were only compensated once and not on an annual basis? They had been benefitting from both, land and crops alike, over a long period of time.

6.4. The Farmer Development Program

The Farmer Development Program (FDP) was always allocated a prominent place in the project descriptions of the company and its donors and was also hotly debated and fiercely criticised by national and international NGO's. Once in the field, I realised that this was not much talk about nothing but constituted a permanent concern and subject of discussion among the project people themselves and hence I decided to look deeper into this. I will first explain the design made by Addax and the FAO before outlining how the program is implemented and received on the local level. Finally, there will be a short digression on the topic of food security.

6.4.1. The Design of the Farmer Development Program

As pointed out in chapter 4.2.2., the Executive Summary of ESHIA expects the operations to impact the region positively through the creation of large-scale job opportunities, infrastructure and service development. Nevertheless, the report also acknowledges that the land lease could result in economic displacement and food insecurity. In order to mitigate the potentially negative impacts, especially for *landusers* who are not compensated financially (CES 2009: 102), Addax and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) designed the Farmer Development Programme (FDP). The FDP “will ensure PAP’s have access to sufficient land and appropriate agricultural training to be able to produce enough rice to achieve food security and enhance their livelihoods” (AfDB n.d.: 7-8). The FDP is a three-year program that aims at enabling affected people to increase food production well beyond current levels by applying improved farming techniques taught in Farmer Field and Life Schools (FFLS). Within the framework of the FDP, the company ploughs and harrows the FDP field provided by the communities⁷² for free. Every project-affected village has one FDP field whose size is determined by the number of people living in the village (0.143ha of agricultural land per person). The company provides 50 kg of seed rice per hectare of FDP land for the first year. The seed

⁷² The FDP is implemented on village land that is not leased by the company.

rice is given to the farmers who seed it on the field. Later, the plots are allocated to the households with the size depending on the number of persons living in the household⁷³. According to the MoA, the people participating in the FDP have the obligation to take “full care of his/her portion of land (complete weeding, rodent control, bird scaring) to obtain optimum yields” (2010: 4). During the months of October and November the farmers harvest the rice themselves and inform the company about the harvest so it can send threshing teams that thresh the rice mechanically and deduct the input. The household needs to pay back input rice for the coming year as seed rice is only provided in the first years. Until 2013, Addax asked an input of 8 kg per person after the first and 16 kg after the second year. However, as many farmers failed to pay back their input for different reasons (see below), they were excluded from the program. However, the FDP Manager explained that Addax reduced the input from 8 kg to 6 kg after the first and from 16 to 12 kg after the second year after his team had realized how much difficulty the input payment meant for the farmers (Pers. Comm. 23.10.13). The input deduction shall be illustrated using the example of a particular household in the second year of FDP⁷⁴. If a household with six members harvested 285 kg, the input to be paid is 72 kg of rice: $6 \text{ (household members)} \times 12\text{kg (Input per person in the 2}^{\text{nd}} \text{ year)} = 72\text{kg Input}$

The threshing team takes the input to Kontobé, the Addax FDP site, where the rice is dried and stored for the next year’s seeding. The remaining 213 kg ($285 \text{ kg} - 72 \text{ kg} = 213$) of farmgate rice still contain the moisture and the husks. During the process of drying and removing the husks, the farmgate rice loses 30% of its weight. If we deduct the 30% from the 213 kg, the household remains with approximately 149 kg of cleaned rice in the end. Accordingly, it can be stated that the 6-person household has a net harvest of 149 kg of FDP rice in the year 2013, which is 25kg per person.

The second component of the program is the Farmer Field and Life School (FFLS). This concept offers a 30-week training in modern farming techniques to 2000 people from the communities and aims at enabling the farmers to improve crop yields. The ESHIA

⁷³ The number of people has been assessed during the household surveys conducted in line with ESHIA. People present at the day of the survey have been counted; the ones travelling or working in a neighbouring village however are not included. Although the number of persons living in a household is often subject to change, it could not be changed after the surveys have been completed.

⁷⁴ Unfortunately, I was in Makeni for medical treatment when threshing teams came to the community of Worreh Yeama. The figures indicated here come from a field trip to Waka village on the 14.11.13.

Executive Summary states that “this will reduce the need for local farmers to leave their land fallow for extended periods (years) in order for the soil to rest, thus increasing the planting period and making more efficient use of the land” (AfDB n.d.: 11). In order to reduce dependency of the farmers on the company, the program is confined to three years in which farmers learn about improved farming techniques and apply them directly on the FDP field. After three years of FDP, the farmers are expected to understand the determinants of farm performance and technical options of improvement and will be able to sustain food security themselves. From the fourth year on, they can benefit from the Farmer Development Services (FDS) offering ploughing, harrowing and storage services of the company at cost price (FDS meeting 10.10.13).

6.4.2. Implementation of the FDP in Worreh Yeama

In the community of Worreh Yeama, the FDP started in 2010 with 125 acres (50 hectares). In 2011, the Paramount chief had “flagged the boliland” because of the on-going land dispute with Lungi Acre, which means that the FDP land could not be used. Hence, the second year of the FDP was postponed to 2012, when the conflict was eventually solved. In this year however, yields on many household plots were poor and many household heads were unable to pay back the input and were thus excluded from the programme. The exclusion of these farmers resulted in the decreased size of the FDP community field from the initial 125 acres (50 ha) to 87,5 acres (35 ha) in 2013. When I asked the farmers about the reasons for the poor harvests, they indicated several reasons:

The first reason is the new method of farming that is implemented on the FDP farms. A woman explained that with the new method, the company ploughs and broadcasts the seeds during the dry season. The rice will begin to grow with the first rains and weeding becomes difficult because the *boliland* is flooded. She is convinced that the traditional way of transplanting the rice is much more successful: Farmers make heaps during the dry season and scatter them during the rains. Then they transplant the rice they have nursed (mostly at Pivot Five) and plant it on the *boliland*. With this method, she explained, weed cannot grow because the soil has been covered. Some also hold the soil quality responsible for the difficulties in weeding, especially if it contains a lot of clay. Others claim that plot allocation to the households was done too late so people did not know which plot would be theirs and could not start with the weeding early enough.

Second reason for poor yields is the lack of fertility. Some farmers were convinced that the intensive mode of cultivation on FDP land reduces soil fertility quickly, as the rice is planted on the same field every year. Others consider themselves unlucky to be allocated an infertile plot. Absolvants of the FFLS said the new method of farming requires the application of fertilizers and herbicides that have become unaffordable for people after the war and criticize the company for not providing fertilizers for free. Many farmers also complained about late land preparation, which leads to poor outcomes. The difference between the FDP farm and 'traditional farms' was actually striking.

However, some farmers deliberately explained their incapability of paying back the input with the fact that they had eaten the rice without informing the company. A woman whose household has been excluded from the FDP after the second year states: "I know about that input thing, but we had already eaten that rice when Addax came. Because we have to eat. We can't just keep it like that to give input for the company. So we don't pay the input because we don't have rice" (Pers. Comm. 27.11.13). Another farmer said they have eaten the rice out of fear that "Addax is going to take the rice away" (Pers. Comm. 6.12.13). This illustrates that many farmers do not understand the design of the FDP and the idea of the input deduction. The company however accuses the farmers of being lazy and of not engaging enough in weeding and bird scaring (Pers.Comm.12.12.13). It seems that the reasons for the failure of the FDP are to be located in the misunderstandings concerning mutual obligation and responsibilities. Most of the farmers do not know about the existence of the MoA⁷⁵ and their obligations in the program. When I asked the farmers to explain the FDP, they often answered something similar as "You know, Addax is planting rice for us" (Pers. Comm. 27.10.13) or "they do the farming for us" (Pers. Comm. 23.12.13). Some of them seemed to consider the FDP as a charity programme whereby the responsibility for its success lies in the hands of the company only.

After three years, the FDP is continued in the form of the FDS. Under the FDS, Addax provides the following services at cost price to registered farmers: contract ploughing and harrowing, threshing, provision of seed, seed storage and transportation. The FDS was opened in October 2013 and farmers of the 22 villages in the final FDP year were asked to register. It costs SLL 50'000 (USD 11.4) to plough one acre of land. Farmers

⁷⁵ The MoA has been signed by the former Addax FDP Manager and a community representative.

complained that the prices are the same as before when they rented tractors from other farmers. Many farmers reported they did not have enough cash to pay for the services and demanded lower prices.

In 2013, a Vegetable Programme (VP) was set up and implemented in eight villages. With the establishment of the VP, Addax made an attempt to diversify the food production, a reaction to criticism that had been raised because of the production of one single crop (rice) only, as the Farmer Development Manager explained (Pers. Comm. 12.12.13). Worreh Yeama was among those chosen villages and there, the VP was portrayed as a mitigation measure for the destruction of the swamp, the Chairlady explained to me:

“They told us that they are going to assist us here in Worreh Yeama because they destroyed our area where we plant before. But we didn’t get nothing on that plot. We had a place to plant [the swamp] during the dry season, so vegetable plantations during the rainy [the VP] is not interesting to us. Because then, we plant in our backyards and the vegetables don’t have prices. During the dry season you get high money because not all the farmers are able to plant during the dry season”
(Pers.Comm.27.11.13).

The statement of the Chairlady illustrates that the VP does not correspond to the needs of women. They are waiting for a measure that would allow them to plant vegetables during the *dry* season as they used to do before at Pivot Five and not during the rainy season when they plant according to their own method behind the houses. The Chairlady also explained that the VP was implemented too late. Instead of planting the vegetables in June as women do according to their traditional method of farming, they planted the seedlings in August. In consequence, not a single crop could be harvested. Other participants confirmed this. Women participating in the Focus Group Discussion demanded that if Addax really wanted to implement a VP in the rainy season, which does not correspond to the needs of women, they should at least do it on time (Pers. Comm. 23.12.13). To conclude we can say that mitigation measures of the VP firstly do not reflect the needs of the women and secondly are imposed on them in a way that does not correspond to the traditional method of farming and did not generate any output as they were implemented too late.

6.4.3. Digression Food Security

In the context of the Bioenergy project, food security is a contentious issue. Many NGOs claim that Addax' operations are threatening the food security of the region; first, for the production of biofuel instead of food and second, for the partial failure of the FDP. Addax on the other hand is convinced to mitigate negative impacts of the sugarcane production on food security successfully with the FDP. I would now like to point out why I cannot make an assessment of the food security in Worreh Yeama.

If we take the household example given above, we can see that the household attained a net harvest of 149 kg, meaning 25 kg per person in a household of six. However, the food security baseline determined by the FAO is 100 kg of rice per person per year (AfDB n.d.:11). Relying purely on these numbers, one could conclude that food security for this household is not achieved. However, this would be very much simplified, as the FDP fields are not the only agricultural areas where food is produced. Since farmers are unable to say how much food they produce besides the FDP, we cannot assess the total amount of rice and other crops harvested and are hence unable to judge if the food security baseline is generally achieved. Moreover, we are moving in an unclear conceptual framework as it is not evident whether Addax meant that the FDP alone would ensure food security or if they considered it as a contribution to the achievement of food security.

The first obstacle to assess food security is the impossibility of recording the total amount of food produced by the farmers in the region in one year. We also have to take into account that the local economy does not merely consist of subsistence farming but that the given household has cash income because one household member is working for Addax. This income enables households to buy food on the market, which also contributes to the food supply. However, people with cash income are unable to make a statement on the amount of money they spend on food.

The question of food security is complex and dependent on various factors. I lack the above-mentioned information to properly assess food security as defined by the FAO.

The second problem is the impossibility to compare the present stage of food security with pre-FDP years: Even if, hypothetically speaking, I was able to properly assess the food security in the region in the year 2013 on the base of FDP harvest, food production on other fields and food bought on the market, we would have no data nor tool to make objectively valid statements about the increase or decrease of food security since the

arrival of Addax. Project-affected people were often unable to tell how much rice and other crops they harvested the previous years since they simply did not write it down. Furthermore, there is a lot of food exchange, or “helping out with food” taking place within extended family networks. People lacking food rely on the solidarity of the family, which results in a constant flow of food and cash, if available. These complex networks make it impossible to track the production and consumption of food of a household or even of a community as families often extend beyond the village borders.

Because of the lack of the necessary data and tools, I am unable to make an assessment of the food security in the region.

6.5. Employment

The creation of employment facilities has been emphasized from the beginning in the project justifications of the Executive Summaries of ESHIA and during the initial meetings of the company with the affected people. The distribution and access to wage labour as well as dismissals of workers were a constant and emotional topic of conversation in the village. Generally speaking, no matter whether young or old, *landuser* or *landowner*, man or woman – everybody wanted to work for Addax, as this is the only possibility to get a steady income and to flee the hardship of agricultural work. However, the amount of jobs was well below the expectations of the villagers. During the interviews and in everyday conversations I got the impression that people anticipated jobs for everyone after having received news from the initial meetings with Addax. Especially the *landowners* expected their sons and daughters to be employed because the company stated to employ *landowners* preferably. However, the reality at the time of research was rather disenchanting, as only five men in the community were employed by Addax or one of its subcontractors. In this chapter, I will describe the development of the labour sector in Worreh Yeama, the way access to labour was organized and how employment and salaries were perceived by the workers.

6.5.1. Contracts, Salaries and Working Conditions

In the years 2010 and 2011, when Addax started its operations, more than 30 persons in Worreh Yeama got employed, among them four women. The women were employed at the nursery in neighbouring Lungi Acre where they planted, weeded and cut the sugarcane. The men were mostly engaged for the clearance of the bush to make space for the sugarcane. People reported that they were excited about the company in those

days. However, when the bush was cleared and the sugarcane nursed, the company needed less people for their operations and they 'ended' the contracts of the workers after an average working time of three or four months. As few people are literate, the employed could not understand the working contracts. Most of them knew that there are two categories of workers, namely the casual and the permanent workers, but they did not understand that there is a difference in contract. They felt they 'were sat' from one day to the other without understanding that working contracts were already limited when they signed them with their fingerprint. Many of the now dismissed workers were confused about receiving a changing salary from month to month.

Again for the reasons of illiteracy and insufficient translation of the contract, many were unable to understand the terms of employment. The salary for a full working day comprising eight hours (but 12 hours for pivot guards and security guards) was 16'000 Le (3.8 \$). If they worked overtime or on Saturdays, they earned time and half of the usual salary. If they worked on Sundays, they got double the salary. Depending on overtime and weekends worked, the salary would vary, but it was mostly between 300'000Le (70 \$) and 400'000Le (94\$).

At the time of research, one man was employed as pivot guard and two men for weeding, cutting and applying fertilizers on the sugarcane fields. The four of them had permanent working contracts with a notice period of one month granting them paid official holidays and 24 days of leave per year. Two men were newly employed by a subcontractor of Addax as security guards. They were employed as casual workers with one week of notice period but they both reported having been promised permanent working contracts if they do not commit any offence. One of them said that his first month's salary was withheld for some time because a thresher was stolen and the subcontractor wanted to put pressure on the thief, but no one came and admitted the theft and the company was obliged to pay the salary anyways.

Another field of concern was the NASSIT (The National Social Security and Insurance Trust) contribution that deducts 5% of the monthly salary for the pension scheme. However, only persons above 60 years of age and who have paid NASSIT during 15 years qualify for old age pension⁷⁶. The Addax workers with limited working contracts felt exploited because they had to pay the contribution every month but would probably never qualify for the pension. On most of the payment slips there was the category of

⁷⁶ Sierra Leone NASSIT Scheme and Organization (news.sl).

“other deductions” next to NASSIT that was double or triple the amount of NASSIT. However, nobody was able to explain to me what these “other deductions” were paid for. When I told one of the workers to ask his supervisors, he was just laughing and saying: “I don’t even know how to write my name, how shall I be able to identify the passage on my pay slip? We are unable to go to offices and ask for our rights, especially if you are unable to speak English, even unable to speak the Krio. They will just tell me, ‘my friend, get out of here’” (Pers. Comm. 13.11.).⁷⁷

6.5.2. Access to Employment

The way access to employment is organized in Worreh Yeama is very interesting and deserves our attention. In the year 2010, the Land Owners Committee (LOC) was formed by the *landowners* in the Makari Gbanti Chiefdom⁷⁸, “because we realised we were loosing our rights to Addax operations” (Pers. Comm. 15.12.13). The *landowners* were particularly dissatisfied with the area of employment. They felt that people from outside the operational area got more employment than their own children. In addition to that, land disputes arose through the land titling process, resulting in the need for an organized local institution that would assist solving the issues.

“We wanted to found the committee so our voices would be heard and we didn’t just wait and do nothing in this problematic situation” (ibid.), the Secretary General of the LOC explained. According to my interlocutor, Addax appreciated the idea and involved the LOC in the allocation of jobs. In case the company needed workers in the Makari Gbanti chiefdom it assigned the distribution of the jobs to the LOC. The LOC paid attention to a fair distribution and took turns in the houses so that all the households would have the opportunity to have a member working for the company. In the end of 2011 and beginning of 2012, however, Addax accused the LOC of accepting bribes from the people and Addax reassumed the recruitment of their workers. From then on, the Secretary reported, the number of people recruited in the cities increased and the

⁷⁷ It is not my intention to suggest that the company is deducting money from the salaries for no reason. Contracts and payments seem to be made correctly, so I assume there is a simple explanation behind „other deductions.“ With this passage, I aimed demonstrating how powerless most local workers are due to their illiteracy and lacking knowledge of English or Krio and how this restricts their space of action.

⁷⁸ In Bombali Shebora chiefdom an equivalent to the LOC was formed and named „Sons and Daughters of Landowners“. In Malal Mara, nothing comparable existed at that time, as operations had just started recently in this chiefdom and people were not organised yet.

number of local workers decreased again and quarrels and frustrations arose again. Addax apparently acknowledged the problem and shifted the responsibility of recruitment of workers in the Makari Gbanti chiefdom to its advocate, Honourable Martin Ibrahim Bangura. From the beginning of the year 2013 onwards, he was the one who chose the workers for the company.

This description shows that landowners try to adapt and found an institution that is destined to represent their interests. Evidence shows that this institution is used to maintain the 'traditional' distributional power of the *landowners*. Before the implementation of the Bioenergy project they managed access to land and within the framework of the LOC they managed access to jobs.

6.5.3. Perceptions of Employment

The men who were employed at my time of research referred to themselves as being "very lucky" on the one hand but complained about the low salary on the other:

"We cut and plant the sugarcane. For this issue we appreciate the company, even though I am not receiving enough salary. But I have no choice because I am not educated. As you can see, I am not doing farming but I am working for Addax. So this is a good impact for me. For the negative impact, when you benefit it is also important for your companion to benefit. (...) Many of my brothers have been terminated and didn't get employment again. But if just a single person will benefit and the majority don't get, how will you be able to take care of those people?"
(Pers.Comm. 25.12.13).

The statement of this *landuser* expresses the ambivalent situation of the employed people in the village: On one side the employed people are on the 'winning side'; they are satisfied, because they have become modern workers with a steady salary and do not have to engage in old fashioned and strenuous farming any more. The cash income enabled some of them to put zinc roofs on their houses and go to town to buy rice. In addition to that, Addax treats its workers in their hospitals in case of illness or accident. This is a fact that is highly appreciated by all workers I talked to. But at the same time, they are confronted with the expectations of an extended family, because they are the successful and the lucky ones and obliged to support the less privileged (cf. 3.1.). A 26-year-old worker said that he has to buy food for the whole family and pay the school fees of his brothers children. "In one week, the money paid is finished, so I only have to trust somewhere else, so that I have money to eat. It is a shame for me as a permanent worker

receiving such salary” (Pers. Comm. 13.11.13). The same worker told me he really wished to become a tractor driver but Addax did not want to fulfil its promise to train local people. In a desperate attempt, he paid 100’000 Le (23,50\$) to the tractor operator and 100’000 Le to the former manager, so they would recommend him to be trained, but it all remained without effect. “So I decided to remain in this area because I am uneducated”(ibid.), he concluded. People feel they have no choice but to accept what is offered to them, no matter how precarious conditions are. It is still better to work for Addax for a small salary than ‘sit in the village’ was the prevailing opinion among the workmen. And, they were still hoping that the situation would improve, and their hopes were fuelled by rumours spread by the local superiors that salaries would be increased once the ethanol production at the factory site had started.

The persons who were not employed (any more) were highly frustrated because of the anticipated long-term employment for everyone. A group that was in special discomfort were the women, especially those who used to plant vegetables at Pivot Five before the start of the Bioenergy project.

“For us it’s difficult to get our survival because at Pivot Five, we usually benefit a lot before. But we the women, we didn’t get employment facilities. So we don’t have nowhere to plant and we don’t have employment facilities” (Pers. Comm. 23.11.13).

These women feel that they have lost much but won nothing from the project. They harshly criticized the fact that not a single woman was employed at the time of research “although we are not unable to plant sugarcane!” (Pers. Comm.27.11.13). Instead of employing local women, Addax is giving jobs to women from Makeni, they lamented.

Some of the women were complaining that their sons were given employment in the time of cassava planting, but once the plantation time was over, they were dismissed, too. This meant that the agricultural work was done by less people but when the planting time was over, there was again a surplus of people ‘sitting in the village’ (cf. Peters 2013 and Meillassoux 1973).

6.6. Resistance and the Aftermath

The previous chapters have illustrated how frustrations arose because of the loss of fertile parts of land, inadequate compensation, non-functioning mitigation measures and very few employment possibilities. In this climate of general frustration, the boliland incident, as I call it, occurred and changed the setting once again. The story and its

consequences will be narrated from the perspectives of community members who were directly involved in the happening.

6.6.1. The Boliland Incident

Towards the end of the dry season in 2013, Addax staff came to the village of Worreh Yeama and started demarcating parts of the *boliland*, apparently without informing the village headman. Women reported having discovered the demarcation pegs when they were passing by the *boliland* on their way to collect firewood in a small patch of forest nearby. During a Focus Group discussion women remembered that day:

“We met those pegs there and we knew Addax wants to take that boliland, but we the women did not agree. So we came and told the men about these pegs. We told the men it is not possible for Addax to come and take this boliland, because they [already] take the Pivot Five land wherein we benefit a lot. But some wanted the land to go”
(Pers. Comm. 23.11.13).

After the women had informed the men, a meeting was called and the matter was discussed. One of the elder landowners was in favour of leasing out the land. Another man told me later on, that the landowner wanted to give the *boliland*, because he was old and his daughters did not need the land for farming as they were living in the city. With the lease of the *boliland*, the *landowner* would have benefitted from an increased LLP and AAP. However, the women fiercely opposed this option and explained to the landowner that they would not lose more fertile land, especially since they were not employed. “We the women did not agree and some of our brothers here and some of our brothers in Royema were also not in favour for the *boliland* to be given” a woman said. She was therewith referring to *landusing* men from AFLUA who joined the women in their protest. Together, they managed to convince the *landowner* to reject the lease of the *boliland* so they could keep it for their subsistence farming. After some time, the landowner gave in. He was one of the two who were accused of having stolen the LLP and the AP some time ago (c.f. chapter 6.3.1.) In retrospective, he told me:

“People are accusing me of having eaten a large amount of money, which is not true, so I faced this embarrassment at the police station, so really I am unhappy. Still, we are with the same poverty as before but people feel you collect a huge amount of money. This is why I agreed not to give this boliland to Addax, so I can rest in peace”
(Pers.Comm. 12.11.13).

From the statement, we can see that the *landowner* was in a weak bargaining position and did not want to risk further damage of his reputation. The community meeting concluded with the agreement of refusing the *boliland* and the *village headman* ordered the removal of the pegs from the *boliland*. The women and some *landusing* men went to uproot the pegs whilst the *landowner* remained in the village.

As the members of AFLUA were connected to SiLNoRF, they informed the NGO about the opposition of the community. SiLNoRF on their terms is collaborating with NAMATI⁷⁹, a global legal empowerment network. Representatives of SiLNoRF and NAMATI came to the village and held another meeting to discuss the *boliland* issue. “We did not have to pay Mr. Sonkita [lawyer from NAMATI] and agreed for him to fight for us”, the *landowner* recalls. NAMATI entered into renegotiation with Addax on behalf of the



Map 5: Cancelled pivot circled with red colour.
Source: Addax Bioenergy Sierra Leone Ltd

community. Parallel to that, the said *landowner* and the Secretary General went to Addax’ headquarters to discuss the issue.

The final renegotiation took place in Worreh Yeama in the presence of the whole community on the 15th July 2013. The Social Affairs Manager came to the village with his team and told the people that Addax is willing to give the *boliland* back to the community and to cancel the

second pivot on village land. He also explained that in such a case, the company

will relinquish the upland because it is not big enough for another pivot without the *boliland*. The community people were warned that the exclusion of up to two third of upland from the LLA would automatically result in an equivalent loss of the LLP and AAP from 2014 onwards. For the year 2013 the community would still receive the entire payments though. After the people of Worreh Yeama and the *landowners* in particular had agreed, the *paramount chief* and the representative of the District Council signed the

⁷⁹ NAMATI Innovations in Legal Empowerment (www.namati.org)

future amendment of the LLA and the *boliland* was in the hands of the community again. The company officially pretended to understand the wish of the community and also communicated it like that in public and to me. However, behind the official scene, the people of Worreh Yeama experienced increasing difficulties through negative discourses and threats against them.

6.6.2. Negative Labelling

After the refusal of the *boliland* and their support of the community of Worreh Yeama, SiLNoRF and NAMATI were accused of inciting people in the project area against Addax. The people of Worreh Yeama equally experienced negative labelling of their community on a discursive level. The members were called “enemies of progress”, “backward farmers”, “opponents of the president and the welfare of the Sierra Leonean nation”, “saboteurs of the company” or simply “liars”⁸⁰. This applied especially to people criticising the company’s operations during meeting or in front of journalists. Criticising Addax means being against Addax, and being against Addax also means being against the president which henceforth means being against development, as development is what the company is actually doing and what the president is fostering.

At the time of my research, two exposed critics were actively intimidated by local authorities: At the end of a meeting for example, a local politician went to a man from Worreh Yeama and told him his sister (who had reported negative impacts of Addax’ operations to a foreign journalist) should rather not spend the night in her house as something might happen to her. The only literate member of the VLC⁸¹ was complaining about being mocked in public. He used to take notes during the VLC meetings so he would remember the entire content of the discussion. He had then been ridiculed by one of the Addax managers in front of all the stakeholders in the meeting who said “Aaah Mr. C. is writing everything down in order to report it to SiLNoRF.” The community representative found this very embarrassing because it suggested that he was working for the NGO that is inciting people and not as an independent person. “So you see”, he stated bitterly, “if the affected people don’t understand what is going on, the company

⁸⁰ Three of the expressions (liar, saboteurs, backward farmers) I personally heard during meetings. The other expressions are personal communications from the 18.10.13 and 20.11.13.

⁸¹ He is not an official member of the VLC but was representing the youth until the new youth leader was elected.

think we are stupid, but if we try to understand and deliver full reports to our community, they consider us as bad people making trouble for the company” (Pers. Comm. 20.09.13).

The resistance of the company did not only result in negative discourses but also had very concrete consequences, because the local authorities felt offended by the community for not accepting “their project” as they were meant to. In chapter 7.2. I have explained that the recruitment of Addax workers was in the hands of Honourable Martin Bangura. In November 2013, at the time of my fieldwork, Bangura came into the village and said he needed six security workers for a subcontractor of Addax. He picked six young men, made them remove all their hair and sent them to a two weeks training. Later he came back and said he would only take two of them because Worreh Yeama had refused the *boliland* Addax needed for its operations. Hence, communities who only gave a small area of land to the company would only get few benefits (meaning jobs in this case), in contrast to communities who leased a bigger part of their land. The father of one of the trained but dismissed sons was very angry with Bangura. According to him “we were the people who usually stand firm for him to succeed to become a Honourable!! And now he treats us as very unimportant persons and is denying all benefits to us!” (Pers. Comm. 5.12.13). The landowner suspected the Honourable to willingly manipulate and fool the affected people, so the people from other villages would not refuse their land in order to secure their employment facilities.

6.6.3. About Ambivalences

As we have seen in the previous chapters, the people in Worreh Yeama often criticise Addax for the negative impacts they are experiencing due to the lease of the water source and the swampland. Interestingly, the women and the *landuser* do not blame the landowners because they know “they have given the land with regards to the promises they [Addax]made to us” (7.10.13), as a woman puts it. People rather blame their local authorities whom they consider responsible for the exaggerated promises in the first place - and they blame, though to a lesser extent, the company.

Further, people complain about low compensation payments, inadequate mitigation measures and failed development projects. However, I have noticed uncountable times when someone said something critical about the company, she/he made sure to quickly relativize the critical statement by saying, “We are not against Addax, we love Addax, but

they should fulfil the promises they made to us” (ibid.). I read this as an indication that people perceive Addax in a very ambivalent manner and that they are moving in a field of tension when expressing their views about the company. On one hand, they refused the *boliland* because Addax had not fulfilled the promise of the dam as mitigation for the lost swamp. On the other hand, nobody I talked to in the project area wanted the company to leave. People wanted the company to stay, under the condition that they would fulfil their promises - although these promises had already been broken many times in the perception of the people. It seemed to me that people were unable to disconnect their opinion about the company from the promises they still had on their minds. They seem to go hand in hand, and the promises persist in their heads as well as the hope that they would materialize one day – similarly to the expectations of modernity of the workers in the Zambian copper belt Ferguson (1999) has described many years ago. This hope is, I believe, intimately linked to a feeling of powerlessness about themselves as poor and uneducated farmers.

“If you are unable to read and write, you don’t have the power to do anything. Particularly, if you are not educated and you don’t have money – then you are just a funny person”, an elder once summarized his view of the things (Pers. Comm. 27.10.13).

This perception of life might be informed by long-standing and deeply rooted patronage-clientele relations (c.f. 5.2.3.) that gained momentum with the influx of foreign aid after the civil war. Accordingly, people clearly consider Addax as a patron that has the responsibility to provide relief and welfare to his powerless clientele. “Addax is a very big and powerful company and we are just the project-affected people. But we want them to succeed” (Pers.Comm.18.12.13). In my view, this clearly reflects both the obligation of sharing for the patron on one side and the obligation of displaying loyalty towards the client on the other, and this might be the reason why the negative labelling is causing people so much pain. They want to support the company, want to be loyal to it. But simultaneously they see the need to raise their voices in order to articulate criticism and to resist if necessary, because the very resilience of their livelihoods is endangered by the company’s operation.

7. Discussion

The empirical findings from the operational area of Addax Bioenergy have revealed a complex pattern of companies, institutions, nongovernmental organisations and local elites acting within a shifting technological and discursive framework linking global scales to a unique local context. Addax Bioenergy emerged at the convergence of the biofuel and the development discourse and an increased demand for biofuels on the European market due to the Renewable Energy Directive of the European Union (EC 2009). Through the combination of the discourse of renewable energy with the development discourse, the company could win a range of development banks as lenders. Another crucial factor for the emergence of the Bioenergy project was the mother company Addax and Oryx Group (AoG) that has decades of experience in oil trading in Africa, important contacts in Sierra Leone and the necessary starting capital. The country itself is very attractive for several reasons: Offering a suitable climate for the sugarcane plantations, it also disposes over some basic infrastructure (the Freetown – Makeni Highway rebuilt by the EU after the war and the jetty at the harbour in Freetown built by AoG), a relatively short shipping distance to Europe and most favourable conditions for investments, including tax exemptions and legal stabilisation clauses (Bürgi 2015). However, Lustenberger (2015) has convincingly pointed out that the biochemical, and the political factors would have hardly been sufficient for the choice of Addax to invest in Sierra Leone. Rather, social networks were of utmost importance, especially the contacts to influential businessmen, local authorities and high-ranking politicians born in and around the later project are.

Findings from my own fieldwork confirm the importance of local authorities, as they acted as brokers between company and affected people. The loyalty and spatial bonds that tie affected people to local elites were – in combination with the ‘abject poverty’ after the civil war – the reason for the consent of the people. When ABSL appeared in the country, the civil war had ended only five years ago and the country figured at the absolute bottom of the Human Development Index of the United Nations. People were desperately hoping for a better life, were waiting for relief and development. When Addax Bioenergy came to the communities with local elites, promising development and jobs in return for the land of the people, happiness and expectations of modernity (Ferguson 1999) gained momentum among local communities. Tired of the hardship of subsistence farming and the horrors of the war, people were excited and pictured

themselves as modern proletarians working in the factory, earning a stable income with which to feed the family, pay for education and buying western comfort they have been dreaming of for so long. In addition, Addax representatives were friends of their local authorities and people welcomed the company with open arms.

Empirical findings reveal that the issues of land and employment are at the very heart of the discussion about the Bioenergy projects on the local level. I will start my analysis with the institution of land rights that has experienced considerable changes through the implementation of Addax Bioenergy. The relative prices for land have changed through the increased interest in land by investors, who had entered the local setting through discourses of modernity and development. The company, vested with high bargaining power due to new technologies, hegemonic knowledge and capital, chose private property institutions (i.e. formalisation) to make land legible to the corporate eye and facilitate its own investment.

Before the investment, land rights in the operational area were organised in form of 'customary' tenure. However, as Peters (2009, 2013) has pointed out for Sub-Saharan Africa in general, the term 'customary' is actually misleading, as the present-day customary tenure is a product of colonial rule and differs from the pre-colonial customary institution in many ways (cf. chapter 2.4., 4.1. and 5.3.2.). Pre-colonial customary rights were informed by the idea of an equal share (Ferguson 2015) for members of the community. British *indirect rule* then considerably weakened customary land rights as it turned the politico-military relationship between the paramount chiefs (or former *kings*) and his subjects into an economic relationship as the chief was assigned the task of tax collection.

Although the power of the chieftaincies has steadily eroded during colonial, post-colonial and post-war politics, *paramount chiefs* and other local authorities still serve as primary identification figures in present-day rural Sierra Leone. Despite internationally funded democratisation and decentralisation mechanisms, the native administration and the patronage–clientele system remain powerful institutions (Fanthorpe 2001). Yet, in addition to altering the role of the *chief*, the colonial administration 'invented' the institution of landowners and therewith developed exclusionary tendencies in customary land tenure. Those who could discursively claim 'ownership' through discourses of belonging and narratives of descending from the *firstcomers* became so-called *landowners* (Toulmin 2008). Still, the 'ownership' of land is by no means

exclusive, as *landowners* must give land to persons with ‘secondary rights’, i.e. user rights. These ‘secondary rights’ holders are women, migrants, pastoralists or other *strangers* who claim their rightful share through access and benefit from land and resources as members of the community. Hence, the *landowners* must rather be seen as coordinators of access to land instead of ‘owners’ in a Western sense. Evidence from Worreh Yeama suggests that within the community, the pre-colonial regulations for accessing land remained in place – in line with to the social obligation of solidarity (or *moral economy* as Scott 1976 put it) that basically corresponds to the idea of a rightful share (Haller 2013, Ferguson 2015).

Similar regulations apply to commonly used *bolilands*, swamplands, water sources and forest patches. In Worreh Yeama, the perennial water source and the surrounding swampland ‘belonged to the community’ as people put it. As the soil in the area was highly fertile and wet all year long, the land was highly requested. In this case, a *landuser* was allocating the plots to other *landusers* (and to the *landowners* as well!). In the rainy season, men and women jointly planted rice at the swamp but in the dry season, the area became a (non-exclusive) ‘*women space*’ (Rocheleau & Edmunds 1997) due to the gendered division of labour. The vegetable grown during the dry season provided families with food and women with cash, as many of them used to sell the surplus of the harvest. As described in chapter 5.3.3., the cash was bitterly needed in the context of low income subsistence farming and enabled women to pay for their children’s education. At the same time, the income increased their (bargaining) power and their overall status in the community. Hence, access to the land meant the right to benefit from land (cf. Ribot & Peluso 2003), which was highly critical for the resilience of livelihoods of women and *landusers* in general.

However, *de facto* exclusionary tendencies in land rights arose in the context of formalisation of land rights through Addax Bioenergy. According to Sierra Leonean Law, the rent for the land has to be split among the *landowners* (50%), Chiefdom Council (20%), District Council (20%) and government (10%). On a voluntary basis, Addax introduced an additional payment for the *landowners* via Acknowledgement Agreement (AA). In order to guarantee fair payments and correct calculation of the complex compensation mechanism, Addax needed to formalize the land so everyone would know ‘which land belongs to whom’.

Diametrically opposed to the functioning of the local institutions, Addax began registering the land by giving titles to the heads of *landowning* families, as they were the ones identified as 'owners' during colonial rule. The land title reinforced and institutionalised patterns of unequal rights and strengthened the element of exclusivity to the primary right holder. This illustrates that the formalisation process functions as a mechanism of exclusion marginalising the groups with secondary user rights, namely women and *landusing* men (De Schutter 2011).

Important to note is that the entire project design of Addax Bioenergy is oriented towards the newly created institution of exclusive landownership. Departing from this logic, *landowners* were the only group on the local level that was consulted. Many donor reports gave the company credit for the establishment of the AA and the related consultations as these measures go beyond the requirements of national law. Besides the issue of consultation, the land lease and acknowledgment payments are reserved for landowners and even jobs are 'given to landowners preferentially'. Though, it is incomprehensible that ABSL did not establish a similar mechanism for *landusers*, especially after the assessment of the Coastal & Environmental Services had identified a possible disadvantage for the marginalised group of *landusers* even before the start of the project (CES 2009).

Landusers would not benefit from the payments at all, if the community of Worreh Yeama had not set up a unique system of sharing payments on its own initiative (cf. chapter 6.3.2.). The same applies for the allocation of jobs that was managed by the newly emerged institution of the 'Land Owners Committee' (LOC). The LOC has distributed jobs by taking turns in households to make sure employment is not an exclusive benefit of the *landowners* (cf. chapter 6.5.2.). I consider these mechanisms of sharing to be related to the social obligation of solidarity that is anchored in the institution of moral economy – a pre-colonial institution that proves to be very robust in times of major transformation. However, in this sense, the mechanisms of sharing can also be analysed as a strategy of the landowners to keep their legitimacy as 'distributors' – if not of land, then of cash or jobs.

However, it would be wrong to suggest that the exclusion of the *landusers* automatically results in a much bigger decision making power of the *landowners* for their own benefits. I will illustrate this using the example of consultation that was, as mentioned above, confined to the landowners. According to my findings, the meetings with the

landowners did not result in a free, prior and informed consent for two reasons. First, because the government had already signed the MoU and the local authorities had already signed the LLA without the consent of the landowners. The fact that *landowners* signed the AA was only a logical consequence of the LLA because they did not have a choice: If *landowners* had refused to sign, the land would have been leased out anyways (as the MoU and the LLA were contracted) but landowners would have gotten lower payments (no Acknowledgement Payment). Second: Landowners did simply not understand what they were signing – regardless if the AA had an impact on the decision whether the land is leased to Addax or not. All the landowners that signed the AA on behalf of the landowning families in Worreh Yeama are illiterate. Due to the lack of education they were unable to read and discuss the agreement among each other or ask questions to the company’s representatives. In addition, several people told me about shortcomings in the hastily translations from English into Temne. In the end, the *landowners* signed it with their fingerprint not because they agreed but because they were pressured to do so by local employees they would never dare to oppose to (e.g. the niece of the powerful business man from the same chiefdom). The fact that contracts were not understandable for local people takes us to the issue of knowledge production that I consider, in line with Millar (2015), to be responsible for many shortcomings, failures and misunderstandings in the Bioenergy project:

As long as land is not measured, mapped and classified, it is not legible for the company. Therefore, Addax Bioenergy produced cartographic knowledge about it (Scott 1998) with the use of modern technologies such as GIS and GPS. Furthermore, relations between affected people and the company are defined by written documents and contracts that are recognized by signatures and fingerprints. While this kind of knowledge is at the heart of societies in the global North, it is relatively new for the people living in the project area, whose lives have been structured by oral communication and informal institutions so far. In the case of Worreh Yeama, these differences put local people at a serious disadvantage. I am not suggesting that one or the other is right or wrong per se, but I claim that one or the other becomes problematic if it is hegemonic, because then, it marginalizes other forms of knowledge. In the case of ABSL the hegemonic type is clearly the knowledge produced by the company. It is hegemonic because it is embedded in the discourses of modernity and development that are declared objectives of the affected people and the Sierra Leonean government.

However, what makes this type of knowledge even more powerful is the fact that it is spread and used in a context of very high illiteracy. People that cannot read a map or understand a contract lack access to this kind of knowledge (Ribot & Peluso 2003) and are excluded from participation and discussions. They are deprived of their bargaining power and therewith stripped off the potential to claim their rights.

Under these circumstances, Addax' justifications through reference to meetings and consultations in case of problems or complaints ('we informed them at numerous meetings and we have documents with signatures') do not seem very convincing. However, Addax believes in this knowledge because it is the only thing it considers to be true and comprehensible. Unfortunately, the company refuses to acknowledge that this knowledge might not be compatible with other people's realities.

These different ways of reading the cultural landscape also manifests when it comes to the consequences of the Addax land take in the community of Worreh Yeama. There, Addax has leased a relatively small but very fertile area of land that is the swampland and its related water source. For Addax, the assessment of the impacts of the land lease is simple: The company looks at the map to understand the spatial dimension of the land take, sees that it is small (in size), and concludes the impacts on the community to be marginal.

For the community however, the swamp is much more than soil and water: It is clean drinking water, vegetable planting and cash income; it is education for the children and empowerment for the women. Hence, the consequences of the loss of the water are serious, especially for women. With the lease of the swamp and the water source, they lost subsistence and access to the market, a fact that weakens the resilience of their livelihoods considerably.

However, the plurality of benefits from this common-pool resource for marginalised groups is not revealed to the reader of a static map. Hence to Addax, the water source was 'only' water that could be easily replaced with two wells in the village. The company seems to be unaware of the fact that this land was valuable for the people due to its *combination* with the resource of water. In case of the fragmentation between soil and water, the benefit of the land is reduced. Addax' statement that Worreh Yeama still has lots of land left for farming, is certainly true; but the problem arises because the two components are disconnected from each other (Mhlanga et al. 2014, Haller 2013). For this reason, a water well in the village cannot compensate the benefits of a swamp in the

dry season. However, company representatives consequently deny the promise of a dam for vegetable plantations people are constantly referring to by claiming that ‘dams are not part of our mitigation measures.’

Based on this analysis my first hypothesis can be corroborated: The process of formalisation of land rights in the Addax operational area had indeed an exclusionary effect: the company issued titles only to the *landowners* and ignored user rights of women and *landusers* in general (De Schutter 2011). This institutional change had effects on the distribution of access to the water source and swampland as well as access to the market that used to be a vital contribution for the livelihoods of women.

But what about the other mitigation measures and compensation mechanisms? Could they not make up for the experienced losses? Findings presented in chapter 6. 4. suggest that the Farmer Development Program (FDP) and the Vegetable Program (VP) conceptualized for the landusers, or the women respectively, are not functioning well at all in Worreh Yeama, as the design systematically misrecognizes the needs and problems of the people. The need of the women is a measure or a program enabling them to cultivate vegetables during the *dry* season. But instead, the objective of the VP is producing vegetables during the rainy season, something women do not need because first, they are doing that in their backyards and second; there is no market for vegetables during the rainy season.

Further, ABSL imposes new methods of farming through the implementation of the FDP and VP. However, these farming techniques require external input in form of fertilizers that is not affordable to the people. Hence, Addax is misrecognizing and depoliticising once more the lives and habits of the people and thereby producing a veritable ‘anti-politics machine’ (Ferguson 2009).

Yet, people claim all the problems would vanish if there were enough employment facilities. Different groups of affected people confirmed that a secure job could outweigh the negative impacts arising from the loss of the swamp and the water and the failed mitigation measures.

Investigating the situation on the ground it becomes obvious that the investment project generated fewer jobs than predicted and fewer jobs than people expected, as Li (2011) had already observed for other LSLA cases. If we look at it through a Marxist political economy perspective, we can say that women have been separated from their means of production that was the swamp and that they *want* to sell their labour force in order to

secure their economic survival. But contrarily to this need, the investment is not capable of absorbing the farmers into the newly emerged economy, because “their land is need but their labour is not” (Li 2011: 286). The so-called surplus people (ibid., Peters 2013, Bernstein 2004, Ferguson 2015) compete for jobs and allow the formal employment sector to employ people under rather precarious working conditions with minimum salaries and maximum working hours (Marx 1962 [1867], cf. chapter 6.5.1.).

In the beginning of Addax operations people mostly got limited working contracts of three or four months. After the contract has ended, they were turning back to the subsistence sector that can be said to subsidize the production of the company. However, at times, the agricultural work had to be done by less people because the employment period and the planting season coincided (cf. Meillassoux 1973 and 1967). However, when the planting season ended, the contracts of the labourers ended too and they were turned into surplus again. Findings from the local level make clear, that project-affected people are tired of farming and would welcome a transition from more subsistence-based production to secure wage labour in the framework of ‘expectations of modernity’. However, “what makes it hard for landless people to accept their de facto proletarian status is that there is no sign that they can move into a proletarian future”, Li (2011: 296) summarizes perfectly (for a description of labour in Mabilafu see Käser 2014).

At some point, the destruction of economic opportunities, non-existent (dam) and non functioning mitigation measures (water well, FDP, VP, low compensation payments) coupled with unavailability of employment possibilities made people clear that they have to return to the subsistence sector for survival (exogenous factor). When the *boliland incident* took place, i.e. when Addax attempted to take some of the fertile *boliland* for additional sugarcane plantations (exogenous factor), opposition arose among women. As *bolilands* are fertile lands suitable for rice production they fiercely opposed the idea of leasing out the *boliland* but they were unable to put pressure on the company directly as they were generally excluded from consultation and negotiation with the company. For this reason, women started shopping around institutions to achieve their goals (Toulmin 2008, Haller 2013). I will analyse the process leading to the community’s resistance to the *boliland* lease based on the graphic below.

As a very first step women decided to go via the ‘customary’ institution (colonial institution) of *landowners* because they are the only official negotiation partner of the

company when it comes to the land lease. One of the *landowners* however was in favour of leasing out the boliland to the company. While trying to convince the *landowner* women allied with the *landusing* men because they have been strengthened as a group through the newly created institution of Affected Land Users Association (AFLUA). The AFLUA (post-colonial or post-war institution) eventually managed to make it clear to the *landowner* that they could not afford to lose further land that was important for the resilience of their livelihoods. They were arguing with their 'right to a share' of land and benefits and thereby relied on a discourse linked to the pre-colonial institution of moral economy (cf. chapter 5.2). As the *landowner* was in a weak bargaining position due to his imprisonment (cf. chapter 6.3.1.) he did not want to risk further conflicts due to the denial of a rightful share to landusers and women. After a heated debate and accusations of selfishness he eventually refused the boliland to the company.

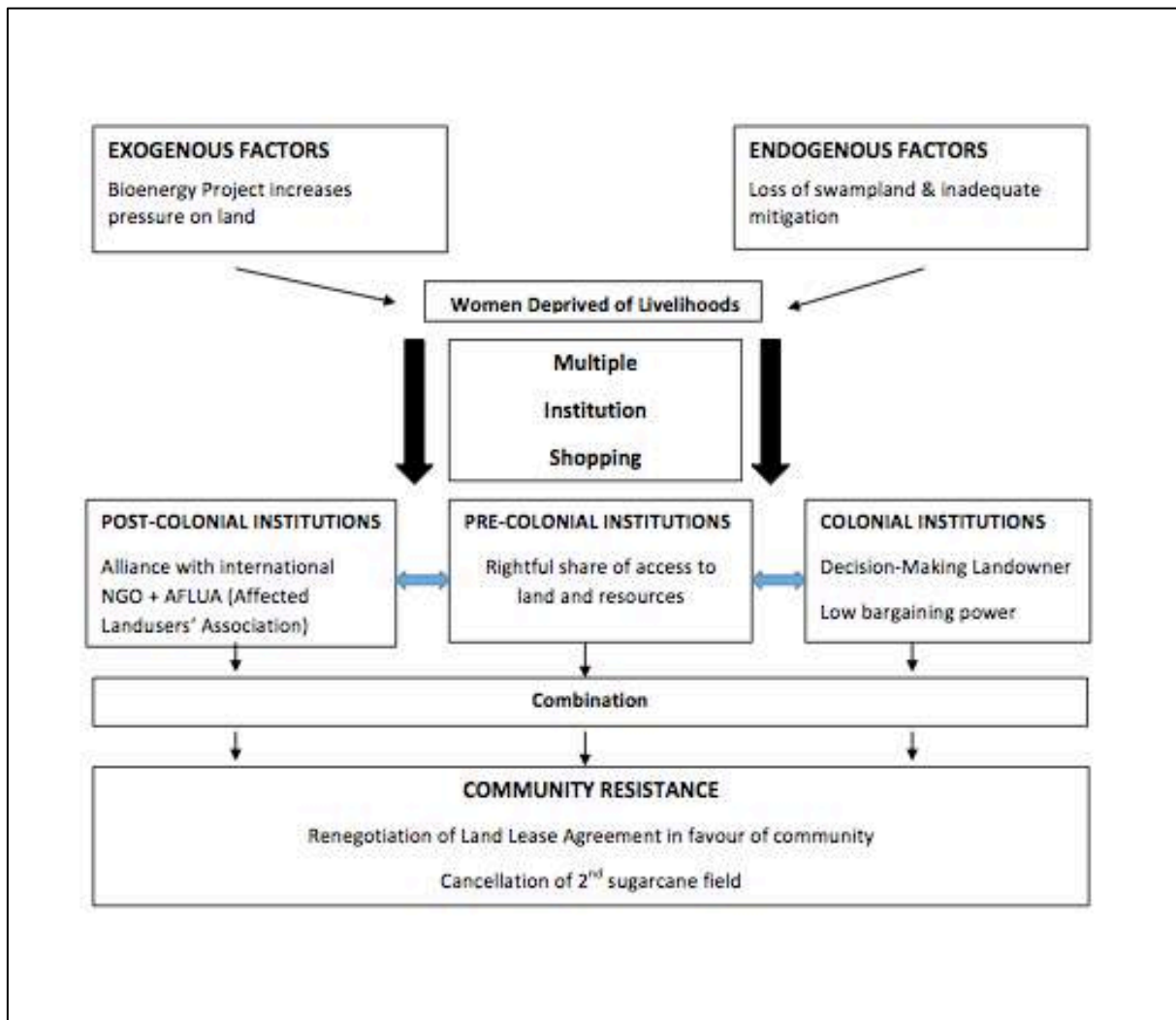


Figure 3. Model of Multiple Institution Shopping. Drawn by the author.

This shows that that women could rely on a favourable endogenous bargaining and institutional setting for the persuasion of the *landowner*. But at that time, renegotiations were still about to come and I argue that the community would have hardly been able to renegotiate land lease agreement in its own favour because it did not have access to the necessary knowledge (literacy, contracts, maps). However, through the connection of the community to SILNORF due the creation of AFLUA, Worreh Yeama was able of setting up alliances with NAMATI, a globally connected legal advocacy movement (McKeon 2013, Haller 2007). NAMATI was providing free services to the community and disposed of the language, information and analytical capacities the community was lacking. NAMATI's lawyer was capable of embedding the claims of the community within the paradigm of human rights, in particular the discourse on the right to food, that is interestingly also informed by the right to subsistence (pre-colonial institution). This emphasizes the robustness of this pre-colonial institution, which influenced both, the colonial (landowner) and post-colonial (NGO's) institution (see blue arrows in the diagram).

The combination of these three different institutions eventually led to a successful outcome of the renegotiation process. Through the exclusion of the *boliland* from the LLA, NAMATI managed to renegotiate the leasing contract for the benefit of the community. ABSL cancelled the second sugarcane field on village land so that the *boliland* can be used for the community's farming activities.

This model of emergence of resistance corroborates my second hypothesis too. 'Institution shopping' of women deprived of livelihoods allow to develop coping strategies that is resistance in this case. However, I amended Toulmin's (2008) and Haller's (2013) notion of 'institution shopping' to '*multiple* institution shopping' as women have combined 'customary' and newly emerged institutions, as one single institution would have hardly been enough to succeed due to the plurality of the institutional setting.

At the time of my research, just two months after claiming back the *boliland*, the community had mixed feelings about the success of the resistance. On one hand people (especially *landusers*) were content of having claimed back the *boliland* but on the other hand, the community is subject of an extensive negative labelling from part of their local authorities and, maybe to a lesser extent, from part of the company. People are called 'backward farmers' and 'enemies of progress'. They are accused of opposing a project of

national importance and therewith opposing the president that has actively attracted Addax Bioenergy with his 'Agenda for Change'. With this labelling, local authorities and the company seem to engage in a process of 'othering' of the community people that results in 'us' vs. 'them'. 'Us' the company that is just trying to develop the area and 'them', the backward farmers that do not know that they have just refused the development they are looking for. In the case of the company, this 'othering' can be contemplated as strategy to delegitimize claims of project affected people and avoid the difficult process of admitting the project's failure in the community of Worreh Yeama. In the case of the local authorities, it comes back to the ancient institution of moral economy and patronage-clientele relations: In the eyes of the patron that is Honourable Martin Bangura, the community of Worreh Yeama is denying (political) loyalty to him by opposing 'his' project and his friend, the company. In return, he refuses insurance of livelihoods (cf. chapter 5.2.), means employment, as he has the power to recruit the workers for Addax (cf. chapter 6.5.2.). Like Addax, he argues on the base of the quantitative knowledge produced by the company itself, and claims that a community leasing out few land has only rights to few benefits, as they are allegedly only marginally impacted. However, as the community people have another reading of the landscape, they (the women in particular) perceive to be seriously affected by the loss of the most fertile land but not adequately compensated. This translates in the loss of livelihoods that used to be secured by subsistence production and cash income and naturally, people feel the need to oppose further deterioration of livelihood strategies.

Hence, many local people feel trapped in an ambivalent space, in between the need to fight for the resilience of their livelihoods (i.e. a rightful share) and the wish to display loyalty to its overall patron (the company). They seem to believe that the promised modernity would eventually materialize; they just had to be loyal enough. This is the reason why the negative labelling causes so much harm to the people and explains every relativizing "but we love Addax" at the end of critical statements. Who else should help them achieving the modernity they are longing for if it is not the powerful and rich Addax company? The belief in development is – in its very absence, somehow persistent, since the story of a developed and modern project area has been narrated for so long.

8. Conclusion

This thesis is part of the research project *Ethnography of Land Deals* and builds on a four-month fieldwork in the operational area of Addax Bioenergy Sierra Leone, a company headquartered in Switzerland. My research is embedded in the research project *Ethnography of Land Deals* and is informed by questions about concrete implementation processes on the local level, (shifting) perceptions of the heterogeneous group of affected people as well as strategies developed to cope with a transformed institutional setting.

Findings reveal that affected people welcomed the investment project with open arms due to the development discourses of the company reaching them in an extremely difficult post-war situation and due to the brokering of the project by local elites.

The company, labelled as best-practice example by the FAO and others, formalised 'customary' land rights and therewith excluded women and *landusing* men from consultation and compensation processes. Findings from the local level reveal that this institutional change in land rights has far-reaching gendered effects on the distribution of benefits from land. In Worreh Yeama, the Bioenergy project was undermining access of women to fertile swampland and associated waters source. This common-pool resource used to be a vital contribution to the resilience of livelihoods of women as it granted them access to food as well as access to market. With the destruction of the swamp and the water source, they were deprived of land that used to be a guarantee for subsistence and economic opportunity with empowering effects. On top of that, the different mitigation measures put in place by the company are not functioning because they are misrecognizing and depoliticising the lives and needs of affected people.

However, virtually all affected people stated they could cope with the land lease and its negative consequences of former livelihood strategies if they were given stable employment. In this view, becoming a worker at the factory site is at the heart of a modern life they are longing for so much. Yet, the reality looks different as just a handful of people in Worreh Yeama are employed, among them no woman. The latter realised they have to continue relying on subsistence farming and therefore developed a strategy of *multiple institution shopping* to gain back a part of the land the company was intending to take. The plural institutional setting required a combination of multiple institutions to achieve aims. Combining pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial institutions and justifying their claim for the land discursively with 'a rightful share'

women achieved a renegotiation of the land lease agreement. The alliance with the newly emerged institution of the international NGO thereby had a catalysing effect for the community's resistance.

This case study shows that women who have been marginalised through the implementation of a LSLA project are not mere victims but manage to develop collective action strategies that affect the outcomes of the Bioenergy project. This illustrates that the horizontal and the vertical level of LSLA are not separate entities but linked through social networks, social interactions and means of communication. For this reason, I consider it highly questionable to certificate LSLA projects as *best practice*, if we should do at all, by merely looking at the theoretical project design. The impacts of LSLA on the local context decisively depend on socio-political and socio-economic configurations on the ground as well as on actors on both levels that co-shape the project's impacts.

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