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**BEING HEARD:
LOCAL PEOPLE IN NEGOTIATIONS OVER
LARGE-SCALE LAND DEALS.**

A CASE STUDY FROM MADAGASCAR

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the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Development Studies

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‘Being heard: local people in negotiations over large-scale land deals.

A case study from Madagascar’

SUMMARY

This thesis examines local people’s voices and influence in negotiations over large-scale land deals. Drawing on ethnographic work on a case study from southern Madagascar, it highlights the variety of agropastoralists’ responses to, and experienced outcomes of, the implementation of an agribusiness project on their land. The purpose of this research was to understand the conditions under which certain local people get heard, and others silenced, in the context of corporate land access and the processes by which some of these local voices manage to influence the terms and conditions of the deal. It looked at how horizontal and vertical power dynamics interface with situated moral economies and contentious politics to inform variations in local people’s perspectives over, engagement with and experienced outcomes of the land deal.

I argue that local voices and opportunities for influence in the context of land transactions in Madagascar are constructed at the intersection of national and village politics. I draw attention to the practices and discourses through which local state officials produce ‘powers of exclusion’ and ‘powers of compliance’ in their mediation of land deals. I show that, in socially-differentiated local populations, formal compliance with dispossession reflects processes of different natures: “compliance as acquiescence” for some, but also “constrained hope”, and potential challenging of local structures of domination or “compliance as resistance” for others. I explore the moral economies that underpin perspectives on corporate land access as well as choices to express, or suppress, subversive voices and observe a resistance, across social divides, to the “demoralising of land deals”. I show how the vulnerability of state authorities to social movements combined with competition for the resources of patronage and of authority associated with the control of corporate land access open interstices for influence. In a context of institutional bias however, only those who manage to activate key alliances with state officials and to unify village voices beyond inter and intra-class differences stand a chance of being heard.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABD:	Accumulation by Dispossession
CIRDOM:	<i>Circonscription Domaniale</i> (Regional State Property Services)
CIRTOPO:	<i>Circonscription Topographique</i> (Regional Topography Services)
DGSF:	<i>Direction Générale des Services Fonciers</i> (General Direction of Land Services)
DREF:	<i>Direction Régionale des Eaux et Forêts</i> (Regional Direction of Water and Forests)
EIA :	Environmental Impact Assessment
MATD:	<i>Ministère de l'Aménagement du Territoire et du Développement</i> (Ministry of Development and Country Planning)
ONE :	<i>Office National de l'Environnement</i> (National Office for the Environment)
SG:	<i>Secrétariat Général</i> (General Secretariat)
VPDAT:	<i>Vice-Primature en Charge du Développement et de l'Aménagement du Territoire</i> (Vice-primature in charge of Development and Country Planning)

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GLOSSARY

<i>Afosa:</i>	In Ihorombe, the hot season that precedes the rainy season (September to November).
<i>Akata horo:</i>	A weed that is green all year even in contexts of rain shortage and that is particularly appreciated by cattle.
<i>Baiboho:</i>	Alluvial soils along the rivers.
<i>Blé:</i>	A species of sweet potatoe.
<i>Confiage:</i>	Practice of entrusting cattle to other villagers.
<i>Dina:</i>	Social convention or set of rules defined by the village community; the rule-making body itself.
<i>Fady:</i>	Taboo.
<i>Fahasivy:</i>	Enemies or ancestors.
<i>Foko:</i>	Group of belonging along kinship and territory.
<i>Fokonolona:</i>	Local community (see footnote 13 in Chapter 2 for more details on the multiple, evolving definitions of the term).
<i>Fokontany:</i>	Local administrative entity, generally encompassing several villages, under the management of a ‘head of <i>fokontany</i> ’.
<i>Hitsaky:</i>	Practice where the cattle are made to run in the fields to prepare the soil for transplantation of the rice.
<i>Kabary:</i>	Customary discourses in Madagascar.
<i>Kalony:</i>	Local vigilantes group set up to address cattle theft.
<i>Komity:</i>	Unofficial village secretary.
<i>Lonaky:</i>	Heads of lineage or sub-lineage in iBara.
<i>Loviana:</i>	Lowlands.
<i>Malaso:</i>	Term used in the south of Madagascar to refer to cattle thieves.
<i>Mpanarivo:</i>	The wealthy (literally ‘those who have thousands’).
<i>Olobe:</i>	Senior members of the local communities (literally ‘the big people’).
<i>Raiamandreny:</i>	Local figures of authority.

<i>Tanety (tazoa in ibara):</i>	Highlands.
<i>Tany oraky:</i>	Wet patches of soil which can sustain rice growth without relying on rain.
<i>Tany masina:</i>	The ‘holy land’.
<i>Tany-pokonolona:</i>	The ‘land of the people’.
<i>Tanindrazana:</i>	The ‘land of the ancestors’, also used to refer to the nation.
<i>Topontany:</i>	The ‘masters of the land’; the landowners.
<i>Titsiky:</i>	Ritual ceremony conducted to restore social order.
<i>Vary afara:</i>	The ‘late rice’ usually transplanted during the month of April.
<i>Vary aloha:</i>	The ‘early rice’ harvested in January.
<i>Vary tonontaona :</i>	The ‘seasonal rice’, rice grown by all during the rainy season (also called vary oraka).
<i>Vazaha:</i>	Foreigners; sometimes also used to refer to the police or allochtones.
<i>Voanjo:</i>	Local species of round beans.
<i>Vondro:</i>	Weed used as a construction material.
<i>Zanahary:</i>	God.

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

“Anay iaby izay”

It was early September 2011. Madagascar was slowly making its way out of winter and moving into the dry season they call *afosa*¹ in Ihorombe. Tsiory and I were setting foot in the rural municipality of Satrokala for the first time and discussing plans for the next day’s visit to Ankitry, the first village on our list. I was eager to learn a little of the iBara dialect, hoping that efforts at language skills, together with our boycott of motored vehicles as a means of moving around, would contribute in a small measure towards convincing villagers that my intentions were different from those of the other white foreigners present here, despite discussions revolving around the same topics. Concern with *vazahas*, as foreigners are called in Madagascar, had not been commonplace in the villages of this rural municipality before but much had changed in the past two years. With two French men, one Belgian and one Nicaraguan having now set up their base there, they had now become a part of the landscape, together with the large, beautiful premises boasted by the biofuel company they were working for and the *cliches* of power and money that were associated with them.

I knew the challenge ahead of me was not minor and my hopes of generating trust on a first visit were slim. Tsiory, whom I had met a few days before in the provincial capital of Ihosy, would himself be considered by some as an outsider. He lived in the provincial capital Ihosy and, as such, was a man of the city and, more critically, was originally from the capital Antananarivo. However, he had lived in the Ihorombe region for more than ten years now, had married a local *Bara* woman and would turn out to be known, and respected, by many villagers since he worked at registering people’s civil status documents at Ihosy town hall. He had been recommended to me as one of the few people who could speak both French and the local dialect. I spoke enough of Malagasy, the national language, to get by and hold everyday conversations, but my command was too limited to allow me to hold full interviews

¹ In other regions of Madagascar, *afosa* is used to refer to the month of May, the month of the harvest.

on my own and the national language was only of limited use in the rural areas of Madagascar. When I asked Tsiory what dialectical expressions I should learn in priority to show respect, he replied: ‘Don’t worry, when we get there, just let me do the introductions. And after I’ve spoken, you just say “*Anay iaby izay*” and then we can start the discussion’.

Anay iaby zay, which could literally translate as ‘This is all of us’, is an idiomatic expression used to express agreement with prior talk. In better English, it could translate as ‘We feel represented by what has just been said’. With small dialectical variations, it is used throughout Madagascar, mainly in the context of *kabary* (historic, ceremonial form of speech). As I would soon witness, its use within speeches is well routinised and serves to punctuate specific instances of interactions. It is pronounced by all men in unison after a person of authority has finished talking and as such, serves to reassert acceptance of hierarchy and power positions, while reflecting the critical importance of displaying consensus. In a society where the right to speak and power positions are mutually constitutive (Ottino 1983), asking who genuinely agrees, and with what, is critical. These questions are equally essential, this thesis stresses, beyond the case of Madagascar.

In particular, this thesis pleads for a nuanced consideration of “local voices” in debates over the regulation of large-scale land deals. In its exploration of how agrarian populations respond to local negotiations for corporate land access, this thesis seeks to reveal the divisions that are obscured by the *Anay iaby izay* as well as the resistance, or absence of resistance, to pressures to speak one way or the other. It is therefore interested in understanding who actually gets a voice within consultation and local negotiation processes and who does not, whether these voices constitute an endorsement or a challenge to power relations, and whether those who do not get to speak may have different perceptions towards land deals. Besides this interest in (i) whose voices are expressed, why and under which conditions, the thesis asks (ii) who, of these voices, succeeds in exerting an influence on the terms and conditions of land deals or, in other words, who gets heard. After exploring the multiplicity of perceptions that local people can develop towards land deals, the thesis seeks to answer the main following question: How do the voices of local people get heard or silenced in the context of negotiation processes for corporate land access?

The discussion opens with a summary of the literature on “land grabbing”, pointing to the specific contribution this thesis hopes to make. It introduces the main focus and objects of the research and the theoretical framework that was used to examine them. The introductory chapter then closes on a discussion of the objectives of this thesis.

Local contestations around land deals: a conjunctural perspective

This research project draws on scholarly debates on contemporary large-scale land deals and heeds calls to investigate the context-specific, contingent processes and differentiated outcomes of the ‘global land rush’ through more empirically-grounded studies.

Albeit less unprecedented than initially assessed, the global rush for land that was accelerated by the finance-food-fuel crisis of 2007-2008 gained swift traction in the media and quickly imposed itself on top of the agendas of many development practitioners, policy-makers and academics (Cotula et al. 2009; Von Braun and Meinzen-Dick 2009; Borras and Franco 2010; Deininger et al. 2010; Zoomers 2010; Odhiambo 2011; Schoneveld 2011; Akram-Lodhi 2012, Anseeuw et al. 2012). Much effort was initially put into trying to assess the drivers, impact and scale of this international “land grabbing” phenomena, with international solidarity organisations and scholars alike expressing concern over its wide-reaching implications on issues of socio-economic subsistence, socio-cultural fabric and environmental justice (GRAIN 2008; Daniel and Mittal 2009; Friends of the Earth 2010, Graham et al. 2010; Borras et al. 2011; DeSchutter 2011; Fairhead, Leach and Scoones 2012; Cotula 2013, Chung 2017).

While most agreed that this phase of mostly fast ‘fact-finding’ missions and research was instrumental in putting this development issue in the spotlight, a second wave of literature highlighted the shortcomings of its outputs (Cotula 2013; Edelman et al. 2013; Scoones et al. 2013). Qualifying ‘the prevailing alarmist picture of an inexorable advance of massive foreign land grabbing’ (Edelman et al. 2013: 1526), observers stressed the need to reconsider statements on the scale of the phenomenon, as well as the methodologies and epistemologies

that underpinned much of the research (Scoones et al. 2013). A bias in perspectives and a lack of rigour in methodologies had led to exaggerations and generalisations (Pedersen and Buur 2016). A wide variety of land deals had been lumped under the term “land grabbing”, obscuring processes at different stages and of varying sizes, nature and implications. The importance of variation in processes, drivers, responses and outcomes was emphasised (Edelman and León 2013; Baglioni and Gibbon 2013; Oya 2013; Borras and Franco 2013) and a number of original statements were qualified: quantitative assessments of the global land rush were revised downwards and refined (Anseeuw et al. 2013); the focus on north-south investment was found to have been unduly obscuring the importance of south-south investments and the role of domestic elites in land deals (Borras et al. 2011; Margulis and Porter 2013); and observers insisted that not all land deals resulted in the displacement of local populations (Hall 2011; Edelman et al. 2013; Wolford et al. 2013; Hall et al. 2015; Pedersen and Buur 2016). This thesis draws on these observations and heeds calls ‘to make sense of the political, social and economic implications of differentiated outcomes with different time horizons’ through empirically and historically-grounded studies of specific land deals (Edelman et al. 2013: 1525).

Accumulation by dispossession?

The land grab literature was initially dominated by political economy analyses in which David Harvey’s concept of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ featured prominently (Harvey 2003). Drawing on Marx’s discussion of primitive accumulation (Marx 1990), the concept of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ (ABD) describes the way global capitalism has responded to the ‘chronic and enduring problem of overaccumulation [experienced] since the 1970s’ (Harvey 2004: 64). In the post-Keynesian capitalism, Harvey explains, ‘assets are “released” at minimal cost through predation, fraud and violence’ so that overaccumulated capital can seize hold [of them] and immediately turn them to profitable use’ (Harvey 2003: 144, 149).

As noted by Derek Hall (2013), the use made of ABD in the land grab literature varied. Its loose use, *en-passant*, generally served to make a point about land grabs representing modern instances of alienation from the means of production for the accumulation of capital. When

its use was better defined, it served to describe the current land rush as the reflection of one or several of the following processes: (i) a response to global crisis, (ii) accumulation through extra-economic means, and (iii) as the creation, expansion and reproduction of capitalist social relations. As such, the concept has provided a heuristic lens to analyse a broad range of global processes formative of and formed by the current rise of interest in land.

As Derek Hall argues (2013), there are, nonetheless, several problems associated with some of its assumptions which have guarded me from its use here. The first and main issue with the use of ABD in the land grab literature is its (implicit or explicit) implication that contemporary land deals are necessarily violent processes, leading to (massive) dispossession. This is further conveyed by the routinised use of the expression “land grabbing” in the literature: although it is frequently used in a loose manner to refer to ‘large-scale land deals’, large in their surfaces or in the capital involved, the word “grab”, in its commonsensical way, suggests a process steeped in violence and coercion. Some scholars justify its use as a way to bring attention to the broad power imbalances at stake in most contemporary land transfers (as opposed to suggesting violence) (Borras et al. 2013). The word ‘grab’, others have argued, should only refer only to those land deals that represent processes of ‘accumulation by extra-economic means’ (Levien 2013). Levien writes that ‘it only makes sense to talk about a “grab” when land is expropriated using means other than voluntary market purchase’. However, I take Hall’s point that it is not so easy to distinguish between economic and non-economic operations, since ‘land sales are usually shaped by the powers of legitimation, regulation and force’ (Hall 2013: 1593, referring to Hall et al. 2010). Likewise, defining what stands as a ‘*voluntary* market purchase’ and what exactly constitutes ‘extra-economic coercion’ is fraught with challenges. Should ‘extra-economic coercion’ only be taken to suggest the straightforward use of political force and violence or should it also include the multidimensional and more surreptitious operations of power that Hall, Hirsh and Li (2014) have argued intersect in creating exclusion from land? In any case, these assumptions of violence that are frequently associated with ‘land grab’ and the ABD, both in the grey and academic literature, explain my reservation in using any of these terms. As Hall puts it, I am not refuting that force is used or that dispossessions take place in contemporary land transfers. I argue that they need to be demonstrated, rather than assumed, and that the

power processes involved in land deals are more complex than top-down processes of coercion.

Embedded in the analysis of ABD can also be misled assumptions regarding the agrarian societies in which land transfers occur. By mobilising the concept of ‘primitive accumulation’ outside of its historical foundations, the risk is to assume that that people living on targeted lands are entirely outside capitalism. The case examined in this thesis highlights the caution needed to make definitive statements on whether a society is inside or outside capitalism. Finally, another assumption that is sometimes made is that large-scale land acquisitions in developing countries take place on land that is held in common by subsistence farmers (Hall, Hirsch and Li 2011). There now exists a large body of literature showing that customary tenure does not exclude individual rights² and that most agrarian societies routinely engage in land markets,³ whether through rentals, leases or sales.

Finally, accumulation by dispossession and primitive accumulation describe top-down processes that are assumed to be carried out at the expense of and against the will of local people. Hall, Hirsch et Hall. (2011) point to the fallacies in this assumption, noting that ‘smallholders in South-East Asia have at times vigorously engaged in enclosure and primitive accumulation “from below”’ (14). The scrutiny of Malagasy smallholders’ responses to land deal negotiations carried out in this thesis will similarly disclose the proactive role that some local people played in corporate land access, shedding light on the more ‘insidious ways in which capitalist social relations can take hold’ (Li 2014: 4).

The thesis more generally follows calls to move the spotlight from global players to domestic players and local people as key mediators of large-scale land deals (Smalley and Corbera 2012; Sikor 2012; Fairbairn 2013; Lavers 2012; Wolford et al. 2013). The focus on the global political economy as a driving force falls short of explaining why “land grabs” happen in certain contexts and not in others. (Sikor 2012). Examining the negotiations of a land deal from a local perspective will reveal ‘the mess of actors and motivations’ (Fairbairn 2013: 336) that lie behind the homogenising categories of the state and local community. The term

² See, for instance: Netting (1993), Peters (1994, 2004: 274).

³ See, for instance: Cohen (1980), Bruce (1988), Besteman (1994) and Peters (2004). Peters (2013) even talks of a recorded increases of market transfers of land in Africa over the past few decades.

‘local’ that is used in the title and throughout the thesis is used as a convenient, yet very imperfect shorthand to point to the fact that the focus is on populations living on and using land targeted for transfer as well as domestic elites and decision-makers. As anthropologists and critical geographers have argued, distinctions between global and local are social constructions more than empirical realities, ‘with a “global” that is far more global in talk than it is in actuality and a “local” that is not nearly so local in reality as it is in the texts of social scientists’ (Cooper 2001: 24). As a social construct, it also has its effects, notably in the spatial construction of hierarchy. In the discussion of my research design (Chapter 3), I explain how I mitigate these imperfections by adopting a conjunctural approach such as the one adopted in *Land’s End* (Li 2014), in which the conjuncture under study is not bounded and the spatial scope is not understood as a hierarchy, with the global on top and the local at the bottom. Despite the close-up focus of the research, efforts were made to pay attention to the wider webs of force in which the specific conjuncture is embedded.

Deconstructing the “local community” and “the state”

Another shortcoming of the initial land grab literature was ‘to assume *a priori*, rather than to demonstrate, what the reactions of affected groups of people are or would be’ (Borras and Franco 2013: 1724). Against common depictions of local people as either subservient victims of imposed land deals or unified resisters against them (Hall et al. 2015: 468), scholars emphasised the variegated ways in which misnamed ‘local communities’ could respond to and be affected by a land deal (Hall et al. 2015, Bagiolini and Gibbon 2013; Borras and Franco 2013; Edelman and Leon 2013; Oya 2013). By providing a compelling illustration of the uneven responses that can be brought to a same land deal, this thesis confirms that opposition, whether expressed or passively suffered, does not exhaust local reactions to land deals. It also highlights the inequalities within agrarian economies and foregrounds social differentiation and perceptions of relational justice within local communities, as a key dynamic in local responses to corporate land access.

Developing finer socio-historical analysis of the current land rush also meant scrutinising the role of the state and domestic elites in shaping and stimulating these processes. Far from being passive actors suffering dispossession from global capital, host states were described

as critical actors in land deals (Lavers 2012; Peters 2013; Fairbairn 2013; Levien 2013). In a special issue, Wolford et al. (2013) stressed that ‘states never operate with one voice’, and emphasised the ‘need to unbundle the state, to see government and governance as processes, people and relationships’ (2013: 189). Variation and contention characterised the intervention of state authorities in land deals, with some initiatives bolstering corporate land access and others stalling it (Burnod et al. 2013; Gingembre 2015; Pedersen and Buur 2016), with contradictions found both across and within national contexts. State-legal regimes responded in different ways to the land rush across countries, from a strengthening of regulation to measures of accommodation and incentive (Wolford et al. 2013). This complex landscape required moving beyond normative observations of ‘state corruption’ to be fixed by good governance agendas to consider the broader issues of sovereignty, territoriality, subjectivity and authority that inform the politics of land deals (Borras and Franco 2010; Corson 2011; Grajales 2013; Peters 2013; Wolford et al. 2013, Gebresenbet 2016).

The intricate dynamics of contention and differentiation that operate both between and within the social groups involved in (or excluded from) land deal negotiations help to explain why in a global context of capitalist development, land deals take different forms and different trajectories. The thesis argues that the way these multi-scale, multi-level contestations articulate also contributes to defining the conditions under which the voices of local populations get heard or silenced during processes of land deal negotiations. The importance of this context of contention in answering this thesis’s main research question is acknowledged through the analytical theme of ‘negotiations’, chosen as one of the three main axes of analysis. ‘Responses’ and ‘outcomes’ constitute the other two. What exactly is included by ‘negotiation’ is defined towards the end of this introduction. I now turn to explaining how the thesis explores the issues of responses and outcomes.

Understanding variation in responses to, and outcomes of, land deals for local people

Two projects are at the heart of this thesis. The first is highlighting and making sense of the diversity and contradictions of villagers’ responses to corporate land access. Calls were made

for empirically-grounded studies to explore ‘how those most affected actually perceive and react to these large-scale land deals and why?’ (Borras and Franco 2013: 1724). The second aim of this work is to emphasise the contrasted implications that a same land deal can have for socially-differentiated populations. Countering common assumptions that people’s responses were either ‘resistance’ or ‘resignation’, scholars observed that corporate land access could not be expected to be welcomed the same way nor have the same impact across gender, class, kin, age and occupational groups (Scoones et al. 2012; Edelman et al. 2013; Fairbairn 2013; Hall et al. 2015; Pedersen and Buur 2016).

Competing Struggles in a Differentiated Population

Countering images of passive populations powerless in front of attacks on their land, media reports and academic works have documented instances of bottom-up resistance initiatives to either land deals (Coordination Sud 2010; Nhantumbo and Salomao 2010; Sullivan 2013; Scoones 2015; Gingembre 2015; Grajales 2015; Baird 2017) or to the policies carrying threats of dispossession through market penetration (Sampat 2015). Observers have also described efforts of rural movements to link up with regional and national actors to defend their rights (Rutten et al. 2017; Sobreiro 2015) and with transnational actors to negotiate a better regulation of land deals through the UN Committee on World Food Security and the negotiation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Land and Fisheries (McKeon 2013).

However, contemporary agrarian changes and the rush for land have also been welcomed by reactions of a very different nature. Scholars have documented how smallholders could look at corporate land access through a positive lens (see, for instance: Mamonova 2015) and demonstrate a keen interest in market integration on the part of many (La-Orngplew 2012; Cramb and Sujang 2013; Li 2014; Castellanos-Navarrete and Jansen 2015). As Edelman notes, ‘some sell their holdings with little or no coercion and even with relief and enthusiasm’ and critically, ‘sometimes smallholders may be agents of or complicit with land grabbers’ (2003: 1519, 1522).

This variation in responses from below could also be observed across time and space but,

more critically, within a same “local community” in the context of a same land transaction. As summarised by Borras and Franco (2013), ‘it is common to see mobilisations against a land deal parallel to countermobilisations in favour of the same deal’ (1730). This reality made it compelling to bring critical agrarian questions back to the fore of analysis of contemporary land deals, and particularly that of social differentiation. As richly documented in the literature in agrarian studies and on land politics, most agrarian societies are characterised by a high degree of differentiation (Peters 2004) and “customary” land tenure regimes are highly unequal (Platteau 1996, 2000; Amanor 2001). Understanding responses from below, as I acknowledge in this thesis, requires paying attention to dynamics of inter- and intra-class politics and social differentiation (Edelman et al. 2013) and to the political contestations that pit poor people against poor people (Borras and Franco 2013).

Borras and Franco (2013) have proposed a useful categorisation of the different types of struggle which have been carried out in the context of capitalist penetration of agrarian societies: struggle against expulsion (or dispossession); struggle against exploitation (or for better incorporation); and struggle against land concentration. They explain that, depending on the nature of capitalist penetration, on the local history of domination and resistance as well as on dynamics of differentiation within the local population, these struggles can either converge or conflict. In certain cases, one type of struggle prevails, whether it is pursued collectively or individually. In others, different types of struggle can be fought simultaneously within a same site.

Two types of struggle are illustrated in the case study examined in this thesis: struggles against (partial) dispossession and struggles for better incorporation, which sometimes intersect, sometimes collide. Borras and Franco (2013) give useful details on the varied type of objectives that are pursued in both types of struggle, which allow for more precision in discussions of responses to land deals from below.

As far as struggles against dispossession are concerned, issues of scale and conditions matter. Some land deals carry threats of outright expulsions, while others allow peasants to keep formal ownership of land but make them lose control of it through, for example, certain types

of outgrowing arrangements or leases (dispossession without proletarianisation) and others, as in the case presented here, imply “only” a partial loss of land. These different forms of dispossession may be expected to orient both the goals and repertoires of struggles (Borras and Franco 2013). Struggle for incorporation (or against exploitation) can either be a first choice, cases where local populations are open to the prospects of incorporation offered by the penetration of capital or a ‘second best option’, in particular when struggles against dispossession were unsuccessful or killed in the bud. Struggles against exploitation can incorporate agrarian struggles (such as demands of improvement in the lease contract or demands to be incorporated into the business through outgrowing arrangements and so on), and labour justice struggles (related to wages, work conditions, for example) (Borras and Franco 2013). The incidence of struggles for incorporation are more likely to be observed in cases of capitalist ventures that need both land and labour as opposed to those that solely require land, which are more likely to result in displacement (Li 2011).

In sum, issues at stake for local people in the context of corporate land access can be expected to vary, according to (i) the nature of the land deal and associated (agrobusiness, conservation, forestry, industrial, tourism etc.) project, and to (ii) agrarian realities as partly informed by social differentiation. These diverging issues carry important implications for the understanding of ‘outcomes’, the third analytical strand structuring this thesis.

Knowing that struggles of a different nature in the pursuit of different objectives can develop in the context of capital penetration calls for nuance in the exploration of land deals and their outcomes on local populations. As noted by Fairbairn (2013), depending on their situation, some local people may not mind some degree or type of dispossession as long as it brings them other benefits. Besides, land deals may not translate into similar patterns of dispossession for all: the terms, scale and geography of land deals matter. Some, within the local population, may have nothing to gain and everything to lose. Others may be interested in being incorporated in some way in the project being developed on the land, whether a first choice or a damage-limitation strategy.

Borras and Franco’s classification stresses agrarian agency. Local people are not all victims of land deals and they may seek, through different means, to try and influence their terms.

However, only certain grievances and aspirations convert into open struggles. This thesis explores the broader dynamics that can explain variation not only in objectives and related outcomes, but also in the choice to express a voice or not.

Consent, compliance or acquiescence?

The absence of resistance (sometimes called ‘non-issues’) has historically been the object of rich discussion in various disciplines, from political science to mobilisation sociology through agrarian studies. In power-ridden land deal negotiations, open struggles are only one part of the story and silences also deserve ‘listening’ to (Moreda 2015). Which struggles are wished for but not fought? Who struggles openly, who struggles more silently and who does not struggle at all, and why? Or to phrase it differently, under which conditions are local people’s voices openly expressed, as opposed to disguised or concealed?

With acknowledged limitations related to issues of data production and positionality discussed in Chapter 4, I strived to explore these questions by thinking about dynamics of consent, acquiescence and compliance. Consent, acquiescence and compliance can be understood differently in relation to different theories (of power, of development and so on), as I discuss in Chapter 3. For the time being, I shall just point at the non-academic understanding of each of these notions and how they can allow me to be clearer about what I am talking about. Acquiescence is defined by the Oxford dictionary as ‘the reluctant acceptance of something without protest’⁴. As such, it is tacitly opposed to ‘resistance’: disagreement (with a decision, an opinion, an action) is either kept silent (acquiescence) or, on the contrary, is expressed and/or acted upon (resistance). Acquiescence is therefore also distinguished from ‘compliance’, which is also used in the thesis. Defined by the same source as the fact of acting ‘in accordance with a wish or command’,⁵ the term ‘compliance’ does not give any measure of the degree of enthusiasm or reluctance towards the ‘wish or command’ that is followed. What compliance implies is the existence of (implicit or explicit) instructions to act or behave in a certain way. The other term widely used in context of local consultation is ‘consent’, in particular in the form of the ‘Free, Prior and Informed Consent’

⁴ Oxford Living dictionary (2017)

⁵ Oxford Living dictionary (2017)

that has become a standard of human rights in the context of economic transactions and debates about the regulation of large-scale land acquisitions (cf. FAO (2012): Voluntary Guidelines on the Governance of Forests and Tenure). The word consent, on its own, implies a ‘voluntary acquiescence to the proposal of another; the act or result of reaching an accord; a concurrence of minds; or an actual willingness that an act or an infringement of an interest shall occur’.⁶ The notion of consent implies, in sum, that the acceptance of a decision or a proposal is voluntary and wanted.

By being clearer about what is meant when using these terms and illuminating the exploration of these discussions with theoretical insights and empirical data, this thesis hopes to challenge some commonplace assumptions about resistance or lack of resistance in the context of land acquisitions. A widespread conviction is that resistance would be the path all land users would choose to take were it not for power asymmetries and their effects. In that frame of thought, compliance with corporate land access is seen as the necessary result of fear, coercion or intimidation, or of mystification caused by a lack of access to information and education. People are acquiesced or manipulated into accepting land deals. On the other end of the spectrum are those narratives holding compliance to consultation processes as proof of consent. Whether it is done implicitly or explicitly, categorising responses to land deals as either acquiescence or consent reflects normative assumptions more than it allows for a nuanced understanding of the dynamics at work.

Rather than drawing a clear line between what qualifies as consent, compliance or acquiescence, what this thesis seeks to do is define what type of consent, what type of compliance and what type of acquiescence are expressed, and under which conditions. This endeavour is supported by the exploration of (i) dynamics of power, as conceptualised by John Gaventa (1980) following Lukes (1974), and (ii) issues of relational justice through the concept of moral economy, as conceptualised by James Scott (1976). The next pages explain why these concepts, which will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Three, have been chosen as the core theoretical frames of this research.

⁶ West's Encyclopedia of American Law (2005)

Uneven influences

This thesis therefore explores how power relations and considerations of relational justice intersect in influencing whether socially-informed aspirations or concerns towards projects of land acquisitions will be voiced or not. Because making oneself heard within land deal negotiations is not only about expressing voice however, it also explores the conditions under which some of these voices may transform into influence.

In the face of the powerful interests that are frequently behind large-scale land deals, decision-making may seem to leave little space for agrarian voices (Vermeulen and Cotula 2010). However, local people can, under certain circumstances, gain bargaining power and exert some influence over the conditions of land acquisition (Hall et al. 2015; Rutten et al. 2017). Research on land deals in Madagascar and elsewhere have indeed established that there could be cracks in the prevailing patterns of state support for commercial land transactions, which can create opportunities for local voices opposed to corporate access to find support and echo (Vermeulen and Cotula 2010; Burnod et al. 2013b). These cracks are more likely to open in contexts where political systems are characterised by a degree of competition and are vulnerable to some extent to contentious politics (Rutten et al. 2017). While the internal dynamics of resistance matter, the successful exercise of influence “against the odds” can also be contingent on specific political configurations. This thesis draws on the sociology of mobilisation to try and explain how particular forms of contentious politics can, in certain types of regimes and in specific conjunctures, contribute to shaking the institutional bias and provide room for subversive local voices.

Pursuing influence does not necessarily involve adopting confrontational attitudes, however. As explained above, local people struggling for incorporation may be favourable to corporate land access, as long as they get a good deal out of it. In cases where there are conflicting views within the local population, achieving influence may involve imposing one’s voice over that of the others or expressing it behind the back of village authorities. Scholars have noted that in countries where consultations are imposed by legal regimes, those have tended to favour the voice of local elites such as village leaders, chiefs, elders and so on (Nhantumbo and Salomao 2009; Sulle and Nelson 2009; Vermeulen and Cotula 2010). This thesis

demonstrates that land deal negotiations can also make space for less authorised voices and that compliance with corporate land access can also be a form of resistance against village power structures.

In sum, this thesis asks who, within local populations, can gain bargaining power, when and how, and how these specific influences articulate with contentious politics, dynamics of power and considerations of social justice.

Power and justice in being heard

Discussions of ‘acquiescence’ and ‘compliance’ have pointed to the visible and invisible pressures that inform responses to land deal negotiations. Most analyses of land deals point to the performative role of power in negotiations for land access but only few focus on power itself (Cotula 2009; Rutten et al. 2017; Fairbairn 2013). Those who do generally look at the vertical relations between domestic elites and decision-makers on the one hand, and local populations on the other, although they note that these can be challenged, and that local people can gain bargaining power (Rutten et al. 2017). Fairbairn (2013) describes how domestic elites use varied sources of power to force or talk local people into accepting land deals.

In their socio-legal study of consultation processes in different countries, Vermeulen and Cotula (2011) observe that the balance of power is predominantly skewed towards corporate interests even in places where legal regimes are protective of smallholders’ land rights. As Wolford et al. (2013) explain, ‘certainly there is unevenness in power relations, but the particular forms, practices and effects of power must be understood in geographically and historically specific terms if we are to adequately address the multiple and diverse practices of land grabs’ (207). I add that there is also a compelling need to reintroduce a focus on horizontal power dynamics, those that operate within local communities. Hall, Hirsch and Li (2011) observe that processes of exclusion from land are not solely perpetuated from above, but also from below. To secure their land access, land users have to prevent the access of others. Similarly, to make sure their voice is heard within the context of land deal negotiations, this thesis demonstrates that villagers may have to prevent others from

expressing their own voices.

Drawing on Luke's (1975) and Gaventa's theorisation of power (1980), this thesis carries an in-depth investigation of the multi-dimensional, multi-scalar operations of power in land deal negotiations. The conceptual framework allows for an analysis of visible ways in which power is wielded in negotiating or resisting the land transactions, but, more critically, it includes the more invisible, diffused workings of power, in a way that is globally missing from the land grab literature.

Responses to land deals, this thesis contends, are also informed by considerations of relational justice. Negotiating corporate land access with local populations raises questions about who has the right to decide on which land. In a context where local land tenure is characterised by flexibility and negotiability, the answer to these questions is never straightforward and a likely source of tension. Feelings of having been illegitimately robbed of one's right to decide on a specific piece of land or, on the contrary, of being rightfully granted that right can be expected to influence perceptions over land deals.

Making a case that land deals should not automatically be lumped under the homogenising, normative category of 'land grabbing' is also a way of saying that conditions of corporate land access are critical. While certain types of appropriation may be tolerable (or even wished for), others may generate outright indignation. Across a socially-differentiated society, what is considered acceptable and what is not both in the context of the land deal and in broader social relations may vary. Drawing on Scott's conceptualisation of moral economy (1976), perceptions of justice are tied to contested understandings of others' rights and obligations on economic matters. How others (corporate and state elites but also other villagers) perform with regards to these rights and obligations constitutes an essential lens, this thesis argues, through which actors will not only develop their perceptions of land deals, but also determine whether it is worth taking the risk of expressing a voice, especially if that voice is (vertically or horizontally) subversive. Whilst highlighting how power dynamics can produce acquiescence, the thesis is therefore also interested in understanding how considerations of social justice can draw red lines that can entice people to challenge power relationships.

Negotiation, responses and outcomes

The main research question ‘How do the voices of local people get heard or silenced in the context of local negotiations over corporate land access?’ emerged from the observations made above, and which can be summarised as follows:

- (i) Local people have varied, sometimes conflicting, visions of land deals, only some of which are openly expressed.
- (ii) Despite unfavourable odds, local people can, under certain circumstances, gain bargaining power and influence the negotiations for the land transaction.

Data analysis and discussion were structured around the three research objects at the heart of that question: ‘negotiations’, ‘responses’ and ‘outcomes’.

The first component of analysis, ‘negotiations’, refers to this multi-sited, longitudinal process, during which the terms of the land deal are discussed, contested and decided upon. Empirically, it covers all repertoires and spaces of negotiations, from formal discussions and their outputs (consultation, meetings, contracts) to informal means of negotiating (lobbying, bargaining, resisting, communicating with the media, networking and so on), through back-door instances of negotiation (blackmailing, secret dealings, use of rumours and threats, for example).

Analytically, this strand reflects this thesis’s interest for the wider configurations of power and politics, in which “local” negotiations are embedded. To be able to understand whether processes of local consultation and the inclusion of local authorities make a difference, it is important to understand what is being negotiated at the local level and what is already decided or will be decided elsewhere. Grasping the dynamics at work in these local spaces also requires exploring how these previous, simultaneous or future negotiations, discursively or materially inform responses and outcomes at the local level. Here the national and transnational levels of negotiation are mainly considered and analysed from a bottom-up perspective. Negotiations also refer to the agrarian context: negotiations take place within agrarian populations characterised by specific (dynamic and differentiated) ecologies,

livelihoods, constraints, capacities and socio-political structures, which all need consideration.

Finally, behind discussions over corporate land access are also internal negotiations over socially-assigned positions, as well as over issues of authority and property: by taking part in land deal negotiations, local people are also vying for land rights, re-enacting land disputes, reasserting or challenging patterns of wealth and authority, questioning each other's rights and responsibilities, trying to reinvent or preserve livelihoods and their position in society. This thesis also looks at these internal negotiations that underpin the direct land deal negotiations.

The theme of 'responses' refers to analytical efforts to explain both: (i) the diverse, sometimes conflicting, perspectives villagers have of the corporate project and of the land deal negotiation process; and (ii) the expression, or non-expression of these perspectives, in the context of the land deal negotiations. Responses are conceived as fluid dynamics in which interactions with and perceptions of others, and of their past and potential future reactions are critical. As discussions evolve, as the project develops, as decisions are carried out, actors may readjust their responses.

Finally, the 'outcome' component of the thesis points to analytic efforts to assess the terms and conditions of the corporate acquisition of land as experienced by the villagers (lived outcome) in relation to initial aspirations. The assessment encompasses various aspects of the land deal: (i) the nature of the project (business model, type and mode agricultural production, labour policies and so on); (ii) the location and size of the land acquisition(s); and (iii) conditions of and retributions for land access (location of the corporate plantations, legal form of the company's land access, nature, scale and destination of compensation, job opportunities and so on).

Purpose and argument

The purpose of this research is to understand the conditions under which certain voices get

heard, and others silenced, in the context of the negotiation process for corporate land access and the processes by which some of these voices manage to influence the terms and conditions of the deal. It looks at how horizontal and vertical power dynamics interface with situated moral economies and contentious politics to inform these variations in perspective, engagement and outcome.

I argue that local voices and opportunities for influence in the context of land transactions in Madagascar are constructed at the intersection of national and village politics. The research highlights the central role of the state in mediating the consultation and ultimately appropriating the land to be used by private capital and argues that the contradictions and contentions that characterise its intervention open interstices for local influence. However, despite its role in both facilitating and stalling corporate land access, the state's projections of power produce compliance with dispossession, which is only resisted by those villagers with the most power resources. I show that, in socially-differentiated agrarian populations, compliance in the context of local consultation reflects processes of different natures: a reluctant resignation to top-down pressures or 'compliance as acquiescence' for some, but also 'constrained hope', and potential challenging of horizontal power relations or 'compliance as resistance' for others. The thesis also draws attention to the contested moral economies that underpin local people's perspectives on the land deal negotiations and choices to express or suppress subversive voices. It finally highlights that, whether struggling against dispossession or struggling for incorporation, local people's chances of influencing high-stake land deals are not only a matter of legal empowerment but are also contingent on state politics and community contention.

Thesis outline

The thesis first opens with a discussion of the Tozzi Green land deal that was chosen as the case study: it describes the corporate project that underpins it, the negotiation approach for land access, its success and challenges as well as the internal tensions that have pervaded the company. This chapter also discusses the global negotiation context: the socio-economic patterns and dynamics of change of the agrarian society living on the corporate project site,

the pliable legal-institutional context that characterises dynamics of land privatisation in Madagascar, and the transnational dynamics of legitimation and contestation that informed the fluctuating politics of the land deal (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 discusses the theoretical framework of the thesis, arguing in favour of a power-moral economy-contentious politics nexus in understanding the complex dynamics of voice and influence in large-scale land deals. After having outlined the research design and methodology that was derived from those conceptual insights (Chapter 4), the thesis presents the results of a 26-village comparison carried out in 2013, which provides a detailed illustration of the panoply of responses and outcomes that can be experienced at the village level (Chapter 5). This overall picture provides a useful background to discuss the three village case studies, on which the next phase of data collection and analysis focused (2014). Each of the cases is then the object of a full chapter (Chapters 6, 7 and 8), which tells their story through the lens of negotiations, responses and outcomes and where discussions of villagers' voices and chances of influence within large-scale land deals progress through comparing and contrasting the case studies. Finally, I highlight the main insights of the thesis on how state and village politics articulate in informing voices and influence in the context of land deal negotiations.

CHAPTER 2

CORPORATE LAND ACCESS IN 21ST CENTURY MADAGASCAR: AN ILLUSIONARY *CARTE BLANCHE*

This chapter seeks to provide some elements of background to the discussion of agrarian voices in land deal negotiations in Madagascar and introduce the case study examined in the thesis. Madagascar is an important site for the study of land deals as both a major target in the rush for land and a country that has passed an ambitious land reform aimed at protecting agrarian populations.

Beyond the infamous Daewoo scandal⁷ that contributed, in a significant measure, to the international outcry over land grabbing, the country is the source of numerous concerns and interests. Its rich and unique natural resources appeal to extractive industries, agribusiness and “green capitalism” (Teyssier et al. 2010; Andrianirina-Ratsialonana et al. 2011; Evers et al. 2011, 2013; Neimark 2012; Seagle 2012; Medernach and Burnod 2013, Ferguson et al. 2014; Huff 2016), as well as to international conservationists who are keen to protect one of the world’s biological ‘hotspots’ (Corson 2011, 2016; Duffy 2006).

On the legal front, Madagascar is one of the few southern countries where people’s rights to consultation in the context of land deals are protected (Vermeulen and Cotula 2010). Since the 2005 land reform, untitled land is no longer considered as the property of the state but of its users, whose rights are recognised under the legal category of ‘untitled private property’. Under this legal regime, the state is no longer allowed to lease or sell untitled land: for land to be transferred to private hands, it first has to be titled in the name of the state, which can only legally be done after local authorities and population have confirmed that the land is not subject to any claims. Large-scale land acquisitions are therefore particularly lengthy

⁷ In November 2008, the Financial Times broke the story that secret negotiations were taking place between the Malagasy government and the South-Korean Daewoo corporation for the long-term leasing of 1.3 million hectares (ha) arable land. The news caused outrage and was used by Andry Rajoelina as a key argument to legitimise his overthrow of the Ravalomanana regime (2009).

procedures, where people's rights are legally protected. Madagascar's legal framework also promotes local participation in natural resource management and has transferred land management responsibilities to local governments (Teyssier et al. 2009). These measures of protection of small-scale farming, however, coincide with policies promoting more corporate-driven models of agriculture, whilst political practices still tend to hold untitled land as state property.

In this chapter, I point to historical practices of 'extraversion' (Bayart 2000) to explain why, in this context of ambivalent policies, local state agents tend to ignore the laws that protect local land rights to further corporate interests (Andrianirina-Ratsialonana et al. 2011; Teyssier et al. 2010; Burnod and Andriamanalina 2014; Ferguson et al. 2014). I also observe, however, that despite this institutional bias, corporate land access can meet obstacles: competition over the benefits offered by corporate projects and the pressure of contentious politics in a context of electoral democracy can turn land deal negotiations into sensitive issues politically. These tensions encourage cracks in the institutional bias, with state agents at various levels finding an interest in supporting local land users struggling against dispossession.

This chapter first discusses the political and policy contexts of corporate land acquisitions in Madagascar. It then introduces the Tozzi Green project and land deal, first describing the socio-economic context of the agrarian region which it developed and then highlighting the difficulties the company experienced on both agronomic and land access issues, relating the latter to the bottom-up resistance that was organised against it.

Institutional bias and political uncertainty

The first part of this chapter examines the policy and legal framework in which the Tozzi Green land deal negotiations took place. After highlighting the hesitation of national policies between family farming and agribusiness-driven models of rural development, I point to the bias of state institutions and actors towards corporate interests. I also explain that state

support for corporate land access is not unconditional, however and that under certain circumstances, political support can shift towards agrarian populations. Attention is finally brought to the specificity of the political context in which negotiations for Tozzi Green's land access were being conducted, with the shortage of external funding in the wake of Andry Rajoelina's illegal seizure of power (2009).

The state in Madagascar: regulating or promoting land deals?

The institutional and policy landscapes that structure issues of access to natural resources and land property in Madagascar are complex and contradictory. In this context, I argue that the historical practices of those enforcing laws on the ground as well as the power webs they are enmeshed in are as critical, if not more so, than legal-institutional regimes to understand local people's chances to be heard within land deal negotiations.

Confusions in policy landscape

In Madagascar, as in many African countries, legal and policy frameworks on access to land and natural resources show hesitancy between two models of development (Teyssier et al. 2010; Amanor 2012; Doss et al. 2014). Recognising small-scale agriculture as a critical sector of the national economy and an essential provider of livelihoods, a number of laws aim to protect local land rights. Simultaneously, politicians and policies promote a rural development model driven by commercial investments in land and natural resources.

Under the Ravalomanana regime (2002-2009), policies were passed to entice investors to come and develop commercial farming on what was defined as the country's "idle land". In 2009, the Ministry of Agriculture, Cattle Farming and Fishing was advertising the 'eight million hectares of arable land' reportedly still available on the island (Bouhey et al. 2010). In addition, for the first time in Malagasy history, foreigners were allowed to buy land.⁸ As in an important number of African countries (Vermeulen and Cotula 2010: 906), a special agency was created to promote and support corporate investments: the Economic Development Board of Madagascar, which ranked agribusiness among its six priorities and

⁸ Law n° 2003-028 of 22 August 2003 setting up the organisation and control of immigration. Foreigners' access to property was further facilitated by the new code of investment (Law 2007-036) of 14 January 2008. However, no implementing decree has ever been passed, and foreign investors therefore still lease land.

was empowered to authorise land prospecting. Simultaneously, regional governments were encouraged to create ‘Agricultural Investment Areas’ (AIAs) to accelerate land access for investors.⁹ These policies were continued by the following governments of Andry Rajoelina (2009-2014) and Hery Rajaonarimampianina (2014-) (Burnod et al. 2014) despite Rajoelina having run his destabilisation campaign against Ravalomanana on the Daewoo scandal, denounced as a ‘treason to the nation’ (Rajoelina, quoted in Pellerin 2009). The current president, Hery Rajaonarimampiana (2014-), regularly promotes the country’s landed potential on visits abroad¹⁰ and policy documents make numbered projections as to the amount of land to be transferred to commercial projects.¹¹

Legally, agrarian populations and hunter gatherers are not totally defenceless with regards to the corporate appropriation of their land and natural resources. A number of laws were designed to ensure that the environmental and social impact of agribusiness and mining projects were kept in check. Besides having to provide a business plan to allow for due diligence by the state, companies are required to obtain an environmental permit from the National Office for the Environment (ONE) if their project aims to develop over 1,000 ha of land.¹² The permit is granted after the validation of an ‘environmental impact assessment’ (EIA) study that considers environmental and socio-economic issues, whilst setting out how impacts will be monitored and mitigated. Consultation with the local population are part of the requirements.

Agrarian populations are protected by another set of laws specifically designed to protect their land rights. A first attempt towards the legal recognition of customary land rights came with a 1998 decree designed for local communities to whom the state had transferred management of natural resources.¹³ The next breakthrough occurred in 2005, when a land

9 Although some of these zones have been identified, they have not yet been legally formalised (Burnod et al. 2013 b).

10 See for instance: Valis (2014) ‘Une Chambre de commerce israélo-malgache’, Madagascar Tribune [Online], 7 June, Available at: <http://www.madagascar-tribune.com/Une-Chambre-de-commerce-israelo,19998.html> [Accessed: 7 June 2014].

11 The 2014-2025 official sector policy document for agriculture, livestock and fisheries mentioned plans to allocate two million hectares for agricultural and export-oriented private projects (Andriamanalina and Burnod 2014).

12 Decree n° 99-954 of 15 December 1999 modified by the Decree n° 2004-167 of 3 February 2004.

13 Decree n° 98-610 of 13 August 1998, regulating the implementation of the relative securing of tenure (Free translation).

reform replaced the ‘presumption of domaniality’ by a ‘presumption of untitled private property’: this meant that untitled land would no longer be considered as state property, but instead be considered as the private property of those who could prove their ‘occupation, use or development’ of the concerned tracts.¹⁴ To increase tenure security for the poor, land management responsibilities were delegated to local land offices at the level of municipalities (BIF), which were given the capacity to deliver legalised proofs of property (land certificates) at much faster and more affordable rates than the land titles delivered by regional land services (Teyssier et al. 2007). Even in the absence of land certificates, local land claims are granted protection under these laws since untitled land can no longer be titled or leased before a ‘commission of recognition’, including neighbours and the *fokonolona* (the “local community”¹⁵), confirms that the targeted land is available and not already under productive use (*mise en valeur*).¹⁶

These laws protecting local land rights lack precision, however. The rights of local land users during these ‘recognition’ missions are loosely laid out. As mentioned above, ‘neighbours, interested parties that have made themselves known and the *fokonolona*’ are to be invited to but their signature is not formally required¹⁷. The law only states that any disagreements with the titling procedure should be recorded in the proceedings of the commission, whose role is also to try and reconcile the different parties. No mechanisms of objection or mediation are clearly set up. Moreover, customary power-holders were given little decision-making power since recognition commissions are made up solely of state agents: they include a member of the regional land office (CIRDOM), which acts as its head; a member of the regional department of topography (CIRTOPO); a member of the municipality; and the head of the concerned *fokontany* (local administrative unit generally encompassing several villages).

14 Law 2005-019 of 17 October 2005 fixing the principles governing land statutes (Free translation).

15 The term *fokonolona* has recovered different meanings through space and time. With historic origins in the Imerina region, it is now used throughout Madagascar to designate the ‘patrilinear and patrilocal clan (or sometimes lineage) unified in the same territory (*fokontany*) and [composed of] descendants of the same ancestry’ (Marcus 2008, referring to Lejambale 1963 and to Condominas 1964). Under President Ratsiraka (1975-1991), it was recognised as an institutional structure and given responsibility in local governance and although its responsibilities have declined since then, its role is still recognised in the constitution. It is also understood as ‘the village assembly that gets together every time a problem comes up in the village or in the neighbouring village’ (Fauroux 2002).

16 Article 18, Law 2008-014 of 5 January 2009 on the private property of the state (Free translation).

17 Article 28, Decree n°2010-233 of 20 April 2010, regulating the implementation of Law 2008-014.

These state agents are then in charge of summoning the neighbours and the *fokonolona*.¹⁸ The choice of whom to invite to the recognition is, therefore, left to these state agents.

This marginalisation of non-state authorities and local population was not made up for by subsequent legislation. In the 2010 guidelines on large-scale land deals,¹⁹ only one of the eighteen stages of the defined procedure included the ‘local population’ (cf diagram in appendix 1). As is the case in most postcolonial countries, access control is therefore left to state agencies, while resource users are left ‘in the position of having to invest in relations with these agents in order to maintain access’ (Ribot 1995 quoted in Ribot and Peluso 2003: 163). This dependency is particularly problematic because of the strong bias that Malagasy state authorities and institutions have been shown to have towards the strongest bidder (Ferguson et al. 2014). The next pages contextualise this institutional bias with regards to the historical ‘strategies of extraversion’ from those holding public power.

The institutional bias of extraversion

The case of Madagascar provides a compelling illustration of how, even in contexts where laws protect local land rights, ‘government agencies tend to align with the interests of large-scale investors when tested in real negotiation’ (Vermeulen and Cotula 2010: 899) Empirical observations all concur in noting that little consideration is given to smallholders’ legal rights in land deal procedures, with untitled land still publicly described and treated as ‘state land’ by local land administrations (Teyssier et al. 2010; Burnod et al. 2013a). Missions of recognition nearly systematically conclude that there is ‘nothing to declare’, even where grazing and/or agricultural activities are evident (Andrianirina-Ratsialonana et al. 2011). Moreover, from my own experience, access to the minutes of these commissions is forbidden to the general public and labelled ‘secret’.²⁰ There is therefore no means to check who participated and what was said, and whether protests about the land operation under discussion were voiced and reported. Other evidence of the double standards that preside in the state management of corporate land acquisitions is that most companies operate without

18 Article 28 and 29, Decree 2010 -233 laying down the procedures for applying law 2008-014 (Free translation).

19 In December 2010, the Rajoelina regime sent a letter of instruction to all the regional land offices across the country, spelling out the lengthy procedure needed for the acquisition of tracts of land equal to or greater than 2,500 ha.

20 Repeated interviews with the Regional land services (Domaines) of Ihosy (2013 and 2014).

the necessary environmental permit and are not held accountable for this failure to abide by the rules (Ferguson et al. 2014). These practices reflect the general bias of state authorities towards commercial large-scale agriculture over smallholders.

In states whose budgets depend mainly on external contributions, private investments, especially foreign ones, represent a critical source of funding: official and unofficial rent associated with them can help state agents deliver on their electoral pledges, support their patronage networks and ultimately, contribute to a strengthening of authority (Burnod et al. 2013a; Wolford et al. 2013). The political scientist, J.F. Bayart, calls ‘strategies of extraversion’ those strategies of asserting power by mobilising the ‘resources derived from their (possibly unequal) relationship with the external environment’ (2000: 218). By demonstrating that dominant actors of African countries have historically gained from the insertion of their country as unequal partners in the world economy, he argues that governing through extraversion is a historical feature of governance in African countries that predates colonialism. The opportunities of extraversion offered by foreign agribusiness and mining projects (or what Bayart also calls the ‘rent of dependency’), I argue, contribute significantly towards explaining the partial application of laws protecting local land rights frequently observed on the ground.

The contested politics of land deals

Political obstruction to land access

Despite the bias encouraged by extraversion, previous research on land deals in Madagascar have highlighted cases of local authorities and officials supporting local struggles against dispossession. An empirical study of recent large-scale land deal negotiations in Madagascar (Burnod et al. 2013b) showed indeed that it was relatively frequent for corporate land access to be stalled following the mobilisation of local officials against cases of land rights abuse. In three of the cases examined in the study, local state officials had backed local struggles against dispossession. In the case of Newprod, opposition claims had been voiced by an ex-mayor and the Regional Direction of Forests and Water (DREF). In the case of N-Fuel, they had united a powerful Sakalava princess and a mayor, while in the case of Tozzi Green examined here, resistance efforts from cattle owners were backed by a mayor. Their official

complaints could be related to struggles over authority within the local administration and/or to competition over the resources offered by the project. In each case, these interventions had contributed to stalling corporate land access to a certain extent, thereby pointing to the potential of local officials in influencing land deals (Burnod et al. 2013b).

The case of Tozzi Green illustrates how political competition can play out against corporate land access, while highlighting that the power of local politicians on such matters is dependent on political conjuncture and cannot succeed without the backing of figures within the national state. Before describing the sequence of events that led to a stalling of the company's land access, I highlight how the context under Rajoelina's government (2009-2014) contributed to turning large-scale land deals into particularly sensitive issues, both politically and economically.

*Competition for extraversion rent aggravated during Andry Rajoelina's 'transition'*²¹

Under the 'transitional regime' that followed the overthrow of president Ravalomanana (2009-2014), Madagascar sank into economic recession, political turmoil and international isolation (Razafindrakoto et al. 2014). In reaction to the coup led by Rajoelina (Randrianja 2012), bilateral and multilateral donors suspended budget assistance and all 'non-essential' aid funding. These measures dealt a hard blow to an economy for which foreign aid represented approximately 40% of the government's budget and 75% of public spending (Ploch and Cook 2012). The political tensions and climate of insecurity that followed the coup adversely affected key sectors such as tourism, textile and construction and led to a sharp drop in the level of private investments.²² According to the World Bank, economic growth in Madagascar collapsed to just 0.6% in 2009, from 7% in 2008.²³

In this context, projects related to the extraction and exploitation of the country's natural

21 On 17 March 2009, a military directorate overthrew president Marc Ravalomanana and handed power to the mayor of Antananarivo, Andry Rajoelina, who was sworn in as president of the 'High Authority of the Transition' (HAT). Order 2009-002 of 17 March 2009 provided for a 24-month transition, but Rajoelina ended up staying in power until January 2014.

22 International Crisis Group (2014) 'A cosmetic end to Madagascar's crisis?' Africa Report n°218. 19 May. Available at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/africa/southern-africa/madagascar/218-a-cosmetic-end-to-madagascar-s-crisis.pdf> [Accessed: 22 May 2014].

23 IRIN (2010) 'Analysis: Madagascar's year of crisis'. Available at : <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportId=88447> [Accessed : 20 March 2010].

resources were one of the few sources of external funding remaining. In the mining sector, some highly-lucrative deals were negotiated with new partners²⁴. A total of ten new mining projects are estimated to have started under Rajoelina's regime, three of which are huge investments concerning areas of over 500,000 ha,²⁵ all adding to the concern over social and environmental damage already raised by major projects such as Madagascar Oil Tsimiroro, Ambatovy and QMM/Rio Tinto (Seagle 2012). Negotiation over large-scale land transfers were also conducted in the forestry sector as part of carbon-off setting schemes.²⁶ The agribusiness sector for its part suffered from a sharp drop in investment (from 82 projects announced between 2005 and 2014 to roughly 10 projects still active in 2014), as concern for Madagascar's political instability was compounded by the prospective investors', general lack of expertise in the agricultural sector, and difficulties in securing land access (Andrianirina Ratsialonana et al. 2011; Burnod et al. 2014a).

Whilst this context of financial scarcity reinforced competition over extraversion rent, large-scale land deals had become a 'hot issue' since the Daewoo scandal. The successful instrumentalisation of the case by Andry Rajoelina to discredit the Ravalomanana regime had highlighted the destabilising potential that accusations of land grabbing could have on a government. The scandal had also put the civil society on high alert: the association of land rights defence which was set up by Malagasies based in France to 'protect Malagasy land'²⁷ and which had played a critical role in publicising the Daewoo scandal at the time remained active hereafter (Coordination Sud 2010). Through its connections with national activists and transnational solidarity organisations, it has since been keeping a close eye and attracting public attention to other cases of large-scale land deals by communicating through the media, writing reports, sending petitions and calling the government to action. Whilst their requests

24 Among them, the company WISCO which paid 100 million dollars to gain the right to access the iron-rich zone of Soalala.

25 Petrochina (688 400 ha), Pan African Mining (1 million ha) and Mainland Mining (more than 2 million ha). These figures, as well as the other ones mentioned in this paragraph, are based on cross-referenced information from media articles, expert reports (Andrianirina et al. 2011; Raharinirina 2013; Burnod et al. 2014a) and civil society accounts (Andrew Lee Trust 2009; SIF 2013, Franchi et al. 2013 and newsletters from Collectif Tany). However, they cannot be considered to be definitive, in view of the opacity that surrounds these projects.

26 An area of 40,000 ha was bought by Madawoodlands in the Sofia region (Re:Common 2013). In Makira protected forest in the north-east, carbon credits were allegedly sold to Microsoft and the zoo of Zurich on an area of 320,000 ha (Collectif Tany, newsletter n°31, 31/04/2014).

27 Information from their website (exact reference not revealed for confidentiality reasons).

for transparency on land deals generally do not get any public response from the government, their action has inclined decision-makers to increased vigilance, as illustrated by Tozzi Green's experience.

The case discussed in this thesis indeed illustrates how the two contextual constraints outlined above, the shortage of external funding exacerbating competition over extraversion rent, on the one hand, and the political sensitivity of corporate land access in the wake of the Daewoo scandal, on the other, played in favour of struggles against dispossession. Before describing how these political dynamics played out in the context of the land deal, I first introduce the socio-economic context of the Ihorombe plateau on which the project developed.

Tozzi Green project-site

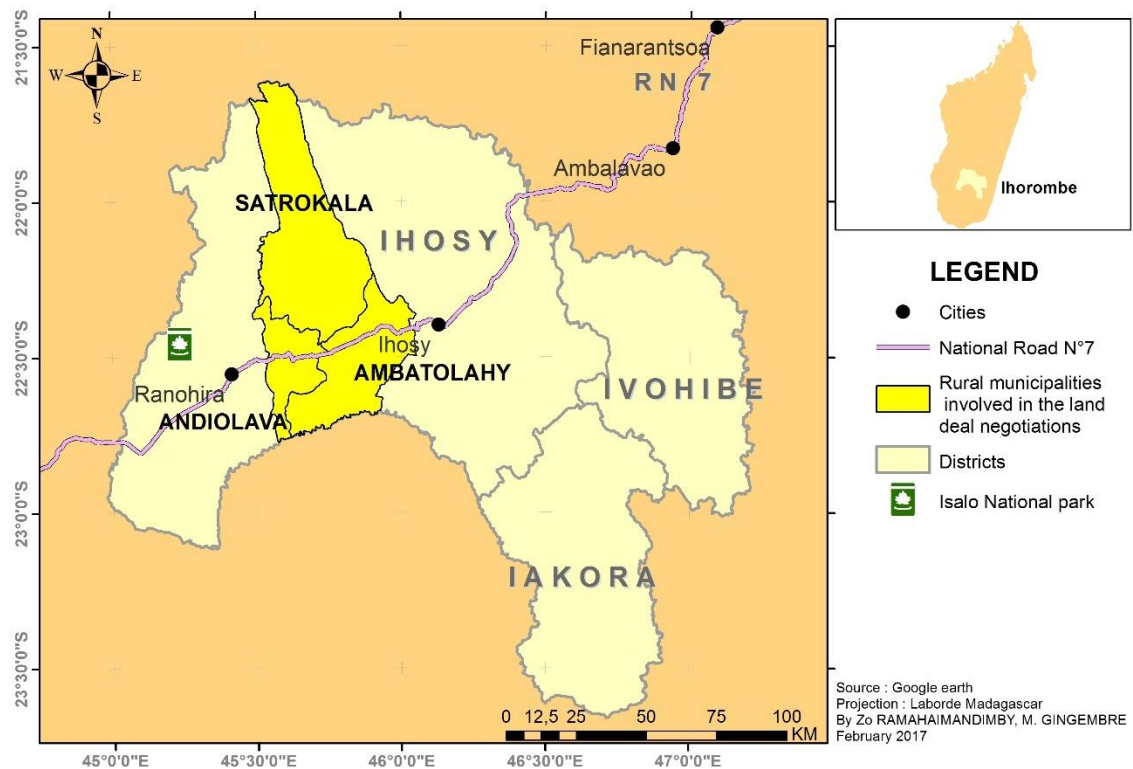
In view of its vast plains, the Ihorombe plateau was designated by the administration of the Ihorombe region as a priority area for commercial investment. It had already been recommended to Landmark, an Indian agribusiness company which had started developing a large-scale maize plantation project for a few years, but had stopped operations just before the arrival of Tozzi Green.

The Ihorombe plateau: an agropastoral, marginalised region

Bordered to the west by the Isalo National Park, the Ihorombe plateau is a region of savanna located in the district of Ihosy, Ihorombe region, some 600 km south of the capital Antananarivo, between the mountainous central highlands and the dry south of Madagascar. Its eroded plains (300 to 600 metres high) are prone to flooding, drought and locust invasion. It is an agrarian region in which most people live by semi-subsistence agriculture and extensive pastoralism, and have poor access to basic socio-economic services.²⁸

²⁸ Most of the data mentioned in this section are drawn from the following three documents written by the regional administration: 'Rapport annuel de mise en œuvre des programmes régionaux' (Implementation of Regional Programs. Yearly report) (2014), 'Profil Environnemental' (Environmental Profile) (2006), and 'Monographie de la Région Ihorombe' (Monograph of the Ihorombe Region) (2003) (free translation). These were the most recent sources of official data that were found to be available on the region.

Figure 1: Project Site. District of Ihosy. Region of Ihorombe, Madagascar.



Small-scale farming and extensive pastoralism provide the basis of the rural economy in the Ihorombe region. The ex-province of Tulear, to which the Ihorombe region belongs, has long been the first region for cattle farming in Madagascar (Fauroux 1992a).²⁹ Poultry and pig breeding is also practised but on a smaller scale. Contrary to pervasive stereotypes of the autochthonous Bara people being exclusive cattle farmers, however,³⁰ agriculture has long been an essential component of local livelihoods. Agriculture is largely non-mechanised. For tillage work, cattle are used.

Rice is the main farmed crop (75% of farmed land), and is complemented by other rain-fed crops, cassava (15% of the farmed land for the region), sweet potato (*sonjo*), maize, peanuts

²⁹ In 2014, 253,700 cattle were counted in the Ihorombe region, with the district of Ihosy accounting for the largest share.

³⁰ The Bara people claim autochthony across an area covering some 60,000km² in south-central Madagascar, often referred to as the Ibara country. On the Ihorombe plateau, they have been joined by Malagachies from neighbouring regions (Antesaka, Itanalas, Antandroy, Betsileo, Merinas, Sakalava etc.) who soon came to call themselves 'Bara' as well. For historical and anthropological work on Ibara, cf St Sauveur 1998, Moizo et al. 1997, Lebigre et al. 1997, Elli 1993, Huntington 1973 and Faublée 1951.

(*voanjo*) and *vondro* (straw-like type of plant used for sewing and roofs) for my field site.³¹

In 2014, the Ihorombe region's index of poverty was at 78.20%, nearly seven points higher than the national level when Madagascar is already in the bottom 50 countries in the Human Development Index world ranking.³² Nearly three quarters of the population did not reach the minimal calorie intake of 2,133 calories per day. Despite being connected to the rest of the country via a national road (the RN7), the region of Ihorombe has low access to basic services, very poor health and hygiene infrastructure, few schools and teachers, and electricity is a rare luxury. Dysentery is still one of the main causes of death, alongside malaria and acute respiratory infections. At the time of fieldwork, the region was also experiencing rising insecurity and a resurgence in deadly cattle theft.

In the countryside, machines, hydro-agricultural infrastructure and transportation means are very scarce. Relying on the rain for their agricultural yields, farmers are vulnerable to the vagaries of the climate. This leads to intense competition for the low-lying seasonal wetlands and the *baiboho* (alluvial soils along the rivers). Despite complex institutional schemes to provide help to small-scale farming at the level of the local administration, state support to cope with common external shocks such as drought and insect invasion seemed to be rare (2013 and 2014 fieldwork).

The rural municipalities of Satrokala, Andiolava and Ambatolahy

The municipalities of Satrokala, Andiolava and Ambatolahy where the Tozzi Green project set up its base have the advantage of being close to a national road, allowing for an easier outsourcing of products and importing of infrastructure and other necessary inputs. The population of these municipalities is relatively low: 8,234 inhabitants for 1,125 km² for Andiolava; 15,000 inhabitants for 2,135 km² for Satrokala; and 12,000 inhabitants for 2,600 km² for Ambatolahy. Densities are therefore between four and a half people per km² for

³¹ Monographie Ihorombe 2003.

³² Madagascar was ranked 154 in terms of HDI in 2015. Source: UNDP website- Available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/HDI>. [Accessed on 07/10/2015].

Ambatolahy and around seven people per km² for the other two (data from 2012)³³. The latest available Development Communal Plans from 2006 highlighted high illiteracy rates (from 65% for Ambatolahy to 80% for Andiolava), very poor access to health care (with a maximum of 2 nurses per municipality and none for Satrokala), and extremely low municipal budgets (from 1,500€ per year for Satrokala to 8,000€ for Ambatolahy). In terms of land use, the same broad patterns were found across all three municipalities, with rice paddies occupying roughly a third of the total farmed land, followed by cassava.

The three municipalities enjoyed varying capital and agricultural yields. Agricultural yields were, for instance, much higher in Andiolava than in the other two municipalities, which resulted in Andiolava topping the list in terms of production per inhabitant for both rice and cassava, despite having significantly less farmland than the other two. On the other hand, Satrokala had the lowest rice production per inhabitant, despite having more farmland than the others. Inequalities were also observable in terms of cattle wealth. In that respect, the municipality of Satrokala was doing better than that of Andiolava, but Ambatolahy was the one standing out. With a total of 42,450 head of cattle (2013), its official cattle wealth per capita was more than three times higher than that of Andiolava and more than two and a half times as high as that of Satrokala.³⁴

These figures sketch different profiles, a municipality with significant cattle wealth for Ambatolahy, one with good crop farming results for Andiolava, but conceal significant inequalities within the municipalities and within the villages themselves. Whilst interviews with key informants revealed that Ambatolahy's cattle was concentrated in the hands of a few, the agricultural yields of Satrokala's villagers may have been much better than the municipal average in certain areas and much worse in others, depending on a variety of

33 Ministère de la Décentralisation et de l'Aménagement du Territoire (2006) 'Plan Communal de Développement de la Commune Rurale d'Andiolava révisé lors de l'atelier des 23-24-25-26 mars 2006' (Municipal Development Plan for the Rural Municipality of Andiolava. May 2006) ; Ministère de la Décentralisation et de l'Aménagement du Territoire (2006) 'Plan Communal de Développement de la Commune Rurale d'Ambatolahy' (Municipal Development Plan for the Rural Municipality of Ambatolahy), August 2006 ; Ministère de la Décentralisation et de l'Aménagement du Territoire (2006) 'Plan Communal de Développement de la Commune Rurale d'Andiolava révisé lors de l'atelier des 23-24-25-26 mars 2006' (Municipal Development Plan for the Rural Municipality of Andiolava. Revised at the workshop held on 23-24-25-26th April 2006).

34 Official document, 2013, Confidential source.

factors.

Moreover, the way people make a living and whether or not this living ensures subsistence security and wellbeing is not the sole product of static ecological constraints and quantifiable capital. Instead, as Huff notes, livelihoods and subsistence securities are the result of ‘complex social, ecological, and political processes’ that articulate differently according to setting, historical experience and agential processes (2014: 85). In her work on livelihood vulnerabilities in southwestern Madagascar, she demonstrates indeed how the variegated articulations of these complex processes can result in same type of external shocks having different livelihood outcomes across geographical sites and social groups (Huff 2014). The short description of livelihoods patterns and endowments on the Ihorombe plateau, given here, falls far short of rendering the contextual and fluid character of these ‘social, ecological and political’ processes. What these quick figures point to are the disparities that exist within misnamed “local communities” and the different livelihood assets and constraints, and varying land needs, with which local people may approach corporate land access.

The three village case studies examined in Chapters 6, 7 and 8 will show how the general constraints outlined above, i.e. agrarian livelihoods with limited diversification and mobility and a lack of access to basic socio-economic services and infrastructure, are experienced and addressed differently in the context of the land deal negotiations, corroborating Huff’s point about the importance of historical experience, setting and agency. To contextualise these discussions further, it also seems important to give some basic elements of information on the local land tenure and pastoral system as well as on local governance.

Pastoralism, land tenure and land use on the Ihorombe plateau

Pastoral system

Cattle possession on the Ihorombe plateau is simultaneously individual and collective. Herds are owned and managed at the level of the nuclear family but decisions regarding the overall village cattle are to be taken collectively by the village and in consultation with the *lonaky* (heads of (sub)-lineage and heads of village).

As in most of lowland Madagascar, people from the Ihorombe region practise extensive pastoralism, where cattle are grazed on wide areas and regularly displaced geographically to allow for pastures to regenerate. Grazing remains fairly circumscribed, however, as practices of transhumance were gradually abandoned at the end of the 20th century due to widespread cattle theft (St Sauveur 1998: 233), putting village pastures under stress. For some, the village land can provide sufficient pastures for the village cattle. For others, shortages are compensated through the system of fostering (*confiage*), by which wealthy cattle owners entrust their livestock to farmers who have little or no cattle themselves. These farmers will graze the patron's cattle on their own land all year in exchange for the right to use it for the *hitsaky*. The *hitsaky* consists of making cattle run in the mud of the rice paddies to prepare the land for the rice transplantation (cf. Figure 2). Although a short-term need, the availability of cattle during the planting season is, therefore, essential to crop farming and a need that is quite cattle-thirsty since roughly 40 head of cattle are required to prepare a half hectare rice paddy.³⁵

Figure 2: *Hitsaky-Village of Antranohazo, March 2014.*



The system of *confiage*, combined with the concentration of cattle wealth, supports large patronage networks across the region (St Sauveur 1998, Moizo 2001). For those tending the cattle, prospects of accumulation are low since it is rare to be allowed to keep the offspring. In certain cases, they even have to offer a portion of the farmed crop to the cattle owners in gratitude. However, besides covering for the necessity of having cattle to plough farmland, tending cattle ensures them a safety net since patrons are expected to provide help in times

³⁵ Village authority, Zazafotsy, Andiolava, 03/05/ 2013.

of need or distress.³⁶

Land tenure and land use

The Ihorombe plateau is characterised by a community-based natural resource management system by which lands can support multiple rights differentially held and claimed. The property-model designed by Schlager and Ostrom (1992) is a very useful tool to understand the different rights that can be distributed in different combinations on the same parcel of land. The scholars identified five different resource control rights: access rights ('the right to enter a defined physical property'); withdrawal rights ('the right to obtain the "products" of a resource'); management rights ('the right to regulate internal use patterns and transform the resource by making improvements'); exclusion rights ('the right to determine who will have an access right, and how that right may be transferred'); and alienation rights ('the right to sell or lease either or both of the above collective-choice rights') (1992: 250-251). The first two are operational rights, while the last three are collective-choice property rights, referring to some capacity to make decisions on the parcel or tract of land.

Applying this model to the Ihorombe plateau, some groups or individuals may have rights to walk through a parcel of land with their cattle (access right), or to walk *and* graze their cattle on it on a tract (access and withdrawal rights) but *not* to make any decision on that tract. On the Ihorombe plateau, the collective-choice property rights (management, exclusion and alienation) are not split; rather, they are concentrated in the hands of a single collective entity: the village. On a particular tract, several villages may be allowed to graze but only one village can decide how to regulate its use, whom to include and exclude regarding its use, and whether or not to terminate this. The village concentrating these collective-choice rights would be referred to as the '*topontany*', literally, the master of the land.

Theoretically, rangeland is undivided within the village itself since it is the *tany-pokonolona* (the communal land). In practice, however, farmland and in certain cases rangeland as well frequently end up being distributed between the hamlets that make up the village. This zoning of the village land signals a rarefaction of land resources. In some cases, land reserves have

³⁶ These observations are based on the data I collected on the Ihorombe plateau and may not apply to the whole of Ibara.

already even been distributed between families.

On the Ihorombe plateau, with collective-choice property rights come obligations of surveillance against cattle theft. When cattle are stolen, hoof marks are followed to identify the direction taken by the *malaso* (cattle thieves). According to the collective surveillance system, every village whose land has been crossed by the thieves has a duty to track the itinerary of the stolen herd up to the limits of their own village land. The village whose direction has been found to have been taken by the *malaso* is then in charge of doing the same thing. Finding where the stolen cattle left one's territory is called 'making marks exit'. The village which cannot identify the exact place where the stolen cattle left its village land has to pay the compensation to the injured party. This system of collective surveillance contributes to asserting land control and to materialising invisible boundaries between villages. With the obtaining of access and withdrawal rights on another village's territory also comes a whole set of obligations of help and reciprocity (Moizo 2001).

The other characteristic of local land tenure on the Ihorombe plateau, which typifies many community-based natural resource management systems, is its negotiability and flexibility (Berry 1993). The fact that the distribution of the rights listed above is regularly discussed and renegotiated will be critical to understanding the contentious character of decision-making in the context of land deal negotiations.

Some twenty years ago, agricultural and pastoral activities in the iBara region were described as 'complementary and even synergic activities' since agriculture was 'using little space and only in a seasonal way' (St Sauveur 1998: 118). Rice culture on lowland would only use the soil a few months per year and the rest of the time it could be used for grazing the cattle as it returned to its state of marshes. Nowadays, agriculture and pastoralism certainly remain complementary activities with agricultural profits contributing to the purchase of livestock and cattle being indispensable to crop farming activities. However, growing ecological and demographic pressures are increasingly turning them into rival activities. As a village official explained, 'the population is increasing and needs more rice paddies. All the lowlands are already used, so now we have to use the *tazoa* (highlands) for agriculture. Nowadays,

there are cases where two families have to share one rice paddy'.³⁷ Another villager explained that about three quarters of their rice paddies were located on the *tazoa* (highlands) as the *loviana* (lowlands) were not sufficient.³⁸ The rarefaction of farmland is leading to an increasing number of rice paddies being formed at close distance from the villages, which leads to frequent crop damage by the cattle.

These pressures on landed resources also contribute to the progressive closing of the territories to outsiders.

If a member of our family needs land for livelihood, one of them can come and ask for our permission to come in. In that case, since it's family, we don't refuse. [...] But we don't accept newcomers anymore because there isn't enough land, even if we are friends.³⁹

These issues need to be kept in mind when examining villagers' perspectives on the Tozzi Green land deal negotiations. Depending on one's situation, the appeal of compensation and increased access to socio-economic services could be offset by the experiences of land shortages and vice-versa.

Governance and authority in Ibara

People from the Ihorombe plateau form a lineage society. Norms of acceptable behaviour, matrimonial exchanges, economic alliances, inheritance and access to resources are all defined by kinship, in conjunction with gender and age.

The Bara define themselves according to their clans but in practice, it is the lineage or sub-lineage that informs their socio-political organisation. Currently dispersed over extremely wide areas, clans do not have centralised authority structures and customary political authority is extremely fragmented (St Sauveur 1998). Lineages and sub-lineages are spatially organised in villages, under the authority of the *lonaky*. The *lonaky* is a hereditary function that falls to the eldest of the ruling family through paternal, indirect descent. *Lonaky* are in charge of the village internal affairs and their assent is needed on issues of matrimonial

³⁷ Head of *fokontany* Ambodilafa, 04/05/2013.

³⁸ Deputy head of *fokontany*, Andafa, 10/05/2013.

³⁹ *Lonaky*, Andalanotsy, 08/05/2013.

alliances, access to and cession of the village resources. Considered as the link between the living, the ancestors and God (*Zanahary*), *lonaky* are in charge of conducting the ritual ceremonies asking for blessing or forgiveness in cases of sicknesses, weddings, funerals and so on. Their intervention is also required to lift *taboos* (or ask the ancestors for forgiveness in case someone in the village has violated one) and to undertake any new significant task or work in the village. Their approval is required for most operations on farmland or rangeland, whether it is to dig new rice paddies, to farm on some portion of highland that was previously used for grazing, to sell a rice paddy or to allow newcomers to settle in the village.

In the past decades, new figures of authority have emerged, contributing to some degree to 'the decline of the lineage power' (St Sauveur 1998: 230) as significant cattle wealth was reaped amid the thriving cattle theft business and the increased commercialisation of agriculture. With this wealth came influence (Fauroux 2002). Often referred to as the *mpanarivo*, 'those who have thousands', their owners have constituted themselves a large clientele through the system of the *confiage*. In the municipality of Ambatolahy, for instance, there are men at the head of more than 5,000 head of cattle, lending their cattle across several municipalities.

In Madagascar, non-state local authorities do not have any constitutionally recognised powers. In places where they have remained distinguished throughout history such as the kings and queens of pre-colonial empires, they can enjoy quite strong recognition and are still seen as key decision-makers on issues of external relations (cf. Feeley-Harnik 1991; Berger 2006). However, in contexts where local leadership is less centralised as in the current Ibara society, the lines of respective jurisdictions between state and customary authorities are likely to be more fluid and the object of constant negotiations. While mayors may gain in legitimacy by being close to respected local leaders, *lonaky* usually need support from state agents to exert influence on external affairs. In this relationship of interdependence, the balance can vary from one case to the other.

Other local figures of authority include the heads of *fokontany* (the village-level administrative units) who have been answering directly to the regional state administration

since president Ravalomanana had them nominated by the head of district instead of elected by the people and the *komity*, unofficial administrative secretaries of the villages, who have no constitutionally-recognised powers but serve critical function. Generally the only or one of the only person who can read and write in the village, easy to reach, and often next of kin, the *komity* are the go-to person for any paper work or contact with state administration. In this context of unofficial legal pluralism, the distribution of local power between state and non-state authorities is characterised by a certain degree of uncertainty and negotiability. This adds a level of complexity to decision-making in a context where local land tenure is already characterised by flexibility. .

This sketch of the legal-institutional and socio-economic context in which Tozzi Green developed will help to make sense of the variegated responses to and outcomes of the land deal negotiations within the villages (Chapters 5 to 8). The next pages describe the evolution of the agribusiness project and outlines the successes and hurdles the company met in trying to secure land access.

Tozzi Green land deal negotiations

Unexpected difficulties in growing biofuel and accessing land in Madagascar

A subsidiary of Tozzi Industry, an Italian holding working in the energy sector, Tozzi Green's original plans were to develop a large-scale plantation of *Jatropha curcas* complemented by *Moringa* and *Vetiver* for purposes of biofuel and biomass production. Its business plan was projecting a coverage of 100,000

Figure 3: Base camp and field offices Tozzi Green, Satrokala, April 2013



ha by 2019 with roughly 2,000 trees per ha and yields of 5 tons of jatropha grains per ha after

five years of activity.⁴⁰ The country managers started prospecting for land and setting the project up in 2010 under the lead of two foreign agronomists who knew the country well and who had influential contacts in the Ihorombe region.

Land access was planned to be progressive with requests of 10,000-20,000 ha at a time, each new portion only offered ‘after observation, control and assessment of the activities on the ground by a competent authority’.⁴¹ After permissions were granted by the national government, Tozzi Green managers started negotiating land access inside the rural municipality of Satrokala, where the company set up its base and developed a tree nursery. A few months later, village level negotiations were extended to the municipality of Andiolava. The land of Ambatolahy was also targeted but, after ‘discussion with his population’, its mayor decided to oppose the implementation of the project in his municipality⁴².

In 2012, upon completion of the lengthy top-down procedure defined by *circulaire* 310-21//MATD/SG/DGSF (2010), a 30-year renewable lease was granted to the project. It consisted of a total of 6,558 ha spread over 15 non-contiguous tracts located in the municipalities of Satrokala and Andiolava (Figure 4).

On the ground, in the meantime, the project was experiencing agronomic difficulties as awareness was growing that jatropha may not be the miraculous plant it had been praised as. Most of the plantations visited in 2013 were showing poor results, with the height of the jatropha trees rarely exceeding 20-30cm. Whether cause or consequence, many of these plantations seemed to have been neglected, with random seeding practices for some and weeds between the rows of trees (Figure 5).

40 Tozzi Green (2011) ‘Projet biocarburant et biomasse Ihorombe – Descriptif du projet et business plan’, 1st April.

41 Tozzi Green (2011) ‘Projet biocarburant et biomasse Ihorombe – Descriptif du projet et business plan’, 1st April, p.29.

42 Interview mayor of Ambatolahy, Ambatolahy, 07/02/2013.

Figure 4: Map of the land originally targeted by and ultimately leased to Tozzi Green

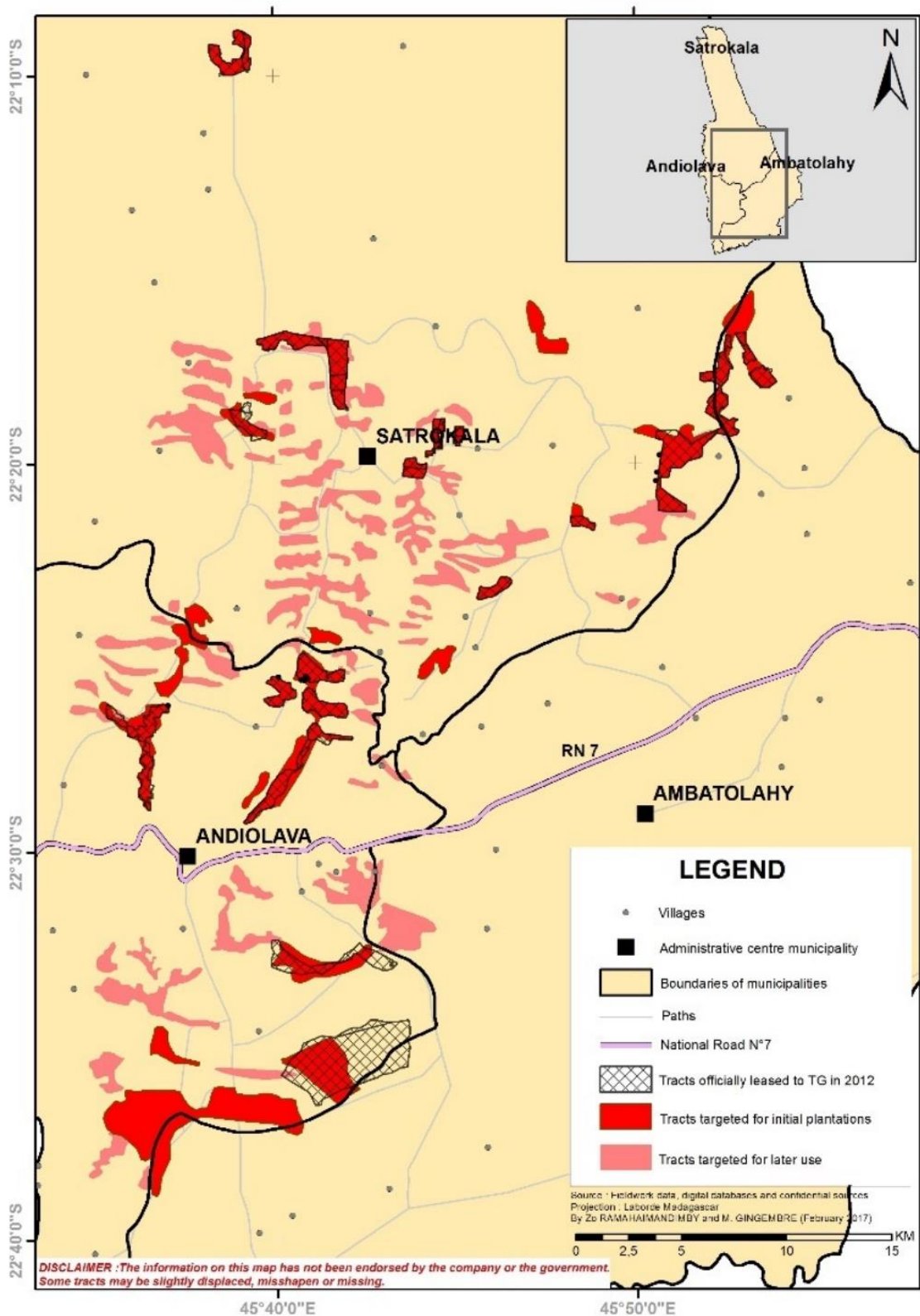


Figure 5: Jatropha fields close to the village of Manambatra, Satrokala, 06/04/2013.



Only those tracts that had proved fertile showed signs of maintenance work, with trees 70-80cm high (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Jatropha fields close to the village of Ampafika, Satrokala 05/04/2013



Tozzi Green agronomic staff explained that the poor quality of the soil and the lack of rain were at fault.⁴³ By 2013, nearly four years after the start of the operations, no fruits had yet been harvested, whereas the business plan had projected that first yields would be obtained by then and the first exports be carried out by 2014. In April 2013, only 3,600 hectares were farmed (against the 20,000 planned in the business plan). Decisions were therefore made to shift from biofuel and biomass plantations to flexcrops.⁴⁴ By 2014, Tozzi Green was growing six different crops, with maize and sunflower representing roughly half the total area farmed and jatropha only a fifth of it. A number of plots were totally abandoned and land occupation shrank to 1,500 ha.⁴⁵

In the meantime, the company had invested funds in socio-infrastructure for the local population. In the *chef-lieu* (main village) of Satrokala, they had constructed a dam, a

⁴³ Interview chief agronomist Tozzi Green, Satrokala, 13/02/2013.

⁴⁴ Flexcrops are crops that can 'have multiple uses (food, feed, fuel, fibre, industrial material, etc.) that can be flexibly interchanged' (Borras et al. 2016: 94). Interviewed agronomists at Tozzi Green confirmed that these crops had been chosen to allow the company to remain flexible about how and in which markets to sell them.

⁴⁵ Interview Stefano, Tozzi Green management team, Satrokala, 05/04/2014.

secondary school and a new town hall, made bore-holes and water pumps, rehabilitated the police station and set up a local health centre with staff paid by the company, and free consultation services for under five-year-olds. They had also invested in public electricity but this help had been short-lived. At the time of the last fieldwork (January-April 2014), they were also carrying out daily street cleaning. In Andiolava, they had also built a secondary school and rehabilitated a few other public buildings.

Although some of these investments were highly appreciated (particularly the health centre and the water pumps), they were also creating frustration. First, these services were concentrated in Satrokala's main village. Second, few of the promises of support made to the villages who had contributed land had been delivered on. Lack of consistency was another main issue with promises of help varying across time and space, generating confusion and frustration.

High levels of staff turnover and important changes in corporate policies seemed to be part of the problem. These reflected the tensions and uncertainty that were pervading the company. With the agribusiness project showing signs that it was floundering, distrust started growing between the Italian headquarters and the country office managers, with the former lamenting the lack of result on the ground and the latter strongly disapproving of the new business approach that was being pushed for in that context. The bitter feud that followed ended with the dismissal of the country director (2013), who had spent years designing and carrying the project on the ground, and the ordering of an audit on the ground following suspicions of embezzlement. Sent from Italy, the new managers had little knowledge of the national context. They arrived with clear orders to make sure the company 'stopped acting like an NGO' and focus more on production instead.⁴⁶ A decision was also made to move towards an increasingly mechanised project where low-skilled workers would be less and less needed. In Satrokala main village, the implications this decision had in terms of labour opportunities were already being felt a year later and quite a number of migrants who had settled there to work for Tozzi Green has lost their jobs.. These decisions were made at a

⁴⁶ Tahiny, Tozzi Green management team, Satrokala, 02/04/2013.

time when tensions were growing on issues of labour rights. In 2013, a strike was organised to contest the differential treatment between resident and non-resident workers.

The members of the Tozzi Green senior staff I met lamented the disconnection that existed between the headquarters' ambitions and their day-to-day struggles.⁴⁷ They explained that on the one hand, their Italian managers were asking them to go more quickly and cut non-essential spending but on the other, both the local population and the state apparatus were always asking for more help and support. They complained of petty opportunist strategies on the part of the villagers, some involving dubious land claims, and of harassment for informal retributions and for different favours from the local administration. Much energy and money, they regretted, was spent on trying to accommodate these various *desiderata*.⁴⁸

In the meantime, state support for the project began to waver. Shortly after the first lease was granted, the mayor of Ambatolahy and a dozen villagers from the municipality of Ambatolahy and Satrokala talked against the land deal at a press conference in Antananarivo (November 2012). This grassroots initiative gained echo, thanks to the help of national and transnational activists, and led to vocal accusations of 'land grabbing' on social and national media. In the context of the tension that followed the Daewoo scandal and the illegal seizure of power by Andry Rajoelina (March 2009), this bad publicity generated anxiety within the government and a month later, the Ministry of Development and Country Planning ordered the regional land services to ensure the 'immediate suspension of all ground operations related to the extension of the Tozzi Green project' (December 2012). At the time of the last period of fieldwork, the moratorium had still not been lifted officially. The political sequence of events that led to these repercussions is contextualised and discussed in more detail below. While illustrating how the institutional bias is translated in practice and how it is legitimised through a specific rhetoric, it also confirms the state to be an ambivalent actor within land deals (Pedersen and Buur 2016; Wolford et al. 2013).

⁴⁷ Stefano, Tozzi Green management team, Satrokala, 05/04/2014; Leonce, Tozzi Green management team, Antananarivo, 21/05/2014.

⁴⁸ Julien, Tozzi Green management team, Satrokala, 14/11/ 2011; Mamy, Tozzi Green management team, Antananarivo, 13/05/2013; Tahiny, Tozzi Green management team, Satrokala, 02/04/2013; Stefano, Tozzi Green management team, Satrokala, 05/04/2014.

The successes of a bottom-up resistance in electoral times

From committed support to requests of suspension

The Tozzi Green project initially enjoyed widespread support among government officials at all levels. In compliance with *Circulaire* 321-10/MATD/SG/DGSF (2010), the first official endorsement came from an inter-ministerial commission which convened to discuss the company's business plan. In this document, the agribusiness project was framed as an investment presenting great potential in terms of local and national development. The biofuel and biomass project would further the country's energetic independence, whilst bringing tax revenues to the state. It would also strengthen local capacities in the clean energy sector through knowledge transfer and capacity building. The company also pledged to bring support to the local population on issues of human and cattle health, local food security, water infrastructure and rural electrification. Optimistic projections were also made in terms of job creation (33 permanent workers in Antananarivo, 520 in the field and some 5,000 seasonal, low-skilled jobs by 2019).⁴⁹ While pointing to the country's large 'reserves of unused or insufficiently used arable land',⁵⁰ a critical commitment was made to spare 'private land, villages, land used by peasants for crop farming and land already legally attributed to other projects or companies'.⁵¹

These win-win narratives were quickly reproduced by decision-makers at all levels. Following approval from the inter-ministerial commission, an authorisation of prospection was delivered (May 2011). As the procedure moved down to the regional and local level, the high-profile Vice-President, also Minister of Development and Country Planning, put his political weight behind the project, carrying field visits and mediating the company's socio-economic compensation.

Local and regional authorities also provided key support, especially by helping Tozzi Green secure land access at ground level. The mayors of Satrokala and Andiolava contributed to the effort by offering tracts from their own family possessions (or that of their in-laws).

⁴⁹ Business Plan Tozzi Green, 2011: 42.

⁵⁰ Business Plan Tozzi Green, 2011: 2.

⁵¹ Business Plan Tozzi Green, 2011: 14.

Together with the regional officials, they also backed consultation efforts by helping the company organise public meetings in Satrokala and Andiolava and by accompanying them in the villages. In July 2011, a ‘regional commission responsible for the sensitisation, information and monitoring of Tozzi Green project’ was created and regional authorities also started to accompany its managers in their visits to the villages. In Ambatolahy, the Regional head himself made the trip. This positive collaboration was short lived, however. A year later, the commission was dissolved on the grounds that the ‘*circulaire* 321-10 had been violated’.⁵²

Soon thereafter, in December 2012, the regional land services (*CIRDOM and CIRTOPO*) received the afore-mentioned order to ‘immediately suspend all ground operations related to the extension of Tozzi Green project’⁵³ (appendix 2). The order came through a memorandum signed by the General Director of the Land Department of the Ministry of Development and Country Planning (*Directeur Général des Services Fonciers*). Accused of having started procedures towards the granting of a second lease to the company, the regional land services recalled that ‘all requests for large-scale land acquisitions had to be approved by the superior authorities first’. The company was also notified of this decision. In the letter they were sent, they were accused of having breached procedures, since no request of extensions could be made before the government had verified that the land already allocated had been duly developed.⁵⁴

Any secret dealings between the regional land services and Tozzi Green are beyond the scope of this research. What matters is to highlight the rationale behind two decisions, the dissolution of the regional commission and the order to suspend extensions, that indicate a shift in position of both the regional and the central state. Discourse and document analysis suggest that they are less an act of regulation than the outcome of politics driven by electoral calculations under the pressure of contentious politics, on the one hand, and competition over

52 Regional government of Ihorombe, Décision n° 216/12-RIH portant abrogation de la décision n°33/11-RIH du 23 Juillet 2011. Ihosy, 01/08/2012.

53 Vice Primature en charge du Développement et de l’Aménagement du Territoire (2012), Secrétariat Général, Direction Générale des Services Fonciers, ‘Note de service’, n° 392/12/VPMDAT/SG/DGSF, 01/12/2012.

54 SG/MATD, Written communication to Tozzi Green, 21/12/2012.

the material and political benefits associated with the foreign project, on the other.

Contentious politics in a context of political competition

When questioned about the nature of the ‘violations’ that had caused the dissolution of the regional commission, members of the *Région* (regional government) explained that the *services déconcentrés* (regional representation of the ministries) were ‘playing it alone’ and acting ‘secretly’ with the Tozzi Green company, thereby excluding the rest of the commission.⁵⁵ Tensions between these two bodies of the regional state existed prior to the implementation of the Tozzi Green project. Interviews with personnel from both agencies painted a picture of mutual suspicion, fed by a lack of dialogue, unclear institutional statutes and overlapping jurisdictions.⁵⁶ However, the mutual accusations of prevarication over Tozzi Green indicated that animosities had been exacerbated by competition fed by the foreign project. Grudges surfaced after the Tozzi Green company offered laptops and a 4x4 vehicle to the regional land office. Resenting an unfair distribution of benefits towards the *services déconcentrés*, the Regional head went to Tozzi Green to ask for the *Région*’s share. Tozzi Green local managers refused to yield to the pressures⁵⁷. A short while later, the *Région* was officially asking its line ministry ‘to withhold, immediately, the boundary marking operations [...] as well as all the land procedures that were engaged for the Tozzi Green project’⁵⁸, and the commission was dissolved. Recalling the sequence of events, Tozzi Green’s community advisor at the time explained: ‘The *Région* started spreading utter nonsense information out, all of that because of the 4x4, and saying that the minister had surely received presents from us and then came the instructions to stop the land extensions’.⁵⁹

Frustration over Tozzi Green’s unfair distribution of benefits was compounded by electoral calculations. The parliamentary elections, in which the Regional head was running, were approaching, while the resistance movement against Tozzi Green was gaining traction.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Senior member of the regional government, Antananarivo, 13/05/2013.

⁵⁶ Law 2004-001 of 17 June 2004 defines the *Régions* as ‘both decentralised territorial entities and administrative circumscriptions’ (art.4).

⁵⁷ Mamy, Tozzi Green management team, Antananarivo, 13/05/2013.

⁵⁸ VPDAT (2013) ‘Rapport de mission dans la Région Ihorombe, du 19 au 21 septembre 2013’ (Mission report in the Ihorombe Region, from 19th to 23rd September 2013). Unpublished.

⁵⁹ Mamy, Tozzi Green management team, Antananarivo, 13/05/2013.

⁶⁰ The parliamentary elections were finally held in October-December 2013 but had been announced as far back as 2010 (Galibert 2011).

In 2012, Tozzi Green wanted to extend its perimeters but the villagers were against it, explained an official from the Région. You know there are things that people really can't understand: for them, it's foreigners coming to take their land; they even talked of tombs being disrespected. And so, they went up to Antananarivo and then they talked on private radios, wrote in newspapers etc. That's how things started degenerating and the Regional head said: "I'm not the one who signed the authorisation. It's the General Director of the Land Ministry and even sometimes the Vice Prime-Minister who signs emphyteutic leases for tracts over 50 ha.⁶¹ They are the ones who should be approached".⁶²

Besides shifting the blame on the national government, the Regional head tried to tame the simmering anger by postponing the boundary marking operations until after the elections. Before being officially leased to Tozzi Green, the 6,500 ha were titled in the name of the state, as required by law. However, the formal marking of the land on the ground was not carried out for another whole year, in July-August 2013, when the elections were over. This strategic move was deceiving: while boundary stones would not have left any room for doubt, rural populations rarely hear about leases being signed. The case studies discussed below highlight the critical impact of these ground operations on people's perceptions of the land deal process.

Fear of an electoral backlash over a land deal that was starting to stir public outcry can also be assumed to be behind the government's decision to order a moratorium on Tozzi Green's land extensions. Civil society's attacks on the government's management of the land deal were indeed singling out Hajo Andrianainarivelo, the Vice-Minister in charge of Development and Country Planning (VPDAT), who was then running in the presidential elections and had not hidden his support for Tozzi Green. As civil society reminded the public, the delivery of Tozzi Green's gifts to the regional land services had been done under his official patronage. This manifest proximity behind the foreign company and the high-profile Minister were feeding accusations of high level corruption. It is certainly no coincidence that the order of a moratorium on Tozzi Green's land extension was issued only two weeks after the press conference against Tozzi Green, as the attacks on the Minister were

⁶¹ Law 2008-014 stipulates indeed that all cession of land above 50ha in a rural municipality need to be approved and signed by the Minister in charge of state land (art. 27).

⁶² Senior regional official, 13/05/2013.

in full swing.

The political events of 2009 had indeed sent a strong reminder of the fine political skills that had to be applied in applying ‘strategies of extraversion’ within a national space whose political imagination gives a special prominence to the *tanindrazana*, the ‘land of the ancestors’ which has come to simultaneously mean ‘the nation’ (Galibert 2011). The social upheaval that had happened shortly after the Daewoo scandal had been revealed, with its violent lootings, arsons and acts of vandalism, had sent a strong message to the Malagasy political class. In its targeting of president Ravalomanana’s agro-industrial and media empire, this unusual outburst of popular violence may have been partly orchestrated; it was also an expression of frustration and anger at a broken contract: the providential, self-made man of 2001 who was priding himself on his ‘Malagasy-made’ (*vita gasy*) social ascension had turned into an extraverted predator, ready to sell an immense share of the country’s farmland to foreign investors (Galibert 2009; Pellerin 2009). In Madagascar’s current moral economy, dealing with foreign investors interested in the country’s natural resources is a complex balancing act. These events had given a taste of the social sanction that would fall on those threatening the *tanindrazana* (the land of the ancestors) and the mobilisation against Tozzi Green had made it clear that civil society was watching.

The caution of the government around that new potential case of ‘land grabbing scandal’ was prolonged by Hajo Andrianainarivelo’s successor at the MDAT who, after an official visit to the project, further threatened the company in cutting their land access (September 2013). The minister’s mission report indeed pointed to the change of farmed crops as non-compliant with the *cahier des charges* (technical agreements joined to the lease) and to the fact that ‘the marking made for the company included tracts that were already occupied and farmed traditionally or that were used as rangeland or as places of worship’. Following these observations, they proposed the partial cancellation of the lease contract.⁶³ Indicating a major shift in official discourses, these criticisms and threats could be seen as a success for those who had actively lobbied for the protection of local land rights.

63 VPDAT (2013).

However, the outcome of this mission was not advertised, no more than the previous order to suspend land extensions. As noted above, the order of suspension was discreetly communicated to the regional authorities by memorandum, an internal administrative document, and to Tozzi Green by letter. This memorandum was circulated through social media and to the villagers who had taken an active part in the resistance campaign, but this can be assumed to be the result of a leak by disgruntled local authorities. Had the ministry wanted to communicate it widely, it would certainly have called the media or organised a press conference. A head of *fokontany* who was himself opposed to the land deal but had not heard of the moratorium explained his surprise:

No, I had never heard about it [the order of suspension] before. And I'm surprised to hear that because as last Wednesday only, Tozzi Green obtained a tract here. That's weird. Why don't they publicise that decision at the level of the *fokontany*? And why don't they talk about it on the radio?⁶⁴

It is also telling that no one wished to claim responsibility for this decision. On the one hand, the regional administration was insisting that the decision had come from the top,⁶⁵ and on the other, the national government, in its official communication, explained that it was made following warnings sent by the *Région*.⁶⁶ This lack of publicity and the absence of follow-up strongly suggest that these two ministerial interventions were pre-emptive moves in anticipation of political attacks rather than genuine attempts to pressure the company into following the rules and respecting local land rights.⁶⁷

Observation of the negotiation process for Tozzi Green land access highlights the bias of the Malagasy state towards commercial interests. The developments discussed above nevertheless show that this support has its conditions and can be easily withheld. Some frustration developed within some members of the regional apparatus over what was felt to be an unfair distribution of extraversion rent. Compounded with the pressure of a vocal

⁶⁴ Head of *fokontany*, Location kept secret for confidentiality reasons, 04/03/2014.

⁶⁵ Interview with officials from the Regional land services, Ihosy, 25/04/2013. Interview with officials from the regional ministry, Ihosy 12/04/ 2013 and Antananarivo, 13/05/ 2013.

⁶⁶ VPDAT (2013).

⁶⁷ More details on this episode and its repercussions were explored in a previous paper (Gingembre 2015).

protest campaign in a context of elections, this frustration encouraged them to report local struggles against dispossession to senior decision-makers. In a political context haunted by the spectre of a previous land deal scandal, the minister in charge took the path of caution as well and ordered a halt to the company's land extensions. Choices not to publicise the moratorium on Tozzi Green's land deal suggest short-term politics, rather than genuine endeavours to enforce regulation and to prioritise local land rights, however. The case of Mangidy village, discussed in Chapter 8, shows that neither these political acts nor Ambatolahy's mayor's official opposition to the land deal stopped the Tozzi Green company from prospecting on Ambatolahy's territory, confirming that victories gained by those struggling against dispossession in this context are fragile.

To understand the complexities of negotiating land deals, the next two chapters introduce the theoretical (Chapter 3) and methodological tools (Chapter 4) used in this thesis. The chapters that follow examine the processes: first, at regional level across 26 villages (Chapter 5), and then in relation to three particular village case studies (Chapters 6, 7 and 8).

CHAPTER 3:

VOICE AND INFLUENCE THROUGH THE LENS OF POWER, MORAL ECONOMY AND CONTENTIOUS POLITICS

Introduction

As stressed in both the discussion of the “land grabbing” literature (Chapter 1) and the politics of the Tozzi Green project (Chapter 2), land deal negotiations are the complex and power-laden articulations of multi-level contentions. In Chapter 1, I also explained that the thesis’ main research question, ‘How do the voices of local people get heard or silenced in the context of negotiation processes for corporate land access?’, had been explored through the lens of Gaventa’s theories of power (1982, as inspired by Lukes 1974) and Scott’s theory of moral economy (1976). This chapter justifies and details the conceptual underpinnings of the thesis.

The analysis of power dynamics will be shown to be instrumental in identifying the multiplicity of pressures that differentially articulate in informing both the type of perceptions and the nature of engagements that make up local responses to land deal negotiations. I briefly describe Gaventa’s theory to highlight how it can help our understanding of how power can prevent or allow certain voices to be expressed, and also influence people’s views on land deals in more invisible ways

Power can be challenged, however, and I seek to understand under which conditions, thanks to the concept of moral economy (Scott 1976). By bringing attention to the structuring importance of perceived fairness in the context of economic transactions, the concept of moral economy allows one to understand not only how relational justice can influence perceptions, but also the decisions to express voices or not, especially if that voice is (vertically or horizontally) subversive. Perceptions of others’ performances with regards to their rights and obligations inform perceptions of land deals and decisions of whether it is worth the risk of expressing one’s voice

In sum, this chapter argues in favour of understanding local perceptions and engagements (or responses) to land deal negotiations as an articulation of power and moral economy. Whilst highlighting how power dynamics can produce compliance, it suggests that considerations of social justice may draw red lines that could entice people to want to challenge power relationships.

Finally, this thesis draws on the sociology of mobilisation to look at the discursive and social mechanisms that are involved in the attempts to streamline local perceptions one way or the other and to impose one's voice in a context of internal contention. Tools from this literature are also used to try and explain how contentious politics and the mobilisation of relations within the state can galvanise local struggles and open room for influence, despite a context of institutional bias.

Lukes' and Gaventa's three-dimensional approach to power

Understanding the dynamics and conditions of peasant mobilisation in the context of change has been a longstanding concern within the field of agrarian politics (Moore 1966; Wolf 1969; Paige 1975; Scott 1976). Noting that only a small fraction of the local population affected by land grabs around the world seemed to have openly voiced protest, scholars working on the global land rush stressed the need to also explore reasons as to why agrarian populations 'fail or refuse to mobilise in the face of attacks on their livelihoods' (Borras and Franco 2013: 1725).

This question of non-mobilisation or quiescence is at the core of John Gaventa's work on the mining boom of the US Appalachian region at the end of the 19th century (1982). His interest arose from the observation that very little remedial action had been taken by the workers and local population to protest against the injustices of that fast, industrial development, despite blatant exploitation by the holders of capital (Gaventa 1982). Political science, he inferred, should not simply be interested in explaining protests in the context of democracy, but should possibly more importantly work at explaining the lack of rebellion in the face of injustices. After Frey, he calls 'non-issues' those cases where situations of glaring inequalities are not

met by ameliorative attempts at influence (Frey 1971: 1097).

Gaventa starts by swiftly rejecting the widespread conception that quiescence of the rural poor comes down to a lack of education and/or to traditional cultures that do not value democratic participation. As he aptly notes, 'If these are sufficient components of explanation, how are variations in behaviour among such groups to be explained?' (Gaventa 1982: 8). He argues instead that 'in situations of inequality, the political response of the deprived may be seen as a function of power relationships. Power works to develop and maintain the quiescence of the powerless.' (Gaventa 1982: vi-vii).

The effects of power are felt in different ways according to different theories of power. On the one hand, there are those theories that focus on the way power constrains people's *actions*. Others, on the other hand, are those that contend that power has a more pervasive imprint in that it affects the *conceptions* of the social order. The methodology used here adopts Lukes' (1974) and Gaventa's (1982) three-dimensional approach to power since it provides the possibility of exploring both effects of power. The next section explains how this research engages with it to carry out an analysis of responses to farmland privatisation.

What Lukes (1974) has called the 'one-dimensional approach to power' was developed by American political scientists Robert Dahl (1957) and Nelson Polsby (1963), two main figures of the 'pluralist school'. Their work explored the exercise of power within spheres of decision-making and of conflict resolution, with a strong focus on the mobilisation of resources. In keeping with the field of the sociology of mobilisation, their theories stress the importance of material and immaterial resources in shaping decision-making and stress the importance of political competition for the realisation of accountability. However, the pluralist school excludes the possibility that non-participation may be a political problem. Since the political system of the USA is believed to be open to all voices, and grievances are assumed to be recognised and acted upon, it follows that the people with the most needs would participate in politics. Non-participation in politics is therefore deemed to be an individual choice based on genuine satisfaction with one's situation.

Schattschneider (1960) and after him, Baratz and Bachrach (1962, 1970) have highlighted

the limits of this approach by bringing attention to a 'second face of power'. Ahead of debates and political battles, they recall, are choices about who participates and which issues deserve to be discussed. Power, consequently, is not only about winning a political argument; it is about deciding who and what makes it to the negotiating table. Looking at the processes underpinning participation and agenda in the space of official decision-making will be critical to our analysis of voices and influence in negotiating land deals.

In *Power and Poverty*, Bachrach and Baratz call 'the non-decision-making power' the power to prevent issues from entering the decision-making arenas. Non-decision-making power, they explain, can be achieved through coercion, intimidation, co-option and biased legislation (or biased application of it), also referred to as 'legal-institutional bias' (1970: 42-46). The exclusion of the subordinates from decision-making arenas can also be achieved through less visible means. One of the most efficient processes lies within what Gaventa calls 'the rule of anticipated reactions'. Disgruntled subalterns are discouraged from challenging situations by a sense of hopeless odds, compounded by a fear of sanctions (Gaventa 1982: 22). When the powerful are assumed to dominate in all situations, direct protest is a useless risk and other types of less visible resistance are preferable. As Gaventa explains, direct and indirect mechanisms are mutually reinforcing:

The inaction of B in the second dimensional sense becomes a sum of the anticipation by B of defeat and the barriers maintained by A over B's entering the decision-making arena anyway, and the re-enforcing effect of one upon the other (1982: 22).

These first two dimensions of power are mostly agency-centred. For a wide range of theorists of power, from Gramsci to Foucault, through Bourdieu, Giddens, Haywards, Balandier, Fanon and many others, power is embedded in much more structural dynamics that go beyond political muscle, coercion, intimidation and institutional bias. It manifests itself through internalised social norms that shape and are shaped by history. Although these scholars develop different understandings of the mechanisms of power, they all argue that behaviours and values are to a certain degree determined by the prevailing order with which people unconsciously comply. These theories relate to what Lukes and Gaventa call the third-dimensional mechanisms of power:

Not only might A exercise power over B by prevailing in the resolution of key issues or by preventing B from effectively raising those issues, but also through affecting B's 'conceptions of the issues altogether (Lukes 1974: 23).

Whether one believes that there is a conscious instrumentalisation of dominant norms by the powerful (as Lukes does) or that *everyone's* actions are conditioned as Hayward (1998), what matters here is to understand how feelings over inequalities and domination are influenced by prevailing norms and how this, in turn, affects (the lack of) resistance. As a result of prevailing paradigms and socio-historical patterns, the social order is either seen as natural, what Scott has called the 'thick version of hegemony', or as inevitable, 'the thin version of hegemony' (1990: 80). Non-issues (or quiescence in the face of injustice) can therefore be the result of two different manifestations of the third dimensional power: either a lack of consciousness over the arbitrary, unfair character of the social order or a belief that it cannot be changed. Discussing the ambiguity of Gramsci on the issue, Femia notes:

On one extreme consent can flow from wholesale internalization of dominant values and definitions; on the other, from their very partial assimilation, from an uneasy feeling that the status quo, while shamefully iniquitous, is nevertheless the only viable form of society (1975 on Gramsci's theory of hegemony: 32).

In the first case (the thick versions of hegemony), the less powerful may feel as if they do not have any grievances at all and they have been convinced of the desirability of the world at it is. In the second case, subalterns recognise grievances but are defeated either by the conviction that their fate is immutable, frequently the outcome of 'a psychological adaptation to the state of being without power' and 'an adaptive response to continual defeat' (Gaventa 1982: 16-19), or by a failure to understand the mechanisms and responsibilities behind inequalities and domination that would allow them to design a plan for action. The subalterns might also be discouraged from action, Gaventa adds, because 'B's conceptions of self, group or class may be such as to make actions against A seem inappropriate' (1982: 16-19). Non-issues would proceed from a sense of internalised hierarchies that make protest seem illegitimate. In those theories, the acceptance of an idea or a situation by the dominated always implies a degree of compliance with the prevailing order, whether that compliance is conscious (and potentially resented) or unconscious.

By incorporating invisible power dynamics in its analytical framework, the three-dimensional approach, therefore, encourages caution with the concepts of ‘free consent’ such as the one defended in guidelines over corporate acquisitions of natural resources. The possibility that ideas and values may be influenced indeed rules out the possibility that consent may ever be completely free, even in cases where no visible pressures may be found. The three-dimensional approach of power also allows research to stay open to different contextual configurations of the workings of power and therefore, to different understandings of the underpinnings of ‘compliance’. Three ideal-types of power-produced compliance could be drawn from this model:

- (i) *Acquiescence*. People are constrained to approve of a situation or process they disapprove of by coercion, intimidation, legal-institutional bias (second dimensional power mechanisms) and/or by a lack of resources to put up an opposition (first dimension of power). In those cases, people recognise and resent power pressures, but are acquiesced into complying with the situation. This ‘performance’ of compliance, as James Scott (1990) would call it, does not exclude subversive thoughts nor more hidden types of resistance.
- (ii) *Naturalised compliance*. Compliance is produced through more invisible means that pertain to third dimensional power dynamics. In this ideal-type, the acceptance of processes imposed from above reflects either (i) an internalisation that the prevailing order is desirable, however unfair (ii) a belief that no other order is possible.
- (iii) *Constrained hope*. In a horizon of limited opportunities, compliance reflects hope that processes of change pushed by more powerful actors presents opportunities for those who collaborate. There is some acceptance of the prevailing order, reflecting third-dimensional power dynamics but also some hope that it can be changed at the margins.

As such, Gaventa’s framework supports the exhaustive exploration of the power pressures that can impinge on responses to land deal negotiations in varying articulations across geography and social groups. It was chosen for its thorough coverage of the different mechanisms of power as well as for the open research approach that it supported. Unlike thick and thin versions of hegemony, it does not rule out the possibility that the dominated may believe another social order is possible. As noted in the third ideal-type detailed above, people may consciously comply with one domination, without any discernible visible

pressures to do so, in the hope to encourage new socio-economic arrangements with promises of social change. This would reflect a third dimensional power dynamics, since the horizon of action is still constrained to a certain extent, but belie assumptions that non-issue amounts to attitudes of passive resignation with the prevailing social-order. Or, as noted in the first ideal-type, complying with the projects of the powerful can consist of a performance under first and second dimensional power constraints, behind which subversive thoughts or less visible acts of resistance are hidden. I shall now give a little more concrete detail about how this approach may illuminate the analysis of local voices and influences within land deal negotiations.

The first dimension of power, highlighted by the pluralist school of thought, insists on resources as a key factor in terms of abilities to influence decision-making. As discussed in Chapter 2, in Madagascar's current policy and political context, negotiations to gain formal access to land in are long and complex. Keeping control and influence over them requires technical, financial and knowledge resources. Considering first dimensional power dynamics in the context of land deal negotiations implies looking at how these resources inform pressures to comply and support attempts to resist these pressures.

As other scholars have stressed, ahead of the battles that shape decision-making are key processes affecting what and who will be included in the discussions. Some of these issues are framed by law. Law defines or restricts rights to be included in decisions but also to protest them and hold decision-makers to account. As Cotula notes, different legal frameworks imply different conditions of difficulty for 'land grabbing' in the narrow understanding of the term (2013). More critically, understanding the second dimensional aspects of power requires looking at the way law is interpreted and applied. This is particularly critical in contexts where policy frameworks are ambiguous as in Madagascar. Chapter 2 highlighted the government's general bias towards corporate interests but pointed to contexts which opened channels of influence for the agrarian population. Exploring power dynamics in the context of land deal negotiations, therefore, requires researching the conditions under which state authorities and administrators may apply procedures in a way that respects the participation and objection rights of the different stakeholders, and the ones

under which legal rights to voice are hampered by practices of coercion, intimidation and disinformation.

As far as third dimensional power dynamics are concerned, it matters to look at how certain dominant norms and narratives may be shaping negotiations and responses. In this case, it consists of looking at how the institutional bias towards corporate land access outlined in Chapter 2 may be legitimised by certain discourses and at how these discourses may affect local people's conceptions of their rights (or not).

Attention to third dimensional mechanisms of power also implies considering local responses to farmland privatisation in the light of historically-informed relations and perceptions among groups and between them. Historical patterns of inter-group relationships (domination, confrontation, interdependency, oppression and so on) affect the perceptions different stakeholders have of each other (the foreigners towards the Malagasy state and vice-versa, the villagers towards the foreigners and vice-versa, the villagers towards the state and vice-versa) which, in turn, can be expected to influence considerations over rights to voice and opportunities of influence within land deal negotiations.

The same three-dimensional frame of analysis should be applied to the exploration of horizontal power dynamics. For that purpose, it matters to go beyond the official distribution of power outlined in Chapter 2 to ask: Who effectively, in a specific context, has the resources to gain voice and influence within decision-making at the village level (first dimension of power)? Who formally has the right to speak and define the agenda and stance to adopt on issues of land alienation? Are authorised voices challenged in the context of land deal negotiations and under which conditions (second dimension)? Are there internalised norms of behaviour or powerlessness that constrain some for expressing their voices and seeking influence (third dimension)?

Chapter 1 pointed to the variation in both perceptions and engagements that characterised local responses to land deal negotiations. In differentiated communities, local people have different goals and aspirations, some of which are expressed (to varying degrees and in

different ways) and others of which are kept silent. As the discussion of (declarative) consent, acquiescence and compliance have highlighted, responses to land deal negotiations cannot be understood without an exploration of visible and invisible power dynamics both at vertical and horizontal levels.

To understand how local voices are heard or silenced, it therefore seems necessary to explore the first following sub-research questions: *How can power dynamics inform local responses to land deal negotiations and how and under which conditions can power relations be challenged by these responses?*

In the next section, I argue for the need to introduce the concept of moral economy to refine our understanding of compliance with corporate land access. Looking at issues of relational justice across and within groups through the concept defined by Thompson (1971) and Scott (1976) will also allow for more caution in categorising situations as ‘non-issues’, since what may appear to the outsider as non-action against a blatant injustice may turn out to either not been seen as an injustice or be a way to challenge injustices in another field.

The moral economy of land alienation

This section describes how this thesis engages with the concept of moral economy to make sense of Malagasy peasants’ responses to the private appropriation of their land by foreigners. The anthropology of moral economies examines popular perspectives of justice with respect to economic transactions and explores the expectations that tie people to their rulers, especially in times of economic turmoil. By allowing for a better understanding of peasantries’ vision of relational justice, this conceptual tool helps to explore the subjectivity of contention. The next paragraphs provide a rapid overview of the concept.

The use of ‘moral economy’ as a concept *per se* dates back to the historian Edward P. Thompson. In *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) and his seminal article *The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century* (1971), he analyses the values and norms behind food riots in England of the 18th century. By moral economy, he refers to the existence of shared beliefs among the poor, of the existence of rights and duties

over access to necessities. In an effort to belie the widespread ‘spasmodic vision of rebellions’ (1971: 188), he underlines the moral universe behind the protests and brings attention to the capacity of the poor to build norms, rights and obligations. He explains:

It is possible to detect in almost every eighteenth-century crowd action some legitimising notion. By the notion of legitimation I mean that the men and women in the crowd were informed by the belief that they were defending traditional rights or customs; and, in general, that they were supported by the wider consensus of the community.⁶⁸

Food riots, he argues, are not the mechanical effect of price spikes. Instead, they generally proceed from the violation of widely held moral expectations with regards to social relations structuring economic exchanges. This relied on the premise that the economy should be guided by moral principles. In that they sought to uphold responsibilities in the context of economic turmoil, these rebellions were also defending conceptions of an economy fully embedded within social relationships in resistance to the philosophy of the *laissez-faire* that was gaining ground at the time.

A few years later, James Scott, a political scientist by training, popularised the concept in the field of anthropology. In *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: rebellion and subsistence in South-East Asia* (1976), Scott looks towards popular conceptions of legitimate and illegitimate economic transactions for explanation of the desperate rage that fed some of the peasant revolts that shook South-East Asia during the depression of the 1930s. He defines peasants’ moral economy as ‘their notion of economic justice and their working definition of exploitation-their view of which claims on their product were tolerable and which intolerable’ (Scott 1976: 3). The empirical focus shifts from consumers seeking to obtain ‘just prices’ on food markets (for Thompson) to peasantries who are both consumers and producers of essential goods (for Scott). Scott also puts a more straightforward focus on values and emotions in addition to Thompson’s stress on mores, norms and obligations. With Scott, ‘it is less about understanding what can and what cannot be done (normative dimension) as what is tolerable and what is not (evaluative dimension)’, explains Fassin (2009: 1249).⁶⁹ Short of explaining the actual *causes* of rebellion, a challenge that Scott says

⁶⁸ Thompson, E.P. (1971) *The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century*, p.188.

⁶⁹ Free translation

has already been addressed with talent by colleagues such as Wolf (1969) and Moore (1969), his goal is to shed light on the *conditions* of possibility of revolt (1976) by outlining the longstanding values that underpin emotions.

Since Thompson's and Scott's works, the concept of moral economy has found a wide acceptance among scholars and across disciplines, sometimes to the detriment of its original complexity, as critics point out (Fassin 2009; Siméant 2010; Edelman 2012). This makes it worth recalling that the strength of the concept, and its relevance to this thesis, is to tie together these two dimensions: the economic, or the production and exchange of goods and services, on the one hand, and the moral, or the constitution of norms and obligations with regards to these transactions, on the other.

In his seminal work, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*, James Scott contends that there are universal principles governing the moral economies of peasantries across time and space. There is, in particular, one overarching principle that dominates the lives of all those who regularly face the risk of famine or shortages: the need to ensure a reliable subsistence. Historical experiences of vulnerability to the vagaries of climate and other external factors nurture, over time, a preference for security over potentially higher, but risky returns. For most peasant cultivators, Scott (1976) argues that subsistence security is the 'primordial goal', in the light of which they examine their relationships with their neighbours, the elites, and the state. Through time, specific patterns of norms, values and obligations develop in support of the safety-first principle. Originally an economic issue, the quest for subsistence insurance therefore comes to be 'socially experienced as a pattern of moral rights or expectations' (Scott 1977: 16). The subsistence *need* becomes a subsistence *right*.

Principles of reciprocity and paternalism are at the heart of these social arrangements. 'It is above all within the village— in the patterns of social control and reciprocity that structure daily conduct— where the subsistence ethic finds social expression', observes Scott (1976: 40). As meticulously demonstrated by Polanyi in *The Great Transformation* (1944), peasant societies distinguish themselves from those governed by modern market economies by forbidding individual starvation. Peasant societies 'are not radically egalitarian. Rather, they

imply only that all are entitled to a living out of the resources within the village' (Scott 1976: 5). This social prohibition of individual destitution creates implicit obligations of help, sharing and redistribution. The pooling of resources translates into arrangements such as the sharing of use rights on communal land and the temporary borrowing of cattle. As far as inequalities within agrarian population are concerned, wealth is accepted provided it contributes, to some degree, to the overall good of the community. The strength of the principle of reciprocity and the degree of risk insurance provided by the village, as Scott notes, can vary greatly from one peasant society to the next however.

The state, landowners and authorities are also expected to be considerate of the peasants' right to a decent subsistence. 'Complete subsistence crisis insurance implies a personal commitment of the landowner to the minimum welfare needs of his tenant' (Scott 1976: 45). Claims on products and taxes are tolerated, provided they allow peasants the maintenance of a minimum income and are therefore adapted to what peasants can do in a given context. Talking about peasants' conceptions of power abuse and exploitation, Scott explains the 'test for the peasant is more likely to be "What is left?" than "How much is taken?"' (1976: 7). Elites are therefore expected to show flexibility and apply reason in terms of the pressures they put on peasantries. Patronage and paternalism is expected in exchange for their domination. It is their duty to provide material help in times of need, to contribute to social and religious village life, to sponsor celebrations and so on. 'The violation of these [subsistence] standards could be expected to provoke resentment and resistance— not only because needs were unmet, but because rights were violated' (Scott 1976: 6).

Subsistence security may be found to be only one of the moral economic expectations at the heart of people's perceptions of the land deal negotiations. In differentiated populations, people might also have different ideas of how to ensure it. Scott's discussion of that safety-first principle is interesting in that it points to how individual and collective entities of a locality are tied together by a web of expectations related to relational justice. As noted earlier, moral economic expectations not only apply to corporate or state elites, but also to village authorities or other members of the rural population.

Another particularly inspiring insight which can be gained from Scott's work is that the

violations of some of these essential rights and obligations may generate feelings of injustice that may encourage resistance, despite the risks known in situations of power asymmetries. This argues in favour of looking at power and moral economy as a two-way relationship. Considerations of relational justice can be influenced by power in the form of prevailing norms (third dimension of power). However, moral economies can draw red lines which, when transgressed, may drive actors to want to challenge (openly or discreetly) existing power relations.

The concept of moral economy, therefore, shines a critical light on this thesis research topic. It supports the view that people involved in the land deal negotiations (corporate managers, state officials, brokers, other villagers and so on) are influenced by tacit or explicit obligations, possibly related to subsistence rights, but possibly also to others. The company, as the other actors involved in the land deal negotiations, is expected to respect a number of conditions for the land deal to be considered fair. These different actors' performances with regards to these obligations, therefore, inform both the local people's perceptions of the land deal and also their decisions to voice their views, despite unfavourable power positions sometimes.

Efforts to understand 'how local people's voices are expressed or silenced within the context of land deal negotiations' (main research question) therefore requires an exploration of the second research question: *What moral economic considerations underpin compliance with or resistance to corporate land access and with which implications on the perceptions of the outcome of the land deal?*

The next section introduces the last strand of theory with which this thesis engages; more specifically, it introduces some of the tools borrowed from the sociology of protest to explore the dynamics of influence within land deals.

Defining and influencing outcomes

Another major objective of the thesis consists of understanding local people's potential

influence on land deals. The next pages outline how Gaventa's analysis of power is complemented with insights from the literature on contentious politics to understand how local people not only suffer the consequences of power, but can also mobilise it.

Gaventa's theory of power and powerlessness holds that challenging injustices in an unequal power relation requires two necessary steps: first articulating grievances and then acting upon them.

Several steps in overcoming powerlessness by B must occur before the conflict is on competitive ground. B must go through a process of issue and action formulation by which B develops consciousness of the needs, possibilities, and strategies of challenge. That is, B must counter both the direct and indirect effects of power's third dimension. And, B must carry out the process of mobilization of action upon issues to overcome the mobilization of bias of A against B's actions. B must develop its own resources -real and symbolic-to wage the conflict.⁷⁰

Three major thinkers of contentious politics, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, worked together on designing a research approach attuned to grasping the complexity and fluidity of episodes of contentious. In their book, entitled *Dynamics of Contention*⁷¹, they identified three main mechanisms as essential to both articulating grievances and acting upon them: the attribution of threat and opportunity, social appropriation, and brokerage (2001: 92). 'Attribution of threat and opportunity' refers to the process of producing and diffusing a shared definition of the likely consequences of a mobilisation and the likely consequences of a failure to act. The authors also establish that however transgressive a collective action may be, it usually thrives, thanks to the appropriation of existing social space and collective identities: this is what they refer to as 'social appropriation' (2001: 102). Finally, the articulation and mediation of grievances relies on brokerage which they define as 'the linking of two or more previously unconnected social sites by a unit that mediates their relations with one another and/or with yet other sites' (2001:26).

Assessments of the opportunity and threat equation represented by corporate land access can be expected to differ within socially-differentiated populations. As McAdam et al. note,

⁷⁰ Gaventa, J. (1980) *Power and Powerlessness. Quiescence and rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*, pp.23-24.

⁷¹ McAdam, D., Tarrow, S. G. and Tilly, C. (2001) *Dynamics of contention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

‘threat-opportunity attribution often emerges from competition among advocates of differing interpretations, one of which finally prevails’ (2001: 95). Attribution of opportunity and threat and social appropriation can, in other words, underpin processes of gaining ‘legitimizing power’ (Hall et al. 2011: 171) in intra-village negotiations over the response to bring to the land deal. The understanding of influence, therefore, requires an exploration of who manages to impose his or her attribution of opportunity and threat and the social spaces and means used to do so (social appropriation). Brokerage is also pervaded with power. Brokers can contribute to feelings of anticipated defeat, by spreading disinformation, rumours or simply sending reminders of the power of the dominant (third dimension of power) or they can exclude from decision-making through more direct means such as intimidation, coercion or denying people’s rights to voice (second dimension of power). However, the way people involve relations with brokers matters as well. By building or activating relationships with third party actors, local people can gain ‘resource power’ in the context of negotiations (Rutten et al. 2017). The interventions of these ‘counter-networks’ (Li 2014a; Savitri 2014; Rutten et al. 2017) can help smallholders to influence the decisions made in the negotiations to their advantage.

In sum, the analysis of the processes of attribution of opportunity and threat, of social appropriation and of brokerage provide a lens through which to look at how power is mobilised at the village level to articulate voices and communicate them at higher levels of decision-making.

Looking at the outcome of these processes will serve to point to correlations between processes of voice formulation and influence. As Gaventa indeed notes, mobilisations are no guarantee of success. ‘For a relatively powerless group, the combination of articulating grievances and organizing action upon them does not necessarily mean that the grievances will merit response-or even entry to the decision-making arenas’, pointing to ‘the capacity of power to repel, neutralize and even remain aloof from protest’ (Gaventa 1982: 24).

A broad range of considerations may influence decision-makers’ inclinations to listen to or ignore local struggles against farmland privatisation. Despite the aversion to protest Gaventa points to and extraversion strategies, state officials do not necessarily obstruct local

opposition to land deals. States are heterogeneous entities that are not aloof from the rest of the society. Their members are embedded within networks of belonging, allegiances or interpersonal relationships that make them more permeable, or fully indebted to certain entities. Influence on state agents could therefore be exerted at individual, low-scale levels, thriving, thanks to relational resources (first dimension of power). Chapter 2 confirmed the ambivalence and contradictions that have been observed to characterise state interventions in large-scale land deals (Wolford et al. 2013; Pedersen and Buur 2016).

In states characterised by a degree of competition, as highlighted in Chapter 2, elected officials may also be susceptible to contentious politics. Scholars from the field of sociology of mobilisation have granted significant attention to what they have called ‘political opportunity structures’ to understand contextual aspects of successful mobilisations (Eisinger 1973; Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1988; among others). Different meanings have been given to the concept across the literature and across time (Tarrow 1996). As far as this work is concerned, the purpose is less to assess the global opportunities that the Malagasy state offers in terms of the democratic right of the opposition, freedom of expression and so on, i.e. static opportunity *structures*, but rather to explore how struggles in the context of land deals can exploit certain political *opportunities* (flexible opportunity structures). McAdam et al. argue that ‘episodes of contention typically grow out of and depend on a perception of significant environmental uncertainty on the part of state and non-state elites and challengers alike’ (2001: 97). Chapter 2 highlighted the divisions and opportunistic realignments that political competition for extraversion rent, compounded with contentious politics, fuelled within the state and how this opened space for certain struggles to be heard.

Influence within land deals consists of being heard both within one’s community and by decision-makers. Although mostly focused on outward resistance than on more passive forms of resistance, the literature on contentious politics provides additional tools to the ones provided by the three-dimensional approach to power to examine the means through which local voices can gain echo. Both these bodies of theories are mobilised to examine the last sub-research question that has guided data analysis and which asks: *Which voices transform into influence and under which conditions?*

Conclusion

As introduced in Chapter 1, this thesis asks, ‘How can local voices be heard or silenced in the context of large-scale land deal negotiations?’ Drawing on the theoretical lenses introduced here, power, moral economy and contentious politics, it explores the process of negotiation, the responses that emerge and the outcomes through these perspectives.

A scrutiny of power relations will serve to not only gain a fine-grained understanding of the processes through which compliance with the consultation process is produced or challenged, but also to grasp intra-community contention, to understand its form of expression (open or silent) as well as its impact in terms of whose voice gets heard. Gaventa’s three-dimensional approach (1982) underpins the nuanced exploration of sub-question 1: *How can power dynamics inform local responses to land deal negotiations and how and under which conditions can power relations be challenged by these responses?*

The concept of moral economy opens a lens through which to reintroduce subjectivity in the analysis of land deals. It points to the importance of relational justice in understanding the socially-situated nature of responses to land deals, suggesting that both compliance with and resistance to corporate land access is underpinned by moral considerations. Perceived performances of those involved in the negotiations with regards to these expectations may, in turn, inspire decisions to voice or silence one’s perceptions and to challenge or tolerate the outcomes of the land deal. They provide ‘legitimising notions’ (Thompson 1971:188) to responses, which are particularly critical when those represent a challenge to (horizontal and vertical) power dynamics. As such, Scott’s work (1976) supported the identification and exploration of sub-question 2: *What moral economic considerations underpin compliance with or resistance to corporate land access and with which implications on the perceptions of the outcome of the land deal?*

Finally, some tools borrowed from the field of contentious politics to understand how voices can be imposed over others and determinedly influence decision-making. Critical dynamics of contention such as attribution of opportunity and threat, social appropriation and brokerage

(Mc Adam et al. 2001) are explored to bring answers to sub-question 3 which asks: *'Which voices transform into influence and under which conditions?'*

To answer these questions, a methodological approach was adopted, linking regional studies with detailed village-based case studies. The approach is outlined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter lays out the research design process that underpinned data collection and analysis. It justifies the choice of a case study research to answer the main questions discussed in the introduction and highlights the inductive process through which the theoretical framework discussed above emerged. It discusses the conjunctural perspective that informed data collection and analysis and finally points to the ethical and methodological challenges encountered throughout the research.

Inductive research process: from comparison to case-study

This research has been designed and carried out following a phased approach, with research questions and conceptual frameworks partly emerging from first fieldwork findings. Building on methodological recommendations from Stake (2005: 443-467), I started with a topical issue (large-scale land deals in agrarian societies), an empirical focus (the process of negotiating land deals, under-researched compared to drivers and impacts of land deals) and a foreshadowed problem (the land rights of agrarian populations in Madagascar are being denied despite a protective legal framework because of political interests and power dynamics), but waited for the first insights from my data to sharpen my theoretical framework and research questions.

I also let the choice of methodology partly be shaped by my fieldwork findings. Originally, I considered using a comparative approach. I visited five agribusiness projects that had recently started in different regions of Madagascar and gained a first understanding of past and ongoing negotiations for corporate land access by talking to key informants and individuals from the main three groups of actors involved or concerned by the local deal at the local level (the local state apparatus, the local population and the corporate staff and management). Whilst this exercise was relevant as a scoping exercise, it quickly showed its limits as a main research methodology to look at the issues I was interested in. I initially thought that it would be more interesting to outline nationally relevant patterns rather than

regional context-dependent dynamics. It turned out that broad patterns were relatively easy to discern across cases: local consultation in the context of large-scale land deals were at best very shallow; local people were excluded from decision-making and deterred from negotiating or protesting out of fear of the state and of foreigners; state agents were generally welcoming of corporate land acquisitions as they hoped to gain benefits from them and were therefore using their power to accelerate land deals rather than seek to regulate them. However, these insights were also known and unoriginal. Understanding the conditions under which these patterns could be contradicted by focusing on one specific case study seemed to hold much higher value. For the depth that it could help me to reach in the understanding of complex processes, a case study research would also allow me to remain open to findings in a way that necessarily quicker and more rigid types of comparative fieldwork would allow. Besides, rather than vainly trying to abstract context to outline similarities, I acknowledged that context (or rather the articulation of context with agential processes) was precisely what was critical. As Flyvbjerg notes, ‘predictive theories and universals cannot be found in the study of human affairs. Concrete, context-dependent knowledge is, therefore, more valuable than the vain search for predictive theories and universals’ (2006: 224).

The two interesting, less expected observations that came out of this exploratory work (and already discussed above) also pushed for in-depth case study work. To begin with, there was a significant level of local discord surrounding these land deals, with local populations showing conflicting interests towards the corporate projects. Second, local politics seemed to matter and did not only work the way I had expected of them. As discussed in Chapter 2, despite the enthusiastic support of most national and local leaders to the development of these projects, some of these land deals were being blocked because of the intervention of local officials. Only in-depth ethnographic work, attuned to the specific agrarian, socio-economic, anthropological and political dynamics of affected areas and attentive to the fluctuations and contradictions of negotiations through time and space, could hope to bring light on the complexity of local voices in land deals.

Out of the five projects examined, Tozzi Green was chosen for three main reasons. Firstly, local populations had been included in the discussions much more thoroughly than in the

other four cases. Whereas in the latter consultation had been limited to one or two meetings at the level of the municipality, the Tozzi Green project had adopted a village-by-village consultation approach. This case study also offered a compelling illustration of the variety of local responses that large-scale land deals can elicit at the local level. Alongside the silent resignation of some, stood outward civil protest, as well as a whole spectrum of perceptions and reactions, from enthusiasm for the corporate project to outright refusal through to more covert forms of resistance. Thus, while enthusiasm and acquiescence needed to be explored and accounted for, so did more or less overt forms of protest. What drove some villagers to resist despite apparent power asymmetries between the state-backed corporation and themselves? Moreover, was enthusiasm towards the implementation of the project necessarily the result of manipulation? Finally, the Tozzi Green land deal offered an example of bottom-up mobilisation against land privatisation that allowed me to explore dynamics of resistance and politics in the context of land deals. This mobilisation belied widespread perceptions of rural populations as disenfranchised and passive and, with the mayor spearheading the opposition, hinted at fissures in the support enjoyed by corporate actors within the state apparatus. It promised to provide critical material on the potential of grassroots resistance in influencing land deal negotiations outside formal spaces of consultation and on the process through which that influence might be exerted. In scientific terms, the case held critical potential for falsification (Popper 1972). Local voices could potentially find a way to be heard and influence land deals, despite the general bias of the state towards corporate interests which, in the typology of the rationales behind the selection of case studies outlined by Fryvbjerg, as such would make it a ‘critical case’ (2006: 230).

Conjunctural approach

Drawing on the work of the Manchester school in the 1950s and on the practice approach of Bourdieu (1977) and Giddens (1979), conjunctural approaches entail both ontological and methodological implications for socio-anthropological research (see for instance Gezon 2006 and Li 2014). They describe research processes examining ‘history at one point in time while situating events in historically-constituted fields of forces’ (Li 2014: 18) and focusing the gaze on social relations, social differences and unequal relations of power. While interested

in people's negotiation efforts along socially-patterned interests (Gluckman 1940), conjunctural approaches take clear distance from liberal conceptions of individuals as 'rational actors' by considering instead the social and historical determinations of agents and focusing on dynamics of differentiation along lines of class, gender, generation, race etc. As summarised by Gezon 2006, conjunctural approaches consider 'human agency as neither determined by social structures but not entirely voluntaristic' (Gezon 2006: 15).

In line with this approach, this research granted special attention to the socio-historicity of the actions and discourses under analysis and, following feminist and postcolonial traditions, considered social relations and social differentiation as a critical lens through which to look at access to resources and dynamics of accumulation.

Varying spatial and temporal scope

As explained by Li, 'the conjuncture(s) under study isn't bounded. It is still composed of a set of elements that have varied spatial and temporal scope. [...] Instead of drawing a boundary around a field site, or fixing the span of time, space and quantity to be investigated, these parameters can be selected flexibly according to their relevance to the matter under study' (Li 2014: 19).

In the context of this research, justice first needed to be done to the diversity of actors involved in these discussions (villagers, state officials, corporate staff and managers, activists, state civil servants, local elites, brokers, economic operators and so on), as well as to the conflicting positions, interests and perceptions that could be found both between and within these groups. To understand local responses, their nature, their rationale and their implications, one also needed to be familiar with the broad context in which the local-level negotiations were embedded, from national politics to the legal-institutional context through the livelihood strategies and socio-economic dynamics of the agrarian populations under study.

Analysing the outcome of local negotiations on land deals also required following negotiations through time. Data collection was therefore spread over several years, and

evolved from a multi-sited and multi-level approach –from Antananarivo to Ihosy through the rural municipality and from national decision-makers to villagers through regional authorities, transnational civil society and so on– to a narrower focus on a single broad category of actors: the villagers. As such, it shifted from a broad perspective, looking at a wide number of actors and negotiations spaces, to a more focused perspective on the responses of local people and the outcomes of the land deal for them.

A total of three field visits were carried out (in 2011, 2013 and 2014) for a total of 10 months of fieldwork. Data collection was carried out through repeated semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and informal discussions with a wide range of actors involved in the negotiation or affected by the land deal (a total of 142 research participants). This was combined with a search and review of documents related to the deal-making process (official documents, maps, protest letters, petitions, media reports and so on). All three periods of data collection engaged with the three themes highlighted above (negotiation, response and outcome), although with changing emphases.

Scoping investigation (2011) and village visits (2013)

The first field trip (September-October 2011) provided me with a first overview of the agribusiness project, of the ongoing land deal negotiations and of the various responses across villages. Interviews were held with corporate managers, regional authorities, mayors and heads of *fokontany* from the three municipalities targeted by the land deal, as well as with villagers from five villages from the municipality of Satrokala. Data collection was also aimed at gaining information on the history, ecologies, socio-economic fabric and government of the agrarian population of the Ihorombe plateau, as well as on local politics.

During the second field trip (February-May 2013), a total of 26 villages were visited across the three municipalities. Driven by a concern to further my understanding of variation (of both responses and outcomes), I made sure my pool of villages included:

- villages affected by the project as well as with villagers not (currently) affected;
- villages who had complied with Tozzi Green's land requests as well as with villages who had rejected them;

- villages of different wealth;
- villages where land disputes in the context of the land deal had been reported;
- villages where people had manifested enthusiasm towards the Tozzi Green project and others where animosity was expressed instead;
- and villages from the two municipalities in which mayors had given consent to the consultation process and from the one where the mayor was opposed.

Information on these criteria had been gained through the discussions and interviews held in 2011 and supported by the prospective map of the first lease that I then had at hand and which the corporate managers confirmed was fairly accurate (cf. Figure 3).

Apart from a few instances where local authorities were absent during the time of our visit, the views collected then were those of ‘authorised voices’. I borrow this term from Loera-Gonzalez to refer to the voices that are ‘considered legitimate according to the current norms’ (2016: 242). As explained in Chapter 2, only a limited number of people is seen as having the right to speak on political matters and to mediate official relations with state officials or outsiders: the *lonaky*, the *komity* (unofficial village secretaries) and the head of *fokontany*. When these were absent during the time of our visit, villagers would orient us to other figures of authority or *raïamandreny*, such as the eldest member of a hamlet preferably or otherwise, to other respected elders). Those local figures of authority were those who were officially authorised not only to talk to us, but also to those in charge of mediating the land deal negotiations. Obtaining other viewpoints required more time and trust on behalf of both village authorities and of those more subaltern members of the community who may have different views but may have been scared or felt illegitimate to express them. Internalised prohibition to express, or to even *have* an opinion, a manifestation of third dimensional power, was a frequent obstacle to our access to non-authorised voices, in particular those of women.

Data collection focused on the accounts these authorised voices were giving of *responses* and *outcomes*. I encouraged them to talk about:

- (i) how their village viewed the agribusiness project and corporate land access on their land

- (ii) how they had engaged with the negotiation process in the way they had and why
- (iii) how they assessed the outcome of the land deal on their village and whether they felt their voices had been heard.

In that sense, this fieldwork was interesting in that it revealed that variations in responses could be found among authorised voices themselves. Across villages, local authorities had contrasted perspectives on corporate land access, had engaged differently with the land deal negotiations and were judging the outcome of the land deal in different ways.

This broad pool was also driven by a concern to gain a closer, more nuanced, understanding of the broad context of *negotiations* in which these responses had been expressed, by looking at whether discussions had taken varying material and relational contours (different brokers, different durations, different places, different timings, different degrees of inclusions or exclusions in the talks and so on) and varying informational and discursive content (different requests, different explanations and so on) from one village to the next, and how these varying circumstances may have had an impact on the way negotiations had been understood and experienced across villages. I was particularly interested in whether these authorised voices felt they had had some choice, leverage and possibility of initiative in the discussions and, if so, which ones and under which conditions. By talking to leaders from 26 different villages, I hoped to identify the patterns and inconsistencies of the consultation process across villages.

This fieldwork also enabled me to gain a subtle understanding of the broader political and power dynamics of the negotiation process that are described in Chapter 2. These village visits were complemented by 40 interviews with actors involved in the consultation or broader negotiation process: from members of the local and national state apparatus, to members of the civil society and to staff members of the Tozzi Green company at different levels of responsibility. These interviews were multi-sited, carried out in the villages, in the regional capital Ihosy, and in the national capital Antananarivo. The purpose of this work was to gain insights into how discourses, actions and decisions of the corporate, state and civil society elites both informed and were influenced by the villagers' responses with the

negotiation process. I also looked at the discourses corporate and state elites held on villagers to understand how their representations of agrarian populations may have affected the design of the consultation process. I paid attention to the way the positions of state authorities fluctuated in a context of tension, competition and uncertainties. Discussions with these authorities also sought to further the data I had on the terms and conditions of the land acquisition.

The findings of the 26-village comparison are, for their part, presented in Chapter 5. They also provided me with the basis to choose the three village case studies that were explored the next year and discussed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

In-depth case studies (2014)

During the last fieldwork period, I sought to move a step further in the analysis of local voice and influence in the context of large-scale land negotiations. I carried out three in-depth village case studies with an aim to:

- (i) gain insights into the variety of perspectives that existed *within* the villages and understand which of these perspectives were actually voiced (how and why) within the negotiations and which ones, if any, had become influential (how and why)
- (ii) get a better grasp of the fluid, contested process of negotiations by looking at how perceptions and actions had evolved through time, as the land deals were formalised into a lease (issued in 2012), and the agribusiness project had expanded and was continuing to expand.

During this field trip, I engaged with a total of 88 research participants, most of them from the villages themselves but also with members of the state and the company.

For purposes of comparison, the three villages were taken from a pool in which authorised voices had displayed similar perspectives towards corporate land access (concern over an unwanted land dispossession), but had taken diverse paths of action and encountered different successes in their struggle. I introduce these cases and discuss the rationales behind their choice in more detail at the end of Chapter 5.

A full month was spent in each of these villages. One hamlet was used as our base: the one where village authorities had kindly offered us a room, in their own homes in Soatanana and Mangidy and in the village school in Antranohazo. However, numerous visits were carried out in people's fields and in the other hamlets of the villages.

Data collection was driven by conscious, permanent efforts to gain access to non-authorised voices, whilst not showing disrespect to the village authorities and not putting any village member at threat, or under fear of being at threat, either. Whilst time and trust helped me access some of the subaltern members in each of the three villages, I remained cautious not to equate their narratives with their "true voices", conscious of the power dynamics data collection was embedded in, some of which were related to issues of positionality that are discussed in a little more detail in the section on methodological challenges below.

Data collection on negotiations, responses and outcomes through interviews, informal discussions and some degree of participant observation was complemented by some basic geographical work. Using a Garmin GPS, georeferenced data were collected for both illustration and analytical purposes. Numerous waypoints were taken during the visits to the various hamlets and neighbouring villages, to villagers' fields and pastures and to Tozzi Green's plantations and other (previous or ongoing) attempts at land appropriation. The village maps drawn below, in collaboration with a Malagasy Geographical Information System expert, are based on these data.

Data analysis was partly carried out using the Nvivo qualitative analysis software. The coding followed the phased approach, discussed above. As I went through my interview transcripts and field notes from the 2011 and 2013 fieldworks, successive insights on the aforementioned foreshadowed research problem were formalised into 'nodes' which, at this point, were broadly classified under my three main research objects. Negotiations, responses and outcomes provided what is referred into Nvivo as 'parent nodes', under which all subsequent data were initially recorded.

The phase of fieldwork and data analysis then led me to the theoretical framework discussed

in Chapter 3. Moral norms quickly emerged as an essential lens through which both responses to and outcomes of the land deal negotiations were discussed and justified, pointing to the heuristic potential of the concept of ‘moral economy’. Power dynamics, which were more consciously the object of observation from the beginning, were confirmed to be critical and their understanding was further refined. After a few moves back and forth between the literature and those data findings, I decided Luke’s and Gaventa’s three-dimensional approach could provide an efficient way to regroup and analyse the multiplicity of dimensions that power had been appeared to take in the context of land deals (and which had been formalised in numerous nodes in Nvivo). Following these choices, new ‘nodes’ were created in Nvivo, theoretically-informed this time.

The versatility of Nvivo then facilitated a three-dimensional data analysis, through the crossing information inside and across the three following ‘parent nodes’ (or main strands of data):

- our three objects of observation (negotiations, responses and outcomes),
- the power and moral economy framework
- the information on the villages, hamlets or individual research participant under observation (more information on the classification of these units below).

The last fieldwork (2014) was illuminated by these first empirical and theoretical findings. The data collected then was added to the Nvivo-organised analytical framework described here.

Methodological and ethical challenges

Several methodological and ethical challenges were encountered during the research process. On the ground, the main difficulty centred on asserting my identity as a researcher despite prejudices that were associated with my racial identity. There were cases where people suspected me of being part of the Tozzi Green team and others in which I was thought to have been sent by the civil society to support grassroots resistance. In the three villages in which I spent time during the last field trip, a better level of trust was achieved. Yet it was

never certain whether I ultimately managed to convince everyone of the research purpose of my visits. These perceptions seemingly affected the way research participants would engage with me and their answers to my questions as well.

A partly related difficulty consisted of accessing the voice of subaltern segments of the local communities, especially women. This required that two difficult conditions were met at the same time. First the discussions needed to be held outside of the control of dominant members of society (men, elders and so on). Crop fields generally constituted a good place or homes, at the end of the rice transplanting seasons. After the excitement related to the presence of a foreigner in their village had dissipated, I was more easily able to wander around the villages freely, although it was generally difficult to be able to have a private conversation with anyone as doors were always left open. The second condition was harder to meet: the members of these subaltern groups needed to be actually willing or feel legitimate to discuss these issues, especially with a foreigner. While their attitude of restraint provided material to reflect on internal power dynamics in a society where the right to talk publicly is reserved for men and elders, one of the main challenges was that a number of voices that were silenced in the negotiation process might not be willing to make themselves heard to me either. I was also careful that people felt free enough to refuse to talk to me should they not be comfortable.

During data analysis, I sought to reflect on the potential effects on those various power dynamics on the accounts of those who did talk to me. In the best cases I concluded, the accounts I was getting reflected the interviewees' current perspectives on the land deal, as opposed to a "true" account of what their positions or responses had been at the time of the negotiations. In cases where there were clear signs of caution on their behalf (retaining information, contradictions, silences and so on), I focused on understanding what their attempts to reconstruct their retrospective accounts of the land deal negotiations, according to potential fears and representations, could reveal on the power dynamics at work and on the evolution of perceptions with time. These interpretations are discussed in the case study chapters.

Another challenge consisted of getting the necessary data to support my understanding of social differentiation across and within the villages. Villagers were generally reluctant to give me information on their capital (or lack of capital) in cattle, and unable to provide quantitative data on their land endowments. The information collected on annual crop food production and financial income from sales of cattle and crops was hard to use for comparative purposes since the units of measurement would vary from one place to the next. On food crop production, villagers usually referred to the number of ox-carts they could fill per harvest. However, not only would the number of annual harvests vary from one place to the next according to the seeds and quality of land available, but their carts would not necessarily contain the same amounts of bags of rice and the capacity of their bags of rice would also vary. Moreover, it was not always clear whether the data given were for the hamlet or for the whole village. On population sizes, numbers given would at times include children, at others exclude them. Considering the number of villages concerned by this study (26), I would have needed a substantial team of research assistants, and much more time, to carry the surveys necessary to gain comprehensive, comparable data for every one of them.

The unrealistic quest for assessing respective levels of wealth was therefore replaced by efforts to gain enough information to establish the varying levels of food insecurities and the broad class position of the *villages* (for the 2013 fieldwork- 26 village comparative analysis discussed in Chapter 5) and of the *hamlets* (for the 2014 fieldwork -three case studies discussed in Chapter 6, 7 and 8) under observation. In order to do so, I focused on determining:

- whether the villages/hamlets owned their means of production (land and cattle) or not, and to what extent. I distinguished distinguishing between (i) villages or hamlets who owned cattle and lent some to others (and rough numbers), (ii) villages or hamlets who had enough cattle for themselves but could not lend to anyone and (iii) villages or hamlets who did not own so had to borrow. Villages/hamlets were also classified according to the broad quantity and quality of farmland and grazeland they owned (using the criteria outlined in Chapter 2).
- The degree of choice with respect to their engagement with the market. This was assessed by trying to answer the two following questions: Were villagers forced to

sell some of their rice production to cover non-food related expenses while eating less valued and nutritional crops themselves? Were they forced to sell their labour force to other villages or were they, on the contrary, employing labour force from other villages themselves? Throughout the thesis, I seek to be as transparent as possible regarding the basis of my assertions on these issues, and the quality of the data.

These classifications were formalised in nodes in the Nvivo qualitative analysis software.

Who and how to anonymise to best protect my research participants without reaching a level of abstraction that would empty the case study of its substance was another concern. After having anonymised Tozzi Green in previous publications, I decided that the nature of their operations called for transparency rather than secrecy and that it was individuals, rather than the company, that needed to be protected through anonymisation. The names of research participants were changed, as well as those of the various villages and hamlets, in order prevent any possible identification of local authorities while being able to tell what their function or position within the local society were.

The thesis now turns to a discussion of the findings of the successive periods of fieldwork. Chapter 5 looks at the results of the 2013 data collection exercise, while Chapters 6, 7 and 8 explore the three village case studies. Throughout the process, I draw on the insights these different units of analysis bring to the question of how local voices get heard or silenced in the context of negotiation processes for corporate land access.

CHAPTER 5:

A REGIONAL ASSESSMENT OF LAND DEAL NEGOTIATIONS

Drawing on the comparative fieldwork research carried out in 2013, this chapter reports on the accounts of the land deal negotiations that were made by authorised voices across a total of 26 villages. These village-level data are complemented by information garnered through interviews with state and corporate officials and through the analysis of documents related to the official procedure and consultation.

I first describe the broad context of *negotiations* in which the village consultation took place, elaborating on the involvement of the local state administration already outlined in Chapter 2 and highlighting how the contours and content of the consultations varied across villages. The following pages explore the villages' official responses to these differently-enunciated land requests and report on the attempts to influence the negotiations through means other than the official consultation (*responses*). Whilst compliance with land requests was shown to largely dominate the spectrum of official responses, it was also found to obscure contrasting perspectives on Tozzi Green, which ranged from enthusiasm to outright opposition. I note that these findings suggest differentiated vulnerability to power pressures with some village leaders who felt free to go against official directives and openly reject the land requests, and others who felt forced to comply. In the last section, I present the interviewees' diverging perceptions on the outcomes of the land deal, pointing to the centrality of considerations of relational justice in reported judgements. Finally, I draw some preliminary observations on issues of voice and influence and introduce the three village case studies that are discussed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

Negotiation: the consultation process

In this section, I explore the patterns and inconsistencies of consultation across the 26 villages. I was particularly interested in understanding whether authorised voices felt they

had had some choice in responding one way or the other. I first describe the regional and municipal consultation meetings that preceded the village-level consultation, as these previous interactions partly conditioned the villagers' perceptions of the land deal and prefigured the type of brokerage the different mayors would conduct, with Satrokala and Andiolava's mayors putting villagers under pressure to comply with Tozzi Green's land requests and the one from Ambatolahy under pressure to oppose them. I then point to the different experiences that authorised voices reported having had with the consultation process, relating them to the varying material and relational contours of these interactions as well to their informational and discursive contents.

First official efforts at consulting the local population were made through large collective meetings organised at the level of municipalities. Some of these meetings were carried out in the context of the Environmental Impact Assessment study that the company conducted in 2011. The consultant company chosen for the study sent two young experts from the capital Antananarivo. They happened to be in the *chef-lieu* of Satrokala when I visited the agribusiness project for the first time in September 2011. Paid by the company, they were based at Tozzi Green's headquarters and used their 4x4 to move around for their interviews, which would presumably have made it difficult for the population to understand that they were the independent entity they claimed to be. From the consultants' complaints about the state officials systematically asking them for financial remuneration when they came to discuss with them, it seemed that even the state administration was struggling to make a distinction.⁷²

The consultants met with the three mayors of the rural municipalities to discuss the 'advantages and risks' related to the agribusiness project and to suggest ways the company could try to mitigate them.⁷³ The population was invited to participate in two of those meetings but from the information gathered in the comparative study, only a portion of the

⁷² Informal discussion, Rivo and Mamy, EIE consultants, 14/09/2011, Satrokala village.

⁷³ Municipal council member (Ambatolahy) (2011b) 'Tetik'asa voly savoa Ihorombe Tozzi Green, Fanadihadiana ny amin'ny Fiantraika (EIE) amin'ny tontolo iainana ny mponina-Tatitry ny fivoriana', (Minutes of the meeting. Environmental Impact Assessment. Tozzi Green. Jatropha plantation project. Ihorombe), Ambatolahy, 16/09/2011.

local population was actually informed of the meetings. Official minutes of the meetings concur with villagers' accounts to suggest the main contribution of these events was to spread official information on the project and display the state's support of it. No fewer than 22 local and regional officials attended the first meeting held in Satrokala, from the head of district and the regional directors of various ministries through the mayors and the cabinet director of the regional government.⁷⁴ After explanations were given on the project, local people were invited to voice their comments and opinions. A head of *fokontany* reported that a few of those who attended did actually say they were reluctant to seeing the project develop in their area but 'not many because people here do not dare to express their opinions'⁷⁵. Likewise, the minutes of the meeting held a few weeks later in Andiolava noted that there was some reluctance on the part of certain villagers because of the bad experiences they had with the Landmark company which had tried to set up an agribusiness project in the area a few years before. The company was also reportedly asked to consider amicable solutions to potential issues of cattle encroaching on the commercial plantations. All of the other comments mentioned were manifestations of enthusiasm, however, with villagers from Andiolava, for instance, reportedly saying that the positive results shown by the Tozzi Green project in terms of socio-economic opportunities in Satrokala were providing them with strong incentives for welcoming the project in their municipality.⁷⁶ Crucially, these meetings were recorded to have validated the 'approval of the project by the local population', a necessity to the procedure moving forward.⁷⁷

Aside from these collective meetings, the population was rarely approached directly by the EIE consultants. Out of the 26 villages visited, only one said they had received their visit and been asked for their opinion on the project. In 2014, Tozzi Green's local managers showed little, if any, knowledge of the findings or recommendations of the report that had

74 Municipal council member (Satrokala) (2011a) 'Procedure of approval of the biomass and biofuel project, Ihorombe Region, Minutes of the meeting', Satrokala, 20/07/2011.

75 Interview with a local official from one of the rural municipalities, Andiolava, 04/03/2014

76 Municipal council member (Andiolava) (2011) 'Fanadihadiana momba by fiantraika amin'ny tontolo iainana sy ny mponina. Tetikasa Biocarburant et Biomasse Ihorombe- Tatitry ny fivoriana' (Minutes of the meeting-Environmental Impact Assessment. Biofuel and Biomass Project Ihorombe), Andiolava, 05/08/2011.

77 Municipal council member (Satrokala) (2011b) 'Letter from the municipality of Satrokala and Andiolava', Ref 001-11/CR TG/PR, Official file on Tozzi Green, Ministry of Development and Country Planning, 20/07/2011.

emerged from this assessment and the project was operating without the required environmental license as the National Office for the Environment (ONE) was requesting that a new assessment be organised.⁷⁸

Village-level consultations were organised a few months after the EIA. All the villages affected by the land lease within the group of 26 villages we visited confirmed that some consultation had been held over the concerned land at some point. Discussions quickly highlighted that the main question was not whether there had been consultation, but *who* had been consulted and how.

Out of the 26 villages visited, there were five cases where village leaders reported that they had not been consulted on the land transfer or only on some of it. In none of these cases, however, was the land just appropriated by the Tozzi Green company without any approval from villagers. In all five, the land had been given by neighbours or family members (from another hamlet). One of the striking feature of this fieldwork was actually how much of the discussion about the consultation process revolved around local rules of land tenure being violated by neighbouring villagers. By favouring one hamlet over the others, and overlooking the importance of including all villages of the vicinity in discussions over a tract as opposed to just one, the consultation rarely included all of those holding claims on the land under discussion and ended up fuelling tensions between and within villages.

The other important question was how these consultations were led as this can be presumed to have contributed to villagers' perceptions of the land deal and of the choice they had regarding the land requests that were made to them.

The change of Tozzi Green's management team, as well as the high turn-over of the staff in charge of community relations, translated into important inconsistencies and contradictions in the promises of compensation that were offered, with the identity of brokers and the content of the discussions changing across time and space. Villagers approached at the onset of the project were told the Tozzi Green project would follow a contractual agriculture model,

⁷⁸ The ONE was requiring for a new EIA be conducted for the area affected by the first lease instead of the whole 100,000 ha.

a pledge consistent with the business plan of the project that mentioned 25% of the total surface of jatropha would be planted through contract farming, but these announcements totally disappeared from discussions after a little while. Some villagers were made more generous promises of compensation than others. Some villagers had received information on the Tozzi Green project beforehand by attending the main meeting discussed above; others heard about the project for the first time on the day they were consulted. People were only consulted once in most villages, but in two of them (such as Mitatra in Satrokala and Mavoreny in Andiolava) they were consulted several times and the discussions were recorded in minutes. Some were approached by both Tozzi Green staffers and local authorities, some only by Tozzi Green staffers and others only by local authorities. Within the four years covered by the research, four different persons acted as Tozzi Green's representatives for the consultation.

Crucial similarities were observable across cases, however. First of all, in most of the villages visited, only scarce, fragmented and often false information was given on the process of the land transfer: villagers were frequently told the company was borrowing the land, but they were not told that this loan would be contracted with the state (after the land was titled and marked out) instead of with them directly. In the village of Mitatra, approached in the phases of exploration, the company even formally pledged that the land would never be titled and remain the property of the villagers, who would be paid some rent for it (cf contract in appendix 3). Two main pieces of (mis)information were generally given regarding the ongoing land deal: the first consisted of saying that the land deal had already been approved at higher levels and the second, that villagers had no legal rights on the land anyway. Second, delays to reflect were rather short: the first *état des lieux* (the official recognition missions during which the availability of the land is checked and georeferenced plans are made) were all held in the space of a month (between 24/01 and 14/02/2012) and all the second ones on the same day, 17/08/2012).

The next section looks at the official responses villagers brought to the negotiation process. Drawing on Gaventa and Pettit (2010), I shall distinguish between the voices expressed in 'invited spaces' (in the context of consultation) and those expressed in 'claimed spaces'

(outside the consultation). These categories indicate different level of initiatives, with ‘invited spaces’ pointing to the top-down process of delineation of the consultation and ‘claimed spaces’ to the creation of new channels and opportunities of expression from below.⁷⁹

Responses: choice and initiative

The domination of compliance in invited spaces

In terms of the official responses to the consultation or responses expressed in invited spaces of decision-making, limited variation was found. A great majority of consulted village leaders complied with the corporate land requests (17 out of the 20 who were consulted). Two interesting findings emerged from these discussions of responses, however: (i) this compliance obscured different perspectives on the project, with some describing their compliance with the land requests as acquiescence under intimidation and some as consent driven by hope for some benefits; (ii) despite this general trend, some village leaders felt free to openly refuse the land requests, in line with their mayor’s directives for some (those from the municipality of Ambatolahy), in contradiction to it in others (those from Satrokala and Andiolava).

Compliance under constraint

Out of these 17 villages that officially cooperated with Tozzi Green’s land requests, eight conveyed a sense of constraint: three of whom explicitly said they had felt ‘forced to’ give land (those from Antafika, Mianarivo, and Antranohazo) and five who explained they had ‘not been forced by the company *but*’. I included in this last group those villages where interviewees were replying negatively when asked whether they had felt forced to give land, but whose subsequent explanations made it clear that they did not think they had much choice. Most of them explained having been told that the land did not belong to them and that the land deal had already been accepted at higher levels anyway (Manambatra, Ampafika, Betongolo, Andoharano). This restricted understanding of choice is reflected in

⁷⁹ In the power-cube approach, Gaventa and colleagues distinguish between ‘closed spaces’ (to refer to the areas of decision-making from which the governed are excluded), ‘invited spaces’ (for those where people are invited to participate) and ‘claimed spaces’ (for those which are claimed by less powerful actors) (Gaventa and Pettit 2010).

the explanations given by the leaders of Mavoreny who, at the beginning of the interview, were saying ‘we had the right to refuse’, but then explained that:

After the meeting that was organised here, the authorities from Ihosy came here to ask for land. They said: "You are honoured of our presence here and of our request but these lands do not belong to you but to the state. If you have papers, show them".⁸⁰

The same ambivalent explanations were given by the hamlet leader of Betongolo, who first said: 'No, we didn't hesitate to sign. [...] It was a volunteer gift' but soon after added 'We accepted because we know these lands belong to the state; so, if we refuse, they will force us later. Even the minister came here'⁸¹. Village authorities of Mavoreny explained that it was the mayor who had chosen which land to give. In a more uncommon fashion, one interviewed village leader explained having been pressured not by state agents but by his own family members: they wanted to make sure they could access the health centre built by the Tozzi Green company that some villagers assumed, rightly or wrongly, was reserved to cooperating villages.⁸²

This serves to show the importance of going beyond asking people whether they felt forced to give land to understand how much share they had in the decision-making. Some research informants such as those from Mavoreny gave the impression that they had retained some degree of leeway in their response to the land requests, yet they had not actually chosen the land themselves. Others such as Antafika, on the other hand, were adamant that they had not been given any option to refuse giving land but that they had been able to choose the tract to be given away. Similar accounts of power pressures emanated from those three villages that said they had complied against their will. Interestingly, therefore, under the same reported power pressures, some were stating that they had not felt forced to give land and others that they had.

⁸⁰ Focused group discussion with the head of *fokontany*, the deputy head of *fokontany* and a *raïamandreny* from Maroveny, Maroveny, 28/04/2013.

⁸¹ *Raïamandreny*, Betongolo, 21/03/2013.

⁸² According to Tozzi Green managers, the health centre is open to anyone, regardless of whether they contributed land or not. Some villagers said they had been denied access but others deny this, saying they had been allowed to go even though their village had not contributed any land to the agribusiness project.

Voluntary compliance?

Authorised voices from the other nine villages who complied, on the other hand, insisted they had ‘*not* felt forced to give land’. These findings, as such, belied the understanding of compliance with the consultation process as being the sole result of (real or anticipated) coercion (second dimensional power). It is of course critical to establish the extent to which this perception of choice emerged from misleading information (on the nature of the land deal, on their land rights etc) or from what some would call influenced worldviews (third dimensional power). These more complex issues are examined in the three village case studies.

For the time being, what matters is to understand that the project, as it was presented and understood, generated a number of positive expectations that made it worth ceding some land for a number of village leaders. In some villages such as Ambohijafy (municipality of Andiolava), the enthusiasm had been such that people had even been pro-active in delineating land for Tozzi Green after having heard of its projects at the meeting held in the main village. Enthusiasm generally derived from prospects of waged-work and generous offers of compensation (from contract farming through the payment of rent to promises of socio-economic infrastructure and other kinds of help). Some also mentioned a desire to live in harmony with the foreigners. Most of the time, acceptance was also related to the fact that the land transfer that had been agreed on was not expected to have any significant impact on existing livelihood activities, either because only a small amount of land had been transferred because the need for land was quite limited since the village did not own or look after much cattle or because land was plentiful (but that last configuration was less frequent). There were even cases where the land deal was seen as a weight off the village shoulders since cattle thefts (and related financial costs) were rife. However, there were also two interesting cases where village leaders had significant cattle wealth but said they had been happy to offer some of their grassland to the project, since gifts had been reasonable and been compensated and represented a means to build good relationships with wealthy foreigners (Antroboka). These counter-intuitive findings were belying simple correlations between wealth (and influence) and a position of opposition to the project.

Villagers can be assumed to have been more or less proactive in requesting compensation. All interviewed village leaders reported having asked for compensation, but only in the first village ever consulted were these commitments put down in writing (Mitatra). The fear of the state and of foreigners that was regularly brought up by research participants can be thought to have had dissuaded a number of them to actively negotiate for compensation, especially for those who were not explicitly asked what they wanted in exchange. In all cases, whether expressed or not, expectations were there: contribution to the land effort should be rewarded and promises should be kept. All the village leaders who explained that the project was welcome indeed made it clear that their good dispositions were contingent on the company bringing them support and not taking more land than agreed. A degree of measure in terms of land alienation was also a condition of their acceptance: all but two indicated that they would *not* be able to provide more land, were they asked to.

Voiced refusal to comply

Contradicting this trend of (constrained or voluntary compliance), three of the 20 villages that were consulted (Marohasina, Itaosy and Soatanana) openly rejected Tozzi Green's land requests. For Itaosy, this rejection was in line with their mayor's directives as they belonged to the municipality of Ambatolahy where the mayor was encouraging opposition. For Marohasina and Soatanana (municipality of Satrokala), this went against the mayor's support for corporate land access. Contrasting with the forced compliance reported by others, their response raises the question as to the potentially varying levels of vulnerability to power pressures across villages. As in the three villages where leaders explained having been coerced to give land against their will, their reluctance was generally explained as a concern for livelihoods, in a context of scarce land and extensive pastoralism. The land transferred to (or feared to be targeted by) Tozzi Green was either land they used for grazing or important land reserves that would soon be needed in the context of the growing population and related increased pressure on landed resources.

Although dominant, compliance was not the only response that was given to the consultation process across the local population, belying the 'approval of the project by the local

population', reported after the main meetings held in Satrokala and Andiolava⁸³ with three villages where consulted leaders openly refused to give land.

Asserting or reclaiming voice through claimed spaces

The five (group of) village leaders who had been excluded from the consultation process, but were affected by the project generally shared the feelings of those who had felt forced to give land. Grievances and concern were generally even stronger because of the experience of exclusion which had deprived them of the opportunity not only to influence the choice of the land, but also to ask for compensation. A few of them sought different channels of expression to try and regain a voice in the process, as did others discontented with the way the project or land deal had evolved, or worried about the way it could affect them in the future. These actions outside of the controlled spaces of the consultation are examined in the pages below.

The appropriation of 'claimed spaces' (Gaventa and Pettit 2010) to express voice was varied across villages and not only a function of exclusions or discontentment. There were village leaders who opposed the project through several different channels of expression when, for some, their land had not been officially requested yet. There were others where no action was taken to contest the ongoing land deal at all, despite the project causing them significant concern.

As the Tozzi Green's project was slowly making progress in the area and the company's intentions were publicised through the collective meetings and first consultation visits mentioned above, three of the 26 villages sent letters to state authorities to let them know of their disagreement in principle with the project and their refusal for it to develop on their land (Andalanotsy, Anvalala and Talata). Two of them also sent representatives to the press conference that was organised the following year by civil society in the country's capital, Antananarivo, to campaign against the Tozzi Green project. They were joined by members of another two villages in doing so, one of which had also taken prior action to resist the privatisation of their land (the village of Mangidy, municipality of Ambatolahy, had written

⁸³ 'Letter from the municipality of Satrokala and Andiolava', Ref 001-11/CR TG/PR, Official file on Tozzi Green, Ministry of Development and Country Planning, 20/07/2011.

a protest letter), and one of which had not (Antranohazo, Satrokala).

Among the villages visited in 2013, a total of seven tried to influence the terms of the land deal through letters to state authorities. Their purpose varied slightly. As mentioned above, in three of them it was used to proactively express disagreement in principle, while in others, it was used in a more reactive way, to complain against promises of financial and material compensation that had not been respected for some (Mitatra), to ask for more support from the company (Betongolo), or to contest what they deemed as an illegitimate transfer of their land by other villagers (Manambatra and Soaravy).⁸⁴

Out of the eight village leaders who complained some of their village land had been given to Tozzi Green by others, three communicated their grievances to state or corporate authorities (Soatanana verbally and Manambatra and Soaravy through letters). The tone and targets of these protest letters could vary quite substantially. In Soaravy, the tone was quite confrontational, seeking the support of state authorities in repairing a manifest injustice. The actions of both their neighbours and the company were a source of indignation. Their neighbours were accused of having ‘sold’ land on which they allegedly had no rights at all and which did not even belong to their municipality, while the company was guilty both of having ‘stolen’ it and of having excluded the rightful landholders from the discussions altogether: ‘What surprised us is that they did not approach us at any time and there has not been any discussion, which is a way of trampling our rights’.⁸⁵ In Manambatra, instead, there was a manifest willingness to sort out the problem through a direct dialogue with the company. Manambatra had been consulted and agreed to give some land but another one of their tracts, which they needed, had been given to the project by ‘an old neighbour’⁸⁶. The encroachment was directly attributed to the ‘old neighbour’ and not to Tozzi Green. Showing that he was not scared of addressing Tozzi Green managers directly, the hamlet leader I talked to explained that he had gone to their office twice to follow up on the letters. He also

⁸⁴ The 2014 fieldwork revealed that two other villages had written letters to protest land transfers by neighbours. This is discussed in Chapter 8.

⁸⁵ *Fokontany Andalanotsy*, Letter sent to the head of Region, the Head of district and the mayor of Ambatolahy 25/08/2011.

⁸⁶ Interview son of the *lonaky*, Manambatra, 06/04/2013.

mentioned the intention to go and talk to the country manager directly to try and find a solution about a water problem that Tozzi Green's project was causing to some of their crop fields. There seemed to be some degree of confidence in the company following previous interactions in the context of consultation.

The intention to go and talk directly with the corporate managers was brought up within three villages, either to try and find a deal (for Ambondro, which wanted to offer an exchange of land), ask for bigger compensation (Betongolo) or to ask the company to honour their commitments (Ampafika). Some even said that they had threatened the corporate managers with precluding them from working their land should they not honour their commitment to provide them with a dam soon (village of Isorano). It is difficult to know whether they followed through on these declarations and the extent to which these were encouraged by the discussions we had together. The Tozzi Green managers themselves said that no complaints had been voiced to them directly⁸⁷. In any case, it seemed that such intentions were voiced when there was still a level of hope and trust and direct contact with senior staff from the company.

A more common way to try and limit land loss or communicate grievances was to go and talk to less senior corporate or state actors, such as Tozzi Green's tractor drivers, state civil servants in charge of the land deal procedure at the village level and/or the mayor. Sometimes villagers' attempts at influencing the land deal would stop there. At others, as in Soatanana's case, that would be accompanied by efforts to lobby more senior authorities.

Some of the post-consultation grievances were expressed at other villagers instead. Three of the eight villages complaining of an illegitimate land transfer went to see the accused neighbours to voice condemnation and put pressure on them to deny their land gift to the company (Soaravy, Soatanana and Bemamory). Pressure was also put by cattle owners on those villages to whom cattle was lent since it was feared that their transfer of land to Tozzi Green would threaten their cattle's health (Soakija). Some villagers such as Soaravy and

⁸⁷ Stefano, Satrokala, corporate manager, 05/04/2014.

Soatanana also communicated with state and corporate leaders regarding the contested land transfer, but others, for example, Bemamory, stopped at pressuring others.

In other villages, Ambondro, Mandritsara and Mitatra, contestation of the land transfer was not voiced in any way. One of the reasons raised for not voicing complaint, even towards those accused of the illegitimate land transfer, was the fear of conflict or tension. There were cases where the land had been offered by members of the family (from the same village but living in another hamlet), which sparked fears that complaints would jeopardise the family cohesion (Manosarena). There were those where tensions with the village that they accused of having given their land preexisted the corporate land deal negotiations and had led to serious violence, including murders, jail sentences and village relocation (Ambondro). With the risks entailed with any reactivation of the conflict, the arguments for and against a complaint had to be weighed carefully.

The exploration of responses outside of the invited spaces of decision-making revealed the use of different repertoires of action, in the pursuit of different purposes (redressing a grievance, pre-emptively expressing opposition, negotiating better compensation), through different targets (corporate managers, state authorities or other villagers).

Although most of the consulted leaders complied with land requests in invited spaces of negotiation, the perceptions of choice behind their compliance varied significantly. Contrasted decisions as to whether or not to invest new spaces to try and negotiate better terms of incorporation or oppose land alienation also suggested different perceptions of the rights, relevance and risks of expressing voice in other fora or through other means. The next pages describe how village leaders' perceptions of outcomes varied from complete satisfaction (with both the land transfer and compensation) to complete discontent.

Variegated outcomes

The 2013 village visits highlighted that no simple, one-way correlation could be drawn between certain types of engagement with the negotiation process and the outcomes of the

land deal. As the next paragraphs indicate, in each broad category of response (refusal, compliance, exclusion from consultation with or without reaction through claimed spaces), a whole spectrum of outcomes was experienced.

As mentioned above, three village leaderships openly refused Tozzi Green's land requests during consultation. Although that decision was respected by the company, the villages were not equally successful in preventing the project from developing on their land. Marohasina and Itaosy were totally spared. Soatanana, however, suffered losses because of a land gift made by their neighbours. They managed to recover some of this transferred land following a meeting with Tozzi Green and the regional authorities. How they reached this deal will be looked at in further detail in one of the empirical chapters (Chapter 7).

Different outcomes were also experienced among the group of 17 hamlets that complied with the land requests, both in terms of the significance of the land transferred and the compensation received. Eight village leaders said their village was not suffering from any adverse consequences from the land loss and that they had received satisfying compensation (Ambatofotsy, Andoharano, Betongolo, Analaroa, Zazafotsy, MianarivoSouth, Soakija, Talata). Interestingly, in one case, this positive outcome was reported, even though the villagers had not had any say in the choice of land (Andoharano). In Zazafotsy and Ambatofotsy, the land transfer to Tozzi Green was even seen as a boon, since it was land that used to be a source of concern as it was prone to bushfires and/or cattle thefts. Another case worth mentioning is that of Talata, briefly mentioned above: the *lonaky* explained that the land transfer had not had any negative impact on their livelihoods since it was far from their hamlet and that Tozzi Green's health centre was greatly appreciated by some members of his family. However, he personally had been and was still opposed to any transfer of the family land endowment, and had actually formalised this opposition in one of the first protest letters to be written and sent to local authorities. Nevertheless, for his cousins, who lived in another hamlet within Talata, he had ended up consenting to offer land since they insisted they wanted their sick daughter to be able to access Tozzi Green's health centre. Pointing to the diverse perspectives that can coexist within villages, Talata's case shows that village leaders do not always impose their decision on the rest of the family and that protest initiatives can

be defeated by internal dissent. It also shows that lack of adverse impact and (relative) satisfaction with the support provided by the company to the local population do not exclude positions of opposition to the project. Others explained their village was not suffering from the land loss but that they were unhappy with compensation or job offers (Mianarivo, Mangidy, Anafihy and Andoharano). The case of Mangidy illustrates how perspectives on corporate land access are dependent on the company delivering on its promises of compensation. After having explained how enthusiastic ‘all of them’ initially were about the agribusiness, their *lonaky* explained:

Tahiny [one of Tozzi Green’s local managers] came here to ask us for land. And we know very well that these lands belong to the state, so we didn’t hesitate to give them. But now we are sad because so far, they still haven’t built us any schools. Whereas they say we’re the best ones [in terms of agricultural yields]. So why haven’t they built a school? And why are they not paying us? [...] We are really sad because we accepted giving land to get jobs.⁸⁸

Whilst providing another illustration of the misconceptions in which perceptions of ‘free choice’ can be grounded in, Nakanian’s explanations highlighted the high hopes that foreign projects can generate among certain villagers. The village leader was also concerned the population would grow resentful against his brother and himself since they had been the ones brokering the land deal. Regarding the issue of wage arrears, he explained that the villagers who had worked on the corporate plantations had not been paid for a few months but that ‘it wasn’t Tozzi Green’s fault, but it’s the project officers who aren’t paying us’ and that he intended to go and talk to Tahiny about it.⁸⁹ This was the only time I heard of problems of wage arrears but complaints about insufficient salaries, and/or short-term character of waged work opportunities were frequent.

There were two villages where research informants explained land appropriation by the project was causing them problems, even though villagers had had a say in the choice of the tract and that choice had been respected by the company. In Antafika, the land passed on to Tozzi Green was close to their grassland which meant having to increase surveillance of

⁸⁸ *Lonaky*, Ampafika, 05/04/2013.

⁸⁹ *Lonaky*, Ampafika, 05/04/2013.

cattle substantially to avoid any damage to the corporate fields. Research participants within the village explained that it was the least detrimental tract to offer under what they felt was an obligation to contribute. Outcomes in Isorano were more ambivalent: on the one hand, there was relief the concerned tract had been ceded to the company since it was a place where cattle used to be stolen. On the other hand, villagers were complaining that now that jatropha trees had been planted, cattle could no longer be taken to the neighbouring village's grassland since Tozzi Green's fields stood in the way.

Finally, within those villages that had complied, there were three in which research participants said that Tozzi Green had appropriated more land than agreed to *and* that compensation was either insufficient (Mitatra and Manambatra) or completely non-existent (Antranohazo). For the first two, some of the contested land had allegedly been given to the company by their neighbours. Their complaints through letters had not yet brought any results. For the last one, the reason why the company had taken more land than agreed was unclear to them and the cause of strong resentment. Their case is explored in further detail in Chapter 6.

In villages where authorised voices said they had been excluded from the consultation also experienced different outcomes. Some saw some of their village land included in the first lease (Ambondro, Bemamory, Manosarena), while others did not (Anvalala, Vadilongo, Anjorobe, Soakija, Soatanimbary, and Andalanotsy), and some had access to some of the socio-economic opportunities offered by the project anyways.

In the three villages where village land was transferred to Tozzi Green, interviewed village authorities knew that the land had not been taken by force by the company but had been given to them either by family members from within the village (Manosarena) or by neighbours (Soanirana and Bemamory). They were all concerned about the impact of the land loss on their livelihood activities, but the immediacy of threats caused by the land transfer varied. Mandritsara and Soanirana seemed the most affected. People in Mandritsara explained that they now had to take their cattle some eight km away from their village for grazing and that they were worried because some of Tozzi Green's plantations were very close to their

stockyards. In Ambondro, lost land was fertile land that they used to use not only for grazing but also for agriculture. No compensation was given in any of these three “excluded but affected” villages. However, Mandritsara said they used the services of the health centre set up in Satrokala village, from which they were close geographically and, as Bemamory, they enjoyed some of the job opportunities offered by the project: some 10 villagers from Bemamory worked for Tozzi Green and a ‘good number’ of them for Manosarena. Those job opportunities proved rather limited, however:

Yes, many of us worked for them because we needed the money. But it was a few weeks only. And last time, it was during the rainy season while we had some work to do on our own fields, so we didn't work very long.⁹⁰

Within my pool, these were the only three villages that had lost land without interviewed village leaders having been consulted at all. All the others had either been consulted to some extent or *not* consulted but *not* included in the first lease either (Anvalala, Vadilongo, Anjorobe, Soakija, Soatanimbary, and Andalanotsy).

Among that last group, all the research leaders I discussed this with said they were satisfied with this outcome (no land loss, no compensation) since they were opposed to the project setting up in their village. It is difficult to assess their own influence in this satisfactory outcome since all of them belonged to the municipality of Ambatolahy whose mayor was then blocking the project from using any of the land within his jurisdiction. Some had engaged more proactively in the resistance campaign than others, however. Some of the leading figures of the opposition campaign came from Andalanotsy and Anvalala: both villages had written letters to say they did not want the project and both had sent representatives to the press conference held in Antananarivo in November 2012. These two villages also officially endorsed the position of protest expressed at a large meeting organised by Ambatolahy's mayor in November 2011.⁹¹ Sent to state officials at all level, the minutes of this meeting (cf appendix 4) were followed by 493 signatures, collected from a total of nine *fokontany* and more than 25 villages, in which Anvalala and Andalanotsy featured

⁹⁰ Lonaky, Mandritsara, 04/04/2013.

⁹¹ Municipal council member (Ambatolahy) (2011a) ‘Opposition to the project requiring large tracts of land in the municipality of Ambatolahy, Minutes of the meeting’, Ambatolahy, 18/11/2011.

prominently. Anjorobe's authorities can also be assumed to have taken an active part in this meeting, since their signature topped the list. The other three 'excluded but not affected' villages in my pool had not signed that letter (Soakija, Iakatra and Vadilongo). The explanations given by authorised voices suggested it was not because they opposed the resistance to Tozzi Green but because of the constraint of distance as they were located further away from Ambatolahy *chef-lieu* where these meetings were held. Iakatra and Vadilongo had actually written letters to oppose the previous agribusiness project that had started operating in their villages, and Atsimandra explained they had tried to talk their relatives (and cattle borrowers) in Mianarivo into not giving land. The difficulty of knowing whether these villages would have been equally successful in their struggles against dispossession even in the absence of support from their mayor reminds us that (perceived) positive outcomes should not be assumed to be the product of villagers' sole endeavours.

As far as compensation was concerned, it is also hard to know, without closer scrutiny and follow-up of the negotiation process through time, the extent to which villages getting more support than others could be related to the villagers' own efforts to gain better terms of incorporation. The change of corporate policies and brokers through time can also be expected to have had an effect. In Mitatra, the promises of compensation were formalised in a contract which was given to the villagers (cf appendix 3). As much as this could have been the product of villagers' proactive engagement in the negotiations, it could also have been motivated by the company's strong quest for legitimacy at the beginning of its operations since Mitatra was the first village to be consulted. This certainly provided the villagers with a strong asset on which to base their claims compared with other villagers.

There were, therefore, cases where outcomes were clearly consistent with responses as in the three villages that refused Tozzi Green's land requests against the opinion of the mayor and whose land was mostly spared as a result or those other ones where compliance with the land requests seemed to have helped mitigate the impact of land loss and gain satisfactory terms of incorporation. However, there were also counter-examples, where compliance ended up with unwanted land loss or unsatisfactory compensation or where expressions of opposition through either invited or claimed spaces did not help retrieve contested land loss, or only

partially. Whilst local people's responses could be a critical factor in influencing outcomes, they were generally not a sufficient condition in obtaining satisfaction.

It is also critical to recall that judgements on what constitutes satisfactory or unsatisfactory outcomes discussed here were those of authorised voices; what may be seen as satisfactory for them (no land loss but no compensation, for instance) may be seen very differently by less dominant members of the village.

Preliminary observations on voice and influence

This conclusion draws some of the insights allowed by these data on issues of local voice and influence in the context of land deal negotiations. I also indicate how these justified the three theoretically-informed questions discussed in Chapter 3 and raised the need to explore these through in-depth empirical observation. I then introduce the three villages that were chosen as case studies for Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

The 26-village comparative study highlighted that within the context of a same project and within the same geographical area, village authorities could express contrasting perspectives on the setting up of a foreign agribusiness project, from seeing it as a threat to livelihoods to considering it as an opportunity to access compensation, jobs and socio-economic services. Their account of the negotiation process also reflected different understandings as to how much choice they had in the response to give to the land requests. Some village leaders had felt forced by the state and the company to comply with corporate land access despite a reluctance to do so, while others had not. Among those who had been excluded from the talks, some had felt emboldened to contest land transfers and ask for repair in other spaces and others had not. Within the villages themselves as well, some had felt entitled to express their dissent with authorised voices and some had not.

This pleaded for a close scrutiny of the power dynamics that were playing out both vertically and horizontally and, as such, confirmed the importance of exploring sub-question 1: *How can power dynamics inform local responses to land deal negotiations and how and under*

which conditions can power relations be challenged by these responses? and more critically, these results highlighted the need to examine this question together with sub-question 2: *What moral economic considerations underpin compliance with or resistance to corporate land access and with which implications on the perceptions of the outcome of the land deal?* The next paragraphs explain why.

As far as vertical power pressures were concerned, most village leaders had mentioned pressures from government officials to act one way or the other but these pressures seemed to have been either exerted or experienced differently. On the one hand, there were those three villages where authorities explained that they had felt free to reject the land requests despite efforts by local officials to try and talk them into complying. On the other, there were those who were adamant that they had been left with no choice but to give land. Others had less clear-cut accounts of the extent to which their compliant responses had been influenced, clearly stating that they had ‘*not* been forced to accept giving land’ but also mentioning pressures from the authorities brokering the deal. It is tempting to conflate their insistence on the lack of external constraints with an unconscious internalisation of domination (third dimension of power). The data, nevertheless, encouraged caution towards these interpretations. Acting the way that was expected of them by complying with their own dispossession did not seem to sign an unconscious endorsement of their subaltern position in society or reflect manipulated thoughts. Their critical comments on the process and outcome of the negotiations showed indeed that collaborating with the consultation process did not mean blindly and unconditionally accepting the land deal. There were conditions to, and expectations behind, their compliance.

The difference in emphasis between those who were talking about full-constraint and those who were saying it was a free choice, and then mentioning pressures when discussing the content of the discussions seemed to be at least partly related to their perceptions as to how the company had performed with regards to these expectations. The more negative the impact and the more grudges village leaders held towards the conditions of corporate land access, the more they would insist on the coercion that had constrained them to comply. Judgements over the justice or injustice of corporate land access was generally related either to

considerations over the legitimacy of those expressing voice and/or over the fairness of the conditions of and retributions for land access. When compliance was described as ‘voluntary’, it was always assorted with expectations (fair compensation, measured land appropriation, respect). Resentment at the land deal, on the other hand, was generally justified by one or several of the following accusations: (i) violated alienation rights in the context of the negotiations (neighbours or other villagers having given “their land”), (ii) disappointed expectations over compensation, and (iii) disproportionate or non-contractual land appropriation by Tozzi Green.

Official responses (compliance or opposition) could also be suspected to have obscured desires *within* the village to respond differently, desires that may have been suppressed under horizontal power pressures. As much as certain village authorities may have felt forced to give land by state or corporate leaders, some villagers may have felt constrained *not* to give land by more dominant actors of the local population (their mayor, the village leader and so on). On the other hand, reports of land transfers having been made by members of the village community behind the back of their authorities indicated that, in certain cases, subaltern villagers dared to challenge horizontal power relations. The fact that in certain cases, authorised voices were challenged and in others were not hinted at another possible intersection of power and moral economy. Could the conditions under which (horizontal) power relations are challenged by responses (sub-question 1) be related to perceptions of relational justice within the village? Or to be more precise: In what context and under which conditions can a deal with the private company be seen as worth antagonising local authorities and how can these calculations be related to moral economic considerations?

Socially-situated perceptions of outcomes

Fewer insights emerged from these data on dynamics of influence. As discussed above, the data made clear that no simple correlations could be drawn between responses and outcomes. They also highlighted that the analysis of (perceived) outcomes, as that of responses, could only be understood in relation to villagers’ differentiated positions and constraints. Not only did perspectives on the balance of threat/opportunity represented by the agribusiness project vary from one village to the next, but because some villagers had more to lose than others,

the potential for grievance was higher, regardless of the company respecting their choice or not. In some cases, although the village had not had any say in the choice of land to transfer, the impact on their livelihoods was relatively small since the village still had enough grassland available in relation to their needs (for example, Andoharano). On the other hand, the opportunity to express some choice in official spaces of negotiations and the respect of that choice by decision-makers were not sufficient enough conditions to allow for a positive outcome of the land deal in the village. When pressure on landed resource was already strong, any land loss, chosen or not, could cause an adverse impact (for example, Antafika). There could also be unexpected consequences, such as in the case of Isorano, where they had not foreseen the problems of access that would be caused by the development of plantations on a tract they did not need.

The data did, however, point to a critical finding on local people's influence on land deal negotiations. A good number of the cases where detrimental outcomes were reported seemed to be related to cases where some of the village land had been given either by neighbours or other family members behind the back or against the orders of their village authorities (such as in Talata, Soatanana, Manambatra, Soanirana or Mitatra). This made it clear that when expressed, conflicting views within or among villages could hamper the influence of authorised voices on the negotiation process. It also pointed to the importance of understanding the subjectivity of influence and of asking '*which voices transform into influence and under which conditions?*' (sub-question 3).

By bringing light on the complexity and contingency of each of these cases, these findings also argued in favour of complementing this research with close-up, fine-grained village studies. Out of the 26 villages considered in 2013, three were chosen for that purpose: Antranohazo (municipality of Andiolava), Soatanana (Satrokala) and Mangidy (Ambatolahy). Their potential to bring some elements of answers to the thesis main research question is outlined below.

Selection of village case studies

The cases of Antranohazo, Soatanana and Mangidy were chosen for their comparative potential on the one hand, and for their own intrinsic value on the other.

In all three, some of the village land had been titled and incorporated in the first lease, but both the scale of the transfer and its impact varied considerably. Their experience of the consultation process had been quite diverse as well: in Antranohazo, in 2013, research participants claimed they had been forced to give land, while in Mangidy, they explained not having been consulted at all but that land had been given by their neighbours instead. In Soatanana, on the contrary, they had been consulted and, despite some pressure, had decided to refuse the land requests. All three villages had also expressed themselves in claimed spaces, by participating in the public movement of resistance against the project for Antranohazo and Mangidy and by protesting a transfer of some of their village land by their neighbour for Soatanana and Mangidy. Whilst all three had lost some critical grassland, Soatanana had lost considerably less than the other two and (their leaders) had had a much higher degree of influence on the land deal. All three were communicating concerns and grievances towards the company but outcomes of the land deal were especially resented in Antranohazo and Mangidy, where the company and its support within the state were accused of having ignored both their voices and their subsistence rights. In sum, Antranohazo, Soatanana and Mangidy offered three cases where actors in similar positions of authority within their village (village leaders) had similar goals (struggle against dispossession), but developed different responses in different negotiation contexts and encountered different successes. Comparing and contrasting these three case studies will serve to identify certain factors and dynamics that appear to have articulated in orienting dynamics of voices and influence.

These cases were also chosen for their intrinsic value. While reflecting general patterns on vertical power dynamics and on internal dissent over local responses to land deals (with two cases of inter-village disputes), they each had specificities that would allow me to question assumptions and add some complexity to my understanding of the research focal issues. Antranohazo was interesting as one of the only villages of Satrokala that had participated to some extent in the resistance movement spearheaded by the mayor of Ambatolahy and yet

seemed to be amongst some of the worst affected villages. Soatanana was among this very minority of (two) villages that had felt emboldened enough to openly refuse Tozzi Green's land requests against the mayor's instructions. Mangidy had this interesting location at the border between two municipalities, raising potential issues related to the distortion between lived and administrative spaces. It was also, to my knowledge, the only case where struggles against dispossession had been lost in Ambatolahy despite the support of both the mayor and activists.

Each of their experiences is reported and discussed in separate chapters (Chapters 6, 7 and 8), dynamics of negotiations, responses and outcomes being analysed from the lens of power, moral economy and contentious politics. Cases of voice had been heard for one and ignored for the other two; their parallel in-depth investigation will help bring out some of the conditions for local people's influence in the context of land deal negotiations.

CHAPTER 6

EXCLUSIONS AND FRACTURES

THE CASE OF ANTRANOHAZO

In Antranohazo (municipality of Andiolava), a significant amount of village land was marked and leased to Tozzi Green. Although the company seemed to have halted its activities there, the project was causing significant concern in the village and having an impact on both grazing and farming activities. Both corporate and state managers were resented for that outcome, for none of the voices that had expressed themselves during the negotiation process seemed to have been respected and the village had lost critical land without receiving any compensation. While analysing the power dynamics that had constrained choice during the consultation, the chapter also relates some of what is perceived as corporate treason to less visible responses from certain segments of the village community. I argue that vertical power dynamics on the one hand, and conflicting responses in a context of tacit moral economic frustrations on the other, prevented the effective challenging of these unwanted outcomes.

The chapter starts by discussing the outcome of the land deal in Antranohazo, listening to villagers' voices to understand why it could have such wide-reaching implications on livelihoods despite the absence of the project on the ground. It then moves on to describe the context of the negotiation, discussing (i) issues of agroecology, livelihoods, socio-economic ties and leadership in Antranohazo and (ii) the specific form of consultation carried out across the municipality of Andiolava. I then point to the difficulty of knowing what exactly had and had not been agreed by those villagers who were consulted, and the degree of choice they had been given, in a context where what had turned out to be a losing deal made it difficult to admit any type of unconstrained interaction with the company. Nevertheless, in the broad context of exclusion from decision-making and information which characterised negotiations in Antranohazo, fieldwork revealed firstly, that dominant villagers had been less excluded than others, and secondly, that less authorised voices had most probably engaged in some backdoor bargaining with the company. The enthusiasm that the initial offers made by the company turned out to have generated in the most dependent villagers was nevertheless now

played down and concealed from the rest of the village. The next section describes the bitterness generated by the outcome of the land deal across the village, relating it not only to material issues, but also to a moral indignation. Both those who had brokered the land deal and those who had acquired the land had violated moral economic expectations, by making so little a case for both their struggles against dispossession and for incorporation. This chapter concludes that the villagers' lack of influence on the land deal is partly due to their vulnerability to first and second dimensional power dynamics, and the impossibility of achieving collective action in a socially-fractured context.

Ghost project, real impact

At the time of the 2014 fieldwork, Tozzi Green seemed to have lost interest in Antranohazo's land. In a context of anticipated coercion, the project had wide-reaching implications nonetheless, and was putting further stress on an economy that was differentially exposing villagers to land shortages, dependency and food insecurity.

The weight of uncertainty

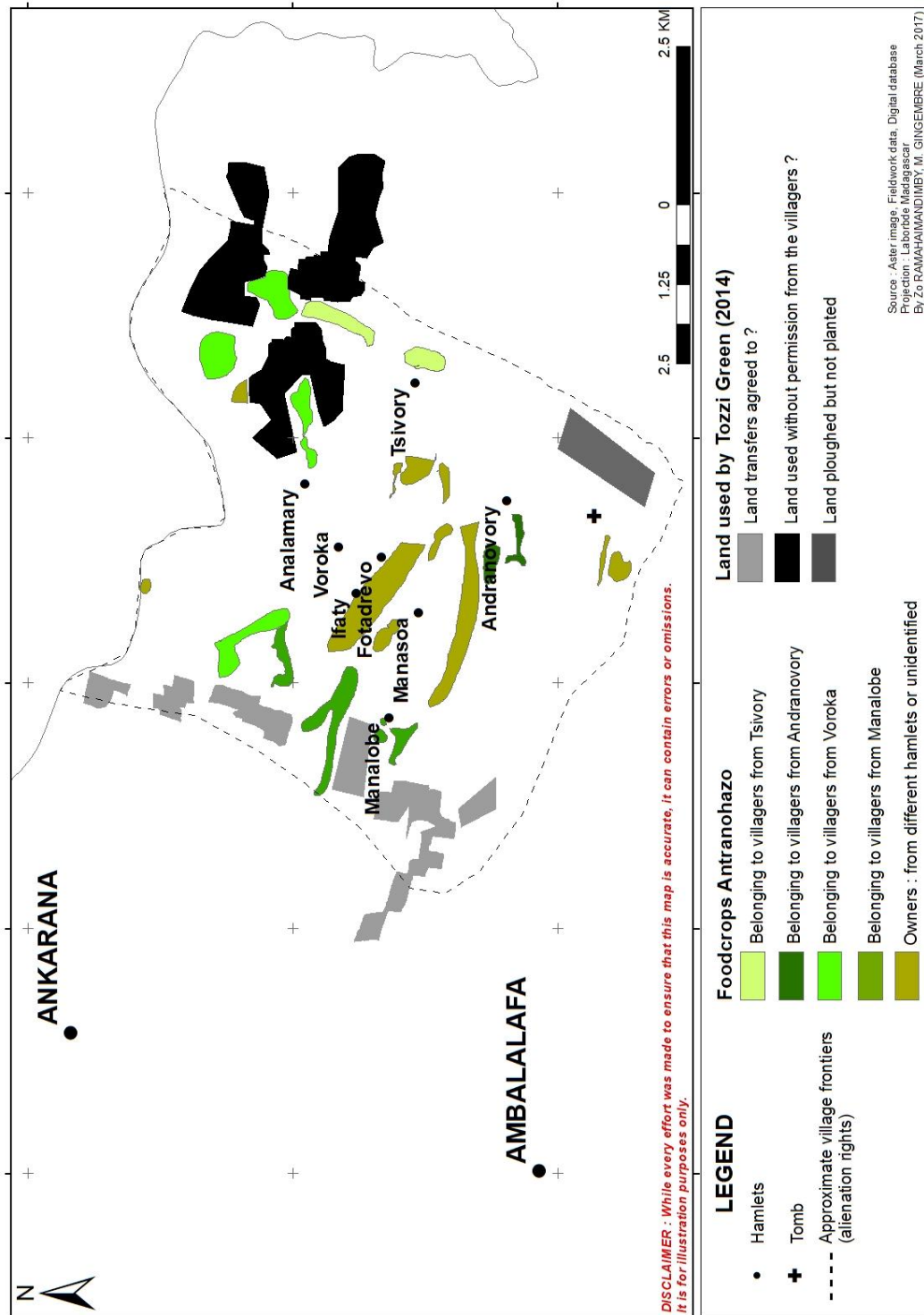
Tozzi Green's presence was strongly felt in Antranohazo with fields of jatropha to the west and east of the village and signs of tractor work in the south (tracts in grey and black in Figure 8 below).

Figure 7: Jatropha fields to the east of Antranohazo, 17/02/2014



The tracts to the west and east of the village had been planted in 2011, titled in the name of the state, leased to the Tozzi Green company in 2012, and demarcated with boundary stones in 2013. At the time of the last fieldwork period, however, it had clearly been a little while since the company had last cared for these fields: they were now covered with weeds and only a few jatropha trees had grown over 30-40 cm (Cf Figure 7).

Figure 8: Map of the land deal in Antranohazo (2014)



Villagers explained that they had not seen anyone tending these fields in more than a year, generating doubts within the village as to what Tozzi Green was planning to do with these parcels. Despite the neglect, however, villagers were not grazing their cattle there. There was indeed a high level of uncertainty as to what was and was not allowed on these half-abandoned tracts and this uncertainty, in a context of fear of sanctions, was playing in the villagers' disfavour. Some villagers explained that they had received 'a visit from from Tozzi Green' after they had been seen grazing on their fields and that they had then been explicitly forbidden to do it again.⁹² Others said the prohibition was only temporary and would be lifted once the jatropha trees had reached a reasonable size, 'but it's a problem, since even a year later, the trees are still very small'.⁹³ Showing Tozzi Green's plantations to the north of the village, Figure 9 indicates that the project plantations in Antranohazo were not all as neglected as those mentioned and illustrated above (Figure 7). However, none had reached the size of trees either. Some said they were still allowed to graze but that the jatropha plantations affected the quality of the pastures because the jatropha trees' leaves 'killed the good pasture' and they could not regenerate them through slash and burn anymore.⁹⁴

Figure 9: Jatropha fields to the north of Antranohazo, February 2014.



Compounded by inconsistent corporate policies, the lack of clear information was feeding rumours and inciting caution. Those who explained that they 'did not think it was forbidden to graze where the jatropha was' added, 'but we are always worried anyways. Can we graze

⁹² Hamlet leader, Antranohazo Manalobe, 17/02/2014.

⁹³ Villager, Antranohazo Tsivory, 16/02/2014.

⁹⁴ Hamlet leader, Antranohazo Voroka, 22/02/2014.

our cattle there where these tracts are theirs now?'.⁹⁵ This fear was accelerated by the damages that villagers from a neighbouring municipality had allegedly been asked to pay, after some of their cattle had damaged Tozzi Green's maize fields on the Sariaka plain. Chapter 8 discusses this incident and the different versions that are given of it. Considering the high price of the fine that their neighbours in Sariaka had reportedly been asked to pay, it was a risk they could not afford to take, in spite of how unlikely it seemed that their pastoral practices could cause any hindrance to the company at the time.⁹⁶

In this context of fear, the Tozzi Green project not only restricted available grassland, but also compounded daily difficulties and work. Even in the hamlet of Andranovory where land was only ploughed but not yet planted, elders were asking children to check on the cattle all day to make sure they did not go on to Tozzi Green's land.⁹⁷ 'Now it's proper *miara-kandrovana* [cattle keeping] that we have to do', their hamlet leader commented. 'We have to check on them all the time now'.⁹⁸

Traditional practices of free-roaming had already been hampered by the pressures from agriculture. Tozzi Green's shadow was lending them a definitive blow:

We don't let the cattle roam freely [without human supervision] anymore no, because the rice fields are growing, so we always fear that they will damage them [...] When I was small, there weren't any rice paddies here, so we could leave the zebus there all day without worrying [...] But at the time I got married [roughly seven years before] people started doing rice paddies here and after that, we would only let the zebus there on their own after the harvest. But now with the foreigners here, even that we can't do.⁹⁹

In this context of anticipated coercion, fear and rumours, the effects of the absent Tozzi Green project were very real. Were the project to resume its activities there, then crop farming itself would also be affected.

⁹⁵ Villager, Antranohazo Tsivory, 20/02/2014.

⁹⁶ Risks of zebus damaging the corporate cropfields are much lower in Antranohazo than in Sariaka (since cattle dislike *jatropha*, whereas they are fond of maize) and the company's interest in Sariaka-where they had guards patrolling the plantations day and night- was manifestly much higher than for Antranohazo.

⁹⁷ Villager, Antranohazo Andranovory, 16/02/2014.

⁹⁸ Rota, Antranohazo Andranovory, 19/02/2014.

⁹⁹ Nathan, fields Antranohazo, 07/02/2014.

Threats to crop farming

First, there were concerns of cattle not being able to access the fields for the *hitsaky*, the practice by which cattle are made to run on to rice paddies in large numbers for a few hours to prepare the paddies for transplantation. In certain areas, indeed, no cattle corridors had been left. With jatropha fields west and east, the villagers of the hamlets of Analamary, Tsivory and Voroka were only left with a three-metre-wide dirt road to bring their cattle to their fields; it was certainly too narrow to allow the passage of the 20-to-50-head herds that were needed to plough an average-sized rice paddy. As Manina from Analamary commented: ‘It’s hard enough to drive a cart on this road, let alone dozens of zebus!’¹⁰⁰ At the time, most farmers were still cutting across the fields of jatropha since ‘there is no other choice really’.¹⁰¹ However, were the trees to reach their mature size, it would become difficult to manage the herd, considering the limited spaces left between each tree and their rows.¹⁰²

For some, the corporate fields also caused problems in terms of irrigation. Narindra, the hamlet leader of Voroka, explained that the way the fields were ploughed had affected the natural slope of the terrains, resulting in the water falling more slowly onto his rice paddies. Similar complaints had been reported to us in a few other villages the year before.

Finally, there was the issue of Tozzi Green’s plantations being at a close distance to a number of villagers’ rice fields since it meant that when cattle could still access the fields for the *hitsaky*, they could no longer graze in the surrounding area after the hard work. Georeferenced work revealed that some rice fields to the north of the village were close to being totally surrounded by the jatropha plantations, with distances of 30 to 50 metres between the jatropha and the fields.

Differentiated outcomes

The geography of the land appropriation translated into unequal burdens across hamlets. Tozzi Green’s main fields were concentrated around the hamlets of Tsivory and Voroka to

¹⁰⁰ Jonah, Antranohazo Analamary, 14/02/2014.

¹⁰¹ Jonah, Antranohazo Analamary, 14/02/2014.

¹⁰² Space between the aligned trees was of 1.5 to 3 metres.

the east and Manalobe to the west (Cf Figure 8).

These fields surrounded by *jatropha*, mentioned above, belonged mostly to Narindra's nuclear family (from Voroka) and to people from Tsivory: 'This is what makes us unhappy here. After the *hitsaky*, the cattle need a lot of pasture. And now, where can they go?'¹⁰³ While people from Voroka could still graze to the west of their hamlets, in Tsivory, the situation was quite dramatic since most of their grassland had been appropriated, whereas they were currently tending 400 head of cattle:

Now the space for grazing our cattle is very narrow, because there are *jatropha* fields to the west and to the east [of the hamlet]. And all we have left for grazing is our rice paddies. And there's no space left for the cattle to access the fields.¹⁰⁴

The situation of Manalobe, to the very west of the village, was also worrying:

Now we only have the east side of the village left to graze our cattle. But the problem is that there are more and more rice paddies as well over there so we don't really have any *tazoa* left to graze the cattle.¹⁰⁵

The excessive strain the project was putting on already heavy workloads and stretched resources was deeply resented, and infringing tacit rules embedded within the villager's moral economies:

It's really a big problem for us to have their plantations there. But do foreigners think it's easy to raise cattle? There is always a risk that they might escape if we don't wake up during the night to check on them. And that's not only when it's raining. Now with the *jatropha* there, we really have to keep a close eye on them all the time.¹⁰⁶

As Marcel was making clear here, it was not only the loss of land, but also the lack of consideration for their daily strife that was a cause for bitterness.

The examination of the negotiation process and of villagers' responses to it served to investigate whether those villagers who were most affected had had a say in the corporate

¹⁰³ Nini, Antranohazo Tsivory, 20/02/2014.

¹⁰⁴ Nini, Antranohazo Tsivory, 15/02/2014.

¹⁰⁵ Hamlet leader, Antranohazo Manalobe, 17/02/2014.

¹⁰⁶ Marcel, Antranohazo Voroka, 04/02/2014.

land acquisitions and to what extent. The next section presents the context of the negotiation, both in terms of village internal dynamics and their experience of the consultation process.

A village community under pressure

The next pages describe the village context of the negotiation, pointing to the lack of unified leadership within the village and to issues of dependence and vulnerability that differentially affected villagers.

Erosion of community ties

The 300 inhabitants of Antranohazo were spread over eight hamlets, some of which were an hour's walk away from each other. Beyond the discursive insistence of forming one family, there were competing senses of belonging within the village. Antranohazo had moved from one single *lonaky* to four. The original split was made to allow for the respect of social prescriptions related to kinship rules: by marrying his niece, the *lonaky* became socially lower than his younger brother—from older brother to son-in-law—who was therefore made a *lonaky* of his own. Across time, new groups of belonging (or *foko*) emerged as a result of a series of matrimonial alliances with outsiders, all of whom created new hamlets with their own *lonaky*. At the time of research, the main line of difference experienced seemed to be between the hamlets of Voroka and Analamary, 'the families of the two [founding] brothers',¹⁰⁷ on the one hand, and those of the other five hamlets on the other. Although the last five did not seem to form a unit of their own, they were distinguished as different *foko* from those claiming to come from the original male branch of the family. 'We're all from the same family, but we come from the man and they come from the woman'.¹⁰⁸ As the eldest of this dominant branch, the *lonaky* of Analamary should have prevailed over others, according to local rules of kinship. In this case, however, he was very old and did not own cattle. As a result, influence seemed to be exercised by authorities in Voroka, especially Narindra who, with his two other brothers in the hamlet, was the only one who owned cattle and Jimmy, his elder son, who could read and write and had been chosen as *komity* to take

¹⁰⁷ Jonah, Antranohazo Analamary, 14/02/2014.

¹⁰⁸ *Lonaky*, Antranohazo Analamary, 14/02/2014.

charge of the village administrative tasks. They were the people we were referred to in both years we visited.

Critically, they were close to the key broker in the resistance movement against Tozzi Green, Hervé who had informed the civil society based in Antananarivo about Tozzi Green's development on the ground and of the opposition put up by some villagers. Hervé used to run a number of development projects in the region and had helped Antranohazo build one of the rare cement-built schools in the region. When he still lived in Ihosy, the provincial capital, he used to visit the village every week. Although contacts were far less frequent now that he had moved to the capital Antananarivo, they would give each other telephone calls now and again, a slender but essential means to access outside information in a context where access to information is difficult.

Besides this diluted leadership between the four *lonaky* and the *de facto* authorities from Voroka, there seemed to be tensions between some hamlets, although it was difficult to know how exacerbated these were. Our suspicions were aroused when villagers of Tsivory explained that they were no longer sending their children to the school in Voroka because of the river, when the water levels were actually quite low, even at the end of the rainy season. The contemptuous comments made by villagers in Voroka about the "lack of manners" of Tsivory villagers when we came back from our visit there further lent credit to that hypothesis. This fractured sense of belonging was certainly accelerated by the context of inequalities and divided resources that characterised the village socio-economic fabric.

Demographic pressure on land

In Antranohazo, indeed, the whole village land (farmed land, grassland, land reserves and even tracts that were not propitious to rice cultivation) had already been divided and distributed between the families. As had been revealed during the previous fieldwork, this was an indication of land shortage. In villages where there was still land to expand, grassland and land reserves remained accessible to all. During our walks across the village, Narindra would frequently point to areas where grassland had recently been converted into fields to accommodate the younger generation's land needs. Far from the "free and idle" land corporate and state managers usually alluded to when justifying the Tozzi Green large-scale

agribusiness project, the highlands or *tanety* were instead hosting fields of cassava and peanuts and increasingly, rain-fed rice fields as well.

In that context, no option was available to compensate the loss of pastures caused by Tozzi Green. To my question as to whether it would not be possible for people from Tsivory to graze on Voroka's land since they had so little left themselves, Moha replied:

No, they have to stop to the east of the river [boundary between the land of Voroka and the land of Tsivory] because we already share the zones to the west with Manasoa; so, if Tsivory wanted to graze there as well, it would be three of us grazing on a common zone.¹⁰⁹

This lack of option was all the more worrying as those two hamlets that had lost the most grassland (Tsivory and Manalobe) were already among the most vulnerable in the village since they did not have any cattle possessions of their own. This lack of material wealth makes them vulnerable to external shocks, but does not mean they do not need grassland. As explained in Chapter 2, grassland can allow cattle-less villagers to tend the cattle of others, a way to have access to cattle for the preparation of their rice paddies but also to gain a degree of protection from wealthy cattle owners. The next section discusses the unequal distribution of cattle in Antranohazo and other indicators highlighting different levels of livelihood vulnerability within the village.

Differential dependence and vulnerability

While some 700-800 head of cattle were kept within the village, only 100 actually belonged to Antranohazo's villagers and this cattle wealth was mostly concentrated in the hands of Narindra and his two brothers in the hamlet of Antranohazo Voroka. The other villagers tended cattle from the rich villages of Analaroa and Anjorobe (municipality of *Ambatolahy*) where their family originally came from, and these critical arrangements seemed to be in jeopardy. In both Manalobe and Tsivory, a fair number of cattle had recently been taken back by their owners, following the death of several heads during the dry season. With the discretion warranted by these sensitive issues, a young man from Voroka told us that Tsivory had lost 200 head in the past year, which is half of the cattle they used to look after. In

¹⁰⁹ Moha, Antranohazo Voroka, 20/02/2014.

Manalobe, 100 had reportedly been taken back.¹¹⁰ Also in the hamlet of Analamary they said that a portion of the cattle they cared for had been taken back.¹¹¹ The owners either feared the cattle did not have sufficient pastures or they needed more cattle themselves to accommodate their growing families. Other hamlets feared the same fate might soon await them and that Tozzi Green exacerbated risks:

At the moment, we are making very big efforts to try and acquire cattle, as we don't know whether the cattle owners will take them back or not. But we need good land for that, whereas nowadays, they're all farmed by Tahiny [the head agronomist of Tozzi Green project].¹¹²

Villagers of Antranohazo were also suffering some degree of food insecurity. The lack of infrastructure, access to technology and help from the state made them particularly vulnerable to the vagaries of the climate. Their dam had broken some twelve years before. In 2013, a locust invasion had caused the production of the hamlet of Manalobe to shrink to half an ox-cart of rice down from the eight they would produce in a good season. In the hamlet of Manasoa, production was said to vary from ten to five ox-carts.

The difficulty of getting comparable data on population size and agricultural production, for the reasons mentioned in Chapter 1, made it hard to carry a rigorous comparison of the respective wealth of the different hamlets. An estimation of their positions within the local economy could be reached, however, by crossing information on cattle wealth on the one hand, and on villagers' positions on the local agricultural job market, as either employers or labourers on the other. Being able to afford to recruit a workforce during the rice transplantation season signals a capacity to have savings and a certain degree of farmland wealth. In Antranohazo, only members of Narindra's nuclear family could afford that luxury. In their hamlet alone, they would usually recruit some 40 people, mostly women from the main village of Satrokala.¹¹³ Jimmy, Narindra's elder son and *komity* of the village, said he usually recruited three daily labourers during three days for his own rice paddies, for instance, and Nathan, one of his middle children, also recruited people 'because we have a lot of rice

¹¹⁰ Laza, Antranohazo Voroka, 18/02/2014.

¹¹¹ *Lonaky*, Antranohazo Analamary, 21/02/2014.

¹¹² Mara, Antranohazo Andranovory, 19/02/2014.

¹¹³ Nini, Antranohazo Voroka, villager, 12/02/2014.

paddies'.¹¹⁴ In another indication of the relative wealth of their family, Jimmy had recently bought a rice paddy 'from someone in the family who needed money'. The hamlet of Tsivory stood on the other side of the spectrum, with its members frequently seeking work in other villages themselves to complement their earnings. In the hamlet of Andranovory, it was only in times of good harvest that they could think of hiring people while, in the other hamlets, villagers explained that they usually did not have the means to recruit anyone.

In an agrarian society where wealth and influence are to a large extent underpinned by capital in cattle and land, Antranohazo stands at a modest position, with a shortage of land resources and most of the village cattle being borrowed from outside. Those who possess cattle are in a position of economic strength in the context of the village community. As will be confirmed by the exploration of the village's responses to the land deal negotiations, those economic elites only have limited leverage on less privileged members of their village community: their political authority only extends to some hamlets, whilst they lack the patronage resources they would enjoy were they able (or willing) to lend some cattle to poorer villagers.

The next pages describe the formal context of the consultation process in Ambaratabe, looking at who brokered it and how, at who spoke on behalf of the village and how much space for discussion and negotiation was perceived to be offered then. The discussion also sheds light on some of the discussions that happened behind the scenes, pointing to the explanatory potential of social determinants such as class and gender in perceptions over land deals.

Constrained and selective consultation

Antranohazo was among the 26 villages Tsiry and I had visited in 2013. By the time we arrived the first time, we had already visited a dozen villages across the municipality of Satrokala and Andiolava. As explained in Chapter 5, a clear majority of those whose land had been transferred to Tozzi Green had said they had been consulted to some extent, or knew their neighbours or fellow villagers had on their behalf. We were therefore quite

¹¹⁴ Anasthasie, Nathan's wife, Antranohazo fields, 14/02/2014.

surprised with Antranohazo's terse account of the consultation process in their village, as being entirely forced from the top, without any villager(s) having had a say: 'These lands [given to Tozzi Green] come from a decision of the *fokontany* [...] Tozzi Green forced it on us. They didn't ask our permission'.¹¹⁵

The findings that emerged from the longer fieldwork carried out a year later helped to both make sense of and qualify these accounts. However hasty and pressured, some consultation had been held but, as discussed in the following section, the negative outcome of the land deal encouraged those few who had had a chance to express their voices to conceal the little say they did have. Closer scrutiny of these dynamics highlighted that some villagers may have been less excluded than others and that narratives of the consultation are also processes of internal negotiations within villages.

Formal and informal consultation

Based on the information reluctantly or discreetly given to us in 2014, two groups of villagers had had some opportunity to express a voice regarding the land deal in Antranohazo: the *de facto* authorities from the hamlet of Voroka on the one hand, and villagers from the hamlet of Tsivory, including women and young people, on the other.

First, Antranohazo had been invited to the meeting organised by the mayor and Tozzi Green with all the villages from the municipality, in April 2012. At this meeting, according to villagers from Antranohazo, people were not asked whether they would be willing to contribute land and if so, against which compensation, but instead they were asked which land they could give. Brokering the meeting, local state authorities were reportedly those who restricted the agenda to a decision of 'where', as opposed to 'whether':

When Tozzi Green came to Satrokala, the mayor summoned the people and then he said, "Tozzi Green needs land to grow jatropha, so we ask you which part of your land you can offer". That's when we chose to give the tract to the west of the village.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Focus group discussion, Antranohazo Voroka, 23/03/2013.

¹¹⁶ Nini, Antranohazo Voroka, 13/02/2014.

When asked who took the decision to give this tract to the west (cf tracts in light grey on Figure 8), Narindra said that it was the ‘Antranohazo family’. Discussions with other villagers highlighted that only the *komity*, Narindra and possibly a few other *raiāmandreny* had attended the meeting and that the *de facto* village leaders had not conferred with the other village authorities prior to attending the meeting,¹¹⁷ whether they had been given time to do so or not. Whether the choice of the tract to give had been made by them, by Tozzi Green or by state authorities, it had excluded the hamlet of Manalobe, whose land was primarily targeted.

Although the only instance of consultation publicly acknowledged, in reality this meeting was not the only time people from Antranohazo were consulted in the context of the Tozzi Green land deal. During a discussion outside the control of their elders, young people from Tsivory told us that their hamlet had actually received a number of visits from Tahiny, one of the core members of the Tozzi Green local management team. While their explanations initially stressed resent and disappointment with the project, they also revealed that there had initially been some enthusiasm towards the project from some specific sections of the village community. Their explanations pointed to economic subordination and gender as critical variables for understanding positive perspectives over corporate land access. Very soon after we started talking about their experience with Tozzi Green, Nicole, a woman in her early twenties, brought up the promises made by Tahiny to help women develop projects of poultry breeding and vegetable farming, provided they first constituted themselves into associations. Whilst all the villagers interviewed so far across Antranohazo’s different hamlets had lamented the project, she pointed to the prospects of autonomy that these new livelihood projects could open up for women in the village:

In this season [between rice transplantation and harvest], there is no work for us [women] to do. We just wait here and look after the children and we wait until the rice is ripe. So, we’re just staying here with nothing to do. But if we had this kind of project, we’d have things to do. People think that we women don’t take decisions. But we are the ones who ask for these projects [...] Yes, we have the weaving [providing some cash], but we only make enough money to buy a bit of petrol and some washing powder. For the rest, it’s the men who decide [how to use the money]. Here it’s always

¹¹⁷ Hamlet leader, Antranohazo Manalobe, 26/02/2014.

the men who make the decisions. But if we had some hens and it was us doing it, it would be us deciding [how to use related cash incomes]. [...] Like for the weaving, yes.¹¹⁸

For women, Nicole made clear that the new livelihood opportunities promised by Tozzi Green were as much valued for the prospects of cash generation as for the prospects of increased autonomy offered to them in the context of patriarchal society. The few other instances when I managed to access female views on these issues highlighted that her views were not necessarily generalisable to all women, however. Most of the other women who did not self-censor their opinions on the Tozzi Green project were of a certain age and married to a *raïamandreny* or village authority and all of them expressed opposition to the Tozzi Green land acquisition. As such, the contrast between Nicole's position and theirs stressed that although gender seemed to stand out as an important parameter, it also intersected with other determinants of identity in informing responses to large-scale land deals. It certainly should not be excluded that the opposition expressed by these more senior women was encouraged by a fear of openly disagreeing with their husband. It is also reasonable to assume, however, that the relative wealth these women enjoyed compared to younger, disadvantaged women such as Nicole led to a different cost-risk assessment of the project. The intervention of Gozy, an 18-20-year-old man, corroborated the relevance of the 'dependence factor' in generating positive prospects over land deals, while stressing that dependence was not only a result of gender:

Yes, I would like to know how to create these associations as well. Because Tahiny sensitised us now and I think that if these projects worked, we wouldn't need to look after other people's cattle anymore. We could hand them back to them.¹¹⁹

The fact that a number of people across the hamlet had taken up the menial job opportunities offered by the company at the onset of the project confirmed that the need for cash generation was not only restricted to women. Tsilavo, the hamlet leader, said that a 'lot of them', men and women, had worked for the Tozzi Green project, weeding the areas to prepare for the planting, providing them with wood for their fences and taking the termite mounds out. In contrast, no one from Voroka had worked for the company. Giving another example of how

¹¹⁸ Nicole, Antranohazo Tsivory, 16/02/2014.

¹¹⁹ Gozy, Antranohazo Tsivory, 16/02/2014.

gender alone is not a sufficient determinant of perceptions over corporate land access, Anasthasie, one of Narindra's daughters-in-law, showed contempt at the idea of working for the foreigners. 'Even if they offered me work, I would say "no". I prefer it here'.¹²⁰

Whether Tsivory hamlet villagers' compliance with the negotiation process reflected a genuine enthusiasm with the deal offered by the company as Nicole and Gozy suggested, or tactics of 'necessary self-preservation and calculated extraction of whatever could be extracted' (Sivaramakrishnan 2005: 347, referring to Thompson 1971), in an understanding of asymmetrical power relations, is hard to say. In any case, these perceptions evolved as the project developed and failed to honour, or blatantly transgressed, moral economic expectations, as discussed later in the chapter. The next section looks at villagers' public accounts of the consultation, highlighting the power dynamics they point to and how these significantly restricted villagers' mental and material space for negotiation.

Token consultation?

In Antranohazo, as in most villages visited, the capacity to impinge on the decision-making process was affected by the lack of educational and informational resources needed to follow the ins and outs of the negotiation process (first dimension of power, see Chapter 3). More critically, their access to decision-making spaces was extremely limited in the first place (second dimension of power).

From villagers' descriptions, consultation spaces likened more to a channel for reproducing misconceptions rather than a platform for promoting local voices and free, prior and informed consent. First, few clear and detailed explanations were ever provided on the nature and scale of the agribusiness project. More critically, misinformation was given on the terms of the land deal under discussion. No one explained to the villagers that the land would need to be titled in the name of the state before it could be leased to the company, meaning that even if Tozzi Green ceased its activities there, the state would, from then onwards, be the rightful owner of the land and therefore be allowed to claim it or lease it to another company without any other form of local consultation. Instead, state and corporate brokers insisted that it was

¹²⁰ Anasthasie, Antranohazo 14/02/2014.

only a temporary loan, which led to the understanding that the land could be recuperated after a while. In Tsivory, villagers were told that the land would be borrowed for five years only.¹²¹ There was therefore a huge sense of surprise and betrayal when villagers saw surveyors marking the land.

Compliance was also accelerated by misinformation on the democratic right of land users to contest the land deal under discussion. The mayor reportedly insisted that villagers had no choice but to comply with Tozzi Green's land requests since they had no right to untitled land, whereas by law, untitled land is 'presumed' to belong to its users as opposed to the state and, as such, cannot be titled without their approval (Chapter 2). With regards to the lack of communication that surrounds the land reform, there are grounds to believe that the misinformation was unintentional. In any case, the mayor played a major role in suppressing aspirations to protest, by stressing that opposition was useless since the land belonged to the state and that the project was supported by the national government.

As explained above, at the meeting in Satrokala, villagers were not asked whether they approved of the land transfer and what their conditions for the voluntary cession of their land were; instead, they were asked which land they could contribute. As such, they were given very little space to influence the terms of a land deal that, as was made clear to them, had already been decided elsewhere. The few apparent opportunities to have some say in the discussions were quickly defeated by the rush with which the land deal was being implemented: 'The day the mayor came to ask where our pastures were', explained Manalobe's hamlet leader, 'I didn't even have time to reply because the same day, the tractors came to plough the land'.¹²² The same practices of *fait accompli* were reported by his counterpart in Tsivory:

We saw the mayor in a car with the foreigner one day. [...] That was maybe a month after they had ploughed the tract close to the road. We asked him what they were doing and he said, "We're just going for a ride with the foreigners and then we're going to assemble all the people here if there are

¹²¹ Nicole and Gozy, Antranohazo Tsivory, 16/02/2014.

¹²² Nampoina, Antranohazo Manalobe, 17/02/2014.

any news.” And the tractors came shortly after that.¹²³

The laying of the boundary stones was also carried out without any prior notice. Although land had already been officially titled and leased to the company by then, this lack of information on the procedure again deprived them of any chance to control the consistency between decisions and their formalisation on the ground, provided they had any information on the location and sizes of the land that had been transferred.

The frequency with which similar types of experiences were reported to us across villages in Satrokala lends credibility to this overall picture of exclusion from both information and decisions. However, it also matters to try and understand the extent to which villagers’ narratives of the consultation process were also processes of internal village negotiations. The next section describes how the outcome of the land deal generated not only concern, but also indignation and shame, and looks at how these emotions led to some discursive reconstructions.

Gone with the wind

The next section looks at how the outcome of the land deal was received in Antranohazo, highlighting how it clashed with several crucial expectations pertaining to villagers’ moral economies, reflecting the themes outlined in Chapter 3. I point to the widespread anger that the one-sided deal was generating within the village and to how the resent and shame felt by those who had been involved to a certain degree in the discussions, but whose voices seemed to have been totally disregarded can help to make sense of the contradictions and inconsistencies found in the accounts of the negotiation process.

Breach of faith and duty

Both the process and the outcome of the land deal confounded villagers’ moral economies. For those who had participated in the meeting in Satrokala or who knew about it (but did not know that some backdoor bargaining had happened between Tozzi Green and villagers from

¹²³ Nini, Antranohazo Tsivory, 20/02/2014

Tsivory), anger was expressed at the fact that the only choice “the village” had been able to make had been totally disregarded. As explained above, they had agreed to give a tract located on the west side of the village land, close to the dirt road that separates their village from the neighbouring village of Ankarana. The land deal procedures that shortly followed from these discussions respected the choice made then and allowed for villagers’ control: ‘I have to say that at the time, they only ploughed the land we had offered them. [...] Yes, it was us who showed them lines that the tractor had to follow’.¹²⁴ However, shortly after having developed that tract, ploughing and plantation work was extended to other parts of the village, which authorities from Voroka claimed the village had had no say on:

But after that they started ploughing those tracts, they started planting on the land to the north-east of the village. And they also started working in the south. It’s really a lot of land that has gone to Tozzi Green now.¹²⁵

One of the critical points that came out of the discussions with those villagers who did not know about the talks that had happened between the company and the hamlet of Tsivory was that grievance was caused as much, if not more, by the lack of prior notice and of consultation with the community, as by the land appropriation itself. This was a critical right whose denial represented an unacceptable lack of respect for them and their authorities. Ceding some land was tolerable, but the act of taking those extra tracts without their permission was highly problematic. The assumed lack of direct consultation was compounded with an exclusion from the rituals of blessing to the ancestors that had been performed in other villages:

That’s what surprises us: all the neighbouring villages were consulted before they offered their land. Why are we the only ones who weren’t consulted? For the others, cattle were killed. But for us, no rituals were held before our land was cultivated and no zebras were killed. We are really sad.¹²⁶

In the Malagasy cosmogony, failing to organise these rituals in such circumstances represents a major offence to ancestral authority. Ancestors are the ultimate owners of the lineage land, called *tanindrazana*-- the ‘land of the ancestors’--. Their blessing is required in many circumstances, and in particular before any new work can be undertaken on land. Considering

¹²⁴ Narindra, Antranohazo fields, 04/02/2014.

¹²⁵ Narindra, Antranohazo fields, 04/02/2014.

¹²⁶ Jonah Antranohazo Analamary 14/02/2014.

the power they hold over the fortunes of their descendants, failing to ask for their blessing therefore represents a direct threat to health and wealth. As the beneficiaries of the land transfer, wealthy investors are expected to show their gratitude and respect by contributing materially to these rituals (Bloch 1971, Feeley-Harnik 1991, Keller 2008, Middleton 1999, Evers and Seagle 2012). In Antranohazo, responsibility for this failing was mainly blamed on the mayor, whose role was to ensure the company showed due deference to everyone's authority:

The mayor didn't call the *lonaky*. We only saw when the tractors came and started ploughing our land. It's the mayor, he's a bad person [...] The mayor of Satrokala, at least he assembled people before giving land; there is a little discussion where they give some advantages, some cattle are killed etc. But here there was nothing.¹²⁷

As the mayor of Satrokala was an agropastoralist himself, there was also a sense of betrayal from within. Villagers said that, on many occasions, they had asked him why he had not given his own land instead (although the mayor did actually contribute some tracts as well).¹²⁸ The interactions villagers had witnessed between Tozzi Green field managers and the mayor were feeding suspicions that he had been bribed, and even accusations that he had gone as far as faking villagers' consent by counterfeiting their signature since a copy of their signature is kept at the town hall.¹²⁹

The extent to which the responsibility for these "undiscussed" land transfers (black tracks on the map) was put on the mayor varied slightly across interviewed villagers. The one who expressed the most forgiving judgement was Narindra, who actually explained that the mayor was also opposed to the Tozzi Green project but did not really have the means to do anything. The others generally held much more denunciative views, including Nathan and Jimmy, two of his sons, with whom we had repeated, extensive discussions:

The villagers don't want Tozzi Green even in Satrokala but the mayors did not make the decision in dialogue with the people here. [...] The mayor is the first responsible. No one in Andiolava accepts having the foreigners

¹²⁷ Jonah, Antranohazo Analamary 14/02/2014.

¹²⁸ Tozzi Green's nursery in Andiolava was developed on one of the mayor's tract of land.

¹²⁹ Nampoina, Antranohazo Manalobe, 17/02/2014.

here. If the mayor had refused, there wouldn't be any jatropha.¹³⁰

These expressions of disapproval reflect moral economic expectations weighing on state and corporate actors regarding land transactions. In one of our conversations, Manina made it clear that there was some land for which cession could be tolerated, as long as the local population was given notice though, and other land for which consultation and approval by the local community was indispensable:

Before we saw them ploughing our land, we already knew that they were going to farm to the west because the mayor was saying 'We're going to give land close to the road'. That was not a problem for us because this was already a national road of the state but inside our village land, it's us going to decide over the limit.¹³¹

The mayor's breach of duty would be sanctioned in the ballot boxes; Jonah added that 'the mayor has to respond to people's needs. But this mayor didn't do that, so he won't be re-elected. It's like for the depute'.'¹³²

The exclusion from decision-making had not only generated resent, it had also deprived them of the possibility of setting out their needs clearly to ensure the least impact possible on their livelihoods. Talking about one of the tracts that had been transferred to the agribusiness project without consent, Narindra made it clear that compromises could have been reached had this been discussed better: 'For us, the west of this tract, it's still OK but the one to the east, we really need it to reach our rice paddies'.¹³³ Although much of the anger was addressed at the mayor, the sense of indignation was therefore also directed at the corporate managers themselves:

One day I saw one of the foreigners, so I told them, 'How can we have a good relationship when we've asked you to keep a part of the land and you don't do it? It doesn't work like that'.¹³⁴

The next pages describe how these feelings of power abuses and disrespect were aggravated by the quasi-absence of compensation and the short-term and low paid nature of the jobs that

¹³⁰ Nathan, Antranohazo Voroka, 14/02/2014.

¹³¹ Jonah, Analamary, 09/02/2014.

¹³² Jonah, Analamary, 09/02/2014.

¹³³ Narindra, Antranohazo fields, 04/02/2014.

¹³⁴ Jonah, Analamary, 09/02/2014.

had been offered.

Threat to subsistence rights, without compensation

The Tozzi Green project was reported to have dire consequences on the livelihoods of both poor and less poor villagers. As mentioned above, the quality of pastures was already suffering from the effects of climate change and demographic pressures, leading to cattle looked after by poorer villagers being claimed back by their owners. The corporate land acquisition was compounding these stresses further in a critical way:

In the hamlet of Manalobe, several zebus died during the dry season, so their owners took most of them back. They have very little pasture left because of the jatropha. Before, they used to graze to the west of their hamlet but now, there is jatropha on both sides of the road, so they can't go through.¹³⁵

At the time, cattle owners from the hamlet of Voroka were explaining, the village livestock themselves were at risk. 'It's not only that our cattle have become thinner', explained Marcel, 'but they're actually dying now'.¹³⁶ These dire consequences were nourishing deep doubts as to the compatibility of extensive pastoralism with the large-scale nature of agribusiness projects:

It's not only land that cattle need, but it's air. They need to feel free and the way they are constrained at the moment, they don't feel good. During the dry season, some of them have even died.¹³⁷

Very little or no compensation had been received to make up for that threat and show gratitude. In the focus group discussion held at the village in 2013, villagers reported that they could not even benefit from the infrastructure built by the company in the main village of Satrokala. 'One of us tried to go to their health centre and got rejected because he wasn't from [the municipality of] Satrokala'.¹³⁸ Reportedly, only the hamlet of Tshivory had received important, but short-term, help in the form of a visit by Tozzi Green's veterinary officer. Without his intervention, Gozy explained, their cattle would surely have died, showing the

¹³⁵ Marcel, Antranohazo Voroka, 16/02/2014.

¹³⁶ Marcel, Antranohazo Voroka, 16/02/2014.

¹³⁷ Rota, Antranohazo Voroka, 10/02/2014.

¹³⁸ Focus group discussion, Antranohazo Voroka, 23/03/2013. Tozzi Green refutes these allegations, saying anyone is allowed in the health centre.

potential the company has to make a difference.¹³⁹ However, none of the other pledges of help that had been made, the livelihood projects mentioned above as well as a school, had been honoured:

People from Tozzi Green came to us to encourage us to talk about our problems and then they agreed to help us by building a school, forming associations for new projects and other things. But it was only lies.¹⁴⁰

The mayor was again associated with this failure of the company to honour commitments. His role, people across hamlets made clear, was to look out for his people by negotiating fair compensation. His inability to uphold expectations seemed all the more intolerable as he had been a fervent vehicle of the win-win narratives of the corporate land acquisition and as such, had vouched for the company.¹⁴¹

As far as the jobs offered by the company were concerned, they were short-lived, ‘very hard work’¹⁴² and low-paid, even according to local standards:

The salary wasn’t satisfactory. Even those boys over there weren’t satisfied [pointing to 12-13-year-old boys] but we didn’t have the choice. The tasks took us at least a full day. Some men managed to finish everything in one day but for us, it took longer and we were only paid 3,000 Ar [1€] for it.¹⁴³

The fact that work was paid per task as opposed to per day was problematic, as Tozzi Green seemed to have underestimated the amount of work required. Tozzi Green’s salary grid did not even ensure the basic wage of 1€ per day that was given by villagers to their seasonal labourers. Nonetheless, that villagers from the hamlets of Tsivory and Analamary had decided to accept the job opportunities, however little paid, and whereas those from Voroka had not, again stresses the inequalities inside the village. There was shame in Jonah’s voice when, after speaking forcefully against Tozzi Green, he admitted that in their hamlet, necessity had forced them to take up the job offers: ‘We decided to let our children work there’, he explained, ‘because if it’s not our kids, it’s other people’s kids who are going to

¹³⁹ Gozy, Antranohazo Tsivory, 16/02/2014.

¹⁴⁰ Toavina, Antranohazo Tsivory, 20/02/2014.

¹⁴¹ Focus group discussion, Antranohazo Voroka, 23/03/2013.

¹⁴² Focus group discussion, Antranohazo Voroka, 23/03/2013.

¹⁴³ Nini, Antranohazo Tsivory, 20/02/2014.

benefit'.¹⁴⁴

Tozzi Green did make some compromises around land use. However, most gestures made were so limited that they appeared more as tokenism than genuine consideration for villagers' subsistence needs: 'I asked them not to plough further than 100 metres from the road but they went up to our rice paddies! I only saved two to three metres'.¹⁴⁵ The sense of being misunderstood, mentioned above, was widespread and people pointed to the gross breach of their subsistence rights:

Cattle breeding is our life. The problem is that today, Tozzi Green has extended up to our village. And in Sariaka, they made people pay damages because their cattle trod on their fields. But if they do that to us, they will kill us.¹⁴⁶

The outcome of the land deal felt like a betrayal for all of those who had been consulted at some point. For the authorities from Voroka who said they did not want to give any land in the first place, their decision over the choice of land to transfer was not respected and more land was transferred. For the poorer villagers of Tsivory, however much land they had agreed to give and under which conditions, they had very little left to uphold their previous livelihoods, whilst having received hardly any compensation in exchange. This bleak picture encouraged villagers from both groups to look to hide their intervention from the other villagers.

Voice as a source of shame

According to local rules, no transfer of the village grassland could be made without the approval of the *lonaky*. Access and withdrawal rights may have been distributed across hamlets; alienation rights had not:

Yes, every hamlet has a special zone but all the land is still one. Even if we are using the land close to our village to do cassava or for the grazing, it doesn't mean that this land belongs to us only. Actually, if one wants to sell the land without discussing with the *lonaky*, it's like a theft. [...]

¹⁴⁴ Jonah, Analamary, 15/02/2014.

¹⁴⁵ Nampoina, Antranohazo Manalobe, 17/02/2014.

¹⁴⁶ Marie, Antranohazo Andranovory, 19/02/2014.

Maybe for selling a rice paddy it's fine, but for the pastures, no.¹⁴⁷

This explanation of the indivisible and collective character of village land outlines the sensitivity of decision-making regarding the village's main resource. The fact that decisions had been taken without any of the four *lonaky* being consulted was a serious offense that, as explained above, was frequently blamed on the mayor. Whether those authorities from Voroka who did attend the meeting in Satrokala were given any notice to consult the *lonaky* before attending the meeting or not, this full blame on the mayor reflects some successful attempts on their part to decline any responsibility for this breach of rules. This is indeed how the *komity* summarised events in the presence of other authorities from the village when we talked to him the first time:

The mayor and his comrades decided to give the land close to the dirt road and imposed it on us. They said that Tozzi Green would work with the population to make schools, health centres and so on and so forth.¹⁴⁸

The choice of this particular land may have indeed been made by the mayor, under pressure from the company who had previously targeted the specific *tazoa*, who then asked the village leaders from Voroka attending the meeting to endorse it. However, for all we know, there may have been more options open to the *komity* and the others who were there with him, and it is certainly interesting that the *lonaky* from the hamlet that was most affected by the choice (Manalobe) said he only heard about the meeting 'by chance because I met the mayor and he told me the ploughing was going to happen'.¹⁴⁹ The differentiated implications of this land transfer may have encouraged the authorities from Voroka to play their contribution down and report on full coercion on the part of the mayor instead.

In Tsivory especially, authorities were unmistakably anxious to conceal their secret bargaining with the company. After the informal discussion with the group of young people from the hamlet, we met with Tsilavo, the *de facto* hamlet leader. He skirted any discussion about their interactions with Tahiny from Tozzi Green and insisted no land transfer had ever been agreed upon by them, shifting the full blame on the mayor as well. Only at the meeting

¹⁴⁷ Tsiory, Antranohazo Manasoa, 13/02/2014.

¹⁴⁸ Jimmy, Antranohazo Voroka, 23/03/2013.

¹⁴⁹ Nampoina, hamlet leader, Antranohazo Manalobe, 17/02/2014.

in Andiolava had villagers from Antranohazo expressed their voices:

The mayor sensitised us and then we accepted to give the tract to the west by the road. But then the tractors came up to here, whereas there hadn't been any discussion between the mayor and us about it. [...] It's the mayor who gave our land and he didn't even ask our permission for it! [...] He was always there with the *vazahas* before and after the ploughing. We saw him pass by in a car with them and then during the ploughing he was here again [...] We had accepted giving the tracts to the west but these tracts [to the east], there it's the mayor on his own who accepted giving them.¹⁵⁰

An official source within the municipal team said that Tsilavo had confessed to him that he had signed a paper with Tahiny, and that he had not been given a copy of it. If that was true, one could wonder whether what was signed on that day was what had verbally been agreed on, when Tsilavo himself is illiterate and whether villagers' request for retribution had been written down or not. In any case, whether anything was signed or even officially agreed between Tozzi Green and the hamlets' authorities, the secret of these discussions seemed to be fairly well kept from other villagers.

In those hamlets that had little information on both these instances of negotiation, there was little room for doubt as to who was to blame for the "illegal transfers": 'No one asked our permission, so for me, I think it's the mayor who favoured this land acquisition'.¹⁵¹ The same story was given in Andranovory and Manasoa as well:

Was there any discussion between you and Tozzi Green?
 -No nothing. Only we saw the tractors ploughing our land and the mayor was there but he said, 'It's not me, it's the general state'.
 -Did the mayor not call the *lonaky* at any time?
 -No, he didn't. I think he is corrupt; otherwise, why would he have given our land?¹⁵²

These comments point again to the moral contract that exists between local elected officials and their constituency. As mentioned above, anger was also expressed at the company, however. Across all hamlets, the Tozzi Green project was associated with power abuse, breach of faith and/or disrespect for their right to subsistence. The next section discusses villagers' attempts to protest this outcome, showing that while there were efforts at resistance,

¹⁵⁰ Nini, Antranohazo Tsivory, 20/02/2014.

¹⁵¹ Nampoina, Antranohazo Manalobe, 17/02/2014.

¹⁵² Rota, Antranohazo Andranovory, 19/02/2014.

these were defeated by internal and external power dynamics.

Internalised powerlessness?

In an illustration of third dimensional power dynamics, local people's imaginations of resistance were undoubtedly imprinted by the patterns of domination that they had historically been embedded in. Protest was first clearly discouraged by the fear-filled anticipations conjured up by the racial identity of the investor. Those villagers who explained they 'wished they could protest' added that they were 'scared [to] because they were *vazahas*' (foreigners).¹⁵³ Seen as the symbols of the indestructible strength of superiorly-endowed foreigners, tractors personified the inanity of village-level struggles: 'No there was nothing we could say. [...] we can't oppose tractors'.¹⁵⁴ The sole acknowledgment of this power imbalance seemed sufficient to shut voices down: 'Us as small farmers and them as *vazahas* [foreigners]', asserted Rota, for instance, 'there was nothing we could do'.¹⁵⁵

The scrutiny of negotiations, responses and outcomes shows that the apparent lack of combativeness shown by Antranahazo's villagers to try and assert their voices was nevertheless not the ineluctable result of a historically-internalised powerlessness, nor the sheer effect of third dimensional power dynamics. The sense of anticipated odds was also clearly fed by efforts by those brokering the land deal negotiations to intimidate and convince villagers of the uselessness of protest in a context of legal-institutional bias (second dimension of power). Moreover, as I discuss below, the understanding of unfavourable odds did not totally suppress action. Villagers from Antranohazo tried to oppose "undiscussed" land losses on quite a few instances, but the lack of material, cognitive and relational resources (first dimension of power) generally circumscribed these voices to non-decision-making spaces of power. Finally, Antranahazo's lack of influence on the land deal also needs to be understood in the light of the dynamics internal to the village. In a context of inequalities, 'attribution of threat and opportunity' (McAdam et al. 2001) was not consensual

¹⁵³ Nampoina, Antranohazo Manalobe, 17/02/2014.

¹⁵⁴ Rota, Antranohazo Andranovory, 19/02/2014.

¹⁵⁵ Rota, Antranohazo Voroka, 19/02/2014.

and on the contrary, Tozzi Green land deal negotiations inspired conflicting struggles: for incorporation for some, against dispossession for others. With limited political and economic leverage on the rest of the community, *de facto* village leaders failed to prevent and even hear of the back-door bargaining in which Tozzi Green engaged with underprivileged members of the community.

Non-decision-making spaces of protest

Interestingly, it was from Antranohazo that one of the few outspoken voices of protest against the Tozzi Green land deal came out. Jimmy, the village *komity*, indeed participated and spoke out at the press conference that the civil society organised in November 2012 to support the grassroots resistance which started in *Ambatolahy*. He was the only representative from the municipality of Andiolava. The village was also kept relatively informed on the overall progress of the land deal and the resistance campaign due to their close ties with Hervé, the local mobiliser who initiated the connection between the civil society and the villagers.

Simultaneously, villagers also engaged in everyday resistance acts. Nearly every operation of Tozzi Green was met by an attempt to mitigate land loss or delay the course of the land deal. Villager authorities from Voroka explained about having tried to stop Tozzi Green from ploughing the tracts to the east to which they had not agreed, having asked the surveyors to spare them a *tazoa* when they came to mark the land and asked for some space to be left around the tree which they gather around for some of their ritual celebrations. In Andranovory, tractors started ploughing very close to their tombs and so villagers asked the drivers to distance themselves from them. In Manalobe, they were asked for a reasonable distance to be left between the company fields and theirs.

However, most of these requests were addressed at technicians who lacked power to effect change (tractor drivers, surveyors and so on) and, as such, failed to bring any significant result. Only the people in Andranovory believed they may have been heard since the land close to their tombs was never planted (cf tract in dark grey on Figure 7). However, the unpredictable way Tozzi Green used the land it had been granted under the first lease ruled out any automatic correlation between the villagers' intervention and the absence of

plantations there. It may well be that the company had simply lost interest in this land. For the other cases, the land was ploughed or marked out albeit with protests, with surveyors and drivers explaining that they were only executing orders. As far as the Voroka ritual site and Manalobe crop fields were concerned, the concessions made were so marginal that they simply fuelled more frustration and anger.

On the one hand, villagers saw this as utter disregard for their pleas for indulgence. On the other, corporate managers reported that no one ever filed complaints.¹⁵⁶ A fear of foreigners does not exhaust the reasons as to why no one may have tried to intervene at a higher level. Utterly unaware of their rights to be consulted and to contest operations on their land under the presumption of untitled private property, villagers thought they had no legal grounds to protest against the land deal. They also mistook tractor work for a formalisation of the deal on the ground when, in all likelihood, these operations corresponded to the ‘reconnaissance works’, mentioned in Tozzi Green’s file, a legal stage of the procedure in which the local population should have had a say. Not only did villagers not know of their rights during these operations, they had not been officially notified of them either (or only at the very last minute as explained above), nor invited to voice their opinion on the ‘availability of the land’, as required by law.

Short of feeling able to influence decision-making, villagers were nevertheless keen *not* to endorse the unwanted land dispossession by signing documents they could not read:

Three-four days before they put the boundary stones, I was summoned by the mayor to put a signature. But I refused. Even if it costs me my life, I refuse to sign anything that has to do with our land.¹⁵⁷

This reluctance to sign anything in this context reflected the broader suspicions villagers had towards written agreements, which tended to be perceived as instruments the powerful could use to fool the illiterate, rather than as a tool that may have later supported demands for accountability. When I asked Jonah if the promises of compensation that he had allegedly obtained from the corporate managers had been written down in an official paper, he replied:

¹⁵⁶Stefano, Satrokala village, 15/03/2014

¹⁵⁷ Nampoina, Antranohazo Manalobe 17/02/2014.

‘No. We don’t want to sign anything and everything, because all they want is to keep our land’.¹⁵⁸ While this may have protected them from any risk of their signatures being instrumentalised, it also left them with no written record of deals that may have been verbally agreed on.

The next section describes how legal-institutional bias informed and reinforced these cognitive and informational exclusions, discussing the important role political brokerage played in feeding expectations of anticipated defeat and in reducing disgruntled villagers to silence.

Legal institutional bias in practice

None of Antranohazo’s leaders were officially recognised by the state since the village did not have the administrative status of a *fokontany*. The village therefore relied on “outside” local officials to defend their interests and represent them at higher levels of decision-making.

Instead of enabling the expression and echoing of villagers’ voices at higher levels of decision-making, the mayor was perceived as an obstacle to being heard through his withholding of information and buffering of protest. On several occasions, he had reportedly tried to convince the disgruntled villagers that any expression of opposition or attempts at protest were doomed to failure. On the day that the *komity* tried to oppose the marking of those eastern tracts ‘they had never agreed to give’, the mayor reportedly told him that the surveyors were only executing orders and reminded him that it was a decision of the national state.¹⁵⁹ The mayor was reported to have pre-empted the voicing of protest on another occasion, by saying that one of the disputed tract (to the north-see figure 8) belonged to the neighbouring municipality which meant the villagers of Antranohazo had no say on it. As he was conveying these messages, the mayor was simultaneously denying any responsibility on the land transfers, by blaming decisions on his hierarchy and by denying any personal power to contest orders or have any influence on the land deal:

We told him [the mayor], ‘So why are you giving our land, whereas these

¹⁵⁸ Jonah, Antranohazo Analamary, 20/02/2014.

¹⁵⁹ Jimmy, Antranohazo Voroka, 13/02/2014.

are the lands of our ancestors?’ And he replied, ‘It’s not me. It’s the general state’. And then the people said, ‘But why did you not tell us before?’ And the mayor replied: ‘How could we have faced that? Even if I had told you before, there’s nothing I can do’.¹⁶⁰

A few villagers expressed regret that another path of action would have been possible had he informed them early and helped them, instead of defending the interests of the investor: ‘If the mayor had refused’, explained Nathan, ‘there would not be any jatropha now’.¹⁶¹ Following the same logic, some predicted outcomes would have been better if the foreigners had had direct discussions with them.¹⁶²

Within the local state apparatus, the institutional bias was not as solid as it may have seemed. Over the three municipalities, several officials privately expressed their opposition to Tozzi Green, generally relating it to disappointments with regards to the outcomes of the project both in terms of compensation and job creation. Their ability to influence decisions and provide a platform for villagers’ voices, however, was limited by this very institutional bias against which they were standing, they explained. In the case of Antranohazo, a key elected official within the municipality claimed that his determined hostility to the Tozzi Green project caused him to be systematically sidelined from communication lines and decision channels. Talking of the state in general, he explained:

We want to let them know of our grievances but we don’t trust them. For example, the [officials from the] topography asked us if we had titles on the land. This is the land of the state etc., they said. So, we don’t know where to address our grievances.¹⁶³

He also explained that he had not been invited to any of the recognition missions for the tracts in the areas under his jurisdiction, whereas his signature was required by law:

They know that I’m opposed to them, so they don’t invite me. [...] No, they’re not worried about me. They only need one *lonaky* and the mayor to sign and it’s done. They can get the tracts.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Jonah, Antranohazo Analamary, 07/02/2014.

¹⁶¹ Nathan, Antranohazo Voroka, 24/02/2014.

¹⁶² Nampoina, Antranohazo Manalobe 16/02/2014.

¹⁶³ Iarivo, Satrokala village, 04/03/2014.

¹⁶⁴ Iarivo, Satrokala village, 04/03/2014.

In this context, the villagers explained they did not know where to turn. The lack of knowledgeable contacts and support to create these important connections further compounded feelings of anticipated defeat:

-There are people who have education, who know the laws and know how to write. Like the mayor of Ambatolahy, he looked for intellectuals who could help. But in our case, if our mayor had been honest, we could have looked together.

-Is there anyone you think who could have helped you?

-No, we don't have any close family in Ihosy or in Antananarivo. Otherwise, why wouldn't we have gone to them?¹⁶⁵

Whereas, in the first place, Hervé had appeared as a potential critical ally, contact with him seemed to have become sporadic and confidence in his potential to improve land deal outcomes for them rather limited. Jimmy and Narindra knew and had met the associations helping villagers fight against “land grabbing” in Antananarivo, but again, these contacts had not been renewed and no one else in the village had heard of them. In sum, potential allies were either too far (civil society) or defeated by the lack of available channels for voicing their opinion in a context of legal-institutional bias (local officials).

Power dynamics, related to the lack of informational, relational and educational resources and to political brokerage, were in that way shielding corporate managers from having to listen to villagers' expressions of protest. Muffled by intimidation but not totally muted, these voices were getting lost in interstitial non-decision-making spaces.

Internal tensions

There also seemed to be a tacit understanding of the limited potential for collective action that existed in a village where there were different views on the struggles to be fought. Unlike in other villages we had visited, no open accusations were made that the land taken by Tozzi Green “without permission” may, in fact, have been secretly given by other villagers. A few observations, here and there, pointed to the existence of suspicions, however. As I asked Jimmy about the procedures to cede land, for instance, he explained:

It's the lonaky who should decide. No one can give the land away without asking permission of the lonaky.

-And has that ever happened here?

¹⁶⁵ Jonah, Antranohazo Analamary, 14/02/2014

- No, no. But for the case of Tozzi Green, we still need to see if it's a member of the family who has lent the land to Tozzi Green or not.¹⁶⁶

Jonah conveyed his suspicions in a more forceful manner. Without specifying whether I was talking about Antranohazo or the other villages in general, I asked him if he thought the other villagers who had accepted giving land had done so to get jobs. He replied: 'I have no idea because the people who have done that do not talk to us but they hide'.¹⁶⁷ No more information was gained on the nature and potential target of these suspicions and Jonah added that, in their view, the mayor remained the main suspect. In iBara, family divisions are a sensitive issue that villagers in Antranohazo were clearly not willing to discuss. As mentioned above, discussions held with the different hamlets, however, did betray tensions and a lack of information sharing on the land deal. Jonah's comment made it clear that the rest of the village may have been more aware of the private discussions that had happened between Tozzi Green and villagers from the hamlet of Tsivory than most were willing to admit.

Interestingly, the struggle against dispossession led by the leaders also seemed to have been kept under the radar. Indeed, few villagers seemed to know that their *komity* had participated in a press conference to publicly oppose the land deal. Rota's reply to the question of whether he had heard about it or not highlighted, once more, the socioeconomic stratification and its effects on influence within the local society: 'No, I have no idea. I've never heard about this. Maybe it's the *olobe* [the important people] who went there with the *lonaky* but us, we are just small'.¹⁶⁸ Without the village's collective backing or any follow-up, and in the absence of support from state authorities, this initiative did not bring any concrete result for the village and any idea of confronting the company publicly quickly waned.

This lack of dialogue and context of tensions within the village may have made it easier for those pushing for the corporate land acquisition to target the most vulnerable, economically speaking, thereby excluding village power-holders in the consultation. Although far from

¹⁶⁶ Jimmy, Antranohazo Voroka 13/02/2014.

¹⁶⁷ Jonah, Antranohazo Analamary, 15/02/2014.

¹⁶⁸ Rota, Antranohazo Andranovory, 19/02/2014.

being a sufficient condition for being heard in a context of strong power asymmetries, the case study of Soatanana village will highlight the difference firm leadership and a tighter knit community can make in terms of influencing land deal negotiations.

Conclusion

The case of Antranohazo provides a compelling example of the disconnect that can exist between the reality of agribusiness projects on the ground and their implications for local land users. The suspension of grazing activities on the land planted but manifestly abandoned by Tozzi Green highlights the performative power of anticipated coercion in shaping outcomes of land deals for villagers. In a context where land resources are already strained, the uncertainty weighs heavily. In that respect, the case of Antranohazo village calls for further research on those numerous agribusiness projects that are being left in limbo (McCarthy et al. 2012) and on their implications on local livelihoods and social cohesion.

The accounts given of the official negotiation process in Antranohazo also offered textbook illustrations of how first and second dimensional power dynamics could exclude agrarian populations from decision-making. Most of the decisions concerning Antranohazo's land had been taken in 'closed spaces' (Gaventa and Pettit 2010). The agenda on which they could express themselves was very limited and the few other opportunities to influence decisions or control their enforcement on the ground had been given randomly without any delay of reflection or information to allow for informed consent. Consultation was also characterised by the interference of local state agents, spreading misinformation about local land rights, speaking on behalf of villagers and dissuading them from trying to oppose. The company did not enjoy consensual support from within the local administration in charge of the village, but those few who did voice objections were soon sidelined from channels of communication and decision-making. The absence of impartial control of the process as well as of educational and informational resources increased the risk of deceit and manipulation.

Only the *de facto* village leaders/cattle owners seem to have had a chance to express themselves in the official consultation and, whether an actual choice or the endorsement of a

prior decision under pressure, the decision that came out of this meeting was made without them consulting or informing the hamlet whose land would be most affected. Fieldwork also unveiled a case of back-door bargaining by another group of underprivileged villagers. Those had direct interactions with one of the senior local corporate managers, which were kept hidden from the rest of the village, during which they may have agreed to give (some of) the land that the company is accused of having taken without villagers' permission to the east of the village. It was hard, however, to gain an idea of what they had exactly agreed to with the company, since these discussions were supposed to be kept secret and the focus of narratives was now on the disappointment and concern with the current situation. This situation highlighted that the narratives of the consultation were also processes of internal negotiations within villages. Nevertheless, the discussions during which these secret interactions were revealed highlighted the interest that certain dependent segments of the village population originally found in the deal, offered by the agribusiness company. As such, the case of Antranohazo highlights the importance of social positioning in explaining some of the contrasted perceptions that members of agrarian populations can develop with regards to land deals. It also points to the outcome of a failure to generate unity around a common 'attribution of opportunity and threat' and around village institutions and leaders (social appropriation).

The fractured response of the village, from the village leaders publicly opposing the land deal in press conferences to underprivileged villagers secretly bargaining with the company, also makes sense in light of the limited interdependency, and palpable tension, that existed between poor and less poor villagers. This context can be assumed to have made it less costly to risk antagonising other villagers by going against the moral economy of shared decision-making on issues of land, although the efforts at keeping these negotiations under-the-radar demonstrated that risk was not null.

Two years later, the outcome of the land deal was the cause of grief and resentment across the whole village, from those who were stressing that the company had taken land without their permission, to those who had been hoping for better compensation for potentially less land loss. Their specific complaints over the way land had been appropriated in disrespect for their voices also highlighted the implications of moral economic violations on more

intangible issues. Denying village leaders any control over the operation of land alienation was not only an offence to their authority, it also meant depriving them of the possibility of honouring their own social and spiritual duties. To be perceived as fair and right, a transaction around land could not be conducted without having been endorsed by ancestors first. The appropriation of their land outside the rituals necessary to avoid antagonising their all-powerful ancestors therefore constituted another source of concern.

Moral economic duties had been transgressed by both those brokering the land deal and those benefiting from it, with little consideration shown for villagers' voices and their subsistence right. Both of those struggling against dispossession and struggling for incorporation had therefore been equally unsuccessful in influencing the land deal. In the context of a *fait accompli*, compounded by a lack of relational, cognitive and material means to stand up to powerful interests (first dimension of power), responses to these adverse outcomes were confined to non-decision-making spaces, where voices were lost under the stronger rumours of tractors executing decisions. Resistance was also hindered by a sense of anticipated failure, fed by misinformation and understanding of the legal-institutional bias they were standing against (second dimension of power). Critically, efforts to gain influence within the land deal were defeated by the contradictions of responses that were given within the village, as well as by the context of dissimulation and lack of trust which seems to have prevented any collective strategy of mobilisation. The failures to speak with one voice and mobilise their networks made their chance to resist vertical power relationships and protest efficiently against violations of basic moral economic expectations even more fragile.

CHAPTER 7

REFUSING ACQUIESCENCE AND PREVENTING DISSENT

THE CASE OF SOATANANA

Introduction

In Soatanana (municipality of Satrokala), Tozzi Green's requests for land were politely rejected and to date, this decision has been respected by the company. The village remained firm in its position, despite pressures to comply but was not left unscathed by the project, however: its land was encroached upon following the development of the project in the neighbouring village. After Soatanana villagers protested against the situation, a settlement was discussed and agreed with Tozzi Green, limiting loss to land that was used, but not owned, by the village.

This chapter explores the dynamics that shaped Soatanana's resistance to political pressures to acquiesce land alienation and discusses the successful, yet precarious outcomes of the village's struggles against dispossession. It highlights how villagers' own material and relational resources and capacities to develop 'legitimizing power' (Hall et al. 2011: 171) can decrease their vulnerabilities to vertical power dynamics and compel decision-makers to listen to their voices, while stressing the importance of galvanising unity around moral economies to avoid that alternative responses are brought from within the village.

First, I describe the successive instances in which villagers from Soatanana intervened and managed to influence the negotiation process and then the political and power dynamics that played out during the negotiations, outlining the pressures that were put on villagers to comply with the land requests. The chapter then explores how these power pressures were challenged thanks to the mobilisation of relational networks within the state and how mechanisms of attribution of opportunity and threat, and social appropriation were used to suppress internal temptations to comply with the company's land requests, closing with a discussion of the mixed outcomes of the land deal in the village, highlighting the power

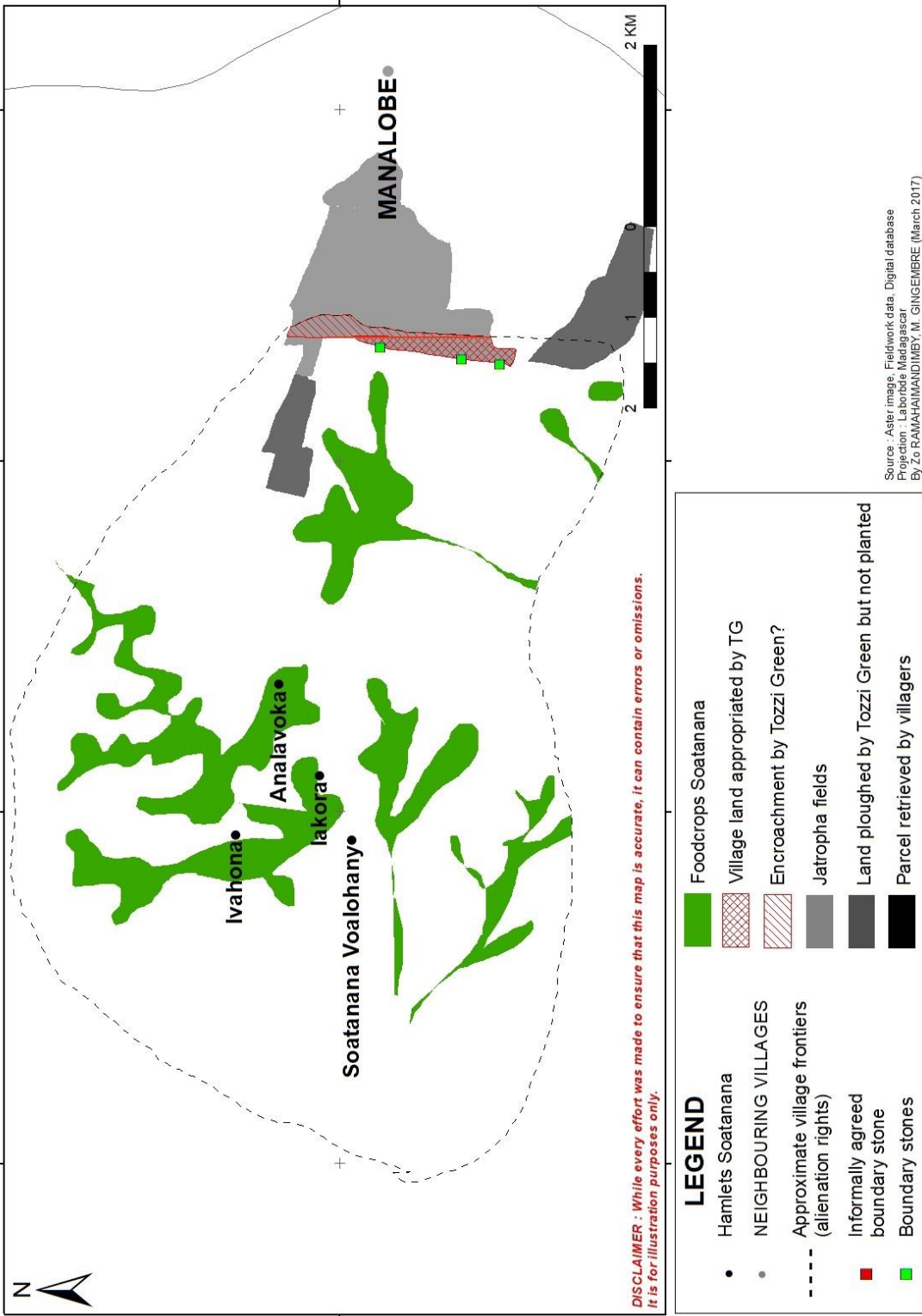
dynamics and moral economies, observable in both the concessions made and in expressed anxieties and resentment about current and foreseeable impacts of the agribusiness project on their livelihoods.

Outspoken refusal of land alienation

In 2012, Soatanana villagers received a visit from Tozzi Green's social mobiliser, who asked them if they would be willing to contribute land. After discussing the proposition among themselves, the decision was made to decline the requests. Of all the villages consulted within the municipality of Satrokala, only two expressed a similar refusal. The company ended up respecting their position, not without having tried to convince them to change their mind, villagers explain.

This unusual rejection of Tozzi Green's land requests did not leave Soatanana totally unaffected by the project, however. A few months after the consultation, the villagers realised some of their grassland to the east of the village had been ploughed and planted by the company. They quickly linked this to the development of the project in the neighbouring village of Manalobe, where Tozzi Green had found some of its most fertile patches for their *jatropha* trees. The *tazoa* on which Tozzi Green had planted was used in common by the two villages but had recently been demarcated between the two villages to clarify the distribution of collective-choice property rights (management, exclusion and alienation rights). Most of the land appropriated by Tozzi Green was Manalobe's property but a part of it belonged to Soatanana (cf. Figure 10).

Figure 10: Map of the land deal in Soatanana (2014)



It took Soatanana villagers a few days to notice the encroachment as they were not grazing on that land during that season. At this stage, the company had already planted on a fairly big area. 'In the space of a month, they had already planted all of these trees. If we had waited a few extra months, they would have had planted the whole thing'.¹⁶⁹

Soatanana villagers reacted quickly to the encroachment. Versions vary as to who they went to talk to first (Tozzi Green workers, the mayor, village leaders of Mangidy) but, as in Antranohazo, no complaint was addressed directly to the corporate managers themselves. Interestingly, however, their protests quickly reached the Tozzi Green base in Satroakala. A few days later, one of their managers came down to the village and had a discussion with some representatives of the *fokonolona*. A month later, an official meeting was organised with Tozzi Green's community relation manager, a member of the municipal council, authorities from the three surrounding villages and the Region Head himself. A compromise was found for that parcel which belonged to Soatanana: Tozzi Green would keep the land on which they had already planted but return the one they had so far only ploughed.

This line of compromise agreed with Tozzi Green roughly respected the previous line of delimitation between the villages of Soatanana and of Mangidy. Soatanana's swift reaction to the encroachment and the informal negotiation that followed therefore allowed them to regain most of the land on which they owned collective-choice property rights.

Figure 11: Jatropha fields to the east of Soatanana, 11/03/2014.



¹⁶⁹ Victor, *komity* Soatanana, Soatanana Iakora, 11/03/2014.

Before analysing the resources and dynamics on which these acts of resistance were built, I emphasise the specificities of the negotiation context with regards to the socio-economic, political and ecological assets of the village, while stressing that villagers were subjected to similar power pressures as those observed in Antranohazo (Chapter 6).

A relative wealth at risk

In the municipality of Satrokala, the village of Soatanana has the reputation of doing well for itself. As we were approaching the place for the first time (April 2013), Nestine, our young female local guide, declared: ‘People are not hungry here. They don’t need [to eat] cassava’.¹⁷⁰ The same picture of wealth had come out of a previous conversation with the mayor, who explained that Soatanana counted among the richest cattle owners of Satrokala.¹⁷¹

For a first encounter, the welcome was generally more serene than in other places. People talked freely and rather proudly about their agricultural yields and the local vigilante groups they claimed fended off cattle thefts. When asked about their land endowments, they answered that they had ‘a lot of rice paddies’.¹⁷² Information garnered the following year confirmed that their land resources were fairly abundant compared to the local average. First, their rice paddies were fairly remote from the village. In the Bara agropastoral system, the further the rice paddies are from the village, the better it is as it limits the risk of the fields being damaged by cattle. As land rarefies, rice paddies are built more closely to the village. Villagers from the hamlet of Ivahona were saying that their rice paddies were an hour away from their houses, for example. A second indicator was that, in contrast to Antranohazo, the land had not been divided among the hamlets. ‘We still have a lot of land available here, so we haven’t had the need to distribute it yet,’ their *komity* explained, adding later that ‘anyone willing to farm a new tract of land is free to do so as long as it is approved by the head of the

¹⁷⁰ Nestine, Soatanana, 04/04/2013.

¹⁷¹ Mayor Satrokala, Satrokala village, 28/02/2013.

¹⁷² Focus group discussion, Soatanana, 04/04/2013.

lineage'.¹⁷³

As most villages in the region, Soatanana was growing rice, beans (*voanjo*), *vondro* (natural weed used as a construction material), cassava and *blé* (a species of sweet potato). What distinguished them from most villages was that their land endowments allowed them to do three rice harvests per year: on top of the *vary tonontaona* (or 'seasonal rice') grown by all during the rainy season, they were able to grow *vary aloha* ('early rice' harvested in January), since the village land had *tany oraky*, wet patches of soil which can sustain rice growth without relying on rain. They also had parcels on their highlands that were suitable for the growth of *vary afara*, 'late rice', usually transplanted in April. This later production is also referred to as the *vary tanety* (highland rice), a reminder that highlands are not only used locally for pastures but also for crop farming, including for rice. On average, the whole village declared an average production of 130 oxcarts a year for an approximate population of 400 inhabitants.¹⁷⁴ Each oxcart having a capacity of five to seven bags of 60 to 70kg of rice each, it amounted to a yearly average production of 50,000 kg of rice per year. They stated that they generally kept half the production for themselves and sold the other half.

The village also enjoyed a large cattle stock, with estimates fluctuating between 718 and 900.¹⁷⁵ This wealth allowed them to maintain a certain independence, as no one needed to borrow cattle from outside. They were also breeding chickens and in the past, they used to have ducks, turkeys and pigs.¹⁷⁶

Soatanana's relative wealth was reflected in their everyday life: in Soatanana drinking coffee was relatively common, a luxury hardly any of the other visited villages enjoyed. People could also afford to buy locally-produced *mofo gasy* (bread doughnut) on a daily basis. Women had earrings and hats that they would wear to go to the markets.

¹⁷³ Victor, *komity* Soatanana Iakora, 14/03/2014.

¹⁷⁴ Victor, *komity* Soatanana Iakora, 14/03/2014. Number based on projections based on the 2009 census.

¹⁷⁵ The first number comes from official reports given to me by a confidential source and the second is the estimate that was given to us by the villagers when we visited them in April 2013.

¹⁷⁶ Pork is usually *fady* (taboo) in the Bara culture. This lenience may be explained that main ancestral figures of Soatanana village are non-Bara.

Despite this slightly more comfortable situation than average, villagers' discourses on their reason for refusing to cede land to Tozzi Green reflected feelings of vulnerability and concerns for the future. This was the first thing Mara, the *lonaky*, told us when we asked him to tell us about his experience with Tozzi Green: 'Tozzi Green asked for land to borrow here. But I refused because we don't have much land and we need it'.¹⁷⁷ Their high production yields relied on robust livestock, which required good pastures, both quality and quantity-wise. No land therefore lay idle as they were already explaining in 2013:

Yes, we use all of our land: some for farming, other for grazing. During the farming season, we use our cattle from February to August. So, they need good grass; otherwise, they'll become skinny.¹⁷⁸

As in Antranohazo, demographic pressure was forcing changes in land use, with grassland being converted to farmland. When asked whether they had sufficient rangeland, Hary replied: 'No it's already quite small because the population is increasing and now we need the highlands for the cassava'.¹⁷⁹

Pressure on land was also compounded by rain shortages and vulnerability to natural hazards. No help or support seemed to ever come from the state, even in dire circumstances such as insect invasions or droughts, and there is a lack of necessary infrastructure to address the vagaries of the climate. Villagers said the local representative of the Centre for Agricultural Services (CSA)¹⁸⁰ had recently inquired about their most urgent needs, but this visit had never been followed up with any help.¹⁸¹ Soatanana had a dam but it was damaged and the villagers said a professional intervention was needed for it to be fixed. In 2013, they told us rain had not been sufficient for the *vary aloha* (early rice) and that they had suffered from the locust invasion. The following year was no better. When we asked how the farming season was going so far, Eugène replied: 'All the rice is dry. We haven't had rain in over a month',¹⁸²

¹⁷⁷ Mara, *lonaky*, Soatanana Analavoka, 07/03/2014.

¹⁷⁸ Focus group discussion, Soatanana, 04/04/2013.

¹⁷⁹ Hary, Soatanana Ivahona, 18/03/2014.

¹⁸⁰ CSAs are support structures for subsistence farming available at the level of rural municipalities.

¹⁸¹ Victor, *komity* Soatanana Iakora, 14/03/2014.

¹⁸² Eugène, Soatanana Analavoka, 12/03/2014.

and Ketaka added that so far, they had only harvested five bags for the vary *tonon-taona*: ‘Really not much at all’, she commented.¹⁸³ Faltering food crop production in a context of population growth had forced them to move from rice-only feeding to rice complemented with more modest staple foods ‘Today, because the rice paddies are suffering and the families are growing, we have some shortages [of rice] sometimes’.¹⁸⁴

Soatanana’s wealth was also affected by issues of cattle theft, particularly rife in the 1970s. Sitra, the hamlet leader of Soatanana Voalohany, explained that in the 1950s, his uncle had some 200-300 head and his father some 200, but because most had been stolen, he was only left with 10 himself. In an acknowledgement of the problem, the village was named after a cattle thief who was killed in the village as he was trying to run away with some of their cattle in the 1970s.¹⁸⁵ The story of the *lonaky*’s grandfather, an Antemoro migrant who founded the village, was one of quick cattle enrichment through fruitful crop farming but this upward trajectory was interrupted by this context of insecurity. Cattle theft had declined in the past decades but had been taking up again in the context of the country’s political instability and economic distress that had followed Andry Rajoelina’s illegal seizing of power in 2009 (Razafindrakoto et al. 2014; Randrianja et al. 2012). A number of recent cases were reported to me across all three municipalities, some involving significant violence. This situation of insecurity was causing significant concern in the area. Soatanana had not suffered any cattle thefts for a few years but petty theft from inside the village was on the rise. ‘It has become a real problem here,’ stressed the *lonaky*’s wife. ‘Actually, we don’t really have any chickens left because of that’.¹⁸⁶

The next pages describe the way Tozzi Green’s land requests resonated within that context and how they were pushed by local state agents, using the same pressured means as that described in Antranohazo (Chapter 6).

Pressure, false pretence and lack of state-legal resources

183 Ketaka, Soatanana Analavoka, 12/03/2014.

184 Sitra, hamlet leader, Soatanana Voalohany, 20/03/2014.

185 Sitra, hamlet leader, Soatanana Voalohany, 20/03/2014.

186 Yolande, Soatanana Analavoka, 02/04/2014.

When questioned on the village's response to the consultation process, the *lonaky* of Soatanana explained that the uncertain, unsustainable alternative offered by the agribusiness company had made for an easy choice, without realising that the perception of having had a 'choice' in itself was singular. As highlighted by the comparative study and confirmed by the Antranohazo case (Chapter 6), there is nothing obvious about disenfranchised agrarian populations feeling free to speak their mind in consultation processes. After describing the power pressures that pervaded the negotiations in Soatanana, I explain how the village's internal resources allowed for these pressures to be both qualified and countered.

As in Antranohazo, attempts to make Soatanana villagers comply were predicated on the use of false pretence, with Tozzi Green's 'social team' having allegedly told them that their land belonged to the general state anyway.¹⁸⁷ The corporate representatives were also deliberately remaining elusive about the terms and the process of the land transfer, insisting land would be rented and not purchased, but not saying this loan would be contracted with the state, after the land was titled.¹⁸⁸ There as well, the pressure put on the villagers to change their mind and give land came as much from the local authorities as from the company. The mayor of Satrokala accompanied Tozzi Green managers on their first visit to Soatanana: 'He was repeating that the other villages had already given so we also had to give'.¹⁸⁹ Villagers were reporting that he came back several times, narrowing the perceived field of opportunities by trying to instil a sense of anticipated defeat: 'The mayor tried to pressure us and to scare us by saying, "Give some land; it's difficult to fight against *vazahas*"'.¹⁹⁰

These intimidation techniques were combined with softer persuasion techniques, appealing to villagers' needs for basic social services:

At first, the local authorities did some propaganda like, you'll have schools and hospitals and the land it's only to borrow it from you, not to buy it. But we decided to wait and see the results in the other villages and maybe if

¹⁸⁷ Victor, *komity*, Soatanana Iakora, 11/03/2014 ; Hary, Soatanana Ivahona, 18/03/2014.

¹⁸⁸ Sitra, hamlet leader, Soatanana Voalohany, 20/03/2014.

¹⁸⁹ Village elder, Soatanana Ivahona, 01/04/2014.

¹⁹⁰ Hary, Soatanana Ivahona, 18/03/2014.

there are advantages, we would give land.¹⁹¹

Those discursive strategies did not go without having an impact and the previous village leader came close to yielding to the pressure: ‘No we haven’t given anything. But Mara’s elder brother [who was then *lonaky* and had passed away since], accepted giving because all the others had already given. But M. Mara refused and he had to follow [...] He was thinking of giving 7ha’.¹⁹² The process through which the *lonaky*’s temptation to give land was quelled by his charismatic younger brother is described below. Confirmed by other sources, this episode is interesting in showing that decisions of the *lonaky* can be challenged and even overturned.

However, there was a sense of anticipated defeat in case a conflict arose with the company. ‘What if they forced their way in anyways?’ I asked. ‘Well then, as I told you, we won’t be able to do anything. We can’t fight against *vazahas*’.¹⁹³ In the absence of access to legal channels to defend their rights, only the peaceful opportunities provided by a fair consultation process seemed to provide room for manoeuvre. As in Antranohazo (Chapter 6), one important impediment to expressing grievances and claiming rights was related to the fact that their own authorities were not recognised by the state. Soatanana’s closest official representative was the head of *fokontany* of Satrokala since the village legally belonged to the *fokontany* of Satrokala. There was therefore very little state-legal action that the village could undertake directly, which increased their vulnerability to the whims of higher authorities:

If we had a *fokontany* of our own, we could go up to the district or the regional government directly if we wanted to ask for help, for example. Whereas if I go to the district now, they will say: ‘Who are you?’ As a *komity*, who will listen to me? [...] For all our papers, we need to go through the *fokontany* to buy land, for [everything that is related to] cattle, to declare births, for all the papers. Even to go to the tribunal.¹⁹⁴

Soatanana’s *komity* explained that they had asked for a *fokontany* of their own but that local authorities were asking for money to officially file their request. ‘They told us, “We can’t

¹⁹¹ Victor, *komity*, Soatanana Iakora, 28/03/2014.

¹⁹² Sitra, hamlet leader, Soatanana Voalohany, 20/03/2014.

¹⁹³ Mara, *lonaky*, Soatanana Analavoka, 24/03/2014.

¹⁹⁴ Victor, *komity*, Soatanana Iakora, 09/03/2014.

sign anything without money,”” he reported, adding that the district deputy had asked for 500,000 Fmg (35€).¹⁹⁵ This administrative dependency makes it difficult for most villagers to voice their grievances officially, even at the local level.

This prompted the questions that follow: How did Soatanana, despite a negotiation context in many aspects very similar to the one experienced in Antranohazo (Chapter 6), manage to resist pressures to comply with the consultation process and challenge traditional power dynamics? What resources did they mobilise and which dynamics were activated to make withstanding pressure from state authorities and corporate managers sound that straightforward? How did they succeed in seizing the consultation opportunities that, in the same context, have remained so theoretical in other places?

Withstanding pressure

Food security first

In Soatanana, a forceful argument was built and spread by the man who was soon to become the village’s main leader. To Mara, matters were clear: the “land against job/compensation” offer made by Tozzi Green represented a risk to subsistence livelihoods without offering any sustainable alternative; their agrarian livelihoods were sustainable, the compensation offered by the agribusiness company were not. For him, the equation was easily solved;

With the rice, we earn 5 to 10 million [Fmg] per year [between 350 to 700 €]. Whereas if we work for the company, we only earn 25,000 Fmg (4 €) etc. which can only serve to buy tomatoes and stuff like that. These 25,000 Fmg don’t last long.¹⁹⁶

Whether slightly mythologised or not, the story of their ancestor who only had five head of cattle when he settled in Soatanana and died with 800, thanks to his agricultural yields, stood as compelling evidence of the potential of subsistence farming.¹⁹⁷ The insecurity of wage-working for an outside operator producing commercial crops instead of relying on well-tried family farming was highlighted:

¹⁹⁵ Victor, *komity*, Soatanana Iakora, 09/03/2014.

¹⁹⁶ Mara, *lonaky*, Soatanana Analavoka, 11/03/2014.

¹⁹⁷ Imanoela, Soatanana Analavoka, 26/03/2014.

And this jatropha, it's not producing anything. In 3 years, it still hasn't given any seeds, whereas us here, we farm three times a year [...] The cattle are the basis of wealth here. When we go to the market, we sell a zebu and then we share the money [...] When a zebu's good, we can sell it for a million *Ariary* [400 €], so we make benefits, even with the costs of the vaccines and the taxes. If we have 10 cattle, maybe later we can have 30. That's why we need a lot of land.¹⁹⁸

In a formulation that nicely encapsulated the safety-first principle behind his reasoning, the *lonaky* added: 'We can't win millions [with rice] but after a while it can become dollars'.¹⁹⁹

The *lonaky*'s position within the land deal negotiations was also galvanised by the view that land belonged to those who used and cared for it and that it should primarily be used to grow food:

The company told us: these are not your lands, they belong to the general state but personally I told them 'If these lands belonged to the state, then the state should be the one to pay the damages in case of cattle theft. So, this belongs to me and I'm not giving anything.'²⁰⁰

As the *lonaky*'s explanations stress here, ignorance of legal rights certainly does not equate with a belief that peasants have no rights on their land. There was also a clear sense that cattle raising and agribusiness were mutually exclusive activities, and therefore that Tozzi Green's commitment not to use farmland was beside the point. With extensive pastoralism, no sharing of space could be envisaged:

We had to refuse [giving land] because we raise cattle and because the fields of jatropha are forbidden to cattle. Now cattle here, it's like a company, it's our economy [...] Cattle need to walk 20 km to be big, not just 1 km. Otherwise they become unhappy and skinny. But if they have a large area for grazing, then they are happy and they become fat. It's like humans; the flesh disappears if we're not happy, if our brains are not happy.²⁰¹

The company's recent change in agronomic strategies further compounded the risks of the two activities coexisting since the new commercial crops planted by Tozzi Green were a treat

198 Mara, *lonaky*, Soatanana Analavoka, 11/03/2014.

199 Mara, *lonaky*, Soatanana Analavoka, 11/03/2014.

200 Mara, *lonaky*, Soatanana Analavoka, 19/03/2014.

201 Mara, *lonaky*, Soatanana Analavoka, 11/03/2014.

for cattle.²⁰² Concern for the future was compounded by the length of the lease assumed to have been given to Tozzi Green:

I told the mayor: ‘You say that they are going to borrow land for 90 years. But myself, I was born in 1943 and I’m not even 90 yet! So, a kid who is born now, he won’t even see the end of the contract’.²⁰³

Suspensions were also rooted in historical experiences between villagers and private companies. Deals offered to rural populations had proved to be generally grossly imbalanced and the financial compensation meagre: ‘I’ve already encountered cases like Tozzi Green. Often the companies give a bit of money but it’s not enough to share between the whole family even for a single day. And after that, what do we eat?’²⁰⁴. When I asked for more details on these experiences, he explained:

For example, there's this man we call Kop, who came here to look for precious stones. We haven't seen him in a long time. Maybe he's dead even now and then recently, a *vazaha* came on these lands and he's Kop's grandson! So, you see, once the land is marked out, even the grandchildren still own that land!²⁰⁵

Beyond the understanding of land titling and its implications, and all interviewed villagers fully understood what boundary stones meant, these experiences seemed to have made Soatanana’s leader suspicious towards private projects of natural resource exploitation or production and the short-term nature of the compensation packages they would provide local land users. These previous experiences had taught him not to take promises at face value and to remain cautious in a context of a lack of information.

Peaceful silencing of alternative views

As in Antranohazo, the contemporary perspectives on the land deal seemed to have been encouraging reconstructions of the narratives of the negotiations, making it difficult to grasp the degree of contention that may have existed at the moment of the consultation. Two years after the consultation, everyone we talked to seemed convinced of the merits of having refused to collaborate with the agribusiness company:

²⁰² Imanoela, Soatanana Analavoka, 26/03/2014.

²⁰³ Mara, *lonaky*, Soatanana Analavoka, 19/03/2014.

²⁰⁴ Mara, Soatanana Analavoka, 19/03/2014.

²⁰⁵ Mara, Soatanana Analavoka, 19/03/2014.

-Would you personally be interested in collaborating with Tozzi Green if you had the choice?

-[Laughing] No, well seriously, I'm really not seeing any advantages to it! I talked to the others who have given and I saw that they haven't gained anything. No one here will want to give them land.²⁰⁶

The recollections of Tozzi Green's first visit present refusal as an obvious position that only few may have questioned temporarily:

-Were some people interested initially at the prospect of having a job and earning money? I asked.

-No, not really. Or were they? added the *komity*, turning to the deputy *komity*. Yes, maybe there were people who were interested in that. But most people here weren't.²⁰⁷

However, some of the details that emerged from conversations suggest that there had been some hesitation at the beginning and that what was now presented as a "consensual no" had required more effort than people were willing to recall. As noted above, the previous *lonaky* himself originally considered consenting to the land requests. Soatanana's firm, common position, therefore, stemmed less from an implicit harmony of views within the village as successful efforts to streamline positions before engaging into any kind of transactions with the foreigners. A meeting was held with all the hamlets from the village, during which it was decided Tozzi Green's land requests would be rejected. The fact that the decision taken was not the one initially envisaged by the main figure of authority of the village highlights the importance of these discussions and of the persuasive endeavours undertaken by those who contested the proposition to concede land:

After Tozzi Green's request, we held a meeting here. There were people who wanted to give land but it was a minority. But I explained the importance of land, the profit made thanks to the rice paddies etc. And the minority had to follow the majority.²⁰⁸

Were it only a minority indeed; it was not *any* minority since it included the voice of the incumbent *lonaky* at the time. Moreover, in places such as Antranohazo (Chapter 6) and Mangidy (Chapter 8), minorities proved able to undermine, through backdoor discussions, decisions of the more powerful. In Soatanana, no one seems to have engaged with the

206 Imanoela, Soatanana Analavoka, 24/03/2014.

207 Discussion with the *komity* and depute *komity*, Soatanana Iakora, 27/03/2014.

208 Mara, *lonaky*, Soatanana Analavoka, 19/03/2014.

company secretly nor tried to openly express alternative positions and offers to the one expressed by authorised voices. The hamlet of Ivahona was approached first, and as such was given an opportunity to make a decision outside the control of the *lonaky*, but the hamlet leader said they refused to make any decision without consulting the rest of the village. ‘Yes, actually, they came to our hamlet first, but we didn’t give anything. Then the whole family got together, all the Soatanana and we decided not to give’.²⁰⁹

An informal discussion with a group of young women and men in their twenties/early thirties one afternoon highlighted that Tozzi Green was not necessarily seen as a threat by everyone and that some of its job offers generated interest within the village. In a conversation about knowledge and learning, Jonya, who seemed slightly more educated than the others, explained that he would have had liked to continue school so that he ‘could have worked for people like Tozzi Green’.²¹⁰ As the young man was drunk at the time of the discussion, my attempts to make him elaborate more on this proved fruitless and the conversation quickly moved in other directions. His comment was important in outlining the hopes for an alternative livelihood and potential path to socio-economic promotion that the foreign project may have been embodying for the younger generation. However, it is important to note that Jonya was not lamenting the fact that Tozzi Green had not been allowed to operate in his village, but rather the fact that because of insufficient educational skills, he could not access the more senior jobs the company was offering.

It is difficult to assess how widespread this vision may have been among the less privileged in the village. Although no other comment of such a nature was made by anyone in the month spent in Soatanana, much more time would have been needed to assert with certainty that Jonya was the one and only person who showed some interest in the project. It is worth noting that none of the other young people who were there with us on that day protested Jonya’s wishes to be working for the agribusiness company. As noted for the case of Antranohazo (Chapter 6), however, possession of one feature of domination (female gender, young age group) did not seem to automatically translate into support for the project. Throughout the

²⁰⁹ Hamlet leader, Soatanana Ivahona, 18/03/2014.

²¹⁰ Jonya, Soatanana Analavoka, 02/04/14.

weeks, I developed a closeness with an outspoken, jovial young woman called Ketaka. She was very curious and happy to engage in all kind of topics and did not seem to be afraid to express her opinions and when I asked her what her views were on the Tozzi Green project, her reply was uncompromising: ‘I really don’t like these *vazahas* there because they take our land’.²¹¹

Whether persuaded or silently compelled by internalised power dynamics within the village, those who might have thought differently did not come forward in any case. The next pages explain that the lack of dissent should also be looked at in the light of the strong patterns of interdependence and effort at maintaining a sense of community within the village.

Maintaining a sense of community

Generally speaking, Soatanana gave the sense of being a closer-knit community than the majority of villages visited. First and foremost, the village only had one *lonaky*. The influence of Mara under the previous *lonaky*’s rule showed that influence was not necessarily neatly tied to distribution of power according to customary rules and that there was space for other figures of authority to make their voices heard. However, there was only one official leader and feelings of belonging did not seem to be dispersed along separate branches of the family.

Patterns of livestock possession and exchange also encouraged a stronger interdependence within the village. There were important inequalities, from Soatanana Voalohany and Soatanana Iakora who only owned a couple of heads of cattle to Soatanana Analavoka who had some 600 through to Ivahona who had 100, but the richest would lend to the poorest, keeping duties of obligations within the village. This pooling of resources was a source of pride: ‘No, here we don’t borrow from other villages but we help each other out. We don’t borrow’.²¹² The same willingness to display cohesion was conveyed during discussions touching on land issues: ‘Here we can go everywhere. Even if there’s an area you like, you can’t make it only your own. It’s all in common’.²¹³ Likewise, when we went to talk to them

²¹¹ Ketaka, Soatanana Analavoka, 25/03/2014.

²¹² Sitra, hamlet leader, Soatanana Voalohany, 20/03/2014.

²¹³ Imanoela, Soatanana Iakora, 09/03/2014.

in 2013, they prided themselves on the fact that there was no cattle theft in the village thanks to their internal cohesion. ‘No, we don’t have any problems of cattle theft because there are no accomplices to be found in the village’.²¹⁴

The fieldwork carried out the next year revealed that the village was actually suffering regular episodes of internal thefts, thereby belying the images of a cohesive, trouble-free community. Two months before, a man from the village had tried to steal five cattle from someone. The incident was evidence that tacit tensions and jealousies may have been simmering below the surface. It was hard to gain more information on the context and identity of the thief, the shame these internal tensions fill people with, as well as the importance of keeping an appearance of cohesion making people reluctant to discuss these issues.

I did gain a better understanding of internal dynamics of identity and community-building through the observation of the way the leadership tackled these issues. In reaction to that latest episode of theft, serious in comparison to the usual chicken thefts Yolande said they regularly suffered from, a decision was made to organise a ritual ceremony called *titsiky*, with the objective of ‘trying to re-establish order’. Ahead of the ceremony, the men of the village assembled to discuss the issues and agree on the measures with which to address them. Each had to contribute 5,000Ar (2 €) towards the cattle to be sacrificed. They waited another few hours for the mayor to arrive, as he had been invited to co-chair the ceremony with the *lonaky*. Concern was also expressed towards the fact that the author of the theft himself had not shown up in the village for the past two weeks and was not there on that important day, although he had been informed of it. Ultimately, it was decided to organise the ceremony without him. Once the mayor had arrived, they all assembled at the back of the village. Again, only men were allowed. Only Yolande, the wife of the *lonaky*, was invited to join the opening of the ceremony, confirming the different statutes enjoyed by women, depending on age and position within the village. I was allowed as well. After the opening speech by the *lonaky*, when listeners were reminded of the importance of community cohesion and of the wrongness of stealing from one’s own family, each man was asked to

²¹⁴ Focus group discussion, Soatanana, 04/04/2013.

take an official oath in front of the rest of the villagers and their ancestors, expressing their commitment to the general interest of the community. The ritual expression used to open the oath stressed how the sense of belonging was rooted both in the worship of ancestors and in the common possession of land:

I call on you *Zanahary* (God), on you *tany masina* (holy earth), on you *fahasivy* (ancestors), *said one of the first man to take an oath in front of the cattle about to be sacrificed*. If I steal cattle from Soatanana, if I steal rice from Soatanana, if I steal chicken from Soatanana, if I hurt this foreign woman, may I be dead tonight [...].

I call on you *Zanahary*, on you *tany masina*, on you *fahasivy*, *said another*. If I don't steal, if I don't hurt; may you be witness [...].

I call on you ..., *said a few*. If I am tracked by the police [for cattle theft], may you be witness [...].

I call on you ... If someone steals my rice, my chicken and even my wife, *said another man eliciting a roar of laughter*, if someone helps someone else steal cattle from me, may this bring evil upon them [...].

I call on you ..., *declared a man who had recently migrated to the village*, I came here to work, not to steal [...].

Far from likening itself to biblical commandments not to steal in any circumstance, the ceremony was there to remind people of where they belonged and where their sense of duty should be directed. Indeed, not only were some thefts *not* banned, they were actually publicly acknowledged and their future perpetrators were asking for blessing. All that was asked was to not steal or harm anyone from the village: 'I call on you *Zanahary*, *tany masina* and *fahasivy*,' two or three villagers swore. 'If I steal cattle from other villages, may you give me strength'.²¹⁵ The *titsiky* also outlined that even within the village, some thefts were acceptable, as long as these were petty theft committed by younger members of the community with a purpose of immediate feeding as opposed to accumulation. Again, the importance of the common good of the community was stressed:

I call on you *Zanahary*, *tany masina* and *fahasivy*: If children steal a bit of cassava from my fields, may it do them good. Because it is kids we are looking for here.

I call on you ...: If cow herders [generally children and young teenagers] steal cassava from my fields, may good come upon them. But if they bring

²¹⁵ Observation of the ritual ceremony of *titsiky* organised in Soatanana Analavoka on 03/04/2014.

it back to their place, may you be witness.

This last quotation is interesting in revealing where the common good ends and where individual property starts. Young cow herders were allowed to take a few crops from someone else's fields for purpose of feeding while on duty but they were not allowed to bring them back home to feed the rest of their family. Goods were only shared up to a certain extent. Ritual ceremonies, such as the *titsiky*, are one means of formalising moral economic rules and norms under the witness of ancestors, in this context asserting the obligation of 'no harm' villagers should have towards each another. The time and resources it required from villagers who are already overstretched also showed a real commitment, on the part of the village leader, to do what it took to revitalise the sense of duty and belonging to the village community.

This ceremony also highlighted the practical face of legal pluralism in rural Madagascar. While deeply rooted in customary rituals and institutions, this ceremony of the *titsiky* as performed on that day in Soatanana made space for state authorities. The mayor of Satrokala was not only invited to the ceremony, he co-chaired it with the *lonaky* and pronounced one of the final speeches. It was his authority as a state official that was intended to operate here and add to the solemnity of the event. The other indication of Soatanana's willingness to get a backing from the state was the recording of most the decisions that were taken on that day in a *dina*, a customary convention that would subsequently be submitted to state authorities for validation. Some of the clauses provided for financial sanctions, such as the one stating that: 'Anyone whose cattle encroaches on someone else's field has to compensate 500,000 Fmg (Malagasy Francs-Madagascar's currency before the Ariary)'.²¹⁶ These can be assumed to have been endorsed by the state. Those authorising extra-judicial killings, as in 'Anyone caught stealing from the cattle pen can be killed without pursuit', however, would undoubtedly be censored. What matters here is to stress the willingness to involve state authorities in this process. The mayor being there for such an important village event indeed provided a powerful illustration of the good working cooperation between the two leaders and a mutual respect for their respective authority.

²¹⁶ Dina recording decisions taken during the *titsiky*, Soatanana Analavoka on 03/04/2014.

The nature of their relationship helps to understand the fact that the *lonaky* felt comfortable enough to defy the mayor's interest and instructions in their response to the consultation process. The next section discusses the grounds for and implications of this position of strength.

A strong position within the local field

One of the most striking features of Mara's recollections of the land deal negotiations was the confidence he boasted in his challenging of local state officials. 'When the mayor said we had to give because all the others had already given, I told him [that] it's none of my business if the others have already given; I'm keeping my land.'²¹⁷ According to his own account, he not only stood up to the mayor's pressure, but actually challenged and threatened him:

It's in this very house that I had this discussion with him [the mayor]. I told him, Come on tell me the truth now, you are selling these lands, aren't you? I'm telling you, if you do sell these lands, you'll hear from me.²¹⁸

At an even more surprising level, the *lonaky* said he had no fear in speaking his mind directly to the Region Head either.

When the Region Head came here, I showed him the 20 cattle that we had just bought. And I told him: 'There you are, Sir Region Head, the cattle that our village has obtained, thanks to the rice. Do you think that with the jatrophas, we'll be able to earn as much?'²¹⁹

This boldness could be understood in the context of the special relationship that the village enjoyed with the official: the Region Head had some 50 head of cattle which needed looking after and of all villages, Soatanana had been chosen to fulfil this high responsibility. Proving the level of respectability and influence the Soatanana family enjoyed locally, a bailiff based in Ihosy, another highly respected figure of the regional state apparatus, had also entrusted Soatanana with his cattle. This special arrangement differed from those encountered before, by which poor villagers would ask wealthier villagers, generally relatives, to lend them cattle. As explained above, the village did not need cattle. It was a favour the village was doing to

²¹⁷ Mara, *lonaky*, Soatanana Analavoka, 19/03/2014.

²¹⁸ Mara, *lonaky*, Soatanana Analavoka, 19/03/2014.

²¹⁹ Mara, *lonaky*, Soatanana Analavoka, 24/03/2014.

these notorious regional authorities, to build social and political capital.

This “special relationship” with local state authorities is how many explain Soatanana’s ability to have resisted pressure to cooperate and give land. Inside Soatanana, however, versions varied as to whether these figures provided meaningful help or not. When I asked Ketaka whether anyone from their family was affected by the project, she said: ‘Nearly all of our family is affected except our village because there were 2 people that helped us: *le Maître* (the bailiff) and someone at the *Region*’.²²⁰ Likewise, when I asked the young Brice if the Region Head had helped them hold head to Tozzi Green, he replied enthusiastically: ‘Yes definitely. He even went up to Antananarivo’.²²¹ The official was believed to have spoken up in their favour, which he clearly related to the moral debt that the Region Head owed them, although the key to their successful outcome, in his opinion, had been to refuse Tozzi Green’s land request from the start. When I asked him if the Region Head had gone to Antananarivo ‘to oppose the whole project or just to help them specifically’, he explained: ‘No, for the villages who had already accepted, there’s nothing he could do about it, but for us, because his cattle are here...’.²²²

Soatanana village leaders, for their part, insisted that these contacts had not made any difference, either because these people only had limited leverage, or a limited desire to help them. Their explanations conveyed a feeling of hopelessness with leaders who did not provide the level of support they should be offering:

-Other villages said you were protected by the authorities here...
 -That’s because Maitre Roger and the Region Head have their cattle kept here that people think that. But they never protect us. Actually, they haven’t even been able to cover us during that dispute with the others [the land dispute with Manalobe].²²³

Even those who believed that the Region head had taken action in their favour were quite pessimistic as to what these leaders could actually achieve in a context of centralised power and clientelism.

But you know everyone has a boss, *explained Brice*. For the head of

²²⁰ Ketaka, Soatanana Analavoka, 25/03/2014.

²²¹ Brice, Soatanana Voalohany, 20/03/2014.

²²² Brice, Soatanana Voalohany, 20/03/2014.

²²³ Victor, *komity*, Soatanana Iakora, 27/03/2014.

fokontany, it's the mayor. For the mayor, it's the head of district and so on and so forth. And so maybe the Region head can say something but he can't block everything. Maybe there are managers who decide something else.²²⁴

It was a matter of pride to argue that their singular position of resistance had nothing to do with networks or contacts, no more than other villagers' compliance was the result of a lack of political support. The reason the others had acquiesced to the land requests, they explained, could be attributed to their greater susceptibility to intimidation practices and their interest in the financial pay-offs offered by the company, and in their opinion, this had nothing to do with contacts, but with capacity to reason and think. As Tsiory was urging the villagers from Ivahona not be worried by our research mission, acknowledging that the presence of white foreigners such as Tozzi Green or myself could generate fear in rural populations, Hary from Ivahona interrupted:

- No, it's people who have a low intellect who think like that. People are scared of the *jatropha*, whereas they are not forced to accept. You don't give and that's it.' [...]
- Some say it's because you have *lamosina* [contacts, support] that you managed to say no to Tozzi Green.
- No, it's not that. It's the intelligence that counts. They didn't think enough before giving their land.
- But it looks like the others are a bit scared of the mayor, whereas you're not. How do you explain that?
- Yes, maybe some people are scared but we're not. Also, some people accepted [taking] the money that the *vazaha* offered. But we didn't.
- Did they offer you money as well?
- Yes, they offered like 500,000 Fmg to the *raïamandreny* (35 €), so then the *raïamandreny* started trying to persuade their descendants. Here there was a woman who came. But the *lonaky* refused. And for the other tracts, it's the mayor who offered them and then he puts pressure on people.²²⁵

While seeking to convince of their moral superiority over others, this account hints at a number of specificities of the negotiation context in Soatanana. First, it seems to suggest that the mayor may have taken more liberties with certain villages than others. In some villages, he would have decided on the tracts to offer in advance (prompted by Tozzi Green, presumably) and then put pressure on the villagers to accept. This echoes the accounts of the negotiations in Antranohazo (Chapter 6), where the "option" of the tract close to the road was said to have been put forward by the mayor. Despite the attempts to convince through

²²⁴ Brice, Soatanana Voalohany, 20/03/2014.

²²⁵ Hary, Soatanana Ivahona, 18/03/2014.

the power dynamics discussed above, no such pressure was reported in Soatanana.

This account also suggests that the financial offers made by the company did not find the same purchase as in other villages. The relatively secure livelihoods enabled by the village's land and cattle wealth may, here again, help to make sense of this position of strength. The strong interdependence links, related to the patterns of livestock loans, may also have acted as an inhibitor to backdoor bargaining from those who were more in need and who may have been interested in the offers made by Tozzi Green.

Finally, Brice's insistence that villagers' destiny was in their own hands contrasted with the sense of resignation that was found in many other places. This determination that they had the power to change things was upheld and spread by figures such as the current *lonaky* and the *komity*, who reported initiatives to try and get help from the state and to encourage children to go to school, for instance. During our discussion in 2013, the villagers were priding themselves on being the ones who came up with the idea of the *kalony*, the local vigilantes group set up to address cattle theft in Satrokala and to have put it forth to the state authorities.

Why should it not be us taking care of these problems of cattle theft rather than others? And now they've taken up the idea in other places [...] Since the *kalony* have been set up, we haven't had any cases of cattle theft. Cattle can even be left to sleep outside of the village. [...] Policemen don't do the same thing as the *kalony*. All the police does is chase the thieves and penalise people who are fighting and take advantage of them. They come and then they ask people 'So, where is your ID card? Where is your *fokontany* book?' etc. But the *kalony*, they always manage to solve the problems because they know very well the problems that exist between villages. Because the villages that fight each other, they are the ones creating the problems of cattle theft, so these conflicts need to be solved very quickly. And it's important to stay calm so it doesn't get worse. Only the *kalony* can solve problems between villages.²²⁶

Although that version of the origins of *kalonys* in the area has not been established, in other villages, we were told that it was the *préfet* who had initiated it, this discussion reflects a willingness to take matters into their own hands in a context of distrust of state authorities and the military. The success of these initiatives reinforced confidence in their own problem-

²²⁶ Focus group discussion, Soatanana, 04/04/2013.

solving capacities and the conviction that they were generally better off without the state.

Soatanana's unified, determined voice and the echo it found with corporate and state managers was, therefore, premised on a relative position of power within the local field, on a firm belief in villagers' right to land, and on cohesion building efforts within a village tied together by a charismatic leader and interdependent livelihoods. However, these internal strengths did not make Soatanana villagers all powerful either. Their forfeiting of the land shared with Mangidy and their pessimistic predictions of the future reflected a certain vulnerability to power pressures and beliefs that only so much could be resisted and contested.

Concessions and resignation

Showing a certain resignation of the rules of the game in which these negotiations were embedded, Soatanana villagers made a number of concessions to the company and were admitting that the outcome of the land deal was ultimately dependent on the good faith of the company.

First and foremost, the village did not seek to challenge the transfer of the land on which they used to enjoy use rights. This loss, however, was causing significant grief within the village, as shall be outlined below. Ultimately, it was seen as Manalobe's right to decide on this tract and therefore not their place to contest it. The situation in which the agribusiness company was putting the agrarian population, by constraining room for the decision to one village at a time, disregarding the complexities of local land tenure, was not contested in itself. It was also a sign of respect for the alienation right of its neighbour and of the agreement reached with them.

Concessions were also made for the tract that was theirs to be decided on. Since plantations had already been made, it was also thought to not be legitimate to ask the company to hand it all back:

The head of region came and we told him: we won't accept the single bag of rice as damage. Now we can't do anything against these fields that have

already been planted but we ask you not to plant any further.²²⁷

As mentioned above, villagers were also saying that if Tozzi Green did not respect their commitments to leave the rest of their land untouched, then there was nothing else they could do since they could ‘not fight against *vazahas*’.²²⁸ Some further thoughts shared by the *lonaky* showed that this claim did not simply derive from the understanding of the power asymmetries they stood in, but also from their conception of Westerners. His strong claims about the rights of agrarian populations coexisted with a duty of gratitude and of respect towards the foreigners: ‘If the cattle started eating the maize planted by the company, then we would risk fighting with the *vazaha*. So, we have to refuse [giving land] to avoid a war. We can’t fight against the *vazahas* because they’ve created all we have here: hoes, carts, medicine...so to avoid that, the best thing is to refuse from the start’.²²⁹

These concessions and feelings of anticipated defeat reflected how power mechanisms, operating at the intersection between empirically-informed realism and historically-constructed imaginaries, could restrict the responses of the boldest and most supported of villagers. The next section discusses the mixed outcome of the land deal in the village, stressing that damage has been limited but not totally avoided and that the future remained uncertain.

A moderate success

The impact of the Tozzi Green project was much more limited than in the village of Antranohazo, discussed in Chapter 6. The fields farmed by the company were located to the east, while most of Soatanana’s crop fields were located to the west. Farming was therefore not affected in any way. The loss of the critical pastures they used to share with their neighbours was a source of concern, however.

²²⁷ Mara, *lonaky*, Soatanana Analavoka, 07/03/2014.

²²⁸ Mara, *lonaky*, Soatanana Analavoka, 24/03/2014.

²²⁹ Mara, *lonaky*, Soatanana Analavoka, 19/03/2014.

Dispossessed of its most fertile grassland

In Manalobe, Tozzi Green had not only found strong enthusiasm, but also some of its most fertile soil. When we first came to visit them in February 2013, the village was boasting some of the company's best attempts at jatropha culture. A year later, the trees were roughly one-metre high and had branches and they were obviously well looked after. It was actually one of the only parcels that Tozzi Green had not switched to other crops. As explained above, on part of this fertile land, Soatanana used to share grazing rights with Manalobe. This tract was crucial to Soatanana for several reasons. First and foremost, the area was one of the rare places to still have good pastures during *afosa*, the hot season that precedes the rainy season (September to November). Only there could they find *akata horo*, a weed that is green all year even in the context of rain shortage, which is particularly appreciated by the cattle. 'Yes, we still have pastures,' commented Mara's son, 'but not enough now'.²³⁰ The loss of these pastures had allegedly reduced the farming work capacities of their cattle. Thanks to this fertile tract of land, explained Eugène from Analavoka, they used to be able to have the cattle plough their fields before the rainy season. In the absence of this nutritional fodder, he explained, such hard work could not be extracted from them anymore.²³¹ Finally, with this tract turning to jatropha plantations, Soatanana lost a potential land reserve since the tract included some *tany oraky* (wet patches) that were favourable to rice growth.

This land transfer to Tozzi Green had also contributed to compounding work hardship. Before the development of the Tozzi Green project, the cattle used to be sent there in the morning and would return to the village on their own in the evening.²³² On hot days, their owners could go and fetch them at midday to make them drink but then they would bring them back there and so most of the day was free for work on their fields:

Before, we used to leave the cattle graze there on their own. But now it's not possible anymore. If we want to graze there, we have to make sure that the cattle don't go on the jatropha. [...] So, we have to take umbrellas because there's no trees there and it's so hot.²³³

²³⁰ Brice, Soatanana Analavoka, 03/04/2014.

²³¹ Eugène, Soatanana Analavoka, 12/03/2014.

²³² Imanoela, Soatanana Analavoka, 09/03/2014.

²³³ Imanoela, Soatanana Analavoka, 09/03/2014.

I did see several cattle pass on these fields during our stay there. The *komity* explained that they were lost cattle looking for the rest of the herd. He explained that Tozzi Green had not said whether it was forbidden for them to graze there or not. There was, in any case, not much for them to graze on since the plantations were well looked after and there were no weeds between the lines of trees.

The lack of compensation given to Manalobe for the generous amount of land they offered was also a source of criticism: ‘At least they should have built schools, given ploughs to the village or built a small medicine store rather than have people having to walk 12km to reach Satrokala’.²³⁴

Finally, Soatanana villagers were suffering from the closure of Satrokala’s cattle market related to the development of the Tozzi Green project. The five-km walk to sell their cattle was replaced by a 60-km trip to the provincial capital:

For us, the market of Satrokala was better because Ihosy, it’s a lot of expenses. It takes three days to go there and then there are expenses; you have to pay the bus to come back etc. How can one person ruin the work of so many people?²³⁵

While rejoicing on their decision not to give land, the villagers were nonetheless concerned. They worried about the impact of the dwindling pastures on their agricultural yield and economic capital and about increasing costs to practise the essential business of selling and buying cattle. They also feared for an uncertain future, following experiences of deceitful pledges on the part of the company and the state and indications that verbal commitments made by the company may not always be honoured.

Breach of trust and concern for the future

Some of Soatanana’s villagers were blaming their neighbours rather than the company for the encroachment against which they had to intervene. A few years before, Soatanana and Manalobe had agreed on a clear demarcation between their respective village lands, after

²³⁴ Victor, *komity*, Soatanana Iakora, 28/03/2014.

²³⁵ Mara, *lonaky*, Soatanana Analavoka 24/03/2014.

some 70 cattle had been lost in the vicinity, and a need to clarify respective responsibilities for damage payments (and related collective-choice property rights) had emerged. The delineation was marked physically: in certain places, a furrow was dug; in others, the area was weeded. As explained above, Tozzi Green's initial work encroached on some of the land that had been demarcated in favour of Soatanana. Accounts suggested that the demarcation was not very clearly visible anymore. Brice said they were doing maintenance work on them every two years 'since weed was growing very fast'²³⁶ but the *komity* seemed to say that it was not very well looked after since cattle theft was rare. The *lonaky* stressed that this was no excuse on their neighbours' part, since they knew the demarcation very well anyway. 'We know it's not the *vazaha*'s fault,' he added. 'It's not their fault but that of those who gave the land'.²³⁷ However, the importance of staying on good terms in a context of interdependence and matrimonial alliances had forced forgiveness:

It's useless to keep grudges. The Region Head asked us to find an arrangement. Not far from here, there are two villages who fought so hard that one man got killed [...]. It's not good to keep grudges, so we had to let go, especially as we have relationships through marriages. But if they did that again, then it could provoke conflicts.²³⁸

For others, the company was to blame for the encroachment. In the *komity*'s opinion, for instance, Soatanana's land had not been given by Manalobe. What had happened was that by failing to include Manalobe during their prospective work on the land, Tozzi Green had gone further than had been agreed. Pointing to the limits of one-off consultation processes, he explained: 'Tozzi Green didn't talk to the people before working the land, that's why they encroached on our land. The people from Manalobe weren't there on the ground'.²³⁹

Whatever the take on this incident, there was widespread resentment and distrust towards the company that had asked to borrow land and ended up marking it out:

At the beginning, Tozzi Green was asking without forcing: we're only asking for a small plot and saying we could refuse. But when Tozzi Green marked out the land, then people were surprised: Is that still just a loan or is it their property now? So, they went to talk to the regional authorities and the Region said it's the general state that puts these boundary stones,

²³⁶ Brice, Soatanana Analavoka, 13/04/2014.

²³⁷ Mara, *lonaky*, Soatanana Analavoka, 23/03/2014.

²³⁸ Mara, *lonaky*, Soatanana Analavoka, 23/03/2014.

²³⁹ Victor, *komity*, Soatanana Iakora, 28/03/2014.

not the *vazahas*. And now there is nothing they can do but just sit and watch. And they don't want to talk about Tozzi Green anymore. As far as those who have given are concerned, they simply won't give ever now.²⁴⁰

Their suspicion was aggravated following signs of a breach of trust on the part of Tozzi Green regarding the agreement reached on the meeting with the Region Head. Upon the suggestion of the latter, two large stones had been brought to mark the limit of the area agreed on. Such a strategy of “informally formalising” land deals is frequent in Madagascar, as it is throughout Africa (Lavigne-Delville 1998). Indeed, very few rural Malagasies can afford the costly and timely procedure of titling (Teyssier et al. 2009; Teyssier et al. 2007; Rochegude 2004) and until now, access to the certification procedures that were introduced by the 2005 land reform remains unequal (Andriamanalina et al. 2014; Andrianirina-Ratsialonana and Legendre 2011). This difficulty of officially formalising land operations is problematic in a context where feelings of tenure insecurity is rife (Burnod et al. 2014 b.). It has been compensated by the practice of *petits papiers*, widespread across Madagascar, by which transactions such as land sales, divisions and inheritances are written on papers that are then signed off by authorities at different levels (depending on the means available), but not submitted to official land registries (Colin and Boué 2015; Pelerin and Ramboarison 2006). As with the *petits papiers*, the act of laying down stones borrowed from state-legal repertoires was endorsed by state authorities, but was organised outside legal procedures.

On the very spot where the two informal stones were laid, Tozzi Green abandoned the tract ploughed but not planted, as agreed. Some 500m south, however, the marking out and planting derived from the agreed delimitation, with the boundary stones gradually moving towards the west, further inside Soatanana's land. In width (west-east), this encroachment was fairly small (some 500m) but in length, it represented more than a kilometre. This area of alleged encroachment is marked by red crossed lines in figure 12.

240 Village elder, Soatanana Ivahona, 01/04/2014.

Figure 12: Map of the land deal in Soatanana (2014-zoom)



Whether the result of a misunderstanding or a violation of the agreement passed, this situation was feeding suspicion and uncertainty:

See this boundary stone, they shouldn't have put that here. They should have stopped where they had stopped planting, as agreed. Maybe they're actually going to take this land. They didn't only stop at the farmed land, so in my opinion, these were only tricks.²⁴¹

Besides this formalised encroachment, there were pockets of uncertainty. South of the jatropha plantations, Tozzi Green had ploughed a *tazoa* that partly belonged to Soatanana (area in dark grey on map). The tract has not been planted or marked out yet but, in the absence of information, villagers were worried that this possibly

Figure 13: Photo komity of Soatanana standing above boundary stone



signalled another encroachment. Like in Antranohazo (Chapter 6), there were enough signs of appropriation by the company for the villagers to want to avoid using the land too much. When questioned about this, the head of Tozzi Green operations in Satrokala was not sure which tract we were referring to. However, in an explanation outlining the transient nature of their land appropriation in a context of agronomic failures and experimentation, he explained: 'In Mangidy, we are farming 240 ha and we have abandoned a tract of 80 ha at the back because it was not interesting. [...] No, it's in the lease and it's still ours but we have abandoned it for technical reasons'.²⁴² Whether Soatanana's or Mangidy's, this 'abandoned tract' is legally no longer the villagers' property: although Tozzi Green had decided they no longer needed it, it had now been titled in the name of the state.

Indignation was also directed towards state leaders, in particular towards the mayor. As mentioned above, he had contributed by reproducing the essential lie that the land would be

²⁴¹ Victor, *komity*, Tozzi Green's jatropha fields east of Soatanana, 15/03/2014.

²⁴² Stefano, Satrokala village, 05/04/2014.

borrowed, not titled. Whether he had done this consciously or not, there was a clear understanding of the vested interest he had in the formalisation of the land deal. ‘The mayor tried to push us to give land but actually he is the one gaining at every hectare given’.²⁴³ The sense of betrayal was exacerbated by the inversely proportionate relationship between his enrichment through the land deal and the villagers’ dispossession. ‘We went to the mayor and asked him, “What are you doing with these fields because we don’t have any land left. Because while you’re lining your pockets, the population is getting poorer”’.²⁴⁴ The same moral economic judgement as the one encountered in Antranohazo is expressed here: if they jeopardise people’s subsistence rights, extraversion strategies are not acceptable and a price will be paid for that power abuse. ‘You know a lot of people voted for this mayor. But maybe next time, we will elect another candidate!’²⁴⁵ Because of their strong involvement in the land deal negotiations, local officials are also held responsible for power abuses and threats to subsistence rights that corporate projects may represent. Mara’s assertion confirms that the ballot box is seen as a valued means to regain some control and sanction the contempt towards the interests of constituents.

Despite the important influence Soatanana had had on the land deal compared with most villages, outcomes were nonetheless not as bright as initially foreseen. Some critical land had had to be abandoned to the project; there seemed to have been some infraction of informal agreements passed with the company; and although not planted yet, another tract had been ploughed outside all consultation.

Conclusion

Through its resistance to pressures to give land and its successful attempt at renegotiating some of the land deal before it was sealed, Soatanana offers an illustration of the potential of local voices to influence land deals through civil resistance, provided several important conditions are met.

²⁴³ Hary, Soatanana Ivahona, 18/03/2014.

²⁴⁴ Mara, *lonaky*, Soatanana Analavoka, 19/03/2014.

²⁴⁵ Mara, *lonaky*, Soatanana Analavoka, 19/03/2014.

The village was formally asked to give land and after the villagers discussed the issue among themselves, the decision was to say 'no'. As mentioned in Chapter 5, only two other villages out of the 20 consulted took the same decision. There was then a case of encroachment, following the development of the project in the neighbouring village, against which Soatanana villagers reacted swiftly. A meeting was then organised with some of Tozzi Green's local managers and senior local authorities and a compromise was found. There remained uncertainties regarding certain tracts on which Tozzi Green's intentions were not clear, and some of the boundary marking seemed to have gone beyond what the villagers had understood was the agreed demarcation. Overall, however, Soatanana villagers had managed to regain most of the land on which they claimed alienation rights. Their response to the land deal negotiations was singular in two respects: first, because they resisted pressures to give land and second, because the village spoke with one voice.

Consultation had indeed been pervaded by the same power dynamics as the one observed in Antranohazo (Chapter 6). Lack of information and of legal means to access state institutions (first dimension of power) was compounded by attempts, by corporate and state brokers with a vested interest in the land deal, to constrain the agenda open to villagers through misinformation and intimidation (second dimension of power).

Soatanana villagers nevertheless demonstrated a singular capacity to offset some of these constraints and pressures. Their lesser vulnerability to vertical power pressures (compared to the villagers of Antranohazo, Chapter 6) seemed to be related to their position of strength in the local field, which allowed them to confront insistent state agents and to mobilise influential allies to support them in their struggles against dispossession. Confidence about the right and necessity to preserve their land also thrived on past experiences and on the relatively good situation the village enjoyed in terms of food security. Previous experiences with foreigners operating on their land further encouraged caution towards the type of changes offered by Tozzi Green, in a context where endogenous forces were trusted to be much more reliable in ensuring (food and general) security than state or foreign forces were. Resisting political pressures to acquiesce land requests also consisted of resisting dominant

narratives over villagers' lack of rights over land. To the assertions that untitled land belonged to the state, Soatanana's *lonaky* was opposing an agrarian-centred conception of local land rights which echoed discourses of advocates of food and land sovereignty.²⁴⁶

Struggles against dispossession also relied on a perceptive understanding of the importance of preventing the development and, more critically, the expression of alternative voices. There were indeed voices, within the village, thinking it might be wise (or interesting) to comply with the instructions from the top. In a compelling illustration of what McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001) have called 'collective attribution of threat and opportunity', efforts were made to align views within the village regarding what to see as an opportunity (their current livelihoods as a safe pathway with potential for enrichment) and what to view as risk (Tozzi Green, causing a threat of uncompensated, long-term dispossession). Aspirations of dissent were also repelled, thanks to the appropriation of social spaces and collective identities (social appropriation) to reassert moral economic rules, with villagers being actively reminded of their moral obligation to prioritise the village common good over personal interests and of their risks of being excluded from the community for failing to do so.

However unique and bold, Soatanana's refusal to comply with the consultation process and reaction to the encroachment proved insufficient in preserving all the village land endowments. As many other villages visited, Soatanana ended up being both included and excluded from the decision-making process over its land. As such, Soatanana's case study also draws attention to the shortcomings of the consultation process in terms of participation and sensitivity to the complexities of local land tenure, since even free, prior and informed refusal does not protect from the risk of unwanted land losses. Here again, the issue of 'who can talk on what' is decided elsewhere (second dimension of power) and generally, use rights do not warrant a position at the negotiating table. Soatanana's forfeiting of the grassland

246 Arguing that alternative food systems cannot be achieved without a simultaneous move towards democratic land control, some engaged researchers have recently launched a discussion over 'land sovereignty' as a potential land framework for the food sovereignty campaign. Land sovereignty is presented as both an alternative analytical framework (going beyond calls for land reform) and a political project whose core principle lies in 'the right of the working people to have effective access to, control over and use of land, and live on it as a resource, space and territory' (Borras et al. 2014: 11).

given by Manalobe and the defeatism shown should the company not respect its commitment and encroach on their land regardless betrayed a vulnerability to feelings of anticipated defeat (second and third dimensional power) and the fragility of their resistance.

Soatanana's case study highlights some of the conditions under which local voices can be heard in the context of land deal negotiations despite a context of institutional bias. On the one hand, it requires a certain capacity on the part of the villagers to: (i) resist political pressures to passively comply with land requests: in this case, villagers resisted efforts at intimidation and persuasion by wielding a counter-power, which was galvanised by experience, material and relational resources and boosted by the construction of counter-narratives. Soatanana villagers, however, were not invincible to potential power abuses; (ii) galvanise unity around moral economies to avoid alternative responses being brought from within the village. On the other, state and corporate decision-makers need to be permeable to these voices which, in this case, was helped by the villagers' leverage of the state through key contacts, on a certain corporate ethics to listen to protests and on a national political context encouraging caution around accusations of land grabbing. The following case study highlights how efforts to express a strong voice of protest can be defeated by a failure to unite the community and highlights how permeability to local voices can stop where corporate interests are at risk.

CHAPTER 8

INSTRUMENTALISED CONTESTATION

THE CASE OF MANGIDY

Introduction

Despite Mangidy belonging to the municipality of Ambatolahy, some of their grassland was included in the first lease given to Tozzi Green. The village elites, who had been active members of the resistance front that had coalesced around the mayor of Ambatolahy, had formally and proactively opposed that appropriation made without any of their villagers being consulted. Their complaint was discarded on the grounds that the concerned tract, whose transfer had been endorsed by a neighbouring village, was not located on the administrative territory of Ambatolahy. At the time of the last fieldwork, Tozzi Green had recently been prospecting further into the village territory, with the involvement of villagers from Mangidy this time, who had less to lose and more to gain from the deal offered by the company than their wealthier next of kin. These cooperative villagers however were showing signs of increasing disappointment with a company that was showing little will to deliver on its promises. The convergence of indignations within the village was not enough to ease the tensions generated by their affront to the authority of village leaders. Although the outcome of the land deal threatened to be detrimental for all, the fractured village community failed to unite struggles, while the mayor, who had provided those struggling against dispossession with a critical support within the state, was suspiciously more and more distant.

The chapter first describes the stages of Tozzi Green's development on the plain of Berevo where Mangidy village is based. It then discusses the conflicting responses brought by the village to the land deal negotiations: the compliance of some villagers to Tozzi Green's recent attempt to develop on the village land, revealing that the vocal resistance that had been heard from the village should not be mistaken for consensual outright opposition to the land deal. I then move on to explain the elites' failure to acknowledge the complexity of the rationale behind other villagers' compliance with Tozzi Green's land requests, in contexts where the

capacities to resist vertical power pressures were not equally shared across the village. Suspicion and resentment over their backdoor discussions with the company, understood at best as selfish struggles for incorporation, at worst as sheer acts of sabotage of their own wealth and authority, prevented them from seeing the convergence of indignation that was growing as Tozzi Green was failing to honour expectations of gratitude and support. The concluding section describes how brokers of the land deal successively informed and built on these tensions and how dissonant voices were silenced by selective legalism and versatile politics.

Tozzi Green on the plain of Berevo

The village of Mangidy is located on a wide plateau, locally referred to as the plateau of Berevo, which stretches over two municipalities.²⁴⁷ The agribusiness company had found strong assets in this fertile, vast space and had therefore developed there quite extensively. In the southern part of the plateau, represented in Figure 14, a total of five tracts had been either appropriated or delineated by Tozzi Green.²⁴⁸

Until 2014, all Tozzi Green's work in Berevo was carried out on the side of the plateau that belonged to municipality X only. After a brief attempt at jatropha, they switched to maize and sunflower. They moved from west to east, planting in Isorana first (2011), next in Ankazoabo (2012) and finally, in Bekata (2013). These three tracts were delineated by boundary stones and an informed employee at the land registry confirmed they were part of the first lease granted to Tozzi Green: 2,045 ha had been granted in Isorana, and 543 ha for Ankazoabo and Bekata combined.

At the time of the last fieldwork (early 2014), fresh furrows that had been drawn by tractor a few days before were visible in two new locations further south (tract A and B in Figure 14). Unlike the three tracts mentioned above, these were clearly *inside* Ambatolahy municipal territory, which suggested that the company intended to develop there despite the mayor's

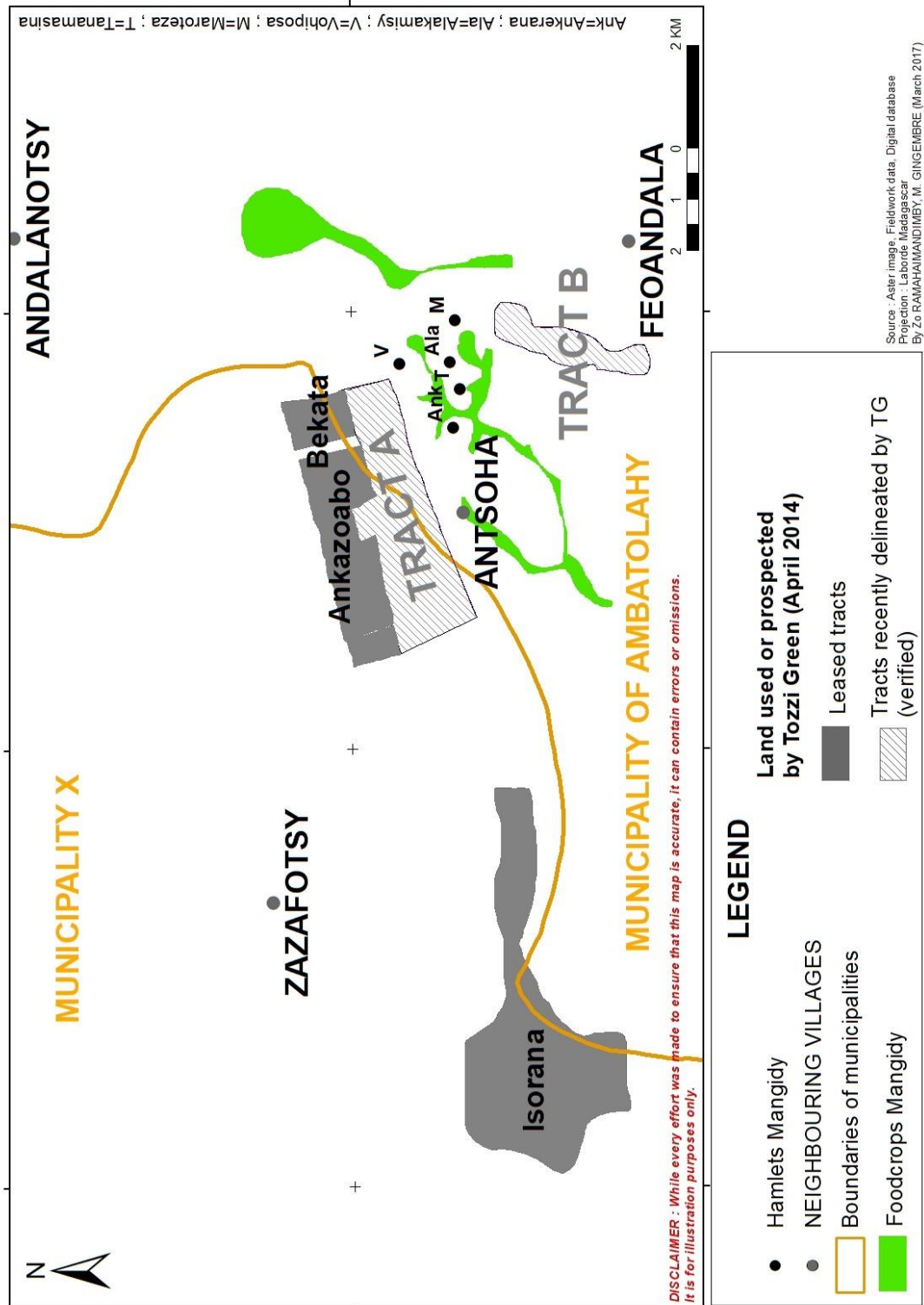
²⁴⁷ The name of the neighbouring municipality is not specified for confidentiality reasons.

²⁴⁸ Tozzi Green also had plantations north of the plateau but only those to the south are of interest for this discussion.

official opposition to their project and the fact that no official procedure had been open for land transfers there.²⁴⁹ The speed at which this prospective work had been carried out and the little information available meant there was great uncertainty as to how much would ultimately be appropriated, when and how.

²⁴⁹ Manitra, head of the regional topographic department, Land registry, Ihosy, 16/05/2014.

Figure 14: Map of past and ongoing land deals in Mangidy (April 2014)



Out of these five tracts mentioned here, four were used or used to be used by the villagers of Mangidy. There was a critical difference in terms of the land deal negotiation process, however: whereas no one from the village had been consulted for the first two tracts (Ankazoabo and Bekata), for the last two some villagers had participated in the discussions. In the next pages, I discuss the conflicting responses that were brought to these successive (attempts at) land acquisitions within the village.

Resistance of the elite, revenge of the poor?

Before getting to Mangidy for the first time in 2014, we met three village authorities from Ambatolahy. This meeting had been arranged for us in Ihosy, by someone who was keen for me to hear the problems that Tozzi Green was causing in Ambatolahy.²⁵⁰ Among the men met on that day was Gaston, a hamlet leader from Mangidy. He explained that Tozzi Green had developed on their village land a few years before and that they were now trying to extend further.²⁵¹ Upon our arrival in the village a few days later, he guided us to the small hamlet of Mangidy Alakamisy, where Fabrice, his 25-year old eldest son and recently designated head of *fokontany*, would host us for the rest of our stay there. It took some effort, following that initial meeting in Ihosy, to make it clear that we were not there to support them in their resistance against the company, but soon enough, the two men were giving us guarantees that they would not interfere with our ambitions to get a fair picture of people's varied feelings within the village. 'No, you are right,' Fabrice ended up acknowledging, 'us, we are opposed, but there are actually some in the village who support the *vazaha*'.²⁵²

It only took a few days to work out who those 'we' and 'they' referred to. On the one hand, there was Gaston, his sons and his elder brother, the *lonaky* and main cattle owner based in the hamlet of Ankerana: they shall hereafter be imperfectly referred to as the 'village elites',²⁵³ out of reference to the political powers (*lonaky*, head of *fokontany*) and to their

250 Focus group discussion with village leaders from the municipality of Ambatolahy, 02/02/2014, Ihosy. For confidentiality reasons, no details are given on his identity and occupation of the person who convened this meeting.

251 Gaston, head of hamlet Mangidy, Ihosy, 02/04/2014.

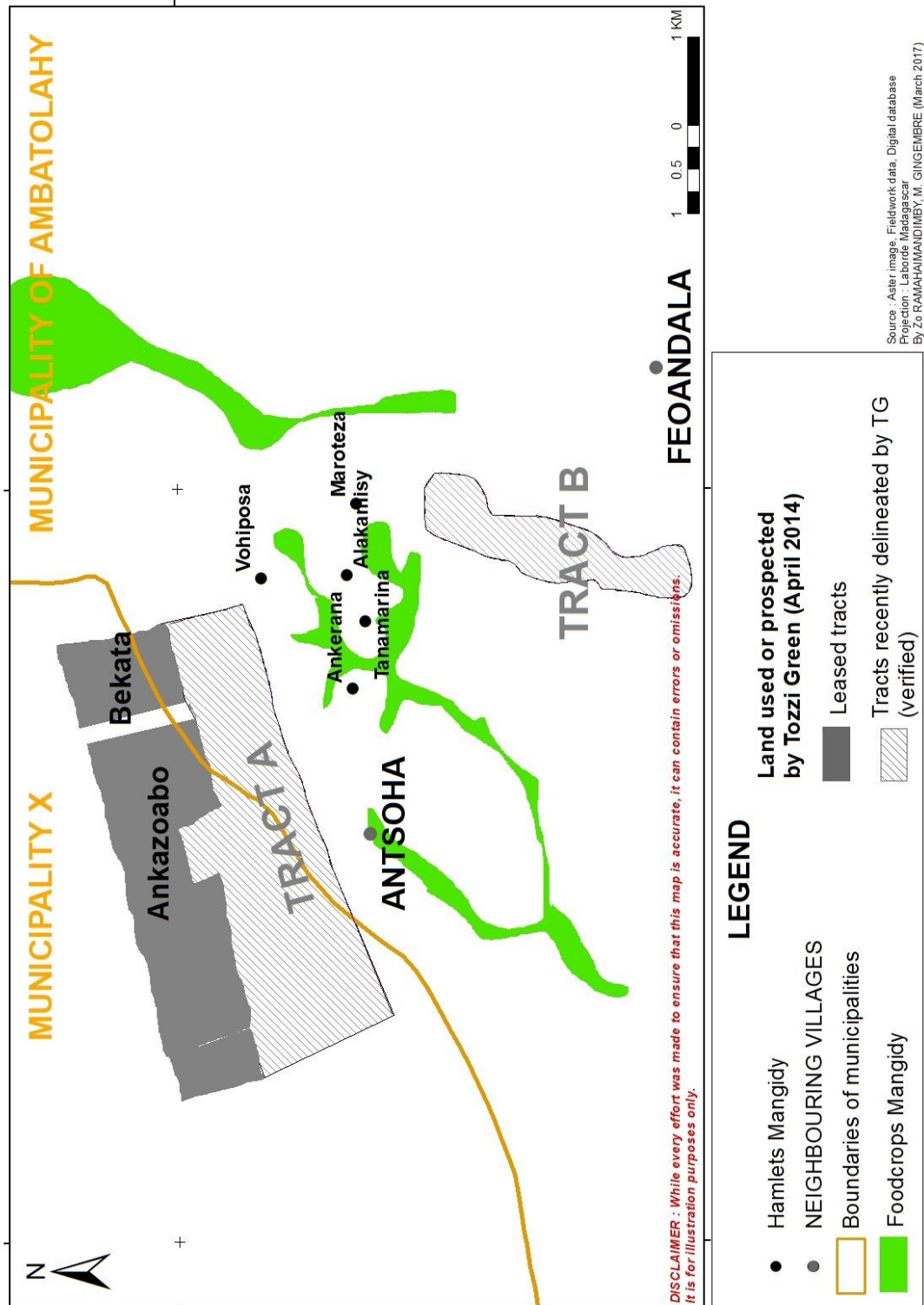
252 Fabrice, head of *fokontany*, Mangidy Alakamisy, 14/04/2014.

253 This designation of 'village elites', as the one of the less wealthy that will sometimes be used to describe the second group, is very imperfect in that it obscures the internal heterogeneity of this group across gender, age group and so on and the potential silencing of voices

cattle wealth concentrated within their branch of the family. They lived in the hamlets of Alakamisy and Ankerana. This group had been opposed to the project from the start and had voiced their opposition in different forums. As their resistance showed, these people were generally more educated, mobile and networked than other villagers. The ‘they’ referred to villagers from the hamlets of Maroteza and Vohiposa who had recently been in talks with Tozzi Green. The hamlet of Tanamarina, for its part, did not seem to belong to any of these groups.

that may have taken place within it as well. For instance, Fabrice explained that despite his official position of head of fokotany, he had little effective powers because of his young age. ‘The only reason they chose me,’ he explained, ‘is because I know how to read and write’. (Fabrice, Mangidy Alakamisy, 14/04/2014). Despite this internal diversity, obligations of respect towards the position of the leaders of their respective sub-groups seemed to have been internalised enough to have prevented dissent.

Figure 15: Map of past and ongoing land deals in Mangidy (April 2014-zoom)



In the next pages, I describe the different initiatives that were taken by this first group to protest Tozzi Green's development on their land and how these were countered by conflicting responses from neighbours and fellow villagers, whose perspective on the opportunity-threat balance represented by Tozzi Green were slightly different from theirs.

Outspoken, supported opposition to the land deal

Mangidy experienced a first loss of grassland following discussions between Tozzi Green and the neighbouring village of Zazafotsy, in municipality X. We had visited Zazafotsy in 2013 and the authorised voices of the village had shown strong enthusiasm towards the agribusiness project.²⁵⁴ They had offered the company quite a significant amount of land: the Ankazoabo and the Bekata tracts to the south of their village (cf. Figure 14) and tracts to the north (not on map). The transfers of the first two were contested by the authorities of three villages from Ambatolahy municipality (Mangidy, Antsoha and Andalanotsy) who stressed not only that they used to use these pastures as well, but also that Zazafotsy did not own any alienation rights to them since they were not the ones paying in case of cattle theft. In their opinion, it was malicious intent based on tense relationships that had driven Zazafotsy to give this land away:

Zazafotsy gave land because there were disagreements between them and us but they should have thought about it a little bit more because then they too could still be grazing here.²⁵⁵

The leaders of the three villages reacted immediately to this alleged usurpation of land rights. To try and prevent land loss, they communicated extensively on their opposition to the land transfer and mobilised strategic alliances with state officials and national activists.

As explained in Chapter 2, an essential ingredient to the (partial) success of those struggling against dispossession in Ambatolahy was the mayor's decision to publicly oppose the development of Tozzi Green on his municipal land. Village elites from Mangidy and their

²⁵⁴ Focus group discussion, Zazafotsy village, Municipality X, date 2013.

²⁵⁵ Ikala, *lonaky* Antsoha, Antosha, 13/05/2014.

counterparts from Antsoha and Andalanotsy played a role in convincing him to go against the institutional bias and support them instead. They were indeed among the first on a list of wealthy cattle owners who publicly called him to act against the corporate acquisition of their land. The day after Tozzi Green managers had met with Zazafotsy., they sent him a letter to formalise their opposition and forwarded it to the most influential figures of the regional state apparatus (the Region Head, the Head of District and the Head of Ihosy Supreme Court), asking them to help them defend their land. On the same day, the village elites of Mangidy and Antsoha also raised their concern and opposition in a written ‘announcement’ that was sent to most of the regional state authorities, and communicated to radio AVEC, the local branch of radio Don Bosco, a Catholic radio with a wide reach in rural areas of Madagascar. When Tozzi Green started extending towards Ankazoabo (September 2013), another letter was sent on behalf of the whole *fokontany* of Morafeno and the village of Andalanotsy to the Vice Prime Minister himself. The argument was of a slightly different nature to those made in previous letters. Instead of insisting on the illegitimacy of the land transfer by their neighbour, they were grounding their rights to the lost land on claims to ancestry: ‘We are the descendants of the first people who settled here. The land has been developed since our ancestors. Clear frontiers exist’. Interestingly, their arguments also connected their distress to the unavailability of state services. The implicit message was that they were not resisting state-bureaucratic efforts to rationalise land uses and inventory land property but that in the absence of state support, they did not have the financial and practical means to formalise their land rights nor any livelihood alternative to extensive cattle farming: ‘There are no [state or donor-supported] project[s] here. We need cattle farming to survive’. They also warned of the risks of having more people dependent on the state benefit system by stressing the negative impacts the agribusiness project already had and could have further on their livelihoods and social cohesion, talking of a shortage of pastures, a decrease in cattle wealth, famine, lack of jobs and social tensions. They also pointed to the tenure insecurity the marginalisation was putting on them: ‘We would like to register our land, but the state has not set up any BIF (local land office licensed to issue land certificate) in our locality’. The letter closed on two concrete requests: one for all contracts of land rental to be brought to an end and the second for the use of GPS and vehicles by Tozzi Green on their land to be

stopped.²⁵⁶

The formal-legal and rationalist twist of their advocacy points to the influence of civil society. Some of these villagers' authorities had indeed been in close contact with national activists in the past years. The head of the *fokontany* of Andalanotsy, who had co-written that second letter, was, for instance, well-known by the anti-land grab activists based in Antananarivo. The solidarity organisation that had helped to organise the press conference in November 2012 confirmed being supportive of the resistance efforts of these very villagers. Their general director, a legal practitioner, had already been to the *fokontany* several times.²⁵⁷ 'He really helped us,' explained Gaston, who had taken part in the press conference himself.²⁵⁸ At the time of the last fieldwork, their organisation was organising a meeting in Fort-Dauphin, in the south of the country, to bring together all those village leaders who were currently trying to resist corporate land acquisitions across the island.

Mangidy's elite resistance efforts also gained from the presence of wealthy and influential individuals within their *fokontany*. As in Soatanana, these boasted determination in fighting for what they saw as their legitimate right to land and food. The elder son of Ambatolahy's wealthiest cattle owner, Tovo from Andalanotsy, was one of them. 'The state thinks there are no landowners but of course there are landowners. There's no land without land owners,'²⁵⁹ he observed as he discussed the political support enjoyed by the Tozzi Green project. The village also benefited from a head of *fokontany* who could read and write, although his young age caused him to be excluded from high-level village authority discussions.

Strategies of resistance were regularly discussed in local meetings, which were organised either at the level of the municipality or of the *fokontany*. A meeting with all the *fokontany* of the municipality had just been held by the mayor in Ambatolahy main village, after village authorities from Mangidy had reported on the new delineation work recently started by Tozzi

256 Letter signed by the *fokontany* of Morafeno and Andalanotsy, 14/09/2013 and addressed to the Vice-Prime Minister in Charge of Land and Country Planning.

257 Hoby, General Director, solidarity organisation, Antananarivo, 21/05/2014.

258 Gaston, head of hamlet, Mangidy Alakamisy, 17/04/2014.

259 Tovo, fields close to tract A, 16/04/2014.

Green. At the meeting, the official was reported to have sensitised the villagers on their land rights and to have reminded them that no land could be given away without his permission. Finally, the authorities of Mangidy had recently called some 15 people from the whole *fokontany* to come for a meeting in their village to discuss the issue and decide on the way forward.

This alliance between Mangidy's village authorities, the mayor and connected activists was a critical piece of the broader movement of resistance, described in Chapter 2. As explained there, this bottom-up protest gained some critical victories, with (most of) Ambatolahy's territory being left out of the lease granted to Tozzi Green in 2012. However, the case of Mangidy highlights the limits of this elite-based contentious politics. First, it did not protect from the loss of village land outside the borders of the municipality. Second, as the next pages describe, this mobilisation process did not have purchase in a divided, unequal local setting.

Struggles for incorporation

Behind this *façade* of determination and unity, resistance had quite a fragile support structure within Mangidy. As aptly summarised by Tilahy, when we asked how villagers from Mangidy viewed Tozzi Green: 'Some are totally opposed to the *vazaha*, yes, but others are scared and others actually want them to work here'.²⁶⁰ Fieldwork inside the village revealed that the authorities' vocal resistance against land loss was indeed obscuring (i) a differential vulnerability to power pressures and (ii) different interests as to whether to struggle against dispossession or struggle for incorporation.

Compared with Antranohazo (Chapter 6) where dissent was slightly suspected but not avowed and not discussed, in Mangidy everyone knew that there were differences of opinion towards Tozzi Green and that these divergences had been expressed within the land deal negotiations. Out of the village's five hamlets, two had received visits from Tozzi Green and had been asked to give land: Maroteza and Vohiposa. The consulted villagers confirmed

²⁶⁰ Tilahy, villager working as a guard for Tozzi Green, Mangidy Maroteza, 22/04/2014.

having formally approved land being transferred to Tozzi Green and having been involved in the choice of the area to offer. Versions vary as to who, between Tozzi Green and the villagers, took the initiative in creating contact, however, and as discussed below, compliance seemed to have been more “voluntary” in one case than in another. In any case, it is certainly meaningful that these interlocutors came from two of the most deprived hamlets of the village, while all the senior village authorities who had previously expressed their opposition to Tozzi Green had been excluded from the discussions. The next section discusses how inequalities underpin these conflicts of perceptions, highlighting the differentiated risks and opportunities the project was understood to represent for these two groups.

Differential needs, differential threats

According to the latest official numbers, there were some 900 cattle in Mangidy,²⁶¹ although my own assessments suggest this figure may have been strongly overstated (from 350).²⁶² In any case, distribution of this capital across the village was certainly unequal, with the hamlets of Ankerana and Alakamisy concentrating most of it (a minimum of 200 head for the former and 150 for the latter). Among the other three hamlets, only Vohiposa had a few head of its own (10). His hamlet leader explained that their wealth had significantly shrunk in the past thirty to forty years because of demographic pressure and frequent extortion by the police.²⁶³ There were inequalities in terms of land distribution as well. Critically, the hamlet of Tanamarina did not have any *tany oraky* (fertile, wet patches of land), whereas all the others had. In the absence of dams, it meant they could only grow rice on the highlands.²⁶⁴ The village was hosting the female branch of the lineage, whose current head had married a migrant from the highlands. The localisation of this hamlet on less fertile land might not have been a coincidence. Agricultural growth was further stunted by a lack of financial means:

²⁶¹ Confidential source within the regional administration, Ihosy, 31/01/2014.

²⁶² There are a few reasons why cattle-owners may want to over- and under-declare their livestock possession. A confidential source mentioned some potential collusion with the veterinary department in these manipulations of numbers (confidential source, land administration, Antananarivo, private communication, Feb 2017). I do not claim that my own numbers are more reliable either however, being based themselves on visual observation (which cannot account for the cattle which is lent outside of the village) and on the aggregation of the numbers given to me by each of the hamlets (again subject to caution).

²⁶³ Hamlet leader, Mangidy Vohiposa, 20/04/2014.

²⁶⁴ Vany, Mangidy Tanamarina, 17/04/2014.

they explained having land prone to maize that they could not develop because they could not afford the necessary help of an outside workforce.

These inequalities were leading to contrasting assessments of the threat/opportunity potential represented by the agribusiness project and these underpinned fairly different explanations of the causes of vulnerabilities within the village. On the one hand, village authorities (the *lonaky*, the head of the *fokontany* and the head of the hamlet of Alakamisy) and cattle owners were insisting on issues of resource shortages. According to the *lonaky*, rice paddies were insufficient to cover all their needs and they did not have any *sakasaka* (flooded parcels) on which to develop new ones.²⁶⁵ They had the financial means to compensate for it, however, by purchasing land in other villages. The young head of *fokontany*, for instance, had recently bought some rice paddies in the neighbouring villages of Andalanotsy and Feoandala, for instance. In the hamlet of Vohiposa and Maroteza which had recently contracted with Tozzi Green, however, a different picture emerged, initially anyway. They confirmed that all farmland had been divided between hamlets but insisted that the village did not suffer from land shortages. On the one hand, villagers from Maroteza were stressing how fertile their land was. On the other, those from Vohiposa were saying not only that they had enough rice paddies, but that they even had land reserves: ‘Actually we can’t even develop all of our land. There’s some land that’s favourable to rice paddies that we haven’t even developed yet’.²⁶⁶ Whilst those struggling against dispossession were complaining of land shortages, villagers from Maroteza and Tanamarina both raised problems related to the lack of material and technology to exploit the land properly.

These contradictory emphases again remind us of how these discussions of natural endowments are part and parcel of the discursive processes of legitimation of their respective responses to the land deal negotiations. For cattle owners, Tozzi Green was adding pressure on already stretched natural resources, putting their fragile livelihoods at risks. Their narratives revolved around the impossibility to have large-scale farming coexist with extensive pastoralism on the same territory. They expressed a fear of losing their livelihoods

²⁶⁵ *Lonaky* Mangidy, Mangidy Ankerana, 16/04/2014.

²⁶⁶ Villager, Mangidy Vohiposa, 17/04/2014.

entirely, a threat they argued did not belong to a distant hypothetical future since the Tozzi Green project had allegedly already had quite severe adverse effects on them: ‘Sixty-three cattle died last year in Soatanimbary because of the jatropha. The cattle, we can’t keep it at home. All of our food is going to disappear’.²⁶⁷

Villagers from Vohiposa, on the contrary, explained that they would not suffer from the loss of land they had recently contributed to delineating with Tozzi Green since they ‘didn’t have a lot of cattle’.²⁶⁸ In Maroteza, they argued some land transfers could actually be a boon for those who, like them, did not need it as it meant less responsibility and thereby less financial burden.

When cattle tracks get lost here, we are asked to pay damages and because we don’t have cattle, it means we have to sell our rice paddies for that. So, I told the mayor: “If you pay the damages for the cattle lost in this field, I will immediately dismiss Tozzi Green. But if we’re the ones paying the damages, let me collaborate with Tozzi Green so we can ask for our benefit with them”. That’s why the mayor didn’t manage to convince us.²⁶⁹

Interviewed villagers from Vohiposa also pointed to a sense of compromise on the part of the company, explaining that no sanctions had yet been imposed despite frequent cases of cattle stomping on to Tozzi Green’s fields.²⁷⁰ For her part, Vany, the female head of Tanamarina hamlet, insisted on the generosity of the support provided by the company across the municipality: ‘If someone falls ill, whether day or night, they come and fetch him and bring him to the hospital in Ihosy or Satrokala’.²⁷¹ Although no one from their hamlet had been consulted by Tozzi Green, she made it clear that she supported the struggles for incorporation that others had engaged in and still hoped it could bring results: ‘We asked for a hospital [a health centre] and tractors to plough our land but until now, they haven’t done anything. Maybe one day they will’.²⁷²

Explanations heard in these three more deprived hamlets outlined once more how relative

²⁶⁷ Samuel, son of the *lonaky*, Mangidy Ankerana, 23/04/2014.

²⁶⁸ Eugene, Mangidy Vohiposa, 17/04/2014.

²⁶⁹ Dax, Mangidy Maroteza, 21/04/2014.

²⁷⁰ Villager, Mangidy Vohiposa, Ambatolahy, 17/04/2014.

²⁷¹ Vany, hamlet leader, Mangidy Tanamarina, 25/04/2014.

²⁷² Vany, hamlet leader, Mangidy Tanamarina, 25/04/2014.

wealth and autonomy could underpin contrasted assessments of the risks and opportunities represented by an agribusiness project. As in Antranohazo (Chapter 6) and compared with Soatanana however (Chapter 7), these contrasted perceptions both found some kind of expression within the land deal negotiations. However, explanations varied from one hamlet to the next as to how much the compliance with the company's land requests was deliberate or not. The next pages explain how the nuances found in the accounts of the land deal negotiation process between Vohiposa and Maroteza could be traced to their respective dependence situation on the village elites.

Differentiated risks of expressing subversive voices

The village economy was not devoid of intra-community exchanges and mechanisms of solidarity support between the differently-endowed hamlets. I saw villagers from the hamlet of Alakamisy make a detour through Vohiposa to load up the latter's crop yields on their cart and carry them to the market for them, for instance. More critically, wealthier villagers were lending cattle to those who did not have any. However, cattle-poor hamlets seemed to be offered different treatment: whereas Vohiposa had been given the care of 100 zebus, Maroteza and Tanamarina were only lent livestock for the ploughing work (and did not tend anyone else's cattle either). To Maroteza, the village of the *lonaky* had lent 20 head for a few years but had ended up retrieving them. As explained in Chapter 2, tending cattle provides some degree of security as in the event of hardship, some requests for help can be made to those whose cattle are taken care of. This unequal sharing of capital across the village reflected varying degrees of trust: the *lonaky* explained that they had taken the cattle back from Maroteza because 'they didn't know how to take care of the cattle so they were becoming skinny'.²⁷³ As far as Tanamarina was concerned, it proved difficult to gain significant information as to why no cattle was lent to them and whether they suffered from it. At any rate, these arrangements meant that hamlets were tied together by different levels of mutual obligations.

With regards to these different degrees of dependencies towards the village wealthy, challenging the elite's struggles against dispossession could be assumed to have been less

²⁷³ *Lonaky* Mangidy, Mangidy Ankerana, 08/05/2014.

risky for some than for others. This could partly explain the very different tones encountered in Maroteza and in Vohisa. In the former, we found an energetic enthusiasm for the deal that had initially been offered by Tozzi Green. Dax, a thirty-year old man and unofficial hamlet leader, was very proud to recall how proactive he had been in bringing the company to their village. For him, while limiting the financial risks related to cattle theft, transactions with the project offered them perspectives of unique socio-economic opportunities.²⁷⁴ Villagers from Vohiposa, who had a much stronger economic dependency on the village elites, described their engagement with the land deal negotiations in a very different manner. They downplayed any possible hopes they may have had and made it quite clear that their compliance was mostly the result of intimidation. The similarity of the power dynamics to those reported in the other two case studies (Chapter 6 and 7) gives credibility to these narratives, which shall be discussed below. However, the emphasis on those constraints also needs to be looked at in the light of their relationship of dependency towards the cattle owners from their village and the potential suspicions that we might repeat their testimonies to our hosts.

There was certainly no ignorance of the adverse consequences the land transfer which they had contributed to delineating (tract A) could have on their wealthier next of kin, however.

-Would you still have enough pastures if Tozzi Green appropriated all of that land? I asked.

-For us who don't have a lot of cattle, it's enough. But for the others, it could be a problem [...] Yes, there are people who have a lot of cattle here. The richest have more than 100 heads. To them, it's going to cause problems, yes.²⁷⁵

Village elites felt betrayed and took it as a personal settlement against them because of jealousies. I argue below that the animosities that developed in this fractured context ended up obscuring some of the vertical power dynamics that were pressuring both groups, and the increasing convergence of feelings towards the company that were taking over their initial disagreements.

²⁷⁴ Dax, Mangidy Maroteza, 21/04/2014.

²⁷⁵ Eugène, Mangidy Vohiposa, 20/04/2014.

Fractured confrontation of power pressures and moral economic violations

The next pages point to the village's failure to acknowledge and act on the growing convergence of indignations across groups. By the time of the last fieldwork, village elites had developed acute resentment against a company which was showing total disregard for their needs by appropriating some of their most critical pastures and for their basic rights by ignoring their opposition to the land transfers. Simultaneously, those who had seen struggles for incorporation as a better option were starting to wonder whether their compliance with the negotiation process, and associated risks, would ever be compensated. While moral economic expectations were breached on both sides, the different groups were themselves too divided to be able to come up with a common strategy to negotiate for better terms and/or limit the extent of land loss.

Converging indignations

Respective indignations were correlated with the moral economic expectations that had underpinned the group's respective responses to the negotiations. For village elites, both their needs and rights were being trampled. The Bekata and Ankazoabo tracts represented highly critical pastures whose quantity and quality seemed hard to make up for, especially as the loss also affected Antsoha and Andalanotsy where cattle were particularly numerous as well (900 for former and more than 5,000 head for Andalanotsy). Competition for alternative pastures was therefore particularly acute, whereas options were limited:

There's grassland to the south-east but there already are other villages from the *fokontany* grazing there [...]

-Yes, and these pastures are not as good as the ones to the north. These were our main pastures. There's really good fodder for the cattle there.²⁷⁶

In that context, the appropriation of the tracts recently delineated by tractor would be particularly concerning. Tract A was all they had left of their previous pastures north of the village and tract B was one of the only ones that could still be grazed at the end of the dry season (September to November) and, for this reason, was used by all of the villages of the *fokontany* of Morafeno.²⁷⁷ It was also dangerously close to some of the village's hamlets and

²⁷⁶ Samuel, son of the *lonaky*, Mangidy Ankerana, 23/04/2014.

²⁷⁷ Fabrice, head of *fokontany*, Mangidy Alakamisy, 17/04/2014.

rice paddies. From Mangidy Alakamisy, less than a kilometre separated the furrows from the houses (GPS collected data). This proximity showed the insubstantial case Tozzi Green was making of ancestral rights and people's livelihoods:

This *tazoa* [Ankazoabo and Bekata] was our grassland since our grandma. All our villages used to graze there. And today Tozzi Green is trying to extend very close to our village. There's only a few metres left between our village and their plantations.²⁷⁸

As in Antranohazo (Chapter 6) and Soatanana (Chapter 7), the agribusiness plantations were compounding the daily workload that had already increased as a result of demographic pressure and shifting land uses. These challenges were not only those of the elites, but also of the younger generations or less privileged villagers in charge of tending their cattle such as that 30-year old man from Vohiposa:

Before, we didn't have to look after the cattle. We would leave them out in the fields, and then come back to the village and fetch them in the afternoon. But today the population is multiplying and people are growing lots of different crops, cassava, maize etc., so we always have to check on the cattle from close. And now on top of that, there's Tozzi Green who's arrived, so we really have to check in the cattle.²⁷⁹

The need for close surveillance was made even more critical since 'the cattle were used to going there [on the tracts appropriated by Tozzi Green]', which made it 'hard for their owners to prevent them from getting there. Especially during the rainy season, the cattle always try to get escape their pens during the night'.²⁸⁰ A recent incident of a cattle damaging some of Tozzi Green's plantations (discussed in further detail below) had confirmed the threat was real, and villagers working as guards for the company were adamant it would inevitably happen again, especially because of the cattle's fondness for maize. 'We are really worried,' confirmed the *lonaky*, 'because one zebu only can eat a lot of maize just in one go'.²⁸¹

Tozzi Green's intention to develop on tracts A and B also raised fears of the adverse impact on crop farming because of water issues. The *lonaky* explained that because of the geography

²⁷⁸ *Lonaky* Mangidy, Mangidy Ankerana, 16/04/2014.

²⁷⁹ Eugène, Mangidy Vohiposa, 20/04/2014.

²⁸⁰ Tilahy, Mangidy Maroteza, 22/04/2014.

²⁸¹ *Lonaky* Mangidy, Mangidy Ankerana, 08/05/2014.

of the place, maize plantations to the north of their fields could cut the natural paths of the rain trickling down to the village rice paddies. For all these reasons, the pressure on already stretched pastures, the threat of financial sanction in case of encroachment and potential impact on their farming as well, Tozzi Green was experienced as a direct threat to their livelihoods.

While Vohiposa and Maroteza had less to lose than their neighbours, their cooperation could have a real cost, that of alienating their kin and the solidarity network they represented. In this context, it was imperative for Tozzi Green to deliver on its promises, not only to access much-needed basic socio-economic services, but also to legitimise their rationale for allowing the “foreigner” in. The difficult position that the current lack of compensation was putting on those who had put their necks on the line was embodied by Dax from Maroteza. While complaining against the corporate betrayal, he was trying to stand up to his initial decision to welcome the company all-heartedly:

People really want to give land, but the problem is that Tozzi Green does not deliver on its promises, so now people are starting to be opposed [to it]. In the other villages, it's the same. They haven't delivered on any of their promises either, so my conclusion is that these were all tricks.²⁸²

After having actively cooperated with the company, he was now promising he was ready to put an end to it, if the company did not promptly deliver on their side of the deal. ‘When Gomez came here, I told him: if you don’t keep your promises, you should leave,’ he boasted. ‘And yesterday I wrote to Francesco, the big boss, and I told him “Stop what you’re doing before you’ve used all your petrol because we don’t accept that anymore”’. He added that as a security staff member for the company, he knew how to get the land back. ‘I’m going to make all the villagers sign and they’re going to leave’.²⁸³ It is unclear what promises had been made to the two cooperating hamlets in Mangidy. Dax explained he had requested a dam and a wood processing machine, to which Tozzi Green had shown reluctance, retorting that the use of these machines required a generator and some training, although Dax assured he knew how to use them.²⁸⁴ What made no doubt was that their continued cooperation was

²⁸² Dax, Mangidy Maroteza, 22/04/2014.

²⁸³ Dax, Mangidy Maroteza, 22/04/2014.

²⁸⁴ Dax, Mangidy Maroteza, 22/04/2014.

not unconditional and that their hopes were tied to strong moral economic expectations.

Besides, choices towards the struggle for incorporation can be believed to have been more constrained than individuals such as Dax liked to make it sound. Other collaborating villagers preferred insistence on power dynamics to explain their choices to comply with the company. Their explanations were debunking the elites' simple narratives of fully deliberate acts of sabotage on the part of the poorer villagers of Mangidy. Whilst the village elites proved slightly more shielded than those with no relational resources, some of their responses to successive violations of moral economic expectations demonstrated that they were themselves far from being immune to vertical power pressures.

Enthusiasm or constrained hope

Quick discussions with Maroteza and Vohiposa would have had one believe that the land gifts to Tozzi Green were fully deliberate. 'Tozzi Green came here to ask us for farmland. They didn't force people. They only asked for what we could offer,'²⁸⁵ villagers from Vohiposa explained at the beginning of our first discussion. As suggested above, Dax from Maroteza also conveyed a sense of full control over the initial dealings, making it clear that people from his hamlet were keen on having a foreign company settle in their village.

As noted in Chapter 5, villagers saying they were given the 'choice' in the context of land deal negotiations could reflect a constrained understanding of what their rights were in the first place. While both hamlets ended up complaining about the company, this initial stress on free consent also needs to be looked at in the light of the context in which the data were collected, and more precisely, in the light of the assumptions that could have been made in terms of my identity and intentions. Indicators might have seemed confusing: on the one hand, my identity as a white foreigner might have fed suspicions that I was somehow related to the company; on the other, the fact that Tsiry and I were being hosted by the head of *fokontany* could have brought them to assume that we shared his opposition towards Tozzi Green and might report on them. There certainly was a certain unease in Vohiposa and

²⁸⁵ Villager, Mangidy Vohiposa, 17/04/2014.

unspoken questions as to what my exact intentions were. The diametrical change of tone over Tozzi Green from one discussion to the next, from pledges that consent had been given freely to more critical discourses insisting on political pressures, might have been explained either by a growing trust towards us or by changes of interpretation as to what my intentions may have been.

As far as Dax from Maroteza was concerned, there was a manifest intention to boast leadership and independence in front of his fellow villagers, both when talking about how he had been a front player in the discussions with the *vazaha* and when he was vigorously promising retribution and recapture of land should Tozzi Green delay any longer on delivering its promises, as mentioned above. These declared promises of revenge may also have been a strategy to try and redeem himself towards the village authorities whom he expected we would repeat his confidences to. It certainly was interesting to find a villager so confident in asserting that he could easily change the turn of events. Again, one can wonder to what extent he was seeking to convince the others as opposed to being genuinely convinced himself.

In Vohiposa, initial accounts of the land transfer as being the product of their free consent were soon replaced by resigned statements about the lack of choice they had been left with and confidences over fear for the future. Information on the circumstances and nature of their interactions with the company revealed the same power dynamics as the one observed in Chapter 6 and 7. Once more, villagers had been told that the land deal had already been approved at higher levels and that they had no right to speak on land that ‘belonged to the state’.²⁸⁶ Misinformation also seemed to have been spread regarding the duration of the lease, with villagers thinking Tozzi Green was only planning to stay for five years, for instance.

The village elites, who had appeared so determined in their letters, shared their fear of a direct confrontation with foreigners, and behind the display of determination on paper and in spaces supported by the civil society, they had remained passive to the latter stages of land

²⁸⁶ Focus group discussion, Mangidy Vohiposa, 17/04/2014.

appropriation: ‘We did see them doing these demarcations but we couldn’t do anything. We’re scared of the *vazahas*’.²⁸⁷ As in the case of Antranohazo (Chapter 6) however, that fear stemmed less from an internalised “irrational” fear of foreigners than from an understanding of the institutional bias that existed in favour of corporate interests and was further exacerbated by anticipated coercion in case any actions were taken against the project.

Two recent incidents were feeding the fears. One day, one of the boundary stones marking Tozzi Green fields was reportedly damaged by some cattle, whose owner was then summoned by the police. Commenting on the event, Tovo from Andanalotsy concluded: ‘In little time, us and our descendants will be imprisoned in Tsiafahy’.²⁸⁸ Briefly mentioned in Chapter 6, the other incident was related to some of Tozzi Green’s maize in Ankazoabo being eaten by cattle. The owner was summoned to a high-level meeting with the mayor, the region head and the regional head of the police, where he received a formal call to order. While the mayor of municipality X explained that the sanction stopped there,²⁸⁹ the owner of the cattle himself reported having been summoned by the police a few days later and been asked to pay 400,000 Ar (some 150 Euro) at Tozzi Green’s basecamp in Satrokala.²⁹⁰ Supported by the head of the veterinary department in Ihosy, these allegations were denied by Tozzi Green and other villagers from villages in Vohiposa were also sceptical:

Until now, they haven’t made anyone pay damages. They’ve only sent warnings. [...] Yes, we heard of a case in Andalanotsy where they had to pay but I don’t know...Normally if someone pays damages, they have to assemble the whole *fokonolona* and the whole *fokonolona* knows the reason.²⁹¹

When asked whether some financial sanction had indeed been imposed on the guilty cattle owner, the *lonaky* of Mangidy equivocated by saying that he knew ‘*some* people had already had to pay’ and added that he had heard that any damage to the company’s crops would be sanctioned by fines and the confiscation of cattle.²⁹² Whether the financial sanction was

²⁸⁷ Samuel, son of the *lonaky*, Mangidy Ankerana, 23/04/2014.

²⁸⁸ Laza, Antosha, 13/05/2014. Tsiafahy is an infamous prison in Antananarivo.

²⁸⁹ Mayor of Andiolava, Andiolava, 04/03/2014.

²⁹⁰ Jean, Mangidy Alakamisy, 14/04/2014.

²⁹¹ Nary, Mangidy Vohiposa 20/04/2014.

²⁹² *Lonaky* Mangidy, Mangidy Ankerana, 08/05/2014.

actually imposed or not, the incident was patently feeding rumours and fears, as were the guards' accounts of the extortionate fines that people could be asked to pay.²⁹³ Those were adamant that these encroachments had not been deliberate acts of sabotage against Tozzi Green but involuntary accidents, and that villagers were instead very careful since 'they were really scared of sanctions'.²⁹⁴

The feeling of vulnerability was compounded by the lack of educational resources. Even the son of one of the wealthiest and most influential cattle owners in the area felt powerless:

- Yes, we're really afraid of the *vazahas* here.
- Don't be afraid. You're only asking.
- Yes, but we're not at their level. We don't even know how to read or write.²⁹⁵

As in Antranohazo (Chapter 6), the anticipated defeat this literacy gap was feeding discouraged action: 'They are intellectuals; we can't do anything even if we are totally opposed to them'.²⁹⁶

Institutional bias towards wealthy foreigners was also seen as a major obstacle. There were little hopes that local authorities would take any decisions that may jeopardise their chances of generating rent from the project. The outcome of the dispute with Zazafotsy came as a confirmation of the little consideration that would be given to local land rules and arbitration mechanisms if these could hinder corporate interests:

Even the villagers of Zazafotsy and all the population accepted that this land [Ankazoabo] belonged to Ambatolahy. But the problem is the authorities and the *vazahas* and those who profit don't want to accept that.²⁹⁷

Aware of the fragility of their own land tenure arrangements, villagers of the area were striving to formalise their land transactions through 'small papers' submitted to local

²⁹³ Tilahy, the local guard, was talking of a very severe rule set by Tozzi Green according to which for every leaf of maize eaten by a zebu, there would be a fine of 60 000Ar (20 Euros). However, he denied that a fine had had to be paid after the incident in Ankazoabo and added that the guard on duty that day had not been dismissed.

²⁹⁴ Tilahy, Mangidy Maroteza, 22/04/2014.

²⁹⁵ Tovo, fields close to tract A, 16/04/2014.

²⁹⁶ Samuel, son of the *lonaky*, Mangidy Ankerana, 08/05/2014.

²⁹⁷ Ikala, *lonaky* Antsoha, 13/05/14.

authorities for endorsement (cf. Chapter 7). They were also conscious of the little value of these papers in these contexts. ‘These are worth nothing,’²⁹⁸ Tovo commented. As in other villages, people complained of regular power abuses by the police and talked of the sense of insecurity these filled them with.²⁹⁹ Generally speaking, state agents were seen as unreliable agents of predation as opposed to agents of protection. As discussed below, even the mayor of Ambatolahy, seen the year before as an essential support in their opposition to Tozzi Green (Chapter 2), now seemed hesitant.

It was this detrimental power balance that was at the heart of the rationale for consenting to Tozzi Green’s land requests. In this lost battle, consulted villagers explained, their best bet was to cooperate so that they would at least have a say in the choice of the land to be given away:

-But if you had the choice: would you have preferred to keep your land or to give some of it and enjoy some of the benefits they offer?
 -No, we would prefer to keep our land but Tozzi Green said that it was the ministry who had given the permission because they had leased the land to the ministry. The general state hasn’t refused, so how could we refuse? And you know, here we’re scared of the *vazahas*, so at least we were lucky enough to delineate the land.³⁰⁰

The same resigned thinking was displayed by a group of villagers from the neighbouring village of Feoandala that we encountered during a field visit. They explained that they would have preferred to keep their land but since there was no choice, they ‘might as well try and have a new school’.³⁰¹

Blinded by mutual suspicion

Essential village rules, such as the duty to prioritise the village’s needs over individual ones and to respect the *lonaky*’s authority especially on issues as critical as alienation of the village land, had been violated, however, and that betrayal seemed to monopolise analysis of the land deal negotiations. The conflicting responses to the land deal negotiations had generated such tensions that some feared it would end up sparking violent clashes:

²⁹⁸ Tovo, fields close to tract A, 16/04/2014.

²⁹⁹ Focus group, Mangidy Vohiposa, 17/04/2014.

³⁰⁰ Joann, Mangidy Vohiposa, 20/04/2014.

³⁰¹ Informal discussion with villagers from Feoandala, fields close to tract B, 22/04/2014.

There's going to be an explosion, I'm sure [...] There was a meeting the other day and there were people in favour of Tozzi Green and people against and it finished in a big argument and one even wanted to use his weapon.³⁰²

Between these arguments, genuine discussions seemed rare. Members of the “other” group were assumed to be at best unable to help, at worst allegedly diametrically opposed to their own views. It was therefore at best useless, at worst risky to try and open their deliberations to the rest of the village. As in Antranohazo (Chapter 6), those who did speak up against the land deal did not tell the others much about their resistance. Very few in the village seemed to know Gaston had taken part in the press conference organised in Antananarivo, for instance. Likewise, not all knew about the letters that had been written to protest Zazafotsy's land transfers. In Tanamarina, they said they had ‘heard’ about them but were not sure at all that their *fokontany* (Morafeno) had written one. They thought only Andalanotsy had done so. More critically, they had remained passive in front of Tozzi Green's attempt to gain consent from the rest of the village. It is hard to believe that the presence of the corporate staff and their 4/4 could have gone completely unnoticed at the time visits were held. Yet no one from the hamlets of the elites tried to join, nor did they go to ask the involved villagers what they had talked about or agreed. ‘We knew very well what they had done,’ observed another one of Cyril's sons. ‘And then if we go and criticise them, it can create arguments within the family’.³⁰³ On the other hand, people from Vohiposa and Maroteza kept a low profile and did not consult any of the village authorities before engaging with the company.

These fractures were condemning mutual efforts to influence the land deal by enhancing exposure to vertical power pressures and allowing for the instrumentalisation of divisions. As far as those struggling against dispossession were concerned, bitterness was clouding their potential to apprehend, and potentially help to address, the complex power dynamics that contributed to making others think that incorporation was probably the only path available. For village elites, there was a clear and simple explanation to Tozzi Green's progress on their village land: ‘It is the poor villagers who are giving land to Tozzi Green because they are

³⁰² Tovo, fields close to tract A, 16/04/2014.

³⁰³ Lala, Mangidy Alakamisy, 02/05/14.

jealous of the rich'.³⁰⁴ It was not clear why they had not initially included the rest of the village in the discussions with the civil society, whether it was because they assumed the less wealthy would be reluctant to back their resistance to the land deal or because they did not deem their involvement necessary. In any case, this exclusion certainly did not help to win the others over to their own understandings of the risks related to the project and to dissuade them from expressing conflicting voices.

As far as the latter was concerned, the knowledge that they were going against fundamental village norms encouraged discretion and discourses of resignation. For village elites, this secrecy was proof of the malevolence that had guided them and the disrespect they had shown to their authorities was inexcusable: 'They always hide by saying "We can't do anything",' commented the head of *fokontany*. 'But why did they not inform people here and the mayor or the *lonaky* about this?'³⁰⁵ Yet, as explained above however, they were not making any effort to engage with them either. There was the reported fear of unleashing a conflict within the village community. Silence was also a means to express their disapproval and their detachment for what were seen as selfish moves to gain benefits, and certainly not struggles that, if successful, could be beneficial to the whole community. 'In my opinion, they won't obtain any benefit. It was just a sabotage strategy so that rich people don't have any pastures'.³⁰⁶

On the one hand, therefore, the compliance of Feoandala and Vohiposa had harmed the elites' struggles against dispossession by providing some legitimacy to corporate land access. On the other, the elites' bitterness for that act of betrayal did not dispose them to consider the complex rationales behind the others' compliance with the land requests and support their fights for incorporation as compensation for land loss. The next section discusses the other political and power dynamics that further hampered the ability to influence the land deal.

304 *Lonaky* Mangidy, Mangidy Ankerana, 16/04/2014.

305 Fabrice, head of *fokontany*, Mangidy Alakamisy, 07/05/2014.

306 Fabrice, head of *fokontany*, Mangidy Alakamisy, 07/05/2014.

Selective hearing and versatile politics

By listening to compliant voices and excluding dissonant ones, state and corporate politics both informed and built on these tensions. The way the land dispute with Zazafotsy was settled stresses the selective use of legalism by state agents pushing for the land deal. The case of Mangidy also points to the top-down picking and choosing of legitimate spokespersons in the context of consultation, with the recent prospective work having conveniently been carried out by the company with those most willing to cooperate, in a deliberate ignoring of the voices formalised by the village authorities. Finally, it shows how villagers' struggles in the context of land deals can suffer from the versatility of state agents.

Selective legalism, selective hearing

The outcome of the dispute over the transfer of the Bekata and Ankazoabo tracts illustrates how institutional bias towards corporate interests can translate into a biased application of law by state agents in the context of land deal negotiations (second dimension of power). Shortly after the land transfer was officially contested by letter, a meeting was organised by Tozzi Green and local officials to look into the issue. This meeting further exacerbated the bitterness of Mangidy's and Antsoha's leaders who claim that the contents of the discussion and agreements reached between villagers on that day ended up being fully ignored by decision-makers. Indeed, according to their accounts, villagers from Zazafotsy ended up admitting that they were not entitled to make decisions on that tract and 'even the mayor could not challenge that'.³⁰⁷ Yet, the formalisation of the land transfer went ahead notwithstanding, with the official complaints being rejected on the grounds of inadmissibility since 'villagers from the municipality Ambatolahy had no right to talk on land based in the administrative territory of municipality X'.³⁰⁸ Rather than a fair chance to reintroduce some of their forgotten voices, the mediation meeting therefore served to entrench the land deal and dissuade villagers from further protest.

This episode illustrates the selective application of law in the context of land deal

³⁰⁷ Lonaky Mangidy, Mangidy Ankerana, 16/04/2014 and Ikala, *lonaky* Antsoha, Antosha, 13/05/2014.

³⁰⁸ Mayor, municipality X, 04/03/2014.

negotiations: state maps were conveniently brought up to declare Andraoboaka's villagers as legally incompetent to challenge the land transfer, while statutory land laws that recognise the 'occupation, use or development of a tract as 'untitled private property' (article 34 of Law 2005-019) were ignored. It also highlights the exclusionary implications of the mismatch between legally-defined spaces and those that govern local lives, or between 'abstract and lived spaces' (Vandergeest and Peluso 1995). In that case, this situation was the result of a prior exclusion. Municipality X was recent; it had been created under twenty years previously. People from Mangidy explained not having been consulted on this administrative parcelling of their territory, which explains why some villages similar to theirs may have found themselves straddling two municipalities.³⁰⁹ Only then, however, were the consequences of these prior exclusions being felt.

Legitimate and illegitimate struggles

As far as the new explorations were concerned, they had so far been carried out outside legal procedures, with no prior approval from any of the necessary local authorities (head of *fokontany* and *lonaky*) and informal reconnaissance missions only including those villagers who showed a disposition to cooperate. At the land registry in Ihosy, they reported that no official procedure had yet been opened for land transfers in Ambatolahy since the mayor had not given his permission yet, although there were suspicions that he had unofficially, as discussed below. Village authorities were also complaining of secret undertakings, such as furrows being dug overnight while everyone was sleeping, highlighting how this secrecy was depriving them of the opportunity to complain directly to the company.³¹⁰ As in other case studies, there were accusations of Tozzi Green taking advantage of people's illiteracy to fool them into signing land transfers.³¹¹

Those struggling for incorporation seemed to have had less of a hard time to make contact with the company and make themselves heard. It was not a social justice operation, as Tozzi Green managers sometimes liked to make it sound, where attention was given to the voices of the poorer villagers interested in incorporation over the noises made by their oppressive

309 Gaston, head of hamlet, Mangidy Alakamisy, 11/05/2014.

310 Tovo, fields close to tract A, 16/04/2014, and *lonaky* Mangidy, Mangidy Ankerana, 08/05/2014.

311 Son of the *lonaky*, Mangidy Ankerana, 23/04/2014.

elites.³¹² As the case under observation here showed, village elites were happily listened to, provided they had the right views. Indeed, Tozzi Green's land extensions in Ambatolahy were not only supported by the dependent segments of the village community. In the villages, south of Mangidy, they were found to have the backing of influential individuals who had roots in the area but whose wealth and power were not land-based as were those of the village elites opposing the land deal. Two individuals were regularly mentioned in discussions over Tozzi Green in the *fokontany*: an army person, 'someone with a lot of authority here'³¹³ and a man who belonged to an association connected with one of the mainstream churches and who was reported to be efficiently fighting police abuses in the villages. He 'often manages to help people who are accused, whereas they are not guilty'.³¹⁴ These two men were seen as obstacles to resistance by those struggling against dispossession who were accusing them of having reached out to Tozzi Green to gain credit for the socio-economic opportunities the project was promising to the people. The mediation of these influential figures who 'could talk directly to Tozzi Green because they talked French'³¹⁵ was, on the contrary, seen as a boon for those who were struggling for incorporation. In any case, these were certainly receiving a much more favourable hearing than the land-based elites opposing land transfers.

Alternatively justified by legal or social justice arguments, the choices of listening to certain voices and ignoring others were blatantly guided by concerns for corporate interests. In this context, the mayor of Ambatolahy had allowed critical access to decision-making power to those struggling against dispossession. With his actions having become increasingly ambivalent however, Mangidy's village elites were concerned that the only crack in the institutional bias was about to be closed down.

Versatile politics in a context of growing dissent

In the context of Tozzi Green's fast-moving developments in Ambatolahy, the mayor was

312 Interview Didier and interview Gomez.

313 Lala, Mangidy Alakamisy, 22/04/2014.

314 Informal discussion with villagers from Feoandala, fields close to tract B, 22/04/2014.

315 Dax, Mangidy Maroteza, 21/04/2014.

indeed showing a suspicious lack of responsiveness. As reported in a previous paper, he had so far been very quick to oppose attempts of secret bargaining between Tozzi Green and “cooperative” villagers, systematically reminding Tozzi Green that, invited by villagers or not, they were not allowed to develop in Ambatolahy without his support (Gingembre 2015). The distant attitude he was showing towards this manifest threat of encroachment on municipal land, therefore, contrasted with this activism of the first days. On paper, his opposition to Tozzi Green was unwavering. Besides the large meeting he had recently organised to sensitise Ambatolahy’s villagers on their land rights, mentioned above, he had written a letter to the new Region Head to reiterate the opposition of the municipality to the land transfer³¹⁶ as new Memorandums of Understanding were being negotiated between the company and the other two municipalities. However, Mangidy and their neighbours were wondering why he had never responded to their calls to come and observe the situation on the ground:

Yes, the mayor has already heard of the new delineations but his eyes haven’t seen them yet. In the past, the mayor and the *fokontany* were managing to oppose the Tozzi Green project in Ambatolahy but now they are penetrating our territory and they don’t even come here to have a look. [...] They often say they are going to come and have a look. We called them several times but until now they haven’t come, whereas we’re in real danger here.³¹⁷

In this context, there were also growing suspicions that he had been corrupted or at best, would only put his neck on the line for the very wealthy patrons:

-But you know the mayor is opposed to Tozzi Green working in Ambatolahy, right?
[Ironical grin from Fabrice and Lala]
- No, you know I don’t know if the mayor is really opposed to Tozzi Green. He is just trying to protect people from Andalanotsy.³¹⁸

As disenchantment grew, villagers were seeking alternative ways to resist Tozzi Green appropriating their land. Villagers from Antsoha said they were now trying their luck with the newly elected MP, a rice collector who had been working in the region for years and as such was a familiar figure to the villagers: ‘He recommended that we sent him our complaints by letter and to send them to him directly if we suspected the mayor of corruption’.³¹⁹ While initiatives such as this one showed that the leading figures were not quite giving up, hopes

316 Interview head of region, Ihosy, 01/02/2014.

317 Ikala, *lonaky* Antsoha, Antosha, 13/05/2014.

318 Discussion with Fabrice, head of *fokontany* and Lala, his younger brother, 05/05/2014.

319 Laza, Antosha, 14/05/2014.

were slimming. They were running out of resources. Their formal and argued opposition to Tozzi Green, through letters, networking with the civil society and communication with the media, had failed to protect their land rights on the Ankazoabo tract. Now internal contestation and the potential loss of their most outspoken advocate of their struggle clearly seemed to open a way to Tozzi Green inside Ambatolahy itself.

Conclusion

The case of Mangidy offers another vivid illustration of the local contestation around corporate land deal negotiations and shows how internal dissent can be instrumentalised by decision-makers to circumvent an assertive bottom-up resistance.

As in Antranohazo (Chapter 6), procedures of consultation were organised in a way that left little space for the participation and objection rights of land users and land owners. From straightforward breaches of law such as the head of *fokontany* not being invited to reconnaissance missions and procedures being started without the official approval of the mayor (case of tract A and B) to biased state agents resorting to misinformation to accelerate villagers' compliance with land requests and to selective legalism to outlaw protest, this case is a good illustration of how second-dimensional power dynamics contribute to constraining local voices in land deal negotiations in Madagascar. Villagers' frequent mention of their 'fear of the foreigner' to explain resignation or compliance points again to the effects of a history of oppression by state and foreign forces (third dimension of power). By revealing how these fears are deliberately revived through intimidation strategies and power abuses (second dimension of power), I contend that they should not be understood as the sole reflection of internalised reflexes of powerlessness.

This case study has the specificity of highlighting the fact that villagers have different vulnerabilities towards these vertical power dynamics, and points to the unequal distribution of resources that it seems to be related to (first dimension of power). Whilst not immune to fear (of sanctions, of foreigners and so on) and whilst also prone to anticipating defeat in the context of institutional bias, Mangidy's village elites have some educational, relational and material resources that allow them to mitigate power asymmetries. Their contacts with the civil society contributed to enhancing their bargaining power by giving them means to

express themselves outside the official control channels of communication. Critically, their local wealth and influence provided them with tools to incentivise a pivotal state agent such as a mayor to go against institutional bias and resist the temptation of extraversion to support their struggles against dispossession, at least initially. Excluded from the discussions with connected, informed external actors, less senior villagers have less access to the information and support networks needed to see through false pretence, resist intimidation and try and negotiate actively for fair terms of incorporation.

The case of Mangidy is also a reminder that the corporate need for territorial expansion sits uncomfortably with the flexibility and negotiability that characterises customary land tenure. The Mangidy case makes it clear that the exclusionary nature of popular consultation in the context of land deal negotiations, whereby only a limited number of land rights claimants are given voice, is not only a technical problem related to an ignorance of the complexity local land tenure; it also suits state and corporate concerns. Long, protracted discussions over rightful land users and land owners would not only delay business, but they may doom the deal to failure for there may always be people to oppose corporate land access. The exclusions of the villagers of Ambatolahy from discussions over the tracts of Bekata and Ankazoabo over which they had claims may not have originally been intentional; their protest over the ongoing land transfers was loud and clear. Going against what those pushing for the land deal wanted to hear however, they were swiftly silenced again. Where corporate interests are high such as on the fertile plain of Berevo, consultation can run the risk of being reduced to tokenism, with contesting of land deals ignored and local authorities illegally circumvented.

Work in Mangidy also confirmed the findings from Antranohazo (Chapter 6) regarding the importance of social positioning in informing perceptions of corporate land access. Villagers who lack cattle wealth either have fewer land needs (if they do not tend cattle) or are more likely to be willing to trade some of their land against perceived opportunities of increasing autonomy through diversification of livelihoods.

In Antranohazo, there were those who insisted on the fact that they had complied with land

requests because there was no other choice, or others who explained they had originally hoped they might gain from the deal. The case of Mangidy shows that behind these clear-cut post-outcome narratives, these rationales often meet and that compliance can stem from a variously-balanced conjunction of hope and power pressures. When discussions with the company go against the opinion of village authorities, there is also an assumed element of risk. The violation of essential social rules (the duty to respect elders' authority especially on the critical issue of village land and to prioritise the collective good over the individual one) carries a high risk of social condemnation. In this context, accounts of respective experiences with the consultation and discussions of the rationales for complying with the company against the authorities are a delicate exercise, which needed to be read as processes of internal negotiations. The case of Mangidy illustrates this very well. To downplay the moral economic sin, some opted for the strategy which consisted of justifying their choice to struggle for incorporation as a potentially beneficial choice for the whole village community (as for Dax in Maroteza), whilst those whose subversion to village authority was much riskier, sought to plead as victims of broader power dynamics (villagers of Vohiposa).

Despite these reconstructions, indignations were converging. The company was failing in its duty of gratitude and reciprocity. Hopes were fading as Tozzi Green appeared to be much more proactive on the front of land appropriation than on that of corporate responsibility, and concern and bitterness grew as feelings of having been fooled were compounded by the weight of social sanctioning from the rest of the community. However, at this stage, fractures were too deep for elites to acknowledge the power pressures that may have pushed others to opt for strategies of incorporation or to either help them in their struggles or invite them to join theirs. The fear of unleashing a conflict within the village community was further inclining to silence.

In this context, the villagers of Mangidy ultimately exercised very little, if any, influence on the terms and conditions of the land deal despite their support by civil society. Two main dynamics can make sense of this apparent contradiction: firstly, as discussed above, decision-makers tend to arbitrate conflicting voices towards the interpretation that favours corporate interests and secondly, exclusive of a large section of the village community and with little

effort to generate consensus around a common attribution of opportunity and threat, contentious politics failed to prevent both the instrumentalising of dissent and to enhance the bargaining power of either fronts of struggles. As such, this case points to the weaknesses of the exemplary bottom-up resistance led against dispossession in Ambatolahy. It failed to have reach in an unequal, divided setting and suffered from its dependence on a single state agent (the mayor) whose jurisdiction was limited territorially and who, for different reasons, seemed tempted to back out on his support of villagers' struggles against dispossession.

CHAPTER 9:

BEING HEARD IN LAND DEALS

LESSONS FROM THE TOZZI GREEN CASE STUDY

The literature on the global land rush highlighted the need to gain a more complex, nuanced view of the diversity of ‘reactions from below’ (Borras and Franco 2013; Hall et al. 2015). The analysis of local responses to large-scale land deals, I added, should pay attention not only to visible reactions, but also to more invisible, potentially suppressed ones. I also observed that only some of the local voices that were expressed in the context of negotiations may exert influence on the terms and conditions of corporate land access. These observations led me to dedicate this doctoral research to the understanding of how the voices of local people could be ‘heard or suppressed in the context of land deal negotiations’.

Building on the observation that land deals are context-specific and contingent processes, I opted for a case study approach, and chose a specific case from southern Madagascar to explore the research question mentioned above through the three core themes of ‘negotiations’, ‘responses’ and ‘outcomes’. Findings from the first phase of empirical research pointed to the relevance of Gaventa’s theory of power (1980), James Scott’s concept of moral economy (1976) and of McAdam et al.’s analysis of the dynamics of contention (2001) in exploring local variations in perceptions, engagement and outcomes. These data and theoretical insights helped me structure the rest of the research work through three critical sub-research questions: (i) How can power dynamics inform local responses to land deal negotiations and how and under which conditions can power relations be challenged by these responses?; (ii) What moral economic considerations underpin compliance with or resistance to corporate land access and with which implications on the perceptions of the outcome of the land deal?; (iii) Which voices transform into influence and under which conditions? Drawing on this refined analytical structure, the second phase of empirical research, focused on three village case studies, brought out critical findings in the understanding of how local voices could be heard or suppressed in the context of land deal negotiations.

This conclusion provides a summarised discussion of these findings. First it explains how they bring light on the first question raised in this thesis by illustrating how, in the process of expressing or enabling voice within land deal negotiations, power represents both a means to an end and an end in itself. While the distribution of power within the agrarian population helps to explain some of the variation in local perceptions of the land deal, it also contributes to influencing whose views will be heard. In this context, special power is wielded by the state agents who derive ‘powers of exclusion’ from their intervention as brokers and ‘powers of compliance’ from the projections of verticality and cohesion that states can convey to their population. This research shows that top-down processes of exclusion and forced compliance (‘compliance as acquiescence’) can be resisted, however, and that compliance can in itself represent some resistance to the prevailing order (‘compliance as resistance’).

The following pages explain how this research has answered the second question raised in this thesis. While contested and socially-situated, the moral economies behind the variegated responses to the land deal agree on several critical aspects, which are summarised. In considerations over the justice of land deals, local people argue over the question of who has the right to talk but meet on the essential obligations of those brokering or benefiting from corporate land access, collectively expressing a resistance to the demoralising of land deals. These considerations play a critical role in influencing both responses and perceptions of outcomes and can encourage attempts to challenge power relations and express subversive voices in the context of consultation.

Finally, the conclusion closes on a discussion of the critical findings of this research on dynamics of influence, by summarising the dynamics and conditions that have been found to boost, or undermine, local people’s capacities to influence the outcomes of the negotiations. The argument that influence comes about as the intersection of power, moral economy and politics is substantiated in relation to the empirical research findings. The discussion points again to the key role of state authorities in mediating influence, highlighting how their competing struggles for the authority and resources of patronage associated with the control of corporate land access and their vulnerability to social movements in an era of transnational

governmentality opens interstices for local influence. Madagascar's legal regime is used as an opportunity for the state to reclaim control of untitled land officially instead of respecting local rights. However, by forcing a lengthy negotiation, it expands the time open for influence. Discussion of the politics of influence also highlights how inter and intra-class politics, underpinned by considerations of moral economy, informs chances of avoiding an instrumentalisation of division by state and corporate elites.

The conclusion reviews the main arguments and findings of the thesis on the question of how the voices of local people are heard, or silenced, in the context of land deal negotiations. It closes with some comments on the contributions of this work on the theoretical debates in the land grab literature.

Voicing power, resisting power

This thesis demonstrates that local responses to land deal negotiations can partly be understood as means to either defend one's power or to challenge others' domination. In view of the socio-economic stakes represented by corporate land access, land deal negotiations indeed present significant opportunities for the challenging or reinforcing of power and authority.

Power is also used to impose certain voices over others in the context of the negotiations. The ability and confidence to defend one's views can be built upon local power resources. Conversely, certain local voices can be undermined by state power, either through outright exclusion from decision-making spaces or through the discursive construction of compliance.

Domination and class in perceptions of land deals

In the introduction to this work, I acknowledged the importance of paying attention to dynamics of inter- and intra-class politics and social differentiation in examining local responses from below (Hall et al. 2015). The comparative study and village case studies confirmed that socially-ascribed positions along gender, class, age and kin affected perspectives on the land deal, but in a complex intersection with factors related to the

geography, ecology and institutional character of the deal (Edelman et al. 2015) and to the (perceived) moral economy of the transaction and of village relationships.

As noted by Hall et al. (2015), although different groups are related to land at the local level, their relationship to land vary: they may be landed elites, capitalist landowners, land brokers, or smallholders, share-croppers, tenants, hunter-gatherers, pastoralists and so on. In the case of the Ihorombe plateau examined here, land concentration is modest, and most nuclear families who had lived in the area for a generation or longer were smallholders with some farmland in their possession. However, there were inequalities in the degrees of control over the means of production, which informed relations of domination. Cattle possession marked relations of domination between wealthy cattle owners (who could hold as many as 5,000 head of cattle) and others who exchanged their labour (as cow herders) for the right to use the cattle owned by others for farming. As far as land was concerned, control of land and of its yields was determined along gender, age, kinship and ethnicity.

What both the comparative analysis (Chapter 5) and the village case studies established was that those interested in trading land for jobs and socio-economic opportunities in the Ihorombe plateau came predominantly from those groups with little control over land or cattle and who were under the social and economic domination of others. In their quality of semi-subsistence farmers and/or cow herders, women, young people and members of poorer kin groups also depended on land for their livelihoods. However, in their situation, opportunities for accumulation of capital were scarce and they were entirely dependent on dominant members of the local societies in cases of external shocks such as illnesses, bad yields and so on. The opportunities for jobs, livelihood diversification and access to basic social services that were being offered by the company in exchange for some grassland (that they may not need as much as their more privileged neighbours or next of kin) were therefore more likely to have a strong appeal among them. Beyond opportunities for enhanced wellbeing, what they saw, as put explicitly by both Nirina, a young female from Antranohazo (Chapter 6) and Dax, an underprivileged man from Mangidy (Chapter 8), was the prospect of increased autonomy. It was not only that they had less to lose from a land they did not control; they also saw potential for some emancipation from the local structures of

domination and determination.

There were counterexamples however, proving Bernstein's point that 'class relations are [a] universal but not exclusive determination of social practices of capitalism' (Bernstein 2010: 115), with wealthy cattle owners holding positive views of Tozzi Green and conversely, females or poor villagers being opposed to it. Some of these cases pointed to the complexity of social identities at their articulation of multiple social divides. Examples discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 showed, for instance, that women were not systematically enthusiastic about the deal offered by Tozzi Green. For some, as Narindra and Nathan's wives in Antranohazo (Chapter 6), reluctance towards the agribusiness project could be explained by the fact that they had married into the *lonaky*'s family and as such, were also part of the dominant segment of the village. The other examples failing the broad pattern outlined above showed that some other important variables were at play in constructing perceptions of corporate land access. Ketaka, for instance, a modest female villager from Soatanana (Chapter 7) explained being opposed to the land deal because she had more trust in the safety mechanisms offered by her own village community than by those offered by the corporate actors. The *lonaky* of Betongolo, who owned more than 5,000 head of cattle and happily gave land to Tozzi Green, articulated an inverse logic, talking of trust towards a company who had respected the terms of the deal they had agreed on (Chapter 5). In addition to the compensation, the deal represented a boost, as opposed to a threat, to their local influence, since it had allowed them to build relations with the powerful foreigner.

This research has established that to some extent, inter and intra-class patterns of domination within the local population could help to make sense of the uneven perceptions of corporate land access. However, as shown by the counter-examples discussed above, people's views on land deals were also informed by other considerations hinted at here, and discussed below : (i) inter and intra-class relationships, and (ii) the experiences with the negotiation process and the type of deals offered (geography of the land transfer according to respective ecological constraints, compensation, labour schemes and so on), both perceived through the lens of moral economies.

The findings of this research on dynamics of power are further drawn out below. Discussions of the powers of exclusion and compliance will highlight the critical role of state authorities in informing local people's choice to express, or suppress, their own voices.

State powers of exclusion and of compliance

This thesis described how dynamics of voice were also embedded within state politics of land deals. In state politics, I included: (i) historical forms of governance, (ii) the nature of the political regime and (iii) laws in practice. This section summarises how, in Madagascar, historical practices of governance through extraversion, neopatrimonialism and bureaucratic authoritarianism play in favour of powers of exclusion and compliance, against the spirit of the 2005 land reform aimed at protecting the land rights of agrarian populations. It also highlights how the state's projections of 'verticality and encompassment' (Ferguson and Gupta 2012) successfully conceal the contradictions and contentions that plague state interventions in land deals.

Powers of exclusion

In their special issue on the 'state in the land grab', Woford et al. (2013) noted that 'we still need a better framework for an understanding of how land deals are shaping-and being shaped by the modern nation state' (190). This case study highlights the 'powers of exclusion' and 'powers of compliance' through which host states and domestic elites influence voices and spaces for influence.

The legal-institutional bias that has been observed towards corporate land access in Madagascar despite a legal reform protective of local land rights (Teyssier et al. 2010; Andrianirina Ratsialonana et al. 2011; Burnod et al. 2013b) is embedded within historical practices of governance, in which extraversion and neopatrimonialism feature prominently (Chapter 2). In a context of 'bureaucratic authoritarianism', state administration and government officials have the power to close spaces of decision-making to those whose views may conflict with corporate land extension and as such, to bypass legal provisions protecting agrarian populations against dispossession. In contexts where local consultations are held, this thesis shows this is done by giving voice to villagers with a stronger disposition to cooperate. In both Antranohazo (Chapter 6) and Mangidy (Chapter 8) indeed, Tozzi Green

negotiated (some of) the land deal with the poorest members of the village who had some interest in the prospects offered by the company.

The case of Mangidy (Chapter 8) illustrates how decision-makers can choose to ignore voices that are expressed in both invited and claimed spaces. Indeed, Mangidy's leaders were first excluded from invited spaces: the land transfers to the north and to the south of the village were both decided on outside their consent, approved by the neighbouring village for the first, by some of their own family members for the other. Then their protest against that first land transfer through other channels of expression was discarded on the grounds that their village did not have any decision-making rights on lands that administratively belonged to the neighbouring municipality. As such, this case is a good illustration of how second-dimensional power dynamics can contribute to suppressing local voices in land deal negotiations in Madagascar: between the choice of whom to invite to the consultation table and the use of selective legalism to outlaw protest, state agents in their quality of both brokers and decision-makers can help to target villagers with a disposition towards incorporation and ignore struggles against dispossession, even when these are formalised.

Conversely, state power can be used to suppress the voices of those who may have been interested in cooperating with the company, as illustrated by the official decision made by the mayor of Ambatolahy to forbid all land transfers in the municipality.

Choices over whom to include and exclude from the consultation represent an efficient means of either accelerating or stalling corporate land access. Another way state brokerage can influence responses to land deals is by delivering or obscuring certain pieces of information and by feeding people's anticipations of defeat through different means related to the second and third dimensions of power, or what could be referred to as 'powers of compliance'.

Powers of compliance

The thesis demonstrated how the power dynamics at work in state mediation of land deal negotiations contributed to constraining responses in the context of consultation. It also showed that through projections of 'verticality and encompassment' (Ferguson and Gupta 2012), discourses and practices of mediation successfully concealed the contradictions and

contentions that plague state interventions in land deals.

In the multiple village study, a number of village leaders reported having felt that they had no choice *but* to comply with corporate land requests (Chapter 5). The explanations they gave as to why they had felt forced to comply were confirmed and substantiated in all three village case studies (Chapters 6, 7 and 8). Fears of both the foreigners and of the state were a recurrent theme, indicating that local responses to land deals unequivocally needed to be read in the light of colonial and postcolonial patterns of domination (third dimension of power). However, their explanations also made it clear that these fears were not the sole product of an internalised history of domination but were instead fed by everyday practices of governance. Decisions to avoid a confrontation with the state or the wealthy, foreign investor were based on the perceptive understanding of the legal-institutional bias against which they stood, and of which state brokers sent constant reminders.

Accounts of the official negotiation process in Antranohazo (Chapter 6) provided the most thorough illustration of the various means through which villagers were pressured into compliance. First, the agenda on which they were consulted was tightly controlled and their choice was reduced to ‘where’, as opposed to ‘whether’, land should be given to the company. In addition, villagers were deprived of the delay and information needed to understand what was at stake. Most importantly, they were dissuaded to withhold cooperation through discursive reminders of the full support that “the state” had given to the company and through recourse to misinformation about people’s rights on lands falsely presented as the property of the state (second dimensional power dynamics). These discourses and practices contributed to the ‘perceptions of verticality and encompassment’ that Ferguson and Gupta identify as key variables in the production of state spatialisation (2002). Faced with these projections of a cohesive state power, most villagers felt they lacked the resources, information and support to carry out a struggle with any prospect of victory (first dimension of power). Similar processes were also reported in both Soatanana (Chapter 7) and Mangidy (Chapter 8). While pressuring villagers into compliance through these first and second dimensional power dynamics, state officials also tended to ignore grievances expressed in other spaces. Coming back to the ideal-types drawn in Chapter 3, compliance with corporate

land access is, in these contexts, less of a ‘naturalised compliance’ (or manipulated consent) than a manifestation of ‘acquiescence’ in a resignation to power asymmetries.

The state as the site of legitimate theft?

In their introduction to their special issue on the role of the state in large-scale land deals, Wolford et al. (2013) have observed that ‘in this process [of accumulation by dispossession], the state is implicated as not only the site of legitimate violence, but as the site of legitimate theft.’ (197).

Drawing on the case of Madagascar, I argue that state authorities can actively facilitate compliance with dispossession without needing to mobilise the state monopoly (or threat) of force. The three-dimensional approach to power begs for closer attention to the more invisible processes of ‘extra-economic means’ of capital accumulation. The scrutiny of the process of land deal negotiations illustrates indeed the performative strength of the state projections of verticality (state is above society), encompassment (the state encompasses its localities) and cohesion (Ferguson and Gupta 2002). Whereas state leaders adopt contradictory, changing positions within the course of the land deal negotiations, to villagers, the state is seen as a cohesive, powerful whole which lends unwavering support to the foreign capital. These projections play a decisive role in generating a sense of anticipated defeat, or in constructing acquiescence through what I have called ‘powers of compliance’.

The exploration of the panoply of responses within the case of Tozzi Green revealed first that powers to comply could be confronted, second that compliance in invited spaces could also be obscured, or be followed by, resistance through claimed spaces, and third that compliance could actually represent a challenge to power

Powers of resistance

The Tozzi Green case study showed that although dominant, cooperation with land requests was not necessarily the only response that was given to the consultation process across the local population and that, in certain villages, pressures to comply had been resisted. In addition, compliance did not mean outright renunciation of struggle either, but could instead represent a calculated performance’, or what Scott would call a ‘public transcript’ (1990),

aimed at concealing resistance through other means. Finally, when it is enacted by unauthorised voices, ‘compliance’ with the consultation process represents a challenge to (local) power relations.

Resisting powers of compliance and powers of exclusion

The negative responses given to the consultation by some villagers in the case of Tozzi Green demonstrated that vertical power dynamics could be challenged in invited spaces. The municipality of Benala, first, openly opposed the implementation of the project on their municipal territory (Chapter 2). Out of the 26 villages visited in 2013, three openly refused to give land to Tozzi Green, two of which did it against the advice of their mayors (Chapter 5). The exploration of the Soatanana case study (Chapter 7) showed that these acts of defiance were premised on a prior position of strength, shielding to a certain extent from power pressures and galvanised by the pro-active wielding of a counter-power.

Field observations indicated that villagers could be subjected to slightly different levels of power pressures (extortions, intimidation), according to their positions in the local society. More decisively, it seems, however, villagers demonstrated differentiated capacities to resist those pressures. By constructing counter-narratives of land rights and accumulation strategies, and opposing the precarious, flimsy livelihood prospects offered by the company to their own material security, the village leaders of Soatanana successfully offset feelings of anticipated defeat, in a demonstration of how third dimensional power dynamics could be mobilised to local people’s advantage. The village leaders also had some educational, relational and material resources (first dimension of power) that were mobilised to confront power asymmetries. These power resources were also observed in the case of Mangidy (Chapter 8). Unequally distributed within the village, however, these assets did not prove sufficient for struggles against dispossession to prevail, with some villagers lacking the information and support networks needed to see through false pretence, resist intimidation and to try and negotiate actively for fair terms of incorporation.

Powers of exclusion also faced resistance. Showing that letters to state authorities constituted a common repertoire of protest among agrarian populations of the Ihorombe plateau, the multi-village study (Chapter 5) illustrated how the silencing of voices in the consultation

process could be resisted in other spaces. In their protest of those land transfers that had been made without their approval, these letters also defied the prevailing narratives according to which villagers had no right over their land. Most made a case that the land may have legally belonged to the state (as they were made to believe), it was that of their ancestors and they had been depending on and caring for it for generations. As such, they were showing that their cosmology and systems of rights and norms provided them with a robust legitimising notion in refusing to be the passive victims of their own dispossession.

This research therefore recalls that within local populations that share similar types of agrarian livelihoods and histories of marginalisation, different levels of resources and different abilities to develop mediating strategies in response to social change can translate into different vulnerabilities to power pressures. The thesis also shows that passive compliance in invited spaces can obscure, or be followed by, struggles in claimed spaces.

Compliance as a performance

Tozzi Green case study showed that, for different reasons, attitudes of cooperation with the consultation process should not be automatically discarded as ‘non-issues’, an expression used by Frey (1971: 1097) to refer to cases where blatant injustices are not fought against. First, compliance can obscure other types of (open or discreet) resistance. Even those villagers who showed the strongest vulnerability to vertical power pressures and acquiesced to land requests reluctantly did not merely comply in a passive way. Village leaders of Antranohazo, for instance, tried to influence negotiations by bargaining with state technical staff and with Tozzi Green’s local staff and by actively participating in the protest campaign organised in Ambatolahy. In a perceived context of skewed decision-making, compliance can be a performance which conceals, or is followed by, other forms of resistance.

Counter-intuitively, responses of compliance with corporate land access can also represent a means to defy the prevailing order: when negotiated behind the back or against the opinion of authorised voices, land transfers can represent a strong challenge of power structures within the village community.

Compliance as resistance

Whilst the unequal possession of power resources was shown to give an advantage to certain voices over others in the context of land deal negotiations (as discussed below), the context of change opened by the arrival of a powerful actor in the local field could also offer opportunities to destabilise that power distribution within the local population. Land deal negotiations can indeed open new spaces of expression, and new prospects, for subaltern villagers. The appropriation of these new channels to gain a voice usually denied to them and to defend their own interests represents, in itself, a challenge to local authorities. Subversion will be especially severe when positions expressed in these spaces run counter to the interests or expressed voices of these dominant actors of the village community.

In the case study explored here, this challenging of authority through subversive struggles for incorporation appeared more frequently as a means than as an end in itself. As reported in a number of cases observed in the 26-village study (Chapter 5), as well as in the poorest hamlets of Antranohazo (Chapter 6) and Mangidy (Chapter 8), cooperating with the company was seen as an opportunity to be eligible to the incorporation and compensation benefits promised to (or hoped for by) those contributing land to the project. It did not appear to be principally encouraged by a willingness to shake up power structures within the village community.

In both cases, there certainly was an element of assumed risk in carrying these discussions behind the back or against the opinion of village authorities. In that respect, decisions to express or silence subversive voices seemed to be partly related to perceptions of how much was at risk, with regards to how wealthy villagers performed in terms of their obligations to help and share. Trust and respect towards one's elites and strength of kinship ties also factored in choices to defend, or suppress, one's aspirations for incorporation. When village elites provide essential support and capital, antagonising them is a risk that subalterns may want to weigh carefully, as illustrated by the hesitations betrayed by villagers from the hamlet of Vohiposa in Mangidy (Chapter 8). Conversely, when support mechanisms are weaker (and potentially deemed to be insufficient), the risks of alienating one's kin might be worth considering: this was reflected clearly in the freedom with which people from the hamlet of Maroteza (Mangidy) which had recently been deprived of the cattle they had previously been

entrusted with, described their negotiations with Tozzi Green (Chapter 8). The limited interdependency, and palpable tension, that existed between poor and less poor villagers in Antranohazo (Chapter 6) may also explain why the hamlet of Tsivory may have been willing to consider transgressing local authority to bargain for incorporation.

In all cases however, there was a marked effort to either fully conceal the expression of unauthorised, subversive voices as in the case of Tsivory or to present them as the result of top-down pressures as in the hamlet of Vohiposa in Mangidy. While power relations were challenged, that was done in a discreet way, and the objective was to secure the benefits of the land deal, rather than to shake up local power structures *per se*.

Power in the context of land deal negotiations: some lessons

The observation of the varying perceptions, as well as the varying degrees of engagement that had characterised local responses to Tozzi Green land deal negotiations (Chapter 5) had hinted at the differing positions of power and vulnerability to power pressures that existed within local populations. From silence to outward resistance through (forced and less forced) compliance, certain voices were expressed while others were suppressed. This raised the question as to ‘how power dynamics could inform local responses to land deal negotiations and how and under which conditions power relations could be challenged by these responses’. The answers the research brought to this question can be summarised as follows:

- Powers of exclusion and powers of compliance can be wielded by state agents, who can influence whether local people will be able, and/or feel entitled, to express their voices (first and second dimensions of power).
- Some responses to land deal negotiations can represent a resistance to vertical power relationships (when local people struggle against dispossession) which can be boosted by previous power resources (material and relational resources mainly) and others a challenge to horizontal relationships (when unauthorised voices struggle for incorporation).
- Compliance can either be the product of first and second dimensional power (forced compliance) or the expression of a defiance to horizontal power relations (subversive compliance or compliance as resistance).

It is not only power that is at stake in large-scale land deal negotiations. It is also justice. This research revealed that whatever views were constructed and whatever responses were expressed in the context of local land deal negotiations, these were always underpinned by moral economic expectations, or a certain vision of what was fair and unfair, in economic transactions around land. All of those villagers who had complied with the land requests made it clear that their cooperation, or passive tolerance, was dependent on the company respecting a number of obligations. The enthusiasm of those who were showing interest in the opportunities of incorporation was conditioned on the company showing fair gratitude, while those who had complied against their will because of power pressures made it clear that those acquiring land had not been given *carte blanche* either. The lack of resistance may be suffered; it did not mean it is not underpinned by (expressed or silent) expectations. Resignation was given with conditions. Likewise, the explanations given by those who had decided to openly resist dispossession also revolved around ideas of justice and legitimacy. The next section elaborates on these matters, in an effort to explain how this research has answered the second question raised in this thesis, that is: ‘What moral economic considerations underpin expressed or unexpressed responses of compliance with or resistance to corporate land access and with which implications on the perceptions of the outcome of the land deal?’

The contested moral economies of land deals

Exploring what moral economic considerations underpinned (conflicting) responses to land deal negotiations brought out some of the main lines of dissent and consensus that characterised local responses to corporate land access.

Local populations are not only divided over the question of which struggles (against dispossession, or for incorporation) should be pursued in the context of the land deal as reminded above, but also over the issue of who has a right to talk. This raises issues of relational legitimacy and justice, particularly complex in a context where land tenure is characterised by flexibility and negotiability. However, beyond their varied perceptions and

varied engagements with the negotiations, local people agree on the critical question of what the essential obligations of both those brokering and those benefiting from the land deal should be. This section pulls together the findings of this research project on the moral economic expectations that underpin (variously-driven and variously-expressed) compliance on the one hand, and resistance on the other, pointing to the tensions and synergies behind the ‘legitimising notions’ of both types of response.

The right to talk: one voice for multiple claimants

The case study examined in this thesis draws attention to the potential shortcomings of consultation processes in terms of participation and sensitivity to the complexities of local land tenure. When the local population is invited to consultation processes, generally, space is made for one entity only to make a decision on a specific tract of land. In the context of flexibility and negotiability that characterises community-based systems of natural resource management (Berry 1993), the inclusion of some local entities in a decision over a land transfer may *de facto* translate into the exclusion of others. In its sole choice of interlocutor and for need of a decisive decision, such consultation processes therefore legitimise some claims over others (Peters 2004). This carries strong potential for tensions, as other studies on corporate land access in pastoral areas have already outlined (Catley et al. 2012).

In the case of Tozzi Green, most expressions of protest against the ‘unfairness’ of the land deal were indeed related to situations where only one claimant was consulted for tracts on which rights were shared. The frequency of these reported grievances highlights the exclusion potential of consultation processes based on a definitive, exclusive model of property: out of the 26 villages visited in 2013, a total of eight were contesting land transfers made by neighbours or fellow villagers without their consent (Chapter 5); out of the three village case studies carried out in 2014, illegitimate land transfers were reported in two (Soatanana and Mangidy) and suspected in the other one (Antranohazo).

The land disputes documented in Soatanana (Chapter 7) and Mangidy (Chapter 8) illustrate two different types of shortcomings. In both cases, some of the land on which they used to graze their cattle was given to Tozzi Green by their neighbours, without them being

consulted. Thanks to a negotiation initiative outside of invited spaces, Soatanana managed to recover some of the land that had been appropriated by Tozzi Green to the east of their village (the part on which they owned alienation rights) but they resigned themselves to the loss of the rest (on which they only had access and withdrawal rights). As a result, they lost critical grassland, even though they had refused Tozzi Green's land requests when consulted and that decision had been respected by the company. This demonstrates that even free, prior and informed refusal does not protect from the risk of unwanted land losses when access and withdrawal rights do not warrant a position at the negotiating table. In Mangidy, the outcome of the land deal generated a much stronger resentment still, since pastures were lost on a tract on which they claimed alienation rights. Their attempt to contest that land transfer was defeated on state-legal grounds: since administratively that tract belonged to the neighbouring municipality, they were denied the right to challenge it. Their case highlights exclusions related to the distortion between lived spaces, on which local rules of land tenure apply, and abstract spaces, administrative divisions used by the state to organise country planning and regulate private operations (Vandergeest and Peluso 1995).

At best, consultation such as those conducted by Tozzi Green make space for voices based on alienation rights but exclude others; at worst, they completely ignore local rules and are based on formal administrative territories. In this context, those who get to decide who can talk on what can yield considerable power, as discussed in the section 'powers of exclusion' above.

Moral duties in the context of the land deal

In the section above, I noted that the land deal represented contrasting implications in terms of power according to one's position within the local society, which partly helped to make sense of the variation in perceptions of corporate land access. I also indicated that no pattern could be observed along specific social divides, however, since several key dynamics also played a key role in informing people's views on land deals. The 26-village comparison and the three detailed village case studies showed that socially-situated perspectives intersected with two main variables: the type of deal offered and the geography of corporate land access with regards to people's land needs, on the one hand; local people's experiences with the

consultation process (whether and how they were involved, nature of information given, which promises were made and so on) and the respect for essential rights and obligations it foreshadowed, on the other. These proved at least as, if not more, essential in determining people's perceptions of the land deal than intra and inter-class divides and revealed some consensus over a number of moral economic considerations across the local society.

A moral duty to consult

Villagers' accounts of the land deal negotiations revealed that an understanding of the potential loss or gain (in terms of livelihoods and/or domination) that could be caused by the agribusiness project was not solely determined by one's social positions, but also influenced by people's experience of the land deal negotiations itself.

These experiences contributed to making some wealthy cattle owners support the agribusiness project and some poor or disenfranchised villagers condemn it. In the 26-village study, I encountered examples of rich cattle-owners who reported feeling satisfied of having complied with Tozzi Green's land requests: the *lonaky* of Betongolo, who owned more than 5,000 head of cattle, explained, for instance, that he had voluntarily agreed to give land and did not regret this choice, since their choice of the (small) tract of land for transfer had been respected by the company who, subsequently, had provided them with some support in exchange (Chapter 5). This deal was looked at as a means to enhance rather than threaten their local influence, since it had allowed them to build relations with the powerful foreigner. Depending on the engagement with the company and the outcome of the land deal, corporate land access was not always seen as a threat to local wealth and domination. There were on the other hand cases where poor villagers (such as those from Manosarena or Soavononjy, for instance) held strong resentment towards the agribusiness project: their exclusion from the consultation had resulted in corporate land access causing the village major problems, even though they "only" looked after a dozen heads of cattle borrowed from elsewhere, and might therefore have needed less land than more endowed neighbours. In both these villages, exclusion from the consultation meant not only that they had not received any compensation, but also that they were not able to influence the location of the transfer: located on their best grassland (and close to their stockyards for the former), the corporate plantations were a serious hindrance to their livelihood activities (Chapter 5).

Views also took into consideration the performances of the company in terms of its duty of gratitude: observations that the land gifts made by their neighbours had rarely been retributed by any kind of compensation or long-term job prospects, Ketaka, a young female from Soatanana, expressed scathing criticism towards the company and satisfaction at the fact that her village leaders had refused to give them land (Chapter 7).

Lack of consultation and/or of compensation can therefore feed animosities from both subaltern and dominant members of the local society: not only are they a violation of moral economic standards, they also fare badly in terms of the company's intention to coexist in harmony with local land users. Conversely, inclusion in a negotiation process allows hope for better prospects, of limiting damage at worse, of suffering no impact and getting benefits at best.

Gratitude, measure and respect

Intangible matters related to relational justice occupied a central position in people's accounts of the outcomes of the land deal. Moral judgements over the land deal were indeed shaped in the light of how the company and those brokering the land deal had performed with regards to a number of moral economic expectations that were brought to light on that occasion.

Those who expressed satisfaction at the project pointed to the fact that the choice they had expressed during consultation, whether they had decided to give (Betongolo, for instance) or not give (Marohasina) land had been respected. Measure and gratitude were also appreciated: those who said they were happy with the project explained that the location or the size of the land transfer meant that they did not suffer from it and that they had received some compensation in exchange (Chapter 5).

Research participants who, on the contrary, resented the land deal always brought up the feeling of having felt disrespected, in addition to the more material causes for concern. Disrespect had been shown in different, sometimes cumulative, ways to different people. For many, their voices had been (totally or partially) ignored. In the letters of complaint that were sent to state authorities to contest land transfers made by others, it was the offense to

their authority as village leaders and/or as the legitimate land owners, as much the loss of land itself, that was being condemned (Chapter 5). In Mangidy (Chapter 8), the *lonaky* and the other village *raïamandreny* had been totally excluded from the decisions over their land. In Antranohazo (Chapter 6), they had been consulted but, whereas they had only given their (reluctant) compliance for a tract to the west of the village, the project had also appropriated lands to the east of the village. In Soatanana (Chapter 7), the boundary marking had gone beyond the line of demarcation villagers thought had been agreed on. However small that encroachment was, villagers described it as a bad omen that more land might be taken behind their back again in the future. Behind the lack of respect for their voice, was a violation of their authority and of their decision-making power on the land of their ancestors.

Quite a few research participants who had complied with the land deal were lamenting the lack of gratitude. Resentment was especially severe in places where the contribution to the land deal had been made at the risk of alienating village authorities. This came across very strongly in the hamlets of Antranohazo (Chapter 6) and Mangidy (Chapter 8) that had been consulted: as their land gifts were being reciprocated by underpaid jobs and inappropriate or non-existent compensation, feelings of betrayal were growing. Not only were their hopes disappointed; the treason they had shown to their village leaders to allow for these land transfers was made even more difficult to defend. Indignation was expressed at the profits that were being made by local state agents to their expense: while they were suffering from these pressures on already stretched resources and strained livelihoods, some were making money. While extraversion seemed acceptable to a certain degree, this enrichment by treason and through suffering was not, and elected officials would be sanctioned for it.

One of the most cited reasons for outrage was the lack of consideration for their hardships and their subsistence needs. Shortage of pastures was the main, but not the sole, source of concern. In both Antranohazo and Mangidy, people pointed to the extra workload that the proximity of Tozzi Green's plantations with the village grassland had resulted in since that meant their cattle's movement had to be monitored closely to avoid damage. A villager from Mangidy observed that they were effectively protecting the corporate fields for free. In both villages, as in a few villages visited in 2013 (Chapter 5), issues of the cattle not being able to

be taken to the rice paddies for the *hitsaky* since no cattle corridors had been left were also raised. Finally, exclusions and insufficient dialogue between the villagers and the company meant that essential social and ritual prescriptions had been utterly violated. In Antranohazo (Chapter 6), people lamented the fact that land had changed hands without the benediction of ancestors having been asked through ritual ceremonies and cattle sacrifices.

A consensus emerged from these different accounts. They showed indeed that beyond conflicting views and contrasted outcomes, local people agreed on what the essential moral economic principles of land deals should be. However powerful, those brokering, benefiting from or negotiating corporate land access were expected to show respect for who they were (their authority, their voices, their livelihoods, their social identities and spiritual obligations) and what their needs were (by showing measure and gratitude and an appreciation of their subsistence needs).

Resisting the demoralising of land deals

Local land deal negotiations are the sites of multiple contentions, some of which divide “local communities” themselves. Not only may local people be interested in responding to corporate land access with conflicting struggles (for incorporation by some and against dispossession by others), they can also have overlapping or colluding claims on lands. Despite these tensions, however, agrarian populations agree on basic principles that need to be respected in the context of the negotiations. What moral economic considerations, I asked in this thesis, underpin responses of compliance with or resistance to corporate land access and with which implications on the perceptions of the outcome of the land deal?

Both compliance with and resistance to corporate land access are underpinned by a ‘legitimising notion’ (Thompson 1961: 68). Resisting corporate land access, on the one hand, is usually presented as the reaction to violations of, or the pre-empting of threats to essential rights related to subsistence security, to authority and to social and spiritual identities. Compliance, on the other hand, is justified by the need to fulfil basic socio-economic needs and diversify sources of livelihood incomes in a context where state support structures do not exist, and subsistence is insecure. One of the insights brought by this thesis is indeed that

compliance is not always the result of power pressures (acquiescence) but that, in some cases, it reflects instead a conjunction of ‘constrained hope’ and ‘conditional support’. The hope for social change raised by the penetration of foreign capital is constrained in the sense that there are hardly any other options to access basic socio-economic services and opportunities of livelihood diversification; the support given is conditional on those benefiting from their cooperation granting them fair terms of incorporation.

That the same land transaction can be perceived as fair by some and unfair by others reflects the complexity of local land tenure, as explained above, but also the fact that moral economies of land deals are socially-situated. However contrasted though, villagers’ views revolve around the same core values. With slightly different emphasis according to the situations, obligations of respect, gratitude and measure are indeed at the heart of both discourses. For those who complied, support for, or tolerance of, the land deal is conditioned to manifestations of respect for the choices they voiced, to the application of measure in land appropriation and to the granting of fair opportunities of compensation and incorporation. For the latter, failings to show measure and respect by those brokering and benefiting from the land deal is precisely what justifies and defines their resistance. These three core values of respect, gratitude and measure appear to be the conditions for the realisation of a moral economic order that respects both who they are and what their needs are. How others (corporate and state elites but also other villagers) perform with regards to these rights and obligations constitutes an essential lens through which actors will not only develop their perceptions of land deals, but also determine whether or not it is worth taking the risk of expressing voice, especially if that voice is (vertically or horizontally) subversive.

This brings compelling evidence of agrarian populations’ resistance to the ‘demoralising of land deals’.³²⁰ Land tenure, as the literature has discussed at length, is embedded within broader matrices of social, cultural and political relations (Bassett 1993; Chauveau and Colin 2010). Land deals are not purely economic transactions and the relations they engage will

³²⁰ The term ‘demoralising’ is borrowed from Ferguson 2006. In his essay on demoralising economics, he looks at what happens ‘when the “demoralising” logic of legitimization that [...] is pervasive in “development” of structural adjustments [...] meets the insistent moralising that is so much a part of discourses on the economy across wide areas of Africa’ (Ferguson 2006: 69).

provide a critical lens, according to which they will be judged, across the social divides that characterise the agrarian population. Compliance with dispossession and land privatisation does not equate with the wholesale acceptance of capitalist social relations.

The next pages summarise the findings on the conditions under which these expressed voices can be heard.

Interstices of influence

Comparing and contrasting the three village case studies shed light on some of the dynamics that are critical to local influence within land deals. Four main conditions were highlighted. Successful struggles against dispossession relied on opportunities and abilities to (i) express voice in both invited and claimed spaces of participation, (ii) avoid or suppress internal dissent, and (iii) gain political support, as well as (iv) on a certain corporate and state permeability to voices from below.

The next section pulls together findings regarding spaces, repertoires and cohesion of struggles within land deal negotiations, and highlights how the dynamics of influence are embedded within village politics of moral ethnicity and contradictory state politics of competition, extraversion and territorialisation.

Spaces and repertoires of struggles

The Tozzi Green case study gives a sample of the various repertoires and spaces which can be used by agrarian populations to try and influence land deals. Some villagers resorted to ‘everyday resistance’ (Scott 2008). In Antranohazo, for instance (Chapter 6), people were refusing to sign papers or trying to minimise land loss by bargaining with topographic technicians or low-ranking staff. In those hamlets of Mangidy that expressed regret at having cooperated with the company (Chapter 8), village leaders declared intentions to boycott work, seek revenge and retake land if commitments were not honoured promptly. While indicating that compliance was not a blank cheque to those acquiring land, these low-profile, uncoordinated responses were having little impact however, since the land deal was already

formalised, and the company's labour needs had significantly decreased. These voices were getting lost in interstitial spaces of non-decision-making.

This case study demonstrates that, in such contexts, the expression of loud, assertive voices, and the occupation of several spaces of decision-making constitute a first and necessary condition to being heard. This implies feeling emboldened enough to speak one's mind in invited spaces of consultation, whether to reject a land deal altogether, or to try and shape its terms. In the case of Tozzi Green indeed, as demonstrated in Chapter 5, the opportunity to express *some* choice in official spaces of negotiations and the respect of that choice by decision-makers were not sufficient conditions to allow for a positive outcome of the land deal in the village. Since pressure on the land resource was already strong for many villages, any land loss, chosen or not, could cause an adverse impact (for example, Antafika). There could also be unexpected consequences such as those cases where corporate land access caused problems even though villagers had been able to choose the tract to offer (for example, Isorano). Chances to influence the land deal successfully consisted of controlling the scope of answers to bring to land requests (not only 'where', but 'whether' land could be taken), and to envisage a right to reject them fully, as in the cases of Soatanana (Chapter 7) and the three villages mentioned in Chapter 5.

As noted above, however, not everyone was invited to speak in consultation. Some voices were excluded from the decision-making power from the start and attempts to make up for it in claimed spaces only bore fruit for those who had some support within the state administration, as those villagers from Ambatolahy who wrote letters of complaint against unagreed encroachment of their land (Chapter 5). In the absence of such support, protests such as the one expressed by village leaders of Antranohazo at the press conference in Antananarivo (Chapter 6) or that formalised by letter by the leaders of Mitatra (Chapter 5) did not bring about any results. Expressed outside the official procedure, they were easier for politicians or corporate managers to disregard.

However, in the right context, mobilising outside of formal spaces of negotiation did prove critical in addressing the shortcomings of the consultation process. The (partially) successful

examples of resistance from the village leaders of Ambatolahy (Chapter 2) and Soatanana (Chapter 7) support the view defended in Wheeler and Newell's edited volume that popular mobilisation around rights has 'the potential to provide a measure of access to justice that regulation does not, to support claims that other legal procedures do not recognise, and to ignite a level of activism that claims grounded in other discourses often fail to achieve' (2006: 6).

Village politics of moral ethnicity

The comparison of the three village case studies highlights the politics of 'moral ethnicity' (Lonsdale 1992) as a critical variable in enabling influence within land deals. Lonsdale's concept of moral ethnicity refers to 'the renegotiation of the bounds of political community and authority, the social rights and obligations of moral economy and the rights of access to land and property' (Berman 1998: 324) which underpin the emergence of ethnic identities. Although operating at the level of the *foko* (group of belonging) instead of the broader ethnic group, this political 'search for a moral community of rights and obligations' and its function in bringing the village population together were observed in the context of the land deal negotiations.

The study established indeed that those who did manage some influence on the land deal were those who proved able to avoid or suppress dissent by galvanising unity around moral economies within the village population. In socially-differentiated societies where people develop different views of the land deal, this is no easy task. As James Scott noted about the possibilities of open resistance in a rural village of Malaysia, 'the very complexity of the local class structure militates against collective opinion and, hence, collective action on most issues' (1986: 14), especially in contexts where the penetration of agrarian economies by international capital tends to reveal and accelerate inter-class tensions (Peters 2013). Whether struggling for incorporation or against dispossession, the key to success highlighted by this research seems to lie in the capacity to activate intra- and inter-class solidarity ties, thereby avoiding the risk of colliding struggles.

The Tozzi Green case study showed indeed that fractured responses risk undermining

everyone's struggles by allowing those pushing for the land deal to target those with less power resources to be able to negotiate actively, while generating a level of secrecy and tensions within the village making it hard to seek redress or repair together, if outcomes turn out to be detrimental for all. In both Antranohazo (Chapter 6) and Mangidy (Chapter 8), the aspirations of the poor, dependent segments of the village community for incorporation were instrumentalised by the state and the company, providing some legitimacy to the land deal while allowing decision-makers to ignore the parallel struggles of the village leaders. Having betrayed the authority of their village leaders and/or undermined the struggles of their elites, sometimes in a secret manner, those villagers could not reasonably request help from them once hopes for favourable terms of incorporation started fading. In Mangidy (Chapter 6), the knowledge that they had endorsed land alienation was feeding a sense of resignation from within the village elites regarding the usefulness of their own struggles against dispossession. Resentful of initiatives they believed to be solely motivated by jealousies, convinced it was too late to act and scared that confronting the village dissent could cause further damage to community relations, the latter did not consider the possibility of trying to draw the community around a common plan either, now that indignations were converging. In both villages, the elites had also been playing it alone to some extent, not including the others neither in their responses to the consultation (Antranohazo) nor in their resistance initiatives (Antranohazo and Mangidy). These exclusions did not provide fertile ground for cooperation within the village and the lack of dialogue in a context of diverging views increased the other villagers' vulnerability to power pressures.

These dynamics reflected a broader pattern of intracommunity relationships in these villages. As explained in Chapters 6 and 8, there were indeed indications that principles of reciprocity and solidarity were eroding in both places. Anthropologists and political scientists working on Madagascar have noted the detrimental impact that the loosening of relations of cooperation could have on feelings of belonging and unity structured around genealogy (Bloch 1971; Freeman 2004; Markus 2008). As noted in the closing discussion of power above, the decision to disrespect village authorities by negotiating directly with the company was certainly not taken lightly. However, the fact that the risk seemed to be worth taking certainly reflects a certain distancing from the community of belonging and a belief that

social identity and economic livelihoods could, to a certain extent, be achieved outside of the *foko* (group of belonging).

The effort put to revive those feelings of community belonging and to subsume inter and intra-class confrontations within debates over moral economy is precisely what has appeared, by contrast, to have bolstered Soatanana's successful efforts at influence (Chapter 7). The strive to convince villagers of the major threats and slim opportunities offered by private interests as illustrated by previous experiences (attribution of threat and opportunity) certainly played a major role in dissuading desires to cooperate with the company. However, more critical yet perhaps, were the politics of moral ethnicity that could be observed in their efforts to revive, through the mobilisation of customary institutions and ritual (social appropriation), the social contract that binds the *foko* around a common genealogy and common ancestors. Ethnographic work in other regions of the island had already noted the power of ritual ceremonies to protect against the appeals of individualism in the context of the globalised economy (Berger 2006a, 2006b). Soatanana leaders' success in unifying voices within the village also seemed to be sustained by a level of authority and legitimacy that seemed to be lacking in the other two villages.

This research therefore revealed the importance of avoiding or suppressing dissent within one's own community, highlighting how this could be done peacefully by wielding 'legitimizing power' (Hall et al. 2011: 171), thanks to processes of attribution of opportunity and threat and social appropriation (McAdam et al. 2001) and through politics of moral ethnicity (Lonsdale 1992). As crucial as the capacity of being heard within one's community, however, was that of being listened to by decision-makers. This was revealed to rely on a certain degree of state and corporate permeability to bottom-up protests, as well as on a capacity to mobilise some support from within the ruling elite.

National politics of influence

This thesis describes how dynamics of influence within land deals are also informed by state politics, in which I included (i) historical forms of governance, (ii) the nature of political

regimes and (iii) laws in practice.

The discussion of voices in the context of land deal negotiations in Madagascar highlighted how historical forms of governance through extraversion, neopatrimonialism and bureaucratic authoritarianism play in favour of powers of exclusion and compliance, against the spirit of the 2005 land reform aimed at protecting the land rights of agrarian populations.

This section highlights how, despite these unfavourable odds, dynamics related to the nature of political regimes in Madagascar can open interstices for local influence. The instability of political regimes and the zero-sum game nature of political competition in Madagascar provides a fertile ground for social movements that are able to seize favourable political opportunities. Local villagers, with material and relational power resources, can also gain opportunities for influence through the patron-client networks that pervade neopatrimonial states. I make the case that the legal regime governing land deals in Madagascar is an important condition for these interstices of influence, despite practices of state power that violate people's rights to oppose land alienation. I conclude by observing that these chances are short-lived and precarious: as the state formally appropriates the land to be used by private capital in a process of internal territorialisation, it also confiscates future rights to voice on the land.

Space for influence: state and corporate permeability to local struggles

Only in contexts where political regimes are permeable to the pressures of social movements and contention may local struggles stand a chance of transforming into influence. As Rutten et al. (2017) note, in authoritarian regimes, social struggles can be swiftly repressed and alliances with national and transnational support groups precluded. Instead, as the infamous Daewoo land scandal and the Tozzi Green case study presented here have shown, the Malagasy state has proved vulnerable to anti-land grab protests.

Initially, most of the senior decision-makers involved in Tozzi Green land deal negotiations sought to facilitate corporate land access by accelerating compliance and buffering the company from villagers' refusal of dispossession and requests for reparation. With time, however, positions changed, showing that electoral politics and the instability of the political

regimes in Madagascar provide political opportunities for agrarian populations, when supported by contentious politics. In the context of elections, the vocal bottom-up resistance organised by local elites from Ambatolahy with the help of the civil society indeed had an immediate impact on officials. Warned by the Daewoo scandal of the risks associated with accusations of association with “land grabbing”, these did not hesitate to suspend the corporate land access they had actively supported until then. As argued by Rutten et al. (2017), by increasing reputational risks, protest campaigns enhance smallholders’ bargaining power while making it harder for both companies and supportive state agents to circumvent local consent. As observed in Chapter 2, however, the victories gained in such favourable conjunctures can be fragile.

Legal regimes of land also matter. The scrutiny of the Tozzi Green land deal negotiations confirms that the land reform in Madagascar and more specifically, its provisions in favour of local land rights are not upheld in practice (Ferguson et al. 2014; Burnod et al. 2013b). However, I argue that the legal framework regulating corporate land access in Madagascar increases local people’s opportunities for influence. As a consequence of the ‘presumption of untitled private property’, the state can no longer lease untitled land directly to investors; before it can be transferred for use by capital, it needs to be titled in the name of the state following a lengthy procedure. I therefore argue that by increasing the time available for local people to get information, protest, find allies and so on, these legal-institutional requirements governing the trajectories of land deals enhance local people’s chance to have a say. The key position of the central state as ‘the ultimate mediator, adjudicator, and power holder’ (Ribot and Peluso 2003), regarding formal land access however, makes it essential to have alliances within its ranks.

Gaining political support

In contexts in which the central state retains the ultimate control of formal land access as in Madagascar, it is critical to have state allies heard. The rhizome nature of state apparatus in postcolonial Africa (Bayart 1989), with patronage networks linking senior officials to village elites, allows for the repercussion of struggles for those who have relational power resources. To fulfil their strategies of extraversion, those ‘patrons’ already in power may be inclined to lend a deaf ear to the complaints of their ‘clients’. However, contentious politics in certain

political conjunctures may entice them to revise their position. In addition, as observed by previous research on contemporary land deals in Madagascar, local elites may seek to impose constraints on corporate land access as a way to reassert their authority and extract additional resources of patronage (Burnod et al. 2013a).

The case of Soatanana (Chapter 7) illustrated how a position of power within the local society (through cattle wealth and relations within the state administration) could increase chances for voiced struggles to be taken into account by decision-makers. Thanks to their close relationship with the Region head (who entrusts the village with his cattle), Soatanana's complaints over the case of encroachment were granted special consideration. The leverage that rich village elites can have on local officials was also manifest in the active engagement of the mayor of Ambatolahy in the resistance movement (Chapter 2).

State authorities, for their part, may have different reasons for being tempted to deviate from the national patterns of bias towards corporate interests. There are those who are driven by frustration over their exclusion from decision-making and/or extraversion rent in the context of the land deal, such as the Region head (Chapter 2). There are others such as the mayor of Ambatolahy who, because of their own kinship identity and networks of belonging, feel accountable to those wealthy cattle owners opposed to the land deal. Finally, there are those who, for one or two of these reasons or another one still, may gamble on a different path of authority building than extraversion, putting support to struggles against dispossession in the context of the land deal at the core of their political agenda, as was the case of the municipal agents mentioned in Chapters 2 and 8.

These state officials have differing leverage on higher levels of decision-making depending on their insertion in networks of patronage, and lower-ranking officials can be easily sidelined, as illustrated in the case of that head of *fokontany* who explained that he had stopped being invited to reconnaissance missions since he had manifested his reluctance towards the project (Chapter 6). He provided, with others, important support to disgruntled villagers by spreading information and organising discussion but being excluded from the negotiation process and with little informational or relational resources himself, he had very little power

to influence the land deal. Thanks to favourable political circumstances, more senior local officials such as the mayor of Ambatolahy and the Region head managed to put pressure on the national level of decision-making to take local voices into account, however.

Corporate approach to the land deal negotiations are also key. Despite all the limitations related to the power pressures and complexity of local land tenure outlined above, the village-by-village consultations carried out by Tozzi Green indeed provided some power-resourced villagers with opportunities to contest or shape the land deal, as illustrated by the cases from the municipality of Ambatolahy (Chapter 2) and by the examples of Soatanana (Chapter 7). By contrast, other entities engaged in negotiations for large-scale land deals in Madagascar limited their efforts at consultation to one or two meetings with local authorities and “the population” (Burnod et al. 2013a) which did not leave much chance for intervention. The way the land dispute was handled in Mangidy (Chapter 8), however, showed that permeability to local voices was not as strong in all political conjunctures and could be significantly lessened where corporate interests were at risk.

State confiscation of influence

Another difference between the current land rush and 19th century ‘primitive accumulation’ described by Marx is that the state is frequently the entity legally appropriating the land. The institutional routes, required by the land reform for corporate land access, allows the state to have land registered and demarcated as ‘state private property’ at the instigation and paid for by the corporate actors. As for many contemporary land acquisitions around the world, land is turned into state property as opposed to formally passing under the control of private capital (Hall 2013).

Such land deals therefore do not represent a privatisation of commons, but a process of ‘state territorialisation’ whereby the state ‘establishes control over natural resources and the people who use them’ within national boundaries (Vandergeest and Peluso 1995). Burnod et al. underscore the historicity of these political practices: ‘Like their predecessors (Merina kings, French colonial institutions and then previous Malagasy governments), state representatives formalize new enclosures for powerful actors — from foreign corporations to environmental

NGOs (Corson, 2011; Desjeux, 1979)—and deny the legal rights of local inhabitants and communities’ (2013: 374).

This provides a compelling illustration of governance by extraversion, in which dependence is a major resource of political centralisation and economic accumulation (Bayart 2000): by allowing foreign actors to gain land access (to the detriment of local land uses), the state recentralises land control and captures resources of patronage that strengthen its rule. This also corroborates Corson’s point that internal territorialisation under neoliberalism involves non-state as well as state institutions (2011: 703). Whilst these formal land deal trajectories give more time to intervene, they ultimately revoke people’s formal rights on this land. Opportunities for local influence on land deals are short-lived: as the state formally appropriates the land to be used by private capital, it also irreversibly confiscates from local people their future rights to voice on the land.

Conclusion

This thesis evidences the critical intersection of state and village politics in informing local people’s voices and opportunities for influence in the context of land deals.

It shows that local people’s perspectives on corporate land access and decisions to express, or suppress, voice in the context of land deal negotiations are underpinned by moral economic considerations and produced at the articulation of vertical and horizontal power dynamics, inter and intra-class relationships, and of local people’s experiences with the land deal negotiation process.

It points to social differentiation and power imbalances as critical lenses through which to understand variation in local people’s perspectives over land deals. Local responses to land deal negotiations can partly be understood as means to either defend one’s power or to challenge others’ domination. Power distribution within the local population also contributes to influencing whose views stand more chances of being heard. While sharing similar agrarian livelihoods and histories of marginalisation, local people can have very different

levels of socio-economic capitals and different abilities to develop mediating strategies in response to social change, which can translate into different vulnerabilities to power pressures.

This thesis documents the role of state politics in enabling or suppressing local people's voices in land deals, through visible and invisible operations of power. In contexts where local consultation processes are held, local officials can derive 'powers of exclusion' from their intervention as brokers and 'powers of compliance' from states' projections of verticality, strength and cohesion.

This research shows that top-down processes of exclusion and forced compliance ('compliance as acquiescence') can be resisted however. By constructing counter-narratives of land rights and of accumulation strategies to those conveyed by state officials during consultation processes, villagers can successfully offset the feelings of anticipated defeat that frequently underpin acquiescence to dispossession. Local villagers with material and relational power resources can also gain opportunities for influence by activating some of the patron-client networks that pervade neopatrimonial states.

Within socially-differentiated populations, cooperation with land alienation does not solely reflect reluctant resignations to top-down pressures ('compliance as acquiescence') however but can emerge instead from complex feelings of 'constrained hope'. In contexts where socio-economic opportunities are scarce, the hopes to diversify livelihoods that are associated with the capitalist penetration of agrarian economies as well as related perspectives of gaining some autonomy from local structures of domination can embolden unauthorised voices to manifest their support to land deals in defiance of village elites. As such, those instances of compliance with corporate land access represent some resistance to the prevailing order ('compliance as resistance').

I argue that internal contentions are one of the main hurdles to local people's influence on land deals. Since unauthorised voices are generally those with the less material and relational resources, they are easy to instrumentalise to accelerate corporate land access, while their

struggles against adverse incorporation are ignored. In local people's decisions to express or suppress subversive voices in the context of land deal negotiations, moral economic considerations over the village economy are key and only those who succeed in unifying village voices beyond class divides may hope to exert influence.

In considerations over the justice of land deals, local people conflict over the question of who has the right to be consulted but meet on the essential obligations of those brokering or benefiting from corporate land access. The scrutiny of moral economic considerations in the context of land deal negotiations highlight agrarian populations' resistance to the demoralising of land deals, across social divides.

The research emphasises the key role of state authorities in mediating local people's influence on land deals, highlighting how their competing struggles for the resources of patronage and of authority that are associated with the control of corporate land access and their vulnerability to social movements in an era of transnational governmentality opens interstices for local influence. I make the case that, by designing complex institutional trajectories for capital to gain formal access to untitled land, the legal regime governing land deals in Madagascar is an important condition for these interstices of influence, despite practices of state power routinely violating people's rights to free, prior and informed consent to land alienation. I conclude by observing that these opportunities for local influence are short-lived however: as the state formally appropriates the land to be used by private capital, it also irreversibly confiscates from local people their rights to voice on the land.

In terms of policy implications, the thesis highlights two main challenges in promoting a full and fair participation of local people in negotiations over large-scale farmland privatisation: (i) the complexity of achieving uncontested, inclusive decisions in contexts where differentiated local populations develop variegated responses and where land tenure is defined by its flexibility and negotiability; (ii) the political, power-laden nature of land deal negotiations.

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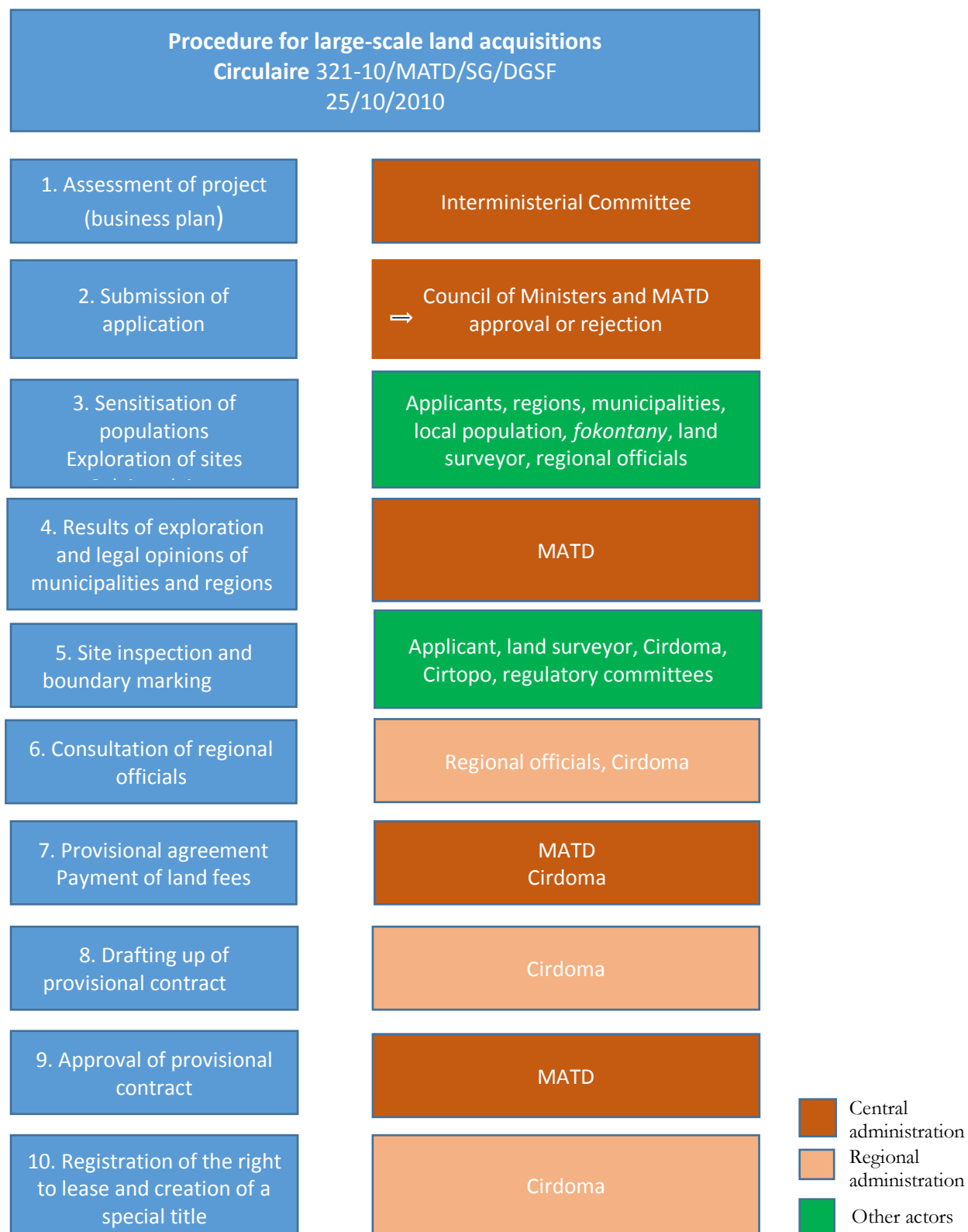
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Official procedure for large-scale land acquisitions in Madagascar



Appendix2: Memorandum requesting the suspension of Tozzi Green's land extensions



VICE - PRIMATURE EN CHARGE DU DEVELOPPEMENT
ET DE L'AMENAGEMENT DU TERRITOIRE

SECRETARIAT GENERAL

DIRECTION GENERALE DES SERVICES FONCIERS

N° 332 / 12/VPMDAT/SG/DGSF



NOTE DE SERVICE

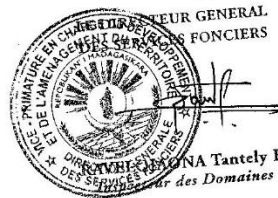
Objet : Rappel à l'ordre

Il est ordonné aux Chefs des Circonscriptions Domaniale et Topographique de la Région d'Ihorombe de suspendre sur le champ toutes opérations sur terrain relatives à l'extension des travaux au nom de la société TOZZI GREEN.

Par ailleurs, il ne sera pas utile de vous rappeler que toute demande visant de terrain à grande échelle doit être obligatoirement passée par l'Autorité Supérieure pour son aval.

J'attache la plus grande importance à l'exécution de la présente.

1 DEC 2012



Destinataires :

- Monsieur le Vice Premier Ministre chargé du Développement et de l'Aménagement du Territoire.
« Pour compte-rendu »
- Le Chef de Région Ihorombe
- DDPF
- DST
- CIRDOMA
- CITPOPO

« Pour information »

« Pour information et suivi »

« Pour Information et exécution des réceptions »

Appendix 3: Contract between Tozzi Green and the village of Mitatra (1/3)

REPOBLIKAN'I MADAGASIKARA
Tanindrazana – Fahafahana – Fandrosoana

FIFANENKENA FAMPINDRAMANA TANY SY FIARAHA-MIASA

TOZZI GREEN Sarl	FOKONTANY: <i>Satoraka / Mahavondraze</i> KAOMININA AMBANIVOHIRA: <i>Satoraka</i> FARITRA: <i>Ihorombe</i>
SORATRA NANOVOZAN-KEVITRA :	DATY: <i>7 Mai 2010</i>

Eo amin'ny:

Andaniny Fokontany *Satoraka* Mitatra

Kaominina Ambanivohitra: *Satoraka*

Faritra Ihorombe.

Ankilany ny fikambanana TOZZI GREEN Sarl, izay ao amin'ny, no Birao fandraharahana, soloantenan'ny Lehiben'ny Fandraharahana M. Didier Van BIGNOOT.

1. Anton'ny fifanekena :

Ny anton'ity fifanekena ity dia hamaritana ny fepetra izay ho arahin'ny Fokontany voalaza etsy ambony sy ny fikambanana TOZZI GREEN Sarl amin'ny fiaraha-miasa hametrahana sy hitrandrahana ny fambolena savoa eo amin'ny tanin'ny Fokonolona.

2. Famaritana ny tany :

Ny fikambanana TOZZI GREEN Sarl dia hametraka eo amin'ny tanim-panjakana amin'ny faritry ny fokontany voalaza etsy ambony ary nahazo fankatoavana feno avy amin'ny fanjakana ara-dalàna sy ara-pombandrazana, ny fambolena savoa sy atratra na izay zavamanan'ny rehetra mety ahazoana menaka.

Ny fokonolona voakasika izany dia manaiiky hampidrana ao anatin'ny 50 taona manomboka amin'ny fametrahana ny fambolena ataon'ny fikambanana TOZZI Green Sarl eo amin'ny tany manana velarana *261 ha* hektara, ny famaritana ny toerana misy ny tany dia ampiarahana ao amin'ny faran'ity taratasy ity.

Io tany io dia natokana ho an'ny fambolena voalaza etsy ambony. Mandritra ny fotoana fampidramana rehetra, tsy azon'ny Fokonolona atao ny mampindrana na hanome alalana olona hafa fikambanana amin'io tany io raha tsy nahazo fankatoavana voasoratra ny TOZZI Green Sarl.

Contract between Tozzi Green and the village of Mitatra (2/3)

3. Fananan-tany:

Ny tany ampindramina dia hijanona ho fananan'ny fokonolona. Na ahoana na ahoana, ny fikambanana TOZZI Green Sarl dia tsy afaka mamaritra (bornage) na manoratra ny tany amin'ny anarany raha tsy ny fokonolona no manome alalana azy hanao izany.

4. Fampahafantarana ny sombin-tany :

Ny fampahafantarana sy famaritana ny sombin-tany voakasiky ny fampindramana dia atao miaraka amin'ny solontenan'ny fokonolona mba ialàna amin'ireo tany manan-tompo sy toerana fady rehetra.

5. Fifandraisana amin'ny fomba fiainana andavanandro :

Ny asa ataon'ny TOZZI Green Sarl dia tsy hanakorotana ny fomba fiainana andavanandro sy mahazatra misy ao an-toerana. Kanefa kosa mba hiarovana ny fitomboan'ireo zavamaniry dia tokony tsy hiarakandro eo amin'ny sombin-tany voavoly mandritra ny roa taona voalohany hambolena ny savoa.

Ka noho izany, ny TOZZI Green Sarl dia hametraka fari-dàlana afaka handalovan'ireo mpiarakandro, na afaka haminavina miaraka amin'ny fokonolona izay fepetra tokony hifanarahana.

6. Fampiasana olona an-toerana:

Ho atao laharam-pahamehana ny fandraisana ireo mpiasa eo an-toerana, ho an'ny fanaovana lavaka, fambolena, fikarakarana sy fiotazana. Raha tsy ampy ny mpiasa eo antanàna dia afaka mandray ivelany ny TOZZI Green Sarl.

7. Fomba amam-panao:

Ny TOZZI Green Sarl dia hanaja tanteraka sy hampanaja ny fomba amam-panao misy eo an-toerana.

8. Haba sy hetra :

Ny TOZZI Green Sarl dia handoa ny hetra sy haba manontolo izay mahakasika ny fampiasana ny tany sy izay vokatra azo ao.

9. Fananana sy fahazoana ny vokatra :

Ny tany dia mijanona ho fananan'ny fokonolona, ny hazo voavoly sy ny vokatra dia mijanona ho fananan'ny TOZZI Green Sarl manokana. Noho izany ny fokonolona dia tsy afaka manome na mivarotra ny hazo sy ny vokatra amin'ny olon-kafa afa-tsy ny TOZZI Green Sarl ihany.

10. Fiarovana ny fananana :

Ny fokonolona sy ny mpiasa ao amin'ny TOZZI Green Sarl dia tokony hifanaja. Ny fokonolona dia tokony hanaja ny voly sy ny fananan'ny TOZZI Green Sarl ary hampiasa ny fomba rehetra hanatanterahana ny fiarovana.

11. Structuration et organisation des opérations :

Ny Fokonolona dia manome fahefana ny TOZZI Green Sarl amin'ny fandaminana ny mpiasa ao aminy, ny fandrindrana ny asa ao aminy, ny famaritana ny fandaharam-

Contract between Tozzi Green and the village of Mitatra (3/3)

potoana izay mety aminy araka ireo fepetra sy tanjona mifanaraka amin'ny fanajana ity fifanekena ity sy ny sata mifehy ny tontolo iainana misy ao amin'ny TOZZI Green Sarl.

12. Fitantanana sy fanarahana ny asa:

Ny komity mpanara-maso maharitra izay ahitana ny solontenan'ny fokonolona sy ny TOZZI Green Sarl no manatanteraka ny fanarahana ara-dàlana ny asa ary misoroka ireo mety ho hevi-diso mikasika ny famakafakana ity fifanekena ity sy ny fampiharana azy.

13. Fahefana mpanelanelana :

Raha misy tranga tsy voavaha ara-pirahalalana sy ara-piaraha-monina, dia mandray andraikitra ny manam-pahefana malagasy.

Ireto avy ireo fangitra ara-« GPS » ny toerana mamaritra ny sombin-tany nomen'ny Fokonolona :

Nord	S. 22	16.873	E. 45	41.602
Nord-est	S. 22	16.923	E. 45	41.878
Nord-ouest	S. 22	16.891	E. 45	41.286
Sud	S. 22	18.618	E. 45	41.773
Sud-est	S. 22	18.606	E. 45	41.938
Sud-ouest	S. 22	18.674	E. 45	41.665
Est	S. 22	17.773	E. 45	41.873
Ouest	S. 22	17.696	E. 45	41.367

Toerana : Mitatra

Daty : 7 Mai 2010

Atao manaraka ny sonia ny soratra « Voavaky ary Nekena ».

Ny Lehiben'ny Fokontany

Ireo ray aman-dReny to-teny eo amin'ny Fokontany

Ny mpisolo tena ny TOZZI Green Sarl

Ny Ben'ny Tanàna



BAGENAIVO Edouard
Marcel

Appendix 4: Letter of opposition to Tozzi Green-Municipality of Ambatolahy (1/2)

FITANANA AN-TSORATRA FIVORIAM-BE

ANTONY : Fanoherana ny tetikasa izay mibahana velaran-tany midadasika ato amin'ny kaominina AMBATOLAHY, distrikan'ny IHOSY, Faritra IHOROMBE.

Andefasana :

- Lehiben'ny Distrika IHOSY
- Lehiben'ny Faritra IHOROMBE
- Lehiben'ny Fananan-tany IHOROMBE
- Lehiben'ny Fandrefesan-tany IHOROMBE
- Ministeran'ny Tontolo Iainana sy ny Ala IHOROMBE
- Lehiben'ny Fitsarana Ambaratonga voalohany IHOSY
- Ministeran'ny Fanajariana ny Tany sy Fanampariam-pahefana IHOROMBE
- Minisitryny atitany
- Mpiraminisitry ny tetezamita lombonana
- Filohan'ny fahefana avon'ny tetezamita

Androany faha valo ambin'ny folo ny volana Novambra taona iraka ambin'ny folo, amby roa arivo tamin'ny roa ora tolakandro, dia nivory teto amin'ny trano malalakin'ny kaominina izahay vahoaka ato anatin'ny fokontany 15 mandrafitra ny kaominina Ambatolahy, ary voasoratra anarana ao anatin'ny lisim-pahatongavana. Ny fivoriana dia notarihan'Andriamatoa ZARA Farassel, Ben'ny tanànan'ny kaominina AMBATOLAHY. Ka nizotra toy izao izany fivoriana izany.

Naombohana ny fotoana dia ny fisaorana an'Andriamanitra nahantontosa ny andro nivoriana ary fisaorana ihany koa ireo vahoaka maro tonga namaly ny antso.

Manarak'izany dia nohazavaina ny fisian'ny « projet TOZZI GREEN », izay manao ny asa fambolena savoa ao anatin'ny kaominina SATROKALA sy ANDIOLAVA ary mitady hiditra sy hanitatra aty amin'ny kaominina AMBATOLAHY.

Raha efa izany dia nanampy sy nanohy ny resaka Atoa BETA Tsikohony André, izay filohan'ny filan-kevitra kominaly ato AMBATOLAHY ary nampiseho ny heviny manoloana ny zava-misy ka nanao hoe « FANJANAHAN-TANY ANKOLAKA IO :satria fibodoana velaran-tany be ka tsy ekena ny hidirany ato amin-tsika manarak'izany raha tsy mandiso ahy ny fiheverako dia ho lasa andevo idray isika satria tsy mba zatra antsika izany mikarama isan'andro izany (journalière) antony moa raha tafiditra ny tetikasa izay hampiasa velaran-tany be dia ho maty ny ombin-tsika ary tsy ampy ny kijana hiraofany ka hanjary boroka dia ho fongana ny harena ary hahantra isika. »

Avy eo dia nandray fitenenana Atoa IJO Armand filoha lefitra voalohany ny Ben'ny tanàna AMBATOLAHY ary ndia mbola mampiseho ny tsy fankahasitrahany ny hampidirana ny tetikasa mibahan-toerana sy velaran-tany maro.

Tapakin'ny be sy ny maro ary fa dia TOHERIN'NY FOKONOLONA ATO AMIN'NY KAOMININA AMBATOLAHY NY FANAOVANA TETIKASA MIBAHANA VELARAN-TANY BE LOATRA NA ORINASA IZA IZY NA ORINASA IZA.

Letter of opposition to Tozzi Green-Municipality of Ambatolahy (2/2)

Marihinay eto manokana ny mikasika ny tetikasa « LAND MARK » izay mikasa ny hamboly katsaka ato anivon'ny kaominina misy anay dia anehoanay FITARAINANA MANOKANA aminareo fitondrana vaovao sady mahefa fa misy fiantraikany betsaka eo amin'ny toekarenanay dia ny fiompiana omby izany izay iankinan'ny lafiny ara-sosialy sy ny kolotsaina misy ato amin'ny faritra BARA mihintsy io tetikasa io.

satria :

- Ny omby no isan'ny fanafody oentina manasitrana ny marary izay ataonay hoe « TSIPIRANO »
- Ny omby no fitaovam-pamokarana oentinay mivelona.
- Ny omby no anaovanay ny fomba aram-panambadiana.
- Ny omby ihany koa dia anaovanay ny fomba an-karatsiana rehetra.
- Ny omby no fomba fitahirizana ny volanay tantsaha BARA.
- Ny omby no entinay angataham-pitahiana amin'ny razana.
- Ny omby no entinay manampy ireo fiarahamonina.

Koa noho izany raha misy toe-javatra mety hanohina ny fisian'io harenanay io dia toherinay hatramin'ny farany satria mbola misy omby miisa 33200 eo ho eo ny kaominina AMBATOLAHY ary andoavanay "droit de recensement" any amin'ny fanjakana ka voadika anaty boky daholo.

Izahay dia mbola mitazona ny fiompiana nentim-paharazana atao hoe "ELEVAGE EXTENSIVE" mazava izany fa mila velaran-tany midadasika.

Ho fehin'ny voalaza dia noraisina ny fepetra ka toy izao izany:

- Tsy mbola afaka mandray tetikasa mpamboly savoa sy kinana izahay.
- Ajanona any amin'ny kaominina nandray azy ny tetikasa.
- Omena andraikitra ny fikambanana mba hanaramaso ny fanitarana izay mety hiseho noho ny antony tsy dia mazava loatra.
- Hiezaka hanao fambolena-kazo ny isam-pokotany mba hiarovana ny nofontany.
- Hiray hina hanongotra ny tsy mety ka hampandrosoana ny kaominina.
- Handraisan'ny fokonolona andraikitra izay rehetra mikasa hanohitra ny hevitrin'ny be sy ny maro ka ampiharina aminy ny dinam-pokonolona.
- Tsy mamerina ny vola nampidirin'ny mpitady tombotsoa manokana ny fokonolona ato amin'ny kaominina AMBATOLAHY.
- Mangataka fiaraha-miasa aminareo fitondram-panjakana voakasik'izany izahay fokonolona.

Ataonay izao taratasy izao ary hampandalo amin'ireo fitondram-panjakana isan-tsokajiny mba hanan-kery ary hampiasaina amin'izay rehetra ilana azy. ampiarahina amin'ity ny lisim-pahatongavana vita Sonia.

Nifarana tamin'ny dimy ora any fivoriana ary tam-pilaminana sy am-piralahiana tanteraka.

NY MPITAN-TSORATRA



RANDRIAMASINJAKA *Emile*

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