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Introduction: Valuing Land in Eastern Africa

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In the neighbouring regions of northern Uganda and South Sudan, where the editors have undertaken research in recent years, we were often told by interviewees that people now knew or had ‘realised’ the ‘value’ of land. Reflecting on an apparent or anticipated increase in the monetary price of access to land, people cast this in terms of a dawning knowledge – a new awareness of land’s value. Such statements would seem to correspond to broader trajectories – albeit with regional temporal variation – of commodification, rising land values and competition for land, which are frequently asserted or predicted in both academic and policy literature on Africa (e.g. Berry 2002, 638; Cotula 2007; Jayne, Chamberlin, and Headey 2014; Peters 2013, 547–548). Indeed, it is hard to controvert the ubiquity and inexorability of these processes when their effects are so widely documented and are a focus of popular concern, even in areas where land markets have only recently or partially emerged.

Yet it was also evident in Leonardi’s research in 2014 in the Uganda-South Sudan borderlands that there was a much more complicated picture behind these assertions of the sudden awareness of land’s value (Leonardi and Santschi 2016). Land here had not been transformed into a commodity that could be bought and sold and resold without restriction in a ‘world of generalized, universalizable standard value’ (van Binsbergen 2005). Even in the expanding urban areas, where plots of land were being surveyed with varying degrees of technical and legal capacity, the issuing of leasehold titles was subject to considerable locally-defined regulation, hybrid governance and elite influence. In the rural areas, people accessed land and asserted land rights through clan-based definitions of landholding communities, in complement or tension with family-based inheritance and with claims to rights based on long-term occupancy and use. More exclusionary definitions of land rights were being asserted in order to inhibit, as much as or more than to enable the sale of land. In many ways then, people were talking about the realisation of land’s value in the sense of a change in perception and knowledge rather than necessarily in terms of the capacity to realise that value in a monetary sense.

This range of possible dimensions to realising the value of land are crucial for understanding the multiple possibilities of valuation itself, from the cognitive, conceptual and imaginative, to the presentational, performative and discursive, and to the material, monetary and commercial. The aim of this collection is to highlight and explore the multiple ways in which land may be valued and how this value is realised. In doing so, it seeks to engage with the multivalence of ‘value’ itself. As David Graeber and others have argued, it is not a coincidence ‘that we use the same word to describe the benefits and virtues of a commodity for sale on the market (the “value” of a haircut or a curtain rod) and our ideas about what is ultimately important in life (“values” such as truth, beauty, justice)’ (Graeber 2013, 224; also Graeber 2001, 2005, Skeggs 2014). Value and values in this sense are inseparable because the behaviours, attributes, relations, beliefs and imaginaries that help to structure society and individual life in turn shape the valuation of material objects. Such a view might help us to move beyond the idea that land’s (newer) monetary or exchange value is simply at odds

with broader ('customary') systems of social, moral and spiritual values (e.g. Adoko and Levine 2008, 106; see also Chimhowu and Woodhouse 2006). Instead our aim in this collection is to think of the value of land as rooted in, rather than abstracted from, the values of society – and hence to pay attention to how efforts to give an abstract (monetary) value to land generate debates over wider values or are justified through reference to those values.

The papers in this collection demonstrate that valuing land is a political and cultural process as well as an economic one. Much of the most prominent work on land issues in Africa has come from political scientists, legal scholars and political and legal anthropologists, examining how land contestation shapes institutional legitimacy, state formation and citizenship. Such work has approached land primarily as the subject of struggles over rights, authority and property relations, and in the process has demonstrated land's crucial importance in much broader political and legal processes. As these scholars often emphasise, struggles over land are never only about land, but about 'power and the legitimacy of competing claims to authority' (Berry 2002, 640; also Boone 2014; Lund 2008; Lund and Boone 2013). There is, however, a tendency in such scholarship to take rising, marketised land values largely as a contextual factor for the processes with which these scholars are most concerned. But this collection seeks to address the reverse implications – what effects do these political and legal processes have on the value of land?

In exploring the political and cultural work of producing land's value, our approach also entails a critique of (neo)liberal economic arguments for exchange as the source of value, with which we therefore begin this introductory essay. In one sense, widespread processes of making land exchangeable are easily identifiable as the source of its new or increasing value, as indeed many of our informants in Uganda and South Sudan emphasised. But this does not mean that commoditisation of land is a straightforward teleological trajectory, or that monetary value necessarily replaces other ways of valuing land. The empirical case-studies in this collection provide more complicated pictures of how land values are constituted, demonstrating that even market values are never entirely abstracted from broader sets of values which privilege particular kinds of knowledge and power (Berry 2004, 2017). We go on to suggest both that land in this sense exemplifies the broader nature and meaning of value, but also that it may be uniquely difficult to commoditise. Here we draw on studies of landscape and territoriality to argue that the value of land has also been produced by physical, imaginative, cultural, spiritual and memory work, by affective and lived experience and by governance strategies in Eastern Africa which have made land the territorial basis for collective identities and rights, even as governments have simultaneously promoted privatisation and commoditisation of land. Some of the resulting contradictions, tensions, conflicts and creative accommodations are the focus of the six papers, which we outline in the final part of this introduction.

Value and representation

Two related historical trajectories are often pointed to in explanations of changing land values in Africa: one a shift from a precolonial context of land abundance and relative labour scarcity to the late colonial and postcolonial situation of rising populations and growing pressure on land; the other a story of progressive privatisation and commoditisation of land rights. Based on strikingly widespread tropes in oral historical narratives, Igor Kopytoff's (1987) 'internal frontier' thesis depicted a

precolonial situation of relative land abundance in which political tensions or demographic pressures within any society could be avoided by individuals or groups migrating to found new frontier settlements. The closing of such internal frontiers is often pointed to as a long-term trend during and since the colonial period, transforming Africa 'from a continent of land abundance in the first half of the twentieth century to one of increasing land scarcity by its end' (Berry 2002, 639; also Jayne, Chamberlin, and Headey 2014, 12).

But value is not simply the product of scarcity, as Arjun Appadurai (1986) argues in his influential introduction to *The Social Life of Things*. Drawing on Simmel, he proposes that value derives from 'a real or imagined exchange': 'It is exchange that sets the parameters of utility and scarcity, rather than the other way round, and exchange that is the source of value.' His collection avoids teleological approaches to commoditisation by emphasising that 'things' can move in and out of commodity status over their 'social life'. This also points to the centrality of politics and social action in transforming things into exchangeable 'goods'. This objectification and commoditisation is, however, a particularly challenging task in the case of land, which is strikingly absent from the 'things' examined in Appadurai's collection.¹ As Tania Li (2014, 589) emphasises, land cannot simply be rolled up like a mat and taken away – the resources upon the land may be moveable, but land itself is not. Indeed, this very permanence is crucial for understanding the value of land, as Berry (2002, 651) points out: 'At once physically immobile and economically flexible, land could serve as a source of income, a store of value, and a base from which to build or reaffirm social connections.'

In order for land to be treated as a commodity with exchange-value, it therefore not only has to be objectified but also to be *represented* in some other moveable form. In a rare reference to land in Appadurai's collection, Kopytoff (1986) thus refers to the early anthropologist Rivers' use of genealogical diagrams to show how a plot of land could 'move' through different hands. And it is of course for this reason that land titling has long been promoted as a vital means by which to 'release' the exchange-value of land, as argued most vociferously and influentially in recent times by Hernando de Soto (2000). He claimed that the extension of formal property titling to regions of the world where land was not yet privatised would enable people to create value by transforming 'dead capital' into 'live capital' – largely by enabling title-holders to access cash through credit and mortgaging of their land. While taken up enthusiastically by development agencies, legal reformers and neoliberal economists (see Manji 2006), his thesis has been the subject of extensive critique. Empirical studies have demonstrated the frequent inadequacies of the credit mechanism so central to his model and the tendency for titling to lead to dispossession of the poor and marginalised (Englert and Daley 2008; Shipton 2009) – something which de Soto did not entirely discount, since a 'great part of the potential value of legal property is derived from the possibility of forfeiture' (de Soto 2000, 55). Timothy Mitchell (2004) thus argues that while titling tends to generate an immediate increase of land values, this comes from short-term investment by speculators, which in turn leads to longer-term increases in the cost of land and housing for later generations, from which only investors and wealthier property-owners benefit. Brett Christophers (2010) draws on David Harvey's (1982) Marxian theories to critique the idea that property can be a source of economic value in itself or that land's exchange value can be

¹ Graeber's (2001) book on anthropological theories of value similarly makes no reference to land – rather surprisingly, given that it would seem to illustrate well his arguments for value as meaningful action. Similarly land is not indexed in van Binsbergen and Geschiere's (2005) collection revisiting Appadurai (1986).

separated from its use value other than through the 'mystification' and 'representation' inherent in de Soto's thesis.

Historical trends towards the financialisation of land predicted by Harvey are easy to identify in Eastern Africa, as evident in the papers in this collection. But it is equally evident from these papers that the exchange-value of land has not been separated from its use-value. As Li (2014, 591) argues more generally, 'land's life-giving affordances make it an awkward, resistant or incomplete commodity'. We must be wary then of treating changes in land values as teleological trajectories or evolutionary processes towards the emergence of property rights and land markets (Cotula 2007, 2, 16). An important collection on land markets in Africa edited by Colin and Woodhouse (2010) challenges the prevalent assumption that customary systems of land tenure are being transformed inexorably into private property regimes. It demonstrates the long and fluctuating histories of land sales and exchange in various regions and highlights the 'variety of rental and sharecropping arrangements' and ongoing overlapping of rights, which complicate or prevent private property ownership and the sale of land (as will also be demonstrated by several of the papers in this volume). And while land sales are increasing, 'disputes over the meaning of such transactions are also increasing' (Colin and Woodhouse 2010, 3-4). As Berry (2004, 146) emphasises, 'market values themselves are culturally organised', because 'the price that buyers will pay for a commodity depends, in part, on the meaning(s) they attach to it'. Even where land sales and markets are evident then, land transactions are not easily removed from social and political relationships (Colin and Woodhouse 2010, 8; Shipton 2009, 227).

While teleological trajectories of commoditisation may be problematic, historical narratives are nevertheless crucial to giving land its meaning and value, and title-deeds are only one way of representing land in order to define or monopolise that value. This is apparent, for example, in the salience of the frontier trope in representations of land. As Kopytoff (1987) argued, the precolonial internal frontier was also the site of new institutional formation, involving the depiction of new settlement sites as *tabula rasa* for the imposition of new political authority. Where there were prior inhabitants, oral histories depict them as having been 'uncouth' and in need of the political order brought by new settlers or conquerors. Similar processes are evident in many other contexts, from European powers asserting the emptiness, under-use or misuse of African land to justify its colonisation, to the kind of contemporary case discussed by Cormack and Kurewa in this volume, in which an international energy company depicts the site of its project as previously empty and valueless.

Similar discourses emanating from national governments and international agencies fuel both hopes and fears among Eastern Africans by emphasising the paramount value of land for national development, the potential for mineral extraction and the need for tenure reform (see Anderson and Browne 2011 on the region's recent 'oil rush'). When people spoke of the sudden new realisation of land's value in South Sudan and northern Uganda, they tended to attribute this not to an immediate shortage of land, but to the anticipation of future profits and competition – speaking of the need to secure land rights in the expectation of 'investors' and commercial opportunities (see Greiner 2016 on the 'economy of anticipation' in northern Kenya; also Mosley and Watson 2016; Browne 2015; Green 2014). Speculation adds value to land, not only when investors buy and sell land specifically to

profit from rising prices, but also when news and rumours generate a wider popular anticipation of impending threats and opportunities for landholders.

For land to be seen as a resource that attracts such investment, it needs not only to be objectified but also to be 'assembled', as Li (2014) argues. A labour theory of value might attempt to define the value of land on the basis of the labour employed in clearing, working and constructing on it – and indeed something like 'an indigenous labour theory of value' (Li 1996) is often apparent in claims and disputes over land, in which conspicuously 'developing' the land or demonstrating long-term use of it can be asserted as the basis for ownership. But other kinds of work are involved in assembling land as a resource and in producing its value – processes which require 'a great deal of complex cultural work', using 'inscription devices – the axe, the spade, the plough, the title deed, the tax register, maps, graphs, satellite images, ancestral graves, mango trees' (Li 2014, 592, 589).

This cultural and political work of making land 'available for some purposes to the exclusion of others' (Li, 2014, 592) is a central preoccupation in the study of *landscape*. It is perhaps therefore unsurprising that such scholarship in the African context has focused largely on the continent's central-southern region, whose history is characterised by racialised dispossession of land for white settlement and wildlife conservation (e.g. Ranger 1999; Mazarire 2003; Marova 2015). More broadly, however, the study of land's multiple and changing value has much to gain from the spatial and temporal approaches of landscape studies (e.g. Cohen and Odhiambo 1989; Davies and Moore 2016; Watson 2009). Proponents of the landscape approach adopt a multi-scalar focus, exploring different, competing and interacting levels of valorisation which problematize the reconciliation of the cultural and imaginative constructions of 'landscape' on one hand, and the material and economic properties of 'land', on the other. Donald Moore thus contends that landscape should be seen 'as a surface of both soil and semiotics'. Urging attention beyond the 'narrow confines of the labor process', he argues for the need to 'situate resource struggles within the cultural production of landscape and resources' (1993, 396).

Central to this cultural production are acts of representation – akin to the land titling that enables land to be treated as a commodity with exchange-value. Conflict and dispute – among and within the state, white settler and African communities – generated by past valorisations of land in turn generates further ascription of new value as memories and narratives of struggle become inscribed into the sediments of the 'history-scape' (Fontein 2006). The future and the past are crucial to understanding the value of land: Moore argues that land 'has been crucial not only for the material reproduction of households but also for the symbolic reproduction of meaningful group identities' (1993, 396). Among other things, shrines and graves have provided anchorage for the continuity of such identities, as well as a strategy for staking claims to disputed land (Shipton 2009; Fontein 2015, Weiss 1996).

We should not forget or underplay the emotive and spiritual attachments to land which may be cemented (often literally) by graves and evoked by historical narratives and the affective and sensory experience of the landscape. At the same time, we should remember that landscape and history are deeply political and contested processes rather than fixed grounds of identity or belonging. Berry argues that land disputes are also contests over historical knowledge and that knowledge is crucial even in marketised processes of valuation:

The value of land as ‘measured’ by the sums of money that landholders demand and buyers are obliged to pay for it depends, in part, on the transactors’ ability to present evidence and interpretations of historical claims that are accepted as valid today. Who accepts them and how such claims to the past should figure in contests over property and power in the present are powerfully emotive issues’ (Berry 2007, 64-5).

Knowledge is important not just in determining the ‘historical provenance or attributes of things’ but also in establishing the transactors’ own ‘histories of market performance’, credit-worthiness and so on. All of this means ‘that market value is a matter of performance as well as production’ (Berry 2017).

We might also ask whether it is knowledge itself that is being valued or commoditised, rather than (or as well as) the object of exchange. In some of our own research areas, clan land authorities expect to be given ‘customary’ gifts when they arrange and sanction new acquisitions of land by individuals. As these ‘gifts’ have increasingly become monetised, is it the land that is being transacted or the historical knowledge of the clan elders? Since the latter may be crucial in any dispute over the land acquired, it is difficult to disentangle the value of knowledge from the value of the land itself. But the clan elders themselves tend to deny that the payment implies a land purchase in order to retain underlying rights in the land and insist instead on the value of their historical and spiritual knowledge as the basis for their claims to authority over land. Such commercialisation of land-related knowledge has a long history, for example in regions of Tanzania most impacted by the nineteenth-century caravan trade, where earth-priests succeeded in transforming their specialist spiritual knowledge into an economic and political asset in the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Wagner 1996).

In the South Sudan-Uganda borderlands, historical knowledge is deployed in contemporary land disputes to debate historic land relations between ‘firstcomers’ and later-comers to particular territories (Leonardi and Santschi 2016; see also Lentz 2013). In the process, the value and exchangeability of land is itself contested. Some people claim that their forefathers long ago acquired land rights from firstcomer land authorities in exchange for livestock, iron objects, services like military defence or labour, or particular skills like rainmaking. Such accounts assert the longstanding exchangeability of land for items or services of equivalent value – something which is also hinted at in the colonial records, where British administrators suggested that migrants or people in need of more land could arrange with clan authorities to ‘buy a plot of land for a cow’ (Beaton 1934). One province governor in Sudan also mentioned briefly a case in which ‘complainants were definite in their refusal to accept a bull from people who had poached on their land, in order to retain their rights’, suggesting that livestock could be exchanged for more permanent rights to the land (Nalder 1937, 138). But other people – claiming descent from firstcomers – nowadays argue vociferously that land could not be ‘bought’ in this way and that livestock were given as gifts to acknowledge the authority of landowning clans or spiritual figures, and to establish social relationships and the recognition of use-rights to land and resources (see also Colin and Woodhouse 2010).

Whether or not land is or was excluded from exchange is thus a matter of ongoing debate rather than evidence of clear spheres of exchange or trajectories of commodification. As Piot (1991, 409) suggests, it is often the relationships rather than specific products of exchange that are of greatest value in ‘societies which have repeatedly been characterized as valuing persons over things, and in which things are forever converted into relationships’. In debating historic land transactions, people in some

of our own research sites were often arguing in essence that the only thing commensurable with the value of land was the value of people: that land was valued primarily as a means of attracting and establishing authority over people (cf. Gray 2002).

Nowadays some of the most virulent 'land disputes' in this region and elsewhere are primarily disputes over territorial jurisdictions, reflecting continuities in the way that land may be valued primarily as the basis for exercising authority over people. In much of Eastern Africa, colonial governments sought to construct territorial units of administration and land governance in the form of chiefdoms, native reserves and tribal territories, and to limit movement or the shifting of allegiances and identities between these (Mamdani 1996; Johnson 2009). The closing of the 'internal frontier' was thus a governance strategy as much as a result of increasing population and land scarcity. Colonial restrictions were replaced by postcolonial government policies of land alienation and privatisation for commercial development and political patronage, giving emotive political value to land (Komey 2010). Particularly since the 1990s, the combined effects of political and economic liberalisation and decentralisation policies have tended to revive and entrench processes of ethnic and political territorialisation as political elites competing at both national and local levels of government have sought to mobilise constituencies along ethnic lines and as intensifying competition over resources has fuelled conflicts and discourses of autochthony (Lynch 2011; Mbembe 2000; Nsamba 2013). New forms of territoriality have thus emerged even in pastoralist areas where linear boundaries or exclusive territorial rights were previously unknown (e.g. Watson 2010; Schlee and Shongolo 2012). Governments have also given new, if varying, degrees of recognition to customary land laws and authorities since the 1990s, while global ideas of cultural rights and heritage have encouraged the representation and valorization of land as collective cultural property, contributing to fusing the exclusionary politics of indigeneity with individual and emotional attachments to place (Rowlands 2005).

At the same time, models of 'community development' have contributed to the production of locality as the locus of national and international aid and services, as Green (2014) shows in the case of Tanzania. As Kuch's paper in this collection suggests, Tanzania provides something of an exception to the processes of ethnic territorialisation evident in other parts of Eastern Africa, which Boone and Nyeme (2015) attribute to its statist rather than neocustomary institutions of land governance. Yet, land still has political value as the territorial jurisdiction of village and district government and in national political debate, especially as land disputes and conflicts tend to 'scale up' the hierarchical governance structures (Boone and Nyeme 2015). The outcome of such disputes can come to signify the perceived extent of the state's commitment to its citizens and contribute to the racialized definition of Tanzanian nationality in opposition to 'foreign' land investors (Boone 2013).

The value of land is thus not only culturally produced through tools of representation, narration and imagination, but also inscribed through governance strategies and political processes which make land the focus of struggles over local and/or national citizenship. These processes have reinforced the value of land as the basis for collective identities and rights, even as governments across the region have simultaneously promoted land privatisation (Manji 2006). Land rights and titles may therefore be valued not only in terms of the use or exchange value of land, but also for what they represent in terms of political rights, resources and belonging.

Land can of course be represented and divided in multiple ways and at different scales, whether into particular plots or fields, resource areas like forests or grazing, fishing or hunting grounds, sites of infrastructure, services, commercial development or extraction, places of social, historical, aesthetic or religious significance, or territories defined by political control and/or social belonging. Each may be valued in different ways, raising important questions about how they overlap and whether their values are mutually constitutive or contradictory. Certainly the most potent disputes and conflicts tend to occur when multiple scales of territoriality and land rights are mobilised together – when small-scale insecurities or struggles over land feed into or are harnessed by larger-scale political disputes and protests. Individual dispossession may generate in turn the kind of symbolic political value that land has gained in Kenyan national culture, as Monte’s paper in this collection shows. But the value of land as political or communal territory can as easily be at odds with its value as a homestead, field, or shop, particularly for those who find themselves on the boundaries of political territory or excluded from definitions of belonging. This also reinforces the point that the value of a specific piece of land is not necessarily generated simply by rising population or market forces but by political strategies, whether at the local, regional or national levels. And value lies in the eye of the beholder – protests and conflict over land, for example, might reduce the economic value of land in the eyes of an external investor while heightening its political and symbolic value for local politicians or customary authorities.

The individual papers

Most of the papers in this collection explore these complexities through particular contemporary and localised case studies. The first paper, however, adopts a broader temporal and scalar approach, exploring the role of land in historical memory and national political culture in Kenya through the medium of song. As a musicologist, Ernest Patrick Monte is able to analyse not only the lyrics but also the deeper significance and meanings of a song’s musical and performative aspects. His interpretation of these in relation to changing political contexts also demonstrates the dynamism of musical sources, which make them particularly useful for exploring the shifting meanings and value of land over time. Land has long been a focus of political grievance and struggle in Kenya, and Monte uses three songs from different periods to trace its resulting symbolic and emotive value in national discourse and culture, from its significance as the basis for anti-colonial resistance and Kenyan nationalism, to its symbolism of the ‘selling-out’ of the freedom struggle by independent Kenya’s leaders, and its fraught meanings in the period since the 1970s. Monte highlights the paradox whereby the symbolic and moral value of rural landholding has been reiterated in both government discourse and individual imaginaries, while access to rural land has been eroded by successive programmes of land alienation, titling and resettlement to the benefit of political elites.

While Monte’s paper explores this idealisation of rural landholding, Miriam Badoux’s paper, through a case study of a significant peri-urban land dispute in the town of Eldoret in the Rift Valley, demonstrates how urban land investments have nevertheless accelerated in Kenya. The disputed area – the Langas neighbourhood – had been a white-owned farm, which was sold in the 1960s. Not only is the original title-deed the subject of dispute as to whether it was bought by the two individual signatories or by a wider cooperative of share-holders, but as the area was absorbed into the town, it

was also gradually divided and subdivided into around 6,000 small plots, whose owners have sale agreements but no formal land titles. Since the 1980s, government programmes to upgrade the neighbourhood have promised but not yet delivered individual titles – nevertheless prompting the case against the government by the families of the original two title-holder signatories. The latter’s recent court victory would seem to demonstrate the sanctity of written title-deeds as the government was ordered to compensate them substantially in exchange for the original land title. But the court decision also recognised the occupancy rights of the plot-holders, who are in turn now supposed to be issued with individual titles. Badoux explores the ambiguities of title-deeds, which she argues are as often suspected of being forged, or subject to multiple claims, as they are believed to bring greater legal clarity. Nevertheless she argues that urban title-deeds have gained their own abstracted and objectified value in popular imaginings, as they have come to signify the promise of a ‘better life’.

Badoux’s paper shows that while land titling – or the prospect of it – may add value to land, it does not necessarily bring certainty or clarity in case of dispute, nor does it eradicate multiple layers of land claims. This is even more evident in another peri-urban area – on the outskirts of Kampala in Uganda – which is the focus of the third paper by Claire Médard and Valérie Golaz. As in central Kenya, this area has an unusually long history of land titling, thanks here to the colonial Uganda Agreement of 1900, which divided the Kingdom of Buganda into individual estates known as *mailo*. Here too, these estates were divided into smaller plots, whose owners pay annual rates to the *mailo* title-holders. The *mailo* titled estates have themselves been subdivided and a thriving market in both land titles and plots has emerged, prompting ongoing fragmentation as well as considerable uncertainty over how the two layers of land rights and sales should relate. The paper explores how rising monetary land values and marketization have generated strategies at multiple scales for the preservation and consolidation of landholding within families and clans. In particular, these strategies have focused on family graveyards and on sites claimed to have special historical and spiritual value for clans or for the kingdom. Such assertions draw on long histories of cultural pride in the Buganda kingdom and clan grievances over the original *mailo* settlement, but they have also been strengthened by wider ideas of heritage and cultural rights. The rising monetary value of land has thus prompted the reassertion rather than eradication of other forms of value.

Médard and Golaz also explore the gendered implications of these strategies for protecting family land, highlighting a self-perpetuating process whereby women are more likely to sell land inherited from their family because their rights to it are less secure, because they are thought to be more likely to sell it. The fourth paper in this collection also explores the gendered and generational dimensions to valuing land in another peri-urban neighbourhood of a capital city – Um Doum, on the outskirts of Khartoum in Sudan. Nisrin Elamin explores a very recent process of land titling here that resulted from successful neighbourhood resistance to a land deal between the Sudan government and a Saudi investor. She argues that this apparently effective defence of customary land rights led conversely to the extension of state control through a subsequent programme of land registration, which in turn exacerbated gendered and ethnic social divisions and produced new forms of exclusion. Like Médard and Golaz, Elamin demonstrates the entwining of land values, as claims to historical settlement, ancestry and autochthony became the basis for privileged access to land titles, and she shows how particular wealthy men were better able to make such claims. But more broadly, land titles have entered popular imaginaries in Um Doum, as in Eldoret, so that many different people see them as a way to secure both the past sacrifices and future life of their families. Even among the Ahamda

community, whose marginalisation was exacerbated by the land dispute and registration programme, differences were opening up between those (often older) people still seeking to use the land to support a pastoralist livelihood, and younger generations who increasingly value land as a financial investment and/or simply as a home and living space for family members whose livelihoods no longer depend on access to land.

The changing value of land among pastoralist communities and the effects of international land investments in producing new forms of exclusion is also the subject of the fifth paper in this collection, by Zoe Cormack and Abdikadir Kurewa. They focus on the dramatic case of the Lake Turkana Wind Power project in northern Kenya, which is currently the largest wind-power project in Africa and the biggest private investment in Kenyan history. Unlike in the previous three case-studies, this is not a context in which land-titling is occurring. But the paper nevertheless explores the effects of the LTWP in transforming land values. And as in Elamin's and Médard and Golaz' papers, this has had the effect of generating claims to indigeneity, historical precedent and cultural heritage, so that new forms of land value are reanimating rather than eradicating ideas of its historical, spiritual and cultural value. But while historical ways of valuing land among the pastoralists of Lake Turkana may have enabled arrangements for shared land-use, now history is being used to argue for greater exclusion along ethnic lines. The immediate reason highlighted in the paper is that the use-value of the land for pastoralist livelihoods is being superseded in the project concession by the new value of land rights as the basis for accessing privileged opportunities for employment and other resources.

Cormack and Kurewa's paper thus shows how land may become valued less for its own material properties than as the conceptual and political ground for claiming other rights and benefits. This is exemplified in the final paper of the collection: Amelia Kuch's study of Burundian refugees in Tanzania. Strikingly, however, hers is a case-study of inclusion rather than exclusion, focusing on the decision of the majority of these refugees to obtain Tanzanian citizenship through an unprecedented programme of naturalisation launched in 2007. The case is all the more striking given that the same group of refugees were the subject of a seminal study by Liisa Malkki (1995) that emphasised their determination to maintain their Hutu identity in the hope of eventual return to the 'homeland'. Kuch argues that land is significant in explaining the resulting paradox of the refugees' decision two decades later to instead adopt Tanzanian citizenship as their original land in Burundi became ever more inaccessible while they enjoyed abundant land access in and beyond the refugee settlements. Unlike their attachment to ancestral land in Burundi, Kuch explores the refugees' quite different (and changing) relationship to land in Tanzania, where there is no attachment to specific ancestral plots and where land is valued instead for its use and as a signifier of national citizenship rights. Kuch's paper suggests an unusual situation in which autochthony is not the dominant discourse or basis for action in relation to land. But like the other papers, it demonstrates that land is valued not only for its material properties and use but also for the rights and belonging that it can represent, even in a context in which people are not seeking to claim deep historical roots or spiritual relationships with the land.

Conclusion

Overall, these papers make clear that not all transformations in the value of land equate to a process of commodification, and nor are such transformations driven simply by increasing population or the 'spread' of capitalism. They demonstrate that understanding the value of land involves asking not just how land may be objectified and represented in order to acquire exchange-value, but also how land in turn comes to represent other things that are of value, such as belonging, rights and authority.

We might ask finally then whether this makes land uniquely awkward to exchange or commoditise – is land the exception to exchange theories of value, or does it merely exemplify the multivalence and complexity of value more generally? We argue that it is and does both. Land is revealing of broader problems with understanding value in solely economic terms, whether through labour or exchange theories of value. As Berry (2004, 2007, 2017) shows so well, even supposedly 'pure' market transactions still involve knowledge, meaning and judgment regarding the qualities of the commodities and their sellers and buyers, however impersonally or abstractly these may be rendered by acts of representation and apparent standardisation. Of course, the very privileging of economic and monetary value is itself a reflection of wider political and ideological value-systems that extol markets, rationality, freedom and so on. The ubiquitous neoliberal politics of value are starkly apparent, for example, in the necessity to give quantitative and monetary value to 'ecosystem services' in order to gain governmental environmental protections (Gómez-Baggethun, Lomas, and Montes 2010).

At the same time, however, we would suggest that land is also uniquely difficult to commoditise, as is evident in the massive upheavals and often violent dislocations that have accompanied processes of privatising land rights in different periods and places. This is not only because it can be the means of production and source of 'life-giving affordances' for the millions of people who rely on it for subsistence, and simultaneously be valued for its aesthetic and affective qualities and its social, spiritual and cultural meanings. The same could after all be said for cattle in many parts of Eastern Africa, where colonial and postcolonial governments struggled to convert livestock into currencies or commodities, and frequently had to acknowledge that cattle acted as a unique store of value – in a way that land did not for many pastoralists. But just as the value of cattle emerges from the combination of their physical attributes and products with their capacity to embody and represent social relationships, so the materiality of land matters in its valuation. The fact that land is not moveable or reproducing – unlike cattle – has placed physical constraints on its extent and availability, and at the same time given it particular uses and affordances in the anchoring of identity, production of territory and state formation.

Ultimately then, the distinctive value and significance of land can only be explained fully by paying attention to the political and cultural work that has been necessary to turn these material characteristics and properties into the basis for defining and claiming political, legal and economic rights and resources. We need to understand therefore how colonial and postcolonial (and global) governance – and often the resistance to it – may have contributed to privileging historical and genealogical relationships with land as the basis for claiming rights as citizens of local, ethnic and national communities. As a result, processes of commodification tend not to eradicate so much as to stimulate assertions of such relationships, whether expressed in terms of protecting cultural heritage, defending indigenous rights or safeguarding the birth-right of future generations. Such assertions may sometimes prove effective at opposing 'landgrabbing' by powerful interests. But they also ensure that

land is valued not only for its uses, affordances or even exchange, but also as a primary signifier of inclusion or exclusion, rights or oppression, recognition or discrimination.

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