New roles of CSOs for Inclusive Development

Civil society engagement with land rights advocacy in Kenya

This project explores the various roles civil society organizations (CSOs) undertake when advocating for fair and inclusive land deals in Kenya. Advocacy activities by CSOs may take place on the local, national or transnational level, and may be directed towards government agencies, donors, investment banks, or private actors. CSOs might navigate differently between confrontational and cooperative strategies vis-a-vis government and private actors. While some CSOs prefer to specialize in one role, perhaps within a broader CSO coalition, others may choose to combine roles. The aim of this study is to explore how Kenyan CSOs working on land rights balance such activities, and how the decisions they make play out in terms of their local embeddedness, autonomy, and legitimacy, as perceived by various stakeholders.

Main questions	• To what extent does playing a cooperative role strengthen or weaken the representational role of CSOs?
	• What are the underlying mechanisms of the relationship between cooperation and representation?
	• How does cooperation influence the way different stakeholders perceive the CSO's level of embeddedness, autonomy and legitimacy?
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Consortium	Radboud University Nijmegen, Moi University, African Studies Centre Leiden in cooperation with ActionAid NL and ActionAid Kenya
Country focus	Kenya
Planned activities	• Conduct a literature review to further operationalize the interaction between different (political and non-political) roles of CSOs and to understand their sources of legitimacy in Kenya from a (contemporary) historical perspective
	• Identify relevant cases of land advocacy and their corresponding actors in preparation for the field work
	• Conduct empirical case research using stakeholder mapping, document analysis and semi-structured interviews
	• Discuss the results from the literature review, the case selection, and the stakeholder mapping with interested parties during a workshop to fine-tune the research strategy
	• Create a roundtable with stakeholders from the private sector, CSOs, central and local government, the Dutch Embassy and Kenyan academics
	• Update the wider audience about preliminary findings through social media and on websites
	• Publish four peer-reviewed open access articles