

The PFRA and CPP: The relation of local resistance to global land disputes

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ABSTRACT

Access to, control over, and ownership of land is of great concern to development thinkers and scholars. While international development courses tend to focus on examples of land issues and the loss of communal property abroad, recent events in Saskatchewan remind us that the questions surrounding private property, land, agriculture, and development are just as prevalent in Canada. My research examines specific factors shaping existing resistance to neoliberal privatization of public lands. Drawing on existing literature, the politics around the current large scale acquisitions of lands in the developing world are explained and broad parallels between land-based conflicts in different parts of the worlds examined. The study examines the controversy around the privatization of the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act (PFRA) in Canada. I have found that local resistance articulates with critiques of the global land grab in some ways and that by questioning neoliberal policy making and modes of production, local actions are to some degree tied to a larger confrontation of hegemonic neoliberal modes of thinking, governance, and land ownership. Participants don't necessarily recognize the way their actions are potentially part of a global struggle. Also, participants employ alternative views of development but they tend not to relate this issue directly to a critique of mainstream development. The sale of Saskatchewan's community pastures represents an important case study for this research since it is a local conflict that is currently being played out.

INTRODUCTION

In 2012 the Canadian federal government announced the cancellation of a 78-year-old program of communal land management in what has been described as a largely ideological move. The cancellation of the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act (PFRA) and the Community Pasture Program (CPP) has been the source of a great deal of discussion and dispute since spring 2012. Various actors have begun to organize in response to the decision and in opposition to the potential sale of currently publicly owned land. Meanwhile, communities abroad continue to face displacement as enormous tracts of land in the developing world are sold or leased to wealthy governments and private investors often without due public consultation. The main targets of this worldwide massive enclosure are non-private or “public lands” and such deals are carried out or justified in the name of ‘development’. Grassroots and non-governmental organization (NGO) opposition to this phenomenon is also growing. The CPP and global land grab provide a local and global example of land issues as a source of contestation worth examining.

With this research, I attempt to understand the cancellation of the PFRA and the current debate surrounding the future of the CPP in the context of today’s international neoliberal framework. I also explore the relationship between this local dispute and international debates surrounding land and agriculture in the developing world. Particularly, I consider the relation of this decision and the subsequent contestation to similarly motivated and contested decisions surrounding the global land grab phenomenon that was the focus of a 2008 media frenzy and a great deal of academic literature, NGO action, and larger mobilization since. Drawing on David Harvey’s (2005) analysis of neoliberal global capitalism, it becomes clear that these issues surrounding land are in fact not separate but demonstrative of a tendency of neoliberal decision-making followed by grassroots opposition. I aim to explore how different factors produce and

shape this resistance. In examining responses to the cancellation of the PFRA, I intend to better understand the resistance to privatization of public lands in Saskatchewan and how this local resistance relates to larger land disputes around the world.

METHODOLOGY

In this research, I examine the conflict over the PFRA privatization in the context of broader global land politics and through the lens of the resistance to privatization. The potential sale of the CPP and the opposition it has prompted represents a very current set of events. As such, I first utilized what secondary academic sources were available as well as government publications and current news sources in order to accurately track the unfolding of events and evolving resistance. Supplementary critical academic resources regarding the global land grab were also used to provide a global framework for my research. Also, this literature allowed me to identify parallels between the two land disputes.

The resources above supplemented primary research made up of five semi-structured, hour-long interviews with individuals engaged in the opposition to PFRA privatization. These participants were used as informants in an effort to gather information about resistance to privatization of the pastures in Saskatchewan. I spoke with different people involved in resisting PFRA privatization to address the following research questions: How is the resistance to the PFRA privatization articulated by opponents of the plan? In what ways does this framing of resistance in Saskatchewan resonate with existing critiques of the global land grab? What role do actors' understandings of development play in shaping their resistance? These questions allowed me to determine if the CPP dispute is just a local issue, driven by the vested interests of stakeholders or if there is a broader critique at work. In asking pointed questions related to the

research questions I gained an understanding of the thoughts, values, and ideals of the individuals and have identified common themes amongst opponents to privatization of the pastures. Specifically, I spoke with five individuals with various backgrounds and interests, some of whom are actively engaged with Public Pastures- Public Interest (PPPI)¹ but spoke as individual members and not as representatives of the group. Participants included educators, former government officials, and conservationists, past government employees, recreational pasture users, environmentalists, farmers, and concerned rural and urban citizens.

I then used the information gathered in the interview process to formulate an understanding of how participants are voicing their local opposition in general as well as whether or not their opposition articulates with any specific understanding of development. I then considered their views in light of the global land grab literature mentioned prior. The publications and critiques of groups working in opposition to the global land grab, such as La Via Campesina and GRAIN, were specifically vital here in an effort to understand how local resistance resonates with or relates to the global land grab resistance.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Canadian federal government passed the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act (PFRA) in 1935 in response to the droughts of the 1930's and the desire to economically and socially develop the prairie regions. The PFRA included the development of various programs including the Community Pasture Program (CPP) of 1937. The CPP sought to permanently remove vulnerable Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan lands from cultivation and develop federally administered, professionally managed, and communally utilized pastures. While the CPP began

¹ PPPI is a key actor in this local opposition. They are a group of concerned citizens driving and organizing opposition to privatization of Saskatchewan's community pastures. They are described in greater detail in the following sections.

as short term legislation, the long-term collaboration of patrons and federally employed pasture managers and scientists led to the recovery of these lands (Balkwill, 2002, p.4). Approximately 930,000 hectares of eroding prairie land were reclaimed under the program (Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, 2010). The majority of this land and the majority of the pastures, 62 of them, were established in the province of Saskatchewan and include some of the largest surviving expanses of Canadian natural grasslands (Savage, 2013). Under federal administration, the CPP employs approximately 350 employees, 150 of those being seasonal, and provides valuable grazing resources for approximately 31,000 patrons managing 230,000 heads of cattle per year (Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, 2010).

Despite its 78 year history in the prairie regions, the Conservative government announced the cancellation of the Act and its withdrawal from the CPP in 2012 with the passing of Bill C-38. The Federal government decided, without public consultation, that the pastures would be transferred to the provinces over a period of six years. It claimed the decision was made on the grounds that the program had completed its original goals of returning vast expanses of poor-quality cultivated lands to grass cover, significantly improving the ecological value of these same lands and helping to increase the productivity of the prairie region and that it would, of course, also save the government money (Savage, 2013; Johnson, 2013). So far, ten pastures have been selected and transferred to the provincial government.

This Federal government decision is particularly perplexing based on the noted success of the PFRA and the CPP here in Saskatchewan. The PFRA has grown into an internationally respected model of sustainable development able to deliver quality grazing to livestock producers on a fee-for-service basis while also providing a quality habitat for the prairies'

endangered and unique plants and wildlife (Savage, 2013). This success has also been celebrated nationally by politicians:

Since 1935 it's been the most effective and well-liked federal government agency in western Canada, dealing with soil, water, community development and pastures, and in a very hands-on way where they actually had a tangible impact on improving farmers' livelihoods (MP Ralph Goodale in Allan, 12 April 2012).

The various social and economic benefits of the pasture program have also been established in critical research. In a 2008 study, Kulshreshtha and Pearson attempted to quantify these benefits and concluded that the assorted private, public, and fiscal benefits amounted to approximately \$54.9 million per annum². This proven success might afford substance to speculation that this was an ideologically motivated decision tied to Canada's own type of agricultural neoliberalism. Deutsch (2011, p.11) argues that similar ideology has been demonstrated in the government's dismantling of the Canadian Wheat Board.

Responses to this federal decision have varied. While the government of Manitoba has adopted a solution that allows for the continued operation and management of their 24 pastures³, the government of Saskatchewan has expressed no interest in being involved in the operation of the PFRA pastures and first seemed determined to transition the pastures into private management and private ownership as quickly as possible (Savage, 2013). Indeed, the Saskatchewan government has characterized the sale of community pastures the same way elites and governments have characterized the global land grab: as an opportunity. Agricultural Minister Lyle Stewart has consistently stated that "patrons are the priority" of the provincial

²Specifically the authors argue that the PFRA community pastures have "assisted in fostering greater economic security, stability and sustainability, and diversification within the Prairies" (p.6). They also reference other economic benefits such as those used accrued by the federal government and which in turn offset the costs of the CPP program. These include: Savings in program payments for land and non-grazing activities such as gravel and mineral extraction, oil and gas exploration, and logging. In the past, these commercial activities were regulated to protect the environmental integrity and benefits of the pastures.

³ For a description of the pasture plan in Manitoba see: Winters, D. (15 Nov, 2012) Community Pasture Takeover Plan Revealed. *Livestock*. www.manitobacooperator.ca

government and that purchase will only be open to existing grazing clients under the current PFRA system. Stewart has also agreed that pastures be subjected to legal prohibitions against cultivation or drainage (Savage, 2013). The Saskatchewan government has characterized recent events as a “great opportunity” for ranchers and patrons (Winnipeg Free Press, 2012).

Ranchers themselves, despite government claims and offers of support, are said to be collectively worried about the environmental consequences and potential of these changes. While some groups like the Saskatchewan Cattleman’s Association (CSA) representing producers from the province’s beef industry⁴, support the gradual sale and long term lease of the pastures, the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS), representing thousands of the province’s agricultural producers⁵, outright denounced the transfer arguing that “no one wants to see [the pastures] sold” (Winnipeg Free Press, 2012). Norm Hall, president of the organization, has stated that APAS “would like to see the community pastures continue to be managed by the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration and remain in Crown lands” (Johnstone, July 2013). APAS and other actors, also wonder who will buy the pastures. With a one billion dollar price tag at market value, ranchers are in no position to afford this “opportunity”. Fears continue to circulate, despite government reassurance, that pasture lands will be outright privatized and sold to the highest bidder. These fears are not completely unfounded as there has been some lobbying done to encourage the selling off of these public lands. Saskatchewan Agricultural Minister Lyle

⁴ The SCA represents “registered producers” which they define as “any Saskatchewan cattle producer who has paid levies (to the association) within the last two years and has not received a refund” (“About the SCA”, www.saskbeef.com)

⁵ The mandate of APAS is to “provide farmers and ranchers with a democratically elected, grassroots, non-partisan, producer organization based on rural municipal boundaries. As the united voice of thousands of agricultural producers in Saskatchewan, we strive to represent the views of a wide variety of agricultural stakeholders in order to form comprehensive policies that can benefit all sectors of society.” (“Who is APAS”, www.apas.ca)

Stewart acknowledged that his office had received calls and visits from individuals and corporations interested in buying individual pastures or all 62 of them (Atkinson, 23 January 2013).

A number of parties with vested interests in the pastures and their benefits have coalesced around demands for continued public ownership and professional management of these lands. A great deal of action has been encouraged, organized and promoted by the newly formed group called Public Pastures - Public Interest (PPPI). The organization's own narrative best describes its work as a group of Saskatchewan residents:

...who are acting to ensure the continued viability of the PFRA Community Pastures. PPPI is part of a growing community of urban and rural people in the province—farmers, ranchers, First Nations people, scientists, hunters, naturalists, and prairie enthusiasts of all kinds—who believe that the security of the public pasture lands for livestock producers, conservation values and the people of Saskatchewan can best be served by continuing public ownership of these last large vestiges of native grasslands. (Public Pastures – Public Interest, Jan.3, 2013)

PPPI has organized fundraising and speaking events, letter writing campaigns, panels, public discussions and forums, and continues to blog and write about the issue. The group has also interacted with the media a great deal in attempts to spread awareness and garner support at both the grassroots and government level. In March of 2013, PPPI formulated and published six principles based upon input they have received from various public forums and discussions. The principles are meant to act as a guiding vision for the future of the Saskatchewan grasslands. Thus far, the principles have been endorsed by 45 local, national, and international organizations including Nature Saskatchewan, Nature Ontario, The National Farmers Union, Bird Studies Canada, Iniciativa Bosque de Agua (Rain Forest Initiative) from Mexico, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (Public Pastures – Public Interest, 28 March 2013).

First Nations have also begun to engage in the issue and express concern over their lack of involvement in the discussion following government decisions. These groups have made it clear that these public lands could potentially be used to resolve existing, outstanding Treaty Land Entitlement Agreements⁶. Under the auspices of the First Nations Sustainable Land Management Joint Venture, First Nations groups have worked to facilitate a cooperative solution to this loss of public lands. This proposed co-operative would be sponsored by First Nations but would host a management board with representation from all interested stakeholders (Neggers Personal Interview & CBC News, 2013).

The pasture patrons themselves have also begun to engage in the discussion. In January 2013, over 220 of the patrons came together for a three day event that resulted in the formation of the Community Pastures Patrons Association of Saskatchewan (CPPAS). The association refers to itself as a “group of patrons working together to attain sustainable community pastures and promoting viable grassland stewardship” (www.cpaos.co). CPPAS is particularly interested in the model Manitoba is pursuing and hopes to stall the sale of the first ten pastures. More Saskatchewan pasture patrons continue to join the association or express interest in doing so. Currently, the association represents just over half of all patrons in Saskatchewan. As such, the views of patrons continue to vary and are difficult to characterize en masse.

The current nature of this dispute has led to the release of documents by various actors on an almost daily basis and PPPI and the Pasture Patrons Association continue to respond to government announcements voicing concerns regarding privatization and loss of conservation and public benefits. However, the Government of Saskatchewan currently appears determined to end public management of these lands. Resistance to this decision, made up of diverse

⁶ According to research participant Don Sweet, the process is very clear when disposing of government owned land and First Nations groups must be notified and given the opportunity to express an interest before sale to an outside party (Personal Interview, 2013)

collections of people with diverse interests, continues to build. As a result of public pressure, the Provincial government announced early in 2013 that long-term leasing options would also be offered to patrons and that government support may be provided to patrons looking to purchase pasture land (LeaderPost, 20 March 2013).

NEOLIBERALISM

This paper draws on David Harvey's (2005) analysis of neoliberal global capitalism. Understanding this model and approach is important in formulating a framework for the research on the global land grab and the CPP that follows. An enormous amount of literature has examined neoliberalism, its spread, domination, and the current global neoliberal capitalist framework that shapes our everyday lives. Neoliberalism can be understood as an ideology, mode of governance, and a package of policies (Steger and Roy, 2010, p. 11). These three intertwined manifestations worked their way across the developed and developing world beginning in the 1980's thus effectively making the neoliberal model the hegemonic economic model throughout the 1990's and today. Harvey (2005) describes this model in his 2005 work *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Such a model was based on the primary virtues of unfettered competition (through the market), the free mobility of capital, privatization, and deregulation. These theoretical tenets and faith in free markets transfer into a withdrawal and reduced role for the state. Drawing further on Harvey's (2005) analysis of neoliberal global capitalism, it also becomes clear that this spread of neoliberal thinking and its central tenets has been neither democratic, nor peaceful (Klein, 2010). The model, and its inherent contradictions, has instigated varying degrees of contestation in each nation and community it has transformed. This opposition often arose in response to the initial adoption of the ideology and implementation of

neoliberal policies and was stamped out using authoritarian rule⁷. In other instances, as seen in Canada, neoliberal restructuring has been accompanied by opposition of various social movements and actors rather than overt violence or repression.⁸

According to Harvey (2005, p.3), advocates of neoliberalism often hold international positions of power. Through these positions, such as those at international financial institutions, neoliberal thinking came to dominate mainstream development discourse. In turn, the mainstream development approach throughout the 1990's forced a number of states to take the neoliberal road. Neoliberal thinkers believe higher living standards are the result of continuous increases in productivity and they work under the assumption that a 'rising tide lifts all boats' and argue that the elimination of poverty can best be secured through free markets and free trade (Harvey, 2005, p.65). The adoption of this neoliberal model of development became institutionalized in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB), leading voices on development policy (Steger & Roy, 2010, p.1127). The IMF developed structural adjustment programs (SAPs) based on this perspective and proceeded to make adoptions of such program, filled with policies of privatization, free trade, opening of markets and a reduction in the role of the state, a condition attached to loans for disadvantaged developing countries (Steger & Roy, 2010, p.119). Thus, attempts at development in various parts of the world have introduced and implanted neoliberal policies.

According to neoliberal thinking, the state should "favour strong individual private property rights, the rule of law, and the institutions of freely functioning markets and free trade"

⁷ Disappearances, torture, and dictatorial power by Pinochet were employed to quell dissent in the case of Chile's neoliberal experiment (Steger & Roy, 2010).

⁸ Saw such an outcry and opposition when Conservative government attempted to unilaterally end the monopoly of the Canadian Wheat Board. Witnessed public outcry on the part of farmers and the Wheat Board itself. See: Chase "& Waldie, 6 September 2012).

(Harvey, 2005, p.64). In Canada, we have seen the endorsement of neoliberal capitalism by essentially all political parties in the form of policies of deregulation, privatization, and social austerity (Albo, 2002, p.47). Existing literature describes the policy making of successive neoliberal governments (Knuttila, 2003; Albo, 2002). Wilson (2004, p.7), for example, references the signing of the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement (the precursor to NAFTA) in 1989 as the beginning of the movement away from our long history of a important role for federal government characterized by a strong welfare program, the Canada Assistance Plan, provincial equalization payments, and established programs financing. The following federal budget, released later in 1989, saw cuts made to Old Age Security, federal transfers for health care and education, and Unemployment Insurance (Wilson, 2004, p.8). As part of public service reform of the 1990's we continued to see withdrawal of the state in the transferring of responsibilities from federal to provincial actors (Clark, 2002, p.772). According to Albo (2002, p.51) the signing of NAFTA, particularly Chapter 11 of the agreement, constitutionalized the protection of property rights, a key neoliberal tenet. In 1994, public service reform continued with large downsizing in the federal government's role in education, health and welfare (Clark, 2002, p.772). Wilson (2004, p.8) outlines a reduction in funding again in 1996 for the very programs he described as characteristic of our history.

Under this ideological umbrella of free-market economics, various Canadian governments including the current Conservatives have taken clear steps away from encouraging small scale or diverse agricultural production, income support programs for such modes of production and shifted instead towards concentration within agriculture and preference for agricultural research focused on increased production alone through monoculture and technical and scientific solutions (Knuttila, 2003, p.300). The decision to end the PFRA along with the

agricultural research it funds and the support for farmers it provides fits this trend in policy making (Lahti, 2014; Deutsch, 2011). Neoliberalism has dominated Canadian politics since international adoption of the paradigm in the 80's. A great deal of literature identifies policy making throughout the 90's characterized by free market ideology, deregulation, privatization, and withdrawal of government (Knutilla, 2003 & Albo, 2002). The Conservative government has continued in this trend, particularly in the realm of agriculture.

Unfortunately, in terms of development the neoliberal approach has often increased rather than addressed inequality, yet continues to influence policy decision making (Harvey, 2005, p.15). In Russia, the neoliberal model pushed a large portion of people into poverty during the 90's and generated a clear lack of positive change in Africa (Harvey, 2005, p.94). The global financial crisis has shaken the faith world leaders have in this once widely embraced hegemonic model⁹. As a result, some scholars such as Manfred Steger and Ravi Roy (2010) have questioned the future or continued dominance of neoliberal thinking, governance and policy. However, the Canadian federal government's decision to cancel the PFRA demonstrates the continued dominance of this neoliberal model in the developed world. The CPP protected farmers and communities from powerful business interests and acted as a defence to the neoliberal process of globalization that privileges commercial interests and pushes public interest aside. However, the sudden cancellation of this successful government program aligns with neoliberal orthodoxy that the state and its interventions represent obstacles to economic and social development. Also, a neoliberal state represents the interests of certain actors (Clark, 2002, p.771). As such, the Conservative government has removed itself and the PFRA as a potential barrier to commercial interests. While the federal government reduces the role of the

⁹ For example, Barack Obama questioned complete faith in the regulatory power of the markets. Such questioning of faith in the markets and suggestion of an important regulatory role for government is a clear step away from basic tenets of neoliberal ideology (Steger & Ravi, 2010).

state, the provincial government is following suit with the pursuit of neoliberal privatization and withdrawal of government despite vocalized public desire for continued central management. In spite of these protests, the two levels of government expect their actions to “optimize economic and employment opportunities” (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 23 January 2013). These federal and provincial decisions increase the economic opportunities for a certain set of interests. Opponents to privatization are arguing it isn’t the interests of Saskatchewan people.

THE GLOBAL LAND GRAB: AN INTERNATIONAL LAND DISPUTE

Land grabbing refers to the transfer of large tracts of land into the hands of transnational and domestic corporate investors, governments, and local elites. This transfer takes the form of outright sale or long term lease usually through dealings with governments of countries targeted for investment. These transactions are often characterized by low transparency, lack of consultation, and minimal respect for communities, peasants, and farmers currently on the land (Borras & Franco, 2010; Cotula, 2013; Zoomers, 2010). The World Bank (2010) estimates that 45 million hectares of land have been transferred in recent years while Oxfam (2012) estimates the figure to be much higher at 227 million hectares – an area approximately the size of Western Europe. These conflicting estimations are based on different measurements and different understandings of what constitutes large scale (Margulis, McKeon, & Borras, 2012, p.2). According to Oxfam (2012), two thirds of affected lands are in Africa. In Liberia alone, more than 30% of the land, 56 to 63% of all arable land is now in the hands of private companies (Oxfam, 2012). Resistance to this phenomenon represents an international example of grassroots resistance developed in response to the neoliberal privatization of public lands.

Critical literature addressing this process is abundant, diverse and enormously complex. The issue has been examined from multiple theoretical frameworks. Olivier de Schutter (2011) employs a human rights perspective, Peter Rosset (2011) a food sovereignty framework, Santorino Borrás Jr. (2010 & 2012) considers the issue in terms of the role of the state, and Araghi and Karides (2012) incorporate neoliberalism into their analysis (Margulis et al., 2012, p.11). This academic literature is supplemented by organizations such as GRAIN and La Via Campesina, which are engaged in the tracking of the phenomenon and involved in outright opposition.¹⁰ The global land grab is described in the literature as a continuation of a historical practice (Borrás et al., 2012; Stephens, 2011; Brown, 2013). Comparisons are made to the displacement of aboriginal peoples from their lands in North America (Borrás et al., 2012, p.623). However, this same literature identifies motivations, mechanisms, and the current political economic framework of neoliberalism as distinguishing characteristics of today's land grabbing.

Neoliberal decision-making and governance have also been linked to these land deals. While food, fuel, and financial gain were an immediate impetus, Borrás (2012), Amanor (2012), and Zoomers (2012) cite liberalisation policies as a long-term cause of the global land grab. Continued reduction in the role of the state, increased free trade agreements incorporating land and agriculture and consistent deregulation facilitated the conditions for this rapid transfer of land to occur¹¹. Stephens (2011, p.2) more specifically identifies globalization as both driver and facilitator of land grabbing but acknowledges that a “neoliberal paradigm informed the course of

¹⁰ Borrás & Franco (2010) suggest GRAIN was perhaps the first to declare a global trend in land grabbing in 2008.

¹¹ Agriculture was brought into the free trade framework through the Agreement on Agriculture in 1994. For elaboration and a critique on this decision see: Murphy, S. (2009). Free Trade in Agriculture: A bad idea whose time is done. *Monthly Review* 61(3).

globalization”. This ideologically dominated globalization process has historically privileged commercial interests and disregarded public opinion. This same historical prevalence of commercial interests over those of small farmers, peasants, and the poor continue to drive land grabbing today.

The recent surge in these land transactions was a result of the convergence of global food, energy, and financial crises (Grain, 2008; Oxfam, 2011; Stephens, 2011)¹². Nations continue to face challenges in meeting food needs and in an attempt to avoid food insecurity some nations are buying or leasing land overseas to use for their own agricultural and food production (Kugelman & Levenstein, 2013, p.2). The desire to avoid energy insecurity is also a motivating factor as numerous countries are using land overseas for biofuels production. Approximately 40% of the world’s land involved in agricultural deals is set aside for this purpose (Kugelman & Levenstein, 2013, p.3). Lastly, private sector investors hope to capitalize on this increased food and fuel driven demand for land. As of 2012 it was estimated that \$14 billion in private capital was committed to investment in farmland (Kugelman & Levenstein, 2013, p.5).

The abundance of coverage demonstrates widespread concern of civil society, researchers, and environmentalists who fear further spread of large-scale industrial farming and destruction of livelihoods and the environment (Stephens, 2011). These consequences have been noted by various authors and have become the source of grassroots and transnational contestation worldwide. This resistance also responds to land grabbing as a barrier to agrarian reform and as a source of the displacement of local populations (Borras et al., 2011; Amanor, 2012; Stephens, 2011, La Via Campesina). Critiques have also cited exclusion from decision making as a key concern of resistance groups (Oxfam, 2011). De Schutter (2011) articulates the concern that this

¹² See Stephens (2011) for a detailed description of this convergence of global crises.

process will threaten access to land and livelihoods of peasants and small-scale farmers. Thus, land grabbing is being considered a potential cause of food insecurity rather than solution (La Via Campesina, 2012). Responses to critiques have ranged from calls for regulation to calls for an outright end to land deals and the branding of the global land grab as both opportunity and threat.

The contested nature of development has impacted these varying opinions on the value of this large scale land and agricultural investment in the developing world. This polarized debate is prevalent in the early land grab literature. In reviewing the literature it is clear that the perception that the global land grab is a development opportunity has pressed its way into mainstream, neoliberal development discourse. This is seen in the World Bank's development of *Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment*. Borras and Franco (2010, p.3) make note of this trend and the way it has led to a push for 'win-win' arrangements and a 'code of conduct'. The neoliberal notion of development as a driver for increased production and economic growth and those consenting of such a model view the global land grab as an opportunity in the developing world. This neoliberal view of development manifests in calls for regulation and optimization of economic opportunity. UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food Olivier De Schutter (2012) cautions against mistaking opportunities for solutions. Daniels (2012), De Schutter (2012), and organizations such as GRAIN and La Via Campesina adopt a far more complex human development approach with focus on community decision-making and agrarian reform. Thus they reject the global land grab as an opportunity for development. Oxfam (2011, p.3) refers to it as 'development in reverse'. This resistance calls for an outright end to land grabbing.

This form of resistance is encapsulated by the 2012 *International Conference of Peasants and Farmers: Stop Land Grabbing!*. La Via Campesina (2012) issued a report on this summit

and it articulates this call for a complete end to land grabbing based on critiques of these land deals as a threat. That is, land grabbing represents a threat to the environment and to the livelihoods of peasants and small-scale farmers. La Via Campesina and its allies see no room for regulation of a process that displaces farmers and encourages a damaging, large-scale neoliberal capitalist farming model that leads to concentration of land resources. Such displacement and concentration impedes the agrarian reform necessary to address poverty in the developing world (La Via Campesina, 2012). This resistance articulates with larger challenges to the hegemonic neoliberal model and its unequal power relations in general and will be used as a point of reference for the proposed research on opposition to PFRA privatization in Saskatchewan.

Not all farmers or farmer groups oppose land grabbing. An illustration shared by Borras and Franco (2009, p.5) demonstrates the influence of ideology and class on resistance to the global land grab through two large and politically active farmers organizations opposing stances. The first is La Via Campesina. As has been explained, La Via Campesina has expressed clear condemnation for land grabbing and views it as a threat. The movement itself and this decision are ideologically driven by its leadership and membership of peasants and small-scale farmers. Meanwhile, the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) is composed of commercially oriented, wealthy farmers with its leadership being dominated by groups from the industrialized world. Its ideological position therefore tends to be influenced by commercial interests (Borras & Franco, 2009, p.5). IFAP views land grabbing and biofuels in particular as an opportunity rather than a threat. These different class viewpoints and ideologies have shaped the response of these two organizations.

PFRA & CPP: EXISTING CRITIQUES

Thus far, analysis and criticism surrounding the federal government's recent decision and what fate awaits the pastures has largely remained within the domain of community actors, activists and various media. Lisa Johnson (7 March 2013) of Saskatoon's *Planet S Magazine* recently referred to the decision as "confounding". Johnson was especially puzzled by the apparent lack of public policy objectives behind the plan and insufficient consultation with stakeholders. These same popular sources have discussed the economic and social benefits of the pastures and the PFRA as well, largely drawing on Kulshreshtha and Pearson's 2008 work. Award winning author and Saskatchewan native Candace Savage (2013) released an article arguing for continued management of these lands. Savage went so far as to state "the prairie ecosystem is dying" and cited declining bird populations as proof. Branimir Gjetvaj, a director with Nature Saskatchewan, argued that the government "should be doing more to protect prairie, not walking away from it" (Savage, 2013).

This abundance of practical reporting in the absence of academic literature was also noticed in the expanding international coverage of the global land grab following the media frenzy of 2008. The international land issue experienced a similar trajectory in which early literature was dominated by popular media coverage and grassroots and NGO resources (Cotula, 2009; Stephens, 2011; Daniels, 2011) starting with the GRAIN (2008) report which signalled the urgency of the situation. An entire 2009 report was developed by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), in collaboration with numerous actors, based on this premise that there was a clear gap in critical knowledge and therefore in rigorous research on the subject (Cotula, Vermeulen, Leonard, Keeley, 2009). However, following this media frenzy, the transfer of large parcels of land in the developing world to wealthy nations or private investors and companies has become the subject of a great deal of academic literature. The

frequency of news stories mentioning such land deals indicated the phenomenon was growing and academic literature grew in response (Brown, 2012).

Existing academic literature examines the beginnings and history of the PFRA and CPP through its creation, implementation and success. For example, there are some early works, like that of James Gray (1967) that describe the process of creating community pastures in Saskatchewan and a more recent analysis by University of Saskatchewan graduate student Daniel Balkwill (2002) focused solely on the first decade of the PFRA program. Also, University of Saskatchewan business and economics professor Suren Kulshreshtha (2008) and his colleagues, in collaboration with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, carried out a cost-benefit analysis of the PFRA Community Pasture Program. The research and analysis determined the PFRA's work returned \$2.65 to taxpayers for every dollar invested. In working with pasture managers, the study identified 24 different public benefits which he determined made up 62% of the total benefits of the program. These public benefits included, but were not limited to, community development, breeding, carbon sequestering, soil conservation, and recreation. Private benefits to patrons paying to use the pastures made up the remaining 38%. Based on these results, Kulshreshtha (2008) and his colleague's argued that user fees collected by cattle ranchers covered the private benefits of the program and therefore made the program inexpensive for the government to run. It was also concluded that the public should in turn, through the government, fund the society-at-large benefits that these pasture produce.

The *Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives* also published an article regarding the current land dispute. It is more current than any other academic piece on the program and examines the cancellation and the provincial response. Essentially, authors Katherine Arbuthnott and Josef Schmutz (2013) address the key issues with the provincial government's plan for the

pastures, review the various interests involved in the debate, and recommend thoughtful and inclusive decision making. This is the first published academic piece since the selection of the initial ten pastures to be transferred. Arbuthnott and Schmutz (2013) argue that the centralized management, as is being encouraged by various opposition groups, is the most likely to ensure continued benefits of what has long been a public good. This expansion of literature on the local issue is likely a demonstration that literature surrounding the PFRA and CPP, specifically academic literature, is likely transitioning similarly to that of the Global Land Grab. Research examining responses to these local land deals is necessary. Opposition to privatization represents one such response and one group whose views should be examined and understood.

RESISTANCE IN SASKATCHEWAN: SUMMARY

In both the local and global example, resistance emerged as a response to these land deals and transfers. Those in opposition, both groups and individuals, view the loss of public lands as a threat and this directly juxtaposes the presentation of land privatization as opportunity. My interviews sought to engage with, question, and understand the local example more clearly. Specifically, I spoke with individuals and groups opposed to Federal and Provincial government decisions to dismantle and privatize the CPP and who view this loss of public lands as a threat. Throughout the interview process, some issues were brought forward repeatedly. I asked questions about the important issues at stake, consequences of potential privatization, obstacles to their opposition, and importance of public control, specific stakeholder issues, possible alternatives, and key concerns individually and collectively. This approach allowed participants to shape the discussion themselves to some degree and made it possible to discern common themes amongst participants and key points of contention. For example, key words were used by nearly all participants again and again throughout the interview process. Terms such as

“dialogue”, “discussion” and “collaboration” demonstrate a common framing of the issue. I describe the collectively voiced issues in order to understand the key concerns of this group and how the opponents to privatization are articulating their position.

Lack of consultation and Transparency

Every participant in this study took issue with the lack of consultation and transparency on the part of the Canadian and Saskatchewan governments. This failure to consult and be transparent relates to both the Federal government’s decision itself and to the Provincial government’s subsequent response and decision making process. As such, opponents of privatization have been forced to demand transparency and consultation. Subsequently, informants share a strong value for transparency and consultation in decision making. Firstly, participants repeatedly talked of the lack of transparency. The initial cancellation decision on the part of the Federal government was described in this way. Laura Stewart, a rural Saskatchewan resident who has worked on the pastures as a consultant doing physical inventories and member of PPPI, complained of the absence of an “open discussion” about the reasons for the decision and Carl Neggers, another participant, agreed. Mr. Neggers is a business consultant who worked with First Nations groups on their joint venture proposal. He was also the final Director General responsible for the PFRA, has an extensive public policy background at the provincial and federal level, and describes himself now as a concerned citizen. Neggers was “very perplexed by the way the decision was made and by the process.” He specifically shared his concern about the lack of public engagement in such an important policy decision. Neggers and Lorne Scott, Saskatchewan farmer, provincially and internationally recognized conservationist, member of PPPI and former NDP Environment Minister, both referred to “no plan” for the pastures following the initial decision itself as an enormous issue. Don Sweet, a retired PFRA federal

government employee and former Real Property Manager, also made it very clear that there is a lack of clarity regarding how such an enormous and complex divestiture of land would be carried out. This lack of clarity moving forward impacts all stakeholders including resistance groups and patrons themselves. Participants and opposition groups have therefore been forced to demand transparency. According to Katherine Arbuthnott, patrons particularly have been forced to demand more information and PPPI has supported them in this endeavor. Arbuthnott is a conservation psychologist, University Professor, and PPPI member who has published research work on the public benefits of the pastures in the past.

Secondly, participants referred to lack of consultation and in some cases outright exclusion from the decision making process and the community pasture discussion. At the Federal level, Lorne Scott described the decision making process as “absolutely terrible” with no consultation at all, even with the Province as far as he knows. Similarly, Arbuthnott stated that there was “zero consultation on the Federal government part as far as I can tell”. Her assertion is based on what she knows and through conversations with people from APAS and pasture patrons themselves. Neggers refers to the First Nations as a group that was not consulted and has since been marginalized. According to participants, what consultation did occur on the part of the Provincial government, in the form of a blue ribbon panel was “politically charged” and “lopsided”. Arbuthnott also commented on the failure to bring together a representative board for that discussion and the fact that patrons themselves, an obviously central stakeholder in this issue, were not included in that. Again, stakeholders and opponents to privatization have had to force their way into these important discussions. Even patrons have had to make themselves heard through collective organisation. Informants articulated their desire for interaction with

governments making these policy decisions. They also shared their disappointment and criticisms of government's failure to engage and inform the public.

Role of Government

Participants' recognition of a failure on the part of the government to consult and be transparent perhaps explains some participants' desire for government to play an important and active role. This is very different from neoliberal desire to reduce this role as much as possible. Carl Neggers was particularly critical of the decision-making process and spoke passionately about the role government should be playing in this Saskatchewan land issue and also the role government should play more generally. According to Neggers, governments should be facilitating the conversation and informing Saskatchewan and Canadian people of the pasture issue. Specifically, he argues that both levels of government "owe (their) citizenry the right to see the due diligence (they) did and conducted in this policy decision". Drawing on the words of a professor from India, Neggers states simply that "government is responsible for ensuring the safety, health, and welfare of its people." Meanwhile, Stewart felt that government, at the very least, has the responsibility to "maintain some things" and in the case of the pastures government should "have the responsibility to protect that asset". The asset she refers to is the existing benefits of the pastures which are a direct result of the investment of taxpayer dollars since the program was established. Participants outlined these base level responsibilities of government but also saw a greater potential role. Neggers explains that "good governments would say 'we are responsible for ensuring clarity in intention and engaging all voices to come up with a solution that's in the best interest of the people'. Good governments don't say divide and conquer and we (the government) wins". A majority of participants, placing high value on transparency and inclusion agree with this line of thinking.

Scott, a previously elected government official, felt that government certainly has an important role. He spoke of the need for monitoring and enforcement of land bylaws and the environmental easements the Provincial government has suggested will address environmental concerns. Currently, Scott sees a “lack of will of the province to monitor and enforce” these acts. He also worries that some individuals and departments in government continue to view environment as the enemy or as “a hurdle to overcome”. He witnessed this first hand during his time as Environment Minister and describes a tendency to look for the “quickest and the cheapest way and the shortest way to get around environmental considerations (so that they can) then get on with development and economic development”. Scott acknowledges that these actors desire a development based on resource extraction and increasing profits.

While participants recognized governments desire to reduce its own role, they still felt a role for government should exist, whether it be considering the environment, monitoring easements, or facilitating the discussion. Almost all participants felt that the role the government played in the formation of the PFRA and the running of the pasture program since was a positive thing. Don Sweet described the setting up of the program as “government (coming in) and (saying) we’re here to help” the various stakeholders who were in need at the time. This aligns with Neggers’ argument that government is meant to stand up for those people who need them most. He specifically refers to First Nations, environmental citizenry, wildlife citizenry, and agricultural citizenry.

Participants also saw obstacles to government playing the role they desire. For example, government neoliberal ideology represents a barrier. Scott refers to it as political philosophy and references pervasive desire for private ownership as an issue. According to Scott, “it’s a philosophical attitude that government shouldn’t be in business”. Arbuthnott agrees that

“ideologically both of them (levels of government) want to privatize”. Neggers further explains the way governments “saddling up” with corporations “skews the role of government”. In the case of Canada, he argues that the federal government is “ignoring their role and allowing fragmentation”. Stewart similarly wonders whose interests the government has in mind. In her eyes, the cancelation of the program itself and potential sale “looks like a gift to oil and gas companies”. However, Don Sweet doubts that oil and gas interests influenced the federal decision itself. Scott and Neggers both repeatedly pointed out that unfortunately in our current political system, politicians only look four years into the future. This is not conducive to the long term thinking and planning participant’s desire.

Collaboration

Attempts at collaboration by opponents of potential pasture privatization are seen in efforts to facilitate open discussions, dialogue and information sharing. These tactics have possibly developed out of necessity in response to the failure on the part of the government to fulfill this role. My interviewees make clear that they collectively value and recognize the importance of collaboration and their actions represent consistent attempts at collaboration as well. First, this is seen in the membership of the key organizer of resistance, Public Pastures-Public Interest. Each participant involved with PPPI spoke of the importance of collaboration in decision making. Also they spoke of collaboration as essential in their efforts to oppose privatization, influence the decision making process, or spread awareness. Lorne Scott, Laura Stewart, and Katherine Arbuthnott all described efforts to work with other stakeholders with a direct interest in the pastures such as First Nations, the patrons themselves, APAS, and environmental groups. According to Scott, PPPI believes in the importance of collaboration. He explains: “We believe in working together and collaborating and it may take a little longer, it’s

not as newsworthy... hopefully at the end of the day we gain something”. These participants particularly referred to the value they see in other opinions and views and their belief in “finding common ground” through “open discussion”. This belief in collaboration translates into action according to Arbuthnott who explains “we are building good relationships, good alliances, and building more knowledge”.

Collaboration is not only seen as important by these members of PPPI but also on the part of the groups they interact with. For example, Neggers believes that First Nations efforts to engage in this issue have also been based on “their interest in working communally” which he argues they have been “completely open and transparent” about. He explains that they also attempted to engage and enlist the support of all existing stakeholders with their cooperative joint venture solution. These two groups, PPPI and the First Nations Joint Venture, have made a clear effort to practice collaboration in their actions. They interact with one another, with other stakeholders, with various conservation groups, and national and international groups as well. For example, at each interview with a member of PPPI reference was made to an upcoming meeting, that evening or the next day, with a different stakeholder they hoped to align with. This resistance articulates as a collaborative effort that believes in the value of open discussion and inclusive dialogue considerate of varying views.

Threat to Small Scale Farmers

Participants view the decision to cancel the PFRA and the potential loss of public lands as a threat. One group they view this as threatening to is Saskatchewan’s small scale producers, whom Arbuthnott refers to as an “already endangered species”. First, participants identified the pasture program as an aid to small scale producers in the past. Stewart explains that they allowed

for the diversification of operations and the pastures were a sort of protection for small-scale producers in that they “kept the pressure off of farmers to convert every little corner to crop production”. Neggers describes the pasture as a “method for young producers to enter, start herds, and create revenue streams” and both participants recognize that the pasture program meant it wasn’t necessary to develop a “great big cattle operation” to survive. It therefore allowed for diversity.

This increased pressure will likely reduce the potential for diversity and encourage large scale industrial farming, which Arbuthnott characterizes as “not good for our social structure and not good for our rural communities”. According to Scott, without the pastures “probably big and well established operators could continue but the little operations won’t be able to afford to continue”. This in turn would lead to a concentration in agriculture. Appropriately then, Arbuthnott shared that “small scaled mixed farmers are really scared about this”. Participants were not keen to see complete adoption of large-scale industrial farming in Saskatchewan yet didn’t link these concerns to a larger criticism of this sort of agriculture.

Related to their concern for small-scale producers and alternative modes of production, participants share their fear for rural Saskatchewan communities. According to Stewart and Scott, keeping small farmers is important to communities because they stay in the communities along with their families. This, according to Arbuthnott is important to the continued survival of rural schools. Don Sweet explains that, for smaller Saskatchewan communities, the pasture program was “a friend and a neighbour, and a benefit”. Scott agrees that these decisions impact local communities by way of reduced employment opportunities in remote rural areas.

Conservation & Environmental Movement

Participants also see this possible privatization as a threat to the environment. The interviews demonstrate that the participant's opposition is articulated with an enormous focus on conservation and environmentalism. While not all participants identified themselves as solely conservationists, every participant expressed a concern over the threat to environment, species at risk, and habitat. In fact, every single participant talked of the issue of species at risk and multiple interviewees mentioned particular species they were concerned for.¹³ Arbuthnott spoke of concerns about habitat for species, preservation of watersheds, loss of biodiversity, and her desire to encourage pro-environmental action. Stewart, whose passion is habitat, notes the importance of "the value of the health of the land" as a form of natural capital¹⁴. Scott, as a previous Environment Minister and an active conservationist, also commented a great deal on this issue. According to him, Southern Saskatchewan has more species at risk than any other region in Canada. He explains that Saskatchewan has lost enormous tracts of natural landscape¹⁵, 20 percent of native plants are rare and endangered and disappearing quickly, and half of the regions wetlands are gone. He follows up with: "what is left it is imperative that we preserve."

The desire participants have for continued central management of these lands is largely related to these environmental values and concerns. Scott and Arbuthnott hope it will prevent the fragmentation of habitat for species that privatization and the loss of such management could cause. Continued, central and overall management would allow for the pastures to be thought of "as ecosystems", which Arbuthnott feels is very important from a conservation perspective. As outlined, the government's response to conservation concerns has been the promise of conservation easements placed on these lands. Participants see numerous problems with this

¹³ For example: Swift Fox, Burrowing Owl, Black Tailed Prairie Dog, Sprague's Pipits, McCown's Longspur.

¹⁴ Natural Capital: Natural capital is way of considering the economic benefits of the natural environment. For a simple and brief overview of the concept see: www.naturalcapitalforum.com

¹⁵ According to Scott the number is somewhere between 75-80% of the natural landscape.

plan. Scott acknowledges that “the easements will do the job if they’re monitored and enforced”. However, participants are doubtful such monitoring and enforcement will be done and they have reason to worry. For example, Stewart points out that no one has ever actually been fined for breaking an easement. Scott uses a more specific example. According to him, Saskatchewan has had a Drainage Control Act since 1981 that requires similar monitoring and enforcement yet no one has been charged under the act in its 32 years of existence. Stewart also argues that conservation easements “say nothing about how it (the land) will be managed”. This represents a problem and point of contention for participants since a desire for pasture management is a key part of their environmental and ecological focus. This value placed on environment is seen even more clearly, along with other values, in the views participants individually have for development.

Understandings of development among participants and resistance

In the semi-structured, hour-long interviews I also asked questions related to development. I asked questions to understand participant’s personal views on the matter and in relation to the groups they interact with. It does not appear that participants fully share an understanding of development or connect their opposition to struggles against mainstream development. While it is clear as an outsider that the opposition they engage in and the values they advocate align with a view of development far different from the mainstream development approach employed by the government who made this decision, those interviewed do not all see themselves in this way. Even members of PPPI, who were consistent in most other areas of questioning, differed from each other. This does not allow for one to conclude whether or not these individual’s views are aligned. They very well may be. However, this uncertainty perhaps

demonstrates that the participants and their collaborators have yet to engage in a discussion regarding their unified idea of development or its place in their struggle.

When participants were asked about development, some seemed unsure of how to understand the term and were hesitant to engage in a conversation about different ideas surrounding development. This is entirely fair as multiple, diverse definitions are currently used and as a researcher I intentionally avoided leading them towards a specific understanding of the term. Katherine Arbuthnott and Carl Neggers both instantly engaged in a discussion about the meanings development can have and the alternative views they employ. Arbuthnott says quite frankly that a “good” and “bad” definition of development exists. According to her, the “good view” is “totally not about growth”. Rather, it is based on diversity in all ways possible including employment, land types, community groups, biology, and farms. She fears that “bad development” including monoculture and industrialization is what the two levels of government mean when utilizing the term. Neggers’ believes in a model based on not only a bottom line of profit but one based on multiple bottom lines. Specifically, he promotes a model that considers not only profit but also environment and social integrity.

Those participants that at first seemed unsure of how to answer this somewhat ambiguous line of questioning still had strong views related to development. In many instances, a few follow-up questions to get at the heart of this issue were necessary. These more specific questions about values, ideal goals of development, healthy communities and the use of the term to justify privatization made it clear that a majority of the participants employ an alternative view of development whether they fully realize it or not. Participants shared their dissatisfaction with current measurements of development. They were also very sceptical of mainstream development and the Federal and Provincial government’s “tendency to equate development

with growth” or short term success (Stewart, 2013). Scott used the term “instant windfall” to describe the focus of current development efforts while Stewart referred to the “big initial phase”. Similarly, Neggers utilized the term “the next big score”. The participant’s use of these descriptors was always followed up with a sentiment similar to Scott’s that “It’s (development) not just economic!” Rather than growth and short term measurements, participants shared a desire for sustainability and long term community health. Furthermore, Scott, Neggers, and Stewart specifically posed the question: What about an environmental component or the whole ecosystem and social considerations? There was also an inability to see positive community impact stemming from development based on economic growth. Neggers and Stewart referenced specific examples. Stewart spoke of her home town and the oil development occurring there while Neggers used the international example of a village in India in which development has not translated into better lives for community members.

DISCUSSION

The themes and points of contention repeatedly referenced by participants represent the results of my primary research. As such, they represent a base understanding of how participants frame and voice their opposition currently. Participants of the study are focused on and concerned with: The lack of consultation and transparency, the role of government, collaboration, livelihoods of small farmers, and the environment. Further, similar research involving an expanded participant pool must be done to be able to utilize the term “the resistance” more definitively and inclusively. However, these early results allow me to address the original research questions and draw some interesting conclusions. For example, there are similarities between the way these local and international decisions regarding land have been made and continue to play out. They are certainly not one in the same, yet political ideology,

based on neoliberal tenets, has motivated governments to reduce their own role and the size of the civil service while also using ideas of development, specifically mainstream, economic views of development, as justification. Meanwhile, CPP privatization and land grabbing have also each been presented as both opportunity and threat by different stakeholders. Various stakeholders with an abundance of concerns have engaged in the issues. Governments have failed to consult, include, or be transparent. Based on these fundamental similarities between government decision making and resulting opposition, I expected to find similarities between the two sets of opposition that stem from them. These parallels were found. However, I also expected participants of the CPP opposition to voice a collective view of development. They certainly voiced views of development contrary to those of the government, but they tend not to relate this issue directly to a critique of mainstream development. In some instances, the way participants voiced their views resonates with existing critiques of the global land grab and in others, their views regarding the value public lands, alternative development, and an important role for government innately tie their opposition to a more global questioning of neoliberal values.

Differences between the two land disputes also exist. Particularly, the intended use of these lands differentiates these two struggles. In the case of the Global Land Grab, there is a desire to utilize the lands for food or biofuel production. Grassroots opposition often fights for direct access to the land for local production of food. Participants expressed a desire to protect small-scale farmers but by keeping these pastures as grasslands rather than utilizing them for crop production. The vulnerability of these local lands and failure as productive farm land in the past lends to this difference but also perhaps the economic circumstances in the global North and South cannot be ignored. In the Global South, opponents are often fighting while facing circumstances of poverty and food shortages. Poor families are often living off the land before

these international land deals occur (OXFAM, 2013). These opponents are therefore directly impacted by their reduced access to the land by way of reduced access to food, work, or income. This perhaps explains the environmental focus of my participants. A lot of them are acting or are involved in resistance based on a love of the land, not because they themselves need the land to produce food or occupy the land directly. It also perhaps explains the difference in tactics between local opposition and resistance abroad. Abroad, the struggle against the massive enclosure of public lands is often fought with direct action by way land occupations, mass mobilizations, or legal tactics (Transnational Institute, 2012). These actions are the direct result of the precariousness of some individuals, families, and groups' situation in the global South. Of course, it is important to note that opponents to the Global Land Grab identify the phenomenon as a threat while other actors have argued it is a method for development and therefore for combating poverty (Borras & Franco, 2009).

An enormous lack of consultation and transparency is characteristic of both the global and more local land dispute. Firstly, this issue was the most clearly and collectively articulated by all participants. As seen in the results, participants were aghast with the decision making process. Numerous groups continue to try and encourage or force consultation. Meanwhile, the international land transactions of the global land grab are repeatedly characterized similarly by low transparency, lack of consultation, and minimal respect for communities, peasants, and farmers currently on the land (Borras & Franco, 2010; Cotula, 2013; Zoomers, 2010). This point of contention amongst my participants strongly links their concerns to those of global land grab resistance groups who have cited exclusion from decision making as a key concern (Oxfam, 2011).

My participants and critics of the global land grab share the perception of the loss of public lands as a threat. Saskatchewan participants certainly articulated their own position in this way and viewed the environment, the livelihoods of small farmer and alternative modes of production in general as being specifically threatened. This is consistent with groups standing in opposition to global land grabbing that respond to the phenomenon as a threat to food security, agrarian reform, local populations by way of potential displacement, access to land and livelihoods of peasants and small-scale farmers (Borras et al., 2011; Amanor, 2012; Stephens, 2011, La Via Campesina, De Schutter, 2011). In this way, my participants clearly share criticisms and concerns also employed by the global example of opposition. Specifically, global land grab critics and my participants identify two stakeholders consistently threatened by these land deals: small-scale farmers (or peasants) and the environment.

It is also important to note that in both the local and international example, this perception of threat exists alongside the perception of opportunity. As conservationists, environmentalists, small-scale producers, First Nations or indigenous populations, and organized grassroots groups argue that the loss of public lands is a threat to various stakeholders, multiple governments, corporations, resource companies, foreign investors, elites and large scale producers argue that the sale of public lands represents an opportunity. Just as is the case with land grabbing abroad, not all groups, individuals, or stakeholders are opposed to privatization of these Saskatchewan lands. In the Global land grab research, I found two groups, La Via Campesina and IFAP, representing producers of different sorts, that viewed the same phenomenon in almost opposite fashions. Similarly, the views of APAS and SCA in Saskatchewan are divergent. APAS, along with my participants, share the threat perceptions of La Via Campesina while SCA's views align more closely with those of IFAP. While some

research has been done on La Via Campesina and IFAP's differing views, future research should look more closely at these two Saskatchewan organizations, examine their membership and speak with these individuals to understand the different views of two provincially based producer groups.

Land disputes involving public lands create contention based on values, ideology and views of development. The interviewees who most openly identified privatization of the community pastures as a threat, Neggers, Stewart, Scott, and Arbuthnott, were also those who most clearly articulated ideas about development alternative to the mainstream neoliberal economic views employed by governments and elites worldwide. Collectively, these participants share a desire for a model of development based on sustainability and diversity that considers environmental integrity and social aspects. It is interesting to note that the way participants describe the CPP prior to the federal government's decision aligns with this desired development model. For example, Neggers questioned the urgency to abandon what he refers to as a "perfect model" that considered the three key bottom lines. Similarly, Scott explains the value of a program that not only provided multiple opportunities for various stakeholders but also preserved biodiversity. Arbuthnott describes the pastures as they were as the "ideal mix of conservation, recreation, and productivity." Stewart sums up these comments succinctly in referring to the CPP as a sort of "backbone" that gave "resiliency" to our agricultural economy.

It is clear that this resistance is made up of individuals who value an alternative understanding of development and who saw the pastures as an expression of that understanding focused on sustainability, multiple bottom lines, diversity, and community health. This is what I expected to find when asking what role actors' understandings of development play in shaping their resistance. I developed this expectation based on the somewhat collective understanding of

development found in global land grab resistance actors like GRAIN and La Via Campesina who adopt a complex human development approach with focus on community decision making and whom, based on this view, reject the global land grab as an opportunity for development completely. However, I didn't expect that my participants wouldn't make this connection between their own understandings of development and their rejection of privatization of the pastures as an opportunity. However, some participants, as seen by Arbuthnott and Neggers, realize their resistance inherently employs an alternative view of development. I suspect that future research might find understandings of development to be central in individuals or groups perception of this local land privatization as opportunity or threat. Also, it will be interesting to explore if participants and opposition in Saskatchewan begin to link their struggle to a critique of mainstream development.

As resistance evolves, future research will need to examine the land dispute in Saskatchewan and the opposition to privatization through numerous different academic lenses. Numerous scholars have explored, and continue to do so, the global land grab opposition in this way. It would appear that actions on the part of participants and their collaborators currently exists somewhere between emergence and coalescence¹⁶. Certainly, the actions of my participants and also of groups like PPPI have moved beyond feelings of discontent. They meet regularly, plan for the future, and discuss tactics, and spread information and awareness. They have also overcome barriers to organization and continuously work to collaborate with various stakeholders and increase awareness on this dispute. For example, the representation of PPPI in the early stages of their organization certain could have alienated them from other stakeholder groups. According to participants, some articles were published that could have created

¹⁶ For a clear description and discussion of these stages of social movements read: Christiansen (2009).

divisiveness and misunderstanding. However, as outlined by Stewart and Arbuthnott, PPPI utilized these potential misunderstandings as the starting point for an open dialogue with various groups and actors. Neither participant was critical of any published piece or the work of the media but they did identify the challenge it presented to their work.

Based on participant's responses, PPPI continues to encourage and facilitate increased awareness and ongoing collaboration between various stakeholders. Therefore, it is perhaps accurate to consider PPPI as a sort of Social Movement Organization (SMO) that works to "raise consciousness around issues" (Christiansen, 2009). Also, my secondary and primary research demonstrated that a wide range of individuals and stakeholders have become engaged in provincial opposition. Simply looking at my participant pool demonstrates such diversity. Local opposition is expanding, growing and beginning to mirror global land grab resistance in which "new movements, cross-class, rural and urban, and from different occupations, are emerging" as well (Borras & Franco, 2013). Certainly, the global land grab movement is more developed. It has certainly had more time to evolve and expand. As an international example it also exists on a larger scale, yet groups across borders have become engaged in the pasture issue. Initially it seemed as though different stakeholder groups were working in their own best interest. However, since this research began it seems as though opposition in Saskatchewan has become more cohesive. Specifically, an increased number of stakeholders are beginning to join the demand for an overall management policy for the pastures in Saskatchewan (Scott, Personal Interview, 2013).

It would seem as though the actions of my participants and of organizers like PPPI are in the early stages of social movement development. It remains to be seen if they will continue to overcome barriers and challenges to enter into a more organized stage of bureaucratization as has

been witnessed in the expanding global land grab resistance. For example, the launch of an International Alliance Against Land Grabbing, led by peasants in collaboration with various social movements and organizations was announced at an international conference organized by the National Confederation of Peasant Organizations (CNOP) in Mali and La Via Campesina (La Via Campesina Press Release, 2011).

Social movements are fluid, inclusive, and complex. Perhaps these two sets of resistance are different and separate yet should be considered as part of the beginnings, foundations, or part of a much larger global social movement that is challenging neoliberalism and its values. In this vein of thinking, the fight against land grabbing would certainly represent its own social movement encapsulating coalitions and SMO's across the Global South which organizes cooperatively and collectively. Meanwhile, my participants and their actions would represent the very beginnings of a potential social movement aimed at a specific policy decision regarding land. More broadly however, these two forms of opposition are challenging a larger status quo. They are certainly not organized collectively but each are raising awareness regarding the pitfalls and failures of neoliberal decision making and governance. For example, the concern my participants shared regarding the role of government is important. Specifically, what participants perceive as a failure on the part of the government in regards to these local land decisions represents a success in the eyes of neoliberal policy makers. Participants view a role for government. They desire their government to play a role. However a neoliberal ethos demands exactly the opposite. It requires the government to reduce its own role and encourage private enterprise wherever possible. As such, this source of contestation locally represents a point of contention between neoliberalism and grassroots opposition more widely.

While my participants don't necessarily identify immediately with this larger struggle, their actions are certainly indicative of a push against neoliberalism. Similarly, the neoliberal ethos also encourages development based on greater productivity and growth and therefore industrial agriculture. Participants questioned such an approach to agriculture here in Saskatchewan just as global land grab resistance groups have abroad. Again, they are acting and opposing locally but resisting a broader status quo in terms of the role of government, development, and agriculture. At least one participant embraced her part in a larger struggle:

“It's global. I mean, I do think that everybody in the world is facing this struggle. This whole business of growth to survive is a recent thing. The growth crowd has power and status right now. At an abstract level it's about what land is for” (Arbuthnott, Personal Interview, 2013).

Neggers also referred to the need for a shift away from one bottom line, profit, in terms of development globally. Besides Arbuthnott's and Neggers' brief comments, participants don't characterize their actions and opposition as a part of a challenge to mainstream development or the dominance of neoliberalism. However, they are questioning policy-making based on this hegemonic system. They are challenging the widespread adoption of industrial agriculture. They are questioning what development should value and look like. My participants are questioning and challenging the status quo that grassroots groups are similarly questioning and challenging all over the world.

CONCLUSIONS:

Land is currently the source of ongoing localized and globalized debates. Neoliberal ideology and its dominance have been implicated in land policies of privatization that include the withdrawal of the state, preference for commercial interests, and disregard for public opinion. Therefore, neoliberal land policies serve the interests of particular sectors of the population.

Resistance has taken shape in response to these policies and specific land issues examined in this study. My research and its findings are especially relevant as land, while the focus of this work is not the only public resource expected to be affected by neoliberal ideology and policy making. Privatization of water has recently become a contested issue internationally and in the province of Saskatchewan as well¹⁷.

This neoliberal dogma has facilitated a movement away from government ownership in which goods and services for the collective public good can be maintained. Based on corresponding events in the developing world, the issue of public versus private land has represents a common source of contestation. Resistance here in Saskatchewan represents a local case with local stakeholders and actions, yet opponents to privatization of the pasture voice their opposition in ways that resonate with existing critiques of the global land grab. Participants understand development differently than current neoliberal governments but have yet to embrace these views collectively or incorporate them into their opposition. They don't yet fully include their views of development as part of their opposition despite the likelihood that without these views, they wouldn't perceive privatization as a threat as clearly. Understanding this local opposition has become important as local resistance is, at its core, part of larger challenges to hegemonic neoliberal modes of thinking, governing, and land ownership.

It's important to note that this research explores one side of the pasture debate. As an honours thesis, it represents only the beginnings of very important Saskatchewan, Canadian, and global land research. Multiple areas for further and future research have been identified

¹⁷ Simon Enoch, Director of the Saskatchewan Office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternative examines the local water issue in: Enoch, S. (19 February 2013). "Regina's Proposal for Municipal Water Privatization". www.rabble.ca

throughout this work. Specifically, this research should be expanded on to include more informants and build upon the findings thus far. Also, the opinions, views, and reasons for such of those individuals and groups that favour privatization and support these contested government decisions need to be examined. Furthermore, every attempt should be made to understand why a group like APAS stands in opposition to privatization while a group like SCA, both representing various Saskatchewan producers, stands in support. Such enlightenments will allow for understanding in the local case and also in land disputes more globally.

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