

Land concentration, land grabbing and people's struggles in Europe

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Introduction: The report and its highlights

Land issues are rarely considered to be a problem for Europeans, or cause for people's struggles in Europe today, as it is elsewhere in the world – at least in the emerging literature on contemporary global land enclosures. But is this really the case? A closer look reveals quite the opposite. Many deeply social, cultural, political and economic issues and concerns around land that are associated with countries and peoples in the global South exist *all* across the globe -- including in a region where one might least expect it: Europe. In Europe today, concentration of land under ever larger holdings controlled by fewer hands, resulting (in part) from land grabbing and resulting in shrinking access to land for small-scale food producers, is accelerating. To what extent, how and why this is happening warrants far more critical attention than has been the case to date. This collection aims to address this gap and spark meaningful and constructive discussion. It brings together case studies detailing the nature and extent of these problems in 13 countries. The case studies are capped by a final chapter that reflects on the situations they present from a human rights perspective, using the lens of the CFS Tenure Guidelines on Land, Fisheries and Forests, a new governance instrument that was supported by European governments and addresses tenure issues in relation to national food security and the progressive realisation of the right to food.

The study itself is just an initial attempt in what we hope will become a continuing conversation around land issues in Europe in particular and in the global North more generally. The current study is the product of an intensive and focused collective process, one involving a team of grassroots researchers, academics, and development practitioners, many of whom were already steeped in practical experience and knowledge regarding the particular situations they researched and wrote about here. The seeds of inquiry were planted in June 2012 and began germinating that Autumn; the early growth was examined, pruned and nurtured in a workshop that was held in Cluj-Napoca, Romania in December 2012; in January 2013 the first fruits were ready for taste-testing via a peer review process and layers of editorial work. The whole project was spearheaded by the European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC), in close collaboration with the Hands Off the Land (HOTL) alliance and other organisations. The European Coordination Via Campesina is an organisation of 27 farmers' and agricultural workers' unions as well as rural movements working to achieve food sovereignty in Europe. The HOTL alliance brings together a number of organisations engaged in raising public awareness within Europe on pressing global land issues, including land grabbing, involving European policies and companies.

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Until now the global phenomenon that is widely referred to as 'land grabbing' has been generally assumed to be happening only in the Global South, and with many reports claiming that it is concentrated in Africa and that the main land grabbers are Chinese, Indian and South Korean companies as well as the Gulf States. Transnational social movement and NGO campaigns have likewise tended to accept unquestioningly this general assumption that land grabbing is a phenomenon focused on countries in the South, especially African countries. By bringing Europe's land issues into focus, the present study stands *to change the way we think of contemporary land grabbing in at least three fundamental ways*.

First, land grabbing is not the only important and pressing land issue in the world today; the ongoing trend of 'generic' land concentration is just as significant and problematic. *Second*, land concentration and land grabbing do not only occur in developing countries in the South, but are trends that are currently underway in Europe as well. *Third*, the study shows that people's struggles against land concentration and land grabbing are also unfolding in Europe, suggesting that a truly transnational perspective on political struggle against contemporary enclosures is certainly warranted, if not urgently needed. In this introduction we offer a discussion of the study's main highlights, which are briefly summarised below.

1. Europe is currently experiencing *tremendous and rapid land concentration*. This process is adversely affecting the lives and livelihoods of millions of small-scale farmers and agricultural workers. In many European countries, the degree of land-based inequality is similar to some countries with notoriously inequitable distribution of land ownership and land-based wealth such as Brazil, Colombia, and the Philippines. In Europe today, tens of thousands of small farmers are being thrown out of farming every year, while large farms and agribusiness are expanding their scope widely and rapidly. The same logic of global capital accumulation imperatives that are the driving force in land grabbing globally, are underpinning land concentration processes in Europe: this is, the revaluation of land in light of the convergence of multiple crises around food, energy, climate and finance.

Yet two European processes have fused together with the converging crises, resulting in the explosive concentrating currents seen today. First, there is a privatisation drive in land property systems in the previously socialist countries, which is rapidly altering landscapes and livelihoods there. Second, there is a possible shift in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) subsidy scheme of the European Union (EU) that is directly tied to production, i.e. subsidy per hectare of farmland, and which may become an important incentive for well-to-do farmers, agribusiness and other speculators to accumulate land – just as the existing CAP subsidy system has been. Dramatic processes of land concentration within the EU have coincided with the concentration of the benefits of CAP subsidy in the hands of fewer *and* bigger land holdings. Simply put, there has been at least the coexistence of CAP subsidy system and tens of thousands of farmers being out of farming every year.

Importantly, while land concentration has always been part of the European scene (as it has elsewhere), we see a few features emerging in recent years that give it a distinct, contemporary character. These features pertain to: (i) the relatively newer/different *context* of global/European capital accumulation imperatives, combined with land concentration *processes* that are of a (ii) relatively newer *character*, (ii) alarming *extent*, (iii) worrying *pace*, and (iv) appalling *manner*. Land concentration turns out to be a very critical issue in Europe today, and ought to be understood as one of the most strategic development issues facing the European region and its peoples -- directly involving at least 25 million people in the EU alone.

2. On par with the scale and character witnessed in Africa, Asia and Latin America – and so, to a greater extent than previously believed – *land grabbing* is underway in Europe as well. Within the EU, land grabbing is especially significant in many of the relatively newer Member States, including at least three of the countries included in this study: Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria, although arguably, it is taking place in Germany, Italy and Spain as well. As will be seen, as in other parts of the world, the scale of the land acquired is usually quite large: often involving thousands of hectares of land per deal.

As elsewhere, the 'grabbers' are not just confined to foreign actors, but domestic investors too, and therefore include not only those grabbers frequently highlighted in the mainstream media (e.g. Chinese capital and the Gulf States, for example), *but also European* capital as well. Indeed, European capital emerges as an important factor in all the countries studied here. Meanwhile, the nature of the land transactions brought to light here are often just as shady in character as those witnessed in Cambodia or Ethiopia, for instance. Finally, it bears stressing that this phenomenon of land grabbing in Europe is unfolding both inside and outside the EU, and the present study also brings into focus the cases of Serbia and Ukraine, in addition to numerous cases inside the EU. Arguably, and as demonstrated in several case studies in this collection, CAP subsidy is one of the drivers of land grabbing within the EU – especially in Eastern Europe, and has helped to unleash the rise of a new class of 'land grab entrepreneurs': land brokers, speculators and scammers whose activities are facilitating the dramatic, and in our view highly problematic, changes around land property relations and land use that are currently unfolding.

Overall, Europe is linked to the global land-grabbing phenomenon in at least three ways: (a) as *context* for land grabbing elsewhere, (b) as the *origin* of land grabbers, and (c) as a *site* for land grabbing. This 3-in-1 role of the region is quite similar to two other regions in the world, namely, Latin America and Southeast Asia.

3. Green grabbing – or land grabbing in the name of the environment – is an emerging phenomenon in Europe, as it is elsewhere in the world. Europe is linked to green grabbing in at least two ways. On the one hand, EU policies such as its biofuels policy, embodied in the Renewable Energy Directive (RED), as well as various global policies that it supports such as REDD+ (Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), are crucial contexts for massive land grabbing happening in various other parts of the world. On the other hand, Europe is itself becoming an important site of green grabbing via increasing corporate investments in renewable energy that require both large-scale acquisitions of land, and significant changes in how land is used. Again, public subsidies for investments in renewable energy that are linked to land grabbing are increasingly an issue.

4. 'Artificialisation' of land is a key underlying process leading to land concentration, land grabbing and green grabbing. Changing lifestyles towards more urban ways, and capital accumulation imperatives (the need to continuously reinvent itself to generate profit) are leading to encroachment into agricultural land, eroding the latter through scattered but steady and widespread land use changes. In Europe, a significant amount of prime agricultural land (e.g., near road infrastructure or with irrigation, for example) is lost to urban sprawl, real estate speculation, tourism enclaves, and an array of other non-agricultural commercial undertakings – a process that many French farmer-activists call 'artificialisation of land'. Although typically encroaching into the most fertile and productive agricultural lands in piece-meal fashion that in isolation may not seem like much, these scattered cases of usually smaller land deals ultimately add up to a substantial capture and loss of farmland across Europe.

5. Additionally, these processes of land concentration and land grabbing in the European setting are further reinforced by existing market dynamics and institutional rules, which effectively deny entry into agriculture to prospective farmers. The process of putting small farmers out of farming and blocking the entry of prospective small farmers into the agricultural sector are two interlinked phenomena that are shaped by the push towards fewer and larger farm holdings. As will be seen in the country studies, this is an especially troubling – but even less visible -- dimension of the land question in Europe today. It has a clear generational dimension too, one that raises additional fundamental questions about the very future of farming in Europe – not only what *form* it will take and what *purposes* it will serve, but *who* will do it.

6. Against these trends and in favour of alternatives, cross-class people's struggles are growing. Vibrant people's struggles against land concentration, 'artificialisation of land', and land grabbing are definitely taking root and growing across Europe. These struggles are of two types. First, we are seeing the rise of defensive *people's counter-enclosure campaigns* where people are actively resisting dispossession or 'artificialisation of land'. Second, we are seeing more pro-active *people's enclosure campaigns* where people are firmly asserting their own right to control land resources, including their right to cultivate and to choose how and for what purposes to farm. One key feature of the protest front that is emerging across Europe is its multi-class character and capacity to bring together diverse categories of people: farmers, workers, consumers, urban gardeners, activists, young and old, men and women. Another is its territorial character: for various reasons the nascent protest front is reimagining and reshaping relations and relationships not just within the rural sphere, but also between rural and urban, and toward more territorial fields of action that criss-cross urban and rural boundaries in transformative ways.

The context: Urgent land issues in Europe today

As indicated above, the processes of land concentration and land grabbing in Europe are quite similar to land concentration and land grabbing in other places in the world, such as Cambodia or Brazil, Ethiopia and Indonesia. In this section we delve more deeply into the context, conditions and challenges to these trends of land concentration and land grabbing in Europe.

Despite the highly urbanised and industrial character of the EU economy, agriculture remains an important sector for various reasons. According to the 2012 Edition of Eurostat (EU 2012: 27), there are close to 12 million farms in the EU-27 in 2010, covering 170 million ha of Utilized Agricultural Area (UAA) (see Tables 1 and 2). This translates to UAA covering a little over 40 percent of the total EU-27 territory, providing livelihoods and jobs to 25 million people. The latter translates to 9.7 million 'annual working units' (AWU) that in turn corresponds to same number of people working full-time (EU 2012: 53). It is very much of a family labour-oriented enterprise. "In EU-27 the share of family labour force in AWU was 75%, regular non-family labour forces was 17% and non-regular non-family 8%" (EU 2012: 53) (see Table 3).

Moreover: "In 2011, gross value added (GVA) at producer prices amounted to more than EUR 148 billion in the EU-27. 83.3% of this value is generated in the EU-15... France, Italy and Spain together produce almost 58% of the GVA of agriculture in the EU-15" (EU 2012: 65). But it is important to note that subsidies play an important role in this sector. "Between 2000 and 2011, the value of all agricultural subsidies... recorded in 2010 in the EU-27 amounted to EUR 55.5 billion. The share of the new Member States in the total value of subsidies paid to agricultural producers rose from 3% to 17.7%" (ibid.).

Crucially, there has been a shift in the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) subsidy over time, from subsidies on product to subsidies on production, which have direct and far-reaching implications in terms of land and land concentration. In 2000, the subsidies on products accounted for EUR 26.6 billion, compared to only EUR 4.7 recorded in 2011. In contrast, subsidies on production jumped from EUR 2 billion to EUR 50.9 billion during the same period (ibid.: 65). This shift directly correlates with dramatic land concentration trends in the EU during the same period of time.

Furthermore, the composition of the value of intermediate inputs consumed by the agricultural industry in the EU-27 by 2011 shows how dominant the industrial nature of the sector has become, and relatedly, how dependent EU agriculture is on fossil-energy and the importation of distant resources (e.g. virtual soil and water) through feedstuff. This data also helps to explain why it is not easy for prospective farmers who have less starting capital and land to enter the sector, why small farmers have difficulty competing, and why it remains an uphill climb for alternative agriculture. And it reveals who is cornering the profits from agriculture. "Intermediate consumption in 2011 in the EU-27 accounted for more than 61% of the output value of the agricultural industry at producer prices... The main input from intermediate consumption is represented by animal feedstuffs, which account for 39% of the total value of intermediate consumption. Energy and lubricants account for 12% of the total value of intermediate consumption, while fertilizers and soil improvements amount to around 8%. The main intermediate input items for crop production are fertilizers, plant protection products and seeds and plants, which together account for 17% of total agricultural intermediate consumption" (EU 2012: 72). This has direct implications on the income from farming (see Table 4).

Table 1. *Number of agricultural holdings, 1966-2010 (1 000), Selected countries in the European Union*

EC/EU; Country	1966/67 6 MS**	1970 6 MS	1980 9 MS	1990 12 MS	2000 15 MS	2010 27 MS
EC/EU*	6404.9	5888.3	5821.4	7993.0	6770.7	11966.4
BG						370.5
DE	1246.0	1074.6	849.9	653.6	472.0	299.1
ES				1593.6	1287.4	989.8
FR	1708.0	1587.6	1255.3	923.6	663.6	516.1
IT	2980.5	2849.9	2832.4	2664.6	2153.7	1620.9
HU						576.8
AT					199.5	150.2
RO***						3895.0

*EC/EU: aggregate calculated for the countries being member States in the reference year.

** MS = Member States

*** Provisional data for Romania

Table 2. *Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA), 1980-2010 (1 000 ha), Selected countries in the European Union*

EC/EU country	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
BG			6150.0	6164.0	5582.1		5054.8
DE			17869.1	17344.3	17064.2	17035.2	16704.0
ES	31335.1	30714.8	30625.2	29863.7	25393.8	25859.0	no data
FR	31732.6	31438.2	30494.2	30017.4	29719.1	29588.2	29311.0
IT	17879.1	17509.9	18166.3	16172.3	15627.7	14709.9	12885.2
HU			6473.1	6179.3	No data	5862.6	5342.7
AT			3458.0	No data	3380.7	3262.9	3165.8
RO			14769.0	14797.2	14811.8	14269.6	14156.4

Source: Eurostat website downloaded 09 March 2013 and put together by authors.

Table 3. *Total labour input, 1966-2010 (1 000 AWU = Annual Work Unit), Selected countries in the European Union*

EC/EU; Country	1966/67 6 MS**	1970 6 MS	1980 9 MS	1990 12 MS	2000 15 MS	2010 27 MS
EC/EU*	10120.0	7461.0	7599.2	8024.3	6352.7	9736.1
BG						406.5
DE	2330.0	1611.0	850.2	1030.0	617.6	545.5
ES				1143.4	1077.7	889.0
FR	3032.0	2369.0	1255.3	1256.5	949.4	779.7
IT	4127.0	2990.0	2832.6	1924.0	1364.9	953.8
HU						423.5
AT					181.9	114.3
RO***						1610.3

*EC/EU: aggregate calculated for the countries being member States in the reference year.

** MS = Member States

*** Provisional data for Romania

Source: Eurostat (2012: 13)

Table 4. *Agricultural income indicator (Indicator A****), 1977-2011 (2005 = 100), Selected countries in the European Union*

EC/EU; countries	1977 9 MS	1980 9 MS	1985 10 MS	1990 12 MS	1995 15 MS	2000 15 MS	2005 25 MS	2010 27 MS	2011 27 MS
EC/EU					106.1	105.7	100.0	111.5	119.1
BG							100.0	123.5	152.2
DE					64.0	90.1	100.0	113.2	128.7
ES				88.7	98.3	104.4	100.0	99.0	97.5
FR	70.8	72.6	74.5	94.8	108.3	110.2	100.0	116.0	113.7
IT		107.7	101.2	101.3	116.1	117.9	100.0	79.9	88.7
HU							100.0	123.2	183.8
AT					95.4	89.6	100.0	106.5	123.7
RO***							100.0	87.7	137.5

* EC/EU: aggregate calculated for the countries being member States in the reference year.

** MS = Member States

*** Provisional data for Romania

**** Indicator A is the index of the real income of factors in agriculture per annual work unit

Source: Eurostat (2012: 19)

Land concentration in Europe: Comparable to Latin America and Asia

Land remains central to the lives and livelihoods of millions of Europeans. But agricultural land is becoming increasingly concentrated into fewer large holdings under the control of fewer corporate entities, and this is undermining the autonomy and capacity of many farming households to construct and defend livelihoods. Growing concentration has shaped -- and been shaped by -- government agricultural policies, especially the CAP subsidy scheme that favours large holdings, marginalises small farms, and blocks entry of prospective farmers.

As a result, lands have become highly concentrated in the hands of the few large holdings. As of 2012, small farms of less than 2 ha dominate the European scene -- comprising nearly half (49 percent, or nearly 6 million holdings) of the total holdings in the EU. But while more numerous, this farm size category corners only a small portion of the total UAA -- a mere 2 percent. In sharp contrast, the farm size category of 100 ha and above -- representing 3 percent of the total number of farms -- captures half (50 percent) of the entire UAA in EU-27 (EU 2012: 27). Land in Europe (as well as in selected countries included in this study) has not always been this concentrated, as the data in Tables 5 and 6

Table 5. Utilised agriculture area (UAA, in ha) by selected size of the holding, 1990, 2003, 2007

EU; country	Total			< 2 ha			> 50 ha		
	1990	2003	2007	1990	2003	2007	1990	2003	2007
BG		2,904,480	3,050,740		312,790	191,100		2,278,900	2,497,710
DE	17,048,110	16,981,750	16,931,900	123,670	24,770	20,110	9,228,820	12,046,610	12,594,570
ES	24,531,060	25,175,260	24,892,520	555,600	369,710	311,960	14,836,700	17,406,120	17,481,430
FR		27,795,240	27,476,930		82,610	62,180		22,022,030	22,745,390
IT	14,946,720	13,115,810	12,744,200	1,246,160	901,620	773,120	5,072,440	5,099,300	5,015,850
HU		4,352,370	4,228,580		210,920	145,410		2,961,900	3,159,770
AT		3,257,220	3,189,110		23,280	22,330		1,262,440	1,298,220
RO		13,930,710	13,753,050		2,031,430	1,807,510		6,798,110	5,500,620

Calculated from Eurostat (2012), downloaded 09 March 2013 by authors.

Table 6. Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) in ha, by selected size of the holding, 2010

	Total 2010	< 2 ha	> 50 ha
BG	4,475,530	144,180	3,889,530
DE	16,704,040	14,250	12,825,280
ES	23,752,690	297,220	16,773,220
FR	27,837,290	62,450	23,513,930
IT	12,856,050	726,990	5,364,530
HU	4,686,340	138,000	3,479,940
AT	2,878,170	19,060	1,096,770
RO	13,306,130	1,718,360	7,026,690

Calculated from Eurostat (2012), downloaded 09 March 2013 by authors.

The state of land distribution by size of holding by 2010 is the outcome of a trend that started several decades ago. While Table 1 shows that the aggregate number of farms in the EU actually increased between 1996/67 and 2010, this increase was largely due to the accession of new member states. EU membership has increased significantly from just 6 member states in 1966/67, to the current 27 member states (e.g., EU-27), and many of the newer member states have relatively larger agricultural sectors and are land abundant. Here, Romania is a good example. But for other EU members during this period, the strong trend toward land concentration is clearly discernible. In Germany, for example, the total number of farm holdings fell dramatically from 1,246,000 in 1966/67, to a mere 299,100 by 2010. Likewise, in France, the total number of farm holdings shrank from 1,708,000 in 1966/67, to just 516,100 by 2010. And in Italy, while there were 2,980,500 farm holdings in 1966/67, this had fallen to 1,620,900 holdings over the same period.

The Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) shows a similar trend towards extreme concentration. Table 2 shows that in Germany the land area covered by farms of less than 2 ha dropped radically, from 123,670 ha in 1990 to 20,110 ha in 2007, while farms of 50 ha and larger expanded their covered area from 9.2 million ha in 1990 to 12.6 million ha in 2007. This is the same trend as in Spain, Bulgaria, France, Italy, Austria and Hungary, especially on the reduction of coverage of small farms, albeit with significant variations between them (see Tables 5 and 6).

In most of the country cases in the present study, land concentration is a truly pressing concern. In some instances the extreme degree of land concentration is not new, for example, as in the case of Andalusia in Spain, where land concentration has been going on for centuries. In Andalusia at present, agricultural areas of over 30 ha account for most of the regional UAA, whereas the most common category of areas between 2 and 5 ha, barely hold a percentage of that (see Aparicio et al, this collection). But trends of the past two decades show a sharp decrease in the number of small farms and a clear trend towards concentration of land holdings under the control of large farms. In other places like France, Germany and Italy, land concentration has occurred in the past, but not to the extent as in Andalusia.

The drivers of land concentration are varied. The economic, polarizing effect of capital accumulation in the rural economy and commodity chain has rendered smaller holdings increasingly unable to compete with large farms. Part of the reason why is because of the EU subsidy scheme through CAP that privileges large holdings. And so, while small farms become weaker, large farms become even stronger in market competition -- not because the latter are necessarily more efficient in farming, but because they are definitely more efficient in capturing subsidies.

Land concentration and the CAP subsidy shape and (re)structure each other over time: as land becomes concentrated in fewer and larger holdings, so does the CAP subsidy become more concentrated as well. Take the case of Italy, where in 2011, a mere 0.29 percent of farms accessed 18 percent of total CAP incentives, and 0.0001 of these (that is, just 150 farms) cornered 6 percent of all subsidies. The remaining 93.7 percent of all farms receive 39.5 percent of CAP subsidies (see Onorati and Pierfederici, this collection). Similarly in Spain in 2009, 75 percent of the subsidies were cornered by only 16 percent of the beneficiaries (see Aparicio et al, this collection). And despite their distinct history, the former socialist bloc countries that are newer to the EU, actually share a broadly similar trend of (re)concentration of land holdings under fewer large farms, while the CAP subsidy scheme has demonstrated similar differentiating currents there.

14 In Hungary, for example, its accession to the EU facilitated highly subsidised agricultural products flooding the market, resulting in the bankruptcy of many Hungarian farmers. This is especially because during the first six years after EU accession the majority of small farmers were not even eligible to apply

for EU agricultural subsidies. Since small farmers constitute the vast majority of farming population, this meant that 93 percent of farmers were excluded from the subsidy regime. Some experts have concluded that “90% of agriculture subsidies went to only 100 persons”.¹ In 2009, 8.6 percent of all farms cornered 72 percent of all agricultural subsidies (see Fidrich, this collection).

CAP direct subsidies were very unevenly distributed in Romania as well. There, less than 1 percent of farms, above 500 ha, received 50 percent of the subsidies, the remaining other half being shared among the remaining 99 percent of all farms. Romanian farmers can also receive funds from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) that privileges agribusiness through a variety of schemes: measure 121 (Modernisation of Agricultural Holdings), measure 123 (Increasing the added value of the agricultural and forestry products) and measure 125 (Infrastructure related to the development and adaption of agriculture and forestry). During 2007-2012, the EU and the Romanian state spent more than €2.9 billion that went mostly to large-scale agriculture – another incentive for further land monopoly, and land grabbing. This is in addition to the fact that the cost of renting land is included in the direct subsidy scheme by the EU and the Romanian state – providing incentives for large agribusiness and all sorts of speculators to accumulate more land (see Bouniol, this collection).

In several Eastern European and former socialist countries, the various forms of land restitution (e.g., restituting lands to pre-socialist era landlords) has contributed to post-1990 land concentration, such as the case of Romania (see Bouniol, this collection). In Bulgaria, restituting land to ‘original’ owners of pre-1946 automatically excluded from the land restitution program many people who did not own any land before state socialism, but who were employed in and whose livelihoods depended on cooperative agricultural production before 1989. This is one factor behind the massive land concentration and economic degradation of the 1990s in Bulgaria, where people who were dispossessed were pushed to urban areas, oftentimes precisely into informal settlements (see Medarov, this collection).

Yet in communities where post-socialist land reforms were carried out and lands were redistributed to beneficiaries, conditions have not been bright either. While land access has not been the key issue, at least not in the beginning, access to support services was and remains a crucial issue today. Few, if any, support services are being captured by the newly created smaller farm plots, resulting in increasing hardship, and consequently, loss of interest in farming – with many abandoning the countryside for the cities. In Bulgaria, for example, especially after accession to the EU, the introduction of subsidies tied to every hectare of land in a farm, coincided with the revaluation of land as a scarce resource globally. This convergence has led to intense land reconsolidation while unleashing a new group of investors called *arendatori*, who are capturing vast tracts of land along the way. Interacting with these changes is the ‘voluntary consolidation’ program under ‘special investment funds’, also favouring larger landholdings. The overall result has been a remarkable concentration of land accompanied by widespread dispossession (see Medarov, this collection).

The exclusionary, polarizing currents of land concentration are not confined to the EU, but are extending to neighbouring non-EU countries as well. The situation in Ukraine is illustrative (see Plank, this collection). The current agricultural structure in Ukraine is an outcome of the post-socialist land reform process. According to statistics there are 4.5 million rural household plots on 7.5 million hectares and 49,000 agricultural enterprises on 23 million hectares. The latter include 40,000 farms on 4.3 million hectares. Interestingly, household plots do not count in the official agricultural system although they contributed more than 50 per cent to the agricultural production in 2008. In recent years large sections of the population moved to the cities because of lack of opportunities in agriculture (no state support services, and so on). As a consequence, the majority of the actual landowners lease

their land, at very low rates. The average lease rate for one hectare amounts to 350 Ukrainian Hryvnia -- around €30 -- with the average leasing time between four and ten years, with a possible maximal tenancy of 49 years. Although agricultural land cannot be sold officially, the selling happens anyway, *informally* -- a situation that has been paving the way for the rise of large holdings (agroholdings) especially since 2005. The latter's share in the domestic gross output is 42.3 percent, against 5 percent for farmers. With their expansion, the concentration and control of land is increasing significantly. Large landholdings arise not only out of land leased from individual landowners, but also through the incorporation of different agricultural enterprises. Agroholdings are increasingly horizontally *and* vertically integrated in order to control the whole value chain. Altogether, the ten biggest agroholdings today control about 2.8 million of hectares -- referred to in Ukraine as 'latifundisty' since they involve big parcels of land dedicated to grain and oilseeds grown for export. Indeed, Argentina and Brazil are frequently cited as examples of how industrial agriculture is developing in Ukraine (see Spoor 2012; and also Plank, this collection).

Land concentration has proceeded apace in Germany as well. When the Berlin Wall fell in 1992, a single company (BVVG) was charged with leasing out and selling off former state owned agricultural land in eastern Germany, which it evidently managed to do well: by the end of 2009, 627,000 ha of agricultural land had been sold, while 393,000 ha was under lease, with a large part set to expire by 2010. In the late 2000s, the government's preference shifted decidedly toward land privatisation, leading to accelerated land sales to private investors. Land prices and land lease rates skyrocketed, with the price of new leases in Uckermark leaping from €50/ha in 2005 to €279/ha in 2010 (and almost doubling between 2007 and 2009 alone). Small farmers especially were hard-pressed to renew their lease contracts, amidst a strong government push to sell land (not renew leases) and because lease prices were too high (see Herre, this collection). Meantime, a preferential scheme (EALG) was introduced giving existing leaseholders owning less than 50 percent of their total cultivated land -- regardless of the farm size -- a pre-emptive right to buy the leased land at discounted rates. With 75 percent of the total area leased out by BVVG for large farms (500 hectares and above) on the one hand, and many small farmers unable to afford even the discounted sale price on the other hand, the scheme led to accelerated land concentration. Several big investors acquired land in eastern Germany in this way, such as Steinhoff Holdings, an international furniture company which now controls an estimated 25,000 ha mainly for biogas.

Creeping land grabbing: A limited but potentially explosive issue

Alongside land concentration, the other big problem experienced in Europe today (even as it remains largely invisible in the news media, NGO reporting, and academic literature), is land grabbing. Here, it is important to be clear about what we mean by the term: for us, land grabbing is, in the first place, about *capturing control of extended tracts of land*. It is about the construction of landholdings that represent a deep rupture with family farming and the associated farm sizes that characterize European farming so far. Although there are, in Europe, specific and historically delivered pockets of large holdings (Andalusia in Spain, the Mezzogiorno in Italy, Scotland and Eastern Germany), we are now witnessing a renewed emergence of very large holdings. We refer here to contemporary land grabbing in Europe as a 'creeping' problem precisely because if compared to the Global South, land grabbing in Europe is, as yet, a limited phenomenon. It is limited in a quantitative sense and it is limited geographically (mainly, though not exclusively to Eastern Europe). However, in the decade(s) to come, the process of land grabbing might very well accelerate and embrace the North, West and South of Europe as well, for reasons that will be discussed later on in this introduction.

While land grabbing in Europe so far is limited mainly to Eastern Europe, there are nonetheless many and varied examples here. Take the case of Romania. There are no official statistics, but as much as 700,000-800,000 ha, or 6 percent of Romanian farmland, is estimated to be in the hands of transnational corporations, according to local researchers (see Bouniol, this collection). One example is *Transavia*, an agribusiness firm originally specialising in meat and poultry that recently acquired over 12,000 ha in the Cluj district to produce grain (corn and wheat). It seeks to control the entire chain of production for its products, and is expanding both horizontally and vertically. In 2005 and again in 2006, *Transavia* received a million euros to modernize a cereal process plant through an EU subsidy program. In 2007 it bought 85 percent of *Avicola Brasov*, its main national competitor, and in 2008 yet another competitor, *CerealCom Alba*. And since 2011, *Transavia* has invested more than €10 million in renting land and building storage facilities in Cluj District.

The two villages where *Transavia* acquired land -- Aiton (2,000 ha) and Tureni (10,000 ha) -- are relatively remote geographically, with an ageing population and many young people no longer living in the area. When *Transavia* first arrived in Aiton, many plots outside the village center were no longer under cultivation. The company worked to get lease contracts through a well-known villager -- a former town hall employee now employed by the company and who also leases 7 ha of land to the company. Local politicians got behind the company, and many villagers were persuaded to sign a contract, agreeing to lease their land for €100 per hectare per year (€8 per month) or 800kg of cereals per hectare per year (equivalent to 67kg per month) -- cheap by any EU standard (see Bouniol, this collection).

Some observers might not see this case as one of land grabbing. After all, the villagers who leased their land to the company appear to have done so willingly. But the term 'land grabbing' can be applied here not just because a big company is getting land so cheaply and its operations have been subsidised with a large amount of public money, but more fundamentally because the case is precisely about the *capturing of control of extended tracts of land* and the construction of landholdings that represent a deep rupture with family farming and the associated farm sizes that have characterized European farming so far.

Now imagine that a Chinese company acquires vast tracts of land to produce various crops, and is making plans to expand its large-scale land acquisition even more. The same region is also under exploration by Middle Eastern companies seeking to embark on large-scale production of wheat, among others. Meanwhile, a foreign company engaged in renewable energy has acquired a huge tract of land that is closely linked to its solar panel commercial project, eroding the already limited area for local food production. Imagine the large-scale land deals described are being carried out in a secretive, non-transparent manner. The situation described here is not Ethiopia; nor is it Cambodia or Paraguay, or any other country or region in the global South. Instead, the situation described here can be found in Europe -- for instance in Ukraine, currently a chief target of contemporary large-scale land grabbing. And it can be found as well inside the EU -- in Bulgaria, Hungary, and, Italy among others. We now turn to some of these other cases.

In Bulgaria an emerging class of 'land grab entrepreneurs' the *arendatori*, is playing a key role; and the case of Boynitsa, a grain-producing village and one of the poorest in the Vidin region (Northwest) of Bulgaria, is illustrative (see Medarov, this collection). In 2011, with full support from the government, the Chinese firm *Tianjin State Farms Agribusiness Group Company*, leased 2,000 ha in Boynitsa to produce corn, with a plan to acquire 10,000 ha more. The company acquired the land through a lease agreement with a big *arendatori*, who bought it in the early 1990s when land prices were very low. Neither the local community nor the municipal authorities were consulted. The mayor first learned of it in a phone call,

where she was told to appear in a meeting and media event scheduled for the next day with company representatives and the Bulgarian agricultural minister. The actual farming work was subcontracted to a Bulgarian agribusiness company. Then in November 2012 the Chinese investor suddenly announced it was terminating the contract and moving elsewhere in the region, leaving many to wonder what had happened. The initial deal may have been simply testing the limits and prospects of such investment in Bulgaria; there was also speculation that the *arendatori* had scammed the company.

In Poland, until changes were made in regulations concerning land sales, a similar dynamic was unfolding there, where the Agricultural Property Agency, the agency responsible for managing public land, has been dissolving land-lease contracts of small farmers in the province of West Pomerania in order to sell off the land (see Lopata, this collection). Even though foreigners may not legally buy land in Poland until May 2016, according to local farmers more than 200,000 ha of land in the province has been bought by foreign companies, mainly Dutch, Danish, German and British, through so-called 'substitute' or 'fake' buyers, often small farmers themselves who meet the legal requirements for making a limited tender and who are hired by these companies to buy the land and transfer control of it to the latter. The land is being used for the establishment of large industrial farms, and probably partly for speculative purposes since land prices are expected to rise in 2016. In addition to buying land in this way, foreign companies are also said to be leasing as much as 200,000 additional ha in the province. Under new regulations, however, those who buy land from the Agency must now cultivate it for ten years. These new regulations are probably largely the result of farmers' protests.

The cases of Boynitsa and West Pomerania show that establishing control over such extended tracts of land does not simply occur through the land markets only, but definitely implies *extra-economic force* as well. Time and again, coercion, cheating and/or orchestrated publicity to create confusion are key aspects of the contemporary land grabbing phenomenon – in Europe, as elsewhere. The term 'extra-economic force' refers to special conditions offered by state-apparatuses (at national, regional and/or local level), good political connections, full support of governors, and, to practices of 'skirting the law' (Italian case), such as 'pocket contracts'.

As in Bulgaria and Romania, the low price of land in relatively abundant supply compared to the old EU member states has been a driving force behind land grabbing in Hungary too, where in the mid-1990s the price of 1 hectare of land was around 30,000 HUF (compared to 3 million HUF in Austria). While the price of land has been slowly increasing (7.7 percent increase in 2010), it is still 5-10 times lower than in Western European countries, making the purchasing or leasing of land there an attractive prospect. Additionally, land users can access land use related EU subsidies (e.g. Single Area Payments Scheme - SAPS), making large-scale land use a profitable business, especially when the land has been acquired at an extremely low price. This factor is key in the recent scandals surrounding 'pocket contracts' and the lease of state lands in Hungary. The term originally referred to land deals where the date of purchase remains unspecified and the contract is kept 'in the pocket' until the moratorium on land sales is lifted. The term is now used to describe a multitude of contracts that aim to circumvent legal restrictions on transacting land deals.

An estimated 1 million ha of land has been obtained through pocket contracts by foreign persons or companies over the past two decades, including Austrian, German, Dutch, Danish, and British, among others (although knowing the real extent of pocket contracts is obviously difficult precisely because of their illegal nature) (see Fidrich, this collection). On the dubious premise that the contracts are legal, these entities have received an estimated 300-500 million HUF (~1.1-1.8 million EUR) worth of national and EU agricultural subsidies since Hungary's accession to the EU.² One name that has been linked to pocket contracts in Hungary is Benetton of Italy, whose activities made headline news when the right

wing party *Jobbik* organized a demonstration in front of the Benetton farm in April 2012. The case involves a former cooperative property in Görgeteg, Somogy county, which was purchased first by a German and then an Austrian, before falling into the hands of Carlo Benetton to grow corn, wheat and poplar trees. The case was picked up by the French newspaper *Le Monde*, which reported that: ‘As for the village of 1,200 residents, hemmed in by fences to protect the Benetton fields from game, some have nick-named it “Alcatraz”, after the former US prison. The unemployment rate here is 50%, with little hope of finding a job – except for working security on the estate’.³

While foreign companies are busy grabbing up Hungarian land, Hungarian companies are also involved in land grabbing outside the country, illustrating very well Europe’s role as both a site of land grabbing and a point of origin of land grabbers. One of the owners of the largest Hungarian bank OTP Bank, Sándor Csányi, is also one of the biggest landlords in Hungary. His company, *Bonafarm*, has been implicated in a land grabbing case in Zambia. *Bonafarm* was one of the foreign investors who submitted bids to the Zambia Development Agency (ZDA) for development of the Nansanga Farm Bloc, which would reportedly have meant resettling at least 9,000 farmers living in the 18,000 ha area. As fate would have it, the negotiations with the government failed and *Bonafarm* gave up on the project in Zambia, but is reported to be preparing for large-scale land deals in Romania, negotiations for which are said to have already started (see Fidrich, this collection). As this case further shows, there are limits to understanding contemporary global land grabbing via a distinction between the global North and global South.

Returning to Bulgaria, one finds alongside the *arendatori* a new type of *investor* growing in importance – namely, individual traders and investment funds, as shown in the contribution to this collection by Medarov. For example, the investment fund *Black Sea Agriculture*, founded by a former Wall Street trader (and current CEO of *Global Quest*), aims to acquire land along both the Romanian and Bulgarian Black Sea coast (the ‘Black Sea Farm Belt’). It reportedly acquired 113 hectares of farmland by the end of 2011. However small this investment is, it highlights a new type of actor in this part of the world. Other examples are *Ceres Agrigrowth Investment Fund* (a grouping of *Raiffeisen Centrobank AG*), global investment funds (like *Firebird Management*, *Black River Asset Management*, and *Mezzanine Management*), and private equity companies like *Rossllyn Capital Partners* – with more than 22,000 ha of land and €45 million of capital combined as of 2008. Yet another example is the *Elana Agricultural Land Opportunity Fund*, one of the largest non-banking financial groups operating after 1989, and owned by QVT Fund LP (based in the Cayman Islands), *Allianz Bulgaria* (owned by the *German Allianz Group*), and *Credit Suisse Securities* (Europe). By early 2009, *Elana* alone reportedly controlled no less than 29,320 ha of farmland in the country. It is worth noting, however, that large-scale agriculture is not the only driver of land grabbing in Bulgaria today; land grabs have been linked to cyanide gold mining and shale gas extraction (hydraulic fracturing, or fracking) as well (see Medarov, this collection).

In Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Germany, land grabbing was galvanised by the revaluation of land into a highly sought resource and commodity, the drive to privatise previously state or cooperative lands from the socialist era, and the CAP subsidy regime. By contrast, in post-Socialist non-EU European countries, land grabbing is occurring in the absence of the CAP subsidy factor, as in Serbia, where “the four biggest... landlords altogether have more than 100,000 hectares of land, individually exceeding the area of the city of Novi Sad, with its 23,500 hectares”, and where just this past January 2013 the government signed a pre-contract with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for more than 16,000 ha of land on long-term lease (see Srećković, this collection).

Likewise in Ukraine, land grabbing has involved vast amounts of land and alliances of domestic and foreign actors (see Plank, this collection). Ukraine’s richest oligarch Rinat Achmetov only recently entered into agriculture as the owner of the agroholding HarvEast with 220,000 ha, while another

company, Ukrlandfarming, formally registered in Cyprus, controls over 500,000 ha. The two biggest foreign agroholdings among Ukraine's top 10 are the American NCH Capital (400,000 hectares) and the Russian Ukrainian Agrarian Investments (260,000 hectares). Several European pension funds, such as the Third Swedish National Pension Fund and the Dutch Pension Fund for Care and Well-Being, are also involved, as are international financial institutions, such as the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). While its share in financing Ukrainian agroholdings has been growing, the EBRD has also been provided credits to non-Ukrainian entities, such as, for example, a French company called Agrogeneration, which received US\$ 10 million to double the amount of its land holdings from 50,000 to 100,000 ha. Another example would be the German trader Toepfer, which received US\$ 60 million to support its operations. At the same time, access to credit remains a major problem for Ukraine's small and medium farmers (see Plank, this collection).

In scrutinising the case studies in this collection, a clearer picture of land grabbing in Europe – both inside and outside the EU -- begins to emerge. The shift towards new forms of control implies a far-reaching *re-ordering of agricultural production*. Land grabbing does not mean that agricultural production is simply continued, albeit under new ownership and management patterns. On the contrary, both the bio-material reality and the socio-institutional contours of agricultural production are deeply affected. In several places yields per hectare (and/or per animal) are going down. Employment levels mostly are decreased considerably (e.g. Emiliana in West Romania only generates employment for 99 people on an area of 11,000 ha – see Bouniol, this collection). Animal production and grain growing are separated (this is notably the case with the *arendatori* in Romania). Monocultures start to dominate. The large tracts (and extended herds) require a standardisation of the productive process: this strongly increases the use of chemical inputs and marks a shift towards preventive medicine use. This translates in degraded quality levels of the produced food.

In addition, and partly due to the previous points, land grabbing translates as a *subordination, marginalisation and/or destruction of peasant agriculture*. This brings as a consequence that on the medium and longer run the continuity of food production (and thus food sovereignty at national level) might be threatened. All this implies that land grabbing carries the danger to introduce *profound disequilibria in society as a whole*. One aspect here is that the enormous ecological capital that has been developed in Europe over the ages, now becomes object of large-scale financial operations. Finally it is to be noted that the present collection of case studies makes clear that the magnitude of land grabbing is *largely kept hidden*. Land grabbing is embedded in sometimes actively created grey zones. The actual and the potential extension of the phenomenon are not known. 'Pocket contracts -- an illegal practice meant to camouflage land transactions -- are a case in point.

So far we have focused on the more conventional types of land grabbing being experienced in Europe and highlighted by the case studies. But there are other, less conventional forms occurring that have likewise been examined by authors in this collection; and so we turn now to look at those other cases and reflect on their insights.

'Green grabs' in Europe: land grabbing in the name of the environment

Green grabbing – land grabbing in the name of the environment – is increasingly in the spotlight. The term 'green grabs', originally coined by journalist John Vidal, further deepens and broadens the perspective on land grabbing by focusing attention on land deals forged in the name of climate change

mitigation strategies, such as carbon sequestration via forest conservation, and production of renewable sources of energy that require some form of land control.⁴ The production of biodiesel in Europe that encroaches into grasslands and areas previously devoted to set-aside initiatives with both economic and environmental functions, is also, arguably, a form of green grabbing. But there are other forms, as illustrated by the case of a solar panel project in Sardinia, Italy (see Onorati and Peirfederici, this collection).

Enervitabio arrived in Sardinia in 2008 to launch the largest solar energy project in Italy with a production target of 27 megawatts, and composed of 107,000 installed panels and 1,614 greenhouse sections (200 square metres each, supported by 33,000 concrete pillars) covering 64 ha of what used to be irrigated farmland. For 20 years the project will receive more than €7 million in incentives annually and €3.5 million per year from the sale of energy through the national energy provider network (ENEL). Enervitabio has built seven plants for a total of about 80 mw, which allows the company to access almost €22 million in subsidies per year during this same amount of time. The crop and pasture lands that were used for the project once generated an average income of €12,000-15,000 per ha, and were compensated by the company for a one-off payment of €40,000 per ha. Increasing land concentration in the area over the past decade has seen the UAA share of smaller farms shrinking, along with prospective farmers' access to land. A limited supply of agricultural land, combined with increasing land concentration, means that any reduction in land availability for farming, although minimal in absolute terms, is having far-reaching impacts on the agricultural sector's ability to produce and supply food for the island. But the situation will definitely worsen in the years to come, since 22 more companies have been approved to produce photovoltaic energy in Sardinia, for a combined projected output of more than 1,000 kilowatts (see Onorati and Pierfederici 2013).

In addition to showing how peasant agriculture in Europe is being subordinated and destroyed through green grabbing, this case further fills out the emerging picture on Europe and its place in the global land grab phenomenon. It shows that Europe is linked to green grabbing in not just one, but two ways. On the one hand, EU policies, such as its biofuels policy, and other global policies such as REDD+ are a critical context for widespread land grabbing in various other parts of the world – from oil palm expansion in Colombia and Indonesia, to sugarcane plantation expansion in Cambodia (see Fairhead, Leach and Scoones 2012). On the other hand, it is itself slowly becoming an important site of green grabbing – with growing corporate investments in renewable energy that require acquisition of land and changing the land's use, often supported with public subsidy. The Sardinia case suggests the need for public action that is capable of addressing green grabbing in an intertwined manner, addressing both ways in which the EU is implicated.

‘Artificialisation’: land use change away from agriculture and towards urban sprawl, real estate interest, tourism enclaves

Land is, more generally, naturally used to produce primary commodities especially food and nurture the environment. However, in recent decades changing lifestyle towards more urban ways, and capital accumulation imperatives (the need to continuously reinvent itself to generate profit) have increasingly encroached in agricultural land, eroding the latter through steady and widespread land use change. In Europe, a significant amount of prime agricultural land (near road infrastructure, with irrigation) is lost to the urban sprawl, real estate interest, tourism enclaves, and other commercial undertaking. These scattered cases of usually smaller land deals add up – and they tend to encroach into the most fertile and productive agricultural lands.

A case in point is the Notre-Dame-des-Landes Airport project in France (see Pieper, this collection), set to become operational in 2017/2018 and which threatens to take over 2,000 ha of prime agricultural land outside the city of Nantes. Led by the world's biggest building corporation, French Vinci, and involving capital totalling €580 million, the airport project also involves the construction of side-roads and related infrastructure at the cost of €4 billion total. The project's proponents argue that it will attract investors and tourists to the area, and thereby stimulate the local economy. But others see many reasons to oppose it, including conflicts of interest among key officials and the companies involved, the destruction it will also entail of a special high-biodiversity area, and the existence of an alternative (e.g. renovation of the city's existing international airport in the city). In Ireland too, land across the country is being re-zoned for housing projects, and areas on the outskirts of towns and cities are seeing the rise of commercial developments, shopping centres and industrial estates. In one case in 2006, "15.3 acres of agricultural zoned land was bought for €3 million to a local developer who planned to build 28 housing units.⁵ The site is now worth approximately €290,000 -- still a high price for around 6 hectares of land" (see Anderson, this collection).

Cases of artificialisation like these ultimately raise deeply contested underlying issues of the meaning and purpose of 'development' and nature of 'modernity' more generally. Is this the kind of 'development' we want and how sustainable is it? The contradiction is sharp enough: Europe actively engages in public debates on how to sustain and improve food production and achieve environmental balance, while at the same time allowing processes that undermine such goals, like the widespread conversion of prime agricultural lands to other uses, some of which are problematic in terms of environmental sustainability.

'Entry denial' to prospective farmers and urban gardeners: Another aspect of a wider problem

As the different cases in this collection carefully spell out, land concentration and land grabbing are each aspects of the wider land question in Europe. This land question might be represented by a triangle. In the top corner of this triangle is the problem of land concentration. Increasing amounts of land are already concentrated in the hand of limited numbers of large agricultural entrepreneurs. These also receive most of the current CAP subsidies. This degree of land concentration is comparable even to the highly skewed land distribution in some Latin American and Asian countries. In the second corner of the triangle (bottom right) there is land grabbing. The third corner of the triangle (bottom left) represents the inaccessibility of land for young people, be it young farmers or young people having a non-agricultural background.

Many rural young people today in the world and in Europe do not want to remain or become farmers for reasons that involve both 'push factors' (little economic remuneration for hard labour), and 'pull factors' (the attraction of urban, commercial-industrial life) combined. This is (or should be) a matter of great public concern, especially since the agricultural work force in Europe is ageing. Often, the question posed is how to make agriculture attractive again to young people. Indeed, while it is difficult to quantify, it is safe to assume that many of the small farms that were swallowed by bigger holdings were vulnerable due to lack of a younger generation who wanted to take up the work from the older generation. But there are definitely cases too where many young people from rural and urban areas want to take up farming but cannot because of numerous structural and institutional barriers – barriers that deny them entry into the farming sector. This is a pressing matter in contemporary Europe, and the case of France illustrates how the entry of prospective farmers is blocked by market forces and by institutional architecture.

The French situation illustrates the numerous hurdles to becoming a farmer for those without land already (see Ody, this collection). To receive state support one must first get a diploma in agriculture, then find a farm to buy or rent, and then obtain a licence to farm. But land is getting more expensive and less available. Prospective farmers are finding it increasingly difficult to actually acquire land to farm due to land concentration and artificialisation. More than 60,000 ha of mostly fertile farmland are lost every year due to land use conversion to non-agricultural uses, while the cost of land is rising dramatically. For instance, a €5,000 per hectare farmland assessed in the context of non-agricultural uses can be sold for at least a hundred times more. Anyone lucky enough to clear this hurdle must then compete in a sector increasingly dominated by large farms. Farms on the market that are less than 50 ha are often snapped up by neighbours seeking to enlarge their own holding, incentivised in part by CAP subsidies linked to farm size. While in 1955 80 percent of all farms in France were less than 20 ha, the average size today is around 80 ha. This trend is reinforced by environmental laws such as nitrate regulation, for example, which incentivise expanding farm size, rather than reducing livestock numbers in order to achieve a certain nitrate ratio.

The existing institutional incentives and subsidy structure, combined with capital accumulation dynamics, can be clearly seen as working strongly against the entry of prospective farmers. Changing this situation will likely require overhaul of not just the existing land policy regime, but the entire agricultural policy regime as well. But entry-denial is one of the most urgent and important dimensions of the land question in Europe today – and it has a clear generational dimension. Ultimately, any effort towards alternative agriculture will be weakened if prospective farmers either lose interest or are unable to secure access to land (see also White 2012, for a general discussion on this topic). This poses a big challenge at a time when many younger people with non-farm income sources are interested in part-time farming, while interest in urban farming is also rising as part of growing awareness about food quality or a growing realisation that producing their own food actually costs less.

The problem of the denial of entry to prospective farmers is not limited to France, but is happening elsewhere in Europe, and is bound to deepen and grow wherever there is land concentration and land grabbing, and vice versa. The three trends are inextricably interlinked, even if unfolding unevenly across Europe. And so, stepping back, what we see developing is a still limited but potentially explosive situation regarding land issues in Europe. If compared to the Global South, land grabbing in Europe is, as yet, a limited phenomenon. It is limited in a quantitative sense and it is limited geographically (mainly, though not exclusively to Eastern Europe). However, in the decade(s) to come, the process of land grabbing might very well accelerate and embrace the North, West and South of Europe as well. This might be the outcome of several interacting processes.

On the one hand the newly emerging, very large agricultural enterprises (from both Eastern Europe and from the Global South) will continue to invade the European markets with very cheap food and agricultural products (this does not mean that consumers will witness considerable price decreases; it means that large retail organisations and food processing industries will benefit from, and therefore prefer, cheap supplies). A second process, that is the further liberalisation of markets, will strengthen this. As a consequence, European farmers will be increasingly crowded out of the market. Growing numbers of farmers will go bankrupt: as a consequence they will have to sell their land.

On the other hand, private investment funds will continue to eagerly look for investment possibilities that offer security (this is especially important in the context of the overall economic and financial crisis). This makes land into an attractive opportunity. If these processes start to interact on a scale

that goes beyond a modest level (in the Netherlands private investment funds like Fagoed and ASR, the former Fortis, currently control 6,000 ha and 30,000 ha, respectively), then new concentrations of land ownership might suddenly occur.

This is especially the case when the role and position of banks is taken into account. Due to the general economic crisis, a lot of farm land throughout Europe is *de facto* economically owned by banks. Monte dei Paschi di Siena for instance is the economic owner of a large slice of all Italian vineyards. Many vineyards are the collateral for credits that are impossible to repay under the current circumstances. Rabobank Netherlands virtually owns most of the horticultural land in the Netherlands. The total debt of Dutch agriculture and horticulture amounts to € 30.2 billion. If these banks are to capitalize more (due to Basel III type of agreements or due to losses in e.g. the real estate sector), bringing these huge amounts of land to the market might become an attractive, maybe even necessary action.

Such a scenario so far remains hypothetical, but it is far from impossible. The point is that if (or when) it would occur, Europe will be without defense. There is not even a monitoring system to be used for early warning. What happens in the land markets is, as argued before, largely made invisible. Within this context, another potentially problematic issue is represented by the so-called hectare payments that partly are and partly will become the cornerstone of the CAP. On the one hand these might help poor farmers to refrain from selling the land, on the other hand the same payments might be an enormous bonus for land grabbers once they have obtained extended tracts of land. This suggests, evidently, that a *capping of the total amount of payments* (per farm) is urgently needed.

People's land struggles in Europe

More generally, though, the only way to resist the rapidly rising (and mutually reinforcing) trends of land concentration, land grabbing and increasingly restricted access to land by prospective farmers, and the surest way to avoid further massive land grabbing in the near future, is the overall revitalisation and strengthening of European agriculture through 're-peasantisation' and the production of new products and services for newly emerging 'nested' markets (Van der Ploeg 2008). While the authors in this collection have emphasised the problems around land in Europe, in part to make them more visible, their contributions also make clear that the situation is not completely hopeless. Against the strong currents already flowing across Europe and despite issues that may divide them, there are growing numbers of Europeans who are taking up the struggle for land, the right to cultivate, a better kind of agriculture, and better kind of public support for agriculture. All of the people's struggles examined in the collection demonstrate variations of cross-class people's initiatives. We briefly highlight a few of them here.

One example is the more than 40-year collective effort against the big airport project in Nantes, France (see Pieper, this collection). Local farmers and other residents of the area have long objected to the project on numerous grounds, and as part of their ongoing resistance, they, together with supporters from across the country, have been occupying the expropriated land and houses (some of which had been previously abandoned) since 2008. Renaming the occupied area the *Zone à Défendre* (ZAD), the '*zadistas*' continue to farm and maintain a collective kitchen and bakery, bicycle workshop, and even their own internet café and radio station.

Another example is 'guerrilla gardening' in Vienna, where citizens plant vegetable patches and flowerbeds in parks, next to streets or in backyards, or cultivate fruit trees and gardens in the city's fallow areas. While some of these activities are relatively spontaneous, others are more organized, such as when, in 2012, Viennese students searching for land to grow vegetables, occupied a 3.5-ha lot owned by

the „Bundesimmobiliengesellschaft“ (BIG), a state company in charge of public real estate (see Möhrs et al, this collection). Among others, the group sought to preserve the land from being converted to a housing complex, and also to reintroduce forgotten practices around urban food production and access to land. After ten days the group was evicted, yet the action led to the formation of SoliLa! (Solidarisch Landwirtschaften! Solidary Agriculture!), a collective of people living in Vienna who question the current mode of food production, distribution and consumption, while putting in practice alternatives that draw variously on Vienna’s long tradition of urban gardening as well as the rising food sovereignty movement in Europe (e.g., Nyeleni).

Still another example comes from Somonte in Andalusia, where, in the midst of record unemployment in 2011-2012, members of the farmworkers movement SAT began occupying a 400-ha portion of 20,000 ha of public farm land that was scheduled to be sold at auction following the closing down of the governmental *Instituto Andaluz de Reforma Agraria*. The action marked a shift in SAT’s strategy from symbolic to permanent land occupations, with the purpose of collectively farming the land in order to produce their own food and generate employment, but in a way that also realises ‘the principles of agro-ecology, such as their commitment to local markets, production geared to self-sufficiency and reforestation of the farm boundaries’ (see Aparicio et al, this collection). The farmworkers’ struggle in this case, while a reaction against privatisation of the land, is also a struggle to construct a better way of life connected to a better way of doing agriculture. Their struggle is reinforced by a solidarity network called the Platform of Support for Somonte that has been created in villages and cities in the region and works with the Somonte farmworkers in marketing their produce, among others.

There is also the case of the struggle of the people of Narbolia in Sardinia, Italy, against the EU-subsidised large-scale solar energy project owned by a foreign company that is removing fertile farmland from local food production and destroying small farmers’ livelihoods. Outrage has led to the birth of the group ‘S’Arrieddu for Narbolia’, which, together with the environmental associations ‘Italia Nostra’ and ‘Adiconsum Sardegna’, is actively campaigning against the project. Using multiple forms of action including awareness raising, petitioning and initiating lawsuits, and community actions, S’Arrieddu for Narbolia defines its struggle as one that is aimed at safeguarding the *territory*, and as such ‘is not just a defensive battle against the solar energy project, but a long-term engagement for the Commons, which include land, energy and water. It advocates for food sovereignty. It also advocates a participatory and diffused, therefore democratic energy production model, which can secure energy sovereignty’ (see Onorati and Pierfederici, this collection).

What is important to highlight about all these examples of people’s struggles in Europe is their increasing cross-class and territorial character: they are initiatives that are bringing together various groups of people from different social class origins and interests, which at the same time represent a reimagining and reshaping of the relationship between rural and urban spheres. These new convergences of people inherently involve fusions of agrarian, labour and environmental issues and politics, and are giving rise to new forms of solidarity. In this vein, it is worth emphasising that the collection presented here stands more as the beginning, rather than the culmination of, a project to critically examine and deepen our understanding of land issues in Europe amidst a rapidly changing situation marked by increasing land concentration, land grabbing and shrinking access to land for already practicing and prospective farmers. And it is hoped that as this study comes to light, more people will be inspired to share their stories and experiences, not only of the problems currently confronting European land and agriculture, but also join in and add to the efforts underway across Europe to create and realise a better way. To this end, we would like to conclude our introduction with the set of recommendations made by ECVC on what is to be done.

What is to be done?

In light of the findings of this report, the European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC), supported by various organizations directly and indirectly involved in this report, put forward a set of demands addressed to national and EU governmental bodies to address the triangular issues of land concentration, land grabbing and barriers to entry to farming. Our main demands are:

Land should regain importance as a public good. We must reduce the commodification of land and promote public management of territories. Priority should be given to the use of land for small-holder and peasant agriculture and food production against the simple private property commercial interests. Access to land should be given to those who work it or to those who want to work it in a socially and ecologically acceptable way. This opens the possibility for young people to enter the land, and simultaneously distances from those who currently control land but do not themselves work it. It also links with the statement that follows here below, i.e. that redistributive land policies are needed.

1. Stop and reverse the trend of extreme land concentration and commodification!

- Carry out redistributive land policies (land reform, land restitution, affordable land rentals, and so on) in areas of concentrated ownership;
- Recognise historical use rights and communal land systems;
- Implement policies to support transformation of industrial farms into small family/peasant farms/ food sovereignty projects, including urban agriculture.

2. Stop land grabbing!

- Ban all investors and speculators (companies, banks/governments) that are operating, and/or grabbing land, in Europe and elsewhere in the world;
- Create a public databank/tracking system of the transactions of governments and companies engaged in land grabbing.

3. Assure access to land for farming, especially for young people, as the basis to achieve food sovereignty; and abolish the patriarchal system of land possession or heritage and promote policies of positive discrimination to assure access to land for farming for women.

- Create public management frameworks or reform existing ones (e.g. Safer, France) to facilitate the access of youth, landless people, also for other resources such as water;
- Strengthen or create the participation of local communities in decision-making on land use;
- Develop legal frameworks for cooperative-type farms and co-ownership arrangements that would improve the situation of women in land ownership and make it easier for young people to set up a farm;
- Change the installation and renting criteria and adopt policies to support sustainable small farm/peasants' projects (e.g. leave minimal surface condition for subsidies);
- Push for the adoption and democratic application of the CFS Tenure Guidelines on responsible governance of land in Europe within a food sovereignty framework;
- Support concrete actions of recovering land (e.g. occupation of industrial zones);
- Prioritise the use of land for food versus agrofuel production and other commercial energy uses, extractive industries and useless megaprojects – in Europe and elsewhere in the world.

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