SEMINAR 28 JUNE, 9.30-13.00

SEEING STAKEHOLDER CONFLICT AND CONNECTIVITY IN LAND GRABS FROM A NEW ANGLE THROUGH THE ‘ZONES OF INTERMEDIALITY’ APPROACH
On 4 May 2016, 523 years after issuance of the Papal Edict or Bull Inter Caetera, a delegation of the Long March to Rome met with Pope Francis and his representatives at the Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace for the first time to discuss the revocation of three ‘Papal Bulls of Discovery’ [Inter Caetera (1493), Romanus Pontifex (1455), Dum Diversas (1452)]. These Papal Bulls are considered to be the “Blueprints for Discovery”, legitimizing the spoliation and conquest of the New World, but just as significantly, creating a template for inequality that has been used both against indigenous peoples and in analogous situations such as land-grabbing in contemporary Africa.

Romanus Pontifex (1455) authorized discoverers to: “...invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens and pagans whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed” and to “reduce their persons to perpetual slavery”. It justified such practices on the basis that heathen were homo animales, a lower form of humanity. In our times, displaced persons in the context of land grabs hear that certain “lifestyles are not worth preserving” in the drive to maximize profit of the “underutilized” and “empty” African countryside. This phenomenon was first traced through the NWO Wotro funded research programme: Development as a Trojan Horse? Foreign Large-scale Land Acquisitions in Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Senegal and Uganda” with the ‘zones of intermediality’ approach which dissects intra and inter stakeholder conflict and connectivity. Using this analytical tool, a parallel was drawn between the modern day land grab trend and the 15th century land grab initiated by the Vatican.

For more information visit: www.longmarchtorome.com
DECONSTRUCTING ACTORS’ POSITIONING IN DISPUTED TERRITORIES. AGRIBUSINESS AND PASTORALISM IN THE SENEGAL RIVER DELTA - DAVIDE CIRILLO, VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT AMSTERDAM – UNIVERSITY OF PADOVA

This presentation outlines a case study on territorial transformations induced by the private lease of a natural reserve situated in the Senegal River Delta Region. It aims to question mainstream discourses about large-scale land acquisitions that portray stakeholders as homogeneous entities, i.e. the “state”, the “company”, the “local community”, bestowing them with static features and prearranged power relations. Against these arguments, ‘zones of intermediality’ has been used as analytical tool to grasp stakeholders’ discourses and positionalities that slip away by macro narratives. Therefore, this study analyses variations in stakeholders’ positioning, their interconnections and the divergent responses of groups of farmer, pastoralist and agro-pastoralist to a new top-down project of territory. Moreover, it aims to show how grounded analysis on large-scale land acquisitions can disentangle the simplistic discourses of “global threats to vulnerable local territories”, by pointing out the distinctiveness of places in attracting and/or mediating transnational dynamics of resource accumulation.

The Politics of Large-Scale Land Acquisitions in Uganda: Discourses of Legitimation and Stakeholder Interactions in Nakaseke District
Josh Maiyo, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

This presentation investigates the role of everyday politics, focusing on interactions between purposive actors’ discourses and practices within localized patterns of authority and power in order to uncover the messy everyday realities of the processes and outcomes of transnational land deals. The research adopts a disaggregated approach to the study of social categories and approaches land-deals as conceptual and material ‘Zones of Intermediality’ where land claims are mediated through discourses and lived realities that are not necessarily homogeneously shared within conceptual social groups such as villagers, local communities, investors or elites. The ‘Zones of Intermediality’ approach allows us to go beyond homogenizing structuralist dichotomies of power relations such as those that view of recipient states or local communities as victims of (trans)national capital interests, but instead uncovers complexities inherent between and within assumed social categories.