55 people attended the Affiliates’ lunch at ILR Conference Center and gathered around 6 tables to introduce their interests and ideas about “contested global landscapes.” Initial summaries below.

Table 1
Moderator: Paul Nadasdy, Team Member

- History in the process of land grabbing. Land grabbing in history? Land grabbing in historical perspective.
  - Undergraduate course exploring land grabbing and conquest – the conquests of Latin America (Ernesto).
    - Land Grabbers as “The New Conquistadors.”
    - Land Grabs as “New Conquests.”
    - Often conquests are not conquests of “land,” but many times they are.
      - Expanding the definition of “Land Grab.”
      - Is this really anything new at all?
- Alternative approach: Science, Technology and People all moving from one place to another and influencing land deals.
  - E.g. Chinese investing in Africa but not transferring technology
    - local investment not happening.
    - How can outside investment better benefit the local communities?
  - “Land Grab” has negative meaning – how in general can it be a “better deal” for the people in the countries where land is being grabbed?
- Conference thoughts:
  - People to invite for workshops: Derek Beyerly, Klaus Deninger, Bridget O’Laughlin
  - Perhaps people exploring legal issues of ownership, access, rights of locals.
  - Conference on land grabbing in New York State. How is Cornell implicated, both historically and in the present day? Iroquois land transfers? New farmers coming in and developing land in different forms? Fracking?
  - Maybe a comparative, transnational conference, comparing what is happening in NY State and Africa, Asia, and Latin America. We should be wary of American exceptionalism. NY and US land grabs not “exotic” at all.
  - “subaltern” forms of land grabbing? Is land grabbing necessarily negative? Is one person’s “land grab” another person’s purchase of a small plot?
  - What about water grabbing? Negotiations of water policies? How do water rights play into the land grab?
- Religion and land grabbing – e.g. how are forest spirits affected by land grabbing (de-exoticizing these meanings of land). Spiritual unsettling & side effects must be happening in many places.
- Interdisciplinary approaches to land grabbing. What are the drivers and implications from different disciplinary perspectives and in different regions? How to unify?
- Implications of land grabbing for social reproduction and labor – beyond titling and physical property. Bridget O’Laughlin as conference/workshop speaker.
- Agriculture and land grabbing
  - Is the promotion of exotic cash crops a form of land grabbing?
  - Is contract farming a form of land grabbing?

Table 2
Moderator: Jon Parmenter, Team Member

- Lassoie attested to his interest in conservation science/parks/other “protected” areas: are green grabs necessarily bad? What does it mean when one nation calls an action or set of actions a land grab and another represents it as good foreign policy or foreign assistance? And what is the relative severity of the contemporary land grab phenomenon considered in historical context (i.e., against earlier colonial expansionary endeavors)?

- EcoAgriculture Partners folks (Buck, Hart, Milder) were interested in accessing a knowledge base for designing wise land-use practices that avoid the evils/pitfalls associated with “grabs” – what are the design parameters for
the optimal use of land? How can foreign investment in development initiatives be conducted in a sustainable way? How can ecosystems be protected sustainably? How are processes of certification of standards for sustainable/responsible land or resource use established and maintained? What are the modalities of non-state governance of land? They also referred to project in Tanzania that might serve as a potential case study.

- Edwards spoke about penal colonization as a form of land-grabbing; island detention centers as *res nullius* spaces for the implementation of practices untenable within the nation-state – blank or “black” spaces on the map.

- Barrett described financial innovations with herd management among East African pastoralists, household surveys on African agriculture to reduce idiosyncrasies of previous data (he mentioned an extraordinarily large data set that they are grappling with how to manage as a potential point of interest for appropriately-trained graduate students); coral reef conservation in Indonesia, and the relationship between land management and soil degradation.

- Herdt related his interest in assessing how long particular agricultural systems backed by large-scale investment might last and what net benefits they might afford. How to determine the effectiveness of these as responses to global shifts in food security, notwithstanding claims that they are “grabs.”

- Fifer asked whether certain ecosystems might best be served, and their services (i.e., benefits provided for humans) optimized by some kind of process that might be perceived as an enclosure or “grab” (e.g., an instance in which smallholders are incentivized or forced to alter their practices)?

- Parmenter shared his interest in the land buy-back efforts of various Indian nations using casino revenues and the status of these lands after acquired (Indian Trust Lands or other).

In sum, key issues are what constitutes a land “grab,” and whether alternative formulations (green grabs, grabs from below, grabs with an eye toward restorative justice) might be viable/justifiable. Can these latter practices be understood without the *a priori* pejorative assumptions?

The development of either new courses in a variety of disciplines by affiliates, or their integration of land-related components into existing courses seemed to represent a means by which the Project as a whole can continue to build connections and maintain energy and integrity beyond its 3-year term.

**Table 3:**

**Moderator Sara Pritchard, Team Member:**

- What are the impacts and consequences of the land rush and land concentration for natural communities, ecosystems and ecosystem services?

- Land grabs are often tallied and compared based on quantities of land involved, but taking natural systems into account raises qualitative questions—a “small” land deal might outweigh a “large” one if the former had life-support properties, irreplaceable genetic materials, or clean water resources the latter lacked.

- To the “who wins and who loses” question should be added “land” according to whom—it has divergent meanings, as does “property” and “ownership.” Land grabs and transfers can occur but be off the normal (western) radar; example, what is landownership to nomadic herdsmen or to Iraq’s Marsh Arabs?

- Importance of “alternatives” — alternative land arrangements and relations that various groups in the past and present have developed; also alternatives that might be put forward in the face of large land transfers (to corporations, governments, elites, etc.).

- Alternatives views and assumptions, from “land” already reflecting certain kinds of assumptions about what it is and means to alternative ways of thinking about land in other cultural and historical contexts. Property in land similarly has other valued symbolic and material components problematized by land grabs.

- Rich Stedman emphasized the idea of thinking about what attaches individuals, groups, or societies to land, and how the land deals open up interesting research questions around the notion of attachment (or lack thereof).

- Theory and practice: how can we theorize land and land deals, developing concepts and insights that help us understand these processes, but also remain committed to specific sites, engage with activists, communities,
and social movements that have mobilized around these issues, and "apply" some of these insights to various domains of practice (individually, policies, institutions, etc.)?

- Incorporating land into various courses and teaching; one idea was to get a "special topics in land" course on the books that might be team taught by several faculty and grad students from different disciplines and then the course could rotate around among interested faculty.

- General agreement that more sustained conversation among smaller groups or subgroups tends to have more "outcomes" than events like one-time speakers. Specific ideas included 1 or 2-day workshops on subthemes; the general idea was that such workshops might spark conversation among intellectual communities at Cornell that then might develop more sustained conversation in the future in various ways (research, publications, grad teaching, undergrad courses, subsequent workshops, etc.).

Table 4:

**Moderator: Rachel Bezner-Kerr, Project Affiliate:**

- What are the community-level effects of land grabs?
- Gender impacts of land grabs should extend to both men and women.
- Different ownership systems respond differently to land rushes and should be researched accordingly.
- What different forms and agendas might a "Land Institute" at Cornell take on?
- It might be constructive to break out land encroachment impacts by sector—food, conservation, energy, and other.
- Discussion about speakers for conferences or the Graduate Seminar.

Table 5:

**Moderator: Nancy Chau, Team Member:**

This table organized its discussion in three areas. First, how does each participant view as the meaning of contested landscape, and what are the pertinent research issues? Second, how can the land project structure activities that will be of interest to each affiliate. And finally, what can the land project do so that its impact goes beyond the allotted three year time span.

I. The Meaning of Contested Landscape.

We covered a wide range of ideas, concepts and disciplines here, each deserving a detailed description and explanation, but for as an itemized listing here:

- Indigenous land rights and minerals rights, and how these issues engage and interact with communal land ownership – an intriguing case in point – the issue of horizontal drilling underground
- Gender and landrights and secondary landrights
- Environmental impact of landgrabs, tracing the sequence of land ownership, land use, and resulting systemic environmental consequences,
- The methods of resolving of competing land use and access (e.g. public land, green space, private land ownership)
- The conversion of agricultural land to industrial and construction uses
- The labor migration consequences of contested landscapes
- The ecology of land deals (corporate- private land deals, long term- speculative land deals)

II. Suggested Activities for the Theme Project

- Activities catering early stage researches (to assist in the building of an inter-disciplinary community). Some examples suggested are reading groups where there are opportunities to present work, small grants program, and a seminar series.
- Forming subgroups / working groups based on sub-themes / geographical divisions.
- A high-profile series of debates featuring government representatives, international organizations (the
Director General of the FAO?) NGO’s, people affected by land deals, making sure to cover both the pros and cons of land grabs.

III. Beyond The Three Years

- All participants agree that the need of data is acute, and a land institute at Cornell should include resources devoted to serving this need.
- How to organize ourselves and our research activities to have an impact on land rush research?
- What can we do in the early stages of land grab research and what beyond the immediate ISS Project? Certainly the land rush will continue indefinitely.
- What is meant by “land” and specifically by land rights (legal framing) as opposed to land uses (a social, everyday framing)?
- What about gender as land gets reshuffled? Do women ever win; why are they so often among the losers?
- What are the priority “small projects” that Team members are formulating and how might Affiliates join these?
- Is there a list of “high profile” land grab debates and the people who are identified with them?

Table 6:

Moderator: Steve Wolf, Team Member

- Concerted attention on interfacing of different themes and potential collaborations
- Interfacing could assume different forms and extend to land grabs and
  - Water
  - Subsurface rights (David Kay and others)
  - Health
  - Governance and trust strategies (explore alternatives to grabbing and financialization, e.g., Darragh Hare’s interests in public trusts).
- How to distinguish “good” from “bad” enclosures?
- What happens “after the grab” in terms of restorations and reclamation (term can be used broadly to encompass social as well as bio-physical recovery).
- Include industrialized country experience with land deal property changes as much as those of developing world.
- What can be gained from examining land grabs as energy grabs?
- To what extent is the shift in ownership and claims a reflection of a reversal of the “consumption countryside?” Are we seeing a post-post-productivist turn whereby demand for material commodities and ecosystem services reassert themselves as determinants of land use?
- Several research sites/subjects might be:
  - Discourse and imagination reflected in reclaimed landscapes including gold mines in S. Africa
  - Customary land rights and REDD+
  - Climate change and large land deals
  - Rejuvenate the commons through, for example, trust-based governance
  - Post-socialist land reforms and their relationship to contested landscapes
  - Technologies (here understood as sociotechnical hybrids) of land governance
  - Land grab literature connections with the “resource curse” literature