

Urban Land Grabbing and its Implications to Urban Development

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SUMMARY

Land grabbing is a term that most investors find distasteful while to the general public it could be an eye opener to the future of the land that they might be occupying. To the urban planner, it may connote inefficiency and lamed administrative machinery that has permitted greed over land. Whatever land grabbing submits itself to be, its main concern is built on the premise of holding land for the future which may be translated to speculating on land either for economic or social-status gain. Land grabbing in urban areas may be explained from the observed multitude of undeveloped land parcels in urban Tanzania amidst a cry for shortage of land for development. This paradoxical urban reality has been considered differently by scholars, those advocating horizontal expansion of cities tolerate it and subscribe to more urbanization of the peri-urban areas; while there are those that consider viable urban expansion as that which takes cognizance of intensification of all available lands before venturing out to the periphery. Urban Tanzania is fast growing and in some cities at an alarming rate of over 3.5% per annum. This has bred land pressure for housing development on one hand, but on the other provided opportunities for large scale investments in form of schools, hospitals, retail properties and hospitality industries. With escalating land prices in urban areas, individuals are taking up lands in the peri-urban areas and in some instances from land occupiers with little exposure on the latent value that sits in the land to be sold to the land seekers. With use of five carefully selected cases, this study illustrates how urban land grabbing has given cause to land conflicts thereby impairing smooth urban development. The paper demonstrates how rigid form of land registration has bred loop holes in land use planning and tenure almost crippling and ridiculing the land administration system and made the work of professional town planners less significant to the public.