



A Question of Fear or Hunger

Resistance, power-knowledge, and hidden transcripts in conjunction with a non-operational land deal in rural Tanzania

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A Question of Fear or Hunger. Resistance, power-knowledge, and hidden transcripts in conjunction with a non-operational land deal in rural Tanzania

En fråga om rädsla eller svält. Motstånd, makt-kunskap, och 'hidden transcripts' i samband med en avbruten jordbruksinvestering på den Tanzaniska landsbygden.

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Abstract

This thesis researches the political and epistemic machinations that control the political agency among rural land holders in conjunction with a non-operational land deal in Mkulazi ward, Tanzania. These machinations are studied through investigating the conditions for resistance in conjunction with the non-operational land deal in Mkulazi ward, Tanzania. The thesis does this by asking what pushes inhabitants of Mkulazi ward to choose to resist or not resist, as well as seeking to understand what inhabitants of Mkulazi ward feel they need in order to protest through official channels.

The data supporting the thesis was collected in Mkulazi ward, Morogoro region, and Kilosa (Tanzania), through a collection of 51 semi-structured interviews together with focus group discussions and ethnographic observations. The data was collected during a field study of two months.

The results of the study show that inhabitants of Mkulazi ward resist the non-operational land deal in ways which minimize the risk of punishment. The study also shows that constraining factors towards further resistance include a feeling of being surveilled, and fear of misspeaking within public settings, as well as a lack of knowledge about the investment, and legal rights to protest. To protest through official channels interviewees report needing a smoother bureaucratic process, as well as the financial means to elevate problems to higher levels of government.

Within research on non-operational land deals there is a lack of focus on resistance towards these. This thesis contributes to narrowing this research gap, as well as providing potential guidance for ways in which knowledge can be more equitably distributed to those affected by non-operational land deals.

Keywords: resistance, weapons of the weak, hidden transcripts, power/knowledge, Tanzania, non-operational land deal

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“A child does not rise against his father”

- J (Interview with Mkulazi farmer J)

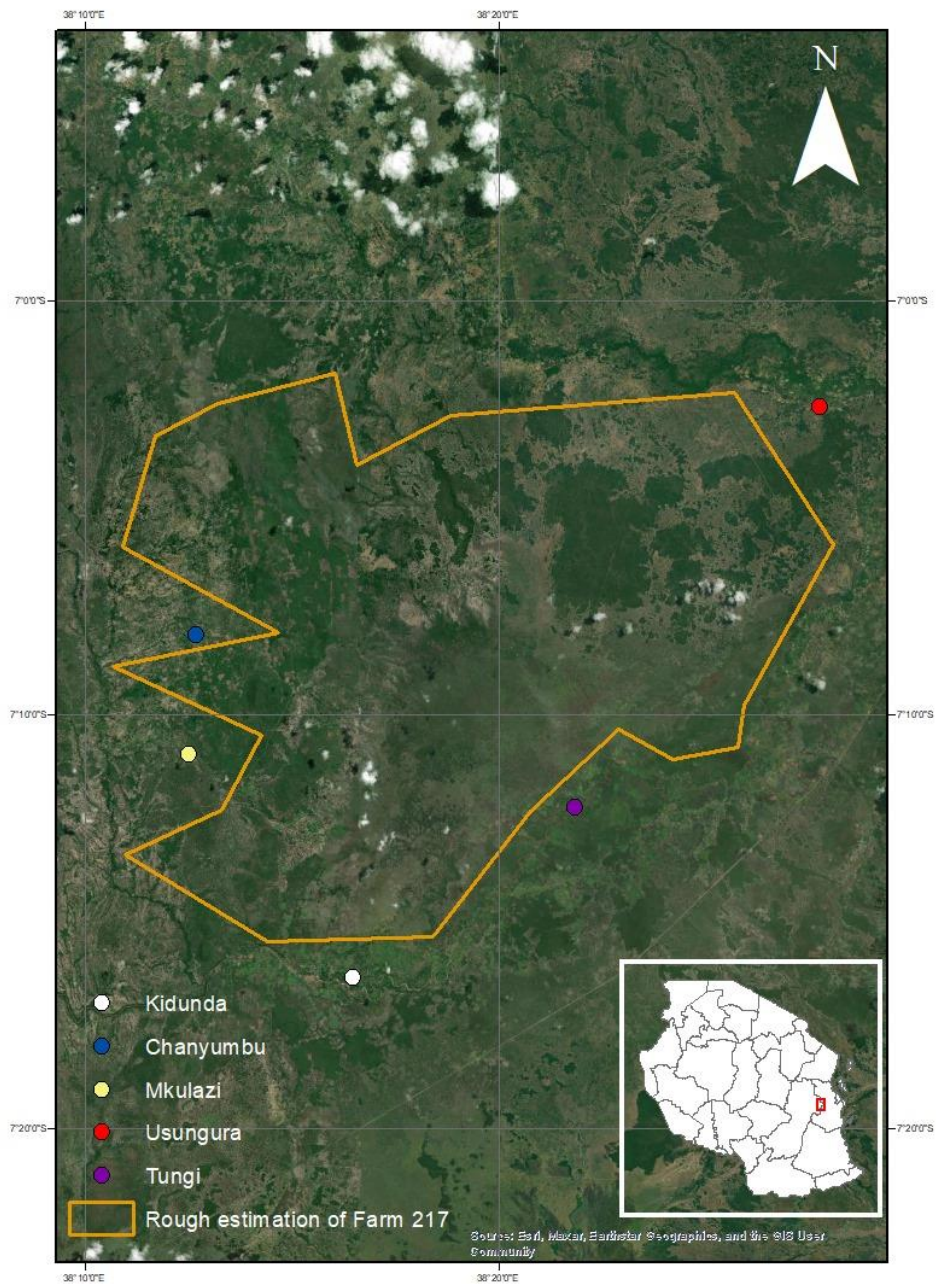
“First is god, then comes the government”

- Y (Interview with Mkulazi farmer Y)

Abbreviations

CCM	Chana Cha Mapinduzi (Party of the Revolution)
TIC	Tanzanian Investment Centre
NSSF	National Social Security Fund (Tanzania)
MHC	Mkulazi Holding Company
SAGCOT	Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania

Figures



Map of investment area and surrounding villages, and their location within Tanzania (Olsson 2024)

1. Introduction

We walk about two kilometers in the sweltering sun, not a long walk to be sure, but sufficiently tiring because of the heat. P seems unbothered, smiling. He's using a construction helmet to "protect from the sun." We've known him for about a week now, he was the one speaking loudest in the village meeting. Through the heat we get to our destination, the investment area, *shamba kumi na saba* (plot 17). He's been back here for about two years or so. It's a short walk through the forest from the main road. During our brief time in the village, we've been told that the first sign of Mkulazi Holding Company was them putting up boundaries to mark the difference between the investment land and the village land. Arriving at the investment we first see what the villagers these "boundaries". I cannot attest to what it looked like before the Mkulazi Holding Company left a few years ago, but to me it simply looks like a somewhat overgrown dirt road dividing two strips of land, one farmed with a little gate, the other mostly filled with unkempt grasses. The grassy side, to the right, is the investment, P informs me through our interpreters. We keep moving, walking straight, and turning to the left until we get to a small hut used for drying surrounded by a few acres of maize. The hut is filled with maize, but P is not yet done with the harvest; he invites us to take part in harvesting from the remaining acre. What strikes me as we move to the fields is how much larger the maize here is compared to the maize on the land we've seen so far, next to the houses in the village. The maize grows taller and has more bountiful fruit, each stem containing at least two or three cobs. P tells us that when cultivating the land, he uses a hand hoe and spreads the seeds by hand. We start picking, throwing the finished cobs into piles. I stop my work several times to show P what I consider to be subpar cobs, asking him with gestures if they are passable or not. After each time I am given a passing grade. I revise my methods until finally I find a cob with only one single piece of corn, looking a little bit blackened, attacked by some insect or fungi. Even this piece is passed, and with this I finally come to terms with what this land and each picking of maize means for P and his family. They cannot afford to spare a single piece, making use of them to make *ugali* [Tanzanian maize porridge] to use as food until the next harvest. P seems happy that we are helping him, laughing at us occasionally as we make blunders or stop to rest. Behind his smiles however, I feel as if there is a sense of dread – the same sense of dread he has spoken to us about in our interview with him as well as

group meetings with the other villagers. He relies on this land, yet he knows that it is land earmarked for investment, he knows that the government can sell it to an investor who can decide to come tomorrow and make him move without compensation, once again forcing him to rely on the meagre village land. He does not know when, how, or by the decree of whom this day will come, but he knows that it will. So, he waits and continues with the harvest until someone tells him otherwise.

Excerpt from my fieldnotes, “Meeting with P” (15/2 2024)

The text above is an excerpt from my fieldnotes collected during fieldwork for this thesis in rural Tanzania. Plot 17, mentioned above, is what is known within research on land as a non-operational land deal (Sulle 2020; Borras et al. 2022). It consists of about 63 000 ha and is within Mkulazi ward (a collection of villages: Mkulazi, Chanyumbu, Kidunda, and Usungura [see figures for map of the investment area and the surrounding villages]). Although clearing of forest and initial moves to construct worker housing started in 2019 it has stalled since then and the further promised development never materialized (SAGCOT Investment Partnership Program 2012; Sulle 2020).

The situation in Mkulazi is not unique, rather non-operational land deals are a consequence of what has been termed the ‘global land grab’ (Borras et al. 2022). During the last two decades there has been a global development agenda for rural Africa that has championed large scale agricultural investments as a solution to achieve more efficient land use, reduce poverty and food insecurity, provide employment and technical development of small-scale agriculture (Bélair et al. 2024). This has led to a land rush, the ‘global land grab’, used to describe ways in which land has become a premium commodity for public and private investors with a large increase in the direct acquisition of land (Wolford et al. 2024).

Wolford et al. (2024) points to the large amount of research emerging on the global land grab in the previous decade, which has now tapered off. Land investments are still continuing at a rapid rate, although the interest of the general public and the research community has waned. This has in turn led to a decrease in reliable data on the scope, quality, and effects of global land investments (ibid). Although there exists a large amount of research on land deals in general, and *land grabbing* in particular there is a lack of research that specifically looks at the effects of land deals and investments which become non-operational. Non-operational land deals have been a continuing problem in Africa in general, and Tanzania in particular, for the last few decades and have been estimated to constitute a large share of the planned land deals (Engström 2018; GRAIN 2018).

Within the understudied field of the effects of non-operational land deals, there is a further scarcity of research into *resistance* against such land deals. This thesis is an attempt to contribute to research on the effects of non-operational land deals in general, by analyzing resistance to non-operational land deals in particular. A key finding of Bélair et al. (2024) is that the majority of the research on non-operational land deals show that “flawed land acquisition processes, loss of land by local communities, and unfulfilled investors’ promises feed opposition to non-operational land deals. “(ibid p, 13). They follow Hall et al (2015) in remarking that there is a “need to pay careful attention to the political agency of rural people”, a call addressed by this thesis.

To understand the reasons for resistance, non-resistance, for protesting or not protesting, I believe that one must also understand the gravitas of land access in cases like these. For P and his fellow citizens, the question of resisting or not resisting is not only one of convenience, but one with potentially far-reaching consequences. For them having access to this land that is earmarked for investment means being able to feed their families, it is the difference of having food enough for a year or being forced to become wage laborers in addition to farming, in order to secure their access to food. The centrality of land is however not the only factor, in conjunction with this exists the absolute key of knowledge. Knowledge of who owns what and why, knowledge of what to do if you feel like your rights are trampled on, knowledge of what your rights are, knowledge of who, what, and where you should turn to in cases such as these.

Thus, to understand reasons for resistance and non-resistance one must also understand the gravity of land, knowledge, and power. This essay attempts to understand the lives of the farmers and pastoralists of Mkulazi ward through these lenses, aiming to make sense of and focus on their lived and shared experiences.

1.1 Purpose

This thesis aims to contribute to filling a research gap on resistance to non-operational land deals. It aims to fill this gap by investigating the political and epistemic machinations that control the political agency among rural land holders, through exploring whether or not farmers and pastoralists in the area of Mkulazi ward have resisted the adjacent non-operational land deal or not To gain insight into this, the thesis also aims to investigate the conditions (opportunities and constraints) of resistance among rural smallholder farmers and herders in rural Tanzania in conjunction with a halted non-operational land deal.

To illuminate these conditions the thesis aims to answer the following questions:

Why do the inhabitants of Mkulazi ward choose to resist or not resist the large-scale land investment? With sub questions:

- What are the factors behind the inhabitants of Mkulazi ward choosing to resist or not to resist?
- What do the inhabitants of Mkulazi ward feel that they need in order to protest through official channels?

In order to answer these research questions, the thesis also explores the plights of villagers in Mkulazi ward in conjunction with the land deal. By understanding these plights, the thesis also aims to provide recommendations on how to better manage investments in just and equitable ways. This thesis is about this search for answers of the why or why not resistance, but it is, as I hope my fieldnotes indicate, also a thesis about the people of Mkulazi ward, their daily lives, and the effect in general of the investment on their daily lives.

1.2 Thesis outline

This introduction is followed by a section on background required for understanding the context of the Mkulazi investment, as well as previous research on non-operational land deals and land deals in general. Chapter three introduces the methodological approach, explaining how the data underlining this thesis was collected and eventual methodological issues. Following this, chapter four introduces and explains the theoretical framework used to interpret the collected data. In chapter five the empirical findings of the study are presented and analyzed. Finally, chapter six contains a concluding discussion on the findings and what they mean for both future research on resistance in conjunction with non-operational land deals, but also how the issues presented within the findings can serve as guidelines for future investments.

2. Background and previous research

The Mkulazi investment was run by the Mkulazi Holding Company LLC, set up as a limited liability company owned jointly by the governmental agencies Tanzanian Prison Pension Fund and the Tanzanian National Social Security Fund. Mkulazi Holding Company was set up to start growing sugar cane, and the investment area in Mkulazi ward was the initial site. After the investment in Mkulazi ward stalled the company instead shifted its attention to another site in Kilosa. Sulle (2020) refers to these two sites as Mkulazi I (the investment area in Mkulazi ward which we visited) and Mkulazi II (the Kilosa investment).

The investment area is a part of the SAGCOT (Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania), a multibillion dollar private-public development project initiated at the World Economic Forum in 2010 that aims to develop Tanzanian agricultural production. The SAGCOT area stretches from Dar es Salaam in the east to Sumbawanga in the west (ibid). The Mkulazi I investment is as of 2024 officially non-operational, with TIC (the Tanzanian Investment Centre) searching for a new investor as of early 2024 (Sulle 2020; Tanzanian Investment Centre 2023).

This general background has two further areas which will need to be expanded upon in order to further elucidate the general argument of the thesis. These are: an explanation of non-operational land deals (and previous research on this topic) and the Tanzanian political system (both national politics as well as politics all the way to the village level, as well as some political history).

An understanding of research on land investments and land grabbing in general, as well as non-operational land deals in particular is required to correctly situate this thesis within a broader research and political context. As for the Tanzanian political system, for the persons interviewed for this thesis, it is, together with Tanzania's political history, a fact of life. Understanding some of the answers and some of the arguments of the thesis therefore requires at a minimum a surface level understanding of the ruling party Chana Cha Mapinduzi (CCM – The Party of the Revolution [translated from Swahili]), as well as the structure of village governance.

2.1 Non-operational land deals

Borras et al define non-operational land deals as “[...] deals that were concluded but later abandoned or contract expired, attempted deals that conclusively ended and failed, and ongoing deal making that are [sic] concluded” (Borras et.al p.2) Bélair et al joins Borras et al. in using the term non-operational land deals, and defines a land deal as non-operational when the farming was never started, only preliminary steps were undertaken, or operations ceased (Bélair et al. 2024).

The reason for investments becoming non-operational are explained by several factors within previous research. A report by the international NGO GRAIN found that although there were no geographic patterns between sites of land grabs or patterns by origins of investors themselves, some commonalities between non-operational investments still materialized. A combination of hubris, lack of infrastructure, lack of expertise, and a focus on capital gains for investors, rather than what benefited farmers or previous tenants, were commonalities identified (GRAIN 2018) As mentioned in the introduction another key driver is local opposition. Further issues identified as contributing to deals becoming non-operational include financial difficulties of investors, lack of farming knowledge and ecological challenges (Bélair 2024).

There is thus a body of research that shows local opposition or resistance as driving deals becoming non-operational. Furthermore, there is a cornucopia of research on resistance to operational land deals which shows those affected resisting in a myriad of ways: from using weapons of the weak to open engagement with government and/or investors (Hall et al. 2015).

2.2 Land deals in Tanzania

Non-operational land deals are, as hinted by the introduction, a symptom of a larger trend in land acquisition. Since the energy, food, and financial crises of 2008 there has been an increasing interest in acquiring farmland from developing countries within the global south (Bélair 2022).

Tanzania has not been spared from these trends, and during the last decades seen many land acquisitions, both by national as well as international actors. In the case of Tanzania, there has been a historical willingness of post-socialist politicians to attract investors. Bélair identifies this as a result of several different factors: politicians wish to cement their control over institutions and land management,

while similarly adapting a neo-liberal development approach according to the praxes of international development discourse (ibid)

Many of these investments, similar to Mkulazi, have become non-operational. An example of this is Engströms research into a non-operational sugarcane plantation run by a private investor and funded by the Swedish aid agency SIDA. Engström shows, echoing the findings of Bélair et al (2024) and GRAIN (2018), that the failure of the land deal was a result of a simplified discourse that has underpinned the development strategy behind large land deals (Engström 2018).

2.3 The Tanzanian political system, land rights and types.

Although Tanzania has been a multiparty democracy since 1992, with the first multiparty elections being held in 1994, the ruling party Chama Cha Mapinduzi, CCM, has remained in power since then. CCM is the result of a merger between TANU (Tanganyika African National Union) and ASP (Afro-Shirazi Party) in 1977, the ruling parties of Tanganyika and Zanzibar respectively at that time. CCM has ruled Tanzania since independence in 1961, with much of independence and post-colonial struggle also being tied to CCM as a symbol of independence. Much of this is a result of the first chairman of CCM, Julius Nyerere, who led Tanganyika and then Tanzania until the 1980's, being seen as one of the main driving forces towards independence from the British empire (Bjerk 2017). He is today referred to with the honorific *mwalimu* (teacher) and in every building which accepts the public, a portrait of him with the honorific *baba wa taifa* (father of the nation) hangs next to a portrait of the current president.

CCM thus has a special place in the Tanzanian public mind that is difficult to detach from the sometimes stark political realities of corruption or mismanagement that has emerged under its rule (Spalding 1996; Lofchie 2014). For many Tanzanians

then, especially those in rural and poverty-stricken areas where CCM gathers most of its support, CCM, the government, governmental agencies, Nyerere and the fight for independence are entangled in a bundle of symbolisms. (O’Gorman 2012).

It is also important to mention that the government in Tanzania has a legal right to expropriate any land that it deems fit for investment. Legally, this is a holdover from the socialist era, but has been used in the new capitalistic economy to open up land for foreign investment through government expropriation, with reference to the so called “public interest”. All land in Tanzania is owned by the state. There exists three land types in Tanzania: general land, which is under the management of the government; village land, managed by villages in rural areas, and reserved land, which is land reserved for national parks, preservation etc. (Abdallah et al. 2014; Tanzanian Investment Centre n.d.)

2.4 Village and ward governance and politics

The Tanzanian governmental system is divided into several levels which each have corresponding government assigned officers – from the national level to the village level. In order they are national > regional >division> district > ward > village. Regional here denotes the regional subdivisions (in the case of our field study this was the Morogoro region with Morogoro as the regional capital); district is a level below the regional level (in this case the district was Morogoro Rural); the Ward level consists of several villages which in turn consist of several subvillages, the Ward level is managed by a Ward Executive Officer, WEO, appointed by the government. The WEO manages the different villages within the ward which are in turn managed by government appointed Village Executive Officers (VEO) as well as the democratically elected chairpersons and Village Council (Shivji n.d.).

3. Methodology

The thesis rests on three related methodological approaches: ethnographic observation and semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The purpose and application of these approaches as well as the empirical boundaries, and ethical dilemmas of conducting field work will be explained in more detail in this portion.

The methodological approaches in this essay were chosen in order to attempt to understand the reasons for resistance or non-resistance via gaining an understanding of interviewed groups and through this gaining information on their perceptions on resistance. The focus on the perceptions of a social group corresponds well with how Robson & McCartan (2016) describes an ethnographic approach.

“An ethnography provides a description and interpretation of the culture and social structure of a social group. It has its roots in anthropology, involving an immersion in the particular culture of the society being studied so that life in that community could be described in detail” (Robson & McCartan 2016, p 156).

Further Robson & McCartan write that the goal of ethnography is to “[...] produce ‘thick description’ [...] which allows others to understand the culture from inside in terms that the participants themselves used to describes what is going on”. This is motivated by what Robson & McCartan call a clear value in conjunction “for and about cultures where little is known or where there have been misleading presumptions and prejudices about the culture of a group” (ibid).

In concordance with the purpose of the thesis ethnography therefore allows for a more substantial and deep-rooted understanding of villagers and pastoralists in Tanzania than other methods. Additionally, to just ‘describing’ things according to the fashion in which pastoralists and villagers perceive things there is additional value because they are marginalized groups. As mentioned previously (see Background and previous research) there is also a lack of research on how these groups resist. It is therefore justified to speak of the cultures of the inhabitants of Mkulazi ward as cultures “where little is known”, at least in the sense of reasons for resistance.

In addition to the ethnographic approach a semi-structured interview approach was chosen according to the guidelines set out by Robson & McCartan (ibid).

There is also precedent in research on resistance in approaching a research problem in this way. James C Scott, for example, in his seminal on peasant resistance *Weapons of the Weak* (1985) [which is also part of the theoretical package underlining this thesis] used an ethnographic approach combined with interviews. This allowed him to better understand the daily lives of peasants to understand what drove their resistance strategies. Similarly, although it is much more limited in temporal scope, the aim of this thesis is conjunctive towards a similar approach.

The study owes much to Scott (1985 & 2008) and is partially a deductive study that tested his theories of resistance (explained in section 4) on the case of the Mkulazi investment.

3.1.1 Empirical data collection

The empirical evidence supporting the thesis was collected in Tanzania between the 23rd of January and the 18th of March 2024 in the Morogoro region. Interviewees included VEO:s, WEO:s, regional officers, village chairs, smallholder farmers, pastoralists, and the senior legal advisor and manager for project planning & performance management at MHC. They were found in Morogoro city, Mkulazi ward (consisting of the villages Mkulazi, Usungura, Kidunda, Chanyumbu, and several subvillages), and the Mkulazi Holding Company office in Kilosa. The evidence was collected from a total of 51 interviews, consisting of both individual and group interviews with an estimated 65 people. The interviewees consisted of both men and women from all age groups and both Christians and Muslims. The interviewees joined *pro-bono* although during focus groups we treated those who joined to sodas. I travelled to Tanzania together with another student who also researched the Mkulazi ward investment, but from another angle. We shared interpreters, held focus group discussions together, and interviewed some respondents together. The interviews and focus groups with villagers in Mkulazi ward were held in Swahili together with two interpreters translating between Swahili and English. Interviews with regional officials as well as executives from Mkulazi Holding Company were held directly in English.

3.1.2 Methodological issues

In conducting ethnographic research in conjunction with interviews and focus group discussion it is critical to remain vigilant of ethical dilemmas and problems of power dynamics that can arise in research situations such as the one underlying this essay.

I am a white university educated male who even with my comparatively low income in a Swedish context makes several times more per month than the average Tanzanian farmer, with the rural wage of Tanzania estimated at 139 euros per month (*Tanzania - ALIGN* n.d.). Inevitably this creates a power disparity that must be taken into account. It is possible to imagine that those interviewed would seek to gain financial benefit because of this disparity. The way to avoid this has been to very clearly state that we could not offer any compensation for interviews or focus groups, as well as also clearly stating that we could not promise that our research would bring any benefits to them as a community. In that sense the limits of our research were made clear to interviewees, and we also double checked with all the interviewees that they understood these limits. We also made it clear to all those interviewed that their participation could be withdrawn at any time, as well as that they would be completely anonymous, and unable to be identified.

The history of colonialism in Tanzania makes the situation of my skin-color one which cannot be avoided. It is clear that those we interviewed always viewed me as a white European. This can entail both a sort of reverence, where my opinions and values are given primacy over those I interviewed, and can lead to a potential damaging of the integrity of the research situation. It can, in turn, also lead to a cautiousness by the interviewees that is detrimental to the potentially sensitive nature of my inquiry (Fox 2012). This is a fact that cannot be overlooked, and one I tried to be aware of at all times. In order to make the research conducted for this thesis more ethical it was necessary to be constantly vigilant about the dynamics of race, economics, as well as power generally.

This thesis deals with topics of language and tries to, among other topics, understand those interviewed through their usage of language. This also ties very heavily into the theoretical package of *Hidden Transcripts* (explained below). It is thus inevitable that using interpreters runs the risk of making messages from those interviewed diffuse or unclear. In order to minimize these risks, there were very candid conversations together with our interpreters where we set the limits of interpretation, and tried to create a situation where the message would be as undiluted as possible. By clearly discussing aspirations and expectations I believe that we were able to create as beneficial of a situation as possible, while minimizing risks. In spite of this, it is key to remain open to the possibility that my status could lead to interviewees not wanting to be candid or feeling uncomfortable with the

interview situation. The large number of interviews conducted, however, gives the thesis an increased reliability by having a large sample size.

4. Theoretical framework

The thesis aims to explain the political and epistemic machinations that control the political agency of villagers on the Tanzanian countryside. To explain, analyze, and critically view this political agency the thesis mainly rests on theories of two thinkers: Michel Foucault and James C Scott.

From Foucault the essay borrows the concept of power-knowledge (Taylor 2014, Foucault 1979) – that is the way that power shapes knowledge and vice versa – to better understand and conceptualize information, rumors, and knowledge that contribute to the milieu of resistance or non-resistance amongst the small holder farmers and pastoralists of Mkulazi ward. It is further inspired by German's (2022) application of power-knowledge and critical ontology on land issues and land disputes.

Weapons of the Weak (1985) is the title of James C Scott's book where he discusses ways in which the dominated, in this case and in the case of Scott, smallholder peasants, can resist the dominant and their tools of power. It is used here to illuminate ways in which the inhabitants of Mkulazi may use more subtle forms of resistance which limits the risks of punishment.

Expanding on the tools of resistance from *Weapons of the Weak*, Scott elaborated and expanded on his theory of the space or possibility of resistance through *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (2008), where Scott presents his idea of the *hidden-* and *public transcript*. The hidden transcript is form of dissent and resistance through language, organizing, and speech acts, that are kept hidden from the dominant and the powerful. This is contrasted with the public transcript, which are the official rules. The notions of hidden and public transcripts are used as analytical tools to understand speech acts as form of resistance, and to contrast open and clandestine ways in which the inhabitants of Mkulazi ward may- or may not resist.

4.1 Power-knowledge and contesting ontologies

Michel Foucault uses the term power-knowledge to explain the mutually reinforcing forces of power and knowledge. Defining the term in *Discipline and punish* Foucault writes that we should not see power and knowledge as separate entities, and resist interpreting knowledge as growing in a vacuum devoid of power relations and unaffected by outside stimuli. Instead, according to Foucault

We should admit rather that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. (Foucault 1979 p.27)

Power thus produces a certain kind of knowledge linked to it, and any ‘knowledge’ we as humans have of something is also a result of a set of power relations. Foucault does not in this sense necessarily mean ‘knowledge’ in the sense of book-knowledge decreed by an absolute authority. Rather in the French term for power-knowledge, *pouvoir-savoir*, *savoir* implies a knowledge that is ‘common sense’ or suppositions that we ‘take for granted’ (Feder 2010).

The duality of the nature of *savoir* in this case also applies to the translation of *pouvoir*. *Pouvoir* is not only power, but also the infinite form of the word ‘to be able to’. Thus according to Ellen K. Feder: “In Foucault’s work, *pouvoir* must be understood in this dual sense, as both “power” [...] but also as a kind of potentiality, capability or capacity” (Feder 2010, p55) .

Power-knowledge, then is used in this essay to analyze how knowledge around the investment is produced, and by extension to analyze the power-knowledge struggle that emerges between different actors. It is also crucially used to understand and frame the ‘potentiality, capability or capacity’ of villagers in Mkulazi ward to resist the investment in terms of knowledge and knowledge production.

In *Power / Knowledge /Land: Contested Ontologies of Land and Its Governance in Africa*, German uses power-knowledge together with what she terms *contested ontologies* (that is the ways in which subject construct and interpret being). German uses this term to describe ways in which perceptions of land and knowledge of what constitutes ‘land’ between ‘indigenous’ (in this case long term occupants) and government or business can be reframed as a form of struggles of meaning and usage over land. German writes that a project such as she attempts, “[...] asks us to approach the land question in its entirety as an open-ended question, asking what “land” is “(German 2022, p 17).

This point shows that different groups can have different conceptions of a similar case and that definitions are entangled in a web of discourses as a result of a power-knowledge struggle. This thesis then, as mentioned, attempts to conceptualize and capture parts of the power-knowledge struggle over the Mkulazi investment *and* further the contested ontologies that arise thereof, in order to better understand resistance in conjunction to the investment.

Finally, Laura German succinctly defines the importance of Power/Knowledge, and its relevance to understanding social phenomena, even in something as far removed from Foucaults original treatises on surveillance and medieval sexuality as contemporary land struggles in sub-saharan Africa:

Theoretical work on power/knowledge and ontology is not just an academic exercise of exposing knowledges that stand above and apart from material and social reality, but an exercise in understanding how the very world is made—from “rights” to regimes of rule and material reality itself. Foucault and other contemporary scholars working in this power/knowledge tradition make exposing the conditions that give rise to certain concepts, and the (social, ecological, material) conditions that these concepts in turn sustain, a core analytical project. (German 2022)

In order to understand how resistance is made or not made in the context of Mkulazi, one must also understand how “how the very world is made – from “rights” to regimes of rule and material reality itself” in the context of the lives of Mkulazians.

4.2 Resistance and *Weapons of the Weak*

This thesis joins James C Scott in interpreting resistance as not requiring an organized intent. Rather in this thesis the word *resistance* is used to denote actions that fight the dominant order, without necessarily requiring the expressed or unexpressed intent of doing this. The reason for this lies in accordance with how Scott expresses the most vulnerable (peasants in Malaysia in the case of Scott, peasants and pastoralists on the Tanzanian countryside in this case) find themselves committing acts of resistance. This is the key thesis put forward in Scotts work *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*.

According to Scott:

“[...] the problem lies in what is a misleading, sterile, and sociologically naïve insistence upon distinguishing “self-indulgent,” individual acts, on the one hand, from presumably “principled,” selfless, collective actions, on the other, and excluding the former from the category of real resistance. To insist on such distinctions as a means of comparing forms of resistance and their consequences is one thing, but to use them as the basic criteria to determine what constitutes resistance is to miss the very wellsprings of peasant politics (Scott 1985, p 298)”

Thus, to properly understand peasant politics, one must look further than what Scott calls a misguided ‘ironic combination of both Leninist and bourgeois assumptions on what constitutes political action’ (Scott, 1985, p 292). Assuming this definition of resistance opens a myriad of ways of analyzing political action and enriches our understanding of the politics and infra-politics of the peasants and pastoralists of Mkulazi. Peasants are often directly in tune with their material needs, thus, according to Scott, cries for “‘bread’, ‘land’, or ‘no taxes’” should be understood as self-interested yes, but also as where acts of resistance and the *need* for resistance arises. It then follows that “to ignore the self-interested element in peasant resistance is to ignore the determinate context not only of peasant politics, but of most lower-class politics” (Scott 1985, p 295).

Instead, resistance must be understood in a broader sense and small acts must also be considered as acts of resistance. As Scott poignantly puts it:

“It is precisely the fusion of self-interest and resistance that is the vital force animating the resistance of peasants and proletarians. *When a peasant hide parts of his crops to avoid paying taxes, he is both filling his stomach and depriving the state of grain* [my emphasis]” (Scott 1985, p 295)

The above definition opens the field for interpreting the acts which Scott (1985) calls *weapons of the weak*. These are acts of resistance that ‘the weak,’ subordinate, and dominated use in order to minimize the risk for capture and punishment. Lower class groups turning to weapons like squatting, poaching, or petty theft should thus not be interpreted as contradictory to resistance, but rather as the few forms of resistance which are available to the most vulnerable groups.

The lessons from *Weapons of the Weak* are used in the context of this essay to properly understand and analyze acts that do not fall under the stricter notions of resistance explained by Scott above. By applying this broader definition the essay is able to more accurately capture the agency of residents of Mkulazi, tying to the notion of *pouvoir* in power/knowledge as well (“capability”) (Feder 2010).

4.3 Hidden transcripts

James C Scott frames speech in the form of public and hidden transcripts. For Scott these transcripts form a way of understanding the speech of the dominant and the dominated. Hidden and public transcripts are an evolution of Scotts description of hegemony and resistance in *Weapons of the Weak*. Public transcripts are the domain of the dominant, where the official ‘rules of the game’ are defined and where speech is heavily monitored. Scott uses a myriad of examples: the way slaves

show reverence for their master; workers speaking and acting in front of bosses; peasants bowing and obeying nobles and government officials. The hidden transcripts then are the domain of the powerless and dominated, where they can express acts and speech that would be impossible to express within the domain of the public transcript without risking punishment.

In the words of Scott, the hidden transcript is not an innocent substitution for resistance but a key part of the repertoire of resistance and intrinsically linked to physical acts of resistance as well. Scott writes that:

“The bond between domination and appropriation means that it is impossible to separate the ideas and symbolism of subordination from a process of material exploitation. In exactly the same fashion, it is impossible to separate veiled symbolic resistance from the practical struggles to thwart or mitigate exploitation. Resistance, like domination, fights a war on two fronts. The hidden transcript is not just behind-the-scenes griping and grumbling; it is enacted in a host of down-to-earth, low profile stratagems designed to minimize appropriation”. (Scott 2008, p.188)

For Scott the strategies used to create hidden transcripts are intrinsically linked with the weapons of the weak, they are both tools used to conduct resistance in ways that minimize the risk of discovery, capture, and punishment. Thus, in order to fully appreciate different forms of resistance, and potential forms of resistance, in Mkulazi ward this thesis uses both *hidden transcripts* and *weapons of the weak*, in order to analyze both speech acts and physical acts as acts of resistance.

5. The conditions of resistance in conjunction with Farm 217

In order to better understand the different push- and pull effects of resistance and non-resistance it is necessary to explain the circumstances and the environments of power in which the inhabitants of Mkulazi ward live under.

To illustrate issues of remoteness, lack of knowledge, and the distance from Mkulazi to larger villages, cities, and people of power the first subsection of this chapter describes our travels to Mkulazi from Dar es Salaam, as well as our search for information in order to pinpoint the exact location. It is also used to illustrate the time and effort required to travel, which can prove fatal for smallholder peasants like most citizens of Mkulazi ward. Prices of transport are comparatively very high compared to average household income. This is a combination of a multitude of factors, including corruption, and infrastructural problems such as poor roads. These infrastructural problems in turn lead to long travel times, which can lead to farmers being away from the farm during work-intensive periods such as harvest (Mkenda & Van Campenhout 2011; Livingston et al. 2014)

The empirical evidence collected from interviews and observations shows that employees at Mkulazi Holding Company, bureaucrats, and villagers have different perceptions on what constitutes the investment land and, the history of the land (both rights and usage). In general, there seems to be a disconnect between the villagers worries, needs, and wants and the perception of these from government officials and previous investors. In light of these dissenting views this chapter also contains a presentation of my perception of the investment land and its history together with observational evidence from the field and interviews. This perception has arisen as a combination of observation of parts of the investment land and interviews with bureaucrats at the regional, ward, and village level, as well as interviews with representatives from Mkulazi Holding Company and inhabitants of Mkulazi ward.

Of the around 45 villagers of Mkulazi ward interviewed all report the land being used by them since before Tanzania's independence. Those interviewed include elders born before independence, active and previously active politicians (all active in CCM with one exception), as well as many born after independence and the end

of Tanzanian socialism. Their perception is that the land was village land before the arrival of representatives from the Tanzanian Investment Centre, the National Social Security Fund of Tanzania (NSSF), as well as the Parastatal Pension Fund of Tanzania (PPF) and in 2019. When the company arrived, the villagers were informed that using the land is illegal, and that it is set aside for investment. Accounts between the villagers differ on what exactly they were told by the government agencies about the upcoming investment or whether or not they would have to leave the land, but most villagers using the investment land decided to leave shortly after. Since the cancellation of the original investment many of the villagers have returned to using the land. Villagers reported having used similar acreage before the investment was initiated as they do currently. According to those who use the investment land currently they also use mostly the same areas as before. The government officers on the village and ward level are aware of the villagers using the land but say that they are allowed to stay until another investor is found. All villagers which were interviewed were aware that they might be forced to leave in case of a new investor. At the time of our arrival in Mkulazi ward the villagers were not informed that TIC was actively looking for a new investor.

There is no evidence of violent protests or overt resistance against the perceived loss of land, in the sense of resisting authority in public. Evidence from the interviews however indicates that villagers are resisting in forms akin to those explained by Scott in *Weapons of the Weak*. One example of this is squatting, that is inhabitants of Mkulazi ward returning to use the investment land, or never leaving, although they perceive themselves as having no legal right to the land anymore.

When asked about their lack of public protest most villagers were forthcoming and explained several reasons, mostly these can be divided around three lines: a lack of trust in the efficiency and fairness of government bureaucracy (especially at the regional and district level, and the large financial burden placed on attempts at complaining); an environment of surveillance and conformity that limits the possibilities of resistant speech acts; a lack of knowledge about rights, ways to protest, linked partly to the obfuscated status of the investment and the workings behind it. As mentioned above these three categories will be discussed in the following subchapters, after the above-mentioned account of our trip to Mkulazi.

5.1 Setting the stage

After being informed about the Mkulazi land deal, in Sweden, through our supervisor, me and Carl (my fellow student working on the project) read an article by Sulle (2020) explaining some of the situation on the ground, although the

information was sparse and fragmented. Through the article Sulle taught us about the two Mkulazis *I* and *II*, Mkulazi I being the first attempt at investment, located in Morogoro region (Sulle 2020). Our empirical work began here – piecing together bits of information to triangulate a place and to find out which people lived there (of course we later found out that it was a ward, a collection of villages rather than a single one).

We were first set on studying what we later came to understand is Mkulazi II – a sugar factory and adjacent land for growing sugar cane in the Kilosa region. Our reason for this initial choice was because we were under the impression that although Mkulazi II was more recently operational, it had stalled as well. From our empirical data at the time, the impression was that Mkulazi I was totally abandoned, and had been so for quite some time.

However, in December 2023 we were alerted to a newspaper article calling for new investors to develop and operate a agricultural investment at “Mkulazi area, Ngerengere, Morogoro Region, Tanzania” (Tanzanian Investment Centre 2023). This article, together with a Youtube video from MHC showing the sugar factory at Mkulazi II as seemingly operational convinced us to focus on Mkulazi I.

Given that we wanted to study an area where an investment was stalled or cancelled, this gave us an indication that we should look for this Mkulazi investment, and that was situated somewhere in the Morogoro region, close to Ngerengere. Unable to reach a conclusion in Sweden we decided to wait until we arrived in Tanzania.

However, pinpointing exactly where the Morogoro Mkulazi investment was located turned out to be difficult even after arriving in Dar es Salaam, the financial capital of Tanzania. Apart from the Sulle paper, the information we had at our disposal consisted of a map from a SAGCOT brief from 2012 (SAGCOT Investment Partnership Program 2012) as well as the information from the advertisement from the Tanzanian Investment Centre naming the investment as located in Mkulazi, Ngerengere area, Morogoro Region (Tanzanian Investment Centre 2023).

After meeting our interpreters Charles and Nestura in Dar es Salaam, Charles travelled to the regional offices in Morogoro to obtain permits for our research. There he obtained confirmation that the Morogoro investment was the stalled one and he also learned that Mkulazi was under the jurisdiction of the Morogoro Rural district. After that, we all traveled together to Mvuha, the district capital of Morogoro Rural district, in order to obtain permission to do research in the district. To get to Mvuha, we left Morogoro early in the morning by *dala dala* (minibuses which travel to even the most remote villages, usually quite crowded and slow moving with several stops). The trip took four hours. While there we interviewed

the assistant to the district manager of natural resources. From what he could tell us Mkulazi I was very remote and can only be accessed by *boda boda* (motorcycle taxis). According to the assistant the area is hard to access at the start of the year because of floods, and most people living there are pastoralists. Of course, we later found out that most people living near the investment were not pastoralists (although most of those living *within* the investment are), but this is an example of how even government officials who have visited the area can be misinformed, or perhaps misinform, about the situation on the ground. Spending approximately two hours in Mvuha and the trip back, going to the district office and being granted our permits was an entire working day, most of which was spent on a bus in sweltering heat. However, we were very fortunate since our permits were speedily expedited because of Charles being able to convince the officials that we had gone from far. It is not impossible to imagine that if the officials had been negatively disposed to us that it would have taken several more hours or even several days.

A few days after visiting Mvuha it was time to travel to Ngerengere, the town we had come to understand is closest to Mkulazi. In Ngerengere we received information from a Barabaig (a pastoral group) chief that there are many people living in Mkulazi, and that they are still using the investment land.

Our interpreter Nestura found a driver able to take us to Mkulazi, but our first attempt to get there failed halfway because of floods on the roads. Distracted, we had to wait another day for the conditions to clear up enough for us to be able to make another attempt, when we were finally able to push through the still somewhat flooded roads to arrive at Mkulazi village, where we were able to find accommodation at the Mchani guesthouse, the only one in the village. We quickly got the contact information of the Village Chairwoman who was able to meet us that same evening. The morning after we arranged for a focus group discussion with about a dozen farmers who had been affected by the investment. Thus, our field work could begin in earnest.

The point of this observatory recollection is to emphasize the difficulty of finding information, the ambiguity in the information available and the difficulty of travelling, both via public and private transport in the rural areas of Tanzania. For the villagers, the difficulty we met of obtaining reliable information, long and difficult travel, and to be able to rely on bureaucracy to tend to their problems in a fair and timely manner, are occurrences which can be fairly time consuming and which in the end may end in a less than satisfactory result. Additionally, these trips are very expensive, with a trip costing about 10 000 Tsh (approx. 40 SEK) which is a large amount of money for the average villager in Mkulazi. To understand the results from the field work, these challenges of infrastructure, knowledge, and bureaucracy must be kept in mind.

5.2 Investment – Farm 217

This section deals with what I, through interviews and observations was able to ascertain about the investment. This information is key both to understand something about the environment, investment, and the general situation, but also for the reader to gain insight into the difficulties inherent in interpreting differing ontologies of land. Because as German writes

“[...] conceptions of ownership over land, where they exist, may not be absolute, but rather part of the representation and constitution of social relationships, symbolic of membership in wider social groups, and reflective of social history. (German 2022, p 231)

Thus, we are dealing here with a myriad of interpretations of what the Mkulazi investment land is, what it is used for and who has the *rights* to it (although this question may be quite clear in a legal sense, see for example Sulle 2020). In interviewing 50+ people of different ages, genders, and backgrounds it also inevitable that memories of key events will differ and events will have been perceived differently. The results presented here are then not meant to be a definitive answer of what the Mkulazi plot 217 is or was – but rather to explain the different perceptions of the land, from the views of regional officials, MHC, villagers and pastoralists, to better understand the conditions for resistance in conjunction with it.

Interviewing the residents of Mkulazi ward slowly but surely painted a picture of how they perceived the investment including who did what, and who arrived when. These interviews together with the interviews of regional officials as well as employees at MHC allowed us to gain an understanding of a timeline of events since the arrival of NSSF and TIC in 2017. A timeline of usage of the land before the investment, and whether villagers were properly informed beforehand of them not having usage rights of the land is one question still partially unanswered.

It was immediately obvious within the first five focus group discussions and interviews (consisting of about 15 people in total) that the villager’s relationship and perception of the investment land did not agree with the official transcript – that the land had been general land since independence. In a legal sense the ownership of the land can of course not be in question since Tanzania’s land laws allow the government to lay claim to any farmland to promote anything that is in “the public interest”, such as large-scale agro-investment (Abdallah et al. 2014). In a usage sense, however, the picture painted by the interviews is that this land had been used by the villagers for generations, since before independence, and maybe even before colonial times. Officials on the regional, district and village levels all described the investment land as having been put aside for investment since independence. Subsequently, several villagers, including the chairwoman of

Mkulazi village, said that they had been informed by TIC, after the arrival of the investor, that the land was set aside for investment in 1952 (that is 12 years before the independence of Tanganyika, that is what today constitutes the mainland of Tanzania, before the union with Zanzibar).

Thus, the key factor at stake here is the contesting perceptions of whether the villagers in Mkulazi ward lost land to the investment, or not. When interviewing villagers, they could not give an exact number describing how much of their land they perceived as having been lost. When asked, most villagers report using around 2-3 acres of land previously but could not name in total how much land ‘belonged’ to the village before 2017. Rough estimations from my own observations of how much land is used currently, together with details from interviews, and the size of the investment [63 000 ha] (SAGCOT Investment Partnership Program 2012) would indicate that the investment land is much larger than the land used currently and previously by villagers.

The majority of village respondents within all four villages within the Mkulazi ward report having perceived the land as village land before the arrival of TIC and NSSF and later MHC in 2019. Whether or not the land has legally belonged to the government since independence is besides the scope of this essay.

There are however indications that at least some villagers were aware that they were not legally entitled to the land, before the investor arrived. Some of these villagers also report using the land, even though they were ‘aware’ that they did not have formal rights to it.

Several villagers mention in interviews that there were beacons, buried in the ground, on the investment land. Most villagers describing these beacons say they didn’t know what purpose they filled. However, V, a farmer from Usungura, describes how he once was employed by the government to put out these beacons during the 1970’s. V’s work on the beacons lines up with the timeline presented by Sulle (2020), with Sulle referencing the land as set aside by the Tanzanian Prison Services in 1975. When following villagers to the investment land we asked them to point out the spots where the beacons had been, which they could, but the beacons were nowhere to be found, perhaps removed.

None of the villagers that we interviewed had housing within the investment area, and from our gathered information we could not find any indication that there had been permanent housing by farmers in the area at any time. If we assume that farmers in general want to live closer to their crops to easier be able to transport them then this could be an indication that villagers were aware that they did not have the formal rights to the land. There are however quite a number of agro-pastoralists who have settled and built houses within the investment. These agro-

pastoralists report buying access to the land from village chiefs. These transactions varied in nature, but most of them took the form of a 'donation' in the form of cash to finance a school, or other infrastructure project, in order for the pastoralists to become village members. Through this they then acquired access to the land.

In our interviews we also received evidence that counters the idea that they lacked formal rights – for example Y, a 70-year-old farmer who describes having lived in the village his entire life, says that his ancestors, meaning at least his parents and grandparents, were buried in the investment land. During our stay in Mkulazi we unfortunately did not have the opportunity to confirm this.

We asked a young farmer, A, to take us to the investment land and show us where his and his family's farms had been. While visiting the investment land, A, without any hesitation, was able to pinpoint exactly where his land began, where his relatives' land began, and where the land of his neighbors began. He also mentioned that Y had used and continued to use the plot adjacent to his family's, which we were able to confirm when we visited the site. This seemingly embodied knowledge of the land would also indicate that villagers like A are extremely familiar with the land and have used it before.

Concludingly we were unable to pin down one uniform image of the degree of surprise, or not, among the villagers at the arrival of the investor. The majority of the villagers of Mkulazi ward report being unaware that they did not have rights to the land, but there are indications that at least a few of the villagers were aware that the land was set aside for investment. Of the pastoralists interviewed all report being unaware it was investment land before 2017. Representatives from MHC and regional officials were convinced that inhabitants of Mkulazi were well aware that it was land set aside for investment, even before 2017.

There are however some facts that are concurrent between all interviewees, whether officials, villagers or pastoralists. The chain of events that can be gleaned from interviews with district and regional officials, MHC employees and villagers is this: in 2017 investors from MHC together with representatives from TIC arrived at Mkulazi ward and gathered leaders and villagers to inform them that 63 000 hectares of what had previously been assumed to be village land (belonging to the different villages) was in fact general land that would be used to start an agricultural investment for growing sugarcane and producing sugar. However, this information did not reach everyone. For instance, out of the several agro-pastoralists and pastoralists belonging to the Sukuma and Barabaig ethnic groups currently living in the investment land, and also living in the land at the time of investment - only one out of the five interviewed said they were invited to this meeting. Among

villagers, all of those we spoke to report at least being invited to the meeting, although all did not attend.

After this, respondents differ in remembering whether or not they were ordered to leave, asked to leave, or allowed to continue using the land until further notice. The reactions were mixed, some people reported feeling very bad and sad because of the potential loss of what they identified as the most fertile land in the village.¹ Concurrently many respondents were also hopeful and of the view that an investment would bring development and modernization to the village. They hoped it would bring jobs, schools, hospitals, and better infrastructure that they sorely need.

In 2020 villagers report seeing workers from Mkulazi Holding Company leaving, without receiving any information about the status of the investment. Before this, from 2017-2020, MHC had buildings, and seeds, and started a small growing project. As the VEO of Mkulazi village put it:

“I don’t know what the meaning of this [MHC leaving the investment] was. They had buildings and seeds in Kidunda and a plot [of land] here. Suddenly, we saw that they left for Mkulazi II” (Mkulazi VEO Interview, 8/2 2024)

Some were then informed through television news that the company had shifted to what was to become the Mkulazi II investment in Kilosa and started to build a sugarcane factory there. During this entire period, they had not received any information on the progress of the investment, or the forthcoming plans to shift operations. Although work opportunities had been promised when the factory was to be operational, these had not materialized at this early stage. Slowly, after not seeing any activity in the investment area, farmers started cultivating the investment land again.

P, a farmer who was forced to borrow and rent land from relatives in the village when the land was announced as investment area, describes his situation and the decision to go back as follows.

“ I came to borrow land around here, but sometimes the owner could kick you out and it was very expensive, even though I borrowed from my aunties. Some others decided to go back, so I followed them. First was my brother, and then J as well. I know it is illegal but I still decided to go. I will be ready to quit if they come back.” (P, interview, 6/2 2024)

¹ My own observations also support the villagers view that the investment land is much more fertile than the land adjacent to the village. From a glance the soils around the village are sandy and produce scant yields, while the investment land is comparatively much more fertile (although the lack of pesticides, tillage using only hand hoes, and lack of fertilizer still produces quite meagre yields).

Later, while following him to his farm in the investment land P also says that the village land gave him around three bags of maize per harvest, while the investment lands gives around 15 bags of maize on the same acreage. This ratio is echoed by other villagers who have cultivated in both areas. Thus, the investment was seen as both a potential blessing and a curse at the same time.

When asked what consequences the reduce in yield have practically in their day to day lives V and C from Chanyumbu answered:

“The consequences are we have hunger. Maybe you have to reduce the meals to one meal a day. We eat normal food, like ugali.” - Interview with V and C, Chanyumbu villagers

The access/non-access to the investment land is thus an issue which villagers cannot escape from. Many were dependent on having access to the land, and with having gained the knowledge of this access being narrated as illegal, they feel a sense of worry and despair. Thus, it becomes a choice between hunger, or food on the table combined with a fear of being evicted.

5.3 Issues of bureaucracy

This section is the first explaining restraints to resistance that I identified during observation, focus group discussions, and interviews during the field work. They are in order: issues of bureaucracy (including financial constraints as a result of this) [explained in section 5.4], an environment of surveillance (explained in section 5.5), and a lack of knowledge (both of rights, and lack of knowledge about the investment) [explained in section 5.5].

As mentioned above, most of the villagers who went back to using the investment land report doing so because they were facing issues of hunger. They ‘squat’, that is use land that they lack usage rights to, because they feel in some sense forced to. This mirrors how Scott describes the reasons for peasant resistance:

“[The intention of peasants resisting] by contrast, is nearly always survival and persistence. The pursuit of that end may, depending on circumstances, require either the petty resistance we have seen or more dramatic actions of self-defense.” (Scott 1985, p 301)

However, before turning to squatting and returning to the investment land, many villagers say that they tried to turn to official channels (that is protesting through local government authorities) to make their grievances known. Villagers from the entire ward report complaining or trying to talk to their leaders in the form of the village council and chairs about the project. Additionally, many also mention discussing issues around the investment with the village executive officer (of their

respective villages) and the ward executive officer. All of them report that these complaints did not go anywhere:

“I went to the local government to complain but I didn’t go far. The answers we receive don’t make sense. “Yes we will work on it”, but nothing happens” (Interview with T, 6/2 2024)

“If you ask the WEO to talk to the investors he will say, I will follow up, then not come back or do anything. The WEO and VEO have not even called a meeting about the investment information – even though they went to the district several times” (Interview with N, 7/2 2024)

The chairwoman of Mkulazi ward when questioned on protesting through official channels mentioned that the only thing within her power is to further these complaints to the VEO and the WEO.

Villagers also report that the VEO and WEO have told them that they were waiting for answers from higher levels of government. This was what the VEOs of the different villages and the WEO also reported when asked. However, when we asked at officials at the district and regional levels, they report not receiving any complaints from either the VEO or the WEO.

This thesis is not passing any judgment on the legal status of Mkulazi I investment land. However, given that the vast majority of interviewed villagers from Mkulazi ward report having perceived the land as belonging to them, it is from their perception a form of appropriating land. Using this point of analysis, certain definitions used by regional officials as well as employees at Mkulazi Holding Company fall under how Scott describes the views of appropriating classes on resistance:

“In any event, most of their efforts will be seen by appropriating classes as truculence, deceit, shirking, pilfering, arrogance.--in short,all the labels intended to denigrate the many faces of resistance (Scott 1985, p 301)”

During meetings with regional officials and employees from MHC they were very reluctant to concede that villagers and pastoralists had a legitimate claim to the land, or that the ways in which these groups used the land was legitimate. Instead, they reframed the land usages of pastoralists and villagers as temporary or fragmented and their aspirations to use the land as disingenuous.

While interviewing the regional officials in Morogoro they stressed that there were no “permanent houses” within the investment land, both before the investment was initiated and currently. Us mentioning the pastoralists living there, and how we’d seen houses, did not sway them. Instead, according to their definition, permanent houses are only those built out of stone. Because most houses on the investment are constructed using clay on a wooden frame, they are not considered permanent. The

irony in this, that must be mentioned, is that the majority of houses in the villages of Mkulazi ward are constructed in the same or a very similar manner.

Interviewing the senior legal advisor and the manager of project planning & performance management at MHC also yielded similar results. They were also disregarding notions that there was any permanent settlement on the land, or that it had been used to farm by villagers before the investment started. Instead, villagers who used the land were deceitful “poachers or chopping things illegally” [shirking, using deceit, pilfering, as mentioned in the above quote by Scott (1985)].

C, a middle-aged woman farming the investment together with her husband, said that they “didn’t see the point of going to the VEO. When we see the VEO he will tell us to go to the ward officer.” C also describes the meeting with MHC as somewhat hostile.

“They called us invaders. We didn’t see any point [of protesting]. It’s because [we had] a low level of understanding of the situation” (Interview with C, 3/2 2024)

During our meeting with representatives from Mkulazi Holding Company they also used the word ‘invaders’ to describe those who used the land before the investment was established. According to MHC’s senior legal advisor there were people “using the land for charcoal, but not doing it openly”. He further stated that MHC starting and then abandoning work on the investment, because it was for such a brief amount of time, “could not be talked about in terms of impact”.

We have here obviously two competing versions of events, land rights, and current and former land usage. Representatives of MHC speak as if their coming and going had almost no effect at all on the inhabitants of Mkulazi ward, and that anyone using the land previously were mere squatters or poachers. Meanwhile, for many of the interviewed villagers their becoming aware of the investment was a key moment, whether this led to a decrease in food security, or whether it just made them live with a sense of uncertainty.

The different conceptions of events and the status of the investment land also illuminates why complaints have not materialized into any actions. There is both a possibility of complaints not reaching the official channels of course, but there is also a matter of officials and investors not perceiving the problems of inhabitants of Mkulazi ward as complaint worthy. Thus, there is nothing to complain about because the complaints are not legitimate. This leads to inhabitants being forced into taking other action when they have exhausted the official channels.

Rather than defining who is right on these different versions – owned/not-owned, permanent/temporary, deceitful/open, this thesis views these competing versions as a power/knowledge struggle.

In presenting competing definitions and perceptions of the case there is a constant power-knowledge struggle over ontologies of land and rights. This mirrors the earlier quoted words of Foucault that “there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (Foucault 1979). Rather than viewing it passively, as simply villagers and pastoralists contenting to the ontologies and knowledges of the investors and government (in this case), it should instead be viewed as a constant struggle between different ontologies of land where each actors uses the tools at their disposal to impose, reinforce, and displace different power-knowledges.

5.3.1 Issues of finance

An additional layer to the problem of wading through the power-knowledge struggle that is the official complaint system, is also the financial aspect of trying to bring it to higher level (that is from ward to district level or from district level to regional, from regional to national e.tc.).

As the observation in *5.1 Setting the stage* shows, dealing with bureaucracy in Tanzania can be a time-consuming exercise even in the case of the privilege of being white. It can also, as mentioned be an expensive one, with tickets costing up to 10 000 tanzanian shillings. Villagers in Mkulazi ward accordingly describe going to Morogoro to complain, that is the regional level, as an almost futile endeavor that would cost them too much financially.

As the Mkulazi village chairwoman puts it, when asked about the investment situation:

“We are not happy but we cannot protest because of economic aspects. We rent [land in the village] to survive” (Interview with Mkulazi village chairwoman, 2/2 – 2024)

S, another farmer from Mkulazi who has come to use the investment also describes the hardships in verifying complaints at the regional level:

“We submitted it [the complaint] and it was received a long time ago, but they didn’t come back to us. [After this] we felt bad because of our financial situation. We couldn’t go to Morogoro, to their offices [the regional authorities] to follow up.” (Interview with S, 5/2 – 2024)

5.4 Surveillance and conformity

Although the majority of respondents describe the formal village meetings as places where everyone is allowed to speak, albeit in forms according to the meeting structure, there are outliers who describe the meetings as an environment where conformity is needed. Along similar lines, some of those interviewed also present the political environment of the village as one controlled by surveillance, where it can be dangerous to speak out of turn. This is potentially an important reason for non-resistance, and thus further explored in this section.

To understand who speak in these meetings, social status appears as a key factor. When holding focus group discussions there were two men who spoke up frequently: An older man, F, who later in an interview asserts that he is not afraid of anyone “because they are all Tanzanians like me” as well as P, a middle-aged male farmer who has recently started using the investment land again. He is more eloquent than the other meeting participants, and visiting his farm shows that although he lives in similar houses of red clay like the others, he also owns a motorcycle and runs a service selling sim cards. Compared to them, the male farmer A, who was silent the entire meeting, and S, his mother (also silent – but answered when asked to join by our interpreter Nestura) live what seems like a more meager existence. A’s chest is protruding and to my untrained eye he looked malnourished. He and his family live closer to the Mkulazi river where the land is prone to flooding. They have stopped using the investment land due to fear of reprisals. While P mentioned lack of knowledge and understanding as the main causes of the lack of protest, A instead talked more about running the risk of reprisals. He mentioned the fear of speaking up in village meetings – of being afraid to say the wrong thing and suddenly finding yourself on the wrong side of village debate. He also mentioned the fear of punishment and exclusion, led by the village officials. In his view, these village officials are keeping tabs on who says what – and often label those who stick out and speak too independently as troublemakers. He also said that the village officers keep tabs on what the populace is saying by employing others to report on village activities and village speech, further complicating matters.

A talked of the hunger his family is facing. Describing his family’s hardships, he said that his average harvest has decreased from fifteen bags of maize to three to five. This year flooding from the Mkulazi river has destroyed most of those three bags, which will force him to find day labor in order to be able to feed his family.

D, who lives on the outskirts of Chanyumbu also mentioned the need to be certain of opinions conforming to the majority before speaking. She said that saying the wrong thing in a meeting can lead to you being ostracized in the community. Additionally, she described an environment of surveillance within the village,

where those who are seen as troublemakers are kept tabs on by the VEO and the WEO. Because the VEO and WEO are representatives of the government and appointed by the same, these can also be seen as an extension of government power and government surveillance. As anecdotal evidence it can be worth mentioning the WEO ‘turning up’ to our interview with a few villagers just a day after we had met him and talked to him about our intentions. Although this could of course be a coincidence, it still shows that the WEO just by walking around can be an example of government authority, and potential surveillance.

Mirroring the concerns of A, D also describes a political situation where she feels confined in her room for action and speech.

“You have to speak the right words. If you speak wrongly you will get punished. First they will ask you about where you got the information, and why you spoke in public. They will tell you not to speak that way in public. When ever you say things that are exposing leaders they will find anyway to punish you” – (Interview with D, 16/2 2024)

Although the majority of respondents describe being able to talk freely to other villagers and in village meetings, it is still relevant to describe the experiences of D and A, and the potentiality for an environment of fear and surveillance that can arise in these situations.

Thus, the danger of speaking out of turn in a village meeting can lead to reprimands and being put under observation by village and ward officers. By speaking up without having the backing of other villagers one runs the risk of becoming ostracized and seen as a “troublemaker” or one’s mental faculties may even be called into question. The power for the villagers in Mkulazi seems to rely on two levels – there is the symbolical authority that the WEO and VEO represents, their officialdom and the murky and esoteric reaches of that officialdom. But the VEO and WEO do also have the authority and power of calling together the village police force and can offer the real threat of putting people in prison for minor offences. Organizing *unofficially*, that is in forums that are not sanctioned by the government, without the involvement of either the VEO or WEO becomes very difficult.

Scott identifies a similar environment of repression as described above in his examination of the Malay village of Sedaka, where in the place of

“[...] large scale brutality and morbid fear, there is instead the steady pressure of every day repression backed by occasional arrests, warning, diligent police work, legal restrictions and an Internal Security Act that allows for indefinite preventive detention and proscribes much political activity” (Scott 1985, p 274)

We must here draw a similar conclusion to Scott, where we cannot be certain of how much this environment of perceived surveillance plays into resistance: “What we can show however is

that the elements of fear is present in the minds of many villagers and that it structures their view of the options open to them” (Scott 1985, p. 274)

Thus, although the majority reported feeling secure in their ability to speak their mind, and to not fearing the risk of punishment from government officials, the potential for this is still something to keep in mind. Anecdotal evidence from a researcher met during my time in Tanzania also confirms the potential seriousness of the situation. This researcher had worked to survey land and went out to a potential site before he had the chance to meet the WEO of the area. When the WEO found out that my acquaintance had visited the site without approval he was enraged and threatened to call the police on him and to put him in jail. It is thus a part of the political reality of Tanzanian rural life that cannot be ignored.

5.5 The dissemination of knowledge and hidden and public transcripts

This section deals with the dissemination of knowledge about the investment land in general, as well as looking at ways in which the power-knowledge struggle of and over the land can be interpreted because of this dissemination. This struggle and ways in which the inhabitants of Mkulazi resist are interpreted through the notions of *hidden* and *public* transcripts (Scott 2008).

5.5.1 Village meetings as resistance

The village meetings, although conducted between the villagers themselves, should not rightfully be considered a part of the villages hidden transcripts. Yes, seemingly from the interviews villagers are more comfortable speaking at these events rather than at meetings with investors or high-level government officials. However, each meeting is, as mentioned, still monitored by the Village Executive Officer who, although he or she is most often a villager (as is the case in Mkulazi village for example) they are still government officials working with the authority of the government. Thus each official village meeting in the village halls is at least theoretically under government surveillance, and speculatively misspeaking in a rebellious or potentially criminal manner also then runs the risk of punishment.

Although it is not a part of the hidden transcript, these meetings can instead be interpreted as a way for villagers to produce a mark in the public transcript. In an interview with the Mkulazi chairwoman she describes how village meetings are conducted, and also how politics on the village level is conducted. Chairpersons and village councilors are elected for terms of five years, mirroring the terms in the district, regional, and national levels. In each meeting the secretary (usually the VEO) takes notes (which the chairwoman and others call minutes) that are then sent

to the district office for safekeeping and is able to be read by district officials. Using these minutes the villagers are able to create their *own* public transcript and ensure that it makes its way to a level above the ward. They are thus able to both bypass the ward level of politics, as well as ensuring that their complaints are a matter of public record, which they can show to officials and companies that they might come into conflict with. The chairwoman gives as an example in the village's dealings with a mobile company which owns a mast close to Mkulazi village. By having the contract with the company as a part of the 'minutes' the villagers can turn to this matter of public record in case of any dispute. They can show both politicians at higher levels as well as companies what their position was, what they said originally, and by that make sure that they are not cheated. In this way the villagers are able to use the bureaucratic system to their advantage.

The village meetings can be interpreted as a 'sanctioned' form of showing public dissent. It is thus a part of the public transcript that can allow us to glean information into the hidden transcript. In *Hidden Transcripts* Scott describes how subordinate groups such as slaves trained themselves in verbal insult to better withstand denigration from masters. Scott writes that:

“The training in verbal facility implied by rituals of this kind enables vulnerable groups not only to control their anger but to conduct what amounts to a veiled discourse of dignity and self-assertion within the public transcript” (Scott 2008, p 137)

From the interview with the Mkulazi chairwoman, I interpret the meeting minutes as potentially containing this “veiled discourse of dignity and self-assertion”. The hidden transcript is by its nature hidden and diffuse, made to not be available to those outside of the dominated group, and made to be resistant to research. It is thus only available in the public transcript within a “veiled or muted form” (Scott 2008)

The information gleaned from the interviews then would point to meetings being arenas of power-knowledge relations where both the public and hidden transcripts play a role, and where the villagers are able to make their mark on the public transcript through the 'minutes'. It is however unclear how efficient a tool this contribution to the public transcript is. Although it may be useful for archival purposes, as in the case of the contract with the telephone company, it is not out of the question to imagine that the corruption and torpid nature that the villagers give witness to would severely dull the edge. In spite of the effectiveness however it is undeniable that the minutes can be and *are* used as a form of resistance.

5.5.2 Rumors

Scott points to *rumors* as a potent tool in the political lives of the dominated and weak. Rumors are both a tool which can be used to put overseers, officials, or other

powerful figures in a bad light, and be used to isolate and brand collaborators with dominant powers. Furthermore, rumors are by their nature intangible and difficult to trace to a single source which makes punishment and discovery an arduous task (Scott 2008).

Rumors are thus an important part of the power-knowledge struggle. They can both be used as a form of resistance by hinting at potential violence, or by defaming officials who are unpopular. But they can also be used to create uncertainty and thus limit potential action. The more organized forms of resistance are then potentially made more difficult because of such uncertainty. Those who want to resist do not know ‘when to strike’ so to speak. At the same time, the diffuse nature of rumors, the fact that they often cannot be traced back to a single individual, also makes them a clandestine tool of resistance at the same time – one of the *weapons of the weak* (ibid).

We quickly became aware of the force of rumors in the villages. Almost immediately we were told of rumors about us, that we were investors or worked for the government in order to prepare the way for new investors. Two *wazungu* (white people) arriving in a car together with a Tanzanian woman sparked interest, as well as specifically a combination of fear and excitement. These rumors may have influenced the candidness of our conversations and interviews with farmers. Even when we explained that these rumors were false some were still skeptical. After an interview it was typical for us to ask if the respondent had any questions for us – whether it be about us being swedes, *wazungu*, or things pertaining to our research. After having what seemed like a not quite fruitful conversation where the interviewed woman showed hesitancy, she got the courage to ask “Why are you here? For what purpose? Are you not investors, after all?”. Us explaining our background, our nationality and purpose, as well as showing her pictures dissuaded her concerns somewhat – but she was still skeptical. For her it seemed unfathomable that we, whites from somewhere rich and developed, would show interest in her, her life and her concerns. This notion of surprise in our interest is a continued thread that shows up in several of our interviews. Respondents described how they were surprised in our interest. Later, in other contexts, they described feeling a great sense of disinterest from officials and city dwellers. “We are farmers and villagers – they don’t care about us, and why should they?” as one respondent put it. The people in Mkulazi feel that they are not listened to, and that officials above the ward level rarely care about them or their problems. Their surprise skepticism at us being there and showing interest is therefore quite logical, following the way the interactions with those they deem superior has played out previously. We, as educated whites seem to obviously fall into that category for them. Us then showing interest and ‘trying to hear their side’ is also suspicious, in their mind it is possible

that we are collaborators with government authorities or investors coming to take their land away from them.

Although we were able to at least partly diffuse rumors that we were investors or working for the government, our experience with *having* to diffuse these rumors indicate what potent tools rumors can be. When meeting the Ward Executive Officer of Mkulazi in Chanyumbu we were informed that he had designated as the interim Village Executive Officer of Chanyumbu because the previous VEO had been ousted. Speculating, it very possible that rumors could have played a role in disposing of the VEO. This is not something that can be ascertained for certain, but the above-mentioned anecdotes show how rumors can be used as a tools of resistance, even in this case.

The rumors of Mkulazi ward are however not only just a tool of resistance but can also be a pacifying force. There were not only rumors regarding us, but about everything from large scale infrastructural projects, neighbors, and goings on in Dar es Salaam or Morogoro. In particular, the rumors of infrastructure projects worked as a deterrent to resistance in this case.

An example of this is K, a man close to retirement age in Chanyumbu, who says that “the reason for the failure of the investment project in Mkulazi is because the investors are waiting for the Kidunda dam to be finished”. K thus interpreted the failure of the Mkulazi project as one of infrastructure (perhaps correctly according to Sulle 2020, as well as interviews with MHC) and was under the impression that when the Kidunda dam was finished the investment would start again, and the inhabitants of Mkulazi ward would reap the benefits.

A few days before speaking to K, our group had visited the Kidunda dam project, about an hour by motorcycle away from Mkulazi village, because we’d heard about it and were curious. While there we had a short meeting with the head of engineering, J, for Sinohydro, a state-owned Chinese company which has been tasked to complete the dam in cooperation with the Tanzanian government. From J we learned that the aim of the project is to construct a dam in the Ngerengere river that will be used for hydropower. This has no connection to Farm 217 and is more for providing electricity for Dar es Salaam and the surrounding countryside. Similarly, the ward chairman for CCM also told us that he had heard rumors that the Kidunda dam project was a result of Samia Sulumu Hassan’s (the current president of Tanzania) shift to focus on hydropower projects. According to the ward chairman John Magufuli (the previous president) focused on sugarcane, and that was the reason for the start of the Mkulazi project, while Sulumu Hassans focus is on hydropower. His interpretation was that the shift from Mkulazi was a result of these shifts in political focus. The interpretation of the chairman is supported by the

well-publicized focus of John Magufuli on sugar production (The Citizen 2021b; a). Magufuli also started several hydropower projects, in the vein of Julius Nyerere, in a similar manner reports confirm Sulumu Hassan has continued this and shifted to an increased focus on hydropower (Dausen 2024). The building of the Kidunda dam is thus not connected at all to the infrastructural problems of the Mkulazi investment.

For K, one of the main reasons of not resisting was waiting for the building of Kidunda dam. Because he interpreted the failure of the investment as a result of the lack of infrastructure – a problem that would be solved with the finishing of the Kidunda dam – he did not resist by returning to the investment. In his view then it is better to wait out the project instead of risking resistance. This is an example of how rumors can also be a deterrence for resistance by creating false information and thus narrowing the space of resistance.

As the examples above show rumors can both be a tool of resistance and a deterrence for further resistance. The primacy of rumors in this case is a direct result of the ways in which knowledge has been and continues to (not) be disseminated in connection with the Mkulazi investment, which will be examined further in the next subchapter.

5.5.3 Withholding knowledge as a display of power

When MHC arrived to set up boundaries and mark where the investment land began and end, they did not inform the villagers. Likewise, when calling for the original meeting to inform the villagers about the investment they did not forewarn anyone about the content of these meetings. During the time that the investment in Mkulazi was active villagers were also not informed about the progress of the project, the difficulties that arose because of the lack of infrastructure, or that there were plans to shift work to the new project in Kilosa. Finally, no one was informed when MHC decided to abandon the Mkulazi Farm plot 217. Villagers instead report just seeing trucks leave and finding the occasional tool or shed left behind.

Analyzing whether the intent of this was malicious or not is impossible, but that speculation is beside the point. Withholding knowledge in these cases was a form of domination. By refusing to inform villagers on the goings on at the investment the villagers were also denied any strategic opportunities to resist, complain, or protest. They were kept in the dark, whether this was intentional or not. This is an example of the power of knowledge production and a concrete example of the centrality of power/knowledge for resistance. The investment land became something obscure, from having been well defined and well used by villagers beforehand, it was now turned into something off limits. Villagers lacked knowledge of what the investment entailed, what land was being taken exactly

(beyond the ‘boundaries’ mentioned above). Through shutting off the valve of knowledge around the investment land MHC, the government at large also established and produced power which allowed them to completely dominate the discussion around the land and its uses.

Foucault writes that:

“it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge [my emphasis.” (Foucault 1979, p 28)

In this case, by simply removing themselves from the equation MHC narrowed the “possible domains of knowledge”, and in this sense also denied an exchange between the different ontologies of land. By leaving, MHC created a sort of primacy of the land as investment, while at the same time denying the benefits that come with this ontology. None of material benefits of the investment materialized, and by leaving the inhabitants of Mkulazi were also denied the *hope* that the perceived benefits of the investment brought with them. This ‘limbo-ontology’ then creates an uncertainty which is further exasperated by TIC not giving any more information on the status of the investment.

6. Concluding discussion

The analysis of the empirical material above shows that the people of Mkulazi resist, however they resist in manners which are convenient to them – this mirrors the description of southeast Asian peasants which Scott describes in *Weapons of the Weak* (Scott 1985).

Hall (2014) calls Scott's (1998 & 2008) theories of resistance a *heterodox one*, whether or not this is true, Scott has been key in the analytical work underpinning this thesis. While visiting Mkulazi ward, the regional offices in Morogoro, and the offices of MHC, and speaking to those affected and involved in the investment, it was impossible not to see the actions of villagers and pastoralists as resistance. It is my conviction, after the work with this thesis, that more rigid theories of resistance may lose key insights into resistance of vulnerable groups such as the small holder farmers and pastoralists of Mkulazi ward.

Squatting emerges as a tool of resistance for the inhabitants of Mkulazi ward because they are shut out from legal ways of protesting. The first resort of many inhabitants was to turn to legal channels, but because of problems of slow and inefficient bureaucracy these were denied. It is however also a possibility that these paths were denied to them not because of general bureaucratic inability, but also because ontologies of land between inhabitants of Mkulazi ward, investors, and officials differ so greatly. The complaints of Mkulazi villagers are thus not seen as proper complaints and denied urgency and importance.

Because they perceive themselves as being slighted at ward and district levels, and because of the difficulty in reaching above these levels (because of bureaucratic problems as well as financial) they instead turn to squatting. This resistance is a result of their immediate material needs, corresponding to the outline of similar resistance in Scott (1985). Farmers in Mkulazi ward are pushed to resist in the form of squatting because they will go hungry otherwise. When this need was not as desperate, they also first turned to official means, but because they were shut out of these channels, or not listened to, they were forced to turn to illegal resistance in order to survive (in their perception).

In order to protest through official channels villagers feel that they would need both financial means, but also knowledge over what rights they have, and also information about the investment. The lack of knowledge is a severe problem that limits any organizational aspirations, as well as making it difficult for inhabitants of Mkulazi ward to decide when, where, and how to protest legally. This is a decisive issue because of the financial (and potentially political, as mentioned in the chapter on surveillance and conformity) consequences a protest outside of the village or ward level may entail.

The weakness of the villagers in Mkulazi ward in the power-knowledge struggle, and their weakening ontological claims (compared to the government) then leads to a situation where their lived realities and usage of the land is displaced by values and knowledge claims of actors external to the ward.

When speaking with regional officials in Morogoro they were interested in the conclusions of this essay, and what it could mean for future handling of land investments. If officials and investors are sincere in wanting to improve the conditions of villagers waiting for delayed and aborted investments, there are several steps that can be taken. A crucial first step is to make sure that those affected are given continuous information about the project, its status and their legal rights in conjunction with the project. Interviewed villagers consistently described the lack of knowledge of investment status and progress during the investment as stressful. The uncertainty of not knowing whether the investment was proceeding, the feeling of missing out on harvests, and the reality of going hungry were all compounded by the lack of knowledge.

Furthermore, the lack of knowledge about the investment is as mentioned a key reason for the inability to protest. Because villagers were never told the ‘rules of the game’, they were and are also unable to identify when these rules are being potentially broken. They lack the means and ability to meet government and investors at the level that is required, and many describe feeling inadequate and having a lack of understanding. This lack of understanding in turn is also a reason for a lack of organizing, which aggravates the problem.

Asking for improved infrastructure to make travel to regional and district offices may be a task that is too expensive and difficult to implement in a swift manner. Furthermore, the problems of corruption and the apathy that this leads to is a problem identified in the Tanzanian political system since at least the 1980’s (Lofchie 2014; Bjerk 2017).

To ask investors and government to define ‘the rules of the game’ and inform is however not too large of a task for investments affecting thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of people within Tanzania. It is important that policy makers take step

to make sure that investments are done openly and transparently, and that villagers are consulted on their needs and wants before projects are started. The transcript of the powerful, in this case government and investors, must be made *public* to give those affected by land investments the opportunity to respond and criticize, and to open up for the potential of revision. Without this transparency delayed large scale investments like the one in Farm 217 will continue to run the risk of severe consequences for those affected.

6.1 Further research – widening horizons and flaws

This thesis first and foremost contributes to an understanding of resistance in conjunction with non-operational land deals. It is my view that this opens up possibilities for others to delve deeper into resistance in similar cases, in Tanzania as well as globally.

What has fit within this thesis cannot, however, by any means be said to be an exhaustive picture. Although, as the methodological section explains, steps were taken to ensure empirical validity, through a large sample size of people of different genders and ages, two months is a comparatively short time. When dealing with hidden transcripts, with resistance as speech acts, it is by nature difficult to glimpse true intentions behind masked speech.

This thesis should not only be viewed as a step towards understanding resistance to non-operational land deals, but also as a *first* step towards understanding resistance in Mkulazi ward. I collected more research material than can fit on these pages, with several strands that surely could have been followed, perhaps finding different conclusions than this one (although I have tried to identify commonalities). However, I find myself at the end of this exercise feeling a sense of frustration at not being able to pierce deeper. Inevitably, a field study that lasts years, with someone fluent in Swahili, a Tanzanian, or perhaps even an inhabitant of the ward, would have been able to pierce deeper into what I see as possibly obfuscated narratives, invisible to me.

In the above sense, this thesis is also a lesson in limitations, and the complexities inherent in understanding political as well as epistemic machinations. Hidden transcripts are, as previously mentioned in this thesis as well as crucially by Scott (2008), by nature vague and hard to grasp. Any study of them must therefore be open to these difficulties, and the notion of failing to grasp a totality. Further research on resistance to, or in conjunction with, non-operational land deals should keep these lessons in mind.

Furthermore, there are several dimensions that would have added depth to a study of this nature. Two key strands are both historical and legal perspectives. Although, because of Tanzanian land laws, the legal situation of the land cannot be in question, someone more well versed in Tanzanian law could potentially have found deeds, titles, or bills of sale that could further clarify the situation.

From a historical perspective, visiting state archives, as well as further interviewing inhabitants, to find out both the status of Mkulazi ward and the investment land through the years is a key part. This would allow for a deeper understanding of land usage, living conditions, and village structure throughout the years. On a further historical note, another key part would be to research historical resistance in the area, as well as historical political organization, and the political structure of the village. In the Tanzanian context of Mkulazi this could for example be to the status of the village during the period of *ujamaa* (Boesl 2023). This could however be generalized for other similar cases as just a need to understand historical political contexts. As Bélair et al states when discussing gaps in research on non-operational land deals

“[...] long term research is needed to grasp the interplay between different parameters shapes land deal trajectories, including their impacts on the local economy and the changing nature of investor-community relationships over time.” (Bélair et al. 2024 p.11)

These dimensions could add depth to other studies of this kind, to further understand reasons for resistance and non-resistance, and to better grasp why some groups choose to resist non-operational land deals, while others do not.

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Populärvetenskaplig sammanfattning

Uppsatsen undersöker motstånd i samband med en avbruten storskalig jordbruksinvestering på den Tanzaniska landsbygden. Materialet samlades in som en kombination av observation, intervjuer, och fokusgrupper. Resultatet är att invånarna främst gör motstånd genom att använda sig av investeringsmark för att odla grödor. De främsta hindren för annan typ av motstånd kan delas in i tre kategorier: problem med byråkrati (att det är kostsamt och ineffektivt att klaga genom politiska kanaler); känslan att bli övervakad, och bristen på kunskap kring rättigheter och vad som kommer att hända med investeringsmarken.

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