Corporate scramble for Africa?

Towards a postcolonial framework for transglocal development governance

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Introduction

On 18 May 2012 leaders of the G8 and three African countries jointly launched the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition (NA). The collaboration was announced by the US president at the time, Barack Obama, who declared that '…food security is a moral imperative, but it's also an economic imperative' (Obama, 2012). Thus, NA links developmental ends to economic means and seeks to enhance foreign direct investment (FDI) in African agriculture through a partnership model that commits international development agencies, national governments, and multinational corporations (MNCs) to shared goals of 'sustained, inclusive, agriculture-led growth' (New Alliance, n.d.).

NA, then, offers a model of development in which traditional aid-based means are eschewed in favour of more business-oriented practices relying on logics of productivity and growth. While touted by its founders as the most effective way of '…pull[ing] people and entire nations out of poverty' (Obama, 2012), the model has received severe media criticism for being but a thin foil for what the *The Guardian* dubbed the 'corporate scramble for Africa' (Jones, 2014): 'It will be like colonialism. Farmers will not be able to farm until they import, linking farmers to [the] vulnerability of international prices. Big companies will benefit' a Tanzanian politician told the newspaper (Kabwe, quoted in Provost, Ford & Tran, 2014). More recently, the European Parliament (EP) has issued a resolution raising similar concerns, albeit in different tones. Thus, the EP (2016) in its review of NA:

> Calls on governments and donors to suspend or review all policies, projects and consultancy arrangements that directly encourage and facilitate land grabbing by supporting highly harmful projects and investments or indirectly increase pressure on land and natural resources and can result in serious human rights violations.

Here, the general unease with a perceived neo-colonial drive within NA is coupled with a specific worry about land grabbing; that is, large-scale acquisition of farmland so as to concentrate ownership or user rights on a few actors, often MNCs (Cotula et al., 2009, p. 3). Thus, critics say, NA not only promotes ideational neo-colonialism, but leads to actual occupation of land by foreign powers, albeit private corporations rather than state actors.

In this paper, we begin from Nkrumah's (1965, p. ix) definition of neo-colonialism as 'the last stage of imperialism' in which '…the State which is subject to it [neo-colonialism] is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside.' Neo-colonialism, then, is imperialism by economic means and, hence, poses an inherent risk to development initiatives in which economic aid and political reform go hand in hand. As relationships between former colonies and colonizers are re-organized around the axis of 'development' (Cowen & Shenton, 1995), the continuities between colonial powers and development donors account for the contested nature of the concept (Ferguson, 1990) and lead to interrogations of the continued economic and political dependencies (Hayter, 1971). In continuation of such concerns, this paper explores the vertical and horizontal governance gaps of NA, asking how principles of self-sufficiency may foster practices of dependency. In other words, is it at all possible to free economic aid from its political strings?

We address this question through an investigation of the paradoxes inherent to the currently dominant development paradigm by tracing the implementation of a global initiative (NA) in a local setting (Malawi). The answer, we suggest, is that the goals of international development, as institutionalized in governance frameworks that originate in and are managed from the Global North, are decoupled from their own consequences, as experienced by those affected by the implementation of these governance frameworks in the local contexts of the Global South. That is, the dynamics of multilevel development governance lead to outcomes at the local level of implementation that are very far from the goals envisioned at the international level of initiation.

For this analysis, we find theoretical inspiration in postcolonial organization studies, generally, and organizational analyses of development initiatives, more specifically (as will be established in the ensuing section). Thereby, we contribute to the current debate in both organization and development studies, which suggests that the concept of governance has potential to produce better development practices, but is in need of further theoretical refinement if this potential is to be realized (e.g. Banerjee, 2018; Kapoor, 2008). Arguing that current conceptualizations of multi-level governance tend to focus attention at either the global or the local level, our contribution, simply put, consists in 'bringing the state back in' (cf. Jessop, 2001). Since the state is currently the site of decoupling between local and global levels of development governance, strengthening state-level governance might reverse the dominant top-down logic of development initiatives and facilitate development from 'the ground'. Here, Banerjee's (2018) recent suggestion of a 'translocal governance framework' is our main source of inspiration and point of departure for introducing the concept of *transglocal* governance as an improvement of the theory as well as the practice of development governance. In sum, we contribute to critical approaches to organization and development by exposing the conflicting logics of a generalized growth paradigm (trickle-down) vis-à-vis a postcolonial paradigm of specific empowerment (bottom-up) to the benefit of local livelihoods.

Towards a postcolonial governance framework

In seeking to contribute to the theorization of multilevel development governance, we draw on – and draw together – postcolonial critiques of development and organization. To this end, we begin the present section with a review of the relevant literatures then move on to position ourselves within these literatures.

Although development studies and postcolonial studies have a history of ignoring each other (Sylvester, 1999), development scholars have increasingly come to recognize the relevance of postcolonial concerns with pervasive asymmetries of power between historically colonized and colonizing peoples (Schurmann, 1993). Thus, postcolonial critiques of development stem from the documentation of continued inequality between the participants in development initiatives (Frank, 1969; Wallerstein, 1986; Edwards, 1989). By the mid-1990's the evidence had become so pervasive and was perceived to be so problematic as to constitute a scholarly as well as practical 'impasse' of the field of development. This failure of the dominant development paradigm, led to calls for alternatives:

> In much current development work, the advice we put forward cannot be used locally because it is manufactured under completely different circumstances. The only way to ensure its relevance is by fostering the participation of poor people in identifying their own problems, priorities and solutions (Edwards, 1989, p. 127).

Thus, the rising suspicion of the 'development project' (Sharp & Briggs, 2006) led to the articulation of a new agenda within which a number of different positions and approaches have emerged, ranging from the complete deconstruction of development in the 'anti-development' perspective to more (re-)constructive takes on empowerment and participation, good governance and improved livelihoods (Booth (Ed.), 1994).

Further, the enhanced attention to what might be termed 'the postcolonial condition' of development has led to a 'cultural turn' within development studies that recognizes the heterogeneity of the subjects of development, advocates 're-learning to see and reassess the reality of the global South' (Simon, 2006, p. 13), and focuses on 'sub-altern' people who are scripted out of conventional histories and narratives (Chambers, 1997). Moreover, postcolonial development studies emphasize the 'situated local' (Simon, 2006) and problematize the adverse effects that development initiatives may have on this subject. Such concepts as 'development from below', 'putting the last first', and anti-development/post-development (Chambers, 1997; Escobar, 1995) aim at establishing viable alternatives by tapping into and empowering 'localized cultural politics that inflect translocal discourses of development, a sort of contra flow to globalizing discourses' (Moore, 2000, p. 655). In sum, the challenge posed by postcolonial development studies '…is to link […] local identities, practices and agendas to broader and multiscale campaigns and 'projects' for progressive and radical change' (Simon, 2006, p. 17).

Within organization studies, the introduction of postcolonial theories has opened up a space for asking the polemical question of whether a subaltern could manage (Srinivas, 2013) and, hence, for interrogating 'the hegemony of western management thinking' (Muhr & Salem, 2013, p. 66), thereby creating an urge to 'decolonize' the very discourses and practices of organization and management (see inter alia Frenkel & Shenhav, 2006; Jack et al., 2011; Jaya, 2001; Mir, Banerjee & Mir, 2008; Westwood, 2006). Work in this vein identifies '…the continued presence of Western imperialism in global institutions and relationships today' (Prasad, 2005, p. 262) and critiques this neo-colonial condition (Dar, 2014).

When postcolonial critiques of development and organization, respectively, are brought together in organizational analyses of development initiatives, the pervasive asymmetries of donor-recipient relations are revealed time and again (see inter alia Banerjee, 2000; Banerjee & Linstead, 2004;

Banerjee & Jackson, 2017). This leads to a general critique of 'mainstream development policy', which is seen to '...perpetuate colonialist and western-centered discourse and power relations, even as it seeks to focus attention on the marginalized' (Sharp & Briggs, 2006, p. 7). Or, as Radhakrishnan (2003, p. 21) points out, '…the decolonized people, after their overthrow of colonialism, are faced with the crisis of agency'. This recognition that decolonization does not in itself lead to representation and participation of recipients in the organization of development initiatives (Cornwall, 2006), provides impetus for postcolonial suggestions of alternatives to currently dominant forms of development organizing: How can decolonized subjects come to speak and act for themselves? (Broadfoot & Munshi, 2007; Cheung, 2008; Prasad, 2003).

In sum, when united by the common concerns of postcolonialism, organization and development studies share a critical stance towards mainstream development initiatives. Turning to the concept of 'good governance', we are guided by, and seek to contribute to, this critique.

'Good governance': Problems and prospects

From the 1990's onwards international development organizations have become increasingly aware of the need to address questions of the representation and participation of local actors in global development initiatives – and predominantly turned to the concept of 'good governance' for answers to these pressing issues (Kapoor, 2008, p. 29). Governance, it is generally recognized, is a slippery and loaded concept with about as many meanings as mentions. Broadly speaking, however, it may be defined as the network of governing (Rhodes, 2007). While this abstract definition has been specified in many ways, its commonly accepted implication is a turn from the static entity of government to the open-ended dynamics of governing (Rhodes, 1996); governance, then, is the organization of political initiatives, i.e. 'those mechanisms by which the behavioural regularities that constitute institutions are maintained and enforced' (Crouch, 2005, p. 20).

'Good governance', in the context of international development is, as the World Bank (1992, p. 1) stipulates, 'synonymous with sound development management'. While one may see the introduction of this concept into the vocabulary of the World Bank and other international organizations as a response to the postcolonial critique of development, there are limits to the reflexivity of these organizations. Thus, the World Bank defines governance as 'the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development' (World Bank, 1992, p. 1). This focus on the governance of 'developing countries' in conjunction with the qualifier 'good', Kapoor (2008, p. 30) argues '…conveys a moralistic tone, implying not simply that developing countries have "bad" governance, but also that the West is the model for good governance'. Thus, Kapoor – and other postcolonial critics (see inter alia Hill, 2005; Jones, 2013; Koelbe & Lipuma, 2008; Mercer, 2003; Minogue, 2002) – find that the discourse of governance, even if and when re-framed as 'global' (Kamola, 2015), simply reproduces the neo-colonial tendencies of development initiatives under a new guise.

Others, however, have found more positive value in the concept of governance as it has been developed vertically through the formulation of transnational principles (Dingwerth, 2008; Risse, 2006) or horizontally by enhancing local practices (Blair, 2000; Osaghae & Osaghae, 2013) and, especially, as these two directions have been connected in theories of multilevel governance (Hooghe & Marks, 2003; Thomas & Turnbull, 2018; Zürn, 2012). The practical application of multilevel governance in development schemes is far from unproblematic as it could, simply, impose 'global designs on local lifeworlds' (Randeria, 2007), but it may also hold potential to instigate the reverse process and, thereby, facilitate local participation in the creation and implementation of development initiatives (Ros-Tonen et al., 2015). For this potential to be realized, however, the links between global and local levels of governance must be further elaborated, in particular in terms of who mediates between the different levels (Munir et al., 2018).

Gereffi and Lee (2016) suggest that vertical integration may be realized by ‘synergistic governance’ that brings ‘…together corporate, governmental, and civil society actors in a global setting to achieve joint objectives’ (p. 35). Whereas these authors point to the importance of strengthening the global level of governance, Alamgir and Banerjee (2018) criticize such multi-stakeholder initiatives, showing how they may lead to ‘the reconfiguration of state powers to meet the demands of global supply chains’ (p. 1) rather than to local empowerment. In line with this critique, Banerjee (2018) suggests that horizontal integration at the local level is a better alternative to currently dominant vertical processes. This ‘translocal governance framework’ builds on an ideology of social justice so as to reach the normative goals of self-determination, co-existence, and autonomy and offers rights to livelihoods and community driven partnerships as means to these ends (Banerjee, 2018, pp. 811-812).

Beginning from the observation of a conceptual divergence between advocates of vertical and horizontal integration in multilevel governance, we will explore the possibility of bringing the seemingly opposite positions together to build a governance framework for vertical *and* horizontal, global *and* local integration. That is, we seek to develop a framework for transglocal governance. We move towards this framework in two steps: First, we conduct a postcolonial critique of the NA as multilevel governance, seeking to identify and explain ‘governance gaps’, understood as the incongruities that may arise between corporate and regulatory actors’ room for and ability to manoeuvre (Banerjee, 2018, p. 810) through decoupling of the various governance levels (de Bree & Stoopendaal, 2018). That is, as pervasive asymmetries of participation and representation. Second, we will bring the empirical findings to bear on the theoretical discussion. Here, we consider the conditions of possibility of transglocal governance as a framework for integrating the ends of self-determination, co-existence, and autonomy with not only the means employed horizontally by various local actors when working together, but also those employed vertically when transnationally conceived initiatives are implemented locally.

Methodology: Case selection, data collection, and analytical strategy

Methodologically, our commitment to the postcolonial perspective leads to an ambition of identifying and criticizing the power relations that are at work in our chosen case of the implementation of NA in Malawi. More specifically, we ask about the representation and participation of local actors in the governance of this initiative. Further, we seek to bring our critique forward, suggesting its conceptual and practical implications and offering an improved understanding of the problems and potentials of vertical and horizontal integration of governance frameworks. We will detail this de- and reconstructive analytical strategy below, but first we present our case and methods of data collection.

The governance of land: A critical case

Postcolonial studies of organization and development have singled out issues of land ownership as particularly contentious; here, the ambitions of MNCs within industries such as mining and agriculture are in direct conflict with the traditions of local communities, and interventions by state authorities and/or international organizations have more often than not proved to cater to MNC interests (Apoh et al., 2017; Banerjee, 2000, 2018; Rahmato, 2014). In such studies, we see the general contours of the more specific argument that current development initiatives constitute a neo-colonial ‘scramble’: Such initiatives, it is argued, are not only indirectly complicit in but actively supportive of corporate take-overs of land and other natural resources in the developing world, generally, and Africa, more particularly (Moyo, Yeros & Jha, 2012; Carmody, 2016). The initiatives, then, are perceived to have a neo-colonial drive; they demand that recipients reshape themselves in the ideological image of the donors (whether individual countries or international organizations), thereby making themselves vulnerable to material takeovers.

More specifically, a neo-colonial relationship is discerned in matters of land ownership as the sovereignty of so-called developing countries and indigenous communities continues to be impaired by the interventions of a nexus of international organizations and multinational corporations (Banerjee, 2011; Carmody, 2016; see also Banerjee, 2000; 2003). In development studies, issues of land ownership are seen to be integral to processes of development, in particular industrialization, as capitalism has developed through replacing colonial division with international specialization (Sanyal, 2007). Through this process, however, the governmental authorities of developing country states are limited:

> The growing power of capital to organize and reorganize agriculture undercuts state policies directing agriculture to national ends, such as food security, articulated development and the preservation of rural/peasant communities (Friedmann & McMichael, 1989, p. 95).

In sum, development initiatives that rely on ‘partnership models’ and FDI rather than public funding often incur land reforms/land deals because gaining access to local land is a prerequisite for MNC involvement in such partnerships (Carmody, 2016; Kapoor, 2008). Such initiatives, therefore, constitute a critical case of the organization and governance of development; one that is in particular need of a de- and reconstructive postcolonial critique. As we will substantiate in the next section, NA is an illustrative case of this broader tendency.

The implementation of New Alliance in Malawi: An illustrative case

The issue of food security has been at the top of the development agenda since the global food price crisis of 2007-2008 and the subsequent global economic crisis (Food Security Information Network, 2017). These crises resulted in historically high levels of worldwide hunger, both in proportional and absolute terms. With the aim of attending to the, at the time, one billion people facing hunger, the G8 countries promised substantial funding for global food security at the 2009 Summit in L'Aquila, Italy. In order to fulfil this promise, the G8 leaders launched NA in 2012 as a joint public-private commitment to sustained agricultural growth in Africa (White, 2013). NA, then, is an important and ambitious initiative aimed at addressing one of the most commonly recognized and pressing challenges of development work.

This provides the general backdrop for our choice of case, but we are also more specifically motivated by the critique that has been raised against NA. As mentioned in the introduction, both perpetrators of public debate and institutionalized political actors have raised concerns about the neo-colonial tendencies of NA. Further, the claim that NA propagates Western ideology has been forwarded in policy papers (e.g. McKeon, 2014) and supported by research articles (e.g. Brooks, 2016). This makes NA a particularly relevant choice for our investigation; here, we are likely to be able to explore the interconnections of the principles and practices of development governance in order to assess whether and how the (de-)coupling of vertical and horizontal integration in the governance framework holds unforeseen and/or adverse consequences.

However, the study of how development principles are turned into practices must be further localized as we cannot assume that NA will have the same consequences in all contexts. Again, we have relied on existing critique to identify Malawi as one context in which adverse outcomes of NA have already been documented (Curtis, 2015; Gausi & Miaha, 2015; Kishindo & Mvula, 2017; Patel et al., 2015). Malawi has for decades been in desperate need of agricultural investment to achieve better irrigation and increased productivity; such investment is often linked to land deals. Already during colonial occupation (formalised as the British Central African protectorate, Nyasaland, from 1891 to 1964) land was made available by village chiefs to white planters through leasing agreements, and the Malawian government continues to lease estates to large scale production of tobacco, tea, and sugar. More recent examples are the 2009 Green Belt Initiative, the National Export Strategy (1 million hectares), and the NA itself (200,000 hectares). All three favour large scale agriculture, using words like 'idle' or 'underutilized' land to legitimize the process of privatizing ancestral land (Gausi & Miaka, 2015). Simultaneously, more than 80 per cent of the Malawian population depends on agriculture for its livelihood wherefore land is seen as a basis for social security (Kishindo, 2004). According to Kishindo and Mvula (2017) the government's resettlement schemes are intermittent and inadequate to accommodate the increasing number of landless families.

In sum, Malawi is largely dependent on donor funding and in dire need of agricultural reform. Hence, the Malawian state is highly responsive to development initiatives, meaning the implementation of NA in Malawi constitutes an illustrative case. Further, and as will be detailed in the following section, we had unique access to the Malawian context.

General principles, specific experiences: Analytical strategy

Our case study involves two initial units of analysis: The general goals and governance principles of NA and local farmers' specific experiences of land deals in Malawi. We studied the NA principles through document analysis of relevant statements, websites, and other publicly available sources (for an overview of the studied documents, see Table 1 B). For the analysis of local experiences, we relied on research performed by one of the authors who conducted fieldwork in Malawi in 2016, focusing on the issue of land deals. Over a period of six weeks interviews were conducted with a total of ten government officials, 13 civil society stakeholders and 50 smallholder farmers from three rural villages where land deals had taken place (for an overview of the interviews, see Table 1 A).

A: Interviews		**B: Documents**	
Smallholders, individual interviews	6	Country cooperation frameworks	2
Smallholders, focus group interviews	44	New Alliance reports	5
Government officials, individual interviews	10	Policy reports	3
Civil society stakeholders, individual interviews	13	Press releases, guide lines etc.	8

Table 1: Conducted interviews and studied documents

Interviews in the villages were explorative and used semi-structured, open-ended questions to prompt smallholder farmers' testimonials of their experiences with land deals. Individual and focus group interviews were carried out in order to get insights into the personally and collectively experienced changes in livelihoods. Guiding questions concerned specific events and their consequences, e.g. what happened the day their land was lost, whether they were offered compensation, and what the effects had been on livelihoods. Government officials and other professional stakeholders were interviewed in order to get contextual insights around themes such as challenges of agricultural commercialisation, the role of the government, and land scarcity.

Following the analysis of these two units with their concomitant data, we sought to combine all data sources, adding material dealing with the implementation of NA in Malawi such as the country collaboration framework and evaluation documents to the interviews with government officials and civil society actors. Here, we turned from more descriptive analytical practices of identifying principles and recording experiences to an explanatory and normative mode, aimed at criticizing the decouplings of governance principles and practices and suggesting better alternatives.

In order to accomplish the dual goals of evaluating the governance of NA and suggesting a better framework, we will, first, focus on the governance gaps of NA; what we, in an adaptation of de Bree and Stoopendaal (2018), term the decoupling between goals and principles as well as practices and outcomes. Thus, we emphasize issues of participation and representation of local actors at all levels of governance, showing that while NA builds on principles of partnership, its practices are, at best, non-inclusive and, at worst, detrimental to local livelihoods. Second, we follow Banerjee (2018) in suggesting how the identified gaps might be filled so as to realize the potentials of integrated multi-level governance. While Banerjee's analysis of similar governance gaps between global and local governance of the extractive industries leads him to suggest an alternative framework of translocal governance, our study of development governance reveals that here the decoupling between principles and practices primarily happens at the level of country implementation, leading us to discuss ways of bringing the state back in as a link between global and local levels of governance.

Analysis: Decoupling of vertical and horizontal governance in the implementation of NA in Malawi

The analysis unfolds in three rounds; first, we conduct a content analysis of general NA documents in order to identify the stipulated goals of the initiative and the governance principles on which it rests. Second, we turn to the lived experiences of smallholder farmers who have been affected by land deals in Malawi. Here, we focus on the narratives of our informants to get a sense of the consequences of land deals on their livelihoods. We conclude these two first analytical steps with an identification of significant gaps between the governance framework of the NA and the consequences of land grabbing as experienced by Malawian smallholders. We then turn to the meso level of country implementation in order to find explanations for the gaps between the envisoned governance and its practical implications.

Global governance principles of NA

As mentioned, NA is a child of the G8 2012 Summit and, as such, predominantly designed by the members of this group (US, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Canada and Russia). NA was presented by former US President Obama who called on a number of stakeholders, including companies, to lift the burden of securing global food security, because, as he said, 'governments cannot and should not do this alone. This has to be all hands on deck' (Obama, 2012). In order to achieve the ultimate objective of ending hunger and malnutrition NA draws on policy principles like donor pledges, pro-market reforms and corporate capital investments, all of which are developed nation inventions. As such, it is a reaction to previous failed development initiatives and brings private corporations more directly into development work as a means of overcoming past failures.

Thus, the underlying principle of the NA's operations is unmistakable: it assumes that growth and development are interlinked and facilitated by the private sector. For instance, US officials point to market-led growth as the key to NA's success:

> Africa is on the rise. Under the leadership of President Obama, we have pioneered a new model of development that is transforming agriculture and accelerating Africa's impressive growth and potential. By harnessing the skills, resources and expertise of the

> private sector, we can build on our investments to power the markets of the future and lift millions of people out of extreme poverty (USAID administrator Rajiv Shah, as quoted in Ford, 2014).

Inherent to NA's governance framework is the assumption that increased food security and decreased poverty levels across the ten participating African nations is predicated upon growth in their agricultural sectors, and the means to achieve such growth appear to be found primarily in promoting FDI. As stated on the website of the White House, 'our goals are to increase responsible domestic and foreign private investments in African agriculture, take innovations that can enhance agricultural productivity to scale, and reduce the risk borne by vulnerable economies and communities' (Office of the Press Secretary, 2012).

Indeed, the general aims of poverty reduction and food security are coupled with the policy principle of investment-led growth as facilitated by public-private partnerships. NA, then, seeks to harness a market logic to development goals; whereas development initiatives were traditionally public affairs, they are now presented as a matter of mutual interest: private investment is a driver of economic growth, which in the NA context is the very definition of development.

The governance framework of NA, then, aims to facilitate public-private partnerships, but local producers are not directly included in the framework, indicating that they are not members of the envisioned partnerships. Rather, the dominant logic is one of trickle-down or vertical integration from the top down: FDI will lead to national growth which will benefit local communities as well. This particular vision of multilevel governance also implies that what is good for market actors is good for everyone; private companies can drive public growth. Forming partnerships with private companies, therefore, becomes a new means to developmental ends. However, partnerships seem to be established at the international level; possibly involving national governments, but with local producers positioned outside of the newly formed governance chains.

Local experiences of land deals in Malawi

Local actors are not invited into the NA's partnership model, but experience its consequences as passive recipients. One such experience has been the loss of land. While smallholder farmers in Malawi, as we will show in this second analytical section, are unaware of the governance frameworks within which their experiences are inscribed, we will, in the third section, link NA's partnerships to land reform and land deals, showing that the local experiences are a consequence of NA – unintended, perhaps, but nonetheless lived. First, however, we turn to local accounts of the disempowering and detrimental experience of loss of land.

Six community members in the village of Kazilira in the Dwangwa district of Malawi gave individual testimonies of having unwillingly lost their land to a sugar producer. The land in question was farmland on which the smallholders grew crops for the survival of their families. As explained by one respondent, around 500 people in her community were affected by this land takeover, including people not only losing farmland, but also land on which they had built their homes. Another respondent explained that:

> I have been cultivating ever since my father gave that land to me, it has been a source of my livelihood. I have been growing food for my family and maybe selling some surplus for my own development. The land was grabbed from me […] through the police, which used coercive means to take the land and also used the authority that they have.

The remaining respondents likewise described how the police forced them away from their land on the day of the take-over. Here is but one account:

> I just heard from other people who say that no, if you go to Kazilira this time, you are going to see tractors and many things are happening there, tractors destroying houses and many people are crying. When I wake up I go there, and I find police are all over there. They were not allowing someone to go there. I was beaten somehow because I said I can go there to find out what, and they say 'no, you cannot go there, this is not your land, this is our land'. So, it was just matter of forcing.

Two community focus group interviews testify to similar events. In Kasitu village in the district of Nkhotakota community members had formed a food security group with the purpose of protecting their land from take-over. Of the 20 people interviewed, five people had lost their land to sugar production. As one interviewee said, '[t]hey did not consult us, and we just saw that our land was gone…[we] were in our fields and then suddenly police came with guns and we had to run for our lives. And that is how it was taken. Just like that.' When asked whether the farmers received compensation for their land the response was: 'Not any compensation. Everyone in this area, no one has received compensation.' In the Salima district, villagers explain how their land was leased by a fruit company. While the community members did not directly inhabit or grow the land, they expressed their despair as they were forced to sell the livestock, which had been grazing on the land prior to the lease.

When asked about the effect that the loss of land has had on their livelihoods, all representatives of the smallholder communities described a negative impact. The main issue appears to be the shift from being a self-sufficient producer of food to being dependent on others for work. As one respondent stated:

> In terms of survival, I am struggling because I do not have a place where I can continue cultivating what I want. So, I survive on casual labour, pieces of work elsewhere, and then I get maybe 1000 Malawi kwacha [= less than US$2] and buy something from others, maybe maize.

Another community member explained how she depended on her land not only for food, but also for selling produce to be able to finance her children's clothes and education. She stated that she had lost this possibility and not been given any alternative means of making a living for herself and her children. Furthermore, none of the interviewed community members had been offered a job by the companies that had invested in the land previously belonging to them – nor had they received any other form of compensation.

Discrepancies between global principles and local experiences

From the local experiences of Malawian farmers, as recounted to us, it is clear that the expropriation of smallholders from their farmland significantly impedes their livelihoods. This is in direct opposition to the stated goals of NA and indicates how the principles of NA, when translated into practice, cannot actually serve these goals. Instead, the logic of NA, when implemented locally, runs in the opposite direction of that stipulated in the general NA documents. Investment-led growth is not a means of development of local livelihoods; rather, local lives and natural resources become a means of fulfilling the growth imperative. The discrepancies, then, are substantial (as summarized is Table 2), but how do they appear? What happens in the translation of NA's principles into practice?

Having established the divergence between the principle of poverty-reduction through FDI and the lived experience of land deals as detrimental to local communities, we will now suggest that the difference between intended outcomes and experienced consequences may be explained by gaps between the vertical and the horizontal governance of NA. These gaps, we will now show, appear at the level of country-specific frameworks.

General principles	Specific experiences
FDI	Landgrabs
Partnerships	Disempowerment
Growth Poverty reduction, food safety, and nutrition	Threat to livelihood Continued/increased poverty, insecurity, precarity, dependency

Table 2: Discrepancies between the general principles of NA and local experiences in Malawi

Identification of governance gaps: The implementation of NA in Malawi

When Malawi joined NA in 2013, Joyce Banda, the Malawian president at the time, echoed the pro-growth and pro-privatization sentiments of its partnership model:

> My government doesn't just view agriculture as an essential means to attaining household and national food security; we see it as a business through which our farmers can generate wealth, improve their livelihoods and transform Malawi's economy. None of this can be achieved without private-sector investment (Banda, 2013).

The specific contents of the NA-Malawi deal are presented in Malawi's Country Cooperation Framework (CCF). The negotiation of this framework was initiated in 2012 and it was launched in 2014, with a revision in 2015 (New Alliance, 2015). The agreement has three pillars; namely, 1) commitments made by donor countries, 2) policy commitments made by the Malawian government, and 3) investment intentions announced by private corporations, both international and Malawi-based.

In the first pillar, eight donor countries and the European Union have announced their commitments to support various funds and programs working locally and nationally in Malawi under the NA. These donation commitments sum up to a total of $273.9 million, spread across 26 different projects over a period of six years.

As the second pillar, the Malawian government commits to 15 policy reforms categorized under four main objectives: First, to create a conducive environment for business with both reduced risk for investors and security of fair market returns for farmers, including elimination of export bans and promotion of exports, promoting smallholder integration into agricultural value chains, tax reform to promote increased investments, identification of land for commercial agriculture, and a review of seed policy as well as the regulatory framework for fertilizers in order to encourage competition. Specifically, each year 10,000 hectares of land are to be made available for large-scale commercial farming. Second, to improve the infrastructure for irrigation and transportation of prioritized food and cash crops. Third, to increase productivity, storage of produce and produce packing. Here, the main commitment is to 'reorganize extension services to improve delivery of modernised market-oriented agricultural extension services' (New Alliance, 2015, p. 5). Finally, to support advocacy for the growing and consumption of more nutritious food crops and agro-processed foods in order to reduce the prevalence of stunted growth in the Malawian population.

In the third pillar of the NA deal, concrete investment plans have been announced by private sector firms. Here, 26 companies have signed letters of intent, briefly describing their intentions of agricultural investments. The private sector investment to be channelled to

Malawi through NA comes from 10 multinational companies, 15 African-based firms, and one cotton development initiative. Foreign companies have pledged to invest more than $112 million in Malawi's agricultural sector. Malawi-based companies have pledged approximately $60 million. The companies commit to invest in land and processing facilities. The prioritized crops among investors are groundnuts, oil seed commodities, dairy products, maize, fruits, seeds, toor dahl, sugar, honey, and tobacco.

Although the general NA documents do not refer directly to deregulation or privatization, looking at the policy commitments in Malawi's CCF this is clearly what the general NA principles translate into when turned into national political reforms. The Malawian government's focus on increasing FDI through industrial farming is apparent in interviews with government officials and civil society organizations as well. When asked about the development potentials of commercializing agriculture, a director at the Ministry for Finance, Economic Planning and Development says: 'We are just starting. Everybody saying that's the way to go.' Likewise, a high-ranking representative of the Malawi Confederation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry states:

> Yes, that's the way to go. And the question is, where are you going to get the land? People from rural areas, make sure that they get jobs elsewhere. To me it's the best way for them to become factory workers, some labourers or something. You have to find an alternative occupation for the people. You can't commercialize agriculture without moving the people. You have to find an alternative… In my view, it is better to get people out of the land. Because it works for them in the long run. Make sure you have commercial farms there and people have other options.

When asked whether the Malawian government shares this view and urges the commercialization of agriculture, he says: 'They do. But they think the policies might be unpopular, because sometimes they displace some people.' Here, a gap between vertical implementation of market-led growth and horizontal concerns about the lack of local representation appears; the problem for the official is not the displacement per se, but the political unrest it might cause.

A senior employee at the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development explains the advocacy for commercial farming thus:

> If we bring a new company to invest on a 5000ha piece of land, we give them land, and then they employ 3000 people, already that's tax for the government. And with that tax, the government can build a hospital in the same location. They can build a road in the same location. In terms of social services, it's not necessarily income coming to the pockets of the communities, but you might find that important services might be improved in the area. Those are indicators of economic growth. In the long term the community benefits.

Again, a gap appears between vertical economic growth and horizontal community development. When applying the first perspective, the implementation of NA in Malawi is successful. Malawi's official NA progress report from 2015 documents progress through such indicators as: Improved score on Doing Business Index, increased dollar value of private sector investment in the agriculture sector and value added agro-processing, increased private investment in commercial production as well as increased sales of produce. However, there is no mention of the progress made with regards to increased food security and reduced poverty levels nor are there any measurements or indicators documenting the impact on hunger, malnutrition, and access to food in the country. Thus, the stipulated trickle-down effect of economic growth, the horizontal benefits of vertical initiatives, disappears in the process of turning the NA principles into practice.

Concerns as to the negative consequences of this gap, are articulated by key civil society stakeholders. When asked how the livelihood of smallholder farmers would be affected by land reforms, a representative of the National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi responded:

> If it is taken away, their means of survival will not be there, because they produce to survive. They are producing for their own consumption. And it is very little that is sold. The impact would be adverse. For sure, their livelihood would be affected.

A professor from Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources likewise assessed the effects of land reforms to be adverse for the smallholders: 'If they don't even have their land to produce food, of course that is going to affect their food security and eventually their economic livelihood is going to be affected negatively as well.' A professor from the University of Malawi also pointed to the shift from being a self-sustained farmer to being a peasant working at others' farms: 'What they have now on offer is only their labour. That kind of livelihood is not sustainable. You cannot survive on working on other people's land, because what you get is very low.' The gap between general economic growth and individual experiences of negative effects on livelihoods, e.g. because of the loss of land, then, is a central feature of the implementation of NA in Malawi.

In sum, the principle of market-led growth, with its assumptions of investment-based development in the form of trickle-down growth, leads to three major governance gaps spanning from the global to the local level (for an illustration, please see Figure 1). These gaps may be specified as three distinct, yet related decoupling mechanisms: first, at the global level of turning the goals of NA into principles decoupling happens as means become ends in themselves. The CCF presents the policy reforms Malawi will undertake in order to prepare the ground for foreign direct investments as if such investment was the end-goal of the initiative. As a consequence, local farm land and local farmers become resources to be made available to investors, e.g. through land deals, road-building, and contract farming.

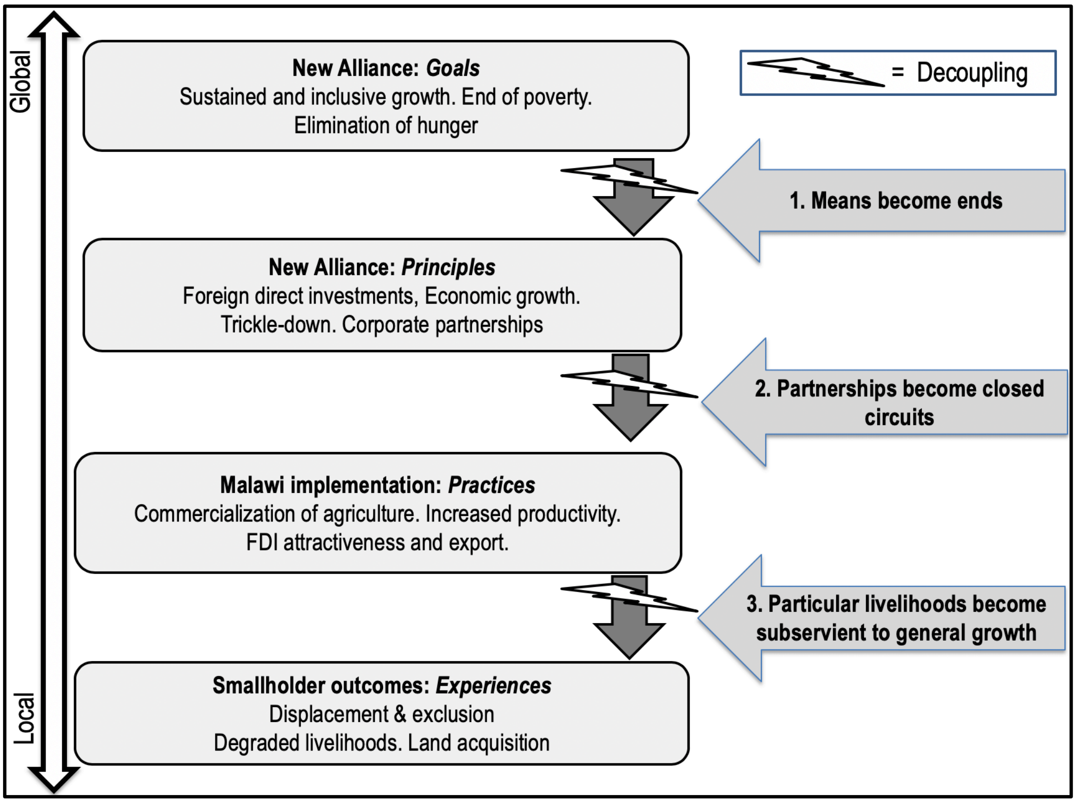

Figure 1: Identification of NA's governance gaps and decoupling mechanisms

Second, the partnerships initiated to get 'all hands on deck' do not include the people whose problems these partnerships were actually meant to solve, leading to a gap between principles and practices. Here, the decoupling takes the form of turning partnerships into closed circuits. Thus, the CCF presents policy reform as a tool for attracting private investments, creating relations between foreign investors, on the one hand, and the Malawian government, on the other, that are not dependent on nor open to any other actors. The underlying logic, here, is that increased investment will lead to economic growth, which, in turn, leads to development, meaning actual developmental aims remain unspecified; indeed, unarticulated.

Third, as the stated goals of NA are decoupled from its governance principles and as principles are decoupled from practices, local levels of governance come to serve the general aim of economic growth, which has emerged and been reinforced as an end itself throughout the governance chain. Due to the decoupling mechanisms of the initiative, economic growth is not pursued for the benefit of local livelihoods; to the contrary, such livelihoods are put at risk in the pursuit of growth.

Figure 1 is an illustration of the three governance gaps inherent in the implementation of NA in Malawi. As the implementation moves vertically from the global to the local level, there are decouplings between the global goals and principles of NA, the principles and practices of national implementation, and the intended outcomes and lived experiences at the local level. In sum, the current governance framework does not include any horizontal integration, its vertical integration only moves top-down, and even this movement is fraught with gaps that are caused by the reversal of ends and means and a detachment of principles from practices, leading to experienced outcomes that are in direct contrast to the stipulated goals.

Further, this cannot be said to be a mistake on the part of the involved actors, but rather appears to be a flaw of the system. That is, tracing the interpretation and implementation of NA's goals in Malawi indicates that pro-market principles of development initiatives may lead to practices that run counter to stated goals. Goals of economic development, when supported by principles of public-private partnership, induce practices of deregulation and land deals which smallholder farmers experience as disempowering and decrepitating – again, this is not an accident, but an inherent effect of the current governance framework. Thus, our analysis suggests that the discrepancies arise from governance gaps between the global level of initiation and the local level of implementation, meaning the established governance framework cannot support its own stipulated goals. While investors profit from their commitment to NA initiatives, the involved smallholder farmers are no better off; rather, they experience negative consequences such as diminished self-determination and self-sufficiency.

The analysis shows that disconnections across the levels of governance reproduce colonial ideologies through Western-centric policy reforms and lead to neo-colonial realities as companies take over smallholders' land. Thus, this case study confirms the existing postcolonial critique of development governance, but contrary to other studies our analysis indicates that a solution to these well-known shortcomings may be found at the level of the state. As the governance gap between global principles and local practices is located at the country-level of implementation, focusing on the state itself may present a key to overcoming current decouplings and sketch alternative pathways for local development. Implementing development initiatives in vertically governance set-ups designed through trickle-down logics has never resulted in the stated goals of sustained and inclusive growth. Instead, successful development governance requires loops of integration at all levels in a process of continuous assessment and adjustment of goals. In what follows, we move towards such an integrative framework.

Discussion: The prospects of *transglocal* governance

When implemented at the national level, the general principles of NA do, indeed, lead to general growth, but also to individual suffering. This, as our analysis shows, is the result of governance gaps in the vertical chain of top-down implementation and a lack of integration between vertical and horizontal levels of governance. In this regard, our findings closely resemble those of Banerjee's (2018) study of the mining industries' use of political corporate responsibility as a means of legitimizing their commercial activities rather than as an opportunity for becoming truly responsible. While the cases are different, the results are similar; what presents itself as aiming for local empowerment becomes a means of corporate enrichment. Further, we also identify governance gaps as part of the problem, and, as Banerjee (2018, p. 810) suggests, 'it is naïve to expect that the interests of vulnerable stakeholders will be served if MNCs fill these governance gaps…'. However, this expectation is, as our analysis shows, ingrained in the principles and practices of NA.

When Obama stated that governments cannot accomplish the goals of development alone, he not only invited in corporations as key partners, but actually shifted the ends of development towards general measures of economic growth and, eventually, moved power from governments to MNCs – to the disadvantage of smallholders and other supposed beneficiaries of development initiatives. Thus, the flaw is built into NA's governance framework; its dominant principle of trickle-down market-led growth means smallholder farmers are neither integrated vertically nor horizontally. Further, a neo-colonial drive is inherent to NA; not only are participating countries, like Malawi, impelled to reform themselves in the image of Western market capitalism, they are to do so in order for MNCs to literally take over local land. The former might be termed ideological neo-colonialism, whereas the latter indicates that the takeover is not only of the mind but an actual and material conquest – and one currently facilitated by the participating governments whose members may benefit personally from partnering up with MNCs, but sell out their countries in the process.

In sum, the ends of the NA are perverted as they move vertically from the general level of articulation to the specific level of implementation. However, this perversion is integral to the current governance framework; it stems from the built-in gaps and the lack of horizontal integration. Here, too, our position resembles that of Banerjee (2018), who advocates a trans*local* governance framework as a better alternative to current practices. Such a framework, he argues, enables local actors to work together horizontally so as to exert influence in their specific contexts. Further, translocal networks may apply vertical pressure from the bottom-up. This vision is about as far from the reality of NA as one can get, raising the question of whether international development initiatives may ever be anything but well-intentioned vessels for neo-colonial conquerors, whether political architects or corporate investors.

While one may be tempted to answer this polemical question in the negative, the opposite query can also be made: can community-driven initiatives eventually lift millions out of poverty? Very few, if any, instances of translocal development governance actually exist, and bottom-up development projects have proven to be more utopian than effective. Thus, Dar (2014) shows how difficult it is for local NGOs to gain the trust of international donor agencies, meaning bottom-up dynamics in vertical governance frameworks may be hard to establish. Similarly, Thomas and Turnbull (2018) argue that the International Labour Organization (ILO) needs to strengthen its transnational governance level if it is to be able to regulate transnational production, indicating how stronger horizontal integration may be needed at all levels of the vertical chain. Thus, strong local networks may not be enough, nor will a reversal of current directions of influence, even if possible, be sufficient. What is needed is two-way vertical integration as well as horizontal integration at all levels.

We offer the concept of trans*glocal* governance as shorthand for such integration. With this concept we, first, emphasize that the voices of those who are to be the beneficiaries of development initiatives must be heard – not only in the course of implementation but, indeed, at all levels of governance. Second, we highlight the need to position national governments at the centre of the formulation as well as the implementation of development initiatives – as guarantors of the design and execution of development projects in accordance with local needs rather than global principles. As shown in Figure 2, national practices must base global representation of local interests on local participation in the articulation of these interests.

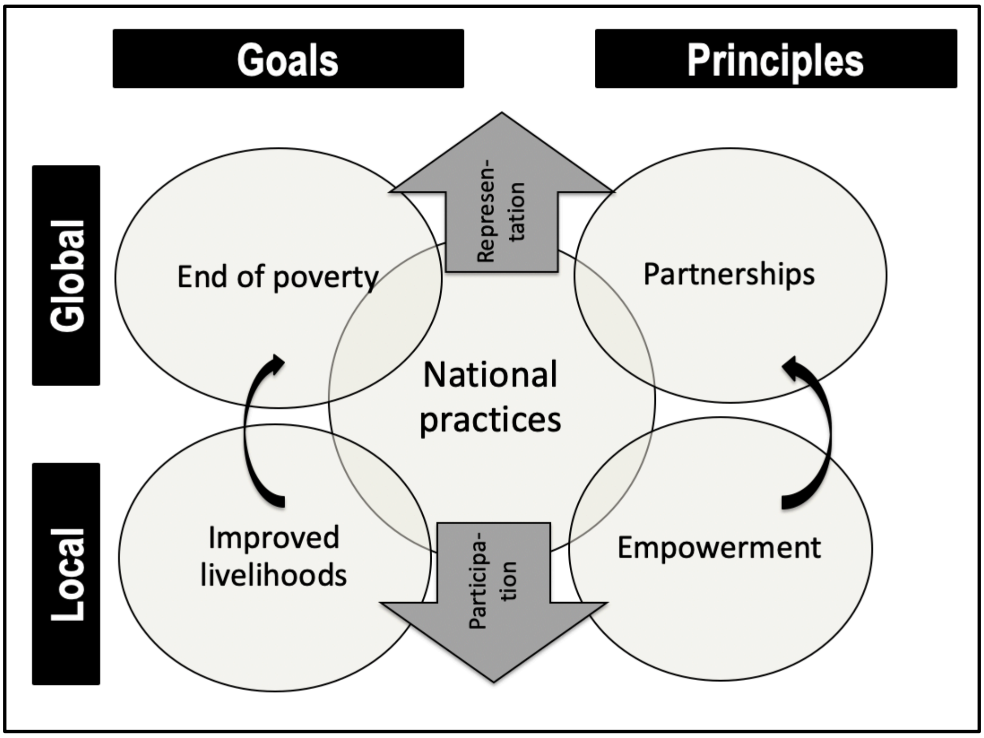

Figure 2: Framework for transglocal development governance

Bringing back the state is a controversial move (but see Hill, 2005 for one argument in its favour); it can only work if based on such principles and practices of participation and representation, ensuring horizontal integration and reversing the vertical dynamics from top-down to bottom-up, meaning local communities can (re-)gain ownership of the development of their livelihoods. This alternative framework for development governance is highly complex and, hence, incurs high degrees of uncertainty. However, complexity and uncertainty are necessary short-term conditions of possibility for long-term realization of people-centred and sustainable development goals. If developed countries and international organizations are not willing to or capable of establishing such governance frameworks, there is little hope that they can ever become constructive participants in postcolonial development. Rather, development initiatives will continue to enforce ideational principles and material practices of neo-colonialism.

In presenting this critique of the current limitations of international development organizations that originate in the global North, we are given pause for reflection as to our own position as Western scholars. In our work with the implementation of NA in Malawi we have sought to base our critique of its governance framework on local experiences and to suggest how the gaps between these local experiences and the stated goals of the NA might be closed through the implementation of a new framework. That is, we have suggested better procedures for international development initiatives, but the question of the substantial features of such initiatives is outside our purview. Here, we can only hope that international donor agencies will cede their current powers and, instead, provide frameworks that enable and incentivize states like Malawi to become the central nexus in governance frameworks in and through which local voices are integrated in not only the implementation, but also the initiation of globally driven initiatives. To ensure that states will, indeed, assume this new role, ownership and cooperative initiatives at multiple levels could be one way ahead.

Conclusion

We began this paper with the question of how NA can be seen as both a means of poverty reduction and as a new form of colonialism. Our analysis of the implementation of NA in Malawi reveals a deep discrepancy between the partnership model for growth-led development and local experiences of land grabbing. Focusing on the role of the state in the implementation of NA, we have shown that the pro-growth principles of the initiative do not translate into pro-development practices when implemented in Malawi but instead become articulated as pro-market policies and regulatory reforms aiming to attract FDI with little or no regard for the livelihoods of local farmers. Thus, we have found that NA reduces poverty by neo-colonial means and that these means only reduce poverty at the general level of national economic growth. Further, in the process of implementation the instrument of growth becomes a goal in itself, meaning individual suffering becomes a necessary sacrifice in efforts to reach general growth. Explaining these dynamics further, we have argued that the reversal of ends and means and the conflict between intention and consequence coalesce at the national level of translating principles into practices. Here, vertical governance principles are decoupled from horizontal governance practices as notion of partnerships turn out to imply only closed circuits of policy-makers and corporate actors; in these circuits increased FDI becomes an end in itself, to the benefit of MNCs, and new means, such as deregulation and land reforms, are introduced, to the detriment of local livelihoods.

In presenting these empirical arguments, our findings closely resemble those of existing post-colonial development and organization studies that identify and critique pervasive asymmetries in donor-recipient relations. Sadly, the recent initiative of NA does not improve the situation; to the contrary, it furthers market-led ideological and material neo-colonialism. While this finding adds to the existing literature, our main contribution lies in offering transglocal governance as a framework that draws equally on and deepens the relationship between development and organization studies in the postcolonial vein, thereby forwarding the joint ambition of not only criticizing current development initiatives but also offering better alternatives.

In analytical terms, our proposed framework identifies discrepancies and explains these through the decoupling mechanisms that create gaps in the framework; as the NA moves from the international level of policy principles to the local level of practical implementation a fundamental shift occurs. At the policy-level, local producers are said to gain access to and benefit from global production networks; in practice, MNCs gain access to and benefit from local resources. Based on this analysis, we turn from the explanatory to the normative mode, suggesting that vertical and horizontal dynamics of governance must be combined in one coherent framework: transglocal governance. For such a positive dynamic to emerge, however, international and national regulators alike must free themselves of the currently dominant market principles. Instead of facilitating MNC entry in local contexts, they must restrict the access of big corporations, and if partnerships with such corporations are to be made, the onus of reform should be on the side of the private, not the public, side of the partnerships. Only through such a fundamental shift in the logic of supply and demand can pro-growth principles inform pro-development practices.

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