Abstract:

Topic:

Rethinking Land Development and Offset Mechanisms in Cambodia

With regard to a gross domestic product of 1.230 USD nominal per inhabitant (as of 2016), Cambodia can be described as the economically poorest country within the region of Southeast Asia. Together with Laos and Myanmar, it is also a member of the "Least Developed Countries" (LDC) list of the United Nations (UN). From the new millennium, neocolonial and neoliberal practices combined with extractivism or rather resource exploitation further prevented a positive holistic transformation of the country (Jacobsen 2010: 207-208; UNFCCC 2016). Cambodia is also trying to implement REDD+. There are pilot projects located in the Northwestern province of Oddar Meanchey, as well as in the north-eastern province of Mondul Kiri in the Keoseima Forest Protection Zone (KFPZ) and in the south-west in the southern area of the Cardamom Mountains. According to Biddulph (2016: 16), indigenous forest residents are jointly involved in the projects in Mondul Kiri and the KFPZ. These two projects are to be investigated more closely in the paper.

In view of the controversial situation, the REDD+ is supposed to help to ensure sustainable forest use. In addition, the management of forestry areas is to be improved. The realization of this measure is to be done primarily through the participation of indigenous communities. They criticized at the beginning of the UN program REDD+ that they were not taken into account as actors. As a result, the 16th Climate Change Convention 2010 stipulated that indigenous groups will be more involved in the respective forest management in the future. According to a public statement by the former Director of the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), Benuit BOSQUETS, from 2013, REDD+ will not be converted into a primary (rain) forest in future plantations, while at the same time also indigenous rights will be increasingly focused. In view of this approach, the question arises whether in practice such measures are actually applied. According to the objectives of the UN program REDD+, participation, fair trade and a more sustainable management of the forest can not only take place here. The economic growth of the Souths as well as the Norths is also expected to benefit from each other in a positive way, with the global financial market also being able to benefit from the commodification offered by

REDD+ (BOSQUETS 2013; GOBIERNO DE HONDURAS 2013: 211; HEUWIESER 2015: 126ff.; LOHMANN 2008).

Due to the growing world population as well as the threat of global climate change, the Souths are the focus of many interests. This is due to the fact that both new agricultural areas for the generation of foodstuffs and bioethanol as well as CO_2 sinks can be developed economically to offset greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, the construction of dams or the creation of protected forest areas will also be focused on the reduction of CO_2-emissions – without consideration for existing social or ecological structures. In view of this situation, a phenomenon has emerged in recent years and decades called Green Grabbing.

Since there are currently hardly any publications on green grabbing in Cambodia, the aim of this publication is to investigate this phenomenon in more detail by means of individual case studies in the Cambodia investigative area. The facts discussed here are critically reflected within a discussion and interpreted by means of a self-developed structure flow diagram. In view of this factual situation, the question arises whether member countries of the **OECD** or the North could expand their influence in Cambodia by means of other actions. In particular, the climate protection instruments Clean Development Management (**CDM**) and above all Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (**REDD+**) are to be thoroughly investigated both by their influence as well as by the articulated arguments with regard to environmental protection measures, development co-operation and so-called **'development'**. At the same time, it is to be examined how migration movements can be observed. In addition, the aim of this publication is to examine the extent to which climate change strategies have been implemented in Cambodia, and whether these are really an improvement for nature, people and the Cambodian economy in the form of green growth. Also, the terms "land grabbing" and "green grabbing" are to be separated from each other in order to be able to view individual empirical applications more clearly and more intelligibly for the readers. Also, the publication will try to derive statements on genuine transformation processes and alternatives in relation to so-called 'development co-operation' in the form of a paradigm shift.

Land grabbing is the commercial appropriation of agricultural land. This phenomenon can be observed more intensively in the Souths. Financially strong companies from the Norths but

also from the Souths buy commercially viable areas in order to gain both control and decision-making about the resources to be met. The reasons for this form of investment are, on the one hand, the development and production of fuels (e.g. mining, palm oil) and the production of food (agriculture, fisheries) in the primary economic sector. In this context, for example, the expulsion of small-scale families by large companies can be said to lead to a change in local commons structures to capital-intensive and profitable agricultural structures. The latter also act out of an extractivist motivation, whereby the appropriation as well as the exploitation of natural resources such as wood or oil can be the focus. These natural resources are primarily developed and exploited for export to the Norths. If land grabbing results from an extractivist motivation, this has logically negative consequences for the ecology (for example post-mining landscape) and thus also for population groups living there. In the end, there are resettlement and expulsions as well as the exploitation of labor (PEN RATANA, 2015: 4; HEUWIESER, 2015: 7f.).

However, extractivist practices can also be observed, though not as obviously as in land grabbing, in the course of green grabbing. Green Grabbing is spoken when land grab is carried out by means of climate and nature conservation measures. According to Leach, this problem has increased mainly because of the efforts to achieve a so-called "green economy" through the UN Conference Rio20+ 2012. The reason for this is the merging of economic growth and environmental compatibility - '**Green Growth'**. One of the primary objectives is the generation of new financial values as well as the creation of new markets through the reduction of new natural goods. This is done by the privatization of forestry areas, but also of flora and fauna in the form of nature conservation parks, which is why ecotourism should be established. In addition, the generation of renewable green energy forms is achieved by appropriating water bodies in the form of hydroelectric power stations. Indigenous biosphere reserves are often expropriated, and indigenous resistance groups are to be weakened by state governments. Also in the production of so-called green agricultural fuels such as bio-ethanol, it can come to "green land grab" by land acceptance. In addition to these criteria, CO2 trading can also be linked to green grabbing. The reason for this assumption is that corporations acquire potential CO2 stocks for their protection and/or expansion in order to compensate for their own CO2 emissions, which, however, simultaneously creates the possibility of emitting even more CO2. However, if an existing

forest part is acquired by a group, there is no compensation or neutralization of CO2 emissions in view of existing existence. It is therefore clear that this practice can lead to an increase in greenhouse gases in addition to possible expropriation processes (Heuwieser 2015: 8; Leach 2012b).

On the basis of these facts it was shown that green grabbing is similar to land grabbing, but also differences are recognizable due to the illegal appropriation of land. It is particularly clear that this form of land grabbing is justified by the advocates of “Green Growth”, "maximizing sustainability" and "preserving ecosystems". This type of "optimization" as well as the heterogeneity of the very different actors in the face of common interests underline the difference to the phenomenon of land grabbing, also because the exploitation of natural resources such as oil or wood is not directly in their focus. Rather, there is a commodification of nature, whereby, similar to land grabbing, minorities and other groups of persons can be expropriated. In contrast to land grabbing, however, this is done with the objective of generating more ecological sustainability, but at the same time new financial markets are to be developed and monetary capital can be accumulated. Above all, national oligarchies in the Souths or large companies in the Norths achieve high financial profits. Moreover, green grabbing does not have to lead to a profound degradation or change of ecosystems, in view of the motivation for more ecological sustainability. The realization of sustainable green energy or green growth, for example by the construction of a hydroelectric power station, can lead to the danger that both deep ecological changes and extractivist practices are generated by means of green grabbing. It can therefore be said that Green grabbing is considerably more difficult to comprehend in terms of the high contradictions between altruistic arguments and neoliberal reality compared to land grabbing (Fairhead & Leach & Scoones 2012: 237ff.; Heuwieser 2015: 8f.).

In the light of this observation, this paper will be used to illustrate the extent to which green growth and green grabbing processes take place in the Cambodian regions Oddar Meanchey and Mondul Kiri, especially with regard to renewable and green energy and economic forms.