

Land Reform in the Era of HIV

Reflections on Lesotho's Land Act 2010

Charles Fogelman
Department of Geography & GIS
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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Introduction

There is an ongoing debate among scholars and policymakers about *how* and *to whom* rural agricultural land should be allocated. While some believe that allowing private title to land maximizes use of the land, others believe such policies increase inequality and supplant an often-efficient customary system of allocation. A steady stream of state-led land reforms took place in many poor in the 1950s-70s, and a new wave of reforms has been underway since the 1990s, continuing to shape new kinds of land control¹ to the present (Bassett 1993).

Two distinct goals shape land reforms, though they are two goals that have often been seen to be mutually exclusive: social justice and increased productivity (Sharma 1984, following Herring 1983). While those who advocate the private titling and leaseholding typical of market-led reforms contend that the increased productivity inherent in their reforms also comes with enhanced social justice outcomes, that belief is widely contested and seemingly based in limited evidence (Peters 2004, Wolford 2007, Sender and Johnston 2004). On the other hand are those who advocate populist land policies, those that privilege allocating land rights directly to poor and landless people by methods other than the market (typically via direct state intervention). (Borras Jr. 2007, Moyo and Yeros 2005b).

While HIV and land have rarely been seen as interlinked, large-scale land reforms in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) now take place in the specific context of HIV/AIDS. This is true insofar as all life in SSA takes place in the context of HIV. This is especially true in parts of southern Africa, where HIV prevalence rates hover around 25%. However, HIV and land are linked by factors that are more than merely contextual. People who receive antiretroviral treatment have higher caloric needs than others, and there is evidence that people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) are more likely to be dispossessed of land than others (Shelton 2011, Drimie 2003), but only a limited linkage has been drawn between land rights and the HIV pandemic.

This paper explores the trajectory of land rights reforms, including a brief history, their theoretical backing and their modern day appearance. It then explores the effects of migration, both literal and metaphorical, on laborers and land users in southern Africa and places land reform in the context of HIV/AIDS. Finally, in a case study drawn from a new market-led land reform currently underway in Lesotho, it links the ideas of land reform, migration and HIV through labor and argues that the recent vogue of market-led land reform is incapable of mitigating the inequalities created and/or magnified by the shock of HIV/AIDS. It then closes with a brief discussion of ways in which state-led land reforms and improved livelihoods are possible, as well as areas in which more study is needed.

¹ "Land control" here is used as Peluso & Lund (2011) defined it: "practices that fix or consolidate forms of access, claiming, and exclusion for some time."

The Labor of Land Reform

There are two distinct branches of belief in terms of land reforms, with only a moderate amount of middle ground. They have been characterized as "market-led" on one hand and "populist" on the other (Wolford 2007). The market-led branch argues that land titling leads to greater land security and a lower incidence of dispossession (Deininger & Binswanger 1999, 250). In turn, the increased security leads to greater investment in the land and increases the value derived from the land (Dickerman 1989). The means by which this is achieved is legislation – laws that "attempt to create or restore private rights to property for the purpose of improving the smooth functioning of rural markets (usually markets in land, credit and agricultural inputs) and increasing efficiency and production through security of title" (Wolford 2007, 550). Those who advocate economic development via market-led reforms contend that poverty alleviation is best achieved by well-functioning markets (including land markets). This economic theory of development is best expressed by Deepak Lal, who maintains that effective markets will boost the total income of a country and the consequent income boost will "trickle down" to the poor. The mechanism for this is by a labor supply curve that is not flat, but instead increases with demand. As overall national income increases, "the fruits of growth...will therefore trickle down, in the sense either of raising labor incomes...or of preventing the fall in real wages and thus labor incomes" (Lal 1985, 9). The way this is to be achieved is via an effective credit market, which is inextricably tied to a well-functioning land market in market-led land reforms (Deininger 2003, 1217). According to this view, those who can make effective economic use of land should be able to borrow against their future land-based earnings in order to take control of the land (Deininger & Jin 2003). In short, the commodification of land is the best method to ensure its use is commensurate with its value. This full use, in turn, helps to ensure steadily increasing national incomes, which in turn leads to a (real or relative) increase in labor incomes. To use a metaphor, a rising tide is said to lift all boats. Or, to use a term I will revisit, a state achieves "poverty alleviation through economic growth."

This is consistent with the Wendy Wolford's assertion that land reforms, both market-led and populist, are inherently predicated on the same Lockean understanding of labor; it is "a labor theory of property that ideally attributes the fruits of labor to the laborer" (Wolford 2007, 550). The ethos that land should belong to the one who tills it is one that has informed virtually all land reforms, not just market-led reforms. The main distinction is between those who believe the most potentially productive agriculturalists should have new access to parcels of land via reform and those who believe land rights should be allocated to those who already work a certain parcel.

As seen above, both types of reform, market-led and populist alike, are informed by a Lockean view of value. According to John Locke, in his *Second Treatise*, the value of a piece of land is created by labor, which in turn justifies ownership of that land as property (Locke 1689; 1988). This viewpoint is a key informer of both sides of land reform, as they both put an outsized significance on labor via the ways

in which surplus is produced and distributed. This is particularly relevant in the case of migratory and HIV-affected populations, which create unique land-labor relationships (this will be discussed in the next section). Populist reforms, though currently out of fashion in state-led development programs, were not at all uncommon in state-led land reform in the immediate post-colonial period of the 1960s and 70s. There are still global calls for such reforms, and those calls may be growing via landless people's movements, from Brazil to Mexico to South Africa (Borras Jr. 2003). Broadly speaking, populist reforms are rooted in a belief that distributive equity and development are linked. Such reforms "attempt to create or restore the connection between peasant communities and the land, improving social justice by distributing resources to the poorest who will then contribute to balanced development and food sovereignty" (Wolford 2007, 550-551). According to the populist view, land should be in possession of those who perform labor on the land, be they owners, sharecroppers, tenants or serfs. In effect, both the market-led and the populist viewpoints agree in the philosophy of "land to the tiller." Their main disagreement stems from how the tiller should be determined, but they both adhere to the idea of one tiller for one parcel of land.

The Political Side of Land Reform

While both the populist and the market-led conceptualizations attempt to offer a full understanding of the relationship between labor and land reforms, they tend to elide another key realm; the political. The political element of land reform is not a minor one. Land reforms are legislated and executed by states and states have concerns that may not align with theoretical ideas of how best to reform land control. In fact, the theory behind land reform has rarely been at the heart of the practice, with market-led and populist rationales taking a backseat to more immediate concerns of social control and political expediency. Longtime UN development economist Solon Barraclough, one of the key theoretical architects behind many of the populist land reforms in Latin America in the 1960s admitted as much. "In any event, the well-known social, economic and administrative arguments commonly advanced in favour of land reform, or to oppose it, seem to have had rather minor impacts on the political processes determining what actually happened" (Barraclough 1999, 10, citing Barraclough, 1992). In short, Barraclough argues, land reforms take place less to reallocate land than they do to satisfy powerful constituencies.

That is not to say, however, that land reforms are simply window dressing. In all land reforms, even in instances where structural change is apparent rather than real, "land reforms produce important alteration in the *observable* structure of agrarian systems – land records are altered, census data collected, reports are made – all presenting a picture of the rural world that is more congruent with the needs of landed elites, administrators, and ruling politicians than with the reality on the ground" (Herring 1983, 269, emphasis in original). Observation is a key function of the state, as demonstrated by James C. Scott (1998) in his *Seeing Like a State*, where the elements of market-led land reform are laid out starkly.

Customary systems of tenure should not be romanticized; they are usually riven with inequalities based on gender, status and lineage. But because they are strongly local, particular and adaptable, their plasticity can be the source of microadjustments that lead to shifts in prevailing practice (Scott 1998, 34-35).

In addition to the surveillance role of the state, Scott also points to the tendency of reforms to benefit a select few. In this, Scott echoes Mamdani, (1996) who illustrates the tendency of citizen/subject bifurcations to happen along ethnic lines and along urban/rural lines, creating the fragmentation that defines many modern African states. The so-called "traditional authorities" who have maintained power since the end of colonialism in rural areas, typically chiefs, are a consistent thorn in the sides of central African states. Land reforms can often serve the useful purpose of minimizing the role of customary authority and shifting state power from urban areas to the rural areas over which the state tends to have the least dominion (Herbst 2000, 174-177; Bates 1983).

An important goal outcome of many land reforms is to keep maligned groups from revolution. Land reforms can serve as valuable tools to provide a modicum of calm in the face of an agitated peasantry. Additionally, reforms are politically useful to the state and to powerful individuals in that they can serve to keep power relations (and thus clientelistic relationships) intact (de Janvry 1981, 219; van de Walle 2001). Those elites, however, generally include only powerful urban individuals and tend to exclude chiefs, whose roles are varied. While chiefs, headmen and other customary authorities vary from place to place, there is often a lineage that runs from colonial indirect rule to the present. When colonial states allocated power to their "decentralized despots," the chiefs, perhaps the most important right given to the chiefs was that of land allocation, to be done according to the wishes of the colonial state (Mamdani 1996). The end of colonial power and tension between a representative state and traditional authorities has resulted in a class bifurcation throughout SSA of citizens on the one hand and subjects on the other; a relevant case study is Mamdani's illustration of migrant labor in South Africa as separate from "civil society." This is especially notable in light of those same migrants' role in the spread of HIV throughout southern Africa, via risky behavior and circular migration patterns that made multiple concurrent partners a strong likelihood for miners (Coffee, et al. 2007).

In summary, in addition to the labor-based and economic claims made by land reformers, there is also a political element to these reforms. Broadly speaking, adjustments to land tenure systems are mediated by bureaucrats and elites before they are enacted, and their enactment is then governed by a series of other power relations. The ways such laws are visited upon people is only after the enactment has been passed through several others' hands. This is not to deny the (possibly growing, see Borras Jr. 2003, cited above) role of social movements in shaping land rights systems, but only to say that their agency is typically muted, particularly in the case of sub-Saharan Africa. Perhaps theoretical land reform is fundamentally about labor,

but the messy reality of land reform makes it about politics as well as labor. Reforms can serve to weaken traditional authority by removing the plasticity that traditional authorities sometimes provide. States and donors often criticize chiefs as capricious in land allocation. What looks capricious to the state may be fully functional on the ground. They also serve to make the population more controllable and observable (by making them legible). Both of these serve to vest more power in the state and to allow for a more powerful and centralized state that is less beholden to rural constituencies. Thus, while Borras Jr. (2003) calls populist reform "state led" in opposition to "market led," this is a false dichotomy. Both populist and market-led reforms are state led, in that they are predicated on state power to change power relations, to create markets and to redistribute property.

Migration & HIV

There are countless political, social, economic, medical and psychological impacts of the HIV pandemic at various scales. One of the best documented impacts is that of lost labor. Labor productivity declines precipitously in AIDS-afflicted households because infection rates are highest among those of working age. Additionally, another economically active member of the household is often called upon to administer care to sick or dying members of a household, leading to an even larger tax on labor productivity (Yamano and Jayne 2004, Drimie 2003, Thirumurthy, et al. 2008). Evidence from those engaged in wage-labor agricultural work in Kenya indicates that those suffering from AIDS show diminished productivity for three years before "termination"² (Fox, et al. 2004, 322).

Like most diseases, HIV is unpredictable. This is especially true in places where only minimal amounts of testing and treatment are available, like much of southern Africa. Despite a national testing initiative begun in 2004, only half of the population of Lesotho has been tested at any point, the vast majority of them only once (Shelton 2011). Because of this, relatively few of the 24% of the population that is HIV-positive are aware of their status.

The labor reforms embedded within market-led land reforms are predicated on prognostication. That is to say that people who take out loans in order to buy land are optimistic about the future and their own opportunities to earn profits from the land they have acquired (Griffin, et al. 2002). In many places, this works efficiently – for example, even at the height of the 2008-09 economic crisis, only 10% of all U.S. mortgages were more than 60 days past due. In places like Lesotho where nearly a quarter of the working age population suffers from a terminal and debilitating disease and many more still need to care for the sick, such a calculus no longer holds true, because the expectation of future labor capacity is only a 75% proposition. The expectation of future earning that allows for 30-year long mortgages in the U.S. is an

² "Termination" is the authors' euphemism for death, job resignation or firing.

expectation that cannot hold true for places like Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland, where HIV prevalence rates are over 20%. As a result, the credit mechanisms that underpin market-led land reforms are non-operational in a context of HIV prevalence on such a high scale.³ Similarly, the expectation of continued and consistent occupation of the land does not ring true when the prospect of employment in mines or factories away from home can present itself at irregular times.

There is evidence that antiretroviral treatment (ART) for HIV has begun to change these realities, but their effects are far from widely or evenly distributed. Labor productivity has been shown to improve drastically in Kenyan tea farmers who receive treatment, in a study where the authors "conservatively estimate that workers worked at least twice as many days in the month than they would have in the absence of ART" (Larson, et al. 2008, 421). While patients commonly report that their lives are redeemed by use of the drugs (Gilbert and Walker 2009), there are many barriers to access, including stigmatization and cost (of the drugs, of transportation or of time) (Jones 2012). In short, while it is clear that ART can mitigate the vulnerabilities caused by HIV/AIDS (Miller and Tsoka 2012), the benefits of ART are not evenly distributed by location or by socioeconomic status and their role in minimizing the role of HIV in land labor availability should not be overstated. In short, ART may change the nature of the plastic, but not the plasticity itself.

Land Reform in Lesotho

Lesotho is a landlocked country entirely contained within South Africa. Its 30,355 km² of area all lie at over 1,400m of elevation, giving it the honor of having the highest low point of any country in the world. Only 12% of the land is arable and over 80% of the population engages in some subsistence agriculture. The marginal quality of much of the land, together with high population density in lowland areas, has made land an issue of contention for generations (Eldredge 1991, Epprecht 1996). New land laws are now taking effect in Lesotho. While the new land laws that passed Parliament in Lesotho have been formulated since at least 2001, they did not become official law until 2010. These laws⁴, which formulate a land registration system based on 90-year leaseholds (de facto titling that allows ownership to remain "vested in the Basotho nation") and establish the legal bodies to create those changes, are rooted in the market-led mindset described above. The laws are reforming the way land is held and transferred in Lesotho. The role of the chiefs in land allocation is giving way to elected committees, according to the law. In turn, the land allocated by those committees can be formalized with a 90-year fully transferable lease—

³ For a critique of the credit-based logic underlying this, see Sauer (2006) on the case of Brazil's *Cédula da Terra* reform

⁴ The Land Act 2010 and the Land Administration Act 2010, which work in concert with the Local Government Act 2004 and the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act 2006

essentially a title to land. This hybrid tenure system is market-driven and intended in part to minimize chief's role in the process. The supporting minister spoke to the perceived shortcoming of chiefly allocation when she decried the "mismanagement of land that has bedeviled and undermined development efforts for many years" (Sekatle 2010).

Beginning with the formalization of the Laws of Lerotholi in 1903, land has been allocated by chiefs: "The duty of administering lands justly lies on the paramount chief [king], and on those other chiefs who have been gazetted" (Laws of Lerotholi 1903, law 44.3, cited in Duncan 1960, 87). The chiefs themselves were an amalgam of semi-longstanding traditional authorities and British-favored "decentralized despots," a tension that typified much of Basutoland's colonial rule by Cape Town and London. A new Land Act passed in 1979 was intended to move land tenure to a more market based system, but the means and methods of allocation were largely retained by the chiefs (Lawry 1993, Quinlan & Wallis 2003, Sekatle 2010). The 2010 laws are intended to more fully allow market-based exchanges in land transactions. The new law is consistent with the market driven ethos of organizations like the World Bank and the U.S. government, which has been a key funder of these laws, in the name of development and poverty alleviation. The stated goal of the land reforms, from the American side, is to "stimulate investment by improving access to credit, reducing transaction costs and increasing the participation of women in the economy" (mca.org.ls). This sweeping market-led reform is consistent with the ethos of the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the U.S. government funding body that is orchestrating the early phases of reform: "Reducing poverty through economic growth." The echoes of Deepak Lal and hopes of a rising tide lifting all boats are resonant.

Parties from the U.S. government to Thompson Reuters to a Danish consulting group have lobbied for or profited from the land laws, typically using the language of "development" or "modernization" in their assessments. Even the architect of Lesotho's economic policy, former Finance Minister Timothy Thahane, used the same rhetoric. "The Land Act is part of an overall strategy to modernize the economy of Lesotho, so that investors can come, start a business and receive mortgage financing and insurance.... This is the kind of process that is necessary in a modern economy" (IRIN 2011). The ideas of "modernization" and "regularization" are defining characteristics of the laws' reason, which is consistent with the rhetoric that backs market-led agrarian reforms in general. DFID, the British development agency, linked land reform to job creation and revenue collection (taxation) in a 2005 report. The Millennium Challenge Corporation calls the process, for which they have granted over \$20mm, "modernizing the land administration system." This narrative of modernization is rooted in the belief that privatization and commodification of land will lead to poverty alleviation. This is in keeping with the broad narrative of "trickle down" espoused by Lal (1985) and restated specifically for Lesotho by Sekatle (2010), which contends that land commodification will raise national incomes in Lesotho. In simplest terms, the argument

is that leaseholdings will increase land tenure security, which will increase investment in the land. That investment will then lead to further increases in output production from the land. The argument is based on standard assumptions, which are ill-suited to Lesotho.

Previous studies offer evidence that some chiefs used their sweeping land powers to protect the land of vulnerable AIDS-affected people (Mothibi 2003). A study of two villages organized by the NGO CARE in 2003, at the height of the AIDS pandemic, saw no evidence of the land grabs that proponents of the land reform claim are widespread: "No cases were found where interviewees had lost access to land either to relatives or to the chief as a result of HIV/AIDS deaths. The chiefs in both villages continue to support people's access to land" (Mothibi 2003, 36). This is not to say that such land grabs never take place or that the chiefs' absolute power over land was desirable – certainly the capriciousness of some chiefs is an issue (Mphale, et al. 2002). But it is an indication of the important plasticity of traditional authorities that relatively few people are documented to have been dispossessed of land. Market-based adjustments to land allocation in rural Lesotho have been resisted repeatedly, both by village chiefs and village residents (Lawry 1993, Mphale, et al. 2002).

The same U.S. government that was battling the perceived capriciousness of chiefs was itself dawdling until a deadline on a key piece of livelihoods in Lesotho. A vital component of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), a piece of legislation that allows tariff-free export of clothing from Lesotho to the U.S., was set to expire at the end of September 2012. Without it, Lesotho's textile industry would have essentially dried up, leaving tens of thousands of low-skill workers unemployed – over 40,000 workers, most women, are employed in textile factories. Over 90% of the textile jobs are located in Ha Thetsane, just within the limits of Maseru. Many would return to rural homes where their land rights would be increasingly unclear. As luck would have it, the U.S. Senate passed the legislation in mid-August of last year and President Obama quickly signed it. This was not before at least 5,000 workers were fired due to concerns about the law's renewal (Ryberg 2012). Lesotho's labor force is dependent on the vicissitudes of global capitalism; this story is meant to serve as an indication of how tenuous the place of laborers can be in Lesotho.

The new legal framework in Lesotho is a market-led land reform process. Based on the (minimally supported) theory of economic growth leading to poverty reduction, land reform in Lesotho is taking power from chiefs, delegating them to elected committees and onward to the market. This process is sure to be lengthy and painstaking and it remains to be seen if it will create either economic growth or poverty reduction. One thing that does seem clear is that clarification of land ownership has led to conflicts that directly challenge chiefs' plasticity. Dual allocations, shared land and secondary/tertiary land uses are falling victim to a process that demands one tiller for one parcel of land. Those who feel that their rights are not being respected can petition the Magistrate of Lands for a hearing and potential redress, but this is

the realm of those who can afford an attorney. The Special Prosecutor for Lands at the Magistrate Court told me that he has not seen an increase in disputes since the beginnings of the major lease initiative in 2011. This may be true, but it reflects an existing class division. At three research sites, the only person with whom I spoke who had brought a case was a government employee. When I asked her how her family brought the case, she shrugged: "We have a lawyer! He is taking care of it for us." By contrast, a woman who earned her living by selling *moroho* (greens; in this case, cabbage) from her fields in Ha Thetsane estimated that she had lost 50% of the area over which she grew *moroho* just three years ago. While her local chief had upheld her right to use a fallow field for her own use, the person who gained the lease to that field made no such allowance to her. The new owner was not using the land and was hoping to sell it to a housing developer, but made clear to this woman that she no longer had use rights to the field. The chief told her that there was nothing he could do, because the land was now held under a lease, rather than an allocation. "Land must be given by the chief," the woman told me. "The leases are shit! Do you understand? They are truly shit!" She estimates that her income has also fallen by 50%. Both of the women are internal migrants.

Pointing to the ways that market-based clarification has created conflicts is not to discount Pauline Peters's caution that plasticity should not be romanticized. Traditional authorities' power over land can "reveal processes of exclusion, deepening social division and class formation" (Peters 2004, 270, citing Amanor 2001). Plasticity, or what Peters calls "negotiability," also reflects and creates winners and losers. That said, Lockean land reform fixes populations in place – it calls for one tiller to one parcel of land and allows minimal flexibility. Even the creation of rural land markets elides the fact that a vigorous and efficient exchange of land to maximize yields already existed in many rural areas (Lawry 1993), due in large part to processes of negotiability and plasticity. Populations that are migratory, both in terms of labor migration and the more metaphorical migration of lost labor and life to HIV/AIDS, resist fixity. In effect, the people of Lesotho are being told by the state and its funders that they are to stay put. However, when the land produces only 12% of the total cereals consumption in the country, many households need additional income. That income is often found outside of the family village and in Maseru, Johannesburg or elsewhere. Between that migration and the inconsistent labor output of people afflicted with and affected by HIV/AIDS, a market-led land reform is particularly ill-suited for the current reality in Lesotho.

Conclusion: Towards Pro-Poor Land Reform in Lesotho

There is no such thing as a perfectly market-led or a perfectly populist land system. "Redistributive reform, in terms of its nature and extent, is essentially a *matter of degree*" (Borras Jr. 2003, 22, emphasis in original). As Borras emphasizes, degree matters. This is true in the market-led/populist divide and also in the divide between titling and plasticity. Evidence from the literature and the political-economic reality

of Lesotho make clear that the ongoing reform, which seeks to minimize the role of chiefs in land tenure, is ill-suited to a country with labor mobility and insecurity, due to global capitalism and the ongoing HIV/AIDS pandemic. Lesotho's land reforms are tilted quite heavily toward the market side and reflect a profoundly market-driven philosophy about how development should happen and how poverty should be alleviated. Economically speaking, this argument is not remarkable – even if Lal's (1985) "trickle down" ethos does not lessen inequality, the stated goal of Lesotho's land reform is to reduce poverty and Lal's framework does indeed tend to reduce poverty.

An important and seemingly overlooked problem, however, is that the reforms that are planned in Lesotho are ill-suited to the reality on the ground in the Mountain Kingdom. While trickle down may be theoretically possible, it is predicated on a labor situation that does not match Lesotho's HIV-infection rate or migration pathways. That is to say that there are two ways in which these reforms are incompatible with high HIV rates (both in Lesotho and in the rest of the heavily AIDS-afflicted world). First, the idea of trickle down is predicated on the idea of a labor supply curve that does not have a significant amount of the working age labor unable to work. Second, the labor reform embedded in market-led land reforms is based on credit schemes that call on people to be able to predict a future that may or may not be there, depending on a host of unknowns, like U.S. tariff laws, HIV serostatus, eventual ART access and health of family members, employers or employees.

Land rights regimes that allow access without threat of dispossession are necessary in the AIDS-afflicted world. Without them, inequalities and vulnerabilities to all shocks, including land dispossession, hunger and HIV/AIDS, to name a few, will only increase. Interviews with chiefs, land administrators and those who have or seek access to land have made clear that there is a need for plasticity in matters of land. This plasticity is not found in Lockean reforms, be they "progressive" or "market-led." That plasticity can only be found by devolving powers of land allocation and flexibility in those allocations to local authorities. While the Land Act 2010 and its associated pieces of legislation does move allocation to elected authorities, its end result is to remove authority from local actors and vest land rights and transactions in willing-buyer, willing-seller style practices. This is incompatible with a country that has been a labor reserve since the 1930s; the migration of that labor virtually ensures that agricultural land will not be utilized by one tiller for one parcel. This is further complicated by the labor insecurity and uncertainty that results from a 23% HIV prevalence rate. A reform that removes plasticity from the landscape of Lesotho is calibrated to harm those who are most vulnerable.

As decentralization of service delivery and devolution of state powers to local authorities have become the vogue in international development, a rich literature has evolved around them. The work of Arun Agrawal, Ashwini Chhatre and Jesse Ribot, among others, has focused on devolution of powers and democracy. Local institutions are vital to allowing the plasticity that is needed in Lesotho and further work

through the lens of local democracy and local institutions will be instrumental in land policies that truly do work to reduce poverty.

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