

## Thesis Abstract:

# Land Grabbing and Water Grabbing Induced Displacement and Resistance in Reforming Myanmar

Emel Emetallah Zerrouk

Myanmar is reforming. This formerly Pariah country has opened-up its lands to investments by foreign governments, multinational companies, and allowed in NGOs and NPOs. New legislation in key sectors has been enacted, brought into force with political reforms began in 2010. However the effort to rapidly develop industrial, agricultural and commercial sectors, has raised concerns that the new laws, brought into force by this developing country, may be investment enabling but disabling for vulnerable stakeholders. This research investigates the effects these reforms have had on local stakeholders, who have fallen victim to controversial mining and damming projects. The Hatgyi Dam development and the Monywa, Letpadaung, Mine expansion project are located in two distinctly different ethno-historic contexts within Myanmar. Including these two cases allows for a more comprehensive study of the various parties involved in this new wave of investment in Myanmar as a whole. In both sites land is being re-appropriated, and villagers are displaced with little or no compensation; in the case of the Hatgyi Dam water resources are to be re-directed to facilitate bulk water sales and hydropower construction. This grabbing of land and water, although not a new occurrence under the former Junta *Tatmadaw* State, has increased both in frequency and size since the reforms. The different case studies also examine the various tools of resistance available to those negatively affected. In a society where civil rights have previously been harshly controlled, and where protests could be ended with the use of force, resistance to development induced displacement in general is fledgling. In the wake of reforms in the civil sector, and during the period of this study, resistance to land grabbing has grown significantly and the methods used by local villagers has been innovative, setting a precedence for those protesting similar situations in other parts of the country. The Monywa Copper Mine is a landmark case, through peaceful demonstrations and creative processes villagers gained international media coverage. The new environment within the country has enabled this process and lead to a slight lessening of the inequity resulting from the expansion of the mine. The situation surrounding the Hatgyi Dam is not as progressive as that of the Monywa Copper mine case. This research concluded that in a context of civil unrest, military suppression and ethnic violence, the same civil reforms that aided protesters in Monywa do not reach those around the Dam site, nor do they work towards undoing the negative impacts of development induced displacement in the area. Around the dam site, land grabs overlap with conflict zones and further militarization of the vicinity, thus it was evident that stability through conflict resolution is the central element required to begin remedial action on behalf of the displaced in this area. Thus there is the potential that civil rights and media reforms may eventually benefit the whole country, however further work is needed to ensure that investment and land reforms do not give rise to further inequity that would require the exercising of these civil rights.