Poisoned chalice, development aid gone wrong or just propping up a dictatorship?

The case of eSwatini

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Abstract

One of the biggest challenges in understanding the political development of eSwatini has been how has this country escaped international attention and scrutiny despite having an absolute Monarchy where political parties are banned. What has been missing in studies is the relationship between external rents and European markers have played in propping up the Monarchial rule of King Mswati. This research attempts to see how a patron client state has been supported by the development aid and trade preferential agreements with the European Union. It explains how the governance system of eSwatini is linked to the sugar industry. Analytically, this study connects different bodies of literature, namely rentier state theories, neo-patrimonial states and land grabbing through the global-domestic assemblages seen in the eSwatini case.

Key words: Land grabbing, Democracy, developmental aid, land grabbing, Tibiyo, King Mswati, eSwatini

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All of this could have been nothing had it not been the warm guidance and leadership of my supervisor Dr. Antulio Rosales. I am more than grateful for the deeply penetrative insights and analysis he made in this thesis. I am very thankful and could never have chosen a more perfect supervisor.

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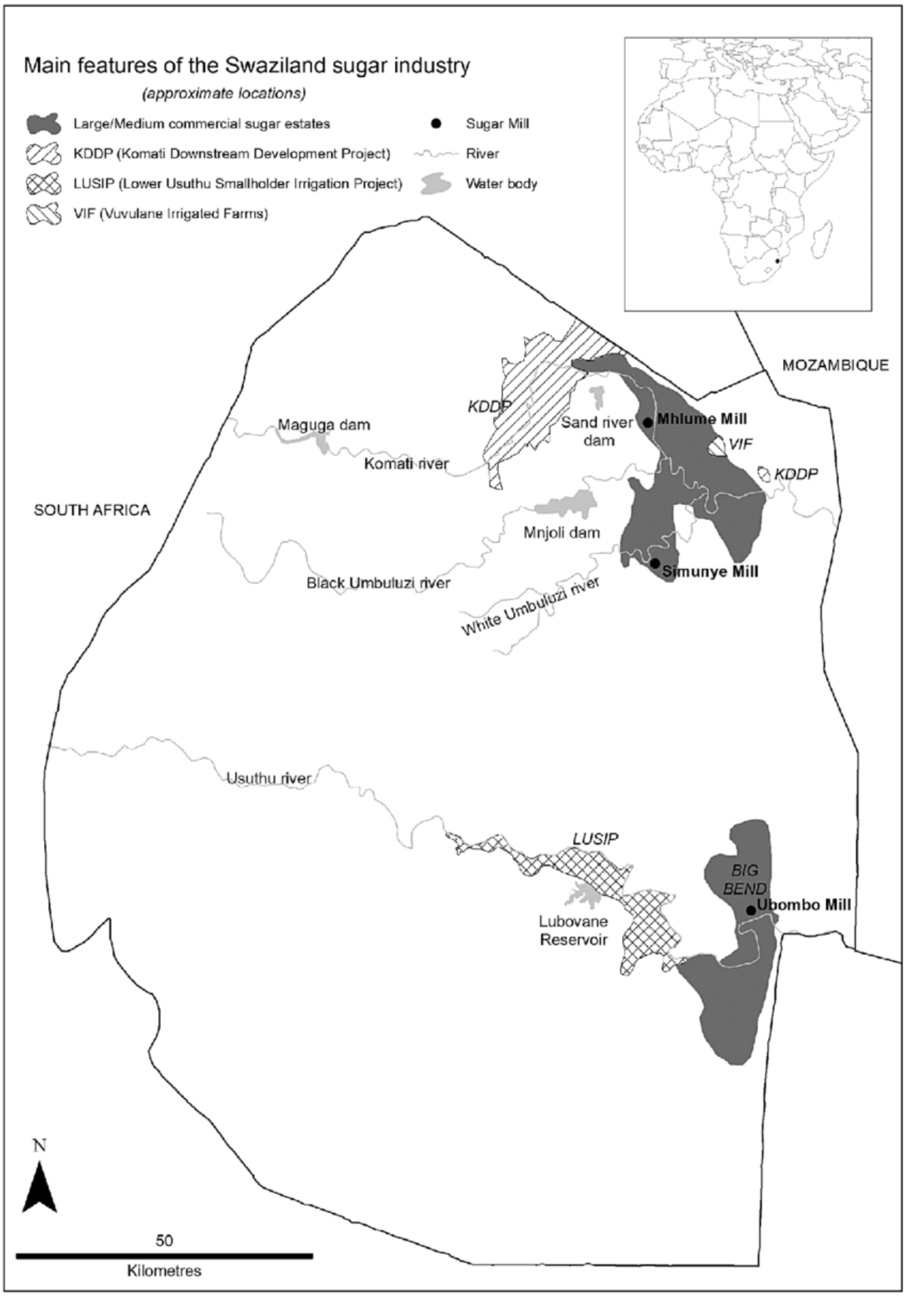

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1 Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

Political analysists, researchers and historians have written extensively on why eSwatini has remained an absolute monarchy in a continent that long embraced liberal democracy. Different theories have been proffered to answer this question. My thesis is a contribution towards that debate with a specific focus on understanding the connection between the political economy of the country's sugar industry and land grabs. This thesis traces the genesis of evictions to the Monarch's desire to benefit from rents from the lucrative European Union markets which have not only incentivised land grabs but has also allowed the Monarch to create a neo patrimonial political system that cuts deep into the political, social and economic life of the country. The result, this thesis will argue, is an entrenched power of the royal aristocracy over all facets of Swazi life and the attendant problem of undemocratic rule. The thesis threads together theoretical lenses on land grab, neo patrimonialism and rentier theory in order to find the relationship between external rents—in the form of lucrative sugar markets from the European Markets—and the undemocratic political system and the resultant problem of evictions. It locates the present Monarch as a benefactor of developmental aid gone wrong. This thesis sees the development of a political system meant to entrench neopatrimonialism and royal dominance not just in the economy but also in the political life of the country.

Towards this end I conducted a field visit to eSwatini in order to source data as well as collect documents and newspaper reports for analysis. The research was conducted during a tumultuous period in the history of the country, something that challenged many of the assumptions I had before the research. Right after my field visit the country erupted into a civil unrest where people were demanding democratic reforms. I therefore had to supplement my earlier data with later telephonic interviews to contextualize the connection between my research and the events that were unfolding in the country.

This thesis was initiated to answer a simple question: how has the European Union preferential trade agreements with eSwatini encouraged changes in control over, access and ownership of land in eSwatini? I enumerated the objects as shown below:

- To investigate the development of the sugar industry in eSwatini and how it has transformed the livelihood of rural dwellers.

- To analyze the role of the monarchy in peasant's land dispossession for the purpose of supplying sugar to EU markets.

- To probe how the preferential trade agreements has helped support/strengthen/sustain the authoritarian regime of King Mswati III.

I structured the thesis such that in the beginning I briefly locate eSwatini for a larger audience, and within that, explain the role of sugar and its trade with Europe in the eSwati economy. Subsequently, the chapter introduces the political history of the country, making special emphasis on the monarchic patrimonial rule established after independence. After laying out this brief history and explanation of the political system, I then give an outline of the main players in the country's sugar industry with a special focus on Tibiyo TakaNgwane, the company owned by the reigning Monarch. This outline helps underscore the centrality of the sugar industry in the country's economy and how it anchors the neopatrimonial political system. I then map out the importance and history of land within the Tinkhundla political system and the power it gives to the royal aristocracy. Understanding land holding patterns also contextualizes the decades long battle between the Monarch and peasant farmers in various parts of the country and the Vuvulane community in particular.

The thesis then closes with my findings and conclusions before pointing out areas for further research and analysis.

1.2 eSwatini in context

[1]eSwatini is a landlocked Kingdom nestled in the southern tip of the African continent. It is bordered by Mozambique to the east and the Republic of South Africa in all other directions. The kingdom has a population of about 1.1 million people, at least according to the country's 2017 census report. The World Bank classifies the kingdom as a lower middle-income country with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 4.711 Billion USD. eSwatini is the fourth largest producer of sugar in the African continent and ranks 25th in the world. In fact, sugar cultivation and milling is the main driver of the Swazi economy and the country's main export commodity, contributing to about US$285 Million of the country's GDP (The manufacture of Swazi Sugar, 2019). The economy of the country is largely agriculturally-based and sugar production accounts for half of the country's overall agricultural output. As much as 20 000 workers are employed in the sector. Sales receipts from the eSwatini Sugar Association (ESA) were estimated at 5.1 billion euro in the 2018/2019 financial year. This is just for raw sugar products and ethanol alone (ESA, 2019).

There is a whole service industry built around sugar in eSwatini; transportation (trucks), railways, sugar packing, engineering, sweet factories, insurance, distilleries, ethanol plants and banking. At the downstream the sugar industry is linked to other sectors of the economy like pre-packers, sweets, chocolates, jams, confectionary, etc (Sandrey & Vink, 2010).

This also includes small business where individual small farms supply the industry with cane. Sugar is therefore the base of a larger industry (Hlophe, 2010). The development of sugar cane farming helped attract sugar processing firms like Cadbury-Schweppes and Coca Cola who both operate large plants in the industrial town of Matsapha. By 1987 soft drink concentrates had become the second most important export earner in the country (Terry, 1997). Coca Cola's syrup, with its "secret ingredients", is shipped from Atlanta to eSwatini where sugar is added in their refinery in Matsapha. Isoglucose or corn sugar, which is produced by refining the

[1] Up until 2018 the country was called Swaziland

starch content of maize, undersells eSwatini sugar and major beverage companies like Coca Cola and Pepsi Cola use it in their soft drinks (Levin, 1986).

The resulting concentrate is then shipped to the rest of Africa and parts of the Middle East where water and bubbles are added. From there it is canned and sold. There are only seven such factories in the world. This makes the business to be hugely profitable and enjoys a six percent corporate tax rate as opposed to the standard 27.5 percent rate other Swazi companies pay (McGroarty, 2013). Hlophe (2014) notes that the sugar industry also makes a direct and indirect contribution to the provision of health care, housing, education, public utilities and social services especially within the sugar producing areas. The main food and beverage manufacturers that utilize sugar in eSwatini are Bromor Foods, Kraft Foods (Previously Cadbury), Ngwane Mills, Parmalat, and Eswatini Fruit Canners – Swazican. There are two boutique companies that use sugar to produce limited quantities of rum, vodka and craft gin in the country. The Eswatini Sugar Association is responsible for selling all the raw and refined sugar produced on behalf of the growers and millers (USDA Foreign Agriculture service, 2019).

The sugar industry is a major borrower from the banks in the country. According to the Eswatini Sugar Association Chief Executive Officer, Phil Mnisi, they borrow €174,790,528.65 from the commercial banks in the country and that without them, banks had no much business to do in the country. This is outside of the business the banks get from the other millers and growers that borrow and thereby sustain the financial services sector (African Leadership, 2020).

Plans are afoot to expand the sugar industry to produce more than sugar. Some suggestions include making sauces, gas and nail polish out of Swazi sugar. Sugar's by products like Ethanol can be reproduced then blended to make nail polish. Ethanol can also be blended with oil to produce blended fuel. Further, ethanol is promoted as a "clean energy": to have clean energy, you take the gas, and you can make electricity.

In terms of productivity indexes or matrix, the country produces hundreds of tonnes of cane per hectare which averages to about 60 or 40 or between 80 and 104 (African Leadership, 2020).

1.3 Sugar and the economy

eSwatini has for a long time benefited from preferential trade agreement with the European Union (EU) and favourable access to sugar markets in the United States and other African countries. These trade agreements have given the country's sugar industry privileged access to revenues and have boosted the national economy. Some rural communities that transitioned from subsistence agriculture to sugarcane farming have seen their income levels rise and general lifestyle improve.

Sugar has become eSwatini's main contributor of the state's revenue through taxes, community services and trade in terms of sugar exports and sugar related imports of agricultural chemicals, processing, fuel, finance as well as transport. In the past, sales to the EU market was carried out through the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States -EU Sugar Protocol (SP) preferential market access that allowed the country to supply the EU with a sugar quota of 120 000 tons as well as supplying 30 000 tons of sugar under the Complementary Quantity (CQ), meant to meet the EU port refiners (Dlamini &Dlamini, 2019).

As this thesis argues, the 'sweetness' of Swazi sugar, however, is built on the exploitation and eviction of rural communities especially in places like Simunye, Shewula, Big Bend and Vuvulane. Furthermore, it has also allowed King Mswati III to build a neo patrimonial state and has provided the rents that funds the luxurious lifestyle of the ruling royal aristocracy. At the centre of the forced evictions in the sugar belt is the king's company, Tibiyo Taka Ngwane. Tibiyo is the main player in the country's sugar industry because it has a slew of businesses under its wing. The company is a billion-dollar investment vehicle set up by the late King Sobhuza II "in trust" for the Swazi people that unfortunately became an exclusive monopoly of the King and the royal family. Over the years it has become a vehicle for dispensing patronage by the ruling aristocracy. The company was established through the purchase of foreigners' business enterprises deemed essential to eSwatini's developmental needs upon the country's independence in 1968. The late King ordered every Swazi family to contribute at least one cow to purchase mostly land from the departing foreign colonial power. Tibiyo’s founding charter, although never registered, defined the organisation as a national asset held by the King in trust for all Swazis each of whom was deemed a shareholder (ITUC, 2016).

The early success of Tibiyo can be traced back to a program initiated in the dying days of the colonial period where the government bought land from the white settler population. The late King Sobhuza II subsequently established a sister organization, Tisuka TakaNgwane from royalty fees previously received by Tibiyo. Right from the beginning Tibiyo’s expenditure was never integrated into the state’s public sector budget and until 1978 the company was capable of financing its capital and operating expenditure from its own resources. However, as the company committed itself to large investments exceeding their own resources the state, in some instances, was compelled to redirect substantial funds from the central budget to the organisation (Levin, 1986)

Over time, Tibiyo became a vehicle through which a new coterie of royalists were transformed into a black bourgeois class using the newly acquired land as a means for comprador accumulation (Levin, 1990). Through Tibiyo, royal elites allied with large-scale capital investments from South African and British capital and got themselves direct stake to these companies. Even though in principle the returned land and the capitalist investments were meant to be held by the King ‘in trust for the nation’ they became an accumulation vehicle for the aristocracy while excluding the vast majority of the population from any substantial gain (Laterza, 2016).

Owing to the way the organization is structured, Tibiyo can been described as a special purpose shell company operating as a front for the King but with no assets of its own since it has no legal status to own or sell assets. In the financial disclosure documents of all the multinational companies who are in business with Tibiyo, they record the transactions/financial assets to be in favour of the Swazi Nation and not the King (Swaziland Justice Forum report, 2018). In an interview with journalists from Inhlase, Tibiyo Managing Director, Themba Dlamini, indicated that most assets of the organization were not cash resources because Swazi nation land was held by the king in trust for the Swazi nation. The argument went that this was not tradable land hence a nominal value in the books of Tibiyo (Mabuza, 2020).

Facilitating the dominance of Tibiyo in the economy more generally and the sugar industry in particular is the status of King Mswati III who is both the sole shareholder of the company and absolute Monarch in the country. King Mswati III exercises executive powers through a charade of a neo-patrimonial system of governance known as Tinkhundla (gathering place) that bans political parties and privileges individual merit as a basis for political office (Masuku & Limb, 2016). The country's constitution, enacted in 2005, gives the King carte blanche powers over all three arms of government. In fact, the constitution allows the king the right to veto all laws and vests controls over all land, minerals on top and below the soil on him (Møller, 2019). The King cannot be taken to court in any capacity[2]. The Monarch maintains control over land and key sectors of the economy through his 'footstools' in the form of chiefs who operate at the community level. Sections 64(1), 64(4d) and 106(a) of the country's constitution narrows the line dividing public and private, compromising the integrity of government and rendering it fertile ground for corruption and administrative paralysis (Limb & Masuku, 2016).

As this thesis will explain, while the EU has used its preferential trade agreements with eSwatini as a form of 'aid for trade' such agreements have, in the main, been a poisoned chalice for many rural farmers who face human rights abuses and evictions by the king's company and the government. The thesis will analyze how the monarch has used his control of Tibiyo to wrestle control over land for his own business interests and to create a patrimonial system cutting across the political and economic sphere of the country. It will attempt to explain why the sugar economy and the favourable sugar markets in Europe have provided an enabling environment for the monarchy to consolidate its stranglehold over the economy and the country's politics.

[2] Section 11 (a)(b) of the eSwatini Constitution

1.4 Brief political history of eSwatini

Before colonization what is today known as eSwatini was a geographical area ruled largely by a Dlamini clan who had migrated from Delagoa Bay, south of present-day Maputo in Mozambique. Having conquered other tribes in the country, the Dlamini royal family exerted their dominance over land and only had to battle territorial challenges from colonial and Zulu invaders between the period 1885 – 1889. By 1906 the country had become an official British Protectorate in order to avoid being annexed by neighboring boers and Zulu tribal kings.

Between the early 1900s up until independence in 1968 the colonial administrators passed a series of laws that allowed two thirds of the country's land to be appropriated for commercial development with the remainder reserved for Swazi citizens. While 58 percent of the Swazi population lived on Swazi Nation Land, spread between 32 reserves, the remainder lived with precarious land rights on freehold land controlled by land-owning settlers and commercial estates (de Satgé, n.d).

The country eventually gained independence in September 1968 under a multi-party democratic system where the King emerged as a constitutional Monarch. Before independence, the departing colonial power had pressured the late King Sobhuza II to establish a Constitutional Monarchy with a parliament under a multi-party system. Even though against the advice of the British, who wanted the monarch to be above politics, the late King Sobhuza II supported the creation of a royalist party – the Imbokodvo National Movement (INM) − to compete in the country's first national elections in 1968 (Baloro, 1994). The first multi-party elections held in 1967 saw the INM sweep to power with an overwhelming majority. All other political parties were swept aside and no opposition party was represented in parliament. With such a stunning victory, the Monarchy's support and prestige among the Swazi population, especially the rural dwellers, was demonstrated to the British colonial administration, the white settlers and the Swazi petite bourgeoisie, many of whom crossed over to join the INM (Baloro, 1994). Although other parties were tolerated, none had representation in parliament until the next elections in 1973 where the INM lost three out of the 24 seats to the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (NNLC), a vaguely Pan Africanist and socialist party.

The loss of three seats for the INM did not in itself constitute any serious threat to the royal family and the then King, Sobhuza II. What was significant, and especially important for this study, was that the three candidates were elected by constituencies containing large numbers of sugar plantation workers who were disgruntled with the government over their working conditions. In particular, the Vuvulane Irrigated Farms were at that time the only settlement scheme in which Swazi farmers held their land on a freehold basis rather than under the traditional land tenure system, something that seemed to irritate the royal family (Hlophe, 2020).

The NNLC's ability to build a political base among this community constituted a potential threat which the King and the royal family were determined to eradicate. Their first strike was an attempt to deport Thomas Ngwenya, a newly elected member of parliament under the NNLC ticket, on the grounds that he was not a Swazi citizen. Ngwenya challenged the deportation order in court successfully. Unable to dislodge Ngwenya by using existing legislation, the King submitted the Immigration Amendment Act to Parliament whose provisions empowered a specially constituted tribunal to decide cases of disputed nationality. Under the terms of the new Act, Ngwenya was once more ordered to be deported. Again Ngwenya challenged the order in the Appeal Court, the highest court in the land, where the law was set aside as unconstitutional (Hlophe, 2020).

In response, Sobhuza II declared a state of emergency, dissolved parliament, banned all political parties and suspended the Constitution. He then introduced for the first time the Umbutfo Swaziland Defense Force (USDF). Essentially, King Sobhuza II transformed what had nominally been a constitutional monarchy into an absolutist one (Balaro, 1994). The country operated without a parliament or public representation until 1978 when the king established the Tinkhundla system of governance in response to widespread political discontent and unrest in the country triggered by a teachers' strike of 1977 (Hlatshwako, 2019). As it shall be shown in this next sub-section, the Tinkhundla political system was important to the royal aristocracy because it created the enabling environment and political structure for royal domination and control especially in the economic sphere. King Sobhuza's mentality when transforming what was nominally a constitutional monarch into an absolute one was a claim that the post-colonial political institutions inherited from the British were incompatible with Swazi tradition to which, as the Swazi monarch, he was the face and protector. In collusion with colonial rule, King Sobhuza actively manipulated the ideology of tradition to maintain his influence over Swazis and fortify royal control over the country (Laterza, 2016).

After the banning of political parties, a series of laws related to land were passed. The Land Concession Order was promulgated in 1976 that made all land concessions granted in freehold subject to the pleasure of the king and on such terms as he may determine. Following this, the Land Speculation Control Act of 1972 was passed which established the Land Control Board (LCB) and a Land Control Appeals Board. This Act imposed restrictions on transactions of freehold land and required the registration of all landowners who were non-citizens and designated the sale, transfer, lease or other disposal of land to non-citizens as controlled transactions, requiring approval by the Board (de Satgé, n.d).

In 1982 the Farm Dwellers Control Act was enacted which recognised the rights of 'squatters' on farms and sought to regulate these by means of a written agreement, valid for a fixed period and requiring renegotiation upon expiry. This law was amended in 1984 to allow for the creation of Farm Dweller Tribunals to rule where rights were in dispute. Chiefs were represented on these Tribunals, some grew their powers to determine use and occupancy rights on freehold land (*ibid*). These laws showed that the King recognized the importance of land to an overwhelmingly rural nation and how this important resource was to be tied to royal legitimacy and patronage (Woods, 2017).

1.5 Tinkhundla system of governance

In order to understand contemporary eSwatini it is important to first understand the unique political system called Tinkhundla. In fact, Limb and Masuku (2016) describes the country's Tinkhundla as a neo-patrimonial system that guarantees royal supremacy over all aspects of Swazi society. Under this system political parties are banned and the King exercises executive powers. To understand the King and his business interests in the sugar economy then understanding how the political system enables and abets the patrimonial system is equally important and relevant for this study. The political system is unique to the country and is both ideological as it is legal and constitutionalized into law.

Tinkundla were recreated by Sobhuza II when he designated former recruitment centers of the Second World War as individual Tinkhundla offices. These centers had previously been used by the African Pioneer Corps as recruiting facilities for the war. The late king transformed them into quasi-administrative buildings staffed with loyalists to the monarchy. Politically, Tinkhundla became a frontier of Sobhuza's struggle for political power with the British.

During British colonial rule traditional authorities had to find avenues of collaboration to keep their power base within the native population while the Swazi Monarch wanted to regain what he considered the traditional powers of Swazi monarchs that had been usurped by British rule and threatened by non-nationalist political forces during colonialism right into the eve of independence. During the final decade of the British Protectorate, Sobhuza saw Tinkhundla as informal institutions to parallel that of the British colonial administration (Woods, 2017).

Tinkhundla was designed to operate at two levels; as the administrative basis of the state as well as the sole option for engaging in politics. While in theory the administrative decision-making and services were decentralized into the hands of regional and local officials, in reality this new governance model allowed the monarch to appoint and monitor state officials. Politically, those with political ambitions had to first swear allegiance to a local chief through *kukhonta*[3] and then be given royal assent before becoming a candidate for political office. All tinkhundla candidates were thus expected to proceed successfully through these two initial steps to partake in the electoral process thus making the selection of political office barears to be skewed towards loyalty to the monarchy (Woods, 2017). It is in this context that Tinkhundla as a political system allowed the King first to bypass British control, and later, the potential resistance of state officials and opposition political parties. Importantly, it allowed the royal aristocracy to entrench their power on all facets of Swazi life.

The Tinkhundla system was only formally recognised in 1955 when King Sobhuza II sought to actively reassert the role of traditional authorities and to guide the nation through the post-war era. Tinkhundla committees were established to provide an organised and parallel governance system for indigenous people in preparation for independence. The colonial administration neither interfered with nor supported the resurrection of Tinkhundla as a vehicle for traditional leadership because it was aligned with the colonial policy of separating native and European populations (Marrengane, 2021).

Mkhonta (2007) takes this view further and suggests that such colonial policy was favourable to the traditional leaders hence they emerged as a strong and influential group post-independence. When parliamentary representation was reinstated through the Establishment of Parliament Order of 1978, political parties remained banned and elections were to be open to all Swazis on individual merit. The challenge with this electoral system is that elections were not conducted under a secret ballot as candidates were seated and counted, with the winning candidate being those with the highest number of votes. Even worse was that the winning candidates did not become their representatives in parliament but were members of the Electoral College whose job was to approve names submitted by the royal family (Dlamini, 2005).

Under this system those who position themselves as close to royalty have access to national benefits. Importantly, the monarchy is guaranteed power since the armed

[3] Kukhonta is a process by which an individual seeks residence in a chiefdom by approaching local traditional authorities. From this process an individual is allocated a piece of land with user rights to build on and cultivate the land, including inheritance to his/her descendants. Under normal circumstances, a person who has been given land must offer a cow to the chief but things have changed now, as the traditional leaders and people with vast boundaries now sell the land to people at prices ranging from E30 000 to E10 000

forces power rests on the king and recruitments favour the royal family, chiefs, regiments and all those loyal to the aristocracy. In many instances, the traditional legal system takes precedence over the civilian legal system (Motsamai, 2012).

The country operated without a constitution for over three decades with the monarch ruling by decree until 2005 when a new constitution was enacted. However, the Constitutional provisions of the new supreme law did not tamper with the absolute powers of the monarch and retained the provisions outlawing political parties. Under the new constitution, the king appoints cabinet (on the advice of the Prime Minister), two-thirds of members of Senate, ten of 65 members of the House of Assembly, many senior civil servants, the Chief Justice and other justices of the superior courts, members of commissions established by the constitution, and the heads of government offices. Parliamentary legislation requires the king's consent to become law (Motsamai, 2012).

Based on this history and emergence of the Tinkhundla political system, I begin the next chapter by interrogating the role of sugar and sugar trade with the European Union in the process of destitution of peasant livelihoods in eSwatini and the affirmation of an absolute monarchical rule. The thesis seeks to establish the links between the political economy of sugar production and export and the establishment of neopatrimonialism as a form of rule that perpetuates complete control of resources and land by an oligarchic elite embodied in the King of eSwatini.

2 The structure of the sugar industry in eSwatini

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I provide a structure of the sugar industry and the different players' role in it in order to map out the linkages between the political structure of the country, the absolute powers of the monarchy, the role of international development partners and the new forms of land grab by the state. I start by explaining the regulation of the sugar regime in the country, its ownership and control, the relationship between land and sugar in the country, the industry actors, international markets and reforms within the EU sugar market. I delve into details to show the nexus between the sugar industry, the political structure of the Tinkhundla system of governance and to the absolute powers of King Mswati III. The chapter then concludes by highlighting how the sugar industry has been the foundational anchor of the neo-patrimonial state and how the sugar rents accruing from the European Union preferential markets have emboldened the monarchy and enabled conditions for land appetite by the ruling aristoracy and his business partners.

2.2 Regulation in the sugar industry

The main institutional players in eSwatini's sugar industry are the eSwatini Sugar Association (ESA), the millers and the cane growers. ESA acts as the regulator whose mandate is derived from the Sugar Act of 1967 (Masuku, 2009). The act stipulates how ESA is to be constituted. It states that the organisation is made up of twelve members drawn from the eSwatini Sugar Millers Association (ESMA) as well as twelve members from the eSwatini Cane Growers Association (ECGA). According to ECGA, the organization is defined as a member owned/funded non-governmental (NGO) and not for profit (NFP) entity established through the Cane Growers Act No.12 of 1967 as amended with retrospective effect to October 1963. The two bodies, as shown in figure 2, are of equal status and are both represented in the council of the Sugar Association, an organization that administers the business and affairs of the association (Masuku, 2009). The three clusters of large-scale estate sugar cane production mills are located in Ubombo and are fed by the Usuthu river; another in Mhlume serviced by an 88-km canal from the Komati river via the Sand River dam and then lastly Simunye which is dependent on the Mnjoli dam on the Black Mbuluzi river (Terry & Ogg, 2017).

The demarcation of roles is such that ESA regulates the entire value chain and the millers are responsible for producing the sugar. Meanwhile, cane growers are responsible for producing and delivering the sugarcane to the mills. The millers also own sugar estate of their own from which they produce sugarcane (Masuku, 2009). All sugar cane growing in eSwatini is done under irrigation in the Lowveld region by four categories of growers; the Miller owned estates (who are by far the largest producers at 49 percent), large scale growers who contribute 18 percent production, medium size growers who contribute to about 12 percent in production and then finally small growers at 21 percent (Terry & Ogg, 2017). The largest number of growers fall under medium and small sized growers even as these account for a smaller volume of total production. To grow Sugarcane in eSwatini one must be registered and allocated a grower quota number by the Sugar Industry Quota Board (Sikuka, 2017).

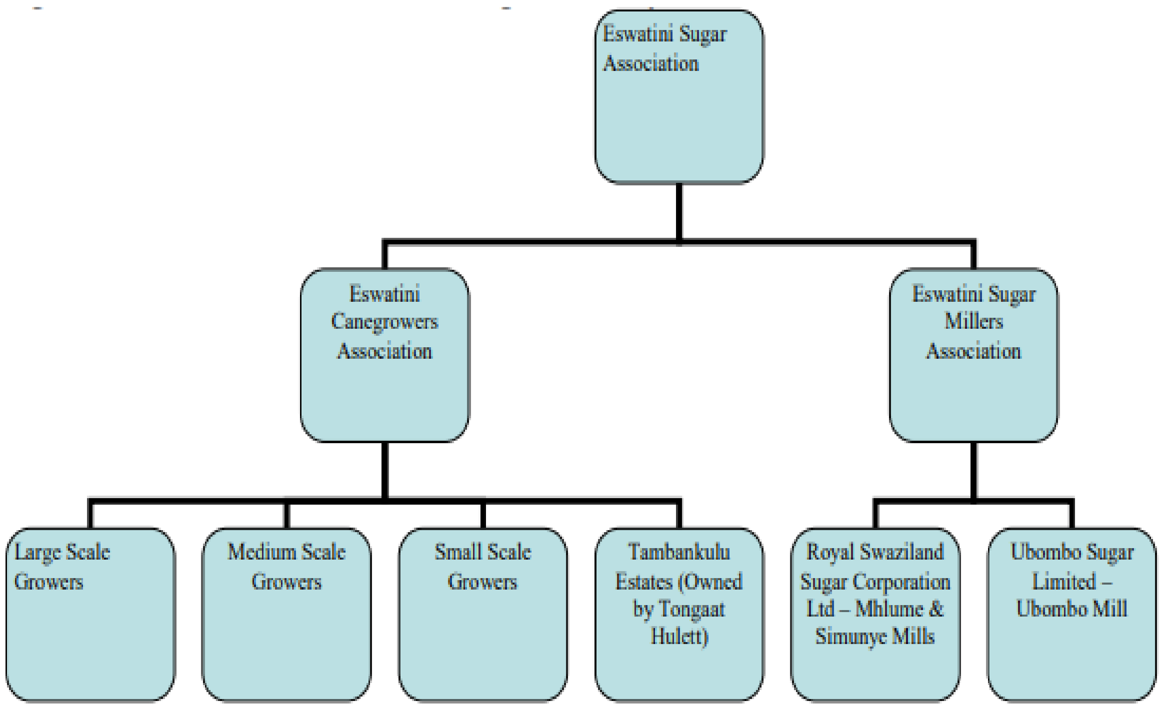
Sugar cultivation has not always dominated agricultural activity in the semi-arid Lowveld though. In the 1980's the main agricultural activity in this region was rain-fed cotton farming. Other crops like maize and beans were still grown but it was predominately for subsistence use. Cotton, however, occupied relatively large areas and was the main source of cash income. It was not until 1991 that sugarcane farming gained momentum mainly due to a combination of political and economic factors.

These included the bankrolling of farmers by Swazi Bank through credit schemes as well as the allocation of sucrose quotas to Smallholder Sugarcane Growers (SSGs) on Swazi Nation Land (Dlamini et al, 2010).

2.3 Ownership and control

For a majority of Swazis, however, their main source of livelihood is subsistence agriculture. In fact, 70 percent of Swazis live on farm households allocated on Swazi Nation Land (SNL) and are engaged on low productivity subsistence agriculture and animal husbandry (Ndlovu, Dlamini & Nkambule, 2014). Agriculture in the country is dualistic. There is the Title Deed Land (TDL), which occupies 26 percent of the land and holds an estimated 90 percent of the available irrigation infrastructure and uses modern technology to produce mainly cash crops, and then there is the Swazi Nation Land which involves mainly semi-subsistence small holder agriculture with communal grazing (Ndlovu, Dlamini & Nkambule, 2014). Arable land covers 1,910 km2 of the total land area while Traditional Customary Tenure (TCT) and Title Deed Tenure (TDT) occupy 57.6 and 42.4 percent respectively. This land is accessible through traditional structures (Dlamini & Masuku, 2011).

The early sugar cane estates were developed on TDL by British and South African capital. Ubombo ranches complex were the first to emerge out of TDL in the central Lowveld in 1958. They supplied the Big Bend (Ubombo) sugar mill. Two years later, the sugar estate had expanded to the northern lowveld. The then Colonial Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC) and JL Hulett started production at their Mhlume sugar estate on TDL in 1960.



Source: Eswatini Sugar Association & Eswatini Canegrowers Association

Figure 1 Structure of the Eswatini Sugar Industry

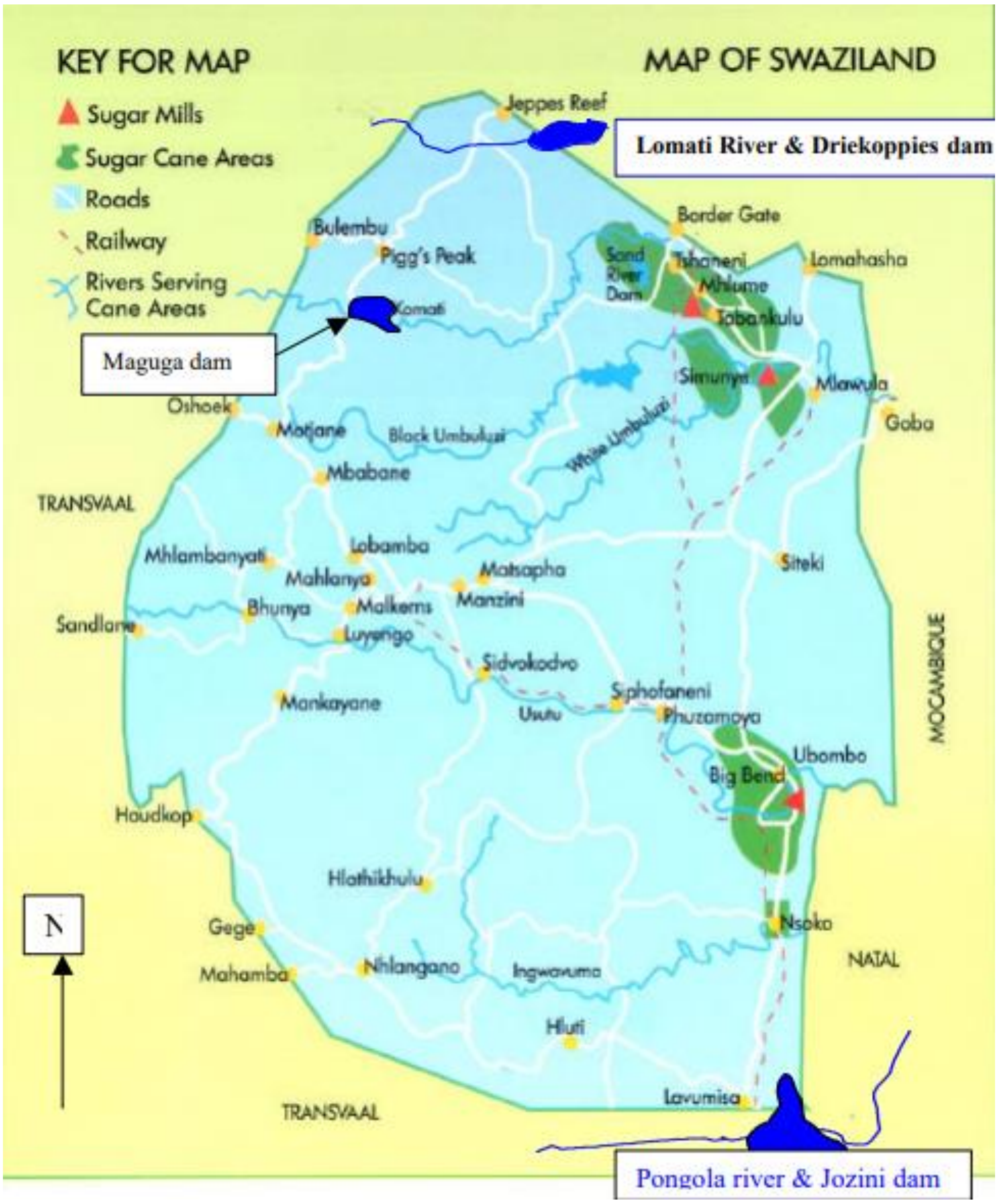


Figure 2 The map of eSwatini showing the sugar cane areas in the lowveld.

To build and help expand the sugar industry in the lowveld, as shown in figure 3, as much 550 families had to be resettled to make way for cane fields and the associated development and infrastructure in places like Ngomane. At first the Swazi government insisted on first class financial and administrative arrangements be made for Swazis. These included the preparation of new lands for agricultural purposes, the reconstruction of buildings and the re-siting of graves. Such a policy was endorsed by the other investors. International Lending Agencies contributed to the project by setting aside up to 1 million euro to ensure resettlement in accordance with laid down criteria. Resettled families were provided with counselling under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture. Land clearing commenced in Ngomane areas around March 1979. 275 families were immediately relocated to nearby developed land on the neighboring ranches (Winn, 1980).

After eSwatini gained Independence in 1968 the expanding industry provided a vehicle for investment and land acquisition by the Swazi monarchy (Terry & Ogg. 2017)[4]. In the same year the then King, Sobhuza II, established Tibiyo as an investment fund following the reversion of mineral rights to the king 'in trust' for the nation. Owing to shortages of domestic capital, Tibiyo sought partnerships with foreign capital through joint investment in new projects and the acquisition of shares in companies, including those in the sugar industry (Terry & Ogg. 2017). Most of the land that Tibiyo used to expand its empire was repurchased under the Lifa Fund, itself financed through a cattle levy on all Swazis. Land repurchased under the Lifa Fund programme was subsequently registered in the name of the Ngwenyama (King) in trust for the Nation. Part of this land was made available to chiefs for the Rural Development Areas Programme (RDAP) while the remainder was used by Tibiyo as agricultural projects, industrial projects, or housing projects, or administered (Sithole & Boeren, 1989).

The Swazi Monarchy subsequently took a direct 40 per cent stake in Ubumbo in 1973 through Tibiyo Taka Ngwane in return for allowing the expansion of a further 2,000 hectares (ha) of sugar cane. Further growth in royal sugar interests followed in 1977: a 50 per cent stake in Mhlume was acquired from Commonwealth Development Corporation, and the Royal Swaziland Sugar Corporation was established with a new mill and 9,000 ha for sugar cane production at Simunye financed by an international investor consortium (Dubb et al, 2017). In the subsequent years Tibiyo broadened its hold over the sugar industry through the establishment of sugar estates at Sihhoye and Sivunga on Swazi Nation Land (Levin, 1986).

The emergence of sugar cultivation came with problems of its own though. For example, Packard (1986) notes that the construction of canals provided perfect conditions for the resurgence of malaria in the country, particularly in areas where

[4] Unlike other African countries, independence in eSwatini was not a result of armed struggle but a protracted negotiation between the monarchy on the one hand and the emerging pre-independence opposition parties. See Laschinger (1965) on the events of independence.

sugar was cultivated. Similarly, Bischoff (1989) saw Tibiyo's aims as not national or set to establish Swazi control over production but a case of entrenching Dlamini nationalism, allying itself with foreign capital that was joined in the hip by a financial and ideological bond. It was, in the final analysis, a Dlamini nationalism showing itself as a form of "pseudo nationalism."

2.4 Sugar and Land

2.4.1 Land administration

The patterns of land ownership in eSwatini determine power dynamics in eSwatini and influence who can control what. In the main, land is owned by the King and administers it through Chiefs at the community level. In turn, traditional authorities are guided in the management and allocation of land by the Swazi Settlement Act of 1950 (with amendments in 1979). This act is specific that land allocated must be used for crop production. This is in line with the eSwatini government's development policies which prioritise agriculture as the basis for development (Van Waveren, 2007). The remainder of SNL includes land transferred from TDL and has been leased out to commercial enterprises, managed by the government of eSwatini or controlled by Tibiyo Taka Ngwane. Another type of land, which covers less than 0.4 percent in eSwatini, is the Crown Land. This type of land is owned by the Swaziland government (Terry, 2017).

SNL is further divided into three sub-categories. The first is land leased to private companies primarily engaged in well managed estates and capital intensive agribusiness and timber production. Worth noting about this type of land is that the companies who own it specialise on export commodities like sugarcane, pineapple, citrus, beef, dairy, poultry and timber and covers about 7 percent of total land. Agricultural production in this category provides the basis for most of Swaziland's manufacturing activity (Mabuza et al, 2013).

The second type of SNL, obtained before and after independence in 1968, is land reclaimed from concessionaries through land purchase programmes. It accounts for about 12 percent of the SNL surface area. This land was used by the Ministry of Agriculture and National trust Commission for agricultural conservation. The Ministry of Agriculture also uses this land for crop demonstration purposes and the management of livestock ‘sisa’ and fattening ranches. The last category of SNL is held under customary tenure and contains a majority of eSwatini. The King is in effect the ultimate authority regarding land distribution, and exercises this power through the local chiefs (Mabuza et al, 2013).

2.4.2 Chiefs

eSwatini’s land and political economy is marked by a duality, on the one hand, of small- scale petty commodity production, and large-scale capitalist production, on the other. At the core of the system is the continued control over land allocation by the ruling royal family with its material basis of power. Funnel (1991) posits that given that a majority of the Swazi population still reside on SNL understanding this dynamic is crucial for understanding the country's agrarian structure. He argues that the agrarian structure is at the core of very fundamental contradictions of Swazi society and that throughout modern Swazi history, the land question has rarely been far from the forefront of political debate (Funnel, 1991).

The traditional structure of how Swazi society is organised is such that there are about 380 traditional chiefs each of whom has an inner and outer council. These traditional leaders are linked hierarchically and at the apex of which is the Swazi Monarchy. Chiefs are at the grass-roots edge of a patron-client system. Traditional authorities therefore exercise significant power especially in land allocation in a country where land represents access to livelihood, making them very powerful. Key to the concept of Swazi Nation Land is that it is communally held by the King “in trust for the Swazi Nation.” The Constitution identifies the role of chiefs as the “footstools” of the King who rules indirectly through them. Land allocations under SNL means everyone can enjoy the use of the land but cannot be bought, sold or used as collateral. In exchange, the recipients pay allegiance to their chief, usually in the form of tribute labour or unpaid labour when requested. There is no formal legal security of tenure in this arrangement and no uniform official written records of these allocations. Under customary law, Chiefs have the power to allocate as well as to banish people from land (Sallinger-McBride & Picard, 1989).

It is worth noting here that the precolonial Swazi state never became a "tame" native authority hence the aristocratic hegemony in eSwatini has always been threatened by an entrepreneurial peasantry. This explains in part why the distribution of land under the authority of Chiefs is at best usufruct. Local chiefs sometimes saw improvements in agriculture as threatening their authority. In the early days, traditional elites were often enraged by nonfood crops (Sallinger-McBride & Picard, 1989). This was understandable because the authority of chiefs was drawn from payment of tribute labour and the sometimes showering of the local chiefs with food.

Levin (1986) observed that capital penetration and accumulation led to patterns of uneven development, which more recently have unfolded in the context of an alliance between the Swazi aristocracy and the forces of international capital. This has been complicated by the conflicting development strategies of Tibiyo and government ministries that have created serious disarticulation of development. The role of chiefs and absence of genuinely democratic structures allow few possibilities for the resolution of land disputes issues in rural areas. Because of uneven capital penetration, a complex class and social structure has emerged which has led to a partial proletarianization of Swazi men, but it also has reinforced and deepened the economic, as well as social, divisions between men and women (Levin, 1986). This research will later explore this patron-client system in detail drawing on insights from rentier state theory and neopatrimonialism.

2.4.3 eSwatini Sugar and international markets

In 1999 the government of eSwatini adopted a National Development Strategy known as "Vision 2022" whose aim is to improve the standard of living of all people through improved access to quality services, wealth creation and employment opportunities.

Key in this development strategy is the support for the sugar industry as means to alleviate poverty. eSwatini's National Development Strategy places high emphasis on sugar as the driver of the economy and also as the means to fight poverty and underdevelopment. The industry has been anchored by readily available markets in several countries and brings in lots of revenue that has kept the economy stable. The country's sugar is sold to several main markets, namely: the European Union (EU), the United States of America (USA), China, Taiwan, the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and the regional/world market. With the EU, the country benefits from preferential market access under the terms of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP)-EU Protocol on Sugar (SP) and the Complementary Quantity (CQ) as already discussed.

Sales to the EU amount to about 150 000 tons per year, with 120 000 tons sold under the Protocol on Sugar. The country also sells sugar to the USA where it benefits from the Rate Quota (TRQ), which permits entrée on preferential terms. Total sales to the United States amount to about 16 000 tons annually given that the country has access to 1.6 per cent of United States demand for sugar.

Lastly, the country sells roughly one half of the eSwatini Sugar Association's sugar to SACU market. SACU is made of eSwatini, Lesotho, Botswana and Namibia. This includes sugar meant for local consumption. Sales into the regional and world markets are mostly representative of left-overs from sales into the four main markets mentioned above, where the excess sugar is sold. This regional market is typified by commonly low prices (Hlophe, 2014). The country previously enjoyed duty-free access to the East African market based on its membership in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). However, this privilege was withdrawn owing to eSwatini's membership in Southern African Development Community (SADC) and SACU which do not enjoy duty free access in COMESA.

This withdrawal resulted in reduced exports to the East African market. The country is increasingly facing pressure from other SACU members who want to be offered lower prices or be allowed to import cheaper sugar from Brazil and the United Arab Emirates (USDA Foreign Agriculture service, 2019). Since 2000 an annual average of 51 percent of total sales has been going to SACU with 25 percent to the EU, three percent to the USA and 21 percent to the world market (mainly the east African region). Seven percent of the country's foreign exchange earnings come from sugar sales outside SACU. SACU's dollar based reference price (DBRP) tariff system protects the sugar industry against import competition through a dollar that grants import protection against low world prices (Sandrey & Vink, 2010).

2.4.4 eSwatini and the changes in the EU sugar regime

In 2006 the European Union (EU) reformed its sugar regime by reducing the reference price of sugar by 36 percent, from €523 per ton to €404 per ton. This affected not just European sugar beet producers but also sugarcane producers in the eighteen African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries which had preferential access to the EU. High world prices helped stop the projected reduction from 100 percent to 90 percent of the EU minimum guarantee price for the period October 2009 to September 2012 (Dlamini & Dlamini, 2019).

Before then the country's access to the EU market was through the ACP-EU Sugar Protocol (SP) preferential market access that allowed the Kingdom to supply EU with a sugar quota of 120 000 tons as well as supplying 30 000 tons of sugar under the Complementary Quantity (CQ). This was mainly meant to meet the EU port refiners. The quota system is nothing more than a set of rules that came into effects through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) on sugar in 1968 that allows price support to the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) and the Least Developed Countries (LDC) producers above the price set in the world market (Dlamini et *al*, 2019). This system of preferential market access responded to a desire to continue the dynamic whereby formerly colonised territories supplied the metropolis with essential primary commodities.

ACP countries, eSwatini included, are estimated to have lost as much as €462 million in export earnings due to these EU sugar reforms. Together with SADC and other APA countries, eSwatini negotiated preferential market access to the EU and was allowed access to duty-free quota of up to 3.5 million tons a year only until 2015 (Dlamini *et al*, 2016). Because the country is a significant sugar exporter and highly dependent on the industry it was hard hit by these reforms. To make up for this and secure their acquiescence to reform, the EU agreed to an 'Aid for Trade' programme called the Accompanying Measures for Sugar Protocol countries (AMSP). This earmarked almost €1.3bn to assist the affected ACP countries by: (a) enhancing the competitiveness of their sugar industries; (b) diversifying economic activity in the cane growing areas; and (c) addressing the social and environmental impacts of adaptation. Swaziland was initially allocated €134m of this total (Richardson, 2012).

Wealthy countries agreed to provide money for developing countries to help them adapt to global trade, moving away from the more brutal approach to trade liberalisation of tearing down trade barriers. To mitigate for these changes the EU broadened the industry to make it more efficient. In fact, the organisation spent €94 Million on 60 different sugar related projects in the country. Some of the money was spent on new tar roads and a large bridge across the Usutu river. The idea was to lower transport costs between growers and the mills while also developing new sugar related products. Most of the money, however, went to large agricultural poverty alleviation schemes in the lowveld. These involved finding (and funding) farmers and chiefs on Swazi Nation Land who were prepared to release their farms into co-operatives and community companies (Hlophe, 2019).

On the face of it, the aid for trade program for the kingdom looked to have been a successful as it was able to bring smallholders – who were given grants – into the industry, away from maize and cotton crops that depend on seasonal rains. Together with the government, LUSIP and other developmental banks, the EU funded the construction of large dams, canals and irrigation schemes. It then provided 80 percent of the cash needed to kick start the farmers as new cane growers. Communities were encouraged to diversify their crops from the beginning. However, workers for sugar mills fared less well as they lost their jobs while communities lost access to sugar industry welfare assistance and the existing smallholders who were mired in debt, were left to fend for themselves (Tran, 2012).

Under the EU and eSwatini National Indicative Programme 2014--2020, there is an acknowledgement that development aid would in the main go towards helping the country's agriculture sector because it has large potential to a favourable climate and abundant soils. However, this great potential is not realised because of a range of institutional, production and marketing-related factors. The EU has already contributed EUR 120 million through the Accompanying Measures for Sugar Protocol Countries to support implementation of eSwatini's National Adaptation Strategy (NAS), where focus was on increasing the productivity of small-scale sugarcane growers, developing irrigation infrastructure, establishing farmer companies, and improving road infrastructure to reduce costs of production. The establishment of farmer companies to group individual plots of modest size (average of 1.7 ha) in order to obtain the necessary economies of scale has been a success. It has also formalised the land allocation/utilisation arrangement, and facilitated the provision of business and agronomic skills to farmers (European Union report, 2014)

2.4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown the importance of the sugar industry in eSwatini's economy and rural development. It has located the industry as a competitive player not just in the SADC region but in Africa too. This chapter has shown Tibiyo as an important institution in the oiling of the aristocracy's transformation into a new comprador bourgeoisie class. The chapter also revealed that the king has significant interest in the sugar industry through a slew of businesses aligned to Tibiyo Taka Ngwane, a company he controls as a sole shareholder. In turn Tibiyo has connection to a broader governance system of local chiefs. Finally, the chapter places the Swati sugar industry in a wider global trade context where preferential treaties with the EU are important. The linkages of the local governance system and the global trade dynamics are fundamental for the following chapters, as I explore the patron-client system created using rents from the sugar industry and the resultant problems of land grabbing that flow from it. In the following chapter, I show that the absolute nature of the monarchy and its business interest converge and create a rentier state and neopatrimonial systems that enable land grabs that go unchallenged.

3 Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I elaborate on the different literatures in social science that inform the theoretical backbone of this research. First, the process of state formation is important as a foundational discussion to the varieties of state forms that ultimately influence the political economy of the sugar industry. Second, I elaborate on two forms of state that have emerged in the literature on the global south: rentier states and neopatrimonial states. In this context, rentier states, which rely on external sources of rent coming from soil and subsoil resources, can give way to the emergence of patrimonial forms of domination, wherein individual leaders control the distribution of benefits, rewards, punishments, and resources, such as in the case of eSwatini. But focusing exclusively on state forms would limit the intervening variables to domestic and purely "African state" problems, and this would be a mistake. The evolution of the sugar industry in eSwatini, as we shall see, is intimately linked not only to the kind of state that has emerged in the country but to its interlinkages with the global economy. For this reason, I bring in the literatures of rentier and patrimonial states with discussions of class formation and global land grabs as larger political economy dynamics that reinforce one another.

In Table 1 below, I summarize the main arguments found in the literature. I also provide some empirical evidence of how these arguments are experienced in the case of eSwatini. Before delving into these bodies of literature I briefly discuss the issue of state formation and contextualize state formation in colonial and postcolonial conditions.

Theoretical perspective	Arguments	Empirical observations in eSwatini
Rentier states	○ A small segment of the society has access directly in the creation of wealth while the rest involves in distribution and utilization of the wealth. ○ The "rentier social contract": the rentier government distributes accrued wealth to society through services, social benefit programs, and favorable governmental jobs in exchange for the society's acquiescence.	○ The royal family, the King in particular, is in firm control of Tibiyo which has substantial ownership in the commanding heights of the Swazi economy. ○ Tibiyo funds a slew of social programs, scholarships and cultural programs means to buy the loyalty the population
Patrimonial states	○ Vertical distribution of resources. ○ Patron-client networks based around a powerful individual or party. ○ Public resources appropriated by ruling elite for private gain.	○ King Mswati as an absolute ruler controls and is a share hold in companies doing business in the telecoms, transport and logistics, property and agriculture business. ○ Government funds the King though tax

		payers funds through what is called Royal Emolument funds. ○ All key political and economic positions and decisions needs the sanction of the King
Land grabbing	○ Appropriation of large portions of land for commercial or speculative purposes. ○ Usually connected with global trade patterns, land grabs dispossess local populations, often stripping them out of their means of survival or subjecting them to exploitative labour conditions.	○ Vuvulane farms taken over by the King's company ○ Growth of land appetite mostly facilitated by guaranteed lucrative European Union markets. ○ Local population who fight land grabs unable to get justice in court or any other structure because of the absolute powers of the King

Table 1 Theoretical perspective, Arguments and Empirical observations in eSwatini

3.1 State formation

To understand rentier states, states that rely on significant sources of rent coming from exploiting soil or subsoil resources, it is important to appreciate the theories on state formation so that we can locate how these states tend to emerge and behave. The importance of understanding patterns of state formation in various parts of the world is crucial because they produce differentiated results especially for the developmental model or structure of the new state. The dynamics of how a state is formed therefore profoundly impact its future politics as some countries tend to be endowed with superior developmental potential than others.

For example, Sørensen (2001) gives an important insight on why state formation in countries like Taiwan was different to other countries. It seems that the nature of a colonial power matters in the bigger scheme of things. Sørensen argues that unlike other colonizing countries like France or Britain, Japan used its own experience with imperialist domination to develop a comprehensive strategy on the role of colonies in their empire. In the case of Taiwan, such strategies included keeping in check the short-term economic greed of private Japanese interests, the settling of property rights thus gave motivation to make long term investment in agriculture and the heavy investment in rail ways, road-building, harbours and the extension of telegraph lines from among other developmental paths pursued by Japan. Without justifying the cruel nature of the colonial enterprise, it is apparent from Sørensen's study that, in the case of Taiwan, upon the end of the colonial project, the country was not a dependent territory. This is important because it gives an important qualifier why, for example, Taiwan and some African countries were on similar overall economic levels in the 1950s yet penned out differently several years later. The conditions set up by the Japanese on Taiwan were therefore much more favourable for a later process of state-making than the corresponding conditions provided by say the British, French and Portuguese colonizers (Sørensen, 2001). This was the case even for Korea where the colonising Japanese pursued a state-led political and economic transformational agenda, still with immense human costs associated with the colonial enterprise. Following the Japanese developmental state project, its colonial project drew on a political economy geared towards "catching up" with advanced Western powers. In

Korea, specifically, the essential elements of this political economy included the creation of an effective centralized state capable of controlling and transforming society and making the state able to intervene in the economy in ways that allowed its effective industrialization. Unlike the British, which created private property regimes expressly dedicated for an extractive purpose in their colonial states, the Japanese may have imposed a deliberate developmental state in Korea with emphasis on the use of state power to drive socioeconomic change (Kohli, 1994).

Meanwhile, state formation in Europe was largely tied to warfare, at least according to the often criticized work of Tilly (1985). Tilly argues that coercive would-be rulers were turned into legitimate governments owing to threats or external war. The ever presence of external threat led to the overlapping interests between would-be kings, landowning nobles, and merchants who each had different ideas about how society should be organized in the early modern period. A middle ground had to be reached between these three groups ultimately leading to the development of constitutions that defined rights and obligations. In the end, the monopoly of violence — a major characteristic of the modern state — was granted to the rulers. To sustain this monopoly of violence the state needed a tax base the creation of a fiscal bureaucracy that helped in revenue collection. The nobles, on the other hand, had to surrender their claims as rulers of their land leading to the idea of private property rights. With time the importance of the state's ability to levy taxes led to the state active championing of production, distribution and the rule of law. The development of internal markets ultimately became high in the state agenda and with time citizens became more educated, the middle class grew, and the urban bourgeoisie began to outweigh the rural aristocracy. In order for citizens to willfully give their taxes they began to demand a bigger voice on how their money gets spent. The slogan 'no taxation without representation' therefore came as an understanding that there is a social contract between rulers and ruled (Aidi, 2019).

The relationship between war-making and state-making was studied in detail by Taylor and Botea (2008) with specific focus on Vietnam and Afghanistan as two of the most war-prone states in the developing world. Their findings was that while war contributed to state-building in Vietnam in Afghanistan it led to destruction of the state. In the former, the presence of a cultural homogeneity and a revolutionary movement that was able to combine nationalism with a communist ideology led to the coming of a strong state. Meanwhile in Afghanistan, decades of war led to state collapse and this was attributed to the absence of both a core ethnic group and a revolutionary ideology that could inspire both the nation and state personnel (Taylor & Botea, 2008).

Some scholars, while acknowledging the connection between violence and state development, argue that in the developing world today things are different. For example, international norms have set fixed borders and in the process made external threats to be of little influence on state formation. Equally important is the ever present international dimension to contemporary conflict which leads to weak state building alliances with foreign commercial parties to exploit opportunities in the global economy rather than to develop internal markets (Verkoren, & Kamphuis, 2013).

While state formation in Europe underlined the relationship between taxation and political development, in the post-colonial world state formation occurred in conditions of the abundance of natural resources and strategic rents at the international level that rulers could access (Aidi, 2019). These natural resources allow for the extraction of external rents as opposed to taxes. Modern states have therefore tended to follow a different path to state formation than say market democracies and developmental states. ‘Rentier states’ tend to have a tight leash over these rents because of little reliance on the economic activity of its citizens to generate revenue. This gives citizens little leverage to hold the government accountable and to enter into a ‘social contract’, in a democratic sense, with the state (Verkoren, & Kamphuis, 2013).

3.2 Rentier states

Yates (2015) defines rent as any surplus left over after all the costs of production had been met or income paid to a landlord for the value of the real property and to compensate him or her for interference with the possession of the land. Given the foregoing, rent, together with ‘wages’, ‘interest’ and ‘profits’ becomes part of four factor of income (Yates, 2015). A rentier state meanwhile comes from how political economists use the word rent to describe returns to landowners. In today’s world "rentier state" has come to describe a country that garners a substantial portion of its income from external sources, most generally from the sales of resources (Losman, 2010). Political economists have identified different kinds of “rents” ranging from economic (derived from the export of natural resources such as oil, gas, minerals, diamonds, and timber) to “strategic rents” (which come in the form of payments for development, military spending or a particular foreign policy) (Aidi, 2019). Hussein Mahdavy is acknowledged among the first to coin the term ‘rentier state’ and laid the fundamentals of rentierism as a term and concept. The idea of rentierism however gained currency thanks to the works of both Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani who used the concept to describe prospects of democracy in the Arab world (Gray, 2011).

Beblawi (1987) defined a rentier economy as one that relies on substantial external rent. He was clear that internal rent, even where substantial, is not sufficient to characterize a rentier economy even as it may be sufficient to explain the existence of strong rentier class or group. He argued that where the economy is without a productive domestic sector an external rent can be enough to sustain that economy. Another important element of the rentier state–as a special case of a rentier economy–is that only a handful of people are engaged in the extraction of this rent (wealth) with the rest mere being useful in utilizing or distributing the rent. A rentier mentality, on the other hand, is one where the work reward causation has been broken. Reward therefore becomes a windfall gain isolated from the conventional process where ordinarily it should be the end result of a long, systematic and organized production circuit (Beblawi, 1987). Meanwhile, in a rentier state system, argues Levins (2012), citizens rely on the state to distribute income accrued from rents either as food subsidies, employment opportunities, health care, or all the basic necessities of living. In such a situation it is normal to find a complacent population not adequately represented, a non-accountable government, poor economic performance, and little trust between the "haves" and the "have-nots." In the Middle East, for example, the high level of wealth and welfare allocation has led to an implicit social contract that substituted political rights for state-provided welfare and to the cooptation of strategic social groups (Schwarz, (2008) Rentier state theory, even though conceptualized to explain rich countries in the Gulf and Middle East, has given us an important insight into the challenges in diversifying economies, the bloating and inefficiencies of state institutions, the absence of democracy, the power of national security states, and patriarchal political cultures in countries with abundant natural resources (Moritz, 2019). Today we are able to understand why oil-exporting countries in the Middle East remain under-developed despite these revenue streams. Through this theory we appreciate that oil-producing states do not make revenue through taxation of the local population instead depend on externally generated rents hence they face many challenges (Altunisik, 2014). The lack of significant taxation in rentier states translates into dearth of political participation thus rentier states tend to be more prone to authoritarianism. Rentier states therefore tend to be less sensitive to societal demands given that they have the financial means to establish and enforce regime legitimacy through rent distribution practices that subdue opposition. The social contract in rentier states became unbalanced by an authoritarian bargain resulting in the people's political acquiescence in exchange for a share of the rents (Altunisik, 2014).

In a rentier state, the availability of resources helps to guarantee traditional loyalty. The result is the buying of political support. This arrangement is kept stable for so long as political rights are traded for state provided welfare. In the end both the state and citizens enter into an implicit social contract that keeps everything on the balance. This arrangement leads to society trusting state institutions with providing public goods and offer little to no resistance. However, as soon as citizens feel a self-serving elite capture of the state this relationship may break down. In order to enforce compliance and social cohesion, the state can turn predatory and repressive (Schwarz, 2008).

In South America, what Rosales (2013, 2019) calls a 'radical rentierism' by leftists regimes was precipitated by a mistrust and failure of neo liberal capitalism. Venezuela, for example, expanded to extractive frontiers like gold mining, crypto currency mining and issuing of crude oil and gold backed cryptocoin as part of scrapping new resources from the underground. While in the past the Venezuela state maximized rents via royalty and tax payments from oil companies, this radicalized rentierism expanded the sources of rent to these fronts of extraction. Venezuela's radicalized rentierism combined emerging technologies, the collateralization of resources and traditional mineral extraction to procure new rents. The downside is that radical rentierism is nonetheless rendered fragile and its ecosystems and infrastructures disrupted given the possibility of the emergence of actors that exercise authority in absence of the state. These actors put the very extraction industry at risk. Illegal actors often take the role of the state or collide with state actors to exert violence as everyone fights to expand the mineral extractive frontier (Rosales, 2019)

In the case of Nigeria, for example, rent seeking and accumulation has been facilitated by the enactment of such laws as the Land Use Act especially in the oil, industrial manufacturing and agricultural sectors. The result has been a lawful, yet cheap land expropriation which has come as good news to Nigeria's retired army generals who use their power and authority to establish large-scale agro-pastoral farms and land-intensive industries—businesses that have de-peasantized and dislocated thousands of smallholding local cultivators. This is the case even in the oil sector where acquisition of land under the dispensation of the Act has exacerbated community fragmentation caused by land transaction deals and the limited sharing of any accruing benefits or compensations. The results has been proliferation of communal disputes and 'petro-violence' over land endowed or believed to be endowed with oil. Additionally, The Land Use Act became a locomotive through which the rentier state could expropriate land from local communities and individuals on behalf of oil companies and other major capitalist investors at little to no cost (Omeje, 2006). In oil rich rentier countries like both Venezuela and Nigeria, leaders often have a financial motive and are therefore deterred from engaging in risk taking. This may present itself as foreign policy adventurism. Leaders can engage in reckless action knowing that they are guaranteed very little domestic opposition through removal from office (peacefully or otherwise) because financial resources are at the disposal to buy political loyalty. The reverse is also true, since oil rents are the lifeblood of these regimes, they can also act as a deterrent to leaders to engage in international conflicts in fear of interrupting the country's oil export sales (Colgan, 2014).

In patrimonial settings, political authority tends to be individualised, often resting on a hierarchy of cronyism, and unrestrained leaders are unlikely to make credible intertemporal commitments. In patrimonial rentier states, extractive capacity is thus low because there is little guarantee of property rights, constant predation reduces economic production, and public resources are typically exploited for private gain. Both rent generation, which is weak, and rent distribution will be dominated by a concentrated elite, even a personalized structure. In clientelist settings, some degree of political competition takes place but usually occurs on the basis of extensive patron–client networks. Some public goods are provided to mobilise and reward supporters, but they tend to be particularist in nature instead of more broadly enhancing collective welfare. Time horizons are short because politics are relatively unpredictable and there are low degrees of institutionalisation, accountability and constraint on power. In clientelist rentier states, rent generation suffers from these short time horizons, and both rent generation and distribution are oriented towards providing benefits to clientele networks.

3.3 Neopatrimonial states

Gray (2009) makes the point that rentier states are enabled in environments of patrimonial rule. Patrimonialism and neopatrimonialism are systems where political relationships are mediated through, and maintained by, personal connections between leaders and subjects, or patrons and clients (Pitcher et al, 2009). The term has its origin on Max Weber's idea of legitimate patrimonial rule as different to his "ideal-type rational-legal authority". Over the years, the prefix 'neo' has come to indicate an extension of traditional patrimonial authority into the modern age, as a suffusion of patrimonial patterns into rational legal structures. Even though patrimonial systems as a concept has been used to explain various systems and regimes some scholars like Pitcher et al (2009) have cautioned that this usage dilutes the concept beyond analytical usability thus perpetuating normative judgments based on "ideal-type" government structures that do not exist (Wolfe & Müller, 2018).

In a rentier state, elites build these patron-client webs into institutions and social units, and then becomes the means through which resources and political order is dispensed centrally to various groups and forces, and through which political information and requests for favors pass upwards to the higher elites and the sovereign (Gray, 2009). Pitcher (2009) goes further to suggest that patrimonialism cements social bonds through trust reciprocity and material exchanges while also distorting power, corrupting authority and fueling personal aggrandizement especially when it permeates the state and bureaucracies.

In African countries, the defining features of neopatrimonialism has been strong presidents, a clientalistic relationship between politicians and citizens and the use of state resources for legitimacy (Sigman & Lindberg, 2019). If it is true that neopatrimolism is not unique to Africa then then why is the continent predominantly led by patrimonial leaders and running patrimonial states? Mkandawire (2015) offers three possible explanations. He argues that patrimonial systems thrive in Africa because of the continent's economy of affection which normalizes corruption. Neopatrimonialism, he argues, provides a moral cultural gloss that renders corruption understandable and its victims complicit. The second feature he identifies is what he calls untoward deference to authority which more often than not has led to the rise of the big man syndrome on the continent. The last feature he points out is the very nature of the African big man himself whom he describes as full of insatiable greed and gluttony. In the end it is not African neopatrimonialism per se that accounts for the continent's poor performance but rather the pervasiveness, ubiquity, and popular acceptability of it (Mkandawire, 2015).

The difficulty with curbing personalized clientelism in African is that countervailing institutions like the media, the courts and parliamentary ethics committees are not strong. This explains in part why it has been difficult to establish viable liberal democracy in the continent. For example, in the absence of state funding, MPs will solicit campaign money from different sources and then use such resources to sustain clientelistic networks. Practically, this might entail attending to voters' schools fees, electricity and water bills, funeral and wedding expenses; or distributing cutlasses and other tools for agriculture, or even handing out 'chop-money' (small cash sums) to constituents. The real motive of such giving and taking is to establish and reproduce agreements of mutual loyalty. The clients are (re-)assured that the 'big man' (or 'big woman' for that matter) will take care of their needs in times of hardship in exchange for political loyalty transferred into votes in democratic elections (Lindberg, 2003).

The Bokassa regime in Central Africa Republic took personal rule and resource control to paroxysmal levels leading to the failure of institutionalization and by extension the state. Perhaps the purest illustration of a patrimonialised system can be seen by taking a glance at the evolution of the Mobutu regime (1965–1997) in the then Zaire. Unlike other patrimonial regimes in the continent what made Mobutu's brand of neopatrimonial rule different was its unparalleled capacity to institutionalize kleptocracy at every level of the social pyramid plus his unrivalled talent for transforming personal rule into a cult and political clientelism into cronyism. Under Mobutu's 'predatory' rule, corruption was so pervasive as to have become its most visible and defining property (Bach, 2011). To compensate for a crisis of legitimacy, Mabutu secured the "instrumental loyalty" of competing elites and was able to secure short-term payoffs but the downside to this was that economic development was derailed (Mkandawire, 2015). In an attempt to undermine neopatrimonialism in Mozambique, for example, developmental partners began to work with the state and giving it technical capacity as a form of neo-institutionalism thinking. However, such technical competence and sophistication ended up being used to prop up the old neo patrimonial systems meant to destroy and reinvent them in such a way that they had expand to new, sophisticated and complex international financial dimension.

In the case of both Angola and Mozambique strengthening the institutional capacity of the state had the unintended consequence of facilitating neopatrimonalism's inner logic (Vidal, 2018). Put differently, neo-institutionalism merely helped to increase the old patrimonial system's political, technical, legal, and bureaucratic competence thus helping to facilitate access to international global financial markets while diluting civil society's critical voices into apolitical representative structures. In the end neo-patrimonialism had merely evolved than gave way to liberal democracies. The results was an even more sophisticated interrelated public/private, African/foreign clientelistic networks that has become effective, unaccountable, and served the essentials of a neo-patrimonial logic for power maintenance (Vidal, 2018). However, some scholars are critical of the way neo-patrimonalism is used to explain the failures of the states in Africa. As Wai (2012) notes, neo-patrimonialism must be understood beyond just theoretical concepts but also power-political tropes for normalising relations of domination and exploitation, past and ongoing. In fact Wai argues that the use of neopatrimonialism to construct narrative about Africa is objectifying and that those who use it cannot claim to stand outside of the power relations which sees Africa as a paradigm of difference and "object of Western colonial fantasy plus its desperate desire to assert its difference from the rest of the World" (Wai pg 16, 2012).

Distributive policies and processes are not peculiar to big man African politics as they can be found even in liberal democratic societies but the difference, as argued by Theobald (1982), is that in those societies these distributive process are normally conducted according to universalistic or affectively neutral criteria, or seldom involves the distribution of spoils by a minority hell bent on limiting the formation of constellations of power against it. However, Theobald makes a disclaimer by explaining that caution must be exercised in isolating a socio- political phenomenon using such simplistic comparisons as they tend to gloss over substantial differences--both within a society at different stages in time and between societies at quite different stages of socioeconomic development. Such criticism mirrors that of Bach and Gazibo (2013) who argue that Weber's ideal-type do not constitute empirical benchmarks in the real world.

The controversy on patrimonialism as a theoretical concept, not least as it is used in Africa, is not new. For example, Erdmann and Engel (2007) reveals the nuances of the discourse on 'neopatrimonialism' by acknowledging the terminological weaknesses that have given rise to conceptual confusion that make people like Wai uncomfortable. In fact they warn that neopatrimonialism was in danger of becoming a catch-all concept because of the absence of clear definitions which would allow for a distinction between neopatrimonialism and other types of domination. This would enable us to apply the concept to empirical research. Despite such critical review the two still believed that the concept was still useful and could be given more substance (Erdmann & Engel, 2007).

3.4 Land Grabbing

Land dispossessions in Africa have a long and complicated history. They often play out differently and produce differentiated results across scale and time, especially in post-colonial Africa. These dispossessions are made worse by the emergence of land grabs which have complicated the ways in which indigenous communities relate with their land.

Behnassi and Yaya (2011) define land grabbing as taking possession of or control over a large scale agricultural land for the purpose of commercial or industrial agricultural production. Land is therefore important to the lives of the rural poor as it acts as a source of food, shelter, income, and social equity. For this reason, human development, vulnerability to hunger and poverty are greatly undermined when there is secure access to land. Moreover, the ways in which this resource is managed—including the rules that govern who gets to use which land resources under which conditions—is central to development outcomes in many societies (Benhassi & Yaya, 2011).

Agribusiness, conservation, extractive industries, infrastructure projects are acknowledged as the main leading causes of land alienation in developing countries (Laltaika & Askew, 2018). Historically, indigenous communities have held a different relationship with the land they occupy. These relationships was as much economic and political as it was cultural and spiritual. Duffy (2008) chronicles how during colonial appropriation of indigenous people's land occurred as a result of a 'just war', where the military was permitted to violently acquire land if certain criteria were met. This notion of a 'just war' was of course colored by a European world view, provided enduring support for patterns of colonization and empire that exerted control over indigenous peoples and their lands (Duffy, 2008).

At the turn of the 21st century Africa experienced a new phenomenon where disproportionately high number of land was leased out to foreign governments and companies for a variety of reasons. The scale of such land acquisitions increased greatly from 2004 to early 2009 with at least 2.5 million hectares of transferred land occurring in five African countries alone (IFPRI). Whether land is being leased out/sold to foreign companies or governments, the thread that runs through is that the land exchanging hands is more often than not previously occupied by poor local and indigenous populations who have little control over such transfers (Aryeetey & Lewis, 2010). Scholars have attributed the ensuing land rush in the global south to the crisis of neo-liberal capitalism which has unleashed capital's appetite for new resources of accumulation at a scale not seen before in contemporary history. Accordingly, the convergence of multiple crisis of finance, environment, energy and food have increased the demand for land in the global north countries (Baglioni & Peter Gibbon, 2013).

Land grabs must therefore be understood as producing differentiated results especially regarding class formation. These class formations are often results of the incorporation of local traditional leaders into joint ventures with foreign capital. Hall (2015) discusses how, for example, land grabs precipitate new patterns of accumulation and commercial investments precipitating changes in local economies. These new agrarian changes create new labour regimes with some farmers becoming workers while others become redundant and ultimately move to the cities (Hall, 2015). Land dispossession in many African countries is underpinned by assumptions governments or foreign investors have about land. In the majority of cases concepts such as "available", "idle" or "waste" land are used to justify land allocations to investors. A perfect example of this is to be found in Ethiopia. Records of the investment promotion agency in that country classified land in Benishangul Gumuz as "wastelands" with no pre-existing users only to be contradicted by subsequent research. Cotula's (2009) research on these areas found that the land was previously used for shifting cultivation and dry-season grazing, respectively. We learn therefore that concepts such as "idle" land often reflect an assessment of productivity than existence of resource uses and that these terms are often applied not to unoccupied lands, but to lands used in ways that are not perceived as "productive" by government (Cotula, 2009). While land dispossession and displacement destroys local people's traditional ways of life, their customs, beliefs and perspectives we can at least breathe a sigh of relief that their concerns are increasingly being heard at the international level. The recognition of indigenous land rights in ILO Convention No. 169 is one example of such victories plus the fact that the Human Rights Committee has become a key driver in raising awareness of indigenous cultural connections to land (Duffy

2008). As studies on ways of land dispossession in Africa by Laltaika & Askew (2018) showed, these land deals come with multiple negative effects on indigenous communities that arise when the interests of agribusiness, conservation, climate change mitigation, extractive industries and largescale infrastructure projects fall into alignment. The solution, they argue, is for the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII); and the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the three oversight mechanisms for indigenous issues within the United Nations, to join forces and align their agendas so as to better fight the nexus of interconnected forces threatening indigenous peoples' existence (Laltaika & Askew, 2018).

A combination of both land dispossession and land grabbing has surfaced scholarly discussions around the need to study the responses of peasant farmers and indigenous communities. Critical discussions on land struggles have historically been researched in agrarian studies. Marxists and social movements theorists show a historical periodization of protest that separate between 'primitive', 'defensive' and 'pre-political' mobilizations from those in the nineteenth century and after that aimed at seizing or at least influencing the state (Hall, 2015). Peasants' 'failure' (for many Marxists), argues Hall, to manifest a proletarian consciousness in contention over land, or to transcend 'defensive' local struggles (for social movements theorists), became just one more indication of their atavistic politics and culture (Hall, 2015). In Uganda Martiniello (2015) was able to study the forms of protest that 80 to 100 women from Amuru District staged in response to land evictions in 2012. These women protested naked in front of representatives of the Local District Board and surveyors of the sugar company Madhvani Group, the firm seeking land in the area for sugarcane growing. Martiniello (2015) helps us gain insight into both the character of contemporary land grabs and the nature of peasant resistance to them. Escalating rural social protests manifested in both every day and hidden practices of resistance and moments of open, militant contestation are aimed at (re)establishing and securing access to means of social reproduction while also embodying claims of land sovereignty and autonomy vis-à-vis capitalist markets and state (Martiniello, 2015). Things are made worse by the fact that official documentation of land records and property rights and ownerships in many African countries is limited. For example, in Sub Sahara Africa only about 10 percent of rural land is officially registered. The rest is informally administered through traditional institutional mechanisms something that makes African land to be the most vulnerable to land grabbing while also placing farmers in a weak legal position to claim of ownership or adequate compensation in case of land acquisition by investors (Ambalam, 2014).

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I employed rentier state theory, neo-patrimonial states and land grabbing literature as theoretical lenses that helps up explain and anchor the patrimonial rule of King Mswati III and the resultant problems of land grabs in the country. As my study will show, the expansion of the sugar industry increased the Monarch's desire to benefit from the external rents brought by the lucrative sugar markets in Europe. Since the country's sugar industry is the main driver of the eSwatini economy and the biggest employer in the country it makes sense why agriculture occupies the biggest share of developmental assistance from the European Union and other developmental partners. Rampant land grabs in eSwatini must therefore be understood as a localized dynamic of a wider problem of resource expropriation by powerful elites globally and locally. As the global markets continue to rake in substantial amounts into eSwatini's national fiscus so too has been the desire by the Monarchy to consolidate his control of sugar industry through Tibiyo Taka Ngwane. Land grabs in this context get to be motivated by King Mswati III's desire to incorporate rural land into his national trust and then lease it to the sugar corporations he controls or is in business with. In this set up, Tibiyo gets to be positioned as an important player in the consolidation of this patrimonial rule given their dominance in the eSwatini economy. King Mswati's blend of patrimonialism uses the power of tradition and culture to organize politics and create some super arching sense of the unity and legitimacy by leveraging on cultural exceptionalism. The rents from export sales of sugar allows the Monarch to buy the loyalty of mostly the middle class through creating business opportunities in the sugar industry and recruitment into the state bureaucracy.

It can be said that eSwatini represents an affirmation that African forms of patrimonialism represent varieties that not only derive from traditional milieux with few patriarchal characteristics, but which incorporate elements that have little in common with patrimonialisms in the Arab-Muslim world or elsewhere. In the case of eSwatini the King uses Tibiyo to buy loyalty through patron –client networks to secure political stability and ensure a certain measure of legitimacy. In the case of eSwatini such networks involve the awarding personal favours in the form of public sector jobs and the distribution of public resources through business contracts and projects within the sugar sector.

4 Research Methodology

In this chapter I explain the methods I have used in conducting this research. Owing to the nature of the enquiry I am making, it became convenient to engage in qualitative research. Qualitative methods of research are important for my type of research because they are for the most part intended to achieve depth of understanding of a particular subject (Bailey, 1994). Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) define qualitative research as a form of research design in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences from a critical analysis of emerging themes. In this case I wanted to find out how the lucrative sugar economy has affected land holding patterns in the sugar belt more generally and the Vuvulane area more specifically. My interest was to understand how developmental aid and preferential marketsd by the European Union and other development partners has intentionally and unintentionally propped up the political structure that confers absolute powers to the monarchy and the resultant issues of land grab that flow from that. By choosing qualitative research I was able to get guidelines that gave me enough detail in maximizing the range of information about my subject (Kruger, 2003). I had a complete appreciation of Merriam (2002) views that qualitative modes of research have to understand that individuals socially create meaning as they interact with their world and therefore as the researcher I was interested in digging deep into the constructions and interpretations people make on a day to day basis. Within qualitative research, I engaged in exploratory research which by definition is a process where little is known or understood about a phenomenon that is then carefully examined with the intention of developing preliminary ideas about it (Neuman, 2014). The advantage with explorative research is that it requires the researcher to formulate theories about the world and about how things relate to each other before initiating any empirical study (Neuman, 2014). The researcher therefore proposes a structure of order that allows him or her to look at the world in a certain way, or through a certain light or prism (Reiter, 2013).

4.1 Positionality

The researcher is a political activist from eSwatini and also a former journalist. As a former journalist I had previously written for several media houses about the issues involving Vuvulane and the sugar farming communities more generally. This proved to be both an advantage as it was a disadvantage. It was an advantage in so far as I was able to converse in a language that my informers were quite comfortable in. Additionally, I had a general comprehension on the nuances of the issues under research. In equal measure, it was a disadvantage because I was studying a phenomenon from the tinted windows of my own subjective political opinions. I therefore had to reflect on my positionality before, during and after the interviews. Savin and Major (2013) describe the term positionality as an individual's view and the position he/she has chosen to adopt in relation to a research task. For this reason Manoha et al (2017) cautions that positionality demands of the researcher to acknowledge and locate their views, values, and beliefs in relation to the research process. Continues Manoha et all (2017, pg 2): "*Self-reflection then becomes a mandatory and an ongoing process in any research project as it gives the researcher the ability to identify, construct, and critique their position within the research process. Reflexivity, the concept that researchers should acknowledge and disclose their own selves in the research, seeking to understand their part in it, or influence on the research informs positionality. It is a self-reflection on how their views and position might have influenced the research design, the research process, and interpretation of research findings*."

Given this conflict of positionality I was, for all intent and purposes, an insider to the research. An insider research is when researchers conduct research with populations of which they are also members so that the researcher shares an identity, language, and experiential base with the study participants (Dwyer, & Buckle, 2009). While Dwyer and Buckle acknowledge that such insider roles may give the researcher a certain amount of legitimacy that allows for more rapid and complete acceptance by participants leading to the depth of data, they also caution of the unintended consequence of what they call an 'existential dual role'. This dual role results in role confusion especially when the researcher responds to the participants or analyses the data. While this is true of any research but the risk is higher when the researcher is an insider familiar with the research setting or participants through a role other than that of researcher (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

4.2 Study site

The main area of study for this research was Vuvulane located in the north east of eSwatini. I chose eSwatini for my research because I wanted to understand the intersection between land, economy, developmental aid and democracy (or the lack thereof). eSwatini therefore became the perfect country not just because it is an absolute monarchy but also because it is one of the few countries where developmental aid has been poured to the sugar industry to eliminate rural poverty, the limitations imposed by the country's lack of democracy notwithstanding. Additionally, Vuvulane was chosen as a site of study because of its tumultuous history. This place has historically shaped contemporary eSwatini by influencing the events that led to the present political system in the country. The Vuvulane sugar farming community was instrumental in igniting the series of events that ultimately led to the collapse of the nascent multi-party democracy in the country in 1973 and the subsequent introduction of the Tinkhundla system of governance in the country five years later (Hlophe, 2020). I also chose Vuvulane because it has always been a site of political tension and protracted legal battles that often pits the king against small-scale sugar farmers. At the centre of these battles are issues related to land. Even more interesting was the renewed interest in the media to surface some of the underlying issues that had led to more recent evictions in the area and the lack of democracy. Farmers Weekly (2018), for example, had reported that as many 33 farmers and 293 dependents had more recently been violently evicted from their land by Swazi police. This had led to the RSSC engaging in a Public Relations offensive to 'clarify' what it considered misleading statements circulating in the media (Zwane, 2018). Lastly, as a smallholder settlement and farming scheme, the Vuvulane Irrigated Farms was for a long time considered a beacon of success and a model for rural development not just in eSwatini but the continent as well (Tuckett, 1977).

4.3 Sampling technique

The sampling technique used for this study was the purposive sampling. This is a nonrandom method where the researcher decides what needs to be known and then sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Etikan *et al*, 2016). The advantage with purposive sampling is that it allowed me to select smaller units of analysis that helped yield the most information about my area of study. Purposive sampling can therefore occur before or during data collection (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009). I selected leaders of the small holder farming community who have been seized with the struggles of the Vuvulane community for a while. I also selected senior managers from the companies involved in the sugar industry who were knowledgeable about Vuvulane in particular and the sugar industry more generally. I then spoke to members of the non-governmental organizations and development partners like the European Union to triangulate my data. Combined I was able to get as much nuanced information. In selecting the Vuvulane informants I made sure that there was a fair representation of both males, females and young people to understand the differentiated ways my study topic is viewed and interepreted.

4.4 Data collection techniques

This research was conducted under conditions of lockdowns and general panic about the COVID-19 virus. For this reason, I had to be cautious not just on ethical considerations but also physical health of my respondents who were mostly old and falling under the category of those considered most vulnerable to the virus. The advent of the COVID-19 virus in 2020 delayed my study as I had to fly to eSwatini for my field research but quickly return to Norway following a COVID-19 lockdown announced in South Africa in March 2020. This meant the set of interviews I had arranged had to be cancelled at the last minute. However, I kept contact with a local informant who had previously helped me get in touch with the Vuvulane farmers, specifically those in the leadership of the Vuvulane Irrigated Farmers Association. I also used the snowballing method as a way of getting the resourceful people for my study. The snowball sampling technique, also known as the chain referral, is when an already contacted participant(s) refers the researcher to people within their networks who might participate or contribute concerning the said subject matter (Creswell, 2009). I also managed to speak to a non-governmental organization called Swaziland Justice Forum that had raised the issue of evictions in Vuvulane prominently in the media. I also interviewed senior managers who used to work for the big mills who had a deeper and nuanced insight into the issues facing the people of Vuvulane, sugar and the agriculture economy.

4.5 Gaining access

One of the first challenges I had to confront early in my research was the political sensitivity of the subject. The issues in Vuvulane pit the rural dwellers directly against the king, something that is seldom seen in the political history of the country. For this reason this issue was considered a hot potato and a controversial subject. I soon realized that the people were fearful and uncertain about their confidentiality and protection. There was also the fear of the authority of chiefs who do not allow anything bad to be said about the king. However, it helped that I was introduced to the community by someone they trusted and my informants accepted my role as a researcher was merely soliciting information for academic purposes.

4.6 The use of Documents

One of the methods I used to enhance depth in my research was document analysis. I reviewed available literature on the subject in order to get a better insight on the subject. This entailed sourcing secondary data in the form of newspaper reports and court documents. This was important because it helped me to triangulate my data. Triangulation in qualitative research refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources that help the researcher to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena by looking at it from different angles. Triangulation is therefore based on the premise that no single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival explanations (Patton, 1999). The importance of triangulation goes beyond qualitative researchers' often over emphasis on "emic" perspective as it reveals different aspects of empirical reality and helps the researcher test validity through the convergence of information from different sources (Triangulation, 2014).

The importance of documents in qualitative research is best captured by Miller and Alvarado (2005) who posit that unlike talk or action, documents are preserved traces that persist beyond the local context of their production and are able to "speak in the absence of speakers," and "remain uniform across separate and diverse local settings". They argue that for this reason documents were a type of formal communication that shows the competence, and often the specialized knowledge, of their producers (Miller & Alvarado, 2005). There was a lot of documents that were given to me as well as a long history of litigation that had moved up and down the court hierarchy. There were also various statements issued by the government, the Tibiyo TakaNgwane and then of course various civil society organisations.

4.7 Interviews

Before leaving for eSwatini I prepared my set of interviews and forwarded them to the Norwegian Centre for Research Data for approval. The organization's approval was important as a way of ensuring that my data collection and storage was not just ethical but procedural too. For the interviews I prepared guiding questions but eventually engaged in open ended questions to ensure that I obtain as much relevant information from my respondents. Before engaging with my informants I made sure to make them comfortable by assuring them that all information will be treated with the anonymity and the ethical consideration required of any credible research. I preferred engaging in face to face interviews for this research instead of telephone or even emails because I face to face interviews allow the observation not only of verbal but also nonverbal data. When in the same room, for instance, participant and interviewer have access to facial expressions, gestures, and other para-verbal communications that may enrich the meaning of the spoken words. This in turn enhances the quality of the interviews as they become more authentic. The interviewer is also able to facilitate trust and openness in the interviewee (Knox, & Burkard, 2009). For this research the participants organised themselves into a focus group of 12 participants. Powell & Single (1996) define a focus group as individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research. The interview lasted for a period of over two ours. This research was made easy by the fact that the researcher and the interviewees were all speaking the same Siswati language and therefore could hear and understand each other without a need for an interpreter. I used my phone to record the interviews. I supplemented this with note taking to note important points for clarity or even further investigation. As much as 40 percent of my respondents were women as a deliberate effort to seek women voices in my research to ensure a gendered perspective on the issue under research.

I personally found the focus groups convenient and time saving especially given the limitations imposed by the lock downs. As Qu and Dumay (2011) so ably observed, focus groups allow the researcher to take a less active role in guiding the discussion and therefore less bias than in individual interviews. I found that my informants were comfortable to speak and complement each other when some information was either forgotten or not properly explained. The ease with which the group was able to talk was testament to the importance of focus groups. The advantage with focus groups is that the participants can hear each other’s responses and therefore are able to provide additional comments that they might not have been made individually. Researchers who conduct focus groups often recognize that the participant interaction, which stimulates the identification and sharing of various perspectives on the same topic, is central to their success (Morgan, 1996). I interviewed an officer from the European Union who was not comfortable with being recorded and opted for note taking instead. King and Horrocks (2010) and Davies (2010) were instructive on how to handle those who prefer note taking. These authors both caution that in lieu of recorded interviews, note taking can be used as the next best option especially as they allow the participant(s) not to have concerns or fears of being recorded. However, I took caution when writing my notes because I understood that note taking may lead to the loss of some information as I may not be able to write statements word for word but rather input their own understanding and interpretations. To counter this, I created a feedback loop with my research participant by sending the original transcripts for any additional information, correction of misinterpretation during the note taking.

Once I had finished my interviews and back in Norway I realized that I needed to get more information from my participants and therefore conducted phone interviews with people I considered would be knowledgeable to triangulate the data. This was especially true once I was in Norway and the country erupted into a violent conflict where the king's properties were targeted for arson.

4.8 Use of audio and visual materials

Some of the information for this research was already readily available in documentary and other visual imagery that was freely circulating online. For my research it was important to engage with the visuals found on the internet which seemed to share a story of people I could not have possibly reached to interview. Scarles (2010) teaches us that where words fail visual auto-ethnography must come in handy because they help open spaces of understanding that transcend the limitations of verbal discourse. I found some of the clips shared on social media and the internet important for my study.

4.9 Ethical considerations

Before conducting my research I submitted a detailed project proposal spelling out the different ways in which I would acquire, process and store data. I needed clearance from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data. This was in line with an important observation made by Creswell (2007) that a qualitative researchers must be able to articulate in clear terms the purpose of the research and to ensure that the informants have no ambiguity or deception that could find them participating in a research they are not aware of. The first thing I had to do was to alert my contacts that I am an activist from the country but was conducting this research purely for academic purposes. My participants were keen to know how will my research help them in their struggle to get their land. I explained that the best this research could do is provide a basis for civil society organisations, policy makers and other activists to use it as a guide to understand the issues they face of Vuvulane and emphasized that this was nothing more than academic work. My informants were also concerned with their safety and expressed genuine fears that they live under condition of political repression and harassment from the police. I assured them I did not even have to know their identities as I will annonymise them in my data taking and storage. With time the informants became quite comfortable and spoke with ease. With time he informants and myself developed a relationship that extended beyond just the research. As this research taught me, ethical dilemmas arise once the researcher develops a rapport with his research participants.

4.10 Limitations/Challenges of the study

One of the clear challenges of this research was the global pandemic that had imposed a slew of limitations on physical contact and travel. I had initially intended to do the research in March 2020 but then there was a global lock down where countries imposed strict curfews and limitation on physical contact. I was forced to cancel some of the interviews I had planned for early 2020. I then arranged again to interview some of my informants in January 2021 and this time I was able to meet them albeit under conditions of lock down. On the day of my interviews one of the informants received news that one of his children had died. He was a poor old man who lived in a stick and mud house. This seemed to subdue the enthusiasm of not just myself but the other focus group members. However, the respondent insisted that the interview go ahead despite this loss. The other members of the focus group also insisted that I come for the interview. I brought with my sanitizers and masks to ensure that everyone was following the COVID 19 protocols. I also ensured that there was the required two metre physical distance between us. I then informed them about my research, how they will be recorded, the ethical considerations I am obliged to follow and then assured them of the safe storage of the information and that at any point they can delete, alter or even revoke anything they said in the research. One of the informants asked what would happen if there were to be repercussions from the government following this interview. I again assured them that there is no way that they would be identifiable individually and collectively even if the worse of the worse were to happen because I intended not to take down information that would be traced back to them.

Since this interview was conducted outside we had to contend with the constant noise of passing cars and the fact that some of the informants would leave and come back depending on whether they wanted to make a contribution. This however did little to disturb the flow of the interview except that I had to constantly move up and down to make sure that the recording could capture everyone well given the social distance between us. The other challenge is worth mentioning is that I had wished to interview a few people in South Africa but I could not do so because of the lock downs and the limited time I had staying in eSwatini. It would be remiss to state that most of my interviews were conducted with leaders of the associations in Vuvulane and within civil society. This surfaces the problem of elite interviews where leaders are privileged over the rank and file. While leaders have a richer knowledge of the issues that were of interest to me as the researcher they also have the unintended consequence of providing too much information that oftentimes goes off tangent or irrelevant. I quickly picked that the leaders were trying to give me as much information and as much detail as they could remember and often times would speak for more up to 20 to 45 minutes at a go. But Berry (2002) offers a solution for such types of elite interviews by suggesting that the researcher must be properly prepared and work with short but properly structured questions that help build bridges to help the interviewee come back to the subject area.

5 Tibiyo, Vuvulane and Swazi Sugar

5.1 Background and introduction

Vuvulane is a resettlement satellite farming venture that grew into a small village of mostly small scale sugarcane farmers located in the lowveld of eSwatini. It is lush with green sugarcane fields stretching kilometres cross the plateau of the Lubombo Mountains. It grew as a community after the establishment of a re-settlement and later an out grower scheme in 1962 by the Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC). The CDC had been established by the British in 1948 as a development agency through an Act of Parliament. It started off as a Colonial Development Corporation whose purpose was to assist in the development of the then dependent territories of the Commonwealth. The Act defined the CDC's role as neither the achievement of maximum profits nor the promotion of British exports but rather to carry out projects for developing resources in all those territories in which it was empowered to operate (Kendrick, 1976).

The Vuvulane settlement scheme became the first of many such schemes established as means towards rural development and poverty alleviation. Such schemes were a direct result of pressure sugar mills felt to increase their sugarcane output. The mills were struggling to find large tracts of land to purchase themselves and opted to do so through subsistence farmers working on customary Swazi National Land. To the government, integrating peasant farmers to the sugar cane industry was to help improve food security through the commercialisation of smallholder agriculture. It was also going to allow poor farmers to access the credit necessary to cover the business start-up costs. It helped that there was a ready buyer in the sugar mills too (Richardson, 2012).

Vuvulane Irrigated Farms was therefore created as part of an interrelated agro industrial complex involving Inyoni Yami Swaziland Irrigation Scheme (SIS), the

Mhlume Sugar Company (MSC) and the Vuvulane Irrigated Farms (VIF). VIF was a resettlement satellite farming venture established using 4000 acres of land owned by SIS. The SIS enterprise was a combination of cattle, citrus, and sugar covering an area of 100 000 acres of land. In addition to their farms, which they operate on twenty year renewable leases, roughly 70 acres of Vuvulane land was managed by the farmers' cooperative primarily for use as a cane nursery (Williams, 1985).

At the time of the establishment of Vuvulane, settler farms ranged from eight to 16 acres, with 75 percent to 80 percent of the farm devoted to sugarcane cultivation. By 1983, 263 families were by now resident in Vuvulane and that number has risen to 4 115 today. What made Vuvulane different was that it represented dichotomies between capital intensive commercial and industrial sector on the one hand and capital poor rural sector on the other hand. Even more interesting is that it became the first and only break with the tradition where land was not owned by the tribal chief except, of course, for the large commercial farms, mostly owned and operated by non-Swazis (Williams, 1985).

Farmers from all over the country were invited to apply for small holdings in Vuvulane where they would each be guaranteed eight acres of land on which to grow sugarcane. Applicants had to be citizens of eSwatini, healthy, of good character and willing to make their home at Vuvulane (Mbuyisa, 2020). In other areas like Mafucula located a few kilometres to the east of Vuvulane, integration into sugar cane farming did not come smooth or voluntary. The government forcefully removed residents. In 1983 the Mbuluzi community was forced out of their ancestral land by the government and relocated to Mafucula to make way for Simunye sugar estate. The community of Mafucula had no choice but to join sugar farming on the instruction of their Chief. Before this, the community had individual farms, the size of a hector where each family could decide what crop to cultivate (Taruvinga, 2011). The Phakama Project was born of a merger of different fields to produce one farm that could operate as a 286.2 hectares smallholder out grower for the local sugar mill. By joining the project, the community had to give their land and convert their individual farms into a communally operated smallholder commercial farm (Taruvinga, 2011).

The distinguishing factor with the Vuvulane Irrigated Farms is that it was the CDC's attempt at extending benefits to out growers by means of a resettlement scheme. They did this by diffusing ownership of the venture to Swazis as a whole. Telling is the words of J.R Tuckett, the first general manager of VIF, about the ground breaking nature of the scheme.

"*When the scheme started it presented to the majority of Swazis an entire new concept in their approach to farming and land use. Payment for the use of the land and for the availability of water, complete dependence upon arable crops rather than livestock, the techniques involved in irrigation and modern farming methods, the idea of leasing land rather than receiving rights from chiefs, the new disciplines involved, and the unfamiliarity of sugar production; all these were foreign and somewhat suspect to many Swazi chiefs and leaders from whose areas were to come. It was scarcely surprising that at first there was no rush to apply for holdings,*" J.R Tuckett

Right from the beginning, Vuvulane set out on a very different land holding pattern that allowed peasants to exercise semi autonomy from the rule of chiefs or the traditional leadership more generally. It can be argued that the granting of land right to the Vuvulane community unintentionally undermined the power of the monarchy and its traditional institutions. Land was always important to the domination and control of the nation by the royal family and Vuvulane had set a different and potentially dangerous path. As Levin (1990) has noted, royal dominance has historically been secured through control over land and the extraction of various forms of tribute by chiefs and the monarchy. Land allocation and use did not just create a controlling mechanism to keep the rural peasantry under a tight leash but it also provided the material basis for the royal aristocracy to pursue a comprador route to accumulation. While this route was initially short-circuited by the large-scale alienation of land, in the aftermath of World War II, elements of the emergent petty-bourgeoisie who were simultaneously aristocrats and/or chiefs, were able to ally themselves with foreign capital and imperialist forces within the colonial state (Levin, 1990). The granting of land holding rights to the community of Vuvulane through the outgrower scheme therefore provided a platform for possibilities to challenge the royal aristocracy and set in motion a political contest that is at the core of the democratisation struggle ongoing in the country. Levin's penetrating analysis of land tenure and (re)-invention of 'tradition', the fluctuating fortunes of Swazi royalty and popular responses to autocracy surfaced the underlying abuse of tradition and centrality of land in Swazi society.

In 1987 the first evictions in Vuvulane occurred when 14 farmers are evicted in response to their open resistance to authority of the Indlovukazi, the King, and VIF. In the same year Mswati III reversed the evictions following sustained protests and resistance by the small holder farmers. The king further yields to the demand for compensation for crops lost, damage done to businesses and properties of the 14 farmers. A sum of €2 500was ordered to be paid by VIF/Tibiyo to aggrieved farmers. Relations and trust further deteriorate between the small holder farmers and the authorities (VIF and Tibiyo) when a levy was imposed on them to fund the compensation that had been given to the farmers.

In 1998 CDC transferred the contested land to the king without consultation with the farmers. Such a transfer was initiated by what is called Libandla, a committee that had presented a 1996 report where they were openly scornful of the rights of the farmers and the CDC decisions of settling them on freehold land outside the control of the king or chiefs. The transfer of the Vuvulane farms to the king by the CDC, outside the terms of the CDC/Indlovukazi Agreement, and in total disregard of the fate of the farmers, would seem to have been the result of the desire to get the king's consent for the merger of Mhlume Sugar Company and Royal Swaziland Sugar Corporation. This included the sale to Tibiyo of a number of CDC businesses (Swaziland Justice Forum report, 2016).

The takeover of the smallholder scheme by Tibiyo and Vuvulane Irrigated Farms (PTY LTD) has been a major turning point in the life of the farmers, culminating in the evictions and the leasing of some of the land to the RSSC for the benefit of Tibiyo and the King. The effect on the farmers was enormous: from being permanent settlers on the land, with entrenched historical rights, to the status of squatters at the mercy of the King. Through this complicity of the CDC, the farmers lost all their accumulated investments in improvements in the land together with the permanent structures and houses built over many decades.

5.2 Tibiyo, Vuvulane and oiling extravagance

One intriguing dimension of the Vuvulane issue has been the direct and indirect role of Tibiyo TakaNgwane in forced evictions and the sequestration of the potential of the outgrower scheme to live up to its initial billing. The King, with the aid of the government, sought to use Tibiyo as a vehicle to dispossess communities their land in order to extend his stranglehold over the economy. The history of Tibiyo, and its its dominance and control of the commanding heights of the economy, is a source of power of the royal aristocracy. In 1978, at the end of the independence decade, Tibiyo had accumulated assets amounting to € 2,798,344.00 million and ten years later the value of their assets had more than doubled to above € 5,599,160.96 million. The organization does not pay tax, its legal status is questionable, is led exclusively by members of the royal family, is not under the oversight of parliament and accounts only to the King as the sole trustee.

In the second half of the nineteenth century eSwatini's agricultural potential and mineral resources attracted white South Africans in droves to the country. By 1910 more than 60 per cent of the surface area of 1 7 363 km2 had either been made Crown land or belonged to a small group of white Swazis resident in the country. King Sobhuza II spent much of his early reign fighting for a more equitable distribution of land and regaining mineral concessions that he had taken by the colonial administration. The Swazis themselves also bought land by means of the Lifa fund and much later, the Tibiyo TakaNgwane fund. As instructed by Sobhuza, the land and mineral question was put on the agenda during the constitutional discussions leading to independence.

However, on the eve of independence, Sobhuza persuaded the British government to transfer the royalties obtained from mineral concessions to the exclusive control of the King. The income received from mineral concessions was paid into the Tibiyo Taka Ngwane fund until 1975 after which the Tisuka Taka Ngwane fund was created. Apart from the acquisition of land and the promotion of education and training, both funds were ingeniously applied to obtain substantial shareholding in foreign companies which were active in all the different sectors of the economy (Esterhuysen, 1984). Levin (1986) writes that the royal family was desperate to use their control, which they exerted over land allocation, to cement their alliance with South African and British capital. He sees the subsequent creation of Tibiyo Taka Ngwane as a vehicle for a comprador accumulation process by the royal family.

The cash flow that followed Tibiyo's successful granting of loan arrangements with potential foreign investment partners, negotiations at the United Nations and Commonwealth backed legal assistance enabled Tibiyo to enter the field of land purchase and development. Tibiyo's funds were largely spent on land purchases, share acquisitions and commercial and agricultural investments (Levin, 1988). While the establishment of Tibiyo nourished the capitalization of the monarchy, it increased land shortage among the peasantry and consequently further depressed the living conditions of rural communities (Simelane, 2000).

The creation of Tibiyo was sold to the nation as means to transfer economic power from foreigners through buying of land. Tibiyo was to be owned by the Swazi nation as a whole with the Monarch as a trustee on behalf of the people. However, in practice it became an exclusive monopoly of the King. The result of the formation of this corporation was that the land bought by the independent government's Land Purchase Programme was instead bought by Tibiyo to establish commercial farms. Towards the end of the 1970s, Tibiyo had spent approximately €2,798,344.00 on the purchase of freehold land to establish huge sugar estates, a development that made Tibiyo a leading shareholder in the Swazi sugar industry (Simelane, 2000). The decision to put land under Tibiyo compromised the ability of the post-colonial state to solve the squatter problem in the country. The corporation competes with squatters on the land issue, and squatters have continued to be marginalized. The squatter problem intensified because Tibiyo also evicted squatters from some of the purchased farms. Furthermore, the evictions have been extended to people who were occupying Swazi Nation Land that was later earmarked for development by Tibiyo in collaboration with international organizations (Simelane, 2000).

It is worth noting that since independence the leadership of Tibiyo has been Prime Ministers who doubled as leader of the government of the day and board chairman of the organisation. This was so until 1993 when Prince Logcogco, brother to King Mswati III, was appointed Chairman as the first non-Premiere candidate. This was rationalized as Tibiyo now following the path of good corporate governance and wanting to demonstrate it through an independent non-executive chairman (Tibiyo Annual report, 2020).

On the other hand rhe RSSC, eSwatini's largest sugar company, took over some of the land which was part of the Vuvulane scheme on a lease arrangement with Tibiyo. In 1986, the year that King Mswati III was crowned king, Tibiyo TakaNgwane assumed ownership of the Vuvulane farm. This meant that farmers, many of whom had been there for over 20 years, suddenly became squatters. Tibiyo TakaNgwane attempted to enforce their own administrators over the VIF and in the process accused Vuvulane farmers of theft and other crimes. In 1999, Tibiyo TakaNgwane brought an interdict application to stop the farmers from planting crops other than sugarcane. The court ruled in favour of the farmers, saying the entity had no legal standing to bring the matter to court in the first place (Mbuyisa, 2020).

The Swaziland Justice Forum (SJF) has accused Tibiyo's business partnerships with multinational companies as aiding and abating what they call massive financial flows through a scheme akin to money laundering where as much as 50 percent of proceeds of the sugar industry meant to benefit the country has been transferred to the king in his personal capacity. The organization argues that all multinational companies in a business partnership with Tibiyo were aiding the transfer of Swazi nation assets to the king without public scrutiny or attention (Swaziland Justice Forum report, 2018).

Tibiyo TakaNgwane gets much of its revenue from the lucrative preferential markets in Europe, United States and Southern Africa through their control of companies dominant in the sugar belt. The organisation has constructed an elaborate scheme which facilitates massive transfers of public wealth to the personal kitty of the king through owning a slew of companies in the Swazi economy as shown in figure 3 and 4. Large South African companies as well as multinational companies such as Coca Cola, RCL Foods Limited, Illovo Sugar and Associated British Foods (ABF) have entered into business with Tibiyo TakaNgwane as a transactional vehicle that ostensibly represents the Swazi nation. In reality, however, Tibiyo is a vehicle for royal accumulation that has transformed the royal aristocracy from a backward semi-feudal into comprador bourgeoisie class. In 2009 Forbes Magazine estimated the King personal net fortune to be about US$200 million, thanks to the already mentioned advantages that local regulators offer it: no tax burdens and no oversight. Even the International Monitory Fund has suggested that Tibiyo must pay tax (Redvers, 2011).

King Mswati lavish lifestyle is partly funded by tax payers through the Royal Emoluments and Civil List Act of 1998. The law obliges government to put aside at least five percent of the national budget for the upkeep of the Monarchy. Paid under royal emoluments are salaries for the King and payments to immediate members of the royal household. In 2010/2011 five percent of the €56,015,000.00 national budget went to cover expenditure associated with the Monarchy. Most of the money went to refurbishing royal palaces and € 28,167,719.00 for link roads to royal residences. On top of this the King's brothers and sisters, each receive € 2,799.62 annual allowance from the Monarch's budget. Expenses under the civil list category is monitored and managed by the royal trustees led by the Minister of Finance (Nxumalo, 2011). Any savings or excess amounts from the royal emoluments and civil list "budget" is not remitted to the Consolidated Fund, but invested by the royal trustees as they deem fit. The Consolidated Fund is the purse which funds the Civil List. The Consolidated Fund gets its money from shares that government owns in the big investment companies in the country such as the Royal Eswatini Sugar Corporation and MTN eSwatini. The Consolidated Fund is also said to be responsible for the repayment of government loans to the African Development Bank and World Bank (Nxumalo, 2011).

This money, together with the revenue he gets from his private businesses and Tibiyo, allows the King to enjoy all manner of luxuries. In the last few years he has bought a fleet of luxury cars, a jet and several Maybach limousines. His entourage blew millions when it booked 38 rooms at the five star Taj Hotel in Cape Town for a conference on poverty in Africa (Karodia, 2015). The King's control of land has also meant that anyone who mines minerals from the soil must give him the constitutionally enshrined 25 percent shareholding but also dividends from profits. Malaysian businessman Shanmuga "Shan" Rethenam who wanted a license for a lucrative iron ore mine in Ngwenya, 20km outside the Swazi capital in Mbabane, had a fall out with the Monarch after a business deal had gone wrong. Rethenam could not get justice in the country's courts after a bad business deal with the King's company, Inchatsavane. He was chased out of the country leaving him to seek justice in Canadian courts (Comrie, 2015). The companies involved in the sugar industry also have to pay rents to the Monarch's personal company that goes untaxed and does not contribute to the national fiscus (interview with government official, 2021).

Figure 3 The companies that Tibiyo Taka Ngwane has business interests in (Source: Tibiyo website)

2. LEISURE & TOURISM

ESWATINI SPA HOLDINGS LIMITED

Eswatini Spa Holdings Limited is a public company listed on the Eswatini Stock Exchange. Shareholders include Tibiyo Taka Ngwane (39.7%), All Saints (Pty) Ltd (50.6%) and minority shareholders (9.7%). The group owns and operates the Sun International hotel and casino resorts in Eswatini.

TIBIYO LEISURE AND RESORTS (PTY) LTD

Tibiyo Leisure and Resorts (Pty) Ltd t/a the Royal Villas is a five-star hotel situated at Ezulwini Valley. It comprises 14 villas with a total of 56 rooms, the luxurious Sultan suite and conference facilities. Tibiyo Leisure and Resorts (Pty) Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of Tibiyo Taka Ngwane.

3. MANUFACTURING

ESWATINI BEVERAGES LIMITED (EB)

Eswatini Beverages Limited (EB) is owned by Tibiyo Taka Ngwane (40%), SAB Miller Africa BV incorporated in the Netherlands, which owns 60% of the company's equity. The company is a manufacturer and distributor of beer, soft drinks and traditional beverages.

PARMALAT (ESWATINI) (PTY) LTD

Tibiyo Taka Ngwane owns 26 percent in this company, while Parmalat Africa Spa owns 60%. The rest of the shares (14%) are owned by the Government of Eswatini. Parmalat is involved in dairy manufacturing, processing, distribution and sales.

4. MEDIA

THE ESWATINI OBSERVER

The Eswatini Observer (Pty) Ltd was established in 1981 and is wholly owned by Tibiyo Taka Ngwane. The company continues to be engaged in the business of publishing and distribution of the Eswatini Observer and Weekend Observer newspapers. It derives its income mainly from advertising and newspaper sales.

5. PROPERTY

BHUNU MALL

Bhunu Mall in Manzini is owned by Tibiyo Taka Ngwane (40.79%), Eswatini National Provident Fund (36.85%) and Public Service Pension Fund (22.37%). The mall has a gross lettable area of 15 962 square metres for shops and offices.

SIMUNYE PLAZA

Simunye Plaza (Pty) Ltd is owned by Tibiyo Taka Ngwane (25%), Eswatini Industrial Development Corporation (EIDC) (50%) and RESC (25%). It is a property holding company presently managed by Tibiyo Properties (Pty) Ltd.

TIBIYO PROPERTIES (PTY) LTD

Tibiyo Properties (Pty) Ltd is wholly owned by Tibiyo Taka Ngwane. It was formed in 2000 and operates as a property management company. The company owns some properties and also manages commercial, retail and residential properties on behalf of Tibiyo Taka Ngwane, Tisuka Taka Ngwane, Simunye Plaza, Bhunu Mall and other clients. These properties are situated in the four regions of the country.

6. SERVICES

FINCORP

Eswatini Development Finance Corporation (FINCORP) is a Company with two shareholders, Tibiyo Taka Ngwane and the Eswatini Government, holding 20% and 80% shareholding, respectively. Initially operating as a wholesale lending institution, the organisation was, in 2003 transformed to become a development finance institution encompassing both wholesale and retail lending. This culminated in a change in legal status from being a Trust to a company.

TIBIYO INSURANCE GROUP (TIG)

Tibiyo Insurance Group is jointly owned by Tibiyo Taka Ngwane (50%) and Kirsh Industries (50%). TIG owns Eswatini Employee Benefit Consultants (Pty) Ltd, whose core business is retirement fund administration, Tibiyo Insurance brokers whose core business is insurance broking.

7. MINING

MALOMA COLLIERY LIMITED (MCL)

Maloma Colliery Limited (MCL) is a coal mining operation jointly owned by Eswatini and South African Shareholders located in the Shiselweni and Lubombo regions of Eswatini. The mine commenced its operations in 1992 and produces anthracite coal products primarily consumed by the metallurgical market in South Africa.

The history of MCL's Shareholding, in partnership with Tibiyo Taka Ngwane (TTN) is as follows:

- 1992 - 1993: Carbonex
- 1995 - 2001: Koch Industries
- 1995 - 2010: Xstrata
- 2010 - 2013: Chancellor House Holdings
- 2013 - 2018: Chancellor House Holdings, Tibiyo Taka Ngwane and Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini

Figure 4 Some of the companies that Tibiyo has interests in the local economy (source; Tibiyo website)

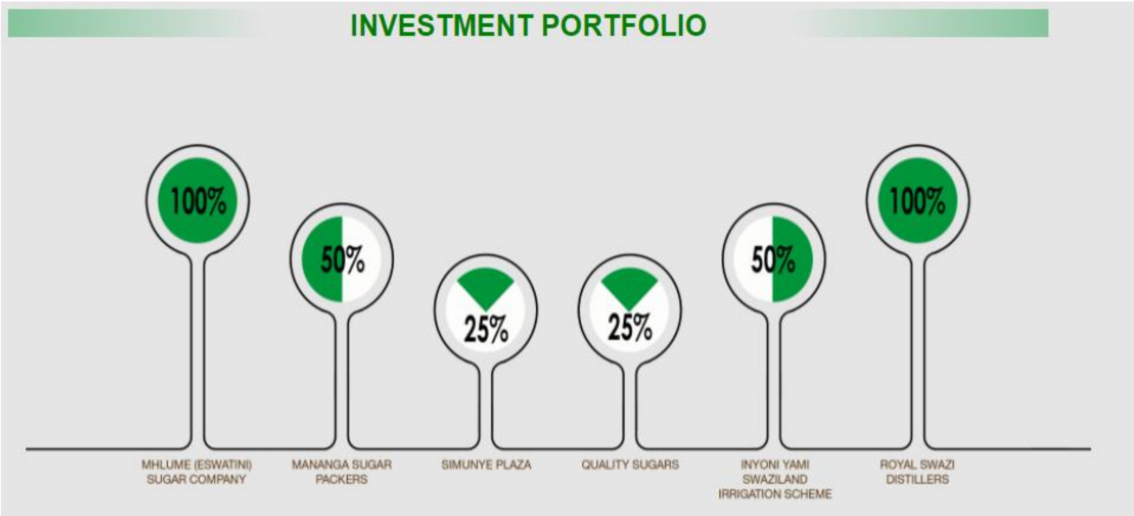


Figure 5 showing Tibiyo investment portfolios. Source Tibiyo website

Figure 6 Shareholders of Eswatini Royal Sugar. Source Tibiyo website

R S S C

Royal Swaziland Sugar Corporatio
P O Box 1 • Mhlume • Swazilan
Tel: (+268) 313-400
Fax: (+268) 313-130

18 June 2018

RE: EVICTION NOTICE – SECTION 13 VILLAGE

Please take notice that pursuant to an inspection done by Property Services you were found to be occupying an RSSC house illegally.

Please take further notice that within 30 days after service of this notice you are required to vacate the house and give up possession of the same to RSSC. Should you fail and or refuse to vacate the house by the 18th July 2018 as demanded in this notice, RSSC will institute legal proceedings for your eviction from the occupied house and the costs of such legal proceedings shall be for your account.

Your full cooperation will be appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Ishmond Fakudze
Property Services Manager

ROYAL SWAZILAND SUGAR CORPORATION
P.O. BOX 1
MHLUME
19 JUN 2018
TEL: 2313 4495
FAX: 2313 4346
PROPERTY SERVICES MANAGER

Ernest Ginindza
76497401
19/06/2018

Figure 7 Showing an eviction letter

6 Chapter 6

6.1 Introduction

When I visited Vuvulane on the first week of January 2021 it was clear that it was the battle ground for political and economic contestation in the country. Even more visible was the dichotomies it presents for a country caught between the past and the future; between modernity and tradition and between democracy and absolute rule. Even more palpable was the marauding hand of the monarchy in the sugar industry and the resultant conflicts. Quite interestingly, my research coincided with a violent uprising that started in May 2021 up to late August 2021. At the centre of this failed uprising was the demand for full democracy in the kingdom. Simmering tensions suppressed for years eventually burst into an open conflict leading to the massacre of over 70 people[5]. Even more telling was how violence from protestors targeted the king's businesses as a site for public anger, torching and vandalism (United Nations, 2011).

Driving to Vuvulane earlier in the year it was visible that the sugar industry had brought its fair share of development especially at Simunye where a small town has developed, complete with all the luxuries one would expect from a modern 'city'. Simunye, a Swati word for '*we are one*' has become ironical for the class contradiction it represents between the rich and poor and between the royal aristocracy and the democratic forces in the country. On the one hand, Simunye has a growing middle class made mostly of top managers who work in the various departments of the sugar mill and its business offshoots. However, as soon as you drive a few kilometres to Vuvulane, a poor and dispossessed class surfaces from the shadows of Simunye glamour. Only until you start to speak to the people of Vuvulane does one realise the Swazi industry has its ugly side. I chose Vuvulane as the perfect case study for my research because it crystallises the economic and political conflict

[5] To read more about the failed political uprising check https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/07/1095352

brought by the sugar industry. Most residents I spoke to during my fieldwork were second and third generation of sugar cane farmers who have known no form of life other than farming and no other home than Vuvulane. Eight of my respondents were way above 45 years and with a detailed history of the ups and downs of the Vuvulane Irrigated scheme and the battle over control of their land. As much as 40 percent of my respondents were women as a deliberate effort to seek women voices in my research to ensure a gendered perspective on the issues under research.

At the onset of my research, I set out to investigate *how has the European preferential trade agreements with eSwatini changed control over, access and ownership of land in eSwatini: the case of sugar cane growing communities?* In order to do this I had to pay special attention on Tibiyo Taka Ngwane as a locus of economic power given its control of large swathes of agricultural land and businesses in the country. Tibiyo is also the conduit through which the Monarch dispossess peasants their land. Most of the people I spoke to were activists who had fought against dispossession of land in Vuvulane and had been involved in a protracted war with the King. For purposes of this research I define forced eviction as the removal of people against their will from the homes or land they occupy without legal protections and other safeguards.[6]

6.2 Land ownership and control

One of the recurring themes in my research findings has been the centrality of land to the functioning of the agriculture economy and the power it gives to the Swazi Monarch. It is worth noting that the country's constitution bestows control over land and mineral resources beneath the soil under King Mswati III. The constitution makes it clear that all land (including any existing concessions) in eSwatini are vested in the king in trust of the Swazi Nation.[7] This arrangement is a consequence of the Land Concession Order of 1973 which transferred concession land to the King. The same

[6] Commission on Human Rights Resolution 1993/77

[7] Section 211 (1) of the eSwatini constitution

constitution gives the monarchy immunity from prosecution and civil suits in his official and personal capacity. It is this legal arrangement that has given the monarchy control over close to a million hectors of land (interview with Bongani Masuku, 2021). Almost all the respondents blamed the constitution for vesting so much power on the king and decried the frustration that there are no avenue to change this.

The biggest challenge I found speaking with my respondents is the problematic land ownership patterns in the country and the power it gives the king. One of my respondents, a young activist from the Swaziland Youth Congress (SWAYOCO), said things were made worse by the fact that King Mswati III exercises executive powers yet has a stranglehold over the land and economy through a slew of business inteest. The control over the land was continuously cited as the biggest hindrance to any meaningful challenge to the King or transformation of the sugar industry. Respondents told me that where the King's business interests are threatened eviction without legal redress have become common place and that Chiefs were more than just footstalls of the monarchy but errand boys who whip recalcitrant subjects back into line (Interview with Vuvulane farmers, 2021).

Respondents from Vuvulane told me they settled in the area under the promise of eventually owning the land. The said the place was supposed to be a land of milk and honey. However, to many Vuvulane turned to be a curse (Interview with Vuvulane farmers, 2021). The Vuvulane Irrigated Small holder scheme that had once been a developmental model for Africa was reduced into ruins (interview with Vuvulane farmers, 2021). One woman respondent said when their parents relocated to Vuvulane they were told to farm sugar cane because they were guaranteed a market in European countries through the Mhlume sugar mill. One of the respondents gave me a detailed history of their settlement in Vuvulane.

"*I remember the people who went to Vuvulane. From my area, for example, they took Sam Myeni, Qwabe, Prince Lokhakhi, Lukhele from Hlatsi. These were to be the first man to be relocated to Vuvulane using a tent as their shelter. These people were allocated farm 5860. The farm belonged to King George, the king of England. The Mill at Mhlume was to be owned by the new settlers… The new settlement had rules that stated that a person was not supposed to leave the area for ten months not even* *burying a loved one. Those who had been resettled were to be permanent and their previous land back where they came from were given to others. The first group was from Shiselweni. Later once the scheme was functional, they recruited four people per year per region. These people had children who also brought their own offspring. If you consider that the scheme started around 1962, and each year they were adding people, by 1981 there were about 264 new setters here. We asked the British what this meant as we had lost our farms back home and we were told that after 20 years you will get your own piece of land under the farm 860*," (interview with Vuvulane Farmers, 2021).

Respondents told me that prior to the privatization of the CDC in 1999, the organisation signed over the farmers' lands to the King instead of returning it to the farmers as originally promised.

When eSwatini went through political flux shortly after the death of Sobhuza II power changed hands within the royal family. A new Queen Regent, Ntfombi Tfwala, and his yet to be crowned son, Makhosetive Dlamini, took over power. According to the farmers, it was shortly after this transfer of power that the new government began to wrestle control over Vuvulane and appropriated everything to the new king.

A memorandum dated March 21, 1986 shows the Queen Mother instructing that Tibiyo takes over full and sole responsibility over the Vuvulane Scheme. The memorandum makes a number of decrees including banning meetings about the Vuvulane Irrigated Scheme and instructing that all who occupy land at Vuvulane would now have to make presentation to Tibiyo about the nature of the land holding right (Libandla report n.d).

In 1995, owing to mounting questions over land ownership in Vuvulane and surrounding areas King Mswati III commissioned a secret report made of his closest advisors. This report—shown to me by SJF activists—indeed confirms the rights of the farmers to the land only after the 20 year lease period with the CDC. However, as a final recommendation to the King, the commission noted that it was "unSwazi" for the farmers to own land and suggested it would give them too much power in the future.

Said a SJF activist: "*Over the years the farmers have made numerous appeals to the King, the Queen Mother, the Royal Advisors and the Prime Minister without success. All of this has been in vain because justice can never be achievable through the compromised Swazi Justice system where the king is above the law. The farmers are convinced that despite compelling evidence in their favor, coupled with the fact that they have occupied the land for over 54 years as promised to them by the CDC.*" (interview January, 2021).

According to another activist from SJF, at least 21 small scale cane growers have become the latest victims of forced evictions in Vuvulane with many still living in fear of losing their land. The real sentiment around the brutal nature of these evictions is best captured by an SJF activist who stated:

"Instead of being a curse, the success of the industry should be an positive incentive to promote the implementation of rural development projects that help these communities to alleviate poverty and create sustainable livelihoods," (Respondent 8, 2021)

One of the respondents gave an example that they used to get money from not just selling sugar but the bagasse and ethanol to Mhlume Mill. However, soon as the king took over their scheme everything stopped coming to the farmers. The respondents say they could not challenge this because the Monarch cannot be taken to court (group interview, January 2021). What was clear from respondents was that the king's control over the land makes it difficult for anyone to challenge the Monarch when an injustice had been committed. This was the same view canvassed by Stacky Dlamini, a Swaziland Youth Congress activist based in Norway. Dlamini told me that the dual nature of land ownership was at the core of the problems facing not just Vuvulane but the entire country. Because of the king's control over land evictions without compensation have become commonplace in various parts of the country and often pits companies where the king has financial interests against ordinary citizens. Respondents cited the example of Simunye and Illovo estates as having developed and expanded based on tribal lands taken from residents forcefully as shown in figure 7.

It is worth noting that evictions in eSwatini are not peculiar to Vuvulane and often happen with legal endorsement from the courts. Respondents told me that operating in an environment where the Monarch is above the law, the courts have found it difficult to act with impartiality, especially where the King's interest are concerned. An Amnesty International investigation on evictions in Nokwane, Madonsa, Mbondzela Malkerns and Vuvulane concluded that the forced evictions violate international and regional human rights law. Read the Amnesty International report (pg 49, 2017) in part:

"*For those who have not been forcibly evicted but face imminent evictions in the Malkerns, Madonsa, Mbondzela and Vuvulane, the lack of adequate international safeguards against past forced evictions in Nokwane and the Malkerns has caused significant uncertainty and anxiety. The cases documented demonstrate how the uncertainty over land ownership and tenure led to protracted legal battles which ultimately lead to forced evictions and homelessness."*

The report goes on to explain how the process of evictions forced the peasant population into exploitative relations with local authorities, where trust has been eroded and their rights undermined:

"In Nokwane, some residents believed they had settled on Swazi Nation Land, after paying allegiance to the area's chief. Others told Amnesty International they had been given permission by previous land owners, whom they understood to be the concession holders. In the Malkerns, families who had been forcibly evicted and those facing imminent eviction were living on what they believed to be concession land, with the verbal permission of the previous landowner. While the concession land in some cases was legally converted to title-deed land, the residents said they were not aware of this arrangement, and were not provided with adequate alternative accommodation or compensation when the new title-deed holder decided they no longer wanted the occupants on their land," (Amnesty International, 2018)

According to this report, the government offers no food, portable water and sanitation, basic shelter and housing, appropriate clothing or means of livelihood to those that have been evicted. In the case of Malkerns, home to approximately 4,050 inhabitants and 122 of those residents being subsistence farmers and seasonal labourers were evicted by a company linked to Tibiyo. In Nokwane, located on farm 692 in Manzini, at least 19 homesteads and 180 residents were evicted in favour of construction of 159-hectare site of the Royal Science and Technology Park, a government-led development initiative. At the heart of the dispute between the families and the eSwatini government was the tenure of the contested land - Farm 692 - and the accompanying rights (Amnesty International, 2018).

The problems with evictions extend to the application of the law. According to Thabo Masuku, the Director of the Foundation for Socio Economic Justice, fair compensation for evictees has been difficult to get because the courts cannot be relied upon to adjudicate fairly especially against businesses or interests of the king (interview with Thabo Masuku, January 2021). Respondents referenced an instance in 2011 when the late former Prime Minister Barnabas Dlamini addressed the Vuvulane farmers at a public meeting and the late Prime Minister informed the community that the King had ordered that they stop using the 450 hectares of unallocated land at Vuvulane (Interview with Thabo Masuku, January 2021).

In a recorded meeting between Tibiyo Managing Director and former Prime Minister Themba Dlamini and residents of Hlane who were challenging Tibiyo and the King over land the monarchy was taking from residents. Dlamini tells residents that the Monarch had decided that he was the constitution and he would not allow to be threatened with litigation:

"*The King is very angry that he has been taken to court by the residents and he has sent me to inform you that for that reason, he is taking over the project and has appointed his own Committee to oversee it. Utsi Okandaba ngalesizatfu lesengisibekile, lama-Association lekutsiwa akhona lana, atawufa, they are dissolved. Kute lenye Association letawuba khona lana, Akuna-Constitution itosebenta lana,,i-Constitution ngiyo iNgwenyama* (The King said just because you took him to court, he has decided to dissolve all Associations here. No Constitution will apply, the King is the Constitution) (Dlamini, 2021)."

A majority of the Vuvulane residents' views about how their land had been taken is best captured by one respondents who claimed they have been turned into '*kaffir*' by the king and royalty. *Kaffir* is an offensive racial slur that was used to describe black people in South Africa by the racist white apartheid regime. The dual nature of land ownership has ensured that the monarchy exercises control over the country knowing he can evict people without challenge.

6.3 The European Union

Most respondents I spoke to were very critical of the European Union (EU) for what they consider a tacit support of the Monarch. The EU's continued support of the government through development project and other social programs is seen as a way of propping up the Monarchy given the extent of the King's involvement in the sugar industry and its history of human rights violations (interview with respondent 7, 2021). The respondents said they were expecting the EU would have long sanctioned or cut off preferential trade markets with the country because of the government's known history of forced evictions, lack of democracy and human rights abuses. The EU has been a significant player in the sugar industry not just because they buy Swazi sugar and beef but also because they support the small growers in the country and fund many of the government's social projects. For a while the EU was funding the government's Free Primary Education program.

The EU's strategy is to support the country's National Adaptation Strategy which prioritises the funding and technical support for small growers to switch to efficient production methods or to more profitable/sustainable crops. The strategy identified small growers as the most vulnerable group and in dire need of priority attention. A large part of the development aid the EU has poured in the country has been given to small sugar growers affected by the EU sugar reforms. This money was used almost exclusively for building infrastructure as well as promoting new growers. The expansion of cane growing concentrated in two areas: the Lower Usuthu Smallholder Projects and the Komati basin Small holder development. These two projects were already in progress when the EU reforms and adaptation measures were announced in 2006. Both RSSC and Illovo sugar were looking to the government and commercial capital raising to fund the projects when the EU took over, providing 70 percent the funding as grants (SJF, 2021).

A SJF respondent (5) was even more scathing in his assessment of the EU and their support of the government:

"*A large number of Swazi small holder farms which were on Swazi nation land and not part of the Vuvulane scheme were already experiencing financial distress due to the reduction in prices. These farms were allowed to die. Likewise, the Vuvulane small holder group could have benefited from the EU sugar support, but they were also excluded. The exclusion of the Vuvulane group was consistent with the interests of RSSC and Tibiyo to acquire legal control of the Vuvulane small holders' lands*," (Interview with SJF activist, 2021).

Another SJF respondent made an example of the EU accompanying measures saying they were not used to strengthen small growers and vulnerable communities whose livelihoods were destroyed by the EU changes in the sugar market regime. Instead, the EU office prioritized large projects primarily aimed at strengthening the profitability of the sugar millers and new small growers to the exclusion of existing small growers, retrenched employees of the industry and other vulnerable communities adversely affected by the industry (interview with SFJ activist, 2021).

What was difficult to ignore in most of the respondents was that they saw the EU's sugar markets and presence in the country as providing an incentive for the king to grab more control of land to benefit from the profits that come with the sugar industry. Consequently, this oils the machinery that has kept King Mswati's autocratic rule intact (interview with Thembelihle Dlamini, 2021)

Said Dlamini: "*They (EU) know very well that the profits from the sugar sale does not benefit the ordinary Swazi people but goes directly to the king through Tibiyo… For a long time the EU was funding the primary education in the country which should have been the job of the government. Recently they also donated PPE equipment. They are taking the responsibility of the government and shielding its shortcomings*" (Interview in August, 2021).

Afrika Kontakt (2017) research findings anchored most of the sentiments of some of my respondents. The report states that the problem with the EU's general support to eSwatini, including aid to the health, educational and agricultural sectors, is that it diverts responsibility from the Swazi government. While the EU supports services that are usually provided by the state, the Swazi government allocates a large percentage of its national budget to security and the royal family. Essentially, the EU disregards the precarious situation of Swaziland: that the country is constitutionally and more importantly in practice, an absolute monarchy (Africa Kontact, 2017). An official from the European Union told me that they have not done much work in Vuvulane because of the conflict in the area. The EU did a mapping of the area and decided to stay away from Vuvulane fearing that their involvement would fuel the disputes. The EU refutes accusations that their preferential markets and developmental aid wittingly and unwittingly props up the monarchy. They feel they work directly with farmers association and communities and not with the Mills where the monarchy has some form of control. They feel their support has directly benefitted rural farmers and helped the country remain economically stable (interview with EU official, January, 2021).

Bongani Masuku, an activist from the country's opposition party, blamed the Monarchy profligate lifestyle and extensive economic stranglehold in the commanding heights of the economy as a result of the support the European Union extends to the government through the markets or developmental aid. The argument he makes being that the EU shields the failures of the government by taking over the responsibilities of provision of education, medical health, infrastructure development (interview with Bongani Masuku, 2011).

"*The developmental aid and European markets literally prop up the monarchy because the EU knows that the money they pour to the sugar industry gets to benefit the King directly or indirectly. Even the communities that were integrated into the sugar industry are paying money to the monarchy as some form of levies to the Monarchy*" (Interview with Bongani Masuku, 2011)

6.4 Absolute monarchy

The respondents from Vuvulane and other political activists made it clear that the genesis of the country's problems can be found in the absolute powers of the monarchy. The monarchy has been shielded from any form of restraint by the constitution making him immune to aby form of challenge in any capacity. This can be best shown by the then Chief Justice Michael Ramodibedi issuing an order that the King cannot be taken to court. This directive was taken after the King confiscated a Swazi businessman's hotel and the owner's attempt to sue for compensation was not heard by local courts. Ramodibedi blocked the suit with an instruction to attorneys that no case against the king can be brought before any court (Freedom House report, 2013). In 2010, Judge Thomas Masuku was fired as a judge after he made a judgement that found in favor of Swazi villagers who sued to retrieve cattle which police had seized and placed in the king's herd. In his judgment, Masuku recalled that the king recently had appealed to Swazis to obey the law and that '*It would be hard to imagine that his majesty could conceivably speak with a forked tongue, saying one thing and authorizing his officers to do the opposite*.' Based on this sentence, Ramodibedi, acting as prosecutor and judge, found Masuku guilty of insulting the king and was fired (Freedom House 2013).

Respondents showed me instances where those who have challenged the monarchy had been victimised. One such case was that of William Mkhaliphi who spoke at a national meeting called by the king and criticised the monarchy for the evictions at Vuvulane. This seemed to buttress the concern that the absolute powers of the monarchy make it difficult for anyone to challenge him even within the cultural ambit.

"*If it is true that people are being evicted on the king's instructions, then it is very unfortunate. I am really not comfortable with the fact that a king is capable of evicting people. Where should they go*?...*What would His Majesty do with the land if it is not given back to the people, who are in a good position to till it?."* (Nsibandze, 2012).

The Times of Eswatini reported in August 2014 that farmers stormed and possessed a SZL2.3 million (US$ 162,785) farm belonging to RES as the battle between Tibiyo and the residents rages on. The farmers are said to have forcefully taken the farm, blocked water canals used for irrigating sugar cane and started ploughing and cultivating food (ITUC, 2016).

The king himself has been questioned on his role in evictions in the sugar belt. During the Sibaya (national cattle byre) in 2012, Kosiyemantjonga Mkhaliphi complained that the King had reneged on his promise to follow in the footsteps of his father – King Sobhuza II – when he ascended to the throne in 1986.

"*At the inception of your reign, Your Majesty, you made a great promise to the nation! You said, during the course of your reign, you would follow in the footsteps of King Sobhuza. You haven't as yet started following in the footsteps of King Sobhuza. It has not happened. If it is true that people are being evicted on the King's instructions, then it is very unfortunate. I am really not comfortable with the fact that a king is capable of evicting people. Where should they go? What would His Majesty do with the land if it is not given back to the people, who are in a good position to till it" (*Times Eswatini, August 2012)

The Monarch has established its own company trading as Silulu Royal Holdings and this company has been taking farms and evicting communities wantonly. According to media reports on April 15, 2021 Minister of Agriculture Jabulani Mabuza, told residents of Lomahasha that the King and royalty were taking over Nkalashane Farm. The Mahlalela clan contested this seizure of farms and the clan's ruler, King Mlambo, claimed that the Nkalashane Farm was the only fertile land to which the traditional authorities hoped would accommodate the residents and their future children.

In 2018, King Mswati III appointed Minister of Finance, Neal Rijkenberg and Minister of Agriculture, Jabulani Mabuza to the Board of directors of Silulu Royal Holdings blurring the lines between private and public institution. There are others in the board. Colins Lovely, an employee of Montigny, which is a company co-owned by Rijkenberg, was appointed general manager of Silulu Royal Holdings. Ostensibly, the farms have been pooled for increased land use. Less than a handful of farms are being rented out to farmers for various uses. Some of the farms, in particular those owned by the Ministry of Agriculture, have been designated for forestry planting and handed over to Silulu Royal Forestry Company. A farm known as Gege Purchase Area is composed of 10 contiguous farms measuring about 10 524 hectares owned by the Ministry of Agriculture and a portion of it, only 200 hectares, is used for rearing dairy cattle. It is located in Gege.

At the time of their purchase, the farms had 170 farm dwellers with 1 900 cattle. Another farm, Mahlangatsha Purchase Area also comprises 10 farms of about 11587 hectares and shares a boundary with the Gege Purchase area and Highveld ranch (Mabuza, 2021).

6.5 Tibiyo TakaNgwane

Many of the respondents bemoaned the double role of the king as both an absolute ruler and businessman. The Monarch uses Tibiyo and its slew of businesses as a conduit for comprador accumulation hence the royal aristocracy has been transformed into a new bourgeoisie class in firm control of the economy. As one respondent said, Tibiyo’s business interests cut across different sectors of the Swazi economy; from agro processing, breweries, banking, retail, media, agriculture and hotel industry, insurance, real estate etc.

This means the King’s business interests is too pervasive and dominant in the small Swazi economy (respondent 13 interview, August 2021). One respondent was emphatic that Tibiyo had made the monarchy to have unlimited resources that have been used to dispense patronage. In other words, being free of judicial constraints and having a multi-sector business conglomerate creates a patrimonial form of rule, where the private interests of the King and the public interests of the nation are blurred.

Tibiyo TakaNgwane is officially defined as a development organisation established in order to complement development efforts of the eSwatini government. According to official documents, King Sobhuza II created Tibiyo TakaNgwane on 19 August 1968, by Royal Charter, to complement the Government's national development efforts. This organisation commands the Swazi economy, owning and controlling the sugar industry, with vast interests in every sphere of the economy. The king appoints the governing board that oversees the entire fund. Woods (207) notes that Tibiyo has become the conduit through which the Swazi monarch is able to distribute economic resources to buttress his power and has evolved into an amorphous corporation that reaches into practically every sector of the Swazi economy.

Tibiyo, through the Royal Eswatini Sugar (RES), has business partnership with publicly listed companies like RCL Foods LTD (formerly TSB) and Coca Cola. RCL Foods LTD (formerly TSB) owns 26 percent of the RSSC and has three directors who sit on the board of the company. RES has a joint venture with RCL (as shown in figure 5) on the marketing and distribution of the RSSC sugar. The company has set up as a network of sugar distribution companies to market the RES sugar and benefit from RCL's elaborate chain of companies involved in the distribution of RSSC's sugar. RCL' supply chain involves the major retail shops in South Africa like Pick n Pay, Spar, Woolworths, Shoprite Checkers and various food manufacturers. Many of these retailers boast cruelty free supply chains of the products on their shelves.

Respondents from JFS argue that Tibiyo and the Swazi king have constructed an elaborate scheme akin to money laundering where they facilitate massive transfers of public wealth meant for the Swazi nation to the personal name of the king. In one of JFS reports they allege that large south African companies such as Coca cola, RCL Foods Limited, Illovo Sugar and Associated British Foods (ABF) have entered into large transactions with Tibiyo well knowing that Tibiyo is not a legal entity in Swaziland or in any other jurisdiction in the world. Tibiyo is largely seen as a royal piggy bank that has allowed the Monarch to build a system of patronage and client state using the absolute powers vested by the constitution.

7 Conclusions

7.1 Summary of arguments

This research was conducted with the aim of explaining how the European Union preferential trade agreements with eSwatini have helped change control over, access and ownership of land in eSwatini. As the main producer of sugar in the African continent, and one of the main beneficiaries of European Union development aid, the study aimed at establishing how this has allowed the Swazi Monarch to consolidate his political and economic stranglehold over the country, creating a patrimonial state and the resultant problems of land grabbing especially in the sugar belt.

The research used the community of Vuvulane as a study site not just because of its history but also because it is at the heart of the political and economic contestation within the sugar industry. The community of Vuvulane presents the perfect example of challenges of land gabbing and its impact in the political life of the country and the economy. At the beginning of this thesis, I enumerated the objective of the research as three pronged; to investigate the development of the sugar industry in eSwatini and how it has transformed the livelihood of rural dwellers for good and for worse; to analyze the role of the monarchy in peasant's land dispossession in order to benefit from revenue that comes from EU markets and lastly to probe how the preferential trade agreements has helped support and sustain the authoritarian regime of King Mswati III. To do this the study engaged in qualitative research within a deductive conceptual framework. The use of qualitative research meant that I had to go on a field visit in eSwatini to source data. This data was obtained through group as well as individual interviews conducted in a semi structured way. This was useful for the study for it allowed me to benefit from observing and juxtaposing group interactions with individual interviews. The use of documents and other secondary data helped in the process of triangulation, especially corroborating and cross-referencing information sourced from documents, laws, press statements and videos. The research threaded together three bodies of literature on land grabbing, rentier theory and neo patrimonialism. The literature review provided the theoretical lenses to help explain and analyse contemporary eSwatini. Caution was exercised when using theories as it is generally accepted that they can sometimes present an oversimplified worldview and that they are useful only when understood contextually and with particular appreciation of local settings. The community of Vuvulane became the reference point because I wanted to understand the power of land holding in the country and how they influence, legitimize or can challenge the patrimonial system of Tinkhundla rule. Within this context, Tibiyo Taka Ngwane emerged as the locus of economic power perfectly positioned as a patronage institution of the ruling royal aristocracy using the sugar industry as its base hence the Monarch's growing appetite for land.

The study was conducted at a time when the country was experiencing by far the biggest political unrest that culminated in the death of as many as 70 people and countless injuries (Kingdom of eSwatini conflict insights, 2021). The June—July 2021 uprising saw the patrimonial system established by the late King Sobhuza II lose legitimacy in the eyes of the people and calls for democratic reform intensified. The community of Vuvulane was again at the centre of this latest revolt. I was therefore able to enrich my study by following and observing the political turmoil in real time and had to constantly check and evaluate my own assumptions and prejudices. In this chapter, I conclude by highlighting the empirical contributions based on the research findings, how my analysis can help integrate different bodies of literature and then close by pointing out areas that deserve to be explored for future research.

7.2 Control of land important for aristocratic legitimacy: empirical contributions

This research highlights the importance of land to understand contemporary eSwatini and the development of the sugar industry in particular. The country's developmental plans privilege sugar as critical component of eSwatini's poverty alleviation agenda.

This explains why sugar features prominently in the country's National Development Strategy. In turn, the focus on sugar expansion has increased the demand for land for sugar cane farming especially in the lowveld. Consequently, poor rural farmers who previously used their land for subsistence and semi-subsistence agriculture were encouraged to change from rain-fed maize and cotton farming to sugar cane farming.

The research looked at the story of Vuvulane and crystalizes the challenges and nuances of turning to capitalist agriculture and how the chase for external rents, powered mostly by preferential trade agreements with the EU that allocates quotas to Swazi sugar with preferential prices, has increased the monarch's appetite to grab more land for his own business enterprises cloaked under Tibiyo. This research centered land as important in giving power to the ruling aristocracy and the potential it holds to challenge for democratic reforms as the June—July 2021 uprising showed. The research has established that the legitimacy of the ruling Dlamini royal aristocracy is anchored on their control of the country's land and highlights the power it gives to the patronage network of the Monarch. All of this is aided by the formulation of the constitution which gives the King absolute powers and shuts the door on ordinary people to get any political and legal recourse where their interests clashes with that of the Monarch. This is especially true where fighting for land rights is concerned. The constitution's inability to secure land rights to peasant farmers has made rural communities squatters in their own country thus rendering them at the mercy of the all-powerful King. This research has also shown that land gives the aristocracy power to control, subvert and eliminate any form of political challenge to the Tinkhundla neo-patrimonial form of rule. Through the power of chiefs, who administer a majority of Swazi Nation Land on behalf of the Monarchy, the ruling Dlamini aristocracy enjoys carte blanche powers in the political and economic life of the country. By extension, this ensures that political challenge is stopped before it even begins. This has bred genuine fears from mostly peasant farmers affected by evictions in the sugar belt that challenging the King can lead to evictions any time as the cases in Vuvulane and other communities has shown. These evictions and the ensuing land appetite for sugar cane plantation is the evidence for land transfers away from local peasants. Since chiefs are footstalls of the monarchy and exercise delegated powers, they play the role of being eyes and ears of the ruling royal aristocracy at the community level. More than that, they also benefit from sugar rents, as they charge peasant farmers who are integrated into the circuit of capitalist commodity production.

This research has also shown that the sugar industry is founded on the evictions of communities who were either forced out of their ancestral land with no compensation or forced into the sugar industry against their will. Most communities were resettled from fertile land and dumped to far flung areas without compensation. Others were forced into capitalist intensive agriculture and absorbed into the vicious cycle of commodity production. Those who have actively resisted the monarch's land grabbing have been failed by the courts and other state institutions when seeking justice, demonstrating a system that lacks accountability and reinforces patrimonial rule. Even a Libandla report, commissioned by the monarch to resolve the Vuvulane fiasco, stated that Vuvulane farmers were supposed to be given land as a right but the fear of giving peasant farmers control over their land would make them rebellious and set a dangerous precedent. Since 2000 the Vuvulane Farmers Association has been fighting to claim back land from RSSC through the courts with little success. The Managing Director of Tibiyo Themba Dlamini has openly told communities that challenging the King using the constitution was useless because 'he was the constitution'. Dlamini is the Managing Director of Tibiyo and Chairman of RSSC and at the forefront of Vuvulane evictions. Business too is not insulated from this uncertainty brought by the ambiguity on land holding rights. Multilateral business that operate on Title Deed Land are forced to pay rents to the monarchy for using Swazi land. Even those who operate on 99-year lease agreement still have to pay land rents that is collected by the Monarch to his private companies (Interview with government official, 2021.

7.3 Analytical contributions of this study

7.3.1 Sugar and patrimonial governance

The Tinkhundla system of governance is not just undemocratic but also patrimonial. It ensures the Dlamini royal family's domination of the political and economic life of the country, blurring the limits of private and public ownership over land and other assets. This system of governance has created a rentier state that is heavily reliant on external revenue coming from the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) receipts or selling sugar to the European Union markets. The country's National Development Strategy places sugar as the driver of the country's poverty alleviation strategy. The sugar industry is often called 'Swazi gold' owing to its contribution to the Swazi economy but also to the kind of revenue it gives to the Swazi government. This research shows that over years, the EU and other developmental partners have poured large amounts of money to expand industry, providing price and trade incentives to the expansion of sugar cane production. The windfalls accrued through the boom years of the sugar industry has not developed the country or created a country with strong democratic institutions. Instead, the revenue has provided the levers used to dispense patronage and buy the loyalty of mostly the middle class. In a rentier state, just like in eSwatini, the availability of resources like sugar revenue buys political loyalty and over time this political support is traded for state provided welfare. In the case of eSwatini Tibiyo provides scholarships, business opportunities and jobs as part of an elaborate scheme to secure support for the monarch from the population. As Schwarz (2008) correctly observes, in a rentier state citizens ultimately enter into an implicit social contract where they lack effective decision making capacity and the state dispenses resources to quell social demands. In the case of eSwatini the state has used the money from the sugar industry to pacify the nation and buy the loyalty of the middle class, the security establishment and other local and external business. However, caution must be exercised because the Swazi state is not a typical rentier state in that even in the absence of external rents from the sugar trade it wouldn't be anything better. If anything, even though the resource abundance theory suggests that abundance of excessive rents creates weak states, the case of eSwatini seems to mirror the conclusions made by Di John (2011) that, like countries like Venezuela before the discovery of oil, previous resource scarcity did not necessarily create strong states. This research agrees with Woods (2017) that it is the deliberate political designs of the Tinkhundla system that patronage appointments to key ministerial and state institutions must reflect the decision−theoretic logic of the monarch to establish stable focal points among the royal elite and the country's dominant clan. The Monarch appoints the executive members of the state, makes judicial and legislative appointments with no oversight institution on his powers and choices. More importantly, every prime minister has come from the royal Dlamini clan and most Ministers, state bureaucrats, key security officials and parliamentarians are drawn from the Monarch's family or chiefs. These patronage appointments underscore the monarch's efforts to limit the emergence of potential threats from elite circles closest to the center of power (Woods, 2017).

7.3.2 Preferential trade and land grabs

The EU support for the sugar industry has been helpful and benefited thousands of smallholder growers in the rural areas. The European market absorbs about 150,000 tonnes of the total sugar production of eSwatini, whilst representing over 30 percent of industry revenue due to the higher prices obtainable in the EU (National Indicative Programme, 2014). However, the change in the EU's preferences in the EU market has meant reduction in export earnings and a reduction in industry revenues. This research has shown that the EU has been supporting more than just the sugar industry but many government programs all with an effort to contribute to the one area of the economy that looks to be providing a lions' share of the fiscus. The EU throwing a lot of money to the sugar industry has also seen a number of communities on Swazi National Land become deeply entangled within the sugarcane complex albeit by taking on debt and accepting a large degree of dependence on the sugar mills. This research has shown that while the EU has provided the financial start up that helped establish farmer companies, improving the agriculture infrastructure, assisting with many government programs most of their support has only helped to bolster the monarchy but also propped up the very patrimonial state the EU had hoped to undermine by trying to diversity the economy. The research has shown for example that a significant share of the profits in the sugar industry finds its way to King Mswati III, the Swazi Royal Family or the pockets of his chiefs, either through Tibiyo, through the haulage companies, rent on land or through royalties. This research agrees with the Africak Kontact report that the EU's external assistance to the sugar industry ends up benefitting the last absolute monarch in Africa directly and indirectly. In the final analysis the EU developmental aid ends up insulating the government from its state responsibilities instead use the rent from sugar sale to buy the nation into compliance and subservience. The EU's developmental aid support to the country has glossed over the extensive interests of the monarchy in the economy, sugar in particular, through Tibiyo and related companies.

In sum, this study has integrated the literatures of land grabbing, which has been at the centre stage of critical agricultural studies for the past decade, with discussions around the rentier and patrimonial state. In so doing, the research has linked local governance systems the incentives from the global economy, namely the EU's aid and trade programs to Africa that strengthen and ultimately shape those forms of rule. In this context, the problem of land grabbing is not only observed through the lens of broad tendencies in global capitalism nor the formation of a patrimonial state solely responsive to local practices, but indeed, as I have shown, these global and local processes are intimately intertwined.

7.4 Areas for future research

Even as this research cannot make a causal link between the EU's support for the sugar industry and propping up the authoritarian rule of King Mswati III this research has exposed how external rents ultimately end up benefitting the King through his business interests linked directly and indirectly to Tibiyo. There is still room to research just how much Tibiyo companies have robbed the country's coffers owing to them not paying tax and expropriating land that could be benefitting ordinary people. Further research could look into concrete forms of resistance and alternative livelihoods in local communities. Similarly, the rise of China and other emerging powers raises the question of whether alternative trade linkages and productive connections to the global economy may help engender new forms of local governance dynamics.

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