



AFRICA IN MOVIMENTO / AFRICA ON THE MOVE

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TITLE: THE ETHIOPIAN LAND QUESTION

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ABSTRACT:

In the early 1990s the Ethiopian land debate was polarized along the two usual directions. At one extreme some donor agencies pushed for private ownership and free market, claiming that state ownership was discouraging private investment. At the other extreme the government maintained the *Derg's* line, which favoured state ownership, public investment and cadastral registration, and which was justified by the class argument that Lenin and Krichevskii proposed in Russia before collectivisation. State---market rhetoric today is out---dated, but still new positions are justified by old arguments. Within the World Bank Lenin's argument has been somehow resumed to converge towards the governmental position and push for land rentals. Within the Ethiopian Studies the opposition to the developmental state is justified by Chayanov's demographic argument, a second Russian argument that in Ethiopia was first proposed in the 1970s to contrast the *Derg's* feudal one. This paper revisits the Lenin---Chayanov debate in the light of the economic and ethnographic evidence of Northern Ethiopia to argue that its main result is to overstate the land question at the expense of the labour one.

AUTHOR'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:

Luca Mantovan is assistant professor at the Department of Economics of the University of Dire Dawa in Ethiopia. His research on Economic Development focuses on Eastern Africa and Middle East and is of an interdisciplinary character in so far as it tries to merge Economics, History and Anthropology.