

Image of a large building site

# GLOBAL OBSERVATORY

## MAPPING LAND-GRABS

*By Land Matrix*

Project URL: [landmatrix.org/en](http://landmatrix.org/en)

Project Twitter: [@ward\\_anseeuw](https://twitter.com/@ward_anseeuw)

Organisation URL: [landmatrix.org/en/](http://landmatrix.org/en/)

- Environment & Sustainability
- Audiovisual
- Data
- Geolocation

Global Observatory is an online database and map to shed light on the global, growing and shadowy phenomenon of large-scale land acquisitions in low and middle-income countries.

Such 'land-grabs' are controversial and notoriously opaque: Global Observatory's developers hope the site will grow the 'Open Development' movement, which is pushing for greater transparency, scrutiny and accountability in this field, in order to improve decisions.

The site was set up by five international research centres, the International Land Coalition, the French agricultural research centre CIRAD, the Centre for Development and Environment at Bern University and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and German Institute of Global Area studies. It was built by [Tactical Technology Collective](#).

The site aggregates information from other portals and observatories covering land transactions, some of them focused by theme, nation, or region, and gathers data collected by regional coordinators and partner networks in Africa, Europe and Latin America, from NGOs and local experts, official records, company websites and media reports. All the information is verified, with government and business feedback actively sought, and the site includes links to source material.

The site has logged just over 1,000 deals since the millennium, equating to a landmass that is half the size of Western Europe, much of it in Africa. But the group believes that is likely to be a 'huge underestimate,' because so many countries lack established procedures for these deals, and actively avoid publicity.

A big element of the site is its crowdsourcing function: encouraging the growth of a community of researchers, policy-makers and technologists and citizens to push for greater clarity, information and justice on the issue.

*Image 'Panorama IKEA Baustelle Hamburg-Altona' courtesy of Frerk Meyer*

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