

Tor A. Benjaminsen

Professor, Human Geographer

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Development Studies (Noragric) Norwegian
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Current position and academic degree: Professor , Cand. Scient (Environmental Geography, University of Oslo, 1988), PhD ([Development Studies, Roskilde University](#), 1998).

Main research topics:

1. *Historical landscape changes*

How are landscapes changing over time and what are causing these changes? How are landscape changes interpreted differently by different actors?

I started my research career in the late 1980s questioning the idea of man-made desertification in the West African Sahel. I have also critically studied the idea of 'land degradation' and overstocking in the drylands of South Africa.

2. *Climate change and conflicts in African drylands*

Does climate change lead to drier conditions, desertification, resource scarcity, and then to conflicts in African drylands?

I have carried out several case studies in Mali and Tanzania that question this chain of events. The conflict cases I have studied have historical and political roots and environmental factors only play a minor role in explaining these conflicts.

3. *Land tenure*

How does increased population pressure and market access impact on land tenure and rural smallholders' access to land and natural resources? Does formalization (surveying, registration, mapping) of property rights lead to increased land tenure security for the poor? How does urban expansion affect people's access to land? Do external investments in land in Africa lead to neocolonial 'land grabbing' or to opportunities for development and agricultural modernization?

Both urban expansion and (other) processes of 'land grabbing' can be seen as opportunities for rent appropriation and primitive accumulation by elites at the expense of the rural peasantry.

4. *Pastoralism*

How are pastoral peoples affected by state policies? How is the herders' access to land and natural resources changing?

There seems to be a general trend of pastoral marginalization in Africa as well as in areas with Saami Reindeer herding in Northern Norway. Pastoralists are accused by states of being economically inefficient and to cause environmental degradation. This again leads to top-down policies to arrest mobile and flexible pastoral practices. Over time, such policies also tend to be among the root causes of farmer-herder conflicts.

5. *Protected areas, participation, and community benefits*

Does the establishment of protected areas reduce or produce poverty? Does community-based conservation lead to the devolution of power to local communities and to substantial local benefits?

Our research demonstrates that conservation projects tend to result in dispossession of land and resources among rural smallholders. Rural residents generally pay the costs of conservation.

Teaching:

- Responsible for the courses EDS 330 ([Political Ecology](#)), EDS 335 ([Advanced Readings in Development Studies](#)) and EDS 130 (Introduction to Political Ecology).

On-going projects:

- *Ekosiasa: The Political Ecology of Wildlife and Forest Governance in Tanzania*. Funded by NUFU. Partners: Department of Forest Economics, Sokoine University of Agriculture; Institute of Resource assessment, University of Dar es Salaam, and Norwegian Institute of Nature Research.
- *Protected Areas and Poverty in Africa (Papia)*. Funded by the Research Council of Norway. Partners: Department of Forest Economics, Sokoine University of Agriculture; Institute of Resource assessment, University of Dar es Salaam, and Norwegian Institute of Nature Research.
- *Security Dimensions of Climate Change* based at the International Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO).

Articles in international journals:

- **2010:** Benjaminsen, T. A. and H. Svarstad. **The death of an elephant: Conservation discourages versus practices in Africa.** *Forum for Development Studies* 37 (3): 385-408.
- **2010:** Benjaminsen, T. A., J. Aune and D. Sidibé. **A critical political ecology of cotton and soil fertility in Mali.** *Geoforum* 41 (4) : 647-656.
- **2010:** Lange Vik, M., T. A. Benjaminsen and K. Daugstad. Synergy or marginalisation ? Narratives of farming and tourism in Geiranger, western Norway. *Norwegian Journal of Geography* 64 : 36-47.
- **2009:** Benjaminsen, T. A. and H. Svarstad. **Questioning conservation practice – and its response : the establishment of Namaqua National Park in South Africa.** *Current Conservation* 3 (<http://www.currentconservation.org>).
- **2009:** T. A. Benjaminsen. **Klima og konflikter i Sahel – eller politikk og vitenskap ved klimaets nullpunkt.** *Internasjonal Politikk* 2: 151-172.
- **2009:** T. A. Benjaminsen, F. P. Maganga and J. M. Abdallah. **The Kilosa Killings: Political ecology of a farmer-herder conflict in Tanzania.** *Development and Change* 40 (3): 423-445.
- **2009:** T. A. Benjaminsen and H. Svarstad. **Qu'est-ce que la "political ecology"?** *Natures Sciences Sociétés* 17: 3-11.
- **2009:** T. A. Benjaminsen and B. Ba. **Farmer-herder conflicts, pastoral marginalisation and corruption: a case study from the inland Niger delta of Mali.** *The Geographical Journal* 175 (1): 71-81.
- **2009:** T. A. Benjaminsen, S. Holden, Chr. Lund and E. Sjaastad. **Formalisation of land rights: Some empirical evidence from Mali, Niger and South Africa.** *Land Use Policy* 26 (1): 28-35.
- **2008:** T. A. Benjaminsen. **Does supply-induced scarcity drive violent conflicts in the African Sahel? The case of the Tuareg rebellion in northern Mali.** *Journal of Peace Research* 45 (6): 831-848.
- **2008:** T. A. Benjaminsen and E. Sjaastad. **Where to draw the line: The mapping of land rights in a South African commons.** *Political Geography* 27 (3): 263-279.
- **2008:** T. A. Benjaminsen, T. Kepe and S. Bråthen. **Between global interests and local needs: Conservation and land reform in Namaqualand, South Africa.** *Africa* 78 (2): 221-244. (see also <http://c3.unu.edu/plec/>).
- **2008:** T. A. Benjaminsen and H. Svarstad. **Understanding traditionalist opposition to modernisation: Narrative production in a Norwegian mountain conflict.** *Geografiska Annaler Series B, Human Geography* 90 (1): 49-62.
- **2008:** J. Pedersen and T. A. Benjaminsen. **One leg or two? Food security and pastoralism in the northern Sahel.** *Human Ecology* 36 (1): 43-57.

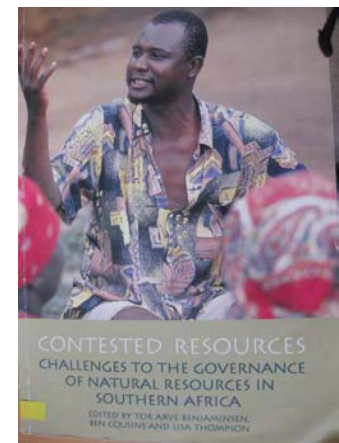
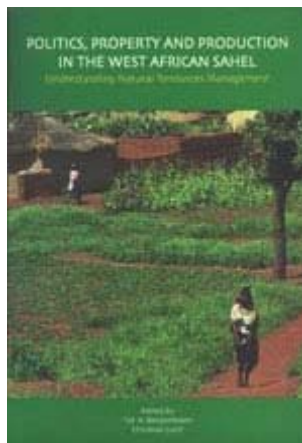
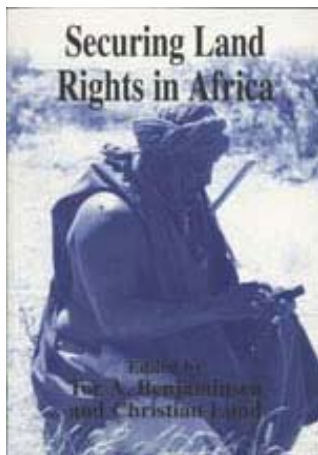
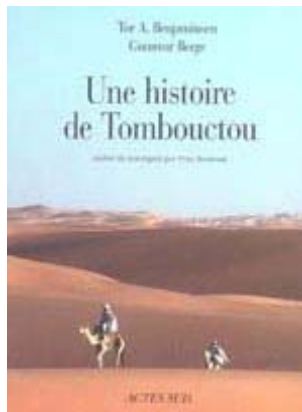
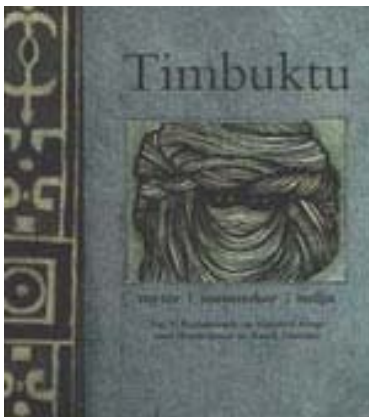
- **2007:** T. A. Benjaminsen, B. Derman and E. Sjaastad. **Exploring new understandings of resource tenure and reform in the context of globalisation.** Introduction to special issue of *Land Use Policy* 24 (4): 611-612.
- **2006:** T. A. Benjaminsen, R.F. Rohde, E. Sjaastad, P. Wisborg and T. Lebert. **Land reform, range ecology, and carrying capacities in Namaqualand, South Africa.** *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 96 (3): 524-540.
- **2005:** R. Kaarhus, T.A. Benjaminsen, A. Hellum and I. Ikdahl. **Women's Land Rights in Tanzania and South Africa: A Human Rights Based Perspective on Formalisation.** *Forum for Development Studies* 32 (2): 443-482.
- **2005:** Ali, J., T.A. Benjaminsen, A.A. Hammad and Ø. Dick. **The road to deforestation: An assessment of forest loss and its causes in Basha valley, northern Pakistan.** *Global Environmental Change* 15: 370-380.
- **2004:** T. A. Benjaminsen and G. Berge. **Myths of Timbuktu. From African El Dorado to Desertification.** *International Journal of Political Economy.* 34(1): 31-59.
- **2004:** J. Ali and T.A. Benjaminsen. **Fuelwood, timber and deforestation in the Himalayas. The case of Basha valley, Baltistan region, Pakistan.** *Mountain Research and Development.* 24(4): 312-318.
- **2002:** T. A. Benjaminsen and Chr. Lund. **Formalisation and informalisation of land and water rights in Africa: An introduction.** *European Journal of Development Research.* 14 (2): 1-10.
- **2002:** T. A. Benjaminsen and E. Sjaastad. **Race for the prize: Land transactions and rent appropriation in the Malian cotton zone.** *European Journal of Development Research.* 14 (2): 129-152.
- **2002:** E. Hongslo and T.A. Benjaminsen. **Turning landscapes into 'nothing': A narrative on land reform in Namibia.** *Forum for Development Studies.* 29 (2): 321-347.
- **2002:** T. A. Benjaminsen. **Enclosing the land: cotton, population growth and tenure in Mali.** *Norwegian Journal of Geography.* 56, pp. 1-9.
- **2002:** H. P. Andersen and T. A. Benjaminsen. **Lærerstuderens myter om befolkning og miljø.** *Norwegian Journal of Geography.* 56: 41-43.
- **2001:** T. A. Benjaminsen. **The Population - Agriculture - Environment Nexus in the Malian Cotton Zone.** *Global Environmental Change.* 11 (4): 27-39.
- **2001:** W. N.Adger, T. A. Benjaminsen, K. Brown and H. Svarstad. **Advancing a Political Ecology of Global Environmental Discourses.** *Development and Change.* 32: 681-715.
- **1997:** T. A. Benjaminsen. **Is there a fuelwood crisis in rural Mali?** *GeoJournal.* 43: 163-174.
- **1997:** T. A. Benjaminsen. **Natural resource management, paradigm shifts and the decentralization reform in Mali.** *Human Ecology.* 25 (1): 121-143.
- **1996:** T. A. Benjaminsen. **Bois-énergie, déboisement et sécheresse au Sahel. Le cas du Gourma malien.** *Sécheresse.* 7 (3): 179-185.
- **1993:** T. A. Benjaminsen. **Fuelwood and desertification: Sahel orthodoxies discussed on the basis of field data from the Gourma region in Mali.** *Geoforum.* 24 (4): 397-409.

Books:

- **2010:** T.A. Benjaminsen and H. Svarstad. [Politisk økologi. Miljø, mennesker og makt.](#) Oslo: Universitetsforlaget. (251 pp)
- **2004:** T.A. Benjaminsen and G. Berge. [Une histoire de Tombouctou.](#) Arles: Actes Sud. (187 pp.). (*Revue: Jeune Afrique*).
- **2003:** T.A. Benjaminsen and Chr. Lund (eds.). **Securing land rights in Africa.** London: Frank Cass. (175 pp.)
- **2002:** T.A. Benjaminsen, B. Cousins and L. Thompson (eds.). [Contested resources: Challenges to the governance of natural resources in Southern Africa.](#) Cape Town: University of the Western Cape.

(398 pp.)

- **2001:** T.A. Benjaminsen and Chr. Lund (eds.). *Politics, property and production in the West African Sahel*. Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute. (333 pp.).
- **2000:** T.A. Benjaminsen and G. Berge. *Timbuktu. Myter, mennesker, miljø*. Oslo: [Spartacus](#). (130 pp, ill.). [Anmeldelse global.no](#) [Anmeldelse NRK](#)
- **1998:** T.A. Benjaminsen and H. Svarstad (eds.). [Samfunnsperspektiver på miljø og utvikling](#). Oslo: Tano-Aschehoug (text book) (400 pp). Revised edition **2002** published by Universitetsforlaget. [Anmeldelse Apollon](#) . [Anmeldelse Morgenbladet](#).



Debates, book reviews, and other articles:

- **2008:** T. A. Benjaminsen. [Book review](#) of J. Mistry and A. Berardi (eds). 2006. Savannas and Dry Forests. Linking People with Nature. Aldershot: Ashgate. *Human Ecology* 36 (1): 135-136.
 - **2007:** T. A. Benjaminsen and E. Sjaastad. [Property rights formalisation in Africa](#). *News from the Nordic Africa Institute* 3: 5-7.
 - **2007:** T. A. Benjaminsen. [Book review](#) of J. Peter Brosius, Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing and Charles Zerner (eds). 2005. Communities and Conservation: Histories and Politics of Community-Based Natural Resource Management. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press. *Development and Change* 38 (2): 355-356.
 - **2006:** T. A. Benjaminsen. Book review of Kahl, Colin H. 2006. States, Scarcity, and Civil Strife in the Developing World. Princeton: Princeton University Press. *Journal of Peace Research* 43 (6): 754.
 - **2005:** T. A. Benjaminsen and F. Gundersen. [Striden om hundekjøring i Gausdal Vestfjell](#). *Utmark* No 1 2005.
 - **2003:** T. A. Benjaminsen and E. Sjaastad. [Mathieu versus de Soto: A Comment](#). *Forum for Development Studies* 31 (1): 89-93.
 - **2002:** T. A. Benjaminsen. [Formalising Land Tenure in Rural Africa](#). *Forum for Development Studies* 30 (2): 362-366.
 - **2000:** T. A. Benjaminsen and H. Svarstad. Book review of Roe, E.. 1999. Except-Africa. Remaking Development, Rethinking Power. New Brunswick: Transactions Publishers. *Forum for Development Studies* 27 (2): 351-354.
 - **1997:** T. A. Benjaminsen. Endrede landrettigheter i Sør-Mali. *Den Ny Verden* 30 (4): 71-85.
 - **1995:** G. Berge, T. A. Benjaminsen and T. Vedeld. Presenting the Sahel. *Forum for Development Studies* 24 (1): 123-129.
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Popular articles, debates, and op eds:

- **2011:** T. A. Benjaminsen, E. Reinert & Svein D. Mathiesen. [Reindriften – hva slags krise?](#) *Nyemeninger.no*. 22.03.2011.
- **2011:** T. A. Benjaminsen, E. Reinert & Svein D. Mathiesen. **Feil om reinsdyr**. *Dagbladet*. 12.04.2011.
- **2011:** T. A. Benjaminsen, E. Reinert & Svein D. Mathiesen. **Naturstridig reinsdyrpolitikk**. *Dagbladet*. 18.03.2011.
- **2010:** H. Svarstad & T. A. Benjaminsen. **Kritisk miljøforskning**. Kronikk i *Klassekampen* 14.08.2010.
- **2009:** T. A. Benjaminsen. [Samarbeid om knappe ressurser](#). Kronikk i *Aftenposten* 10.12.2009.
- **2009:** T. A. Benjaminsen, I. Bryceson, A. Dahlberg, K. Holmgren, M. Widgren and W. Östberg. **Svenskt bistånd ska rädda miljöfarligt etanolprosjekt**. Kronikk i *DN.se* [OPINION](#) 14.04.2009.
- **2009:** T. A. Benjaminsen & I. Bryceson. [Klimakolonialismen](#). Kronikk i *Dagbladet* 28.01.2009.
- **2008:** T. A. Benjaminsen. [Klima, konflikt og mytespredning](#). Kronikk i *Verdensmagasinet X* nr 5 2008.
- **2008:** T. A. Benjaminsen. [To grader varmere](#). Debattinnlegg i *Aftenposten* 03.11.2008.
- **2007:** T. A. Benjaminsen. [Feilslått norsk bistand](#). Kronikk i *Aftenposten* 30.08.2007.
- **2007:** T. A. Benjaminsen. [Synsing om klimaendringer og miljødegradering i Afrika](#). *Cicerone* No 1, p. 19.
- **2005:** T. A. Benjaminsen & H. Svarstad. [Naturvern i Afrika: Retorikk og praksis](#). Kronikk i *Bistandsaktuelt* 15.12.2005.
- **2005:** T. A. Benjaminsen & H. Svarstad. [Overgrep i naturvernets navn](#). Replik i *Aftenposten* 01.12.2005.
- **2005:** T. A. Benjaminsen & H. Svarstad. [Krafttak for fattige folk](#). Replik i *Aftenposten* 10.10.2005.
- **2005:** T. A. Benjaminsen & H. Svarstad. [Krafttak for naturbruk](#). Replik i *Aftenposten* 12.08.2005.
- **2005:** T. A. Benjaminsen & H. Svarstad. [Hermetisk miljøvern mot fattige](#). Kronikk i *Bistandsaktuelt* 06/2005.
- **2005:** T. A. Benjaminsen. [Vest-Afrikas hvite gull](#). Kronikk i *Dagbladet* 24.08.2005.

- 2005: T. A. Benjaminsen & H. Svarstad. [Et helt annet krafttak](#). Replikk i *Aftenposten* 20.07.2005.
- 2004: T. A. Benjaminsen & H. Svarstad. [Mytespredning fra Mjøs](#). Replikk i *Morgenbladet* 17.12.2004.
- 2004: T. A. Benjaminsen & H. Svarstad. [Fredspris på feil grunnlag](#). Kronikk i *Dagbladet* 10.12.2004.
- 2004: E. Sjaastad & T.A. Benjaminsen: [De Soto og praktisk politikk](#). Artikkel i *Bistandsaktuelt*.
- 2004: T. A. Benjaminsen. [Darfur: Nomade mot bonde i et fattig land](#). Kronikk i *Aftenposten*. 14.09.2004.
- 2004: T. A. Benjaminsen & H. Svarstad. [Naturvern og fattigdom](#). Kronikk i *Dagbladet*. 30.08.2004. [Replikk fra WWF](#). 12.09.2004. [Svar til WWF](#). 19.09.2004.
- 2003: H. Svarstad & T. A. Benjaminsen. [Rigets og redelighetens tilstand](#). Artikkel i *forskning.no* 25.05.2003.
- 2003: T. A. Benjaminsen & E. Sjaastad. **Hvordan skaper kapitalen utvikling?** Kronikk i *Stavanger Aftenblad*. 21.03.2003.
- 2003: H. Svarstad & T. A. Benjaminsen. [Lomborg og vitenskapens høyborg](#). Artikkel i *forskning.no* 26.02.2003.
- 2003: H. Svarstad & T. A. Benjaminsen. [Lomborg, løgn og forbannet løgn](#). Kronikk i *Dagbladet* 20.02.2003.
- 2003: T. A. Benjaminsen & E. Sjaastad. **Kapitalens mysterium**. Kronikk i *Bergens Tidende* 18.02.2003.
- 2002: T. A. Benjaminsen & E. Sjaastad. [Jordfordeling i Sør-Afrika - en tidsinnstilt bombe](#). Kronikk i *Aftenposten* 27.02.02.
- 2000: T. A. Benjaminsen. [Kampen om Sør-Afrikas landreform](#). Kronikk i *Dagbladet*. 24.05.00
- 1998: T. A. Benjaminsen. [Malthus - fra Norge til Afrika](#). Kronikk i *Aftenposten*. 27.12.98.
- 1996: T. A. Benjaminsen. **Befolkning og miljø i Afrika**. Kronikk i *Klassekampen*. 21.11.96.
- 1993: T. A. Benjaminsen. **Pastoralisme - den beste utnyttning av det afrikanske beitelandet**. *Utvikling*. NORAD. No. 3, pp 62-63.
- 1991: T. A. Benjaminsen & H. Svarstad. [Revolusjonen i Mali](#). Kronikk i *Dagbladet*, 04.04.91.
- 1990: T. A. Benjaminsen. **Ørkenspredning - en myte?** *Populærvitenskaplig Magasin*, no. 4, pp 32-34.

Videos:

- 2003: T. A. Benjaminsen & C. Sørensen: [Timbuktu](#). Part 1 (African Eldorado or end of the world?) and Part 2 (Where water is life and milk is food). Shown by NRK1 in May 2003 and August 2003. Available in Norwegian, English and French versions. The first screening of the two parts at NRK1 had an audience of about 400 000.
- 1998: Research consultant on a video production by Thomas Tellander and Carsten Sørensen on the conflict between international conservation and local interests in Serengeti/Ngorongoro, Tanzania. Title: **Masaier i Serengeti. Inntrengere på eget land**. (Maasai in the Serengeti - trespassers on their own land). Shown by NRK1 (Norwegian Broadcasting Cooperation)

Miscellaneous:

- Served as referee for *Human Ecology*, *The Professional Geographer*, *Danish Journal of Geography*, *Norwegian Journal of Geography*, *Sosiologi idag*, *European Journal of Development Research*, *Forum for Development Studies*, *Global Environmental Change*, *Journal of Arid Environments*, *Journal of Transdisciplinary Environmental Studies*, *Land Use Policy*, *Current Anthropology*, *Geojournal*, *Geografiska Annaler B*, *Environmental Conservation*, *Environmental Management*, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *Area*, *World Development*, *Geoforum*, *Conservation & Society*, *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, *Society and Natural Resources*, *International Journal of the Commons*, *Ecology and Society*, *International Security*, *Journal of Peace Research and Political Geography*.
- Member of the Editorial Board of [Forum for Development Studies](#) and [Journal of Political Ecology](#).

Foreign languages:

- French (fluent)
- English (fluent)
- Basic knowledge of Swahili, Spanish and German

Employment record:

- September 2007 – present: Professor of Development Studies at Noragric.
- October 1998 – September 2007: Associate Professor of Development Studies at Noragric.
- August 2005-July 2006: Visiting Fellow at the School of Development Studies, University of East Anglia, England.
- August 1994-September 1998: Research Fellow at the Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM), University of Oslo.
- May 1992-May 1994: Programme Officer (Junior Professional Officer) at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania.
- January 1989-April 1992: Research Assistant at the Department of Geography, University of Oslo, attached to an interdisciplinary research programme in Mali ([the Mali Programme](#)).

