

Land Acquisition for Development and Infrastructure Projects: A Global Bibliometric Analysis (2016–2025)

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Abstract - The process of acquiring land to develop and build infrastructures is an important subject of debate in legal, governance, and even socio-economic spheres, but the literature is still spread across disciplines so that it is difficult to integrate knowledge and synthesize evidence. The research fills this gap by mapping the intellectual fabric and development of the research on the compulsory land acquisition in the context of infrastructure and development systematically. The quantitative bibliometric design was used to retrieve records in the Scopus-indexed records on 3 February 2026. A predetermined search strategy and PRISMA-based screening were used to find 812 records, of which 469 publications in English language (2016-2025) were included. With the help of Bibliometrix (R) and VOS viewer, performance indicators (annual growth rate, citation impact, leading sources, country productivity, and collaboration patterns) were performed, as well as science-mapping methods (keywords co-occurrence, bibliographic coupling, thematic mapping, and co-authorship networks). The findings indicate the stable increase in publications (3.25% per year growth rate) and their highest point in 2022 and the middle level of international collaborations (22.6%). In Bradford Law, a central nucleus of publication is seen to be headed by Land Use Policy and Land. The biggest contribution to the number of publications is made by China and the United States and some European countries show higher average impact of citation. Thematic analysis reveals the dominant clusters of acquisition processes, compensation and livelihood, governance and policy mechanisms, tenure insecurity, and conflict dynamics, and country-specific cases study orientations are strong. In terms of Information Science, the research can add to knowledge organization, scholarly communication analysis as well as research evaluation by systematically organizing a policy area with fragmented knowledge and determining intellectual focal points, systems of collaboration, and uncharted research frontiers. The results can be used as an evidence base of the interdisciplinary integration, enhanced visibility of research and policy-based knowledge management of land governance and infrastructural development.

Keywords: Land Acquisition, Infrastructure, Eminent Domain, Governance, Compensation, Bibliometric Analysis, Knowledge Mapping

I. INTRODUCTION

Infrastructure-based development relies on land, but the acquisition of land to support roads, railways, energy

facilities, housing and other projects of the state is one of the most controversial and difficult phases of project implementation. In various jurisdictions, governments use the compulsory acquisition (eminent domain/compulsory purchase) of land to compile a land parcel in a specified purpose of the government, subject to legal legality, due process and compensation (Duan et al., 2024). Nevertheless, acquisition legitimacy is often openly questioned in the case where public purpose is elastic, valuation and eligibility requirements are secondary or customary interests, and consultation and grievance processes are weak prerequisites that may become resisting forces, lawsuits, delays, and permanent livelihood effects (Riffel, 2022; Somin, 2010; Kabanga and Mooya, 2023; Smyth and Vanclay, 2024). Such tensions are particularly apparent in the context of big and time-sensitive infrastructure projects whereby acquisition is no longer a one-to-one interaction but a multi-actor process of governance involving land administration agencies, project authorities, financiers, contractors, and impacted communities.

Empirical evidence on the matter is increasing, and it is becoming apparent that institutional coordination and procedural credibility are no less important factors in determining the success of the acquisition process than are the presence of statutory powers. In Asian and African case-based studies, conflict over compensation levels, documentary and boundary demarcation, claims to customary tenure, and payment delays have been reported to paralyze implementation and further escalate conflict even with projects being promoted as nationally strategic (Putri et al., 2023; Gameda et al., 2023; Owusu and Amoakoh, 2025). Meanwhile, socio-economic literature emphasizes that cash-only payment often does not substitute land-based assets and social connections, thus the displaced families will remain landless, face food insecurity, and marginalized where livelihood restoration is not programmed or tracked (Aryan, 2024; Chilonga and Chikhwenda, 2026). The political-economic and tenure-driven literature then goes on to posit that conflict is often not exceptional, but structural, and it occurs because of plural legal orders, unequal power relations, and selective acknowledgement of rights especially where the customary and the statutory

systems co-exist (Bae, 2023; Berenschot and Loughlin, 2025; Holland et al., 2022).

Although the scope of this literature, development and infrastructure land acquisition studies has been scattered throughout law, planning, development studies, geography, public policy and environmental social science, and the concomitant literature arguments are not always interrelated (Hamsadhvani et al., 2025). Bibliometrics methods are now generally employed to synthesize these fragmented areas by mapping the growth patterns, central journals, and networks of collaboration as well as the development of themes over time (Han et al., 2021; Rasva and Jürgenson, 2022). The current bibliometric research has enhanced the comprehension of the neighboring field like land grabbing, land-use change and land governance, yet it lacks the integration of the concrete scholarship building the relationship between compulsory acquisition mechanisms and the final outcomes of infrastructure and development delivery (Cheng & Wei, 2025). This forms a useful distance between researchers and policymakers that require a holistic picture of where the knowledge is pulled together, which themes take the centre stage and what new fronts are worth some consideration.

Although this literature is extensive, the research on land acquisition to be developed and create infrastructure is conceptually abundant but organizes it structurally scattered in the law, planning, geography, development studies, and environmental governance (Turayeva et al., 2025). Although a number of recent bibliometric studies have charted related areas, no such studies have collated systematically compulsory land acquisition studies in the infrastructure and development realms.

In particular, Han et al. (2021) have made a bibliometric review of transnational agricultural land investment by concentrating on land grabbing and global agricultural processes instead of legal expropriation and providing infrastructure. Rasva and Juergenson (2022), studied massive land purchases in Europe but this was region specific and failed to incorporate governance, compensation and livelihood aspects in global infrastructure conditions. Consistently, Allan et al. (2022) and Xie et al. (2024) mapped the land-use change and ecological land research, and they focused on the environmental drivers, but not on the mandatory acquisition mechanisms. To date, conservation land trusts, sustainability transitions, and restoration research have been covered by more recent bibliometric studies (e.g., Yang et al., 2022; Begum and Shaik, 2025; Zhang et al., 2025) but none of them have deployed eminent domain, compensation governance, and infrastructure-related land assembly.

Therefore, three gaps in literature are observed. Firstly, it has a thematic gap since no bibliometric synthesis has so far incorporated legal underpinnings, governance structures, compensation regimes, livelihood effects and conflict relationships in a single land acquisition-infrastructure nexus. Second, there is a gap in the context since the available

literature focuses mostly on land grabbing, agricultural land investment or land-use change in the environment but not compulsory acquisition of land to deliver public infrastructure and development. Third, a knowledge gap is structural in that there still exists no global science-mapping analysis that establishes the intellectual clusters of the field, the systems of collaboration, the primary sources of publications along with new research fronts in the compulsory land acquisition scholarship.

The need to address these gaps extends beyond the synthesis of substantive policies, and also to an Information Science point of view, in which fragmented interdisciplinary domains are in need of systematic knowledge organization, mapping of scholarly communication networks, and discovery of intellectual concentrations. It is against this backdrop that the current research offers the initial international bibliometric synthesis of land acquisition research specifically pegged on development and infrastructure undertaking.

Key Contributions and Organization of the Paper

This study has four contributions. It gives, first, the first bibliometric synthesis world-wide devoted to the compulsory land acquisition in the sphere of development and infrastructure projects, uniting the body of research in legal strand, governance strand, and socio-economic strand. Second, it charts the intellectual landscape of the field by determining central themes, prevailing clusters and new research terrains using science- mapping methods. Third, it enhances the Information Science input through the use of performance measures, Law of Bradford and network analysis to assess the concentration of publications, systems of collaboration and evolution of the themes in this interdisciplinary policy area. Fourth, it provides useful recommendations by establishing fundamental journals, most effective countries, patterns of collaboration, and untapped areas applicable in research planning and policy-based knowledge management.

The study is structured in the following way: Section 2 provides the discussion of the essential conceptual and bibliometric underpinnings; Section 3 discusses the methodology; Section 4 reports the results of the performance and science-mapping; Section 5 is the discussion of implications; and Section 6 concludes with limitations and future research directions.

Study Objectives

This research will map and review the international academic environment of forced expropriation of land to development and infrastructural projects in 2016-2025. In particular, it aims at measuring publication increase and citation influence, core journals, top nations, and patterns of global collaboration, and interpreting intellectual and thematic landscape of the discipline by use of science-map methodologies. The study will also seek to explain the prevailing research clusters, new themes and structural knowledge concentrations by introducing performance

indicators and network-based analyses to consolidate a disjointed interdisciplinary repertoire in the eyes of Information Science.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Eminent domain, often known as land acquisition, compulsory acquisition, or compulsory purchase, is a legal method used by governments to acquire privately held land through the use of eminent domain to serve the needs of the state, e.g. in the creation of infrastructure, residential development, and utility supply. Although the practice is legal in most jurisdictions, it must have evident statutory power, protection of due process, and mechanisms of equitable compensation (Lingamaiah, 2023; Riffel, 2022). One of the main conceptual arguments is on understanding the meaning of the public purpose. In a number of legal systems, especially the United States, the courts have taken a liberal view of what constitutes public use, and have thus equated it to public purpose and limited the discretion of the legislatures when deciding on land acquisition (Kades, 2002). Nevertheless, this flexibility can bring about abuse possibilities especially when they are applied to allow transfers of lands that eventually favor the private players, under the guise of the society. Researchers then highlight that more intensive judicial review and protection against pretextual takings should be achieved (Somin, 2010).

The changing constitutional and institutional patterns of land acquisition are also brought out in comparative legal scholarship. In India, an example is that the right to property was not declared to be an important right, but a constitutional legal right under the 300A article, which enhanced the power of the state to acquire land, as long as the process is supported by a law (Babu, 2012). There is still debate on whether development-related acquisitions are fair and distributive justice when the land is sold to corporate organizations with the excuse of economic development. Similar issues arise in other areas where the definition of "public interest" is unclear or not applied correctly. This can lead to broad administrative power and ineffective ways of holding people accountable (Ni et al., 2023; Gleason, 2025). These arguments show that there has been a longstanding conflict between empowering infrastructure creation and safeguarding property rights using legally binding norms.

Other than the legal doctrine, land acquisition is equally a critical governance process that determines success or failure of the infrastructure project. Empirical research indicates that acquisition practices usually have a number of players that include government agencies, project authorities, financiers, and local communities whose interactions determine the implementation outcomes. The examples of large projects in infrastructure development demonstrate that there is no consensus on compensation amounts, estimating value, and defining and marking property boundaries which frequently cause project delays and potential lawsuits (Purohit et al., 2023; Nayi et al., 2026). The same governance issues are observed in the Indonesian infrastructure projects, where the compensation process is challenging due to disagreements

over compensation, claims to customary land, and the lack of coordination between various government levels (Putri et al., 2023; Nurnaningsih & Sihombing, 2024).

The socio-economic implications of land acquisition are also high. The compensation policies tend to be more interested in paying with the market value and overlooking the livelihood disruption that the displaced communities suffer. Empirical research shows that monetary compensation is often incapable of substituting land-based livelihoods, social networks, and economic security, especially in rural areas (Aryan, 2024; Kabanga and Mooya, 2023). This has been associated with poor valuation systems and a vague compensation policy that has led to the dissatisfaction of the affected communities and long-standing conflicts in various African and Asian societies (Gemedda et al., 2023; Yacim et al., 2022). Displacement has not only economic disadvantages; a lack of land and food scarcity are other consequences that are seen when the resettlement plans and efforts to restore livelihood are not pursued properly (Chilonga and Chikhwenda, 2026; Smyth and Vanclay, 2024).

The tenure systems and power relations that prevail also play a key role in disputes with regard to land acquisition. In most developing areas, the existence of overlapping statutory and customary land tenure systems has structural weaknesses that allow the dispossession or elite grabbing of land resources. Zambian and Kenyan research indicates that a transition of customary land to statutory land regimes can benefit external investors or state actors at the expense of the local communities (Bae, 2023; Wachira et al., 2023). Political economy discussions also indicate that the policy of land acquisition may strengthen unequal relations of power when the definition of the concept of the public interest is reformulated to pledge large-scale development projects (Berenschot & Loughlin, 2025; Meckelburg and Wardana, 2024). As a result, the need to enhance the security of tenures, open procedures, and active involvement in decision-making in socially sustainable land acquisition processes is increasingly discussed by scholars (Holland et al., 2022; Al-Jashaami et al., 2025).

Given the interdisciplinary nature of land acquisition research, bibliometric approaches have recently been used to synthesize fragmented scholarship and map the intellectual structure of related research domains. Science-mapping techniques, such as keyword co-occurrence, bibliographic coupling, and citation analysis, have proven valuable for discerning contemporary research trends, thematic groupings, and collaborative networks within extensive bodies of literature (Han et al., 2021; Rasva & Jürgenson, 2022). An example of this is Han et al (2021) mapping of global studies on transnational agricultural land investment, which show that the focus initially was on land grabbing but there are newer studies that focus on governance, sustainability, and impacts on livelihoods. Likewise, Rasva and Jürgenson (2022) discerned thematic groupings within European land acquisition research, connecting land

concentration with human rights considerations, food security concerns, and agricultural policy frameworks.

Additional bibliometric research on land-use changes and environmental land management highlights the growing importance of sustainability-oriented themes, governance frameworks, and institutional drivers in land-related scholarship (Allan et al., 2022; Xie et al., 2024). Studies on conservation land trusts and ecological restoration similarly show that land governance research is increasingly integrated with sustainability and environmental management discourses (Yang et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2025). Although these advances have been made, the current bibliometric studies do not really concentrate on the compulsory land acquisition that is related to the development of infrastructures.

This means that the literature is still conceptually robust but structurally disjointed in legal, governance, and socio-economic research traditions. Legal theories highlight doctrines on the constitution and statutory frameworks, institutional coordination and dispute resolution in the field of governance, and socio-economic theories that reveal the implications of compensation adequacy and livelihood benefits.

Nonetheless, these streams seldom overlap in a systematic manner and the majority of case-based researches are country-specific and case-specific. This disaggregation restricts cross-national comparison and hides larger trends in the world research arena. To fill this gap, it is necessary to carry out the systematic bibliometric synthesis that will allow tracing intellectual connections, define the prevailing themes, and explaining the new research directions in the interdisciplinary area of research into land acquisition and infrastructure development.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this research, the bibliometric research method will assume a quantitative research design whereby the researcher will

Screening and Selection Process

TABLE I PRISMA-BASED SCREENING AND SELECTION PROCESS OF STUDIES INCLUDED IN THE BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS (2016–2025)

Screening stage	Inclusion / Exclusion criteria	Records (n)
Identification	Records identified through Scopus database search (3 February 2026) using predefined search string	812
Step 1: Time-period filtering	Included: Publications from 2016–2025 Excluded: Publications before 2016 and after 2025	496
Step 2: Document type filtering	Included: Articles (377), Book chapters (59), Conference papers (28), Books (14) Excluded: Reviews (12), Notes (5), Short surveys (1)	478
Step 3: Publication stage filtering	Included: Final publications Excluded: Articles in press (6)	472
Step 4: Duplicate removal	Duplicate records removed	3
Final dataset	Documents retained for bibliometric analysis	469

The dataset was refined with the help of a structured screening process that only provided the publications that

conduct a systematic review of the development, intellectual formulation and theme progression of academic literature on eminent domain and acquisition of land in development and infrastructure projects. Bibliometric analysis is especially applicable to the synthesis of extensive literature volumes, the definition of trends in publications, sources of influence, collaboration and cooperation, as well as new research topics, in a clear and replicable way.

Data Source

On 3 February 2026 the bibliographic data has been accessed through the Scopus database. The reason behind selecting Scopus is that it is very broad and covers peer-reviewed journals, books, and conference proceedings covering law, development studies, social sciences, and policy-related fields and is compatible with existing bibliometric analysis software.

Search Strategy

To be precise in both conceptual and contextual relevance, a structured search was conducted with Title and Title-Abstract- Keyword fields. The search string used was the following:

TITLE (land acquisition” OR land procurement or land assembly or land expropriation or compulsory purchase or eminent domain)

AND

TITLE-ABS-KEY (infrastructure OR development OR the public project or the capital project or the construction or the urban or the governance or the policy or legislation or regulation or implementation or challenge or barrier or dispute or conflict)

The initial search yielded 812 documents.

were relevant to the bibliometric analysis. In accordance with the PRISMA-related principles of transparent literature

selection, the filtering of the literature was applied in several stages on the basis of time period, type of document, publication status, and elimination of duplication. This procedure started with 812 records found in the Scopus database, and they were filtered one after another on the basis of predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. To begin with, the articles that happened before the 2016-2025-time range were eliminated. Second, types of documents that are not suitable to undergo bibliometric analysis (e.g., reviews, notes, and short surveys) were eliminated. Third, the articles were filtered out to include only final publications since those were articles in press. Finally, duplicate records were identified and eliminated. The complete screening workflow and record counts at each stage are summarized in table I.

Data Preparation and Analysis

BibTeX and CSV files were used to export the final dataset of Scopus. The data cleaning involved standardization of author names, institutional affiliations and keywords as a means of reducing inconsistencies. Descriptive statistics, thematic mapping, bibliographic coupling, and conceptual structure analysis were analyzed with Bibliometrix (R package), whereas networks of co-occurrence of keywords and patterns of international collaboration were examined with the help of VOSviewer. Microsoft Excel was employed for preliminary data handling and verification.

Bibliometric Indicators and Analytical Techniques

The bibliometric analysis was conducted through two complementary components: (i) performance analysis to examine annual publication trends, citation impact, document types, and the most productive authors, sources, and countries; and (ii) science mapping to visualize and interpret the field's intellectual structure using keyword co-occurrence, bibliographic coupling, and co-authorship network analyses. In addition, Bradford's Law was applied to identify core journals and strengthen the rigor of source concentration assessment.

Methodological Limitations

This study has a number of limitations in spite of being robust. First, the use of the Scopus database might omit some pertinent literature included in other databases and this could influence coverage and patterns of citation. Second, the limitation to English-language publications creates language bias and can bias research on other non-English-speaking areas. Third, productivity indicators and collaboration networks in large-scale bibliometrics database can be affected by metadata inconsistencies and ambiguity in the names of authors (Shamly & A, 2026; Subaveerapandiyan, 2025). Lastly, time-lag effects in citation can give a false underestimation of the contributions of recently published papers, especially the research studies that are still developing (Subaveerapandiyan, 2025).

Operational Definitions of Bibliometric Indicators and IS Constructs

The bibliometric indicators were operationalized in the framework of an Information Science as this study aims to assess the visibility of the field, its impact, as well as collaboration and structural integration of the field. Publication output was used to measure the information access and source dispersion was measured with Bradford's zones as a proxy of the availability and concentration of knowledge. Information quality and impact were measured using total citations, citations per year to control for time-lag effects, normalized citations for cross-year comparability, and average citations per document. Service efficiency and knowledge organization were examined through Bradford's Law to identify core sources and keyword co-occurrence clusters to map conceptual structure. Collaboration behaviour was analyzed using co-authors per document, international co-authorship rates, and single-country versus multi-country publication patterns. Finally, system performance was evaluated through co-authorship network centrality, bibliographic coupling strength, and thematic mapping based on centrality and density to assess the relevance, maturity, and structural integration of research themes.

Operational Definitions and Rationale of Performance Metrics

To evaluate domain growth, influence, and collaboration, we used standard bibliometric performance indicators computed in Bibliometrix. Publication output (N) is the number of documents per year and indicates growth/visibility of the research stream. Annual growth rate (AGR%) quantifies the average year-on-year increase in publication output over 2016–2025. Citation impact is reported using total citations (TC) and citations per year (CPY = TC / citable years) to account for citation time-lag; where relevant, normalized citations (NTC) are used to improve comparability across publication years. Source productivity is measured as the number of documents per source, and Bradford's Law is applied to identify the core publication nucleus (Zone 1), supporting interpretation of outlet concentration and knowledge dissemination. Country productivity is measured by the number of documents attributed to corresponding authors' countries. Collaboration patterns are assessed using authors per document, co-authors per document, and international co-authorship rate (% MCP), where SCP denotes single-country publications and MCP denotes multi-country publications.

IV. RESULTS

Table II summarizes the principal bibliometric characteristics of the dataset covering the period 2016–2025. The last corpus contains 469 documents published in 317 sources, which is a very heterogeneous and interdisciplinary field of publication. The industry has shown constant growth with a growth rate of 3.25 per annum. The mean age of documents is 5.35 years, and the citation impact average is 10.03 citations per document, on the total of 3,601 works cited.

TABLE II MAIN BIBLIOMETRIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDY DATASET (2016–2025)

Category	Indicator	Value
Main information about the data	Timespan	2016–2025
	Sources (journals, books, etc.)	317
	Documents	469
	Annual growth rate (%)	3.25
	Document average age (years)	5.35
	Average citations per document	10.03
	References	3,601
Document contents	Index Keywords (ID)	1,164
	Author keywords (DE)	1,252
Authors	Total authors	968
	Authors of single-authored documents	135
Authors' collaboration	Single-authored documents	148
	Co-authors per document	2.57
	International co-authorships (%)	22.6
Document types	Articles	371
	Books	14
	Book chapters	56
	Conference papers	28

In terms of content structure, the dataset includes 1,164 index keywords and 1,252 author keywords, reflecting substantial thematic diversity. A total of 968 authors contributed to the corpus, with 135 authors producing single-authored works and 148 documents classified as single-authored. Collaboration is moderately strong, with an average of 2.57 co-authors per document and an international co-authorship rate of 22.6%, indicating partial but not fully integrated global collaboration.

Regarding document types, journal articles dominate the field (371 documents), followed by book chapters (56), conference papers (28), and books (14), confirming that peer-reviewed journal publishing is the primary mode of scholarly communication in this domain.

TABLE III AVERAGE CITATIONS PER ARTICLE PER YEAR BY PUBLICATION YEAR (2016–2025)

Publication year	Mean total citations per article	Number of articles (N)	Mean citations per year	Citable years
2016	24.24	33	2.2	11
2017	14.04	49	1.4	10
2018	17.12	41	1.9	9
2019	11.44	52	1.43	8
2020	15.06	47	2.15	7
2021	7.75	51	1.29	6
2022	5.56	59	1.11	5
2023	5.78	45	1.45	4
2024	4	48	1.33	3
2025	0.77	44	0.38	2

Table III presents the citation distribution by publication year from 2016 to 2025, comparing total citation accumulation with time-adjusted impact. Previous editions have greater overall citations per article and the highest overall citation per article in 2016 is 24.24 citations and has 33 articles with over

11 years of citable publications. It is then preceded by 2018 (17.12 citations; 41 articles; 9 citable years) and 2020 (15.06 citations; 47 articles; 7 citable years).

Upon time correction with the mean citations per year, 2016 (2.20) and 2020 (2.15) exhibit the best yearly effects, which signifies a sustained academic effect. The annual performance is also relatively good in 2018 (1.90). In 2022, the maximum number of publications is 59 articles, but the average annual citation (1.11) is less in comparison to 2020 (5 citable years).

Since 2021, the total and annualized citation averages decrease, with 2025 having the lowest (0.77 total citation; 0.38 average per 44 articles) which to a large extent is due to citation time-lag effects as there would only be two citable years. It is a classic example of a bibliometric lifecycle whereby the older the publication date, the greater the total number of citations of that specific publication and the annualized rates give a more accurate picture of the recent scholarly changes.

Table IV shows the fundamental bases of the publication found with the help of the Law of Bradford demonstrating the presence of a publication nucleus (Zone 1) in the general dataset. Regarding publications, the first one is Land Use Policy and then there is Land which has 35 and 21 publications respectively. Habitat International (7), Eminent Domain: A Comparative Perspective (6), Environmental Research Letters (6), International Development Policy (6), Sustainability (Switzerland) (6), World Development (6), Ecology and Society (5) and Cities (4) are other major sources in Zone 1.

TABLE IV CORE SOURCES IDENTIFIED USING BRADFORD’S LAW

Source title	Rank	Frequency	Cumulative frequency	Bradford zone
Land Use Policy	1	35	35	Zone 1
Land	2	21	56	Zone 1
Habitat International	3	7	63	Zone 1
Eminent Domain: A Comparative Perspective	4	6	69	Zone 1
Environmental Research Letters	5	6	75	Zone 1
International Development Policy	6	6	81	Zone 1
Sustainability (Switzerland)	7	6	87	Zone 1
World Development	8	6	93	Zone 1
Ecology and Society	9	5	98	Zone 1
Cities	10	4	102	Zone 1

The cumulative frequency reaches 102 publications across these ten sources, demonstrating a clear Bradford-type concentration in which a small group of journals and edited volumes accounts for a substantial share of total output. This pattern confirms that, although the field spans 317 sources overall, scholarly communication is anchored in a well-defined core of interdisciplinary land governance, development, sustainability, and urban policy outlets.

TABLE V CORRESPONDING AUTHORS’ COUNTRIES AND INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION PATTERNS

Country	Articles	Articles (%)	SCP	MCP	MCP (%)
China	66	14.1	50	16	24.2
United States	44	9.4	34	10	22.7
India	24	5.1	21	3	12.5
Ethiopia	21	4.5	19	2	9.5
Indonesia	17	3.6	15	2	11.8
Germany	14	3	11	3	21.4
Netherlands	13	2.8	5	8	61.5
South Africa	12	2.6	11	1	8.3
United Kingdom	12	2.6	8	4	33.3
Australia	11	2.3	6	5	45.5

Note: SCP = Single Country Publications; MCP = Multiple Country Publications; MCP (%) = share of MCP in total publications for that country.

Table V presents the distribution of corresponding authors by country and their patterns of international collaboration. China is the top three articles (14.1%), of which 50 papers are single-country publications (SCP), and 16 articles have been published as multi-country publications (MCP), indicating a 24.2% international collaboration rate. The United States is next (44 articles 9.4%), including 34 SCP and 10 MCP (22.7%).

India is in the 24 articles (5.1%) with a smaller share of collaboration (12.5%), and Ethiopia (21 articles; 4.5%) and Indonesia (17 articles; 3.6%) also have mainly domestic research output, with 9.5% and 11.8% MCP rates, respectively. Germany has 14 articles (3%), an MCP rate of 21.4%.

In contrast, smaller European and Anglophone research systems demonstrate stronger internationalization. The Netherlands, with 13 articles (2.8%), shows the highest collaboration intensity at 61.5% (8 MCP). Australia (11 articles; 2.3%) records 45.5% MCP, and the United Kingdom (12 articles; 2.6%) shows 33.3% MCP. South Africa contributes 12 articles (2.6%) but with limited international collaboration (8.3%).

The data reveal a dual structure in which high-output countries tend to produce more single-country publications, while smaller but globally connected systems exhibit higher levels of cross-border collaboration.

TABLE VI TOP GLOBALLY CITED PUBLICATIONS BASED ON TOTAL AND NORMALIZED CITATION IMPACT

Paper	DOI	Total citations (TC)	TC per year	Normalized TC
Davis KF (2020), Nature Geoscience	10.1038/s41561-020-0592-3	130	18.57	8.63
Friis C (2016), Land Use Policy	10.1016/j.landusepol.2016.05.028	102	9.27	4.21
Shan L (2017), Habitat International	10.1016/j.habitatint.2016.11.009	87	8.7	6.2
Bao H (2016), Habitat International	10.1016/j.habitatint.2015.12.008	86	7.82	3.55
Johansson EL (2016), Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA	10.1073/pnas.1524741113	78	7.09	3.22
Wubneh M (2018), Land Use Policy	10.1016/j.landusepol.2018.01.017	75	8.33	4.38
Lin Q (2018), Land Use Policy	10.1016/j.landusepol.2018.05.018	74	8.22	4.32
Johnson KA (2020), Nature Sustainability	10.1038/s41893-019-0437-5	71	10.14	4.71
Brooks L (2016), American Economic Journal: Economic Policy	10.1257/pol.20130399	65	5.91	2.68
D’Odorico P (2017), Land Degradation & Development	10.1002/ldr.2750	64	6.4	4.56

Table VI shows the most influential publications in the field according to the total citations (TC), annualized citation impact (TC per year), and normalized total citations (NTC). Davis (2020) in Nature Geoscience is the most cited study

that has received 130 total citations, 18.57 citations per year, and the highest normalized impact (8.63) potentially because of its exceptional cross-disciplinary impact.

Others that received high citation are Friis (2016) in Land Use Policy (102 citations; 9.27 per year; NTC 4.21), Shan (2017) in Habitat International (87 citations; 8.7 per year; NTC 6.2), and Bao (2016) in Habitat International (86 citations; 7.82 per year; NTC 3.55). PNAS (Johansson 2016) has 78 (7.09 per year; NTC 3.22) citation.

The publications of the mid-period also show a high impact, such as Wubneh (2018) in Land Use Policy with 75 citations (8.33 per year; NTC 4.38), Lin (2018) with 74 citations (8.22 per year; NTC 4.32), and Johnson (2020) in Nature Sustainability with 71 citations (10.14 per year; NTC 4.71). Brooks (2016) in American Economic Journal: Economic Policy has 65 citations (5.91 citing per year; NTC 2.68), and

D’Odorico (2017) in Land Degradation and Development has 64 citations (6.4 citing in the article; NTC 4.56).

The most impactful articles are published in both highly impacted and interdisciplinary journals as well as specialized journals on land governance, which represents the hybrid legal, economic, environmental, and sustainability-focused nature of land acquisition research.

Table VII shows the thematic organization based on bibliographic coupling, which has ten related clusters. Cluster 4 with the highest centrality (frequency = 97; centrality = 0.475; impact = 1.133) is the biggest and most central cluster which means that it is the bridging center in the area. The economically and institutionally oriented analysis is represented by Cluster 3, which is centred on land assembly, eminent domain, and the holdout issue (frequency = 18; centrality = 0.446; impact = 2.238).

TABLE VII THEMATIC CLUSTERS IDENTIFIED THROUGH BIBLIOGRAPHIC COUPLING ANALYSIS

Cluster label (key terms)	Group	Freq	Centrality	Impact
land acquisition - conf 7.7% bp neural network model - conf 100% compensation - conf 9.1%	1	5	0.276	1
eminent domain - conf 17.6% collective action - conf 100% agricultural productivity - conf 100%	2	10	0.224	10.541
land assembly - conf 88.9% eminent domain - conf 29.4% holdout problem - conf 100%	3	18	0.446	2.238
land grabbing - conf 100% large-scale land acquisitions - conf 94.4% large-scale land acquisition - conf 100%	4	97	0.475	1.133
land acquisition - conf 19.2% land - conf 42.9% eminent domain - conf 11.8%	5	23	0.353	1.154
china - conf 63.6% land expropriation - conf 56% land acquisition - conf 19.2%	6	35	0.424	2.002
land acquisition - conf 17.3% india - conf 50% rehabilitation and resettlement - conf 100%	7	20	0.343	1.286
india - conf 37.5% land acquisition - conf 5.8% ecology - conf 100%	8	4	0.232	0
ethiopia - conf 54.5% expropriation - conf 57.1% compensation - conf 36.4%	9	11	0.392	2.399
us - conf 100% california - conf 100% eminent domain - conf 17.6%	10	4	0.274	0

There are also country-specific clusters. Cluster 6 (China; frequency = 35; centrality = 0.424; impact = 2.002) and Cluster 7 (India; frequency = 20; centrality = 0.343; impact = 1.286) have a high level of integration into bigger governance and compensation debates. Cluster 9 (Ethiopia; frequency = 11; centrality = 0.392; impact = 2.399) is associated with the problems of expropriation and compensation in African situations. A narrower doctrinal stream is Cluster 10 (United States -California-eminent domain; frequency = 4; centrality = 0.274; impact = 0).

The cluster with the greatest impact score (10.541) is cluster 2 (eminent domain, collective action, agricultural productivity) although it is smaller in size (frequency = 10; centrality = 0.224), meaning that there are high scores of influential theoretical pieces. Cluster 5 (frequency = 23; centrality = 0.353; impact = 1.154) represents more general land and acquisition linkages whereas Cluster 1 (compensation and modeling approaches; frequency = 5; centrality = 0.276; impact = 1) and Cluster 8 (India-ecology; frequency = 4; centrality = 0.232; impact = 0) represent more specific or upcoming subthemes.

The grouping indicates a field that is enclosed by three overwhelming frameworks: debates of large-scale land acquisition globally, legal economic studies of eminent

domain and land assembly, and country specific empirical research on compensation, resettlement and tenure insecurity.

Fig. 1 presents a thematic map that positions the major keyword clusters according to Callon’s centrality (relevance/importance to the field) on the x-axis and Callon’s density (internal development/maturity of the theme) on the y-axis. The cluster “land acquisition” appears in the motor themes quadrant (high centrality and high density), indicating that it is both highly influential to the overall research domain and well-developed conceptually, supported by the highest cluster frequency (n = 775) and strong Callon density (52.084). This confirms that land acquisition functions as the core organizing theme linking governance, livelihoods, compensation, and infrastructure delivery debates. The cluster eminent domain appears in the niche themes section (lower centrality but very high density) with an indication of a highly specialized yet methodologically mature research stream (density = 58.974) which is highly developed within itself but less integrated into the overall thematic organization, which is also consistent with its lower frequency (n = 257). The cluster of land management is located in the basic themes quadrant (high centrality and relatively lower density) and it means that the topic is a cornerstone, and has high rates of connectivity across studies

(frequency $n = 510$) but is not a conceptually solidified research specialty (density = 39.143).

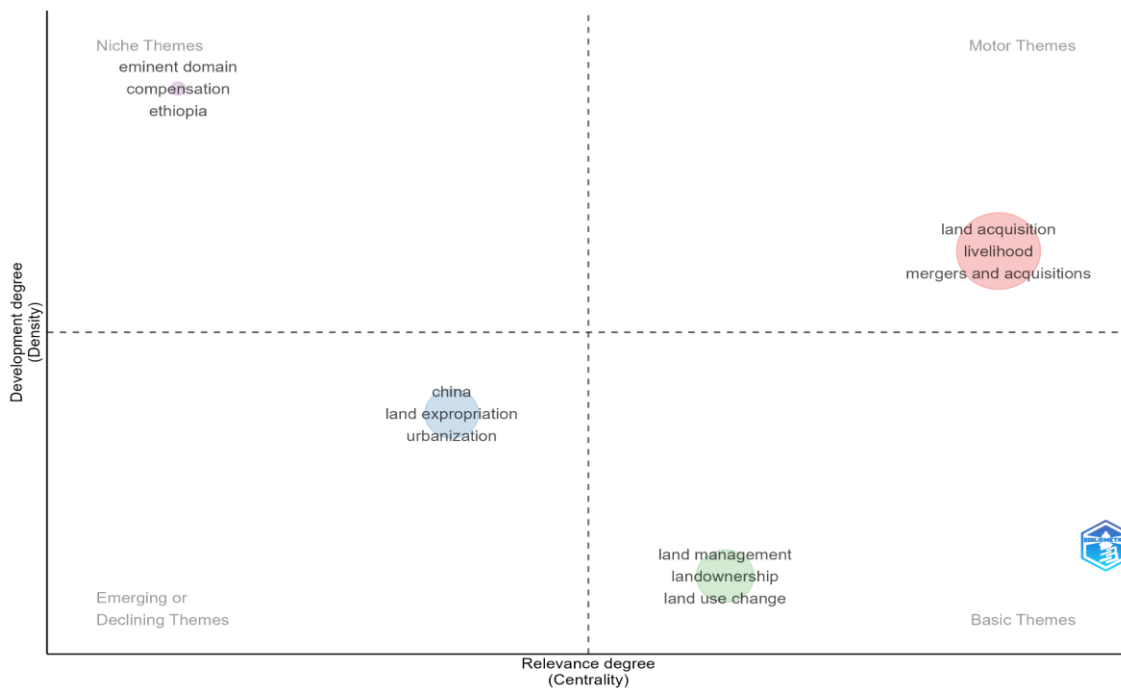


Fig. 1 Thematic Map of Land Acquisition Research (2016–2025): Centrality–Density Structure of Key Themes

Finally, the “china” cluster occupies the emerging/declining quadrant (moderate centrality and lower density), indicating a theme that is structurally present and sizeable ($n = 480$) but comparatively less mature and potentially in transition either developing into a stronger thematic pillar (as country-focused expropriation/urbanization work grows) or reflecting a shifting emphasis as attention diffuses across other regions and governance contexts. The thematic map shows a field dominated by a strong motor theme (land acquisition), supported by foundational management-related issues, with eminent domain as a specialized legal niche and China as a dynamic country-centred research line.

V. DISCUSSION

This bibliometric review provides a systematic literature review on eminent domain and land acquisition in development and infrastructure projects in the world since 2016 to 2025. The findings show that there is a consistently growing body of literature in the field of land acquisition as a critical governance and development problem. The peak in the publication output in 2022 with some variation thereafter implies that the area is in the consolidation phase but not decline whereas the messages of lower citation rates on more recent publications are to be expected by well-known citation time-lag effects (Davis, 2020; Friis & Nielsen, 2016).

A strong core of journals identified under the guidance of Land Use Policy and Land, as well as Habitat International, World Development, and Sustainability, prove that there is a Bradford-type concentration and emphasize the role of land governance, development studies, and urban policy sources

in the formation of the scholarly discourse. Simultaneously, the eminence of the most referenced articles in the interdisciplinary journals including Nature Geoscience, PNAS, and Nature Sustainability highlights the extended applicability of the land acquisition research studies in the fields of environmental and economic, as well as social science. This trend indicates that land acquisition is a sectoral issue but also a cross-cutting one associated with the field of sustainability, resource management, and development trends.

In the country-level analysis, there is an unequal distribution of research across the globe. China and the United States are the most prolific contributors, indicating good research capacity and policy salience in such setting. Nevertheless, other European nations show superior average citation impact, which means that they vary in the manner they manifest visibility in research, choice of outlet, and the intensity of international collaboration. The network of collaboration in the world also indicates that, although the big research centers control knowledge generation, transnational collaboration especially between European states and certain parts of Asia and Africa is becoming a dominant player in the knowledge sector. However, numerous Global South nations are still most emblematic as the locations of empirical activity compared to the dominant producers of knowledge, indicating the presence of enduring asymmetries in global intellectual power (Han et al., 2021; Rasva and Jürgenson, 2022).

Thematic analyses give more information on the intellectual organization of the literature. Thematic analysis Keyword

and trend-topic analysis show that the thematic center of the discipline consists of land acquisition, compensation, livelihoods, land grabbing and governance-related issues. Further evidence of the dominance of clusters around large-scale land acquisition, eminent domain, land assembly and country-specific case studies (in particular, China, India, Ethiopia, and the United States) is in the form of bibliographic coupling. These trends support a high empirical inclination to contentious conditions of development and support the primacy of quality of governance, distributive justice and war in land acquisition studies.

The thematic map shows that there have been a progressive change in the previous focus on land availability and productivity to socio-economic effects, institutional design, and sustainability-oriented concerns. As much as the land acquisition and livelihoods act as motor themes slipping the field, other aspects of eminent domain and compensation emerge as more specialized niches, indicating that more power can be added to the merger between the legal analysis and socio-economic impact research.

Comparative Insights with Existing Bibliometric Studies

The present study provides convergences and structural peculiarities as compared to previous bibliometric studies in related land-related fields. Indicatively, in their knowledge-mapping project of the transnational agricultural land investment, Han et al. (2021) found land grabbing and global land as early dominant clusters and later deviating towards governance and livelihood-oriented conceptions. In the same fashion, we can find that major land acquisition and governance bundles are active, but, in contrast to Han et al. (2021), we propose that legal structures of eminent domain and compensation systems are better-integrated into infrastructure-focused settings. This marks a transformation of the purely agricultural or resource based land arguments to the compulsory acquisition led by the state and associated with infrastructure governance.

Analyzing the European land acquisition in large scale, Rasva and Jurgenson (2022) noted that geographical concentration of themes and little integration across fields. However, as an example, our international data set (201625) demonstrates more widespread geographic dispersion and more cross-continental networks of collaboration, especially between China, the United States, and European centers. Whereas their study focused on the issue of regional land concentration and agricultural restructuring, our thematic map depicts a more diversified intellectual framework of including the compensation systems, livelihood effects, urbanization, and conflict processes into a single infrastructure framework.

Likewise, in bibliometric reviews of land-use change and ecological land studies, Allan et al. (2022) and Xie et al. (2024) also found a high level of thematic clustering with environmental and sustainability concerns. These findings partially concur with our findings of sustainability and governance as emerging themes, but the motor theme in this

field is still the land acquisition itself as opposed to ecological restoration or environmental motives. This suggests that infrastructure-related compulsory acquisition research retains a governance–legal core, even as sustainability discourse gains prominence.

In terms of collaboration structure, earlier bibliometric studies in land-related research consistently report geographic concentration in China, the United States, and Western Europe (Han et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2022). Our findings confirm this pattern but further reveal a pronounced core–periphery collaboration model in which Global South countries are frequently empirical research sites yet less central in co-authorship networks. This extends previous observations by demonstrating that asymmetry persists even in infrastructure-focused land acquisition scholarship.

Methodologically, while previous studies relied primarily on keyword co-occurrence and citation analysis, the present study integrates performance indicators, Bradford's Law, thematic mapping, bibliographic coupling, and collaboration network analysis within a single framework. This multi-layered approach enhances structural interpretability and supports Information Science-oriented knowledge organization beyond descriptive trend mapping.

As compared to current bibliometric literature, the study provides more of a unified and governance-centered mapping of mandatory land acquisition in the framework of development and infrastructure, which link legal analysis, socio-economic effects, and institutional governance arguments in a manner that has never been consolidated before.

Practical and Policy Relevance for Information Management, Digital Libraries, and Information Services

The findings have clear operational value for information management and digital library services because they identify where knowledge on compulsory land acquisition is concentrated, how it is organized thematically, and which actors drive global knowledge production.

First, the Bradford core (Zone 1) (e.g., Land Use Policy, Land, Habitat International, World Development, Cities) provides an evidence-based basis for collection development and subscription prioritization. To academic libraries that facilitate planning, public policy, development studies, and governance, it is more effective to have a consistent access to these central outlets so as to enhance the effectiveness of retrieval and better coverage of high-yield, policy-relevant research.

Second, the dataset's high outlet dispersion (317 sources) combined with rich keyword diversity (Index + Author keywords) indicates a fragmented and interdisciplinary domain. This supports the need for enhanced knowledge organization practices in digital libraries such as curated subject guides, cross-disciplinary metadata mapping, and controlled vocabulary enrichment so that land acquisition

evidence is discoverable not only under “land” or “eminent domain” but also under infrastructure delivery, governance, compensation, resettlement, and conflict.

Third, the thematic clustering results offer a practical blueprint for domain taxonomies and research portals. Libraries and information services can structure discovery layers around the dominant clusters identified here (governance and policy mechanisms; compensation and livelihood impacts; tenure insecurity and conflict; land assembly and holdout problems; country-specific streams). This improves navigation for policymakers, students, and practitioners who typically search by “problem area” rather than disciplinary labels.

Fourth, the country productivity and collaboration patterns reveal a core–periphery knowledge structure: high output is concentrated in major hubs, while many Global South contexts appear more as empirical sites than knowledge leaders. For information services, this implies a policy-relevant role in improving visibility of underrepresented regional scholarship through institutional repositories, OA support, local journal indexing, and targeted research dissemination strategies.

Finally, the citation profile (older papers dominate total impact due to time-lag, but mid-period works show strong annualized influence) suggests that evidence users should avoid relying only on “most cited” and instead adopt balanced evidence retrieval protocols combining core-cited foundational works with recent, fast-growing themes (governance quality, safeguards, livelihood restoration, and sustainability-linked acquisition). Digital library services can operationalize this through recommended reading lists, alert services, and dynamic topic dashboards.

The study translates bibliometric patterns into actionable information service interventions: smarter collection building, improved metadata/controlled vocabulary, thematic discovery design, and equity-oriented visibility strategies supporting stronger evidence access for land governance and infrastructure policy decision-making.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study mapped global scholarship on compulsory land acquisition in development and infrastructure projects (2016–2025) using 469 Scopus-indexed English-language publications selected from 812 initial records. The area has been experiencing a steady growth (3.25% growth rate / year), with the highest results in publication output in 2022 (59 articles). The communication of scholars is well spread with 317 sources, but a few main sources prevail, as the leading ones are Land Use Policy (35 papers) and Land (21 papers), adding up to 56 publications. There is a moderate influence (10.03 citations per document) and an average age of a document is 5.35 years, which is the presence of the well-grounded but interdisciplinary knowledge base. The relationships of collaboration indicate team-based production (968 authors; 2.57 co-authors per document) and moderate

internationalization (22.6% multi-country publications). The concentration of country productivity is between China and the United States with the two countries producing 66 papers and 44 respectively (14.1 and 9.4). Thematic mapping proves the dominance of the following research fronts: governance and policy design, compensation and livelihood outcomes, tenure insecurity, and conflict dynamics. The study can also offer an evidence base to facilitate the targeted organization of knowledge, interdisciplinary synthesis, and more equal cross-regional research collaboration by consolidating a fragmented literature in the field of land governance and infrastructure development.

Future Research Directions

This field should be expanded in several significant directions in future. First, additional comparative cross-country investigations should be conducted to analyze the different outcomes of acquisitions in various governance regimes by analyzing how the law, compensation regimes, and definitions of the purpose of the acquisition affect the outcome of acquisitions. The existing literature is still very case-oriented and still nationally constrained so that it cannot be generalized to a wider scope. Second, longitudinal and post-acquisition studies that monitor the outcomes of livelihood restoration, social displacement, tenure security, and grievance should be given more emphasis because most of the current studies currently concentrate on the acquisition processes but not the long-term effects. Third, future scholarship should better integrate legal, governance, and socio-economic perspectives, as these strands still remain only partially connected despite addressing the same acquisition processes. Fourth, more research is needed from underrepresented Global South contexts and through stronger international collaboration, because many of these regions appear mainly as empirical sites rather than as central producers of knowledge. Finally, future bibliometric and review studies may expand the evidence base by incorporating non-English literature, additional databases such as Web of Science and Dimensions, and mixed-method evidence synthesis to provide a more inclusive and globally representative understanding of compulsory land acquisition in development and infrastructure projects.

Declarations

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval

Not applicable. This study is based exclusively on secondary bibliographic data and did not involve human participants or personal or sensitive data.

Informed Consent

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

The bibliographic data used in this study were retrieved from the Scopus database. Access to Scopus data is subject to licensing restrictions. Processed datasets and analytical workflows may be made available by the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

AI Use Disclosure

Generative artificial intelligence tools were used solely for language editing and clarity enhancement. The authors take full responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

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