

vestments are evident in all sites.

Again, our findings highlight the design of these corridor investments and the importance of a networked approach in which there are multiple linkages from the core investments (usually around infrastructure, large estates and mining) to the wider hinterland. Too often extractive tunnel designs emerge in which any impacts on wider development are very limited.

Our conclusions are reflected in AGRA's excellent 2019 report focusing on the hidden middle. This argues that the private sector investment with the most impact is usually small, often informal, and deeply linked into local economies. Clusters of interconnected economic activity are usually spontaneous, not planned as part of grand corridor or investment hub schemes. And when you look, the link between the vast number of smallholder producers and consumers is increasingly filled with many entrepreneurial private sector actors working in transport, processing, logistics and so on.

Private sector players are not missing in these instances, as is often assumed, but instead hidden from view. The UK-Africa summit's focus on investment and the private sector emphasises large, formal operations, branded as UK plc. But it is the smaller, local outfits that are driving change in African agricultural value chains. They are the ones in need of support and investment.

Will the focus of the UK Africa investment summit be on supporting such smaller initiatives with the real potential for transformation, and developmental gains? From what I have seen, I somehow doubt it.

### What to guard against

As the UK scrambles to compensate for the errors of committing to Brexit, it will be crucial to hold to the UK government to account for its aid spending to avoid business imperatives overriding development goals, with larger UK investors getting the upper hand and crowding out local alternatives.

Investing is certainly possible in ways that are positive for local economies and where land rights are protected in line with internationally-agreed guidelines. But it does require a sophisticated approach that goes beyond the promotional gloss and the hype of international trade fairs. There's plenty of good research on the implications of trade and investment on development in Africa, including that commissioned by DfID. Let's hope the arm of the UK government that is promoting trade makes use of it.

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