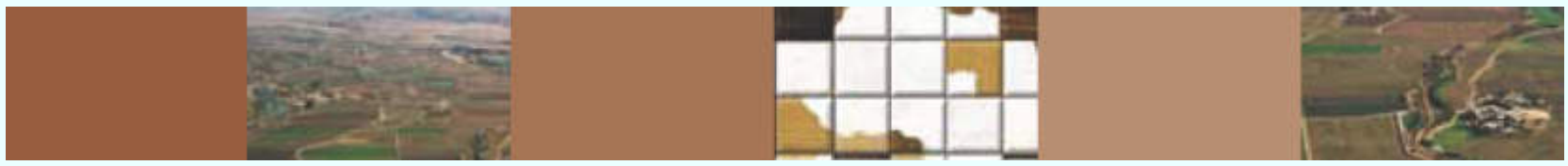

LAND IN AFRICA

Is there a struggle over land in Africa?

What are the conflicts, politics and challenges? The truth behind land struggles in Africa - experts shed light

A new HSRC Press book interrogates land conflicts and their factors, and compares responses to internal crises across a range of countries drawn from all regions of Africa.

Disputes over land are an enduring feature of African politics. From civil war in Côte d'Ivoire to threatened land invasions in Kenya to the murder of white farmers in South Africa, the profound linkages between land and the onset of violence and strife in Africa are illustrated across the length and breadth of the continent. The failure of African governments to recognise and resolve lingering land disputes has triggered violence, disrupted vital production and even destabilised economic and political systems.

International development programmes often ignore these concerns, leading to ineffectual interventions.

HIGHLY SYMBOLIC RESOURCE

Land is a fundamental and also highly symbolic resource for the vast majority of African peoples. It is a valuable and immovable resource of limited quantity, and represents a precious reservoir of natural resources.

The power of the land issue to invoke emotional responses and political action spills over into questions of ownership, usage, citizenship and identity politics. With economic, symbolic and emotional aspects at stake, small wonder that land is often the root cause of violence across the continent. The response to such conflict, in terms of policy and reconstruction, remains a continental challenge.

Examining land conflicts in Africa is a daunting task, as the contexts are continuously changing, altering the nature of the conflicts themselves. Understanding the volatile dynamic between land, conflicting uses and conflicting claims to control is not straightforward, they are extremely complex and embedded. However, by taking note of economic policy, international relations, sociology and anthropology in approaching land, a more constructive and viable source for policy appears possible.

SITE AND SOURCE OF CONFLICT

The struggle over land in Africa: Conflicts, politics and change (HSRC Press), edited by Ward Anseeuw and Chris Alden, analyses the role of land as a site and source of conflict, with special regard to policy development, crisis management and (post-conflict) reconstruction. With authors drawn from the academic, diplomatic, political and civil sectors, the publication takes a multi-layered look at the land issue from a variety of perspectives.

The struggle over land in Africa: Conflicts, politics and change (HSRC Press) draws attention to the diverse and often complex root causes of these land questions, a complexity that is seldom analysed and documented and often neglected. It demonstrates that the simplistic, one-dimensional interventions that have dominated, to date, should be questioned.

SA AFFORDABLE HOUSING
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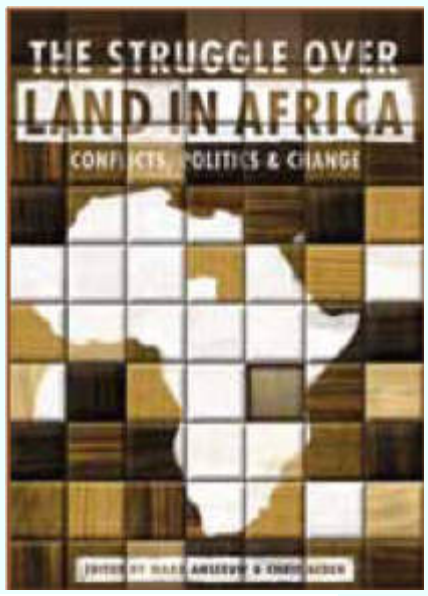
LAND IN AFRICA



The chapters are updated contributions selected from the international conference "The Changing Politics of Land: Domestic Policies, Crisis Management and Regional Norms"" held in Pretoria in 2005.

THE BOOK IS DIVIDED INTO SIX THEMES, GROUPING CAUSES AND STRUCTURAL FACTORS:

- Ethnic and indigenous land conflicts (featuring research in
- Kenya and the Great Lakes Region);
- Between "traditional and modernity": Insecurity, privatisation and marginalisation (including studies in communal reform in South Africa and farming land in Cameroon);
- Renewed land interests, land use and conflicts (featuring research on tourism in Namibia, land rights in Mozambique and the effects of biodiversity conservation);
- State building, policies and land (with chapters on conflict in
- Angola, land policy in South Africa and land reform in Namibia);
- Land policy development, planning and (non)-inclusiveness featuring studies on violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo and urban planning in Tanzania);
- Regional scopes of land conflicts and changing norms (including a look at the Zimbabwe land crisis and the impact of narratives on southern African land policies).

The chapters interrogate land conflicts and their factors, and compare responses to internal crises across a range of countries drawn from all regions of Africa. As such, the publication forms a valuable contribution to the process of land policy development across the continent.

The book was launched on Tuesday 20 April 2010.

The struggle over land in Africa: Conflicts, politics and change is edited by Ward Anseeuw and Chris Alden and published by the HSRC Press.

Dr Ward Anseeuw is a CIRAD Researcher in the Post Graduate School for Agriculture and Rural Development at the University of Pretoria.

Dr Chris Alden is a reader in International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science, UK.

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