



Responsible Land Governance: Towards an Evidence Based Approach

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THE POLITICS OF INSTITUTIONAL PROLIFERATION AND THE MANAGEMENT OF REPATRIATION-INDUCED LAND DISPUTES IN POST-WAR BURUNDI

ROSINE TCHATCHOUA-DJOMO

African Studies Centre, Leiden University, The Netherlands
tdrosine@gmail.com

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Abstract

Though policy makers foresee the restitution of property and land as a primary mechanism for state formation after violent conflicts, and as a sustainable solution to peace building, its implementation unveils critical challenges. In the case of 2000 Arusha Peace Accord to put an end to conflicts in Burundi, the negotiators recommended land restitution and compensation as a key strategy to strengthen an already fragile peace and justice to many former long-term refugees. This paper examines how the management of repatriation-induced land disputes works out in practice and the politics related to it in southern Burundi. Deriving from extensive ethnographic research in the province of Makamba, this paper demonstrates that institutional multiplicity provides choices and opportunities to both returnees and occupants seeking to get their claims validated and settled. Yet, rather than providing a solution to the multiple land disputes between returnees and occupants, institutional multiplicity contributes to intractable land disputes and confusion between local and higher-level government actors about their roles and who has the power to adjudicate local land disputes and to enforce property rights. Ultimately, the resolution of repatriation-induced land disputes resumes to broader political contention about legitimacy, power and control.

Key Words: Authority, Control, Institutional multiplicity, Land disputes, Repatriation



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