Losing Your Land

Edited by An Ansoms & Thea Hilhorst

Dispossession in the Great Lakes

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Abstract of the book

Africa is increasingly confronted with the commodification of its space and extreme forms of land competition. There is a lot of research ongoing on large-scale cases of land grabbing. However, local and medium-scale land-grabs may be as uprooting for people’s livelihoods, particularly in land-scarce overpopulated regions. What is the role of local power dynamics, often rooted in history, upon these processes of land competition and dispossession? And through which strategies do the already poor and vulnerable try to hold onto their land in post-conflict settings?

Case studies in the Great Lakes Region (Eastern DRC, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda) show the huge impact of local and medium land-grabs on people’s lives and livelihoods. How do such local land-grabs come about in a conflictuous environment characterized by both weak and strong states? The book illustrates that land grabs are not sterile projects ‘parachuted’ from the outside. It points to the way in which local actors – particularly local elites – are involved and how the deals entail different opportunities and constraints for different interest groups. In this way, this book sets an eye on how local-level land grabs interact with previous and potential future conflicts.

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