Securing tenure, Sustainable peace?
The challenges of localizing land registration in conflict-affected Burundi and eastern DR Congo

Aims of the project
Contribute to a better understanding of the challenges of localized land registration (LLR) in conflict-affected settings.

Research design and methodology

- Ethnographic fieldwork including participatory theatre on pilots of LLR in Burundi and eastern DR Congo
- Analysis of discourses, assumptions and policy ambitions around LLR
- Co-creation and knowledge-sharing with donors, NGOs and local governments

Key Findings

In the case studies, key assumptions about localized land registration in conflict-affected settings do not hold. LLR is not just a response to tenure insecurity and conflict but tends to become part of the dynamics that nurture these. Frequently, efforts for transforming land tenure effectively undermine the prerequisites for peace.

Key assumptions | Findings
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‘LLR clarifies and helps better protect local land rights’ | LLR risks to disrupt pre-existing arrangements of land tenure
People fear current claims are not accepted and are hesitant to join

‘LLR promotes inclusion and protection of marginalized groups’ | Elite capture, smallholders are pushed to the periphery
Resistance of customary authorities

‘LLR helps prevent conflict and promotes peace’ | LLR risks to re-ignite conflict
Gets integrated in struggles around identity and belonging

Findings particularly bring out frequent de-politicization of land tenure interventions
1) discourses on technical optimization reduce engagement with fair outcomes and render invisible the political choices
2) underestimation of elite capture and institutional competition
3) underestimation of risks involved

Findings resonate wider concerns in T2S research
- Tenure insecurity threatens sustainable land use and livelihoods in conflict-affected settings
- Profoundly political nature of land tenure interventions
- Complex trade-offs between ending violence and promoting justice
- Added value of interactive research methodology

The research team consisted of:
Mathijs van Leeuwen, Camille Munezero (CICAM-RU, NL)
An Ansoms, Aymar Nyenyezi, Joel Baraka (UCL, BE)
Gemma van der Haar (SDC, WUR)
Prof. Sévérin Mugangu, Emery Mudinga, Patient Polepole (CERPRU, ISDR Bukavu, DRC)
Sergyo Vutegha, Kyle Hamilton, Jonathan Shaw (UCBC, DRC)

The project collaborated with:
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