



## International Conference

# The changing politics of land in Africa: domestic policies, crisis management and regional norms

## CALL FOR PAPERS

Date: November 2005

Venue: University of Pretoria, Republic of South Africa

Partnership: IFAS/French Embassy of South Africa / London School of Economics

Ending post-colonial conflicts in Africa and reconstructing states and societies in their aftermaths is the focus of much international activism since the 1990s. In cases such as Mozambique and South Africa, the movement from war to peace has resulted in tangible economic and social improvements in the lives of individuals and the communities. And yet, for all the successes that can be pointed to, there remain numerous instances where peace still has only a tenuous grip on society or conflict has re-asserted itself. A common denominator of those states, which have succumbed to political violence, is the failure of post-conflict reconstruction to address the issue of land. As a primary and fundamental but also highly symbolic resource for the vast majority of African peoples, land holds a unique position within so-called traditionalist societies and economies. Indeed, much of the conflict experienced in the colonial and post-colonial period can be traced back to its summary expropriation from the peasantry by various authorities. In this sense, the absence of any systematic analysis of the status of land, changes to tenure and, ultimately, the integration of these insights into post-conflict reconstruction strategies - embarked upon African governments and international community - potentially undermines their very substance.

The central aim of the conference, being comparative in nature, is to gain insight into the nature of policymaking concerning land not only at national level but also at the level of regional, inter-state systems. In particular, the conference hopes to address issues like the impact of challenges facing policy development in the form of new norms of governance of state and markets (most recently articulated in the NEPAD initiative) or in the rise of an anti-imperialist discourse on land. This conference will seek to examine and analyse the role of land as a site and source of conflict, especially with regard to post-conflict reconstruction. The central aim of the conference, being comparative in nature, is to gain insight into the nature of policy making concerning land, not only at national level but at the broader African state system level as well and the degree to which the challenges facing it - in the form of new norms of governance of state and markets (most recently articulated in the NEPAD initiative) or put forward by several African State leaders supporting anti-imperialist policies - influence the latter.

As such, the conference will compare responses to internal crisis related to land across a range of African sub-regional groupings. It will adopt a continental perspective on the topic, that is to say, investigate cases drawn from all regions across Africa. Papers (selected through an international review committee) are welcomed from academics, policy makers or main practitioners dealing with the politics of land. Proceedings will be compiled and edited for publication. The conference is linked to a three-year project on land policy in Southern Africa jointly sponsored by the French Institute of South Africa (IFAS) and the London School of Economics (LSE).

**Abstract of papers (2000-2500 characters)**

**(In English only)**

**Should be sent to:**

**Politics of Land Conference**

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**before the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2005**