

Domestic Communal Land Grabbing and Dwindling Peri-Urban Spaces: The Case of Midlands Province's Mataga Communal Areas

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Abstract

The loss of land by communal villagers is increasingly becoming a problem in Zimbabwe, for reasons such as urban expansion and mining claims. In the context of a broader analysis of land-grabbing globally, this chapter focuses on conflicts embedded in the transformation of communal (rural) land into urban residential spaces in Zimbabwe. It does so by drawing upon a case study of two villages in Mataga communal areas in Mberengwa, Midlands province. In particular, the chapter examines a series of protracted land-based conflicts over an extended period between communal land villagers and a rural district council in the face of the council's annexation of their ancestral (communal) land, as well as the strategies that they have used to halt and resist the council's advances, including the sheer refusal to move and the use of legal arguments. This discussion also entails noting how a third (neutral) party sought to negotiate and resolve the land conflicts, in part successfully. The case study demonstrates the deepening levels of tenure insecurity being felt and experienced by communal villagers in contemporary Zimbabwe.