

Call for papers  
for the journal *Afrique Contemporaine*

**“Examining the connections between rural land  
and violent conflict in Africa”**


Special issue coordinated by Jacobo Grajales (University of Lille, CERAPS), Jean-Pierre Chauveau (UMR GRED, IRD Montpellier) and Eric Léonard (UMR GRED, IRD and Pôle Foncier Montpellier)

The goal of this issue is to foster dialogue between two fields of research whose topics overlap, but whose specialization limits their reciprocal enrichment: research into wars in the social sciences on the one hand, and into land tenure dynamics and land related conflicts on the other hand. The issue will seek to combine contributions from these two thematic fields, including both empirical knowledge about the complex ties between violent internal conflicts and the land issues affecting rural territories, and methodological and theoretical approaches to better describe and analyse the dynamics behind the unstable or “hybrid” social changes produced by such conflicts in Africa.

These two fields of study are often empirically oblivious to each other even though access to land and natural resources in rural environments are regularly identified as decisive factors in the sparking, playing out and perpetuation of civil wars (guerrilla wars, insurrections, situations of everyday violence), as well as in so-called “post-conflict” policies (Huggins and Clover (eds.), 2005; Baranyi and Weitzner, 2006; Peters, 2013; Bavinck et al. (eds.), 2014; Van Leeuwen and Van Den Haar, 2016).

When the ties between land and violent internal conflict are addressed by those specialized in conflicts, they are often part of a causal and nomothetic approach to the place of land issues in the different stages of civil wars and post-conflict situations (Newman, 2009; Kalyvas and Balcells, 2010; Strauss, 2012). And yet understanding of the role played by land in the trajectory of conflicts and their pacification requires a precise and thorough investigation of the social dimension of land access. This is notably the case in wars described as “ethnic wars” or, more recently, wars involving “sons of the soil”; as well as in debates surrounding the ideology of autochthony as a driver of civil war. More specifically, the array of local socio-land related norms and institutions, the diversity of layers (political, identity-based and territorial, as well as productive and economic) involved in land relations are rarely considered in their complex entirety and dynamic nature (Jackson, 2006; Dunn, 2009; Fearon and Laitin, 2011; Geschiere, 2011; Côté and Mitchell, 2015).

Specialists in land studies confronted with civil war situations are conversely not always able to situate the profound changes in socio-land relations within the array of systems of meaning and relationships of collective belonging, power and authority in which they are embedded (Sikor and Lund, 2009; Chauveau and Richards, 2008; Cramer and Richards, 2011; Lund and Boone, 2013). In Africa more specifically, the dynamics of land relations are part of “rural governmentality” configurations made up of all the more or less stabilized system of heterogeneous powers exerted over people and resources that help shape the processes of co-construction of the state and – largely “rurbanized” – rural societies, which often have very high



population mobility (Chauveau, 2017). Such processes are extremely hybrid and country-specific (Luckham and Kirk, 2013). They are difficult to grasp using classic state-centred and dichotomous categories like war, peace or post-conflict; state vs. non-state; internal vs. international scale; formal vs. informal legality; customary, state or commercial land regimes; securing rights through legal formalization vs. social recognition; security provided by public authorities vs. communities, etc.

From a methodological perspective, the approach adopted by this issue encourages the use of analytical tools that move away from normative theories on war and after-war context, states, politics, legal matters, governmentality and property rights (Grajales, 2016a; Le Roy 1999, Bavinck et al. (eds.) 2014; Van Leeuwen and Van Den Haar, 2016).

In this respect, this special issue is in line with the recent change in paradigm proposed in comprehensive qualitative research that favours processes, types of mobilization and the imbrication of civil wars in processes of state and rural society co-construction (Cramer, 2006; Richards, 2005; Wasinski, 2006; Porto, 2008; Berry, 2009; Cramer and Richards, 2011; Linhardt and Moreau de Bellaing, 2013; Boone 2014). As such, it hopes to contribute to the conceptual and methodological debate surrounding the land conflicts-civil wars nexus (land-related conflicts, land-oriented wars and land-violent conflicts). It should be noted that we employ the term civil war out of convenience and that the qualification of such violent internal conflicts and the ensuing post-conflict situations are precisely at the core of our research topic.

We notably hope to adopt a perspective on situations which often involve a succession of moments of confrontation, of “no war, no peace” (Richards, 2005) or of “inter-war” (Debos, 2009). The goal is to move beyond the short-term limits imposed by an oversimplified division between periods of conflict and “post-conflict” and rather to explore the overlapping of temporalities, the intertwining of ways in which violence is used, the (in)capacity of institutions to control the most destabilizing expressions of dissent, or the real empirical bases of monolithic land security policies advocated by the international institutions to prevent, calm or avoid the recurrence of conflicts (Grajales, 2016b; Daudelin, 2003; Humphreys, 2005; Baranyi and Weitzner, 2006).

Ultimately, the issue aims to present empirical and/or historical research to create a “variation space” (Comité éditorial, 2013, translated here) devoted specifically to civil wars with a land-related component. We are as such interested in inductive and non-normative approaches to the processes involved in the overlapping of productive, economic, identity-based, territorial and political aspects surrounding land, and in documenting the different mechanisms driving interactions that make it possible to plausibly interpret the multiple ways that socio-land relationships are organized in situations of unstable or violent social change (Humphreys, 2005). Among these processes, the connection between land trends and the globalized flows of people and resources deserves particular attention. We are therefore also interested in the multiple relationships that exist between national land policies and transnational capital (Grajales, 2016b), as well as regional and international migratory flows .

### **Suggested Topics**

Among other possibilities, we can list the following topics of interest which often overlap in different areas and highlight the role of land issues in the emergence or spread of social and political violence:

- The impact of migrations on land as an ingredient in civil wars;
- The forced displacement of populations and the reproduction of land-related conflicts;
- The tools of environmental global governance: a new element in conflictualizing land relations?
- The rise of “post-conflict” situations steeped in land issues;
- The inclusion of land policies related to the formalization of customary rights in after war context.

### Submission criteria

The journal is interested in two types of articles:

- Articles containing 35 000 to 45 000 characters maximum, spaces included (including the footnotes and bibliography) in the final version destined for publication, as well as a short, 800-character abstract (including spaces), keywords and a biography of the author (150 characters). Authors are free to include tables, graphs, maps, photos, drawings, etc. in their papers. The source files must be in .ai, .pdf or .jpg format for maps and in .xls, .pdf or .jpg format for other inserts and images. All photographs must be high resolution (300 DPI minimum) and free of rights.
- Shorter articles destined for the “*Repères*” section of the issue which are more focused on data or a specific empirical topic (professional account, field observation, actor profile, etc.). Authors may also include iconographical resources in their submissions (see above).

To submit your paper, please send a **short, one-page overview entitled “Proposal” (topic addressed, overview of the main arguments, presentation of the data, sources and fieldwork referenced)**.

The proposal and article must be submitted through the Editorial Manager platform at the following website: <http://www.editorialmanager.com/afriquecontemporaine/>

The final decision to publish articles is conditional on their approval in a process of scientific review involving two anonymous reviewers and the review committee of *Afrique contemporaine*.

For further details, please contact: [fortuiti@afd.fr](mailto:fortuiti@afd.fr) and [courtinn@afd.fr](mailto:courtinn@afd.fr)

### Calendar

Deadline for article proposal submissions: **15 May 2018** at the latest.

Reply to authors from the editors of *Afrique contemporaine*: **15 June 2018**.

Submission of a first copy of pre-selected articles: **15 October 2018**.

Publication of the issue: **2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2019**.

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