



The Politics of Possession: Property, Authority, and Access to Natural Resources

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The Politics of Possession investigates how struggles over access to resources and political power constitute property and authority recursively. Such dynamics are integral to state formation in societies characterized by normative and legal pluralism.

- Includes some of the latest theoretical work on the dynamics of access and property and how they are joined to questions of power and authority
- Explores how access to resources is often contested and rife with conflict, particularly in post-colonial and post-socialist countries
- Offers a thought-provoking approach to the study of everyday processes of state formation
- Shows how the process of seeking authorization for property claims works to legitimize the authorizers, and the efforts undertaken by politico-legal institutions to gain legitimacy underpin and undermine various claims of access and property
- Contributors explore from a wide empirical compass of original research spanning Latin America, Africa, South-East Asia, and Eastern Europe

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Editorial Review

Review

‘When people or states assert control over land and its resources, how do they justify their claims? Cases in this original collection link competitive claims to a fractured politics. Its overarching analysis linking property claims with political legitimacy - and plurality of both linked to conflict - provides an important framework that is as good to contemplate at the most local setting as it is to the most global.’

—**James Fairhead, University of Sussex**

‘Who gets to determine the legitimacy of claims and rights over property and resources? Any answer to this question must be sensitive to the varied forms by which societies organize and institutionalise access to and control over resources whether this be among peasant communities in Indonesia forests or in the slumworld of Mumbai or Lagos. But equally important is a full accounting of the forms of authority by which rights are conferred and relatedly how these forms of authority have limits and are invariably contested, fought over (often violently), disputed and reformed (even overturned). The ways in which authority, power and property are always inseparably linked strikes to the heart of Politics of Possession. Sikor and Lund have drawn together the leading theorists working on the property and natural resource question. The chapters are a brave and innovative mix of conceptual innovation, thick description and comparative insight. A pathbreaking and foundational book.’

—**Michael Watts, University of California, Berkeley**

From the Back Cover

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James Fairhead, University of Sussex *‘Who gets to determine the legitimacy of claims and rights over property and resources? Any answer to this question must be sensitive to the varied forms by which societies organize and institutionalise access to and control over resources whether this be among peasant communities in Indonesia forests or in the slumworld of Mumbai or Lagos. But equally important is a full accounting of the forms of authority by which rights are conferred and relatedly how these forms of authority have limits and are invariably contested, fought over (often violently), disputed and reformed (even overturned). The ways in which authority, power and property are always inseparably linked strikes to the heart of Politics of Possession. Sikor and Lund have drawn together the leading theorists working on the property and natural resource question. The chapters are a brave and innovative mix of conceptual innovation, thick description and comparative insight. A pathbreaking and foundational book.’*

Michael Watts, University of California, Berkeley

Access to resources is often contested and rife with conflict. This holds particularly true in societies characterized by normative pluralism such as post-colonial and post-socialist countries. Access and property are very dynamic because they are joined to questions of power and authority. The process of seeking authorization for property claims works to legitimize the authorizers, and the efforts undertaken by politico-legal institutions to gain legitimacy underpin and undermine various claims of access and property. This book includes some of the latest theoretical work on the dynamics of access, property and authority. Bringing the debate about access and property to speak to issues of power and authority, it also offers a thought-provoking approach to the study of everyday processes of state formation. Its contributions explore

the politics of possession from a wide empirical compass of original research spanning Latin America, Africa, South-East Asia and Eastern Europe.

About the Author

Thomas Sikor is Senior Lecturer in the School of Development Studies at the University of East Anglia, UK. His research focuses on rural property and resource governance, with a geographical emphasis on post-socialist countries. He has authored more than 30 journal articles, is the editor of *Public and Private in Natural Resource Governance* (2008) and has guest-edited special issues of *World Development* (2009), *Development and Change* (2009), *Forest Policy and Economics* (2006) and *Conservation and Society* (2004).

Christian Lund is Professor in International Development Studies at Roskilde University, Denmark. He is the author of *Local Politics and the Dynamics of Property in Africa* (2008) and *Law, Power, and Politics in Niger - Land Struggles and the Rural Code* (1998). He is the editor and co-editor of *Twilight Institutions: Public Authority and Local Politics in Africa* (2007), and *Negotiating Property in Africa* (2002).

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