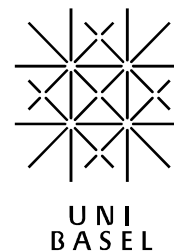


Informal Land Transactions in Peri-Urban Villages, Malawi

Ignasio Malizani JIMU, Institute of Social Anthropology

Ignasio.jimu@unibas.ch



This dissertation project aims at analysing practices taking place in the peri-urban villages of Blantyre City, Malawi. Preliminary findings from a 10 month fieldwork indicate an increase in both the practice of selling land and the price of land. Most people buying the land are from the city, and the major reason is for residential development. While selling land brings instant money, the actual dynamics are partially appreciated.



Figure: Advertisement for land, Blantyre (Malawi)

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Ever since land became a commodity it is not possible to acquire land free of charge

Background

Selling customary land implies a state of permanent loss of the immovable property in land, and also of the means of earning a living. The question is how are the transactions initiated and concluded given that both custom and law on land do not permit the selling of such land. Relevant are questions about who participates in the transactions, on what terms, and what are the effects over time.

Specific Objectives/Research Questions

1. How are 'informal' land transactions initiated, mediated and consolidated or concluded?
2. How are land owning patterns transforming over time?
3. How are the transactions embedded in social and legal/power relationships?

Methodology

The project relies on a triangulation of qualitative methods (participant observation, interviewing, collecting documents) which allows for the analysis of the phenomenon from multiple perspectives.

Expected/First Results

Increase in the practice of selling land, emergence of landlessness or near landlessness, proliferation of alternative ways of earning a living, and disputed claims given that custom and law do not permit such transactions, reconfiguration of how access and control is defined and contested.

Relevance

Learning more about land ownership transformations/transformations in the governance of peri-urban land.