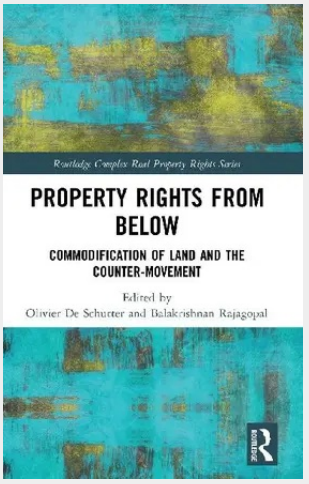
De Schutter / Rajagopal

Property Rights from Below

Commodification of Land and the Counter-Movement

Recent years have seen a globalization of property rights as the Western conception of property over land has extended across the world. As formerly community-owned land and natural resources are privatized and titling schemes proliferate, Property Rights from Below questions the trend toward treating land as a commodity and explores alternatives to the Western model. As we enter an era of resource scarcity and as competition for land and associated natural resources increases, purchasing power cannot become the sole criterion for land allocation; and the law of supply and demand in increasingly financialized markets cannot become the sole metric through which the value of land is determined. Using a range of examples from around the world, Property Rights from Below demonstrates that alternatives to this model often emerge from social innovations supported by local communities and that there is an urgent need for a broader political imagination when it comes to land governance. This innovative cross-disciplinary perspective on the pressing problems surrounding global property rights will be of interest to academics, students and professionals with an interest in property law, development economics and land governance.

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