

***Conflict and Housing, Land, and Property Rights:
A Handbook on Issues, Frameworks, and Solutions***
by Scott Leckie and Chris Huggins
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The images of intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and state governments providing food, medicine, and clean water to conflict and post-conflict regions of the world have appeared on North American and Western European television news broadcasts since the completion of the Second World War. During the second half of the twentieth century, these images represented what it meant to provide aid to a region, often outside of North America and Western Europe, in need of assistance. However, it has become clear that providing conflict and post-conflict regions with food, medicine, and clean water is only a short-term solution for handling economic, racial, political, and ethnic challenges. Experts such as Scott Leckie and Chris Huggins have begun to argue that the appropriate management of housing, land, and property (HLP) rights in conflict and post-conflict settings are “decisive in determining the extent to which peace is sustained” (1).

In their book *Conflict and Housing, Land, and Property Rights: A Handbook on Issues, Frameworks, and Solutions*, Leckie (the Founder and Director of Displacement Solutions) and Huggins (an academic who spent the past decade working in Eastern and Central Africa) present a practical and theoretical blueprint for dealing with HLP rights in conflict and post-conflict regions. Although the authors clearly state that every HLP issue is unique, their goal in this work is to explain to a broader audience that HLP abuses can lead to prolonged conflicts, and that addressing these issues are essential to the peacemaking process. Designed as a “user-friendly, thought provoking, and accessible” work (x), the book systematically begins by introducing the issues surrounding HLP rights. It then presents a variety of case studies to articulate how HLP rights have been addressed, or have failed to be addressed, and the outcomes of these situations. Finally, the book closes by presenting examples of how work in the field of HLP rights has been addressed by the United Nations and NGOs, as well as the work that is still left to be done.

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Geared primarily towards readers in the developed world, Leckie and Huggins begin their work by outlining the unique frameworks in which HLP rights are most often violated in conflict and post-conflict regions of the developing world. As the authors explain, readers in North America and Western Europe must realize that HLP rights' instruments, which are based on Western models, will often be unsuccessful in the developing world due to ethnic tensions and the overlapping systems of laws that exist in these regions. Leckie and Huggins also argue that land tenure and land scarcity, particularly on the continent of Africa, can often be linked to poverty, which can eventually lead to violence. Therefore, although violence in the developing world may not always appear to begin over HLP issues, Leckie and Huggins argue that HLP issues will often play a significant role in violent conflict.

Within the introductory chapter, Leckie and Huggins explain HLP rights by outlining the problems that individuals in post-conflict regions have in re-establishing their basic rights. The authors note that more than one-quarter of the world's population does not have proper building permissions or titles to lands, making it very difficult to establish HLP rights in post-conflict areas. Throughout the book, Leckie and Huggins continuously present case studies to help illustrate a theory, law, or concept to the reader; many of which are outlined in the body portion of the work. For example, Leckie and Huggins choose to articulate the HLP problems that individuals face without proper building permissions or land titles with the examples of East Timor and Kosovo. The problems in both East Timor and Kosovo were compounded by the fact that the archives that housed the ownership and tenancy rights' records were destroyed or were taken out of the country during the conflicts in the respective areas.

An interesting point that Leckie and Huggins allude to is that although the majority of HLP rights violations happen in the developing world, these abuses also exist in the developed world. These HLP rights issues often affect the indigenous people that live in the Americas, Australia, and New Zealand, for instance, and they also impact individuals who have been affected by natural disasters. These examples provide a balanced approach to HLP rights and remind the reader that HLP rights concerns do not only exist in the developing world.

Written as a book that is "designed to promote creative, concrete, and solution-oriented thought for eventual practical application to real-life HLP challenges in the field" (x), Leckie and Huggins have produced an excellent work for both academics, as well as for individuals who are working for international institutions throughout the world. Leckie and Huggins support their explanations with several real-life examples and provide a strong base for anyone interested in the HLP challenges that individuals face in both the developing and the developed worlds.