

## Territorialisation and Elections: Land and Politics in Benin

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**Abstract :** In the frontier zone of Benin Republic, land seems to be a fundamental political resource as it is used as a tool for socio-political mobilization, blackmail, inclusion and exclusion, conquest and political control. This paper seeks to examine the complex and intriguing interlinks between land, identity and politics in central Benin. It aims to investigate what roles territorialisation and land ownership are playing in the electioneering process in central Benin. It employs ethnographic multi-sited approach to data collections including observations, interviews and focused group discussions. Research findings reveal a complex and intriguing relationship between land ownership and politics in central Benin. Land is found to be playing a key role in the electioneering process in the region. The study has also discovered many emerging socio-spatial patterns of controlling and maintaining political power in the zone which are tied to land politics. These include identity reconstruction and integration mechanism through intermarriages, socio-political initiatives and construction of infrastructure of sovereignty. It was also found that 'Diaspora organizations' and identity issues; strategic creation of administrative units; alliance building strategy; gerrymandering local political field, etc. These emerging socio-spatial patterns of territorialisation for maintaining political power affect migrant and native communities' relationships. It was also found that 'Diaspora organizations' and identity issues; strategic creation of administrative units; alliance building strategy; gerrymandering local political field, etc. are currently affecting migrant's and natives' relationships. The study argues that territorialisation is not only about national boundaries and the demarcation between different nation states, but more importantly, it serves as a powerful tool of domination and political control at the grass root level. Furthermore, this study seems to provide another perspective from which the political situation in Africa can be studied. Investigating how the dynamics of land ownership is influencing politics at the grass root or micro level, this study is fundamental to understanding spatial issues in the frontier zone.

**Keywords :** land, migration, politics, territorialisation

**Conference Title :** ICEME 2016 : International Conference on Environmental Management and Engineering

**Conference Location :** Singapore, Singapore

**Conference Dates :** September 08-09, 2016