FURS Abstract:

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**Title:** 'Land Conflicts in Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh: Dynamics of Property, Identity and State Formation'

**Abstract:**

There is rising competition over land and an increase in number of land conflicts in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh. My research focuses on the land disputes between hill people and Bengali settlers (who migrated through government initiated settlement program in 1979) in CHT. By looking at land dispute processes, the study explores- how different identities and notions of authority are invoked in claim-making and how land claims influence the processes of authority and identity formation. The study employs ethnographic methods to understand the patterns and practices. Data are collected by engaging with various actors- disputants, institutional actors, academics, members of political organizations and civil society (both at local and national level). Findings suggest both Bengalis and hill people negotiate over identities and claim for certain identities in relation to their claims over property/land. The right people have over property/land also hinge on how people are categorised. The study reveals there are formal state authorities, informal state authority (military) and non-state authorities that compete over authority and settle disputes within and between communities. Moreover, the contestation over land and authority occur within ambiguity where property in land in CHT is not fixed, which is the cause and consequence of the on-going political contestation over recognition of customary ownership of land. The study aims to contribute to the existing knowledge and debate on politics of control over land, land distribution and representation of people in CHT of Bangladesh.