

# The land question in southern Africa: Lessons from Zimbabwe

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## 1.0 Introduction

The land questions facing southern Africa are dominated by the negative effects of distorted settler-colonial decolonization, and the associated failure to address the national question, sustainable development and democracy, within the context of incomplete national democratic revolutions. While important differences exist in the nature of the southern African countries' land questions and ways in which these have been addressed, there are critical similarities in the fundamental socio-political and economic questions that fuel the persistent conflicts that arise from unequal land distribution and discriminatory land tenure systems.

Land remains a basic source for the livelihood of the majority of southern Africans and is key to the development of agriculture, tourism, mining, housing and industry. Economic development, understood as agrarian transformation and industrialization tends to be distorted by skewed agrarian structures. Thus the land question is not only an agrarian issue but a critical social question regarding inequitable patterns of resource allocation within the rural-urban divide and, the agricultural-industrial divide. This underlies the persistently conflicted relation of class, gender, race and ethnicity and processes of inter-class labour exploitation, differential taxation and resource access and benefits, in the context of the marginalization of the majority rural populations. Even South Africa and Zambia, which are more urbanized than elsewhere, high unemployment rates (30-50%), have land questions attenuated by the wider crisis of homelessness and jobless urbanization, and dependence on straddling rural-urban livelihoods. Inequitable land ownership and utilisation patterns distorts the integration of space and development strategy, due to the predominance of enclave development.

The peasant question in southern Africa has for long been subordinated, in terms of ideology and substance, by white settler landlordism and institutionalized racial discrimination by the state and capital, and justified by an agrarian modernization project based on peripheral export oriented capitalist agriculture. Thus land and racial conflicts which affect Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe have remained unaddressed for long, despite the fact that their peasantries continue to be marginalized, and to expand, while in other southern African countries new land questions arise from emerging land and agrarian differentiation.

Zimbabwe has dissented from this trend by reshaping its agrarian structure in terms of the scale and quality of the producer base, and social relations, with significant implications for the peasantry and semi-proletariat. Its rural and/agrarian class formation processes, while enabling the peasantry to maintain itself at basic levels of social reproduction, have spawned a new differentiated class structure, privileges "peripheral" (or semi-peripheral) capital accumulation among an expanded but racially more balanced economically straddling elite.

This essentially bimodal path of agrarian change, presents contradictory class interests of large capitalists, middle and "poor" peasants and workers, since resolving racial aspects of the land question alone, and retaining a peripheral export economic strategy, does not fully address poverty among the peasantry and workers.

The land question in South Africa on the other end remains unresolved partly because of its gradualistic approach to land reform, but largely because the peasant question (or even the small farmer development trajectory) is under-estimated by official policy and denied by intellectuals and civil society. This reflects the teleological tendencies of discourses, which envision greater industrial and non-agricultural employment growth, and diminished peasant demand for land, as well as ideologies which presume the "inefficiency" of peasant production systems and livelihoods *per se*. Growing urban and peri-urban demand for land, required for housing and petty commodity production, which is contingent upon growing semi-proletarianisation and unemployment, has however also been neglected by South Africa's market based land reform and neoliberal social security policies. These trends raise the spectre of increased land conflicts resulting from the demands of a growing but blocked peasantry, rising urban poverty, as well as a nascent black bourgeoisie, poised against minority white landlords.

The fate of the peasantry in terms of its socio-economic character and political significance under capitalism remains central to neo-colonial southern African futures. Is the peasantry disappearing economically or becoming politically insignificant given the emerging perception that agrarian change, since 'the implementation of structural adjustment policies and market liberalisation worldwide has had a dissolving effect on peasant livelihoods'. In this light, what is the land question in southern Africa?

The dilemma's of the land question in southern Africa arise from a poor understanding of the influences of the peasantisation and proletarianisation processes and of the constraints to "articulated" development in the semi-periphery, the nature of indigenous capital accumulation processes (especially in "agrarian" sectors and the intra-class and racial contestations over the control of land and related resources. The cooptation of civil society in this context, and the persistence of distorted "development" and democratic processes, are critical contradictions which face social struggles for land reform alternative paths to change.

## **2.0 The Land Question in southern Africa**

### **2.1 From decolonization, to radical and neoliberal land reforms**

Different forms of settler colonization in the region, with regard to the degree of colonial expropriation of land, define the main differences in the land questions faced, and particularly with regard to the nature of the unresolved national questions. Thus where mild land expropriation and white settler occupation obtained, for instance in Swaziland, Botswana, Zambia, and Malawi, less explosive land questions are found, although over time land concentration among blacks has become the issue. Extreme settlerist land expropriation in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique and Angola led to more protracted liberation struggle and persistent land conflicts. However, it is critical to recognise that the regionally systemic nature of the land questions that the legacy of colonialisation brought to southern Africa. Namely, that land expropriation in parts of the region and generalized migrant labour mobilisation especially in Lesotho dispossessed of land in the current free state, Malawi, the Rhodesia and South Africa, were intertwined facets of the growth of South Africa's regional agro-industrial, mining and commercial farm enclaves, and of Zimbabwe and Zambian mining and agricultural enclaves in the middle of the last century.

The regions' economies founded on labour migration and enclave settlement patterns, depended on the subsidization of urban wage incomes by the so-called rural subsistence economies, based in marginal lands, as well as on the combined rural-urban livelihoods that

define popular income flows in the regional economy. The linkage of agro-industrial capital in the SADC region today reflects historically hegemonic settler interactions and common models of land and agrarian management, within an agro-industrial development strategy focused on European exports, and are mediated mainly through large South African capital and regional labour markets. This development model defines the highly inequitable income and consumption distribution patterns, and persistence of marginalized rural and informal economies.

The form and outcome of the national liberation process has had varied implications on the manner in which the national question, the land questions and democracy have been addressed in southern Africa. Specific national approaches to resolving the land question reflected the varied decolonization processes and the varied mobilizations of the liberation movements, particularly since the mid-1970's when détente emerged and the waning 'end' cold war from the 1980's. Hence, the varied tactics of land reform experienced in southern Africa since the 1970's (in the lusophone zone), in the 1980's and early 1990's period in Zimbabwe and Namibia, and the post-apartheid approaches (of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia), as well the neo-liberal land (essentially tenure) policy formation processes experienced since the 1960's in other SADC countries. Where liberation was decisively concluded in Mozambique and Angola, in spite of internal armed conflicts over the national question, fuelled by external destabilization, the land question appears to have been broadly resolved. Where liberation was relatively partially concluded, as in the main settler territories of Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa, negotiated settlements left both the national and land question relatively unresolved. In particular the racial dimensions of the national question has not been adequately addressed as we have seen recently. Thus, racially inequitable structures of wealth, income and land distribution remained intact, while liberal democratic constitutions and market principles protected these inequalities and inequities. This limited the scope and pace land and agrarian reforms.

Moreover, corporatist-liberal states that emerged and its articulated within global capital through the IFIs (especially the Bretton Woods Institutions), the development aid structures (bilateral and multi-lateral donors and lending structures) and the trade system, eventually consolidated the neoliberal framework used to address the regions' national questions and the land reform strategies adopted. The latter can be seen to have been interconnected by an increasing common neo-liberal ideology and common economic management strategies of externally imposed and home grown SAP-type macro-economic stabilization, trade extroverted trade liberalisation and de-regulation of domestic markets (land, labour and commodity). These processes led over 4 decades to varying degrees of de-industrialization from Tanzania to Zimbabwe, of growth enclaves which had been based on capital intensive industrialization processes, since the 1950s, alongside the increasing dependence of most of the regions' economies on land for social survival. The lessons from this are common failure of land reforms and economic transitions, and narrow dissidences of approach to land reform and economic management.

The specific trajectory of land reform processes in the SADC region therefore needs to be examined in terms of the 40 year history of national liberation, if the apparently varied experiences of the evolving land questions facing southern Africa and the land reform tactics used are to be understood. Whereas different socio-economic and political specificities need to be critically reflected upon, it is however the gradual shifts in the terrain of national independence and liberation struggles among the countries since the 1960's, in terms of their ideological and political mobilisation of social forces in response to imperial tactics, which distinguishes the specific land reform strategies experienced.

Thus, the SADC region of the 1960s and 1970's experienced a clear divide between the radical nationalist-cum-socialist orientation to land reform and liberal approaches. The former were based upon the nationalization of settler lands and foreign commercial/industrial structures of capital (as pursued in Tanzania and Zambia during the 1960's and early 1970s) and in Mozambique and Angola (from the mid-1970's). In contradistinction to this, the more liberal strategies of land reform were found during the same period in the smaller colonial 'protectorates', which predominantly faced indirect colonial rule accompanied by minor

degrees of white settlerism alongside cheap labour migrant systems (in Botswana, Swaziland, Lesotho and Malawi). In the latter countries, the land reform experiences involved a limited degree of market based expropriation of settler lands, accompanied by market led compensation with some colonial finance, as was the case in Swaziland and Botswana for example. Such lands held by small settler communities were mainly indigenized with limited foreign and white minority dominated large scale land ownership and estate farming remaining alongside the emergence of state farms and the resilience of largely peasant and pastoral agrarian structures.

The nature and outcome of land reform radicalization also varied. Whereas Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique had pursued socialistic land and agrarian reforms based upon largely state marketing systems, and land settlement and use reorganization (villagisation and rural development in Tanzania and resettlement and integrated development in Zambia), Mozambique followed land nationalization with even more intensive attempts at socialistic transformation of the land and agrarian question through state and cooperative farms, Angola which started off mired in civil war throughout and did not pursue further significant land reform after land nationalisation from 1975. Civil war in the lusophone territories, fuelled by South African destabilization and relative international isolation, however contained radical agrarian reforms there.

The liberal approach to the resolution of the land question varied slightly. It consisted mainly of limited market led land re-distribution efforts and attempts to modernize peasant agriculture within a contradictory context of imbalanced public resources allocations. The latter were focused primarily on developing the large scale indigenized and state capitalist farming sub-sector and their increasing incorporation into global agricultural export markets. This form of land and agrarian reform led to intensified land concentration in the various southern African countries, steady growth of agrarian social differentiation based on capitalist accumulation, labour exploitation and rural marginalization, and a bi-modal agrarian structure which became entrenched at different scales throughout the region.

## **2.2 The nature and significance of the peasantry in southern Africa**

The peasantry– the small-scale/family agriculturalists operating within the generalized system of commodity production– does not constitute a class in itself but inherent in it are the antagonistic tendencies of proletarian and proprietor. The ideal-type 'peasant household' reproduces itself as both capital and labour simultaneously and in internal contradiction, but this combination of capital and labour is not spread evenly within the peasantry, for two reasons. First, the peasantry is differentiated between the rich, middle, and poor petty-commodity producers, a spectrum that ranges from the capitalist that employs labour-power, beyond the family, to the semi-proletarian that sells it; as such, the middle peasantry is the only category that embodies the ideal-type of petty-bourgeois production, managing neither to hire nor sell labour-power – and which in turn is rare. Second, the combination of capital and labour is not spread evenly within a single household either; differentiated by gender and generation, patriarchs will control the means of production, women and children will provide unwaged labour. While this may appear on the surface as a 'different' mode of production, it has been argued convincingly that petty-commodity production is firmly embedded in the capitalist system and in fact is a normal feature of capitalist society, even if subordinate and unstable.

Under capitalism the peasantry remains in a state of flux, within the centre-periphery structure spawned by colonialism, as proletarianisation co-exists with peasantisation and semi-proletarianisation. The form and scale of the actually existing peasantry is both an empirical and an interpretive problem to be understood from the composition of household income by source, including non-exchangeable sources of sustenance; and from an analysis of household residential patterns, as between town and country (Ibid). It has been argued that under structural adjustment peasants have become 'problematic', insofar as they are 'multi-

occupational, straddling urban and rural residences, [and] flooding labour markets'. Yet, the peasantry has been problematic in this way for much of the twentieth century.

Structural adjustment has been accompanied by intensified migration. Africa now has notched-up the fastest rate of urbanization in the world (3.5 percent annually) and nearly 40 percent of the population is now urbanised. This fact is often used as proof that the land/agrarian question is losing its relevance. Migration does not mean full proletarianisation, or permanent urbanisation, but the spreading of risk in highly adverse circumstances, that urbanization moves alongside de-industrialisation and retrenchments, illegal and unplanned settlement, such that, for example, half the urban population of Kenya and South Africa lives in slums. Migration is not merely one-way, as workers retrenched from mines and farms are also known to seek peasantisation, as recorded in a case study of rural 'squatting' in Zimbabwe, or as urbanites enter the land reform process. As well, as opposed to secular urbanization, which Kay terms the 'ruralization of urban areas' and 'urbanization of rural areas', whereby rural and urban workers compete for both jobs, including agricultural jobs, and residential plots in both urban and rural areas. It has also been observed that retrenched workers from mines and industry have joined this struggle and have also sought to become peasants themselves (e.g. Bolivia where former miners have taken up coca production). Thus urbanization and proletarianisation are not definitive, and agrarian reform can not be seen as anachronistic, or underestimate the political significance of the countryside, in which the 'end of land reform' thesis writes off an alternative pattern of accumulation. The semi-proletarianisation thesis, under current agrarian change within the contemporary centre-periphery structure does not provide for massive population relocations to the north.

The effect has been the rise of a richer class of peasants against the rest who became semi-proletarianised or landless. Full proletarianisation was generally forestalled, not least by state action and, rural households held onto a plot of land and maintained the dual income strategy of petty-commodity production and wage labour. Rural non-farm activities and markets proliferated, such that between 30 and 40 percent of household incomes are now derived from off-farm sources. This dual trend suggests that 'the informal sector [in the urban economy] is not a stepping stone towards a better and settled urban life, but a temporary abode for labour which can be pushed back to its place of origin when no longer needed'.

The transition to capitalism in the periphery has taken place under disarticulated accumulation and subordinately to the accumulation needs of the centre. In consequence, it has not been characterised by an 'American path', as identified by Lenin – that is, a broad-based accumulation by petty-commodity producers 'from below' – but by varied paths. These include a 'junker path' of landlords-turned-capitalists in Latin America and Asia (outside East Asia), with its variant in the white-settler societies of southern Africa, operating in tandem with transnational capital (whether landowning or not) and recently with large agrarian capital has also expanding and converted land away farming to wildlife management, or 'eco-tourism' ventures; a 'merchant path' comprising a variety of urban [petty-] bourgeois elements with access to land, whether leasehold or freehold, via the state, the market, or land reform, farming on a medium scale but integrated into export markets and global agro-industry.

Measures of 'poverty reduction', including 'integrated rural development programme', sought to bolster this functional dualism in its moment of crisis from the 1980s led to the abandonment of the poverty agenda and the tendency for proletarianisation to accelerate although direct and indirect political action and a series of social catastrophes have even brought back land reform in its market-based form. Where the neoliberal social agenda failed spectacularly in Zimbabwe, large-scale re-peasantisation has taken place outside the control of the World Bank and hence because of penalties imposed from the north, a new pattern of 'accumulation from below' has not yet emerged.

Various social hierarchies derived from gender, generation, race, caste, and ethnicity, have intensified under capitalism and functional dualism, since disarticulated accumulation and its corollary of semi-proletarianisation provide the structural economic basis for the flourishing of powerful social hierarchies that either fuse with class (e.g. race, caste), or cut across it (gender), and reproduce apparently 'non-capitalist' forms of 'landlordism', even despite the

historical culmination of the 'junker path'. The synergy between class and race is notable in Zimbabwe and South Africa where both historical domination and the process of resistance have fused class and race discourses.

Consequently, demands for agrarian reform have struck at the heart of the dominant national/cultural identities through which the conditions of super-exploitation are reproduced. In Africa however the issues of race and class have been strongly politicised for a longer period, and armed national liberation struggles against colonialism intensified these. The attainment of majority rule across the continent, within the neo-colonial framework, was characterised by the nurturing of small indigenous extroverted bourgeoisies combined to defend nationally the disarticulated pattern of accumulation, while in southern Africa, neo-colonialism coincided with structural adjustment. National politics have been galvanised by rural and urban class struggles informed by growing class differentiation among blacks, and inter-capitalist conflict between emergent black bourgeoisies and established white capital, both extroverted and both bidding over the land question. The result has been a stark bifurcation of the national question: on the one hand, black capital has confronted white capital, transforming the meaning of 'national liberation' in its own terms and hijacking land reform; while on the other hand, the historical realities of class and race persist, characterised by functional dualism within a white supremacist framework, including the racialised landlordisms to which it gives rise.

Gender hierarchy has been as intrinsic to functional dualism as race, male labour for mines and farms rested on a policy of confining women to the communal area by institutionalised means, under despotic chieftaincies. While, chieftaincy has been transformed in variable ways, and women have entered the labour market in large numbers, they have continued to be a rural pillar of functional dualism. Under structural adjustment gender hierarchy has been thoroughly instrumentalised, as structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) have curtailed social services and relied on female reproductive labour, which in turn has intensified, as well as child labour. At the same time, women have also been compelled to diversify the sources of household income. However, the traditional obstacles to access to land have persisted and remained subject to patriarchal kinship relations, while the illegal use of land has in many cases proliferated.

The above trends underlie the emergence of scattered but significant land conflicts in the region, a direct negative outcome of neo-liberal land reforms, which tends to fuel renewed struggles over the national and democracy questions. The rest of the paper examines these land questions and land reform experiences in southern Africa, including the nature of the neo-radical fast track land reforms of Zimbabwe, and the regional implications of these for the future land questions in the SADC region.

### **3.0 Land Concentration, Privatisation and External Control in Southern Africa**

#### **3.1 Historical context of the land question in southern Africa**

The overriding land question facing southern Africa is that little progress has been achieved in the implementation of land reform, especially with regard to redressing colonially derived and post-independence unequal land ownership, discriminatory land use regulations and insecure land tenure systems which marginalize the majority of rural and urban poor populations. The legacy of racially unequal land control which confronted mainly the former settler colonies, was at independence maintained through constitutions which guaranteed the protection of private property by sanctifying willing-seller-willing buyer approaches to the redistribution of freehold land. Those SADC states with legacies of limited settler colonialism have tended to face the challenges of promoting equitable legal and administrative systems of land tenure security and effective land management within a context of growing land concentration and agrarian class differentiation.

An underlying major problem which confronts these land questions in southern Africa is the continued increase in population among the peasantries in marginal and congested lands, without a net increase in the access to the maldistributed and underutilized arable lands, and a slow rate of growth in land productivity and agricultural intensification. Discriminatory land use policies and practices, and land tenure laws have tended to encourage underutilization of land or inefficient land use among large-scale farmers, who nonetheless have high levels of productivity on limited parts of the land they control. Yet, expanding the number of landholders through land redistribution could redress the land shortages and the patterns of insecurity of tenure that arise from maldistribution of land. Instead, southern African land reform policies have focused on reforming the regulation of land use and environmental management practices among smallholders, and reforming customary tenures towards market based land tenure systems, in the belief that these can lead to increased agricultural investment and intensification.

A persistent feature of the land reform question in the sub-region therefore is that racial imbalance and historic grievances over land expropriation provide a binding force for the political mobilization of social grievance and growing poverty for land reform. Independence political settlement and reconciliation policies in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa have thus failed to curb racial conflict in a context where the peace dividend of the mid-1990's has not led to economic growth throughout the sub-region nor delivered structural changes which include the majority into the formal economy. Not surprisingly, even in the non-settler territories, the land problem and its racial foundations, resonates. Thus conflict over land tends to be fueled by ideological and land policy discourses which in Southern Africa have not resolved the question of whether and to what degree the rights held by whites over land that had been expropriated historically are valid and, socially and politically legitimate.

Land reform discourses are further fueled by the myth that the freehold landholding system and private land markets are more efficient and superior to customary (so-called "communal") land tenure systems. This myth tends to justify the preservation, of unequally held land in the dual tenure systems, while incorrectly arguing that land reform *per se* undermines food security and exports, as well as the confidence of the investors in the economy. While this may be correct where conflicted land transfers obtain, as in Zimbabwe since 2000, this could be a short to medium term transitional problem, depending on the support given to new settlers. In this context, where smallholder farmers are regarded as being less efficient in land use, productivity and ecological practices intrinsically than large-scale white farmers, who hold large chunks of the prime lands and other resources, prophecy can be sustained by the withholding of agricultural resources from so-called subsistence farmers. That is, land reform can only succeed to the degree that attendant resources are reallocated by the state and through appropriate market interventions.

Land conflicts today result from grievances over and struggles for access to land and natural resources by both the poor and emerging black capitalist classes. Such grievances reflect the deep roots of social polarisation along racial and nationality lines. These arise historically from the discriminatory treatment of blacks on farms, mines and towns through a proletarianisation process based on land alienation and for cheap labour mobilisation, and the persistence of racially inequitable development. The increasing radicalization of land acquisition approaches in Namibia and South Africa, and the growth of the tactic of land occupations in the SADC region since the 1990's are manifestations of this deeply rooted phenomenon of common grievances over the unresolved land questions, and the failure of markets or land owners to reallocate land to a broader constituency.

### **3.2 Racial and foreign land distribution patterns**

The existing structure and patterns of land inequalities in southern Africa are based upon a relatively unique racial distribution of socio-economic features including population, wealth, income, and employment patterns. Land expropriation was rampant in most southern African countries and it is only Botswana that had no white settlers by 1958. On the other hand,

Angola, Lesotho and Zambia had lower percentages of alienated land. In terms of settler population Namibia, seems to have had a significant white settler population mainly composed of the Afrikaners and Germans in 1960 with 19%. The greatest white settler land alienation occurred in South Africa at 89% with the Dutch and English jostling for the control of land since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Although at independence the white settler populations have tended to decrease the proportion of land possessed by white minorities has tended not to decrease proportionately in former settler, while there has been a gradual in foreign landholdings in some countries such as Mozambique, Zambia and Malawi, in the context of renewed interest by private international capital in tourism based on the control of natural resources.

Countries such as South Africa and Namibia are confronted with unequal land holdings with titled land in the hands of a few white commercial farmers. This pattern is excessive in South Africa where 60,000 white farmers, who make up only 5% of the white population, own almost 87% (85,5 million) of the land. Only 20,000 white commercial farmers produce 80% of the gross agricultural product. A further 40,000 including some 2,000 black farmers, produce 15%, while 500,000 families living in the former homelands produce an estimated 5%. At least 12 million blacks inhabit 17.1 million hectares of land and no more than 15 % (or 2.6 million hectares) of this land is potentially arable. Thus whites own 6 times more land in terms of the quantity of land available and its quality.

However, Namibia has the highest number of white settlers with about 8% of the total population. Commercial land under freehold title comprises approximately 6,300 farms belonging to 4,128 mostly white farmers measuring about 36.2 million hectares. The freehold land covers 44% of available land and 70% of the most productive agricultural land covering 36 million hectares. Only 2.2 million hectares of the commercial farmland belong to black farmers. By contrast, communal lands comprise 138,000 households with an area of 33.5 million hectares, which is only 41% of the land available.

In countries with predominant customary land tenure systems there is a tendency of high population densities on land regarded as poor around largely mountainous areas and scarce arable land. In fact, in Swaziland and Malawi, the struggle for equitable land ownership invokes the control by traditional leaders over land allocation. Increased privatisation of state lands as part of the foreign investment drive has crowded out the poor on to the worst lands. In Mozambique, although all land is constitutionally state land, "privatisation" of land started in 1984 as part of the implementation of the structural adjustment programmes. This has created grounds for racial animosity as foreigners and white South Africans tend to dominate this investment. Confrontation over land in Zimbabwe has seen the emigration of white Zimbabweans to Mozambique. Mozambican officials have called for greater social integration of in-coming white farmers to avoid creation of "white islands" where commercial development outpaces that of the indigenous populations who surround these new settlers.

In Zimbabwe, before the fast track land reform programme, most of the freehold lands were in the hands of 4500 whites (comprising 0.03% of the population) and located in the most fertile parts of the country, with the most favourable climatic conditions and water resources. White farmers controlled 31% of the country's freehold land or about 42% of the agricultural land, while 1.2 million black families subsisted on 41% of the country's area of 39 million hectares.

A diverse and differentiated structure of land tenure and land use also exists among the regions white population. Racial ownership of land ranges from family landowners to a few white-dominated large companies – most of which are multinational companies with strong international linkages. Whilst these companies tend to under use most of their land, it is however the nationality and citizenship of large landowners that is mostly contested. In Zimbabwe it is estimated that between 20,000 to 30,000 white Zimbabweans are British and South Africans with dual citizenship. While the definition of who is indigenous remains contested, including for non-white members of minority groups who are citizens by birth or through naturalization, absentee land ownership exacerbates feelings against foreign land ownership. In Namibia, corporate ownership of lands hides the influx of foreign landowners, particularly those who are shifting land use from agricultural use to tourism.



Foreign land ownership has a historical and contemporary dimension to it. Past colonial land expropriation tends to now be reinforced by new land concessions to foreign investors. This tends to be complicated socially and politically by the physical absence of many foreign large scale landowners. Foreign landowners increasingly use stock holding land tenure arrangements for the control of land, especially in the growing eco-tourist industry, thus increasing the globalization of the region's land question. The rural poor are thus marginalized from their own landscape livelihood systems undermined.

The market paradigm shift of the 1980s saw new waves of migration by white large farmers into Zambia, Mozambique and Democratic Republic of Congo. This migration encouraged by neo-liberal investment policies has led to increased foreign land ownership in many countries, and pressures for increased private land tenure property regimes in order to protect investments. The agricultural sector has been prime target of such investment through lucrative incentives provided for foreign investment especially in export processing zones.

### **3.3 Contested settler notions of land size and peasant marginalisation**

Per capita arable land ownership per household has been declining due to the increase in population in the regions' customary tenure areas, while the few white and some black large scale farmers own most of the best arable land in farms that are oversized. Thus, according to poverty tends to be concentrated in households with farm sizes under 1ha and especially under 0.5ha. While poor black smallholders and the landless call for increased land redistribution, rural and urban black elites also call for access to large over-sized commercial farms, such as happened recently in Zimbabwean where the prescribed land size ceilings are based upon outdated notions of the land sizes are required for "viable" commercial farming.

Farm sizes in the region reflect the trends in land ownership. In Namibia the average white LSCF farm sizes is 5,700 hectares. In Zimbabwe the average was 2,500 with variation between NR II to V. In the communal areas the average farm size is around 2 hectares and in resettlement it is 5 hectares. In South Africa 28.5% of the farms were larger than 1,000 hectares. In Malawi 40% of the smallholders cultivate less than 0.5ha, with an average farm size of 0.28ha. The areas inhabited by smallholders have the highest poverty. The resettlement programmes in the region are proceeding on the basis of small sized farms for blacks averaging less than 10 hectares of arable land in areas such as NR II in Zimbabwe. Land reform based on controlling farm sizes through ceilings has not been pursued in most of the countries.

This leaves a few landowners holding excessively large tracts of land. Using the cut-off point of over 10,000 hectares owned either through company or individual title or as single or multiple farms, about 66 landowners (with 158 farms) occupied over two million hectares of Zimbabwe's land by 1998. Most these farms are multiply owned company farms. Eight individuals for instance together owned 13 farms occupying 158,531 hectares, of which 29 per cent of the area was owned as multiple farms. Multiple farm ownership is thus a decided feature of Zimbabwe's landed gentry, whether these are company or individually owned.

The criterion used to determine viable farm sizes is based on a legacy of white settler notions of the 'small scale' being subsistence oriented and the 'commercial' being large scale white farms. Although the categorisation is posited as a function of different resource levels, there is a fundamental class and racial basis of its definition. Historically large farms have prescribed higher levels of income targets for whites, against lower 'subsistence' incomes for blacks. The latter any rate were required to provide cheap labour to supplement incomes. Large sized lands are also said to allow for multiple land uses at a 'commercial' scale, and to allow some of the land to remain fallow for sometime. They are also considered necessary for mechanised agriculture, on the false grounds that economies of scale obtain farming. Yet blacks have historically been unable to acquire large scale machinery through institutionalised resource allocation biases and financial institutional discrimination. However, whilst many of

the large farms so supported are productive by the region's standards, most of their lands are underutilized.

In order to conceal land under utilization and speculative uses of land, white commercial farmers and multinational companies have tended to put their land under wildlife ranching even though the social and economic benefits of such uses remain contested. Nonetheless investing in game ranching, tourism in the form of conservancies, requires the continued exclusion from large areas of the poor, and in some countries the enclosure of newly consolidated lands to the same end. Various shareholding structures that remain in the clique of white farmers exclude both elite and poor blacks, who contest such arrangements through various strategies, including land occupations. The tourism sector has justified the exclusion of blacks by arguing that it is too technical for black smallholders' land management, and that its marketing requirements are too sophisticated for them. It is argued that the latter should instead concentrate on less technical crops such as food grains than horticulture export crops.

This racist notion is buttressed by the belief that blacks only aim to secure home consumption and residence, and that they do not require land for commercial uses. However, the output performance of smallholders including resettled black farmers, and including those who have invested in peri-urban areas, demonstrates that with adequate access to land blacks contribute substantially to domestic and export markets. Unfortunately racism, including in some donor circles, continues to pursue the misplaced notion that when blacks obtain large sized land through state support it is only a reflection of unproductive cronyism rather than a de-racialisation process. However, since historically whites obtained large sized land through the same procedures, which were aimed at commercialising farming, such notions are unfounded. These contradictions of access to land based on race, class and nationality cleavages thus a fundamental source of conflict over demands for land in a region, where the hegemonic neoliberal ideology in fact promotes agrarian capitalism with lip service paid to poverty reduction focused land reform.

#### **4.0 Land Reform Experiences in the SADC states**

##### **4.1 The demand for land reform**

The demand for land redistribution, in terms of both redressing historical and racially grounded inequities and of growing needs by both the black poor (rural and urban) and black elites, has been a consistent feature of Southern African politics and policymaking. Recently, most of these countries have been formulating land policies in response to both pressures for redistribution. These efforts are dominated by official perspectives that tend to emphasize the conversion of customary tenure systems to private freehold land tenure systems. Most official analyses of the land question have, however, tended to underestimate the nature and scale of demand for land redistribution, and to ignore the racial tensions that have persisted as a result of the unfinished land reform agenda.

The demand for land reform takes various forms and arises from various sources. These include formal and informal demands, legal and underground, or illegal, forms of demand for land redistribution, and demands which may be based upon the restitution of historic rights or contemporary demands based upon different needs. The different socio-political organizations which mediate such demands include civil society organizations, farmers' unions, political parties, War Veterans Associations, business representatives' associations, community-based organizations and traditional structures. Such structures are central in the evolution of the demand for land redistribution. The social content of these structures, however, is decidedly racially polarized in southern Africa, while the class composition of the "visible" policy actors has been elitist.

Since the decolonization of Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia, the debate on land reform has been mainly focused on market instruments of land transfer. Despite broad consensus among governments, the landless, landowners and the international community on the need for land reform in the sub-region, land reform remains limited. The onset of structural adjustment programmes, as well as multiparty "democratization" in southern Africa since the 1980s has tended to reinforce the liberal political and market dimensions of debate on the land questions. In the process of economic liberalisation, however, informal rural political demands for land, including land occupations and natural resource poaching have remained a critical source of advocacy for radical land reform, and, indeed, have succeeded in keeping land reform on the agenda. Over time, the salient land demands of the black middle classes and elites have tended to be advanced within civil society organizations and both the ruling and opposition parties, within a liberal political and human rights framework, which leaves the fundamental issues of economic restructuring and redistribution of resources to the market. Thus the predominantly urban-led civil society has not formally embraced the land reform agenda perhaps due to the enduring, middle class basis of its leadership, especially in the NGO movement.

#### **4.2 Limited Civil Society advocacy for land reform**

This has relegated rural social movements on land reform to informal politics while giving prominence to more organized, middle class civic groups and policy organizations that typically advocate market-based methods of land reform and, liberal civic and political rights issues. Yet the race question of land reform persistently dominates land reform struggles and debate because the land to be redistributed is mainly expected to come from land largely owned by whites, while the black potential beneficiaries compete for redistribution and affirmative action along class lines, but in the common name of healing the wounds of past grievances.

This raises contradictory tendencies in the ideologies and foci of social movements, between those who struggle for access to social (land and broader resource redistribution) rights and those focused on political (civic and human) rights. Thus most civil society organisations, which are generally one issue oriented in their advocacy, have tended to divide between those with structuralist (redistributionist) and proceduralist (governance) perspectives of social and economic change, even though in reality both issues need to be addressed in calibrated combination. Over the years however, the formal demand for radical or merely extensive land reform has tended to be submerged, especially in recent struggles for democratization, by the proceduralist thrust of civil society activism, much of which is ensconced within a neoliberal framework. This is reinforced by the fact that the balance of external aid, in Zimbabwe for example and elsewhere, has tilted in the last 5 years towards the support of governance activism. While such support is necessary, this trend has served to highlight mainly the issues of human rights and electoral transgressions by the state, to the detriment of the redress of structural and social rights issues. The exception here are food aid and HIV/AIDS and health, which defy the dichotomy and tend to be considered as basic humanitarian support.

Civil society discourses on land reform, therefore to the extent that these go beyond rule of law issues, have been focused on a critique of methods of land acquisition and allocation, without offering alternatives to land market acquisition and expropriation instruments, and without mobilizing the more deserving beneficiaries of land reform in support of extensive land reform in the face of resistance by landlords and other stakeholders. Because of the polarization of society on political party and ideological grounds in Zimbabwe for example, engaging the state in furtherance of land reform has been sacrificed for rejecting the administrative processes and legal rules applied in land reform, despite the legal challenges and resistance. Yet there is a *fait accompli* redistribution on the grounds of this trend of civil society land advocacy is not conjunctural or limited to the Zimbabwe experience.

Southern Africa, in general, has not, historically, had an organized civil society that has made radical demands for land reform or land redistribution. Under colonial rule, the land cause was

led by the liberation movements, and in the 1970s, was pursued by means of armed struggle. In the independence period, civil society land advocacy has been constrained by their predominantly middle class, social welfarist and neoliberal developmentalist values, which are in turn dependent on international aid. Meanwhile formal rural and urban community based organizations which seek land tend to be appendages of middle class driven intermediary civil society organizations while local land occupation movements have tended to be shunned by them. The rural operations of NGOs within a neoliberal framework have thus been characterized by demands for funds for small "development" projects aimed at a few selected beneficiaries, and have left a political and social vacuum in the leadership of the land reform agenda.

Advocacy for land reform in the region has increasingly been dominated by former liberation movements' associations, scattered traditional leaders and spirit mediums, special interest groups and other narrowly based structures rather than by broadly based civil society organisations, as we have seen in Zimbabwe and Namibia and South Africa. In the latter, a few left leaning NGO groups have supported the formation of the Landless People's Movement (LPM), although the contradictions of white middle class intellectual leadership of black people's landless structures, and the transclass and nationalist nature of the interests in land, have become evident in the slow maturation of a nation-wide radical land reform agenda.

Black indigenization or affirmative action lobbies, some with ethno-regional and gender foci, have on the other hand re-focused the land reform agenda, including the demand to "return of lost lands" more towards the de-racialization of the ownership base of commercial farmland, at times as a racial substitution formula for capitalist farming. So far however a dual approach of land redistribution to large black and poor peasants remains on the formal or official land reform agenda, even of resource allocations have tended to favour elites. However, large white farmer organizations, black technocrats and many NGOs, have tended to support the commercial farmer orientation of land redistribution in general, given their general tendency to believe in the inefficiency of small farmers. This has shifted policy discourses on the criteria for access to land, refocusing the redistribution vision from the "landless" and "insecure" towards the "capable," and presumed "efficient", indigenous agrarian capitalists, within the terms of the neoliberal global development paradigm.

This is exemplified for example, even in the similarity between the bi-focal land allocation policies of the opposed political parties in the case of the Zanu-PF led Government of Zimbabwe, and the MDC. The former talks about providing the needy (the landless and 'congested') and the 'capable', with land as defined by the A1 and A2 allocation schemes respectively, while the latter promises to give according to need and ability. Both do not formally define the proportionate class based tilt intended of the land allocations, although in Zimbabwe 35% of the land has been given so far to the capable elites who number less than 20,000 compared to 130,000 'needy' beneficiaries. This however suggest also that there is a common intra-elite bipartisan interest in a capitalist agrarian class project. These terms of the land reform agenda tend also to be dictated by the favourable disposition of the middle class and elite dominated political party and civil society to external (global) markets, buttressed by optimistic expectations of the promise of foreign investment. The latter it seems, tends to be expected to obviate the need for extensive redistributive land reform, and the belief that it could be substituted by other economic development benefits, including employment creation. But employment growth remains appallingly low and informalised and well below survival wages among the majority, while the rural remain marginalised.

### **4.3 Neoliberal land reform programme design**

In this context, the objectives and strategies for land redistribution adopted in the region vary. Land redistribution programmes have tended to emphasize rehabilitating and politically stabilizing countries torn by armed struggles. The generic objectives of land reform objectives in most southern African countries tend to include: to decongest overpopulated areas; to

increase the base of productive agriculture; to rehabilitate people displaced by war; to resettle squatters, the destitute, the landless; to promote equitable distribution of agricultural land; and to de-racialise commercial agriculture. These are mostly underpinned by the aim of addressing historical injustices of colonial land expropriation and to assert the right of access of 'indigenes'.

Land redistribution initiatives in the region have tended to be constrained by existing legal, institutional and constitutional frameworks, which have led to costly and slow processes of land acquisition and transfer of land rights to various beneficiaries. Land redistribution policies have tended to be influenced by market-oriented approaches to land acquisition and proscribed by the legal challenge by large land owners of the land expropriation mechanism, while the negotiated voluntary transfers of large amounts of land on a significant scale has not occurred. The experience with land redistribution in the SADC region has been in general based upon four inter-related tactical approaches.

The dominant approach used mainly in Zimbabwe and Namibia, before the implementation of compulsory land acquisition, is the "*state centred but market based*" approach to land transfers. Land was purchased by the state for redistribution following willing-seller-willing-buyer procedures. The private sector led land identification and supply through the market, and central government was a reactive buyer choosing land on offer. Governments identify the demand and match the private supply with beneficiaries selected by its officials. The land restitution approach followed in South Africa is essentially a state initiative in which government pays mostly market prices for land claims of individuals and communities in a limited land rights and time-bound framework. These programmes were slow in redistributing land, except during the early years in Zimbabwe when this was accompanied by extensive land occupations on abandoned white lands.

The use of *compulsory land acquisition by the state with compensation* for land and improvements has been pursued in the region since the 1990s, mainly in Zimbabwe. This approach involves direct intervention by government in the identification and acquisition of land at market prices, and the governments also tend to manage the resettlement process, although settler selection is generally more locally controlled. Zimbabwe has used a mass compulsory acquisition strategy and up to 7,000 farm properties have been gazetted for acquisition between 1992 and 2001. Litigation by landowners against compulsory acquisition has been a key constraint. In South Africa, a few cases of compulsory acquisition have recently evolved out of its land restitution programme, given the resistance of landowners to part with their land, while legislation was amended in 2003 to enable smoother land expropriation. The South African government argues that this approach will be used sparingly. In early 2004 the Namibia government initiated legal measures to expropriate 8 farms, three of which are intended to assuage urban landlessness, while some of the others are being expropriated in response to the eviction of farm workers by landlords from their farms.

A third approach to land redistribution that has been tried to a limited degree in both South Africa and Zimbabwe in the context of testing "alternative" approaches, is the *market assisted land reform* approach, espoused mainly by the World Bank. This land reform approach is meant to be led by the private sector, communities and NGO's, who identify land for transfer or beneficiaries to purchase land within a market framework. This framework of land acquisition seems to favour the large landowners' compensation requirements given the land price response to demand. However black communities in the sub-region resist paying for land, which they feel, was expropriated through conquest. Very little land has been redistributed through this approach so far, and this is mainly in South Africa. Efforts to follow this approach in Zimbabwe during 1998 and 1999 were aborted before they took off as the actors tended to fail to agree on financing the process, on the combined use of market and compulsory acquisition and on approaches to the identification of agreed amounts of land and beneficiaries for redistribution.

Finally there is the *community-led land self-provisioning* strategy, mainly in the form of land occupations or invasions by potential beneficiaries. This approach has tended to be either state facilitated and formalized, or repressed by the state at various points in time. As a formal

strategy to land redistribution, it has not been implemented on a grand scale in most of the countries except in Zimbabwe during the first four years after independence and in 2000 under different political and economic conditions, with different formal responses by the state in the two periods, and its repression during the mid-1980s to mid-1990s. In this approach land identification is led by communities through "squatting" and the government later purchases the land at market prices. This is what officially became the "Accelerated Resettlement Programme" during the early 1980s. During the fast track land reform period land occupations were encouraged extensively, and supported by the state through compulsory land acquisition, but purchases are staggered and exclude payments for land itself. In Namibia land is recently being compulsorily purchased to accommodate and formalise urban and farm worker community land demands, as well as for the rural poor. Occasional isolated land occupations have been reported in Malawi, Botswana and South Africa. The latter however experienced large urban land occupations between the 1980s and early 1990s, which are being formalized in lease ownership schemes. This is however not formal government policy in the SADC region and tends in fact to be officially discouraged in general.

These various approaches to land redistribution increasingly tend to be used in combination, although the market based approach has remained dominant. Recent donor support to land reform tends to favour the as yet untested market assisted approach to land reform, and is intended to provide an alternative to the pursuit of compulsory acquisition on a large scale or to pure willing-seller-willing-buyer approaches. However, most of the southern African countries facing demands for land reform may require strong state intervention in land markets given the legacy of inequitable social capital and the control of financial markets.

Given the general slow pace of land reform in the region, persistent popular demands for land redistribution in terms of both redressing historical and racially grounded inequities and in terms of the growing demands by both the black poor (rural and urban) and black elites for land to enhance their livelihoods and accumulation strategies respectively, has consistently resurfaced on the southern Africa political and land policy-agendas. Demand for land reform has tended to take various forms and to arise from various sources. These include formal and informal demands, legal and underground or illegal forms of demand for land redistribution, and demands which may be based upon the restitution of historic rights or contemporary demands based upon different land needs. Various types of organizations tend to mediate such land demands, using approaches that differ according to class, power and organizational capacities. Such organizations include civil society organizations, farmers unions, political parties, War Veterans Associations, business representative organizations, community-based organizations and traditional structures. These structures have tended to be central in influencing the evolution of the demand for land redistribution both in collaboration and in confrontation with the state.

The social and political mobilisation for land reform in southern Africa has heightened racial and class polarisation and contradictions around approaches to implementing land reform within a context of democratisation. For example in Zimbabwe, war veterans and landless peasants and the urban poor utilised land occupations, in collaboration with dominant elements in the state and ruling party to force the government to pursue official compulsory land acquisition in a fast track programme. In South Africa the demand for land has mainly been in the urban and peri-urban areas, given that 70 % of the population is urbanised. However, the demand for land in the rural areas is also growing and leading to polarisation at the political party level and between white farmers and blacks demanding access to the land of their ancestors, at the back of significant violence against land owners. The emergence in South Africa of a landless peoples movement demanding land redistribution for workers and peasants, with an explicit threat to boycott the ANC in elections, has had the effect (alongside the pressures from Zimbabwe's experiences) of bringing greater urgency to that government's land reform initiatives.

Official and formal studies tend to underestimate demand for land, especially in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia. Recent experiences of rural land occupations in Zimbabwe and in peri-urban South Africa and Namibia show the intensity of popular demand for land

redistribution, among a diverse range of beneficiaries such as the rural landless, former refugees, war veterans, the poor and former commercial farm workers, the urban poor and black elite. Thus while land reform, has been rural oriented and focused on promoting national food security and agricultural development, urban demand has also come to the fore. The cutting edge of demands for land reform at this stage thus rest on expanding the access and rights to land by the poor, the landless, and disadvantaged sections of society such as women and farm workers, and a nascent black agrarian capitalist class.

#### **4.4 The scale and nature of land redistribution**

The scale and social composition of those benefiting from land redistribution thus far has been narrow. Since independence in 1990, only about 30 000 black Namibians have been resettled. Of these 6 515 only have been resettled on commercial farms. The rest have been resettled in communal areas. Land reform in South Africa has gradually picked up pace, although less than 3% of the white held lands have been redistributed. By 1998, Zimbabwe had redistributed 3.6 million hectares to 70,000 families, during the first five years of independence. Between 2000 and 2004, about 130,000 families have been resettled on about 10 million hectares of land expropriated under the fast-track programme. However much of the acquired land is still being contested by land owners, and the provision of infrastructure and services to the resettled families has been minimalist, given the lack of state resources during the attendant economic downturn.

The demand for land redistribution increasingly includes the emerging black middle classes such as business executives, agricultural graduates, academics, including civil servants. The key issue now facing the region's land reform policies is how to balance the control and access to land, by existing large-scale landholders who underutilize their land, vis-à-vis the demands of new small and medium scale aspirant farmers. De-racialising commercial farming is a policy perspective that has been gaining importance in this context, and to a critical extent at the expense of the landless. In Zimbabwe land reform in the 1990's promoted emergent black large-scale farmers in what appeared less as a resettlement than a land reallocation programme intending to redress racial imbalances. Thus state land had been used to facilitate access to land by about 400 middle class blacks, while another 1,000 blacks used their own resources to purchase about 760,000 hectares. By 1999 black elites held about 11% of Zimbabwe's commercial farmlands. The fast track process then added 19,000 more new small to medium commercial scale farmers as discussed below. In South Africa and Namibia policies have also sought to create and empower black commercial farmers as an integral aspect of land reform.

In this context, land reform has tended to marginalize critical vulnerable and organized groups. For example special groups such as war veterans in Zimbabwe and elsewhere have received particular attention in policy but their prescribed quota of resettlement land has generally not been met. Whereas significant progress has begun to be seen in recognizing women's land rights in policy, in practice women's land rights have remained marginalized at law in most of the countries. Farm workers' land rights, especially to residential and farming land have tended to be marginalized in all the former settler territories. In Zimbabwe the fast track land reform programme accommodated less than 3% of the farm workers, while in Namibia and South Africa landlords continue to evict them at will.

## 5.0 The Zimbabwean Dissidence in land reform

### 5.1 Radicalisation of land redistribution strategy

The re-emergence of radical land reform in Zimbabwe since the mid-1990s, and the re-launching in 1997 of the resettlement programme in Zimbabwe, coincided with the demise of its structural adjustment programme, and marks the dramatic change in the dialectical political and economic relations between the peasantry and the state, vis-à-vis urban constituencies. Poor economic results and the failure of the state during and at the end of the economic structural adjustment programme (ESAP), in 1996 to raise consistent external financial support from the international institutions (IFIs) meant that the state would not live up to its development promise. Failure of the 16 year experiment with both corporatist and neo-liberal policy regimes, to contain the social development and accumulation expectations of various classes, led to significant cracks in political and economic institutions, and significant domestic political conflict within and outside the ruling party and the state, and the breakdown of international relations with Zimbabwe. The ruling party, facing the cumulative erosion of urban jobs and wages, associated de-industrialisation, and land demands by the poor, resuscitated its liberation promise in the context of competitive electoral politics and increased inter-class competition over diminishing domestic and external resources and opportunities. Land reform as potential instrument for restructuring of the economy its accumulation model, became the only integral and broadly legitimate resource that could be used for both trans-class accumulation and survival as part of the economic indigenisation thrust and contestations of nationalist ideology.

This complex process has been rather simplistically defined as a crisis of nationalism and liberation consensus. Such perspectives, however neglect the salient force of the racial and class dynamics of inter-elite competition for primitive accumulation in Zimbabwe, and the severe constraints posed by global capital through ESAP and ZIMPREST on national accumulation and development strategy, and their role in the current crisis of democratisation. Analyses based on short term electoral contests, using narrow historical analyses of the nature of the state and class relations, and the development trajectory which, focus on culturalist rather than structural approaches to the study of African nationalism and politics (e.g. Raftopolous) miss universal contradictions of peripheral capitalism and essentialise political practice in the periphery. As Bret has argued theories of the uniqueness of the African state, based on their perceived peculiar atavistic values and ascribed tendencies of thriving on disorder, are untenable.

Given that Zimbabwe's colonial legacy of conflicts over land and that its political economy is weak and inherently rural, periods of economic stress translate into intense electoral political competition, weighted on rural public goods, including land. This in turn, is marked by polarization over the use of radical or conservative redistributive tools, such as land transfer strategies. While, opposition parties in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia sought to depoliticize the land issue and reduce it to a technical and managerial aspect of good governance, the ruling party advanced a politically mobilized fast track land reform process, and then argued that the opposition parties sought to reverse the land reform momentum on behalf of the former colonial masters and landlords, whom they alleged had financed oppositional politics and civil society organisations.

In the face of aggressive demands by liberation-war movements' for radical land reform by 1998, the white farmers appear to have sought political solace through the opposition political parties and movements rather than the corporatist negotiations for resolution within the state in 1999. However, Zimbabwe's economic decline from the mid-1990s, coinciding with government attempts at mass compulsory land acquisition in 1997, had already created political rupture within the ruling party, increased labour strike action and the emergence of the strong opposition MDC party, provided the scope for white farmers for the first time to take an open political path to protect their interests. This took the form of support against the governments vote in the constitutional referendum proposals of 2000, and their alleged financing of the MDC. The MDC on the other hand, between 2000 and 2002, presented the governments' land reform strategy as an electoral gimmick, while failing to mobilize for viable



land reform alternatives in their electoral campaigns, and wrongly reducing the political significance of the social mobilizing effects of the land occupations on the political landscape.

Moreover an ideological convergence of thinking and interests across the Zanu PF and MDC party political divide appears to have taken hold on the basis of elite class interests in entry into large scale commercial farming, posing contradictory signals in the political coherence of both parties. Today both parties extol the virtues of commercial farming, albeit downsized farms which they seem to want enlarged for dubious reasons of "viability". In addition, they both pursue macro-economic and agricultural policies which reinforce the biases of resource allocation towards larger farmers. While the MDC argues for less state intervention through subsidies, they argue for the market to allocate resources such as credit and infrastructures, which under currently inequitable capital and skills markets would favour the larger farmers. The government of Zimbabwe on the other hand seeks to subsidize agricultural credit, most of which targets larger farmers in the post-fast track period.

The Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) of the Government of Zimbabwe was essentially the product of the failure by various parties, including the Government of Zimbabwe, the large landowners, civil society, land advocacy groups and the international development assistance community to come to agreed terms of a collaborative and internationally financed land reform. It changed in focus and approach over seven years from 1997, in line with the decline of the economy, deteriorating relations between the Government of Zimbabwe and international community, and with the escalating domestic confrontation between the Government of Zimbabwe and domestic political opposition forces led by the MDC. Increasing political differences among these parties led to the gradual radicalisation of the scale, pace and method of land acquisition by the state, which adopted the strategy of mass land acquisition, which began in 1997 when 1,471 farms were targeted for expropriation.

The critical domestic social forces that influenced this strategy were the interrelated processes of both a partial political rebellion led by war veterans and an alliance rupture between two factions within the ruling Zanu PF party, and the emergence of widespread labour unrest and strikes organised within the framework of an opposition-political-party-in-the-making, which emerged two years later as the MDC. The economic recession and its negative effects on wages and inflation, as well as the increasingly limited opportunities for and factional competition over accumulation among the indigenous classes, across their current political party affiliations, combined to generate new political aspirations and alliances, and new forms of advocacy for change in civil society and among political parties.

These pressures instigated direct demands for incoherent economic policy reforms, including land reform policy change, and demands for political and leadership change in the context of the perceived opportunity for succession in ZANU PF and the state presidency. But these domestic political processes also reflected the failure of the ESAP economic management to stabilise the economy or generate growth and development, while providing an excuse to all parties to neglect land reform for eight years since 1990. The realisation by the Government of Zimbabwe that the international community was not coming to its rescue at least with land reform, a crucial means of political capital that could be used to assuage political grievance and social deprivation within the electoral cycle (i.e. not just in the election campaign period), increasingly generated the spirit in the Government of Zimbabwe of 'going it alone', while defending, if not also provoking, the perceived domestic-international alliance against land reform and the ruling party. The Government of Zimbabwe land acquisition target of 5 million hectares, which had been considered too ambitious and unaffordable within a decade by many donors, was gradually lifted upwards to eleven million hectares by 2004.

Analyses of the FTLRP process in 2000 tend to conflate the land occupations, which occurred on 1,000 farm properties, hardly amounting to 2 million hectares, with the official Government of Zimbabwe's FTLRP land acquisition and land allocation programme. These were not one and the same thing, although the former were and became a critical instrument of legitimising the need for the latter, and for putting pressure on landowners to release land for its expropriation without legal contest. The initial land occupiers were estimated by the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) to be well below 20,000 families in 2000, and these

become the core of beneficiaries in the A1 scheme which had been designed in 1998. Most elements in the Government of Zimbabwe saw the formal FTLRP process as a means of addressing the needs of the land occupiers on the 800 farms which the Government of Zimbabwe listed in June 2000 for expropriation. The official land acquisition process was intended to bring the occupations into line with policy and land expropriation laws, and to contain the further propulsion of legally directed and motivated land occupations, by proposing the 4 year agenda to redistribute land for A1 beneficiaries, and from 2001 for the A2 commercial farming scheme.

There were some real fears that the occupations had gone out of control in terms of conflict on the ground and in terms of the scale of land occupied, and at any rate the internal political power struggles that they yielded, the community mobilisation contradictions encountered and occupier-landowner-farm worker conflicts that arose from them in various localities were issues that brought about intense dialogue and negotiation. This process was reflected in dialogues between war veterans and the Government of Zimbabwe, and within the context of the ruling party. Initial resolution of these difficulties was to some extent based on expectations that after the elections there would be a lowering of political conflict in general, and that formal redistribution of some of the farms would reduce the now entrenched land occupation tensions. If negotiations with the UK government (April 2000) and with the UNDP (June 2000) yielded fruit, it was thought, then the mild fast track would proceed as planned. But the political tensions did not recede by July 2000, instead there was escalation of the confrontation in the media campaigns of both parties, and in the 'strike' actions (stay-aways, farm operations shutdowns, etc) of the MDC and of landowners, and in Government of Zimbabwe initiatives to physically contain these. Indeed it appeared that the campaign for the 2002 presidential elections was launched by both the MDC and Zanu PF immediately after the parliamentary elections. Donor support was not promising either as the GoZ ignored the overtures for conditional support to land reform.

Sensing that a point of no return had been reached in the land reform dialogue with landowners and donors, and given the MDC electoral rhetoric of de-legitimising the fast track land reform process, the GoZ finally decided to fully go it alone with an up-scaled and even faster FTLRP, from August 2000. This was reflected in the attempt to expropriate 3,000 farms by the end of 2000, up to 5000 farms at the end of 2001 and over 6,000 farms by the end of 2002. Thus during August 2000 and mid 2003 there was hardly any dialogue between the Government of Zimbabwe and the International community, except for a UNDP land reform review mission in late 2001 which reported in early 2002 that was inspired by the Abuja Commonwealth agreement of September 2001. Other minor forms of bi-lateral dialogue over the delisting from the expropriation list of farms owned by foreign nationals of the key members of the international community, continued but without final agreement on the delisting until late 2003.

The radicalization of land expropriation began in earnest with the falter of compromise and negotiation in 2000. The UNDP report representing the views of most donors, was however not accepted by the Government of Zimbabwe in 2002, given its proposed slower track land transfer process, unclear funding processes, and the conditions for improved governance that it required. Thus seven years of dialogue over support to land reform had failed and the Government of Zimbabwe proceeded on its own to expropriate 90% of the LSCF land in staggered fashion, bedeviled by 'successful' landowner litigations, and accompanied by sporadic violence and forced evictions on the white lands.

In the end the Government of Zimbabwe approach of state-led mass land expropriations stimulated and accompanied by land occupations led by war veterans, mobilised various social classes in support of land redistribution, in a process phased over 5 years from 1997 and it took 3 years from 2000 before the Government of Zimbabwe could declare its completion.

## 5.2 Land redistribution outcomes and impacts

Between 1997 and 2003, shifts in Zimbabwe's policy on land reform, economic policy, and its relations with the international community, including external financial institutions, had led to dramatic economic decline. The economic crisis entails hyper-inflation, forex and commodity shortages, the erosion of incomes, increased food and social services insecurity, the halving of production in the real economic sector and reduced employment. Severe droughts between 2001 and 2002 worsened this situation. Economic policy became increasingly dirigiste from 2000, being based upon greater state control of prices and markets in various spheres (including interest rates), greater state control and rationing of forex, expansionary monetary policies and deficit financing. The economy became increasingly informalised and based upon parallel markets. The reduction of external international support for balance of payments, aid in general and commercial finance, exacerbated the economic crisis and political tensions.

The impacts of land reform on production were worsened by the two droughts and the cycle of wider economic decline. The latter reduced availability of forex for the import of farming inputs and inflation limited the access to these by smallholders and new settlers. Production went down by more than 60% for large scale commercial farming (LSCF) produced agricultural commodities (wheat, tobacco, soya beans, sunflower, dairy, beef), by an average of 15% for the LSCF tea, coffee and sugar, and horticulture, and by 50% for wildlife based tourism. Maize and small grains were drastically reduced by droughts and lack of inputs among peasants who mainly produce these, while cotton declined by 25%. Tourism declined by at least 60%. Thus, in the medium term the land reforms have had negative impacts on the livelihoods of the urban and rural poor.

The elites, particularly those with security and higher political leadership positions tended to receive most of the well endowed land allocations, made under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme, and some held excessive lands (multiple or oversized farms), thus crowding out potential poor beneficiaries (war veterans, farm workers, women). Up to 178 elites had secured more than one A2 or A1 and A2 land allocation, covering an area of 150,000 hectares, without counting about 50 other black multiple landowners who had already acquired more than one LSCF farm by 1999 or those leased farms from the Government of Zimbabwe indigenous commercial farmer scheme pre-dating the year 2000. The few remaining white farmers tend to have large farms, while most of the agro-industrial estate firms remained and currently hold more than one farm, with the majority of the latter being extensive land holdings. Moreover the available evidence suggests that a few blacks and whites have multiple landholdings on account of their having hunting licenses which give them effective control of extensive land areas in addition to the farms which they either bought or were allocated through the A2 scheme.

The rate of land allocation to former farm workers was also limited but varied in different parts of the country, ranging from 2% to 10% in various districts. In some provinces, a number of farms were specifically set aside for former farm worker resettlement, in others they were not. Women received the least proportion of resettlement land, even though their skills and labour tend to be critical to food production and rural livelihoods. This structural problem affects women former farm workers and their children, who continue to suffer poverty the most, suggesting that special efforts will be necessary to target women in a variety of humanitarian, new productive and re-training activities.

The emerging agrarian structure can be captured from the class structure, that may emerge on the basis of land tenure type and farm size per se, as well as the above information of the differential class based access to the two redistribution schemes. Expanded re-peasantisation has been the dominant phenomenon under fast-track land reform. The new petty-commodity producers amounting to about 1.3 million families account for 93.7 percent of total new farming establishments on 40.7 percent of the land acquired, and nearly all (97 percent) have taken up their plots. The large majority of them originate directly in the communal areas. This process has combined with a renewed 'merchant path' of urban professionals, petty-bourgeois, and bureaucrats, amounting to 19,260 small, middle, and large farmers, on 21

percent of the acquired land and with a lower take-up rate of about 66%. Urbanites also entered the A1 settlement scheme, at an estimated level of approximately 20 percent of the total. The land reform process downsized and retained (as opposed to fully expropriate) 1,323 white large-scale commercial farms, although by the end of 2003, about 25% of the 10 million hectares being acquired had not yet been allocated, due to land allocation negotiation impasse, bureaucratic bottlenecks and settler conflicts. The war veterans received less land than originally targeted 20% of the land and that women and farm workers were more severely prejudiced. This means that a large number of farm workers were stranded, given that not more than 100,000 remain employed in the combined commercial farm sector.

The external financial isolation of the Zimbabwean economy, combined with internal policy incoherence and ongoing repression, will continue to aggravate the living and working conditions of the urban and rural proletariat and semi-proletariat. We expect landlessness, unemployment, casual employment, poor working conditions and incomes, low peasant farm incomes, and food shortages to persist as critical economic and political issues in the medium term. Meanwhile, the new peasantry on A1 farms will itself maintain the dual semi-proletarian income strategy of petty-commodity production and wage labour, especially as differentiation proceeds apace.

Class differentiation among the peasantry is further driven *inter alia* by agro-ecological variation, off-farm incomes, and local political power, over and above access to differential land sizes. This differentiation is expected to continue, as is the operation of informal land markets under the aegis of traditional authority, given that the institution of chiefdom has not been challenged in the process of mobilization for land reform.

At present, middle and large capitalists are in political alliance under the banner of 'indigenisation', seeking to appropriate the remaining land and also to tailor the agricultural policy framework to their needs. Their vision is of a differentiated agricultural sector, in which middle/large capitalists specialise in the production of high-value commodities for export (tobacco and hybrid beef) and peasants in the production of grains for domestic consumption. The contradictions between small and middle/large farmers and between internal/external orientation will thus accentuate as they bid over public and private resources (infrastructure, water, credit) and policy instruments (interest rates policy, foreign exchange allocations). It is important finally to note that there is a significant process of reorganization of capital underway across the economic sectors, by which the emerging agrarian bourgeoisie is joining forces, economically and politically, with the nascent indigenous bourgeoisie in transport and retail, and most importantly with finance, which has seen the emergence of a dozen new indigenous institutions. Together, they recognize the significance of agricultural production and distribution to their own reproduction.

The nature of agro-industrial re-organisation and consolidation of the black capitalist class; differentiation within the peasantry, including the trajectories of rich (small capitalist) and poor (semi-proletarians) peasants; and the labour process which underpins both the above and which will continue to be characterized by functional dualism. These capital accumulation and agrarian differentiation trends may become more entrenched, the more that black capital, together with its downsized white counterpart, succeeds in re-entrenching a disarticulated pattern of accumulation.

## **6.0 Conclusions: Regional dimensions of radical land reform**

The effects of the Zimbabwean land reforms since 2000, as a dissident model of radical land reform, on the southern Africa region needs to be recognised at various levels, although there is a tendency by some to dwell on some aspects and a narrow discourses. The most commonly considered impact is the expectation that land occupations, as a popular strategy of redressing land grievances and hunger might replicate itself widely, especially in former settler states such as South Africa, Namibia and even Kenya. The formation of the Landless Peoples Movement of South Africa in 2001 is a significant sign but an uncertain prospect of

such a diffusion, in spite of recent land occupations there. These expectations seem premature given that political coalition for majority rule appears to be relatively intact, and that the economic growth prospects of South Africa are perceived to be promising, despite the quite high levels of unemployment, poverty and wealth inequalities facing that country.

The greatest incidence of land occupations in South Africa had already shown itself in the late 1980s during the apartheid struggle while sporadic land occupations had been observed in the late 1990's in Botswana, in Namibia and in Malawi. These incidences had coincided with the low profile and sporadic land occupations that Zimbabwe had experienced at that time. Given the strict evictions of land occupiers that the South African government had begun to pursue since majority rule, Lahiff could confidently claim that these would not spread widely there or elsewhere in the region, and that unlike Zimbabwe, SADC governments were even more intent on pursuing 'orderly' land reform.

There has been growing tendency among southern African governments to rapidly develop comprehensive National Land Policies to pre-empt the Zimbabwe scenario, as we have seen in Malawi, Swaziland and Lesotho in 2001, Botswana, Zambia and Angola in 2003. These national policies are yet to be implemented. The SADC is currently in the process of adopting a Regional Land Reform Technical Facility intended to mobilise aid and regional expertise to improve land policy formation processes.

There have also been efforts to improve land redistribution policy and strategy in South Africa and Namibia since 2001. In both these countries small scale attempts to utilise land expropriation laws were attempted with limited effect since then. In South Africa, streamlining bureaucratic procedures for land restitution has since increased the pace of land transfers, although the extent of the total effort (transferring 3% of white lands) is a far cry of the 30% targets originally set for 1994, and now set for 2015. Namibia has falteringly between 2001 and 2003 instituted a land tax, which together with the threat of land expropriation may be expected to release more land for redistribution. Both countries are introducing regulations which limit the purchase of land by foreigners, particularly absentee landlords. Donors are also increasing their funding of these two countries' land reforms.

In most of these countries the most salient land policy change however, and perhaps one with the greatest potential to re-concentrate landholdings, has been the legal provisions introduced to enable customary land tenures, under which the majority of people live, to lease out land to developers through long term leasehold and natural resources concession arrangements. These policy developments largely emulate the Mozambique and Botswana customary tenure arrangements and expand the land lease practices already found in state held land and public natural resources property regimes. These policy directions have received much international donor support.

The crucial question is whether these reforms address the growing land concentrations, mainly among white and black elites and foreign owners, including multinational firms, in the agriculture, tourism and urban real estate sectors. Land concentration among black elites, to the exclusion of the poor and 'remote' communities, generates further inter-elite conflict. These processes of land concentration are part of official policies aimed at developing agrarian capitalism and tourism, both based on export oriented land uses. Perhaps because land concentration in countries such as Zambia, Botswana, Mozambique and Malawi, has been less dramatically executed than has been the case in the recent Zimbabwe process, the concentration processes are largely uncommented upon in regional and international discourses on the land question.

The maintenance and indeed the expansion of unequal land distribution structures in the region, which are tied into evolving global markets, begs many questions about the consistency of international concerns with land reform and the emergence of a black agrarian elite in most countries, vis-à-vis the 'cronyism' leveled at Zimbabwe. To boot, one of the major impact of Zimbabwe's land expropriation has been the translocation of large scale white farmers from Zimbabwe to various countries in the region, including to Mozambique, Zambia, Tanzania and even as far as Uganda. This relocation of about 400 farmers appears to have

been facilitated by both domestic forces and international finance. The attraction of white farmer skills has been rewarded there with cheap large scale land leaseholds, subsidized operating and investment capital and cheap labour.

The further regional impact of both the white farmer relocations and production falls in Zimbabwe has been the incipience of a restructured regional agricultural production and trade pattern. To begin with the collateral damage effects of the drought during the land reform of Zimbabwe, has led to the importation of larger quantities of maize from South Africa, as well as of maize seed from the latter and Zambia. Zambia has been a beneficiary of both relocated Zimbabwean on-farm seed producers and seed companies. Many Zimbabwe farm products such as milk, poultry, tobacco, sugar and seeds have found themselves in parallel regional markets in search of higher prices in forex. Production of tobacco, horticulture and even maize by former Zimbabwe farmers has been on the increase in Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia. New agrarian enclaves have been diffused regionally.

Some of these impacts result more from the attendant debilities that face foreign currency starved peripheral economies rather than directly from radical land reform itself. But they also reflect the new patterns of government-international donor relations in general. In the cold war and apartheid era, development assistance was less proscribed by concerns over governance and human rights issues, which they consistently neglected to co-opt the development orientation. Then, aid might have been mobilised to ease the forex and import stress of Zimbabwe, rather than watch its continued economic collapse, and extend the humanitarian food aid provided to about 45% of the population, to 'stabilise' smallholder farming and reinforce incipient re-orientation towards western markets.

The current stand-off between the Government of Zimbabwe and the international community over domestic governance transgressions and the contradictions that Zimbabwe's land reform approach of mass land expropriation supported by land occupations have raised over the 'rule of law' reflects the regional dilemma of addressing the national question, distorted development and democratization of settler territories. Land reform policies in southern Africa seem to evolve through the interactive use of market and compulsory approaches to land acquisition for redistribution to both the landless and an emerging black agrarian bourgeoisie, under increasing pressures to respond to growing 'popular' demands for land. The radicalisation of the land reform process has closed opportunities for early economic recovery and poverty reduction with international assistance, even though alternative land reform models have been effective. The framework of future aid relation in the region with regard to land reform, democratization and 'sustainable development' need to be re-thought, if the post-apartheid 'transition' is to take root.

An important lesson to be learnt from the political independence settlements in the settler territories of the region is that by not sufficiently addressing the problem of inequitable land and natural resources ownership, the down stream entrenchment of unequal racial economic opportunities ensuing from such control, in economies facing slow employment growth, are likely to fuel agitation for radical land reform. These underlying problems are relevant to the non-settler states. Thus, land reform which redresses historical grievances, social justice and poverty is a crucial ingredient of reconciliation and development, and essential to the resolution of the national question and democratization processes, and regional integration.