

# Workshop on Community Perspectives on Land and Agrarian Reform (CPLAR) in South Africa

---

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/19012>

*Boston University*

# Community Perspectives on Land and Agrarian Reform in South Africa

Final Project Workshop

11-13 March 1994

Ridge Hotel, Johannesburg

*The people have no more tears to cry for land,*

*but it is a burning issue. . .*

— Knox Nyathi  
resident of Cork village, Gazankulu

An interdisciplinary research project funded by the MacArthur Foundation of Chicago, Illinois.

# Community Perspectives on Land and Agrarian Reform Project Executive Summaries

---

## Table of Contents

Paper Title	Page #
<i>Initial Results of the CPLAR Bantustan Socio-Economic Survey</i> by D. Weiner, O. Chimere-Dan and R. Levin . . . . .	1
<i>Comparative Perspectives on Land Reform in South Africa</i> by Tessa Marcus . . . . .	2
<i>Determinants of Land Reform</i> by Teddy Matsetela and Masiphula Mbongwa . . . . .	4
<i>Food Security in a Democratic South Africa</i> by Henry Bernstein . . . . .	5
<i>Food Insecurity: Views from Below</i> by Hilton Toolo . . . . .	6
<i>Rural Land Use</i> by Edward Makhanya . . . . .	7
<i>Soils and Irrigation Systems in the Hazyview Area of the Eastern Transvaal</i> by P. Woodhouse . . . . .	7
<i>Livestock Production and Agrarian Reform in South Africa</i> by Ben Cousins . . . . .	9
<i>The Chieftaincy, Land Allocation and Democracy</i> by Richard Levin and Sam Mkhabela . . . . .	11
<i>National Liberation and Village level Organisation and Resistance: The case of the Eastern Transvaal Lowveld</i> by Richard Levin and Ian Solomon . . . . .	12
<i>Forced Removals and Land Claims in the Eastern Transvaal</i> by Richard Levin and Ian Solomon . . . . .	13
<i>Land Claims in the Bushbuckridge/Graskop Area</i> by Themba Maluleke, Janet Small and Harald Winkler . . . . .	14
<i>Social Differentiation Amongst Poor Rural Women: A Case Study of a Coffee Plantation in Lebowa, South Africa</i> by Urmilla Bob . . . . .	15
<i>Demography</i> by O. Chimere-Dan . . . . .	16

<i>Social Differentiation in the Bantustans: Class, Gender and the Politics of Agrarian Transition</i>	
by Richard Levin, Ray Russon and Daniel Weiner .....	17
<i>Migrant Farm Workers in the Maize Sector</i>	
by Dave Husy .....	18
<i>Repression and Resistance: Labour Tenancy in South Eastern Transvaal</i>	
by Abie Dithlake .....	19
<i>The Economics of Small-holder Sugar Production in Natal</i>	
by E.M. Makhanya .....	20
<i>Class and Community - The Farmers Surveyed</i>	
by Tessa Marcus with Jonathan Levin .....	21
<i>Agricor and Rural Development in Bophuthatswana</i>	
by Johnson Kwame Klu .....	26
<i>Transforming Agricultural Institutions: A Theory and Methodology for Drafting the Required Legislation</i>	
by Ann Seidman and Robert B. Seidman .....	27

---

The authors wish to acknowledge the support of the MacArthur Foundation for funding the CPLAR project.

## *Initial Results of the CPLAR Bantustan Socio-Economic Survey*

by D. Weiner, O. Chimere-Dan and R. Levin

---

The bantustans are real places with real people. They are not abstract apartheid relics. Within the bantustans, there is much social and spatial variation in peoples' socio-economic condition as well as in their skills and desires. To date, however, knowledge about the bantustans remains patchy. Socio-economic information pertaining to the bantustans has historically been produced in two main forms: broad attempts at statistical generalization and local field-based surveys. The reliability of most generalized data is very poor (see DBSA statistics) while field surveys have been spatially concentrated in a few bantustans; mainly KwaZulu, Transkei, Ciskei and Bophuthatswana. Existing bantustan research also tends to be overly empirist and methodologically driven from the top down.

This information deficiency is an important legacy of apartheid that has received too little formal attention and recognition. In this transition period, policy-makers are generalizing about socio-economic conditions within the bantustans without properly acknowledging the weak empirical base associated with conceptualizations of the "rural periphery." A few studies often form the basis for establishing important assumptions that feed directly into policy proposals. It is also true that existing bantustan studies are not satisfactorily being incorporated into contemporary debates and that some of the information presently available is of high quality. The underutilization of existing research, and the numerous research gaps that still exist, are problems which threaten the viability of the entire rural restructuring process.

This working paper presents some initial results of the CPLAR bantustan socio-economic survey. The paper contributes to the process of information gathering and dissemination by: (1) presenting the survey results in the context of previous research that has been done, and (2) examining how empirical findings match with some of the broad generalizations and assumptions found in contemporary South Africa land and agrarian reform policy debates.

Because the data analysis is still ongoing at the time of the workshop, only a limited presentation of survey research findings is presented.

From June-August of 1993, 141 households in KwaZulu, 82 in Transkei, and 477 in Lebowa, Gazankulu and Kangwane were surveyed (see paper # 1 for site description). The survey instrument was revised after a pilot survey of 259 households in the same regions in 1992. A few CPLAR survey results are presented below in the context of broader issues and debates which are relevant to land and agrarian reform in South Africa. These include:

### **Migrant Labour and Income Flows**

Within the broad structures of a "migrant labour" economy, there are numerous forms of rural social organization that can presently be found in the bantustans. Existing farms, production relations and labour processes can not merely be assumed away as "legacies of apartheid" in need of transformation. They represent the material basis from which specific land and agrarian reform programs will be built. Available research clearly documents the dominance of off-farm income for rural bantustan households. CPLAR results concur: 73.2% of total sample income came from wages and pensions with the

highest off-farm income dependence in Transkei. However, 38.5% of the total sample (36.3-46.5%) have no members of the household that earned wage income. Only in the E. Transvaal was migrant labour participation high (67.1% of households have at least one migrant). Transkei and KwaZulu percentages were 20.7 and 29.7% respectively.

These data suggest a complex spatial pattern of wage labour dependence and a large group that are dependent on non-wage forms of income. It is no surprise, therefore, that petty commodity production is high, ranging from 20-50% of household involvement. The dominance of wages and pensions towards total income flows must not be used to understate (or ignore) the importance of alternative income earning strategies (selling crafts and vegetables, brickbuilding and construction, etc.).

### **What Do People Want?**

Understanding what people want and are capable of doing is a central but very complex question. Unfortunately, the information presently available is highly problematic and tends to underestimate demands for agricultural land. Survey data indicates many respondents were "willing to participate in agricultural land reform." This figure ranged from 78.0 in the eastern Transvaal to 33.0% in KwaZulu and 41.% in Transkei. Household respondents "prepared to move to another place for more farm land" ranged from 35.8% in KwaZulu to 39.2% in Transkei and 55.1% in the eastern Transvaal. Only 0.9% (E. Transvaal), 2.7% (Transkei) and 12.5% (KwaZulu) of households thought purchasing land was a "preferred" method of land allocation. Most respondents favoured "locally elected committees" and the "new government" were the preferred methods of land allocation. These figures need to be understood in the context of access to agricultural land ranging between 24.3% (E. Transvaal) to 42.6% (Transkei).

### ***Comparative Perspectives on Land Reform in South Africa*** by Tessa Marcus

---

The debate over land reform has advanced considerably in the past three years. In the process of this ideological struggle key political and social interests have been forced to substantiate and/or develop the positions they have held on various issues. They have fed off each other, sometimes converging, more often reinforcing their own arguments.

In this paper I have juxtaposed the positions of the African National Congress (ANC), the State, the Urban Foundation & Development Bank (U and DBSA) and the World Bank (prior to their 1993 Review) around fourteen issues which have emerged or which I consider important to understanding the struggle over land reform policy.

Aside from the extreme right, these organisations or institutions represent the social and political spectrum across which land reform is being contested. The ANC is the dominant organisation of the political opposition, the State articulates the interests of the conservative core within the current power bloc, the Urban Foundation and Development Bank of Southern Africa represent the progressive segment of large and/or corporate capital, and the World Bank, the institution of global capitalism.

The issues are not ordered in a hierarchy of importance, although some are more important than others. Some also overlap because the concerns they raise centre around the same problems. They are nevertheless looked at separately because they are often raised as such. Lastly, whilst it is important to understand where the moments of consensus and disagreement are on each issue, it is their programmatic combination which provides the most insight into the respective perspectives under examination.

A comparison of these four key perspectives on some major issues of land reform reveals both the degree of consensus and the major differences which remain outstanding.

In general, there is no agreement between the ANC and the state, either in terms of a general perspective or on any particular issue. This is largely because the state does not begin to fathom the need for a major land reform in the national interest. Its concerns remain sectional.

Abstracting issues from the overall programme and perspective, there appear to be significant moments of consensus between the ANC and World Bank particularly with regard to the scale, scope and general direction of the land reform process in South Africa.

There are, however, three main disagreements between the ANC and the World Bank. The first centres on their motivation for land reform. Whilst the World Bank is driven by the transnational interests of global capitalism, the ANC is directed by the national interest. These interests rarely converge. In practice, however, as the experiences of Asian, Latin American and African countries over the past half century show, sufficient international pressure can be brought to bear to force national governments to acquiesce or redefine their interests to fit in with the demands and expectations of global capitalism. In this process national governments are transformed from being buffers against the global capitalist system into becoming its agent.

Directly related is the difference in emphasis on who should benefit from land reform. Whilst the ANC wishes to cast its net as broadly as possible in order to address multiple class interests in the countryside, the World Bank focuses its land reform programme on a new farming class, which the Urban Foundation and DBSA agree with, albeit from a narrower and more limited understanding of the reform process.

The third disagreement is about the social institution which should lead the reform. Whereas the ANC stresses the important proactive role of the state, the World Bank is committed to what it terms "market lead reform". These different emphases are consistent with their different motivations for reform and who should benefit. The market is a mechanism which stimulates capitalist class formation. In this it operates proactively for the owning class and regressively for workers, petty commodity producers, the unemployed, the land- and propertyless. These interests can only be assisted by state action and directedness. At the heart of the dispute over market or state lead land reform is the cardinal question - who will benefit?

The Urban Foundation and DBSA hovers midway between the state and the World Bank, both in terms of its general approach and in terms of the way it addresses particular issues. It is drawn to the conservative certainties of the present establishment and, at the same time, realises that these are unsustainable even in the short term.

There is a general consensus on historical land rights and the need to address these by judicial process. Whilst this is an important advance, it is essential that it is not abstracted from a more generalised land reform programme. If this one issue is acted upon in isolation, both its own efficacy and the broader issues of land reform will be seriously endangered.

The debate on land reform is still a relatively open terrain of struggle, not simply over policy formulation but especially over its realisation.

### *Determinants of Land Reform*

by Teddy Matsetela and Masiphula Mbongwa

---

This brief commentary seeks to demonstrate that to the extent that community demands and aspirations is supposed to be considered in a future land reform programme, then the various experiences of these communities in different regions will greatly determine how they approach various land reform strategies.

It shows that where white settlement has been the longest and the dispossession of the indigenous population been almost complete - like in the Western Cape - the market based solutions of promoting access to land by hitherto deprived communities is understood and conditionally welcomed if the necessary state support accompanies it.

On the other hand, on the extreme side, where white settlement and African dispossession is of recent and particularly apartheid origin - there the demand for restitution is the strongest and the wounds inflicted by the process are still very fresh. Only compensation is considered second to outright and unconditional return of the land to original owners, most of whom are still alive.

In between these two extremes, is the majority of the black rural population and rural areas. The demand for restitution and redistribution of land is unmistakable. But there is a mixture of possible land reform options. A mixture of state and market based solutions are therefore the means by which demands and aspirations for land reform of the majority of communities is likely to become.



1. The conceptual framework of the paper brings together (a) the work of A K Sen on food security (food entitlements and a development strategy based on 'support-led security'), (b) the French approach of filières vivrières (food commodity chains) and their regulation, involving all the linkages and exchanges from farmer's field to consumer's plate (agricultural production - marketing - processing - distribution), and (c) an estimation of some strategic dimensions of the democratic process in South Africa as they bear on food security, including the conditions and prospects of 'structural reform'.
2. The first section of the paper outlines and specifies some key concepts and issues, distinguishing national and household/individual food security, food entitlement protection and promotion, development strategies based on 'support-led security' (Sen) and 'growth-mediated security' (eg the World Bank).
3. The second section applies this framework to South Africa at the end of the apartheid era in relation to the movement towards deregulation of agricultural markets, and to a very limited and belated consideration by government of entitlement protection and nutritional interventions in the bantustans. Both are located within the broader picture of government's commitment to white agriculture (and its reproduction after apartheid), its failure to regulate highly concentrated corporate capitals in the food industries, and its failure to address the structural bases of black poverty and food insecurity.
4. The third section is a critical evaluation of documents from the democratic movement on food security, centred on the ANC Policy Brief on Food Security and Food Policy of November 1993. First, it is argued that land reform, as comprehensive and democratically organised as possible, is central to the food security of the impoverished masses of the bantustans, that is, through entitlement promotion by providing (some of the) assets needed for livelihoods. Any disruption in aggregate food availability (national food security) that may occur can be compensated by a greater emphasis on human food staples than the ingredients of animal feeds (eg white vs yellow maize), and by a flexible import policy.

5. Other measures of entitlement promotion include employment creation (employment centred macroeconomic policies, public works programmes), and entitlement protection of the most food insecure groups through the extension and deepening of social security.
6. The (virtually) blanket rejection by the ANC Policy Brief of price and margin controls in food *filières* (marketing, processing, distribution), in favour of a more vigorous 'competition policy', is questioned.
7. The final section extends this discussion in terms of the conditions and needs of 'structural reform' in a post-apartheid but still capitalist South Africa. 'Structural reform' entails contesting the property rights, institutions and powers inherited from apartheid, by public action (on the part of civil society and the state) and 'accumulation from below'.
8. This perspective is illustrated in relation to land reform and the institutional changes necessary to facilitate its success, and to the stimulation of 'accumulation from below' (small-scale commodity production) in food marketing, processing and distribution. The latter also links with the suggestion of a leading role for trade unions in food price monitoring (possibly civics as well), and in the monitoring and regulation of big food industry companies. Finally, the possibility of experimenting with cooperative forms of (retail) food distribution is indicated.

***Food Insecurity: Views from Below***  
by Hilton Toolo

---

Food insecurity in the study area is a general phenomena, although with differential effects related to household status and intra household differentials.

The form of food insecurity is one that consists of deficiencies and insufficiencies in the quality and quantity of food. This has been translated into problems of malnutrition and associated health vulnerability and disorders.

The immediate causes of widespread food insecurity are associated with income insecurity; social insecurity; and low buying power and its effects upon food prices, which are generally high in South Africa, but made worse in the rural areas as a result of low buying power and the discount system.

However, the prime cause is the problem of the lack of land that was designed to force people to go and look for jobs. As a result of the world recession and the South African structural crises these jobs have become insecure and as such affecting their main source of income.

In view of this the recommendations made by the communities are primarily with regards land, its unequal distribution; ineffective usage and the lack of community power and control to alleviate the problem and respond effectively and speedily to that which they experience and know - the structured causes of food insecurity.

### *Rural Land Use*

by Edward Makhanya

---

The aim of this study was to examine the ways in which the inhabitants of the study areas used the available agricultural land resources. The data for land use analysis was gathered from by aerial photo-interpretation, Spot satellite image analysis, field surveys and interviews with the villagers. The objective of the exercise was to complement the socio-economic survey data gathered by other methods.

From the analysis of land use it became apparent that there different ecological as well as socio-economic conditions prevailing in the different areas, e.g. the settlement patterns, type of crops raised, different climatic conditions, landlessness, land degradation, etc. However, it can be stated that in general all the areas being studied are overpopulated and are producing below subsistence level.

### *Soils and Irrigation Systems in the Hazyview Area of the Eastern Transvaal*

by P. Woodhouse

---

This study reviews current and potential use of soil and water resources in the Hazyview area of the eastern Transvaal, in order to assess constraints and opportunities for agricultural and land reform in the area. The paper is based principally upon a study of secondary sources, supplemented by information obtained in interviews with farmers, and with informants working in various development agencies in the RSA and KaNgwane administration area.

Hazyview is situated in the "middleveld" near the confluence of the Sabie river with the Marite and the Noord-Sand. The area is characterised by sharp gradients of altitude, climate and land use. Mean annual rainfall falls from an estimated 2000mm on the Drakensberg escarpment, to the west of the study area, to 500-750mm on the lowveld, to the east.

The area of higher altitude at the western margin of the study area is occupied by large-scale commercial forestry, giving way on lower ground to irrigated fruit (mainly bananas and avocados) plantations and commercial arable farming of tobacco, grain, and vegetables on gentler slopes. Along the eastern side of the study area is the Kruger National Park, and sandwiched between this and the white commercial farming area to the west are a number of former bantustans: KaNgwane (Nsikazi district), Gazankulu (Mhala district), and Lebowa (Mapulaneng C district).

In relation to soils, there is evidence to support a broad argument that soil potential is lower in the black areas to the east of Hazyview than in the white commercial farming area to the west. However, soil conditions are very variable, and pockets of high-potential land can be found in predominantly low-potential areas. Drawing on a comparison of different classifications of soil suitability in the area, this study emphasises that such classifications depend on assumptions about levels of management and input and output levels which can be - and are - disputed. This is critical when considering the scope for land use by black farmers, whose management criteria for soil and water may diverge considerably from the conventions of white commercial farming.

In relation to water resources, the study draws on recent hydrological modelling of the Sabie river sub-catchment which indicates that a significant proportion (equivalent to 35 percent) of mean annual runoff is used by commercial forestry and irrigation which occupy the upper parts of the catchment, where rainfall is highest. While estimates of water consumption by forestry may have to be revised upwards in the light of current research, irrigation development by white commercial farmers in parts of the middleveld is so intensive that rainfall runoff from these areas is, for practical planning purposes, excluded from downstream use in the lowveld.

The remaining tributaries (Sabie, MacMac and Marite) have generally supplied adequate flow to meet lowveld water demand. However, hydrological modelling showed existing (1988) use to account for 75 percent of high assurance flow in the driest months, and in the 1992 drought abstraction for irrigation in the former bantustans was heavily restricted. This study finds, therefore, that water availability and distribution will act as a constraint on expansion of water use, particularly for lowveld irrigation, unless further storage is built, or unless runoff use in the middleveld is reorganised to allow more release to the lowveld.

From a consideration of the legal and institutional processes governing access to water resources, the study finds that the Water Act (1956) is largely ignored through avoidance of one of its main instruments - the Water Courts. However certain of its principles, notably that of riparian rights to water abstraction, are likely to be strongly defended because they will conserve existing preferential and preemptive patterns of water use. These leave black farmers strongly disadvantaged due to their position as downstream users, made worse by bantustan boundaries drawn and administered to exclude them from riparian rights on the main perennial watercourses.

An alternative under the Water Act is the proclamation of a government water board or control area, which would be authorised to allocate water beyond riparian rights. This would seem to be the trajectory of the KNP-led Sabie River Working Group, and has the merit of bringing water use in both black and white areas under a single authority.

Such a public authority could consider the following policies: Firstly, the importance of the water resource justifies investment in closer monitoring, for example through stream gauges on all the main tributaries. Secondly, the efficiency of water use in the middleveld may be encouraged by water tariffs inversely related to the flow of each tributary at its confluence with the Sabie. Compliance and internal policing of water use on each tributary could be the responsibility of irrigators' associations. Thirdly, construction of large-scale storage capacity should not be justified on agricultural grounds alone, as repayment charges are likely to be excessive for "beneficiary" black farmers. Finally, opportunities should be explored for the construction of small-scale storage on local streams (many of which are not perennial) in former bantustans with a view to encouraging local initiatives in irrigated agriculture.

### *Livestock Production and Agrarian Reform in South Africa* by Ben Cousins

---

1. The agro-ecological potential of land in South Africa is limited. Due to constraints of climate, soils, slope etc 87 percent of agricultural land is used for grazing of domestic livestock, and there is not a great deal of room for expansion of the area under crops. But debates on agrarian reform have mainly centred around crop production, and the restructuring of livestock production has not been explored much; this is a discussion that urgently needs to begin.

2. Livestock production off extensive rangeland is a potentially highly efficient form of land use, and one of the most effective ways of producing human livelihoods from natural resources. Livestock convert the energy, nitrogen, minerals and water stored in plants (primary producers) into forms which can be utilised by humans, and secondary production takes a number of different forms: live animals supply milk and blood for human consumption, wool and mohair, and draught power and manure as inputs to cropping. Animals which have died or been slaughtered supply meat, hides, and hoof, horn and bone meal. Mixed farming systems in which there are strong inter-relationships between the cropping and livestock components are a particularly effective ecological adaptation. Herds with access to sufficient food reproduce themselves, and produce a return on investment in the form of herd growth. Livestock are mobile and can move in search of water and forage from natural vegetation, making possible patterns of movement in concert with cyclic or episodic changes in primary production. The costs of extensive production off rangeland are low, particularly in non-commercial systems. Livestock are also an effective means of storing wealth, of serving as a measure of value in general, and of accumulating capital. They can thus play a major role in exchange transactions between production units.

In multi-purpose livestock production within household-based systems the total value of production can be much higher than in single-purpose commercial enterprises, when measured in terms of output per hectare. Declining availability of extensive rangeland has meant a trend towards high stocking rates, which make economic sense, and are doubly so if ecologically sustainable. Common property arrangements, as found in many African communal tenure regimes, facilitate flexible and "opportunistic" access to

resources which are variable over both space and time. There is thus a striking congruence between the ecological, economic and institutional features of these systems, which helps to account for their persistence over time despite fundamental shifts in the nature of the wider political economy.

3. Livestock (particularly cattle) constituted one of the primary forms of production in pre-colonial South Africa, was a branch of production ecologically well adapted to the contrasting conditions of different regions, and played a major role in the social relations which ensured the reproduction of the primary units of production. For this reason they were central to the class structure of these societies, and political rulers used their control over stock as a means of securing and maintaining wealth and power. The colonial period saw many profound shifts in the social relations of production and distribution. Livestock continued to perform many of the same roles as before (eg. as stores of wealth, or in marriage transactions) alongside their new functions - as a source of centrally important inputs to crop production, and as marketable commodities. In the period of capitalist industrialisation production in black rural areas declined as population-resource ratios became increasingly adverse, and livestock assumed a new function as "placeholders" in rural communities, as well as a retirement fund, for migrant workers.

4. A review of contemporary studies of livestock production in black rural areas reveals that herds continue to be multi-purpose in character, but which functions dominate depends on a number of factors. One influence is agro-ecological zone: livestock sales for cash may be more important in dry areas with poor cropping potential than elsewhere. Another is the economic profile of the region: using cattle for draught power is less important in areas where tractor services are available and affordable, and more important where they are not and where land availability makes cropping a viable option. A function of cattle important in most areas is milk production for home use. Livestock continue to be a useful form of savings (or "store of wealth") for migrant workers, but phases in the "developmental cycle" of the household must also be taken into account. Herd size and composition influence the decision to sell, but there is contrasting evidence from different regions on whether or not large herd owners have a greater propensity to sell animals for cash. Many studies report that sales are occasional, driven by an immediate need for cash for the household, and often of an "emergency" nature. Livestock ownership is highly skewed in most areas, is often correlated with higher levels of crop production and with higher levels of income from non-rural sources, and is thus one indicator of social differentiation. The role of stock is thus also influenced by the class identity of the owner. Transactions between households involving livestock (eg. bridewealth payments, loaning, and co-operative arrangements for ploughing) are widespread, but probably variable in importance. Prestige is still associated with high levels of ownership of stock in many rural areas, but again is this probably variable, and so cultural context may be another variable affecting livestock functions. Although not yet researched, the outcome of gender struggles over household decision making is probably another factor influencing the uses of livestock.

5. Based in part on the literature review, a conceptual model of livestock production and rural livelihoods is offered which outlines the range of possible functions that livestock can play, singly or (more usually) in combination with each other, and indicates sources of variation in the relative importance of these functions. The model indicates how the total value of livestock production should be calculated if it is to reflect the objectives of rural households.

6. Although most studies report high stocking rates in black rural areas and diagnose rangeland degradation, leading to concerns for the sustainability of production, empirical research on the condition and dynamics of communal rangelands in South Africa has been limited. Rigorous examinations of what evidence exists have come to the conclusion that these diagnoses are unfounded, and that little scientific justification exists for interventions aimed at reducing stock numbers. These conclusions are supported by recent research into the ecological dynamics of rangelands elsewhere in Africa and in other countries.

7. The implications of the analysis for land reform debates are that assisting rural producers gain wider access to livestock for a range of purposes needs to be an important part of both land redistribution programmes and reconstruction efforts in existing areas. What needs to be taken into account is the heterogeneity of the rural population, with a corresponding range of livestock functions to be catered for. Efficient land use is facilitated by communal tenure, but there is need within this for the development of effective regimes of common property management.

### *The Chieftaincy, Land Allocation and Democracy*

by Richard Levin and Sam Mkhabela

---

The search for new forms of land tenure features high on the list of policy priorities for the new South Africa. The system of land allocation through the chieftaincy in the bantustans, has been transformed and shaped by colonialism and apartheid, despite continued reference to land allocation being based on tradition and customary law. Throughout Africa, colonialism created and reinvented tradition in the interests of promoting indirect rule, and the question of land control was central to these reconstituted relations. The notion that the chief was a custodian or trustee of land is essentially a colonial creation, produced by the search for a system of customary land tenure. This notion is based on understandings of communalism which assume that pre-colonial society was egalitarian and founded on relations of reciprocity. The central role of the chief in land allocation is understood in the context of reciprocity. Unequal relations are viewed as being largely the product of the external interventions of capital and the colonial and apartheid state. In South Africa today, there is ambivalence surrounding the institution of the chieftaincy and its continued role in land allocation, as a consequence of existing myths and ambiguities surrounding the concepts of "traditional" communalism and reciprocity.

Control which chiefs exert over land allocation, constitutes the fundamental material basis of their power. In the eastern Transvaal today, there is widespread recognition of and a growing resentment at the way in which the chieftaincy through the bantustan tribal authority structures and its control over land allocation has become an increasingly corrupt and oppressive institution. Customary laws have been used to legitimise a regime of extra-economic coercion which has been deployed in the interests of developing accumulation strategies and facilitating the ongoing reproduction of the hegemony of the chieftaincy. Extra-economic coercion takes a variety of forms including forced labour, forced contributions and forced land alienation. This regime of labour

compulsion also has distinct political effects which have a crucial impact on democratic practice, while leading to processes of accumulation from above.

In the villages of the eastern Transvaal, residents have shown a clear preference for the establishment of more democratic mechanisms for land allocation. More specifically, within all villages investigated there was overwhelming support for the creation of democratically elected local committees and development committees which would preside over domains hitherto under the control of the chieftaincy. Eighty-five per cent of villagers surveyed were opposed to continued control by chiefs over land allocation. Despite some degree of ambivalence surrounding the chieftaincy, strong preferences have been expressed from below for a bottom up process of democratisation which would involve the restructuring of local government, land holding and use and an end to the current system of tribal levies. While we do not argue for the dismissal of popularly recognised cultural rights, institutions and ceremonies, we are arguing for the scrapping of invented traditions aimed at promoting and entrenching 'tribal' forms of oppression and discrimination and which suppress popular initiative and participation.

*National Liberation and Village level Organisation and Resistance: The case of the Eastern Transvaal Lowveld*

by Richard Levin and Ian Solomon

---

Despite the central role of land dispossession in the development of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa, the national liberation movement has devoted relatively little energy towards fostering land struggles. While organisation and resistance have existed throughout the country, in many localities, in a variety of forms and at different times, these have not been articulated within a national framework by the liberation movement under the aegis of the ANC. The UDF led struggles of the 1980s marked a turning point in the development of resistance in South Africa and also saw rural struggles being co-ordinated at a national level for the first time.

These processes impacted profoundly on the eastern Transvaal which saw the mushrooming of organisation and resistance in the latter half of the 1980s. In keeping with national developments, it was the youth and student-based organisations which emerged in the forefront of struggles, focusing on local issues and grievances. Successive states of emergency and detention of national-level UDF leaders saw an increasing reliance on local-level initiative and the encouragement of civic structures. This led to emergent forms of organisation from below, which were in a process of consolidation by the time the ANC was unbanned in 1990.

The unbanning of the ANC significantly transformed the political landscape in the eastern Transvaal after its unbanning. While it provided for a momentous boost in the confidence of the oppressed majority, it also recast emergent forms of organisation from below into centralised structures of organisation from above. The re-emergence of the ANC as an active open organisation also led to the consolidation and reorganisation of civic structures in the form of civic associations, but these emerging bodies, although largely supportive of the ANC have differed with the organisation over the role of the



chieftaincy. At the same time, neither the ANC nor the civics appear to have adequately addressed the land question in the eastern Transvaal since the unbanning. This neglect of land issues, however, mirrors the situation at a national level within the liberation movement.

The ANC has taken steps to build a structure of land commissions at national and regional level, but it is clear that these structures have not been established within localities. The question of participation and organisation from below has not been adequately addressed within the organisation which enjoys virtually unchallenged hegemony in the bantustans of the eastern Transvaal central lowveld. The ANC as a political organ of civil society is thus ideally placed to take forward a process of participatory policy formation, planning and development, but needs to help to cultivate the development of local democratic structures which will focus on land reform. Widespread support in the sub-region, for the establishment of locally elected democratic committees to oversee land allocation in place of the chieftaincy poses a challenge for the ANC which should play a central role in the evolution of these alternative structures.

### *Forced Removals and Land Claims in the Eastern Transvaal*

by Richard Levin and Ian Solomon

---

Forced removals were an integral part of apartheid land policy effecting brutal inequalities of resource distribution throughout the rural landscape. Millions of households lost access to productive agricultural land, grazing land, and residential land and were dumped or forced to settle on land with less surface water, less rainfall and generally inferior soils. In addition to the expropriation of water and soil resources, the process of dispossession, which continued with the creation of the bantustans, was characterized by severe political oppression, economic exploitation and control over labour power. As South Africa struggles to rebuild itself post-apartheid, it is crucial that a future land policy address the history of forced removals and the legacy of apartheid geography.

There have been several proposals for a land claims process as part of a land reform or rural restructuring program. Of course, any program will have to contend with the current constitution and the unfortunate entrenchment of existing property rights. Reform programs must also understand the limited nature of rural organization and resistance at this present juncture. The problem is that many of the current proposals rely on major assumptions about removals and the victims that will constrain the process, frustrate land claiming communities and fail to meet their needs for land restoration and restructuring of agrarian social relations.

The assumptions are that a relatively small number of easily identifiable "victims" will put forth unitary claims for easily restorable land to be dealt with through a judicial process separately from a rural restructuring program. In reality, as data from the eastern Transvaal subregion shows, there are a large number of complex and competing claims. In a broad survey of households in the region, approximately 25% of the households have lost access to land. Furthermore, as TRAC demonstrates (see working paper #8), these households often have competing and conflicting claims to very large pieces of land. Most importantly, the distinction of "victim" is highly problematic.

In the World Bank proposal for a Rural Restructuring Programme, for example, restitution and redistribution are proposed as two legitimate means of land reform, the first to deal with the victims of apartheid and forced removals and the second to encourage participation in a market based program. However, "in cases where evidence is inadequate to demonstrate a birthright to a particular portion of an existing farm, but the claimants want access to land," the World Bank adds the claims will "be directed to the redistribution process, where they should be given priority." Turned from victims to clients, the land claiming communities lose their right to restitution and are expected to pay for the restoration of their land.

This happens because forced removals are seen as a distinct number of cases that were largely incidental to apartheid rather than fundamental to the design and geography of apartheid South Africa. The real victims of apartheid's rural strategy do not distinguish their types of claims the way the World Bank, the Committee on Land Allocation, and even the ANC have done. They hope to restore the land through democratic processes and participation that restructure apartheid geography as a whole.

What is called for, therefore, is a participatory process that does not focus on claims as separate and incidental allowing the World Bank's slide (or push) from victim to client (patron), but rather a thorough understanding of the significance of land to people in the rural areas and their need for comprehensive land reform within and outside the bantustans.

### *Land Claims in the Bushbuckridge/Graskop Area*

by Themba Maluleke, Janet Small and Harald Winkler

---

During 1992, a number of communities from the Bushbuckridge and Graskop areas approached the Transvaal Rural Action Committee (TRAC) for assistance with land claims. Initial investigations carried out by TRAC fieldworkers soon revealed that the dynamics around land claims in this region are quite different from those we had come to know in other parts of the Transvaal.

The claims which TRAC and the Legal Resource Centre (LRC) have investigated in this area so far are from the Mogane, Mashilane, Setlhare, Moletele and Mathibela communities. The claims have a number of features in common. Firstly, the claims tend to be very large, covering most of the land between Hoedspruit in the North, Sabie in the South, Ohrigstad in the West and the Kruger Park in the East. Secondly, the land claimed is *not unoccupied*, but in some instances occupied by other black communities. Thirdly, these are claims by largely Pulana communities (and no Shangaan-speaking communities at this time) which points to the potential for violent confrontation between communities given the history of ethnic conflict in the area.

Given these realities and the fact that there are many interest groups involved in these land claims, it is important to advance a land reform policy that would deal with (1) specific claims where a community can agree to claim a particular farm or farms from the government, (2) conflicting claims where two or more communities are claiming the same land, and (3) claims in the context of a district land reform and development plan

considering that, in some instances, the desire is clearly for additional land or development services rather than ancestral land.

With an acceptance of the right to claim land having been entrenched in the new interim constitution, there will be legislation composed around the terms and parameters of a land claims mechanism. The context of Bushbuckridge offers an insight into the potential complexities that must be faced. Land claims in this area mean something very different to land claims in "black spots" in the Western Transvaal.

Part of our purpose in writing this paper is to alert policy makers and land activists of the potential difficulties that could arise. While the regional dynamics of the North Eastern Transvaal are specific to the historical and social factors found there, similar dynamics exist in other homeland areas of South Africa.

*Social Differentiation Amongst Poor Rural Women: A Case Study of a Coffee Plantation in Lebowa, South Africa*

by Urmilla Bob

---

South Africa's rural areas are home to the impoverished black masses. The successful transition to a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic South Africa will require significant changes in current patterns of land use and control. Limited knowledge and understanding of rural communities exists at present. This has led to the misconception of bantustans as homogenous regions that are reserve armies of cheap labour. Information on gender issues, the structure of agricultural production, survival strategies and issues of social production and reproduction is urgently required in these areas. A thorough understanding of rural communities and of local grassroots research institutions is crucial for the formulation of solutions that are developed for the people and by the people.

This paper explores the relationship between class, gender and capital in rural South Africa; particularly the intersection of poor rural households and plantation agriculture in Mashia, Lebowa. More specifically, it focuses on the impact that this articulation has on the socio-economic relations and positions amongst poor rural women.

In South Africa, significant social differentiation exists within the black, female agricultural labour force which makes the homogenizing of a particular class problematic (Bernstein, 1988). The basic tenet of the concept of social differentiation is that a particular class or group is not homogenous. They are characterized by significant differences that can be related to a number of factors (women's age, family and community status, access to labour and resources, income generating ability, etc.). Thus the existence or prevalence of socio-economic differences among rural poor women and the persistence of these differences have serious implications for the production and reproduction of the household, community and plantation agriculture. This form of social differentiation is clearly discernable among rural women due to the persistence of patriarchy steeped in tradition and the domination of plantation agriculture on local labour processes. The importance of patriarchy is demonstrated by Folbre (1986) who illustrates that patriarchal subordination of women makes them susceptible to two

different kinds of exploitation that reinforce each other: the exploitation of their labour and the exploitation of their reproductive abilities. Focusing on social differentiation among rural women does not deny that most women are oppressed but that women experience oppression differently and different socio-economic positions shape different social realities and identities for women.

### *Demography*

by O. Chimere-Dan

---

The basic demographic characteristics of the study area reflect a young and expanding population. Over 4800 individuals were enumerated in the 700 households included in the survey.

The key demographic results are summarized in the following table.

**Table: Summary of Demographic Results, 1993**

---

Total population listed in the household survey	4 799
% of the population male	2 212
% of the population female	2 587
% of the population aged 0-4 yrs	12.3
% of the population aged 5-14 yrs	27.4
% of the population aged 15-64 yrs	55.2
% of the population aged 65 yrs or older	5.1
% of females in the reproductive age (15-49)	49.2
Average household size	6.9
Sex ration (Male/Female)	85.5
Dependency ration (working/non-working age)	72.0
Median age of the population (yrs)	19
Mean number of children ever born by women aged 45-49 (P)	6.4
Completed fertility of a synthetic cohort aged 45-49 (F)	4.9

---

The micro socioeconomic correlates of these patterns are examined in detail in the paper.

*Social Differentiation in the Bantustans: Class, Gender and the Politics of Agrarian Transition*

by Richard Levin, Ray Russon and Daniel Weiner

---

Despite the existence of some literature on social differentiation in the bantustans, debates on agrarian transition and land reform in South Africa are taking place in the absence of a rigorous analysis of class and gender differences. South African rural society is not self contained, and the processes of transition need to be located within an understanding of the broader context of social transformation taking place in the country. Liberal neo-classical populist analysis has tended to homogenise black rural areas, seeing them and their inhabitants as the victims of a rapacious system of racial oppression, which has distorted the market mechanism and prevented the emergence of communities of egalitarian, utilitarian small scale producers, who, all things being equal, would compete with and often outsmart inefficient large-scale producers. Radical analysts on the other hand, have understood rural areas in the context of both an oppressive racist state and the development of capitalism. These have led to the stifling and destruction of an emerging vibrant peasantry, and its replacement by a more or less homogenous category of semi-proletarians and proletarians, whose social reproduction is secured through wage earnings and the remnants of non-capitalist forms of subsistence production. The common theme which runs through both these analyses is that of the homogenisation of South Africa's black rural population.

South African policy makers on both the right and the left emphasize the urgent need for a programme of Rural Development and land reform. An emerging consensus is evident in the common discourse which has surfaced through initiatives such as the World Bank's Rural Restructuring programme (RRP). Evidence of this common discourse can be found in a growing consensus around the need for the development of a new strategy which carries with it numerous "equity" objectives including the reduction of income and employment disparities, the promotion of equal access to public goods and services, the alleviation of rural poverty and the goal of identifying target groups, although these are seldom clearly specified. The result is a search for technical and institutional-based solutions, but little thought has been given to the vast array of evidence from other Third World countries which has demonstrated how these strategies have benefitted particular socio-economic groups. We believe that class analysis remains relevant in the 1990s. Locally contingent struggles over power and resources as well as the role of culture are bounded and influenced by the social structures of production and reproduction. Apartheid tended to inhibit processes of social differentiation in the bantustans, but post-apartheid transformation is likely to rapidly open up new social spaces for accumulation.

The vast international literature on social differentiation amongst the peasantry has tended to focus on the impact of commoditisation on relations of production between households. While such a focus is critical to an understanding of socio-economic class differences and the process of differentiation, it often treats the household itself as a "black box", and fails to elucidate the impact of commoditisation and socio-economic differentiation on gender relations. This can be best achieved through analysing the effects these processes have on household structure, composition and divisions of labour by sex and age. An analysis of differentiation by class and gender is so crucial in rural South Africa, because the processes of commoditisation and capitalist development did

not only bring about transformations in socio-economic relations, but in gender relations as well.

If there is a real intersection between class and gender, strategies targeting unequal gender relations must not be divorced from, but must rather be integral to broader strategies targeted at ending class inequalities. These will need to confront the social structures of poverty and inequality, rather than their phenomenal manifestations of wealth inequalities and income disparities. A key starting point, of course is to correctly understand the central dimensions of female oppression and exploitation. There has been a tendency in South Africa to focus primarily on the relationship between women and capital. The bantustans and the gender relations contained within them have been seen as functional for capitalist accumulation. This fails to adequately explain unequal relations between men and women in the household, and thus overlooks some essential aspects of female oppression. An analysis of gender relations must embrace relations between women and capital; gender relations in the household; as well as political forms of oppression experienced by women in their relation to various tiers of the state, such as the absence of land rights under customary law and its reproduction through the local state under the tribal authority.

The following classes have been identified:

1. **Petty Bourgeoisie**
2. **Petty Capitalist**
3. **Worker peasants**
4. **Allotment-holding wage workers**
5. **Rural proletariat**

It is important to emphasize that these categories be seen as flexible relational entities which are internally stratified on the basis of specific characteristics which would include levels of income and wealth. Socio-economic classes which constitute these categories are produced by social relations entailing processes of production, appropriation and distribution of surplus as well as social relations of land ownership and access and engagement in wage labour. Socio-economic classes refer to the structural position which agents occupy within the social structure of production, and not to perceived social identity. They become classes in the true sense when constituted as such through political practice. National liberation political practice and discourse has thus far not constituted rural people into classes, and there has been no attempt thus far to understand the relationship between policy and social class, or that particular policies are likely to select certain class and gender "beneficiaries" for themselves.

### ***Migrant Farm Workers in the Maize Sector*** by Dave Husy

---

This paper arose from a farm migrancy research project undertaken by the Farmworkers Research & Resource Project (FRRP) in the Taung district of Bophuthatswana from 1989 to the present. The primary task of this research was to gather information on

migrant labour to the farms of the Transvaal and Orange Free State to attempt to facilitate the organisation of these workers.

The data collected relied on four main sources:

- 1) Recruitment records of migrant farm workers from the Baphuhucwana Tribal Authority office in Taung. These records are a summary of the contract of employment offered by the farmer;
- 2) Interviews with migrant workers;
- 3) Interviews with farmers;
- 4) Information and reflections from the FRRP fieldworker involved in the project, Abie Dithake, and various union organisers and interested parties.

The paper analyses the data collected in the context of the structural powerlessness of migrant workers, and the compounding of this powerlessness by the structure of the agricultural economy - in this case the maize farming industry. Reference is made to similar international situations, particularly the Californian agricultural economy.

The analysis of the data provides an insight to the practical problems and obstacles faced by migrant farm workers, as well as an overview of the incomes derived from this employment and the levels of recruitment of workers to maize farms. In addition, the position of women as a marginalised group within a politically disempowered group is briefly examined.

The data and the analysis provide insight to a fundamentally disempowered community of people. Their demands, however, are clear and direct. The list of these demands include immediate work related issues such as transport, working conditions and wages, but they also deal with fundamental long term issues such as the need for community development projects, land reform, and a change in the role of local authority structures.

***Repression and Resistance: Labour Tenancy in South Eastern Transvaal***  
by Abie Dithake

---

During 1992, the FRRP undertook a pilot project titled "Community Investigation". The project sought to investigate labour tenants' perceptions of developments in South Africa and their expectations for the future. Issues investigated included: land, politics, struggles, negotiations, social conditions and farming trends in general. The pilot project, and my own research, was based in the south-eastern Transvaal, an area where labour tenancy is the dominant relation of production.

This paper reflects work in progress, and does not constitute a comprehensive survey of repression and resistance characteristic of political relations in the area, in part because of the clearer forms of repression and resistance now emerging.

In contextualising the present conflict, I have given a brief summary of the evolution of the labour tenancy system and how it led to the present problems in the south-eastern Transvaal. The present conflict between farmers and labour tenants emerges because of the insecurity of land ownership amongst farmers. In attempting to assert their ownership rights, they resort to evicting labour tenants from the lands that they have occupied for generations. Labour tenants, on the other hand, believe that they have a right to the land based on occupancy. White farmers, they argue, have no right to evict them, and as a result they refuse to leave, even when farmers have obtained court orders.

Farmers respond by using more repressive measures to evict tenants. These include assaults, murder, impounding of cattle, and the enlisting of police and magistrate support. In the course of this struggle, labour tenants' resistance has been increasing from dispersed actions to more conscious and organized forms of resistance. The present national political developments demand a solution between farmers and labour tenants as land reform becomes the most serious issue in the rural south-eastern Transvaal.

*The Economics of Small-holder Sugar Production in Natal*  
by E.M. Makhanya

---

Sugar cane has been grown successfully in the study area since the second half of the nineteenth century, and there is to date no evidence of environmental degradation resulting from its cultivation. It can thus be stated that, from an ecological point of view, sugar cane is a sustainable crop at Nkanyisweni.

Since the 1960's sugar cane production was promoted among the peasants, and the stated objectives was that it would increase the intake of sugar cane at company owned mills as well as provide the smallholder growers with an increase in cash income which, it was hoped, would improve their standard of living. Apart from other production factors, the smallholders' decision in the production of cane is thus influenced by that of a number of interested institutions.

The aim of this study was to examine the profitability of smallholder cane growing from the small-holders' point of view. It was carried out by the complementary use of aerial photo interpretation, the analysis of SPOT satellite imagery, field work and interviews.

The results indicate that, instead of improving their standard of living, the growing of sugar cane causes indebtedness to many smallholders due to the small size of their landholdings. It is therefore recommended that landholders with less than 8 ha be not encouraged to engage in cane production. Other more appropriate crops can be grown as substitutes for cane.



I. The principle aim of this survey is to investigate class and community amongst farmers - how to read these notions and how they are construed by farmers. Whilst property relations are "the organising principle of social relations" (James 1993), how class is constructed around them is not self evident and needs to be explored. Understanding what makes farmers a class and how they assemble their class relations is essential to understanding the locus of power in the countryside and how it is exercised. In this paper class is constructed out of three groups of relations - ownership, occupation and income; production and management; and social milieu and organisational networks.

II. In a context of class, the notion of community acquires specific and different meanings - physically as an area over which a particular class cluster claims authoritative domain or socially as a group of people which is bounded by common attributes that are attributed to colour but within which there may be different social classes. The project undertook to explore these problems bearing in mind the difficulties of accessing farmers, not least of all because of their class, the country's agrarian history and the present political climate.

III. Fifty six farmers participated in depth interviews between 1992 and 1993 in the Natal Midlands - Lidgetton and farming districts surrounding Pietermaritzburg (43%)- and in the Eastern Transvaal - Hazeyview (16%), Levubu (14%), Dendron (12,5%) and Malelane-Komatipoort (14%).

#### **General Sample Characteristics**

IV. In general, the farmers surveyed were rooted in the countryside. Most had been born on farms, at least 2/3 were farming in the region where they were born, and most had been on their present enterprise for between one and four decades. The majority were full-time family farmers. They actively worked, producing a variety of products for the market from enterprises which were physically medium to small scale. They lived in classic nuclear households where their wives, in particular, were involved to varying degrees in administration as well as other aspects of commercial farming.

V. Farming was the sole occupation of more than 60% of the respondents, and the principal pressure to acquire or develop other businesses was financial. A fairly large minority accrued additional resources from income earned by spouses in waged work off the farms. Whilst it is clear that external resources contribute to the well being of medium and small scale family farming households, the significance of this contribution needs further investigation.

VI. They were fairly well educated. Nearly 70% had had tertiary education. However, only 20% of the farmers had specialised post-school training in the non-social scientific aspects of agriculture. Most felt that they had a negative public image which did not accurately reflect their reality. In all this, the sample reflected fairly typical medium to small scale capitalist family farm enterprises in South Africa.

VII. From the Multivariate analyses there is a large amount of variation between farmers, but this variation is related to area. This might reflect inherent differences between the areas or more likely could reflect different patterns of non-response. We should therefore be cautious in noting area differences.

#### Constructing Class - Ownership, Occupation, Income

VIII. The survey reveals a class of propertied farmers who own and work fairly substantial tracts of farm land with, at the time of the study, very limited direct aid from the state. For the most part they are successful, both in terms of turnover as well as their capacity to generate surplus income. What is most startling about the fact that 30% report making a loss is that on this scale of production under present conditions farmers need average annual turnovers of over R1 million rands to break even and/ or become profitable.

IX. Farming was a positive choice option, the "preferred occupation" of 85% of the sample, but it was also a decision significantly influenced by a family farming background. Moreover, the physical inheritance of being from a propertied farming background played a important role in getting farmers started. Of equal weight in providing start up capital was the role of bank credit, and together both served as conduits for keeping successive generations of farmers on the land.

X. These farmers had an overriding belief and commitment to private property and it was viewed as unquestionably positive, even if farmers were not succeeding. They were conscious of a corporate presence which they distinguished from themselves and about which feelings were divided. When the system was working for them, farmers tended to specify and personalise achievements, taking responsibility for them. By contrast, when things were going badly they distanced themselves from shortcomings and failings, making them abstract and general - the fault of the state or nature, but never the type of farming system and their location within it.

#### Production and Management

XI. Exploring the way these farmers organise production yields a picture which is overwhelmingly contradictory. They are caught in the intricacies of a system which is both modern and backward and which they continue to perpetuate. This is absolutely evident when their levels of mechanisation and their perspectives on constraints and prospects is juxtaposed against their overall approach to labour and management.

XII. The majority of farmers appear to have completed most of their capital investment and have been mechanised for some time. This is reflected, not least of all by their understanding of the costs of mechanisation - both in terms of capital needs to maintain, replace or expand existing equipment and in terms of increased unemployment.

XIII. At the level of output and profit enhancement, most of the farmers seem to approach the issues of marketing and production expansion in a fairly rational manner, taking into consideration the implications of risks and pursuing technical opportunities which would make them more viable. They seek advice from a range of specialists, and many draw on the shared experiences of other farmers in organised discussion groups.

XIV. From the numbers of workers they employ it is clear that their commitment to mechanisation has not been one of absolute labour replacement. They are still dependent on a reduced but fairly large labour force whom they continue to squeeze. They rely extensively on a core, household based work force that more often than not resides on the farm, and which is made up of both men and women. The fact that farmers' responses are ambiguous about the exact composition of this work force, in terms of gender and the division between full and part-time is itself indicative of the way they constitute and use the workforce. They often rely on farm workers household labour and select workers essentially for their capacity to do physically onerous menial work.

XV. They pay workers wages which they know to be extremely low, which deliberately differentiates between women and men and which inadequately compensates for skill, experience and responsibility. Wage levels keep workers and their households in the depths of poverty and farmers have made no effort to address the issue voluntarily. They are, for the most part, opposed to legislation which will introduce norms for the sector.

XVI. The absence of a business background or training in business administration and their general disregard for the value of business experience is clear from the way many of the farmers approach management. Despite many changes, not least of all at the technical level of production, a significant minority had made no change at any level of management. For those who had introduced some changes, fewer than 10% reorganised their production process as a whole. The rest did so in an ad hoc and piecemeal manner.

XVII. Most pinned their innovations to the mass of changes in labour relations and conditions - changes which the survey reveals to be inadequate, arbitrary and even inappropriate. Farmers revealed very informal and inexact recruiting mechanisms dependent, in large measure, on the brokerage of key existing workers and intermediaries. They paid very little attention to education, and whilst many believed that, in principal, training helped, few were concerned about the narrowness of the training on offer.

XVIII. The overwhelming majority did not calculate management time. From the organisation of their working day it is possible to infer two opposite managerial tendencies. On the one hand, there were those who had a fairly sophisticated management style and who appeared to delegate responsibility although they tended to under-value it - both in terms of pay and in terms of expected workloads. On the other hand, there were those spent a large part of their day supervising or working beside labourers which suggests, amongst other things, low levels of delegation, weak planning, low levels of worker training, and poor labour incentives. That the principal way some farmers got workers to work was through a regime of close personal supervision harks back to the backward conditions of the recent past where productivity was squeezed out of workers largely through compulsion.

XIX. Relations with workers were pervasively paternalistic. Some were trying, however, to shed the obligations of paternalism whilst retaining the controls. Thus, they encouraged the creation of workers committees rather than independent union organisation and they expected these committees to attend to their employees health and welfare, transferring their obligations back onto the workers.

#### **Constructing Class - Social Milieu and Organisational Networks**

XX. The occupational milieu of these farmers' families is strongly associated with professional (both agricultural and non-agricultural) and business people. Closely complementary are their own direct circles of association. Farmers mix with other farmers, professionals and business people, a significant proportion of whom live locally and know each other.

XXI. At the level of social organisation farmers are principally organised by their occupation. Most are members of agricultural unions (AUs) and farmers' associations (FAs) - with many regarding the AUs as nationally influential and the FAs as locally influential. A majority are also members of production associations connected to the crops they produce. In addition, farmers belong to a range of religious organisations, and at least half were members of recreational clubs.

XXII. In terms of their presence in civilian positions of responsibility at the local level, under half held some form of office, a significant minority being occupationally related. However, most were not members of local councils.

XXIII. At the level of political organisation, although most expressed political interest in varying degrees, and the majority partook in general elections, less than half were members of a political party and only a fraction had ever been an office bearer.

XXIV. In general, these farmers have a fairly closely woven, narrow social network which has distinct occupational and organisational characteristics. Socially they interact with people from the same or similar class categories as themselves. Organisationally their world is shaped, above all, by the fact that they are farmers. But they are farmers of a particular standing - not very engaged in local civilian life, highly occupationally and politically interested but ambivalent about organisations and their capacity to represent their interests. Generally they are either passive members or do not join political parties, and within agriculture, although they join, they perceive the agricultural unions as operating with a political and sectoral bias that does not reflect their own interests and concerns. In expressing their views on "topical issues" - understanding and interpreting the past and responding to future reforms in the sector - with a few exceptions, they essentially locate and confine the terrain of problem to politics and governance rather than situating it in a broader social and economic context, of which they are integrally part.

### **Constructing Community - Class and Colour**

XXV. Community is about drawing social and physical boundaries around particular sets of power relations which are articulated through class and colour. In their general understanding of South Africa, these farmers perceive it as a society deeply divided by class and colour - concepts which they often conflate, defining class by colour and colour by class. But they invoke community as class- and colourless. And this is because for them, community hinges on the dominance and control they derive, in the first instance, from their position as property owners, men of wealth and social standing, people with authority. The general openness of these family farmers to black farmer entry into the commercial sector simply underscores this point. It is a position of power which is reinforced and complemented by the "dominant authority" of their colour, evidenced by their social milieu, by the way they interact with workers, by the way they understand and act on "the security threat" or independent worker organisation, etc.. Community thus serves as a convenient hold all which they can use or discard, as they see fit, to assert,

maintain or defend their position in existing power relations. It is grounded on class and colour assumptions, although these are not often expressly and openly articulated.

XXVI. What is also clear is that the phrase and frame of patriarchal relations on the farms, whilst persisting, have been significantly refashioned. The oft repeated projection of the farming establishment as a caring institution based on patriarchal concern is, at best, anachronistic. As modernised commercial farmers most have shed their social responsibilities towards workers albeit that some have done so indirectly (through workers' committees), rather than directly.

### **Some General Conclusions**

XXVII. The principle limitation of these findings is the general inaccessibility of farmers to social scientific investigation, especially in a period of national tension and conflict where existing power relations are in transition. Particularly, it would seem that the organisational and political profile of those surveyed is not reflective of a (substantial) proportion of small and medium scale family farmers whose categorical views and high levels of activity make them loath to engage with researchers. What the survey does reveal are some dominant class aspects of white small and medium scale family farmers in South Africa, parts of which are generalisable to the whole class and parts of which are more reflective of a segment within it.

XXVIII. In general, class for them centres on owning property and making money in an agrarian context. Around it they weave a web which incorporates groups of people who are similarly placed socially and with whom they constantly and closely interact. Their social network is very class bounded. Their entry into and retention in farming is dependent on their rural background and, importantly the provision of sufficient supports and incentives at the macro social level. They are conscious of class as a major social divider and they are highly class conscious, not simply constituting a class but actively working for their own class interests, as they understand them.

XXIX. Class is interlaced with colour, but the apparent indivisibility of the two hinges on the present almost categorical demarcation in which being a farmer means being white (or sometimes Indian), and being a worker means being African (and sometimes Indian). This is set to change - a fact, which this class is conscious of and which this segment is open to. As the racial composition of this farming class is modified class and colour become less synonymous such that class determinants will prevail, even though racial demarcations persist. In this, it is possible to anticipate that class solidarity between black and white farmers will be stronger than colour solidarity between black farmers and black workers.

XXX. For medium and small scale commercial family farmers, community is anchored by class relations and it is a vehicle through which they assert class hegemony in a defined geographical area. They exercise and maintain control and render service in communities constructed by the refracted light of the social and racial prisms of their perceptions. As a class, they locate themselves in positions of authority and power, doing to rather acting with this greater social whole. When they do act for the community, they act in the first instance, for their own class, as the issue of "security" so clearly illustrates.

XXXI. What questions does this survey of class and community amongst commercial white family farmers suggest for future relations on the land? If class is the dominant

organising principle of relations in the countryside, how will colour changes in class composition render new sets of relations between these farmers and their workers? If the capital price of entry into and maintenance in the sector is so high, what are prospects for generating and sustaining black family farmers there? Does the success of this project not hinge upon further squeezing an already intensely exploited work force? Will community remain a vehicle for class mobilisation and control? What will be the consequence of all this for the present multi-layered rural crisis. What prospects do these relations hold for future development? Land reform initiatives must at least be conversant with the answers that this study's questions imply.

*Agricor and Rural Development in Bophuthatswana*  
by Johnson Kwame Klu

---

South Africa's transition to a non-racial and democratic future would be meaningless to many landless and marginalised Blacks in the rural areas in particular if it stops short of land and agrarian reform. In the face of the problems of land hunger, poverty, unemployment and a devastated agricultural sector facing many Black rural communities, such a reform is both crucial and long over-due. Land and agrarian reform should however form part of a massive and comprehensive rural development programme.

Detailed information regarding rural communities is vital for land and agrarian reform planning and implementation. Equally important is information about the impact of the bantustan agricultural parastatals (where they exist) on these areas. Agrarian transformation may require the involvement of some institutions as Zimbabwe's so-called small peasant success story reveals. This is where a case study of Agricor's service centre-based rural development strategy in Bophuthatswana is pertinent in determining appropriate land and agrarian reform strategy in the future.

Agricor's service centre strategy was not based on a thorough understanding of the complexities of rural communities in terms of their differentiation, needs and environment. Rural communities are not predominantly farmers as they engage in a variety of petty commodity activities. There is evidence of a very substantial proportion of off-farm incomes, mainly in the form of remittances and wages which far exceed farm incomes.

Landlessness is fairly widespread side by side with agricultural land under-utilization. Small-scale crop farming is largely unproductive while a few petty capitalist farmers engage in a variety of petty commodity production activities and are therefore able to produce substantial surpluses. Women are marginalised as a group yet are differentiated in terms of income and relations of production. Gender aside, social differentiation also does exist.

Agricor's top-down management style assumed that there were homogeneous "peasant" communities in Bophuthatswana with identical agricultural-related needs. The result was the insistence on almost the same basket of services at all service centres irrespective of the actual needs of these communities. The apathy of the people towards Agricor and its activities is a manifestation of their rejection of this form of imposition. Given the

legacy of apartheid land policy, the agricultural and grazing land resources required for the success of such a strategy did not exist.

The present study (the subject of this paper) made some very interesting findings. It emerged that land was the top-most priority of most rural households, a fact that underscores the severity of the land problem. Shortage of arable and grazing land is due mainly to the inadequate and generally poor quality land South Africa allocated to Bophuthatswana. Shortage of agricultural land made many households that could afford seeds and tools to cultivate a portion of the residential plot. Availability of land without the resources to ensure its cultivation often resulted in non-use of agricultural land. Most people were keen on farming but made this conditional on access to land, water, labour, seeds, fertilizer, and the tractor.

Agricor's service centre strategy focused too narrowly on commercial farmers and neglected small-scale farmers whose very survival depended on credit and agricultural inputs that were outside their reach. Agricor's policies have left many rural households vulnerable to drought and hunger with drought relief becoming an important source of food for many households.

In the light of the above, a few pertinent observations can now be made. A thorough knowledge of rural communities and their peculiar needs and orientation is essential in planning agrarian and land reform. Even though most rural households may undertake small-scale farming if given arable land, it is not every rural dweller who is interested in farming. Marginalised sections of the rural population including the landless and poor men and women must be catered for through a comprehensive rural development programme. Finally, conditions should be created to accommodate those who do not want to farm.

*Transforming Agricultural Institutions: A Theory and Methodology for Drafting the Required Legislation*

by Ann Seidman and Robert B. Seidman

---

This paper describes a workshop, held in May, 1993, that aimed to initiate the establishment of a democratic participatory process of drafting the myriad of new laws required to abolish the apartheid institutions that for decades have oppressed and impoverished South Africa's rural black majority. To transform and develop South Africa's distorted political economy, the new democratically-elected representatives can only exercise their newly-won state power through legislation. To do that, however, requires drafting new law that effectively change the behaviours of the central actors whose decisions the day after elections, like the day before, will still shape the institutions imposed by apartheid.

Building on a recognition of these limits on the use of law as a tool for social change, the May workshop participants began a participatory process of analysing the causes of existing repetitive patterns of behaviours (by definition, institutions) that have disadvantaged the black rural majority. Using the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) as an example, they reviewed a research agenda designed to facilitate the

process of thinking through the kinds of legislative programmes required to transform rural South African institutions. Because others had already begun to tackle the issues of land reform, they drew on their expertise instead to initiate a process of formulating legislative programmes for two related areas: 1) the protection and advancement of the wages, working and living conditions of commercial farm workers; and 2) the necessary institutional changes required to enable black farmers and rural entrepreneurs to acquire the essential skills, inputs, credit, and access to markets, processing and storage they need to achieve increased rural productivity and incomes.