


Agrarian Change and the Fate of Farmworkers: Trajectories of
strategic partnership and farm labour in Levubu Valley, South
Africa

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the trajectories of agrarian change on community-owned commercial farms in the Levubu Valley in the northern part of Limpopo Province, South Africa. Levubu is a locality where fertile land was developed and made highly productive after state-led dispossession of African communities. White farmers were initially resettled on a state-run irrigation scheme, but later became independent large-scale commercial farmers linked to global agro-food markets. The thesis focusses on four Communal Property Associations (CPAs) that acquired ownership of farms in Levubu. Government's post-apartheid land restitution programme required the CPAs to enter into 'strategic partnership' agreements with agribusiness companies. Resettlement of beneficiaries on these farms was ruled out in an attempt to sustain existing production systems and levels of employment. After these partnerships collapsed, CPAs have attempted to run the farms themselves, through operating companies employing professional farm managers. Using key concepts from agrarian political economy, the thesis seeks to understand the dynamics of production and social reproduction on the farms and the political tensions that have arisen since restitution occurred. It also explores how this form of land restitution has impacted on the livelihoods of farmworkers. The study combines intensive (or qualitative) research methods, involving in-depth interviews, focus groups and direct observations, and extensive (or quantitative) approaches, mainly in the form of a farmworker household survey undertaken in two communities. This research design has allowed for 'retrospective' analysis of changes over time to be complemented by 'circumspective' analysis of the relations and dynamics of property, production and power on community-owned farms in Levubu. The main findings of the study are that neither joint venture companies nor community-owned farming enterprises have been able to distribute dividend payments to claimant community members as yet. Rather, when profits have been realised they have largely been invested back into productive enterprises. Few other benefits have been received either, other than the preferential employment of some claimant farmworkers on the farms, a small number as managers or supervisors. Although additional jobs were created in the initial stages of restitution, these enterprises have struggled to maintain employment levels. Poor management decisions have meant that increased labour costs have not been accompanied by increases in productivity and output. Severe tensions and conflicts have arisen within CPAs, manifested in different forms of identity politics and competing 'modes of belonging'. Tensions in community-owned large-scale farming enterprises are explained by the contradictory unity of capital and

labour within community-owned enterprises, with difficult choices to be made between enhancing social reproduction or ensuring accumulation and profitability. These combine with complex processes of identification in socio-political struggles around access to and control of key resources. These findings suggest that policy makers should re-examine assumptions in relation to community-owned farming enterprises and explore mechanisms through which individual beneficiary households can realise more significant benefits. One policy option might be to seek the complementarity of large-scale commercial farming and smallholder farming systems, both on land restored to CPAs through restitution and in communal areas.



KEY WORDS

Agrarian change, restitution, community-owned farming enterprises, farmworkers, social reproduction, class dynamics, property relations, production relations, power relations, Levubu (Limpopo)



DECLARATION

I declare that *Land reform, agrarian change and the fate of farmworkers: Trajectories of strategic partnership and farm labour in Levubu Valley, South Africa* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Tshililo Justice Manenzhe

Signed:

December 2015



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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACET	African Center for Economic Transformation
AgriBEE	Agricultural Broad Economic Empowerment
AgriSA	Agri South Africa
ANC	African National Congress
ARDC	Agricultural and Rural Development Corporation
BRC	British Retail Consortium
CDE	Centre for Development Enterprise
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CLB	Central Land Boards
CLS	Centre for Law and Society
CPA	Communal Property Association
CPP	Community Private Partnership
CRLR	Commission on Restitution of Land Rights
DAFF	Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries
DLA	Department of Land Affairs
DoA	Department of Agriculture
DRDLR	Department of Rural Development and Land Reform
DTT	Daily Task Target
ESTA	Extension of Security of Tenure Act
EU	European Union
FAWU	Food and Allied Workers' Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GCIS	Government Communication and Information System
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEAR	Growth Employment and Redistribution
Global-GAP	Global Good Agricultural Practices
Ha	Hectare
HACCP	Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point
HH	Household
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ILO	International Labour Organisation

IMF	International Monetary Fund
LAMOSASA	Land Access Movement of South Africa
LCC	Land Claims Court
LDA	Limpopo Department of Agriculture
LEAF	Linking Environment and Farming
LRAD	Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development
LRC	Legal Resources Centre
LSCF	Large-scale commercial farming
LTA	Land Reform/Labour Tenant Act
Mavu	Mavu Management Services
NAMC	National Agricultural Marketing Council
NDP	National Development Plan
NFPM	National Food Produce Market
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NGP	New Growth Path
NPC	National Planning Commission
PEGP	Provincial Economic Growth Plan
PGDS	Provincial Growth and Development Strategy
PLAAS	Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies
PLAS	Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy
PPECB	Perishable Products Export Control Board
RADP	Recapitalisation and Development Programme
RDG	Restitution Discretionary Grant
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RLCC	Regional Land Claims Commissioner
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SAAGA	South African Avocado Growers' Association
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAFM	South African Farms Management
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
SAMAC	South African Macadamia Growers' Association
SIS	Settlement Implementation Strategy
SLAG	Settlement and Land Acquisition Grant

SPG	Settlement Planning Grant
SSDU	Settlement Support Development Unit
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
TIL	Trade and Investment Limpopo
UK	United Kingdom
Umlimi	Umlimi Consortium
USA	United States of America
VDC	Venda Development Corporation
WT	Workers' Trust
WWII	World War II
ZAR	Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek
ZFU	Zoutpansberg Farmers' Union



1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the trajectories of agrarian change on community-owned commercial farms in the Levubu Valley (henceforth, Levubu), in the Vhembe District of the Limpopo Province, South Africa. These farms were transferred to African communities in 2005 and 2006 in terms of government's land reform programme of restitution¹. In Levubu land restitution took a particular and somewhat unusual form, since land was not simply restored to community ownership but transferred subject to the signing of joint ventures known as 'strategic partnership' agreements with private sector partners. Initially these kinds of joint ventures were agreed between Communal Property Associations (CPAs), representing land reform beneficiaries, and agribusiness companies (the so-called 'strategic partners'). Subsequently these gave way to community-owned commercial farming enterprises, mostly employing farm managers, after the joint ventures experienced great difficulties. In all cases there has been substantial continuity in production systems between the pre-land reform period and post-land reform, these being focussed almost exclusively on export-oriented sub-tropical fruit and nuts. This case is of great significance for land reform policy more generally, given the continuing dominance of large-scale commercial farming in South Africa and government's current policy emphasis on supporting strategic partnerships between beneficiaries and private sector actors.

The thesis situates land restitution in Levubu and its trajectory over time within broader debates about the political economy of agrarian change in post-apartheid South Africa. According to Bernstein (2010b:1), agrarian political economy concerns investigation of the social relations and dynamics of production, reproduction, property and power in agrarian social formations. A key focus in this approach is on processes of change, both historical and contemporary. Therefore, the thesis presents an analysis of the social relations of community-owned commercial farming enterprises against the backdrop of the historical development of and subsequent deepening of capitalist relations in South African agriculture, which is accompanied here, as elsewhere, by a crisis of social reproduction (of labour). Such crises signify the salience of 'Agrarian Questions of capital and labour', as framed by Byres (2012)

¹ Restitution is one of the three components of South Africa's land reform programme; the others are land redistribution and tenure reform (supported through the Recapitalisation and Development Programme). Restitution is implemented in terms of the *Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994* as amended, which provides for measures that enable victims of land dispossession under the apartheid policies and practices after 19 June 1913 to reclaim their lost land rights.

and Bernstein (2007a; 2009a). Using the latter's expansive definition of 'classes of labour', as discussed in Chapter 2, this thesis has a particular focus on the implications of trajectories of commercial partnerships (joint venture, community-owned enterprises under management contract, and mentorships) for the fate of farmworkers, who are considered a key agrarian class.

Levubu is a 'social space' as much as a 'material space'. Greenberg reminds us that 'space' is a dynamic social construction that has been highly racialised in the South African context (Greenberg, 2011). The establishment of large-scale capital-intensive farms in Levubu resulted from processes of land dispossession by colonial and apartheid governments, resistance against such dispossession, and ultimately the displacement of black communities from their ancestral lands. In this area dispossessions and removals began in the late 1920s, as Mulaudzi (2000) has documented, and contributed to the obliteration of peasant agriculture in the north of the country. As in many other parts of rural South Africa, persuasively demonstrated by Bundy (1988), prosperous peasant farmers located on the fertile arable lands of Levubu were stripped of access to their land, their peasant agriculture was destroyed, and they became proletarianised. State-sanctioned and state-supported development of capitalist farms was based on utilisation of the cheap labour of many of 'the dispossessed'.

The post-apartheid government's programme of land reform, and restitution of land rights in particular, was introduced in 1994 in order to provide redress for lost land rights, one of the causes of severe imbalances in the racial distribution of land. The land reform programme has since become entangled in many difficulties and is highly contentious, one problem being the dilemmas that government experiences in trying to achieve very different and sometimes quite divergent objectives, e.g. providing redress for past injustices at the same time as ensuring continuity in commercial agricultural production (Greenberg, 2013). Over the years, land reform has become increasingly identified with agricultural production as the major land use and source of livelihoods, despite the arguments of many that this is too narrow a focus (Walker, 2008).

By 31st December 1998², the entire Levubu Valley was subject to land claims. These were lodged by various ‘tribes’ and communities displaced from their ancestral land by colonial and apartheid governments. Since 2005, the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights (henceforth the Commission) has transferred 79 farm portions, or approximately 5000 ha³ of prime agricultural land, to seven ‘claimant communities’ organised as CPAs⁴ (Manenzhe, 2012; Derman *et al.*, 2013).

South African land reform has in the past been severely criticised for the absence of effective post-settlement support (Jacobs, 2003; Manenzhe, 2007; Anseeuw & Mathebula, 2008) . Part of the problem is the insistence, mostly by government officials and private consultants, that commercial production must continue, as well as the lack of policy and economic measures enabling land reform projects based on large-scale farming to succeed (Hall, 2009b). Post-transfer arrangements in Levubu, involving joint ventures between agribusiness companies or white commercial farmers and CPAs, resonated strongly with wider shifts in South African land policy aimed at ensuring continuity in production, as well as a shift in national policy frameworks more generally, from the poverty and redistribution-oriented Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) to the market-friendly Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy (Hall, 2010; Greenberg, 2013), and now the National Development Plan⁵ (NDP).

The strategic partnership model prohibited resettlement of claimant communities on restored farms, to allow continuation of production primarily for export markets. This model is in keeping with market-led approaches to agrarian reform, in which land transfers are premised

² In terms of Section 2(1)(e) of the Restitution of Land Rights Act (1994), a person shall be entitled to restitution of a right in land if the claim for such restitution is lodged by no later than 31 December 1998. However, the Section 1 of Restitution of Land Rights Amendment Act (2014) extended the closing date to 30 June 2019.

³ These estimates are based on an analysis of various Section 42D memoranda, signed to settle the land claims by the Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs. The seven claimant communities are: Tshivhazwaulu, Masakona, Shigalo, Ratombo, Tshitwani, Tshakhuma, and Ravele.

⁴ CPAs are communal landholding legal entities or juristic persons established in terms of the Communal Property Associations Act, 1996 for transfer of land ownership in title. They are mostly established in land reform contexts.

⁵ “The National Development Plan is a plan for the country to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030 through uniting South Africans, unleashing the energies of its citizens, growing an inclusive economy, building capabilities, enhancing the capability of the state and leaders working together to solve complex problems” (NPC, 2012:1). It offers a long-term perspective, defines a desired destination, and identifies the roles that different sectors of society need to play in reaching that goal. It aims to ensure that all South Africans attain a decent standard of living through the elimination of poverty and reduction of inequality.

on the assumption that land is principally an economic resource. They thus help to constitute a ‘neoliberal agrarian restructuring’ (Akram-Lodhi, 2007). Further, such transfers fail to recognise the socially-embedded character of land relations in African communities, as Cousins (2008) argues. Rather, such land reforms tend to entrench ‘productivist’ paradigms, which neglect wider and longer term restructuring of agricultural production systems and the expansion of non-agricultural land uses, as well as farm and non-farm service provision (Moyo *et al.*, 2000).

The phenomenon of strategic partnerships in South Africa’s land reform has prompted much scholarly research, from a range of perspectives: the geography of development (Fraser, 2006), anthropology (Derman *et al.*, 2013), human rights and gender perspectives (Hellum & Derman, 2010; 2013), critical agrarian studies (Wisborg *et al.*, 2013; Hall *et al.*, 2013; Hall, 2009a; 2009b) and development economics (Aliber *et al.*, 2013). A review of this literature reveals that a central issue in strategic partnerships is the notion of ‘inclusive’ development, which suggests that real developmental benefits require bringing previously disadvantaged individuals and communities into the mainstream of the agricultural economy, with a key role played by private sector partners. However, the literature tends to question the ‘inclusivity’ of these partnerships and the benefits they are purported to bring to ‘beneficiaries’ (Derman *et al.*, 2013). One of the benefits promised to claimant ‘communities’ is increased opportunities for employment on the farms they now own, thus introducing the complexity that the owners of the means of production (i.e. the farms and businesses) are to be recruited as labourers.

Whilst scholars have explored strategic partnerships from a range of perspectives, the position of agricultural wage labourers on these community-owned farms, and their socio-economic conditions have rarely been discussed, and if so, only obliquely. Given that the goal of restitution is primarily to restore land ownership, it is understandable that questions of labour and employment have not been explored much. However, these are central issues in this form of restitution. Preferential employment of CPA members on these farms is proposed as a key benefit, but it is not clear that this is what *all* beneficiaries desired, particularly given the low wage rates in force. The socio-economic conditions of agricultural workers on these farms are thus a key aspect of strategic partnerships that deserves attention. Employment issues are often a source of tensions in both strategic partnerships and community-owned enterprises, which may in turn derive from the underlying contradictions of capitalist accumulation. This thesis explores these and related issues.

1.1. Aims of the thesis

This thesis seeks to understand the social relations and dynamics of production and social reproduction on farms transferred to claimant ‘communities’ in terms of the government’s programme of land restitution, and managed through various forms of commercial partnerships. Such partnerships cannot be seen as simply embodying the key characteristics of large-scale capitalist farming in South Africa, viewed in a static and ahistorical manner. Rather, they must be understood as involving processes of social change that derive from fundamental aspects of the social, economic and political organisation of the wider society. The thesis explores how land restitution, a political project aimed at achieving social justice in the post-apartheid period, together with related processes of social change, has impacted on the livelihoods of agricultural farmworkers in large-scale commercial enterprises owned by restitution beneficiaries.

Theories drawn from the political economy of agrarian change offer useful analytical tools to explore the empirical complexities of the dynamics of strategic partnerships and community-owned enterprises. From a class-analytic perspective, commercial partnerships in Levubu have become a site of intensifying tensions, conflicts and contradictions mainly due to what Gibbon & Neocosmos (1985:192), citing Marx, 1913b:120, refers to as the “contradictory unity problem” of class places of capital and labour in capitalist enterprises worked by the owners of the means of production (the CPA members) who sell their labour power to the farming enterprises they themselves own. These tensions and conflicts are explored in depth in this study.

This thesis explores these issues through investigating the following aspects of community-owned farming enterprises, *inter alia*:

- (a) the discursive underpinnings of restitution models that involve commercial partnership arrangements, community-owned enterprise management through contracts with professional commercial farmers, and ‘mentorship’ contracts;
- (b) the actor networks generated by both strategic partnerships and community-owned enterprise management involving contracts with professional commercial farmers;
- (c) the practices and strategies of different actors that have shaped relations of property, power and production at Levubu;

- (d) the impacts of commercial partnerships on the socio-economic conditions of farmworker households; and
- (e) the fate of farmworkers in this model of restitution, both claimant and non-claimant farmworkers (who worked on the land of white commercial farmers bought out by the restitution programme).

1.2. Research problem and questions

The principal question that this thesis seeks to answer is: to what extent have strategic partnerships, and their subsequent evolution into community-owned enterprises, transformed, modified, or reproduced the dominant relations of property, power and production which existed on commercial farms in Levubu in the past? This is explored with a particular focus on the livelihoods of the farmworkers. This broad question is addressed by attempting to answer a subset of more specific questions, in order to provide a detailed account of processes of social change and their impacts.

The specific research questions that have guided the research process are as follows:

- (a) On farms in the Levubu valley restored to community ownership through land restitution since 2005, how have arrangements for the continued production of sub-tropical fruit and nuts evolved over time, and how successful have these arrangements been in sustaining profitable production?
- (b) How have varying management arrangements on farms transferred to communities through CPAs impacted on property regimes and relations of production on these farms, and on relations between management and labour in particular?
- (c) How have farmworkers responded to the fact that some of them are both workers employed by commercial enterprises and co-owners (through land claim) of the enterprise? Have major differences between claimant and non-claimant farmworkers emerged, and if so, how have these shaped labour relations within the enterprises?
- (d) How have commercial partnerships and their evolution into community-based enterprises been influenced by social identities other than those of class, i.e. race, gender and in particular, those 'traditional identities' of ethnicity or tribe through which the land claims were pursued? What roles do traditional authorities play in the management of community based enterprises, what is their relationship with

Communal Property Associations, and how do these influence the ways in which the enterprises are managed and their benefits are distributed?

- (e) How have strategic partnerships and subsequent community-owned farming influenced the manner in which farmworker households secure their social reproduction? In particular, what are the livelihoods outcomes of restitution for farmworker households?
- (f) What are the perspectives of different actors (community members, farmworkers, traditional authorities, CPA committee members and professional managers) with regard to the future of community-based farming ventures in Levubu? Are there feasible alternative farming management models to the ones currently being practised?

1.3. Rationale and significance of the thesis

According to the Limpopo Provincial Growth and Development Strategy (2005-2009), 90% of all commercial farmland in Limpopo Province has been subject to land restitution claims (Limpopo Provincial Government, 2005:27). In some districts, for example, the Levubu valley in the Vhembe District, virtually the entire commercial farming area, has been claimed. Some scholars and observers have regarded Levubu land claims as a litmus test for restitution in South Africa (Derman *et al.*, 2013). This is due to the extent and cost of land claims and the massive character of processes of social change that will result.

The government, through the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) formerly the Department of Land Affairs (DLA), has shown preference for commercial partnership in land reform, initially focussing on settled land claims on high-value agricultural land such as in Levubu, Letsitele and Hoedspruit. As Derman *et al.* (2010) suggest, such arrangements in principle seek to strike a balance between the constitutional, economic, developmental, and political imperatives of land reform as well as to ensure that restitution does not disrupt farm employment and the local agricultural economy. This links to a more general and global concern about food crises, rural poverty, investments in agriculture, and landlessness in former colonial territories, amongst other issues, which attest to the continuing relevance of agrarian questions today.

However, South African land reform (including land restitution) attempts to bring about a fundamental and wider *agrarian transformation*, which involves the restructuring of relations of property, power and production (Bernstein, 1998). In commercial partnerships these three

dimensions are subject to change. The rationales for this thesis are thus, firstly, there is a need to understand different forms of commercial partnerships and their prospects given wider processes of agrarian change, and to contribute to the on-going debate about desirable and feasible forms of agrarian transformation in South Africa. Secondly, the study attempts to explore the wider significance of such partnerships for processes of redistributive reform and agricultural investments in Africa, and elsewhere, by addressing the question of whether or not the purported inclusivity of these models of agriculture is being realised in practice. It thus seeks to contribute to global debates about ‘agriculture-for-development’, as evident in the World Development Report of 2008 (World Bank, 2007) as well as in scholarly debates on the contemporary class dynamics of agrarian change (see recent issues of the *Journal of Peasant Studies* and the *Journal of Agrarian Change*, for example).

1.3.1 Are there any gaps in the existing literature on Levubu?

Processes of agrarian change in Northern Limpopo more broadly, and Levubu in particular, have attracted a plenitude of scholars. Mulaudzi (2000) and Nefale (2000) provide insightful historical accounts of agrarian change in the Vhembe District In Levubu, much research has been conducted on processes of land restitution, how strategic partnerships have evolved over time, and the outcomes achieved under such post-settlement arrangements (Fraser, 2006; Derman *et al.*, 2010). However, the impacts of strategic partnerships in relation to agrarian transformation, and in particular on the conditions and relations of agrarian labour remain poorly understood. Further, the contradictions of capitalist production on farms in which commoditised labour is sourced from members of land owning groups represented by CPAs, who are supposedly the owners of the means of production, have not received adequate scholarly attention.

Given the fact that new land redistribution and restitution policies developed since 2009 now require all land reform beneficiaries to have strategic partners and mentors, who are usually commercial farmers or ex-farmers (see for example, the Recapitalisation and Development Programme, 2009, and the Strengthening the Relative Rights of People Working the Land, 2014), and that often ‘beneficiaries’ are meant to receive benefits as ‘workers’ as well as ‘owners’, these issues are clearly of wider significance. This thesis, therefore, explores these issues in the context of restoration of land rights to communities in terms of restitution and subsequent strategic partnerships in the Levubu Valley.

1.3.2 Potential contribution to wider debates on land reform in South Africa

The key focus of this thesis can be summarised as the exploration of processes of agrarian change in Levubu and how they affect wage labourers as a constituent part of the wider ‘classes of agrarian labour’, as conceived by Bernstein (2004; 2006; 2007a; 2009a). The study asks questions about whether or not commercial partnerships in land restitution have the potential to fundamentally alter the agrarian structure of South Africa, and whether or not commercial partnerships in practice tend to reproduce the existing agrarian structure. In Levubu the strategic partnership model was based on the assumption that land restitution, and land reform in general, should not tamper too much with existing farming systems. Rather, the new entrants should be trained to gradually take over management of the farms while maintaining the existing structure of the enterprises and ensuring continuity in systems of production. The model entangles beneficiaries in long-term contracts with agribusiness, investors and professional farm managers as strategic partners. The thesis thus explores the wider significance and implications of this approach.

Commercial partnerships appear to be the preferred form of post-settlement support to land reform beneficiaries in South Africa (DRDLR, 2009). Recent literature on strategic partnerships in land restitution in Levubu has focussed on the drivers of the model, analysing the key actors involved, while NGOs have engaged in research focussed on monitoring developments for purposes of advocacy, and lobbying for more inclusive and transparent processes. Such work has had a central focus on the processes of crafting strategic partnerships, and also examined how strategic partnerships have evolved over time (Fraser, 2006; Derman *et al.*, 2010; Lahiff *et al.*, 2012; van Leynseele, 2013). This research has thus described actors, analysed contracts and assessed governance and institutional arrangements – especially processes of negotiation and securing the final approval by CPAs and communities (Derman *et al.*, 2013).

There is a rich and insightful literature in existence that describes the nature of partnerships, analyses whether or not promises and expectations have been fulfilled, and to a limited extent, assesses the outcomes. Literature from Levubu, and elsewhere, has shown how the model of strategic partnerships has so far not fully benefitted the members of the claimant communities as owners of the land (Lahiff *et al.*, 2012, Aliber *et al.*, 2013, Davis, 2014). Whilst the issue of wage-labour has been raised in such literature, and discussed briefly as

part of a critique of shareholders contracts, the question has not been explored comprehensively, taking into consideration the lived experiences of farmworkers, as well as their responses to experiences of strategic partnerships over the years.

This thesis thus aims to contribute to debates in the literature on commercial partnerships in South Africa by situating the question of wage labour on community-owned farms within broader debates on the 'Agrarian Question'. It does so by exploring the nature of agrarian change in contexts where commercial partnerships have been formed on community-owned farms, in part through assessing their impacts on the livelihoods of agricultural wage labourers on these farms. It also explores the 'everyday politics' and cultural politics of 'belonging' they generate, as well as the changing dynamics of farm management. In highlighting the perspectives of farmworkers in their relations with other key actors, themes of politics and power are integrated into livelihood perspectives, as Scoones (2009) advocates.

1.4 Agrarian contracts, commercial partnerships, and land reform in South Africa

Analysis of the history of agricultural development policies in developing countries demonstrates that state interventions often reflect aspirations to integrate the rural poor into an increasingly internationalised agricultural system (Little & Watts, 1994). This phenomenon is referred to as the 'social integration' of agriculture that rests on managed transitions from agriculture to agro-industry. The notion of a 'contract' is central to any understanding of such social integration into corporate relations of production (*ibid.*). A contract supposedly enables socially unequal partners to negotiate and enter into binding agreements as legal and political equals. However, Little & Watts (1994) argue that the definition of such contracts must be expanded to include the wide variety of forms in which they appear in agrarian contexts. Contracting involves a constellation of institutional and production relations, and can also represent a crucial means by which agriculture is being industrialised and restructured.

Thus contracts in agriculture are extremely heterogeneous in form. Little & Watts (1994) submit that the classic, all-encompassing definition of agrarian contracts is those arrangements between farmers and other firms, whether written or oral, specifying one or more conditions of production and marketing of agricultural products. A contract defines the

social space of independence and subordination that the grower occupies in relation to labour processes, and cuts out the terrain of direct and indirect control (*ibid.*) The literature shows that new 'industrial' agricultures and agri-food systems have increasingly become globally dispersed, and also vertically integrated within value chains (da Silva, 2005; Little & Watts, 1994). Da Silva (2005:4) shows that contractual relations in commercial agriculture have grown alongside a scaling-down of the role of the state in farmer support and an increase in the role of the private sector. The significance of these contributions to debates about agri-food systems is that they elucidate the ways in which capital has taken a grip on an increasingly global agri-food system, and how peasant growers, in response, often try to resist and refashion the process (Little and Watts, 1994).

Commercial partnerships in agriculture, utilising different forms of contracts, are not a new phenomenon. Their history can be traced back to the 1970s, when commercial farmers and corporations, spurred on by broader political economic changes, developed such ventures to offset the effects of the political and economic changes of the time. What of the South African context, and in contexts of land reform in particular? Various forms of commercial partnerships have evolved in a range of models. These include the group-based or community-owned and operated model, which has been associated with the joint ventures and share-equity schemes referred to as strategic partnerships, and facilitated commercial partnerships between communities and investors. The latter are usually referred to as Community Private Partnerships (CPPs), as Davis (2014) and Davis & Lahiff (2012) show.

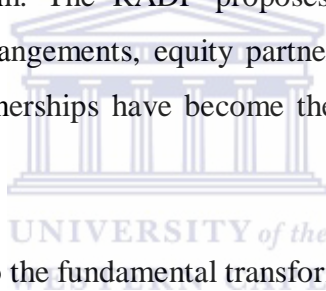
In a study of joint ventures in South Africa, Mayson (2003:32) concluded that joint ventures help to mobilise private sector and government resources to support land reform initiatives. In policy discourses, the idea of partnerships can be traced to the White Paper on South African Policy (1997). It states that partnerships that have the potential to widen the scope and efficiency of the land reform process should be supported (DLA, 1997). The notion of private sector participation in land reform is also articulated in the NDP, which acknowledges that agriculture is a primary economic sector in which the private sector's contribution to job creation is central in both up- and downstream industries. It suggests that agriculture has the potential to create one million jobs by 2030. It commits to prioritising successful farmers in communal areas for support, and to support industries and areas with a high potential to create jobs. The bottom line of this approach is that there will be an increase in collaboration between existing farmers and beneficiaries of land reform (NPC, 2012: 197). It states that -

“...there should be greater support for innovative public-private partnerships. South Africa’s commercial farming sector is full of major investments that have resulted in new growth, and new job opportunities...” (NPC, 2012:205).

It thus proposes to

“...offer white commercial farmers and organized industry bodies the opportunity to significantly contribute to the success of black farmers through mentorships, chain integration, preferential procurement and meaningful skills transfer” (NPC, 2012: 206).

These overarching policy positions continue to shape the trajectory of land reform policy in South Africa. For example, since 2009 some land reform policies, such as the ‘Recapitalisation and Development Policy’ (RADP) and the ‘Strengthening of the Relative Rights for People Working the Land’ have sought to institutionalise the role of private sector actors in support of land reform. The RADP proposes different types of partnerships: mentorships, co-management arrangements, equity partnerships, and strategic partnerships. As will be shown, strategic partnerships have become the most prominent form of private sector support to land reform.



Do these approaches contribute to the fundamental transformation of the relations of property, power and production in post-apartheid South Africa? This question focusses on fundamental aspects of agrarian change, and is centred on trying to understand the complexity of underlying social, economic and political realities. While policy debates continue to rage on how best to design land reform and agricultural development, there is also an on-going debate among Marxists and other critical political economy scholars about the relevance of the classical Agrarian Question today in contexts such as South Africa. These theoretical debates are taken up in more detail in Chapter 2, and returned to in the concluding chapter that seeks to explore the links between the policy and the theoretical aspects of agrarian change in Levubu.

1.5 Introduction to the research site

Levubu is situated in the north-eastern part of Limpopo Province, in the northern part of South Africa as illustrated in Map 1 (A map of Limpopo Province situating Levubu Valley). Administratively, it is part of Makhado Municipality, in the Vhembe District of Limpopo.

Map 1: A map of Limpopo Province situating Levubu Valley

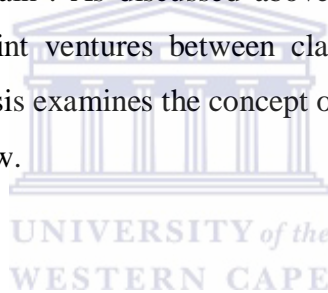


As will be discussed in Chapter 3, the Levubu valley is one of those localities in South Africa where prime farmland was developed following the dispossession of African communities by the colonial and apartheid governments. White farmers were resettled in Levubu, initially on a state-run irrigation scheme, and later supported by the state to develop into large-scale commercial farmers linked to global agro-food markets. Pursuant to South Africa's attainment of a democratic government in 1994, the original inhabitants of Levubu, comprising mainly 'tribes' and communities, lodged land claims in order to obtain equitable redress for their lost land rights. Derman *et al.* (2010) note that the relatively recent process of dispossession, and the fact that the majority of people were still alive at the time of the lodgement of land claims, account for the high number of claims received by the land claims commission. With the 2014 amendment to the Restitution of Land Rights Act (1994), more

land claims are likely to be lodged by ‘tribes’ and communities who feel that previous claims did not adequately address their claims.

As shown in Table 1 below, Levubu is a site of land restitution which has led to the transfer of about 79 white-owned commercial farm units, covering over 5 000 hectares, to seven claimant communities, comprising 1 683 households. This was at a total cost of R260 367 930. These are capital intensive large-scale commercial farms that have been reported as employing over 10 000 people in the early 2000s, both on farms and in downstream industries (Aliber *et al.*, 2013).

At the time of negotiating settlement agreements, government argued that transferring large and complex agricultural enterprises as going concerns to claimant communities required the transfer of skills and an injection of capital that could help sustain production on farms and other enterprises in the value-chain⁶. As discussed above, government initiated a strategic partnership model, involving joint ventures between claimants (organised as CPAs) and agribusiness companies. This thesis examines the concept of strategic commercial partnership in detail in the chapters that follow.



⁶ Own notes from a meeting of the land claims commission in Thohoyandou, Old National Assembly of the Republic of Venda (2000), and Chief Land Claims Commissioner Adv. W. Mgqoqi (undated).

Table 1: An overview of a profile for land claims processes in Levubu

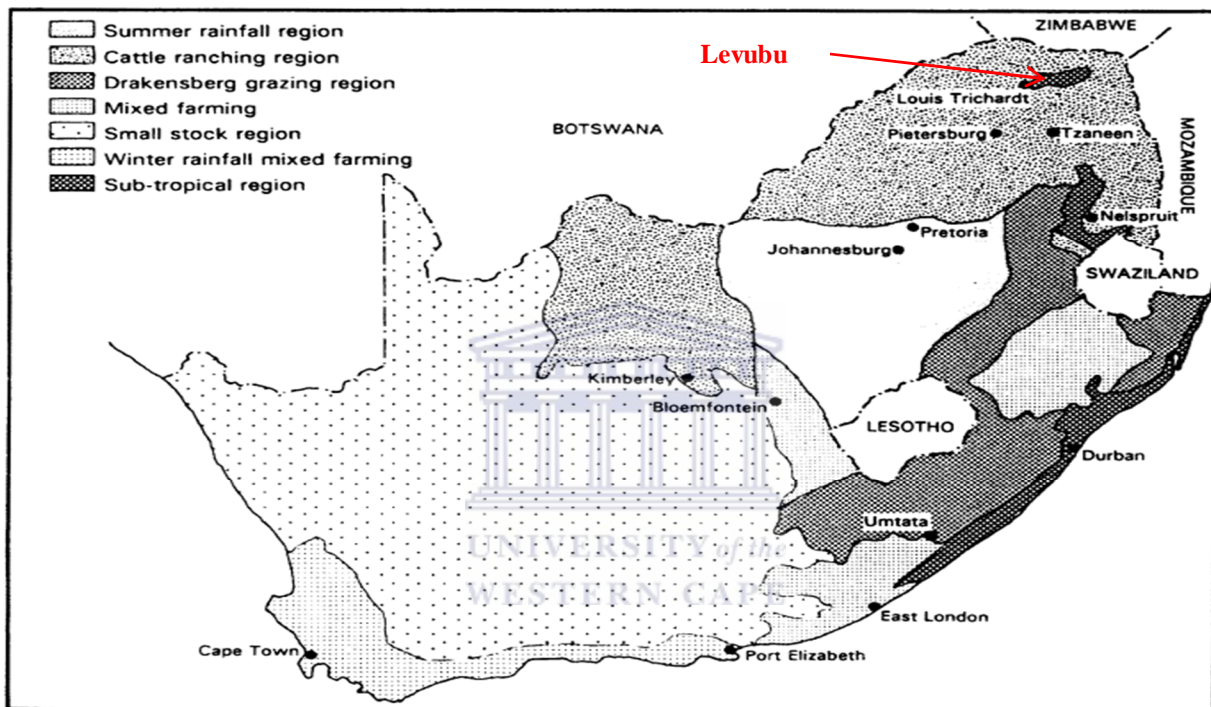
Variable	Description		
Province	Limpopo		
Municipality	Makhado Local Municipality, in the Vhembe District		
Property locality	Levubu Valley, 40km east of Makhado town, (formerly known as Louis Trichardt)		
Types of legal entities	6 CPAs and 1 Trust		
Models of commercial partnerships	7 Joint Ventures (2005 - 2009/10), CPA-owned companies under management contracts/mentorships (2011 to date)		
Number of households	CPA	No of HH	Date of lodgement
	Ravele	324	31 May 1995
	Tshakhuma	144	06 January 1998
	Shigalo	120	19 March 1998
	Masakona	148	03 November 1997
	Ratombo	104	01 April 1996
	Tshitwani	717	27 January 1997
	Tshivhazwaulu	126	04 January 1997
Ha awarded	Section 42D approvals were signed in phases since 2005, and 5000 ha comprising 79 farm units were restored in five phases to 7 claimant communities mentioned above		
Current land uses	Subtropical fruit and nuts production; timber; with processing factories: juice factory, nut cracking and packaging facilities, pack houses		
Cost of settlement and grants⁷	SPG: R1 440/966 HH	R1 391 040.00	
	RDG: R3 000/966 HH	R2 898 000.00	
	Land Cost	R256 078 890.00	
	Total	R260 367 930.00	

Source: Adapted from five Section 42D memoranda approving settlement of the various phases of the land claims (CRLR, 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008).

⁷ SPG (Settlement Planning Grants), RDG (Restitution Discretionary Grant). These are calculated per household (HH). In the current policy regime, no grant is given to restitution beneficiaries. Instead, the post settlement support to communities or beneficiaries of restitution is channelled through the Recapitalisation and Development Fund which ties land reform beneficiaries to commercial partnerships.

Levubu is one of the three zones or escarpment regions with a sub-humid climate in South Africa. As Map 2 (illustration of the farming regions in South Africa) demonstrates, the climatic conditions characterising Levubu, i.e. subtropical region, are rare and can only be found in three particular regions in parts of Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the coastal areas of Kwazulu-Natal. The subtropical conditions of Levubu are conducive for growing crops such as bananas, avocados, mangos, macadamia, litchis and guavas mainly.

Map 2: Illustration of the seven farming regions in South Africa



Source: Adapted from de Klerk (1991).

Levubu contains some of South Africa’s most productive agricultural land. It receives an average precipitation of 561 mm per annum. Temperatures have been recorded at a maximum of 25.5⁰C and a minimum of 15.5⁰C. Many of the commercial farmers in the area regard Levubu as the “finest and the best farmland in Limpopo, and one of the few such areas in the world”⁸, whereas others claim that “if you fail to farm successfully in Levubu you will not farm anywhere in the world”⁹.

⁸ Interview with Fritz Ahrens, the Regional Chairperson for TAUSA (Farmers Union), on 12 May 2011 at his farm outside Makhado/Louis Trichardt.

⁹ Interview with Danie Basson, the General Manager for Ravele and Masakona enterprises, on 10 May 2011, at the offices in Appelfontein farm. The two CPAs/enterprises shared the office building on Appelfontein until 2014 when Masakona moved offices to their own farm after terminating contract with Danie Basson.

1.6 Methodological considerations

I started research for this doctoral study in 2011. However, my research builds on earlier fieldwork, which I began in 1999 when I became involved with Levubu land claimant communities as an NGO¹⁰ fieldworker. I supported the seven claimant communities to pursue their land claims by documenting their oral histories, facilitating resolution of boundary disputes, assisting them to form CPAs, and coordinating support to the CPAs. In total, this has provided me with 15 years of observation of developments at Levubu, which, in Murray's (2002) terms, can be regarded as a longitudinal research in a loose sense. Such 'loose longitudinal' research involves –

“... reconstructing significant change through the approximate complementary use of different surveys carried out at different points in time for different purposes, or the denser and inevitably more haphazard as well as statistically insignificant, use of intersecting life histories” (Murray, 2002:490).

Longitudinal observation of the processes of land restitution in Levubu provides the benefit of 'retrospective' approaches that track changes over time, but this is complemented by 'circumspective' analysis (Murray, 2002), which in my case has involved the empirical investigation of combinations of various modes of livelihoods pursued by farmworkers in Levubu.

Direct involvement with claimant communities has provided me, as an active participant (and later a more distant observer), extraordinary opportunities to obtain insights on both 'local discourses' and 'official discourses'. Knowledge of local discourses was acquired during encounters, meetings and events that occur when one lives within a sphere of research. Knowledge of 'official discourses' (knowledge and practices that implement and shape policies, interventions and representations in socially powerful institutions, as Rutherford (2001) describes them), can be acquired from analysis of documents as well as from interactions with officials and other powerful actors. Participant observation provides certain kinds of insight that are difficult to obtain in any other way (Crehan, 1997). 'The small bits of its life' are observed in 'some kind of context'. My prior experience has been exceptionally

¹⁰ The NGO I worked for is Nkuzi Development Association and I was based in its Elim Office, some 20 - 30 km away from Levubu.

advantageous for this study, in the sense that data gathering included observation of events as they occurred.

The research design, discussed at length in Chapter Four of this thesis, can be characterised as comprising mainly intensive, qualitative research; it was thus open, fluid and changeable. It was augmented by a short, extensive, quantitative survey of farmworker households, focussed on livelihood patterns and trends. The intensive, qualitative approach implied an iterative process that involved a set of flexible and non-sequential activities, contrary to research designs that are fixed and technical in nature, and thus restrictive and unsuited to exploratory and inductive styles of research.

I do not claim that the findings of this research are representative of all community-owned large-scale commercial farms in South Africa. Nonetheless, I need to emphasise that these findings are illustrative of the dynamics within land reform's community-owned large-scale commercial farms and probably have wider significance for debates on how to meet the challenges of land reform through commercial partnerships and inclusive business models, as well as group-based approaches, including cooperatives.

My key research activities involved the following: firstly, a scoping exercise to select four case studies from the seven claimant communities; secondly, a series of in-depth interviews with key 'stakeholders' from government, non-government organisations, and CPAs; thirdly, extensive research that involved administering questionnaires to farmworker households, both land claimants and non-claimants; and fourthly, a number of in-depth interviews with key informants working on the restored farms, including workers and farm managers. Extensive data collection focussed on questions of the livelihoods of farmworkers' households after land restoration, including demographic features and asset holdings.

This thesis has allowed me to take note of the findings of a series of cross-sectional, 'circumspective' investigations of restitution at Levubu undertaken by other researchers, and complement these with my own intensive and extensive research since 2010, together with my prior experience of working with these land claimant communities. It aims to fill a significant gap in the literature on strategic partnerships in South Africa's land reform.

Drawing on Oya's (2013) analysis of contemporary large-scale land investments, popularly dubbed 'land grabs', an important question can be raised in relation to commercial partnerships in land reform contexts: do these partnerships support the emergence of agrarian capitalists, whether from the ranks of established white commercial farmers or consortiums, or from the ranks of black landowners and rural elites? According to Oya, answers to such a question will shed light on different trajectories of transition and accumulation, from above or below, which may emerge as a result of the current land rush (Oya, 2013: 1551).

In addition to a classical agrarian political economy approach, this thesis also makes use of key ideas drawn from anthropology and political sociology that focus on cultural politics. Notions of 'modes of belonging' suggest that complex inter-linkages exist between social relations and the economic dimensions of social life. This approach enables the thesis to engage critically with the enduring debates and questions in agrarian political economy, which Oya (2013:1535) succinctly summarises as "the prospects for and impediments to the development of capitalist agriculture in developing countries", in an attempt to avoid oversimplifications that obscure basic features of agrarian change and capitalist development. Firstly, in-depth and detailed investigation of the complex social relations found in particular historical contexts is fundamentally significant. Analysis from within an overly-narrow political economy approach does not always offer sufficient ground from which to grapple with the nuances of such social relations and dynamics. In the analysis of social relations and dynamics, rather than seeing economic factors as unilaterally determining political and social effects, or assigning the economic aspects a privileged role, a broader conception of political economy necessitates seeing the economy as an important and integral part of a social whole, and requires the tracing in detail of the complex links between economic, political and social aspects (Browning & Kilmister, 2006:2).

In this wider conception, production always takes place within a definite social context, but political economy analyses often abstract from their specific features. Marx argues that –

“...in order to talk about production at all we must either pursue the process of historic development through its different phases, or declare beforehand that we are dealing with a specific historic epoch such as e.g. modern bourgeois production... However all epochs of production have certain common traits, common characteristics. *Production in general* is an abstraction, but a rational abstraction in so far as it really brings out and fixes a common element...” (Marx, 1973:85, cited in Browning & Kilmister, 2006:54).

Political economy analyses often focus on the structure of capitalist production, including the labour regimes that characterise different sectors. These kinds of structural approaches sometimes omit the essential aspects of *agency and power*. In its analysis of the social relations of ownership, production and power in Levubu, this thesis is guided by the four classic political economy questions framed by Bernstein (2010b:22-13), i.e. “who owns what, who does what, who gets what, what do they do with it?”. However, as Peters (2013: 555-556) reminds us, social and political relations and interactions, as well as the politics of representation, are also vitally significant. Berry (1994:35) also suggests “constructive deconstruction” to study sequences of action and interaction, so that research can deconstruct institutions and gain insights into their significance, as well as their fluid and dynamic nature. This thesis thus provides a useful opportunity to deconstruct the meaning of “communities” in the context of restitution, exploring who is included and excluded, and on what basis. When addressing questions of tenure rights, Berry states that –

“... if rights in land are defined through on-going, open ended debate over authority and obligation as well as rules and practices, the security of farmers’ rights depends on the terms in which they participate in such debates and in the domestic, judicial and bureaucratic arenas in which they occur. To study these processes one must observe them” (*ibid.*).

This perspective suggests the importance of questions about the rights of members of ‘communities’ in terms of access to and control of resources on ‘community-owned farms’, as well as rules and practices arising from discourses and narratives in social arenas. In my field research, observations of particular moments of engagement, such as community and management meetings, provided useful insights. It was important to understand the notion of ‘community’, and membership of communities, as well as the flexibility of social boundaries within restitution communities. Hence, there is a necessity to rethink the bounded analytical construct of a ‘claimant community’, or a ‘beneficiary community’, in order to fully understand agrarian change in these settings. However, Peters (2013:556) also argues that –

“... the challenge of accounting for ‘agency and power’, ‘politics’ and ‘representations’ is to document the ways in which different actors see, think, judge and value, how they assess what they do, what they want, what they object to and so forth. This entails careful sociocultural analysis in order to capture the irreducible sociality of human existence and to document how the world is affectively and cognitively experienced, acted upon and inhabited by sentient human subjects (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff, 2012: 42, 49)”.

In this study farmworkers were my principal informants, their statements and actions providing key evidence about relevant social practices and actions. They played an active role in shaping my understanding of their circumstances. It is for that reason that my interactions with them, especially when shadowing them in the workplace and in meetings, were very useful in providing opportunities to learn about how they are affected by commercial partnerships. Collecting data on farmworkers' life histories has been helpful in understanding what has happened on the farms over time. One key entry point was to enquire into employment mobility over time, for example as a farmworker moved from one farm to another, until the period of current employment on a farm at Levubu.

I have attempted to analyse arenas of interactions as complex social realities to be assessed on their own terms, avoided treating social processes as 'weighted sums of autonomous individual acts', which is how Berry (1994) portrays 'methodological individualism' as a mode of explanation. One of the challenges that I encountered in studying commercial partnerships in Levubu was that there were often many different activities and events taking place simultaneously, reflecting the multiple processes at work in any given social arena. This challenge was not unique to this research; it is common among students of African social dynamics. These can be regarded as the multiple "rhythmic structures of social life" that need to be teased out (Guyer, 1992:468), tracing subtle changes in the temporality of social activity, which in turn open new windows onto processes of agrarian change (Berry, 1994).

Anthropological and political-sociological perspectives are a necessary supplement to political economy-inspired theorisations of the situation of farmworkers, which tend to present analyses in terms of configurations of capital and power on the national, if not international scale (Rutherford, 2014). According to Rutherford (2008a), analysis of power and politics, and the ways in which social relations shape class relations, has been largely missing. While a focus on the wider political and economic circumstances that shape agrarian labour dynamics is helpful, this perspective can limit our understanding of the micro-practices shaping political action by farmworkers and farm dwellers, particularly processes of mobilisation and demobilisation despite the fact that assisting political change is often the ostensible goal of such analyses. The concepts of 'modes of belonging', 'cultural politics' and 'local sovereignty' help us to understand questions of labour on commercial farms (Rutherford, 2014).

Identifying ‘modes of belonging’ on farms raises important methodological questions in relation to how to understand the routinised discourses, social practices, and institutional arrangements through which people make claims for resources and rights. Ethnographic methodologies such as direct observation and in-depth interviews have been useful for an understanding of the cultural politics at work within particular locales in Levubu.

1.7 Chapter synopsis

This thesis is structured into ten chapters which follow particular themes, guided by the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the study. In this chapter I have introduced the thesis, and located commercial partnerships within the literature on processes of agrarian change as conceptualised in both the Marxist political economy tradition and in related but distinct approaches such as the anthropology of ‘modes of belonging’. Following this introductory chapter, the thesis proceeds in nine further chapters.

Chapter 2 explores some of the theoretical debates on agrarian change. It develops a foundation for discussing community-owned capitalist farms and commercial partnerships by discussing Marxist analyses of the development of capitalism in agriculture, and interrogates the relevance of the classical Agrarian Question in the contemporary era of neoliberal globalisation. Some of the key concepts that constitute the central theme of the thesis are discussed in this chapter, particularly the class relation of capital and labour and the tensions and contradictions that arise thereof. It is acknowledged that tensions in commercial partnerships cannot be explained simply in terms of capital and labour, class identities and class consciousness. This chapter thus also introduces key concepts drawn from anthropology and political sociology, such as ‘modes of belonging’ and ‘cultural politics’.

Chapter 3 describes the development of large-scale commercial agriculture in South Africa, locating it within historically specific processes of land dispossession and agrarian change. It explores the central role of agricultural labour in such development, as well as the key role played by the state. The chapter also provides a brief overview of land reform in the post-apartheid period, and critically analyses the influence of conceptions of ‘commercial farming’ on land reform policies. It reviews the evidence of the impacts of land reform on livelihoods, security of employment, and farming systems. It further discusses the recent

literature on farmworkers in South Africa, and how land reform has impacted on their socio-economic position in society.

Chapter 4 discusses the research design of this study. It describes the methodology employed, outlines various research techniques used to gather data, and describes the analytical tools used in data analysis.

Chapter 5 introduces the general features of agriculture and agricultural employment in Limpopo Province. It further discusses land reform, in particular restitution and commercial partnerships in Levubu, and shows how processes of land restitution led to the formation of joint ventures, widely known as strategic partnerships. In the context of this discussion, the thesis proposes use of the concept of commercial partnerships to widen the scope of analysis in order to encompass other forms of business ventures, such as those that are either co-owned by a claimant community and agribusiness companies, or solely owned by the CPA, but managed by a commercial farmer who has some form of incentive to run the enterprises profitably. This chapter thus describes the evolution of such farming enterprises from strategic partnerships to community-owned farming enterprises managed by professional commercial farmers in terms of management contracts.

Chapter 6 reveals the profound ambiguities found within land restitution projects in Levubu structured as strategic partnerships. It shows how restored farms within such partnerships can be conceptualised as fields shaped by the competing interests, values and understandings of different agrarian classes. It analyses the underlying tensions within these enterprises, as well as cost-price squeezes and other pressures exerted on the enterprises, in their efforts to maximise profits from the capital invested in them. It explores the manifold contradictions within capitalist agriculture, central to which are pressures to ensure viability and profitability. One of the key conclusions of this chapter is that strategic partnerships are microcosms of wider processes underlying the global integration of capitalist agriculture. In this scenario, the logics of exploitation and accumulation, competition and continuous development of productive capacity are at work in capitalist farming enterprises.

Chapter 7 analyses the survey data collected during the study to explore the livelihood outcomes of commercial partnerships, with a focus on farmworker households. It reports findings on the composition of households, employment status and household income

sources, and access to land and land-based livelihoods and resources. The survey results are complemented by several case studies of households detailing the livelihood strategies of different members of the households of wage labourers, conceived of as members of fragmented classes of labour. These cases studies show how members of such households make a living amidst the constant changes in the environment within which they work. This chapter shows the many uncertainties in the lives of farmworkers, especially in relation to job security, wages and livelihoods.

Chapter 8 elaborates on the ‘Agrarian Question of labour’ and associated crises of social reproduction within contemporary capitalism, as they are experienced on restored farms in Levubu. It discusses labour recruitment and patterns of employment, labour management and the division of labour, and tensions between claimant and non-claimant workers on these farms. Labour processes are an integral part of the social relations of production. The chapter demonstrates how the organisation of commercial partnerships, especially in relation to the conditions of labour, differentially affected various categories of farmworkers.

Chapter 9 discusses the micro-politics of belonging and the role of different actors and institutions within community-owned agricultural enterprises. The focus of this chapter is on identification and ‘modes of belonging’ that define complex and overlapping social boundaries both on farms and within rural communities. Key to this discussion is a description of the range of structures of control that exist in these communities and compete for authority. Such structures include, but are not limited to, CPAs, farm management committees, and traditional councils.

Chapter 10 is a concluding chapter that sums up my analysis of the contradictions of community-owned, large-scale capitalist farming, within which a complex cultural politics of belonging plays out. It brings together key insights and empirical findings from earlier chapters and integrates them into a core argument, that the many tensions evident in Levubu since land restoration are, at root and base, derived from the fundamental underlying contradiction of capitalism, that is between classes of capital and classes of labour, which is not resolved through common ownership of the means of production. In particular, it does not resolve the Agrarian Question of labour, in Bernstein’s (2010b) sense of this concept. The chapter discusses the wider significance of research findings, especially as relating to the tensions inherent in ‘community-owned enterprises’ in capitalist economies, including co-

operatives, and in relation to restitution policies, and discusses some of the policy implications.



2. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AGRICULTURE IN CAPITALISM

2.1 Introduction

Contemporary agrarian political economy draws on Marx's analysis of the origins of capitalism in agriculture and the processes through which its core characteristics came to be established (Akram-Lodhi & Kay, 2010b:180). Changing class relations are central to the deepening of capitalist development over time. The Marxist concept of class, although in practice used in diverse ways, is usually understood in terms a conception of a category of people who occupy a common structural position within the social relations of production (Wright & Perrone, 1977:33).

Agrarian political economy investigates 'the social relations and dynamics of production and reproduction, property and power in agrarian formations and their processes of change, both historical and contemporary' (Bernstein, 2010b:1). As a starting point, it is thus important to analyse the social relations of production within a particular society in order to uncover the class positions of different actors. Analysis of class structure in a capitalist mode of production is centred on two fundamental aspects: ownership of the means of production by *capitalists*, and sale of labour power by *workers* and purchased by the capitalists (Wright & Perrone, 1977). Further, in all class societies there are people who neither sell their labour power nor purchase the labour power of others, but do own means of production. These are referred to as *petty commodity producers*, who combine in themselves the class positions of petty capitalists and labourers (Neocosmos, 1993:42; Gibbon and Neocosmos, 1985: 191-192; Cousins, 2011:13).

Having regard to the focus of this thesis, (the social relations and dynamics of production and reproduction on community-owned farming enterprises, in which community members are both workers and owners who participate in decision- and policy-making), the centrality and complexity of class relations is key. This chapter argues that the core contradictions of petty commodity production emerge clearly in this context, since community-owned farming enterprises also combine the class positions of both capital and labour within a single entity. It also argues that the micro-politics on these farms cannot be explained in terms of class identities alone. Analysing processes of social and political identity formation, and thus

competing ‘modes of belonging’, complement class analysis in exploring the tensions and contradictions present in community-owned farming enterprises.

This chapter discusses theories and concepts derived from both Marxist political economy and anthropological and political-sociological perspectives. Not all of these theories and concepts will be put directly to work in the interpretation of the empirical presented in later chapters. However, it is important to show the interconnections between different components of this version of political economy. This is because the Marxist approach to agrarian change attempts to provide a coherent account of the underlying dynamics of a large number of phenomena in past and contemporary economy and society, and it is difficult to present only some aspects of the approach and not show how they are strongly interconnected with others.

The chapter begins by briefly explicating Marx’s powerful and suggestive analysis of capitalism as a system of production. Then it shifts from the economic sociology of class relations to perspectives drawn from anthropology and political sociology, which focus mainly on themes of identity formation and modes of belonging, factors that influence political agency. These theories and concepts are knitted together to develop a conceptual framework for the study. The framework assists in teasing out the wider implications of research findings and exploring the prospects for community-owned capitalist farms. It underpins my arguments about the inevitability of the pressures and tensions that arise within these arrangements.

2.2 Marxist analyses of capitalism

According to Brenner (1977), capitalist social relations necessarily involve processes of accumulation (or expanded reproduction), which drive technological change. Patnaik defines capitalism in terms of commodification of livelihoods, production for the market, use of ‘free’ wage labour, and the reinvestment of profit to produce technological change (Patnaik, 1986; 1990). Das (2012) draws on Lenin’s perspectives, espoused also by Chattopadhyay (1990:82), to suggest that commodity production and the use of wage-labour are the chief distinguishing features of capitalist agriculture. For Das (2012), Marx’s concept of the subsumption of labour under capital is particularly useful. Bernstein (2010b:1) defines capitalism as ‘a system of production and reproduction based on the fundamental social

relation between capital and labour: capital exploits labour in its pursuit of profit and accumulation, while labour has to work for capital to obtain its means of subsistence'. As Akram-Lodhi & Kay (2010a:180) point out, capitalism is contradictory: exploitative in its construction of the differential material interests of capital and labour, on the one hand, but because of its capacity to develop the material forces of production, a necessary precondition for a more economically prosperous and socially humane society, on the other.

2.2.1 The labour theory of value and capitalist social relations of production

Marx's analysis of value has been an object of innumerable criticisms and contestation. The labour theory of value, which is central to Marxist political economy, '...seeks to trace out how labour-time exercised within capitalist production is attached to market forms, with corresponding consequences' (Fine, *et al.*, 2010:70). It expresses how the value of commodities can be reduced to socially necessary labour-time, reflecting its social utility (Dunn, 2011:3). It provides an abstract basis on which to understand the social relations of capitalist society; it attaches 'complex forms such as price and profit to simple underlying determinants', and it addresses the dialectics of change and reproduction (Fine, 2001:41). The labour theory of value addresses value in the context of the accumulation of capital, and its laws of production and reproduction through distribution and exchange (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2004; Fine *et al.*, 2010).

Referring to Volume I of Marx's *Capital*, Fine (2001) asserts that value exists only in societies dominated by commodity production. Dunn (2011), citing Marx (1973:532), reminds us that value is determined by 'objectified labour time whatever form it may take'. However, this does not mean that value is derived from simply the quantity of work involved (Elson, 1979:132, cited in Dunn, 2011). The process of exchange establishes the equivalence between different types of labour used in production. The relation between producers, i.e. relationships between their labours as a material process, is expressed as a relationship between commodities, and relationships between different use values are expressed in terms of relative prices. Thus value is a social relation between producers, and this is peculiar to a commodity producing society. This abstraction is important because of the light that it sheds on class relations (Fine, 2001).

Fine (2001:43) reminds us that in Marxist political economy value theory underpins the following notions: that classes of capital and labour are divided by conflicts within the sphere of production; that the accumulation of capital is an imperative for the capitalist system; and that there are definite methods by which the expansion of value is pursued. The significance of analysing production as a value-creating process, and measuring the flow of commodities between individual contractors in terms of value, is that it demystifies the social relationships between 'men' (i.e. people) that are hidden in the sphere of exchange, or circulation. It redirects attention to a set of social relationships between people underlying the labour process. These cannot be discovered on the basis of the quantities of commodities produced by a system, nor on the basis of the price system.

The capitalist mode of production creates the conditions under which wage workers are exploited, because they produce 'surplus value' i.e. value that is higher than that for which they are rewarded through payment of wages. It is vitally important to explore the question of the production of surplus value when every commodity apparently exchanges at its value. The argument is that the commodity 'labour power' is purchased by capitalists at a value that bears no necessary quantitative relation to the amount of labour performed. Surplus value, therefore, is generated from the ability of the capitalist to extract more working time, hence value, than is required to purchase labour power (Fine *et al.*, 2010: *op cit.*). The very process of commodity production, involving the sale of labour power, generates surplus value and leads to its reinvestment in production, resulting in technological change. Marx deploys the concepts of absolute and relative surplus value to shed light on the extraction of surplus value by capitalists.

Analysis of the forms in which labour produces value and surplus value offers insights into processes of exploitation. In the initial stages of capitalism, the *formal subsumption* of wage-labour is characterised by four properties: (i) there is no extra-economic coercion in the sphere of production, in the sense that labourers who do not own the means of production are generally free to choose their employers; (ii) no more labour time is used in production than is socially necessary, given the prevalence of competition to reduce the cost of production of commodities for sale; (iii) an economic relation of subordination exists at the point of production, as the worker is supervised by the capitalist; and (iv) the means of production and consumption are bought in the market and confront the worker as capital (Fine *et al.*, 2010; Das, 2012).

The purely formal subsumption of wage-labourers means that capital takes over pre-existing labour processes without revolutionising them. It subordinates labour on the basis of the technical conditions within which labour has been carried on up to that point in history. Formal subsumption does not by itself change the socio-technical conditions of production. The necessary part of labour-time, i.e. the labour time that the worker expends in producing her/his own means of subsistence, is not decreased through technological change during the early stages of capitalism. The only way more surplus can be produced is by increasing the surplus labour-time, by making workers work longer or intensifying the pace of work. Therefore, absolute surplus value (the surplus value generated by increasing the length of the working day, thus increasing the surplus labour time) is dominant in the first stages of capitalist development.

The *real subsumption* of labour to capital is associated with the capitalist mode of production proper. It entails reduction of necessary labour-time through the use of technology, manifesting in an increase in the ratio of constant capital (means of production) to variable capital (labour). As a result, labour productivity increases. At this stage, the appropriation of surplus value in its *relative* form dominates, i.e. the surplus value generated through increases in productivity, thus reducing workers' necessary labour time in proportion to the surplus value extracted.

Formal and real subsumption of labour together constitutes “accumulation by exploitation” in contrast to Harvey’s (2003:144) notion of “accumulation by dispossession”¹¹. Provided that production has the four characteristics of Marx’s formal subsumption, production is capitalist in character, regardless of whether there is real subsumption, the second moment of accumulation by exploitation.

¹¹ The concept of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ is an adaptation of Luxemburg’s arguments on primitive accumulation, administered in part through financial institutions (both corporate and public), state powers and what many now refer to as the Wall Street-Treasury-Washington alliance that lies at the core of contemporary forms of imperialism; e.g. the Structural Adjustment Programmes of the IMF (Harvey, 2007:65).

2.2.2 The capitalist mode of production: generalised commodity production, accumulation imperatives and primitive accumulation

Capitalism as a mode of production involves three inter-related features, namely, generalised commodity production, the imperative of accumulation, and primitive accumulation. Firstly, when products typically take the form of commodities, and production of goods and services as commodities is geared towards market exchange in order to make profit rather than for immediate use, this is referred to as *generalised commodity production* (Bernstein, 2007a:39). Capitalist social property relation operates within a strenuously competitive environment that drives innovation and productivity (of both labour and land) (Bernstein, 2007a: 29), in a systemic development of the productive forces that is unique to capitalism (Bernstein, 2010b:25). However, the production of social use values, market exchanges and profit making are intimately interlinked. Just as products embody social use values, i.e. production for persons unknown and reached through the market, they are created by social labour in the abstract, by wage workers unknown, hired through the labour market and disciplined within competing firms by the profit imperative (Bernstein, 2010b).

To summarise, the capitalist mode of production is characterised by the production of social use value and the exchange of the products of concrete labour that exist, and contribute to value, as abstract social labour (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2004:21). The notion of “generalised commodity production” does not suggest that all elements of life are necessarily and comprehensively commodified, but means that social reproduction cannot take place outside the circuits and disciplines of commodity relations. Marx refers to this as the “dull compulsion of economic forces” (Bernstein, 2009b:29).

Secondly, a related key characteristic of capitalist production is its *accumulation imperative*. In this mode of production profits are the essential driving force of capitalist enterprises. Enterprises invest productive capital in the means of production and enable labour power to make new commodities, creating value as a necessary step towards the realisation of profit. Labour power and the means of production, as discussed above, are presupposed to be widely available as commodities. However, labour power is the most fundamental, because it is the only commodity whose use in production creates greater value than its own value. Profit is then reinvested to make more profit, in an endless cycle of accumulation of further production and profit, also known as the expanded reproduction of capital (Bernstein,

2010b:26-26). Whilst capitalism organises production as a definite social relationship between capitalists and workers, the capitalists are subject to social control through competition and the need for profitability. For both capitalists and workers, external powers exert control over them.

Thirdly, *primitive accumulation* refers to processes through which pre-capitalist societies undergo a transition to capitalism. This occurs under non-market relations and dynamics, often involving a degree of extra-economic coercion, that are distinct from the market-driven compulsion of economic forces (*ibid.*). Notions of primitive accumulation have their analytical basis in the original transition from feudalism¹² to capitalism in England. These are then extended to other parts of Europe, and to the old agrarian civilisations of North Africa and Asia during the period of modern imperialism. The concept of imperialism is complex and has been used differently by different authors. However, it must be seen in the context of the entire history of capitalism on a world scale (Brewer, 1990).

A transition to capitalism requires a process of primary accumulation that establishes the conditions of 'market dependence', which signifies the necessity of generalised commodity production for social reproduction, the essential condition and characteristic of capitalism (Fairbairn *et al.*, 2014:29). The logic of a capitalist social property relation, not least the condition of 'market dependence,' drives the growth of productivity of both labour and land in agriculture, especially through technical innovations and new technical and social divisions of labour. This is what is termed the development of the productive forces. This is a key attribute of the 'classic Agrarian Question', which centred on the establishment of the conditions of increased productivity in farming, and was originally conceived as theorising the transition from feudalism to agrarian capitalism. The second aspect of the Agrarian Question concerns contributions by agriculture to processes of industrialisation. Thus primitive accumulation can be linked with the dispossession of peasants, together with the growth of productivity in farming required for the development of manufacturing industry and other non-agricultural sectors (Bernstein, 2010b).

¹² Feudalism refers to those pre-capitalist agrarian formations characterised by social relations between landed property and peasant labour; the surplus labour of the latter is appropriated by the former through rent of one kind or another.

The existence of labour as a commodity is an essential feature of capitalism. The separation of labour from ownership of the means of production is a necessary condition for the ‘freeing of labour’ so that it can be available for capitalist development. If workers had unmediated access to the means of production, the products of their labour rather than their capacity to work would be sold. When labour is ‘freed’ and the workers depend on someone else to provide for their social reproduction needs, then labour can be commoditised. Establishment of these social relations is fundamental to the birth of capitalism. As illustrated by the example of the emergence of capitalism in Britain, such separation was imposed by large landowners, the aristocracy and the state, rather than being the cumulative outcome of individual thrift and devotion to work by small farmers and people within family enterprises. It entailed conversion of the traditional (i.e. feudal) use of existing means of production and labour power into their use in capitalist enterprises. Once this was established, the process of competitive accumulation gathered its own momentum.

The secret of what Marx called the ‘primitive’ accumulation of capital lay in the expropriation of the agricultural population, as well as the destruction of the rights or customs of independent cultivators. The combined effect of these transformations was to turn the majority of peasants into wage workers, creating a potential source of surplus value (Fine and Saad-Filho, 2004:40). But workers can also be redundant to capital. Bernstein (2007b:3), citing (Marx 1976/1867: 782, 798), states that -

“... it is capitalist accumulation itself that constantly produces...a relatively redundant working population, i.e. a population which is superfluous to capital’s average requirements for its own valorization, and is therefore a surplus population...The fact that the means of production and the productivity of labour increase more rapidly than the productive population expresses itself...in the inverse form that the working population always increases more rapidly than the valorization requirement of capital...”

I take up this issue in the South African context in Chapter 3.

2.2.3 Labour and labour power

What distinguishes a capitalist mode of production from all other modes is the sale and purchase of the workers’ capacity to labour, and the use of such capacity in commodity production aimed at profit. In Marx’s terms, the ‘capacity to work’ is referred to as labour

power, whereas its application is labour (Fine and Saad-Filho, 2004). The notion of commoditised labour power highlights the most distinctive feature of the capitalist mode of production, the relationship between owners of the means of production and workers who exchange their capacity to work. The significance of labour power is that it is the only commodity whose use in production creates greater value than its own value. Hence investment in hiring in labour power (as variable capital) is necessary in a capitalist system (Bernstein, 2010b). Labour power has a particular use value, which is that it allows for the creation of other use values. The use values created by labour are necessary for the existence of the society; for example, food, clothing, houses as well as immaterial forms of production like education and health services. In capitalist societies use values are produced for sale; as such they embody abstract labour time, or value (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2004:23).

On the other side of the class divide are the capitalists. They control both workers and the product of their labour through their command of wage payments and their ownership of tools, machinery and raw materials, the means of production. The capitalist monopoly of the means of production ties the worker to the wage relation. Social class identities and relations are essential in distinguishing one kind of economy from another, as well as differences within an economy. This goes beyond the property and distributional relations that define the modes of production, i.e. ‘who owns what’ and what do they get?’, to questions of forms of control of labour and its products, as well as other aspects of social organisation, and thus include answering the questions ‘who does what?’ and ‘what do they do with it? [i.e. with what they get]’ (Bernstein 2010b).

2.2.4 Classes of labour in the countryside

Analysis of labour regimes and labour processes on commercial agricultural estates exposes the fluidity and ambiguity of such categories of labour as landless labour, tenant farmer, and small peasants (Banaji, 1997; 2007, cited in Bernstein, 2010b). The class differentiation of family farmers also creates ambiguity. ‘Rural labour beyond the farm’ is a term applied not only to fully ‘proletarianised’ rural workers who are landless, and hence unable to farm on their own account, but also to marginal farmers or those too poor to farm as a major component of their livelihood and reproduction, and who therefore have to sell their labour power. Both these categories of rural labour might be employed locally on the farms of

neighbouring capitalists and petty commodity producers, or seasonally in more distant zones of capitalist farming, sometimes elsewhere in their own country and sometimes even in another country (Bernstein, 2010b:110).

The concept of ‘classes of labour’, therefore, refers to -

“the growing numbers ... who now depend - directly *and indirectly* - on the sale of their labour power for their own daily reproduction ... They have to pursue their reproduction in conditions of growing income insecurity and ‘pauperization’ as well as employment insecurity and the downward pressures exerted by the neoliberal erosion of social provision for those in standard wage employment, who are shrinking as a proportion of classes of labour in most regions of the South, and in some instances in absolute terms as well” (Bernstein, 2006:455).

Bernstein (2010b:111) further interrogates the meaning of ‘poor farmers’, and suggests that they can be included in the concept of a ‘global informal working class’¹³, a phrase used by Davies (2006:178). Bernstein suggests that poor farmers might not be dispossessed of all means of production, but neither do the majority of them possess sufficient means to reproduce themselves, which established the limits of their ‘viability’ as petty commodity producers. As the working poor of the South, they ‘...pursue their reproduction through insecure, oppressive and typically increasingly scarce wage employment and/or a range of likewise precarious small-scale and ‘informal economy’ survival activity, including marginal farming. In effect, livelihoods are pursued through complex *combinations* of wage employment and self-employment... many pursue their means of reproduction across different sites of the social division of labour...’ (Bernstein, 2010b:111).

Combinations of employment and self-employment are entered into across different sites of the social division of labour. Using the notion of “footloose labour”, Bernstein suggests that the social locations that classes of labour inhabit, combine and move between, make for ever-more fluid boundaries, where the masses of surplus labour, the informal working class and formal and informal economies intersect with each other. It thus becomes clear that there is no “homogenous proletarian condition” within the global South, other than the essential

¹³ The notion of the informal working class is often used in an urban rather than a rural context, but Davis's book *Planet of Slums* (2006), resonates with what Bernstein designates as “classes of labour”. The notion of ‘economic informality’ prevalent in Latin American cities since 1980, is allied to what Bernstein terms the ‘fragmentation of labour’, and is applicable to the countrysides of the South in all their diversity. (Bernstein, 2010b)

condition of the need for people to meet their reproduction needs through the sale of their labour power (Bernstein, 2007b:6). Therefore, as Bernstein (2010b:111) argues, the working poor of the countryside “defy inherited assumptions of fixed and uniform notions of “worker”, “farmer”, “petty trader”, “urban”, “rural”, “employed” and “self-employed””.

2.2.5 Reproduction: securing the conditions of future production

In *Capital*, Marx’s analysis of a capitalist economy reveals the existence of two broad sectors, i.e. the means of *production*, which have to be produced through purchase of ‘constant’ capital (i.e. investment in the means of production); and the means of *consumption* acquired through purchases by workers out of wages or ‘variable’ capital (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2004). Both constant capital and variable capital have to be sourced from surplus value, and this must be understood in the context of the reproduction of capital as a whole. Generally, reproduction is about the need to constantly produce the conditions of production as well as the means of production, of current and future producers, and of the social relations between producers, as well as between producers and others (Bernstein, 2010b:18). All the requirements of reproduction in the future have to be met from what is produced now.

Bernstein suggests that various kinds of reproduction ‘funds’ exist, that reflect demands on what is produced. These include the *consumption fund* that meets the immediate and daily needs for food, shelter, rest and other basics, and the *replacement fund*, which relates to the tools used in cultivation, machinery and other means of production becoming worn-out and needing to be replaced, and also other inputs that tend to be used up more quickly. Part of the claims on the replacement fund is for *generational reproduction*, which relates to producing the next generation of producers. *Ceremonial funds* refer to allocation of the products of labour to activities that create and recreate the “cultures and social relations” among farming communities. Lastly, there is the *fund of rent*, which refers to payments that producers (farmers) have to make to others; for example, landlords, or others who might for example be moneylenders from whom farmers borrow against the value of the next harvest. (Bernstein, 2010b:19-20)

Replacement and ceremonial funds require a ‘surplus’ product over and beyond what is required for immediate consumption by producers. This is true for all societies, e.g.

subsistence-oriented, feudal and capitalist societies. The capacity to appropriate surplus labour brings into being social relations of exploitation. However, what distinguishes capitalist societies from the others is that they are defined by the exploitation of labour, and driven by an imperative to expand the scale of production and increase productivity, in order to make a profit. To the contrary, in agrarian class societies such as feudalism, a surplus had to be produced above the needs of the producers in order to support the ruling classes, but without the necessary requirement that it be re-invested in production, whereas in subsistence economies producers reproduce themselves at relatively constant levels of consumption.

To take this explication of the basic features of Marxist political economy one step further, I draw on Bernstein's (2010b:104-105) summary of Marx, who proposed three key analytical concepts, the *simple reproduction of capital*, the *expanded reproduction of capital*, and *social reproduction*. In the simple reproduction of capital, capitalists spend all the surplus value appropriated from workers on their own consumption and merely repeat the previous pattern of production. In the expanded reproduction of capital, the capitalists do not consume the entire surplus value. They spend part of it in buying additional means of production, to enable heightened capital accumulation to take place. In this case, capitalists purchase further means of production for the next period, so that that production exceeds current rates, hence allowing expanded reproduction.

With regard to social reproduction, labour power is only reproduced within the circuits of capital insofar as the provision of wage goods is adequate for that purpose. But, by virtue of the workers' freedom once the working day is over, capital must eventually release control over the process of reproduction, and this is when social reproduction takes over. This involves a complex array of 'non-economic relations, processes, structures, powers and conflicts' (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2004:70).

Katz (2001) focusses on the social practices through which people reproduce themselves on a daily and generational basis, and through which the social relations and material bases of capitalism are renewed over time. She defines social reproduction as follows:

“Social reproduction is the fleshy, messy, and indeterminate stuff of everyday life. It is also a set of structured practices that unfold in dialectical relation with production, with which it is mutually constitutive and in tension. Social reproduction encompasses daily and long-term reproduction, both of the means

of production and the labour power to make them work. ... it hinges upon the biological reproduction of the labour force, both generationally and on a daily basis, through the acquisition and distribution of the means of existence, including food, shelter, clothing and health care” (Katz, 2001:711).

Katz further suggests that for Marxists, social reproduction is much more than this, since ‘it also encompasses the reproduction of the labour force at a certain (and fluid) level of differentiation and expertise’ (*ibid.*). Interpreted narrowly, social reproduction thus includes those processes necessary for the reproduction of the workforce, both biologically and as compliant waged workers. More generally, however, social reproduction is how society as a whole is reproduced over time (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2004: *op cit.*). Social reproduction thus has political, economic, cultural and environmental aspects. For example, the political-economic aspect of social reproduction encompasses the reproduction of work knowledge and skills, the practices that maintain and reinforce class and other categories of difference, and cultural forms and practices that reinforce and naturalise capitalism (Katz, 2001). Social reproduction thus ‘covers the entire ground between the abstract category of capital and the empirical reality of capitalism’ (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2004:70).

2.3 The political economy of agrarian change

According to Fairbairn *et al.* (2014:656-657), agrarian political economy has expanded in the last few decades to examine questions of how capital in the contemporary world is seizing hold of land and natural resources, destroying and restructuring social and natural relations. Therefore, as global capitalism penetrates agrarian formations and commons in new ways, the theoretical legacy of the ‘classic agrarian question continues to be reconstructed’ (*ibid.*). This section begins by discussing the key features of capitalist agriculture in the contemporary era of capitalist globalisation, where national economies are located within a rapidly changing world economy.

2.3.1 Capitalist agriculture

The literature on agrarian change suggests that, in addition to the growth of large-scale agricultural enterprises, some small-scale and household-based farming operations survived through the era of industrial capitalism in the late 19th century, and continue to do so to today. Thus a great diversity of farming enterprises exists across the world of contemporary

capitalism. This diversity is evident in relation to the social organisation of farming enterprises, the distribution and degree of concentration of capital in farms; the size and scale of farming; the extent of mechanisation; the variety of modes of integration in markets for means of production and outputs; and the ways in which they are affected by state policies and practices (Bernstein, 1994; Cousins 2011). The diversity of types of farming in capitalism is far greater than that of the branches of production to which farming is linked, both 'backwards' and 'forwards', i.e. to economic activity both 'upstream' and 'downstream' of farming itself.

The crucial attributes of capital intensive (and thus less labour-absorbing) agricultural subsectors include the fact that enterprises must seek to employ economies of both scale and scope in the production of outputs. These are principally destined for export markets, located mainly, but not exclusively, in the advanced capitalist economies. These farms operate in terms of the law of value and the logic of market imperatives, which means that they must continually strive to improve their competitiveness by reducing per unit costs and improving per unit yields. These operations forge linkages with agro-food transnational capital operating at various levels in finance, input supply, and food processing, distribution and retailing. The linkages between export-oriented capitalist farms and agro-food transnational capital may be direct, through the physical ownership of farms, or in the control of production through contract farming. They also manifest indirectly through public or private middlemen that link on-farm production, global processing, and global wholesale and retail distribution (Akram-Lodhi & Kay 2010a:178).

Petty commodity producing agricultural subsectors have also become increasingly bound to the market imperative. Their products are sold on markets subject to the law of value, and they participate in the market for labour-power that is productive of surplus value. Members of households from this subsector often straddle both farm and off-farm activity, and many producers have thus become increasingly reliant on income arising from the sale of their labour (Akram-Lodhi & Kay, 2010a:180).

Akram-Lodhi and Kay (2010a:178) argue that the dominance of large-scale capital in world agriculture has produced a global agrarian crisis, in which under-consumption coexists with (and collides with) over-consumption. Globalisation represents a new phase of the concentration, centralisation and mobility of capital. It further intensifies the "fragmentation

of labour, which pursues its reproduction in conditions ever more insecure” (Bernstein, 2010b:111). Bernstein shows that due to such fragmentation, ‘wage employment is combined with informal sector and survivalist activity across a range of sites: urban and rural, agriculture and non-agricultural, wage and self-employment’ (*ibid.*). The fragmentation of labour and its consequences, together with increasing demands for greater stability and security of rural livelihoods, appear to drive contemporary struggles over land in the global South, and inform demands for land by the rural poor in the South African countryside.

Given the continued co-existence across the world of large-scale commercial farms and petty commodity producers, re-theorisation of the classic Agrarian Question should aim to make sense of this ‘substantive diversity’¹⁴ (Bernstein & Byres, 2001). It is notable that the state forms, economic systems and labour regimes that subordinated peasants in the past have now become incorporated into global circuits of production, trade and finance. The research site in this study, the Levubu Valley, has the character of a highly capital-intensive farming area that supplies global markets, and is thus subject to the dynamics of a globalised agro-food regime. This helps to explain the origins of the strategic partnership model (see Chapter 5).

2.3.2 Agrarian Questions of capital and labour

Byres (1986; 1991) and Bernstein (1996; 2009a) suggest the analytical deconstruction of the classic Agrarian Question into three interconnected broad themes, namely a problematic of ‘production’ which denotes the development of the productive forces in agriculture, in transitions from pre-capitalist to capitalist agriculture; a problematic of ‘politics’ which entails the role of peasant classes, small farmers and farmworkers - ‘agrarian classes of labour’ - in struggles for democracy and socialism; and a problematic of ‘accumulation’, which focusses on the contributions of capitalist agriculture to processes of industrialisation (Bernstein, 1996).

The foremost concern of the classic Agrarian Question centred on the establishment of the conditions of increased productivity in farming. This has been understood in terms of transitions to fully developed capitalist relations in agriculture, for example, through the

¹⁴ This is a phrase coined by Kautsky (1898) that helps understand complexities such as the coexistence of peasant capitalism and large-scale capitalist agricultural sectors and enterprises in a national economy.

‘Prussian path’¹⁵, versus the class differentiation of petty commodity producers (the ‘American path’), as well as by various combinations of these two dynamics and other trajectories¹⁶. Transitions involve the emergence of full proletarianised labour as a result of the dispossession of tenant peasantries by capitalising landed property, and/or from class differentiation of the peasantry (Bernstein, 2002; Cousins, 2011). Such transitions do not occur through uniform and unvarying pathways; state policies and interventions influence the nature of agrarian transitions, given the varying strength of landed property, agrarian capital, agricultural labour and emerging industrial capital (Cousins, 2013).

The classic Agrarian Question was formulated in terms of the conditions that allow and the processes that unfold in a transition to fully-fledged capitalism within a single social formation. Bernstein (2009a) suggests that this can be regarded as an ‘internalist’ perspective, centred on the class structures and dynamics internal to the countryside of particular social formations. Bernstein argues that this ‘classic’ Agrarian Question is the Agrarian Question of *capital*, which subsumes that of labour, in the sense that its logic accomplishes the social transformation and technical development of capital in ways that contribute to a broader process of industrialisation.

Controversy rages on as to whether or not rural social formations where none of the transformations discussed above have taken place are still confronted with an unresolved Agrarian Question. It thus raises questions about the emergence of a ‘new’ or ‘contemporary’ Agrarian Question. Some have suggested that the continued politics of land and agriculture in the Third World is symptomatic of the continuing salience and relevance of the classic Agrarian Question (Akram-Lodhi & Kay, 2010a). Cousins (2013), however, cautions that attempts to directly apply conceptual models drawn from classic formulations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Europe to other places and times constitute a flawed approach. It is problematic partly because of the ambiguities and tensions inherent in the original formulations, especially issues of the differential timing of transitions in a changing world-

¹⁵ The ‘Prussian’ path in Lenin’s conceptualisation denotes a transition to capitalism on the basis of the dispossession of the peasants through ‘extra-economic’ means, and the transformation of feudal ruling classes into capitalists. As occurred in South Africa, it results in the establishment and entrenchment of large agrarian and industrial capital. Some regard this as ‘capitalism from above’. This can be contrasted against capitalism ‘from below’, which results from peasants’ differentiation into different classes (Lenin, 1972; Cousins, 2009).

¹⁶ Bernstein (2010b) offers a useful schematic illustration of the diverse pathways possible in the development of capitalist social relations in rural economies.

historical context, the great ‘substantive diversity’ apparent in different contexts, conditions and processes (Byres, 1991; 1996; 2012), and the general tendency to propose predominantly ‘internal’ forms of explanation¹⁷ (Bernstein, 1996).

Owing to the world-historical nature of capitalist development, the international dimension is central to any rethinking of the Agrarian Question. Agriculture, as will be illustrated in following chapters, is increasingly dominated by new forms of capital in agri-business both upstream and downstream of farming. Agribusiness capital is also increasingly global in its scope. Weis (2007) argues that the high levels of productivity achieved by capitalist agriculture have not eliminated hunger. High levels of waste co-exist with the malnutrition of hundreds of millions of people, including in the rural areas of the global South. The ecological contradictions of capitalist agriculture have also emerged ever more clearly over time.

Contrasting articulations of the Agrarian Question by different authors such as Bernstein (2010b), Araghi (2009) and McMichael (1997; 2009) have one main thing in common – a view that the globalisation of capital has had adverse effects on subordinate classes of labour, especially in relation to the terms and conditions of their reproduction. Thus Bernstein (2007a; 2007b; 2009a) argues that the Agrarian Question of capital has now been resolved on a world-historical scale, but that the contemporary Agrarian Question is one of *labour*, or of the *dispossessed*, who face an ongoing crisis of social reproduction. This is a perspective that informs this thesis and its presentation of in-depth case studies from Levubu on the impacts of commercial partnerships on farmworkers’ households.

The starting point for examination of the Agrarian Question of labour is the growing proletarianisation of labour, combined with the diverse and varying forms of its fragmentation. This era is characterised by the relative shrinkage of formal wage employment, insecure forms of waged and self-employment (and their various combinations), and the reduction of real incomes derived from these sources. The fragmentation of labour can be understood as a consequence of the systematic crisis of livelihoods that enable the reproduction of labour (Bernstein, 2004). As discussed above, globalisation expels people from agriculture without absorbing their labour elsewhere in the economy, i.e. “their labour is

¹⁷ Internal to the economic logic of agrarian modes of production, to specific agrarian class formation, and to particular social formations.

surplus to the requirements of a more efficient agricultural sector” (Li, 2009:1). They become ‘surplus populations’ of the dispossessed when their land is needed but their labour is not (Li T. M., 2009). In similar vein, White *et al.* (2012: 624-625), quoting Arrighi and Moore (2001: 75-76) suggest that –

“...contemporary forms of agrarian transformation ... expel people from agriculture without absorbing their labour in manufactures or elsewhere in the economy, thus making them surplus ‘to capital’s requirements for labour ... the underlying contradiction of a world capitalist system that promotes the formation of a world proletariat but cannot accommodate a generalized living wage (that is, the most basic of reproduction costs), far from being solved, has become more acute than ever”

Rural classes of labour, according to Bernstein (2007a), include the majority of small-scale farmers in the South. These are classes that are neither dispossessed of all means of reproducing themselves, nor are they in possession of sufficient means to reproduce themselves through their own efforts. They increasingly depend, directly or indirectly, on the sale of their labour power for their daily reproduction. They have to “pursue their reproduction through insecure and oppressive wage employment and/or a range of precarious small-scale and insecure informal sector activities” (Bernstein, 2010b:111). This crisis constitutes a new Agrarian Question of labour, which is shot through by class tensions and contradictions arising from peoples’ struggles to construct a precarious livelihood in the face of the further development of the productive forces of capital.

2.3.3 Theorisation of petty commodity production

Petty commodity production as a concept refers to ‘a phenomenal category of commodity producers who possess the means of production necessary to produce commodities and who engage in production on the basis of unpaid household labour alone. It is assumed that such producers are capable of reproducing themselves as private producers of commodities without employing wage-labour and without selling (part of) their labour power’ (Gibbon & Neocosmos, 1985:170).

Gibbon & Neocosmos (1985) suggest that peasant petty commodity producers, on one hand, and capitalists and proletarians, on the other, are not valid polar opposites. Seeing proletarians and peasants as polar opposites, and peasants as pre-capitalist ‘left-overs’, does

not move us forward. Viewing the peasantry as a pre-capitalist or non-capitalist class is restrictive and fails to pose critical questions about its contemporary conditions of existence (Neocosmos, 1993). Petty commodity producing enterprises are equally the product of capitalist relations. The class basis of a petty commodity producing petty bourgeoisie is constantly produced by the contradiction between capital and wage labour, the essential production relation of capitalist society (Gibbon & Neocosmos, 1985:168).

Although distinct classes of wage labourers and capitalists are effects of a relation between capital and wage-labour, collective identities of these kinds need not exist in all capitalist formations (Gibbon & Neocosmos, 1985). The contradictions which underlie the existence of these classes have to be discovered through a process of critical analysis and the explication of their conditions of existence:

“...to suggest that a social formation is capitalist by virtue of being founded on the contradiction between wage-labour and capital is not to assert that all – even the majority of – enterprises in this social formation will conform to a ‘type’, in which capitalists and wage labourers are present, and which constitutes the measure in relation to which all other forms deviate. What make enterprises, and more generally social formations, capitalist or not, is not their supposed essential features, but the relations which structurally and historically explain their existence” (Gibbon & Neocosmos, 1985:169).

In this perspective petty commodity producers, whether agricultural or not, are founded on the contradictory combination of capital and labour in a single enterprise (Neocosmos, 1993). In simple terms, this form of production involves a combination of the class ‘places’ of both capital and labour. In the context of farming, capital takes the form of land, tools, seeds, fertilisers and chemicals, and labour takes the form of family or household unpaid labour. So petty commodity producers own their means of production, unlike, for example, landless workers, and are in this sense ‘capitalists’. But they also use their own labour power, unlike capitalists who hire the labour of workers (Cousins, 2011:10).

Bernstein (2010b:103) refers to this as the “contradictory unity” of class places. However, these class places are not evenly distributed within farming households, especially given gendered divisions of property, labour, income and spending within such households. There is a contradiction between capital and labour, between reproducing the means of production and reproducing the producers. In other words, the contradiction involves having to decide

between the distribution of income to replacement funds and funds of rent, on one hand, or funds for consumption and generational reproduction, on the other.

Cousins (2011) argues that some petty commodity producers seize opportunities to produce a substantial surplus over and beyond the amount needed to secure their simple reproduction as both capital and labour, and then reinvest all or part of this surplus in extending the material base of their production unit. Such producers, therefore, shift from a dynamic of simple reproduction to one of *expanded reproduction*. This development has implications for labour, because it means that such producers need to begin to hire in significant amounts of wage labour. The farm then assumes the character of a normal capitalist enterprise that operates in terms of the logic of profit and loss, within the competitive markets of a capitalist economy.

Another effect of the inherently contradictory combination of different class places within petty commodity production is the tendency for the differentiation of such producers into distinct classes to take place, e.g. into rich, middle, and poor peasants, as suggested in Lenin's classic (1964) text.¹⁸ Cousins (2011) suggests that the extent to which petty commodity producers are able to successfully navigate these contradictions, deal with a variety of external risks and shocks, or make use of opportunities for expansion and growth of their enterprises, is always uneven. What emerges from these dynamics of petty commodity production is a generalised tendency towards class differentiation in the countryside.

This perspective on petty commodity production has informed my analysis of tensions within community-owned large-scale commercial farming enterprises in Levubu. Here, too, we find workers who are also, at least nominally, owners of the enterprise, thus combining the class places of capital and labour. These enterprises involve distinctive property regimes and relations of production that tend to generate severe tensions and conflicts, and which ultimately derive from the fundamental class antagonisms of capitalism.

¹⁸ Rich peasants are those who are able to engage in expanded reproduction, middle ones are those able to meet the demands of simple reproduction, and poor peasants are those unable to survive without squeezing either their capital or their labour power, or both.

2.4 From economic to political sociology: modes of belonging and the cultural politics of recognition

Political economy perspectives situate rural wage labour within processes of capitalist accumulation (Bernstein, 1996; 1997; Sender & Johnston, 2004). Such analyses tend to highlight the unequal social relations of farm production that adversely affect the working and living conditions of farmworkers, and encourage critical reflection on the economic ramifications of their lack of access to land and consequent constraints on strategies to improve their livelihood possibilities. These questions are sharpened when considered in the light of Bernstein's (2004; 2006) argument that while the Agrarian Question of *capital* has now been resolved, the Agrarian Question of *labour* has not. I concur with Rutherford (2014) that this kind of materialist theorisation needs to be supplemented by other perspectives, as discussed below, to provide for a nuanced account of power and politics; and the extent to which they shape social relations..

Having regard to the different ways in which farmworker issues have been approached in Zimbabwe, i.e. welfarist¹⁹, workerist²⁰, transformative²¹, and nationalist perspectives, and further noting a preference for the transformative approach, Moyo *et al.* (2000:192) suggest that 'the greatest advantage of securing land rights for farmworkers would be in lessening their dependence on farmers for their provision of social services and economic opportunities'. Rutherford (2008a) suggests that what is missing from this kind of analysis are questions of power and politics, and the ways in which social relations are shaped within agrarian relations. Therefore, Rutherford (2014) suggests that a focus on the wider, often conjunctural, political-economic circumstances that shape agrarian labour dynamics is helpful in identifying opportunities for farmworkers and farm dwellers. Nonetheless, he cautions that this perspective can itself be limited to attempts to understand the local practices that shape political action, particularly mobilisation and demobilisation, despite wider

¹⁹ In the '*welfarist*' approach, social services are provided to farmworkers by state agencies and possibly farm owners. It neglects the fundamental need to get land allocated for improvement of farmworker livelihood.

²⁰ The '*workerist*' approach (or the proletarianist view) is often advocated by political economy scholars and implemented by trade unions and those CSOs with a pro-labour focus. It focusses on the improvement of working conditions and wages of farmworkers. Moyo *et al.*'s (2000) critique is that the approach views farmworkers as workers only, and does not see them as potential farmers in their own right. It neglects other livelihood options that farmworkers could pursue, including gaining access to land.

²¹ The '*transformative*' approach seeks to improve the working conditions (and wages) whilst ensuring that farmworkers have access to land themselves.

political change often being the ostensible goal informing such analyses. He thus employs a broader range of concepts in his analysis of the situation of farmworkers on commercial farms in Zimbabwe, including notions of ‘modes of belonging’, ‘cultural politics’ and ‘sovereignty’ (Rutherford, 2014).

In his more recent work on Zimbabwean farmworkers working on commercial farms in northern Limpopo in South Africa, Rutherford explores the location of Zimbabwean workers within the dominant socio-political geography of South Africa. He concludes that, unlike other Zimbabwean immigrants, farmworkers are not considered as refugees, but as “a particular type of worker” (Rutherford, 2008b:402). He suggests that these workers are people marked by displacement and that trans-border farm work is informed by contested ‘modes of belonging’. He thus deploys the concepts of ‘modes of belonging’ and ‘sovereignty’ in efforts “to trace the ways in which the Zimbabweans are emplaced and potentially dis-emplaced in northern Limpopo Province, along with how they are valued ambivalently as Zimbabweans” (Rutherford, 2008b:403).

In this study I draw on Rutherford’s (2008a; 2008b) analytical framework to help explain the evolving ‘cultural politics’ that are shaped by, and in turn shape, access and control over resources on community-owned farms in the Levubu valley. Cultural politics, as I will demonstrate, have significant implications for employment on farms and the livelihoods of farmworkers. The key concept is modes of belonging, which refers to:

“...routinized discourses, social practices and institutional arrangements through which people make claims for resources and rights, the ways through which they become ‘incorporated’ in particular places; ... modes of belonging that inform access to land entail forms of territorialisation ... are attempts to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over land with control over people” (Rutherford, 2008a:79 - 80).

Specific modes of belonging produce a certain “sense of belonging” for those living by and/or creating its terms. A particular mode of belonging may exist as an intangible and sometimes intuitive structure of feeling linked to ‘a sense of entitlement to occupy and use a given space’, or in contrast, it can generate a ‘sense of not belonging’ (Hammar, 2002). The concept is therefore constituted by the practices and discourses that shape ways of life in a

particular locale, as well as memories and attachments to other places, together with those memories generated through experiences of displacement (*ibid.*).

Rutherford suggests that the practices of authority and the power relations that configure access to various resources often underpin or inform distinctive modes of belonging. Consequently, they shape the particular labour relations and living conditions on farms. For example, Rutherford suggests that power does not simply operate through the broad social categories of 'white farmer' and 'black worker'. They work through cultural styles of interaction that become privileged, and recognised as 'proper decorum' on farms, and a morality that informs relations of dependency and interdependency within such spaces. It can thus be argued that claims and decisions over resources are driven by recognised cultural styles, or a cultural politics as Rutherford (2008b) terms it. Modes of belonging, therefore, imply certain cultural politics regarding the recognition or rights and responsibilities in specific localities. This includes constructing and policing the boundaries of rule. Yet, they are always entangled in trans-local processes and histories, as are state administrative and legal practices (Rutherford, 2008b; 2014).

Drawing on Moore's (2004) categorisation of analysts of the Zimbabwean land redistribution programme, as either 'patriotic agrarianists' or 'critical cosmopolitans', Rutherford (2008a: 77-78) argues that both focus primarily on the actions of the state, but fail to examine how power relations became entangled in the state/non-state divide on commercial farms in Zimbabwe in the period before 2000. He uses the example of farmworkers on the farm Memphis to illustrate the power relations that helped situate farmworkers as a particular 'represented community' within the nation-state (Kelly and Kaplan 2001:22), and led to particular forms of dependency and interdependency that have played out on farms since the land occupations of 2000. Rutherford employs the concept of recognition rather than focusing only on rights, including analysis of the way that rights often hinge on certain notions of belonging that have traction within particular relations of dependency and interdependency, to facilitate a different understanding of these dynamics.

With regard to the literature on the ethnography of the state (especially Das and Poole, 2004; and Hansen and Stepputat, 2001), Rutherford (2008a) suggests that it is more useful to examine the processes of identification and the contestations that shape access to and control over resources, including labour power, on farms, rather than basing an analysis only on

notions of ‘rights’ tied to particular identities. It is against this backdrop that he uses the term ‘the politics of recognition’²², borrowed from Englund (2004). These practices generate represented communities, renewed in their existence not only by representation in the semiotic sense, but also in the political and institutional sense, through state formation (Kelly and Kaplan, 2001:22). This involves governmentality, hegemony and practices of citizenship, including mass-mediated narratives and academic analyses of such identities. Represented communities acquire certain characteristics, institutional forms and political possibilities at the scale of the nation, as well as at localised or transnational scales. Modes of belonging are not reducible to wider forms of governmentality and hegemony; rather, they emerge from, and are entangled with, ‘social projects’, which are the organised aims of action. When such social projects become routinised forms of control over specific localities, they can become modes of belonging in and of themselves.

Institutions that govern access to and control of land-based resources have always been characterised by negotiation and fluidity to some degree. Material struggles over resources are simultaneously also struggles over meaning. Thus Cousins and Claassens (2006:22) argue that “land rights are embedded in a range of overlapping social relations and identities (households, kinship networks, levels of ‘community’) and derived from accepted membership of social unit, and can be acquired via birth, affiliation or allegiance to a group and its total political authority, or transactions of various kinds (including gifts, loans and purchases). They are somewhat similar to citizenship entitlements in modern democracies”. As will be shown in this thesis, membership of CPAs and the claimant communities they represent embed not only rights, but also certain forms of recognition that enable claims to be made to the resources and opportunities available on community-owned farms.

2.5 Conceptual framework: property, power and production

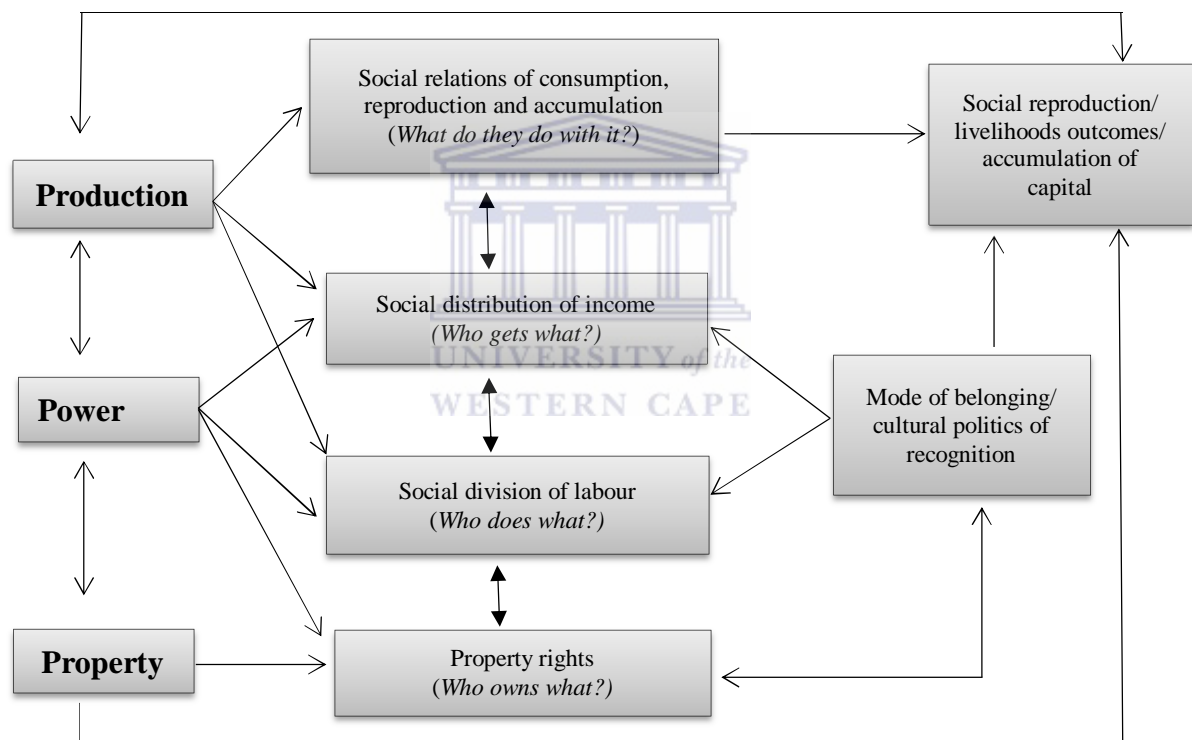
As discussed above, agrarian political economy concerns investigations of “the social relations and dynamics of production and reproduction, property and power in agrarian formations and their processes of change, both historical and contemporary” (Bernstein,

²² Englund (2004) uses this term to discuss the complicated identification processes that categorise social agency, their dependencies and interdependencies, within a particular political economy context. These are offered as ‘ideal types’ generated in the growing emphasis on law and human rights. This view suggests that one needs to examine how ‘rights talk and practices’ become translated into existing power relations and dynamics.

2010b:1). It also encompasses the ways in which capital is seizing hold of land and natural resources more broadly, in the process both destroying and restructuring social and society-nature relations (Fairbairn *et al.*, 2014). The overarching research thrust of this study, discussed in the previous chapter, is to explore how commercial partnerships in land restitution contexts in Levubu transform or modify such relations.

As schematically illustrated in Figure 1, Bernstein’s four key political economy questions (who owns what, who does what, who gets what and what do they do with it?) are central to my analysis of social relations on farms in Levubu.

Figure 1: Conceptual framing of social relations on community-owned farming enterprises



Answering these questions illuminates the tensions and conflict evident in community-owned farming enterprises in Levubu, and sheds light on the everyday politics involved in struggles for social reproduction. From political-sociological perspectives, the concepts of modes of belonging, identity formation and cultural politics espoused by Rutherford (1997; 2008a; 2008b) offer a rather different but complementary perspective on the tensions and contradictions evident in community-owned farming enterprises. Questions of ownership, access to and control of community-owned assets are influenced by the power relations within these “communities”, which in turn play a significant role in the social division of

labour and the social distribution of income. Table 2 lists the micro-level actors found on these farms and the interconnections between institutional structures and actors in different social sites or arenas.

Table 2: Interconnections of institutional structures and social actors on farms in Levubu

	1994	2005 to 2009/10	2010 to 2014
Property rights	White farm owners Farmworkers Claimants Agro-processing farmers Government Traditional Councils	Traditional Councils CPAs Strategic Partners Joint Venture Companies Government	CPAs Professional farm managers Lessee farmers Management companies Government Traditional Councils
Relations and systems of production	Government Agro-processing companies White farmers	Joint Venture companies Agribusiness Companies	Professional farm managers Operating Companies Farmworkers CPAs Board of Directors
Relations and dynamics of power	White farmers Farmworkers Land Claimants Traditional Councils NGOs	Land claims committees Traditional Authorities CPAs NGOS	Professional farm managers CPAs Farmworkers Traditional Councils

As Table 2 shows, restitution pitted traditional councils and rural communities against white farm owners in claiming lost land rights. Processes of negotiation facilitated by government resulted in transfers of commercial farmland to communities through CPAs, not the traditional councils that were prominent in the lodgement of land claims. As will be discussed in Chapter 9, membership of CPAs and traditional councils involves distinct modes of belonging that then influence access to resources and opportunities. Over time, the formation of strategic partnerships, and their subsequent evolution into community-owned farming enterprises introduced another form of authority, the boards of directors of companies, as well as farm management committees. In most cases, the interests of the general membership of the CPAs collided with those of professional farm management, the tensions arising from

the contradiction between the needs of capital accumulation and the requirements of the social reproduction of labour.

In complex situations such as those found on community-owned commercial farms, it is always important to identify the key actors, and to assess and compare their interests and the conflicts, compatibilities and trade-offs that emerge in their relations with one another. In this study I seek to engage in such an analysis across the three interconnected dimensions of property, power and production. Competing interests and relations of contestation arise not only in relation to struggles over property, but also over the scope and constitution of authority and power, as well as over access to benefits. These manifest and intersect in arenas of conflict. Nuijten (2005) coined the term “force field” to denote such an arena –

“... certain forms of dominance, contention, and resistance may develop, as well as certain regularities and forms of ordering. In this view, the patterning of organizing practices is not the result of a common understanding or a normative agreement, but the forces at play within the field” (Nuijten, 2005:3).

It thus follows that within community-owned farming enterprises, conceived of as arenas of conflict and thus ‘force fields’, it is important to understand processes and practices concerning control of access to resources by actors, as well as the distribution of resources. Therefore, in this thesis particular attention was paid to how the performance of community-owned enterprises has affected classes of labour, particularly in relation to relations of property, power and production. However, as I outlined above, the analysis attempts to transcend a narrow focus on property rights alone to consider issues of “...illicit actions, relations of production, entitlements relations, and the histories of all of these” (Ribot & Peluso, 2003:157). The sub-sections that follow briefly discuss the conceptions of the dynamics of property rights, production and power relations that I have made use of, and sketch how they might be applied to the material from case studies.

2.5.1 Power relations

Connected to property relations are the relations and dynamics of power. Property is closely linked to authority in the sense of a legitimising power that validates claims to property rights, and involves the capacity of politico-legal institutions such as states, and other institutions such as village communities or religious groupings to influence social actors. In

sum, “property relates to authority because property claims require support by politico-legal institutions in a position of authority” (Sikor & Lund, 2009:10).

Marx used the concept of power in relation to social classes and social systems as a whole, which is different from a Weberian conception of power involving the ability of individuals to control others, resources, or events (Jessop, 2012). In Marx’s terms, power derives from a the position of a social class in the relations of production, and in relations of domination or subordination of other social classes. But:

“To investigate how competition for society’s vital resources is organized and structured is to investigate not only how wealth is distributed and how classes of ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ are made; it is equally to investigate how politics emerge, consolidate, and recede through processes of legitimization, inclusion, exclusion...” (Sikor & Lund, 2009:2)

In order to enhance understanding of power or powerlessness within community-owned farms, ethnographic understanding of everyday politics is also important, in relation to practices of authority and the power relations that underpin distinctive modes of belonging (Rutherford 2008a). Thus labour relations and living conditions on farms are mediated by cultural styles of interaction recognised as proper decorum on farms, and that claims to and decisions over resources are driven by recognised cultural styles. Modes of belonging involve the construction and policing of boundaries of rule (Rutherford, 2008a; 2014). The processes by which identities are contested, and negotiated by various actors, are significant. The question of power presupposes that some degree of agency exists for the rural poor, within the overall dynamics of production and reproduction, property and power (Long, 2001).

The trajectory of strategic partnerships and social relations of power on community-owned farms results in part from what Long (1989) refers to as the social and cognitive struggles that take place between different social actors. Questions about who really derives benefits from things and through what processes they are able to do so, also bring to the surface the powers that affect people’s abilities to benefit from resources.

2.5.2 Property relations

Property relations are social relations that constitute a pattern of rights, duties, privileges and powers which control the behaviour of individuals or groups in relation to one another and to the custody, possession, use, enjoyment, disposal, of various classes of objects (Sikor & Lund, 2009; Peluso & Lund, 2011). Characterising any specific set of property relations should be based on an analysis of such patterns. ‘Access’ is a dynamic analytical construct that helps us to understand how people or institutions benefit from resources, whether or not they have rights to them (Sikor & Lund, 2009). Ribot & Peluso (2003) suggest that ‘access’ be distinguished from ‘property’; access can be defined in terms of the ability to benefit from things, including material objects, institutions, and symbols. This view amplifies ability rather than rights. It thus suggests that analysis should focus on social relationships that constrain or facilitate beneficitation, rather than an exclusive focus on older notions of property rights. Thus Hall *et al.*, (2011), drawing on the example of investors’ access to land in the ‘new’ boom crops in Southeast Asia, propose that powers of regulation, market, force and legitimation have been used. This necessitates investigation and interrogation of the range of processes through which actors and institutions strive to legitimise or vindicate their actions (Sikor & Lund, 2009).

As illustrated in Table 2 above, land restitution in South Africa has resulted in trajectories of social change within which various actors with disparate interests play a critical role in the establishment of property regime and systems of land access and control. Such interests, whether of government bodies, claimant ‘communities’, institutions of traditional leadership, or white land owners, have been pitched against each other. Drawing on the notion of “powers of legitimation”, some of the dominant actors (government, agribusiness capital, and rich commercial farmers) have argued that lack of skills and capital by claimant communities is a key shortcoming²³, hence their proposals for strategic partnerships that prohibit physical resettlement on the land by claimants.²⁴ Restitution guarantees property rights, but not the physical occupation of land.

Government facilitated the negotiation of contracts between new landowners and agribusiness, in order to regulate access and control. Control refers to the ability to mediate

²³ Own undated notes (2005), meeting of land claimants and government at Levubu Hall.

²⁴ The settlement agreements based on the Section 42D incorporated this conditionality to land restoration.

others' access and thus to the checking and direction of action, the power of directing and regulating free action (Sikor & Lund, 2009). Research on property rights in land reform projects should delve deeply into the social and cultural discontinuities and ambiguities inherent in these 'battlefields of knowledge' that shape relations among actors (Long, 2001). Long uses this image to convey the notion of contested arenas where actors' understandings, interests and values are pitted against each other.

2.5.3 Relations of production

For Marxists the bases of class power are primarily located in the social relations of production (Jessop, 2012). The agricultural sector in South Africa today is integrated, organised, and regulated by the relations between agrarian classes (capitalist landed property, agrarian capital, and wage labour) on the one hand, while on the other hand, highly concentrated forms of agri-business capital are located both upstream and downstream of farming itself. Commercial partnerships occur in the context of capitalist globalisation, involving the internationalisation of agriculture, global divisions of labour, and extensive financial and commodity circuits. As illustrated in Table 2 above, systems of production under commercial partnerships maintain key elements inherited from the apartheid era: the fundamental social relation between capital and wage labour, production for competitive markets in order to make a profit, and accumulation in order to survive (Bernstein, 2007a).

2.5.4 Integrating theories and concepts in analysis of the empirical material

With reference to Figure 1 above, there are at least three dimensions within which I explore trajectories of commercial partnerships in Levubu: property rights, power relations, and the social relations of production. Political economy analysis, especially of the four questions proposed by Bernstein (2010b), assists in illuminating the tensions and contradictions arising from class relations within community-owned farming enterprises, and struggles and contestations around access to and control of resources. I further note that processes of identification and cultural politics, in addition to class relations, offer a useful lens through which processes of political action and cultural styles of various actors can be understood. Therefore, I make use of analytical tools that enable analysis of the discourses, practices, and institutional arrangements through which people make claims for resources and rights

(Rutherford, 2008a). Central elements in this analysis are the forms of identification that generate a sense of belonging or not belonging, and of entitlement.

A final element in the broad analytic model developed here is a focus on livelihood outcomes and impacts on social reproduction. This explores how property rights, power dynamics and production relations are mediated by modes of belonging and related cultural politics, and how these influence livelihood strategies aimed at social reproduction. This goal is in fundamental tension with that of ensuring the reproduction of capital within capitalist social relations. As illustrated in Figure 1, the contradiction between profit maximisation and its reinvestment into production processes and the social reproduction of labour, constitute the basis of many of the tensions and contradictions discussed in this thesis.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed complex debates in relation to how to theorise capitalism in general, as well as the more particular time- and space-bound question of the nature of capitalist agriculture in South Africa. It has also considered the conceptualisation of the contemporary Agrarian Question as that of “fragmented classes of labour” facing a crisis of social reproduction, after revisiting debates on the classic Agrarian Question. These assist in conceptualising questions about who is enabled and benefits, and who is constrained and does not benefit, and by what factors, within community-owned farms in the Levubu area.

The chapter suggested that tensions on community-owned farms cannot be understood only in terms of the class-analytic perspectives dominant in Marxist political economy. Contributions by anthropologists, especially in relation to notions of the cultural politics of recognition and modes of belonging proposed by Rutherford (2008a), as well as the theory of access theory suggested by Ribot & Peluso (2003), are reviewed and found useful. These concepts assist in the analysis of the inherent tensions and contradictions found within community-owned farms. They suggest that at root and base, these tensions and contradictions derive from the class relations of capital and labour, which are constituted in an extremely complex manner in community-owned large-scale farms. The next chapter maps the history of the development of large-scale commercial farming in South Africa through state intervention, dispossession, and subsidies, with a particular focus on farm

labour, and discusses the character of the land reform programme that has been put in place since the democratic transition of 1994.



3. LARGE-SCALE COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE AND FARM LABOUR IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the history of the development of capitalism in agriculture in South Africa, and provides a contemporary analysis of large-scale commercial farming. It focusses mostly on the emergence of large-scale commercial agriculture. This account also traces the story of different systems of property rights in South Africa, with a focus on colonial dispossession, restrictions on land ownership in terms of the Natives Land Act of 1913, and the confining of Africans to the former Bantustans as labour ‘reserves’. Walker & Cousins (2015:1) remind us of the legacies of stark disparities in land ownership between whites and blacks that were bequeathed to post-apartheid society. These loom large as a powerful symbol of enduring racial inequalities and social exclusion.

Given the key focus of this thesis, an underlying question informs the discussion of the material in this chapter: does the restitution, and redistribution more broadly, of large-scale commercial farms through the medium of commercial partnerships and joint ventures, facilitate agrarian transformation, or do these arrangements merely serve to reproduce inherited forms of capitalist farming? I argue here that commercial partnerships should not be construed only as measures to safeguard white agrarian and corporate capital interests. These models also arise as part of wider structural shifts in the world economy since the 1970s, as described by Friedman & McMichael (1989). In similar vein, Bernstein (2015:104) suggests that commercial agriculture in South Africa needs to be understood in terms of the dynamics of contemporary capitalist agriculture and its globalising tendencies, perhaps more so than in terms of polarised debates about the strategies pursued by white farmers to retain their dominant position.

Interrogation of the structure of relations of property, power and production on large-scale farms in both the pre-1994 period and after 1994, is crucial. In this chapter, I begin by exploring the centrality of agricultural labour, both as labour tenancy and as wage work, for the development of capitalist farming, a process that benefitted greatly from state policies to assist farms and mines to secure supplies of cheap and abundant labour. Secondly, I explore

the nature and dynamics of large-scale commercial farming in South Africa today. The 1970s was a critical period for large-scale commercial farming in South Africa, especially with regard to the changing availability and use of farm labour. I discuss how commercial farming responded to wider economic changes at this time. These developments had lasting implications for the programme of land reform and its developmental imperatives. The third focus of this chapter is the programme of land reform initiated in the post-apartheid period. Here I briefly describe the nature of the programme, the progress made in achieving its objectives, and the many problems it has experienced since 1994. I also briefly outline the changing character of land policies since 2009, when a new Minister was appointed by President Zuma.

3.2 Land, labour and capitalist development in agriculture

The emergence of the capitalist mode of production in South Africa, as elsewhere, depended of the commoditisation of labour, so that surplus labour could be appropriated by the owners of the means of production (as explained in Chapter 2). In this case the owners of land were mainly whites, and the majority of the sellers of labour power were blacks. Land dispossession sought to ensure the “freeing” of sufficient labour from the land, and was thus at the centre of the development of capitalist agriculture.

South Africa’s capitalist agriculture emerged in the 20th century from a semi-feudal system which was based on a ‘squatter peasantry’ paying rent either in cash, kind or sometimes labour rent. The development of capitalism in agriculture should be construed in the context within which large-scale commercial farming and agriculture has evolved over time. Its history is marked by the legacy of colonial conquests and dispossession of the means of production for a majority of black people (Cousins & Scoones, 2010). Beinart & Delius (2015:34) argue that such land dispossession largely met the needs of agrarian capitalism and white land owners in South Africa, in contrast to other arguments that place the needs of the mining sector as the main motivation for land dispossession.

It is important to reflect on why and how capitalist agriculture developed in the manner it did and its contributions to the establishment of the capitalist mode of production in South Africa. Two elements were crucial to transformation of the social relations of production in

the countryside: firstly, the fact that capitalist relations of production were in existence elsewhere, largely in mining, by the late 19th century (Morris, 1976); secondly, the proletarianisation of citizens, including the transformation of independent petty commodity producers (the African peasantry) into a source of farm labour as share croppers, labour tenants, and wage workers (Morris, 1976; Keegan 1986; Bundy 1988).

Through various legislative processes, the state-sanctioned process of 'freeing' African labour through dispossession of their land, and the institutionalisation of deprivation of land access and ownership, resulted in the proletarianisation of rural Africans. It was not until the passing of the Natives Land Act (1913) that an effective system of enforcing these measures at a national scale was devised. This Act was a response to a multiplicity of interests: firstly, many white farmers struggled to compete with their black counterparts in terms of productivity and market share; secondly, many of them were short of labour and wanted easier access to cheap black labour (Aliber *et al.*, 2013). The Act also prohibited African ownership of land outside the demarcated 'reserves', as well as sharecropping which resulted in independent production by African tenants and squatters. This legislation and its successors served the interests of the better-capitalised and improving white farmers in two critical ways. They found it easier to control all of their land and apply more productive techniques; and the scope for Africans to congregate on private land and to defend a relatively independent existence as smallholders, was diminished. Many of the African people located on white-owned farms became labour tenants rather than sharecroppers, and breaches of contracts were increasingly criminalised (Beinart & Delius, 2015).

African households living on white-owned farms were gradually subordinated to capitalist relations of production. They were later evicted once their labour became surplus to the farm requirements. They lost access to land as white farmers sought to farm ever larger portions of their land, while the demand for African labour declined as mechanisation took place (Nattrass & Seekings, 1997). However, dispossession of land did not proceed without resistance. The direct producers often refused to give up access to land, even if they had to concede their independent peasant or 'tribal' hold over it. Such struggles were a critical component of the transformation of labour service to capitalist labour tenancy, because, even by the 1930s, farmers were struggling to obtain labour unless they granted access to at least some land and grazing rights.

Contrary to the interests of direct producers, a powerful (white) landlord class in the countryside imposed high levels of political and economic subordination of the African peasants on their estates. Many of their estates enjoyed support from the state in the exercise of this power. Morris (1976) suggests that some of the tensions that plagued capitalist development in the 1930s and 1940s related to underlying structural contradictions determined by the uneven development of capitalism in South Africa. These contradictions set the conditions for ongoing class struggles; an economic struggle over labour tenancy as a wage form; the struggle over specific forms of organisation of the productive forces entailed by labour tenancy; and the struggle or consensus between the different fractions of the dominant classes within the ruling 'power bloc'.

A consequence of this kind of discriminatory legislation has been the emergence of a 'dualistic' agrarian structure whose legacy is still prevalent today. On the one side are the large-scale commercial farms, previously reserved for whites. These areas are mostly capital intensive and characterised by abundant agrarian wealth. This sector is strongly integrated into global markets for both inputs and outputs (Hall, 2004; Vink & Van Rooyen, 2009). On the other side are the former 'reserves' that were restricted to occupation by black Africans removed from the 'white-owned' farms. The 'reserves' were, and continue to be - in their current form as communal areas - characterised by extreme poverty and dominated by low-input and labour intensive forms of subsistence/small-scale production²⁵ as a key source of livelihood, along with migrant remittances and state pensions (Hall *et al*, 2013; Wisborg *et al*, 2013; Cousins, 2011). As Wolpe (1972) noted, the past government represented this dualism reality as symbolic of two contrasting modes, namely modernity and tradition. However, the black 'reserves' served to reproduce and subsidise the cost of labour for white commercial farms (and the mining sector). Their working and living conditions were shaped by processes of dispossession and labour coercion.

The development of capitalist social relations of production in agriculture cannot be understood in isolation from the development of mining after the discovery of gold and

²⁵ The small-scale farming sector is highly socially differentiated, and ranges from very small subsistence producers to a small number of households whose production is commercially-oriented. About 250 000 to 300 000 black farmers derive some cash income from agriculture and are sometimes seen as commercially oriented, but many of these farmers struggle to do more than just get by (Cousins, 2010, Aliber & Hall, 2010; Aliber *et al*, 2013).

diamonds in the 19th century. Developments in these sectors had significant ramifications and extensive opportunities for commodity production. At that time, vast tracts of land were not fully utilised. Despite the potential for commercial agriculture, the natural conditions were not favourable to a flourishing agriculture, cash was scarce and the means to introduce machinery did not exist for most of the farmers. For that reason, payment of workers in kind in most cases was the only possibility, hence the use of labour service by peasants with few skills and low levels of technical proficiency. With regard to mining development, there was now competition for labour, as its expansion meant the availability of higher cash wages than could possibly be paid in agriculture (Lacey, 1981). To maintain an adequate supply of farm labour, farms had to provide incentives other than high cash wages, hence the transformation from labour service peasants to labour tenant farmworkers (Morris, 1976).

Morris (1976) demonstrates that a labour tenancy system predated the enforced transformation of many squatter peasants into labour tenant relations. As a strategy for mobilisation and control of labour on farms, labour tenancy became the principal manner in which a labour supply was secured in most parts of the countryside (Jeeves & Crush, 1997). The capitalists needed cheap labour because its availability was central to the profitability of capitalist enterprises. So land dispossession of Africans effected by both coercive measures, as well as taxation, and state managed systems of labour recruitment were part of a strategy to 'free' labour for capitalists (O'Laughlin *et al*, 2013). There is plethora of scholarship that documents examples of the different ways in which landless black farmers and capital-poor white farmers negotiated mechanisms through which farm labour could be provided (see for example, Morris, 1976; Lacey, 1981). The compromises often entailed unlawful continuation of tenancy and share cropping. However, by the turn of the 20th century, systematic processes were put in place to coerce black Africans to enter into low wage paid labour (Lacey, 1981). Already, the form of pre-capitalist labour tenancy corresponding to 'feudal corvée labour' was dying out. Most labour tenants were being contracted for three to four months at a time and the remainder of the year was left for their own production.

Morris (1976) suggests that a way of characterising agriculture as capitalist or pre-capitalist is not only through examining the manner in which products are exchanged, but the manner in which they are produced and the forms in which surplus labour embodied in them is appropriated. With the dispossession of land and the means of production, and the subsequent deepening of labour tenancy and ultimately its replacement by the wage system, the direct

producers were separated from their means of reproduction. This system reinforced reliance upon the sale of their labour power in order to subsist (Morris, 1976:305). The direct producers were 'freed', i.e. separated from the means of production by various means and they then sold their labour power to the capitalist farmer. The direct producer, or former peasant, now worked under the organisational control of the farmer. With this social relation of production, it can therefore be stated that production and the labour process were now fully capitalist in nature regardless of the low degree of development of the productive forces. Morris (1976) states that "the development of the forces of production was not bounded 'within the limits set by independent peasant production', for the direct producers were under the direct organisational control of the capitalist farmer or his agent, and directly subsumed under the farmer's means of objects of labour" (Morris, 1976:306).

In this kind of capitalist development, racially exclusive forms of social and industrial citizenship heightened the vulnerability of black people. This contributed immensely to the resultant poverty and inequality in ways that were incomparable in extent anywhere else in Africa. Morris (1976) suggests that the South African version of the "Prussian path" to capitalism in agriculture was one of the most likely culprits in this process.

3.2.1 The nature and dynamics of large-scale commercial farming in South Africa

South Africa has a total land area of approximately 1 223 000 km², within which the former Bantustans account for about 170 000km² or just below 14% of the total land area. About 40 000 private/commercial farms cover over 860 000km² or 70% of the total land area. With regards to population dynamics, there has been a significant growth in the population at large, whereas those dependent on agriculture have decreased steadily. Since 1913, the population grew from just under 6 million to some 53 million in 2013. Another trend is the increasing trend of outward migration of rural dwellers to urban areas. For example, in 1980, 57% of the population was classified as rural whereas by 2001, 57% of the population was classified as urban, rising to 63% in 2014 (Walker & Cousins, 2015). However, agriculture remains an important economic sector, a provider of food and other products, and of rural employment – directly and indirectly. The other side of agriculture is in the small-scale sector, in which agriculture is extremely important for household food security.

The nature and dynamics of white commercial farming in South Africa should be understood in the context of the economic history in the 20th century. Feudal agriculture was transformed by means of a heavy reliance on the state, especially the maintenance of political and legal controls over direct labourers. The kinds of support that followed enforcement of large-scale commercial agriculture for whites included statutory interventions in agricultural marketing, through, for example, the 1925 Cooperative Societies Act and the 1937 Marketing Act, which was amended in 1968 but repealed completely in 1996 during the deregulation processes (De Swart, 1983; Vink & Van Rooyen, 2009).

The state believed that these legislative processes would enable farmers to ‘stand’ together, and thereby stabilise and increase the prices they received for their produce, including in export markets. It was also generally believed that cooperation amongst farmers would cut out unnecessary duplication in the marketing chain, and therefore lower the cost of getting produce to the consumer in the form and at the time and place desired (De Swart, 1983). Though these were ‘noble intentions’, the statutory mechanisms were hijacked for the benefit of a few - mainly larger white commercial farmers. White agriculture was protected through the use of marketing boards with guaranteed prices, protectionist trade barriers, and state investment in transport, storage facilities, and irrigation infrastructure, subsidised credit through the Agricultural Credit Board and a variety of drought relief schemes. In contrast, black agriculture in the ‘reserves’ was suppressed.

Drawing on work by Elphick & Giliomee (1989), Schirmer (2009:83) shows that by the late 19th century there were already in existence “classes of rural cultivators”, i.e. wealthy plantation owners, the well-off gentry, and the hard-working ‘yeoman’ farmers. As farming developed, and new technologies were introduced, some of the farmers remained very conservative. By 1919, there were farmers who had land in excess of the capital at their disposal, who were only able to ‘maintain a struggling existence’ (Schirmer, 2009:88). Their income levels were comparable to those of the *bywoners*²⁶, who owned no land and had very little security of tenure. Therefore, the well-off farmers began to purchase land placed on the market. Intensive farmers were also becoming gradually larger as their success allowed them

²⁶ Trapido (1973:59) shows that *Bywoners* were poor tenant white farmers who arrived after the initial land grants had been made. As a result they became squatter farmers on the land of large land owners. They provided the land owner with a share of their crops and added to his status as a landlord, which he was able to call upon them for commando service.

to purchase additional land, while less successful farmers were becoming smaller as circumstances forced them to sell up (Schirmer, 2009; Trapido, 1978).

The political victory of the National Party, based on racist ideology and advocating a ‘strong state’, marked a turning point in the class struggle in the countryside. Some see the apartheid-era as the end of the transition to capitalist agriculture. But seen as the outcome of a determinate class struggle, in regard to agriculture, it effectively ended migration from white agricultural districts to towns, settling the farm labour force. O’Laughlin *et al* (2013), influenced by Marxist scholars like Wolpe (1972) and Legassick (1974), locate these developments within the wider political economy of Southern Africa. These scholars see apartheid not as an aberrant Afrikaner innovation of 1948, but as the continuation and reworking of earlier forms of domination.

The delineation of the native ‘reserves’, as both social and physical spaces, was central to the functioning of both colonial capitalism and apartheid. It has thus become clearer that poverty and misery in black rural areas were not the residual result of an absence of development but, rather, manifested a particular pattern of capital accumulation on the back of the land question (O’Laughlin *et al.*, 2013). The growth in output and area of the large, highly capitalised, white-owned farms depended heavily on state intervention, the entrenchment of cheap labour, and forced evictions of thousands of blacks on ‘white farms’ to the ‘Bantustans’ (Crush & Jeeves, 1993)

Apartheid planners sought to create the conditions for expanded agricultural output, helped to open up export markets, and assisted in bringing modern technology into white farming. They were also forced to transfer the costs of most policies onto black producers and consumers (Crush & Jeeves, 1993). Whilst some used state assistance to enhance the productivity of their land, many white farmers failed to transform their practices. Government invested a great deal of money in white farming. To illustrate:

“... from July 1950 to June 1951, the state provided farmers with subsidies on 8236 ‘works’. These ‘works’ included earth dams, contour banks, reservoirs, silos, weirs, internal fencing, erosion fencing, drinking troughs, wells, and diversion banks. The cost of erecting these came at \$550 000, of which government provided \$217 960 in subsidies and \$24 764 in loans...” (Schirmer, 2009:96)

Further, Schirmer (2009) drawing on Delius and Schirmer (2002), shows that by 1961 the government had supplied farmers with nearly R9million in subsidies and rebates, and loans in excess of R6.5 million. The point is that the state was behind the success of many white commercial farmers, mainly but not exclusively Afrikaners, with the National Party attempting to promote the poorer farmers in particular.

There is a large literature on the major shifts that took place in the South African agricultural sector in the 1960s, especially in labour markets and patterns of labour deployment. The most important developments are post-war capitalisation, mechanisation, labour displacement, forced resettlement, and 'migrantisation' (Morris, 1976; De Klerk, 1985). Nonetheless, until the 1970s, white commercial agriculture remained remarkably undercapitalised. The quasi-feudal agricultural labour system that existed began to change, mainly owing to the structural economic changes that took place in South Africa in general. Agriculture, which grew at 1.9% per annum between 1946 and 1971, experienced the beginning of growth of major capital stocks, and agriculture became a large foreign exchange earner (Atkinson, 2007). An increase in mechanisation resulted in labour shedding, or as Atkinson puts it, farmworkers became increasingly 'redundant and superfluous', being regarded as 'surplus people'. They then lost their livelihoods and homes, and had to fend for themselves in towns and cities (Atkinson, 2007:53).

One of the dynamics underpinning the migration of farm labourers from rural districts to towns, and the disintegration of labour tenancy, were changes in the quantity of landholdings. In 1918, the total number of whites on the land was 655 000; in 1921 it was 675 000 and this remained consistent until 1931 when it reached 708 000. However, the number of farms increased between 1918 and 1939, from 76 149 to 107 537. In 1946 the number of farms increased to 112 453 and by 1951 it was 118 186. Various processes influenced land occupancy and use; one of those was the subdivision of land, which resulted in an increase of land brought under cultivation. These resulted in a rise in the value of land, shrinkage in farm sizes, more intense cultivation, lack of sufficient cash to increase farm wages substantially, continuously declining relative prices and the accumulation of debt. These were the 'structural conditions under which class struggle manifested itself' (Morris, 1976).

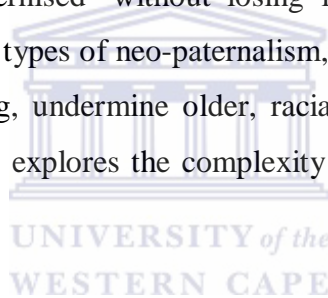
During the 1970s, commercial agriculture reached a landmark stage when it became self-sufficient in terms of its labour needs, working larger individual farms but a small total

number of holdings. The entrenchment of capitalist agriculture based on capital-intensive, mechanised production with more limited labour, replacing older production systems with a less land-intensive wage labour system, led to out-migration from agriculture. Government reports expressed concerns about the effects of the outward migration of labour, namely declining food production in the native ‘reserves’ and erosion of the conditions of migrant labour. Alongside the continuing outward migration from rural areas, demand for labour started to decline in mining and manufacturing, cheap labour was no longer scarce and securing it no longer required systematic state intervention. The dramatic rise of state support for white farmers from the 1930s to the 1940s began to fall away, as state interventions in land, credit, input, and output markets began to decline (Hall, 2010). It was, however, in the 1980s and the early 1990s that major shifts in policy took place, symbolised by the scaling down of interest rate subsidies on loans from the Land Bank, as well as the phasing out of government subsidies to the control boards system. Agriculture was in trouble, given that net incomes and exports began to decline, with farming debt having quadrupled (Hall, 2010). These shifts should be linked to wider reforms in the market economy that began to exert pressure for reform in the farming sector.

Large-scale commercial farms operate on a competitive basis, and this influences patterns of employment on such farms. Based on an analytical approach that combines a ‘trade and poverty framework’ and global value chains analysis, Barrientos & Kritzing (2004) examined changing patterns of global trade, supermarket buying strategies, national regulation, and their combined effect on the informalisation of work. They found that “in order to reduce labour costs and remain competitive, many producers are downsizing their permanent labour force, and increasing their use of contract labour” (Barrientos & Kritzing, 2004:82). However, they also note the limits to this process because of the need to retain the high quality of products and to meet changing employment standards. Informalisation of work within global export production allows producers to maximise the flexibility of work, and to minimise the costs of labour (in terms of remuneration and employment benefits). Types of employment which are not regulated, or provide social protection and employment benefits, are a key feature of informal work. One other type of informal work is contract work. It involves a shift beyond merely increasing flexibility through casualisation of work, where labour is employed on a part-time or temporary basis directly by the employer. Contract work forms part of externalisation of employment in which work is put out to external contractors or agents. This is advantageous for the employers: they are able to meet

flexible but tight production schedules set by global buyers, whilst minimising their costs and the contractual commitments entailed in direct employment (Barrientos & Kritzing, 2004:84).

Atkinson (2007) presents a description of paternalism on farms as a form of social capital. Empirically, she shows the interdependence of farmworkers and farm owners in a manner that she defines as having a paternalistic ethos, a patron-client relationship more than a collegial one, and a quasi-family relation with a great deal of mutual dependence. Rutherford (2008b) and Addison (2014) engaged in ethnographic research on the lives of Zimbabwean farmworkers in the Northern Limpopo, in ways that illuminate the existence of paternalistic relations on farms, and so do Du Toit *et al.* (2008) based on their seminal work in the Western Cape wine industry. This thesis explores the shifts of property relations on large-scale commercial farms, the effects on the place and position of farmworkers in these farms, and the complex relationships that ensue. Atkinson (2007) shows the prevalence of the paternalistic ethos that is 'modernised' without losing its normative strengths. The new commercial pressures create new types of neo-paternalism, in that new rights of farmworkers in both employment and housing, undermine older, racialised power relations, but do not totally displace them. This thesis explores the complexity of these relations on community-owned farms.



From the late 1980s until today, the agricultural sector has been characterised by technological dynamism and international competitiveness. These are certainly prominent in the discourses of government policy and of 'organised agriculture', especially when questions arise about the impact of land redistribution. It is argued that the programme should consider the possible negative implications for national food security and investor confidence. There are also major implications for farm labour. The growth of production freed from the former constraints of trade sanctions on agricultural exports, barriers to inward investment by international agribusiness and outward investment by South African farmers elsewhere in Africa and further afield, was accompanied by the concentration of both farming and agribusiness, rapid technical change, and partly as a consequence of the latter, reductions in the size of the farm labour force (Bernstein, 2013a). These overall features are the context in which land restitution in Levubu has taken the form of community-owned capitalist enterprises, which have to be competitive in order to survive.

3.2.2 Post-1994 land and agricultural policy shifts and transition

The African National Congress (ANC) government coming to power in 1994 inherited some difficult choices in relation to agriculture. One key issue was maintaining the existing marketing status quo through the 1968 Marketing Act and the use of Control Boards to benefit consumers or small-scale farmers, or accelerating the liberalisation and deregulation that had already begun. In discussions at a policy workshop held on the eve of the unbanning of the ANC, Mr Zola Skweyiya (the chairperson of the ANC's Constitutional Committee during negotiations) gave some important pointers on how thinking on the land question was evolving within the ANC. He described land reform as central to the struggle for national liberation but hinted at its marginality by noting that it deserved more attention from all progressive forces. He further argued against the destruction of the commercial agricultural sector, because of its importance for national food security and its contribution to foreign exchange (Walker, 2005).

Government chose liberalisation and deregulation, which was expected to result in the efficient use of South Africa's agricultural resources, increased investment and employment in agricultural marketing activities, lowering of real food prices, a further fall in real land prices, a shift in responsibility for managing agricultural risk from government to the private sector, less of a burden on government finances, and a considerable savings in political and bureaucratic time and energy expended on price setting (OPMR, 2000). In this regard, the "measures to safeguard capitalist farming and agriculture in the new South Africa, following the abolition of institutional apparatus of apartheid, were anticipated and initiated in the final years of apartheid, and have continued since 1994" (Bernstein, 2013a:25).

Hall (2004) discusses how macro-economic policies affected land policy, focussing on the GEAR framework adopted in 1996 that embraced a 'neo-liberal paradigm' in which the state plays a limited role in the economy. Thus, restructuring of agriculture in South Africa was, to a large extent, a response to South Africa's self-imposed structural adjustment of the late 1990s. Different kinds of commodity-based state marketing schemes, with their administered producer prices and other forms of subsidy key to the fortunes of white farmers in the period of apartheid, were completely dismantled (Hall *et al.*, 2013). South Africa's markets were opened up to international competition through the dismantling of most tariff barriers. Whilst these measures may have been introduced with good intentions, the outcomes have not

benefitted small farmers and new entrants, such as the class of emerging black commercial farmers (including the beneficiaries of land reform (Lahiff & Cousins, 2005). Farmers became subjected to immense pressures arising from “the dismantling of an elaborate architecture of policy and institutional support for commercial farming: agricultural deregulation including removal of direct or indirect subsidies, state-controlled marketing boards with floor prices and pan-territorial pricing, cheap credit and tax breaks; the rapid liberalisation of trade in agricultural products; and sharp increases in the prices of key farming inputs, particularly diesel and electricity” (Hall, 2012:825).

South African agriculture now operates under difficult circumstances, due to the reduction of public subsidies in the sector, amongst other factors. It has also moved from being a highly protected industry to being highly exposed to global competition. Farmers are more vulnerable to international shocks and deteriorating terms of trade. Owing to this, many less competitive farmers have been forced out of agricultural production (Atkinson, 2007). The changing structure of the large-scale commercial farming sector is evident in the decline in the number of farming units, from 90 422 in 1971 to 39 982 in 2007 (Aliber *et al.*, 2013). Associated with these changes is agricultural labour shedding, strongly associated with processes of farm consolidation. Aliber *et al.* (2013), writing about Limpopo in particular, further demonstrate that the districts that experienced the significant decline in the number of farming units tended to be those where regular employment decreased. In addition, when farms are taken over under these circumstances, the new owners do not usually take over the labour on the same farms as well, especially on smaller commercial farms. “A government survey of 4 100 farms conducted in 2000 revealed a marked drop in employment. Between 1994 and 1999, the number of regular workers in employment had fallen by 7.6%. All types of farms reduced their numbers of regular workers, with the only exception being horticulture” (Atkinson, 2007:66).

Since the mid-1990s, policy shifts and changes include the introduction of basic labour rights for farmworkers, minimum wage regulations (via sectoral determination), the extension of tenure rights to farm dwellers/workers and their families under the land reform programme, and historical land claims to large areas of commercial agricultural land by former black occupiers, owners and tenants. These developments are perceived by large-scale farmers to be key challenges and difficulties confronting commercial agriculture. Hall (2012) documents how commercial farmers have responded to these developments. She suggests that many

have decided to exit farming, sell their farms and invest in new careers in other sectors of the economy, as seen in the decline in the number of commercial farming units from 60 000 in 1996 to just under 40 000 by 2007; diversification into non-agricultural sectors or into up-and-downstream activities; and moving out of South Africa, either individually or collectively (Hall, 2012). The prevalence of intra-regional ‘land grabbing’ challenges narratives that describe large-scale land acquisitions in Africa and elsewhere in developing economies as a “return to old patterns of colonial enclaves and mercantilist colonialism” (Hall, 2012:839). The World Bank euphemistically uses the phrase ‘rising global interest in farmland’ – but South African private sector involvement is evidence of attempts to gain access to agricultural land without having to carry the burden of ownership of such land, such as is the case in South Africa itself.

Large-scale commercial agriculture in South Africa is subject to contradictory pressures on labour also experienced in the global economy. Firstly, globalisation is leading to the increased use of informal workers for production that is linked to export production, and secondly, many large global buyers are demanding rising production standards, including improving employment conditions within their supply chains (Barrientos & Kritzinger, 2004). The effect of these changes on workers includes a trend toward flexible labour, with reductions in regular farm employment, an extension of growing/harvesting seasons, a shift from on-farm employment, deepening gender and racial segmentation, and intensification of work (Du Toit & Ewert, 2002; Kritzinger *et al.*, 2004; Preibisch, 2011).

Having established that economic restructuring processes resulted in the removal of subsidies and other forms of support to large-scale commercial farms, what other sources of funding are available for capitalist farms? Bernstein (2013a) illustrates the patterns of shifts from previous government funding, both directly through the Land Bank and Agricultural Credit Board and indirectly through the cooperatives, to private banks and other lenders such as AFGRI²⁷, mainly through mortgage financing. These shifts, however, have had very little or no adverse impact on farm investment. Although profit rates dipped between 1990 and 2002, in the past decade they have recovered to exceed the sector interest rate in most years. It can

²⁷ AFGRI is a leading agricultural services and processing company with a core focus on grain commodities. It provides services across the entire grain production and storage cycle, offering financial support and solutions as well as inputs and hi-tech equipment. See <http://www.afgri.co.za/about-us-2/>

thus be stated that commercial farming in South Africa has become more profitable over the past two decades, but for fewer farmers.

The implementation of a comprehensive agrarian reform that seeks to transform the commercial agricultural sector, address the dualism of 'freehold vs communal areas' and provide livelihood opportunities for the mass of the rural poor and landless, remains a major challenge in South Africa (Lahiff & Cousins, 2005). This thesis engages critically with commercial partnerships as a model for land reform on large-scale commercial farms, exploring whether or not the model has resulted in fundamental transformation in areas where it is being implemented.

3.3 South Africa's land reform programme

Du Toit (2013) reminds us that land matters are not simply a question of resources or material realities, but are also an 'empty signifier', a field of meaning available for appropriation by a wide range of different political projects. They are a powerful, material metaphor for deeply conflictual political processes extending well beyond the matters directly addressed in land reform policy. If we recognise that land reform relates to struggles and antagonisms that extend well beyond their literal and material consequences, we therefore need to think more carefully how land reform is imagined and evaluated. If not, argues Du Toit, questions of equitable transformation and justice are too easily framed in ways that 'obscure the terrain of struggles rather than revealing it', and which make complex policy questions much harder, rather than easier, to resolve (*ibid.*). In the overall analysis of land reform policy, it can be viewed as attempts to frame an agenda that appeared to reconcile the aims of national reconciliation, deracialisation, global integration and jobs for the poor (William, 1996; Hall 2010; Du Toit, 2013). These different projects were framed as elements of a 'seamless narrative of enlightened humanist modernisation', but in Du Toit's view, the consensus has been an extremely fragile one (*ibid.*).

Whilst there is a substantial literature on the relationship between redistribution and economic development, the connection between land rights and enhanced livelihoods or economic growth tends to be assumed rather than examined (Walker, 2005: 807). This point is further illuminated in analysis of the fate of farmworkers and farm dwellers by Hall *et al*

(2013), who argue that the dominant narrative in policy circles and wider South African literature locates the issues facing farmworkers primarily within the context of colonial dispossession and apartheid monopoly on land ownership, and related political and economic marginalisation. The authors further state that discourses on social justice and rights, in particular tenure reform, have added to the pressures arising from agricultural policies in the spheres of agricultural deregulation, trade liberalisation, labour regulation and price controls on key farming inputs. These have tended to compound pre-existing trends toward agricultural labour shedding.

South Africa's land reform is founded on the country's constitutional framework set out in Section 25 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996). The three core and interrelated elements of the land reform programme are *tenure reform, restitution and redistribution*. First, Section 25(5) lays a framework for land redistribution. It states that: "The state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to foster conditions which enable citizens to gain access to land on an equitable basis". Second, tenure reform is in line with Section 25(6) which states that: "A person or community whose tenure of land is legally insecure as a result of past racially discriminatory laws or practices is entitled, to the extent provided by an Act of Parliament, either to tenure which is legally secure or to comparable redress". Third, the mandate for restitution is provided for in Section 25(7) which states: "A person or community dispossessed of property after 19 June 1913 as a result of past racially discriminatory laws or practices is entitled, to the extent provided by an Act of Parliament, either to restitution of that property or to equitable redress".

As Hall (2012) shows, the policy on land redistribution initially involved delivery of land through a grant system, namely the Settlement Land Acquisition Grant (SLAG). This approach targeted poor households with monthly incomes not exceeding R1 500.00. In 2001, a notable shift in policy resulted in a programme known as the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD), which focussed on all black South Africans not employed by the state, but required an own contribution for the purchase of land. From 2009, the Pro-active Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS) became the only policy mechanism available for land redistribution, excluding restitution. PLAS involves the state purchasing privately owned land and leasing it to emerging black commercial farmers. According to government, about 2.8 million hectares were redistributed between 1994 and 2013 and this

benefitted 225 895 people. Since 2009, there has been an increase in land acquisition through PLAS, comparing the acquisition of 922 185 hectares to 160 354 acquired under LRAD during the same period (DRDLR, 2014a).

The programme of land redistribution has been extensively criticised, mainly on two fronts. Firstly, against the commitment to redistribute 30% of white-owned agricultural land, having achieved transfer of less than 10% of such land over 20 years, the programme has been regarded as having reached an impasse, being very slow to deliver at the scale anticipated. Many commentators have therefore suggested that the state must find mechanisms to scale up its implementation of the programme and transfer more land to blacks. Secondly, land reform farms are widely regarded as not being productive enough. Media reports, based on anecdotal evidence, have suggested that about 90% of all land reform projects were dysfunctional by 2009. However, the basis for such assessment is unclear, since no scientifically sound study corroborates statements of such a high failure rate. Based on limited case study work, the rate of the collapse of land reform in certain districts is approximately 40-50% (see Aliber *et al.*, 2013).

By 2012 the government had shifted its focus to the delivery of a high quality and sustainable land redistribution programme. This was aligned with the policy review linked to the 2011 Green Paper on South African Land Reform. This sought to address, amongst other issues, the cost of acquisition of land, hence it made proposals to abandon the willing-buyer willing-seller approach to the acquisition of land for land reform purposes. The emerging view of the state was that it should give effect to the constitutional provisions for 'just and equitable' compensation, which considers the market price of the property to be acquired as only one amongst a range of other factors.

With regard to land restitution, by 31 March 2014²⁸ this programme of land reform had benefitted over 370 000 households and 1.83 million beneficiaries, of which 68 183 households, with 313 012 beneficiaries, had benefitted in the last five years. Under the same period, redistribution through the Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS) reached at least 18 358 beneficiaries. Comparing the two redistributive programmes in the last five

²⁸ CRLR (2015 Reopening of the lodgement of land claims campaign quick facts and figures; Pretoria: CRLR; http://www.ruraldevelopment.gov.za/phocadownload/Commission_ReOpening_2014/Newsroom/re-opening_quick_facts_and_figures_30june2014.pdf; accessed 10 May 2015.

years, it appears that restitution has more potential to affect many people when compared to redistribution. By March 2014, the total cost of restitution was R24.4 billion, comprising R7 billion for financial compensation, R1.5 billion for grants, and R15.9 billion for land acquisition.²⁹ About 77 622 of the total 79 696 land claims have been settled. Whilst about 99% of all land claims had been settled by 2013, the number of finalised settlements amount to 74% or 58 990. Settlement of a land claim means approval by the Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform or either by the Land Claims Court whereas finalisation of the land claim means that the settlement agreement entered into by the claimant and the Land Claims Commission has been implemented, i.e. transfer of land or payment of compensation.

Government further responded to calls for the reopening of the lodgement of land claims by those people who had missed an opportunity to do so, mainly the victims of betterment-related dispossessions, and particularly those located in the Eastern Cape. The Amendment of the Restitution of Land Rights Act was assented to by the President on 30 June 2014. This Act provides for the re-opening of the lodgement of land claims for a period of a further five years, for those who missed the deadline of 31 December 1998. However, critics of this approach, including some NGOs (LRC, 2013; CLS, 2013; PLAAS, 2013; LAMOSA, 2014; AGRISA, 2014)³⁰ have questioned the implications for those claimants that have been waiting for the settlement of their land claims. Government has indicated that the state would prioritise claims lodged prior to 31 December 1998.

By 25 July 2014, the total number of new land claims lodged across all 14 lodgement sites was 4 917 (CRLR, 2014)³¹. About 25% of those claims were in the Western Cape, followed by Gauteng with 17.25%. Limpopo province had only 7.42% but was likely to increase after the Commission had rolled out mobile offices for the lodgement of land claims (*ibid.*). However, by April 2015, the number of land claims had increased to approximately 58 000 nationally amid the constitutional challenge. The Act is being challenged by the Legal Resources Centre (LRC) and Webber Wentzel on behalf of the Land Access Movement of

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ This is based on the observations during the Parliamentary public hearings on the Restitution of Land Rights Amendment Bill, 2013. Apart from nation-wide public consultation held at various locations across the country, public hearings were also conducted on 28 and 29 January 2014 in Parliament.

³¹ CRLR (2014) PowerPoint Presentation to the Portfolio Committee on Rural Development and Land Reform, Mowbray Lodgement Centre; Cape Town.

South Africa (LAMOSA), Nkuzi Development Association and the CPAs of Makuleke, Modderfontein and Popela. The application was lodged on the grounds of alleged lack of public involvement in the legislative process, and that the Act was vague regarding the resolution of existing claims. The challengers argue that this Act's influence on the lives of poor and landless communities is significant and that the steps to meet the requirement of a reasonable public participation process, ahead of signing the Act into law, should have been more intensive (LRC, 2015³²).

The key issue of the entitlements of farmworkers within restitution and whether or not there are adequate safeguards to protect the rights of farm dwellers and farmworkers, without one right superseding another, has been barely raised in the literature to date (Hall *et al.*, 2013). Hall *et al* (2013) show that restitution processes have brought some private white owners under pressure to sell, whilst others have improved levels of investment in farmworker housing and conditions in attempts to bolster their negotiating positions and power (Hall *et al.*, 2013).

With regard to the tenure rights of farmworkers/farm dwellers, a large body of literature on farm labour exists in South Africa. For example, some scholars have problematised labour conditions in the agricultural sector, while others are concerned with low wages, dangerous working conditions, forced overtime, insecure employment and labour regimes that combine elements of paternalism and despotism (Gibbon *et al*, 2014; Gibbon & Riisgaard, 2014). In addition, questions of precarious and insecure tenure for farm dwellers, poor housing, and adverse labour conditions for farmworkers have also been addressed (SAHRC, 2003; Atkinson, 2007; HRW, 2011; Du Toit, 2002; Atkinson, 2007; Wisborg *et al*, 2012). Some recent literature has focussed mainly on policy debates (Hall, 2003), with a strong emphasis on evictions (Wegerif *et al*, 2005).

Two main pieces of legislation in relation to farmworkers' tenure have been passed, namely the Land Reform (Labour Tenant) Act (1996) and the Extension of Security of Tenure Act (ESTA) (1997). There is dearth of large-scale and up-to-date surveys on the extent of farm evictions in South Africa. The only survey to date was conducted by Nkuzi Development Association and Social Surveys in 2004. The survey found that 3.7 million individuals were

³² <http://www.lrc.org.za/press-releases/3425-press-release-challenge-to-the-restitution-act-going-to-the-constitutional-court> - accessed on 22 November 2015.

displaced from farms over a 20-year period from 1984 to 2003, and about 1.7 million were forcefully evicted (Wegerif *et al*, 2005). Poor performance in this particular policy area is partly due to inadequate implementation of regulations on how and when people can be evicted from farms, as well as a disconnect between implementation and any development vision (Hall, 2003). In terms of the tenure security on large-scale commercial farms generally, du Toit (2013) argues that ESTA has had differential impacts. With specific reference to the labour-absorbing Western Cape horticultural sector, where farmworkers' livelihoods are greatly dependent on employment, and where a high degree of mobility is an essential part of the coping strategies of the farm dweller population, the policy did little to shift power relations in favour of farmworkers, and arguably worsened them. As to whether or not ESTA has contributed to the uneven but significant trend towards downsizing, casualisation, and externalisation of farm labour, research is divided on the impact or influence of this piece of legislation. It is clear that agro-food deregulation, supermarket power, price pressure and tightening of labour laws have also played key roles.

In relation to land reform in general, Walker (2005:806-807) has been sceptical that “even if land reform were to receive more sustained attention as a programme of government, a serious mismatch is likely to remain between the political aspirations and popular expectations that surround the land question on the one hand, and the transformative potential of land reform itself on the other”. This mismatch, in her view, constituted the “main fault line of land reform” at the end of the first decade of democratic government in South Africa (*ibid.*). One key issue at the heart of land reform's ‘transformative potential’ is clearly that of post-settlement support, the focus of the next section.

3.4 Development support for land reform beneficiaries and farmers

Development support for land reform beneficiaries has undergone many policy changes. Between 1994 and 2008 very limited support was available in practice, but attention was beginning to be focussed on the issue. In 2005 the Department of Land Affairs developed the Settlement Implementation Strategy (SIS) to address concerns around lack of post-settlement support for land reform, and the piecemeal approach to land reform in general. Various units of the Regional Land Claims Commissioner's offices recruited the SIS Units (SSIUs), but since 2009, changes in the policy have resulted in the centralisation of funding for support for

all land reform under the Recapitalisation and Development Programme (commonly referred to as the Recap programme).

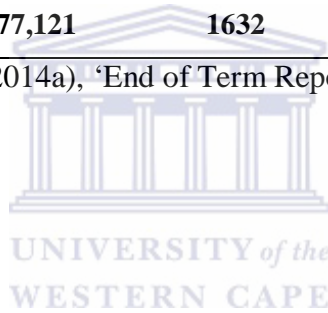
The Recap programme was introduced in order to address the challenge of failed land reform projects. The policy framework suggested that about 6 million ha of transferred land was out of production. Although the policy was developed in 2009, implementation started in 2010. The objectives are to provide emerging black farmers with social and economic infrastructure and the basic resources required to manage a successful agricultural business. It aims to contribute to the transformation of the rural economy through enterprise and industrial development in various agricultural chains. In particular, it seeks to 'rekindle a class of black commercial farmers', combat poverty, unemployment and income inequality, decrease rural-urban migration, increase food production, guarantee food security, and create employment opportunities within the agricultural sector (DRDLR, 2009).

Between 2010 and December 2013, government supported a total of 1 357 farms (about 1 million ha in total) through the Recap programme as illustrated in Table 3 (RADP performance 2010 - 2013). The programme is based on a five-year funding model, decreasing from 100% funding in year one and withdrawal of financial support by year five. A total of 1 632 farmers were trained through some form of collaboration, what in this thesis is called 'commercial partnerships'. The programme had 347 strategic partners, including mentors and partners in terms of co-management agreements and share equity schemes in the programme.

Table 3: RADP Performance 2010 - 2013

Province	No of Farms	Ha	Farmers Trained	RADP Funding	Strategic Partners
		No	No	(R'000)	
Eastern Cape	160	78735	94	R386,580,649	52
Free State	177	132030	67	R380,379,024	70
Gauteng	130	27329	0	R175,659,464	26
KwaZulu-Natal	178	77338	371	R462,419,745	58
Limpopo	177	71538	197	R333,543,223	44
Mpumalanga	197	128814	209	R502,737,068	61
Northern Cape	75	313688	89	R191,925,682	40
North-West	204	207952	5	R405,425,091	77
Western Cape	59	39697	600	R116,225,233	9
Total	1357	1,077,121	1632	R2,954,895,179	437

Source: Adapted from DRDLR (2014a), 'End of Term Report 2009-2014'.

**Table 4: No. of farms redistributed/restored vs farms recapitalised (2009 - March 2014)**

Province	No of Farms		Total	Total Recapitalised
	Redistribution	Restitution		
Eastern Cape	211	378	589	188
Free State	154	17	171	182
Gauteng	95	162	257	115
KwaZulu-Natal	244	112	356	212
Limpopo	139	304	443	196
Mpumalanga	183	87	270	206
Northern Cape	80	21	101	81
North West	164	32	196	215
Western Cape	49	687	736	64
Totals	1319	1800	3119	1459

Source: DRDLR (2014b) Presentation to the Portfolio Committee on RDLR, 5/11/2014.

Table 4 (No. of farms redistributed/restored vs farms recapitalised 2009-2014) demonstrates that for the duration of the implementation of the recapitalisation and development programme about 3 119 farms were acquired and distributed to beneficiaries, 1 319 under PLAS and 1 800 under restitution. Only 1 459 farms were supported through the Recap programme. It is important to note that some of the farms under Recap may have been acquired prior to 2009, and thus it is unclear how many farms fall in that category. There is no data in the public domain about what is happening on the farms acquired after 2009 but are not supported.

In November 2009, the DRDLR had targeted 1 807 distressed farms for recapitalisation and development over the medium-term. By October 2014, 1 459 farms (or 80.74% of the total targeted) were recapitalised. About 298 projects under mentorship 'are doing well' and 314 under different forms of partnerships "are doing well". This means that 612 farms or 41% of 1459 farms are "doing well". The period 2015/16 would mark the end of the first five year cycle for RADP funding to land reform beneficiaries. As indicated below, only 4% of the overall farms recapitalised will exit the RADP. This suggests that critical questions need to be asked about these commercial partnerships, and the extent to which they have served the purposes they were intended for. As will be discussed in relation to the Levubu partnerships, questions about training and capacity building to enable farm owners to take effective control of the farm need to be raised. The above tables show that if the Recap programme continues at this rate (with an exit rate of only 4% after 5 years), the goal to improve the productivity and efficiency of land reform projects will take very long to realise.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the transition from pre-capitalist modes of production to the dominance of the capitalist mode of production in South Africa, as well as the class struggles and contradictions governing the process. It also showed that the benefits of this transition were not evenly distributed, owing to the racially-skewed land divisions arising from the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts. Large-scale commercial farms were exclusively demarcated for whites. Such transformation in farming and agriculture, occurring through a 'Prussian path' to the resolution to the Agrarian Question, relied heavily on the state for the human and material resources that ultimately contributed to its prosperity. The chapter demonstrated that

it was the state rather than the market that defined the basic parameters of agrarian change, but the logic of capital accumulation drove the underlying processes.

The extraordinary extent of state support to large-scale commercial farms owned by white farmers had contradictory and paradoxical effects. On the one hand, marketing, credit, price support and other measures played a vital role in the transformation of South Africa's agricultural industry. Labour policies protected farmers' access to a servile labour force and made it available at sub-economic rates. On the other hand, these policies impeded the development of a farming sector appropriate to the country's demography and environment. The artificially high farm prices, low labour costs, and protection from imports that resulted from marketing, credit and tariff legislation encouraged white farmers to use land for agricultural purposes that were better suited, because of the semi-arid conditions of most of the country, to pastoralism. The exclusion of black peasant farmers from any benefits from the various subsidies that the state gave to whites eliminated a source of cheap food that had been important during the first stages of industrialisation.

What the literature tells us about agricultural labour is that global-scale processes of technological change have occurred over time, and continue to do so, with major implications for food systems. In South Africa, transitions from feudal production, to labour tenancy, and then to wage labour, have played a key role in the past, but contemporary transformations are equally fundamental in their implications. In the context of the 'flexibilisation' and casualisation of labour, increasingly mechanised production processes and shifts to less labour intensive systems of production have significant repercussions on the quantity and quality of jobs that can be created in agriculture. Capitalist enterprises respond to global competition by reducing labour costs in order to remain competitive, downsizing their permanent labour forces, and increasing their use of contract labour. This approach poses a dilemma to the community-owned farming enterprises in Levubu, that purchase some of the labour power from members of the CPAs that have had ownership of the farms transferred to them, especially in relation to impacts on the accumulation and profit maximisation imperatives of capitalist enterprises.

Before I discuss restitution in Levubu, and the formation of commercial partnerships on farms transferred to 'claimant communities', the next chapter will outline the research design and methodological approach adopted in this study.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

4.1 Introduction

This study is based on data collected between 2010 and 2014 using a combination of qualitative (intensive) and quantitative (extensive) research methods. The principal focus in fieldwork was on understanding the perspectives of farmworkers, farm managers, members of the CPAs and government officials on processes of social change affecting community-owned farming enterprises in Levubu. In this chapter I outline the research design that guided my research journey, bridging the formulation of the initial research questions through to execution of different research activities in the field, analysis of field data and write-up of the research findings. I present a brief account of how I set out to collect data about social change, its dynamics and processes, in Levubu, go on to document and reflect on my experiences during the field, and describe how I analysed the data. This chapter will also reflect on whether or not the research techniques employed in this study assisted me in seeking answers to the research questions I posed at the outset.

The chapter proceeds as follows: firstly I present an overview of the research design and present a case for the combination of 'intensive' and 'extensive' research approaches in a study of this kind. Combining these approaches, I argue, is appropriate for investigating the shifting terrains of power, property, and production in Levubu as well as the complexities of social relations and dynamics in this setting. Secondly, I discuss the particular research methods and techniques used, and present some justifications for their choice given the research questions posed in Chapter 1. Lastly, I sketch out the steps I followed from data capturing to analysis and interpretation of data.

4.2 Point of departure

Here I locate my personal history of involvement with claimant communities in the Levubu Valley within the design of this research study. Although my PhD research study began in

2010, its original basis dates back to my fieldwork in Vhembe District under the auspices of Nkuzi Development Association³³, a Limpopo-based, land rights NGO.

In 1999, I was recruited by Nkuzi as a 'Project Officer: Land Reform and Rural Livelihoods' to support land claimant communities in Northern Limpopo³⁴. Amongst the groups I worked with was the Nzhelele Land Forum, within which a cluster of Levubu land claims was found. My role was to facilitate a variety of forms of support for all Levubu claimants, initially comprising eleven communities (including those with claims on forestry land).

Between 1999 and 2006 I supported these communities to document their histories, gather evidence for their land claims, set up sound institutional arrangements, including through facilitation of processes to establish CPAs, facilitate the resolution of boundary disputes between claimants and 'tribes', and conduct claimant verification processes. During this time I produced field notes useful for Nkuzi's reporting purposes, and gained useful insights about the struggles over and demands for land by claimant communities, and I refer to some of these as documentary sources in this thesis. One of my key observations over the years has been the shifts that have taken place in local narratives about land claims, from a dominant view of land as something that means much more than a landscape, a farm or an agricultural property seen only in economic terms. Initially dominant views about the re-establishment of 'traditional communities' on their ancestral land, with socio-cultural and religious notions of land ownership and access playing a significant role in land claims, gave way to perspectives on land as being mainly a productive resource providing economic benefits. This shift was clearly influenced by dominant official discourses on how restitution on large-scale commercial farms should take place, and that began to dominate policy after 2000.

³³ Nkuzi Development Association is a non-profit Section 21 company providing support services to historically-disadvantaged communities wishing to improve their rights and access to land. It was started in 1997 and operates in Limpopo and parts of Mpumalanga, and also works with farm residents in Gauteng Province. It focusses on advocacy and facilitation work to support disadvantaged people/communities claiming their rights to land, secure land tenure, food security, and basic services. <http://www.nkuzi.org.za/about%20us.html>

³⁴ Much of the work of the land reform forum in the Nzhelele Valley arose from a pilot project of the Area-Based Land Reform Initiative (ALRI) initiated by the Nkuzi Development Association, in partnership with Makhado Municipality. The idea of district land committees was already discussed at these forum meetings, as was how land reform could be approached at a local level with the needs and aspirations of local people at the fore.

Between 2006 and 2009, I monitored and participated in the negotiations around the formation of ‘strategic partnerships’ in Levubu³⁵. Alongside other researchers, I focussed on the evolution of strategic partnerships with particular attention to the potential benefits of such arrangements for claimant communities. Due to limited resources, in this work the issues around farmworkers always took a secondary place to concerns for the interests of CPAs, claimant communities as a whole, and traditional leaders. This neglect of farmworkers has informed my choice of topic in this thesis. I developed many key insights into strategic commercial partnerships in land reform during this period.

My involvement with the same communities for an extended period of approximately 15 years has afforded me an extraordinary opportunity to document my intimate knowledge of what Rutherford (2001) refers to as ‘local discourses’ and ‘official discourses’. In this context, local discourses are understood to mean understandings and knowledge which one acquires during encounters, meetings and events, whereas official discourses arise in overlapping arenas of knowledge and practice where policies are made and implemented. My position as a participant observer within processes of negotiating the settlement of land claims, as well as negotiating contracts to govern strategic partnerships, provided particular kinds of insights that would be difficult to acquire in any other way. In retrospect, I found this highly advantageous in the sense that key elements of my data gathering activities were not driven by hypothetical reasoning, but rather by events that occurred spontaneously. This long period of work in Levubu provides the benefit of a ‘retrospective’ approach, a concept used by Murray (2002) to indicate a research design that tracks changes over a long time-scale, and that can be complemented by ‘circumspective analysis’. In Levubu this would involve concentrating on the empirical investigation of the combinations of various modes of livelihoods for farmworkers.

The fact that I have been closely involved with these communities and helped them in a variety of ways over many years, can be criticised on the basis that it has the potential to affect the objectivity of my research or introduce a bias. In the ‘eyes’ of claimants and beneficiaries, I was still the same person who had assisted them in the past. In fact there were times when some claimant communities requested me to go on assisting them by making interventions on some issues, but I refrained from doing so. I did, however, provide them

³⁵ This was undertaken in a collaborative research project between Nkuzi Development Association and PLAAS. Much of the work has been published in journals and books.

with information about who might be able to assist them. On other fronts, both government and community members were reluctant to conduct interviews with me, based on the assumptions that I knew almost everything about the Levubu land claims. However, there was also an appreciation of the fact that constant changes have taken place over time in relation to management of these farms; hence there was a legitimate need to keep up-to-date with developments.

4.3. Research design and approach

My approach to this study began by recognising a great difference between the subject matter of the social and the natural sciences. Social phenomena are a product of human choices and can be understood ‘from the inside’ by other human observers, unlike natural phenomena. As Pawson (1999) noted about human beings in general, farm owners and farmworkers in Levubu are active and conscious beings who are aware of what is going on in a social setting and are capable of making choices about how to act. With its key focus being social relations and the dynamics of power, property, and production/reproduction, this study adopted approaches or paradigms associated with interpretive sociology and anthropology.

The approaches discussed above put a strong emphasis on the qualitative comprehension of social meanings, and less on statistical measurements and analysis. The latter are essential for the approaches promoted in traditional natural scientific research, and associated with positivist research paradigms in which scientists begin research activities with a theory about the nature of the world, then derive hypotheses about particular observations, that are then put to the empirical test. Positivists, based on their view of the ‘science of society’, believe that the behaviour of human beings can be objectively measured in similar ways to the subject matter of the natural sciences. They hold certain assumptions about the characteristics that scientific methods should have, i.e. research should be objective or value-free, reliability is the most important characteristic of scientific methods, and science should produce quantitative data that can be converted to graphs and tables (McNeil & Chapman, 2005).

Some experimentalists and quantitative researchers do not approve of qualitative research designs, arguing that flexible and pragmatic research is non-scientific, and modifying designs during the execution of research may result in research bias. However, many social scientists

defend qualitative approaches, arguing that fixed and technical designs are, to a great extent, restrictive and unsuited to exploratory and inductive research. As Patton (1990:40) shows, themes of qualitative inquiry are ‘naturalist’ in character, attempting to study real-world situations as they unfold naturally, and are ‘holistic’ seeking to understand the whole phenomenon under study as a system comprising complex interdependencies. Further, inductive research allows immersion in the details and specifics of the data, and this facilitates discovery of important categories, dimensions and interrelationships. It starts with the exploration of ‘genuinely open questions’, rather than testing theoretically derived hypotheses. According to Bernstein (2013:72), different answers to the question ‘why?’ are important because they influence how the object of research and its methods are framed. This in essence is the relation between the theoretical and conceptual means utilised and the purposes for which they are utilised.

These arguments I have just highlighted suggest a polarisation of positivist and interpretive research and a ‘gulf’ that exists between them, seen to be as different as ‘chalk and cheese’ (McNeil & Chapman, 2005). This ‘theory war’ is often subject to simplification and exaggeration (Pawson, 1999; McNeil & Chapman, 2005). McNeil & Chapman (2005) further argue that the idea that the two approaches have nothing in common and are therefore irreconcilable is a methodological myth, and a false dichotomy; they are not polar opposites. The approaches face identical problems and need to adopt common solutions. In practice, a great deal of social enquiry has circumnavigated this ‘theory war’ and successfully used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods (McNeil & Chapman, 2005; Bulmer & Warwick, 1983) “apparently without the researcher suffering signs of schizophrenia” (Pawson, 1999:32). McNeil & Chapman (2005) further argue that present day methodological disputes are likely to be ‘family feuds’, i.e. ethnographers arguing with each other about how participant observation might be best undertaken in order to understand social reality (McNeil & Chapman, 2005:22). What constitutes evidence in the social science rejects any fetishism of statistical and mathematical proofs, and their intrinsic superiority, and can encompass a wide range of materials (Bernstein, 2013b).

It is now generally accepted that social science does not operate from within a single paradigm, as illustrated in Table 5 (Paradigms of social science research). This notion of “paradigms” refers to “systems of interrelated ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions acting as perspectives that provide rationales for the research

and commit the researcher to particular methods of data collection, observation and interpretation” (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 1999).

Table 5: Paradigms of social science research

	Ontology	Epistemology	Methodology
Positivist	Stable external reality Law-like	Objective Detached observer	Experimental Quantitative Hypothesis testing
Interpretive	Internal reality of subjective experience	Empathetic Observer subjectivity	Interactional Interpretation Qualitative
Constructionist	Socially constructed reality Discourse Power	Suspicious Political Observer constructing versions	Deconstruction Textual analysis Discourse analysis

Source: Terre Blanche *et al.* (1999)

Having due regard for these paradigms, I opted to try to integrate both qualitative (or intensive) and quantitative (or extensive) research approaches. This combined approach does not imply an exclusive focus on technical elements such as accurate measurement. In this thesis, the extensive-quantitative methods were used for the collection of data about the socio-economic and demographic profile of farmworkers’ households. The extensive method was blended with interpretive, and where necessary constructionist, interactional, qualitative, textual analysis and discourse analysis, hence I adopted an approach embodying *methodological pluralism*. This methodological pluralism drew on several of the different paradigms shown in Table 5 above, because these paradigms exist simultaneously.

Investigating social processes within community-owned farming enterprises, a social arena in which a range of actors and interests are at play, required diverse methods in order to build up a comprehensive picture of social life in these settings. For example, qualitative methods were used to produce extracts of verbatim conversation that gives meaning and life to views on strategic partnerships in Levubu and how these enterprises have performed in the last few years, as well as on labour processes. The quantitative survey data revealed certain trends in relation to income sources and the asset base of these rural households as well as the spread

of claimant and non-claimant farmworker households. These were produced through use of a standardised questionnaire. Use of in-depth interviews with selected household members, as well as documenting the life histories of a few farmworkers allowed for *triangulation*, where multiple methods were used to cross-check and verify the reliability of a particular survey questionnaire and the validity of the data collected. I thus used a combination of intensive-qualitative and extensive-quantitative methods to ascertain the accuracy of the data gathered, especially as it related to household survey and in-depth interviews, general semi-structured interviews and key-informants' interviews. Where possible, document analysis was also undertaken and proved useful.

What I discussed above suggests the complementarity of quantitative and qualitative research methods, even if they differ in nature. On the one hand, qualitative methods generated soft data such as impressions of social relations and dynamics of production on community-owned farms under commercial partnerships, texts and documents from meetings, and symbols. On the other hand, quantitative methods generated statistical data collected through surveys of farmworker households; these focussed especially on livelihoods data. The survey of farmworker households, from a positivist angle, focussed on measuring variables linked to the broad causal explanations being sought by the study. The short household survey was intended to complement an interpretive or critical social science approach, where observation is imbued with cases and contexts, in a detailed examination of cases that occur in social life with an attempt to present an authentic interpretation that is sensitive to specific socio-historical contexts (Neuman, 2000).

Both approaches provide different data types and require different research strategies. It is perhaps at this stage important to state that although the research framework drew on various paradigms, it was, to a large extent, intensive-qualitative in nature, an iterative process that involves a flexible and non-sequential approach. The survey data was collected at a particular phase of this research, and the rest of the time was spent using an intensive approach because of a need of explanations on the structural or causal relationships which could not be attained by some descriptions of common properties and the general patterns found in the population as a whole (Sayer, 1992). A summary of the research design is presented in Table 6 (Combination of intensive and extensive research: Summary of research design), using a description of its key components drawn from Sayer's (1992) exposition of a realist approach to social science research.

Table 6: Combination of intensive and extensive research: Summary of research design

	INTENSIVE RESEARCH	EXTENSIVE RESEARCH
Research question	To what extent does restitution in Levubu transform, modify, or reproduce the dominant relations of property, power and production which existed on the Levubu commercial farms in the past; what are the impacts of restitution/partnerships, in particular, on farmworkers' livelihoods?	What are the livelihoods strategies of farmworker households? What are common patterns and distinguishing features of the farmworker household?
Relations	Substantial/contingent relations of connection between social objects	Formal relations of similarity
Type of groups	Causal groups	Taxonomic groups
Types of account produced	Causal explanation of the production of certain objects or events, though not necessarily representative ones	Descriptive representative generalisation, lacking in explanatory penetration
Typical methods	It involves a study of individual agents in their causal contexts; it involves interactive semi-structured interviews for key informants/ and unstructured discussions; focus groups; ethnographies; life histories and qualitative analysis. Study of individual agents in their causal contexts, using interactive interviews.	Survey of population or representative sample, formal questionnaire, standardised interviews, statistical analysis.
Limitations	Actual concrete patterns and contingent relations are unlikely to be representative, average, or generalisable. Necessary relations discovered will exist wherever their <i>relata</i> are present e.g. causal powers of objects are generalisable to other contexts as they are necessary features of these objects	Although representative of a whole population, they are unlikely to be generalisable to other population at different times and places. Problem of ecological fallacy in making inferences about individuals. Limited explanatory power
Appropriate tests	Corroboration	Replication

Source: Adapted from Sayer (1992)

4.4 Overview of research methods

As discussed in Chapter 1, this research focussed on four Communal Property Associations (CPAs) selected to represent a range of variables. These included relationships with different strategic partners - South African Farm Management (SAFM) or Umlimi Consortium (Umlimi), ethnicity, different management styles (adopted by different general managers), location and proximity of the claimant community to the farms, different crops, and varying degree of performance. I therefore selected four of the seven operating companies, or enterprises owned by CPAs, on farms successfully restored to claimant communities. The four case studies involve a range of actors, such as operating companies, boards of directors, CPAs, farmworkers and government officials, and have seen major changes in management structures over time. The farms have undergone a series of changes, from being privately-owned and managed, then under companies owned by partnerships (CPAs and a strategic partner), and under a joint-venture management, and then to being community-owned and managed in terms of contracts with former white commercial farmers.

At the time of the choice of research sites, each of the four farming enterprises had an average of around 200 farmworkers. The cases of Ravele and Masakona represent those strategic partnerships that had been agreed between their CPAs and SAFM, whereas Shigalo and Ratombo represent strategic partnerships agreed between their CPAs and MAVU/Umlimi Consortium. Other communities in Levubu, not chosen as case studies, include Tshakhuma Trust, Tshivhazwaulu CPA, and Tshitwani CPA. The research techniques involved structured and unstructured interviews, conversations and 'hanging out' on farms with farmworkers and some CPA leaders. Table 7 below shows the number of people that I interviewed over the three years of field research. For some respondents, I made repeat visits and carried out interviews on a quarterly basis to keep up-to-date with developments, especially in relation to the changes in the businesses and employment scenarios.

Research involved a phased approach that encompassed the following activities: firstly, I undertook a scoping exercise to select four case studies from the seven communities who had acquired their land through restitution. At a very high level, this involved seven interviews with four CPA representatives, two general farm managers, and one official from the Regional Land Claims Commissioner's Office. Secondly, this was followed by extensive research that involved administering a survey of a sample of 145 questionnaires to

farmworker households, both claimants and non-claimants in two of the cases, Masakhona and Shigalo. In the survey I asked questions about the socio-economic characteristics and profiles of farmworker households, employment and income sources, and other key livelihood variables. In addition, 38 in-depth interviews were conducted with general farmworkers in different CPAs, documenting their life histories. I also undertook a range of interviews with CPA leaders, general managers, mentors, production managers, HR managers and supervisors on the farms, as well as other key informants not located on these farms – government officials and other key actors such as the manager of a neighbouring commercial farm.

Table 7: Record of interviews conducted between 2011 and 2013

	Category	Masakona	Shigalo	Ratombo	Ravele
Farm	General Managers	1	1	2	1
	Mentors	1	-	1	-
	Production Manager	1	1	1	1
	General Workers	10	10	10	8
	HR Manager	1	1	1	1
	Supervisors	3	3	3	2
	Security	1	2	0	0
	Workers' Representatives	1	0	0	1
Claimants	CPA representatives	2	2	3	1
Survey	Farmworker Households	72	73	-	-
Government	Officials from the LDA &	3			
	RLCC: Limpopo	2			
Others	TAUSA (Soutpansberg)	1			
	General Manager: Valley Farms	1			

NB. Over the duration of this research I conducted repeat visits and interviews with some of the key, strategic informants and respondents, especially farm managers, CPA leaders and some of the workers.

Table 8: Overview of fieldwork activities between 2010 and 2013

<i>June/July 2010</i>	<i>Dec 2010/Jan 2011</i>	<i>March/April 2011</i>	<i>June/July 2011</i>	<i>Dec2011/Jan 2012</i>	<i>Dec2012-Jan 2013</i>
Scoping exercise and update on the progress of partnerships	Actor-analysis by mapping different actors involved	In-depth interviews with selected farmworkers, representing particular households	Interviews with farm managers, general managers: about the production relations	Spent time in the offices of the companies, analysis of the financial statements and the board packs	Follow up with CPA leaderships on the developments on farms, general managers, and selected workers
Interviews with key informants: farm managers, CPA leadership, and Government Departments	Administer a survey to gather data about the livelihoods of the farmworker households.	Mapping of the value-adding industries linked to these land reform farms	In-depth interviews with general workers: claimant and non-claimant workers about the general conditions of employment, and responses to the changes in Levubu	Interviews with workers, management on processes of labour, quantities of labour, and social relations underlying production and accumulation on the farms	Follow up on the power relations within the farms, and the emergent conflicts emerging from the contradictions and resource allocations on farms
Visits to farms: Observe the developments and just 'hang out' with workers	Focus group with women on one of the farms under Masakona CPA	Interview with key informants about the transition from strategic partnerships to Management Contracts	Interviews with key government informants: in the provincial government		Tracking labour and recruitment over the last 4 to 5 years, since strategic partnerships to current arrangements

4.4.1 Methods and techniques in intensive, qualitative research

Three main commitments that characterise qualitative research include: firstly, understanding of the world through interacting with, empathising with, and interpreting the actions and perceptions of actors, exploring the meaning of people's worlds; secondly, collecting data in natural settings, rather than in artificial and constructed contexts such as laboratories; and lastly, *generation* of theory rather than testing it (Brockington & Sullivan, 2003). The most common research techniques used are different types of interviews (from open conversations, semi-structured discussions around particular topics to highly structured questionnaires; others include focus groups, conversation and discourse analysis; field diaries (day to day record of events, diet, work or observations); documentary sources, including films and photographs; participant observation in which the researcher immerses him/herself in the place/societies they are studying.

The following sections discuss the techniques that I used, and explain on the context as well as the purposes.



(a) Case study life histories

Qualitative methods are most common for developing case studies. Case studies make no claim to representivity, but treat each subject studied as a unit on its own; they are about vividly told stories that can make a contribution to our knowledge and understanding of selected aspects of social life (McNeil & Chapman, 2005). I used a case study approach for rich description of each of the cases that are part of this research. One type of case study is a life history. Life histories of key actors on farms in Levubu enabled me to construct a personal narrative of these individuals and were generated from unstructured interviews or conversations. As discussed here, I conducted life histories and timelines for the enterprises to be able to present rich descriptions about these enterprises, CPAs and other actors involved, to enable greater richness of data and depth and penetration of analysis.

“The life history method attempts to locate individuals in their overall life experience as well as their broader socio-historical backgrounds against which they live.... There appear to be two main alternatives.... [the] complete life history attempts to cover the entire sweep of the subject's life experiences. It is inevitably long, many sided and complex.... The alternative would be to collect

multiple biographies within the same or similar area of research.... The multiple biographies approach, abstracting dominant themes, makes it possible to generalise to one type by showing that certain biographies have, for the entire idiosyncrasy, some common elements". (Armstrong, 1982: 7, 19, 20; cited in Graham, 1984:109).

My case studies were developed through the use of a repertoire of methods to gather data; these included all sorts of interviews with knowledgeable key informants in the locale being studied, and participant observation of events in the setting as and when they occur (Bulmer & Warwick, 1983).

(b) Unstructured and semi-structured in-depth interviews

I found that unstructured interviews worked well when used together with observational techniques to gain in-depth understanding of processes and dynamics observed. For example, when 'hanging about' I observed relations among workers, but only when I probed in an unstructured manner was I able to get a deeper understanding of the observational data. Such data acquired through unstructured interviews was further discussed through semi-structured interviews, often prearranged with CPA leaders, farm managers, government officials and general workers. The fact that they were semi-structured, allowed for flow of conversations, especially when a dialogue emerged. As already stated, qualitative research is an iterative process, in the sense that at times preliminary data analysis coincides with data collection. My membership of an NRF Chair's research group at UWC gave me opportunities to present preliminary analyses, allowing self-critical reflection and the reframing of certain questions in order to address particular lessons and insights emerging from the field. In addition, I have also experienced circumstances where respondents just digressed to their own issues or interests, but these were often surprisingly informative, as narratives often were very revealing of the life worlds of farmworkers.

(c) Participant observation

I drew on participant observation techniques mostly used in ethnographic studies, in which the researcher writes about the way of life or culture of social groups, with the idea to tell it like it is (McNeil & Chapman, 2005) or ordinary activities. McNeil & Chapman (2005:95) sees this as "research driven from the inside rather than research imposed from the outside".

As an NGO worker hanging around with workers in the avocado and macadamia fields, I joined the activities of those being studied and shared their experiences of social reality, watching, observing, and listening to their narratives about their daily lives and the social struggles they were involved in. Sometimes observations were made in the context of just being present in farm offices to observe interactions and movements, especially in the mornings before work for the day began. On other occasions, being present at meetings of management of the operating companies (e.g. Masakona and Ravele), I sat there as a passive observer, watching and listening to how they ran the meetings, noting issues discussed, and who spoke about what. These meetings presented me with opportunities to gather ‘insider’ information about the management and performance of the companies under management contracts.

While positivist critiques of participant observation suggest that its design breaches the fundamental rules of scientific procedure (i.e. objectivity, lack of control of influential variables, lack of representivity), I have found that participant observation allowed me to access the “intimate and creative world of social meanings and action” as McNeil & Chapman (2005) would argue. I gained insights that I would never have had through ‘clipboard and questionnaire’-style structured interview techniques. Graham (1994:111) encourages the use of narratives, rather than surveys and interviews which he argues are grounded in the chronology of people’s lives. Being a participant-observer is highly recommended because “it is possible for the participant, as observer, to collect minutely detailed data on a wide range of topics and verify them by careful cross checking from multiple sources” (Collins, 1984:55). It can only be used when an investigator cannot think of another way of observing the social setting of interest (*ibid.* 55).

(d) Focus group discussions

In the sub-sections above, I have indicated how in-depth interviews with farmworkers, CPA leaders, and farm managers have allowed me to delve deeply into social and personal matters. Focus group discussions held during this research study, mainly facilitating discussion amongst women workers, provided space for gathering data on a wider range of female farmworker experiences on these farms. On a particular day, at lunch time, I had a discussion with women at Masakona farm, in which they shared with me their knowledge about these

farms as well as their experiences in relation to divisions of labour. This was invaluable and a source of unique data.

(e) Analysis of documentary sources

Documentary sources in this study included minutes of meetings of the boards of directors of operating companies, contracts between strategic partners and CPAs which served as founding documents for strategic partnerships, newspaper articles, letters, and official documents such as communications between government and land claimants, and Section 42D memoranda used to settle land claims. In addition, I was able to gain access to Nkuzi Development Association files, as well as some of my own field diaries and notes of meetings kept during negotiations for strategic partnerships and finalisation of land claims for Levubu. Such materials have an obviously ‘constructed’ nature and are the means by which ideas and discourses are circulated in society.

In document analysis, one of the major methodical approaches used was textual analysis (McNeil & Chapman, 2005). It entails analysis of linguistic subtleties within documents in order to see whether they encourage a particular interpretation of events. Therefore, as a researcher, I spent some time reading minutes of meetings as well as other primary reference materials from public or official records, as discussed above.

4.4.2 Methods and techniques in extensive, quantitative research

As discussed above, the study was based on data from four CPAs but I chose Masakona and Shigalo CPAs as sites for the collection of quantitative data on the basis that, at the time of the selection, Masakona had been performing better than the other three CPAs. Masakona had partnerships with SAFM and subsequently Mr Basson was hired as farm manager. Shigalo had partnered with MAVU and Umlimi, and subsequently hired Mr Kotze as a manager.

I first designated farmworkers on two CPAs (Masakona and Shigalo) as the populations of interest, then selected a subset of a predetermined size from their total population of farmworkers. Information gathered from the subset would ideally be just as accurate as the

data that we could gather from the entire population (Bailey, 1994). The next thing to consider was sample size. Probability theory assures us that a relatively small size is adequate and can allow us to estimate our sampling error (*ibid.*). I used random probability sampling, where each sample element (farmworker household) in the universe had an equal probability of being chosen for the sample, regardless of similarities or differences among them, so long as they were employed in a commercial partnership. Thus farmworkers were chosen without any bias towards any personal characteristics, for example, claimant or non-claimant, men and women. I assigned numbers to the list of farmworkers from both Shigalo and Masakona CPAs farms, and further drew a table of random numbers through a computerised system that provides random numbers. The samples were drawn from a sampling frame of lists of farmworkers on each of the CPAs farms/enterprises. The survey was conducted between December 2010 and February 2011.

Shigalo: At the time of the survey fieldwork, a total of 137 farmworkers were permanently employed at Shigalo Farms Management (the ‘operating company’). In addition, 33 farmworkers were employed as casual and seasonal workers. The research employed a probability sampling using a simple random sample of 73 households based on a sample ratio of 43% (based on the formula of sample size/population size (170) multiplied by 100). Using a random number generator from the statistical software Moonstats, I generated random numbers which were then matched to the reconstituted list of all workers at the Shigalo Farms Management. Each worker represented a household, and therefore I sought to interview the household head of each household selected randomly. One person refused to continue with the interview after it had begun.

Masakona: The Sharp Move Trading Company had a total of 158 farmworkers employed at Sharp Move Trading Company (Masakona). In addition, about 22 farmworkers were employed as casual and seasonal farmworkers. Through the use of probability random sampling, using a similar sample ratio of 40%, a sample (180) was selected and I interviewed a total of 72 farmworker households. As discussed above, I used a random number generator to select households to be interviewed.

4.4.3 Shifting back to qualitative research

Having completed the survey of farmworker's households, I moved back into key respondent interviews. Here I used purposive or 'judgemental' sampling, in which I was under no obligation to fill a quota from within various strata of the population. Neither did I just pick up the nearest 'warm bodies', as in convenience sampling. Rather, I used my judgement about which respondents I would choose, with due regard to men and women, old and newer workers, claimant and non-claimant workers, those with multiple livelihoods and those with narrow livelihood strategies. Follow-up, in-depth interviews were undertaken and life histories collected.

In certain instances, a snowballing technique was used (Overton & van Diermen, 2003); this was mainly to address key issues raised in interviews, when some people referred me to other relevant persons for interviews. For instance, in three years of fieldwork, I had never encountered any signs of worker organisation, and in fact I was informed that there was no union active in Levubu. However during January 2013 I learned about the existence of workers' fora in Masakona and Ravele. Particular individuals that I should interview were mentioned. The snowball technique did not involve a formal sample – and only a few people could be reached for interviews. I would have liked to also interview those people that had resigned or were laid off from the commercial enterprises. Unfortunately, limited time and resources could not allow for these.

4.5 Data analysis

Having regard for methodological pluralism, it follows that analysis of data also had to take this into consideration. Qualitative data, such as life histories and other interviews (in-depth individual and focus group), were analysed through searching for patterns in the data. Organisation of data into themes is mostly known as 'inducing themes'. Themes were drawn mainly from interview data, especially the narratives of the respondents. Analysis and interpretation involved "breaking up the data into manageable themes, patterns, trends and relationships; with an intention to understand constitutive elements of data through inspection of the relationships between concepts, constructs or variables, and to see whether there are any patterns or trends that can be identified or isolated, or to establish themes in the data" (Mouton, 2001:365).

To a certain extent, I also followed an ‘immersion’ procedure, especially when it came to unstructured interviews and observational data, reflecting on the material, and then writing up my interpretations. In this style, I relied on my intuitive grasp of what was going on rather than on any particular analytical technique. I therefore shifted focus from description of the lives and experiences of farmworkers and claimants, to an interpretation of the meaning of their experiences. In doing so, I tended to think in terms of processes, functions, tensions, and contradictions.

As stated earlier, I was part of an NRF research group, in which I had to come back and present emerging insights from the field in each phase of the research. So gathering data was not a ‘mindless technical exercise’, it involved continuous development of ideas and analysis of the phenomenon being studied. By the time I completed data collection, I had an in-depth understanding of the research site and the meaning of data.

4.6 Reflections on fieldwork and ethical considerations

When conducting this research I ensured that informed consent was provided by the respondents, I assured them of anonymity and confidentiality, and I told them that in reporting my findings only pseudonyms would be used, especially in the presentation of life histories. Even though I had had prior connections to the claimant communities, had no conflict of interest as a result of engaging in research. McNeill & Chapman (2005) also emphasise that research should not engage in deceit, protection of respondents from physical harm, and that researchers should ensure legality and morality (McNeil & Chapman, 2005). This did not prove to be a problem.

I did experience difficulties in explaining my new identity as a researcher, rather than an NGO worker, to claimant respondents. This was because the majority of them knew me as an Nkuzi Project Officer who had helped them deal with a range of issues, including facilitation of government assistance with regard to challenges in lodging their land claims. For those who knew that I currently work for Parliament, especially CPA leaders, this caused another minor complication because of their expectations that I would take up their issues with government departments or in Parliament.

In relation to farmworkers, there were constant difficulties in explaining to people about my new role as a researcher and not an Nkuzi fieldworker. I had experienced this challenge before, between 2006 and 2009 when I was working for PLAAS – however, then there was a degree of flexibility allowing for collaboration with Nkuzi to try to get things done for the CPAs. So the best strategy proved to be to mention to farmworkers my interest in continuing to monitor how the projects fared. However, in the eyes of many elderly workers and CPA members, I retained my previous NGO identity. The advantage was that many people were willing to talk to me, and I was told things that otherwise I would not have heard as a researcher. Graham (1984:154-55) records similar experiences and suggests that in treating information as confidential, to be used only when suitably ‘camouflaged’ (through the alteration of important details), this does not diminish the usefulness of the data gathered in this fashion.

4.7 Limitations of the thesis

A limitation of this thesis is that it has not undertaken an in-depth analysis of the specific value-chains associated with different subtropical crops produced on community-owned capitalist farms in Levubu. Understandings of production dynamics on these farms would be enriched by such an analysis, especially in relation to ‘upstream’ and ‘downstream’ linkages, as well as the dynamics of capital accumulation in different nodes within these value chains.

A comparative analysis of production relations on community-owned farms and other commercial farms in Levubu could provide useful pointers to the extent of change in relations of production, power and property, or the lack thereof, on restored land. I could not conduct in-depth research on white-owned commercial farms in Levubu that have not been subject to successful restitution claims to date. Conversations with key respondents from organised agriculture (both farm owners and those involved in agro-industry) in Levubu have been useful for developing insights on such issues as the difference between privately owned and community-owned farms. For example, in the former there is a clear division between capital and labour, whereas in the latter this division is blurred and demands that reflect the logic of social reproduction of labour are probably much higher. In-depth comparative analysis might well provide more such insights.

This study explores cases of the restitution of high-value commercial farmland transferred to African communities in a particular location, the Levubu Valley in Limpopo Province. This was one of the first examples of the restoration of prime agricultural land in the province, based on a ‘strategic partnership’ model that involves maintaining and sustaining the production systems previously established by white commercial farmers. Strategic partnerships are now a key element in government’s land reform programme more generally.

The extent to which the Levubu case is relevant for the commercial partnerships now being established through the Recapitalisation and Development Programme is limited, however, due to the very different models of funding and support in the latter. The four CPAs focussed on in this study did not receive grant funding³⁶ after their strategic partners had used up all the government funds made available. In contrast, most of the new commercial partnerships are completely funded by the state, with the idea that the scaling down of financial support will take place over a period of five years (depending on the types of commodities produced³⁷). These differences may limit the usefulness of this study’s findings.

Notwithstanding these constraints, the study may be useful in helping to explain the difficulties that often confront group-based land reform projects, such as internal tensions and confrontations between competing interest groups. These may well involve questions of who owns what, who does what, who gets what, and what they do with it - the key concerns of agrarian political economy.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research design for this study, and provided a rationale for my choice of a blend of qualitative and quantitative approaches. I further explicated the process of analysing the data collected for this study. A combination of life histories and semi-structured in-depth interviews, as well as an extensive sample survey of farmworker

³⁶ Shigalo applied for the ‘recap’ fund during the 2014/15 financial year (DRDLR, 2015), but no funds were provided because of internal tensions and conflicts and due to the fact that the farm had been leased to white commercial farmers.

³⁷ Policy on the Recapitalisation and Development Programme (2009), revised as per the Recommendations of the Review of the Policy by the Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation in the Presidency; DRDLR (2015). PowerPoint Presentation on the Recapitalisation and Development Programme during the Parliamentary Public Hearings on 5 January 2015.

households, has generated deep and rich data to enable this study to provide answers to the research questions. I have also shown how the iterative nature of qualitative data collection and analysis allowed for the development of new questions, which helped to provide more depth in this study.



5. LAND DISPOSSESSION, AGRICULTURE, AND LAND REFORM IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE AND LEVUBU VALLEY

5.1. Introduction

Chapter 3 has shown that state-sanctioned processes of land alienation and consequent displacement of African communities paved the way for the establishment of capitalist agriculture under white ownership and control. In northern Limpopo these processes took place much later than elsewhere in South Africa. Perhaps this helps explain why such a large proportion of Limpopo's farmland is subject to claims for land restitution. According to the Limpopo Growth and Development Strategy (2005), close to 90% of the province's commercial farmland has been claimed. In similar veins, the Limpopo Employment Growth and Development Plan: 2009-2014 (2009) reaffirms the significance of commercial agriculture in the economy of the province. For example, primary agriculture contributes about 3.1% to Gross Domestic Production (GDP) but together with backward and forward linkages contributes 7% (Limpopo Provincial Government, 2005; 2009). The significance of commercial agriculture to the economy of the province and commitment to land reform, and restitution³⁸ in particular, now features prominently in the political economy of the province.

Land reform in South Africa encounters many challenges. Greenberg (2010; 2013) suggests that the most significant of these are the slow pace of land reform, lack of appropriate settlement support, and conventional wisdom regarding reliance on the market and global processes as appropriate agricultural development paths. Derman *et al.* (2013:35) also suggest that South Africa's post-apartheid discourse on property rights and land reform appears to be entangled in "general competing models of what appropriate governance models for land tenure should be, and the appropriate agricultural paths for increased food production". A market-led programme of land reform, generally advocated by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), regional development banks, as well as some donor organisations, has been a preferred policy option. This approach seeks to promote international investment in land and agriculture, to create and sustain national land markets

³⁸ The reopening of the lodgement of land claims makes it an even more prominent and significant aspect of the political economy of the province. By August 2015, the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights reported that about 8810 land claims had been lodged in Limpopo, and about 5298 (60%) were in Vhembe, the District within which Levubu is located.

and to increase imports and openness to globalisation (Derman, 2013; Lahiff, 2007). These influential discourses have a largely ‘productionist’ perspective on land reform in general, that has informed planning for restitution on large-scale commercial farming (LSCF) in Limpopo in particular. The potential of land reform and related commercial enterprises to reduce poverty and inequality appears to be in the balance, as this thesis shows.

Given the significance of agriculture and the imperatives of land reform discussed above, this chapter will proceed as follows: firstly, it presents a brief account of land dispossession in the northern Limpopo with a particular interest in historical processes of agrarian change in Levubu. It examines the large-scale support provided to white commercial farmers to resettle on prime farmland in the area, to the detriment of African communities displaced or turned into a pool of labourers on white-owned farms. Secondly, the chapter discusses the general features of agriculture in Limpopo, including employment trends in agriculture and uneven levels of support for black agriculture in the former Bantustans. It describes the key features of fruit and nut production systems and value chains, in particular subtropical crops produced in Levubu, and trends over time. Lastly, it explores the government’s land restitution programme in Limpopo, and Levubu in particular. It briefly describes the context within which strategic partnerships in Levubu were established, and the basic terms and conditions for such partnerships. It situates these partnerships within larger debates about what a successful and ‘viable’ agriculture should be, i.e. whether or not capitalist farm production that targets export markets is the appropriate model for restitution which seeks to ensure social reproduction of agrarian classes of labour.

5.2 Land dispossession in northern Limpopo and agrarian development in the Levubu Valley

Accounts of agrarian development in Limpopo are prominent in the historical literature on agrarian change in South Africa. Delius & Schirmer (2002); Trapido (1978) and Lahiff (2000) contributed significantly to documenting agrarian development in Limpopo, including agricultural and rural development in the former Venda homeland. As noted above, the geographic trajectory of land conquest and settler occupation of land in South Africa proceeded from south to north, with the north being further away and thus land dispossession occurred later than elsewhere (Aliber *et al.*, 2013). This helps account for the large number of restitution claims in the Vhembe District due to the fact that many of the people that had first-

hand experience of land dispossession were still alive³⁹. In order to develop a comprehensive picture of the development of capitalist agriculture in northern Limpopo, and Levubu in particular, one needs to go back in time and to make sense of what has happened before the entrenchment of export-oriented, large-scale commercial farming.

Mulaudzi (2000) and Nefale (2000) offer useful accounts of the history of development in the Zoutpansberg district and Levubu respectively. Other studies by Nemutanzhela (1999) and Lahiff (2000) also contribute to this literature. Accounts of the arrival of white settlers in the Zoutpansberg district recorded the first settlement at Schoemansdal, as a base for the elephant hunters' trade, and ensuing territorial disputes and wars from 1867. Shortly after, government started demarcating and allocating farms. In reality, few white settlers were willing to take settlement of the farms in such distant areas, except around the town of Pietersburg (Wagner, 1980; Mulaudzi, 2000; Aliber *et.al.*, 2013). In these early days, most of the allocated farms were neither occupied nor farmed by their white owners, and were effectively still under the control of African chiefdoms (Mulaudzi, 2000). This was exacerbated by the fact that when the ZAR⁴⁰ began the process of surveying and allocating native 'reserves' in 1885, chiefs continued to exercise effective forms of authority on some of these farms. By 1906, most of the Crown land⁴¹ in the Limpopo Valley had been proclaimed for mineral prospecting, and was therefore not available for the settlement of whites. The southern part of the Zoutpansberg mountain range (including Levubu) became the next logical option as a site for settlement, due to its fertile valleys and high rainfall. In addition, it was the only part of the Zoutpansberg district that was ideal for the small-scale intensive forms of cultivation promoted for poor white people (Mulaudzi, 2000).

The initial settlement around Levubu involved people moving onto four government farms, namely Goodhope, Grootgeluk, Klein Australia, and Schoonuitzicht. It was situated at a place

³⁹ Review of Nkuzi's land claims files for Ratombo, Shigalo and Masakona showed that many of the affidavits of the witnesses were made by people who experienced the removals first-hand and were eager to return to Levubu to settle there as previously was the case.

⁴⁰ Dutch abbreviation for Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek, i.e. the South African Republic (often referred to as Transvaal)

⁴¹ The Crown Land Disposal Ordinance No.57 defined Crown Land as "all unalienated land and all landed property of the government however acquired".

known as Piesangkop, some 15 miles (24km) east of Makhado/Louis Trichardt⁴². These farms were subdivided into 22 lots ranging from 250 to 600 morgen each (or 171.34 to 514.02 ha). Government allocated them to so-called 'yeoman' farmers under either a 5-year lease, renewable for a further 5 or 10 years, or under a 30-year purchase scheme. The cost of the lease was 5% of the purchase price of the farm, payable twice a year; if they chose a purchase scheme, the farm would be paid by 60 half-yearly instalments; the total per year was 5.75% of the purchase price (Mulaudzi, 2000). Although prone to malaria and horse-sickness, the area had the highest rainfall in the district and was good for agriculture. It was suited to growing cereal, tobacco, as well as fruit and vegetables. The state also supported farmers by investing in agricultural development, with provision of credit facilities, payable in 20 yearly instalments at 5% interest for permanent improvements and for the purchase of stock, implements or other requirements in proportion to the settler's financial investment. Through these land settlement schemes, by 1910 the state had succeeded in introducing more whites in the Zoutpansberg districts. These schemes appropriated large tracts of land from Africans for the benefit of white settlers. Although these schemes by themselves did not result in an increase in agricultural production, they laid the foundation for large-scale commercial farming in the Zoutpansberg district. The present-day Levubu Valley remained not fully occupied by settlers until government-sanctioned processes to resettle them in the Valley came into operation. Harries (1989) attributes the slowness of white settler occupation in the area to the military strength of the local tribes, and the incidence of malaria. What follows below is an account of the process of settlement of white farmers in Levubu.

5.2.1 Levubu's irrigation scheme settlement

By 1922, settlers in the northern part of the Zoutpansberg district had begun complaining about the size of their 1200 to 1500 morgen farms, allocated during First World War boom conditions. The farms had become too small to adequately support stock-raising, and the government had also failed to directly respond to their pleas for help. In 1935 the Zoutpansberg Farmers' Union (ZFU) and government officials renewed the call to enlarge livestock farms. This was triggered mainly by the 1935 drought. In July 1935 a proposal to resettle all lessees from the area behind the Zoutpansberg range was submitted to the Central

⁴² The name of the town was changed from Louis Trichardt to Makhado in 2003 but lengthy court battles ensued, resulting in back and forth name changes, until 30 October 2014 when the North Gauteng High Court endorsed an agreement by parties, making it an order of court to revert to the name of Louis Trichardt.

Land Board (CLB) for consideration. Levubu was identified, being first earmarked for this purpose by a Member of Parliament, Mr Rooth, in discussion with other landowners. The area was located in the Klein Spelonken ward some thirty miles east of Louis Trichardt, in the fertile Luvuvhu (Levubu) River, where rainfall levels were some of the heaviest in the area. The proposal suggested that the resettlement would serve double interests - those of both poor settlers, and those of the rich stock farmers who sought to expand their holdings and ranching operations (Mulaudzi, 2000; Nefale, 2000). By the end of 1935, the Minister of Lands approved the recommendation of the CLB. The settlement measured 7,570 morgen and consisted of four farms⁴³ subdivided into 67 holdings varying from 65 to 100 morgen each and organised around the three weirs that supplied irrigation. The weirs were named Lutanandwa, Levubu, and Barrota (Mulaudzi, 2000).

Government built canals to carry water to the irrigated farms. Each holding was fenced, and had a three-bedroom mosquito-proof house provided by the Department of Lands. By 1931 a total of 21 holdings had been granted to 43 settlers, most of who were transferred from inferior holdings in the Zoutpansberg area. By 1942, 24 of the 57 holdings had been allotted to settlers. It did not cater only for the poor whites of the north, but also returning Second World War soldiers. In fact, the latter represented an important proportion of the settlers on the scheme by 1945, owing to the refusal of some of the farmers north of the Zoutpansberg range to relocate southwards (Mulaudzi, 2000; Aliber *et al.*, 2013). Due to the limited water supplies, the government began construction of the Albasini Dam in 1947, and completed it in 1952. According to Aliber *et al.* (2013:210), another 50 holdings were then demarcated and allotted. Documentary evidence shows an increase in the number of holdings demarcated in Levubu, and by 1960 there were 116 holdings in total, with another 17 in the process of being developed. However, the total number of farm parcels at Levubu is a somewhat controversial matter, because different figures for the number of land parcels have been published. This might be attributed to subdivisions and subsequent consolidations. This perhaps explains the levels of boundary disputes among claimants arising from the subdivisions that occurred on farms even after the removals of African communities.

⁴³ Nefale (2000), using a report from Grimbeek to the Central Land Board, dated 14 November 1935, suggests that the farms acquired were Laatsgevonden 74, Barrota 65, Klein Australia, Welgevonden 120, Madrid, and Morgenzon.

The Levubu scheme was part of the state's programme to establish irrigation schemes for whites across the country. Other examples of such schemes are the Section 29 schemes⁴⁴ in Vaalharts and Loskop, Pongola, Riet River, and Sterk River. Farmers were to begin as 'probationary lessees', and to receive training and farm under strict supervision and mentoring for a period of two years. Those who met the requirements were to be granted permission to farm on a lease-purchase basis, an arrangement through which they could exercise an option to purchase the farms within a period of five or ten years (Aliber *et al.*, 2013). Those that did not qualify were replaced by new entrants, or a few flourishing owners were allowed to expand by buying out other farmers and consolidated their holdings. This trend is found in the literature on large-scale commercial farming in the country as a whole – the consolidation of farms beginning around the 1950s (Hall, 2010; Aliber *et al.*, 2013).

As one of the Section 29 schemes, the Levubu scheme gave struggling white farmers a new start whilst affording the remaining farmers in the Limpopo Valley an opportunity to become more viable by expanding their stock farms. White farmers were thus not a homogenous group. Mulaudzi (2000) describes stratification within the white farming population, where a few farmers, generating a significantly higher agriculture-based income, co-existed with a majority of farmers who were still poor and lived through hunting and subsistence farming.

5.2.2 The Levubu irrigation scheme and African communities and tribes

Allocation of holdings to white farmers in Levubu occurred at the expense of African communities and peasantries. They were displaced from their land in order to make way for the white settlers and establishment of the irrigation scheme (Mulaudzi, 2000). It would, however, be a misrepresentation to suggest that all land dispossessions in Levubu took place as a result of the resettlement of white settlers. In fact, the historiography of the area also shows that some forced removals took place in order to allow for the establishment of state plantations, namely at Entabeni and Barrota (Nemutanzhela, 1999). According to Nefale (2000), the mass removal of about 13 000 'natives' from Levubu was to take place at the end of August 1937. As Aliber *et al.* (2013) also noted, by then African communities had already

⁴⁴ Based on documents from the Department of Agriculture in the 1960s, 'Section 29' schemes were irrigation schemes established in terms of the Land Settlement Act of 1956 with coordinated support from the Departments of Lands, Water, and Agriculture. The Section 29 schemes meant for dense settlement was distinguished from those involving non-irrigated grazing or cropland (Aliber *et al.* 2013).

been dispossessed of their land rights, even if they were still living on the land, in the sense that their land was regarded by the state as the property of the white farmer to whom it had been allocated.

The extent of land dispossessions and removals in the areas is variable. Not all the ‘natives’ were removed: some were to remain on farms as labourers when the irrigable plots were ready. Generally, however, African communities were displaced into ‘reserve’ areas, which were already overcrowded. For example, the Mauluma community under chief Ravele was moved to the farms Beaconsfield, Cliffside, and Boabab in Nzhelele; and Masakona and Shigalo communities were removed to a Trust Farm south of Pietersburg, namely Msibi. These communities were later moved again, under the Bantustan consolidation process, to different locations in the former Venda and Gazankulu homelands, i.e. present day Ha-Masakona and Olifantshoek Villages respectively. Other communities removed were Ratombo, Tshakhuma/Dombo, Matumba, Matidza, Tshivhazwaulu and Tshitwani⁴⁵. Nefale (2000) has documented the loss of their livestock and access to good arable land. The people also suffered from the disintegration of their communities, and institutions of traditional leadership suffered from the incorporation of some chiefs into the jurisdiction of other chiefs.

Systems of labour tenancy in Levubu are documented in Mulaudzi (2000), Nefale (2000), and Delius (1985). As Atkinson (2007) has noted, commercial agriculture secured labour from the large number of black residents on white farms who did not have the requisite influx control permits to move to towns. They were not all available as farmworkers, because some continued to try to make a living from stock farming or cropping. Africans, especially males, had to work for 90 days a year on white-owned farms. Even those who worked in the urban centres had to return to the farms for 90 days to render ‘farm service’, or their families would be removed from the farms. Attempts to force people to do poorly-paid agricultural work were hampered by their attempts to move to towns illegally.

Table 9 (Timeline illustrating major developments in capitalist agriculture in Levubu and impacts on labour) illustrates in chronological order the effects of capitalist development in agriculture on farm labour in Levubu. In most cases, labour was supplied by members of African communities living on these farms. Land dispossession stripped African communities of their

⁴⁵ This is based on interviews with members of claimant communities and review of the relevant land claims files in the Regional Land Claims Commissioner’s Office for Limpopo.

means of production and rendered them tenants or labourers on their land, that had become white-owned. The farmer became some form of authority, under paternalist relations of 'baas and boy' (master and servant). The 1994 democratic government brought about legislative changes aiming to transform labour regimes on farms, involving minimum wages and statutory regulation of the conditions of employment. Similarly, tenure rights were strengthened through the Extension of Security of Tenure Act (ESTA). The restitution of land rights processes opened up opportunities for the original owners to lodge claims on their ancestral lands.



Table 9: Timeline illustrating major developments in capitalist agriculture in Levubu and implications for farm labour

Year	Processes	Implications for farm labour
1900s – 1950	Land alienation and disposessions; removals of black people from Levubu to the ‘reserves’ (former Venda and Gazankulu Bantustans); establishment of irrigation scheme for white commercial farmers; provision of support to white farmers.	A large number of people who farmed for subsistence were semi-proletarianised, selling their labour power to newly established commercial farms on an irrigation scheme. Proletarianised Africans continued to live on the farms as labour tenants.
1950 -1960s	Expansion of cultivated areas was associated with the use of tractors replacing draught oxen for ploughing; establishment of the Levubu Cooperative in 1956.	Labour-intensive farming system, with labour supplied by the neighbouring communities and some workers living on the farms; recruitment of labour the sole responsibility of the farmer.
1970s - 1980s	Increased productivity and market integration. Shifts in cropping began in the early 1960s, from vegetables and maize to subtropical fruit and nuts. Farms became a large foreign exchange earner, using capital-intensive, mechanised production systems. Larger areas could be managed and more labour required for harvesting.	Farmers source more labour from the neighbouring communities of Tshakhuma, Valdezia and Mashau. Introduction of fruit trees affects the availability of permanent employment as farmers shift to use of seasonal labour.
1990s – 2000s	New democratic government and introduction of labour laws to regulate conditions of employment; new tenure legislation and land restitution programme. Organised agriculture assists in attempts to improve relationships between employers and farmworkers.	Labour regime: minimum wage, statutory regulation of the basic conditions of employment and labour relations; more workers from neighbouring communities commute to farms daily. Establishment of workers’ committees and liaison committees.
2005 – 2009	Gazetting of land claims and negotiations over the future of the farms. Introduction of commercial models including Strategic Partnerships. Collapse of strategic partnerships and formation of new forms of farm management governed by management contracts.	Assurance of job security for farmworkers, promises of a Workers’ Trust (WT) in the new joint ventures. Failure to establish the WT. Labour sourced from claimant ‘communities’ and CPAs are responsible for recruitment of labour. Loss of employment; tensions on what profit should be used for.
2010 to date	Rebuilding of farms under new management in terms of management contracts, or wholly CPA-managed farms.	Lack of investment on farms and labour instability and uncertainty.

5.3 General features of agriculture and agricultural employment

Limpopo Province is characterised by stark contrasts between different agro-ecological zones. Three distinct climatic regions can be identified; namely, the Lowveld (arid and semi-arid) region, the middle veld, Highveld (semi-arid) region; and the escarpment region which has a sub-humid climate, with rainfall in excess of 700mm per annum (Oni *et al.*, 2012)⁴⁶. For most parts of the province, especially in the fertile areas, agriculture is an important source of income. Maize is the major crop, with fruit, vegetables, tea and cereals also grown where possible. The most fertile areas are associated with plantation crops and irrigated agriculture, as in the Levubu and Letsitele Valleys (Aliber *et al.*, 2013). Cattle production is practised mainly in the western and northern parts of the province, given that in these areas the rainfall is generally too low for cropping (Wegerif, 2004).

Of the total 12.3 million hectares in the province, 9.24 million hectares are utilised as farmland - 0.93 million hectares are utilised as arable land, 6.68 million ha as natural grazing, and the rest is shared between nature conservation, forestry and other purposes. Limpopo produces 75% of the country's mangoes, 65% of its papayas, 36% of its tea, 25% of its citrus, bananas and litchis, 60% of its avocados, and 67% of its tomatoes. A total of around 285 000 tonnes of potatoes are grown each year. Other crops include coffee, nuts, guavas, a burgeoning sisal industry, cotton, tobacco, timber, as well as staples such as sunflowers and maize. According to Trade and Investment Limpopo⁴⁷, more than 45% of the R2-billion annual turnover of the Johannesburg Fresh Produce comes from Limpopo. Apart from crop farming, cattle and game farming are also important. The agricultural census of 1993 and an agricultural survey of 1996 show that in the mid-1990s about 545 farming units, spanning an area of 477 781 hectares, were under crop production. About 1 067 farming units, developed on 563 545 hectares of land, were used for horticultural production. Over the years, there has been a shift from livestock to game farming, with impacts on agricultural jobs and the tenure rights of farm dwellers⁴⁸.

⁴⁶ <http://policyresearch.limpopo.gov.za/bitstream/handle/123456789/636/Agric%20Study%20Summary.pdf?sequence=1> Accessed 06/01/2015

⁴⁷ http://www.til.co.za/documents/Agriculture_Sector_2008-9.pdf Accessed 06/01/2015

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Reflecting the general features of agrarian structure in South Africa, two distinct types of agricultural production systems coexist, namely, large-scale commercial farming (predominantly by whites) and smallholder farming systems (predominantly by blacks). This agrarian structure, as discussed earlier, evolved from past policies of colonial and apartheid regimes that privileged white farmers' large-scale commercial farming and provided state support and assisted in the development of advanced production technologies. Most commercial farms occupy higher quality farmland compared to the land found in most areas in the ex-Bantustans. Oni *et al.* (2012), based on analysis of the 2000 Stats SA data, found that there were approximately 5 000 commercial farming units in Limpopo. But Aliber *et al.* (2013) suggest a decline in the number of farming units, by almost half, between 1988 and 2007. For example, in 1998 about 5400 units were recorded, which in 1993 declined to 5000, by 2002 it was just below 3000 and in 2007 it stood at approximately 2600 farming units.

Smallholder farming systems predominate in the communal areas (the ex-Bantustans) and are characterised by low levels of production technology and small farm sizes of approximately 1.5 ha per household. All the claimant communities in Levubu are located in such areas and many households have little or no access to productive land. Production is primarily for subsistence, with limited capacity to produce a marketable surplus. The smallholder sector is constrained by its low incomes and a poor resource base. Oni *et al.* (2012) estimated that there were approximately 519 000 smallholder farmers in Limpopo Province in 1995 and women constituted 80% of smallholder farmers. By 2000, Stats-SA estimated that there were approximately 273 000 small-scale farmers operating in the former homeland areas of Limpopo Province⁴⁹. This confirms the widely acknowledged challenge of the gaps in data for smallholder farmers in South Africa. The challenge is further compounded by the fact that smallholders do not form a homogenous group. Cousins (2012; 2013) suggests that they are highly differentiated in terms of the objective for production, proportion of marketed output, contribution to household income, labour, capital intensity, access to finance and mechanisation.

⁴⁹ <http://policyresearch.limpopo.gov.za/bitstream/handle/123456789/636/Agric%20Study%20Summary.pdf?sequence=1> Accessed 06/01/2015.

5.3.1 The changing structure of agriculture and employment patterns

A global trend in capitalist agriculture is that farms tend to become fewer, larger and more capital intensive. In South African agriculture, the calculations by Aliber *et al.* (2013) in Table 10 (Indicators of the changing structure of the large-scale commercial farming sector) shows that whilst the average number of employees per farm remained relatively the same over several decades, average farm sizes were increasing more or less commensurately with the decline in their numbers. This suggests a decline in the number of workers per hectare. Also noted is a rise in real wages paid to farmworkers. Similarly, the expenditure on improvements and machinery has kept pace with the wage bill. Based on this review of statistics derived from different surveys, Aliber *et al.* (2013) demonstrate that significant changes have occurred in the agricultural sector. There has been a dramatic decline in the number of commercial farms, of approximately 50%, between 1998 and 2007, and similarly, a significant decline in the number of regular and casual workers employed.

Table 10: Indicators of the changing structure of the large-scale commercial farming sector

Year	Comm-er-cial farms	Employ-ment	Average employee/farm	Average remuneration/employee (R/worker/year)	Wage bill (R bn)	Average bill/farm (R)	Aver.expend iture on fixed improvements & machinery
1971	90 442	1 516 013	16.8	3 586	5.4	60 126	85 786
1985	65 880	1 323 694	20.1	5 385	7.1	108 200	116 142
1993	57 980	1 093 256	18.9	5 985	6.5	112 856	89 281
2002	45 818	940 820	20.5	8 219	7.7	168 773	177 729
2007	39 982	796 806	19.9	10 807	8.6	215 378	211 060

Source: Aliber *et al.*, 2013.

In relation to farm employment in Limpopo Province, Aliber *et al.* (2013:42) show that there has been a significant decrease in both regular and casual employment in agriculture generally. Between 1988 and 2007, the number of regular farm employment decreased from about 73 000 to about 40 000. Similarly, casual employment decreased from about 54 000 to 32 000. According to ILO (2015:130-131), regarding Limpopo, “from the first quarter of 2008 to the third quarter of 2014, a total employment in the sector ranged from 47 000 to 127 000, with an average of 85 000. During that period employment in the agricultural sector

in Limpopo increased at an average of 9142 jobs per annum (10.8% of average employment). The tremendous growth of the agricultural workforce started in 2010, although some labour shedding has occurred post revision of the sectoral determination”.

For the Vhembe District, Aliber *et al.* (2013:42-43) show that about 12 306 people were employed in commercial agriculture in the Vhembe District alone in 2007, whereas in Limpopo, 59 363 people were employed. This meant that in Vhembe, farm employment accounted for 13% of the total employment in the province, higher than the provincial percentage of 11% of the total employment. In the former homeland territories, 67% (189 910) of all black households were engaged in some form of farming, higher than the provincial percentage of 44%. Furthermore, evidence suggested that the majority of those who farmed were women, i.e. 68% (265 462) as compared to the provincial percentage of 69% (745 723).

Data about farm employment in Levubu is not easily accessible, if not disjointed. One can, however, use available national data to get a sense of employment in the production of different commodities. The *avocado sub-sector* plays a significant role in job creation. It employs about 6 000 permanent farmworkers and an additional 2 000 casual labourers during peak periods (DAFF, 2012a). The *macadamia sub-sector* employs most of the workforce on seasonal basis for harvesting and processing, mostly between February and August. It is estimated that at least 3 500 new job opportunities have been created on macadamia farms over the last decades and another 300 permanent jobs in cracking facilities. In the peak season, the industry employs approximately 6 000 farmworkers and about 1 400 factory workers. The *banana sub sector* contributes to direct employment in production and processing. It is estimated that in 2011, the industry directly employed 27 033 people with 108 131 dependants (DAFF, 2012b).

The prescribed minimum wage is used as a baseline for determining basic wages in accordance with legislation governing conditions of service. In March 2013, the Minister of Labour increased the minimum wage by 52%. Minimum wage rates are presented in Table 11 (Minimum wage for farmworkers in South Africa since March 2013). For 2014 and 2015, the minimum wage would increase by the consumer price index (CPI) of 1.5%.

Table 11: Minimum wages for farmworkers in South Africa since March 2013

Minimum rate for the period 01/ 03/2013 to 28 /02/ 2014			
Monthly	Weekly	Daily	Hourly
R2273.52	R524.70	R105.00	R11.60

The study by ILO (2015) found that the majority of its case study producers was paying at least the minimum hourly rate. In its case study producer from Levubu, the ILO study shows that a farmer who did not comply with the minimum wage had applied for exemption. The seasonal workers on that farm earned R50.00 per day and permanent workers were paid R1 100.00 per day.

5.4 Subtropical fruit and nut production trends

Before I discuss some of the production trends for Levubu, it is imperative to outline trends for South Africa generally, which to some degree apply in Levubu. South Africa is the main fruit exporter in Sub-Saharan Africa and accounted for more than \$1.4 billion of Sub-Saharan Africa's \$2.0 billion in fruit exports in 2008 (FAO, 2011⁵⁰, cited in ACET, 2013:29). Fresh fruit value chains typically involve a range of actors for both domestic and international export markets in the region, the European Union (EU) and the United States (US). In terms of value of production, the subtropical fruit industry earned R2 739 million in 2012/13; that is an increase of 8.3% when compared to R2 530 million in 2011/12 (DAFF, 2014).

Domestic supply is generally provided by produce that fails to meet the standards required for international export, as governed by a regulatory regime. International supply chains are managed through complex regulatory mechanisms, and involve a series of distant ports, and arrangements for international logistics and market transport to final customers. The control mechanisms involve stringent quality standards across the entire value chain, with the application of, for example, the Global-GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) guidelines that are globally accepted as standards for major commercial buyers, as well as Fair-trade practices. Producers also have to comply with stringent standards for refrigerated road transport set by

⁵⁰ FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations). 2011. "FAOSTAT". Rome. <http://faostat.fao.org/>. Accessed on 06-01-2015.

the Perishable Products Export Control Board (PPECB) and Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) standards set by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF).

Agro-processing, with horticulture as a key subsector, has strong upstream and downstream linkages. Upstream, it links agriculture across a wide variety of farming models and productions, and downstream the products are marketed through both wholesale and retail chains, including an array of different supermarkets and fast-food outlets. For fruit production, the value chain involves fresh fruit packed in cartons as well as dried fruit, and fruit juice in containers ready for consumption⁵¹.

In 2012 South Africa had approximately 3 500 citrus growers (oranges, grape fruit, mandarins, lemons and limes), and 1 600 subtropical fruit growers (avocados, mangoes, pineapples, macadamia nuts, bananas, litchis, guavas, papayas). Subtropical crops are produced mainly in Limpopo and Mpumalanga as well as in the subtropical coastal areas of KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape (GCIS, 2012). South Africa is the second largest producer of fruit in Africa, accounting for 18% of production, after Nigeria which accounted for 22%. However, South Africa is a leading producer of temperate and subtropical fruit (ACET, 2013:22). In 2009, South Africa's average annual volumes of citrus and subtropical fruit amounted to 46 896 million tons (ACET, 2013).

Table 12 (Subtropical tree census in South Africa as at 31 May 2012) shows the results for a tree census conducted by SAAGA and confirmed in 2012. It shows that Limpopo leads in production of avocado, and mango. According to the general manager for Ravele, Mpumalanga has overtaken Limpopo in production of macadamia, and it is growing further. However in terms of the total production of subtropical crops, 42% of the total crop is found in Limpopo, followed by Mpumalanga with 34%. The remaining 24% is mostly shared between KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape. A notable thing from the census is the amount of emerging growers in Limpopo, especially amount of hectares under macadamia and avocado.

⁵¹ Interview with C. Nel, the General Manager for Valley farms, held at Valley Farm juice factory in Levubu on 16 May 2011.

Table 12: Subtropical tree Census in South Africa as at 31 May 2012

Province	Ha under various subtropical crops				No. of trees planted				% per
	Avocado	Litchi	Macadamia	Mango	Avocado	Litchi	Macadamia	Mango	Province
Limpopo	7568	334	4756	4756	2126608	66466	1441674	1521920	42
Mpumalanga & Swaziland	4554	1108	8024	866	1279674	220492	2431272	227120	34
KwaZulu-Natal	1319	109	3701	127.4	370639	21691	1121403	40768	13
Eastern Cape	114	0	302	0	32034	0	91506	0	1
Emerging growers Limpopo	1833	180	1036	1254	515073	35820	313909	401280*	10
TOTAL	15388	1731	17819	7003.4	4324028	344469	5399764	2191088	100

Source: SAMAC - <http://www.samac.org.za/docs/SubtropTreeCensus.pdf>

(*Note that statistics for emerging growers for mango were from Vhembe district only)

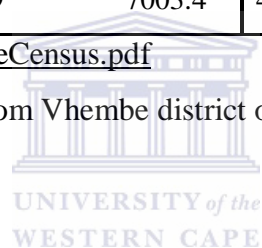


Table 13 (Harvest seasons for subtropical fruit in Limpopo) illustrates the seasonality of production of subtropical fruit. Farmers diversify crops in order to ensure perennial production and secure a steady cash flow for the rest of the year. For example, in Levubu bananas are a perennial crop and yield fruit throughout the seasons, and thus allow banana farmers to diversify into other lucrative crops such a macadamia and avocados. As will be discussed in the next few chapters, this method of organising production helps farmers to sustain a steady cash flow throughout the year.

Table 13: Harvest seasons for subtropical fruit in South Africa

Crop	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Citrus					**	**	**	**	**			
Avocado			**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**		
Litchi	**	**									**	**
Guava			**	**	**	**	**	**	**			
Mango	**	**	**	**								**
Pecan nut								**	**	**	**	**
Macadamia								**	**	**	**	**
Banana	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**

Source: Constructed from a focus group discussion with workers at Masakona Farm, and corroborated through interviews with farm managers (Mr. Basson, Mr Kotze, and Mr Hasbroek).

Aliber *et al.* (2013) note the difficulties in obtaining data on production trends in Levubu, particularly on restitution farms. However, based on a reading of secondary data, one can obtain some insights about production trends in general. One should also note the inconsistencies in the sources.

5.4.1 Avocados

South Africa's avocado production is mostly export-oriented, targeting European markets. The main varieties are Fuerte, Hass and Pinkerton. Over the years, the industry has become increasingly consolidated, with 80% of exports⁵² controlled by four companies, all of which

⁵² Information on the SAAGA (www.avocado.co.za), by 2012 there were about 14 SAAGA-registered exporters in South Africa.

have strong grower involvement and either have their own importing companies in Europe and the UK or work very closely with established importers. According to South African Avocado Growers' Association (SAAGA), consolidation helps to maintain continuity of volumes in order to meet the requirements of supermarket programmes. Contracts with major retailers provide greater price stability than selling fruit on the open market. Over and above these minimum standards, more than 95% of the industry is Global-GAP accredited. Other commonplace accreditations are Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP)⁵³, British Retail Consortium (BRC)⁵⁴, Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF)⁵⁵, Fairtrade⁵⁶ and others.

Based on information from the South African Avocado Growers' Association (SAAGA), the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) reported that South Africa produces about 11 000 tons of avocados annually. About 45% of the total production is exported mainly to Europe and the UK, 15% is processed, 25% is destined for the national food produce markets and 15% is sold on the informal markets. As an export-oriented industry, the gross value of production is, to a large extent, reliant on international avocado prices and fluctuations in the value of the South African currency⁵⁷.

Production of avocados is concentrated mainly in the north-eastern and eastern parts of South Africa, i.e. in the subtropical areas of Limpopo, mainly in Levubu and Letsitele as well as in Mpumalanga Province. Over the last two decades, there has been an increase in the area

⁵³ HACCP is part of a regulatory framework in which farmers/producers must get accreditation for global markets. It refers to a management system in which food safety is addressed through the analysis and control of biological, chemical, and physical hazards from raw material production, procurement and handling, to manufacturing, distribution and consumption of the finished product.

⁵⁴ BRC Global Standards is a leading safety and quality certification programme, used by over 23,000 certificated suppliers in 123 countries, with certification issued through a worldwide network of accredited certification bodies. The Standards guarantee the standardisation of quality, safety and operational criteria and ensure that manufacturers fulfil their legal obligations and provide protection for the end consumer.

⁵⁵ LEAF describes itself as the leading organisation promoting sustainable agriculture, food and farming. It helps farmers produce good food, with care and to high environmental standards identified in store by the LEAF Marque logo. It promotes sustainable food and farming production and adherence to high environmental standards.

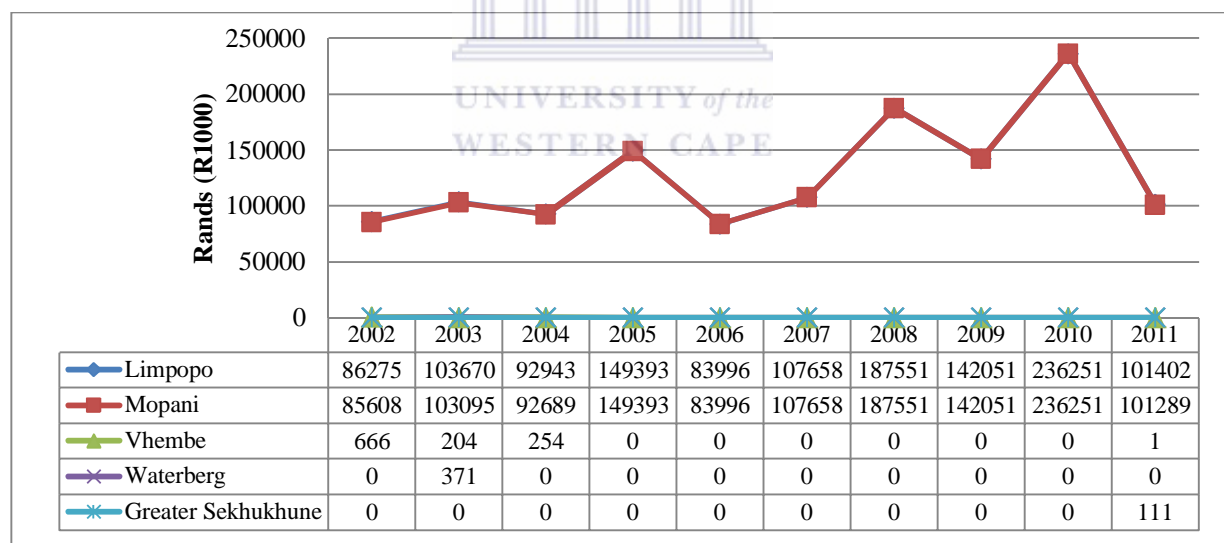
⁵⁶ Fairtrade is an ethical certification whose main aim is to promote more equality and sustainability in the farming sector. The Fairtrade Certification Mark means that the product has met the rigorous Fairtrade Standards, which focus on improving labour and living conditions for farming communities and on promoting a way of farming that does not harm either people or the environment.

⁵⁷ Interview with Dannie Basson, the General Manager for Ravele and Masakona farms at Appelfontein farm on 29 March 2012.

planted, from 2 000ha in the 1970s to approximately 15 388ha in 2011. The gross value of production increased from R195 015 to R486 387 (DAFF, 2012a). In 2003, the largest volumes came from the Tzaneen/Letaba region (Mopani district) which exported 15 496 pallets, followed by Kiepersol and Nelspruit which exported 9 553 and 6 212 pallets respectively. Levubu was the fourth largest exporter, with 3 313 pallets (DAFF, 2012a).

In 2011, about 61% of production came from 9 401ha in Limpopo, i.e. 49% from commercial farming areas and 12% from emerging growers. Figure 2 (Value of Avocado export – Limpopo 2002 – 2011) shows that almost all exports came from Mopani District. Whilst Levubu has made a contribution, it is noteworthy that between 2005 and 2010, there were no exports of avocados coming out of Levubu. This period coincides with the attempts of strategic partnerships in Limpopo but there is no evidence to suggest that the strategic partnerships were responsible for this decline for Vhembe since there were other commercial farmers in Levubu who were not affected by restitution and strategic partnerships.

Figure 2: Value of avocado exports – Limpopo Province, 2002 - 2011



Source: DAFF (2012a) based on calculations of Quentec Easydata.

Mpumalanga contributed about 30% of South Africa’s avocado production. For the 2010/11 season (end of February to the beginning of November as illustrated in Table 13 avocado production contributed 21% to the total gross value of subtropical fruit, that is R2.3 billion, in South Africa (DAFF, 2012a). In the 2012 season, a total of 11.75 million cartons were passed

for exports.⁵⁸ Over the years, production trends have shown a shift toward consolidation within the export business, private cultivar development, integrated fruit production, processing, growth of the local markets and efforts to access new markets. The significance and implications of this production trends for community-owned farming enterprises will be discussed in a later section. Suffice to state that the drop in export crops could not solely be attributed to land restitution in Levubu. A range of factors played a critical role, and land restitution was one of them. As discussed before, one of the issues was the long period of neglect between 2000 and 2005, when previous owners neglected the farms.

5.4.2 Macadamia nuts

South Africa is the third largest macadamia nut producer in the world, after Australia and Hawaii (DAFF, 2013a). DAFF (2013a:4) states that there are about 1 000 macadamia farmers supplying 12 cracking factories. In the Vhembe District, there are two in Levubu - Royal Macadamia and Green Farms – and one in Makhado/Louis Trichardt - MacRidge⁵⁹. A number of these growers have achieved Global-GAP accreditation, and many are HACCP and ISO9001⁶⁰ accredited. With the increase in development of macadamia orchards in Barberton, Mpumalanga has overtaken Limpopo Province with total area/ha under macadamia production. As demonstrated in Table 14, just over 50% of the total area (8820ha) under macadamia production with 2 million trees is in Mpumalanga, and Limpopo accounts for 29% or 5105ha with 1.5 million trees (DAFF, 2013a; SAMAC, 2010). This is a significant increase from 1 million trees in 1996 to about 5 million in 2013 on about 17000ha (SAMAC, 2013).

⁵⁸ <http://www.namc.co.za/upload/Trade%20Flow%20Reports%20-%20PDF/Fruit%20Trade%20Flow%20-%20March%202013%20-%20Issue%20No%209.pdf> Accessed on 10/01/2015.

⁵⁹ This is based on observations and conversations with managers during a visit to MacRidge and AvoRidge, a macadamia and avocado processing plants just outside Makhado, Witvlag.

⁶⁰ ISO9001 is an independent, non-governmental organisation made of members from national standard bodies of 162 countries. It is therefore a network of national standards bodies that represent ISO in their country. It specifies requirements for quality management where an organisation needs to demonstrate its ability to consistently provide products that meet customer and applicable statutory and regulatory requirements

Table 14: Total area (ha) under macadamia production in South Africa (2013)

Province	Limpopo	Mpumalanga	KwaZulu-Natal	Eastern Cape	Other	Total
Hectares	5 105	8 820	2 859	400	183	17 367
No. of trees	1.5 million	2 million	694 000	150 000	-	5 million
Ha (%)	29%	51%	16%	2%	1%	100%

Source: DAFF (2013a)

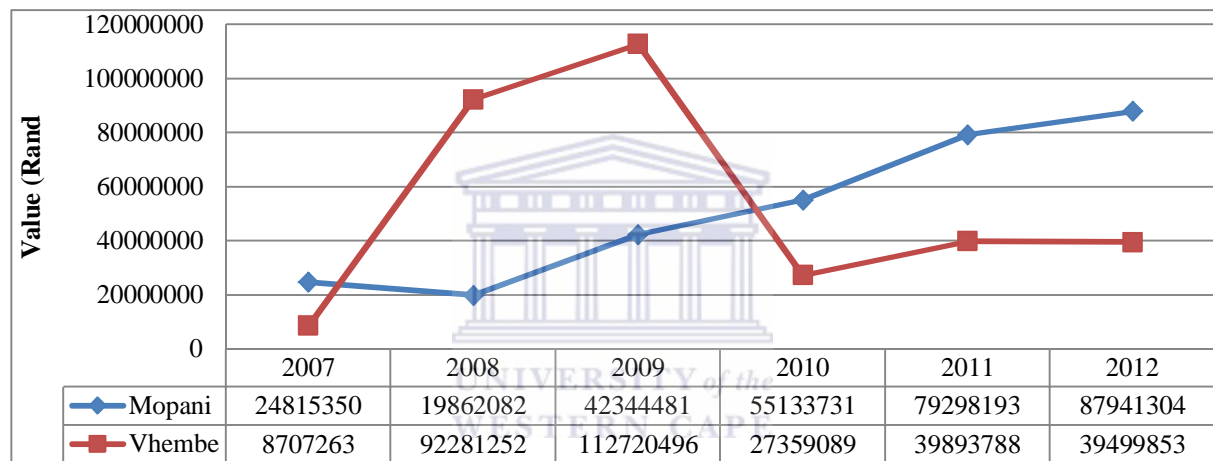
According to the South African Macadamia Growers' Association (SAMAC), the contribution of the macadamia nuts industry to the gross value of agricultural production between 2003 and 2012 increased by 50%. But its contribution in the 2010 season declined by 35% compared to the previous season due to a loss of R54million worth of nuts due to unsound kernels. This decline of 35% was due to the decline in macadamia prices globally (SAMAC, 2009).

In 2011 and 2012, however, growth increased by 15% and 7% respectively due to a global increase in macadamia nut prices. As an export industry, prices of macadamia nuts are determined by the global market's supply and demand. Macadamia nut exports for South Africa represented 36.78% of the world's macadamia nut exports and South Africa was ranked number one exporter (ITC Trademap, 2011). About 95% of the total annual production is shipped to international markets, mainly in the US, Europe and Asia. In 2012, exports represented 28.81% of the global total but South Africa was still ranked number one, followed by Australia, Kenya, Netherlands, Guatemala, and Hong Kong China. Domestically, macadamia nut buyers include retailers Spar, Pick 'n Pay, Woolworths, marketed through the national fresh produce markets.

Aliber *et al.* (2013) attempt to construct production trends for macadamia in Levubu. While the authors acknowledge the difficulty in obtaining precise data on production trends, they offer a useful analysis of the secondary data. However, there are inconsistencies in available data in the case of avocado production. Available data from DAFF covers the period from 2007 to 2012, but as Aliber *et al.* (2013) observe, lacks information on the quantitative units. In addition, it only reports on exported nuts rather than on total production. However, the literature tells us that less than 1% of macadamia nuts are for domestic consumption nationally.

Figure 3 (Value of macadamia nuts exports – Limpopo Province) shows that between 2008 and 2009 production in Limpopo grew by 42% and it is noteworthy that Vhembe, (i.e. Levubu) accounted for this growth. However, there has been a sharp decline since 2010. Noteworthy is that during the early days of strategic partnerships, the macadamia crop seems to have done well, yet when the partnerships collapsed, there was a huge decline. However, although the data show some form of recovery, values still trail behind export values achieved in 2009. Although the rand value is low in Limpopo, Vhembe is reported to be producing the high quality of macadamia nuts (DAFF, 2013a:15), and in 2012 Mauluma was awarded a prize for producing the best nuts in the province⁶¹.

Figure 3: Value of macadamia nut exports – Limpopo Province



Source: DAFF (2013a) based on calculations of Quentec Easydata.

5.4.3 Bananas

In 2011, the total hectares under banana production in South Africa were estimated at 11 360 ha, but *Farmers Weekly* reported that the total had decreased to 10 280 ha by 2014. About 58% of that (6 600 ha) are in the Onderberg area near Malelane and Kiepersol in Mpumalanga Province. Limpopo Province, mainly through production in the Levubu and Letaba areas, accounted for 20% of all banana production. Almost all production of bananas in South Africa is for sale in local markets or self-consumption, and only a tiny fraction is sold in world markets. Whilst there is domination of the market by the large-scale commercial operators who use external inputs intensively and are technologically

⁶¹ Interviews with Danie Basson, the General Manager for Ravele farms on 14 December 2012 and Bethuel Ravele, the CPA secretary on 12 December 2013, at Appelfontein farm in Levubu

sophisticated, smallholder producers also participate in banana production but mainly for home consumption.

For the 2010/11 season, the total production was 397 287 tons, representing a 4% increase when compared with the 2009/10 production season but only a 1% increase when compared to volumes produced in 2001/02. The local market absorbed 61% or 241 944 tons of the total crop produced, and 39% was absorbed by the processing market. Export volumes are insignificant and remained below 1 000 tons during the past ten years. For those bananas exported, 99% were absorbed by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and 1% by West Africa (DAFF, 2012b). During 2010/11 bananas contributed 56.5% (R1.3 billion) to the total gross value of subtropical fruit (R2.3 billion) produced in South Africa.

Data available for Limpopo shows the share of banana crops produced for export. Even though this is a negligible share, it probably reflects accurately the overall story for the province. In 2004 and 2005, Mopani District accounted for 81% and 100% of exports respectively but in 2006, 100% of exports were from Vhembe District (i.e. Levubu). However, in 2008 and 2009, Mopani again accounted for 100% of exports. Communication with managers in Levubu show that farmers prefer not to export due to the costs involved and that they get the best price in the local markets.

Farmers Weekly (2015: 2-9 January 2015) reported that “Mozambican imports threaten SA banana farmers”. It was reported that an 18kg box of bananas achieved on average of R79.70 in 2013/14 but the forecast price for 2014/15 year ending June 2015 was R63. 27 per box. Since 2013, there have been price reductions due to supply exceeding demand. With the decrease in production in South Africa, and a possible increase in market volumes, this will likely affect South African prices. DAFF (2012b) also attests to the growing import of Mozambican bananas.

On the basis of analysis of production trends for subtropical fruit and nuts in Limpopo, avocados, bananas and macadamia nuts in particular, three points about production and implications for community-owned farming enterprises in Levubu can be made. Firstly, the significance of accreditation with different global regulatory regimes affected some of the CPAs to enter market completion as their predecessors and the strategic partnerships failed to sustain the accreditations. This study found that the enterprises’ ability to rebound varied; for

example, Mauluma enterprise (Ravele) managed to acquire Global-Gap and Fair-Trade accreditation in 2009/10 whereas Shigalo and Ratombo could not. Early in 2015, Ratombo CPA, under Mark Cohen as a mentor, had started processes to acquire accreditation in order to compete globally again. Secondly, the ability of the community-owned enterprises to stay in business depended on their ability to secure capital from financiers as well as generating enough cash to improve on cash flow for the companies, hence crop diversification, for example, macadia nuts (annual crop) and bananas (production throughout). Under the current context in which none of the commercial banks were willing to extend their credit facilities to the community-owned enterprises, enterprises turned to downstream industries to secure contracts to supply crops and receive payment from them in advance, but also reliance on bananas as a 'cash crop' for aiding cash flow. Lastly, these trends and dynamics are to a large extent influenced by market forces at play, which has significant ramifications for profitability of the enterprises. For example, banks could not extend credit facilities due to uncertainty of businesses, a drop in the price of bananas due to the influx of banana crops from Mozambique, inability to export due to the quality of the crop as well as a lack of accreditation with global standards regulatory regimes. These factors put pressures on community-owned enterprises, hence struggles by enterprises to improve on the productive forces so that they could re-enter the global production platforms. Therefore, the failures of these farms and production can be attributed to a range of issues as discussed above.

5.5 Land reform in Limpopo and restitution in Levubu Valley

Analysis of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) policy document shows that the new democratic government of South Africa made a commitment to transform the agricultural *status quo* established through decades of dispossession (and the generalised oppression) of African rural communities. Government envisaged "land reform programmes that transfer land from the inefficient, debt ridden, ecologically-damaging and white-dominated large farm sectors to all those who wish to produce incomes through farming in more sustainable agricultural systems" (Aliber *et al.*, 2010:288). As Walker (2005) has stated, this conception of the 'land question' in South Africa has two main elements, namely a history of colonial conquest and apartheid dispossession, together with the decline of black peasant agriculture since the passing of the 1913 Natives Land Act. For particular groups, communities and individuals involved, 'the land question' represents:

“... a concrete and very particular project, embedded in local histories, dynamics and directed, in the first instance, towards local rather than national relationships to the land and include overlapping rights and claims, such as those of tenants , and land owners on former black-owned (black-spots) farms, or of former and current residents of state-owned land” (Walker, 2005:809).

This thesis will show how different claimant ‘communities’ of Levubu Valley have struggled to reconstruct who the rightful claimants to particular pieces of land are, and that this is mainly due to the overlapping rights and claims, as well as the lack of agreement on the identities of the first occupants or original owners of claimed land.

Land and agricultural reform features prominently in the Limpopo provincial government’s strategies and rhetoric about transformation and the empowerment of rural communities, for example in the Provincial Economic Growth Plan (PEGP) and the Provincial Growth Development Strategy (PGDS). As noted above, it is estimated that about 90% of the province’s commercial farmland is under claim (PGDS, 2005). There is uncertainty about the precise extent of restitution claims, but it is estimated that in 2011, there were about 600 claims to be researched, and 718 outstanding land claims (Bigen Africa, 2011:16, cited in Aliber *et al.*, 2013). With regard to land redistribution, Aliber *et al.* (2013) found that there were about 236 projects involving 80 000 hectares, collectively costing R360 million. The authors further cite instances of land that reverted to the restitution programme because the Commission became aware of valid claims only after the land was transferred through redistribution. This study shows that in the two districts of Vhembe and Capricorn, about 50.6% of redistribution projects and 36.1% of restitution projects could be characterised as ‘no beneficiaries using the land and nothing happening’.

5.5.1 Restitution and strategic partnerships in Levubu

By 31 December 1998, the cut-off date for the lodging of restitution claims, almost the entire Levubu Valley was already under claim by African communities. These are Ravele, Masakona, Shigalo, Tshakhuma, Matumba, Ratombo, Tshivhazwaulu and Tshitwani (see fact sheet in Table 1). On 7 April 2000 and 11 May 2001, government published these land claims in the Government Gazette (Gazette notices No 21074 and No. 22270 respectively) officially

pronouncing on what further investigations and negotiations for their settlement are required and the terms and conditions under which the land would be held (CRLR, 2005: 22)⁶².

Restitution in this area is highly contested. On one hand, there are white land owners who continue to contest the validity of the land claims and the outcomes of the valuation processes conducted by government⁶³. On the other hand, claimant communities have criticised government for the slow pace of settlement of their land claims. Particular concerns have been expressed regarding claims on state land (mainly under forests). In addition, there are intra- and inter-community contestations around boundaries. Intra-community disputes also relate to questions about the legitimacy of the rightful claimants, whether one is a chief or not. Inter-ethnic relations between Shangaan and Venda ‘communities’ also play a role in these struggles for access to and control of land and resources (Derman *et al.*, 2013:61).

Between 2000 and 2005, as observed by Derman *et al.* (2010), a group of 23 white commercial farmers came forward willing to sell their farms, and Fraser (2006) and Van Leynseele (2013) make reference to ‘the willing and unwilling sellers’ in Levubu. Those unwilling to sell are not a homogenous group, with some opting to challenge restitution claims on the bases of the economics of the area and the investment made by the existing commercial farmers, whilst others challenge it on the basis of legalities such as the validity of land claims, and some appear to be staging a protest against perceptions that the government was against white people, in particular ‘the farmer’⁶⁴. As documented by Fraser (2006), white commercial farmers and entrepreneurs had invested heavily in downstream linkages to the farms, and would not like to see declines in production because it would affect these business operations. In one interview by Fraser (2006:94), a white commercial farmer linked to Mavu said:

⁶² As an NGO project officer working with Levubu claimants, I recall facilitating meetings with claimant communities to understand the Gazette notices and assess the implications for settlement of these claims, especially the boundary disputes that arise from using cadastral boundaries when claims were made in terms of boundaries under the customary law and practices. Communities also began to document their negotiating mandates; initially, most of them were inclined towards returning to the land, but positions shifted through discourses that emerged around the local economy and jobs.

⁶³ Van Lyneseeles (2013) conducted in-depth research in the area and his PhD thesis provides useful insights in relation to the perspectives of white farmers in Levubu.

⁶⁴ Interview with Fritz Ahrendse, the District Chairperson of TAUSA, held on 13 May 2011 at his farm in Levubu.

“Look, to be honest, if I didn’t have any investment in the factories, I wouldn’t have been a strategic partner ... I would have been out of here. ... Remember, a factory, if your raw material basis is not secure, it’s actually just a heap of stainless steel.”⁶⁵

This shows the existence of diverse interests amongst commercial farmers at the heart of the negotiations around restitution, one of the most prominent being in relation to businesses in downstream industries. It would seem that of those that came forward offering themselves as willing sellers, the majority were business people who had interests beyond the farm gate, and were concerned about the effects of the collapse of Levubu, especially in view of looming threats of ‘Zimbabwe-style’ land occupations and expropriation of land in the wider discourse of land reform. These farmers influenced the official discourse in Limpopo, which was already biased in favour of the retention of large-scale commercial farming systems, citing the provision of job security for farmworkers, sustenance of the local economy and preventing the disruption of commercial agriculture and its links to foreign markets.

Between 2005 and 2008, government settled Levubu land claims in phases and the total hectares of land transferred to claimant ‘communities’ are indicated in Table 5.7 below⁶⁶. Government purchased 5 958 ha in 79 parcels of land at the total cost of R262.2 million. As illustrated in Map 3 (A map showing land transferred to the seven communities in Levubu), a considerable number of land claims have been settled, yet there remains a large section of land (in the map shown as unshaded areas) still to be transferred under restitution. It is at this stage unclear how the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights plans to deal with the remaining claims, especially considering the disputes, many challenges with regard to partnerships and the use of land, as well as the cost of acquiring land.

Table 15: Phases of land acquisition for seven communities in Levubu

	Phase 1 (2005)	Phase 2 (2006)	Phase 3 (2007)	Phase 4 (2007)	Phase 5 (2008)	Total
No. of ha	5382	206	254	69	47	5958
No. of land parcels	63	3	9	2	2	79
Total cost (R)	R219.4 m	R6.9m	R14.9m	R16.4m	R4,6m	R262.2m

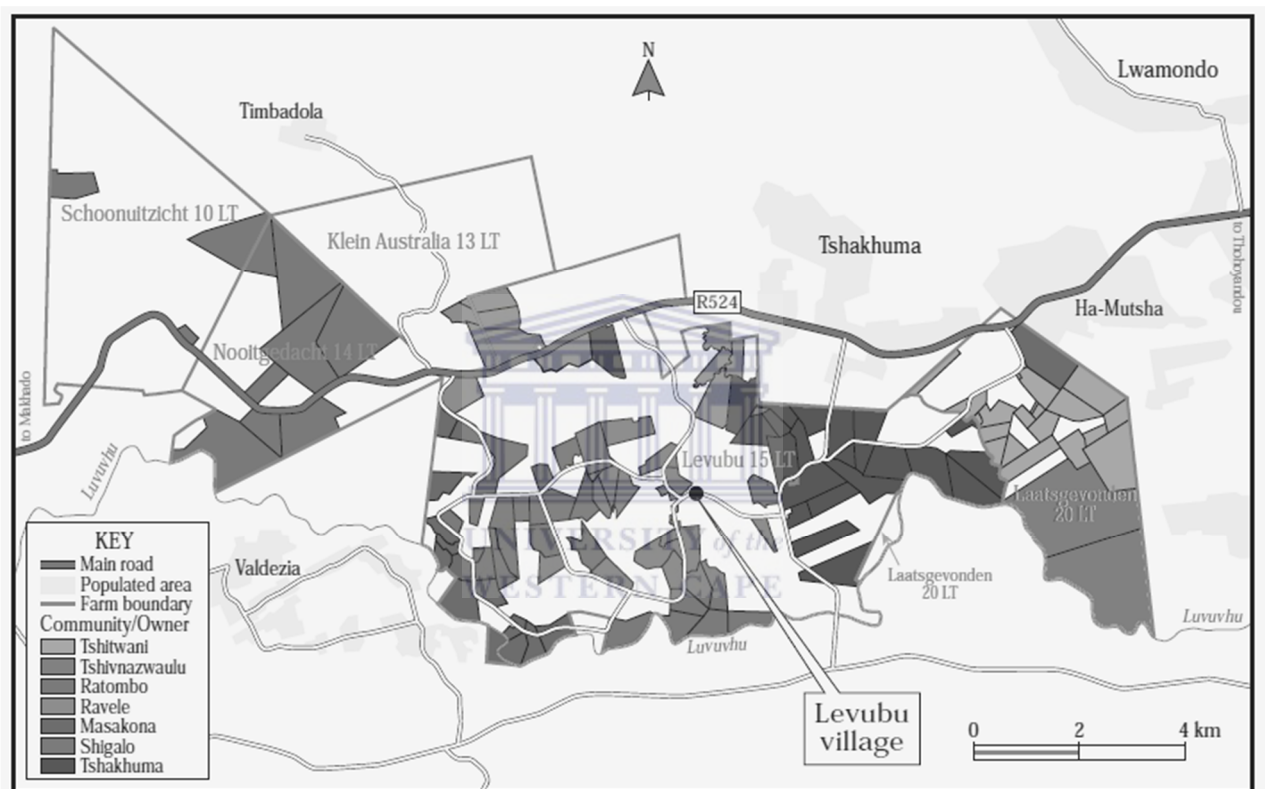
Source: Memoranda of the Regional Land Claims Commissioner for Limpopo (2005 - 2008)

⁶⁵ This extract of an interview is taken from a doctoral thesis by Fraser (2006), referenced in this thesis.

⁶⁶ The Land Claims Commission is the process of verifying restitution statistics. It is therefore difficult to provide official statistics about the extent of outstanding claims. However, land claimants have reported that less than half of their claims have been finalised.

An interview with the relevant project officer for Levubu shows that the total land under claim in Levubu is 20 626 ha. By 2012, about 8 249.899 ha had been restored to claimants⁶⁷. This suggests that government still has to purchase 60% of the claimed land. However, the figure does not correspond with my own calculations based on the Section 42D memoranda. Map 3 (A map showing farms transferred to seven claimant communities in Levubu) depicts those land transfers shown in Table 15 above.

Map 3: A map showing land transferred to the seven communities in Levubu



Drawing on my experience during the facilitation of processes to secure restitution agreements by claimants in Levubu, it is clear that issues raised by Walker (2005) about overlapping rights in land claims are relevant. These have fuelled tensions between and within ‘communities’, such that to date there are many unresolved questions about farms allegedly transferred wrongly to other claimant communities. In certain instances, the Commission has been able to resolve the issues by transferring the land back to the rightful claimants. Derman *et al.* (2013) go into detail on these community disputes. Protracted negotiations around the settlement of these claims (for around five years) are indicative of the

⁶⁷ Interview with Gloria Ratshitanga, project officer for Levubu land claims in June 2013, at the RLCC offices in Polokwane.

complexity of interests and the enormity of the challenge that the settlement of these seven land claims presented to government, claimants, land owners and agribusinesses.

Claimant communities expect the Land Claims Commission to resolve outstanding claims as a matter of urgency. There is unhappiness about the pace of settlement of claims on state land, which, as noted above, are mostly under forest plantations. Community representatives point to the approval of phase 1 settlement, which included some state land. However, no progress had been made (at least at the time of finalising this thesis) to resolve the claims on those properties⁶⁸. The Commission appears to be in a dilemma regarding further processing of the land claims, as an official stated that the Commission has become very cautious about further purchases of farms because of the existing challenges, especially the capacity of communities to manage the farms already transferred. An official in the Limpopo land claims commission stated that –

“The issue about resolving outstanding claims in Levubu is a critical one. We are having internal discussion about any further purchases of farms. The view is that perhaps government has already achieved a just and equitable compensation for the loss of land under the apartheid regime ... as the Commission, we have no additional funding in this financial year to purchase more farms. We have been instructed to prioritise payment of all court orders”.⁶⁹

The court orders refer to circumstances under which farm owners who offered their land claims for settlement and the state’s delay in honouring the agreement, the owners refer such matters to court, more often courts compel government to pay. Such reprioritisation of funds to payment of court orders also affects the amount of funds available for land purchases.

At the time of this interview the matter was still subject to internal discussion, and claimants were not made aware of this stance, but some members of claimant communities expressed their dismay at the possibility that it might be adopted. They reject such a thought because restitution is about ‘their rights’ and they further suggested that it would be advisable to test this position in court, if that was the way the Commission was going to proceed.

⁶⁸ Interviews with CPA Committee members: Mr Bethuel Ravele (Ravele CPA) on 16 June 2010 at Appelfontein Farm, Levubu; Mr Peter Mawela (Masakona) on 20 May 2011, at Masakona Traditional Council’s Offices; and Mrs Grace Manage/Ratombo (Ratombo CPA) on 16 May 2011, at U-No-Me farm, Levubu.

⁶⁹ Interview with Rirhanzu Shilote, Director: Quality Assurance, Restitution (Department of Rural Development and Land Reform), date: 17 June 2010, at RLCC offices in Biccard Street, Polokwane.

Although expropriation of land is an option, government has been cautious of using this as a way to fast track restitution in Levubu. To date, there is only one case in Levubu (involving Masakona CPA) where government has attempted expropriation, but it has been disputed. The crux of the dispute is what is considered the market value of the equipment on the property. This dispute originated from a 2001 valuation of the property which was accepted in 2003, but according to TAU-SA, a farmer organisation representing the landowner, the valuation did not include the macadamia nut handling equipment worth about R200 000 at the time. Government wanted this equipment to be included in the purchase price. After the collapse of negotiations and stalling of the transaction, in 2012 government conducted a new valuation and indicated that they were prepared to increase the purchase price by R100 000. The landowner rejected the offer because he wanted R200 000 for the macadamia processing equipment. The DRDLR then applied for, and succeeded in obtaining, the expropriation order⁷⁰.

This matter remained unresolved at the time of writing this thesis. Restitution has also caused tensions in Levubu. One of the white farmers I interviewed, whose farm is under claim, informed me that “my farm is claimed, but I do not want to settle any claim because my farm is not on the market. There is plenty of land in the market”⁷¹. This raises another element in restitution in Levubu, namely the fact that some farmers are not willing to cooperate with the restitution programme. During the conversation, the farmer suggested that government should acquire farms on the market for redistribution and purchase farms for restitution as they come to the market, rather than through forced purchases.

5.5.2 The making and remaking of commercial partnerships in Levubu

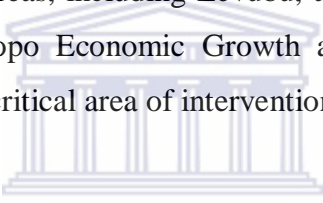
Levubu’s prime farm land is the site of capital-intensive production linked to lucrative local and export markets, but restitution of such land confronts major challenges of how to design effective post-transfer arrangements and provide support to new owners and farmers. Between 2000 and 2004, policy debates in government have increasingly shown concerns about how “to transfer land from white people to black people without damaging commercial agriculture” (Aliber et al, 2010: 289). In a similar vein, the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights had become concerned with the ‘viability’ of restitution projects on commercial

⁷⁰ <http://www.farmersweekly.co.za/news.aspx?id=42327&h=No-clues-to-Galloways-disappearance->

⁷¹ Interview with Fritz Ahrendse, District Chairperson of TAUSA on 13 May 2011 at his farm in Levubu.

farms, to the extent that it established the Settlement Support and Development Units (SSDUs) in 2001/2, and further made provisions for development grants at the value of 25% of the purchase price of the land. The restitution programme has now adopted a 'productionist' perspective – a path in favour of retaining large-scale commercial farms rather than the distribution of smaller parcels of land to beneficiaries, a trend observed in South African land reform generally (Hall, 2012). Recent policy choices to introduce the Recapitalisation and Development Programme (RADP), with its emphasis on the commercialisation of production by employing mentors and strategic partners in all redistributive land reform projects, is also indicative of the commitment to entrench large-scale commercial farming. From government's perspective, the challenge is that beneficiaries often lack skills and capital to manage farms of that magnitude and scale.

Limpopo pioneered the formation of strategic partnerships in the Zebediela citrus estates, the model being replicated in other areas, including Levubu, and later Moletele, as discussed in Lahiff *et al.* (2012). The Limpopo Economic Growth and Development Plan (LEGDP) identified land reform farms as a critical area of intervention, stating that -



“In broad terms, the specific objectives of large-scale commercial farmers revolve around (i) profit maximisation, (ii) simplification of sustainable management to free up available time, (iii) seeking opportunities for economic growth and (iv) diversification of production. The strategic intervention roles of the LDA would mainly be facilitation instead of support. For instance, in land reform farms, large scale commercial production can be achieved through joint ventures” (Limpopo Provincial Government, 2009: 62).

It identifies joint ventures between agribusiness and land reform beneficiaries as a strategic intervention. Such intervention is also promoted in some of the overarching policy documents of the Limpopo provincial government. For example, the Limpopo Economic Growth and Development Plan, which acknowledges the challenges resulting from the collapse of some of the land reform projects, states that:

“The collapse of land reform projects contributes to the reduced effect of agriculture on the GDP. Various factors, inter alia: lack of post settlement support, lack of production inputs; lack of working tools; financing and limited skills in best-practices on agricultural production among the beneficiaries, do play a role in the diminishing agricultural contribution. The state must provide full support to land reform clients and minimize group farming approaches that compel potential farmers to exit projects. Furthermore, the state and/or struggling land-owners must

lease/rent the land to capable entrepreneurs to remove the mortgage burden”. (Limpopo Provincial Government, 2009: 60).

It is within this context that joint ventures, known as ‘strategic partnerships’, were proposed for Levubu, to promote a form of ‘viability-oriented’ and productionist restitution. Whilst this is part of a plan to ensure the minimal disruption to production and to linkages to export markets, these kinds of partnerships were seen as part of a plan to manage transition to ownership of productive commercial farms and lucrative agricultural businesses by African ‘communities’.

According to Derman *et al.* (2013:52), government has sought to adjust its strategies and policies “to fit with the broader agricultural national agendas. Thus, in Limpopo Province, a rights based land restitution strategy with its vision of historical social justice was married to a business one”. As argued in this thesis, operationalisation of the model and the functioning of the joint venture operating companies have involved great complexities arising from the diverse and contradictory interests at play in strategic partnerships on community-owned large-scale commercial farms.

Proposals for post-settlement arrangements ranged from outright leases, as proposed by a ‘group of 23’ willing sellers, to joint ventures. Government preferred strategic partnerships because they were seen to be ‘developmental, progressive and transformative’, promising ‘inclusion’ of beneficiaries and workers in decision-making about farming, skills development and transparency in relation to how the farms were managed⁷². Government considered having ex-landowners as lessees and mentors to be a ‘problematic’ arrangement because it would not signify meaningful transformation of social relations on the farms. As an alternative, strategic partnership approaches were seen as a ‘win-win’ model of post-restoration production.

Two Limpopo-based agribusinesses, namely Mavu Management Services (MAVU) and South African Farms Management (SAFM) were appointed on the basis of their presentations on farm management, access to capital, links to markets (especially the capacity to export), skills transfer plans, charges on management fees, and generally a vision of making Levubu a

⁷² Interviews with B. Ravele on 09 May 2011 at Appelfontein Farm, Levubu, and Peter Mawela on 20 May 2011 at Masakona Traditional Council Office.

model for restitution on high-value agricultural land. The key tenets of the model were the empowering of communities to take over farms after a period of 10-15 years, promising preferential jobs for members of claimant ‘communities’, payment of rental fees, sharing of profits (or losses), distribution of dividends, and development of the communal areas where the majority of members of claimants currently reside.

Some researchers and scholars have termed these strategic partnerships an attempted ‘marriage’ of social justice and businesses (Derman *et al.*, 2013) whereas others view them as a ‘hybrid approach’ to restitution under the influence of market-led approaches to land reform (Fraser, 2006). Fraser further views the commercial partnerships “as a form of privatised post-settlement support that minimizes the need for government-provided support but which also places severe limitations on how the rightful landowners can use their land” (*ibid.*, 88). Indeed, these models are focussed on the prevention of changes to existing production systems as they are regarded as the best possible use of the land.

Derman *et al.* (2010) identified what they referred to as “strategic questions” that arise from this policy direction. These include questions on the direction of restitution, the realisation of benefits among claimants, and the extent to which the original objectives of the programme of land reform are being achieved. These seven strategic questions⁷³ raise fundamental concerns about the earlier versions of agreements in relation to strategic partnerships, which were subsequently improved through negotiations involving the state, agribusiness companies, NGOs, commercial lawyers acting pro-bono on behalf of claimants, and claimant communities’ representatives. Derman *et al.* (2010) concluded that there would be limited benefits from a successful strategic partnership arrangement, in the short to medium term in particular. The only significant benefit to be realised was employment and training opportunities for claimant community members. Their analysis shows that the impact of strategic partnerships on net employment would likely be negative, in the short term, as production had slumped during the transition to new ownership. In their analysis of the material conditions on these farms, “the big losers are the existing workforce, whose interests have effectively gone unprotected through the restitution process, despite lip service from

⁷³ Who makes the key decisions? What will happen to revenue? What are the implications for scale of production and risk management? Who will benefit from employment opportunities? How will the handover to the communities be implemented at the end of the contract period? How will communities and their members benefit?

various quarters and promises of a state in the reconstituted farming enterprise” (Derman *et al.*, 2010: 321).

Commercial partnerships, as observed in Levubu, involve large tracts of prime agricultural land being transferred to ‘traditional communities’ represented by Communal Property Associations. A key question is who benefits from such strategic partnerships, especially in an approach that does not broaden access to land and encourage individual household production but only a ‘collective’ interest? Is it agrarian capital at the expense of ‘classes of labour’, who are now the collective owners of the land? This question brings to the surface the many tensions and contradictions inherent in ‘commercial partnerships’ on community-owned large-scale commercial farms. This thesis argues that these tensions and contradictions arise most fundamentally from competing imperatives to both maintain commercial production and also help meet the social reproduction needs of the members of a large group of co-owners.

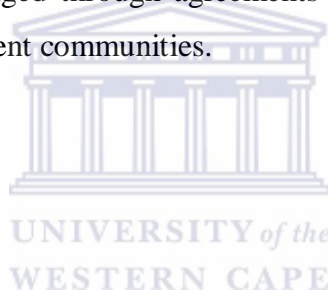
5.6 Conclusion

This chapter located commercial farms in Levubu within the larger literature on the development of agriculture in Limpopo and the centrality of the role of the state apparatus in support of large-scale commercial farms. A key issue is that the capitalist development of agriculture has had negative effects on the rural poor, or ‘classes of labour’ in Bernstein’s theorisation. As the chapter demonstrated, dispossession and displacement of African communities resulted in the proletarianisation, disruption of ‘communities’ and their ways of life, and subjection of Africans to the authority of white farmers. Land dispossession established unequal power relations between workers and land owners, who were backed by the state to implement repressive policies to keep labour on farms. The chapter also showed that by 1994 what had emerged in Levubu was an agricultural industry that was highly capital-intensive and linked to export markets in Africa, Europe and the US, with the potential to expand to markets in the East.

Policy changes since 1994 have enabled African communities to reclaim their ancestral land. This chapter showed that the entire Levubu Valley, including its processing plants and pack houses, became subject to one of the most expensive land claims in South Africa. The process revived older boundary disputes between neighbouring communities, and also

struggles around chieftaincies, manifesting in tensions around who have legitimate rights to particular farms. These tensions are part of the reasons for the long delays in settling land claims. Critical questions have emerged about how government should settle these claims. Government, to a certain extent, shared similar concerns from the point of view of the ability of government to lure agricultural investment into the province. This chapter made reference to the many provincial strategic documents which suggest that policy makers see agriculture as an 'industry' and a 'business', and what happens on the land should basically be for business purposes only.

The chapter outlined the development of capitalist agriculture in Levubu, and demonstrated how policy changes since 1994 have created opportunities for social justice. But questions have been asked about how the new owners manage their farms. The next chapter will discuss the dynamics of strategic partnerships and show how they evolved into community-owned farming enterprises managed through agreements between professional commercial farmers and the CPAs that represent communities.



6. FROM STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS TO COMMUNITY-OWNED FARMING ENTERPRISES IN LEVUBU

6.1 Introduction

The rise of arrangements in which agribusiness and private sector partners collaborate with land reform beneficiaries and members of other rural communities in South Africa has become a subject of great interest to scholars over the past decade or so (Lahiff *et al.*, 2012). More importantly, it is a phenomenon of great significance for land reform and agricultural development policies, both in South Africa itself and elsewhere. This is particularly the case in countries where there has been an increase in cases of large-scale land acquisition by multinational companies, the so-called ‘land grabs’, and the emergence of associated ‘inclusive business models’ in agriculture. A growing body of literature exists in relation to investments by agribusiness companies in primary agriculture located on land occupied by traditional communities (Hall, 2011; Cotula *et al.* 2009; Deininger *et al.*, 2011).

The notion of partnerships in South Africa’s land reform and agricultural development programme has been on the rise since the early 1990s. At that time, commercial farmers initiated equity-sharing schemes as an alternative to the redistribution of land and its subdivision. Such approaches promoted changing the structure of ownership rather than of production relations (McKenzie, 1993). Approximately 61 of these schemes were registered between 1995 and 2001 (Knight & Lyne, 2001). The South African White Paper on Land Policy (1997), an overarching framework for post-apartheid land policy, also promoted farmworkers’ farm equity schemes (FES). Although a moratorium was put on FES in June 2009⁷⁴ (although it was subsequently lifted in 2011), the new policy on the recapitalisation of land reform farms came into existence that same year. It provided for the establishment of commercial partnerships, in the form of ‘strategic partnerships’, mentorships and co-management arrangements. Between 2010 and the end of 2013, about 1 357 farms came

⁷⁴ The DRDLR suggested that part of the challenges confronting FES was that, amongst others, they lacked mechanisms for empowerment of beneficiaries, and that resident farm dwellers and workers did not have security of tenure; FES were characterised by poor working relations between the managers and the shareholders; and FES experienced a so-called free-rider syndrome where some farmworkers, as shareholders who did not work on the farm also wanted to receive dividends, if any distribution occurred.

under some 437 commercial partnerships of diverse kinds. Limpopo Province accounted for 177 farms and 44 strategic partnerships in all (DRDLR, 2014a).

As discussed in Chapter 1, formation of strategic partnerships between land reform beneficiaries organised under CPAs, and agribusiness companies facilitated processes of inclusion of previously disadvantaged groups into mainstream agricultural production of export commodities. This chapter therefore describes the strategic partnership arrangements and their trajectories over time, including their demise and replacement by a different model, namely community-owned commercial farms. It also explores how the imperatives of capitalist accumulation connect or collide with the social reproduction of ‘classes of labour’, both farmworkers and beneficiaries of the restitution programme (these categories overlapping to a certain extent). It delves into the ambiguities of restitution and strategic partnerships constituted as a ‘force field’ of power relations, exploring the extent to which the interests, values, understandings, interactions and contestations of different agrarian classes have shaped the dynamics of commercial partnerships. The main agrarian classes active in this context are farming capital (white commercial farmers), classes of agrarian labour (farmworkers), and agrarian capital (agribusiness enterprises). The chapter suggests that the underlying contradictions of capitalism, (the social class relations of capital and labour) have to a large extent shaped the trajectory of partnerships and community-owned farming enterprises. The chapter concludes with some reflections on the profitability of community-owned enterprises.

6.2 The formation of ‘strategic partnerships’ in Levubu (2005 – 2009)

The ‘Section 42D approvals’⁷⁵ signed in 2005 by the then Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs, Ms Thoko Didiza, to enable the restoration of land rights to the Levubu land claimants, in principle endorsed ‘strategic partnerships’ as the desired model. This drew on ideas proposed by commercial farmers during negotiations for the settlement of land claims in Levubu. A government planning document stated that:

⁷⁵ Section 42D of the Restitution of Land Rights Act (1994) empowers the Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform (previously Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs), if satisfied that a claimant is entitled to restitution of a right in land, to enter into an agreement with the parties. He/she may approve the award to the claimant of land, a portion of the land or any other right in land.

“The strategic partners are proposing to have shareholding equity schemes, together with the claimants, through the legal entities, and the current employees of the farms, through a Workers’ Trust, and form an Operating Company wherein each party will have a certain percentage of shares.” (CRLR, 2005:23).

In Levubu the company known as South African Farm Management (SAFM) was the strategic partner preferred by government. However, communities and NGOs called for a much more transparent selection process in which CPAs, as partners, could participate in the selection process. This then required the issuing of advertisements, and the screening and assessment of potential partners on the basis of their farming credentials and proposals for Levubu. The outcome of this process, when it was implemented, was that Mavu Management Services (Mavu) emerged as a second preferred strategic partner. These two companies were allocated some of the farms to manage as an interim arrangement, to allow negotiations of contracts to be finalised. The contracts linked four CPAs and one Trust to SAFM as their strategic partner,⁷⁶ with two CPAs linked to Mavu (and subsequently Umlimi Services (Pty) Ltd when Mavu withdrew). Farm management and partnership arrangements are summarised in Table 16, which periodises the changes over time.

Table 16: Changes in farm management arrangements in Levubu (2005-2015)

Period	Management model	Masakona CPA	Ravele CPA	Shigalo CPA	Ratombo CPA
2005-2007	Interim phase	SAFM	SAFM	Mavu	Mavu
2007-2009	Joint Ventures	SAFM+CPA	SAFM+CPA	Umlimi+CPA	Umlimi+CPA
2010-2014	Management contrasts with commercial farmers	Sharp Move Trading 150 (Pty) Ltd	Mauluma Farming Enterprise 1938(Pty) Ltd	Sea Shadow Trade and Investment 136 (Pty) Ltd	Ratombo Farms Management
2014 - 2015	Mentorships	Mentor-Mr Thenga	N/A	N/A	Mentor - Mr Mark Cohen
	Outright leases ⁷⁷	N/A	N/A	Lease to Mr. Kotze	N/A

⁷⁶ SAFM has also signed partnerships with Tshakhuma Trust, Tshitwani and Tshivhazwaulu CPAs. These communities were not part of this in-depth study.

⁷⁷ Strategic partnerships were mainly based on the first phase transfers of land (63 farm units of about 5300 ha); none of the CPAs had any of the portions leased. Ravele had a portion leased in the third phase transfers. Shigalo’s lease to a white commercial farmer brings an interesting dynamic to the trajectory of partnerships in Levubu and the future of community-owned farms elsewhere in Levubu.

The signing of the lease and shareholders agreement between SAFM and 5 communities, and between Mavu and two CPAs, on 8 and 15 December 2007 respectively, was central to processes of restitution in Levubu and formalisation of the relationships that started in 2005.

6.2.1 Profiles of strategic partners

The 'Mavu' was a local company constituted by some of the commercial farmers who previously owned farms and agro-processing plants in Levubu, that were subsequently transferred to claimants. Their in-depth knowledge of the area and familiarity with local communities as well as their traditions, coupled with their track record as successful commercial subtropical fruit farmers in Levubu, was regarded by some of the CPAs⁷⁸ as strengths. According to Mavu, as a strategic partner, it was committed to the highest standards in relation to both the quality and quantity of outputs. Its directors had individual and collective investments in food processing operations in Levubu and Makhado, and therefore they had an interest in ensuring that agriculture in Levubu continued to flourish. One of its directors suggested that Mavu would actually make farms more profitable than before because of heightened efficiencies of scale⁷⁹.

The SAFM was appointed as a strategic partner by the Limpopo Department of Agriculture in June 2005 and was an initiative of the 'Boyes Group' that had an established relationship with the Limpopo provincial government. The company managed the Zebediela Citrus Estate in Limpopo on behalf of land claimant communities (Lahiff, 2007), as well as Giba CPA farms in Mpumalanga (Phuhlisani, 2007)⁸⁰. SAFM was seen as a private investment group that provided useful management expertise and capital for the benefit of land reform. In its proposals for Levubu, it stated that it sought to contribute to rural economic development and transformation by supporting land reform, especially the restitution of land rights to the rightful owners. It promised to manage farms more efficiently than the previous owners, and

⁷⁸ Interview with Grace Ratombo, a member of the Ratombo CPA executive committee, on 16 May 2011 at U-No-Me farm in Levubu.

⁷⁹ Interview with one of the directors of Mavu, done jointly with Prof. Derman (cited in Derman *et al.* 2013).

⁸⁰ <http://www.phuhlisani.com/oid%5Cdownloads%5CChapter%204.pdf> Accessed on 25/01/2015.

to develop new viable businesses through its strategic farming and financial management skills, including the use of its networks and access to export markets⁸¹.

In relation to Umlimi Services (Pty) Ltd (Umlimi) - on 24 May 2005, the *Mail and Guardian* newspaper reported that the company was originally launched as a black-owned agricultural services company⁸². It sought to serve farmers and manage the substantial base of costs that occur beyond the farm gate. Its services were to include production and development, procurement and sales, supply chain management and financial services, and it would initially target the fresh produce agricultural market⁸³. The CEO for Umlimi, Mr Rutherford, was quoted to have said that:

“What Umlimi offers is the management of the farmer's cost chain on a transparent and accountable basis to ensure the cost competitiveness of South African fruit...together with better returns for South African growers. But, besides offering a management service, there are also significant financial opportunities around the enormous value of turnover controlled by major exporters. This is not only limited to the area of currency management, but also include advances and production finance to the farmer...”⁸⁴

Umlimi describes itself as an agent for agricultural transformation, especially in relation to the implementation of the AgriBEE charter. It was quite obvious that it was targeting government as a key partner, especially in relation to land and agricultural reform policies.

6.2.2 Partnerships as interfaces for competing interests: classes of agrarian labour and classes of capital

Experience from the implementation of strategic partnerships in Levubu suggests that mediating between and negotiating the interests of multiple actors in land reform contexts is a daunting task. This thesis argues that some of the most important interests brought to these negotiations are class interests. Table 17 captures the range of actors whose interlocking or contesting sets of interests in relation to property rights, production and power, interests

⁸¹ <http://www.capacity.org/capacity/opencms/en/topics/value-chains/fruit-producers-in-a-fair-trade-chain.html>
Access 08/01/2015

⁸² <http://mg.co.za/article/2005-05-24-umlimi-aims-to-transform-agricultural-sector> Accessed 06/01/2016

⁸³ http://www.ifula.co.za/news_room/news_more_3.html Accessed 06/01/2015

⁸⁴ (*ibid*)

either in existence already or that could potentially emerge, have shaped the outcomes of restitution in Levubu.

Table 17: Interconnections of social actors across various ‘force fields’ of social relations

	1994-2005	2005-2009/10	2010 to 2014
Property Relations	White farm owners; agro-processors; government; farmworkers; land claimants; traditional councils	Strategic partners; joint venture companies; government; traditional councils; CPAs	Traditional Councils; Royal families; CPAs; Government; professional farm managers; Lessee farmers
Relations of Production	Government; Agro-processing farmers; White farmers Farmworkers	Joint venture Companies; Agribusiness Companies Farmworkers	Professional farm managers; Mentors; Operating Companies; Farmworkers; Board of Directors
Relations	White farmers; Farmworkers; Land claimants; Traditional councils; NGOs	Land claims committees; Traditional Councils; Royal Families; CPAs; NGOS	Professional farm managers; Board of Directors; Farmworkers; Traditional Councils; Royal Families; CPAs, Mentors

These actors can be aggregated most basically into *classes of capital* constituted by corporate agribusiness, rich farmers, and other business owners; and *classes of agrarian labour* constituted by members of land claimant ‘communities’, and often governed by traditional councils. However, this bipolar classification should be problematised, especially in a context when land claimant communities have taken over ownership of large-scale fruit and nut farms. Through land reform, ‘communities’ as collectives assume a new class position as large land owners and business partners. Yet, within these communities there are farmworkers and a few small-scale farmers whose subsistence is often highly dependent on them providing labour to these farms and other nearby commercial farmers. As discussed in Chapter 2, members of such ‘classes of labour’ can be extremely heterogeneous in their composition and characteristics. As community-owned enterprises, as with agricultural petty

commodity producers or ‘peasants’, the class positions of both capital and labour are combined, in complex fashion.

Interactions of different actors within restitution processes and the formation of strategic partnerships mean that these actors become entangled in what Long (2002:52) refers to as “bridging, accommodating, segregating or contesting social, evaluative and cognitive standpoints” - for example, bridging the imperatives of restitution and social justice/equity, on the one hand, and those of sustaining large-scale commercial farms, on the other. Restitution and the restructuring of privately owned large-scale farming operations into joint venture operating companies with share-equities for different partners, should be seen as a series of ‘force fields’, to use Nuijten’s (2005) phrasing. These are social platforms where a wide range of government and non-government actors, representing particular interests and committed to different cultural interests and political trajectories, interact with each other.

Whilst the perspectives of the different actors shown in Table 17 do vary and are contested, it is at the interface of opposed class interests that intense social struggles can take place. Some previous landowners were diametrically opposed to changes in property rights. They questioned the validity of land claims and alleged that government was ‘anti-farmer’, as interviews with a key informant representing the TAUSA demonstrated.⁸⁵

Another category of land owners with vested interests in agro-processing industries in the area (i.e. ‘agrarian capital’) were more concerned with the throughput to their industries, and sustaining their investments. They coordinated their actions through the so-called ‘Group of 23’, that represented those farmers who broke ranks with others in order to make their farms available for restitution. However, the proposal by the ‘Group of 23’ was intended to transform the structure of property *ownership*, but not necessarily the dominant production *systems and relations*. These farmers agreed to enter into outright leases and joint ventures for a period of time, until the new owners were fully trained and developed the skills to manage the farms independently. This strategy appears to be in line with Bernstein’s (1998:14) observation of a dominant tendency in South African agriculture to aim to preserve (and expand) the most ‘efficient’ branches and enterprises of capitalist agriculture, and to then append ‘emergent’ farmers to them in the form of joint ventures.

⁸⁵ Interview with Friz Ahrens, District TAUSA (Commercial Farmers Union) chairman, at his farm on 13 May 2011.

Whilst previous landowners (as the Group of 23) tried to negotiate to remain on their farms as lessees, with CPAs as lessors, these proposed arrangements caused great concern for the CPAs and NGOs active in Levubu, partly because they meant lack of effective access to the farms by their new owners. For government, particularly the Limpopo Department of Agriculture, such an arrangement was seen as having far-reaching ramifications for transformation imperatives; it appeared to lack sufficient economic empowerment and inclusivity. It perpetuated the status quo. The provincial government thus rejected the proposal by the 'Group of 23'.

What subsequently emerged was a shifting and changing class alliance. This involved a block of commercial farmers who saw it as in their interest to try to resist restitution and thus preserve the status quo in Levubu, together with some of the rich farmers and owners of agro-processing industries who established Mavu so as to position themselves within land reform. Fraser (2006) and Van Leynseele (2013) both found that some of the white farmers in Levubu viewed the 'Group of 23' and the directors of Mavu as 'sellouts', who had abandoned the struggle to resist restitution.

At another level, claim-making processes between 1994 and 2005 magnified the social tensions; hence struggles within these rural communities, thus shaping the dynamics of change in Levubu. Firstly, overlapping and competing claims to rights in land by different 'tribes' and clans made it difficult to determine who should get exactly what piece of land. This problem was exacerbated by existing property descriptions which conflicted with the indigenous 'tribal' boundaries. The matter is further complicated by membership to particular ethnic groups as a mode of belonging determining where a claimant belongs and what piece of property one had rights to. For example, whilst oral history has it that Masakona and Shigalo communities once lived together at Tshitungulu with overlapping rights, ethnic identities have been used to define membership to Shigalo and Masakona, i.e. Tsonga-speaking and Venda-speaking respectively. Therefore, some of the boundary disputes have been difficult to resolve. These dynamics and processes have rendered facilitation of signing of agreements on common boundaries to take longer in most cases⁸⁶. In some respects such disputes remain unresolved to date.

⁸⁶ Personal notes from observations carried out when I worked with these communities to facilitate the resolution of boundary disputes between 2000 and 2006, and helped facilitate processes to form CPAs.

Secondly, Levubu land claims processes also raised another complex question of the place of chiefs (traditional leaders) in claims-making and governance and administration of communal resources owned by the CPA. Given that almost all the land claims were initiated, lodged and pursued by chiefs, or chairpersons of royal families, on behalf of communities; and the determination of boundaries of properties that were to be restored was firstly based based on the historical jurisdictional boundaries of chiefs, although these are heavily contested – as, for example, in the cases of disagreements between the Shigalo and Masakona communities, as well as between Ravele and Ratombo and Ravele and Masakona. These complexities were exacerbated by occasional references to ethnic identities, for example when Tshivenda and xiTsonga speakers raised questions about who the original inhabitants of the land were. The ethnic dimension is at the heart of conflicts between the Tshakhuma and Shigalo communities, as well as between the Masakona and Shigalo communities. The resolution of these complex conflicts involved a negotiated process which entailed ‘give and take’ or compromises that eventually led to resolution of the claims. Given the reopening of the lodgement of the land claim in terms of the amended Restitution of Land Rights Act (2014), it remains to be seen what the impact of such process would be on land claims such as the ones in Levubu which were resolved through time-consuming negotiations and facilitated compromises by claimants. However, key informants from some CPAs at Levubu have indicated that they intended to lodge new claims with the Land Claims Commission⁸⁷ because they felt that the initial process was not fair for them. At the time of the last field visit to Levubu, in April 2015, none of them had lodged new land claims.

In relation to property rights, before the era of land reform white commercial farmers had enjoyed secure private property rights and, with state support, had established thriving commercial farms and agribusinesses. Calls for restitution and restorative justice were confronted with questions about what the impact of land reform would be on this ‘agricultural hub of the province’, and the agricultural industry at large. Questions about the potentially negative impact of land transfers on agro-processing industries, export market networks, contributions to the local economy through jobs, rates and taxes to the municipality, were raised. These views were also partly aligned to government’s interest in ensuring sustained production on land reform projects, and together they promoted a ‘market-based approach’ to deciding how land in Levubu should be held.

⁸⁷ Personal conversations with the chairperson of the Masakona CPAs on 07 April 2015 at the Masakona (Sharp Move) offices in Levubu and Interview with Grace Ratombo 16 May 2012 at U-No-Me Farm, in Levubu.

The outcome of discussions on the future of the farms at Levubu was that ‘pro-market’ forces circumvented unrestricted land restoration to communities, by structuring a compromise solution in which, in spite of nominal changes in property ownership, large-scale commercial production would continue, and thus the view that ‘market realities’ would have to be recognised triumphed in the end. For Fraser (2006), strategic partnerships mean the privatisation of post-settlement support, and thus safeguard the interests of agricultural capital. Although it seemed that government genuinely intended to empower rural communities, it did not know how to resolve basic challenges arising from the contradictions of capitalism itself. These are at the heart of the dilemmas posed by restitution for capital-intensive large farms in places like Levubu.

6.2.3 Negotiating contracts for strategic partnerships

The negotiations for strategic partnerships involved both agribusiness groupings and CPAs (the entities that would be the future land owners), which were supported by a local NGO, Nkuzi Development Association, together with a commercial law firm operating on *pro bono* terms. These support organisations tried to counterbalance the power of strategic partners and to ensure that the interests of beneficiaries were protected. Government departments on the other hand, mainly the Limpopo Department of Agriculture (LDA) and the regional Land Claims Commission were the convenors and facilitators of these negotiations. Strategic partners comprised investors whose interests were to ensure that they had effective control of enterprises, irrespective of their percentage shareholding in the operating company responsible for agricultural production.

Earlier conceptions of shareholding arrangements envisaged a strategic partnership of three groups of actors with equity shares in the operating companies, namely, farmworkers, represented by a Workers’ Trust (2% of shares), CPAs as land owners (50% of shares), and agribusiness/private sector investors (48% of shares).

Furthermore, lease agreements of 10 to 15 years in duration were proposed. The general idea was that these joint ventures, in the form of operating companies, would pay rent to the CPA at an annual rate of 1.25% of the value of the purchase price of the farms, indexed to

inflation⁸⁸. In order to protect the CPAs from loss of the land, government was adamant that land could not be used as collateral for bank loans. However, some farm managers argued that this provision makes farming profitably much more difficult. On the contrary, the CPAs felt that this agreement protected them, as seen when both the SAFM and the Umlimi strategic partnerships collapsed. The strategic partner became responsible for raising all operating capital. Evidence from this and other studies show that it became difficult for them to secure sufficient capital without using land as collateral, hence the strategic partners began to rely on government grant funding and bank overdrafts to supplement various grants to communities from government.

During the negotiations, farmworkers had no formal body representing them and advancing their issues and interests. Government also failed to ensure mobilisation of farmworkers so that they could articulate their interests. At times, Nkuzi attempted to bring farmworker issues to the negotiation table. However, Nkuzi was also conflicted as it saw itself as being primarily on the side of CPAs – the new land owners. In the absence of sturdy farmworker representation, over time their 2% share was incorporated into the land owners' share, increasing the CPA's equity share to 52%. However, reducing the question of the transfer of shares to issues of representation distorts understanding of the real social struggles and power relations at play. Levels of organisation among farmworkers are very low, here as elsewhere in South Africa. There are high levels of illiteracy, and thus there is an inevitable lack of capacity by farmworkers to manage bodies such as trusts. Additionally, the fact that the model envisaged that CPA members would be offered preferential employment on farms implied that all workers would ultimately be sourced from membership of CPAs; this further implied that their equity share would be held through the CPA rather than through a Workers' Trust. Considering the heterogeneity of farmworkers working on Levubu farms, as discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, the greatest losers were *non-claimant workers* who would not benefit from, for example, dividend payments and investments in public goods.

Despite the fact that strategic partners would not own a controlling interest in operating companies (they would own only 48% of equity), they demanded total control of the enterprises, on the basis of the value of the working capital they were expected to provide, along with their farm management expertise. They argued that the requirement that the

⁸⁸ These are specified in the shareholder agreements between CPAs and the SAFM.

enterprise maximise profit, required them to be able to take all business decisions. Acting in good faith, all parties then agreed to this principle. In addition, strategic partners would have exclusive control of upstream and downstream processes (i.e. inputs, machinery, processing, packaging and marketing). The challenge with this arrangement was that it could potentially create an inherent risk of price manipulation, as value is pushed up or down a vertically integrated value chain.

The contracts that were signed created certain obligations on the strategic partners. They would ensure eventual transfer of the strategic partner's shareholding to the CPA, enable the transfer of skills in order to prepare beneficiaries to be able to manage farms independently, and would exert a preference for workers from claimant communities represented by the CPA. They would ensure that a solely community-owned farming enterprise come into being after 10 to 15 years.

Another key issue which was the subject of lengthy discussions was the need for the operating companies to build up reserves of financial capital, similar to Bernstein's concept of a 'replacement fund' (Bernstein 2010b:19). This fund can be used to replace machinery etc., i.e. it is reinvested into production. A question that arose was whether or not there would be adequate funds to distribute at the end of the first year of a strategic partnership. In the interest of building a solid 'replacement fund', and considering the state of the farms and the lack of investment on farms by previous owners, it was unlikely that there would be any profit to be disbursed. Although CPAs, as majority shareholders, were in favour of building up the reserves or 'replacement fund', they also understood the need for enhanced social reproduction by the majority of their members, and wanted to ensure that at least some tangible benefits flowed to the 'communities'. Their 'quick win' solution was to demand employment of as many members of CPAs as possible. As will be shown, tangible benefits from these partnerships became a central point around which internal community disputes revolved.

6.2.4 Performance of strategic partnerships

It is clear that export-oriented subtropical fruit and nut farms in Levubu were always, and still are, capitalist in nature, and are forced to strive for productive efficiency and competitiveness in the global marketplace. They are operated in terms of the fundamental principle of the exploitation of labour in order to generate surplus value and thus profit, part of which is invested in expanding the scale of production. As Bernstein (2010b:33) suggests, this is often achieved by increasing productivity, or reducing the costs of production, as well as by exploring new sites and sources of commodity production, and of new markets for commodities. These strategies were pursued successfully prior to restitution. How well have they performed in recent years? Before discussing the performance of farms in Levubu under the two strategic partners, it is important to describe the general characteristics of the farms acquired and the types of production they engage in.

(a) General features

The Land Claims Commission settled land claims in Levubu in phases. As shown in Table 18 (Total No. of hectares transferred between 2005 and 2008), all the land restored to the 7 CPAs in phase 1, representing about 89% of the total area restored (5 362 hectares) was placed under the management of strategic partners. Although it is expected that it would be clearer what the number of outstanding claims should be, on the ground, it is yet unclear due to boundary contestations among claimant communities. Officials of the Commission estimate that about 50% of claims are yet to be resolved, including some of the forestry claims under restitution claims by, amongst others, the Maguada, Matumba, Maelula, Matidza and Lwamondo communities.

As discussed below, after the collapse of the strategic partnerships, these farms were subsequently managed in terms of management contracts between CPAs and professional commercial farmers. Ravele CPA had only 65% of the total hectares transferred to them farmed through strategic partnerships, while Shigalo and Masakona had 99% of their farms under strategic partnerships and Ratombo had about 88%. Farms not included in the partnerships have been leased to other commercial farmers. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss what happens on these farms, but suffice to state that CPAs have generated some revenue to help fund their operations from rent earned from the leasing of such farms,

as well as leasing the houses on these farms, including houses on those farms under strategic partnerships.

Table 18: Total No of ha transferred between 2005 and 2008

CPA	Phase 1		Phase2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5	Total
	No of Ha	as % of total					
Ravele	343.937	65	-	188.432	-	-	532.3689
Tshakhuma ^{*89}	860.542	83	96.5088	56.9282	18.6618	-	1032.64
Shigalo	714.943	99	-	-	-	8.5653	723.5078
Masakona	860.183	99	-	12.848	-	-	873.0305
Ratombo	650.888	88	-	-	51.39	39.7	741.9779
Tshitwani *	621	84	120.556	0.5665	-	-	742.1229
Tshivhazwaulu *	717	100	-	-	-	-	717
Total	4768.491	89	217.0652	258.775	70.0518	48.2653	5362.648

Source: CRLR (2005; 2007; 2008) Section 42D Memoranda for Minister's approval of settlement of land claims.

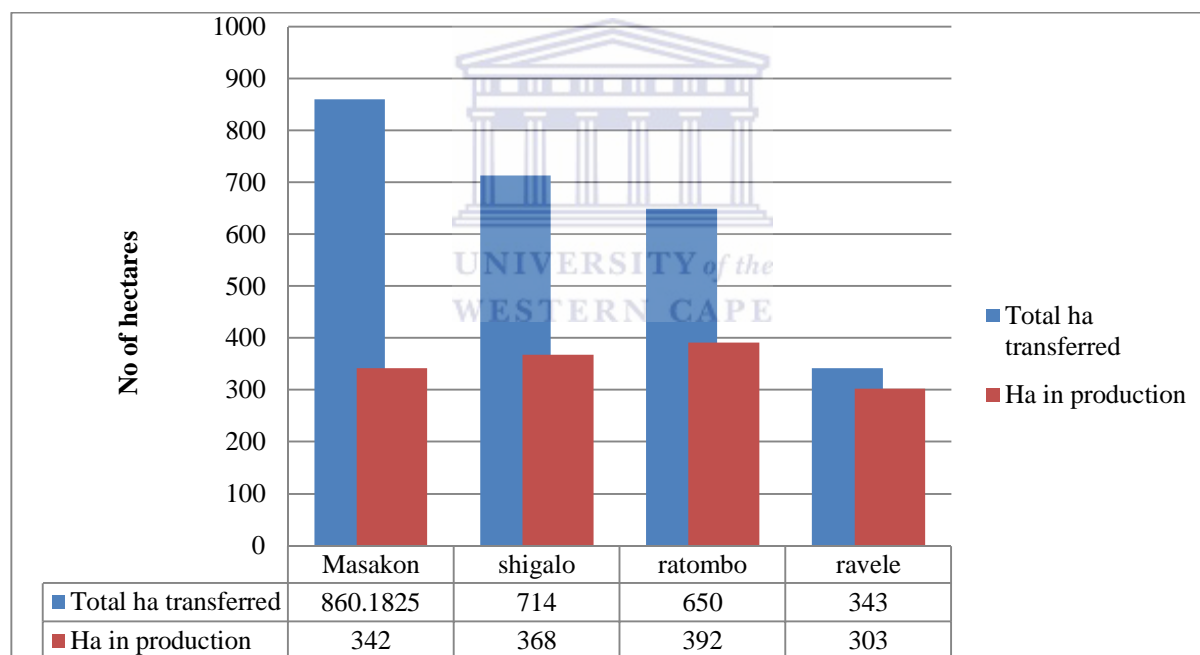
With regard to the use of land under strategic partnerships, Figure 4 (Number of hectares transferred during Phase 1 and in production by 2009) below compares the total hectares transferred under phase 1 and the hectares under production in 2008. This data was sourced from the business plans and feasibility studies conducted by the Limpopo Department of Agriculture, and was further triangulated through interviews with general managers, production managers and key informants representing the perspectives of the CPAs.

Most of the land owned by the Ravele CPA was in full production by 2009, 40% of the Masakona CPA's land and 52% of Shigalo CPA's land was in full production, while Ratombo CPA had 60% of its land in production. However, in December 2010, when the first leg of fieldwork for this thesis was conducted, farmworker respondents from Masakona, Shigalo and Ratombo reported that some of the orchards were old and required replanting. They also explained that the orchards were negatively affected by the lack of investment on farms during the period of strategic partnerships. From a farm management perspective, farm

⁸⁹ The symbol * represents CPAs that were did not form part of this study

managers have argued that the long period between the gazetting and settlement of land claims (from 2000 to 2005) as well as the protracted negotiations (2005 to 2007), was the main reason for this lack of investment. Previous owners and interim farm management could not invest on the farms because of ‘uncertainty’. Furthermore, government was not prepared at that point to inject funds pending the finalisation of the agreements. That resulted in the lack of maintenance of farms (lack of irrigation, fertilisation and maintenance work) in the period leading to the settlement of a land claim. Mavu’s withdrawal from a strategic partnership contract attests to the challenges created by the lack of investment. It is not surprising that the quality of the crops grown on these farms had declined substantially by 2009/10, and the subsequent withdrawal of strategic partners merely exacerbated the problem.

Figure 4: Number of hectares transferred in Phase 1 and in production by 2009



NB. This graph is based on interviews with general managers and corroborated by the business plans of the various enterprises

Government has adopted a particular strategy to address the problem of under-investment in farming subject to restitution claims, paying previous land owners in a staggered manner. This approach allows government to conduct a thorough inspection of farms prior to the final payment and departure of the owner. If it discovers any evidence of neglect, it withholds payment of the balance of the value of the property until the landowner provides sufficient

evidence that all the concerns have been addressed. It is unclear whether or not this has effectively addressed the problem.

As indicated in Chapter 1, Levubu is suitable for the production of subtropical fruit and nuts. On the mountainous areas there are eucalyptus plantations, especially on state farms claimed by different communities, including the Ratombo and Ravele communities. Table 19 shows the total number of hectares under production per crop for the four case study CPAs. Ratombo and Ravele have 125 ha and 165 ha under macadamia nut production respectively. Shigalo and Masakona produce macadamia nuts on 64 and 58 hectares respectively. However, both Shigalo and Masakona have a large number of ha under banana production, i.e. 210 and 123 ha respectively. As can be seen from the table, all the CPAs have diversified their crop production. From a farm management perspective, banana production is a ‘cash cow’ for farmers, whereas macadamia nuts (which are extremely profitable, as we shall see) yield a long-term profit at the end of the season.

Table 19: Total ha under production per crop

	Masakona CPA	Ravele CPA	Shigalo CPA	Ratombo CPA
Crops	<i>Sharp Move Trading(Pty)Ltd</i>	<i>Mauluma Farming Enterprise (Pty) Ltd</i>	<i>Sea Shadow (Pty)Ltd</i>	<i>Ratombo Farms Management</i>
Avocados	54	53.4	-	71
Bananas	123.3	21.3	210	35
Guavas	42	-	44	36
Macadamia nuts	58.2	165.6	64	125
Citrus	66	54	30	10
Mangoes	-	-	20	102
Litchis	-	8.9	-	35
Pecan nuts	-	-	-	13
Total	342	303	368	392

Source: Various business plans of operating companies, and discussions with farm managers

Strategic partners faced a challenge in managing these commercial farms. During the initial stages of the partnerships, a number of individual farms that were previously owned and managed independently, under diverse farm management styles, were grouped together, and 63 parcels of land acquired from more than 30 farmers were to be managed by two general

managers. Strategic partners grouped these individual farm units into mega-farms and allocated clusters of farms to different farm managers. The SAFM group attempted grouping all crops of the same type as one production unit, for example all the bananas on farms owned by different communities would be managed as one enterprise.

This strategy presented farm managers with a difficult challenge, as identified by community members from the Tshakhuma Trust during a meeting with government officials. The Chairperson of the Tshakhuma Trust said, “The problem is you take 20 farms from 20 different farmers and say one manager should manage all those”.⁹⁰ The consolidation of different orchards of the same crop from different CPAs was not favoured by workers and ‘community’ representatives for a range of reasons. Firstly, labour had to spend more time commuting to different farms; secondly, it was difficult to track production per orchard for management purposes, and some farms were neglected. This approach has since been abandoned, after the collapse of these strategic partnerships. .

(b) Economic performance of strategic partnerships between Shigalo and Ratombo, and Mavu and Umlimi



Soon after taking over management of the farms now owned by the Shigalo and Ratombo CPAs, Mavu realised that its promise of achieving the highest standards and quality of production was but a ‘pipe dream’. This was because negotiations for the finalisation of partnerships in 2006 were taking too long, and government was not willing to release any funds prior to the signing of shareholders’ and lease agreements. Although the directors of Mavu had major investments in agro-processing industries in Levubu and Makhado, they did not want to invest their funds into the joint ventures because there was no written commitment from government that development grants would be released. Despite these challenges, they operated the farms with minimal inputs, focussing on the payment of labour, and the supply of electricity and water⁹¹. At Ratombo, Mavu also replanted a banana orchard in order to boost the cash flow on the farms. In relation to farm machinery, the strategic

⁹⁰ Field notes taken during my observation at a meeting with the MEC of Agriculture on 16 July 2008, Bergwater Hotel, Makhado.

⁹¹ Interviews with Grace Ratombo, CPA executive member and liaison between the CPA and the operating company, as well as a member of the Royal Family of Ratombo, on 08 December 2012; and Johan Hasbroek, General Manager for Ratombo farms, on 10 May 2011 at U-No-Me farm.

partners established a company that owned all the machinery and made it available to the operating company on a lease-basis.

During the year of its interim caretakership, Mavu spent approximately R10 million for operational purposes. This amount covered wages, and the purchase of machinery and farm inputs. However, due to delays in the release of the development grants that had been promised by government, Mavu withdrew from the arrangement in June 2007. It cited a lack of commitment from government as the main reason. However, government was also in a dilemma because it could not agree to transfer the funds until legally-constituted operating companies had been established to which funds could be released. Mavu then seized all the equipment and machinery that it had purchased. Without farming equipment and machinery, the CPAs were then in limbo. Both the Ratombo and Shigalo CPAs requested assistance from government in order to purchase the equipment from Mavu. Key informants reported that Shigalo used grant funding of approximately R1.8 million (of the total R16m of grants released) to purchase machinery from Mavu⁹². Similarly, Ratombo purchased machinery using their grant funding⁹³.

The LDA brought in SAFM as a caretaker to manage those farms originally intended for the strategic partnership with Mavu, whilst a process to source another strategic partner was unfolding. SAFM managed the farms for three to four months, a period during which the LDA called for interested agribusiness companies to submit proposals for managing the Ratombo and Shigalo farms. The LDA, the RLCC-Limpopo, and other government agencies, together with CPAs, undertook a rigorous assessment process which involved candidates presenting proposals at a workshop attended by a range of actors, including CPA representatives. Umlimi Holdings⁹⁴ was recommended and accepted by the CPAs. In December 2007, both Shigalo and Ratombo CPAs signed 15-year lease and shareholders' agreements to kick-start strategic partnerships with Umlimi Holdings. On signature of these agreements, some development support grants were reportedly transferred by government to

⁹² Interview with Mbhazima Sambo, former executive committee member for the Shigalo CPA, on 16 August 2010.

⁹³ Interview with Ms Grace Managa (Ratombo CPA Executive Committee member) on 08 December 2012.

⁹⁴ Umlimi is an integrated agricultural group, and is a subsidiary of Peu Group (Pty) Ltd, which is a black-owned and predominantly black managed investment holding company involved in black economic empowerment deals across mainly financial services, information and communication technologies, supply chain, fleet lease and automotive sectors; <http://www.peugroup.co.za/overview.htm>

the new operating company, and some of these funds were used to repurchase equipment from Mavu, as discussed above. There is lack of clarity on how much money was used and how much remained to be paid over. (Any chances of CPAs accessing these funds, in the current context of the current ‘recap’ policy appear slim, unless government introduces a new mentor or strategic partner into Levubu).

Two years after signing the agreement with the CPAs, Umlimi began to show signs of financial distress. The operating company could not service its debts - for example, it owed a creditor an amount of R220 000 for irrigation pipes in 2009. Other reported problems include R1m owed to a supplier of fertilisers, many irrigation pumps and boreholes were not functional, and some orchards were in poor shape due to the lack of irrigation, especially at Shigalo. The company owed R1.2 million in rent to each of the CPAs. It is reported that it had a total debt of R17 million, but Lahiff *et al.* (2012) have indicated that it is difficult to verify this figure.

Difficulties manifested in the following manner: the Umlimi members of the boards of directors of the two operating companies started absconding from meetings, stopped visiting the farms, and no tangible signs of investment on farms could be verified. It became obvious that Umlimi was in distress and could no longer function effectively. By 2009, Umlimi representatives started resigning from the boards of directors of the operating companies and were replaced by representatives of Free State Maize, which had a majority shareholding in Umlimi. Free State Maize was unknown to the communities until then. There were no consultations with the CPAs as majority shareholders in their respective companies, and as a result a dispute arose. According to some representatives of the CPAs⁹⁵, there were no proper processes put in place to end the relationship with Umlimi; it appears that the Umlimi directors sought to transfer their agreements to Free State Maize without following a due process⁹⁶.

For the Shigalo CPA, the operating company was placed in provisional liquidation under the judicial management, the business and management consultants from KPMG which had been involved with capacity building programme, especially on governance issues. Its liquidation

⁹⁵ Manganyi Lucas (Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Shigalo CPA). Joint discussion with Grace Managa and William Ratombo at U-No-Me farm in Levubu on 08 December 2012.

⁹⁶ Interview with Mbhazima Sambo, ex-member of the Shigalo CPA executive committee on 16 August 2010.

was concluded in 2010. By early 2010, Shigalo had retrenched over 400 workers on its farms (for the impact on farm employment, see discussion in Chapter 7). The CPA then approached a certain Mr Kotze to manage their farms, from October 2011. Kotze does not regard himself as a farmer, but as a businessman whose interest is in the marketing of agricultural projects. In an interview he stated that he was not a general manager, it was just an ‘interim arrangement’. He owns a number of market outlets in Levubu, to which Shigalo farms were a major supplier, hence his interest in ensuring sustained farm productivity.

With regard to Ratombo, the CPA approached its attorneys to initiate liquidation of the operating company because it had high levels of debt. The Ratombo farms also laid off almost all of their work force. With these troubles and a lack of clarity on how the CPA would take the farms forward, together with the absence of any financial and material benefits to CPA members, the community’s internal divisions continued to grow. The thesis argues below that these divisions reflect internal struggles around social reproduction of the members of the CPA.

(c) Economic performance of strategic partnerships between Masakona and Ravele and SAFM



As early as February 2008, barely three months after signing the shareholders’ and lease agreements, there were already indications that SAFM was experiencing financial problems. One such indicator was at the board meeting of the company operating the Ravele CPA’s farms. Due to discrepancies in the figures and the lack of a proper explanation, community representatives refused to ratify the financial report, citing the lack of credible information. Although this raised red flags to the CPAs, government officials could not respond. This was acknowledged by the MEC of Agriculture on 16 July 2008 when she met with the Levubu claimants to discuss how they could take the partnerships forward. The extracts below are taken from fieldwork notes of the meeting.

From the presentation by the Ravele CPA representative:

The Treasurer of the Board rose to present the CPA’s observations regarding the performance of SAFM as a strategic partner. Firstly, lack of transparency. The strategic partner failed to provide the joint venture company’s monthly statements to the Board. “I stand here as a treasurer but I don’t know anything about the funds of the company, everything is done in Tzaneen. I cannot confidently present

to you the financial state of the company”. Secondly, during the first board meeting, members of the board were informed about the grants that were released from the government, but the CPA as a landowner and a majority shareholder was not involved. “It is wrong for the strategic partner to access our grant funding without our consent. It appears ... we are a junior partner and SAFM was using us to access government money and run the farms for its own benefit”. Thirdly, there is no maintenance of farms, and the strategic partner always says there are no funds. “The question is: what did the strategic partner do with more than R4 million grant fund released [to SAFM]... by the state?”⁹⁷

From the presentation by the Masakona CPA representative:

The Masakona CPA representative was the third speaker after the Ravele CPA and the Tshakhuma Trust. The first issue he addressed was financial management. He indicated that he sits in the Board of Directors, but what he has observed was that SAFM does not have capital to invest in Levubu as originally proposed and agreed. “Our grant fund of R5 million has already been taken, we do not understand how because we never authorised the release of the grant to SAFM”, he said. The second issue they raised was the rental of equipment by the joint venture company. Approximately R124 000 goes for rental of equipment on a monthly basis. This matter was never on the agenda, that the operating company will rent equipment, but the company was going to buy it.⁹⁸

Statements by these two CPAs, especially in relation to the R5m grants released to respective companies and the inability of the strategic partner to account for the use of these, the absolute control of accounts by the strategic partner, and the lack of investment on farms, were clear indications of the underlying challenges experienced by SAFM. These in turn impacted negatively on the performance of the joint ventures managed by the operating companies.

A month later, in September 2008, the CPAs received correspondence from SAFM (sent through the LDA) showing the extent of SAFM liabilities, and stating that it was withdrawing as a strategic partner in Levubu. The withdrawal of an overdraft facility by their bank also contributed to the woes of SAFM and its inability to continue farming. The bank invoked interim judicial management of the farms managed by SAFM in April 2009⁹⁹, leading to the

⁹⁷ Extracted from my personal field notes: presentation by community representatives at the meeting with the MEC for Agriculture, 16 July 2008; Makhado Bergwater Hotel.

⁹⁸ (*ibid.*)

⁹⁹ The bank applied at the Pretoria North High Court in a bid to recover the funds which SAFM had borrowed in the name of the operating companies owned by Ravele and Masakona CPAs. The matter also affected

complete liquidation of SAFM. Another major setback for the communities was that SAFM had made loans in the names of the operating companies and not in its own name. It thus left CPAs with debts in excess of R5 million each. It also ceded ownership of farm crops to the bank. When SAFM was ultimately liquidated, the CPAs became the sole owners of the farming enterprises. Because there was no investment on the farms, productivity fell below industry standards, negatively affecting farm profitability.

Subsequent to the collapse of SAFM, both the Masakona and Ravele CPAs appointed a general manager, Mr Danie Basson (a former operational manager under SAFM) to manage their respective farms. The CPAs also re-constituted the boards of directors of the operating companies. The general manager was expected to work towards the same aims and objectives as the strategic partnerships, i.e. to empower claimant communities through skills development in various fields of farm management, so that communities are enabled to take over the farms at the end of the management contracts.

6.3 Community-owned farming enterprises and contracts with professional commercial farmers

The preceding section described the withdrawal and liquidation of strategic partners in Levubu and CPAs, leading to the hiring of professional commercial farmers to manage the farms. By the end of 2009 all four case study CPAs had begun to set up their own companies and boards of directors. Some of the terms of the management contracts with professional commercial farmers resembled strategic partnerships in the sense that they required farm managers to ensure that skills development and training for members of the CPAs took place, in addition to the maximisation of farm profits. In some instances the managers were given incentives by allocating a share of net profit, at the rate of 5% of the total, to the general manager (in the cases of Ravele and Masakona). A discussion of the economic performance of these community-owned farming enterprises follows.

Tshakhuma and Tshitwani communities who were also in partnership with SAFM (these communities are not the subject of in-depth analysis in this research).

6.3.1 Shigalo CPA and the Sea Shadow Trading (Pty) Ltd

By the end of October 2010, Shigalo CPA had begun the attempt to form a new operating company, which would solely own its farms and manage them independently. However, government had reservations about the capabilities of the Shigalo CPA to manage complex, capital-intensive farms of the magnitude of Shigalo's farms. With the advice of the LDA and KPMG, the CPA procured the services of a commercial farmer with the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to manage a subtropical farming business. The going rate (in 2010) for the recruitment of a general manager with requisite expertise was in the range of R40 000 to R50 000 per month¹⁰⁰. As described above, the Shigalo general manager, Mr Kotze, who does not regard himself as a general manager, is a businessman with interests in the marketing and sale of fresh produce. Hence, the opportunity to be contracted by Shigalo was of mutual interest. He already had a lease to operate a fresh produce market, and collapse of the farms would have meant that he would also have close his business, hence he stepped in at a 'reasonable' fee, lower than what a general manager would generally require. The terms of the agreement were that the CPA would recruit a bookkeeper to ensure that the finances are in order and an attorney to assist it with legal matters. In return, he proposed to buy all the fresh produce from the Shigalo farms¹⁰¹. There was no written contract in existence at the time of the field research in 2011; however, they were said to be 'exploring the relationship'. In addition to these provisions, there was an understanding that the 'general manager' should assist with skills transfer as required in the previous strategic partnership arrangement.

When the CPA attempted to register a company with the Companies and Intellectual Property Office (CIPRO)¹⁰², a firm of auditors known as KPMG, appointed by government to assist land reform beneficiaries in Levubu, suggested that the CPA use a shelved company known as Sea Shadow Trading Pty (Ltd). This company became 100% owned by the Shigalo CPA under a Board of Directors appointed by members of the CPA. The CPA oversaw the management of the farms through this Board of Directors. Being a CPA-owned company, members' expectations of it were high. Part of these expectations related to CPA

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Theuns Kotze, the General Manager for the Shigalo Farming Enterprise, on 12 December 2011, at the Shigalo Farming Enterprise offices in Levubu.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² On 1 May 2011, CIPRO and the Office of Companies and Intellectual Property Enforcement (OCIPE) merged to form the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC).

representation in strategic positions within the company, high levels of profit making, the distribution of substantial benefits to members, and fast-tracking of the skills transfer programme. One of the tangible steps taken by the CPA was to ensure that the general manager placed CPA members alongside each sectional manager (previously employed by Umlimi, and not necessarily CPA members).

By June 2011, Sea Shadow Trading was managing about 18 farm units covering around 700 hectares of the land transferred to the Shigalo CPA. According to the 'general manager', over 300 hectares were not fully productive. His mandate was to bring all the hectares into full production. The lack of productivity, according to some farmworkers, should be attributed to the inability of Umlimi to invest on farms. For example, during the 2008/09 season the harvest was clearly less than optimal. Some of the long serving farmworkers on Shigalo farms, their employment predating restitution and strategic partnership, shared first-hand accounts of what transpired during the term of Umlimi. They accused Umlimi and its managers of a lack of basic production plans - for example, there was no programme for the fertilisation of orchards, and they failed to replace propping poles and irrigation infrastructure. These accounted for the drop in production¹⁰³.

The CPA-owned enterprise had clearly inherited farms that had been neglected and were not as productive as they could have been for example, only 60 of 180 hectares of banana orchards were productive in 2011. Macadamia nut production was severely affected by the lack of an appropriate spraying programme and poor irrigation. Similar problems affected the citrus orchards. The company had to survive through sales of litchis and avocados, which experienced good yields regardless of these problems. After 2011 the enterprise began to bounce back after the CPA acquired some grant funding from government in order to purchase back the equipment from the liquidator, at a cost of R1.2 million.

The collapse of the strategic partnerships with Umlimi and the liquidation of operating companies had far reaching ramifications for future access to capital by the 'new' company. This was especially difficult because no commercial bank was willing to extend a loan to the company. The general manager, in his own name, secured a loan of R400, 000 from Green

¹⁰³ Interview with Maluleke Owen (from Olifantshoek) and Phineas Chabalala (also from Olifantshoek), security guards at Shigalo farms, on 07 December 2011, at the Shigalo offices in Levubu.

Farms, a nut processing factory in Levubu. In addition, he also invested R200 000¹⁰⁴ in the business. These amounts were provided as a production loan. By June 2011, the company had already settled the loans from Green Farms but not those of the general manager. According to him there was no hurry to settle the production loan with him because of standing relations between the CPA and his marketing company. His priority was to ensure that the farms were fully productive.

The Board of Directors considered other options to source financing, especially for operational costs and capital investment. However, it was concerned about the high rate of interest that finance companies charged. During an interview with the general manager, he said:

“I think if I can make this farm run on a good solid profit in five years’ time, why must I borrow money and pay 12.5% interest, whereas a farm makes 4% profit. I do not want to struggle. I would rather reinvest the rest of the profit on the farm.”¹⁰⁵

Whilst the above quotation suggests that the general manager approached the whole operation and funding of the business cautiously, it does further suggest the struggles of capitalist enterprises to continually make profits, and the requirement that capital investment takes place. In the context of Levubu land reform farms, however, government has been a central provider of funds for the farming operations, while the private sector failed to provide the required capital. The question arises: is this a viable option for managing large-scale commercial farming enterprises like the fruit and nut farms in Levubu?

(a) Financial performance of the company

The description and analysis that follows draw on the unaudited financial statements of the enterprise for the period of 2011/12. These are the only figures that could be accessed under very difficult fieldwork conditions. The company, having undergone significant changes in the shift from strategic partnerships to management contracts with professional commercial farmers, had difficulties in locating previous records from the period under Umlimi. The

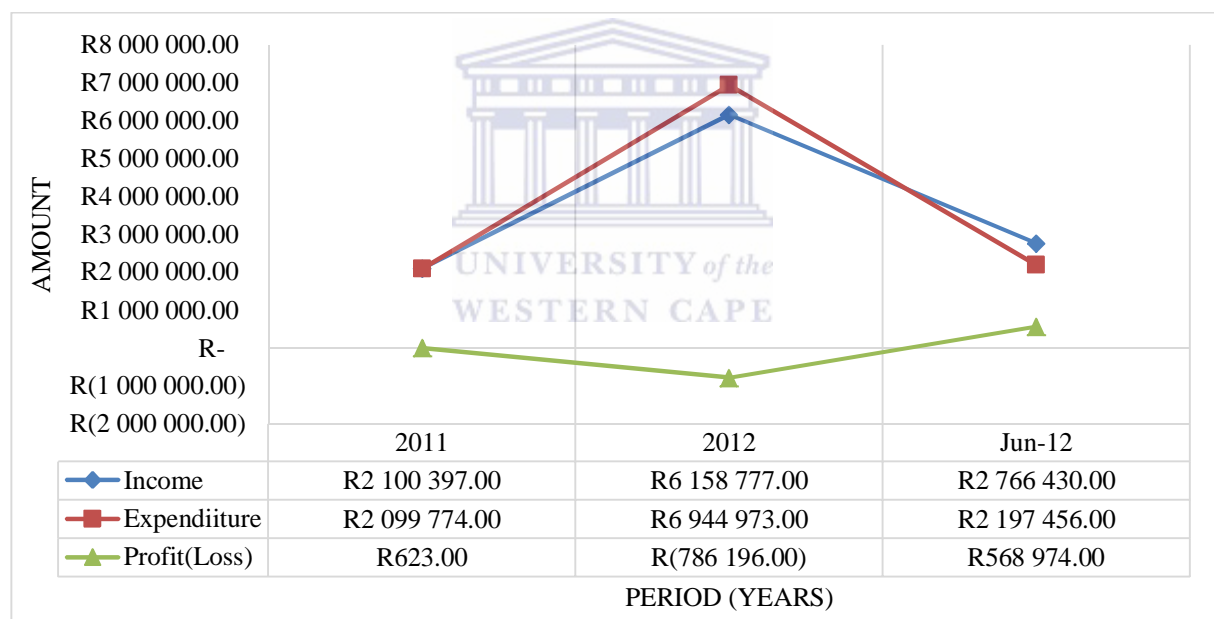
¹⁰⁴ The general manager during the interview had mentioned that this money came from a private investor, but upon probing, he indicated that the investor was in fact himself.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Theuns Kotze, the General Manager for Shigalo Farming Enterprise on 12 December 2011 at the Shigalo Farms Offices in Levubu.

general manager reported that he did not have any records prepared by the previous Umlimi management, including production data and trends over time. According to the general manager, the previous Umlimi management had just ‘run the farm down’.

Figure 5 (Financial Performance of Sea Shadow Trading and Investment – Masakona) below shows the financial performance over a period of two and half years (during the time of field research). Under the management contract, the community-owned enterprise – Sea Shadow – began to show signs of balancing income and expenditure. In the first five months under this management, in December 2011, the farm showed a profit of R600 000. But due to debts and other liabilities, this profit went to pay off the debt that had accumulated over time, thus leaving a net profit of only R623.

Figure 5: Financial performance – Sea Shadow Trade and Investment 136 (Pty) Ltd



Source: Board pack for meeting of 17th July 2012. (Unaudited Shigalo Financial Statements. 2010/11; 2011/12 and 1st 4 months of 2012/13)

The period 2011/12 was somewhat difficult due to investments on the farms necessary if they were to remain productive. The company invested in irrigation, the purchase of equipment and the re-establishment of aging infrastructure and orchards. As Figure 5 shows, the total loss for that financial year was over R700 000. However, such investment was worthwhile, as the figures of the first quarter of 2012/13 (March to June 2012) show, the company was recovering from distress. As at June 2012, the company had an income of R2.7 million and

expenditure of R2.1 million, which shows a definite improvement from the two previous years. In fact, the company had already secured an income that surpassed annual income in the 2010/11 financial year. As stated above, this progress can be linked to the significant recapitalisation that had occurred on the farms. It also entailed lowering the cost of production by decreasing the quantities of labour on the crops, as discussed in detail in the next few chapters, while increasing farm productivity by investing in the expansion of banana and guava orchards, and the stricter management of their cash flow.

Whilst some of the community-owned enterprises in Levubu were struggling, one was curious to understand how the general manager began to turn the business around. During one of the conversations with him, he said:

“You just need to look at what the previous company paid on wages, and what they (workers) were doing. There was absolutely no control on anything...the control was as bad as can be. People were sitting here, getting R70 000 to R80 000 per month as a salary. If one of the directors came to the farm, they paid R5000 for inconvenience; ... they also got reimbursement for the petrol used. Money was flowing, R18 million in two years’ time was gone, leaving a debt of R5 million”¹⁰⁶.

According to the general manager, Levubu is a fertile farming area and the farms could generate a good profit if properly managed. ‘Proper management’, according to the general manager, meant getting the priorities right. It appears that previous management had not set the right priorities. According to him -

“...people would come and, say, buy protective clothing or security uniforms; I will do calculations and then decide on whether to spend money on a plough or on security uniforms; unfortunately business decisions are taken with the intention to generate more profit, so money is spent on items that will generate further revenue”¹⁰⁷.

The question of priorities raises other important and interlinked questions about whose “priorities” these were. From farmworkers’ perspectives, protective clothing is a matter of priority for a range of reasons: health and the uniform save them using their own clothing, whereas the general manager focusses on achieving profits for the CPA. These contradictory interests are explored more fully in following chapters.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Shigalo CPA general manager, Theuns Kotze, 12 December 2011.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

6.3.2 The Ratombo CPA and Ratombo Farm Management Company

The Ratombo Farm Management Company described itself as a Limpopo-based entity operating in the agricultural sector. It further describes its mission as follows: “to develop and utilise...land by implementing good agricultural practices in a responsible and environmentally friendly way with an aim for a fair profit for all the Ratombo CPA beneficiaries; and to create employment opportunities for local men and women who will be fairly compensated and encouraged to better themselves”.¹⁰⁸ After the withdrawal of Umlimi as a strategic partner, the Ratombo CPA entered into a management agreement with the general manager, Mr. Johan Haasbroek, who remained behind when Umlimi left. The CPA did not enter into a written contract with him. Thus the expectations of the CPA were unclear to the general manager, as were his roles and responsibilities. Other members of the CPA regarded the relationship as a capricious one reliant on goodwill as well as protection of him by part of the royal family and other influential members of the CPA committee¹⁰⁹. The position of the general manager, as the ‘central power’ controlling resources on the farms, became the centre of conflicts within the Ratombo CPA. As will be discussed, alliances between some of the CPA directors and the general manager were seen as a key factor underlying maladministration of the company. Before discussing the financial performance of the company, it is important to reflect on general production features.

The Ratombo CPA acquired eight farms, jointly making up 1 449 hectares of prime agricultural land. As discussed already, these farms produce a variety of subtropical fruit for both domestic and international export markets. The main export crops for Ratombo are avocados, litchis and macadamia nuts. The Ratombo farms have been regarded as some of the largest growers of litchis and mangoes in the district. During its functional stage, all macadamia nut production was for export markets, and 80% of avocados and 60% of litchis were produced for export. Other outputs, mainly second and third grade produce, were sent to the national markets and to Valley Farms, a juice factory located in Levubu. Production of bananas, mangoes, naartjies, and timber was undertaken mainly for local markets.

¹⁰⁸ This is based on the Ratombo CPA Business Plan (2012).

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Milingtoni Ratombo, a member of the Ratombo CPA executive committee, on 9 January 2013 at Makhado Crossing in Louis Trichardt/Makhado.

This section is based on discussions with the general manager of Ratombo Farm Management, as well as some administrative staff, and scrutiny of the unaudited financial statements for the 2011/12 financial year. Changes in farm management, the withdrawal of strategic partnerships, and the lack of capacity within the CPA to keep records, all contributed to a lack of company production and financial records. As illustrated in Table 20 (Income/expenditure statements for Ratombo Farm Management), the company managed to achieve a gross profit of about R1.43 million but showed a net loss of R678, 862.83. According to key informants, this company had been running at a loss over time since 2009, but it became clear in 2012 when it could not pay for its electricity for two months and it laid off many farmworkers as a way to cut the cost of production. Various key informants have also associated the difficulties of the company with poor management decisions and excessive interference in the day-to-day farm management by the CPA leadership and the Board of Directors.

Table 20: Income/Expenditure Statement for Ratombo Farm Management

Income/Expenses	Costs (R)
Income	2 719 636.86
Sales	2 562 136.86
Other income	157 500.00
Expenditure	3 398 499.69
Operational	1 286 514.19
Overheads	2 111 985.50
Gross profit (loss)	1 433 122.67
Net profit	-678 862.83

Source: Board pack, financial statements (March 2011 – February 2011), Prepared by Danie Basson, dated 09/03/2012

The total annual cost of salaries and wages for 2011/12 was R1.7 million, including the general manager's annual salary of R256, 902.22. This amounts to more than 50% of the total expenditure of the company. The most prominent costs, after wages and salaries, were chemicals, maintenance of irrigation, and tractor and equipment maintenance, followed by processing, packaging, fuel and oil, and electricity. Increasing farm productivity is reliant on the use of chemicals, as is generally the case in capitalist agriculture.

Some informants have pointed that many of the troubles of this company, and poor management by the general manager and the misuse of funds in particular, could be attributed to internal conflicts within the CPA. The Board of Directors was dysfunctional and the general manager was allegedly not providing reports about production and the state of farms. These in turn had a snowball effect on the operations of the company. For example, due to the instability within the CPA, two managers were fired within a period of three months. During an interview with the CPA chairperson in 2013 showed that there was a serious management crisis at Ratombo; he said -

“When we as CPA committee members ask about what development was made on the farm, we get informed that there are no funds; and we have no clue whatsoever about the sales that happen on the farm, and this created a huge challenge. You find that money has not been banked but we do not see where the money goes. This has always been the case under Mavu and Umlimi, it continued even after they had left. We were told not to interfere with farm management and that was exactly what we did, but that created spaces for us to be robbed”¹¹⁰.

It appears that at the centre of the crisis was the unclear role of different management structures on the farms, as well as overlapping responsibilities. During an interview with the production manager, he complained that a large sum of money had been invested in the farm by government, during Umlimi’s term:

“During the term of Umlimi, government transferred R11 million to the operating company to redevelop the farms. We are informed that Umlimi developed the dam and a fence but we do not know which fence or dam...we only know of *bakkies* and a truck which was taken by the sheriff because we could not afford to service the debt.”¹¹¹

These snippets of conversations with the CPA chairperson and production manager show that serious underlying problems of the lack of communication existed which began during the time of strategic partnerships, and continued under new management by the CPA. Attempts by government to address the problems by hiring a general manager from the Ravele CPA to assist the Ratombo community were frustrated because of the internal struggles and conflicts within the CPA.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Derick Ratombo, Chairperson of the Ratombo CPA on 13 January 2013, at Offices of the Department of Agriculture in Vuwani.

¹¹¹ Interview with Patrick Raphathela, production manager at Ratombo farms on 11 January 2013, at U-No-Me farm.

6.3.3 Masakona CPA and the Sharp Move Trading 150 Pty (Ltd)

The preceding sections outlined the factors that contributed to the collapse of SAFM and its strategic partnerships. Masakona CPA, as sole proprietor of Sharp Move Trading 150 Pty (Ltd), hired Danie Basson as a general manager. The general manager had worked under SAFM as a production manager. In addition to Masakona, he was also contracted as general manager by the Ravele CPA, both CPAs having been former SAFM partners. The agreement between the Masakona CPA and Basson basically outlined his responsibility for day-to-day management of the farm, i.e. managing production, exploring market opportunities and ensuring the realisation of the maximum possible profits. Notwithstanding that the contract was entered into with an individual farmer, its objectives strongly resembled those of strategic partnership arrangements, i.e. the general manager was responsible for raising operating capital, and training and mentoring CPA members for ultimately independent management of the farming enterprise. However, the key difference was that there was no shareholding arrangement with the manager. The only incentive created was to guarantee him 5% of the net profit. Instead of a management fee, he received a salary.

Table 21: Tons produced and delivered by Sharp Move Pty Ltd (01/03/2011- /28/02/2012)

	Ha	TONS PRODUCED		% tons delivered
		Tons produced	Tons delivered	
Avocados	54	301	290	96%
Bananas	123.3	2,200	1693	77%
Citrus	66	1374	425	31%
Guavas	42.8	789	276	35%
Macadamia nuts	58.2	150	112	75%
TOTAL		4,813	2,796	58%

Source: Sharp Move Trading (Pty) Ltd Board Pack for a meeting of the 23rd March 2013
(unaudited figures based on statement dated 08/03/12)

Table 21 (Tons produced and delivered by Sharp Move Trading Co – Masakona) shows production trends for the one financial year, i.e. between March 2011 and February 2012. It lists the hectares under production of different types of crops grown, namely, avocados, bananas, guavas, macadamia nuts and citrus (and also some cabbages on the side). Additionally, Table 21 illustrates the production and productivity during the 2011/12 period,

i.e. the total yields vis-à-vis the produce sent to markets (delivered). The difference between tons produced and delivered lies in the quality of the produce, whether it is good for the market or not. As can be seen, citrus and guavas were not quite productive; the farm only delivered 31% and 35%, respectively, of the total tons produced. As will be discussed later in this thesis, this matter became one of the issues fuelling tensions between the general manager and the Board of Directors, particularly in relation to day-to-day decision making on the farm.

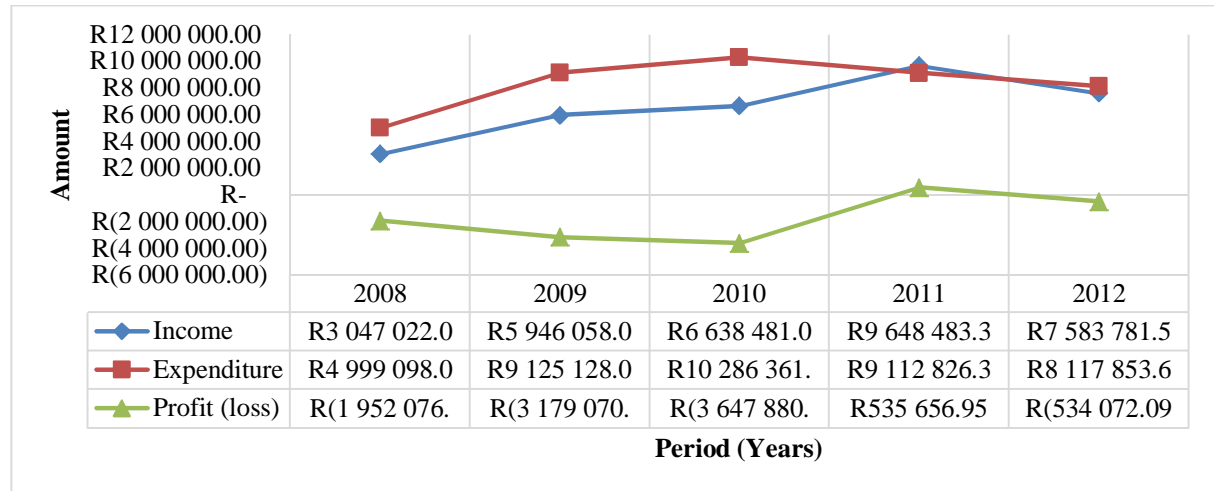
As described above, the company owns some 860 ha of prime agricultural land. However, the total number of hectares under production was 342 ha. The main crops sustaining the company were macadamia nuts, avocados and bananas. Interviews with the general manager, Danie Basson, revealed that the citrus was not quite productive as other crops in Levubu. For example, 66 hectares produced 1 374 tons, of which only 31% (or 425) was delivered. It thus means that a lot could not be sent to the market. From the tons delivered to the market, the enterprise could only earn a total income of R2 500 446; but the actual income (i.e. less the costs of production) was only 12% or R290 055. It is quite evident that the company, with respect to citrus, was operating at a very high cost.

According to the general manager, to run a profitable company, the cost of production should be low so that opportunities for profit could be maximised. With regard to macadamia nuts, 58 hectares were in full production, and the yield was 150 tons, but only 112 tons were delivered to markets, i.e. 75% of the total yields. The gross income from the crop was R1.8 million and the net income (less the cost of production) was R1.4 million. This is a stark contrast to citrus, and a major reason why the general manager had canvassed the idea of eliminating all the citrus orchards. Chapters 8 and 9 will elaborate on the tensions and conflicts arising from these issues, which ultimately led to the resignation of the general manager.

Figure 6 below illustrates the financial performance of the farming enterprise over a period of five years, from February 2008 to February 2012. As shown, the company operated at a loss, the worst loss reported being for the period between 2008 and 2010. Such decline in productivity can be attributed to the financial crisis of SAFM which culminated in its withdrawal in 2010. However, in 2010/11, the first year under management contracts with a

professional commercial farmer, the company managed to declare a profit of approximately R0.5 million.

Figure 6: Financial performance of the Sharp Move Trading



Source: Board pack - unaudited financial statements of Sharp Move Trading (Pty) Ltd

While there was a 10.43% income increase in 2010, i.e. from R5.946m in 2009 to R6.638m in 2010, during the same period there was an increase of 11.29% in expenditure, from R9.125m to R10.286m. This increase in expenditure was attributed to a range of factors, chief amongst them being the debts left by SAFM. The company had to spend its limited resources to pay off a ‘compromise’ debt agreed with ABSA bank. In addition, the company invested much of its profit in the orchards that were neglected by SAFM and also conducted other maintenance work. For example, during 2011/12 the total cost for fertilisers and chemicals was R168 784.54, and the cost of the maintenance of equipment, tractors and cars was R339 431.21.

However, the highest costs were those for labour, since salaries and wages accounted for R4.5 m (including UIF, SDL, and sundry deductions which accounted for only 5%). After 2011, a reduction in the number of casual workers employed on the farms, and also attempts to cut down on use of chemicals, were clearly discernible during the field research. An increase in the company’s income by 31% in 2011, and decreased expenditure by 12.88%, resulted in the realisation of the R0.5m profit. It was further estimated that R2.4 million would be required for the recapitalisation of the banana orchards. Once these are in full

production they will be able to further redevelop other orchards¹¹². However, a downward trend began in 2012, due to conflicts in the Board of Directors and the CPA, resulting in the election of a new CPA committee and the withdrawal of the general manager from his contract in 2014.

According to the general manager, the financial situation of the company pointed to one important issue: if they were to generate profits, the cost of production had to be decreased, and a key option was to cap the cost of labour. This meant that the company could employ only a limited number of farmworkers. Furthermore, the decline in profits arose from the CPA's own decisions, in particular not taking heed of his advice that the enterprise invests less money in the citrus orchards, which yielded fewer returns than bananas, avocados and macadamia nuts¹¹³. This point is taken further in the chapter dealing with labour, especially the social relations that shape, and are shaped, by these business decisions.

This matter of high labour costs endangering profitability intersects with those surrounding the institutional dynamics and underlying class struggles that emerge within community-owned farming enterprises. It is consistent with the central argument of this thesis, that it is the contradictions within capitalist production that account most fundamentally for tensions and struggles. Institutionally, the power relations between the CPA, the Board of Directors and professional farm management resulted in collisions over the key issue of benefits to members versus profitability. For example, the demands for employment by Masakona CPA members contributed to high expenditure on labour costs, thus eating into the ability of the enterprises to generate profits.

As will be discussed further in Chapter 9, the dynamics around different 'modes of belonging' and associated institutional structures on community-owned farms also express some of these underlying contradictions. For instance, general managers take instructions from the CPAs (the owners of the enterprises). The CPAs have constantly pushed for employment of as many people as possible on the farms, despite the general managers' anxieties over the affordability of the high number of personnel.

¹¹² Interview with Danie Basson on 29/03/2012 at Appelfontein Farm, Levubu.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

6.3.4 The Ravele CPA and the Mauluma Farming Enterprise (Pty) Ltd

The Mauluma Farming Enterprise 1938 (Pty) Ltd was legally established in 2010, after the Imperial Crown Trading (the joint venture operating company) was established in 2007 under the strategic partnership with SAFM was closed down. The Mauluma Farming Enterprise is solely owned by the Ravele CPA. The CPA appointed Mr. Danie Basson as the general manager under the terms and conditions of a ‘management contract’ (this company shares the services of the general manager, as well as other aspects of administration such as bookkeeping and human resources management, with Masakona). Therefore, Mauluma Farming Enterprises is a subsidiary company of the Ravele CPA.

The CPA appointed seven members of the CPA to the Board of Directors. These directors were not all from the CPA executive committee as was the case with the Masakona, Shigalo and Ratombo CPAs. For Mauluma Farming Enterprise, the CPA took into consideration the knowledge and expertise required to take the company forward. Some of these directors have relevant prior experience in terms of land reform and the functioning of the CPA, and have a legal and financial management background. The CPA also appointed its administrator, who also serves as secretary to the Board. Board meetings normally address the following issues: production, human resources and financial reports, and they also draw on the deliberations of farm management meetings convened by the general manager, in which some members of the Board of Directors sit when necessary. These meetings thrash out the details of each unit’s performance in terms of production, i.e. inputs, capital requirements, total yields, labour requirements, etc.¹¹⁴

As illustrated in Table 22 (Tons Produced and Delivered for Ravele farms), income is derived mainly from sales of fruit and nuts: macadamia nuts, bananas, citrus (Valencia, Turkeys, Navels, ‘easy peelers’, lemons) and avocados (Fuerte, Hass). The highest sales are recorded from macadamia nuts, followed by bananas. This perhaps explains why the general manager had focussed attention on replanting banana orchards and expanding the macadamia nut orchards. Over the last four years, Ravele CPA had planted 5000 macadamia nut trees, and increased its banana orchards twofold. In addition, the company also spent R1.4 million on capital equipment namely, four brand new Landini tractors, four spraying machines mainly

¹¹⁴ Personal notes from observations of management meetings for Ravele and Masakona companies on 29 March 2012

for use in the macadamia orchards, trailers, three second-hand tractors, slashers, and a boom spray for weed killers.¹¹⁵ These new purchases were made from the revenue generated on the farm, and not from bank loans or government grant funding.¹¹⁶ Much of the profit made has gone back into establishing labour-productivity enhancing tools and equipment.

Table 22: Total tons produced between 01/03/2011 and /28/02/2012 (financial year)

Crop	Ha	TONS PRODUCED			TURNOVER		
		Tons produced	Tons delivered	% tons delivered	Total (R)	Actual (R)	% actual
Avocados	53.4	130	83	64%	806 890	310 792	39
Bananas	21.3	339	245	72%	876 736	476 785	54
Citrus	54	1029	463	45%	723 693	426 995	59
Litchis	8.9	32	34	107%	182 180	26 702	15
Macadamia	165.6	510	301	59%	7 474 985	4 389 306	59
TOTAL	303	2040	1126		10 064 484	5 632 259.37	56

Source: Calculations of Board Packs' draft annual financial statements for Ravele CPA, statements dated 09/01/2012

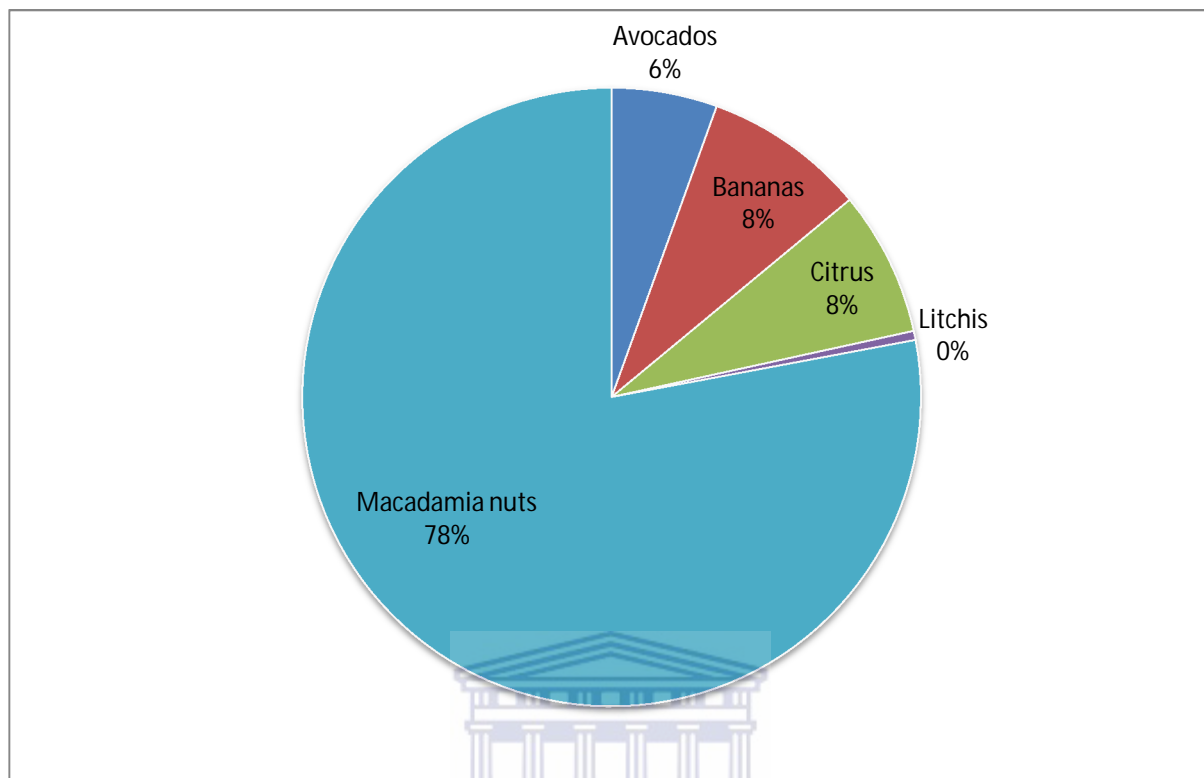
As illustrated in Table 22 above (read together with Table 18), the enterprise manages about 392 hectares of prime agricultural land, of which 303 ha were in full production, mainly under avocados, bananas, litchis and citrus. Over time, there has been an increase in the number of hectares under production. For instance, banana plantations increased twofold in 2008. During the 2011/12 financial year, the key drivers of income were macadamia nuts, with a total turnover of R4.3 million, contributing 78% percent of the total actual turnover for the business in that year, while bananas and citrus accounted for 8% each, and avocados accounted for 6%, as Figure 7 below demonstrates. The company has been able to achieve an actual turnover of R5.6 million. Often, questions are asked about how the general manager was able to turn the business around in one of these companies, while this has not been achieved in other cases. According to the general manager, the companies "achieved profits by increasing productivity and decreasing the costs"¹¹⁷, a basic principle in running a profitable business. He illustrated how resignations of the white farm managers previously employed by SAFM significantly decreased the cost of labour.

¹¹⁵ Interview with a member of the Ravele CPA, Mr Bethuel Ravele on 29 March 2012 at Appelfontein in Levubu.

¹¹⁶ (*ibid*)

¹¹⁷ Interview with Danie Basson on 29 March 2012, Appelfontein in Levubu.

Figure 7: Mauluma Farming Enterprise 2011/12 actual turnover as a percentage



At the time of the interview, there were only two white employees on the farm, the general manager and the bookkeeper. Another contributing factor was that production decisions minimised the unnecessary use of chemicals, replacing them with the use of compost - a contrast to previous management practices, which emphasised the usage of chemicals to increase yields. There was recognition that compost was only good as an interim measure but in the longer-term, the company would need to use chemicals so that they can bring the soil to balance. Good management also resulted in satisfactory yields, in fact Mauluma macadamia nuts were the best product of all those supplied to the Green Nuts Company by 77 different suppliers.¹¹⁸

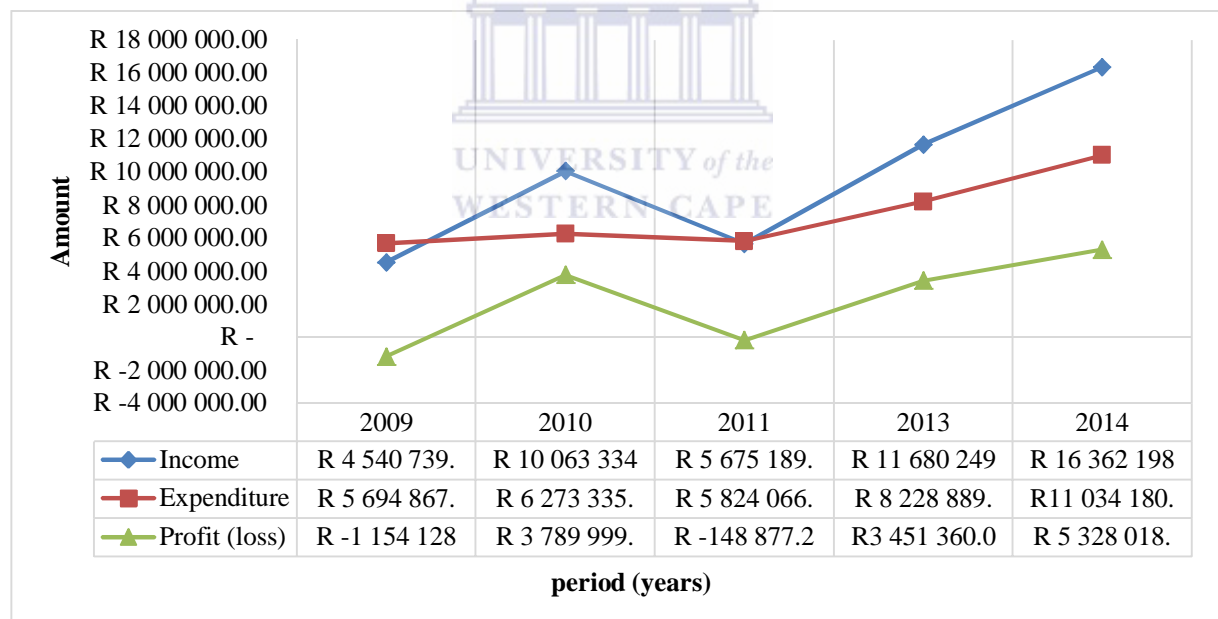
Figure 8 (Income and expenditure analysis for Mauluma/Ravele Enterprise) demonstrates the financial performance of this company from the season that ended in February 2009 to the end of February 2014. Following the financial and institutional instability caused by SAFM's mismanagement of the enterprise and its subsequent withdrawal, the company's finances were at their lowest in 2009. In the same year, the enterprise had a net loss of close to R1.2

¹¹⁸ (*ibid.*)

million after incurring farming operational expenditure of R5.7 million. This loss was attributed to the failures of SAFM, for example the debt of R5 million which was left by SAFM. The enterprise negotiated with ABSA bank and a compromise agreement was reached to pay a revised fee of R800 000 instead of R5 million, over three years. The 2011 decline in income and a joint loss of R148 887 is attributed to the decline in the quality of macadamia nuts, and the rejection of the crop during that year due to the hail and frost that hit the Levubu Valley.

For three successive years after 2009, when SAFM withdrew as a strategic partner, the enterprise kept its expenditure within the range of R5 million and R6 million per annum, despite a 54.88% increase in income from R4.5m in 2009 to R10.6m in 2010. This was contrary to other enterprises, such as that of Masakona, which increased its expenditure partly due to hiring in more labour and investing in less productive crops.

Figure 8: Income and Expenditure analysis for Mauluma



Source: Board pack (2012) - unaudited financial statements of Sharp Move Trading (Pty) Ltd

For Mauluma, as illustrated in Figure 7, the largest share of income comes from the macadamia nut crop, which is exported to Europe and the UK. For example, for the 2011/12 season, of the total R5.6 million actual turn over, the macadamia nut revenue was R4.3million. The remainder was distributed to avocados, bananas, citrus, and litchis. In 2013, the company had resolved to gradually reduce the hectares under citrus and replace it with

macadamia nuts and bananas, to enhance the productive efficiency of the farm. According to the general manager and some of the CPA key informants, an increase of 51% in income between 2011 and 2013 was the result of prudent management decisions, as well as good cooperation between the board and the general manager.

The company continued to grow its income by 29% in the 2013/14 season. Similarly, during the same season, it had a 35% increase in profit. The general manager has been able to turn the company around from a turnover of R5.4 m in 2009 to R16.3m in 2014, and 125% expenditure as a percentage of income to 67.4%.

6.4 Reflections on the pressures of profitability and capital accumulation on commercial farming enterprises

The dynamics of strategic partnerships and community-owned farming enterprises identified in this chapter suggest that contradictory pressures are exerted on these operations. Some arise from the imperatives of profitability and capital accumulation that drive all capitalist enterprises. Others arise from the imperatives of and reform in a highly unequal society. The three most prominent factors are the political-economic motivations of land reform, the integration of Levubu farms into export commodity markets and the need to attain global competitiveness, and the politics of capitalist production versus the social reproduction needs of community members.

Bernstein (2010b:98) reminds us that “land reforms are always political processes, albeit with an economic rationale and always with socio-economic consequences”. The enterprises established in Levubu appear to address mainly the economic rationale, i.e. sustaining agricultural production and the links with foreign markets that make it profitable, ideally with an ultimate trickle down of benefits to the members of communities. The political imperatives of redress, equity and access to productive land are not foregrounded in the motivations of these partnerships. The enterprises emerge in a process that Bernstein (2010b:99) refers to as land reform ‘from above’ which “does not aim to divide capitalist farms that are commercially successful, as they represent commercial modernisation.” The model places great emphasis on ‘productivist’ agricultural paradigms.

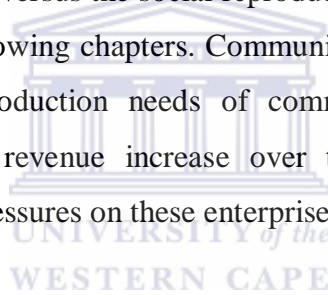
The cases discussed here demonstrate that there is an acute tension between the economic rationale for land reform, i.e. achieving maximum possible profit, and the political, i.e. ensuring that equity and social transformation are achieved through land restitution. Due to the nature of the enterprise as capitalist companies functioning in competitive market conditions, huge pressures are exerted on the companies to ensure that they remain productive, which means pressure to pay less attention to the socio-economic needs of the beneficiaries. As this chapter shows, those enterprises that attempted to balance these pressures experienced a downward production trend, and ultimately collapsed, whereas the Ravele CPA which prioritised the need for capital accumulation has sustained itself.

Furthermore, the commodification of life under capitalism, in which all elements of production and social reproduction are produced for, and obtained from, market exchange, means that land restitution is subjected to what Marx refers to as the “dull compulsion of economic forces”, or the disciplines of commodity relations (Bernstein, 2010b:102). These community-owned capitalist enterprises are integrated into export commodity markets at a global scale. This integration requires them to remain globally competitive, especially for export commodities like avocados, macadamia nuts, and litchis. One of the critical interventions undertaken by both Umlimi and SAFM was to attempt to expand the scale of production, with the idea that economies and efficiencies of scale will result in high yields per hectare, thereby increasing cost competitiveness. Unfortunately, as has been described, this intervention was founded on opportunistic relations between strategic partners and the state, in the sense that they relied on access to state grant funding, with no equity contribution being made by the strategic partners. This helped to undermine them.

As Weis (2007) shows, conceptions of the ‘productive efficiency’ of industrial agriculture have become an important foundation of dominant development narratives. But these enterprises continued to struggle, due to inadequate access to capital. They failed to live up to the expectations of many, in relation to their ability to generate much-talked-about profits and the subsequent distribution of benefits to members, and in sustaining agricultural productivity. Due to this inability to raise adequate capital, the enterprises were unable to expand production by replacing non-productive orchards, and expanding to available land not under production. Remaining viable and profitable under the current antagonistic relations of globally competitive agriculture, in tandem with constraints such as the extent of capital investment required, has proved very difficult to achieve.

Thirdly, the politics of capitalist production for profit versus the social reproduction of classes of labour also exerts considerable pressures on the viability and profitability of the enterprises. Ownership of the enterprises vests in individual ‘communities’ of some 300 or more households. With expectations of improvement in the livelihoods of beneficiaries following land reform, one finds heightened demands for the delivery of tangible benefits. This has manifested in social struggles around access and control of resources, job opportunities, and other means of rewarding members of CPAs.

This has resulted in a very complex situation in which demands for enhanced means of social reproduction have superseded the requirement for re-investment on the farm to allow expansion of the scale of production and the achievement of productive efficiencies. Pressures on enterprise viability are thus the result of the competing imperatives of the expanded reproduction of capital versus the social reproduction of labour. This argument will be covered in more depth in following chapters. Community-owned farming enterprises that fail to address the social reproduction needs of communities will experience serious problems, as the demands on revenue increase over time. Scrambles for benefits by beneficiaries continue to exert pressures on these enterprises.



6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that land restitution, a key component of land and agrarian reform in South Africa, transfers large tracts of land to rural communities. Whilst calls for land reform in most of the developing world have been linked to social justice (Weis, 2007), the strategic partnership model attempts to integrate social justice with a business or economic rationale for land acquisition. In competitive environments, the promise to pay dividends and rental fees, and to create many jobs, are put on hold as companies attempt to build their “replacement funds”, or reserves for reinvestment in the companies, thus neglecting the social reproduction needs of classes of labour, people who are left without access to land, and depend on the sale of their labour power for their simple reproduction.

The research literature on strategic partnerships in Limpopo tends to agree that in general the benefits for community members have been negligible to date, and that alternative pathways

are needed. The emergence of community-owned enterprises with management contracts with astute commercial farmers has appeared to offer a new way forward, but this ‘alternative path’ is problematic because it remains fixated on the notion of agricultural commercialisation or modernisation. As key policy documents and policy pronouncements make clear, the articulation of a ‘farming is business’ rhetoric uncritically endorses large-scale commercial farming, with much less regard for the socio-economic benefits expected by the beneficiaries. The next chapter examines the impacts of these commercial farm models on ‘classes of labour’, especially farmworker households.



7. LIVELIHOODS OF FARMWORKER HOUSEHOLDS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the livelihoods of farmworker households, exploring how processes of social change on commercial farms in Levubu have impacted on their livelihood security. A livelihood is how people combine “different activities in a complex bricolage or portfolio of activities” to make a living (Scoones, 2009:172). One of the central issues in the conceptualisation of the livelihoods of the poor is the need to understand both their access to resources and opportunities, and how such access is mediated by institutions. According to Cousins & Scoones (2010), institutional and organisational arrangements influence the vulnerability or robustness of livelihoods strategies. One key concern in this chapter is thus to understand farmworker livelihoods against the backdrop of the dynamics of strategic partnerships and community-owned farming enterprises, characterised by the contradictory and conflictual relations of capital and labour. It also concerns the social struggles shaping households’ access to resources, assets and opportunities in their pursuit of secure livelihoods. As Chapter 8 will demonstrate, such struggles and strategies involve both individual efforts and forms of collective action.

This chapter proceeds as follows: firstly, it describes the general characteristics of farmworker households in Levubu, along with different farmworkers’ ‘identities’ as land claimants or non-claimants. It explores how these identities and related micro-dynamics shape, and are shaped by, access to key resources, i.e. land, labour and community-owned assets. Secondly, the chapter describes the socio-economic profile of farmworker households on community-owned farms, focussing on employment status and income sources in order to understand the nature and structure of rural incomes in this area. As Bernstein (2010b) suggests, the social locations and identities that the working poor inhabit in the contemporary world involve ever more fluid boundaries; thus, the chapter also discusses the range of activities that are necessary for livelihood-making in the Levubu area, including on-farm and off-farm income, formal and informal economic activities, as well as rural and urban income sources. Thirdly, the chapter presents and analyses five vignettes, or mini-case studies, of farmworker households that draw on in-depth interviews and life histories to analyse the dynamics of livelihoods pursued by farmworker households.

Note that the methods used to collect these data on farmworker livelihoods were described in detail in Chapter 4. The household survey was conducted in two claimant communities, Masakona (70 households) and Shigalo (75 households).

7.2 Distribution of farmworkers' households in terms of their social identities as 'claimants' and 'non-claimants'

Table 23 (Claimant and non-claimant members of Masakona and Shigalo farming enterprises) shows that survey respondents were asked if they were land claimants or not. Of the total sample survey of 145¹¹⁹ households, membership of the Masakona claimant community (i.e. membership of the CPA) accounted for 48.27% of the sample whereas membership of the Shigalo claimant community accounted for 51.64%. The overall outcome of the survey shows that 42% (n=61) of the farmworkers' households in the sample survey regarded themselves as members of the claimant community and 58% (n=84) regarded themselves as non-members.

Table 23: Claimant and non-claimant members of Masakona and Shigalo (n=145)

Member of Claimant group?	Masakona			Shigalo			TOTAL	
	n	%	as a % of the sample	n	%	as a % of the sample	n	%
Yes (claimant)	19	27.14	13.10	42	56	28.90	61	42
No (non-claimant)	51	72.86	35.17	33	44	22.74	84	58
Total	70	100	48.27	75	100	51.64	145	100

For Masakona, about 27% (n=19) of the respondents replied that they were part of the 'claimant group' whereas 73% (n=51) replied that they were not. With regard to Shigalo, 56% (n=42) of the respondents replied that they were part of the claimant community whereas 44% (n=33) were not. Further analysis of data shows that all the respondents who replied that they were not part of 'the claimant group' were resident at both Ha-Masakona and Olifantshoek villages under Chief Masakona and Chief Shigalo respectively. This has to do with the ambiguities of membership of 'claimant communities' in scenarios where 'outsiders' have over time been accepted as part of the broader 'community', defined in terms of

¹¹⁹ This number excludes one respondent/household that refused to be interviewed, from the Shigalo CPA. He said that he wanted nothing to do with land claims issues.

allegiance to respective chiefs rather than as distinct ‘community’ of a group of victims of racially-based forced removals.

Conversations with respondents revealed controversies regarding how a ‘claimant community’ is defined and who constitutes such a community. The meaning of ‘claimant community’ is challenging because present-day Masakona and Shigalo communities are heterogeneous. They incorporate the victims of forced removals who maintained social connections, networks and relationships after their displacement to parts of the former Venda and Gazankulu homelands and elsewhere in the country. Such ‘communities’ are not place-bound; even households that do not reside at either Ha-Masakona or Olifantshoek villages still form part of ‘claimant communities’ by virtue of their link with Masakona prior to land dispossession¹²⁰. Similar sentiments were expressed by CPA representatives at Ravele and Ratombo CPAs, especially when devising strategies for labour recruitment, in which they feel that they should take cognisance of the location of their membership.

However, these communities, when defined in terms of the jurisdictional boundaries of traditional leaders, also incorporate households with no historical ties to either the traditional leader or the historical ancestral land – the object of restitution claims. They came to these respective villages searching for a place to stay. Membership of these ‘traditional communities’¹²¹ thus plays a significant role as a ‘mode of belonging’, involving social boundaries that entitle members to a range of benefits. However, legally, a ‘claimant community’ is defined in the Restitution of Land Rights Act (1994), allowing the victims of forced removals and their descendants, irrespective of their residence within chiefly boundaries, to claim back land.

Defining ‘communities’ in the context of community land claims has been a critical question, as illustrated by the Kranspoort judgement at the Land Claims Court (LCC26/98) and the Richtersveld judgement at the Constitutional Court (CCT19/03). The courts have recognised that a ‘community’ is a dynamic and ever-changing entity. Whilst some members may leave,

¹²⁰ Interview with Peter Mawela, the Masakona CPA chairperson and secretary of the Masakona Traditional Council, interview held on 20 May 2011 at Masakona Traditional Council’s Offices.

¹²¹ The Traditional Leadership and Governance Frameworks Act, Act No 41 of 2003 defines a traditional community as a recognised traditional community in terms of section 2 of the Act. Such a community may be recognised as a traditional community if it “is subject to a system of traditional leadership in terms of that community’s customs; and observes a system of customary law”.

others may join. Therefore, the process of renewal of ‘communities’ is not solely dictated by lineage, and other forms of association related to culture, location and livelihoods also play a significant role. Sjaastad *et al.* (2013:419) argue that “determination of a lineage between claimant and those originally dispossessed is futile. What is necessary is to establish a sufficient measure of commonality and cohesion within the claimant community and to establish inter-temporal continuity between claimants and the community that was dispossessed”. With commercial partnership models emphasising the distribution of dividends to recognised beneficiaries only, and with Shigalo and Masakona communities illustrating the fluidity of ‘community membership’, these questions, however contested, remain a critical issue.

The farmworker household survey findings point to the micro-level complexities of defining who does, or does not, constitute a community. These identities of ‘claimant’ and ‘non-claimant’ have particular implications with regard to labour recruitment, as well as labour processes and the relations of production. On the restored farms, all workers recruited by the CPA, whether ‘claimant’ in the strict sense defined by law, or those without rights in terms of the Restitution Act but with ‘sufficient measure of commonality and cohesion within the claimant community’, are identified as ‘claimant workers’. In addition, this is how they are seen by those workers who were already employed on these farms at the time of their transfer. As various case studies in this chapter and in Chapter 8 show, these divisions play a significant role in determining access to better paid positions on farms, for example as production managers or supervisors¹²². Whilst these divisions were significant when strategic partnerships were first initiated, this differentiation is gradually becoming irrelevant as companies strive for the utilisation of skilled labour to achieve profitability rather than engaging in a ‘politics of identity’¹²³.

¹²² Interview with Mpho Mulaudzi, a female driver – messenger for Masakona farms, on 15 January 2013 at Piccado pack house; Interview with Michael Munyai, a section manager at Shigalo farms on 08 January 2013; on the farm while they were picking litchis.

¹²³ Interview with Danie Basson, the general manager for Ravele and Masakona community-owned farming enterprises on 29 March 2012 at Appelfontein farm in Levubu; and Sunnyboy Ramashia, production manager for Masakona on 13 December 2012 at Piccado pack house, and interview with Theuns Kotze, a general manager for Shigalo community-owned farming enterprise, on 12 December 2011 at the Shigalo offices in Levubu.

7.3 Household composition

Table 24 (Household composition of farmworker households from Masakona and Shigalo combined) demonstrates that a sum of 866 individuals was found in sample households, with a median of 5 members and a range of 1-11 household members. Of all 866 household members, 685 reported that they were present at home most or all nights. While it is generally common for farmworkers to reside on farms, Levubu presents a rather different scenario, in which the majority of farmworkers commute to and from work by public transport system at their own costs. In the case of Masakona, the CPA has organised a bus which leaves Masakona at 5am and arrives in Levubu at 7am¹²⁴. Farmworkers pay about R200 per person monthly for this transportation. This arrangement was supported by many women, especially young women, who felt that at least they return home daily and can take care of domestic issues, and support those grandparents who look after their young children.

Table 24: Household composition in Masakona and Shigalo combined (n=866)

	HH Size	No of Males	No of Female	No of adult men (m>18) in the HH	No of adult women (f>18) in the HH	No of children (<18) in HH
Mean	6	3	3	2	2	2
Maximum	12	9	8	5	5	7
Median	5	3	3	2	2	2
Minimum	1	0	0	0	0	0
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sum	866	433	433	271	283	312
%	100	50%	50%	31%	33%	36%

The survey results also show that there is an even spread of the number of adult men and adult women (everyone above 18 years of age); about 31% or (n=271) are men and 33% (n=283) are women. Children below the age of 18 years comprised 36% of the sample. While the head count of males and females showed a 50/50 split, which is a rather unusual case, the distribution among the adult males and females over 18 years of age was 31% males and 33% females as stated. One is curious of the municipal area distributions. Based on the census data

¹²⁴ Interview with Angie Ramulongo, Piccado pack house manager at Masakona, on 12 May 2011 at the Piccado pack house.

for 2011, Stats SA (2011) found that of the total population for Makhado Municipality of 515 514, males accounted for 45.86% (236 411) and females for 54.14% (279 103). The difference is insignificant.

7.4 Marital status of household heads and access to land in the former homelands

This section discusses the question of the marital status of heads of households and explores how the marital status of the head of household influences a household's access to residential and productive land in the communal areas in which they reside. This analysis links to the later discussion of the significance of land-based livelihoods for farmworkers in Levubu.

Table 25: Marital status of household heads in Masakona and Shigalo combined (n=145)

Marital status of the household head	Gender of the HH				Male and Female					
	M(=n)	F(=n)	Total		M		F		Total	
			n	%	n	%	N	%	n	%
Not married	3	12	15	10	3	20	12	80	15	100
Customary marriage	62	1	63	43	62	98	1	2	63	100
Civil marriage	6	0	6	4	6	100	0	0	6	100
Co-habitation	10	0	10	7	10	1	0	0	10	100
Separated	3	10	13	9	3	23	10	77	13	100
Widow/er	4	34	38	26	3	11	34	89	38	100
TOTAL	88	57	145	100	88	61	57	39	145	100

Table 25 shows that 61% (n=88) of households were headed by men as compared to 39% (n=57) headed by women. Of those household heads married under customary law, 98% (n=62) were men and 2% (n=1) were women. The results also show that the prevalence of women-headed households is most common in circumstances where a woman was separated, widowed, or never married. The survey results also show a case where a woman married under customary traditions reported that she was the head of the household. Follow up in-depth interviews showed that this occurred under circumstances where the husband married a second wife and moved into the other house, but the couple were not separated. This is a rare case under customary practices, in which men are usually regarded as heads of several households irrespective of whether they live there or not.

Table 26 (Residential land acquisition in Masakona and Shigalo combined) provides some insights regarding the influence of marital status on access to residential land, and Table 27 (Fields acquisition at Masakona and Shigalo combined) demonstrates household's access to land. Whilst data gathering included questions about when the land was acquired and in what ways, the results did not reveal any unusual findings. However, responses to the question 'by who was the land acquired?' are illuminating. Table 26 also shows that in 72% (n=105) of cases, the household's residential land was acquired by the head of the household. Of the 105 household heads, 66% (n=69) of household heads were males, compared to 34% (n=36) who were females. Data also show that parents were likely to acquire residential land for their sons rather than their daughters. For example, of the 16 households whose land was acquired by a father, in 69% of cases (n=11) this was for their sons and in 31% (n=5) it was for their daughters. Similarly, where respondents show that land was accessed through parents, in five of the seven cases land was acquired for sons, as compared to two cases where it was for daughters. A slightly different picture emerges when mothers secure land for their children. The data shows that of the four cases found, three involved mothers securing land for their daughters and one case where it was for a son. However, this was insignificant as it only constituted 3% of the entire sample'; similar picture is also found under land acquired through parents and by other means, this trend is prevalent parents tend to acquire land for sons than daughters, or inheritance of land tend to be given to sons than daughters.

Table 26: Residential land acquisition in Masakona and Shigalo combined (n = 145)

Through whom was the land acquired?	Residential land									
	Gender of HH		TOTAL		Male		Female		TOTAL	
	M (=n)	F (=n)	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Self	69	36	105	72	69	66	36	34	105	100
My spouse	0	10	10	7	0	0	10	100	10	100
My mother	1	3	4	3	1	25	3	75	4	100
My father	11	5	16	11	11	69	5	31	16	100
My parents	5	2	7	5	5	71	2	29	7	100
Other	2	1	3	2	2	67	1	33	3	100
TOTAL	88	57	145	100	88	61	57	39	145	100

Acquisition of productive land (fields) is shown in Table 27 (Fields acquisition at Masakona and Shigalo) reveals a different story. First and foremost, the majority of farmworker

households in both Ha-Masakona and Olifantshoek villages did not have any access to fields. Secondly, such access is skewed in favour of men, as would be expected in most rural parts of South Africa. Findings on the use of such household land are reported below in Table 35

Table 27: Fields acquisition in Masakona and Shigalo combined (n=145)

Through whom was the land acquired?	Fields										
	Gender of the HH				TOTAL						
	M (=n)		F (=n)		n		Male		Female		TOTAL
				n	%*	n	%	N	%	n	%
Self	12	5	17	12	12	71	5	29	17	100	
My husband	0	2	2	1	0	0	2	100	2	100	
My father	4	1	5	3	4	80	1	20	5	100	
My parents	1	1	2	1	1	50	1	50	2	100	
TOTAL	17	9	26	18	17	65	9	35	26	100	

*This represents a % of the entire farmworker households sample of n=145.

As illustrated in Table 27 above, 18% (n=26) of the sample reported that they had access to fields. Of the 26 households, about 65% (n=17) were male household heads as compared to 35% (n=9) who were female. Of the 17 household heads who reported that they acquired fields by themselves, about 71% (n=12) were males as compared to 29% (n=5) of women. In five cases, parents helped their children to access fields. The data shows that four of these were sons assisted by fathers (this could include inheritance from the fathers), whereas in only one case did a daughter have a field acquired for her by her father. In two cases of parents helping to acquire land, there is an even spread of one case each. Further in-depth interviews with selected households showed that individual heads of households approach their chiefs or a traditional council through a headman to request the allocation of land. Some of the case studies presented later in this chapter illustrate this practice. In addition, applicants for land are required to make a payment of fees to the traditional authorities for the allocation of either a residential site or fields. There are different ways of recording rights in these communities. Some use a register at the offices of a traditional council, as was the case at Masakona Traditional Council, to record the name of the applicant, the site or block where

land would be allocated, with a receipt book showing the amount that was paid¹²⁵. As the some life histories (see below) illustrate, this practice is also common in other areas.

Budlender (2013) finds significant processes of change and adaptation in relation to marriage and how single women living in communal areas have begun to access land in their own right. A survey of 3 000 rural women conducted by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) in the ex-homeland areas of Msinga, Keiskammahoek, and Ramatlabama shows that women had greater degree of access to land than would be expected from reading the standard literature on customary law and practice (Budlender, 2013). It also found that access to land by women who had never been married and widowed women had increased noticeably if one compares the period before and during apartheid with the period after 1994. Claassens & Smythe (2013:17) suggest that single women who were either never married or who were widowed received residential sites for themselves and their children in communal areas. The findings of this research regarding the acquisition of land in communal areas broadly confirm findings from research in other localities. However, Tables 26 and 27 show the rarity of cases where women as spouses acquire land for their households. Where it has occurred, it was a case of a mother acquiring land for her son.

7.5 Employment status and income sources of members of farmworker households

Table 28 (Household size and employment in farmworker households) below shows that 28% (n=240) of the sample size of 866 comprises household members with some form of employment both on-farm and off-farm. About 72% (n=626) of them are the unemployed and children. In Table 24 above, confirmed in Table 28, the results show the household sizes of a mean of 6 and maximum of 12, with a median of 5. With regard to the employment status in farmworker households, Table 28 shows employment of the mean of 2 and a maximum of 5, yet the median is 1. From these results, it is clear that there is high level of unemployment and dependency within farmworker households. As illustrated in Table 27 above, the sample has an overall dependency ratio of 0.39 (this is the difference between the employed and unemployed together with dependants). This clearly shows that the burden of supporting the unemployed rests on a few employed farmworkers, as shown in Table 28 below.

¹²⁵ Interview with Peter Mawela, Chairperson of the Masakona CPA at the time of the interview, at the Traditional Council offices at Ha-Masakon on 20 May 2011; Interview with Sunnyboy Ramashia, Production Manager of Masakana farms (Sharp Move Trading) on 19 May 2011 at Piccado pack house in Levubu.

Table 28: Household size and employment in farmworker households (n = 866)

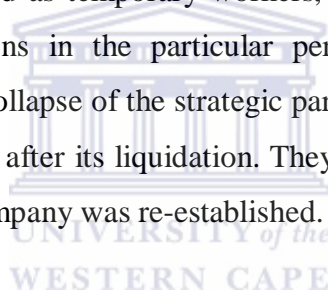
	Household Size	Number of employed household members	Number of unemployed household members + children	Dependency ratio
Mean	6	2	4	1
Maximum	12	5	11	3
Median	5	1	4	0
Minimum	1	1	0	0
Mode	5	1	3	0
Sum	866	240	626	0.39
Sum %	100.0%	28%	72%	

Table 29 (Employment status of heads of household in Masakona and Shigalo) below shows that 49% (n=71) of the heads of farmworker households on Masakona and Shigalo farms were permanently employed. Of the n=71 heads of households permanently employed, 66% (n=47) of them were men and 34% (n=24) were women. Bearing in mind that this was a sample of farmworker households, in which one or more members are employed on farms, the survey showed that about 62% (n=23) of the total unemployed heads of household who are not looking for work, were women. Yet, the overall unemployment among heads of households not looking for work was 26% (n=37). By contrast, 92% (n=12) of men versus 8% of women (n=1) reported that they were unemployed but still looking for a job. In-depth interviews with some of the respondents show that the demand for jobs by men could be attributed to the societal expectation that men should work to provide for their households.

Table 29: Employment status of heads of households in Masakona and Shigalo (n = 145)

Household head's employment status	Gender of the household head					
	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
Permanent employee on farms	47	66	24	34	71	49
Permanent employee not on farms	7	88	1	13	8	6
Temporary employee on farms	3	43	4	57	7	5
Temporary employee not on farms	4	67	2	33	6	4
Non-farm self-employment	1	33	2	67	3	2
Not employed, looking for work	12	92	1	8	13	9
Not employed, not looking for work	14	38	23	62	37	26
Total	88	61	57	39	145	100

Tables 30 and 31 present the survey results on farm employment. Firstly, farm employment is the main form of employment for farmworker households. This should be understood within the context in which government and strategic partners promised the creation of jobs for members of claimant communities. Against this backdrop, 27% (n=21) of the sample of farmworkers on the Masakona-owned farms regarded themselves as claimants or direct descendants of claimants, compared to 73% (n=57) who reported that they were not claimants. However, it appears that almost all the claimants were in permanent job positions because, as shown in Table 30, 18 of the 21 employed were permanent workers as compared to only three who were temporarily employed. The Shigalo farms presented a dissimilar picture. The distribution of labour was more evenly spread between claimants and those who do not regard themselves as claimants. About 55% (n=53) of the total labour force were 'claimants' and 45% (n=43) were not. About 48% (n=32) of the permanently employed reported that they were claimants whereas 52% (n=32) were not. Shigalo also had a high number of farmworkers employed as temporary workers, i.e. 30% (n=29) of the total. This might be attributed to conditions in the particular period in which this research was conducted, i.e. shortly after the collapse of the strategic partnership, with the CPA attempting to rebuild the operating company after its liquidation. They had to rehire most of their labour on a temporary basis until the company was re-established.



For the 2011 census, Stats SA looked at the distribution of the population aged between 15 and 64 by employment status in Makhado. Of the total population of 122 639, 63% (77 154) was employed and 37% (45 485) was unemployed. Furthermore, it recorded the unemployment rate of 37.1%. For Vhembe District, the unemployment rate was 39% and so was the provincial rate (Stats SA, 2011).

Table 30: Number of people in employment as farmworkers in Masakona and Shigalo CPAs

	Masakona CPA						Shigalo CPA						Total	%
	Claimant				Sub-total	%	Claimant				sub-total	%		
	Yes	%	No	%			Yes	%	No	%				
Total no. of farmworkers	21	27%	57	73%	78	100%	53	55%	43	45%	96	100%	174	100%
Permanent employment	18	26%	50	74%	68	87%	32	48%	35	52%	67	70%	135	78%
Temporary employment	3	30%	7	70%	10	13%	21	72%	8	28%	29	30%	39	22%



Table 31: On-farm employment for Masakona and Shigalo farmworkers according to the main village of residence

FARM EMPLOYMENT	Masakona CPA				UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE		Shigalo CPA				Sub-Total		Total	
	Village of residence				Sub-Total		Village of residence							
	Masakona		Other				Olifantshoek		Other					
	Claimant		Claimant		Claimant		Claimant							
	Yes	No	Yes	No	N	%	Yes	No	Yes	No	n	%	n	%
Permanent employment	18	13	0	37	68	87%	31	2	1	33	67	70%	135	78%
Temporary employment	3	4	0	3	10	13%	21	3	0	5	29	30%	39	22%
Total no. of farmworkers	21	17	0	40	78	100%	52	5	1	38	96	100%	174	100%

Table 30 might suggest that claimants have begun to claim jobs on community-owned farming enterprises, confirming what general managers of different companies have said, i.e. that there has been a push from CPA members to access these jobs. However, a closer look at the numbers reveals a somewhat different story, especially given variations within the different CPAs and their respective farming enterprises. Evidence from key informant interviews suggests an emerging trend in which general managers have begun to make appointments to strategic positions on the basis of merit, especially due to the pressure to ensure profit maximisation. To a certain degree, the identity of claimant and non-claimant farmworkers is no longer the only determinant of employment on these farms. As discussed in the next chapter, the appointment of a production manager at Masakona, and farm managers at Shigalo and Ravele, are examples where the general managers have looked at individual farmworkers with relevant skills and expertise, who could assist with the improvement of farm and labour productivity.

Whilst the total numbers of claimant workers were fewer than those who did not identify themselves as claimants, the picture on the ground is even more complex, as illustrated in Table 31 above. Due to the scattered distribution of farmworkers from elsewhere than Ha-Masakona and Olifantshoek (the main villages for Masakona and Shigalo respectively), Table 31 categorises all workers from other villages as 'Others'¹²⁶. As shown, a total of 38 (21 claimants *vis-à-vis* 17 non-claimants) of the 78 surveyed farmworkers working on Masakona farms reported that they resided at Ha-Masakona Village. This points to the complexity of processes of identification within these communities. In this case, the results show that the CPA has extended the benefit of farmworker jobs to members of the wider Masakona community, a community defined in terms of chiefly jurisdiction rather than connections to the claimed land.

This survey data was triangulated in an interview with the secretary of the CPA, who was also the secretary of the Masakona Traditional Council. This interview revealed that recruitment of farm labour was undertaken by the CPA at the Traditional Council's office, and was open to all members of the Masakona 'community', not only the 'claimant community' as defined by restitution legislation. This thus shows that restitution in this respect has benefitted the entire community of Masakona. With regard to temporary

¹²⁶ The sample had an insignificant number (n=2) of farmworkers who reported that they originally come from Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

employment, only 3 of the 10 were 'non-claimants'. The 37 permanent farmworkers who do not reside at Ha-Masakona village are mostly those already in employment on these farms in 2006.

With regard to the Shigalo CPA, a majority of members reside at Olifantshoek Village. Within Olifantshoek, the Shigalo community (which mainly comprises the victims of forced removals) co-exists alongside another community under Chief Khamanyane. The Shigalo community, under chief Shigalo, have maintained their own separate identity, lodging a land claim as a distinct group of people displaced from Levubu. However, some of their members also reside elsewhere, scattered across the former Gazankulu homeland.

As illustrated in Table 31, 96 farmworkers who were surveyed were employed on farms owned by the Shigalo CPA. However, only 57 (52 claimants and 5 non-claimants) came from Olifantshoek Village. There is also an even spread of permanently employed claimants *vis-à-vis* non-claimants farmworkers, i.e. 33 claimants and 34 non-claimants. However, in terms of temporary employment, there were 24 claimant farmworkers as opposed to 5 non-claimants. Key informant interviews with the general manager and the HR manager of the company revealed that it had shifted from preferential employment of claimants, due to the need to increase productivity. According to them, only skilled farm labour can achieve the productivity levels required for the farm to realise profits, as case studies presented in Chapter 8 will show.

7.5.1 Income sources for farmworker households

Table 32 (Combined Masakona and Shigalo farmworker households income sources: n=866) demonstrates that the farmworker households in this survey derive their livelihood from a multiple sources of income. In Table 30 and 31, employment has been presented as a key source of income, especially farm employment. This is not surprising because this survey was for farmworker households. But sources of income as shown in Table 32 include permanent and temporary on-farm employment, permanent and temporary off-farm employment, non-farm self-employment, and grant incomes (including child support grant, old age grant and disability grant), as well as remittances from family members and relatives living elsewhere, especially those employed in cities. Non-farm self-employment refers to small-scale trading

and hawking, selling food and snacks at school markets and trading other goods at pension pay points. As discussed in detail below, the majority of farmworker households rely on permanent employment on farms as a primary source of income, followed by social grants, which are more ubiquitous but bring in less cash.

Table 32: Combined Masakona and Shigalo farmworker household income sources (n= 866)

	Median	Maximum	Minimum	Sum	Sum%
No. of grant incomes	2	8	0	278	100%
Old age pensions	0	3	0	50	18%
Child support grants	1	7	0	220	79%
Disability grants	0	2	0	8	3%
No. of farm incomes	1	2	1	174	100%
Permanent on-farm	1	2	0	135	78%
Temporary on-farm	0	2	0	39	22%
No. of off-farm incomes	0	4	0	62	100%
Permanent off-farm	0	4	0	39	63%
Temporary off-farm	0	3	0	23	37%
No. of other incomes	0	2	0	32	100%
Non-agric. self-employment	0	2	0	18	56%
Own farming activities	0	1	0	2	6%
Income generating projects	0	1	0	1	3%
Remittances	0	1	0	11	34%

As shown in Table 32 (Combined Masakona and Shigalo farmworker households income sources), of the total sample population of 866, 278 grant incomes were received. About 79% (n=220) of those are child support grants, followed by old age grants with 18% (n=50) and disability grants accounting for just 3% (n=8). The contribution of non-agricultural self-employment, own farming activities, income generating projects and remittances are among other sources of income. However, the number of households with these sources of income are much less important and often negligible.

When the research probed other sources of income from agricultural activities, such as sales of livestock and other forms of agricultural produce, this survey found that these are an insignificant means of livelihood. In-depth interviews revealed that inadequate access to land and water presented major constraints. For those with access to fields, they explained that they spent most of their time working on commercial farms and had little or no time available to work their own land. Some decried the fact that returns on their investments were negligible due to changes in weather patterns (i.e. not enough rainfall) and lack of fencing of fields. Studying similar contexts of decline in production and dependence on wage income, Neves & du Toit (2013) suggest that the inexorable process of deagrarianisation, wide variations in the availability of agro-ecological conditions, social, institutional and market conditions that enable smallholder agriculture played a significant role. Despite this, land is still a significant resource for the poor.

The findings from this survey do confirm other studies that show the significance of wage employment as the main source of income for many rural households (Jacobs & Hart, 2014¹²⁷; Hall et al., 2013; Aliber *et al.*, 2009). Based on analysis of the Household Surveys of 2002 and 2012, Jacobs & Hart (2014) shows that rural households depended much on salaries and wages. For example, in 2002 about 42% of households reported that salaries and wages were the main sources of income compared to 38% in 2012. The second most important source of income for rural households is remittances, with 22% of rural households in 2002 and 13% in 2012. Both Aliber *et al.* (2009) and Hall *et al.* (2013) suggests that the change in trends of number of household who regard salaries and wages as the most important source of income can be explained in terms of structural forces which rural households have no control of and the historical contexts. According to Neves & du Toit (2013), the decline in remittances arises from complex combination of declining employment opportunities and the need to retain resources for household unbundling, weakening entitlements linked to social mores.

¹²⁷ http://krieger.jhu.edu/arrighi/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2015/03/Propoor-Rural-Development_SoN2014_Ch8.pdf Accessed on 11 December 2015

7.6 Asset base of farmworker households

According to Conway (2008), a livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets, both material and social resources, and activities for making a living. Table 33 (Asset ownership by farmworker households at both Masakona and Shigalo combined) shows that there are low levels of asset ownership among farmworker households, except for electronic assets (mainly cell phones) and agricultural assets (basic hand implements like hoes, spades, and rakes). The maximum number of electronic assets is 12 and a median of 4. With domestic assets, the maximum is 7 and a median of 1. Agricultural assets for rural households recorded a maximum of 11 and a median of 4. The overall findings relating to asset ownership suggest where the rural households spend their hard earned incomes on. As some of the life history case studies shows, majority of the households spend their incomes on food as a basic necessity, hence the low levels of investment in other assets.

Table 33: Asset ownership by farmworker households (Masakona and Shigalo combined) (n =145)

	No. of electronic assets	No. of domestic assets	No. of transport assets	No. of agricultural assets	No. of other assets
Mean	4	1	0	4	1
Maximum	12	7	3	11	3
Median	4	1	0	4	1
Minimum	0	0	0	0	0
Sum	566	187	31	546	208

Table 34 below shows that there is a significant (but weak) correlation between household size and number of assets. This simply shows that larger households appear to have greater amounts of income, thus enabling them to accumulate some assets. Yet they are still unable to invest significantly in productive assets. More importantly, there is a significant correlation between the numbers of adults employed in households and household assets, indicating the importance of wage income in these households.

Table 34: Correlations between asset ownership and other variables amongst farmworker households from Masakona and Shigalo (n = 145)

	Total No of HH assets	HH size	No of men (m>18) in the HH	No of women (f >18) in the HH	No of children in the HH (<18)	Total No of income sources	Total No of grant incomes	Total No of employed HH members	Total No of non-employed HH members + children	Employment ratio
Pearson	1	.350**	.293**	.303**	.073	.235**	.066	.541**	.157	.223**
Correlation		.000	.000	.000	.400	.005	.434	.000	.060	.007
Sig. (2-tailed)	144	144	144	143	135	144	144	144	144	143
N										

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).



7.6.1 Access to land

Based on a 2007 survey of socio-economic conditions in the four claimant communities, namely Masakona, Ravele, Shigalo and Ratombo, Derman *et al.* (2013:13) found that the majority of households were dependent on the state’s social security grant funding. Of the 72 households surveyed, 48 were receiving Child Support Grants, 42 were receiving Old Age Grants, and 27 households received both. With regard to access to land, about 60 of the 72 households had garden plots around their homes and 31 had fields – although many had not cultivated in 2007 due to drought. Derman *et al.* (2013) concluded that there was a limited amount of agricultural production taking place.

The 2010/11 survey reported here focusses only on farmworker households, unlike that undertaken by Derman *et al.* (2013). Whilst Table 27 already discussed in section 7.4 above focussed on the question: ‘through who was the land accessed?’ Table 35 (Farmworker households’ access to and use of land at Masakona and Shigalo combined) below presents findings on the type of land accessed, and whether or not those with access to land were using it. Some 96% (n=139) of all households surveyed had gardens within their yards, and 87% (n=121) of those who have access to such land do use it, i.e. a total of 83% of the total sample of 145 households. With regards to fields, about 20% (n=30) of the households have access to fields whereas 65% of those use it, i.e. only 9% of the entire sample of 145 households reported to be using their fields.

Table 35: Farmworker households’ access to and use of productive land in Masakona and Shigalo (n = 145)

Type of land	ACCESS				USE			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Garden within the yard	139	95.86	6	4.14	121	83.45	24	16.55
Field/s	30	20.69	115	78.62	13	8.97	132	90.34
Project garden plot	3	2.07	142	97.24	2	1.38	143	97.93
Land reform land	0	0.00	145	100	0	0.00	145	100

As could be expected in the context of strategic partnerships in Levubu, none of the households have access to land reform land for production purposes. Similarly, a negligible number of households have access to project garden plots in the communal areas where they live.

Despite the widely acknowledged significance of access to land to rural households for production of food, restitution in this area where there is limited number of people with access to land has not considered the option to facilitate access to land in favour of protecting the existing systems. Such an approach appears to be in line with the views that agrarian reform should be considered as a strategy to expand wage employment and improve the conditions of workers on commercial farms rather than radical redistribution shifts in the ownership of land (Sender & Johnston, 2004). It is a view shared by some of those sceptical of the efficiency of smallholder farming. As will be discussed in Chapter 8, use of land reform as a wage employment creation intervention has not resulted in desired benefits that secure livelihoods of rural poor households. As this thesis shows, possibilities of farms creating employment for the majority of the unemployment in the villages studies are minimal, especially due to the imperatives of capitalist mode of production as discussed in Chapter 2 as well as the compulsions of market forces. A fundamental policy issue to consider is the extent to which commercial farming areas such as Levubu could be used to develop successful smallholders alongside large-scale commercial farms.

7.6.2 Production on own land by farmworker households

As discussed above, own-account agricultural production by farmworker households takes place mainly on household gardens in the homestead or 'yard'. In-depth interviews with selected members of farmworkers' households show that agricultural production is mainly for household consumption and this is attributed to limited access to input costs, lack adequate labour and limited availability of water. As can be seen in Table 36 (Production and harvesting of crops from homestead gardens by farmworker households from Masakona and Shigalo combined), there is little evidence of sales of harvest, except in a few cases where some maize was sold. Household production on home gardens is mainly focussed on the staple foods. The top five crops produced in household gardens were maize, beans, peanuts, mangoes, and pumpkins. This is followed by fruit trees such as avocados, different kinds of

citrus, peaches and guavas. Less important are macadamia nuts, sweet potatoes, grapes, paw-paws, and bananas. For purposes of this discussion, Table 36 presents data on only the top five crops.

Table 36: Production and harvesting of five main crops from homestead gardens by farmworker households from Masakona and Shigalo (n = 145)

Crop type	Unit of measurement	Quantities harvested		Quantities consumed		Quantities sold	
		Sum	=n	Sum	=n	Sum	=n
		Maize	80 kg bag	255	115	238	115
Peanuts	10 kg bag	81	57	154	57	0	57
Pumpkins	10 kg bag	147	22	141	22	0	21
Beans	10 kg bag	96	62	103	62	0	61
Mangoes	25 kg bag	188	56	268	56	0	53

Respondents also reported that household gardens are mostly worked by members of the household, and sometimes by members of the extended family. Some hire tractors to plough their gardens whereas others use hand hoes to cultivate the backyard. Because many household gardens depend on rainwater, family labour on these gardens takes place most commonly during the rainy season. There is little water for irrigation available from the running water supplied to villages.

To a large extent, it is older members of the households who work the gardens. A few households reported that children assisted in gardening. Household heads or other adult members working on farms usually get the opportunity to work in their gardens over weekends. Households reported that they do not pay those who work the gardens, but there have been a few instances where those that assisted were paid in kind, and children were given incentives in the form of cash. As will be illustrated by the case studies presented in the next section, unemployed women were the ones who used most of their time working in the vegetable gardens.

The extent of landlessness, especially in relation to productive land by a majority of rural households in the former homeland areas, is not surprising, given South Africa's history.

However, the extent of the underutilisation of what land people have, is striking. Of the 30 households that have access to fields, only 13 (or 43% of the total) made use of them. In-depth interviews revealed that adults who are keen on working the land spend most of their time working in wage employment. Those that have used their fields in the past reported that they no longer do so because of low yields, which they see as due mainly to drought. In addition, some report that the lack of proper fencing was another big reason for moving out of production, because of roaming livestock that destroy their crops.

The cost of production for many of the rural households was seen as high, especially when compared to the returns they receive. For instance, to hire a tractor to cultivate a field costs R280. Some report that perhaps if conditions improved they might again engage in cropping whilst others suggest that when they retire from employment on the commercial farms, they might spend more time in their fields.

The overall pattern revealed by this survey is that farmworkers household income levels are among the lowest and that the level of dependency on income earners is high. However, the contribution of social security in the form of old age pension grants and child support grants is vitally significant for the households. As the survey shows, the level of accumulation of assets by households is very low, the priority for households being to put food on the table and ensure that children receive education. Whilst the lack of access to productive land was not surprising as the areas they live in are already overcrowded, what was striking was the abandonment of the land. The significance of farm employment cannot be underestimated because in most of the households, farm wages are the only regular income source, with many people dependent on them for their livelihoods. In the context of the unstable production and farming enterprises at Masakona, Shigalo and Ratombo, the vulnerability of the livelihoods of farmworker households increases. Child support grants and old age pension grants have played a significant role in cushioning some households against shocks such as the non-payment of wages, reduced wages, and/or the enterprise being temporarily out of production. As discussed above, not being able to use land on the farms to supplement household income has increased the vulnerability of farmworker households.

One key conclusion from the survey is that the vulnerability of farmworker households is increased due to the lack of stability in production by community-owned farming enterprises; secondly, vulnerability is exacerbated by the insignificance of agricultural production on their

own land. As discussed above, this issue could further be tested by the selection of a sample from both farmworker households and non-farmworker households within the same community.

7.7 Selected vignettes on farmworker livelihoods

This section illustrates the pressures and contradictions in the livelihoods of farmworker households of those working on community-owned farms in Levubu. It presents five short case studies or vignettes based on in-depth, unstructured interviews and life histories of selected members of farmworker households. These vignettes provide important insights into the lived experience of household members in relation to livelihood security and options, as well as how access to job opportunities within commercial farming enterprises is negotiated. In order to protect the identities of the respondents, the names used in these case studies are pseudonyms.



7.7.1 Life history of 'Ntodeni'¹²⁸

'Ntodeni' was born in 1957 at Tsianda, some 10km from Levubu. In 1964, he started his primary schooling at Tshakhuma, proceeding to secondary education until he dropped out in Form III (the equivalent of Grade 10) in late 1978/9 because he felt he was too old for schooling. Between 1980 and 1991, he worked in Gauteng, starting at Germiston Bricks in the East Rand, and in 1985 he joined Bliss Dairy. Having returned to Tsianda in 1991, the same year he found his first farm employment in Levubu on a farm commonly known by the locals as 'Ha-Musekene'. He worked as a general labourer in macadamia nut and citrus orchards. In 1996, he was married and currently lives with his wife and three children. In 1998, he became a supervisor in the macadamia nut orchards. In the early 2000s, the farm owner who was part of Mavu convened a meeting with farmworkers to inform them that he was going to sell the farm to government because of a land claim. He further informed the workers that government was not going to expel workers, but it would integrate them as part of the

¹²⁸ Interview with Ntodeni, a foreman at Shigalo farm, on 08/01/2013. At the time of the interview he had just been promoted to become a section manager.

new management. All the workers were to join him and work with the Shigalo CPA in a joint venture with Mavu.

When Ntodeni, together with other farmworkers, came to the Shigalo-owned farms, he lost his position as a supervisor, but was appointed as assistant to another supervisor who came to these farms. It was Ntodeni's responsibility to manage human resources in a section of the farm he was allocated to, mainly to clock-in and clock-out the farmworkers. Mavu conducted a skills audit and Ntodeni submitted an interest in becoming a driver for the company. Due to changes in management after the withdrawal of Mavu from the strategic partnership arrangement, the skills audit report was never implemented. Instead of promoting Ntodeni, Umlimi (which replaced Mavu) hired a CPA member as a supervisor. Due to the lack of experience of the supervisor, production started to decline, and the macadamia nut crop in 2008/9 was not of good quality. Farmworkers complained to the Human Resources (HR) manager that production was collapsing because of poor management, and the new manager did not take advice from experienced workers. They recommended that Ntodeni, as one of the more experienced workers with relevant skills and knowledge in relation to macadamia and citrus, be offered an opportunity.

In 2010, Shigalo's HR manager deployed Ntodeni to manage the macadamia orchards across Shigalo farms, as an interim measure. Ntodeni then introduced a systematic crop management system, focussing on irrigation and spraying programmes. The orchards were in great distress due to the lack of spraying and fertilisation, and the company was at risk of having to throw away the entire macadamia nut harvest due to its poor quality. Ntodeni claimed that, drawing on his accumulated experience at the 'Ha-Musekene' farm, he introduced a new system for sorting nuts, using a large basin filled with water and nuts. Poor quality nuts floated and the good ones sank. Further, at 'Ha-Musekene', they had sought out a particular cultivar known as 'Pahala', known for its resilience to harsh conditions. Even if not sprayed, it still gives a good harvest. He could not share this knowledge with the CPA member appointed as supervisor, because the latter was not prepared to take advice from non-claimant workers. In the 2011 season, Shigalo's macadamia nuts were rated amongst the best supplied to the Green Farms packing plant. In 2012, Ntodeni was confirmed as a supervisor for the macadamia, guava, litchi

and avocado orchards on Shigalo farms. As a supervisor, he feels that he plays a crucial role to ensure increased farm and labour productivity.

Until recently, most of the farmworkers sourced from the Shigalo CPA had not worked on farms before, and lacked experience and the resilience to undertake hard labour on farms. Many, both men and women, had struggled to do farm work, for example, some refused to climb litchi and avocado trees to harvest fruit. They expected the non-claimants to undertake some of these heavy duties. As a supervisor, he worked hard to eliminate such and other expectations which are purely based on certain forms of belonging and identity of workers.

7.7.2 Life history of ‘Tshinakaho’

‘Tshinakaho’ is a female farmworker on one of the Ravele CPA farms and is known to other farmworkers as ‘EMS’. Tshinakaho did not know how old she was but she appeared to be in her mid-50s. She was born at Mabunda Village in the former Gazankulu. In 1975 she married, and together with her husband, two children and two grandchildren, she lives at ha-Mutsha village, some 5 km from Levubu. Her husband works for a forestry company.

In the early 1980s, Tshinakaho obtained her first employment on a commercial farm as a seasonal labourer harvesting avocados, and later other crops such as guavas and litchis. After doing different types of casual and seasonal work on farms for more than a decade, she was permanently employed on ‘Ems’ farm, now owned by the Ravele CPA. She heard about the vacancy from other farmworkers who had been working at Ems. Her previous experience as seasonal labourer counted in her favour, and she was offered a job as a general labourer.

In the early 2000s, the farm owner convened a meeting of all farmworkers to inform them about restitution and said that she was selling her farm to government. Tshinakaho was shocked and instantly felt uncertain and insecure about her future. The farm owner then organised to pay her for her long service over time and an Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF)/‘blue card’ payment. For long service she was

paid R1 000, and the 'blue card' paid R1 500 over seven months. Although she felt that the amount was too little, she could not complain because she still had some work. The farm owner introduced a new manager from the strategic partner, SAFM. "Although there was uncertainty, we couldn't care much because Gerrie brought with him more money for us", she said. This referred to the fact that for the first time, they were paid a minimum wage as farmworkers, they were paid for overtime work, and conditions of employment improved.

Despite payment of the minimum wage and improvement in the basic conditions of employment, it was the manner in which farm management was carried out which was troubling. Tshinakaho relates a story that they had applied fertiliser to the tree crops only once after the arrival of SAFM, and they did not replant any orchards. "As farmworkers who had worked on these farms for decades, we could see the need, but the response from the office was not satisfactory. They kept on saying they were still making plans. The problem was that the orchards could not wait for their plans". At that moment they began to worry, but they were nevertheless happy to be getting their salaries at the end of the month.

With regard to livelihood-making strategies, Tshinakaho's household depends mainly on her income from farm employment. The income is supplemented by child support grants for her grandchildren. The wages of her husband are not included because nobody knows what he does with it. The fact that her farm wages are the only reliable income renders her household vulnerable, especially under the uncertainty that strategic partnerships have created, with the threat of possible retrenchment, or even late payment of salaries. During discussions she emphasised the significance of farm employment and indicated that the household would struggle if she were to be retrenched or if there was a delay in the payment of salaries.

A brief assessment of the household income and expenditure illustrates the level of vulnerability of this household. Having observed that the main sources of income are wages and social security grants, Tshinakaho went on to demonstrate that the total income of R1 200 from farm wages and about R500 from child support grants was insufficient. In her calculations of income she excluded her husband's salary because she said she did not know what he uses it for. The household's expenses were as

follows: food stuff (R600), maize-meal (R380), transport (R220), electricity – mainly for lighting (R100), firewood for cooking (R70) and sometimes funeral society contributions of R11. These total R1 370, and exclude daily expenses like bread and other staple foods. The income was constrained but she said that the child support grants were extremely useful for taking care of the children's needs when they go to school, and also for supplementing other household necessities.

Asked if she belonged to any of the savings clubs organised by workers, Tshinakaho stated that this was impossible considering the demands on her salary. Some farmworkers, especially new ones from claimant communities, have set up *stokvels*¹²⁹ in order to save money.

With regards to land-based livelihood activities, the household has access to two residential stands, the second acquired by her unmarried daughter. Tshinakaho grows crops in gardens on both stands. The area is fertile and it receives relatively good amounts of rainfall. The household plants maize and some vegetables and has some fruit trees. In the harvest of 2011 she produced 2x80kg bags of maize, being approximately two months' supply of maize meal for the households. Considering the cost of maize, the households made a saving of about R600 if they factored in the cost of production. She wished the household could gain access to more land for the cultivation of food crops. The challenge is that the village is growing larger, and more land is being allocated for residential purposes.

7.7.3 Life history of 'Phundulo'

'Phundulo' was born in 1973 at Ha-Raliphaswa, in the Nzhelele Valley in the former Venda 'homeland'. In 1976 his family relocated to Ha-Mashau, some 5 to 10kms from Levubu. Due to the proximity to Levubu, he often took vacation jobs on commercial farms. His earnings supplemented his parents' meagre wages from farm labour. He

¹²⁹ Irving (2005) views Stokvels as Informal Savings Groups (ISG), conventionally understood as a means for the poor to mobilise financial resources in the absence of developed financial markets. However, in South Africa these ISGs (or commonly referred as 'societies') continue to exist alongside sophisticated formal financial markets. Members regularly contribute an agreed amount and from which they receive a lump sum payment on a rotational basis.

could earn enough for his pocket money, purchasing his own school uniform and some books. He thus developed an interest in farming.

In 1992, at the age of 19, Phundulo lost both his parents, one after the other. At that time he was in Standard 9 (equivalent to Grade 11) at Vhafamadi High School in Ha-Mashau Village. He had to drop out of school because there was no one to support him. In 1994, he obtained a job on a farm and a year later he got married; he and his wife now have three children.

The commercial farm where Phundulo is employed is located in an area historically known as Ha-Mphabada, under Chief Masakona. He was recruited as a general labourer, mainly engaging in weed control in banana and avocado orchards. Having learned to drive a tractor, in 1997 he became a tractor driver delivering bananas and avocados to the pack house. In November of the same year he was appointed as a foreman. He supervised a group of 24 farmworkers, fourteen women and ten men. His responsibilities spanned labour relations and overseeing the social life of farmworkers living in the farm compounds. At times, he also became involved in settling disputes amongst farmworkers, even in relation to events outside of working hours.

When Phundulo first started working on commercial farms he earned R175 per month and was given a 50kg of maize-meal. By 2005, he was earning R500 per month; as a supervisor he was the best paid farmworker on the entire farm. This changed significantly when SAFM took over the farm as a strategic partner. For his entire life, farm wages have remained the single most important source of income for his household.

In the early 2000s, Phundulo heard about the possibility of land being transferred to its rightful owners through the restitution programme. In 2005, after two decades of working for the same farmer, government bought the farm and transferred it to the Masakona CPA. This was the most important turning point of his life. It created uncertainty about the future of farmworkers, although new management also brought changes in relation to compliance with the sectoral wage determination for farmworkers, as well as improved conditions of employment.

In 2005 SAFM appointed Phundulo as a section supervisor, working under SAFM's farm managers. When SAFM withdrew from Levubu, the new general manager promoted him to the position of production manager in 2009. As a production manager, he manages soil preparation and develops spraying programmes for different farm units. At the time of the interview, he was also learning to draw up a farm budget. He has learned skills in pack house management, farm management, and production management. He wishes to further develop his skills in financial management and marketing.

In 2007 Phundulo's household relocated to another village known as Ha-Mangilasi. He paid about R500 to the chief for the allocation of a piece of residential land. He does not have access to agricultural land, but does cultivate fruit trees and vegetables in his backyard. His wife is unemployed, and she takes care of the fruit and vegetable garden in the yard. Farming knowledge and skills acquired from working on commercial farms have helped him to grow better crops in his yard. He is, however, constrained by the lack of access to productive land. At the time of the interview in 2013, he had not gained access to any fields.

7.7.4 Case study of 'Muvhulawa',¹³⁰

'Muvhulawa' was born in 1953 at Msibi, a village to which her family were relocated before they faced a second forced removal to Ha-Masakona village, where she lives today. She lives with her daughter and three grandchildren, her daughter's children. Her daughter is a university graduate who was, at the time of conducting the interview, still looking for a job. Her daughter receives child support grants to the value of R750 for all three children, i.e. R250 each. One of the children did not reside at Muvhulawa's house but with her father, and was nevertheless regarded as part of the household.

After the death of Muvhulawa's husband¹³¹, the household experienced difficulties. She began to engage in non-farm self-employment, selling firewood, and cutting and selling thatching grass to local people and in neighbouring communities. In addition, the

¹³⁰Interview with Muvhulawa on January 2013, farm belonging to Masakona CPA; Muvhulawa is a Venda name that means 'the one that is being sacrificed', literally a victim.

¹³¹ She could not remember the year in which her husband passed on.

family was supported through gifts from relatives and friends. Due to the limited household income, she struggled to get her daughter through university education.

When government restored farms to the Masakona CPA, community members were excited about the prospect of getting jobs on the farms. In 2006, the CPA, through the Traditional Council, invited all adult unemployed people who were looking for jobs to gather at the Traditional Council's offices for a recruitment process. A method of casting lots was used and Muvhulawa was unsuccessful because of her failure to pick the right piece of paper. After five attempts, Chief Masakona made an intervention after he noticed that she, together with four other women, have consistently come to look for jobs on the farms without success. The Chief requested that the CPA hire the five women because of their desperate situation. In 2009 she was offered a job as a general labourer, along with the other four women. "Had it not been for this job, and the good heart of the Chief, I do not know where I would be now, and would not have been able to pay for my child's education", she said. On their arrival at the farm, they were assigned to work night shifts in the citrus pack house. They packed different types of citrus produced on Masakona Farms.

On her arrival, Muvhulawa earned R1 000 per month which she considered to be too little for the long hours of work undertaken. Yet she desperately needed some form of stable income. At the time of the interview she was very grateful that she was earning R1 400 per month. She thought it was not quite enough to enable her household to have a decent standard of living, but the household could survive, especially when her wages were combined with other income sources. After taking into account the one child support grant sent to the family where the child was staying, their total household income amounted to about R1 900.00 per month. Analysis of the household expenditures showed that this total income was barely sufficient. The main expenses incurred were 80kg maize-meal (R380.00), electricity (R30.00), groceries (R1000.00), burial societies (R50.00), and transport (R240), amounting to R1700 per month.

The household had experienced an unexpected setback in June/July 2012, when her daughter suffered a stroke shortly after the birth of a child. The household has spent a lot of money on treatment, involving many costly visits to clinics and hospitals across the province, but with no real progress. The cost of a trip by hired vehicle to Elim

Hospital, for example is R300. Due to the family's firm belief that the sickness was the result of witchcraft, they also spent over R500 monthly on trips to the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) in Moriah, just outside Polokwane. It appears that the child support grants have subsidised the cost of these medical and spiritual treatments.

With regard to land and agricultural production, the household has access to fields allocated to it in 1972 by the Chief. However, the field was not being used at the time of the interview due to drought and lack of proper fencing. Muvhulawa complained that she used to spend R280 annually to hire a tractor to plough the fields without any returns, hence they had not been cultivated over the previous three years. In her own words, ploughing the fields was a "waste of time and money" because the heat would burn the crops or livestock would destroy them.

The household maintains a garden within the homestead. Between June 2010 and June 2011 the household had planted only maize because Muvhulawa had limited time available to cultivate the garden. The household eats green maize cobs, as well as dried maize taken to a grinding mill for maize-meal. During the 2009/10 season the household harvested about one 80kg bag of dry maize. Although that was not enough to feed the family, she was grateful that the household ate both green cobs of maize and also took the 80kg bag of maize to the grinding mill. The household had a supply of mealie-meal for about a month, thus saving about R250 on the purchase of maize-meal from shops (if one subtracts the cost of transport and milling). The cost of an 80kg bag of mealie-meal is R380.

7.7.5 Case study of 'CKM'¹³²

'CKM' is a 'non-claimant' farmworker from GaPhoko, Ga-Mamaila in Soekmekaar. She lives in a household of eight people, comprising CKM, her husband and four children, and two other children who did not reside in the same house but were considered to be part of the household. These are children from her first marriage, who live with her mother who also supports her children. She has also sent her four months old baby to live with her mother because CKM was living on the commercial farm

¹³² Interview with CKM on January 2013, Shigalo pack house.

where she was employed and mostly goes home at the end of the month. She has also left a 19 year old in her house, a niece whose mother has passed away and hence has come to live with CKM. On most, or all nights, her husband and a niece are at home. The people who comprise this household are scattered in different locations mainly because CKM works on a farm and cannot go home on a daily basis.

She started working on Shigalo Farms in 2007. However, due to the financial and management problems that the company experienced, she, together with other workers, were temporarily laid off in 2009 February. She stayed home from February 2009 until called to return to work in September 2010. She runs a small retail shop business in the village, which at the time of the interview generated a cash income of R600 per month. However, this was less than the income generated when she worked on the Shigalo farms, when she was able to purchase stock. The business has the potential to generate a cash income of R3000 per month. However, because of the layoff from farm work, she was struggling to keep the business viable given the lack of financial capital.

CKM has a garden at her homestead. Although she plants maize and other vegetables, the crops are often destroyed by livestock because of the lack of proper fencing. Among the few crops she has been able to harvest are beans and pumpkin leaves used as vegetables. The garden often provides vegetables for about two to three months of the year.

7.8 Wider significance of these case study vignettes

A concern of this chapter is to demonstrate how farmworkers' livelihoods have been impacted upon by restitution and strategic partnerships. Having described household compositions, sources of income, and ownership of assets - including land – this section now discusses the wider significance of these vignettes or case studies, considered conjointly with the survey findings presented earlier in this chapter. Six broad conclusions can be drawn.

Firstly, land-based livelihoods, although highly constrained, are nonetheless a common feature of the livelihood strategies of poor people in rural South Africa. Whilst limited access to productive land can be regarded as a constraining factor for the majority of households, the

use of home gardens for production of vegetables is quite prominent. However, the lack of water for irrigation is a limiting factor. The vignettes presented above, especially those of CKM and Muvhulawa, show that households value access to fields for growing food staples such as maize. However, an overall trend of the severe underutilisation of cropping land, and to some extent abandonment, can be observed. The major contributing factors appear to be changing rainfall patterns as well as a lack of fencing. These patterns have been observed in other parts of rural South Africa, particularly the Eastern Cape, as documented by Fay (2005).

Secondly, poor households tend to depend on multiple and diverse livelihood strategies. The case studies discussed in this chapter demonstrate the significance of social security grants, mainly pensions and child support grants. Due to the fact that this sample was drawn only from farmworker households, farm employment is the main source of income for many of the households discussed here. Usually, on-farm wages alone are not able to offer a decent living for farmworker households. Whilst some of the households are probably situated within networks of social reciprocity and kin support, as the case of CKM with the support of the mother shows; Muvhulawa's household lacks these networks and that increases its vulnerability. The Case of CKM illustrates the significance of these networks as part of informal strategies for social protection. As Du Toit & Neves (2007) have argued, such strategies are complex, spatially extended, and de-centred social networks created in the context of domestic fluidity.

Thirdly, restitution and strategic partnerships generate tensions relating to the contradictory class positions of farmworkers when labour is sourced from the membership of the CPA, which is the landowner. From a class analytic perspective, the preferential recruitment of CPA members creates tensions in relation to their demands for higher wages, when the enterprises that they co-own may be attempting to reduce the cost of labour on the farms. Analysis of these struggles is explored in the next two chapters, suffice to note the patterns that the survey results reveal. Evidence from case studies shows some of the tensions in relation to the occupation of strategic positions such as farm/section manager by the so-called non-claimant farmworkers. As conversations with some of the general managers have shown, capacity to manage the farm in a manner that increases both farm and labour productivity, requires skill and experience, and as such, the initial stance on retaining CPA members in strategic positions was reversed, as the case study/life history of Ntodeneni (Shigalo) shows.

Similarly, the case study/life history of Phindulo attests to this reversal of agreement in an attempt to increase productivity. Some of these positions come with higher salaries and some of the experienced people challenge the placement of people without the required skills in such positions.

Fourthly, membership of communities and households is a complex matter and often multi-locational in nature. For households, some members do not reside in the same homesteads yet they contribute to the livelihoods by sending home remittances or taking care of the members of the household. At a community level, restitution benefits some community members who live in areas outside the boundaries of claiming communities as defined in terms of chiefly jurisdiction. Others who live inside these boundaries can become beneficiaries of restitution in terms of preferential access to farm jobs and access to public goods, despite not being members of CPAs. The case studies demonstrate that institutions play a significant role in mediating access to opportunities and influencing livelihood strategies and their vulnerability.

Fifthly, survey results and case studies point to profound interconnections between the key variables of land access, agricultural employment and rural livelihoods, which influence the fate of farmworkers in land restitution in the form of commercial partnerships. As Neves & du Toit (2013) have pointed out, combinations of formal employment, land-based entitlements, informal non-farm economic activities, state social assistance and practices of social reciprocity are crucial to the livelihoods of the rural poor. But employment, even at low wage rates, is often the key to livelihood security. Here it is important to note that the vulnerability of farmworker households under strategic partnerships has appeared to increase over time, especially for those farmworkers who do not form part of claimant communities, and have lived their entire lives as labourers on farms with little or no opportunity to venture into other careers due to their lack of education or training.

Sixthly, contradictory dynamics are at work in community-owned farming enterprises. When commercial farms were transferred as a result of land restitution, for example, many workers feared the loss of their jobs, yet the new management improved their conditions of employment, complying with sectoral wage determinations for agriculture, and more CPA members were offered employment. All of these measures raised the cost of labour, which capitalist enterprises generally strive to reduce, and helped put pressure on their viability. The case studies of Ntodeneni and Phindulo illustrate how power and politics within claimant

communities have led to differential access to job opportunities. The politics of restitution, and who is entitled to restitution, has manifested in unequal access to opportunities for promotion to better paid jobs, causing tensions amongst farmworkers. Some farmworkers were overlooked because the priority was to offer opportunities to members of the CPAs. However, there is an emerging trend which sees a reversal of this practice, as illustrated in the case studies of Ntodeni and Phindulo, because of pressures to become competitive.

7.9 Conclusion

The chapter has shown that wage employment is the key livelihood strategy for most farmworker households. This is explained in part by the low usage of their own fields associated with absence of sufficient labour to work the fields, lack of water, high input costs, changing weather patterns and lack of water. In some instances, access to productive land was identified as a challenge due to overcrowding in the villages. The socio-economic conditions under which rural households live can be seen as a driving force for demands of preferential employment of CPA members on farms, additional to the need to take over farm management by the CPAs. These dynamics have influenced socio-political processes within CPAs in relation to which community members should be first in line for recruitment on farms.

Whilst preferential employment of members of CPAs was a key policy decision made early in the restitution process, farming enterprises have also been under pressure to realise profits. This requires skilled and experienced labourers, and the imperative of profitability appears to have forced farming enterprise to relax the preferential employment policy, and instead place some of their more experienced workers in strategic management positions in order to ensure productivity. This appears to have helped to increase yields and output to some extent, but it has also resulted in resentment and fuelled further tensions and conflicts both on farm and between CPAs and farm managers.

This chapter has shown how the delineation of social boundaries in the context of restitution at Levubu has posed particular challenges for defining who is included and who is excluded. This has serious implications for the vulnerability or robustness of the livelihoods of farmworker households. It also raises important questions about the politics of identity within

land claimant communities, which Chapters 7 and 9 discuss at great length. In the next chapter I consider the social relations of production on community-owned farms.



8. FARM LABOUR ON COMMUNITY-OWNED FARMS IN LEVUBU

8.1 Introduction

The design of strategic partnerships on community-owned farms and their subsequent evolution into community-owned enterprises raises questions about the social relations of production that are likely to emerge on such farms, particularly in relation to the recruitment, organisation and management of labour. The relations of production are here understood to mean “the organisation and activities of labour in particular processes of production” (Bernstein 2010:129), including both the technical and social conditions of production. It is closely related to the notion of a labour regime, which connotes “different modes of recruiting or mobilising labour and organising it in production” (Bernstein, *ibid*). In previous chapters, the technical conditions of production were described as “particular sets of productive forces organised in the labour process” whereas social conditions encompass “social relations, institutions and practices that shape activities of production and productive forces” (*ibid*).

From a class-analytic perspective, strategic partnerships and community-owned farming enterprises, just like any capitalist enterprise, involve relationships between land owners (CPAs), agribusiness companies (or strategic partners) and labour (farmworkers). These enterprises are driven by the capitalist imperatives of competition and profitability. Selwyn (2008) reminds us that capital-labour relations are based on conflictual and ongoing processes where each class attempts to maximise their share of the surplus created in the process of accumulation. It is thus important to consider labour practices and processes as an integral part of the social relations of commodity production under capitalism.

The literature on commercial partnerships and community-owned farms in Levubu has not engaged critically with labour issues or investigated labour relations. Derman *et al.* (2013) and Lahiff *et al.* (2012) have evaluated the key factors underpinning shareholder agreements and examined the wider implications for farmworkers, but this is a somewhat narrow focus. This chapter explores various practices and processes in relation to labour in order to understand the dynamics of the underlying relations of production on community-owned commercial farms. This entails an analysis of employment patterns in community-owned

enterprises, management structures, the technical division of labour, farm design and labour management. These are all critical elements of labour regimes, which encompass the mobilisation and social organisation of labour in production (Bernstein, 2010b), as well as the political apparatus that reproduces labour through the regulation of struggles and production politics (Preibisch, 2011). The analysis reveals the complex effects of the underlying contradictory and conflictual relations of capital and labour within community-owned farms in Levubu.

8.2 Labour recruitment and patterns of employment on joint venture and community-owned farming enterprises

The foundational principles of strategic partnerships in Levubu entailed attempts to ‘transform’ agriculture by empowering land claimant communities by means of training and mentorship by agribusiness companies, in addition to securing private sector investment in primary agriculture (CRLR, 2005)¹³³. As discussed earlier, these agreements included commitments to ensure the preferential employment of members of land-claiming CPAs. As early as 2005, at the time that interim management arrangements with strategic partners were being negotiated, and pending the finalisation of shareholder agreements, the CPAs began demanding employment of their members, as well as the occupation of key and strategic positions within farming enterprises. They wanted their representatives to begin working alongside the strategic partners¹³⁴. In the initial stages of the period of interim management, there were no formal recruitment processes at work; strategic partners merely wanted some CPA members to work closely with them, as per the agreements¹³⁵. CPA executive committees, as a matter of urgency, invited those that were available - both executive members and youth – to seek employment. At that stage there were high expectations from young people in particular that they would soon be occupying management positions, but in practice few were employed in such positions and the majority became general labourers.

¹³³ Section 42D Memorandum by the Regional Land Claims Commissioner’s office for Limpopo to the Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs.

¹³⁴ Interviews with Dennis Ravele, Production Manager for Mauluma (Ravele) Farming Enterprise on 14 December 2012 at Appelfontein farm in Levubu; Grace (Ratombo) Managa, CPA Executive Committee member and a member of the royal family, on 16 May 2011 at U-No-Me farm in Levubu, and Peter Mawela, Secretary of the Masakona CPA Executive Committee as well as the Masakona Traditional Council, on 20 May 2011.

¹³⁵ Interviews with Dennis Ravele and Grace Ratombo (*op. cit.*)

By 2006, there was a need to recruit a sizeable number of general labourers as provided for in the shareholders' agreements, despite these agreements not being signed yet at that stage. Recruitment strategies broke with conventional recruitment strategies previously pursued on the farms, in which farmers had recruited labourers from the surrounding villages of Tshakhuma, Mashau, Valdezia and Tsianda, amongst others, or from a pool of seasonal labourers. Under strategic partnerships, neither the Human Resources managers nor the general managers of the farms were responsible for the recruitment of labour. Instead, companies transferred the responsibility for labour recruitment to CPA committees, since members of 'claimant communities' were scattered across different areas located in the former Venda and Gazankulu homelands.¹³⁶ Furthermore, those members of CPAs suitable for recruitment were seen as best identified by CPAs themselves.

This arrangement resulted in complex farm and human resources management practices. Firstly, the CPAs sought to employ as many people as possible, yet general managers and farm managers were cautious, and advised that the CPAs limit numbers, on the basis of industry norms for crops as well as the overall capitalist imperative to keep costs of production as low as possible. However, more often than not, management was put under severe pressure by the CPAs to create vacancies and recruit labour irrespective of the financial position of companies and the affordability of increased labour¹³⁷. In other instances, recruitment processes disregarded the capabilities of the candidates and pushed certain members of the CPAs through to management positions on the farms.

Essentially the CPA committees acted as a 'middle man' in recruiting labour for operating companies. However, there are variations across different CPAs in precisely how they conducted recruitment, as illustrated in the interview discussed in section 8.2.1 below. Some CPAs recruited through word of mouth, or through advertisements placed at local traditional council offices and in local newspapers.

¹³⁶ Interviews Bethuel Ravele of Ravele CPA on 09 May 2011, at Appelfontein; offices of the Ravele farm enterprise; and Sambo, executive committee member for Shigalo CPA, on 16 August 2010.

¹³⁷ Interviews with Danie Basson, the General Manager for Ravele and Masakona Farming Enterprises, on 14 December 2012, at Appelfontein (shared office space by the two CPAs); and with Anthony, an interim General Manager for Ratombo CPA farming enterprise (assisting Danie Bason), on 05 May 2013 at U-No-Me farm, in Levubu.

For the general managers, this trend was worrying. The Ravele CPA was an exception to the rule in the sense that it restrained the growth of its labour force in order to avoid the catastrophic results of the escalating cost of labour. The general manager of the Ravele and Masakona farms suggests that:

“The main issue for these land reform farms with high value commodities should be to balance job creation and profitability. For me, yes, I am here because I want to manage a farming business. I must make profit because if I do not, the government is not going to bail out this company just because of some irrational decisions to employ more people than the company can afford. Yes, it is good to employ more community members. But [...] we should keep up with the industry norms. For example, the farmworker-hectare ratio for bananas is 1:2, for irrigated macadamia in production it is 1:4; and for dryland guavas it is 1:6. We need to factor in these considerations in all aspects of recruitment and division of labour on farms. Unfortunately some of these communities do not understand these principles, they just would like to employ as many people as possible without consideration of the extent of production; you can only take this much if these farms have to realise profit.”¹³⁸

The above extract from a conversation with Danie Basson illustrates the nature of the dilemmas and contradictions confronting CPA members, who hoped that restitution would result in significant material benefits for them, and especially in more employment of CPA members. At the same time, CPAs as owners of the means of production also sought companies as partners who would aim to maximise profits, which could be distributed to members in the form of dividends. However, the inclination towards an increased intake of labourers threatened this possibility. General Managers argued strongly against unnecessary increases in the labour force. For example, Basson suggested that –

“Jobs can be created through expansion of production, not only in primary agriculture but continuously seeking newer opportunities for investment in agro-processing [...] For example, as a norm in banana production, often 10% of the bananas produced are not suitable to sell as fresh. This presents an opportunity to think outside the box and find mechanisms to derive value from that produce. There are opportunities to produce dried fruit, package it and sell it as a snack. This is how operating companies could increase jobs whilst simultaneously creating avenues for more investment and profit to expand the business.”¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Interview with Danie Basson (the General Manager for Ravele and Masakona CPA farming enterprises) on 29 March 2012 at Appelfontein, in Levubu.

¹³⁹ Interview with Danie Basson (*ibid.*)

In a conversation with the general manager for Shigalo, Mr Kotze, he suggested that the Levubu farms had a huge potential to make increased profits, provided there was proper financial management. His view was that the CPA owned large tracts of underdeveloped land on the farms. To create more jobs, the CPA should ensure that this land is developed so that more people can be employed there. Similar sentiments were expressed by the newly-appointed mentor for Ratombo, a consultant. He suggested that proper financial management and accountability were crucial factors that the CPAs did not take cognisance of when making decisions about recruitment of labour.

There were variations in the modalities of recruitment undertaken by the CPAs, as illustrated in the following extract from an interview with a farmworker on one of the Masakona farms:

“I started working on this farm in 2006; I was part of the second group of farmworkers recruited to work here on Masakona farms. I am a part of the Masakona land claim, so after government had bought these farms for us and the white farmers had left, strategic partners needed members of the Masakona community to come and work here. The traditional council made an announcement that unemployed people who are looking for jobs should come to the *Thavhani*¹⁴⁰. Together with others, I found that the CPA committee had already cut pieces of papers written ‘yes’ or ‘no’. By way of casting lots, if one picks up a ‘yes’ piece of paper, it means one is hired. I was pleased to have picked up a ‘yes’ piece of paper, and the next day I was on a bus to Levubu.”¹⁴¹

The Masakona CPA, as well as the Shigalo CPA, adopted a system that they considered fair and transparent to all, of casting lots at a community meeting called for the purposes of recruitment. According to key informants from the Shigalo and Masakona CPAs, the system has worked well because membership of the CPA was concentrated in one or two localities.

With regard to the Ratombo and Ravele CPAs, their memberships were more scattered and lived in various parts of the former Venda and Gazankulu homelands. Recruitment processes have been influenced by their commitment to ensure that these diverse locations where claimants and beneficiaries reside are dealt with fairly within the recruitment process. This approach was an attempt to dispel perceptions that only people from Nzhelele (where the chiefs lived) would benefit, whereas those from sites such as Mashau, Tshakhuma and other

¹⁴⁰ ‘Thavhani’ is a Venda word which means a mountain but in this context it refers to the location of the seat of the Traditional Council, and the Chief.

¹⁴¹ Interview with Agnes Masakona, in January 2012, at a Banana pack house for Masakona, Levubu.

places would not¹⁴². In these circumstances, the CPA executive committee worked with community leaders or coordinators who helped to recruit labourers in their own localities. The recruitment processes in these areas attempted to ensure the proportional selection of workers from different villages in order to ensure that all members have equal opportunities.

Below is an interview with a member of the Ravele CPA, who resides at Ha-Mashau. It documents his life story as well as how he came to work on the Ravele farms.

Interview with 'Dovhani'¹⁴³ of the Ravele CPA

Dovhani was born on 3 September 1964 at Ha-Mashau. He is one of five siblings. He refers to Levubu commercial farms as Mauluma (original name of Ravele settlement in Levubu). He regards Mauluma as his ancestral land. As a descendant of the victims of forced removals (his parents), he is part of the Ravele CPA. His parents were part of the Mauluma 'community' that was displaced during apartheid to Nzhelele. Due to the dry conditions in Nzhelele, his parents relocated to Ha-Mashau. In 1983, his family requested a residential stand at Tshakhuma in search for better schools. The chief allocated the family a residential stand. However, his parents remained at Ha-Mashau but built a house for their children at Tshakhuma, and they used to visit regularly while the children went to school in Tshakhuma. He could not proceed with his education due to financial problems. In 1989 he married his wife and together they have three children. In 1984, he started working at a tea plantation in Sapekoe, Mambedi. He worked as a supervisor at first. In 1990 he was promoted to work as an 'employment clerk', the position he occupied until he was retrenched in 1999, when Sapekoe went through its restructuring process that ultimately saw the closure of Mambedi, part of Sapekoe.

In 2000, he joined a cooperative, a group of small-scale farmers, at Ha-Mashau. They farmed on 4.7 ha under a government-funded income-generating project. Although the project had a good start, it could not succeed due to lack of access to affordable inputs and failure to secure markets for their fresh produce. In 2002 the project collapsed and he remained unemployed until 2006. That same year, government restored the claimed farms to the Ravele community. A certain Mr Ravele from Ha-Mashau, who represented the claimants from Mashau at the CPA executive meetings, informed claimant families at Mashau that farms were transferred to the Ravele community; they were in the process of recruiting farmworkers, preferentially members of the CPA or descendants of those who were forcefully removed from the old Mauluma (in Levubu). BP submitted his name together with other members of the Mashau-group. A few days later, Mr Ravele came back to report that, from the list of names he sent, the executive committee could only cater for 30 people, and he was one of them. He started working

¹⁴² Interview with Mr Mutuwa and Mr Tshikwara (part of the Ratombo CPA dissident group that occupied some of the farms so as to manage them independently), on the 11th May 2011, on portion no 13, commonly known as the Meyer farm.

¹⁴³ 'Dovhani' is a pseudonym – a Venda word which means 'to repeat', and connotes a second chance. This interview took place on (date), at (place).

in October 2006 at a farm called EMS as a general worker on macadamia, banana, litchi and avocado fields.”

This interview shows that the process of recruitment involved attempting to give equal opportunities to all members of the Ravele CPA scattered across the former Venda ‘homeland’. In contrast to the Masakona case, processes at Ravele appear to sincerely attempt to ensure that members of the entire ‘community’ had an opportunity to access jobs on the farms. According to CPA members, this approach has worked well. However, this does not mean that everyone is satisfied. During recent tensions and divisions within the CPA, allegations were made by disgruntled people that certain sections of the community were preferred for certain types of jobs¹⁴⁴. Resentment in relation to the recruitment of labour, as well as questions relating to the distribution of the fruits of labour, contributed to tensions and conflicts within the CPA, as will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

Recruitment in the case of the Ravele CPA stands in contrast to processes undertaken at Masakona, as illustrated by the life history of ‘*Muvhulawa*’¹⁴⁵ presented in Chapter 7. To recapitulate, the Masakona Traditional Council played a significant role in the recruitment of labour using a system to cast lots as opposed to formal interviews or targeted selection as in other CPAs whose membership is sparsely located. The full range of recruitment methods and processes undertaken within Levubu claimant communities are illustrated in Table 37 below. The table shows methods of recruitment and key characteristics of these methods. Different jobs require different methods of recruitment, especially as they relate to the levels of skill and knowledge required for different job categories. Relevant categories of workers include management and administrative positions, general workers who may be permanent or temporary, and seasonal and casual workers. In Masakona and Shigalo, with the majority of CPA members living in close proximity and often gathering at the offices of their traditional councils for meetings, labourers could be randomly selected through the casting of lots. In contrast, in Ratombo and Ravele, recruitment poses a challenge because members of the CPAs are scattered far and wide. Recruitment here is based on the proportional selection of members from different villages in order to ensure that all members enjoy an equal opportunity to access farm jobs.

¹⁴⁴ Notes from a complaint lodged with the Presidential Hotline by the Ravele CPA ‘concerned group’.

¹⁴⁵ ‘*Muvhulawa*’ (already mentioned in previous chapter) means an object of sacrifice. This interview took place on 12 December 2013 at Wilken Farm for Masakona CPA.

Table 37: Methods of labour recruitment undertaken by Levubu CPAs

Kinds of vacancies	Types of jobs	Methods of recruitment
- Management and administration	- Production managers, farm managers, pack house managers, human resources managers, bookkeepers/ administrative assistants.	- Publish vacancies, receive CVs and conduct formal interviews; headhunt for certain strategic positions.
- Permanent and temporary general workers	- Supervisors, irrigation workers, security guards, general workers in the fields, tractor drivers, operators of sprayers.	- Cast lots; target certain category of the beneficiaries from certain villages; proportional selection of employees from claimants.
- Seasonal and contract work	- Harvesting workers for particular crop in season.	- Appointment of a number of people required in a particular village, a mix of claimants and non-claimants



Source: Observations and interviews with CPA members, farmworkers, farm managers.

Both strategic partners and CPAs have recognised that to achieve productive efficiency, companies require specialist skills that might not be found within the membership of CPAs. Companies were mandated to advertise for and appoint suitably qualified persons. The main idea here was to ensure that persons with specialised skills be assigned to work alongside designated CPA persons, for purposes of skills transfer. Strategic partners brought with them the majority of skilled administrative and technical staff. Members of CPAs were recruited mainly as general farm labourers. In the period where farms were under strategic partnerships, few CPA members were identified for training as pack house managers, farm managers, and administrators. In the absence of a structured training and capacity-building programme, no comprehensive transfer of skills took place.

In contrast to strategic partnerships, community-owned farming enterprises adopted rather different strategies to empower members of the CPAs. For example, at both Mauluma Farming Enterprise and Sharp Move Trading, all the white farm managers resigned when SAFM withdrew from Levubu. The new general manager then appointed some of the supervisors and foremen as farm managers and developed an on-farm programme for mentoring and training them. The programme involved both weekly management meetings and one-on-one sessions to discuss development of each farm unit.¹⁴⁶

Increasingly these companies are appointing non-CPA (i.e. non-claimant) farmworkers as farm managers. General managers have argued that if they are to realise maximum possible profits, they require skilled and experienced farmworkers who can use their expertise to improve farm and labour productivity, while they also aim to empower CPA members to eventually take over management of the farms. For example, one of the longest serving farmworkers at Masakona has been appointed as a production manager¹⁴⁷, and similarly at Ravele an experienced worker at Appelfontein has also been appointed as farm manager¹⁴⁸. Shigalo has abandoned the preferential employment of members of the claimant communities, and implemented instead a 50/50 arrangement that caters for the recruitment of non-claimant workers from nearby villages.¹⁴⁹

The question arises: With these dynamics in mind, what has been the state of affairs with regard to quantities of labour on these farms over time? Figure 8.1 below shows that, at least by 2009, operating companies had larger numbers of permanent labourers than casual workers. That was mainly due to the demand that strategic partnerships employ CPA members on the farms. Furthermore, prior to the collapse of strategic partners, the number of CPA farmworkers were less than those who were not members of CPAs.

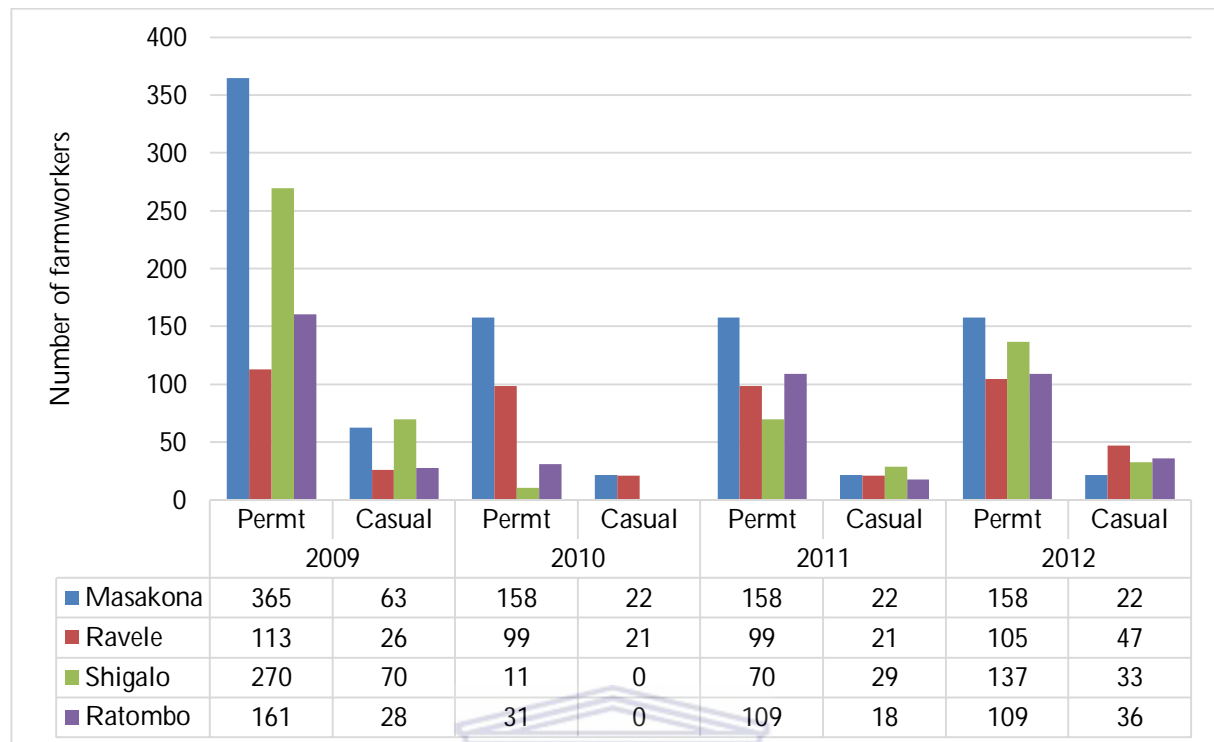
¹⁴⁶ Interview with Danie Basson, the general manager for Ravele and Masakona farming enterprises on 29 March 2012, Appelfontein in Levubu; Notes taken during farm management meetings of the Ravele and the Masakona farming enterprises on 29 March 2012.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Sunnyboy Ramashia, production manager on Masakona Farms on 19 May 2011 and 13 December 2012, at Piccado Bottom, ack house.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Barnard Munyai, (who is this? Full date and place of interview?)2012.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Theuns Kotze, the general manager for Shigalo CPA farming enterprise on 12 December 2011.

Figure 9: Farm employment by operating companies (2009-2012) in December each year



Source: Interviews with HR managers/officers in the four enterprises. (Permt – permanent workers).

Figure 9 shows that the collapse of strategic partnerships in Levubu had differential effects on the security of employment by operating companies. Both Ratombo and Shigalo suffered tremendously because of lengthy liquidation processes that resulted in the exodus of many workers from their farms to nearby farms. In some cases operating companies asked the workers to stop working for a period, until they could be recalled to the farms. For example, at some point during 2010, Shigalo had only 11 workers on its farms compared to over 250 in 2009¹⁵⁰ and about 400 in 2005/6¹⁵¹, whereas employment on Masakona farms dropped from 365 in 2009 to 158 in 2012. Except for the 11 workers who were security guards and irrigation workers, all farmworkers were sent home, because the company could not afford to pay their wages.

However, after the newly established companies entered into management contracts with commercial farmers, they began to rebuild the farms, and there was a slight increase in the

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Maluleke Owen (from Olifantshoek) Phineas Chabalala (from Olifantshoek), security guards at Shigalo farms, on 07 December 2011, at Shigalo Offices in Levubu.

¹⁵¹ Interview with Mbhazima Sambo, a former member of the executive committee of Shigalo CPA, at his house in Olifantshoek, on 16 August 2010.

recruitment of labour. The difference with past labour regimes was that, across the board, there was no strict adherence to the idea of preferential employment. At Shigalo, this was more pronounced because by December 2012, the general manager had already disclosed that their labour recruitment policy aimed at a 50:50 ratio of claimants to non-claimant farmworkers. Ratombo, as a former partner to Umlimi, like Shigalo, also experienced problems leading to a decline in employment.

On the Masakona farms, the decline in the number of permanent farmworkers from 365 in 2009 to 158 in 2012 was mainly the result of the operating company terminating the contracts of a category of temporary workers. These temporary (not casual or seasonal) positions could not be sustained when the operating company was under temporary judicial management. Many of those workers were members of the Masakona claimant community. However, they became a pool from which seasonal labour could be sourced.

In the three CPAs of Ratombo, Ravele and Masakona, more than 70% of their workers are members of claimant communities¹⁵². However, these numbers change from time to time due to the mobility of farmworkers, as well as the difficulties experienced by community-owned farms, such as problems in securing adequate finance. For example, within a period of one year the Ratombo CPA had experienced a decline in the number of workers from about 270 to 11, but employment picked up subsequently and a total of 70 workers were employed the following year.

It appears that the numbers of CPA members working on these farms increased over time, when the figures cited here, based on fieldwork conducted in 2008/9, are compared with the findings of Derman *et al.* (2013:76). These authors report that "... Shigalo farms before the Umlimi liquidation kept their former workers, and only 11% of the workers were from Shigalo (34 of 297), whereas from Ratombo the percentage is 37% of the total of 106 employees".

¹⁵² Interviews with Bethuel Ravele on 16 June 2010 and 09 May 2011 at Appelfontein, Ravele farming enterprise offices; interview with Grace Managa/Ratombo at U-No-Me on 10 May 2011; interview with Emily Mashawana, HR Manager for Ravele and Masakona CPA farming enterprises on 10 May 2011 at Appelfontein farm.

A general decline in the recruitment of labour is also evident in the category of seasonal/temporary workers, as illustrated in Figure 8. However, the case of Ravele seems to be an exception, since it has managed to keep seasonal labour at a relatively stable level. The differences between Ravele and Masakona are intriguing, especially when taking into consideration that they are both under the same general manager, and they grow similar types of crops. A range of factors that contribute to this difference has been noted in previous chapters, and will be discussed further in Chapter 9.

8.3 Organisation of production: labour management and divisions of labour

As discussed earlier, the four companies owned by these communities engage in the production of subtropical fruit and nuts and target export markets in Europe, the USA, Asia and other parts of Africa (DAFF, 2013). This section discusses the organisation of production processes in terms of structures of management and control on community-owned farms, and methods of labour management aimed at increasing productivity.

8.3.1 Farm design and labour arrangements

Earlier observations on arrangements for strategic partnerships revealed how private sector partners attempted to combine different farm units owned by the CPAs into distinct ‘mega-farms’.¹⁵³ As observed by Derman *et al.* (2013) and Lahiff *et al.* (2012), this approach resulted in the joining up of four or five farms that were previously owned and managed by four or five different commercial farmers, but now reporting to one farm manager. Due to the spatial location of farm units across the Valley, the layout of these ‘mega-farms’ led farm managers to spend much of their time moving between different farm units. Similarly, this notion of ‘mega-farms’ had serious ramifications for labour. Earlier observations described how a pool of labour was centralised, meaning that general farmworkers also had to move between farms, losing more productive labour time. In addition, crops on some farms were not being given the attention they needed, for example, the citrus orchards at EMS in 2007/8¹⁵⁴.

¹⁵³ Tshililo Manenzhe, Fieldwork diary notes (Undated), Nkuzi Development Association.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

When strategic partners withdrew from Levubu in 2009, most of the CPAs, through their general managers, reversed this approach. Apart from Shigalo CPA, the other three reverted to designating farm units according to the original cadastral farm boundaries obtaining at the time of restitution, as well as appointing different farm managers for each farm unit. Contrary to the other three, Shigalo opted to group different blocks of a particular crop as a production unit, with dedicated labour for each crop type under a section manager. For example, all macadamia blocks on their farms comprise a single production unit under a section manager¹⁵⁵. Those CPAs that use existing farm boundaries to determine production units argue that it is a more efficient way of managing production, whereas the Shigalo CPA believes that their arrangement is the best way to utilise the limited available resources.

8.3.2 Structures of management and control

Under strategic partnerships, ‘mega-farms’ involved enterprises under operating companies in which the general manager, who was not the owner of the business, as is the case for many large-scale commercial farms in South Africa, acted as a CEO. The general manager reported to the company’s board of directors established to represent the shareholders in terms of the agreements entered into¹⁵⁶. Although executive powers lay with the general manager (who managed different farm managers, production managers and a number of supervisors on different farms), the ultimate decision-making body was the board of directors representing both the strategic partner and the CPA in the joint venture.

With strategic partnerships came complex management systems, involving the centralisation of powers in the general manager, who was appointed by the strategic partner company. This centralisation was agreed to despite each CPA having the majority shareholding in the operating company, on the basis that the strategic partner needed secure control of the operating company if they were to inject operating capital. The control of the management of the company gave them some form of ‘surety’. (As it turned out, none of the capital promised was ever declared in accounts submitted by the operating companies.)

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Theuns Kotze, the general manager for Shigalo CPA farming enterprise; and interview with PC, production manager for Shigalo on 14 December 2012.

¹⁵⁶ Shareholder agreements between SAFM and Ravele CPA, and Masakona CPA; Shareholder agreements between Umlimi Consortium and the Shigalo and the Ratombo CPAs, unsigned.

Other structures of management and control within communities include CPA executive committees, traditional councils and royal councils, all of which have an interest in the management of the farms. These structures are conceptualised as arising within particular ‘modes of belonging’, and will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. However, it is important to reflect here on the changes that occurred after the collapse of the strategic partnerships and the formation of community-owned farming enterprises.

After 2009, when strategic partnerships collapsed and CPAs became the sole proprietors of the farming enterprises, they entered into management contracts with professional commercial farmers. For accountability, the CPAs also constituted boards of directors of the relevant companies. There is, however, much variation across the four cases in relation to how these are linked to other structures of management and control.

For example, the Ravele CPA resolved to ensure that the chairperson of the board and the CPA executive committee would never be the same person. In addition, some members of the board of directors were not members of the CPA executive committee. In addition, although the traditional leader, Chief Ravele, was an ex-officio member of the CPA executive committee there was no other direct link with the office of the traditional leader. In contrast, at Ratombo there was no clear distinction between the CPA executive committee, the board of directors, the farm management committee and the royal council. These structures sometimes interfered in farm management decisions¹⁵⁷, resulting in ineffective decision-making and lack of accountability by the farm manager¹⁵⁸. At Masakona, the chairperson of the CPA committee was also the chairperson of the board of directors, and members of the board were selected from the CPA executive committee. Thus the lines between the CPA executive committee and the board of directors were often blurred. Decisions of the CPA could be enacted on the farm without proper communication with other managers, for example decisions about employment or investment in different portions of the farm¹⁵⁹.

General managers are responsible for day-to-day farm operations. Interviews with general managers have shown the difficulties they experienced with regard to structures of control.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Danie Basson on 05 April 2012 and interview with Anthony, interim farm manager supporting Danie Basson, on 05 April 2012 at U-N0-Me farm.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Milingoni Ratombo on 09 January 2013, an executive committee member of the Ratombo CPA, at Makhado Crossing, in Makhado/Louis Trichardt.

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Danie Basson, 29 March 2012.

Where there is a clear delineation of powers, roles and responsibilities, as in the case of Ravele, the enterprises appear to work relatively well. The Ravele CPA is the only one that has consistently operated with positive profit margins, it has managed to keep the number of farmworkers relatively stable, and it has been able to address internal conflicts, by putting in place systems to address queries by dissident groups and disgruntled members of the CPA¹⁶⁰. At the time of the writing, the Ravele CPA had suspended the chairperson of the company's board of directors.

The case of Ratombo, in contrast, illustrates the difficulties experienced when structures of control are poorly defined. For example, between 2012 and 2014 the operating company hired and fired three general managers. In 2015 it recruited a former owner of one of their farms to return to assist them as a mentor, on a consultancy basis. An interview with this mentor, Mark Cohen, illuminates the key role of institutional dynamics on community-owned farms.

Interview with Mark Cohen¹⁶¹

Mark Cohen is a white commercial farmer in Makhado. His family has a long history of farming in the area, and he is a third generation farmer in his family, on both the maternal and paternal sides. He was brought up on a farm called Claremont, now transferred to the Ratombo CPA. Mr William Ratombo and Ms Grace Managa, elders in the Ratombo community, would have known him as a young boy and helped to raise him up. He studied Agricultural Economics in Pietermaritzburg after which he came back to the area.

He was the CEO of Green Farms Nut Company, responsible for general management and import of crop from other African countries and exporting to the rest of the world, Europe and the US mainly. In 2004, after selling farms to the restitution programme (he was actually among the first group of farmers to sell (i.e. he was part of the 'Group of 23'), the family also sold the Green Farms Nut Company and moved out of Levubu. He was also part of Mavu, one of the strategic partners that tried to work with the Ratombo and Shigalo CPAs. However, it did not work, he says, because of the lack of commitment by government to implement the promises they made to the CPA and the strategic partners, for example, the release of grants.

In November 2013 one of the CPA members, Mutshinyalo Ratombo contacted him, asking if he could avail himself as a mentor to the Ratombo CPA. Because he knew the community, and still feels some form of attachment to some of the farms, he was willing to give it a try. Further, some of the people working on the farm were his

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Bethuel Ravele on 09 May 2011, at Appelfontein; offices of the Ravele farm enterprise.

¹⁶¹ Interview with Mark Cohen – Mentor for Ratombo CPA farming enterprises - on 9 March 2015, at his smallholding in Makhado.

trainees, for example, the production manager, Mr Patrick. He also thinks that Ratombo CPA has some of the best farms in Levubu, for example the U-No-Me farm, of about 3000 ha. He was informed that he should to contact the Limpopo Department of Agriculture to get the process going. After difficulties in securing a meeting with the Department, he decided to meet the CPA. He agreed to mentor the CPA on a consultancy basis, charging them a rate of R600/hour; i.e. around R10 000 per month. In his first month of work, the fee was a bit higher than this due to the amount of time he spent on the farms trying to set up systems for the company.

According to Mark, there were no management systems in place and the CPA was just running the farm down. In November 2014, he tried to obtain information on, and records about the farm, i.e. production and sales and also to check the state of the company. It was 'a mess', there was no trial balance, and their financial records were on an Excel page that no one could explain. There was just no capacity to manage the farm. The main problem that he encountered was that there was clearly corruption at the CP, but it is not within his powers to send people to jail. In 2013, the fragments of financial reports showed that the farms had the potential to generate a turnover of at least R7 million per annum. However, the company at that time could not even pay salaries and wages. There were no systems to account for the funds of the company. The people on the farm sold bananas for cash and there were no controls and no record keeping. Cash was flowing in and out 'without proper controls'.

Furthermore, the CPA could not encumber the assets to generate more capital. The CPA had a balance in grants of approximately R1 million but because of the conflicts within the CPA, none of the government departments (i.e. of agriculture and rural development) were willing to engage with the CPA and release these funds until the CPA had sorted out its own business. He phoned Green Farms and asked that the company purchase 200 tons of the crops on the farms. When he received this money, he started to set up certain internal controls.

As a mentor, he launched himself into a very problematic situation. The challenge within this CPA is that there are 'different families attempting to stamp their authority on the farms'. The matter is exacerbated by the fact that when Chief Ratombo passed on, there was a leadership vacuum in the community in general, and the CPA also lacks strong leadership figures, hence the conflicts. As a mentor, he encountered difficulties because he would set up systems in an attempt to close all the gaps, in order to protect the resources of the company. Unfortunately, some people have the protection of senior members of the CPA, and hence 'the community' undermined his decisions and the systems he has put in place.

The challenges of community-owned farming enterprises were experienced elsewhere too, as at Masakona, leading to the resignation of Danie Basson as general manager. Subsequently, the Masakona CPA approached Mr Thenga to work on their farms as a mentor. An interview with Thenga reveals the background of people hired to provide support to these enterprises.

Interview with Mr Thenga¹⁶² (recently appointed mentor for Masakona CPA)

Mr Thenga, who regards himself as an agricultural technician, was 63 years of age at the time of the interview. He lives at Ha-Masia, about 10 km from Levubu. He started schooling in 1962 at Ha-Masaia. His interest in agriculture started at an early age when he was in Standard 4 (or Grade Six), at a primary school at Ha-Masia, when he worked in school gardens and fields. After graduating with a Junior Certificate (later Form III, presently Grade 10), in 1975 he went to Tompi Seleka Agricultural College, whilst many of his contemporaries chose to go to Tshisimani College of Education. Having completed his three-year diploma in agriculture, in 1978 he was employed by the Venda Development Cooperation (VDC) and championed the Agricultural Trade component of VDC. In 1979, when the former Venda 'homeland' attained its 'independence', he co-founded Venda Agricultural Corporation (Ltd), commonly known as Agriven. Later this became the Agricultural and Rural Development Corporation (ARDC) after the integration of different development corporations from the former Bantustans of Gazankulu and Lebowa. He contributed to the establishment of different plantations and the development of agriculture in the former Venda homeland, working with traditional leaders and communities, as well as in the development of various irrigation schemes.

In 1999 he left the ARDC to pursue a career as an agricultural consultant. In 2003, the then MEC of Agriculture in Limpopo, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, recruited him on a contract basis to assist in the resuscitation of the Tshivhase Tea Estate. In 2012, he started his own business, known as Masingo Irrigation. He also runs a nursery at Tsianda, and holds about 16.5 hectare of his own land at Ha-Masia. For the past three years he has focussed on his own businesses. In 2015 he was approached by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform and asked to assist Masakona CPA as a mentor. On 10 February 2015 he had a meeting with the DRDLR, and started to work as a mentor on 2 March 2015. By the time of the interview, he had worked as a mentor for only one month.

The recruitment of Thenga in March 2014 represented a shift in government thinking regarding the management of large-scale farms in Levubu, away from relying only on white commercial farmers for professional expertise, to the use of experienced black farmers such as Thenga. This is also driven by the perceptions of CPA members that white commercial farmers were 'setting them up for failure'¹⁶³. In contrast, however, the Ratombo CPA has requested a former owner and a member of Mavu (their initial strategic partner) to come back to provide assistance to them.

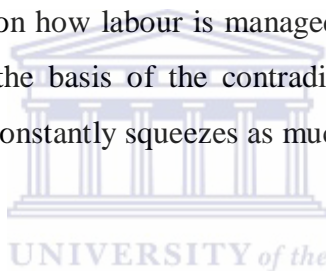
¹⁶² This story is based on conversations with Mr Thenga on 7 April 2015 at the Masakona offices at farm B24 Levubu (not Appelfontein, offices which they had shared with Ravele for over 9 years under SAFM and later with Danie Basson).

¹⁶³ Interviews with Mr Thenga (newly appointed mentor for the Masakona CPA farming enterprise) and Mr Munyai (new Masakona CPA chairperson) on 07 April 2015, on the farm portion B24 in Levubu.

There is no common trajectory in relation to structures of control and institutional arrangements amongst the four CPA case studies. Shifts in practice reveal that a great deal of experimentation, or learning through ‘trial and error’, is undertaken. Yet the Ravele operation has managed to retain the services of their general manager over this entire period. Central themes are leadership challenges and a failure to establish sound management structures in different enterprises, distinct from other structures of control present in these situations, such as chiefs and CPA executive committees.

8.3.3 Labour management and productivity

Large-scale capitalist farming enterprises, such as the ones in Levubu, are under constant pressure to increase farm and labour productivity. They are also driven by a vision fixated on maximising profits, yet ‘cost-prize’ squeezes and other pressures tend to obstruct this goal. Controlling costs depends much on how labour is managed (Gibbon & Riisgaard, 2014). As discussed in this thesis, this is the basis of the contradictory and conflictual relations of capital and labour where capital constantly squeezes as much labour as possible to achieve its profit.



Before discussion of the interests of actors and the gendered analysis of labour process, a key question relates to how enterprises fared in relation to labour management and productivity. During the times of joint venture operating companies, the enterprises in line with their corporate structure established human resources units with dedicated clerks and/or managers. According to one of the general managers¹⁶⁴, an effective human resource manager makes a major contribution to farming enterprises of the magnitude of those at Levubu, since companies are expected to employ large numbers of community members whose expectations of the farms are high. These divisions were inherited by the community-owned enterprises after the collapse of strategic partnerships, albeit with differential levels of structure. For instance, the Ravele and Masakona enterprises continued to operate professionally whereas Ratombo was not fully capacitated, hence reports of poor payroll management and the lack of management of staff, as reported by the newly appointed mentor.

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Danie Basson on 29 March 2012, at Appelfontein Farm, Levubu.

The community-owned enterprises had varied success rates and were influenced to a large extent by the levels of structural and institutional organisations. The Ravele and Masakona enterprises enjoyed a fairly long period of stability within their labour forces. A more difficult period began in 2012/13, when industrial action was embarked on by Masakona farmworkers when the enterprise could not pay their salaries and wages regularly. As discussed before, the general manager attributed this to poor management decisions by the board of directors based on their interference with the day-to-day management of the farms. Some of the CPA members also accused the general manager of a lack of transparency.

What can be said about labour management? This research found an element of compromise between 'market' and 'domestic' conventions of labour management, as discussed in Gibbon & Riisgaard (2014). The processes of recruitment, work organisation and worker deployment discussed earlier illuminates this assertion. The hiring of labour often involves 'personal acquaintance and historical ties' to the owner of the business (the CPAs) and especially those in the CPA responsible for recruitment, but to a certain degree, the system also allows for impersonal and purely 'cost-based' hiring practices. In order to manage this compromise, general managers on the farms often try to negotiate between hiring of labour from the 'communities' and adhering to industry norms on worker:hectare ratios¹⁶⁵. In some cases, boards of directors do take heed of managerial advice, whereas in others they do not, and this contributes to the variable success of the enterprises.

The life history of 'Ntodeni' presented in Chapter 7 illustrates the compromise achieved on these farms between 'domestic' and 'market' conventions in labour management. People are often hired into positions based on the cultural politics at play within agricultural enterprises, yet the pressure for increased productivity compels the enterprises to promote certain individuals with relevant knowledge and skills to do certain jobs. According to 'Ntodeni', a section manager on one of Shigalo farms, he had the necessary skills and experience to manage a farm but because he was regarded as an outsider by the CPA, he could not be appointed to such a position. Eventually, however, a drop in both the quality and quantity of production that resulted in part from the lack of relevant knowledge and skills of the incumbent manager, forced management in 2011 to appoint 'Ntodeni' as a section manager.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

This was in recognition of his ability to turn around failing macadamia nut and citrus orchards.

Interviews with general managers and some farm/section managers suggest that in their view there are various ways to achieve increased labour productivity. The most common strategies are to increase incentives for workers so that they put in greater effort, and to end the use of casual workers. However, due to the nature of the crops being produced and the financial position of the enterprises, none of the CPAs have done away with casual and seasonal labour. In addition to setting a daily task target (DTT), they offer piece rates (PRs) to workers. For example, on the Ravele farms workers can earn R6 per 80kg of nuts as the piece rate, in addition to the daily task target. This allows the company to achieve higher production with the available labour on the farm. Similar approaches have been implemented at Masakona. However, on the Ratombo and Shigalo farms, the permanent workers work on a DTT basis and seasonal workers on a piece rate. In addition, where the DTT has been implemented, workers were allowed (once targets have been achieved) to end their daily work shift. As some of the interviews with workers have shown, they preferred it because they could go home early. However, some workers, especially the new ones from the CPAs, were reportedly struggling to achieve their DTTs. For Ravele CPA, the general manager, at the time of this research, was developing a new approach to productivity of labour. He referred to this as an evolving system of labour management in which each worker's position would be reviewed and graded on a regular basis. This was meant to address the challenges where some CPA Executive Members insist on their relatives or family members being offered positions for which they are not qualified, and demanding higher salaries.

Whilst the general managers for enterprises owned by the Ravele and Masakona communities are committed to 'non-despotic' systems of supervision, older supervisors that have worked on these farms for most of their lives still hold on to an older style of labour management. Some general managers, especially Danie Basson, utilise weekly management meetings to modify the management and supervision of labour in a largely pragmatic manner¹⁶⁶. Some supervisors now tend to serve as production monitors and technical problem-solvers, albeit with differential degrees of knowledge on the technical aspects of the farming of subtropical

¹⁶⁶ Personal field notes, taken during observation in the management meetings on 29 March 2012.

fruit and nut crops. This is a style associated with an ‘industrial’ convention of labour management (Gibbon and Riesgaard, 2014).

8.4 Divergence and convergence of interests of claimant and non-claimant farmworkers

As discussed above, claimant farmworkers on community-owned farms in Levubu occupy contradictory class locations, as both ‘labour’ (as workers) and ‘capital’ (as co-owners of the farms). This means that at times the interests of claimant and non-claimant farmworkers diverge, as in relation to preferential employment, and at times they converge, as in relation to wages and conditions of work.

Settlement agreements for restitution in Levubu forbid claimants to settle on the farms, and propose that beneficiaries will gain from job creation, as well as receiving other benefits such as the payment of a share of dividends, the payment of rent, and so on. They thus institutionalise the recruitment of new co-owners of the farms (i.e. members of CPAs) as farmworkers, alongside non-claimant farmworkers. But farms have struggled with complex processes of integrating these new workers, and have had to manage the tensions that arise from the differentiated identities of farmworkers, not only in terms of their rights arising from restitution, but also their diverse places of origin, their ethnic backgrounds, and so on. New farm management structures in Levubu inherited many highly experienced and skilled farmworkers with an excess of 10 years of service on these farms. As illustrated in some of the case studies and life histories provided above, such workers often become insecure in the course of transitions in ownership and the subsequent restructuring of farms as joint ventures.

The first few years after restoration of ownership of the farms and their management by strategic partners were characterised by the emergence of significant tensions between the already employed, often non-claimant farmworkers and new farmworkers, usually members of CPAs. At the insistence of CPA committees, strategic partners were meant to recruit ‘younger’ CPA members to management and strategic positions on farms, as discussed above. In some cases, as with ‘Ntodeni’ (see Chapter 7), new appointees had to supervise experienced farmworkers who had been in supervisory or lower-level management positions on similar kinds of farms. Key informants reported that some of the new workers, irrespective of their skills and experience of farming, attempted to assert their authority by rejecting

advice offered by more experienced farmworkers. In some instances, the outcomes were disastrous, as when production levels collapsed.

On 18 June 2010, a scheduled interview with a CPA committee member at the offices of the Shigalo-owned company could not take place because the person concerned could not meet the appointment. Instead, a conversation took place with an administrator who had been appointed to the company by Mavu in 2005. She expressed frustration at researchers, and related a story about the number of people who had conducted research at Levubu since 2005, with nothing happening over that time to improve conditions on these farms. Instead, she said, ‘conditions have deteriorated from bad to worse’. At this time the companies were just beginning to emerge from the difficult period in which strategic partnerships had collapsed and companies were being liquidated, many farmworkers had lost their jobs, and a feeling of despair was common among workers. She further said:

“Both government and communities contributed in the problems of land reform in Levubu, because it appears that no one had clear knowledge about farming and what needed to be done, hence strategic partners could do as they pleased on these farms. This has caused so much pain, frustration, and uncertainty for us, the workers.”¹⁶⁷

Given strategic partner commitments to empower CPA members so that they would be able to take over and manage farms and companies by the time that contracts with strategic partners expired, non-claimant farmworkers were not generally considered for supervisory or management positions. When they were appointed to such positions, they were usually shadowed by CPA members; however, some of the latter did not want to take instructions from non-claimant farmworkers, stating that ‘the land is now ours’. After the collapse of strategic partnerships, CPAs and enterprises began to shift towards a narrower, strictly skills-oriented set of appointment criteria, given pressures to achieve profitability.

Some CPA members in management positions have experienced difficulties in explaining their decisions to CPA members not employed on farms and to farmworkers. For example, by 2011 the Masakona-owned company, Sharp Move Trading owed the CPA approximately R2 million in rent. The CPA committee took a decision to defer the payment of lease fees until the company improved its financial standing. Yet this decision angered some members of

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Maluta Mukwevho on 18 June 2012, at Shigalo-wa-Muhunguti Offices, Levubu.

communities, who expected material benefits but had not yet received any¹⁶⁸. As a result of unmet expectations, people in farm management positions who were appointed by the CPA are generally under pressure to provide information about the finances of farms to other members.

Sometimes the interests of claimant and non-claimant farmworkers clearly converge, as when all workers experience frustrations caused by the lack of payment of salaries. This occurred at Ratombo and Shigalo during the time when Umlimi experienced the financial difficulties that eventually led to its liquidation. Recently, the financial troubles at Sharp Move Trading resulted in the non-payment of all labourers on the Masakona farms, whether they were CPA members or not. Convergence is also illustrated by the 2013 strike action by Masakona workers. About 120 farmworkers demanded an improvement of the terms and conditions of their employment, including questions of the gendered division of labour, lack of overtime payment (especially for security guards who work at night), and compliance with the sectoral determination of wages.

A conversation with Gabriel Masakona, a Food and Allied Workers' Union (FAWU) shop steward, showed that the workers felt that the company was not treating them appropriately, for example through non-payment of wages on time, non-payment of overtime, poor conditions of services, e.g. lack of protective clothing and uniforms, and so on. These views were expressed across all the community-owned farms in Levubu, with the exception of those owned by the Ravele CPA. Both claimant and non-claimant workers agree that improvements are needed in conditions of employment for farmworkers as well as improved levels of pay.

Case study of the Masakona workers' strike

By December 2012 the total number of farmworkers employed by Sharp Move Trading, the operating company working the farms owned by the Masakona CPA, was about 120. The work force comprised both CPA members and non-members. Due to the company's financial and cash flow problems, the company could not pay wages to its workers for three months,

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Peter Mawela, the former Chairperson of the CPA, on 18 June 2010 at the Masakona Traditional Council offices at Ha-Masakona Village.

between December 2012 and February 2013¹⁶⁹. Engagement between a workers' forum and farm management did not yield any desirable outcomes for farmworkers. Management on the farms and the CPA Executive Committee made a commitment to address the situation by paying two months' of wages to 'catch up'. As a gesture of goodwill, the company offered a 25kg bag of maize meal to all the workers.

However, on 28 February 2013 almost all farmworkers on all Masakona CPA farms embarked on strike action because the company had reneged on the agreement, not paying the full two months' wages as agreed, only one month's. The farmworkers demanded better working conditions, regular payment of wages to workers, and protective clothing for general workers, especially during the rainy season and for those involved in spraying chemicals. They also demanded overtime payment, for security guards in particular, for work done over weekends and public holidays, as well as compliance with the sectoral wage determination for agricultural workers.

In January 2014, it was evident that the Food and Allied Workers' Union (FAWU) had recruited some farmworkers. One of the members of the royal family was now a shop steward for FAWU, representing workers against the operating company and the CPA. At the end of February 2014 farmworkers belonging to FAWU embarked on strike action again. Their demands had increased to include an annual bonus (of one month's full salary), and an increase of daily wage rates from R85.00 to R105.00. They further complained that management and the CPA had made promises but no action or implementation had been seen. The CPA executive committee, the Chief of Masakona and the HR Manager engaged in negotiations with workers, represented by FAWU. Although the majority of issues had not been addressed by the end of 2014 due to the financial constraints experienced by the company, the concerns of security guards had largely been addressed. The post of 'security guard' had been abolished, and these workers were to be regarded as farmworkers, under the same terms and conditions as the rest of the workforce.

This dispute arose in the context of a company that was struggling to generate enough revenue to cover the costs of labour, and made poor management decisions in relation to this

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Gabriel Masakona, a leader of the workers' forum, and subsequently a shop steward for FAWU, on 15 January 2013, at Piccado Top farm; observations and conversations with other farmworkers at B24; and a focus group discussion with female farmworkers.

issue. The general manager placed the blame at the doorstep of CPA members, as a result of their interference in the management of the farm. A generation of younger farmworkers on these farms, with improved levels of literacy, as well as an awareness of labour relations legislation, is one contributing factor in the convergence of ideas on how workers, irrespective of their identities (i.e. both claimant and non-claimant workers) can work together.

8.5 Gender and farm labour

All CPAs in Levubu agreed that a general principle was that men and women should be treated equally on community-owned farms, and that they should have equal opportunities. For example, appointments of farm managers, supervisors and tractor drivers should be based on skills and capabilities rather than gender. This thesis attempts to understand how gender relations manifest in day-to-day activities on the community-owned farms. A gendered analysis of divisions of labour draws our attention to the character of the social relationships between men and women; it also infers that status and social positions are culturally constructed. Using an 'interpretative' approach that emphasises the consciousness and subjectivity of actors, the thesis explores the gendered frames of reference held by men and women working on the farms; this is augmented by the researcher's direct observation.

This discussion draws on the researcher's interactions with claimants between 2005 and 2009, and on observations in field research conducted between 2010 and 2014, but most heavily on some focus interviews held in June 2012. Data was captured in the midst of conducting interviews with farm managers and workers, taking note of actions, behaviour or incidents linked to gender roles.

On 30 March 2012 the researcher visited the EMS farm, owned by the Ravele CPA, to conduct interviews with general workers. Key observations regarding gender and farm labour were recorded: At the macadamia and citrus orchards, women and men were all hand-picking macadamia nuts off the ground. It was reported that men and women do the same work. However, three days before this visit, during an interaction with farmworkers on one of the Shigalo farms, some of the supervisors on Shigalo farms held the view that men and women undertake quite different tasks on the farms, although some women challenged this notion.

These female workers complained that, in practice women do all kinds of work whereas men sometimes refuse to take on some tasks, saying that they are for women only (but only when it suits them). On EMS farm, I asked the supervisor if it was a common practice for men to also pick up nuts (a question informed by my previous understanding that this is mostly undertaken by women). He informed me: “There is no division of labour according to gender here. That is why you find us (men) doing work that is traditionally meant for women, for example picking up nuts”¹⁷⁰.

On the Masakona and Ratombo farms, the researcher engaged with women who were picking avocados from trees. It was apparent that due to the age and height of some trees, not all women were able to climb such trees to pick the fruit. On a Masakona farm one woman complained about the attitudes of male supervisors. She said: “These men are not good. Look at my age, am I not old? But let’s get into the fields now, you will find women young enough to be my granddaughters allocated to pick up bags of nuts to take them to the tractor, whereas older women of my age are in the trees”¹⁷¹.

Similarly, a woman at Ratombo complained about the differential treatment of women:

“Those who are from the Royal Family are treated with kid gloves, and we who are not, are treated badly. We climb avocado trees, and if you collapse, you are on your own. A woman here collapsed, was taken to the clinic and then brought back to the farm to work”¹⁷².

These complaints were made mainly by members of CPAs, i.e. relatively new claimant farmworkers.

On 12 May 2011, at Piccado farm, the researcher observed a tractor being driven by a woman in her late 30s. After initially thinking that Masakona was advancing the empowerment of women, the researcher was later informed, in discussion with another woman on the farm, who said: “I would also like to be a tractor driver, but there are no opportunities to train as

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Phillemon Bvumbi, one of the Workers Forum leaders on a farm commonly referred to as ‘Ems’, Date: 09 January 2013, on EMS farm.

¹⁷¹ Interview with Maria (not the real name), a female farmworker on one of Masakona farms, interview held on 08 January 2013, at ‘Welken’ farm.

¹⁷² Interviews with Grace (not her real name) a female farmworker for farms, on 10 January 2013, Citrus pack house at U-No-Me farm.

drivers on these farms. The two women that are drivers on the Masakona farms came here with a drivers' licence"¹⁷³.

The complexity of the gendered division of labour on commercial farms is illustrated by an encounter with a female farmworker from Shigalo farms who specialises in weed killing. She is a non-claimant worker who has worked for more than ten years on different farms in the Levubu area. She reported that she mostly carries herbicides on her back and sprays weeds, but she also sometimes scouts the orchards for pests. She believes this is the best job for her and she praises the company for arranging regular check-up visits at Tshilidzini Hospital.

However, another woman working on a Masakona farm, a non-claimant workers living at Valdezia, believes that spraying of chemicals should not be done by women. She said: "If you are a breast feeding mother, carrying these chemicals on your back and spraying fields throughout the day, poses a health hazard to your child."¹⁷⁴ She said that no protective clothing (raincoats, gloves, and masks) is provided for workers. In addition, there are no proper ablution facilities with showers where women can wash before they go home: "In most cases, we come from the fields, (we do) a bit of cleaning and then we are off to our homes. So when you get there sometimes, you do not have time to bath; if breast feeding is needed, you breast feed, and prepare supper for the family."¹⁷⁵ Across the farms, both men and women farmworkers have complained about the lack of protective clothing. This issue was raised in demands by the Masakona workers who went on strike in 2013.

While government officials and others have presented commercial partnerships and community-owned farms as progressive and transformative in nature, their approach to labour management appears to be influenced heavily by past practices carried over to the present, and this is evident in relation to gender relations. Female farmworkers have complained that men are already advantaged, as was evidenced by the fact that not many rural women have a drivers' licence. Women feel that they are frequently side-lined, and that this will continue unless there is a conscious effort to empower women so that they can have access to positions on farms which carry higher level responsibilities and are better paid One

¹⁷³ Interview with Maria (not her real name) (op cit.)

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Selena (not her real name), a female farmworkers on Masakona,

¹⁷⁵ (*Ibid.*)

focus group discussion highlighted the plight of women on some of the farms. A woman stated that:

“Male managers are lazy, they like to order women around. We do all the heavy work, and if you question their instructions, they put an even heavier load of work on you than on those who are compliant with their instructions.”¹⁷⁶

Another woman stated that:

“We have no protective clothing such as water boots, raincoats, and overalls. This is particularly important for women because many of us are of youthful age and we are breast feeding. We carry the chemical containers on our backs without any protective clothing; we wash bananas at pack houses without protective clothing. There are no facilities for bathing properly, and this poses a health risk to the babies we breast feed, and to ourselves as mothers who are inhaling the chemicals”¹⁷⁷

This raises questions about the representation of female farmworkers. For example, in relation to the issue of women climbing up avocado trees to harvest the fruit, many have complained that this task is not suitable for female farmworkers. At Ratombo a woman fell from an avocado tree and had to be taken to a clinic, but the company had no fund to compensate her. She is still expected to climb the avocado trees at harvesting time, but refuses. “You need to be strong here to challenge these men, but unfortunately the women leaders do not speak on behalf of other women on these farms”¹⁷⁸.

8.6 Conclusion

Strategic partnerships on land restitution farms in Levubu aimed to protect existing jobs on farms, sustain the productivity of farms, and ensure the transformation of the agricultural sector by training the beneficiaries of restitution to become successful commercial farmers in their own right. One key benefit took the form of preferential employment, in addition to rental income and the payment of dividends. However, there are often severe tensions between these aims and objectives, as is evident when the question of farm labour on

¹⁷⁶ This extract is taken from notes on the women’s Focus Group Discussion Notes on farm B24 (Masakona), in which one of the female workers expressed her concerns to the rest of the women, in January 2012.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

community-owned farms is explored. Some of these tensions have been described in this chapter.

The chapter also assessed the quality and quantity of labour on the farms, and explored how these factors have impacted on their productivity. Problems of the decline of jobs on farms arose due to poor management within strategic partnerships and a lack of monitoring from state agencies. Tensions between new (claimant) and existing (non-claimant) workers have emerged, which some companies appear to have resolved. In contrast to the divergent interests that arise from claimant and non-claimant identities, the convergence of class interests of workers has also been evident. Claimant workers who are members of the CPA that owns land also struggle against elite interests within this category, who occupy management positions or are members of boards of directors. This small group is involved in the making of decisions that privilege the productivity and efficient management of farms as capitalist enterprises.

These tensions and conflicts are driven ultimately by the underlying contradiction that beneficiaries of restitution are both owners of land and other means of production, as well as being workers employed to make those means of production a source of profits. The following chapter examines further sources of tension, arising from the cultural politics of land holding, derived in part from different 'modes of belonging'.

9. MODES OF BELONGING AND IDENTITY POLITICS ON COMMUNITY-OWNED FARMS

9.1 Introduction

On 28 August 2008, shortly before the formalisation of partnerships in Levubu, in-depth interviews were conducted with Ravele farmworkers at a farm commonly known as ‘Red Bank’. In response to one of the questions about changes observed since the takeover of farms by strategic partners, one of the respondents said -

“This year the citrus production has declined; we sprayed [chemicals] only once. I have worked on this farm for a very long time; I know the spraying programme by heart and I can tell you now, as we told them then, that it was not enough...; yes, I informed the new foreman; but he said to me that he does not take advice from me as a mere worker ...”¹⁷⁹

What was intriguing was not so much the reported decline of citrus production, but expressions such as “I have worked on this farm for a long time” and “he does not take advice from me as a mere worker”. Such narratives drew attention to questions of identity, belonging and recognition of farmworkers in Levubu, as well as the extent to which they shape the emplacement or dis-emplacement of farmworkers on community-owned farms. Further, it raises questions about the cultural styles of interaction on community-owned farms possibly with implications for the social reproduction of fragmented classes of labour.

This chapter employs the concepts of ‘mode of belonging’ discussed in Rutherford (2008a:74; 2014:225) and processes of identification (Sicakkan & Lithman, 2005) to explore emergent political relations on community-owned farms in Levubu. Firstly, it revisits the concepts of modes of belonging and identity politics as a basis for the interpretation of the empirical material to be presented. Secondly, it describes different governance structures (or structures of management and control) on community-owned farms and the different modes of belonging with which they are associated. The chapter argues that restitution and commercial partnerships have resulted in complex social dynamics in which different modes of belonging became enmeshed with one another. It explores the interconnections between governance structures and modes of belonging and the ensuing tensions, conflicts and

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Makondelele Isaiyah Nengwani, a member of the Ravele CPA, on 21 August 2008 at Redbank Farm of the Ravele CPA, in Levubu.

struggles that have emerged in the four CPAs. The crux of these tensions is contested local sovereignties, involving ‘territorialised rules’ overseen by traditional authorities, CPAs and professional farm management. Thirdly, the chapter attempts to explain the nature of the conflicts, tensions and struggles that have emerged, and examines similarities and dissimilarities within the CPAs, as well as their impacts on the livelihood possibilities of fragmented classes of labour.

9.2 Revisiting the concepts of ‘modes of belonging’ and ‘identity politics’

As discussed in Chapter 2, Rutherford (2008a; 2008b; 2014) has employed the concepts of ‘belonging’ and ‘recognition’ to analyse the forms of cultural politics intertwined with contested access to and control over land and resources in Zimbabwe’s land reform process. The concept of ‘belonging’ is used to refer to the politics of citizenship, autochthony, foreignness, and claim-making. Modes of belonging can be seen as “routinized discourses, social practices and institutional arrangements that define particular forms of recognition that shape access to material and non-material resources, and the ways in which one becomes incorporated into particular places” (Rutherford, 2008b:403).

Rutherford also shows that –

“modes of belonging that inform access to land entail forms of territorialisation [...] attempts to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over land with control over people” (2008a:79-80).

However, he cautions that modes of belonging cannot be narrowly equated to wider forms of governmentality and hegemony; but when social projects become routinized, they too become modes of belonging. The concept of modes of belonging should thus be seen as an analytical lens through which to view power relations in agrarian settings, shaping the ways in which different categories of people are able to make claims on different resources, including wages, housing, social welfare, land and land-based resources.

Table 38: Institutional structures and their relations

Institutional structures		Key characteristics and relations with other structures
Traditional communities	Traditional Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They are established in terms of the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act, comprise elected members of traditional communities (40%) and appointed members of the Royal councils (60%). - They do not own land, but administer land owned by the state on behalf of traditional communities. - Membership is open to anyone willing to subscribe to the rules of that community.
	Royal Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They comprise members of the royal family and elders, and often play an important advisory role for the chiefs. - They play a significant role in lodgement of land claims in many communities.
	Chiefs/ Headmen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The office of a traditional leader of a community. He/she is supposed to act in the general interest of the 'community'. Some chiefs were elected to CPA executive committees. Sometimes chiefs are in competition with CPA committees in relation to the management of communal resources on restored farms.
CPAs	Executive committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CPAs own farms in title, and their executive committees administer the CPA and its properties, including membership rights and obligations. - CPAs are supposed to look after the interest of members and ensure equity and justice in access to and control of resources. - CPA constitutions, although varying in content, often specify that four of nine members of the committee should be women.
Commercial farms	Board of Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corporate structure to oversee management of farm enterprises through a registered company. - Constituted by members of CPAs (members of traditional communities under traditional council/leaders).
	Farm Management Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A core group of supervisory workers under a professional farm manager. They take decisions regarding day-to-day farm operations. Its composition incorporates farm managers, an HR manager (where possible), and, in some companies, representatives of the board.
	Workers' Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On some farms, especially those owned by Masakona and Ravele, farm management has created a platform for workers to discuss their issues. Over time this has created a platform for the unionisation of workers, as in the case of the Masakona farms.

9.3 Institutional arrangements as modes of belonging

A commercial farm itself can be a mode of belonging, given that practices of authority and power relations on such a farm also configure access to, and control over, resources and people. Communal areas under traditional leadership institutions that administer land rights are also modes of belonging, the power relations generated in turn deeply influencing access to material and non-material resources. When CPAs took ownership and management of farms in Levubu, a third mode of belonging came into being, and complex dynamics were set in motion. Such dynamics can be observed at the intersection points between different structures of ownership, governance and management, conceived of as arising within distinct modes of belonging. This chapter discusses the politics generated by these interacting three modes of belonging on community-owned farms in Levubu, whose key descriptive features are summarised above in Table 38 and discussed thereafter.

9.3.1 ‘Traditional communities’ as a mode of belonging

Rural African populations are characterised by “deep and enduring connections to the land through birth, kinship, ancestors and burial grounds” (Derman *ibid.*, 2013:36). The affairs of traditional communities in Africa, including the allocation of land and provision of access to land-based resources, have always been administered and managed in terms of ‘customs’, often involving institutions of traditional leadership. As discussed earlier, traditional communities discussed in this thesis are from Venda and Tsonga ethnic identities with long histories of disputes around the question of belonging at Levubu, as will be discussed in this section. The communities, since time immemorial, had certain traditions and practices such as the payment of royalties as a symbol of acknowledgement of their authority, joint labour on the king’s fields and many more. The return of large-scale commercial farms to traditional communities as CPAs brings to light issues of belonging to traditional councils with their long established traditions and practices. Therefore, in this thesis the place of traditional communities and authorities in the political economy of land should thus be situated within the context of long-term historical development.

Cousins (2008), citing Beinart (1982), suggests that the imposition of colonial rule had severe impacts on nested systems of governance, and thus on the balance of power within traditional communities. The fact that institutions of traditional leadership played a crucial role in the

advancement of the project of indirect rule in most parts of colonial Africa, has been documented by many historians and anthropologists (Mamdani, 1999; Claassens and Cousins, 2008). According to Mamdani,

“The authority of the chief thus fused in a single person all moments of power: judicial, legislative, executive and administrative. This authority was like a clenched fist, necessary because the chief stood at the intersection of the market and the non-market economy. The administrative justice and the administrative coercion that was the sum and substance of his authority lay behind a regime of extra-economic coercion...” (1999:874).

This illustrates the co-option of traditional authorities as the lowest level of rural local governance by colonial administrations. At the centre of this co-option was the administration of land and control of rural people. Therefore, two points can be made about the role of these structures within traditional communities as a distinctive mode of belonging.

Firstly, membership of chiefdoms was based on the principle of recognition of the authority of a particular chief, who was usually drawn from a dominant or royal lineage (Delius, 2008). Many of the chief's subjects belonged to related lineages but some could trace no kinship connection to the royal group. Some chief's subjects were descendants from groups who had lived in the area prior to the arrival of the chiefly lineage, while others arrived later and sought permission from the chief to settle in the area (*ibid.*) Secondly, colonial and apartheid legislation created draconian regimes for the control of African people, in part to ensure a supply of cheap labour to emerging capitalist enterprises in the mine and industries, and institutions of traditional leadership were in the forefront of such mechanisms of control.

In terms of the Native Administration Act (1927), Africans were to be governed in a distinct domain legitimated by 'custom' and chiefly rule, but under strict control from above. Further, the Bantu Authorities Act (1951) was the basis for the establishment of Territorial Councils and Tribal Authorities for particular ethnic groups in the 'reserves', designed as a system of control. Delius *et al.* (1997) suggest that these institutions were highly authoritarian, 'stripped of many of the elements of popular representation and accountability which had existed within precolonial political systems and which had to some extent survived within the reserves'. As Cousins (2008) reminds us, control over land extended to power over people.

It is against this background that traditional authorities and councils consider themselves to be the custodians of communal land on behalf of their communities, which helps to explain why chiefs and royal councils played leading roles in the lodgement of land restitution claims in Levubu. The chiefs also played a leading role in the compilation of beneficiary lists during the claimant verification process¹⁸⁰. Such processes involved scrutiny of lists compiled by volunteers within communities, and elders of the community confirming whether or not a household was a member of the community.

Analyses of the post-apartheid statutory framework for institutions of traditional leadership highlight the power relations involved. A series of post-apartheid laws has bolstered the powers of traditional leaders. Firstly, the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act¹⁸¹ (TLGFA) of 2003 defines communities living within areas under jurisdiction of chiefs as ‘traditional communities’ and establishes traditional councils as governance structures. A traditional council’s territory is an administrative area under a headman (*nduna*) or sometimes a sub-chief¹⁸². Some observers and analysts have argued that by retaining tribal authority structures as traditional councils, the legislation reinforces apartheid-era chiefly authority in the post-apartheid state (Claassens 2011).

Secondly, the Communal Land Rights Act (CLaRA) of 2004, which was nullified on procedural grounds by the Constitutional Court in 2010 after it was challenged by four rural communities, posed a serious challenge. The substantive arguments against this Act, which the court did not address, highlight several challenges, including that the Act provided traditional leaders with substantial but unaccountable powers, especially through control over land administration¹⁸³. Further, it was argued that the Act undermined community members’ tenure security by giving far-reaching powers to traditional councils that could not be held accountable.

¹⁸⁰¹⁸⁰ Observations: field notes.

¹⁸¹ This legislation should be read with the provincial laws dealing with traditional leadership in different provinces.

¹⁸² Interview with Peter Mawela (*op. cit.*).

¹⁸³ Constitutional Court Judgement: *Tongoane and Others vs National Minister for Agriculture and Land Affairs and Others* (CCT100/09) [2010] ZACC 10; Date 11 May 2010.

Thirdly, the Traditional Courts Bill (TCB) of 2008 sought to ensure that more South Africans had improved access to justice by giving proper recognition to traditional justice systems in a manner consistent with values in both customary law and the Constitution. This bill has been criticised on the basis that it fails to guarantee the participation of women in traditional courts, neither as litigants nor as members of the body of people who make decisions in the courts; it denies people legal representation, thus undermining the constitutional right to legal representation, especially in criminal cases; and it gives traditional leaders power to make customary law and adjudicate disputes, in addition to their executive powers in land administration and development (Mnisi-Weeks, 2013).

To the extent that these institutions have powers to control access to land, accepting or rejecting applications to joining traditional communities, as well as exercising a form of 'local sovereignty', these institutions represent a distinct mode of belonging. The survey results presented in Chapter 7 show that almost all of the respondents acquired land through an allocation by the chief or a headman. Such allocations were made to persons who accepted the authority of the traditional councils and chiefs. This practice is not only common in Limpopo, but elsewhere in the country as Fay (2005) shows. Based on examples from Fay (2005) and other scholars, Cousins (2008b) presents much evidence of payments of fees by outsiders in return for land. Often outsiders pay fees of some kind as 'chief's dues', indicating acceptance of the authority of traditional structures, or as an administrative fee (Alcock & Hornby, 2004). But Fay (2005) also uses the case study of Hobeni to reveal that the right of the chiefs to collect fees and demand lavish gifts from outsiders was contested. Hobeni suggested that prior to the granting of land, applicants must approach the neighbours first.

The case of 'Phindulo' discussed in Chapter 7, confirms the existence of this practice in communities in the Levubu area, especially his acceptance by the Chief of Zwikwengani and the process of land allocation which then began initially at the local level under the sub-headman, until its final approval by a senior traditional leader.¹⁸⁴ This example confirms

¹⁸⁴ This practice differs from area to area according to local custom. Traditionally, as Ntsebeza (2008) has shown, an *imbizo* (community meeting) for the neighbourhood would be called to ascertain if there was anyone with existing claims to the land, and if not, the applicant (mostly men, but there is increasing evidence of women getting independent access to land) would be subjected to other security checks such as whether he or she was married, verify that he or she was a taxpayer, if there is proof or not, then an application is granted. In

Ntsebeza's (2008) finding that chiefs tend to play a significant role in land and resource allocation in traditional communities. Further, membership of a local community confers both political identity and legal status, since residents of the former homelands often need letters from chiefs, headmen or traditional council confirming that they are known and *bona fide* community members in order to obtain identity documents, access government programmes, and open bank accounts and other services.

The four CPAs discussed in this thesis are constituted by members of traditional communities under the jurisdictional authority of the chiefs who had lodged land claims on their behalf. This is discussed again below in clarifying relations between CPAs and traditional leaders. Processes of lodging land claims, especially those in relation to property descriptions and negotiations of the historical boundaries of the ancestral land, are also revealing of the identity politics at play. Claimant communities usually used the names of farms as they appear on title deeds to indicate which land they were claiming. However, their descriptions of their ancestral lands did not fit neatly with cadastral boundaries demarcated by beacons placed by state officials and described in the title deeds. Their understandings of older boundaries, based on chiefly jurisdictions as they existed prior to land dispossession and forced removal, relied largely on oral traditions, resulting in many boundary disputes which remained unresolved at the time of writing.¹⁸⁵

Membership of a Levubu claimant community does not mean this is a homogeneous group comprising only the victims of forced removals. Over the years, other individuals or households have been accepted into these communities, despite their lack of historical ties and common ancestry. As indicated above, acceptance into these communities and allocation of land follows a due process, including payment of chiefly dues or administrative fees and acknowledgement of the authority of the chief. This complicates notions of 'community'; and who represents 'the community'. The Restitution of Land Rights Act (1994), as many observers and courts have noted, acknowledges the fluidity of community boundaries, and creates opportunities for sub-groupings in a community to lodge a land claim (Wicomb, 2014).

some cases, the highest level of traditional hierarchy is the chief, who ratifies the land allocations undertaken at lower levels of the hierarchy.

¹⁸⁵ Ratombo vs Ravele and Masakona vs Ravele communities.

Different views are held regarding emerging land policies on communal tenure. Government is increasingly asserting that land under the jurisdiction of chiefs should be held by traditional councils, as first proposed under CLaRA, and now forming the basis of the so-called the ‘wagon wheel’ model¹⁸⁶. The bolstering of powers of traditional leaders with the TLGFA, CLaRA and TCB by government is a trend that can be linked to tensions in rural areas (Claassens A. , Resurgence of tribal levies, 2011).

9.3.2 Communal Property Associations (CPAs) as a mode of belonging

As discussed earlier in this thesis, a CPA is a juristic person or legal entity, the purpose of which is to acquire, hold and manage property communally, especially in the context of land reform. Between 1996 and 2004 about 1 200 CPAs were registered by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR, 2014c). In many traditional communities that have benefitted from land reform, CPAs constitute a layer of institutional controls in addition to traditional councils, royal councils, and municipalities¹⁸⁷. However, what sets CPAs apart from other structures is that they require the active participation of the majority of their membership in their affairs. They are supposed to be based on the will of the people, on principles of equity, fairness and justice, and are democratically constituted by members (McCusker, 2002; Sjaastad *et. al.*, 2013).

The performance of CPAs in South Africa has not been without challenges. The majority of CPAs have not received adequate support to enable them to function properly. As Barry (2009) shows through the case study of Elandskloof CPA, they are often dysfunctional. Other studies show that the challenge with CPAs is that there are no clear rules to govern the institutions, and where they do exist, they are not enforced. Pienaar (2000) has argued for a re-definition of tenure systems and rules in CPAs. What this study shows is that CPAs often embody a complex ‘intersection’ of institutions of traditional leadership and these democratically constituted landholding entities.

Traditional councils, which are not landowners, are administrators of the land owned in trust by government, yet endowed with powers to determine who can become a member of a

¹⁸⁶ Policy proposals present this as a choice for rural dwellers, not as an inevitability.

¹⁸⁷ Communal Land Indaba (Commission Reports) 29-30 May 2015.

traditional community, as well as providing access to and control over resources. As Fay (2005) has shown, payment of fees, demands of gifts are common cause. In some respects, as it will be discussed below, communities honour their traditional leaders through gifts and royalties. In contrast, CPAs as juristic or legal entities that own land, regulate their membership and make decisions on communally owned land and resources in a participatory and democratic manner. When the two structures, traditional councils and CPAs, co-existed without a clear delineation of their roles and powers, what resulted was a contestation over authority.

In 2000, after the gazetting of land claims, the Regional Land Claims Commissioner's office for Limpopo together with Nkuzi began a process to establish legal entities for the Levubu land claiming communities. Nkuzi conducted a series of workshops to assist individual communities to choose their preferred legal entity, either a trust or a CPA. Of the seven communities in Levubu, six chose CPAs while one chose a trust (Sjaastad *et. al.*, 2013). The majority preferred CPAs on the basis that they are participatory in nature and decisions are taken by the members; leadership of the CPA is accountable to the entire membership; and constitutions are based on the fundamental principles of fairness and equity. These are distinguishing features of the normative values underpinning the existence of CPAs as a distinctive mode of belonging in land restitution communities, at least ideologically if not in actual practice.

Across the Levubu CPAs, the composition of executive committees tends to reflect the accepted role of institutions of traditional leadership within traditional communities. There is an overlap between the land claims committee¹⁸⁸, the royal council and the traditional council, on the one hand, and the CPA executive committee, on the other. Defining the role of traditional leaders within CPAs has been a challenge. Some traditional leaders were appointed as chairpersons, while some have been accorded *ex-officio* status in the CPA executive committees. As will be discussed in subsections that follow, the co-existence of these structures within claimant communities has been characterised by conflictual and contradictory relations.

¹⁸⁸ Land claims committees are voluntary local structures set up to drive land claims processes within communities.

In Levubu, membership of CPAs is mostly linked to eligibility and entitlement in terms of the Restitution of Land Rights Act of 1994. In terms of Section 2(1) of the Act,

“A person shall be entitled to restitution of a right in land if - (a) he or she is a person dispossessed of a right in land after 19 June 1913 as a result of past racially discriminatory laws or practices ; or (b) it is a deceased estate dispossessed of a right in land after 19 June 1913 as a result of past racially discriminatory laws or practices; or (c) he or she is the direct descendant of a person referred to in paragraph (a) who has died without lodging a claim and has no ascendant who - (i) is a direct descendant of a person referred to in paragraph (a); and (ii) has lodged a claim for the restitution of a right in land; or (d) it is a community or part of a community dispossessed of a right in land after 19 June 1913 as a result of past racially discriminatory laws or practices; and (e) the claim for such restitution is lodged not later than 31 December 1998.”

As Sjaastad *et al.* (2013) also show, membership of CPAs formed in the context of restitution excludes some members of traditional communities who may not be entitled to restitution. However, such people may be members of the broader community under the traditional leadership. Communities therefore undertook a tedious process of verifying membership. An outcome was the beneficiary lists that are used to determine who has access to preferential employment on farms and who should be eligible for dividends, should they be distributed. It should also be noted that, according to Hellum (2013), the membership status of children of sons and daughters who married outside the claimant community are not identical. Unlike sons, in the case of daughters who married non-community members, these women cannot pass on community membership due to the requirement for direct descendancy.

In all four CPAs studied, executive committees had, to different degrees, grappled with issues of contestations over the authority of either royal councils or chiefs, or the use of restitution processes to stake claims to the chieftaincy, especially where royalties were being paid to traditional leaders.¹⁸⁹ Some of the examples include the following: the Ratombo CPA allocated a fully furnished farm house to the chief, the Ravele CPA payment of royalties to the chief; and earlier discussion about the chief's role on Shigalo CPA and access to cars and other assets of the CPA. The crux of conflicts within the CPAs revolved around some of these issues and allegations of skewed access and benefits from the communal resources by traditional authorities. Another example of Masakona, where nearly the entire CPA

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Bethuel Ravele, a member of the CPA committee and the secretary of the Board of Directors for the operating company on 29 March 2012 at Appelfontein.

committee was outvoted, demonstrates the struggles for power that have emerged within the CPA over time. What this case reflects are the competitive, conflictual and contradictory relations amongst structures of control within land claimant communities in the Levubu area. These arise from certain modes of belonging which give rights to recognition of others for certain forms of benefits, while others do not.

The recent Land Tenure Indaba convened by the Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform in May 2015 attests to this relationships of structures of control. Government has proposed a Rural Economic Transformation Model (RETM), commonly known as the ‘wagon wheel model’ which is mainly about delineating the powers of traditional councils and chiefs in relation to land administration, as well as the ‘revitalisation of rural economies’ in the former ‘homeland’ areas. The chief concern of this policy intervention is how to secure tenure rights on communally owned land, as well as the roles to be played by different structures such as CPAs, trusts, traditional councils, and traditional leaders. The DRDLR proposes the separation of the authority of traditional leaders from the executive authority of the traditional councils. Further, it proposes that traditional communities be given a choice as to which governance structure will take ownership of their land when it is transferred by the state. This policy intervention is partly a response to challenges in land reform arising from conflicts and tensions between various institutional structures.

9.3.3 Commercial farms as a mode of belonging

This section seeks to answer the question: What are the “practices of authority and power relations that configure access to various resources” on a large-scale commercial farm, with particular focus on their impacts on labour relations and the working and living conditions of farmworkers? After dispossession and displacement of African communities in the early 1900s, and the transformation of the independent black peasantry into a landless workforce (Atkinson, 2007; Wisborg *et al.*, 2013), commercial farms became ‘private spaces’ in which farm owners lived. They could permit or prohibit others to also live there, and these were expected to live in accordance with the farm owners’ rules, which specified the types of houses they could build or live in, the number of people allowed to live together as a household, the number of visitors they received and the amount of time they could visit for,

and so on. As Atkinson (2007) suggests, the social order contained elements of paternalism, limited mutual social loyalties, and an 'economy of affection'.

These power relations raise critical questions about the status of commercial farms as sites of 'local sovereignty' and 'domestic government' (Rutherford, 2008b: 403). Sovereignty in this conception is predicated on distinctions that delimit public authority over life and place, includes the definition of boundaries over who is included and excluded from membership in the delimited territoriality, and the designation of those who exercise authority (Rutherford, 2008b: 403). On commercial farms such authority is bolstered by paternalist relations, which deny the individuality of workers and constrain the expression of their independent judgement (Atkinson, 2007).

The Levubu area is no different to other commercial farming areas in South Africa. It is characterised by unequal power relations between farm owners, as capital, and farmworkers, as labour, in which farmworkers are exploited for purposes of capital accumulation. Capitalist farmers, as Rutherford (2008b) shows in the Zimbabwean context, derive their legal and moral authority from colonial and apartheid regimes, that gave them authority and control over their properties and labourers. Further, the management of farms rested on domestic and dependant ties both between farmer and wife, and between the owners and the workers and their families (Rutherford, 1997b).

Post-apartheid legislative and policy changes have begun to challenge these 'total institutions' and systems of 'domestic government'. Some policy changes had been initiated before 1994, especially in relation to the restructuring of the agricultural sector and the removal of state subsidies and protective measures. It intensified with post-apartheid interventions such as the passing of tenure legislation for farmworkers, and the sectoral determination of minimum wages for farm work. Commercial farms have become more open to external influence, especially by trade unions and civil society organisations (Ewert & du Toit, 2005). Longstanding traditions associated with 'domestic government' on farms began to change, and land restitution has contributed to these changes in Levubu.

The preferential employment of restitution beneficiaries in Levubu has introduced a number of community members to farm labour who were neither raised on nor have ever lived on commercial farms before. Some, especially younger people, had no prior experience of the

paternalist relations that had existed on commercial farms. Their understandings of farm work are influenced by their knowledge of labour law and labour rights and relations. This helps to explain why they established farmworker forums, which then led to the unionisation of workers, this bolstering their bargaining powers, as exemplified by the Masakona farmworkers' strike.

These dynamics have significantly altered the 'mode of belonging' on these commercial farms. For the majority of workers on the Masakona farms, for example, who commute daily from villages to farms, the latter are seen as places of work, and not the site of their homes, as would ordinarily be the case on commercial farms. However, this is different in the case of those farmworkers who worked for many years on the farms in the past, who have to a certain degree considered the farms as their second homes. Another effect of restitution is the entanglement of different structures of control on community-owned farms, including chiefs and CPAs, as discussed above. As discussed below, this entanglement can complicate the exercise of authority by different structures, for example, professional farm managers that take decisions about day-to-day farming operations, CPAs and boards of directors of companies responsible for financial decisions, and traditional authorities that are responsible for local governance in the villages from which the farmworkers come.

9.4 Cross-cutting identities and modes of belonging

Community-owned farms and commercial partnerships, as discussed above, are characterised by the interplay of competing structures of control, disparate modes of belonging, and ambiguous practices of sovereignty. A critical issue at the intersection of these structures are cross-cutting identities relevant in different modes of belonging, which generate complex and dynamic social and political relations on the farms. These have significant ramifications for the social reproduction of CPA members and farmworkers. The notion of a 'partnership' conjures up the image of social and institutional interfaces in which different people come together for some purpose. As discussed at great length in this thesis, in Levubu this has involved the retention of some of the workers who previously worked on these farms under white farmers, the recruitment of new workers from the ranks of claimant communities, CPAs as legal owners of the farms, the registration of operating companies, embracing the

commercial management of farms in order to achieve profitability, and involving institutions of traditional leadership in various capacities.

The idea of ‘community’ conjures up notions of geographic locality, of a demarcated space, as well as cohesive patterns of social interactions. Contrary to popular imaginations of ‘communities’ as harmonious, homogenous and timeless collectives independent of state and economy, ‘communities’ actually comprise multiple, differently positioned actors with diverse interests that can sometimes be in acute tension with one another (Li, 1996; Turner, 2013).

As discussed earlier, traditional communities comprise members of diverse origins. Some have a common ancestry, whereas others have joined these communities without having any historical connections to them. Land claimant communities, as a result, include members that have been accepted but do not necessarily have any direct connections to the claimed land as defined in terms of the restitution Act. This implies that they are eligible to a share of the common resources of that community, and some have been employed in jobs preferentially reserved for claimants. In the context of restitution, a ‘community’ is not spatially bound; it is constituted by people who at some point held rights in land, governed by shared rules prior to their dispossession. As Turner (2013a) shows, restitution privileges origin and ancestry-based articulations of membership. Such members are meant to benefit from land claims or any other form of benefit or opportunity that may arise. But within claimant communities and on farms one finds households and individuals that can be referred to as ‘non-claimant beneficiaries’.

This category has also benefitted from investments in public goods by CPAs. For example, the Masakona CPA purchased computers for the schools at the main village¹⁹⁰, the Ravele CPA subsidises the employment of an administrative officer at the traditional council’s offices¹⁹¹, and the construction of a CPA/traditional council office has been supported by the Shigalo CPA¹⁹². These being communal amenities, the benefits accrue to all members of the traditional community, irrespective of their eligibility to benefit in terms of restitution.

¹⁹⁰ Interview with Peter Mawela (*Op cit.*)

¹⁹¹ Interview with Bethuel Ravele (*Op cit.*)

¹⁹² Interviews with Protector Sambo (*Op. cit.*) and with Lucas Manganyi (*Op.cit.*)

Farmworkers on community-owned farms thus combine and articulate different identities as ‘claimant’ and ‘non-claimant’ farmworkers, as well as the complex combination of ‘owners’ and ‘workers’ within divided class positions. According to some key informants, the ultimate goal of these farms should be to enhance the material benefits of restitution to the original owners of the land¹⁹³. Some also argue that the main role of non-claimant farmworkers should be to train the new workers in order to enable them to manage the farms independently. An interview with the mentor for Ratombo Farming Enterprise reveals the challenges associated with such perceptions. According to him, “Many of these claimants do not understand what the farms are about; it is not only about the creation of jobs, it is about running profitable businesses that are sustainable”.¹⁹⁴ Such discursive struggles are intertwined with struggles over access to and control of resources and opportunities on community-owned farms.

9.5 Tensions, conflicts and social struggles in community-owned farm enterprises - a descriptive overview

The interconnections between and the mutual entanglement of different institutional and management structures, each associated with distinctive modes of belonging, result in the emergence of spaces for socio-political struggles between competing interests. Long (1997:2) refers to such spaces as “domains and arenas of social action”. In Levubu, these struggles were related to the cross-cutting identities, modes of belonging and general entanglement of competing interests that have emerged over time. Some of the tensions and conflicts can be understood in the light of Bernstein’s four fundamental questions of political economy, i.e. who owns what, who does what, who gets what and what they do with it. Others are due to forms of cultural politics.

This section provides brief descriptive overviews of the tensions and conflicts that have emerged in each of the four claimant communities, building on, and to some extent recapitulating, accounts of such tensions provided in earlier chapters. Following these, subsection 9.6 will examine the nature of the complex relationships that have emerged between class interests and identity politics.

¹⁹³ Interview with Mark Cohen (*Op. cit.*)

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

9.5.1 Ratombo

Like other claimant communities in Levubu, the Ratombo group was assisted by government officials and NGO staff to register a CPA at the then Department of Land Affairs in 2004, in anticipation of the restoration of land rights and the transfer of claimed farms. In line with the CPA's constitution, four members of the executive committee were women and five were men. In addition, Chief Ratombo was co-opted as an *ex officio* member of the committee. Some key informants suggest that a mistake made at that time was to allow the executive committee to be made up mostly of people who shared a common ancestry. This mistake was compounded by the domination of the committee by members of the royal family. Thus distinctions between the traditional council, the royal family, the chieftaincy, and the CPA executive committee were extremely blurred.

As discussed above, the processes involved in lodging land claims in Levubu were led by traditional leaders. At Ratombo the royal family dominated the land claims committee, and funded some of these processes. The decision to take over farms as going concerns and to operate them through strategic partnerships required the co-existence of the CPA, the board of directors of the operating company, and the professional farm manager (first representing the strategic partner, Mavu, and later holding a management contract). The challenge was that there was never a clear delineation of the roles of the CPA executive committee and the royal council in relation to farm operations. By the time that the strategic partnerships collapsed, divides between the CPA, the traditional council and the board of directors were almost non-existent.

A range of socio-political struggles relating to ownership, access and control of the farms then emerged, evident most clearly in the formation of 'a dissident group' within the CPA in the period between 2008 and 2012. This group portrayed themselves as representing those CPA members who had felt marginalised in the allocation of job opportunities, which were directed mostly to members from the Nzhelele Valley where the chief lived.

In 2006/7 government transferred several 'phase 3 properties' (portion 28, or the Benek farm, and portion 21, or the Helendale farm, of the Schoonuitzicht property (both being mainly under timber), together with portion 13 of the Nooitgedacht property (the Meyer farm), to the Ratombo CPA. Members of the CPA executive committee expressed different views on how these new farms should be managed, some being in favour of a strategic partnership, and

some questioning the benefits of such a partnership, and opting instead for their management by the CPA itself.

In October 2008 four members of the CPA, including some members of the executive committee, took over management of these farms, despite the disapproval of both government and other CPA members. The dissidents argued that the CPA had authorised strategic partnerships only on 'phase 1 farms'. In their view each farm unit needed to be managed independently, so that the CPA could determine which units were profitable and which were not. Further, they contended that the strategic partnership model had 'failed' because no benefits had materialised for members of the CPA other than the employment of a few on the farms. They also questioned who had been selected for these jobs, asserting that they were mainly people from the Nzhelele area, and that few people from other areas such as Mashau and Tshakhuma had been employed.

The dissident group employed a total of 12 farmworkers on the three farms, comprising three non-claimant workers that they found already employed on the farms and nine CPA members. Many existing workers left, one asserting that: "the difficulty is that they did not want to take instructions from us because they thought they knew more about farming than us, and they were the ones that taught us about this farm ..."¹⁹⁵

Although there was no formal management structure on these properties, the four men in the dissident group had different roles. One was responsible for irrigation, another two were responsible for administration and finance, and the fourth was responsible for sales and marketing. The dissident group also used the services of the general manager who oversaw operations on the bulk of the Ratombo CPA farms, paying him R5 000 per month on a consultancy basis, (although no formal contract was signed), whereas the CPA paid him R30 000 per month. However, in practice the general manager provided minimal support to the dissident group, because of the tensions between the CPA executive committee and the dissidents. According to one of the latter, "We got the farms back and we did not have

¹⁹⁵ Interview with Mr Mutuwa Senior and Mr Tshikwara, members of the dissident group that took over management of some of the Ratombo farms for own management, on 11 May 2011, at Portion 13 commonly known as Meyer farm.

managers, the strategic partners failed us... the two of us¹⁹⁶ are working as trainee managers under the mentorship of Johan... Things are now looking much better here, as you can see for yourself, we are working and at least this side of the farms we can see what we are doing”.¹⁹⁷

The dissident group reported that the banana orchards on these farms were in a poor condition and blamed the strategic partner, Mavu, for not investing in the orchards. Their main source of income was the sale of timber, for example, sales to the value of R350 000 sustained production on other farms between October 2010 and April 2011. They used the income from those sales to fund salaries, wages, transport and other operational costs. The group also benefitted from grant funding by the Far North Youth Development Programme (FNYDP), which paid part of the wages of the additional farmworkers that they recruited for seasonal work. This grant contributed R700 to the monthly wage of R1300 per worker, and the farm contributed the rest, for 31 temporary workers on the farms for 14 days per month.¹⁹⁸ The farmworkers’ contracts were terminated when the funding came to an end in March 2011.

In 2011 these farms began to sell produce other than timber. At the time of fieldwork in 2011, sales were increasing, but the market was entirely local because of high transportation costs and the fact that the farms lacked packaging facilities. Although they had access to such facilities at the U-No-Me farm, owned by Ratombo, it did not make economic sense due to the time and costs involved in transporting produce from the farm to the facility. According to one member of the group, “it was not good business, because workers from this farm would have to go there for cleaning and packaging, and in the process they only arrive perhaps 30 minutes after the starting time, since they have to report on this farm first, and then they will also take a further 30 to 40 minutes to come back. It thus means that on a daily basis they would have lost an hour and a half of labour. Also, if the pack house at U-No-Me was busy, they would have had to wait”¹⁹⁹.

¹⁹⁶ Interview with Stephen and Mashudu Mutuwa, part of the group that took over management of some of the Ratombo CPA farms for own management as opposed to partnerships, portion 13 commonly known as memyer farm, date: 11 May 2011

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Mashudu Mutuwa (*op cit.*)

¹⁹⁸ Total labour recruited under this programme was 80 workers. However, the dissident group negotiated with the main CPA that they are allocated 31 workers and the main farms take 40 farmworkers.

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Mr Mutuwa Senior (*op cit.*)

The dissident group could however not sustain production without capital and had difficulties in managing the farm without equipment. Due to the paralysis of the CPA and the business, culminating in the expulsion of the general manager, government - the Land Claims Commission and the Limpopo Department of Agriculture - intervened in order to help bring about cohesion of the entity. Part of the cohesion was to ensure that the CPA is unified, and that the takeover of some farms by a group of CPA members was stopped, and that they would be managed jointly under a professional commercial farmer. As discussed below, the cohesion could not be achieved.

When the Ratombo CPA first established a community-owned farming enterprise under the management of a commercial farmer (the former general manager employed by the strategic partner), tensions within the claimant community did not ease up and continued to render the company dysfunctional. The general manager was fired in 2010, on the basis of allegations of corruption and having paid allegiance to a faction of the CPA. He was accused of lack of accountability to the board of directors of the company and the executive committee of the CPA. Subsequent attempts to recruit a general manager were hamstrung by continuing factional battles within the CPA, focussed primarily on *de facto* control of the farms by those aligned to the royal council, which exerted authority over the CPA, resistance to this control by those that wished to ensure the autonomy of the CPA.

Tensions had also arisen because the CPA had recruited more labour from the claimant community than the company could afford, as it attempted to produce at least benefits for claimants. However, the collapse of the strategic partnership in 2009 resulted in much uncertainty amongst the workforce on the farms, leading to exit by many in search of other employment opportunities. By December 2009, as discussed earlier, the CPA and the operating company could no longer afford to pay its employees; hence the job shedding that took place at that time. Some informants also alleged that certain members of the CPA were using the company's resources for self-enrichment. For example, a manager hired by a small group of CPA committee members sold a company *bakkie* to purchase a C-Class Mercedes Benz sedan for himself.

In 2014, the CPA appointed a mentor, Mark Cohen, who works on a consultancy basis, as described in Chapter 8. One of the strategies he recommended to rescue the company was to reduce the cost of labour. The CPA executive committee, (not the board of directors), then

resolved to retrench part of the labour force. The mentor advised them to employ the principle of ‘last in, first out’, and requested the assistance of the Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) to ensure that retrenchment processes were in line with the Labour Relations Act and all the regulations. Some members of the CPAs were resistant because the principle was disadvantageous for those CPA members or ‘claimant workers’ employed since 2006, meaning that were to be the first on the line for retrenchment as opposed to the long serving non-CPA farmworkers. The retrenched farmworkers became a pool of seasonal and casual workers for Ratombo and were to be reintegrated once the farm was fully operational²⁰⁰.

9.5.2 Masakona

Although the Masakona CPA executive committee and the board of directors for the CPA-owned farming enterprise are quite distinct entities on paper, in reality the boundary separating the two structures is somewhat fluid. The board of directors is composed of members of the CPA executive committee. This is contrary to the Ravele CPA, discussed below, which included members of the CPA that are not in the executive committee but have skills and knowledge to contribute to the board. Further, the chairperson of the Masakona CPA was the chairperson of the board of directors. Such an arrangement created tensions and conflicts within the CPA, especially the centralisation of much power in a single person. Another sphere of tension was the competition for the control of the company by the board of directors. Therefore, this scenario in which the chairperson of the board and the chairperson of the CPA is the same person leaves no avenues for CPA interventions in cases where the relationships soured, as discussed below.

Until 2008 the strategic partnership between the Masakona CPA and SAFM seemed to have progressed with minimal challenges but in actual fact there were serious challenges as discussed earlier. The higher debts and inability to raise capital resulted in the collapse of SAFM and its withdrawal from Levubu and was subsequently liquidated. When the CPA took full control of the enterprise, the challenge of the absence of capital and a need for stringent management of the enterprise, especially the income and expenditure brought to the

²⁰⁰ Interview with Mark Cohen, a newly appointed mentor for Ratombo farms, on 9 April 2015 at his farm just outside Louis Trichardt/Makhado

fore severe underlying tensions. These manifested in the relationship between the CPA/board of directors and farm management structures (the professional commercial farmer). For example, the general manager accused the chairperson of the board of directors for interference in processes to appoint deserving farm managers. In an interview with the general manager²⁰¹, it was clear that there were major disagreements about how the farms should be managed, and in relation to business decisions taken by the general manager. According to the general manager, there was excessive interference by the CPA, for example in the appointment of farm managers. The CPA committee questioned many of his decisions, such as investments in macadamia nuts rather than citrus, as discussed in the preceding chapter. These tensions almost resulted in the resignation of the general manager from the company in 2010. However, an intervention by Chief Masakona helped resolve the impasse. This point to the vacuum left by the CPA executive committee when it acted as the board of directors, hence the intervention by the Chief.

There was also growing dissatisfaction of the general membership of the CPA in relation to the management of the farms. Some key informants reported that the failure of the executive committee to report back to CPA members was causing unhappiness, as was the continuing failure of the company to declare a profit and payment of dividends. Unhappiness was also evident within the workforce on the farms, as shown by farmworkers' protests at the lack of payment of salaries between December 2012 and February 2013²⁰², and their perception that preferential employment in key management positions was offered only to those close to the CPA leadership, as discussed in Chapter 8. As discussed earlier, in 2013 approximately 120 workers, both 'claimant' and 'non-claimants', embarked on an unprotected strike in protest over poor working conditions.

9.5.3 Shigalo

The Shigalo CPA's executive committee comprises a total of nine people, four women and five men, as required by its constitution. The board of directors of the operating company established after the collapse of the strategic partnership with Umlimi in 2009 comprised seven people, four from the CPA, two from the Limpopo Department of Agriculture, and the

²⁰¹ Interview with Danie Basson (*op cit*).

²⁰² Interview with Gabriel Masakona, workers' representative at Masakona CPA farms; and observations and conversations with workers on 15 January 2013.

professional farm manager. All decisions about farm operations were meant to be ratified by the board of directors and not the CPA executive. The board was supposed to represent the interests of the CPA and was required to report to it on a regular basis. The chairperson of the CPA also served as the chairperson of the board of directors.

The blurred line between the company and the CPA was further complicated by continuous struggles by the traditional leader to exert his authority. Chief Shigalo is based at Olifantshoek, in the former Gazankulu, where community members were relocated after dispossession of their land in Levubu. In terms of the CPA's constitution, Chief Shigalo has no control over the land and the resources acquired through the restitution claim. However, members of the CPA are also members of the traditional community under his jurisdiction. This has led to tensions, in turn leading to factional battles. When the original chair of the CPA passed away in 2009, some members ensured that the chief was appointed as chairperson of the CPA.

Internal struggles over access to resources sometimes resulted in problematic appointments to strategic positions on the farms. For example, a CPA committee member who also had a position as a security manager on community-owned farms was fired in 2010 on the basis that he used company resources for personal gain, such as for the purchase of a private car. He also grazed his goats on an unused field on one of the farms without the approval of the CPA.²⁰³ Members of the Shigalo CPA occupied strategic positions on farms at the expense of the need to increase the productive capacities of land and labour. This was justified by the need to show that the farms were benefitting members of the CPA. However, this antagonised some of the more experienced labourers on the farms, such as 'Ntodeni', as discussed in Chapter 7.

Many farmworkers expressed existing concerns about the security of their employment and conditions of work. The company had to shed many jobs due to the lack of prudent financial management, and failed to invest in protective clothing and accommodation on farms. These failures arose from the company's inability to address a fundamental challenge, namely the lack of capital to invest in the productive capacity of its labour. By 2014, the company ceased

²⁰³ Interview with Protector Sambo (*op cit.*)

to exist and most of the farms owned by the Shigalo CPA were leased to a commercial farmer.

9.5.4 Ravele

The current Ravele CPA committee was elected on 16 December 2014 after the term of the previous committee expired. Together with members of the traditional council, the previous committee had created a clearly defined framework within which different institutional structures are located and their roles are clearly defined. Chief Ravele lodged the land claim on behalf of the entire community. The traditional council provides oversight of all agricultural operations on restitution farms to ensure benefits for the entire Ravele community. The CPA executive committee, mainly comprising members of the old land claim committee, oversees issues to do with CPA membership and the nature of the benefits flowing to members. In terms of its constitution, the CPA can and does co-opt certain people to its committee on the basis of their knowledge and skills. Its focus is on the commercial farms, given that it is the legal owner of these farms on behalf of the Ravele community. Its decisions impact on the operating company, but the CPA's executive cannot interfere unnecessarily in the operations of the company.

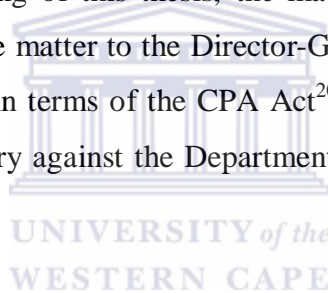
The company's board of directors is appointed from among CPA members and oversees how the farms are managed. To ensure a clear boundary between the CPA and the board of directors for the operating company, the chair of these structures cannot coincide in the same person. This enables the CPA's executive committee to exercise an essential oversight role. However, the chair of the board did initially serve as the deputy chair of the CPA. Professional management comprises the general manager together with five farm managers, a production manager and an HR manager. At times, representatives of the board of directors sit in management meetings²⁰⁴. The general manager chairs the meetings which focus on production, and CPA issues are not discussed.

Between 2009 and 2013 the CPA did not have to deal with any tensions and conflicts due to competing structures of authority²⁰⁵. Two contentious issues did arise, however: firstly, access to CPA resources and assets (including funds) as well as allocation of royalties to the

²⁰⁴ Observations during Ravele and Masakona farm management meetings on 29 March 2012.

²⁰⁵ Conversations with Danie Basson (*op cit.*) and Bethuel Ravele (*op cit.*)

office of the traditional leader. This section has shown the enmeshment of the institutions of traditional leadership in land claims processes, and these institutions as modes of belonging in communal areas (former 'reserves'). The tradition of gifts to the chief has long established this practice in many traditional communities, hence the members of the CPA took a decision to allocate funds as royalty to the office. According to the Secretary of the CPA, such decision should not be seen in isolation, but together with other interventions like the allocation of a bursary fund for deserving students and others²⁰⁶. Despite what appeared to be an agreed principle, in 2011 a concerned group emerged within the Ravele CPA. It complained about the lack of benefits from the resolved restitution claims. In 2012, some members of the CPA began to mobilise against the payment of royalties to the office of the chief. When the CPA executive committee conducted preliminary investigations, there were allegations that the chairperson of the board of directors was instigating and leading the concerned group; hence his suspension by the CPA pending a full investigation into the allegations. At the time of writing of this thesis, the matter was not resolved yet and the concerned group had reported the matter to the Director-General of the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform in terms of the CPA Act²⁰⁷. Further, it was also reported to the Presidential Hotline as a query against the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform.



The second contentious issue is the extent to which the operating company values its labour force. While the general manager stated that the company paid bonuses to the workers after making profits of R5.1 million in the year ending February 2014 (and with an anticipated profit of R9m for the financial year ending February 2015), some workers complained about working conditions and salary scales. In an interview with one of the farm managers²⁰⁸, he expressed a concern that during the era of strategic partnerships, white farm managers were paid much more (R15 000 to R20 000 per month) than the current black farm managers (R5 000 to R7 000 per month).

9.6 Explaining tensions and conflicts within community-owned capitalist farms in Levubu

²⁰⁶ Interview with Bethuel Ravele (*op cit.*)

²⁰⁷ At the time of writing, this matter was not resolved as yet.

²⁰⁸ Interview with Barnard Munyai (*op cit.*)

As described above, community-owned farms are characterised by inherent tensions, conflicts, contradictions, and incompatibilities among actors and institutional structures. In terms of a Marxist analysis, such tensions and contradictions can be ascribed to the contradictory class places of capital and labour, which can lead to crises of social reproduction. However, as argued in this chapter, conceptions from political sociology add important perspectives. Notions of ‘identity politics’ and ‘modes of belonging’ assist in refocussing our attention on the relational processes within which individuals and collectives design ‘images’ of the other, systems of values and rules of conduct, which can also result in tensions, conflicts and contradictions.

9.6.1 Identities of farmworkers as ‘claimants’ and ‘non-claimants’

In terms of the ‘Section 42C memorandum’ required for ministerial approval of settlement of the cluster of Levubu land claims, a framework within which strategic partnerships and agreements should be established, was laid out. It stated that -

“The strategic partner undertakes to build capacity amongst the employees of the operating companies through training and transference of skills, to ensure that sufficient managerial and technical expertise is created during the initial period of the lease to enable members of [...] communities and eventually employees to continue with the operating of the company after the initial agreed number of years” (Limpopo RLCC, 2005:22).

The provisions cited above were interpreted to mean that members of the CPAs should be recruited and trained in key strategic positions, in order build their capacity to take over the management of the farms after an agreed period of time. This meant that members of claimant communities were to be trained in farm management skills. Routinised narratives of the identities of farmworkers as either ‘claimants’ or ‘non-claimants’ meant that the former enjoyed privileges that the latter did not, for example having opportunities for promotion as well as participation in institutional structures such as CPAs.

Daily struggles and negotiations in relation to access to such opportunities on these farms reveal power relations entangled in an increasingly subtle ‘claimant/non-claimant’ divide. Farmworkers have rights set out in various laws, and these suggest a mode of belonging

defined in terms of identities of landowners and workers. 'Claimant' workers derive their rights from the Restitution of Land Rights Act (1994), defined in terms of membership of a dispossessed community, in which the mode of belonging is that informed by norms and values derived from notions of 'tradition' and 'custom'. As Rutherford (2008a: 78) suggests, issues of recognition are relevant, and not simply rights (the dominant narrative in restitution), since "rights often hinge on certain notions of belonging that have traction with particular dependencies and interdependencies". The life histories of black farm managers at Masakona and Ravele have shown how access to opportunities and resources on community-owned farms, as well as social struggles, have been shaped by the 'traditional community' mode of belonging. Thus the two different modes of belonging converge for claimant farmworkers, but diverge for non-claimant workers.

The discussion above raises questions of sovereignty, which Moore (2005) suggests is not the exclusive domain of the nation-state. Local sovereignties include the definition of boundaries over who is included and excluded from membership in a delimited territoriality, and designation of those who exercise authority and oversee territorialised rules. Rutherford (2008a), based on his examination of the uneven ways in which complex territorialised rule plays out between competing and overlapping sovereignties of 'traditional authorities' and 'the state', suggests that -

"whereas legislation, development projects and political analyses may peddle clear, distinct social agents with delineated rights in their discourses - 'ideal types' - in practice effective articulations of rule tend to embed rights and administrative structures into forms of dependencies within a mode of belonging with particular cultural politics of recognition. These modes of belonging are shaped by territorializing projects that could differ dramatically from how officials perceive them" (Rutherford 2008a:81).

For example, contrary to provisions of the negotiated settlement of the land claim, stating that jobs will be reserved for claimants only, and CPA constitutions which state how benefits will be shared, this thesis has shown scenarios where new jobs were allocated to non-claimants, and CPAs insisting on the employment of certain individuals in management positions despite their lack of experience. These could be seen as social projects for those CPA leaders. For example, in contrast to laws that specify that only Zimbabweans have rights to land in communal areas in the district to which their national registration card says they belong, there are many cases of authority figures in the communal areas actively recruiting immigrants or

‘strangers’ from outside the district to settle on land, including many farmworkers whose birth-place or ancestry is non-Zimbabwean.

Anecdotes illustrate the issues in question. On the morning of 12 May 2011, at U-No-Me farm, owned by the Ratombo CPA, while an interview with a financial clerk was under way, a farmworker came into the office. Without greeting anyone, and looking furious, he started to complain about the lack of respect shown towards him by one of the children of a prominent CPA committee member, also a member of the royal council.²⁰⁹ Having asked for a protective mask from an administrative assistant, because he was going to be spraying herbicide, he then left. It turned out that the man was a ‘non-claimant worker’ who had been on the farm for a long time. He was complaining about the behaviour of someone who also worked on the farm as part of the management team. Similarly, in an interview the general manager of the Masakona²¹⁰ farms discussed how tensions in the operating company had emerged when he refused to offer a farm management position to a relative of one of the CPA executive committee members.

These interactions demonstrate the role that particular modes of belonging play in shaping who gains access to employment opportunities on farms. Relations between non-claimant farmworkers, claimant workers and management thus draw on and amplify the power relations on community-owned farms. By virtue of the fact that CPAs are the owners of farms, and some CPA members are farmworkers, these members are empowered over non-claimant workers. Power relations and struggles on the ground are thus shaped by these identities.

9.6.2 Contestations involving traditional councils, CPAs, boards of directors and professional farm managers

Commercial partnerships in land restitution can be viewed as ‘routinised social projects’ designed by the state to establish a class of black farmers. They entail bringing together different actors, including private companies with boards of directors, professional farm managers, land-owning communities, CPAs and traditional authorities. This creates

²⁰⁹ These were the utterances of an unnamed farmworker; observation at the Ratombo Farms Management Offices in U-No-Me Farm, Levubu on 12 May 2012.

²¹⁰ Interview with Danie Basson (*op cit.*)

overlapping and sometimes competing forms of sovereign authority on these commercial farms. These forms of authority are very different from those found on conventional white-owned commercial farms, which, according to Rutherford (2008b), historically drew their legal and moral authority from the colonial and apartheid regimes that supported them to become successful farmers.

The above description suggests a well-planned institutional arrangement for the management of commercial partnerships. However, due in part to the complexity of the competing interests at stake, the restored farms in Levubu have become contested arenas in which different actors' interests, understandings and values are pitched against each other. Competing interests derive in part from the fundamental goals of commercial partnerships: job creation and skills training for CPA members, on the one hand, and the distribution of dividends, which implies the imperative to run a profitable farming enterprise, on the other. When structures such as traditional councils and chiefs are factored in, the complexity increases with the interests of an elite group who derives its legitimacy and support from yet another mode of belonging based on custom and tradition, being brought to bear.

A conversation with one of the general managers illustrates the complexity of the contours of power on community-owned farms:

“It is very difficult because some of the farmworkers who sit on CPA committees are workers today and a boss tomorrow at the board of directors meeting [...] today you tell him/her what to do and tomorrow he/she tells you what to do. This system was inherited from the old strategic partnerships and it needs to be changed so that there are clear lines of accountability. Where you have a representative of the CPA, he or she should not be involved in the day to day operations of the company or the enterprise. In the company workers should remain as such, there has to be a clear line between a worker and CPA board member”²¹¹.

Farm management in such situations is a very challenging task. Contestations are common over who possesses the final authority on the farms - the general manager, the CPA as the owner, the board of directors of the operating company, or traditional leaders. Across the four case study CPAs there are different understandings of these issues.

²¹¹ Interview with Johan Haasbroek (*op cit*). The sentiments were echoed by the general manager for Ravele as well as the caretaker manager for Ratombo, Mr. Anthony Wewege.

At Ratombo, Masakona and Shigalo, there has not been a clear delineation of the boundaries between the board of directors and the CPA executive committee. The expulsion of Ratombo's general manager in 2011 and the withdrawal of the Masakona's general manager in 2014 were driven by tensions and conflicts linked to ambiguous authority on the farms. Based on disparate and contradictory modes of belonging, complex relationships have emerged, especially in arenas where decision-making to secure a viable business operation is required. Competing cultural styles of interaction are evident, that help explain these tensions and conflicts.

9.6.3 Social struggles about access and control of CPA resources

Dominant narratives about strategic partnerships in their formative stages revolved mainly around sustaining the productivity of farms, creating additional jobs for members of CPAs, ensuring profits that could then result in the distribution of dividends to households, and investing in public goods in areas where claimant communities are settled. Despite the collapse of the Levubu strategic partnerships, ideas about deriving benefits from the farms and enterprises appear to have captured the imaginations of many within claimant communities. For example, despite the large-scale retrenchment of workers at Ratombo, their CPA continued to recruit more workers, regardless of affordability. This is emblematic of the social struggles that emerged within the CPA, manifesting in the constant need to reassure beneficiaries of the benefits of restitution.

The recently appointed mentor for Ratombo²¹², Mark Cohen, suggested that the CPA had been crippled by poor leadership. He related a story about his first approach to ensuring that the farm is profitably managed, in which he proposed reducing the cost of labour through retrenchment of part of the existing labour force. Having completed the project, he went on leave. However, in his absence, the CPA reappointed those same farmworkers without consulting him. Upon his return and discovery of the developments, he convened a management meeting to discuss the financial implications of recent recruitments with no regard of the financial implications on the company. After he had shown them the financial status of the company, and suggested that the company would be bankrupt by March 2015,

²¹² Interview with Mark Cohen (*op. cit.*)

one of the CPA members said, “We did not know it was this bad, we thought that these farms were returned so that we could employ our people”²¹³.

This discussion points to power struggles between institutional structures, in this case the CPA and a professional farm manager, as discussed above. The CPA’s rules of conduct for its members and the system of values implicit in a distinctive mode of belonging contrasted with the mode of belonging and attendant processes set up by the professional farm manager, the mentor. Identity politics involve political processes whereby different forms of belonging are articulated in order to achieve political ends. Here, members of the CPA executive committee wanted to achieve recognition by giving out jobs, even if this proved not to be sustainable in the long run. In return they would gain popularity amongst the general membership of the CPA.

The conflicts that arose when a dissident group emerged at Ratombo, and the emergence of ‘concerned groups’ within the Ravele and Masakona CPAs, further illustrate the complexity of contestations around competing modes of belonging and the turn to identity politics. The dissident group at Ratombo comprised a group of people who challenged attempts to silence unhappiness by the general membership of the CPA on the controversial issue of the control of CPA resources by a minority, through invoking the status of traditional authorities. This group challenged the enjoyment of privileged access to benefits by those close to the Royal family.²¹⁴

The removal of the entire executive committee of the Masakona CPA in 2014 was the culmination of longstanding discontent that had first been observed as early as 2009. Some members of the CPA alleged that the committee and the board of directors were failing to effectively oversee farm operations and the work of the professional farm manager. Some also alleged that the previous committee had been guilty of nepotism, especially in relation to the appointment of farmworkers and promotions to senior positions, as discussed above.

For many years the leadership of the Ravele CPA appeared to have managed to maintain its unity, ever since its formation in 2005. However, in 2012 signs of conflict emerged as some members began to contest its authority. The tipping point, as discussed above, was the

²¹³ Interview with Mark Cohen (*op. cit.*).

²¹⁴ Interview with Milingoni Ratombo (*op. cit.*).

suspension of the chairperson of the board of directors by the CPA executive committee. This example draws our attention to the power relations that shape the ways in which different categories of people make claims on different resources, such as royalties and CPA funds. The position of chiefs and the potency of discourses of traditional authority within claimant communities make traditional leaders eligible for receipt of ‘royalties’ from the CPAs, in the form of houses, cars, and other benefits that are not available to ordinary members of the CPA. This ‘routinised social practice’ appears to have been acceptable to many Venda people. However, when such benefits are provided to a small elite group in the midst of complaints about poverty and unemployment by ordinary members of the CPA, this generates discontent.

9.6.4 Investing in the improvement of the conditions of work *vis-à-vis* investment on farm profitability

All four community-owned farming enterprises studied here have one thing in common - poor conditions of farmworker accommodation. An interview with one of the white commercial farmers in Levubu revealed that this is a general challenge in the large-scale commercial farming sector. In relation to farmworker accommodation, he said, “these are not houses, they are compounds, just a place where a person can have shelter while working on the farm”.²¹⁵ On community-owned farms, general managers have focussed mainly on making profits, and issues of housing were seen as peripheral. Interviews with two general managers show that they have not devoted resources to investments that do not yield returns, particularly in the period when companies had just emerged from a financial crisis.²¹⁶ The key focus, they suggested, should be on building capacity through accumulating financial reserves.²¹⁷

Community-owned farms have become entangled in different social projects that have become distinctive modes of belonging in themselves. In one such project and mode, profit-making has been prioritised at the expense of social reproduction, and all resources have been mobilised in attempts to achieve that objective. Any form of mobilisation that asserts the importance of conditions of basic employment (i.e. minimum wages, protective clothing,

²¹⁵ Interview with Fritz Ahrends (*o. cit.*)

²¹⁶ Interview with Danie Basson (*op cit.*) and Theuns Kotze (*op cit.*) – general manager for Ravele and Shigalo farming enterprises respectively.

²¹⁷ Interviews with Danie Basson on 17 June 2010; and with Mark Cohen on 09 April 2015.

normal working hours, and equal pay) is circumvented by arguments such as “we are building company reserves and we cannot afford to buy uniforms, and we cannot improve the living conditions in workers’ housing.”²¹⁸

The examples of the Shigalo, Ratombo and Masakona-owned farms all involve struggling companies which have failed to pay their workers on time at one time or another. The worst case scenario was observed at Shigalo and Ratombo, where workers had to be laid off completely. While there has not been any observable mobilisation by farmworkers in these two cases, the Masakona CPA experienced an internal uprising against the farm enterprise and the CPA executive committee. When members of the workforce, both ‘claimants’ and ‘non-claimants’, rose up to demand payment on the 25th of each month, protective clothing, and overtime pay for security guards, complex cross-cutting identification processes underlie the expression of their social agency.

In this case, a collective of farmworkers came together to challenge the form of domestic government, or local sovereignty, exerted by the company and the CPA. This generated a “represented community” within the community-owned farm. To put it slightly differently, communities “renewed their existence not only by representations in the semiotic sense, but through state formation via governmentality, hegemony, and practices of citizenship....” (Rutherford, 2008b: 80). According to Rutherford (2008b), represented communities have informed, but not determined, the contours of modes of belonging on commercial farms in Zimbabwe, and this is an apt characterisation of the situation in Levubu too.

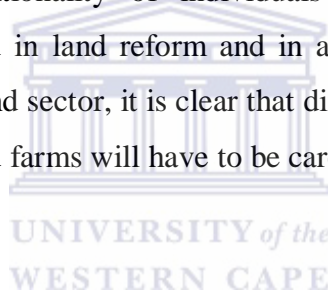
9.7 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how identities associated with different modes of belonging have shaped social relations of inclusion and exclusion on community-owned large-scale commercial farms in Levubu. Contestations and struggles have been driven in part by a cultural politics centred on recognition as well as rights. Conflicting modes of belonging have contributed greatly to tensions, and have become enmeshed in those contestations generated by the underlying contradictions of capitalist farming enterprises. These become doubly complex when contradictory class locations are internalised within CPAs, which represent the

²¹⁸ Interview with Bethuel Ravele (*op cit.*)

co-owners of the means of production who are also hired into the labour force of the farms. As a result there is little room for manoeuvre to lower the cost of labour, which places additional pressure on already stressed companies. Demands for better wages and improved working conditions have been made by workers, but there is an inherent ambiguity in who exactly these demands are aimed at, and how they are to be addressed without jeopardising the very existence of the enterprises.

The material in this chapter lends support to Bernstein's (2010: 11) assertion that "class relations are universal but not exclusive 'determinations' of social practices in capitalism. They intersect and combine with other social differences and divisions" The key concepts of 'modes of belonging' and 'identity politics' discussed in this chapter have assisted in the analysis of how power relations arise in agrarian settings of this kind, and the extent to which these shape access to and control over resources. Access and control are deeply influenced by the positionality of individuals or 'communities' within these complexities. For those involved in land reform and in attempts to help to resolve widely publicised conflicts within the land sector, it is clear that different cultural styles and forms of politics within community-owned farms will have to be carefully navigated.



10 CONCLUSION: THE CONTRADICTIONS OF COMMUNITY-OWNED LARGE-SCALE CAPITALIST FARMING

10.1 Introduction

In this thesis I set out to explore the social dynamics of production and reproduction on community-owned capitalist farms in Levubu, with a particular focus on the livelihoods of farmworkers. The principal question that I sought to answer is to what extent commercial partnerships and their evolution into community-owned enterprises have reproduced, transformed, or modified the dominant relations of property, power and production which existed on commercial farms in the Levubu Valley in the past. My interpretation of the empirical material presented in this thesis was deeply influenced by theoretical frameworks from within the political economy of agrarian change. I explored the four key questions suggested by Bernstein (2010b), in relation to property regimes ('who owns what?'), divisions of labour ('who does what?'), the distribution of income ('who gets what?') and relations of consumption, reproduction and accumulation ('what do they do with it?').

I set my analysis against the backdrop of particular historical contexts: firstly, of South Africa's history of capitalist development in agriculture, and secondly, the crisis of social reproduction faced by classes of labour in rural South Africa today. The latter is distinct from pressures on the reproduction of agricultural capital, which occurs when downward pressure is exerted on the prices that large-scale farmers receive and upward pressure is exerted on the prices of inputs needed for production. I concur with agrarian political economy scholars such as Akram-Lodhi & Kay (2009; 2010a; 2010b) and Bernstein (2004; 2006; 2010b; 2012), who suggest that both kinds of reproduction crises highlight the continued salience of the Agrarian Question in an era of neoliberal globalisation.

I also have noted contrasting formulations of an Agrarian Question for the 21st century. Bernstein argues that there is no longer an Agrarian Question of capital on a world scale, even when the Agrarian Question as a basis for processes of national accumulation and industrialisation has not been resolved in many countries, hence the intensified fragmentation of classes of rural labour. Therefore the Agrarian Question today is that of *labour*, which infused with a number of class tensions and contradictions (Bernstein, 2010b). Akram-Lodhi

& Kay (2009), in contrast, argue that the Agrarian Question of capital has not been finally resolved and that it cannot be separated from that of labour. The central issue, in their view, is the balance of class forces, nationally and internationally. The nature and trajectory of accumulation within transitions to capitalist agriculture remain uncertain in many contexts.

In this final chapter I cover the following ground: firstly, I present a summary of the main empirical findings of this thesis. I also outline the limits of the thesis, clarifying which issues I could address with the time and resources available and which I could not, and propose some questions that a future research agenda for the Levubu area might address. Secondly, I show how I have analysed and interpreted the empirical material through the application of key concepts and theories. I also suggest possible future trajectories of community-owned enterprises in Levubu in light of these analyses. Thirdly, I highlight some of the policy implications emerging from this study.

10.2 Summary of findings

The empirical findings presented in this thesis build on and make use of key concepts and approaches discussed in the extensive literature reviews contained in Chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the political economy of capitalist agriculture as theorised by Marxists. The approach involves analysis of the character of petty commodity production, a form of production based on the ‘contradictory unity’ of the class places of capital and labour. I have extended this conceptualisation to the core characteristics of community-owned farming enterprises, in which CPA members occupy the class places of both capital and labour. Chapter 2 explores the contradictory nature of capitalist relations of production, with farming enterprises seen as governed by capitalist laws of motion, expressed through the ‘dull compulsion of economic forces’. These dictate competitiveness, profit-maximisation and ongoing capital accumulation by the enterprise as conditions of its survival (Bernstein, 2010b). In addition to this class-analytic perspective, Chapter 2 also argues that the notion of a ‘mode of belonging’ (as conceptualised by Rutherford, 2008) is useful in interrogating processes of political representation and the ways in which they shape social relations in agrarian settings. The concept thus facilitates analysis of the role of identity politics in community-owned farming enterprises.

Chapter 3 presents an historical account of the development of capitalist agriculture in South Africa. A central issue was the structure of relations of property, power and production prior to 1994. This chapter demonstrates that the state played a central role in the development of capitalism in the South African countryside and the consolidation of agribusiness. Chapter 4 discusses research design and the research methods used in the study. Chapter 5 shows how post-apartheid land reform has attempted to transform the property and power relations and production regimes found in the Levubu Valley. This account draws on several research reports that have been published on restitution in Limpopo, and on strategic partnerships in Levubu in particular (Fraser, 2006; Lahiff *et al.*, 2012; Derman *et al.*, 2013; van Leynseele, 2013).

The following paragraphs present a summary of the key empirical findings covered in Chapters 5 to 9. These findings attempt to provide answers to the research questions posed in Chapter 1.

1. *On farms in the Levubu Valley restored to community ownership through land restitution since 2005, how have arrangements for the continued production of subtropical fruit and nuts evolved over time, and how successful have these arrangements been in sustaining profitable production?*

The year 2005 was a turning point in the history of the Levubu area. As Chapter 5 shows, land restitution saw about 79 farm units transferred to African communities between 2005 and 2008, culminating in the formation of strategic partnerships between private sector entities and CPAs. The partnerships aimed to ensure the continued production of fruit and nuts for export markets, to support ‘upstream’ and ‘downstream’ industries in the area, to secure levels of farm employment, and to protect property values (Derman *et al.*, 2010; 2013). The thesis examined the complex trajectories of these partnerships. Three moments in the evolution of institutional arrangements in Levubu are explored. Firstly, strategic partnerships were in place from 2007 to 2009, a curious case of ‘hybridity’, as Fraser (2006) describes them. Contracts between partners in a joint venture dictated how the farms would be used and managed. However, despite access to government grants, strategic partnerships failed to maintain production on the farms and by 2008 both partners, SAFM and Umlimi, had run into financial difficulties, leading ultimately to their withdrawal and liquidation. This left the CPAs with heavy debts.

Secondly, farming enterprises owned by the claimant communities and managed by professional farmers replaced strategic partnerships between 2009 and 2013. These faced the mammoth task of re-building previously productive farm enterprises that had largely collapsed due to the lack of adequate investments by the strategic partners. The Ravele farms have been able to raise their annual profits to between R3 million and R5 million over the last two years, and have been able to maintain a stable labour force. Ultimately, however, none of the other three farms could be reconstituted as viable businesses, leading to the contracts that operating companies had entered into with professional farm managers being abandoned. These three CPAs saw a downward trend in relation to productivity, production levels, profits, and employment on their farms, with the operating companies eventually having to terminate contracts and retrench many farmworkers.

Thirdly, in the period since 2013 communities have taken very different routes. Ratombo and Masakona have entered into mentorship agreements with two experienced commercial farmers, and Shigalo has leased all its farms to a commercial farmer. The Ravele CPA has maintained its contract with a professional farm manager due to his success in improving farm productivity after the exit of SAFM as their strategic partner.

A key factor that helps to explain the different trajectories of these community-owned farms is the institutional configuration of the management roles of different actors, such as traditional leaders, boards of directors and CPAs. Ravele appears to have institutionalised its management structures in a manner that clearly delineate their boundaries and the nature of the relationships between them, especially in relation to land governance and business management. However, as discussed in Chapter 8, this is not to suggest that there are no conflicts and tensions within this CPA. In the other three CPAs, however, many of the tensions and conflicts that emerged were the result of a lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the different structures of control, resulting in much interference in the day-to-day management of farms by CPAs or traditional leaders.

What has not emerged at Levubu thus far is a push for a radical restructuring of the farms that might, for example, involve their subdivision into smaller units farming on a smaller scale. While it might be unthinkable at the moment, it does not suggest that restructuring in this way should be ruled out, given the high level of conflicts and tensions that have to be

constantly managed at present. That could have significant policy implications, (discussed in section 10.5 below) since the current land reform and agricultural policy approaches do not encourage sub-division of agricultural land.

2. *How have different management arrangements on community-based farms impacted on property regimes and relations of production on these farms, and on relations between management and labour in particular?*

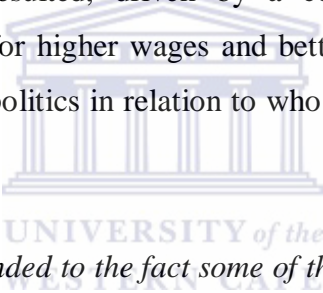
Chapter 3 details how the development of a racially-skewed form of agrarian capitalism in South Africa resulted in distinctive property relations on commercial farms, in which white farm owners employed black farmworkers, often ‘freed’ from the land as a result of state-driven dispossession. Racially inequitable power relations on farms also resulted in a system of ‘domestic government’ (Rutherford 2008a), associated with a distinctive mode of belonging. From 2005, post-apartheid land restitution saw the transfer of commercial farms in Levubu to African communities, represented by CPAs, with day-to-day management and control in the hands of strategic partners. These arrangements involved shareholdings by both CPAs and strategic partners in operating companies, but gave way over time to a situation where CPAs were the sole proprietors of these companies, with their boards of directors exercising oversight of farm management decisions. Later on some CPAs appointed mentors to advise them, rather than hiring managers, and one has since leased out all of its land to commercial farmers.

Chapter 5 shows that commercial partnerships were built on the basis of the guaranteed private property rights of CPAs, but these did not permit physical occupation of the land by members of CPAs. Partnerships imposed limited access to benefits, and these have generated continued social struggles around access to benefits by members of these communities. The complex trajectories followed first by partnerships, and subsequently by alternative ownership and management arrangements on these farms, have had varied impacts on power and production relations.

In all four of the CPAs in this study, questions were raised about decisions made in relation to who has been employed on the farms, and in what positions. Non-claimant farmworkers complained about some of the newly appointed supervisors who had fewer skills and

experience than they did. Tensions arose between professional farm managers and boards of directors of operating companies in relation to day-to-day farm management and control.

With regard to the social relations of production, operating companies try to function as normal capitalist farming enterprises, and are thus constituted on the basis of a fundamental division between capital and labour. But some workers are members of claimant communities represented by CPAs, and are thus simultaneously (co-)owners and workers. As Derman *et al.* (2010) suggest, the attempted marriage of social justice and business was bound to experience tensions and contradictions. As discussed in Chapter 8, the fact that the farms exist within capitalist relations of production and reproduction means that as ‘capital’, operating companies have been under intense pressure to invest in maintaining or improving the technical conditions of production. This has inevitably pitted them against ‘labour’ or farmworkers, whose chief concern is their social reproduction through employment and wages. Social struggles have resulted, driven by a combination of the capital/labour contradiction and thus demands for higher wages and better working and living conditions, and a particular form of cultural politics in relation to who gains access to jobs and positions on community-owned farms.

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3. *How have farmworkers responded to the fact some of them are both workers employed by commercial enterprises and co-owners (through the land claim) of the enterprise? Have major differences between claimant and non-claimant farmworkers emerged, and if so, how have these shaped labour relations within the enterprises?*

Chapters 5 and 6 have shown that a key benefit of land restitution for CPA members is preferential access to employment on community-owned farms. Enterprises and managers have thus been under constant pressure to employ more CPA members, especially in strategic positions, thus preparing CPAs to manage the farms themselves after a period of ten years (in the event that that strategic partnerships were not renewed). Where members of communities were offered supervisory and farm management positions, this pitted them against longer-serving and skilled farmworkers, who were qualified for promotion but were not offered such positions, as discussed in Chapter 8. This has been a major bone of contention, as the CPAs, as landowners, have wanted to stamp their authority on decision-making in relation to employment. There have also been constant squabbles between claimants and non-claimants on the farms, resulting in poor relations amongst workers.

Agricultural employment in South Africa more widely has continued to decline over the past two decades, as discussed in Chapter 3, but community-owned enterprises tried to buck this trend by recruiting additional workers to the farms, to fulfil the promise of expanded employment opportunities for CPA members. Other than at Ravele, the number of workers on the farms escalated over time, in defiance of industry norms on optimal numbers of farmworkers per hectare for particular crops. The operating companies were caught between maintaining productive and profitable enterprises, on the one hand, and ensuring a flow of benefits in support of the social reproduction of members of CPAs, on the other. Chapter 8 has shown the immense challenges generated by the unsustainable increases in the number of workers. Except on the Ravele farms, all the other CPAs experienced subsequent declines in the numbers of workers employed by the companies.

CPA members were given preferential access to employment on farms, and some members of the CPA executive committees were employed on farms as managers and supervisors. The latter were able to make decisions on the daily operations of the enterprises, thus placing them in a somewhat conflicted position: although benefitting from policies that emphasised the expansion of employment, they were often swayed to focus primarily on issues of productivity, profitability and the goals of generating a financial reserve for use in future operations. Traditional leaders generally supported this stance. Some members of the executive committees of CPAs and boards of directors of farming enterprises have thus become local elites who dominate decision-making on the farms. As the case of the farmworkers' strike at Masakona has shown, farmworkers have sometimes seen these community leaders as occupying the class position of capital, with very different interests to those of members working on farms and occupying the class position of labour. In some cases CPA members, who neither participated in decision-making nor were informed about the severe pressures bearing down on the enterprises, gradually moved from a focus on preferential employment to becoming more concerned about wages and working conditions on farms.

As discussed in Chapter 8, the strike that took place on the Masakona farms in 2013 indicates the inability of most of these enterprises to address demands for the improvement of wages and conditions of labour. A strong alliance of business, emerging and traditional elites emerged, that was focussed largely on ensuring profitability. Workers have struggled to

develop a politics of class, however, partly because of divisions based on whether or not one is from a claimant community, and thus entitled to privileges such as preferential employment. Some farmworkers thus occupied contradictory class locations, while others did not. These kinds of cross-cutting identities and the complex politics they have given rise to are at the root of many of the tensions experienced on community-owned farms.

4. *How have commercial partnerships and their evolution into community-based enterprises influenced social identities other than those of class, race and gender, and in particular those traditional identities of ethnicity or tribe through which the land claims were pursued? What roles do traditional authorities play in the management of community based enterprises, what is their relationship with CPAs, and how do these influence the ways in which the enterprises are managed and their benefits are distributed?*

Chapter 9 argues that the trajectories of community-based farms in Levubu call for an analysis of power and politics at the micro-level, and the ways in which these shape social relations within agrarian settings. It explores the cultural politics and practices that underlie political action in Levubu, especially those that are centred on access to and control over different types of jobs and various forms of benefits on community-owned farms. It is clear that membership of 'traditional communities', and thus of CPAs, played a significant role in the employment of workers on the farms.

However, this involves a subtle and complex politics of belonging. Not all members of traditional communities are members of the CPAs, since not all suffered from dispossession and therefore qualified as land claimants. As discussed in Chapter 9, however, some non-claimant members of traditional communities were offered employment on farms. In relation to management of the enterprises, different structures (including traditional councils and CPA executive committees) competed over the authority to make decisions and control resources, thus leading to tensions and conflicts.

Power relations have shaped the ways in which different people make claims on funds such as those controlled by CPAs. The widespread legitimacy of discourses of traditional authority allow traditional leaders to claim benefits from CPA funds, in the form of houses and cars, that are not available to ordinary members, which provoke discontent. This raises questions about the role of the institution of traditional leadership in CPAs and traditional communities

at large, and the democratic right of members to render the institution accountable. Current policy discussions around communal land tenure and rural economic transformation provide for a role for both CPAs and traditional councils, based on the choice of the people (DRDLR, 2015). The policy implications of this stance in relation to community-owned farms are discussed below.

5. *What is the impact of commercial partnerships (both strategic partnerships and community-owned farming enterprises) on the livelihoods of farmworkers?*

This study has shown that in the early days of strategic partnerships there was an upsurge in the recruitment of labour from claimant communities to work on CPA-owned farms. However, there was little regard for, on the one hand, the production needs of the farms or considerations of how the increased numbers of workers would be managed, and on the one hand, some of the existing workers who would have been suitable for promotion to strategic positions were overlooked. What transpired was the increased insecurity of existing labour, which was further exacerbated when in Masakona, Shigalo and Ratombo the operating companies failed to make enough money to pay their labour. As discussed in Chapter 8, after 2008 farm employment has been in decline over time as enterprises ran into financial difficulties and internal disputes and conflicts erupted, resulting in retrenchments and layoffs, in attempts to ease the financial burdens of the companies. As household survey data show, the majority of farmworker households depend heavily on their wages and these trends have increased their vulnerability. This led to the increased mobility of farmworkers as they searched for more secure jobs on farms elsewhere in the area.

Household survey data underscores the significance of social grants to rural households; they act mostly as a cushion on which to fall when all else fails. Furthermore, survey data also shows the marginality of small-scale subsistence agricultural production for households on communal land. These factors explain why there has been such a strong demand for preferential employment on these farms. Traditional councils and CPAs have come under pressure to show that the farms restored to community ownership will employ more people, but this has proved unsustainable. The pressures bearing down on capitalist enterprises result in attempts to squeeze labour to increase output with minimal reward, leading to a failure to reproduce the labour force, thus generating the social crisis that Bernstein refers to.

6. *What are the perspectives of different actors (community members, farmworkers, traditional authorities, CPA committee members and professional managers) with regard to the future of community-based farming ventures in Levubu? Are there feasible alternative farming management models?*

Chapter 9 in this study discusses various perspectives held by members of different structures of control in relation to land restitution in Levubu and alternative farm management arrangements. Chapters 6 and 7 discuss farmworkers' perspectives on the impacts of restitution on their livelihoods.

Three points can be made: firstly, strategic partnerships have largely failed farmworkers, as some of them have lost their jobs due to the failure of operating companies to maintain production levels and ensure profitability. While some new jobs have been created for CPA members, in many instances this has proved not to be sustainable, and companies have ended up laying off workers. Secondly, non-claimant workers, while recognising that restitution was necessary, have expressed concern over the preferential appointment of CPA members to strategic positions on farms. As the case of the Shigalo farms shows, this has led to declines in production in some instances. Thirdly, in some CPAs farm managers have expressed concerns with regard to the lack of clear boundaries between CPA executive committee members and traditional councils. In others, there was no clear delineation between executive committee members and boards of directors in the operating companies. This has muddled the management of the farms at times, when farm managers have not been able to take independent decisions about production issues. In relation to traditional authorities and customary regimes, the administration of land is seen as being within their jurisdictional authority, and this has allowed them to compete with CPA executive committees in decisions around land.

The question arises: are there feasible alternative farming models that might result in more beneficial employment and livelihood outcomes for CPA members and other farmworkers than those that have been in place in the past, or are emerging at present? Attempts by some CPA members to take over portions of farms for their own farming ventures have been actively discouraged. Chapter 8 has shown that a few years after the restoration of the farms, strategic partnerships collapsed, and since then operating companies have continued to shed jobs. Reasons include poor farm management, the uncertainties of the subtropical fruit and

nut export sectors, and tensions between the contradictory demands of capital accumulation and the social reproduction of labour. Some benefits have flowed to claimants in the form of employment on farms, but no dividends have been paid as yet. Few CPAs have managed to make substantial investments in public goods for claimant communities. There is thus an urgent need for the reconsideration of the basic features of all the approaches implemented to date.

The future of the farms is now in the balance. The Shigalo CPA has leased out all its farms, and another two (Ratombo and Masakona) have opted to enter into mentorship arrangements with experienced commercial farmers. Only Ravele is doing reasonably well. This implies that for the foreseeable future restitution projects of this kind will result in few, if any, benefits other than the employment of some claimants as farmworkers. These jobs have, in any case, involved very low wage rates. It is also likely that much smaller numbers of claimants will be employed in supervisory positions than has been the case over the past nine years. No clear alternative visions for the future of these farms have emerged to date. As discussed above, attempts to engage in individual production by the dissident group within the Ratombo CPA, were unsuccessful, with government interventions forcing them back to the collectively owned farming enterprise. It appears that at this stage no one has any intention of moving towards subsistence production on the farms.

10.4 Explaining tensions and conflicts on community-owned capitalist farms in Levubu

I have applied key concepts from agrarian political economy, as discussed and summarised in Chapter 2, to analyse the empirical findings of this study and explore their wider significance. A key focus of Marxist political economy is class relations. I have adopted Bernstein's view that the classical Agrarian Question can be redefined in the contemporary period as the Agrarian Question of *labour*, rather than capital, and involving a key focus on the social reproduction of rural classes of labour. This latter category refers to people who "depend - directly or indirectly - on the sale of their labour power for their own daily reproduction" (Bernstein 2010:110-111). This includes poor small-scale farmers who might not be dispossessed of all means of production, but also do not have sufficient means of production to reproduce themselves (*ibid*). Farmworkers, therefore, are an important constituent part of a larger set of classes of rural labour, that include the working poor and poor farmers.

As I argued in Chapter 2, the political economy analyses of processes of agrarian change are useful for unpacking and explaining the tensions and contradictions found on community-owned enterprises and related commercial partnerships. They shed light on struggles over the use of resources to ensure the social reproduction of labour, as against their use for purposes of capital accumulation. Another analytical focus in the study is the various structures of management and control on these farms, that are enmeshed in contrasting ‘modes of belonging’ and hence vie with each other. I have thus argued for two complementary analytical approaches in explaining the trajectories of commercial partnerships in Levubu, namely, a class-analytic perspective focussed on class dynamics, and a ‘mode of belonging’ perspective focussed on the micro-politics of community-owned farms.

A class-analytic analysis highlights the contradictory unity of capital and labour within CPAs, an approach associated mostly with studies of petty commodity production. Yet the community-owned farms in Levubu are characterised by the production of exchange values targeted at export markets, and are aimed at making a profit. As Patnaik (1990) reminds us, in a capitalist economy profits must always be reinvested in the enterprise, often in technological changes aimed at increasing its productivity and enhancing its competitiveness, resulting in the expanded reproduction of capital, or capital accumulation. Accumulation is rooted in the exploitation of labour. Class relations thus help explain the tensions and conflicts that arise within community-owned enterprises, especially social struggles over the use of profit for either increased wages for workers or for investment to achieve successful accumulation.

The social reproduction of labour and the reproduction of capital are two sides of the same coin. Capital is under constant pressure to reproduce itself under competitive conditions, which means that it must downplay social reproduction and invest profits back into production, in order to survive or to grow. Community-owned enterprises are thus caught between two contradictory imperatives: to prioritise enhancing the social reproduction of labour or to make decisions that ensure the survival and growth of the enterprise. As discussed in this study, a key contradiction of global capitalism is that capital systematically fails to reproduce its own labour force, since investing in technologies with higher labour productivity ends up reducing employment. Commercial partnerships with the private sector have been punted to communities as ‘win-win’ solutions, promising both productivity gains

and employment creation. However, the contradictory unity of wage labour and capital on community-owned farms presents a major challenge for the new businesses.

Bernstein (2010b:94) suggests that “the owners of such agricultural enterprises (farmers), cannot be exploited by the corporations they contract with or the banks they borrow from (even though they often claim that they are!); rather they exploit the labour they employ”. But notions of the ‘exploitation of labour’ remain somewhat unclear on community-owned commercial farms in Levubu, due to the ambiguities that arise from contradictory class locations. Levubu community-owned farms have been fully incorporated into modern capitalist agriculture, use standard inputs in production processes, and aim to produce outputs acceptable in competitive markets. Community-owned farms and enterprises purchase labour power from the very communities that own these farms and enterprises. The questions that arise, are: Do these farmworkers identify themselves as owners of productive capital, or as labour, or as both? Do CPA members ‘exploit themselves’, in the same way that members of households engaged in agricultural petty commodity production do? These questions point to the underlying ambiguities that lie at the door of many of the tensions found on these farms.

In addition to the contradictory class dynamics discussed above, socio-political processes shape the dynamics of property rights and production. Bernstein (2010b) suggests that class relations intersect and combine with other social differences; although universal, class does not determine social processes exclusively. Critical questions arise about what other social differences or boundaries exist that might result in exclusionary relations among members of classes of labour. In Chapter 9, I argue that processes of identification (as a claimant or a non-claimant farmworker; as a member of traditional communities or not; as an owner or manager of a commercial business; or as a worker) result in particular ‘modes of belonging’ emerging on community-owned farms. The notion of ‘community’ held in Levubu includes both claimant and non-claimant members, yet some of the latter become beneficiaries of the restitution programme by virtue of accepted community membership. The cultural politics of belonging in these settings thus play a vital role in determining access to opportunities and resources, and shape both the recruitment of workers and the technical division of labour on farms, as discussed in Chapter 8. Competing modes of belonging are thus enmeshed with class-based contradictions on community-owned farms.

10.5 Policy implications

Analysis of the dynamics of class relations and their articulation with other socio-political processes within commercial partnerships in Levubu is of more than academic interest. Research findings on these issues have key implications for policies of redistributive land reform and agricultural development in South Africa. As explained in Chapter 4, I do not claim that my findings based on four cases in Levubu are representative of all community-owned enterprises created through land reform. I do, however, suggest that the findings of this study shed light on critical policy issues and could thus well have wider application, perhaps informing how government and private sector actors design and implement commercial partnerships. Here I explore a number of policy questions prompted by my study.

(a) *Who are the intended beneficiaries of commercial partnerships in land restitution, and to what extent have they benefitted?*

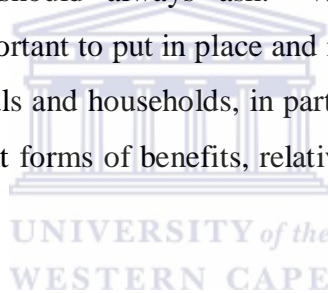
In 2003 and 2004 proponents of strategic partnerships in Levubu promised that these would result in more jobs for community members, and also that land rental and dividend incomes would be paid. Such discourses involved particular ‘images of community’, presenting these as homogenous groups with clear social boundaries. Li (1996) shows that this is an ideal-type, not located in time or space. In this image, every member of a community is assured of the opportunity to meet his or her basic needs; communities function in accord with mutually agreed rules; and groups experience minimal internal strife or conflict. These are highly simplified representations of communities and can be detrimental when translated into specific policy recommendation (Li, 1996: 505).

In Levubu, for example, traditional communities were defined primarily as the victims of land dispossession, entitled to restitution in terms of the Restitution of Land Rights Act of 1994. Other members who joined such a community after dispossession had no right to restitution. In practice, however, it has proved difficult to distinguish claimants and non-claimants, especially in the recruitment of labour for community-owned farms.

The place of chiefs, royal families and traditional councils within rural communities, together with the key roles they have played in processes of claiming land, raise critical questions about the distribution of benefits. For example, poor households may find their specific

interests being submerged beneath the interests of traditional leaders and those associated with them, or subordinated to those of the community in general. The general community interest may be seen to be best represented by macro-level investment, rather than by supporting the social reproduction struggles of poor households. In some communities, such as those of Ratombo and Masakona, the dynamics generated by the competing interests of different 'community members' have contributed greatly to conflicts and tensions.

Lahiff *et al.* (2012) conclude from their review of strategic partnerships that the internal coherence of community groups should be given top priority by policy makers. But communities are not necessarily internally coherent, as shown in this study. Drawing on Leach (1991), the question may be asked: just whose economic circumstances or security of tenure are at stake, in programmes that seek to enhance the rights and livelihood security of rural households? In relation to the distributional benefits of large-scale land investments or commercial partnerships, one should always ask: "What, and who exactly, is 'the community'?" It is therefore important to put in place and implement mechanisms to allocate and secure the rights of individuals and households, in particular the substantive rights to the communal resources and different forms of benefits, relative to the rights of the wider group or 'the community'.



(b) Can corporatist farm management styles function in tandem with institutional structures such as traditional councils and chiefs, which are associated with very different modes of belonging?

As Borrás and Franco (2010) remind us, it is vitally important to conceptualise land not only as a factor of production, but also as 'territory', which is important for socio-cultural reproduction. The restoration of the land rights of traditional communities is bound to intersect with issues of traditional authority and the role it plays in the administration of land and land-based resource use. Strategic partnerships involved private sector partners, operating companies and CPAs established to represent claimant communities. Shares in the operating companies were held by landowners, through the CPAs. However, membership of a 'traditional community' under chiefly authority is also a powerful 'mode of belonging'. Tensions arise when each of these structures of control wants to exert its authority, and competing modes of belonging are invoked.

One should thus not overlook the significance of land as a cultural resource, shaping cultural politics on the ground. Land is crucial for the formation of social and cultural identities that shape relations of power and powerlessness in rural settings (Akram-Lodhi, 2007:555). It is important to allow for the emergence of working models ‘from below’. Key is the facilitation of the design of a model specific to the needs and desires of a particular community, which the majority of members agree to. Even where these take the form of a straightforward lease, these arrangements must have the general agreement of members and involve clear roles and responsibilities, and be backed by mechanisms that ensure the coherence of institutional arrangements.

The current proposals for communal tenure reform by the DRDLR envisage that rural residents would be allowed to make choices about what governance structure should represent them (DRDLR, 2015). But this thesis shows that CPAs and traditional councils have coexisted in many rural communities benefitting from restitution. It also shows that communities are not homogenous groups of victims of apartheid forced removals, and in some cases ‘claimant communities’ have been subjected to jurisdictional authority of other chiefs. This raises important questions about the democratic right of members of CPAs or claimant communities to choose the land administration institution they prefer and not the entire traditional community that might not have rights to claim in terms of the Restitution of Land Rights Act (1994).

Whether the governance structure of choice is a traditional council, a CPA or a trust, policy mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that such structures are accountable to the general membership. The current Communal Property Association Act (1996) creates such mechanisms. However, it is limited in the sense that it does not apply to traditional councils. Proper care should be given to ensure the institutionalisation of democratic and participatory principles as well as the accountability of traditional councils, as a governance structure on communally owned commercial farms, to the general membership.

(c) Are commercial partnerships an appropriate model in land reform?

Land reform policies in South Africa are informed by a hegemonic model of large-scale commercial farming, leading to a neglect of smallholder agriculture - in practice if not in rhetoric (Cousins & Scoones, 2010). These are underpinned by assumptions about ‘viability’

that have informed the design of the model of strategic partnerships that was implemented in Levubu. These sought to preserve large-scale farms in contexts where a great deal of capital had been invested in subtropical fruit and nut plantations.

In current policy discourses, the RADP has been developed by the DRDLR to give effect to this model. It involves employing commercial farmers as mentors and insisting that the beneficiaries of land reform enter into strategic partnerships with private sector actors (DRDLR, 2014b). In essence, current policies institutionalise these models through funding arrangements. Where groups of beneficiaries are involved, as in most restitution claims, as well as some redistribution projects, this focus on capitalist large-scale farming means that those enterprises will inevitably prioritise capital accumulation, at the expense of the social reproduction of farmworkers.

If South African land policies were informed by a conceptualisation of the Agrarian Question as primarily centred on the social reproduction of the poor and dispossessed, or labour, large-scale farming could be seen in a different manner. Rather than viewing it as a more desirable option than smallholder farming, or as an ideal which all smallholder farmers should attempt to move towards over time, it could be seen as a *complementary* farming system. It could thus be offered to some (but not all) land reform beneficiaries – which raises the questions of which beneficiaries should be offered this option of entry into large-scale commercial farming, and what alternative options should be offered to the rural poor.

The findings presented here suggest that group-based land reform and agricultural development initiatives, in which significant numbers of poor South Africans are beneficiaries, must aim to ensure the adequate social reproduction of ‘classes of labour’ as a basic objective. If they do not do so, then even if they sustain levels of production and make a profit, they are probably doomed to fail, because of the inevitable tensions that will arise.

In a study of strategic partnerships in Levubu and Moletele, Lahiff *et al.* (2012:61) conclude that “among the key weaknesses in this model are: vast differences (in knowledge and experience) between communities and their commercial partners; lack of agreement around precise responsibilities of the commercial partners, particularly with respect to provision of working capital; long delays on the part of the state in transferring land and releasing grant funding; and a failure , particularly on the part of the provincial Department of Agriculture to

monitor and regulate the contractual agreements between the parties”. To this I would add the key weakness of not factoring in obligations to ensure that at least some of the social reproduction needs of beneficiaries are met, which Lahiff *et al.* (2012:62) refer to as the inability of strategic partners to “include social responsibility as part of their mission”.

Lahiff *et al.* (2012:64) thus argue that the failure of the strategic partnership model resulted mainly from errors in its design and implementation. I suggest that the causes of failure are more complex, and are driven by the underlying contradictions involved in capitalist farming. Even if partnerships are appropriately designed, the chances of these enterprises declaring sizeable profits that can be distributed in meaningful amounts to beneficiary households are close to nil, given the current context of a globalised agricultural market and the resultant cost-price squeezes experienced by farmers.

Given the continued tensions within group-based farming enterprises, questions are often raised about the possibility of subdividing farms into smaller units for distribution to households. At the centre of this question is whether or not commercial partnerships are an appropriate mode of land reform. Policy makers must take into consideration both the complexity of community-owned large-scale commercial farming models and the real needs of land owners. Three scenarios can be suggested as alternatives to the hegemonic model of high-tech commercial agriculture.

Firstly, the farms could be kept as they are, but the state would provide strong support and invest in mechanisms to ensure effective farm management, if not the resolution of increasing tensions and conflicts within CPAs and farming enterprises. Further, the state could attempt to enhance the access of operating companies to start-up and operating capital, taking into consideration the fact that CPAs are not allowed to use farms as collateral for loans. This is likely to be expensive, however, and will thus be unattractive to government. Secondly, there is the option of radically transforming and restructuring both property and production relations by subdividing the land and distributing smaller units to households. However, given the high levels of capital investment on farms in Levubu, this scenario is likely to be rejected in the interest of protecting these investments. Thirdly, policy could attempt to create a diversity of farming systems, and foster complementary relations between large-scale commercial farms and smallholder farmers, integrating both into established value chains. Smallholder farm units could be allocated to households already farming in communal areas,

as well as to existing farmworkers with agricultural experience. Targeting the non-productive sections of farms for subdivision and allocation to households could generate real benefits for households, in addition to jobs and investment in public goods.

The third scenario has significant implications for land redistribution policy. Policy could provide space for more diverse farming approaches and models to cater for a range of circumstances and contexts. The Levubu case has shown that a blanket approach ('one size fits all') does not work, with the result that differences are beginning to emerge 'from below', with the owners of the farms setting up farming enterprises that best suit their circumstances.

(d) What is the future of the restitution claims lodged in Levubu, in light of the recent re-opening of the land claims process until 2019?

As discussed in Chapter 5, many commercial farms in Levubu had been claimed by 1998, but only some claims have been resolved and only some land has been restored to claimant communities. The Restitution of Land Rights Amendment Act (2014) provides for the reopening of the process for lodging land claims until 2019. I have shown that almost the entire Levubu Valley was claimed but that the last transfer of agricultural land in Levubu took place in 2008. Other claimants have continued to wait for the restoration of their land.

Apart from budgetary constraints, also an important factor, it appears that the failures of the strategic partnership model in Levubu, and the many problems experienced subsequently, have influenced the thinking of the provincial office of the Land Claims Commission and led them to neglect outstanding Levubu claims. The RLCC also has serious concerns about the expense of supporting agricultural production in Levubu. In some quarters the view has been expressed that the transfer of ownership of some of these farms to communities may in itself constitute 'just and equitable compensation', and thus that no further claims need to be resolved. This is a matter of constitutional importance.

Having been a participant observer in processes leading to the settlement of land claims in the Levubu area, I understand the many compromises made by claimant communities when negotiating and resolving boundary disputes with one other. Some, in fact, remain unresolved to this day, even after the transfer of farms to CPAs. The re-opening of land claims thus creates a platform for disgruntled groups within communities to re-lodge land claims, as is

taking place already on the Masakona and Ratombo farms. This kind of dynamic could impact negatively on the ability of the land claims commission to focus on other pressing restitution claims in the Levubu area.

10.6 Conclusion

This thesis has examined the trajectory of commercial partnerships in Levubu over time, from joint ventures to management contracts and the leasing out of land to white commercial farmers. It argues that commercial partnerships in land reform must be understood as deriving their rationale from the current dominant approach to development. Here private sector investment in agriculture drives the global shift to neo-liberal forms of agrarian restructuring, in which rural poverty reduction is supposed to ensue from pro-poor market transactions. However, the track record of partnerships between land reform beneficiaries and private sector actors in South Africa is not encouraging to date.

The thesis has also shown that commercial partnerships in Levubu have all involved uncertainties, struggles over employment, contested rights to benefits and access to resources, tensions and conflicts, and problems in relation to sustaining production levels (and even their collapse in some cases). All of these problems have tended to re-emerge over time as institutional arrangements are restructured and take different forms.

The dynamics of partnerships, especially in relation to the preferential employment of members of CPAs, employment in strategic management positions, and reducing the cost of labour in order to realise profits, tend to render farmworkers uncertain and insecure. These partnerships continue to function under the compulsion of market forces which dictate capital accumulation over social reproduction. The fate of farms in Levubu restored through land restitution is far from clear, as is the fate of the farmworkers working on these farms. The vulnerability of farmworker households derives in part from a combination of a lack of access to productive land in communal areas and a lack of labour to work the land available, resulting in their inability to secure a livelihood from small-scale agriculture.

The overall research question informing this thesis is: Do commercial partnerships on community-owned farms transform, modify or reproduce the relations of property, power and

production which existed on Levubu farms in the past? The thesis has shown that, on the one hand, a change has indeed occurred in property relations, which are characterised by the collective ownership of land obtained through the transfer of land titles to CPAs and by community-owned shares in operating companies. On the other hand, maintaining continuity in production relations is an expressed goal for all community-owned farms, and the resettlement of claimants on the restored land is prohibited because of the imperative to maintain large-scale commercial production of subtropical fruit and nuts. Partnerships have thus involved a complex mix of continuity and change. However, capitalist relations of production have become increasingly entangled in local power dynamics arising from intense struggles over the benefits promised by land reform. Some of the restored farms have not been able to continue employing as much labour as previously, compelling some farmworkers to resign in search of more secure jobs on neighbouring farms and indeed continue to work under precarious conditions of uncertainty.

Community-owned large-scale commercial farms are clearly very complex enterprises to operate, given the contradictory unity of capital and labour within the enterprises. Arrangements for their management are ever-changing, as different actors attempt to find solutions to problems, which inevitably gives rise to yet more tensions and conflict. This study has attempted to understand the dynamics driving such processes of change over a lengthy period. An expanded version of political economy analysis has proved useful, and offers a critical understanding of processes that connect local arenas to wider global contexts and dynamics.

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Appendix No. 1: List of Interviews cited

- Interview with Agnes Masakona, Banana packhouse Manager in 11 January 2013 at a Banana pack house on Portion B24 of Masakona CPA in Levubu
- Interview with Angie Ramulongo, Piccado Packhouse Manager (Masakona farms) on 12 May 2011 at Piccado farm in Levubu
- Interview with Anthony Wewege, an interim General Manager for Ratombo CPA farming enterprise (assisting Dannie Bason), on 05 May 2013 at U-No-Me farm, in Levubu.
- Interview with Barnard Munyai, Farm Manager for Appelfontein farm – Ravele CPA, on April 2012, at Appelfontein, Levubu.
- Interview with Bethuel Ravele, CPA Liaison officer and the Secretary of the Board of Directors, on 16 June 2010; 09 May 2011; 29 March 2012; at Maulum Farming Enterprise offices at Appelfontein farm in Levubu.
- Interview with C. Nel, the General manager for Valley farms - Juice processing facility in Levubu on 16 May 2011
- Interview with CKM on 08 January 2013, Shigalo Pack house
- Interview with Dannie Bason, the General Manager for Ravele and Masakona Farming Enterprises on 05 April 2012; and 29 March 2012 and; 14 December 2012, at Appelfontein
- Interview with Dennis Ravele, Production Manager for Mauluma (Ravele) Farming Enterprise on 14 December 2012 at Appelfontein farm in Levubu;
- Interview with Derick Ratombo, Chairperson of the Ratombo CPA; Date: 13 January 2013 at the Offices of the Department of Agriculture in Vuwani.
- Interview with Emily Mashawana, HR Manager for Ravele and Masakona CPA farming enterprises on 10 May 2011 at Appelfontein farm in Levubu.
- Interview with Fritz Ahrens, a commercial farmer and the District Chairman for TAUSA. Date: 13 May 2011; on his farm along the LTT-Pundamaria road.
- Interview with Gabriel Masakona, a leader of the workers forum, and subsequently a shop steward for FAWU on 15 January 2013, at Piccado Top farm in Levubu
- Interview with Gloria Ratshitanga, A project officer for the Commission working in Levubu and the Vhembe District, date .13 December 2011; 5 April 2012; June 2013
- Interview with Grace Managa and William Ratombo (jointly), members of the CPA executive Committee, and members of the Royal family; Date: 08 December 2012 at U-No-Me farm in Levubu.

Interview with Grace Ratombo/Managa, a member of the CPA committee and a CPA liaison and HR officer at Ratombo farms, on 10 May 2011; 16 May 2011, at U-No-Me farm, Levubu.

Interview with Johan Hasbroek, the General Manager for Ratombo Farming Enterprise, Date: 10 May 2011 at U-No-Me farm in Levubu.

Interview with Joyce Mulaudzi, 10 January 2013, Citrus Pack house, U-No-Me farm

Interview with Maluleke Owen (from Olifantshoek) Phineas Chabalala (from Olifantshoek), security guards at Shigalo farms, on 07 December 2011, at Shigalo Offices in Levubu

Interview with Maluta Mukwevho on 18 June 2012, at Shigalo-wa-Muhunguti Offices, Levubu

Interview with Manganyi Lucas, Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Shigalo CPA; Date: on 08 December 2012, at Olifantshoek Village.

Interview with Mark Cohen – Mentor for Ratombo CPA farming enterprises - on 9 March 2015, at his smallholding in Makhado

Interview with Mbhazima Sambo a former member of the Executive Committee for the Shigalo CPA at his house in Olifantshoek, on 16 August 2010

Interview with Michael Munyai on 08 January 2013, at litchi orchard of Shigalo CPA

1 Interview with Milingoni Ratombo on 09 January 2013, an executive committee member of the Ratombo CPA, at Makhado Crossing, in Makhado/Louis Trichardt.

Interview with Mpho Mulaudzi, a female driver/messenger for Masakona farms, on 29 March 2013 at Piccado Packhouse, Levubu

Interview with Mr Mutuwa and Mr Tshikwara (part of the Ratombo CPA dissident group that occupied some of the farms so as to manage them independently), on the 11th May 2011, on portion no 13, commonly known as the Meyer farm.

Interview with Mr Munyai, the newly elected Chairperson of the Masakona CPA, Date: 7 April 2015 (personal conversation)

Interview with Muvhulawa (not a real name) on 12 December 2013 at Wilken Farm for Masakona CPA.

Interview with Patrick Raphathela, Production manager for Ratombo Farms; Date 11 January 2013 at U-No-Me Farm in Levubu.

Interview with Peter Coen (PC), Production Manager on Shigalo Farming Enterprise, 14 December 2012 at the Shigalo Pack house.

Interview with Peter Mawela, Chairperson of the Masakona CPA and the Secretary of the Masakona Traditional Council, on 20 May 2011 at Masakona Traditional Council Office; Ha-Masakona

Interview with Phindulo on 13 December 2012, Piccado pack house, Masakona CPA

Interview with Rhirhanzu Shilote, Director: Quality Assurance, Restitution – Commission on Restitution of Land Rights – Limpopo Regional Land Claims Commissioner’s Office on 17 June 2010, at RLCC offices in Biccard Street, Polokwane.

Interview with Sarah Manthwa, female farmworker at Masakona Farms (Welken) in Levubu on 08 January 2013

Interview with Sunnyboy Ramashia, Production Manager on Masakona Farms on 19 May 2011 and 13 December 2012, at Piccado Bottom, Pack house

Interview with Thenga on 7 April 2015; at Masakona farm new offices at farm B24 Levubu

Interview with Thenga, newly appointed mentor for Masakona CPA farms, on 7 April 2015 at the Masakona offices at farm B24 Levubu (not Appelfontein, offices which they had shared with Ravele for over 9 years under SAFM and later Dannie Basson)

Interview with Theuns Kotze, the general manager for Shigalo CPA farming enterprise, enterprise on 12 December 2011, at Shigalo farms offices in Levubu

Interview with Tshinakaho on 09 January 2013, on Ems farm, Ravele CPA

Interviews with Tshimangadzo Mudau and Joyce Mulaudzi, 10 January 2013, Citrus Packhouse, U-No-Me farm

Other documents

Complaint lodged with the Presidential Hotline by the Ravele CPA ‘concerned group’.

Field diary notes Tshililo Manenzhe – Nkuzi Development Association (undated)

Notes from Focus Group Discussion at Meyer Farm, Dissident Group, on 18 June 2010

Notes from Women’s Focus Group Discussion at Portion B24 of Masakona CPA, in 2011

Observations from farm management meetings of the Ravele and the Masakona farming enterprises, notes taken on 29 March 2012.

Shareholders agreements between SAFM and Ravele CPA

Shareholders agreements between SAFM and Masakona CPA

Shareholders agreements between Umlimi Consortium and the Shigalo CPAs

Shareholders agreements between Umlimi Consortium and the Ratombo CPAs

Appendix No. 2: Survey Questionnaire
TRAJECTORIES OF STRATEGIC PARTNERS IN LEVUBU
FARMWORKERS HOUSEHOLD SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE [NOV/DEC 2010]

Questionnaire Number			
SITE	1	Masakona	
	2	Shigalo	

RESEARCH ASSISTANT	
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Personal Details of the respondent	
Name of respondent	
Address (Location)	
Cellphone number	
Nationality	

Particulars of visits to the household					
Particulars of visits	Date	Time		Response	Other (e.g. Description of the reason for refusal to be interview)
		Start	End		
1st visit					
2nd Visit					

Response options for particulars of visit.	
1	There was no one at the household
2	There was no adult in the household
3	The respondent is selected
4	The selected respondent was not there
5	The selected respondent refused to participate
6	The interview was partially completed
7	The interview was completed

[please specify the reason for refusal]

8

Other (describe)

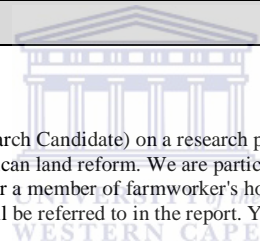
RESEARCH ASSISTANT DECLARATION

I certify that this interview took place in full with the recorded respondent and that the information contained in this questionnaire is an accurate reflection of his/her views. The interview was carried out as instructed by Tshililo Manenzhe (Institute for Poverty Land and Agrarian Studies - University of the Western Cape) and no pressure was placed on the respondent to participate.

Name of Research Assistant	Signature	Date

Introducing yourself

Hello, my name is..... I am a research assistant working with Tshililo Manenzhe (Phd Research Candidate) on a research project at the Institute for Poverty Land and Agrarian Studies at the University of the Western Cape. We are conducting a study about the fate of farmworkers' households under South African land reform. We are particularly interested in the livelihoods of farmworkers in Levubu. Your households has been selected for participation in this survey. We ask permission to interview you as farmworker or a member of farmworker's household. The information obtained from all participating farmworkers will be compiled in a composite report and findings will be presented to people in the surveyed areas. No name will be referred to in the report. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential. For more information you may contact Tshililo Manenzhe at 0834121909



Do you have any questions before we start? **If NO**, continue with the interview

WRITE DOWN OBSERVATIONS YOU MAKE BEFORE STARTING THE INTERVIEW

.....

.....

.....

.....

Codes Table 1: Household members									
	What is the highest education level completed by this person? [Col4] [Do not read out]		How is this person related to you? [Col 5] Do not read out		what is the marital status of this person? [Col 6] Do not read out]		How often is this person present at this household?[Col 7] [Do not read out]		What is the employment status of this person? [Col 8]
1	No formal education	1	Self	1	Not married	1	Most or all nights	1	Permanent Employee on the farm
2	Primary school	2	Husband/wife/partner	2	married -customary	2	During working days but away during weekends	2	Employee not on farm
3	Matric	3	My child	3	Married - civil	3	During weekends but away during working days	3	Employee on temporary job on the farm
4	Diploma certificate	4	Adopted/foster child	4	co-habitation	4	About once a month	4	Non-farm self-employment
5	Degree	5	Child in law	5	divorced	5	For one or two periods in the year	5	Not employed & looking for work
6	Other	6	Grand-child	6	separated	6	During school holidays	6	Not employed & not looking for work
		7	Parent	7	widow/er	7	Other (describe)	7	Employee on temprary job not on the farm
		8	Grandparent	8	Other (describe)			8	Scholar/Student
		9	Sibling					9	Other
		10	Co-wife						
		11	Co-wife's child						
		12	parent-in-law						
		13	partner's sibling						
		14	own niece						
		15	partner's niece						
		16	Other relative						
		17	Domestic worker						
		18	Tenant						
		19	relatives of respondent's partner						

20	Other
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1. HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS (Those that lived under one roof or within the same household/stand at least 15 days out of the past year)

I want to start by asking you who the members of your households are. Please tell me about all people who are members of the household, even if they are not always at the household all the time. Do not include people who have established other households and have not come home in the last few years. Please, start with self and then continue with the oldest person, then go through to the youngest baby. [Use Codes **Table 1: Household members**]

TABLE 1: HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS									
	Col 1	Col 2		Col 3	Col 4	Col 5	Col 6	Col 7	Col 8
	1. Full names	2. Gender		3. Date of Birth e.g. 1994/16	4. What is the highest education completed? [Use codes]	5. How is this person related to you? [Use codes]	6. What is the marital status of this person? [Use codes]	7. How often is this person present at this household? [Use codes]	8. what is the employment status of this person? [Use codes]
		Male	Female						
1		1	2						
2		1	2						
3		1	2						
4		1	2						
5		1	2						
6		1	2						
7		1	2						
8		1	2						
9		1	2						
10		1	2						
11		1	2						
12		1	2						
13		1	2						
14		1	2						
15		1	2						
16		1	2						

Observation:

Codes Table 2: Income Sources of the Household members	
NB. Description of income sources: Add details on nature of incomes sources such as type of job, economic sector where it is located, etc.	
1	Earnings from permanent employment on farm
2	Earnings from permanent employment off-farm
3	Earnings from temporary employment on farm
4	Earnings from temporary employment off farm
5	Remittances in cash
6	Remittances in kind
7	Disability grant
8	Child Support Grant
9	Old age grant
10	Sale of household's or own livestock
11	Sale of vegetable or fruit from own or families field or garden
12	Earning from income generating project
13	Dividends from land reform projects
14	Private pension earnings
15	earnings from own farming activities
16	Self employment - small business (non-agricultural)
17	Other



2. Household Income Sources: Use Codes Table 2 to answer the questions asked in the table below

2.1. Now I would like to ask you about this/ your household income sources, including remittances you receive from members of this household living away from this family or other family members, relatives or neighbours that support this household financially or in kind.

	Col 1	Income Sources 1				Income Sources 2			
	Full Names	Code	Description	Cash p/m	How many times in the last 12 months	Code	Description	Cash p/m	How many times in the last 12 months
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									
13									
14									
15									
16									

2.1. Continued

	Col 1	Income Sources 3				Income Sources 4			
	Full Names	Code	Description	Cash p/m	How many times in the last 12 months	Code	Description	Cash p/m	How many times in the last 12 months
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									
13									
14									
15									
16									



Observations:

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.....

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.....

.....

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TABLE 2.2: RANKING OF SOURCES OF INCOME OF HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

Please rank the four most important income sources of the homestead, in order of importance, and explain why each source is important for this household.

Order	Name of the Household Member	Income Source	Cash earned per month	Reason for importance
1				
2				
3				
4				

Observations:

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.....

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.....

.....



Codes Table 3: Land access and use by the Household							
	How what the land first acquired? [Col 5]		Through whom was the land acquired [Col 6]		Interms of what arrangements was the land acquired [Col 7]		who cultivates/works this land [Col 9]
1	Allocation by the chief or headman	1	Self	1	Customary tenure (allocation)	1	Self
2	Allocation by government	2	My husband/wife	2	Permission to Occupy (PTO)	2	Hired labour
3	Payment to a local leader	3	My mother	3	Self-occupation	3	My mother
4	Payment to the chief or headman	4	My father	4	Given land by local family	4	My father
5	Self-occupation	5	My parents	5	Rent paying to a local family	5	My parents
6	Asked a local family	6	My son	6	Rent paying	6	Relatives (un paid)
7	Purchase	7	My daughter	7	Permission by CPA/ or leaders	7	My son
8	Rent/lease	8	Part of community project	8		8	My daughter
9	Allocation by the CPA/Trust	9	My wife/husband and I	9		9	Up paid family member
10	Caretaker for a family or relative	10	Not applicable	10		10	Paid family member
11	Other	11	Other				

3 TABLE 3: LAND ACCESS AND USE BY THE HOUSEHOLD

3.1. What type of land does this household have? [Read out types o land use Codes Table 3: Land of the Household]

	Col 1	Col 2		Col 3		Col 4	Col 5	Col 6	Col 7	Col 8	Col 9
	Type of Land	Does the Household have this type of land?		Has the land been used by the household in the last 12 months?		When was it acquired by the household ? e.g. 1970	How was the land first acquired?	Through whom was the land acquired?	In terms of what arrangements what the land acquired?	How many plots does this household have? [enter a number] eg 1,2,3 plots	Who cultivate/work this land?
		Yes	No	Yes	No						
1	Residential										
2	Garden within yard	1	2	1	2						
3	Fields	1	2	1	2						
4	Irrigation scheme plot	1	2	1	2						
5	Project garden plot	1	2	1	2						
6	Land reform land	1	2	1	2						
7	Other	1	2	1	2						

4 **PRODUCTION DETAILS:** This Section should focus on those households with access to fields, irrigation scheme plots, or garden plot

4.1. **TABLE 4:** why types of crops were grown on the land accessed by this household in the past 12 months?

	Type of land	Crop Type1:					Crop Type2:				
		Quantity harvested	Unit of measure	Amount consumed	Amount sold	Cash received	Quantity harvested	Unit of measure	Amount consumed	Amount sold	Cash received
1	Garden plot in the yard										
2	Fields										
3	Irrigation scheme										
4	Other										

4.1. continues

	Type of land	Crop Type3:					Crop Type4:				
		Quantity harvested	Unit of measure	Amount consumed	Amount sold	Cash received	Quantity harvested	Unit of measure	Amount consumed	Amount sold	Cash received
1	Garden plot in the yard										
2	Fields										
3	Irrigation scheme										
4	Other										

4.1. Continues

	Type of land	Crop Type5:					Crop Type6:				
		Quantity harvested	Unit of measure	Amount consumed	Amount sold	Cash received	Quantity harvested	Unit of measure	Amount consumed	Amount sold	Cash received
1	Garden plot in the yard										
2	Fields										
3	Irrigation scheme										
4	Other										

5 LIVESTOCK DETAILS

5.1. Please list all livestock owned by members of this households

	Type of Livestock	Col 1	Col 2	Col 3	Col 4	Col 5	Col 6	Total
		Name	Name	Name	Name	Name	Name	
1	Cattle							
2	Goats							
3	Sheep							
4	Pigs							
5	Chickens							
6	Other poultry							
7	Donkeys							
8	Horse							
9	Other							

5.2. The next sections seek to understand how much of your livestock was sold or consumed at home?

	Livestock type	Sale			Consumption		Given away			
		No Sold	Livestock Owner	Cash received	Sold to?	No. slaughtered	Livestock Owner	No Given	Livestock owner	Given to?
1	Cattle									
2	Goats									
3	Sheep									
4	Pigs									
5	Chickens									
6	Other poultry									
7	Donkey									
8	Horse									
9	Other									

6. Labour Sources

6.1. I would like to ask you about sources of labour for both crop and livestock production in the last 12 months.

	Type of Labour	Col 1		Col 2	Col 3	Col 4	Col 5		Col 6	Col 7	
		Does the household use this type of labour					Total numbers employed last year	No. Of Men		No of Women	Payment in Cash
	Relatives	Yes	No						Yes		NO
1	Relative resident	1	2				1	2		1	2
2	Non resident labour	1	2				1	2		1	2
	Non Relatives										
3	Seasonal worker	1	2				1	2		1	2
4	Permanent worker	1	2				1	2		1	2
	HH Members										
5	Children	1	2				1	2		1	2

7 **Durable Goods and Productive Assets of Household members**

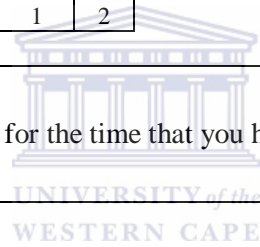
7.1. I want to ask you about household items which the household may or may not own

	TYPE	Does the Household have?		No. Owned	Total
		Yes	No		
Electronic/Communication					
1	Radio	1	2		
2	CD Player	1	2		
3	TV/DVD Player	1	2		
4	Computer	1	2		
5	Cell phone	1	2		
6	Satelite dish	1	2		
7	Camera	1	2		
8	Other	1	2		
Domestic					
7	Paraffin stove	1	2		
8	Gas stove	1	2		
9	electric stove	1	2		
10	Microwave	1	2		
11	Fridge/Freezer	1	2		
12	Washing Machine	1	2		
Transport					
13	Motor Cycle	1	2		
14	Bicycle	1	2		
15	Motor Vehicle in working order	1	2		

Agriculture		Does the Household have?		No owned	Total
		Yes	No		
16	Tractor	1	2		
17	Plough	1	2		
18	Wheel barrow	1	2		
19	Knapsack sprayer	1	2		
20	Donkey cart	1	2		
21	Garden spade	1	2		
22	Garden fork	1	2		
23	Hoe	1	2		
23	Generator	1	2		
24	Water tank	1	2		
25	Grinding mill	1	2		
26	Plough	1	2		
27	Disc plough	1	2		
28	watering can	1	2		

7.2: Savings, Financial investments, & assets that appreciate in Value: List assets that the household may own or not own		
<i>Type of Saving (Prompt for each on the list)</i>	Does HH have?	
	Yes	No
Savings (cash in bank account)	1	2
Savings in Stokvels	1	2
Pension or retirement annuities	1	2
Units, Stock & shares	1	2
Loan to non-household members	1	2
others, specify....	1	2

ENDING THE INTERVIEW:
 We have come to an end of the interview. I would like to thank you for the time that you have spent to assist me fill in this questionnaire. Do you have any question you would like to ask?



Appendix No. 3: Interview guide for key informants (farmworkers and farm managers)

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Please tell me about your origin (your family), when you were born and where?
- 1.2. If married, when did you get married; how many wives, children; and where are they?
- 1.3. Under what kinds of arrangements are your married (if married)?
- 1.4. Tell me about your schooling and educational achievements?
- 1.5. Why and how did you end up in Levubu; in what capacity (as a worker, farm manager, claimant land owner, etc)
- 1.6. What do you consider to be the most significant events in your entire life, why do you think they were so significant?
- 1.7. What do you think has been the turning point/s in your life? And why?

2. Employment history

- 2.1. When did you start working; where?
- 2.2. What did you do when you started working?
- 2.3. Have you changed jobs, if this is not your first job? Or have you been employed on this farm since you started working?
- 2.4. What kinds of skills and knowledge have you acquired over time; do you think that you are using the skills in this enterprise?
- 2.5. What opportunities for learning and further improving on your skills exist in this enterprise?

3. Livelihoods activities

- 3.1. What do you do for a living (apart from being a farmworker)?
- 3.2. Are there other sources of income and livelihoods that your household rely on?
- 3.3. Do you own or have access to agricultural land? Where and how did you get it allocated you, and by whom?
- 3.4. What do you do with the produce and profits from the fields, if you have?
- 3.5. What are the major threats to livelihoods of your household?

4. Do you own any agricultural land (in Levubu or elsewhere?); do you manage farms elsewhere outside Levubu?

- 4.1. If yes, what size; what do you produce, for what do you produce, who provides labour on that land;

5. What are your aspirations for the future in relation to the following?

- 5.1. Land ownership and control
- 5.2. Farming and productivity

6. Views about farming in Levubu

- 6.1. To what extent are the restored farms being used productively, what are contributing factors to your analysis of utilization or lack of full utilization?
- 6.2. What do you think should be done to improve production and farm management; and institutions and structures of control on these farms? What are your views about the role of the following:
 - 6.2.1. Government?
 - 6.2.2. CPAs?
 - 6.2.3. Traditional Leaders?
 - 6.2.4. Farm managers?

Appendix No. 4: Analysis of the political economy of community-owned farms in Levubu

Key Political Economy Questions		Claimants farmworkers	Non-claimant farmworkers	Claimant non-farmworkers
Who owns what?	Property, farms, rent; farm machinery and equipment	They own the land as members of CPA; they own capacity to work as individuals and sell that capacity to their own enterprises for wages (commoditised labour); they own machinery which they use as CPAs	Commoditised labour	They own land and machinery as a collective, and benefit from rent for some of the properties they own that are privately leased
Who does what?	Production	Preferentially employed on farms; some have taken strategic management positions;	General workers; and some have been used to mentor new claimant workers; but some have been placed in strategic positions in production on the basis of their skills	Not involved in production; they are source of labour
Who gets what?	Power to decide on who gets what or reinvest on farms and/or to declare profits and pay dividends (dictated upon by the market conditions)	Could get dividends if they are declared and distributed. Decisions are also complex due to the composition of traditional communities since the forced removals. In some cases, non-claimants end up in line for jobs, and other benefits (investment in public goods) by virtue of their membership to traditional communities.	Not involved in sharing rewards except only wages (incentives in bonuses – only Ravele so far)	Could get dividends if declared; they theoretically could be involved in decision-making about what should happen. At the current stage, the CPA executive committees and the Board of Directors are the ones who decide on what should happen to company profits.
What do they do with it?		Farmworkers not involved in the decision-making relating to what should happen to the profits.	Not involved (those sitting in farm management could influence the decision by impressing upon the Board of Directors a need to retain the money for investment in the company)	They could decide on CPA funds and not the Company fund since it is the domain of the Board of Directors. But the ambiguities around the boundaries of the Board of Directors and CPA executive committees complicate the powers to decide. Equally the role of traditional leaders



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