



Farm workers and farm dwellers in Limpopo, South Africa:

STRUGGLES OVER TENURE,
LIVELIHOODS AND JUSTICE

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PLAAS – Cape Town
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Published by the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies, School of Government,
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Website: www.plaas.org.za

ISBN: 978-0-86808-740-5

January 2013

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Copy editor: Priscilla Hall

Photography: Poul Wisborg, Ruth Hall, Shirhami Shirinda, Phillan Zamchiya

Cartographer: John Hall

Design: Design for development, www.d4d.co.za

Printing: Creda Communications

PLAAS – Cape Town

Noragric – Ås

Preface

In the late 1990s land and agrarian issues remained a barrier to the enjoyment of human rights and justice for millions of South Africans. With funding from the Norwegian government, the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights decided to support collaboration between PLAAS and Noragric to explore human rights in South Africa's land and agrarian reform. PLAAS is the Institute of Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies at the University of the Western Cape, and Noragric is the Department of International Environment and Development Studies at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences. Our collaboration from 1999 to 2010 has involved joint research and graduate training (MA and PhD) in rural areas of South Africa and Norway. Our joint programme 'Land Rights and Agrarian Change in South Africa' initiated in 2007 focused on the Limpopo Province and its context of rural poverty and inequality. The programme aimed to enhance the understanding of the problems facing rights-based approaches to land and agrarian reform in South Africa; to influence land reform policy and implementation in a positive way; and to strengthen applied social science research capacity within land and agrarian studies in South Africa. One of the teams in the collaboration from 2007 to 2010 studied farm worker and farm dweller issues on commercial farms in Limpopo, and produced this book.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank the many farm workers and farm dwellers, ex-farm workers and evictees who shared their experiences and insights, and often painful personal histories and memories, with us during the research. We also thank the farm owners and managers who cooperated with and participated in the study, and shared their own histories, hopes and fears. We are grateful to the Norwegian government for funding the South Africa programme over the years and to the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights for facilitating and supporting research on land, agrarian reform and human rights in South Africa. Thanks go to project leaders Professors Ben Cousins of PLAAS and Bill Derman of Noragric, and to our colleagues Themba Maluleke, Tshililo Manenzhe, both in PLAAS, and Professor Anne Hellum, University of Oslo, who shared insights during work in Limpopo. We thank all colleagues and others who helped with discussion and cooperation. We are pleased to be able to share experiences through this book; the responsibility for its quality and limitations rests with us.

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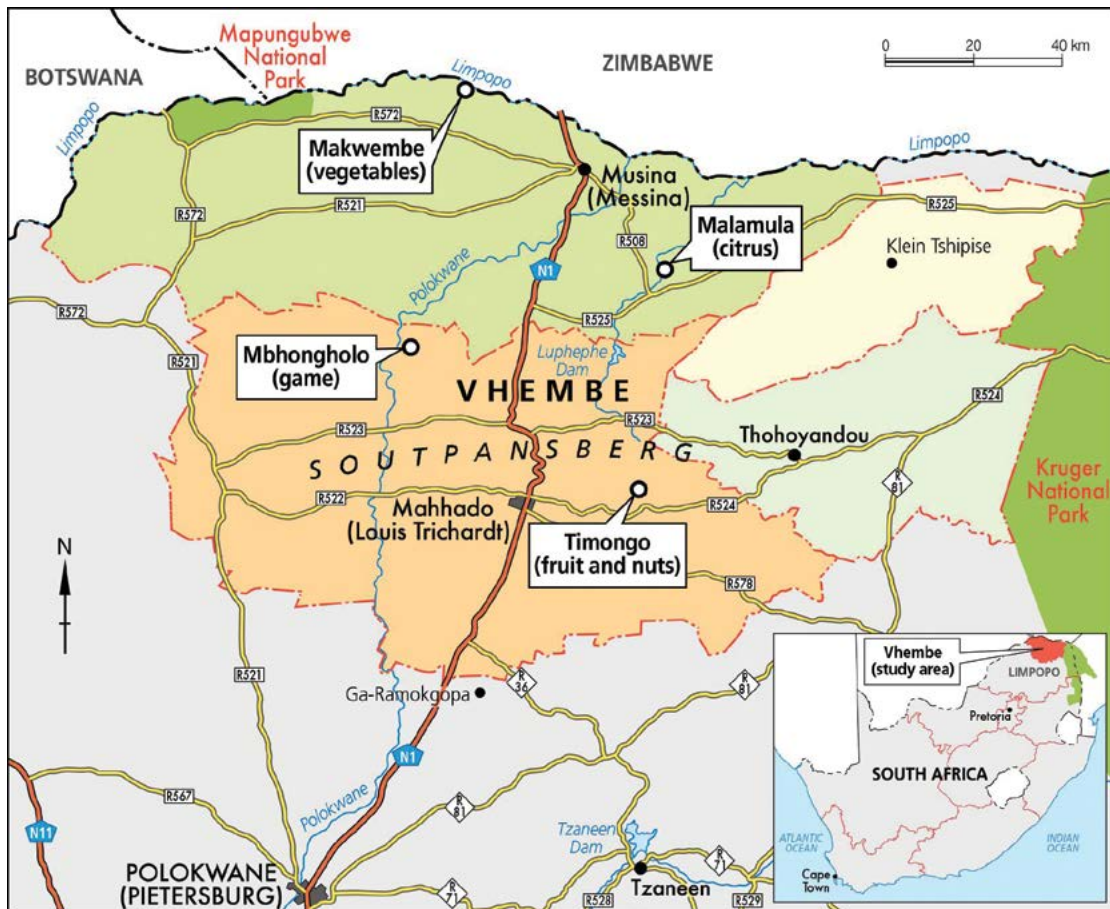
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Abbreviations

AgriBEE	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment in Agriculture
AgriSA	Agriculture South Africa
ANC	African National Congress
CEDAW	Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CLC	Community Land Conference
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CRLR	Commission on the Restitution of Land Rights
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (previously NDA)
DLA	Department of Land Affairs (later DRDLR)
DRDLR	Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (previously DLA)
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
ESTA	Extension of Security of Tenure Act, 62 of 1997
EUREPGAP	Euro-Retailer Produce Working Group standard on Good Agricultural Practices
FDC	Farm Dweller Campaign
FMSP	Forced Migration Studies Programme
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LPM	Landless People's Movement

LRAD	Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development
LTA	Land Reform (Labour Tenants) Act, 3 of 1996
MALA	Ministry of Agriculture and Land Affairs
MLAO	Musina Legal Advice Office
NDA	National Department of Agriculture (later DAFF)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NLC	National Land Committee
NLTC	National Land Tenure Conference
Noragric	Department of International Environment and Development Studies
PGDS	Provincial Growth and Development Strategy
PLAAS	Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SADT	South African Development Trust
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SPP	Surplus People Project
SSA	Statistics South Africa
TAU	Transvaal Agricultural Union
UMB	Norwegian University of Life Sciences
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UWC	University of the Western Cape

Figure 1: Vhembe district, Limpopo, South Africa with study sites (farms)



Part I

FARMS IN SOUTH AFRICA:
PERSPECTIVES AND POLICIES

1. On or off the farms

EVICTED AND EXPENDABLE

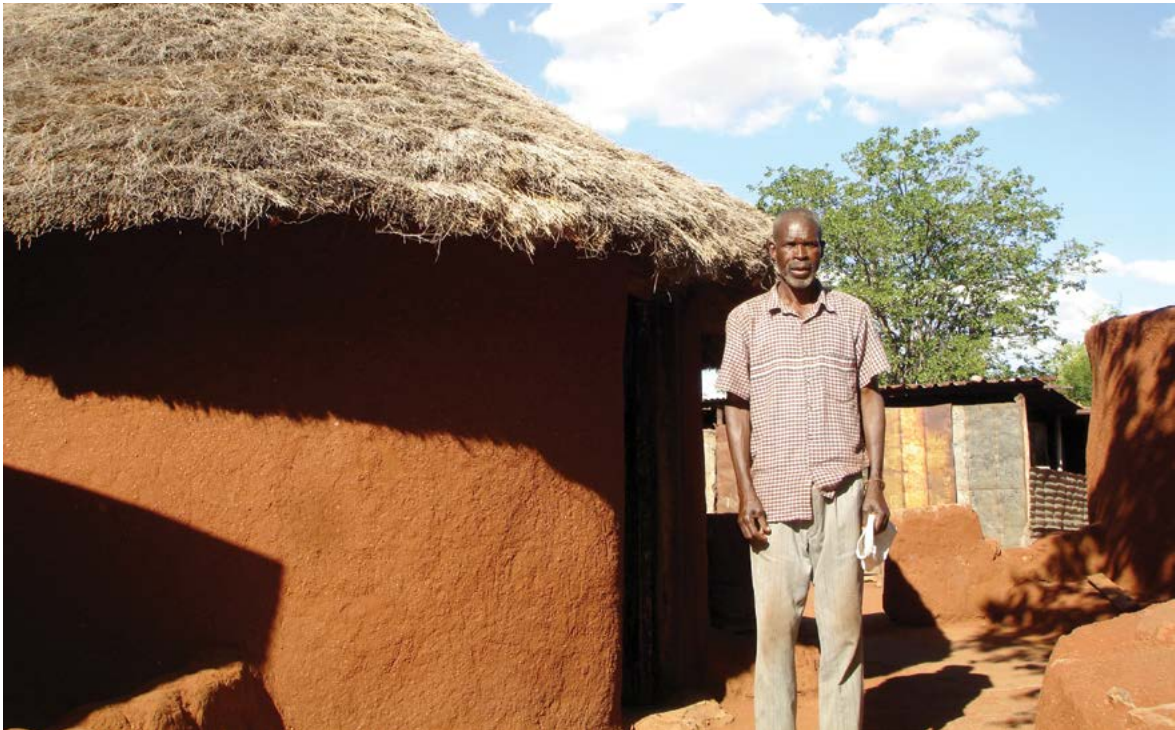
Stories about farm workers and dwellers losing their homes, land and livelihoods are common in contemporary South Africa, and also in Limpopo Province. Around 1988, Grace M.¹ and her children were evicted from a Limpopo farm, where she had lived for more than twenty years and given birth to seven children. Strictly speaking, it was the cattle owned by Grace and her husband that were evicted, as the landowner wanted to reserve all the grazing for his own stock. Grace took the livestock and the children to a nearby village, where she still lives, while her husband remained on the farm as a worker without his own stock. In the village the cattle died but the goats thrived. The children grew up with only intermittent contact with their father, who died on the farm.

In another case, in 2003 Sarah (59) and Zachariah (91) were evicted from the farm that had been their home for decades when a European investor bought and merged it with neighbouring properties to create a large game farm. Sarah and Zachariah were assisted by a local land organisation in securing a compensation of R20 000 – but it was

spent within a year on the costs of moving and on bricks and cement for a house they built in a communal area, which was still unfinished when we talked with them in 2008. Not feeling at home in their new surroundings, they said that they were ‘like goats in a *kraal* just waiting to run down the road and back to the farm’, a place they remembered with nostalgia despite the hardships they had also experienced there.

In Limpopo we often met such stories of broken relations and broken lives: these elderly people had spent most of their years on just one or two farms; they had accessed land for their own use and had owned livestock; yet, when asked to leave, they saw no option but to comply and eviction cases were unrecorded. Asked if anyone assisted them, they said, ‘Who should that have been?’ They were regarded as expendable by those who held the power to determine their old age. The outcome might have been less traumatic if they had been provided with alternative homes and livelihoods comparable to what they once had on the farm, but they were not.

While some evictees dream of a life back in the well-known context of the farm, despite its harshly unequal relations,



today most farm workers face a reality of temporary relations, contracts, and the pressures of economic and political change; they do not appear to long for the past but for secure and fair working conditions. Women, men and children on the farms in Limpopo – or displaced from them – therefore have widely differing experiences and imaginings of the past and of better futures. This poses extraordinary challenges for the efforts to understand, protect and enhance tenure security, livelihoods and social justice on farms, the subject of this book.

LIVING ON FARMS: INSECURITY AND POLICIES OF NEGLECT

The experiences of farm dwellers and workers described above speak of structural inequalities created through a long history of conquest, dispossession and uneven development. The South African countryside remains divided between the communal rural areas once set aside for the black majority and the private farm land owned mostly by white South Africans, largely the descendants of European settlers. Of South Africa's total land area

(of about 1 223 000km²), former homelands and other communal areas cover some 170 000km² or just below 14%, while about 40 000 private farms cover 860 000km² or 70%. The number of commercial farms declined by a quarter from about 60 000 in 1996 to 45 000 by 2002 as they were consolidated into larger units, and the total area farmed has declined by about 10% (DAFF 2009). It is estimated that about three million people live on farms they do not own, as farm workers or farm dwellers (SSA and NDA 2005: 4). By 2005, the agricultural workforce was about 628 000, down nearly a third from 921 000 in 1994 (NDA 2008). In KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Limpopo many farm dwellers, probably tens of thousands, still accessed land in return for labour rather than being proletarianised as wage workers (Jensen 1998: 254; Hall 2003: 12).

People living on farms, including those who are *not* employed, continue to be relatively invisible, their experiences unreported in official statistics, and their needs

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1. All names of farms and individuals have been changed to protect anonymity; in the case of Timongo the names of strategic partners and claimant communities (which are in the public domain) are unchanged.

obscured in policies that focus on labour conditions on commercial farms and on other settlements than farms. 'Farm workers' and 'farm dwellers' are distinct categories, reflecting that, historically, many black people who lived on white-owned farms were not employed there and that an increasing proportion of the workers do not live on the farms but commute there seasonally or daily from nearby settlements. The term 'farm dweller', as opposed to 'farm worker', also suggests that we may not assume that everyone depends on wage labour or that proletarianisation will continue as an inexorable trajectory of change. As our work will explore, farm owners, workers and dwellers have different and often contradictory visions for future production, labour conditions and settlements.

While farm workers and farm dwellers are highly diverse groups, many experience precarious tenure, insecure livelihoods and poor labour relations. This is due, among other things, to the unequal distribution of land, a legacy of racial and gender discrimination, and agricultural restructuring – as post-apartheid land policy has recognised. Yet, farm workers and farm dwellers have repeatedly protested that their voices have not been heard in policy circles. Evictions from commercial farms were noted and debated in the 1990s but only in 2005 did a national survey show that displacement and dispossession of farm workers and dwellers had continued, and even gathered pace, in the democratic era (Wegerif, Russell & Grundling 2005; see Chapter 2). Our research was inspired in part by this study and the need to understand the dynamics of the startling trends it exposed.

OUR FOCUS AND GOAL

Continued insecurity of farm tenure and employment raises questions about post-1994 policies, their implementation and effects. While national policies and legislation have generally been documented, we need to understand how actors respond to them and to other changes. We need grounded understanding of situations on farms and how the diverse groups working or living there see their lives and possible futures – women and men, long-term and full-time workers, migrant and seasonal workers, dwellers who are not employed, children, the elderly and so on. The public and policy makers need suggestions about how to improve the situation within realistic agrarian scenarios for South Africa. Our research therefore aimed

to contribute to knowledge and understanding relevant for improving tenure security and livelihoods of farm workers and farm dwellers in a social justice perspective.

We decided to focus on four more specific objectives: First, to understand links and conflicts between the *economic context of farming, agricultural policies, and the economy of single farms* and how they affect tenure security and livelihoods for workers and dwellers. Secondly, to analyse how *policies and legislation, including land reform*, affect farm tenure and livelihoods. Thirdly, to document and understand *discourses and responses* by people on farms to these policies. Fourthly, we wanted to place the issues in a *social justice perspective*, including exploring scenarios and strategies that people on farms expect, fear or advocate.

To get a grounded understanding of responses to changes in policy and economic contexts, we chose to focus on a small number of farms in Vhembe district of Limpopo, a predominantly rural province and the poorest in South Africa, which we studied on repeated visits between May 2007 and March 2009. Given its geographical focus and small number of farm cases, the research is just one among many studies needed, but we hope it will contribute usefully to the research and debates on farm tenure and farm labour in South Africa.

Although we call for more research and debate on the topic of the book, questions of agricultural labour in South Africa have been addressed in a longstanding and diverse academic tradition ranging in perspective from Marxist to institutional, agency-oriented or constructivist (Atkinson 2007: 16–17). These are a resource for our approach. Focusing on the keywords of the title, we also suggest that one may see *tenure security* as nested within *livelihoods* and *social justice*, which need to be understood and addressed in an integrated manner. We are concerned that South African policy and legislation to secure the 'tenure' of farm workers and dwellers are, in the views of most observers, 'failing' – or indeed, 'have failed'. Yet, we feel urged to complicate and expand the issues of tenure and livelihoods of people living or working on farms – so diverse and complex as production sites and homes; due to the many values of land, income and health at stake; and by virtue of their great human diversity. We think such complexity and diversity must inform new and more creative policy responses.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The book has four parts. In Part I we review perspectives and policies on power relations, labour and tenure on farms. We also explain the choices we made on research design and methods. Part II presents the Limpopo Province context, and the four farm case studies. While the farms are unique places and enterprises, they also illustrate common trends and trajectories of change through horticultural intensification, land restitution and a shift from livestock to game farming. In Part III we look

more closely at some struggles and changes on farms. One chapter is about ownership, production and management; one about tenure, housing and livelihoods; and the third about family, gender and children. In Part IV we draw lessons from the cases and the trends observed, identifying implications for policy and social justice. Through scenarios for land and agrarian reform we try to imagine how different policy choices might unfold in the reality we have learnt about. Finally, we use our new understanding to suggest possible ways forward through policy change, better practices and the responsibilities and actions they require.



2. Perspectives and policies

PERSPECTIVES ON POWER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL RELATIONS ON FARMS

The divided land

In South Africa, insecurity of employment, tenure and livelihoods on farms has been shaped by historical processes. Over several centuries, indigenous groups in what came to be South Africa were increasingly subjected to restrictions in access to land that became the basis for an adverse incorporation in a colonial society and continues to shape social relations. The transition of agriculture into more capital-intensive modes of production varied from region to region due to variations in, among others, agricultural labour, agrarian capital and landed property (Cousins 2007: 226); the Cape was transformed by colonising capitalists before other regions (Beyers 1971). In the Northern Transvaal, present-day Limpopo Province, colonists settled and appropriated land only from the late nineteenth century due to its distance from the coast and resistance by African communities (Lahiff et al. 2008;

Thompson 1995). While pastoralist groups in the Cape were relegated to subservient roles on farms or on mission stations further east and north, many black smallholders remained mixed farmers with the resources and skills to compete with settler farmers (Keegan 1996: 289).

By the late nineteenth century, competition for labour emerged between the mining sector, the urban economy and settler farmers, leading to demands that the government should control and curtail the farming by indigenous smallholders or tenants, so as to coerce them into low-paid wage labour relations (Lacey 1981). Such interests underpinned the Natives Land Act (No. 27 of 1913), which some settler landowners saw as an 'opportunity for at once making slaves of their tenants and appropriating their stock', in the words of Sol Plaatje, who depicted the dispossession and displacement of black farm tenants and workers caused by the Act (Plaatje 1916: 28). Labour migration also became central to the growth of settler agriculture and mining, and to key rural livelihoods strategies in Southern Africa (First 1981; Murray 1981). Initially, most migrant labourers were men, while women took care of social reproduction at home (Wolpe 1972), but women have made up a growing proportion of labour



migrants (Peperdy 2008). Modernisation of farming in the twentieth century through technological change, state protectionism and subsidies promoted high levels of farm employment but from the 1970s mechanisation, deregulation and reduced subsidies started to cause a reduction in employment (Mbongwa, Vink, van Zyl & Thirtle 2000). As a result of these intertwined historical processes, post-apartheid South Africa inherited a divided countryside, characterised not only by the dualism between commercial farming areas and the state-governed communal areas but also by unequal relations *within* commercial farms, where farm workers and dwellers faced poverty in the midst of agrarian wealth (Marcus 1989). Albie Sachs (1990: 17) argued that in South Africa private property had become ‘one of the bastions of rightlessness’ and ‘feudal-type’ relations. The words chosen by Plaatje and Sachs – ‘slave’, ‘rightlessness’ and ‘feudal-type’ – indicate the depth of social and political changes they saw as necessary in farming.

These historical and contemporary reconstructions of agriculture and farms in South Africa have been the subject of historical and social studies and debate. Atkinson (2007: 16–17) usefully suggested four major perspectives

in the academic tradition on farms and farm relations: *Marxist-materialist*; analysis on the farm as ‘total’ institution with emphasis on surveillance and dominance; agency-structure perspectives with more emphasis on the spaces for agency and mobility on and between farms; and *hermeneutical and constructivist* perspectives to emphasise the role of symbols and meaning in reinforcing and challenging material conditions. As a resource for our investigation and discussion, we sketch these mutually complementary perspectives on the political economy and power relations that structure the farming sector as well as on processes through which actors recreate and change farms.

Historical materialist perspectives

Marxist analyses have emphasised the historical creation of a marginalised and exploited class of black farm workers dominated by capitalist agriculturalists with links to colonial and apartheid governments, arguing that the South African transition followed what Lenin called the Prussian path of ‘accumulation from above’, through which pre-capitalist settler landowners became agrarian capitalists (Beyers 1971; Morris 1976; Byres

1991; Bernstein 1996; Cousins 2004). This differs from the American path, where capitalist agriculture emerged through ‘accumulation from below’ by peasants and other small-scale producers (Bernstein 1996; Byres 1971). The landowning class relied to a significant extent on the state, which regulated ownership of land on the basis of race, subsidised farm production and promoted the supply of cheap labour through political and legal control over workers (Morris 1976). Capital accumulation by land-owners through dispossession caused a demise of the

Capitalism is failing to provide adequate and secure employment.

tenure security, social relations and livelihoods of the peasantry and the creation of a class of landless agricultural wage labourers. Farm workers, like industrial workers, became wage labourers, whose employment conditions and livelihoods are a consequence of the low value of wages (Krikler 1987; Marcus 1989). For these Marxist scholars the problem is weak agrarian capital. Typically, the focus is on the formation and transitions of capital while farm dwellers and workers become mere ciphers – rather than actors – in narratives about capital and labour. This type of analysis hardly provides an adequate framework for understanding the diversity of farm dwellers in South Africa including their agency and livelihoods beyond reliance on wage labour.

Bernstein (2004) argues that the productive capacity of capitalist agriculture in South Africa shows that the ‘agrarian question of capital’ has been ‘resolved’ and is no longer an important constraint on capitalist industrialisation. However, the ‘agrarian question of labour’ and of the dispossessed has *not* been resolved: capitalism is failing to provide adequate and secure employment, so the demand for land derives from problems of reproducing labour, not because it is needed for further agricultural industrialisation (Bernstein 2004; Cousins 2004, 2007; Moyo 2004, 2007). To resolve the agrarian question of labour, it is argued, the privileges of commercial farmers must be contested and agriculture restructured to enable small-scale producers to achieve tenure, employment and food security through an ‘accumulation from below’ (Cousins 2007: 227).

Some scholars argue that granting land rights to the dispossessed may assist in transforming the structural conditions that cause poor employment, tenure and

livelihood conditions (May 2000; Moyo, Rutherford & Amanor-Wilks 2000; Hall 2003, 2004; Wegerif et al. 2005). This underpins demands for redistribution of assets to the landless (ANC 1994; CLC 1994). The redistributive ideology claims to provide a solution to the employment insecurity and poverty of the rural labour to an extent that materialist analysis does not (Bernstein 2004). Other scholars argue that ‘the preoccupation with egalitarian solutions is archetypally populist’ (Byres 2004: 25) and that the evidence for a causal link between land reform, agricultural productivity and secure livelihoods is weak. Sender and Johnston (2004) also claim that land reform affects the rural poor negatively by causing a loss of wage-earning opportunities. With data from the Western Cape, they argue that contemporary capitalist agriculture provides greater employment, livelihoods and social benefits to the rural poor, especially farm workers, than they could have obtained through their own small-scale farming (Sender & Johnston 2004). That, however, may underscore a point in materialist analysis, namely that ameliorative action that leaves elite control over land, labour and other capital intact will have a limited impact.

The total institution and domestic governance

The ‘total institution’ thesis is another perspective on social relations on farms and stresses the ways farmers exert control over workers’ lives. The term ‘total institution’ was coined by Goffman (1961) and made famous by Foucault (1977) through his analysis of how prisons and mental hospitals use surveillance to provide an unusual degree of regimentation and control over the lives of inmates (Nasson 1988; Rutherford 2001a). Nasson (1988) argued that South African farms are total institutions and similar to prisons in the ways they dominate workers and regulate their lives and livelihoods. Characteristics of farms as total institutions include (a) highly unequal power relations, (b) that the place of employment is also the place of residence, (c) isolation from external influences and alternative sources of power and authority, and (d) lack of protection by the law and the state. The notion of farms as total institutions is related to the concept of ‘domestic governance’ used by Rutherford (1997, 2001a: 11–13) to describe how the living and working conditions of Zimbabwean farm workers were regulated by the unilateral decisions of farm owners rather than by

public procedures. Domestic governance denotes both the absence of the public sphere and the intimate character of governance on farms, extending to private relations among workers and their families.

Scholars have criticised the total institution thesis by arguing that the farm owner dominance over the lives of farm workers has never been absolute and that South African farms are now even more 'porous' or open to outside influence in the form of mass media, migration, urban influences and civil society action (Graaff, Louw & van der Merwe 1990; du Toit 1993, 1995). Farms become more open due to the activities of trade unions and community organisers, though their reach remains limited (SAHRC 2003; Ewert & du Toit 2005; Addison 2006; Rutherford & Addison 2007; Zamchiya 2008).

Structure-agency perspectives

The theoretical paradigms explored so far tend to present farm workers as victims. However, economic structures (like ownership of land) or institutional factors (like political discrimination) do not exert absolute control over people's lives, as individuals can respond to or evade control. Proponents of the 'subaltern school' argue that workers challenge the structures that exploit and oppress them (Guha 1974; Arnold 1984). James Scott (1984) describes such agency as 'weapons of the weak', a range of 'everyday acts of resistance' from covert to overt, from individual to collective, through which the poor and oppressed challenge authority and extract resources to improve their position in agrarian class relations. Scott's attention to acts of resistance, such as sabotage, arson and revenge, has been criticised for over-emphasising covert forms of resistance (Hart 1991) and Korovkin (2000) found a shift over time from covert to overt forms of organisation and resistance by Ecuadorian peasants and workers.

Somewhat similarly, a 'structuration approach' (see Giddens 1986, 1989) to farm relations argues that structure and agency are interconnected and that farm workers challenge and reshape structures that constrain their lives through their choices and agency (Graaff, Louw & van der Merwe 1990). Rutherford's (1997, 2001a) studies of commercial farms in Zimbabwe challenge discourses of workers as 'belonging to the farm(er)' and having no agency. Rutherford (2001b) argues that one must look at

the strategies and practices through which farm workers struggle to create livelihoods, and Zamchiya (2008) analyses how workers on a South African farm use their agency to eke out land-based and other livelihoods outside their wage labour. Addison (2006) found that workers on one large citrus farm in Limpopo transcended established forms of resistance by engaging in an overt mass strike over the payment regime, while workers on an adjacent farm continued with covert acts of petty resistance. Farms as such distinct terrains for complex tenure, employment and social relations will be further explored in our case studies.

Constructivist approaches and paternalism on farms

Social history approaches to South African agrarian relations have shown that tenure, livelihoods and social relations on farms are shaped not only by economic factors but also by identity and culture (Dooling 1992; du Toit 1993, 1995; Ewert & du Toit 2002). Mainly employed in studies of commercial farms in the Western Cape, not all findings may be generalised to other parts of South Africa. Dooling (1992) argues that the history of slavery shaped paternalist social relations on farms in the Western Cape that have been maintained in day-to-day contact and outlived the institution of slavery. Modelled on the relation between father (*pater*) and child, paternalism portrays the farm as a family-like community (du Toit 1995), where relations of affinity and mutualism are combined with those of hierarchy, authority and male dominance. This 'legitimated the master's rule and emphasised the master's absolute and despotic power over the child, his worker' (ibid: 56). The paternal role entailed obligations to workers beyond waged employment and providing food rations and protection, and these obligations were seen as mechanisms of control rather than expressions of generosity, and discretionary rather than rights-based (du Toit 1993, 1995). Paternalism rejects agency and resistance that threaten power relations and portrays outside influence as threats to the harmonious relationship between farmer and worker, who might say '*ons verstaan mekaar*' – 'we understand each other' (du Toit 1993, 1995).

Paternalism has been weakened as agricultural sector restructuring, including the removal of state subsidies and protections, made farm owners and managers adjust

by withdrawing non-monetary worker benefits that were typical of paternalism (Hamman 1996; Wegerif et al. 2005; Addison 2006). In a survey of 42 wine and fruit farms, Hamman (1996) found no farms where substantial food and farm produce was still part of the remuneration, and increasing costs had led some farmers to introduce rentals for housing; some adopted the concept of ‘productive house’, whereby every household had to provide labour of at least two adults to the farm. In Western Cape wine and fruit farms, worker housing was being knocked down or left unoccupied (Ewert & du Toit 2002; du Toit 2004). Rising operational costs, tenure legislation, and minimum wage regulations introduced in 2003 also led some farmers to withdraw free services to workers, for which workers now often pay through wage deductions (du Toit 2004; du Toit & Ally 2004; Wegerif et al. 2005; Atkinson 2007).

Summing up, the historical materialist perspective suggests that farm tenure, employment and social relations are shaped by the mode of production and the control of capital. The total institution and domestic governance perspectives stress landowners’ hegemonic control over individual lives, both because of the material power position and the absence of effective public regulation. Structuration perspectives note that farm workers are not just victims but also use their own agency to evade and resist control. Constructivist approaches hold that relations on farms are shaped by culture and fluent identities maintained, among others, through the micro-politics and practices of paternalism, although these are now reshaped in response to ideological and economic changes. In their own ways, these scholarly perspectives underscore one of the points running through the book, namely the complexity and diversity of the conditions and lives of farm workers and dwellers as they are shaped by power relations but reasserted and remoulded in nuanced, daily practices – and that the subject is far from a straightforward matter of politics, policies and legislation.

THE DEMOCRATIC ERA BEGINS (1994–2000)

Everything you have said was said before, but nothing was done. (Kitty Jacobs, farm dweller, in a policy workshop on farm tenure, Stellenbosch, October 2008)

In this section we examine some recent farm worker and dweller policy in the conviction that this ought to be about extending democracy and citizenship to all. Such policy processes include the politics of creating and maintaining support for change, actor involvement, legislation, budgeting and delivery, and changing practices and institutions – and that these are contested ‘in interaction of networks and relationships, agency and practice, and knowledge and power dynamics in particular contexts’ (Keeley & Scoones, 2003: 4–5). States and other actors may collaborate effectively in achieving change towards desirable ends, or policies may be incoherent, captive to narrow interests – or abandoned.

From protest to ANC policy

The deplorable conditions of farm dwellers and workers received considerable attention in the struggle against apartheid. The Freedom Charter (1955) demanded economic and technological benefits to all on an equal basis and called for the sharing of land among ‘those who work it’ – though these terms remained ambiguous. By the time of political transition in the early 1990s, the de Klerk government’s White Paper on Land Reform (RSA 1991) tried to defuse claims for land reform by focusing on the state land already conceded to the African majority. Its attention to agricultural workers was about improving skills, efficiency and social conditions, overlooking the demands for land and tenure security by farm dwellers and workers. The White Paper was widely condemned but by the early 1990s the ANC, in contrast to its earlier insistence on the nationalisation of farms, had accepted the protection of private property, subject to a mandate for land reform. Its land agenda focused on creating a new class of black smallholders but also aimed to overcome the legacy of spatial apartheid by restructuring the commercial farming sector. The ANC Land Manifesto of 1992 affirmed that ‘the rights of farm workers to stay on land owned by others must be separated from their rights as workers, and this must be recognised in law’ (ANC 1992: 5). It also insisted on extending full labour rights to farm workers, abolishing child labour, and giving people on farms rights to decent housing, health and sanitation. Despite these intentions, people living on commercial farms were not seen as primary beneficiaries of land redistribution, as compared to those with historical claims or with their own resources to contribute. In this way, one may argue that the ANC’s policy approach to land reform

failed to link on-farm improvements in tenure security, labour rights and housing to its broader vision of rural transformation.

In February 1994, on the eve of the first democratic elections, representatives of 353 rural communities, many of whom were farm workers, labour tenants or farm

evictees, joined at the Community Land Conference in Bloemfontein to formulate their vision and demands to a new government. They demanded secure and independent rights to land for residential, cultivation, grazing and recreational purposes, and further rights and freedoms, as stated in the Land Charter adopted at the conference (see excerpt in Box 1).

Box 1: Land Charter: Tenants and people living on farms

‘We, the farm workers and labour tenants, demand access to land and security of tenure. Laws which victimize us must be scrapped.

1. We demand a halt to all evictions of labour tenants and farm workers. We want the Prevention of Illegal Squatting and Trespass Acts to be scrapped. We want legal protection and security of tenure.
2. Laws must be passed to protect people working on farms. These laws must set down conditions of employment and minimum wages. Firm steps must be taken to oversee that labour laws on farms are implemented. And farm workers must be informed of their new rights. Farm workers should also be involved in making laws. Farm workers should be paid the same rates as other workers in towns because they work equally hard.
3. Farm workers and tenants must be given secure rights to plough and graze their cattle. These rights should be protected when a farm changes hands.
4. Women and widows should not be evicted when their husbands die or are dismissed. Farmers must be responsible for supporting orphaned children of deceased workers.
5. We want an end to child labour on farms. People breaking this law must be monitored and severely punished.
6. Farm evictees, tenants and other landless people should be given top priority in any land reform programme.
7. Groups who can service and assist farm dwellers should immediately have free access to the farms. Farm worker unions should be legally entitled to organize workers on farms.
8. As tenants and farm workers, we want to be given ownership of our homes.
9. Special pieces of land should be set aside for farm workers villages.
10. We should not lose our homes if we do not continue working on the farm, or if we are disabled or pensioned. The wives and widows of farm workers must not be thrown off the land because of the circumstances of their husbands.
11. The government should set aside portions of land on farms for the use of the people living on the farms. This land can be used for schools, sports fields and clinics, for example.
12. Farm workers must be provided with safe transportation to and from towns.’

Source: Community Land Conference, 1994

Under the Government of National Unity, responsibility for farm tenure was placed in the new Department of Land Affairs, under its minister Derek Hanekom. The terms in which this would be pursued were debated at numerous workshops and conferences, in bilateral meetings with farmer associations, trade unions and NGOs, and in the fiercely disputed hearings on the constitutional protection of property rights.

The Constitution

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996) holds that 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity' and resolves to 'heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights'. Drawing on international law, it bridges 'civil-political' and 'social, economic and cultural' rights. The Bill of Rights states the right of everyone to equality (Chapter 2, Section 9), human dignity (10), life (11) and freedom and security of the person (12). Everyone has rights to a healthy environment (24), equitable access to

Evictions had reached 'endemic proportions'.

land and tenure security (25), housing and protection against evictions (26), health care, food and water (27) and education (29). The

state 'must respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights in the Bill of Rights' (7.2) and 'take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation' of rights such as to equitable access to land (25), access to housing (26), health, food and social security (27). Every child has unqualified rights to basic nutrition, shelter, health care and social services, and to protection from neglect and abuse (28b and c). Institutions charged with promoting human rights include the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE) and the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), which monitors the realisation of the rights to shelter, food, health care, social security and the environment.

Section 25 states that no one can be deprived of property except in terms of a generally applicable law that is not arbitrary (25.1). Expropriation of land is subject to fair compensation (25.2) and must be in the 'public interest', which includes 'the nation's commitment to land reform, and to reforms to bring about equitable access to all South

Africa's natural resources' (25.4), including for people on farms. Most important for farm dwellers is 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.

Parliament must enact legislation to give effect to this right (25.9). Another key commitment holds that 'no one may be evicted from their home, or have their home demolished, without an order of court' (26).

The White Paper on South African Land Policy (1997)

The White Paper on South African Land Policy set out national policy for a democratic South Africa, and argued that millions of rural people including 'occupants of privately owned land including farm dwellers' have insecure tenure due to the racially discriminatory social structure:

That is the reason why current and prospective evictions are so devastating. The evicted have nowhere else to go and suffer terrible hardships. The victims swell the ranks of the absolute landless and the destitute. They find themselves at the mercy of other landowners for refuge. If no mercy is shown, land invasion is an unavoidable outcome. Because the root cause of the problem of insecurity of tenure under these circumstances is a structural one it requires a structural solution. (RSA 1997b: 34)

The White Paper recognised that evictions in commercial farming had reached 'endemic proportions' that were fuelled by legal and political uncertainty, and required urgent interventions. Yet, the problem analysis and evocation of human suffering gave rise to fairly modest proposals of two new laws 'to accommodate the mutual interests of both occupiers and land owners': the Land Reform (Labour Tenants) Act (LTA) (No. 3 of 1996) and the Extension of Security of Tenure Act (ESTA) (No. 62 of 1997).

The Labour Tenants Act (LTA)

The Labour Tenants Act recognises the specific but nevertheless quite substantial population of farm dwellers, largely in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, who are not wage workers but have lived on white-owned farms for generations, supplying their labour in return for the right to reside there, cultivate and keep stock (Williams 1996). They are farmers themselves, but are constrained by insecure tenure. The LTA recognises that their predicament is the product of the laws, ordinances and practices that denied them secure tenure to their land and aimed at strengthening the powers of landowners to extract labour (RSA 1996). It prohibits unfair eviction of labour tenants and their families and aims to enable tenants to claim ownership of the land they occupy and use through application to the Department of Land Affairs (now Rural Development and Land Reform) (*ibid*). It was reported that 19 416 claims had been lodged by the deadline in 2001 (DLA 2002). However, soon thereafter, a combination of political and institutional factors caused the implementation of the Act to be effectively halted: few applicants have acquired land; where they have, it has been through the use of redistribution grants; evictions have continued; and the department started, and then stopped, the issuing of notifications to landowners of claims on their land, in view of the legal challenges in court that this provoked (Hall 2003).

The Extension of Security of Tenure Act (ESTA)

ESTA was enacted to secure the tenure of farm dwellers and to prevent arbitrary evictions. It applies to all people living on farms (property zoned for agriculture) with the consent of the landowner, who are defined as ‘occupiers’ (RSA 1997a). This includes farm workers and their dependants, and also farm dwellers who are neither employed nor the dependants of farm workers. Should the owner’s consent be revoked, ESTA prohibits the eviction of any occupier unless in terms of a court order, as required by Section 26 of the Constitution (*ibid*). Despite the enactment of ESTA (and sometimes because of it), evictions continued and most of these were illegal since they were carried out without a court order (Hall et al. 2003; Wegerif et al. 2005). Organisations supporting farm workers often sought negotiated settlements rather than

court cases, which are seen as cumbersome, expensive and as holding poor prospects of success (Shirinda, 2012). ESTA also provides for occupiers to secure long-term tenure by purchasing land with state support, and requires the minister to allocate funds for this purpose (RSA 1997a), but this has not been realised at significant scale (Hall 2003, Wegerif et al. 2005).

AGE OF UNCERTAINTY (2001–2011)

Unrealised policy commitments

A decade ago the responsible minister, then Thoko Didiza, acknowledged that ESTA was not working, and proposed legislative changes to address its failings. The persistent tenure insecurity of farm dwellers was addressed at a major gathering of government and civil society, including farm dwellers, farm owners, traditional leaders, activists and others, at the National Land Tenure Conference (NLTC) in Durban in November 2001. Yet, farm tenure was somewhat eclipsed by the perceived greater controversy around the third draft of the Communal Land Rights Bill. At the close of the conference, Minister Thoko Didiza stated that ESTA would be overhauled, a promise that has been repeated almost every year since by her and her successors, Lulu Xingwana and Gugile Nkwinti, up to the time of writing in 2012. On several occasions, draft legislation was leaked from within the department but no Bill was presented to Parliament. In the interim, proposals agreed to at the NLTC on how to enforce the existing provisions were never implemented.

Ahead of the NLTC in 2001, a civil society lobby convened by the National Land Committee had developed a joint position on farm tenure, which it tabled at the conference. It outlined numerous improvements in implementation and enforcement. Rather than legislative changes, it proposed a set of policy choices and institutional arrangements among state bodies. It included two calls to action: a call for the establishment of a National Task Force on ESTA, comprising representatives of the government and civil society, to oversee the creation of implementation and enforcement systems; and a call for a moratorium on evictions of ESTA occupiers until the National Task Team had reported that the necessary systems were in place to

implement and enforce ESTA (NLC-convened technical committee 2001).

These proposals were not accepted by the ministry. Instead, the resolutions, as prepared by the ministry, were that ESTA would be 'consolidated' with the LTA and with the law governing urban tenure and evictions, the Prevention of Illegal Eviction from and Unlawful Occupation of Land Act, No. 19 of 1998, into a single piece of legislation. As well as being consolidated, it would be 'strengthened to include long-term tenure' (MALA 2001). The purpose of the legislative amendments would be to 'strengthen long term rights, with real substance, which are legally enforceable' (ibid). Other resolutions were to improve enforcement and monitoring; put an end to the culture of impunity of violators; integrate farm dwellers into the farming sector as producers; and place a ceiling on land ownership (ibid). A 2003 review of farm tenure reform concluded with a bleak assessment of the prospects of integrating the LTA and ESTA, which:

... has been underway since early 2002, but without public debate, accurate information or a clear policy framework to guide legal drafting. Landowners remain hostile to attempts to reform tenure rights on farms, and government has yet to demonstrate that it is willing to confront landowners and invest substantially in enforcing the rights of occupiers. (Hall et al. 2003: 13)

It was only in 2010 that a new Land Tenure Security Bill was published. This Bill proposed to extend the rights of occupiers to access land on the farms where they live for their own productive purposes (to grow crops and graze livestock) but the extent of these rights was left vague. The Bill also proposed that, instead of securing and upgrading occupiers' long-term rights on farms, as provided under Section 4 of ESTA, government would aim to settle farm dwellers in state-owned 'agri-villages', where they would have temporary permits to occupy. In these ways, the Bill alienated both farm dwellers and their organisations, and farm owners and their organisations – with both sides threatening litigation against the state if the Bill were enacted. By the time of writing in 2012, the Bill had been withdrawn, and no clarity exists on the future policy or legislative framework for farm tenure.

Atkinson (2007) argues that a 'rights-based', legislative approach, especially the introduction of tenure and labour

laws, combined with state failure has reduced the degree of trust between owners and workers. Mngxitama (2001) argues the democratic government has failed to extend full rights of citizenship to farm workers. They remain 'citizens without rights' because of the degree of control exerted over them by others and their lack of independent land rights. Hall (2003) argues that state ambivalence about and poor enforcement of enacted legislation disconnected from any developmental vision have left the rights of farm workers and dwellers in a policy vacuum.

Inquiry into human rights violations

In 2001 the South African Human Rights Commission launched a national 'Inquiry into human rights violations in farming communities', to examine the nature, causes and outcomes of tenure insecurity and other rights violations, and the action needed. Complaints about ESTA and LTA dominated the inquiry, which found 'a clear lack of support for the legislation from organized agriculture and a failure to ensure representation for those whose rights are violated' (SAHRC 2003: iv–v). Other problems were lack of labour unions, which were often resisted by farm owners; low and uneven wages; discrimination against women workers, seasonal workers and migrant workers; and instances of child labour. Both farm owners and workers had experienced violence and reported low confidence in the justice system. Poor access to social and economic rights and services, including housing, and the impact of HIV/AIDS added to a dismal picture. Racism, violence and other rights violations were reported to be particularly severe in Limpopo Province (SAHRC 2003: 99).

Major barriers identified by the Human Rights Commission were lack of political will, resources and knowledge. The report recommended that a Farming Community Forum in the Office of the State President should lead joint action by farm dwellers, farm owners and the government (SAHRC 2003: vi) – but this recommendation, along with others, was never implemented. After new hearings in September 2007, the SAHRC (2008) reviewed progress made since 2001. Its primary recommendation was a request for

...the DLA [now DRDLR] to enter into an urgent dialogue with its social partners to review, clarify and reform its policy on tenure security for farm workers

and occupiers... This should result in clearly articulated policy objectives supported by a coherent strategy and a detailed farm dweller development programme specifying on- and off-farm tenure and development options, enforcement and monitoring measures together with plans to improve housing, access to education, health care, HIV/AIDS mitigation and other matters agreed to be of relevance. (SAHRC 2008: 46)

Health and on farms

The HIV/AIDS disaster and other health problems are features of the life crises experienced by many individuals on farms. The 2002 Nelson Mandela/HSRC survey found an HIV prevalence of 8% on farms nationally and 10% on farms in Limpopo Province (Shishana & Leickness 2002: 46–7). However, later studies have found a radically higher HIV prevalence rate on commercial farms. A 2010 survey of over 2 800 farm workers in three sites in Mpumalanga and Limpopo found an HIV prevalence rate of 40%, twice the estimated national prevalence for South Africa of 18%, and considerably higher among women (47%) than men (31%) (Maromi & IOM, 2010). Farm workers often have poor access to health facilities, exacerbated by the loss of health professionals to AIDS; home-based care for those living with HIV/AIDS is weak or nonexistent in many rural areas (SAHRC 2003: 46, 52). In Limpopo in particular, health is affected by the remoteness of farms and by abuse and lack of physical security (SAHRC 2003: 108–112).

‘Still Searching for Security’, 2005

In 2005 the scale and impact of ‘evictions’ and ‘displacements’ from farms in the post-apartheid era was thoroughly documented for the first time (Wegerif et al. 2005) (Table 1). The results were presented to parliamentarians, covered extensively by the press and followed up at a national conference involving civil society organisations, the private sector and the government (Chenwi 2005). Key findings of the survey were:

- About 3.7 million individuals were displaced from farms over a twenty-year period from 1984 to 2003, of whom about 1.7 million were evicted (Table 1).
- Over two-thirds of dwellers and workers who were evicted from farms moved on to urban areas.
- From 1994 to 2003, the high number of displacements (2.3 million) and evictions (0.9 million) has continued.
- The number of evictions increased during adverse climatic conditions and when legal measures to strengthen tenure security or improve work conditions were introduced, and was particularly high in 2003 when minimum wages were introduced.
- Half of the individuals evicted were children, 28% women and 23% men.

Table 1: Estimated total number of people displaced and evicted

	Displaced from farms	Evicted from farms
1984 to end 1993	1 832 000	737 000
1994 to end 2004	2 351 000	942 000
Total	4 183 000	1 679 000
Now on other farms	469 000	93 000
Permanently off farms	3 716 000	1 586 000

Source: Wegerif et al. (2005: 43–4) (figures rounded to nearest '000). The category ‘evicted’ is a sub-category within the ‘displaced’. ‘Eviction’ indicates removal against the will of the dweller; ‘displacement’ includes some cases where farm dwellers and their dependants may have agreed to leave. However, the power relations and the use of threats or violence may make the notions of ‘choice’ and ‘voluntary’ rather inappropriate in the case of many displacements. The figure on eviction is conservative and only includes cases where the application of force against the will of the dweller was positively confirmed.

- Adult evictees were poorly educated, three-quarters having only primary school.
- Only 1% of evictions involved the court process prescribed by the Constitution and supporting legislation; the vast majority were illegal.

The study also reports that, whereas full-time farm workers of both sexes received almost the same salary levels during 1984–2000, in 2001–2004 male workers earned about 60% more than female full-time employees (Wegerif et al. 2005: 52), a phenomenon that requires an explanation. Another trend is a shift towards casual labour. Whereas in 1996 there were about twice as many permanent farm workers (610 000) as casual employees (304 000), in 2002 the numbers were approaching parity (480 000 and 460 000 respectively) (Wegerif et al. 2005).

Most disturbingly, the survey shows that *evictions gathered pace rather than declined in the first decade of democracy*. More black South Africans lost their homes and access to land due to evictions from farms than acquired land through all land reform measures – restitution, redistribution and tenure reform – combined. The removals of women, men and children living on farms manifest a startling continuity, even acceleration, of apartheid dispossession as South Africans moved into the democratic era.

A Farm Dweller Campaign

By 2005, a national Farm Dweller Campaign was initiated by a network of land rights organisations in partnership with farm dweller committees, unions and others. Without dedicated institutional capacity or funds, it failed to make a national imprint, though activities in various provinces included marches, organising on farms and engagements with municipalities, political leaders, farmer associations and government departments. The campaign proposed a Farm Dweller Citizen Bill which would recognise ‘that apartheid laws established a particular set of unequal relations on farms that turned black farmers into tenants and created slave-like dependencies that require specialised redress and transformation’ (FDC 2005). It stated that it would address tenure rights as part of a wider set of entitlements and freedoms for farm dwellers. With limited momentum in the campaign, though, the Bill was never finalised or tabled in Parliament.

Farmers’ views

Commercial farmers and their organisations stress the increasing global competition that South African agriculture is exposed to, including from heavily subsidised agriculture in North America and Europe. These pressures, they argue, have led to a restructuring of farms towards increased size and levels of mechanisation, trends that are compounded by regulation of labour and tenure rights that have raised the costs and risks of employing on-farm and regular labour. In this context, farmers and their representatives have called for the introduction of incentives for farmers to establish business partnerships with farm workers – and to provide services to them – in place of a rights-based approach that merely imposes obligations on farmers. AgriSA (Agriculture South Africa) states:

We recognise the need for tenure security, but are very concerned about the unintended consequences of ESTA and the Labour Tenants Act. We are totally against illegal evictions and encourage our members to adhere to these laws even though we have concerns about the legislation ... We believe that farmers should be encouraged to participate in land reform – there should be incentives for farmers who make land available. Recognition should be given to those farmers who make a positive contribution in this regard. (AgriSA undated: 2)

A report by the FW de Klerk Foundation argued that ‘one of the unforeseen consequences of this legislation [ESTA] was that agricultural businesses increasingly choose to appoint workers on a contract basis and not to provide housing to workers’ (Bosman 2007: 8). It described the implementation of ESTA as a ‘highly contentious and emotional issue in rural land reform – and one of the key points of contention between the Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs and organised agriculture’ (ibid: 24). It explains the exodus of farm dwellers as arising from two sets of factors: (a) the policy is not effectively communicated and farm workers not aware of their rights under it – for instance, despite workers’ right to legal representation in eviction cases, they generally do not get it; and (b) mechanisation, reduction in the number of farms, drought, and a general movement of the population from rural to urban areas. Farmer associations therefore argued that broader socio-economic causes of evictions should be given more attention, rather than farmers being held wholly responsible (ibid). At the

same time as organised agriculture has condemned violations, it had objected to ESTA and the LTA.

Agri-BEE

Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) has arguably eclipsed rights-based legislation as the most prominent framework encouraging farm owners to make available land to farm workers and labour tenants, and to engage in forms of enterprise sharing with them. The Charter for Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment in Agriculture (Agri-BEE) was negotiated between government, farm owners, agribusiness and unions and requires transformation in larger farms and agricultural businesses. Agricultural enterprises with an average annual turnover of over R1 million (which excludes well over half of all farms) are required to increase the representation of black South Africans and women in ownership and shareholding, management, and preferential procurement, as well as improving employment equity, skills and enterprise development, and corporate social investment. Its 'scorecard' provides that firms can earn points by making available or selling land to farm workers or any other black people. The last of the Charter's ten objectives is:

Improving protection and standards of land rights and tenure security for labour tenants, farm workers and other vulnerable farm dwellers and addressing the inherently paternalistic nature of relationships associated with insecure tenure by promoting more permanent forms of tenure with the emphasis being on the transfer of ownership of land. (DTI 2008: 10)

Thus, two major reports of the South African Human Rights Commission (2003, 2008) have documented the continued and systemic rights violations in farming communities, but little progress in their follow-up has been seen; the scale, distribution and illegality of evictions has been documented in a national survey (Wegerif et al. 2005); and the government has acknowledged that its laws have been ineffective. Civil society organisations have continued to argue in favour of a moratorium on evictions until ESTA has been amended and strengthened to ensure its effective enforcement. Some have also proposed a delinking of employment and tenure rights, to protect the access to housing and land by workers who lose their jobs, and their dependants (ibid: 205). Against these proposals, AgriSA (2006) has

argued that a complete ban on evictions would amount to an uncompensated expropriation of property rights in violation of Section 25 of the Constitution, and that the state has the responsibility for the long-term security, including housing needs, of poor rural communities (Bosman 2007: 25). By 2011, politics and policy on tenure, livelihoods and social justice for farm dwellers lacked notable direction and coherence. Attempts to chart an agreed way forward, including at a Farm Worker Summit in 2010, led to renewed debate and the publication of a Farm Tenure Security Bill later that year, but these processes have yet to yield a political settlement that has widespread support and can be operationalised.

The rest of this chapter attempts to understand both the power underpinning the political economy of agriculture and the specific farms studied as well as the different kinds of power that are changing them, or have the potential to. Probably neither scholars nor policy makers can avoid the critique that part of the problem is lack of articulation between their respective contributions, and with the main actors on farms. The challenge of linking theoretical understanding with realistic scenarios, policies and action for change is considerable.



3. Into the field: Our study

Research goal and objectives

As suggested by the diversity of issues on farms and the scholarly debates, our study of farm workers and farm dwellers could have taken numerous approaches and was shaped by our interests, skills and choices, and the resources available. Finding that policy and legislation were generally well documented by Hall (2003), Atkinson (2007) and others, and that farm evictions had been quantified by Wegerif et al. (2005), we aimed to get a nuanced understanding of processes on farms, as seen in a national policy context and in a social justice perspective. Working in Vhembe district of Limpopo, where this phase of the PLAAS–Noragric collaboration was implemented, a key decision we took was to focus on a few farms, and to interview many actors there, rather than survey many farms. This gave us an insight into life situations, individual viewpoints and discourses, which we could analyse against an economic and political background. While we can make inferences about the impact of policies we must also be cautious in generalising findings to the provincial or national level; we invite debate and comparison with work on farm worker and farm dwellers in other districts, provinces and countries.

The goal of the study was to *contribute to knowledge and understanding that is relevant for improving tenure security, livelihoods and social justice for farm workers and farm dwellers in South Africa*. More specifically, we aimed to contribute to the understanding of four sub-themes:

- *the economic context and agricultural policy* shaping farm economies and the tenure security and livelihoods of farm workers and farm dwellers;
- *the policies and legislation* on farm tenure and livelihoods, seen in relation to broader land reform policies, policy discourses and processes;
- *policy responses and impact*, focusing on how actors understand the causes of and responsibilities for problems, how they respond to policies concerning tenure security, livelihoods and health including HIV/AIDS, and how policies, including land reform, have affected farm workers and farm dwellers as beneficiaries and as non-beneficiaries; and
- *social justice* for farm workers and farm dwellers, including the future scenarios and changes that



people on farms expect or would like to see, and the improvements and strategies they suggest.

Thus, we were seeking a grounded, interdisciplinary and normative understanding of farm worker and farm dweller issues that would link economic context, policy processes and responses on farms, and that would enable us to critique policies and suggest ways to strengthen the tenure, livelihoods and rights of farm workers and dwellers.

TENURE, LIVELIHOODS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Tenure security

Focusing on the keywords of the title, we suggest that one may see *tenure security* as nested within *livelihoods* and *social justice*, like Chinese boxes, and we think we need to expand the vision to improve analysis and policy. The first expansion concerns the *breadth of tenure*. Tenure – ‘the terms on which something is held: the rights and obligations of the holder’ (Bruce 1998: 1) – has been at once reduced and idealised, delinked from the social relations

and the concrete lives of which it is part. ‘Security of tenure’ is about the breadth of rights (the resources and types of rights included), duration (in time) and assurance, or guarantees and certainty (Roth 2001: 2). Dwellers often struggle, on the basis of historical rights, to defend a deep and broad association with land and place, while land-owners seek to narrow it down to a right to work, on which the right to be on the farm entirely depends. Tenure rights are often violated by evictions or by a ‘constructive eviction’, unilateral changes that make continued occupation intolerable. As noted, the Bill of Rights in the Constitution gives farm workers and dwellers whose tenure of land is insecure as a result of past racial discrimination a right to secure tenure or comparable redress (25.6) and a right not to be evicted from their homes without an order of the court made after considering all relevant circumstances (26.3). ESTA (Section 6.1) recognises a broad concept of tenure, which means effective rights to be, live and move on the land; to access housing; and to use land, such as by keeping livestock and drawing water and firewood. The Constitutional Court of South Africa has stated that ‘the stronger the right to land, the greater the prospect of a secure home’.²

2. Port Elizabeth Municipality v Various Occupiers 2004 (12) BCLR 1268 (CC) para 18 (quoted from Chenwi 2008: 16).

Livelihoods

A second expansion we propose is *from tenure to livelihoods*, the means by which people gain a living (Ellis 2000: 10). The right to livelihood is a human right, and includes the right to health and wellbeing, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and social services (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25). Sources of livelihood on farms comprise wage income and social grants; livelihood practices, such as gardening or keeping livestock, that are based on access to land and often historical rights; and in some cases access to natural resources in the surroundings of farms – dwellers in Limpopo’s semi-arid Waterpoort area told us that

Land and farm tenure is a human rights issue.

delicious *mopane* worms collected from the wild are among the attractions of the area. Even when property owners have been involved, farm dwellers have been unfairly excluded from conservation projects (Crane 2006). Our research considers situations where people have been able to retain their right to *be* on farms, but without the means to *live* – lacking employment, access to land or other economic opportunities, food or water, they have (a narrow) tenure security *without* livelihood security. Tenure is a necessary but insufficient condition of a secure livelihood.

Social justice

The third expansion is *from livelihoods to social justice*. Social justice requires that everyone is able to enjoy freedom, equality and dignity, as promised by the South African Constitution. The principles of justice suggested by John Rawls require that everyone is free from serfdom, slavery and physical abuse and can enjoy the rights to freedom of movement, thought and expression, political participation and personal property. Positions and offices must be open to all on the basis of equal opportunity; social inequalities can only be justified to the extent that policies benefit the worst-off. The main criterion for choosing between different development options is what happens to the worst off: the change that benefits them most must be chosen (Rawls 1996: 6).

We hold human rights by virtue of our humanity (An-Na’im 2003: 3). Human rights underpin the Constitution and require full social, economic and

political citizenship for people on farms, and protect non-citizens as well. They establish the basis of claims for both racial and gender equality. The African Union’s Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa undertakes to ‘(a) promote equality of access to employment; (b) promote the right to equal remuneration for jobs of equal value for women and men; [and] (c) ensure transparency in recruitment, promotion and dismissal of women and combat and punish sexual harassment in the workplace’ (African Union 2003: 13). The human right to work includes individual and collective rights. Workers must be able to freely accept work that is ‘decent’, which includes that it respects their physical and mental integrity and provides adequate incomes for themselves and their families (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 2006: 6, 7). Collective rights include the right to organise in unions. The state must promote a high level of employment and ensure that domestic and agricultural workers enjoy the same level of protection as other workers (10). Land and farm tenure is a human rights issue: human rights, such as the ban on gender and racial discrimination, enhance tenure security; in turn, tenure promotes the human rights to, for example, home, livelihood and food (Wisborg 2006). Human-rights-based development promotes participation, inclusion, accountability, rule of law, and priority for those whose rights are at risk; practically, it aims to build the capacity of rights holders to claim rights and of duty bearers to meet obligations (UNDP 1998, 2006).

Largely consistent with human rights, the capability approach developed by Amartya Sen (summarised in Sen 1999) and Martha Nussbaum and others centres on individuals’ real abilities to lead a good life, including having enough food, being sheltered, enjoying bodily health and integrity, and having control over one’s political and material environment (Nussbaum 2000: 70–86). The capabilities of women, men and children on farms, such as bodily health and the ability to care for others, are put at risk when they lose tenure and jobs, or when violent crime puts the health of dwellers, owners or managers at unacceptable risk. Sen (1999) argues that human capabilities are both ends in themselves and dynamic sources of development: being able to communicate freely and being safe in a crime-free environment, for example, has intrinsic value but also empowers women, men and children to be the agents of change.

The justice perspectives mentioned here are often silent on the structural and political constraints that we have discussed. Although farm workers need information about rights – ‘*ken jou regte*’ (know your rights), as the DLA said in one campaign – power relations often prevent them from realising those rights. Social justice requires us, and them, to move *beyond* ‘the farm’, to the opportunities for social and political mobilisation to change power relations with landowners, farmer organisations and the state.

Thus, we advocate an integrated approach where, first, the concept of tenure must be expanded to be cognisant of historical practices and the breadth of tenure rights to home, land, movement and services. Protecting or reforming tenure must take into account livelihoods, the social relations on farms and the need to build human resources so that farms become places where humans thrive. Social justice is based on, and requires, that farm workers and farm dwellers: (a) have the same inherent dignity as everyone; (b) have the same human rights as others, which carry the same moral and political weight; (c) have human capabilities that are recognised on par with others, such as to live, to have enough food, to participate, to care for others and for the environment; (d) are entitled to real, equal opportunity in accessing positions in society and on the farm; and (e) must achieve housing, education, training and credit on a basis of equality. Dwellers, workers and others on farms must be able to transcend the unequal gender and racial relations on farms, thereby removing the stigma of workers as exploited and of landowners as exploiters. That farm workers and dwellers achieve this is a central dimension of realising South Africa’s constitutional vision of democracy, human rights and equality, freedom and dignity for everyone. It must be done.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Research design

Our study uses the research design, the strategic framework that guides the choice of research methods (Durrheim 2002), of a qualitative case study. A case study ‘allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events’ and ‘its unique strength

is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artefacts, interviews and observations’ (Yin 2003: 2, 8). Our study examined a small number of farms, which we used to compare and analyse the dynamics of tenure, livelihoods and management practices.

The major information sources and research methods included: (a) a review of academic literature, policy documents and secondary data; (b) interviews with resource persons in government and civil society at provincial level; (c) case studies of four farms in the Vhembe district of Limpopo Province; and (d) interviews with selected displaced households.

Study area and the four farms

The study area is Vhembe, one of Limpopo’s five districts, located in the central northern part, historically called Soutpansberg; we worked in two of four municipalities, Makhado (south-west) and Musina (north-west). Vhembe is predominantly rural, has a large proportion of households residing in communal areas and Limpopo’s highest share of black households who practise agriculture. While a hub of commercial farming, mining, forestry and tourism, the unemployment rate in Vhembe was 53% in 2003 (PGDS 2004: 15). The district spans two distinct agro-ecosystems: north of the Soutpansberg range one finds a semi-arid area which is primarily used for livestock and game ranching but also, if irrigation is available, horticulture. South of the Soutpansberg are sub-tropical and higher rainfall areas with mixed cultivation, plantation forestry, and fruit and nut farms across the fertile valleys and hillsides. We selected farms representing different agro-ecological situations and production systems, three north of the Soutpansberg, and only Timongo to the south (Table 2).

The study farms differ remarkably from one another. **Makwembe** on the Limpopo River has a large workforce and high number of seasonal workers to execute its diverse and technically complex vegetable production. Makwembe has over time sourced much of its labour from the Zimbabwean side of the Limpopo River valley (the owner said memorably that ‘in Africa a river cannot be a border’). **Malamula** is a large family-owned citrus farm that also largely relies on Zimbabwean labour. **Timongo** is a diverse horticultural farm (nuts, fruits, vegetables) comprising 26 formerly white-owned farms granted to neighbouring communities under land restitution

Table 2: Case study farms

Farm	Location	Main production	Comment
Makwembe	Musina, Limpopo River	Vegetables	Completed study
Malamula	Tshipise	Citrus	Completed study
Timongo	Levubu Valley	Fruits and nuts	Completed study
Mbhongholo	Waterpoort	Game	Completed study
Tinghala	Waterpoort	Game	Rejected

Note: Names of the farms have been changed.

Table 3: Case studies: Farm visits and total number of respondents

Farm	Visits	Owners/managers		Workers/dwellers			
				Group		Individual	
		M	F	M	F	M	F
Makwembe	4 (May 2007, Feb 2008, Sep 2008, March 2009)	5	1	3	3	7	16
Malamula	3 (May 2007, Feb 2008, March 2009)	3	1	0	15	12	1
Timongo	4 (May 2007, Feb 2008, Sep 2008, March 2009)	20	2	15	30	4	7
Mbhongholo	4 (May 2007, Feb 2008, Sep 2008, March 2009)	4	0	10	8	4	2
Tinghala	2 (Feb 2008, Sep 2008)	1	0	13	2	0	0
Total		33	4	41	58	27	26

and at the time of study being managed in cooperation with an agro-business company or 'strategic partner'. **Mbhongholo** was created when a European investor in 2003 bought six former livestock farms and merged them into one operational unit; he occasionally visited it with his family and business partners. In contrast, **Tinghala**, where we could not complete our work, is a 'successful' game farm that caters to a luxury market of mainly foreign visitors and has effectively eliminated all workers with long-term relations to the land.

Field research

Field research was conducted through four relatively brief visits (one to two weeks each) to Limpopo between May 2007 and March 2009. We stayed in Louis Trichardt/Makhado and made day visits to farms, normally one to two hours' drive away in Musina, Tshipise, Levubu or

Waterpoort. Each case study involved: (a) documenting farm and tenure history including changes in production, economic performance and employment; and (b) interviewing owners, farm dwellers and farm workers (permanent and seasonal), both women and men (overview in Table 3). Two team members spoke relevant local languages, Shirinda (Venda, Shangaan, Pedi) and Zamchiya (Shona, Venda). We did not use a dedicated interpreter, so when necessary translation was conducted by the relevant team member. Open-ended interview checklists were formulated in advance of field visits and revised during the research. We adjusted the interviews over time in order to address what we saw as interesting emerging issues. These included (a) migration, a powerful factor in this border district with Zimbabwe, (b) gendered patterns of residence, migration and segregation, (c) the situation of children, and (d) the impact of restitution on farm workers. Some, but not all, interviews were recorded.

Table 3 shows the number of individuals interviewed over the course of the farm visits. We conducted about 37 interviews with managers, normally individually (and listed as such), but in a few cases with one to three individuals present. We spoke with an estimated hundred workers/dwellers in groups, slightly more women than men. We interviewed 53 workers/dwellers individually, with a balance of men and women. Whether groups or individual interviews were chosen depended on circumstances and suggestions by workers. Though we made an effort to speak to both men and women, we were not successful in gender balancing both individual and groups interviews on all farms. Our interviews with managers were tilted towards men, reflecting male predominance in this group. Our interviews with evictees were skewed towards women (4 women, 1 man) and those with staff from local organisations and government institutions towards men (2 women, 12 men). We met children on the farms, normally in connection with interviews of adults, but did not interview children, although that could have been valuable, as family relations on farms became a key theme of the study.

Assessing the approach chosen

Farm tenure is a sensitive issue and required a flexible, cautious approach. The SAHRC (2003: 99) reported that its access to farms in Limpopo was strictly controlled and in some cases denied; to some extent this also affected our work. Only one team member, Shirhami Shirinda, is from and lives in Limpopo, while three were based in Cape Town, and partly in Norway, during the research. As a lawyer for a land organisation, Shirinda had rich, prior experience from farms in the area, and his knowledge and contact with farm owners and workers was instrumental in identifying and selecting farms and developing the necessary trust. It also meant that participating farm owners had previously tolerated the presence of a land organisation and a labour lawyer. Not all farm owners would have done that, so the selection is not entirely unbiased. This may be reflected in some findings, for example that the study farms complied with minimum wage legislation, while workers told us about neighbouring farms with worse conditions, including physical abuse and violations of labour law. However, we found that it was justified to base our work on the rich cases we discovered.

We experienced a rejection at one game farm, Tinghala, which illustrates the challenge of access. We wished

to study a game farm in full commercial operation and selected this farm based on general knowledge. Repeated phone calls showed that the management was reluctant but we eventually secured a meeting with a senior manager (the owner living abroad). We were offered an interview and informative tour of the game farm but the discussion was somewhat tense, for example we were told that housing conditions for workers was a 'political' issue, and as such not an appropriate topic for discussion. At the end of the visit, we were asked not to return to the farm. When we left, workers outside the farm approached us and raised a number of issues. We later met a group of workers and obtained more information, but the atmosphere was marked by tension, fear of managers, and lack of trust among workers. We faced a research quality issue because we could not combine manager and worker perspectives, and an ethical issue since workers could not provide critical information without exposing themselves to risk. We therefore chose not to pursue the case – but learnt a few lessons.

Family relations on farms became a key theme of the study.

The study farms are quite different from each other – their production, size, number and composition of staff, and human relations – and our approach varied somewhat for each. We tried to produce a fair, valid and accurate picture of the study farms by using: triangulation (combination of actor viewpoints); using the varied experiences and skills within the team; and by repeating visits over time, to gradually develop and refine our interpretations. However, field research on the widely scattered and large farms was time consuming and, partly therefore, we did not include specialised participatory research methods or a quantitative survey of dweller or worker households on each farm. In many cases we were not able to crosscheck information provided by owners or managers about the economy and labour force on the farms. We became aware of trade-offs between the number of farms and the depth of methods one can use.

While power relations affect whose voices get heard, we tried to secure fair and representative participation in the study. We had access to owners, managers and workers in almost all cases, while access to workers was initially somewhat controlled by management in some cases. Repeating visits over time increased trust and therefore our freedom

to access farm employees and dwellers. It is important to clarify goals, plans and expectations from both sides, secure informed consent from all participants and share information along the way. We informed respondents about the project verbally on first contact, and had available written information on the project, the funding and contact persons at our universities, for those who wished such information. While we anonymised names of farms and individuals, farms and individuals in certain positions will in some cases be transparent for local observers and we have tried to take this into account when presenting individual stories and views. In September 2009 we presented findings in two workshops with, respectively, respondents from farms, mainly workers though owners/managers had also been invited, and representatives from civil society and government organisations. We generally

underestimated the challenges involved in the work, and our conflicting commitments, so our outputs were less timely than we wished.

Our work involved emotionally straining confrontations with harsh living conditions and deeply problematic life situations on and off farms. This was linked to the high number of women and men displaced by the crisis in Zimbabwe but also the poverty of most workers, for example those who could ill afford to visit children or other family members living at a considerable distance, or seasonal workers who lacked income and food in the off-season. Despite brief field periods, we engaged with the situations and individuals on farms, and they inform our sense of the importance of the topic.



Part II

FOUR FARMS:
PLACES, PEOPLE AND STORIES

4. Limpopo

Limpopo Province is at the periphery of South Africa, geographically and economically. In 1994, the Northern Province inherited the legacy of thwarted development under the apartheid government in the form of three ‘Bantustans’ – Gazankulu, Lebowa and Venda – plus parts of KwaNdebele and areas under the Transvaal Provincial Administration, areas characterised by high levels of poverty, poor infrastructure and weak and fragmented institutions. In 2003 the province was renamed Limpopo after the river that defines much of its northern boundary.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Historically the last frontier of the colonial conquest of what became South Africa, farming in Limpopo, as in other parts, was shaped by land dispossession during the colonial and apartheid eras (Platzky & Walker 1985). Various African groups came to the Limpopo area from different directions: the Venda are said to have originated in the Great Lakes Region of Central Africa, Tsonga-speaking people in Mozambique and Pedi-speaking people near present-day Pretoria (Wagner 1980: 318).

Major changes happened as a result of the Great Trek, the movement out of the Cape colony of several thousand of its Dutch-speaking Afrikaners (Ross 1999: 39) who were displeased with emancipation of slaves in 1834, which they saw as reflecting British missionary influence and dominance. During the mid-1800s the Transvaal Republic spread its authority over the region and its resources. For example, in 1848 *voortrekkers*, or pioneers, led by Louis Trichardt established the Schoemansdal settlement west of present-day Louis Trichardt or Makhado town, which they held until driven away by the Venda under the leadership of Chief Makhado in 1867 (Wagner 1980: 318).

Participation in the trek entitled settlers to receive two large farms, on the view that land was available regardless of the rights and occupation of African communities (Wagner 1980). They carried with them certain views and ideals regarding land, labour and Africans, and sought to construct private land ownership and systems for exploiting African labour (Delius 1983). Some settlers employed commandos to extract tribute and labour, for example enrolling women and children to guard crops, and men in the hunting for elephants (Wagner 1980: 197).



African communities in the area practised mixed farming, keeping cattle, goats and sheep and growing crops such as maize, sorghum, millet, groundnuts, tobacco, sweet potatoes and beans, and reportedly they initially exchanged grains, meat and other products with the new arrivals. However, in response to encroachment and exploitation they increasingly adopted strategies to defend their rights and access to land and reduce their provision of free labour to settler farmers. However, by the 1930s a system of labour tenancy was widely practised in the Zoutpansberg district whereby African tenants provided labour to a farmer for 90 days (*drie maand*) of a year in return for access to residential, cultivation and grazing land, the amount varying according to the owner's available land and own needs (Native Economic Commission 1932). Wives, children and other members of the household could be contracted individually, working three months consecutively or spread over the year (Marcus 1989). While farmers tried to extract labour from tenants for longer periods, tenants tried to avoid being tied to the farm for a whole year so that they could retain their freedom to move and to work elsewhere.

PEOPLE

Limpopo has a population of about five and a half million and the highest percentage of black South Africans of all the provinces. The population is younger than the national average, and the ratio of women to men higher, largely due to male out-migration. Life expectancy declined rapidly from 58 in 2000 to 52 in 2003, a trend associated with HIV/AIDS, and was expected to drop further to 47 by 2010 (PGDS 2004: 10; SAIRR 2003/2004). A survey of over 2 800 farm workers in three sites (Malelane in Mpumalanga and Tzaneen and Musina in Limpopo) found a very high HIV prevalence rate on commercial farms (40%), particularly high among female workers (47%) as compared to male (31%) (Maromi & IOM 2010). At Musina, the HIV prevalence rate among farm workers was 28%, much higher than the 15% in Vhembe district as a whole, but only marginally higher than on commercial farms in Tzaneen further south (26%) (ibid). The study suggested that multiple and concurrent partnerships, transactional sex, irregular condom use, presence of other infections and high levels of sexual violence all played a role in explaining the high

prevalence (IOM, 2010). Theyise (2010) argues that the semi-forced separation from families due to domestic and regional migration contributes to risky sexual practices.

ECONOMY, EMPLOYMENT AND AGRICULTURE

Agriculture, mining and tourism are the major sectors of the economy. The Limpopo Provincial Growth and Development Strategy (PGDS) for 2004 to 2014 focuses on seven investment ‘clusters’ that are expected to create jobs and economic growth. Mining accounts for 24% of provincial GDP. Tourism is based on the many protected areas, including the Kruger National Park and private game farms (PGDS 2004).

About half (49%) of the province’s economically active population is unemployed (using the expanded definition of unemployment). Much employment is in low-paid ‘unskilled’ or ‘semi-skilled’ jobs in agriculture and mining. Unemployment rose from 1993 to 2003 as growth in the economically active population outstripped job growth (Table 4).

Agriculture only accounted for 3% of provincial GDP but 15% of employment in 2003. Major commodities include citrus and sub-tropical fruits and nuts, melons, and a wide range of vegetables and other field crops, particularly maize, and there is a substantial livestock sector, though the data are outdated (Table 5). Horticulture and its up-stream and down-stream industries are seen as a growth area (PGDS 2004).

Since the early 1990s there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of farming units in Limpopo, largely due to multiple farms being bought up and consolidated. This trend is most notable in livestock farming areas, where it has been associated with the conversion of livestock and mixed farms to game farms. At the same time, gross income from farming has nearly doubled between 1993 and 2007, with all three major farming sectors – horticulture, field crops and livestock – registering growth: incomes from horticulture and field crops more than doubled and those from livestock increased by more than half between 1993 and 2002, but those from field crops then declined somewhat (Table 6).

Agriculture in commercial and communal areas remains important for a large portion of the population for employment and for self-provisioning. The Income and

Table 4: Employment and unemployment in Vhembe district, Limpopo

Year	Vhembe district		Limpopo Province	
	1998	2003	1993	2003
Economically active	271 454	343 649	1 161 565	1 468 098
Employed	123 271	134 466	580 457	675 092
Percent unemployed	49%	53%	47%	49%

Source: Authors’ adaptation from PGDS 2004: 15

Table 5: Commercial farming sub-sectors in Limpopo 1993

Sub-sector	Farming units	Hectares
Horticulture	1 067	563 545
Field crops	545	477 781
Livestock	2 644	3 749 328
Mixed farming	660	447 447
Forestry	137	97 188
Totals	5 053	5 335 289

Source: adapted from NDA 2009: 6

Table 6: Commercial farming in Limpopo 1993, 2002 and 2007

Item	Unit	1993	2002	2007
Farming units	Number	5 053	2 915	2 934
Employment	”			
Owners and unpaid family members	”	5 776	3 827	
Paid employees (total)	”	93 116	101 249	74 216
Regular employees	”	62 720	62 635	44 037
Casual and seasonal employees	”	30 396	38 614	30 179
Employees’ remuneration	R1 000	446 774	632 613	685 389
Gross farming income	R1 000	2 541 779	4 247 863	4 638 558
Field crops	R1 000	338 339	785 982	435 145
Horticultural products	R1 000	1 137 892	2 319 058	2 443 697
Animals and animal products	R1 000	888 972	1 038 642	1 737 424
Other products	R1 000	176 576	104 181	22 292
Expenditure	R1 000	2 271 547	4 118 081	3 461 084
Current expenditure	R1 000	1 931 864	3 791 963	3 272 735
Capital expenditure	R1 000	339 683	326 118	188 349
Farming debt	R1 000	2 100 458	2 734 233	2 542 742

Source: Stats SA 2005, 2010

Note: Rand amounts for 1993 and 2007 are adjusted to 2002 prices.

Expenditure Survey of 2005/06 shows that Limpopo is the province where people spend the highest proportion (22%) of their income on food, a feature correlated with poverty (Aliber 2009: 12). At the same time, and despite being one of the poorest provinces, Limpopo has the lowest proportion of people who report experiencing hunger (ibid: 23, quoting the General Household Survey of 2007). One possible explanation is that Limpopo is the province with the highest proportion (44%) of black households involved in agriculture, and that for most, farming is an extra source of food rather than a source of cash income (ibid: 39, quoting the Labour Force Survey of 2007). While small-scale farming is thus a strategy to improve food security, poor households on privately owned farmland often lack opportunities for independent use of land to support their livelihoods. A 2005 survey in Limpopo, the Free State and Eastern Cape found that 3% of farm dwellers access a field for their own use, on or off the farm, and that a more significant 14% of farm dwellers accessed garden plots for cultivation (ibid: 49).

An estimated 24 000 households, or some 150 000 individuals, were forcibly evicted from farms in Limpopo Province alone in the first decade of democracy (Wegerif

et al. 2005: 59). While the provincial government’s motto is ‘Development is about people’, its development strategy does not address this issue. ‘Tenure reform’ dealt only with the transfer of ‘full ownership of the communal land areas to traditional authorities’ but did not mention farm workers and farm dwellers (PGDS 2004: 31). This omission may be further aggravated by the importance of land restitution in the province.

LAND RESTITUTION

The Limpopo Provincial Growth and Development Strategy notes that ‘90% of the commercial farm land in the province is currently subject to land claims’ (PGDS 2004: 31).³ By March 2006, 2 580 claims had been settled in Limpopo, of which 1 263 were rural claims. Of these 181 involved the restoration of land to claimants, while other claims were settled through payment of cash compensation or various forms of development support (CRLR

3. The Restitution of Land Rights Act No. 22 of 1994 provides for people dispossessed of land due to racial discrimination after 1913 to get that property back or get other compensation.

2006; authors' calculations). The cost of the land that had been or was to be bought with respect to the settled claims was R586 million. With the cost of compensation, and development and settlement grants to the claimants, the total cost would be over R750 million. The national database of settled claims maintained by the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights reported that claims settled in Limpopo by 2006 involved 86 864ha of privately owned land and 91 465ha of state-owned land – a total of 178 329ha, or 1.4% of the total area of the province or 2.5% of the commercial farming area (authors' calculations). By March 2011, a total of 3 326 claims were reported as settled in Limpopo, involving 548 044ha being restored to 43 667 households at a cost of R2.8 billion (CRLR 2011). Some claims include farm dwellers and workers, but they have been widely ignored as a distinct interest group in settled claims, and are vulnerable to job loss and displacement.

The provincial government proposed that land not transferred under restitution should be 'made available to emerging black farmers' (PGDS 2004: 31). However, land redistribution has not been central in Limpopo. The Department of Land Affairs (now Rural Development and Land Reform) attempted to transfer land through its Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD) programme but Wegerif (2004) found that it mainly concerned land that had once been acquired for incorporation into the Bantustans but was now leased or transferred to small-scale commercial farmers. Instead, it is restitution that is likely to remain a determining feature for the future of Limpopo and its people.

MIGRATION AND DISPLACEMENT

Regional migration into and through Limpopo has been common. Yet, both the scale and character of migration have changed radically following political crisis in Zimbabwe from the early 2000s and its economic collapse from 2005, which added high numbers of individuals displaced by economic and political factors. A United Nations report estimated that between 1.5 and 3 million Zimbabweans now live in South Africa (Chaykowski

2011). Labour migration provides commercial farming with enormous benefits. A commercial farmer told a Norwegian journalist that 'the Limpopo provides us with water and Zimbabwe provides us with labour' (Skjæraasen 2008: 16). The influx from Zimbabwe probably exacerbates existing market pressures towards flexible and insecure labour arrangements: some workers argued that the presence of men and women in desperate need of survival and incomes weakens the negotiating power and labour conditions of all workers. Farmers and workers also emphasise problems of crime and insecurity associated with the high number of people moving through the farm areas (interviews 2007 to 2008). In the absence of support from the Zimbabwean and South African governments, farms played a role by providing temporary livelihoods and refuge for some displaced Zimbabweans (Wisborg forthcoming).

While historically the Soutpansberg district of Limpopo was 'exceptional' in being officially exempted from labour migration requirements applied elsewhere, this exceptionalism has persisted unofficially, as immigration authorities have facilitated 'corporate permits' to allow commercial farmers in the border zone to recruit migrant labour (Derman & Kaarhus forthcoming). From 2009, South Africa granted temporary residence permits, in recognition of the plight of migrants, but also sought to maintain a scenario of normality and policies of treating Zimbabwean migration as 'economic' rather than 'political', deporting large numbers of unsuccessful asylum-seekers (FMSP & MLAO 2007; Derman & Kaarhus forthcoming).

Thus, the context for our four case studies is made dynamic by several factors including structural change in agriculture, the massive land restitution programme, and regional migration and displacement. The casualisation of farm labour and movement of workers and dwellers off commercial farms is a trend that was not highlighted by Limpopo's development strategy but will be one of the issues explored in the farm cases that follow.

5. Makwembe – a vegetable farm in Musina

HISTORY OF OWNERSHIP AND PRODUCTION

On the South African side of the border fence along the banks of the Limpopo River is a narrow strip of farms. Some of them draw water from the river for irrigation to produce high-quality fruit and vegetables for domestic and export markets. One such farm, not far from the Beitbridge border post, is Makwembe (meaning vegetable). Makwembe is a 'family farm', bought in 1982 and owned by Mr Vosloo, his wife and three children, who managed it at the time of study. Its real name in Afrikaans refers to a sense of precariousness, as its owner said: 'Farming always seems to be on the edge.'

The farm comprises 265ha of irrigated land, which is less than a third of the total land area, and also rents in the land of a nearby agricultural research station. Irrigation water is drawn from the Limpopo River, the property boundary extending to the middle of the river, and the irrigation pump house by the river is accessed via gates through the three rows of South African border fences.

Other large farms along the Limpopo grow tomatoes, citrus, potatoes and cotton, but Makwembe has the most diverse and intensive vegetable production, including tomatoes, peppers of different varieties, baby courgettes, as well as mangoes, melons and maize. In nearby Musina the family owns a pack house and processing plant for dried fruit from Makwembe and other farms. Livestock is not part of the commercial production but dairy cows are kept to produce milk sold to workers at half of the market price.

ECONOMIC AND POLICY CONTEXT

Makwembe mainly produces for major supermarkets in South Africa but also for export, such as melons processed into pre-packed fruit salads to the UK. Production is mainly based on forward contracts with retailers. The owner said the farm has enjoyed an excellent market for twenty years, but the terms of these contracts have become tougher in the past few years. Prices are being kept down by price wars among the large chains, which threaten



producers: 'We won't be able to survive,' he claimed. Some speciality vegetable lines are not profitable, but are still required as part of larger deals with retail companies. While land reform has not had a discernible effect on this farm, a changing economic climate and the state's governance of the Zimbabwean crisis and migration were among the important contextual factors.

Production costs and economic risk

The owner found that the minimum wage introduced in 2003 and increased annually had raised the real labour cost. The minimum wage rose nominally by 12% (to R1 090 per month) in 1 March 2008, and by 13% (to R1 232 per month) in March 2009. The owner argued that the minimum wage has had 'a huge effect' on production costs and came at a time when the farm was increasing employment to enter into new, more labour intensive production lines with a better profit margin, due to the price pressure in old production lines. Responses to rising labour costs were to 'sacrifice profit' for the three years prior to 2008, to establish new production lines, and to postpone 'development programmes' such as improvements in housing

for workers. Mr Vosloo said that he wished but could not afford to offer better labour conditions than required by law.

Labour accounted for a large and growing share of farming costs but was not the only cost that was rising. Major cost shares of total turnover were: labour (37%), seeds (8%), fuel (5%) and electricity (2.5%). Transport costs were rising with the fuel prices, and the weaker Rand had increased the costs of imported inputs, especially seeds and fertilisers over time; the weaker Rand would presumably make the farm more competitive in global markets as well, but this was not mentioned by the owner. The farm pays fees for irrigation water ('we are paying a lot of money, but we do not know what for,' the owner said), but it was still not a major factor in the farm economy.

Other risk factors and risk management strategies

Power cuts could potentially have a serious impact, as electricity is used in greenhouse climate control, but the

repeated electric power outages in South Africa in 2007 and 2008 did not affect Makwembe. The owner assumed that he and his neighbours benefited from uninterrupted delivery due to a mine further down the power line.

Climate change posed other risks. The farm incurred massive losses when 85% of the crop was damaged by frost just a few days ahead of our first visit to the farm in May 2007. Only the seedlings and the tomatoes in the greenhouses survived. The mango trees were affected during flowering and did not yield a crop that year. In February 2008 the owner estimated that the frost had caused a loss of R4.8 million in 2007: 'With another disaster, we will not be able to recover,' he said. Severe frosts had occurred occasionally over the past twenty years or so (1985, 1994 and 2007) but due to prohibitively high premiums the farm cannot insure the crops against damage by frost.

In September 2006 and early 2008 extreme heat also caused damage to tomato crops. Another problem is declining rainfall in the western part of the country, the catchment area for the Limpopo River on which the farm depends. The owner expected 'devastating effects' of climate change in Limpopo – more drought, frost and floods. He believed that extreme weather events were a greater threat than crime, migration, minimum wages or the restitution claim on the farm. Yet, while climate change is making farming more risky, it is also an opportunity: incidents like frost, flood and drought cause shortages that create an upward pressure on prices for those who are able to continue producing. Floods in 2000 pushed prices up and kept them buoyant until 2002/03. The owner stressed that they needed prices to rise again in order to make a profit.

Mr Vosloo considered that 'the whole of South Africa is a risk area'. One of the responses to economic, policy and climatic risks was that Makwembe reduced the number of new production lines, would experiment less and 'stick to what we know well' in lines that could be produced at scale. Another strategy was to source fresh produce from other farms, as far away as Mozambique, for the pack house and dried fruit processing plant in Musina, where Makwembe had normally provided 60% of the raw materials. Makwembe's owners had also recently started supplying a wholesale business that sells vegetables to local informal markets. In summary, the risk management strategies employed at Makwembe are to try to secure

access to both domestic and export markets through secured forward contracts; to internationalise the sources of produce for packing; and to enter channels for selling to informal markets. This amounts to diversification in terms of input and output markets, whereas the diversification of production lines, which the farm recently pursued, was halted.

Workers also worried about the risk imposed by the frost and other factors (group interview, May 2007). They were aware of a clause in their contracts that allowed the farmer to retrench them in case of natural calamities. They were, they said, not prepared to accept cuts in salaries unless work hours were reduced similarly. They had thought about strategies to diversify the production and improve cultivation practices to meet the challenge caused by the frost. A supervisor mentioned that they had not received normal bonuses at the end of 2007, since production targets had not been met, and that they had not received new work clothing as usual (interview, February 2008). At a meeting the farmer had explained that the farm had only barely been able to cover its expenses in 2007. He withheld information about the real extent of the farm's financial crisis from workers, explaining to us that workers would not believe him if he told them, 'if we do not make money, we have to stop' (owner, February 2008). Some workers, on their side, were speculating that the farm had actually received insurance payments but withheld this from workers to justify the cutting of costs, like the missing bonus payments since 2007, and pointed out that the area under cultivation had increased and some new production lines had been introduced. Thus, despite relatively open lines of communication between management and workers, there were limits to transparency and trust.

Restitution

The farm was said to be under a restitution claim but it had not been gazetted by the time of our research – a decade after the deadline for claims. The owner thought it was by a Venda community claiming some 120 farms in the area, but he had not discussed the claim with workers, arguing that this would lead to even more insecurity for them. He claimed that restitution was not significantly affecting investments and production decisions, since in the event of a successful claim he was confident that the family would be bought out at full market value and could perhaps stay on as managers or as partners of the claimants: 'I am not

worried too much. At least we get compensated. There may be a possibility of renting back the land, maybe in partnership' (owner, May 2007). By February 2008 there had still been no progress with the claim: 'We don't hear anything, all is quiet,' said Mr Vosloo. While he hoped the family would not be forced to sell the farm he would not challenge the validity of a claim but would oppose it on the grounds that jobs would be lost if it was effected. If forced to leave, he envisaged that he and his sons would continue farming elsewhere, perhaps in Botswana or Zimbabwe if the situation there were to change.

Although the restitution claim did not appear to be a major issue among workers, some expressed worries about it. A woman supervisor from Musina said that workers discuss land reform with Zimbabwean colleagues, and that she feared a similar development: 'A claim could lead the farm to going waste. Then we would have nothing. I am afraid that something similar to Zimbabwe could happen. The problem is that even if you get the land, you may not have the money to work it' (supervisor, February 2008).

MANAGEMENT SITUATION

Makwembe combines two management patterns: on the one hand, the farm is a family enterprise, and on the other hand a neo-paternalist transformation has spawned an intermediary layer of managers and supervisors typical of a more corporate environment.

Box 2: The family farm

I was born on a farm here in the valley. My husband is a manager on a farm 29km away – also Oom Jan's farm. There we grow baby veg. Here I am an administrator. I do the buying and selling. Tatenda [a young Zimbabwean woman] is doing wages for both farms [i.e., there is one administrative system for the two Makwembe farms]. In July we have 400 people in total.

Jan's sons are Benji, who is not married and is a manager, and Hendrik, who is married and whose wife is working at the pack house in town. She is the sales representative and negotiates prices with retailers and is responsible for marketing. They have twins and stay at the *proefplaas* [the experimental farm next door, leased on a yearly basis by Makwembe]. Jan's wife is the production manager at the pack house, where they prepare dried fruit and do packaging of fresh produce.

Oom Jan's daughter is married to Bezuidenhout's brother's son. She is staying at Tshipise at the Bezuidenhout farm but is working at the pack house in Musina ... she is doing labour stuff and HR. Her husband is farming there at Tshipise, on the hunting side.

Source: Administrator, February 2008

The farm is owned by members of one family, who control management and administration, which partly involves extended family members, some of whom have related farming operations in the district (see Box 2). Words like *oom* and *tannie* (uncle and aunt) used among members of this network reflect familial ties and affinity based on shared race, class and language. The owner's daughter-in-law, heading up the administration of the farm office, together with a young Zimbabwean woman, explained the multiple ways in which extended family structures and farming (and related business) operations are intertwined (see Box 2).

One change under way was the professionalisation of intermediaries. Over the past five years or more, some individuals with backgrounds as farm workers have been trained to take up more significant positions. It appears that a core of professional black farm managers will emerge over time. Most senior among these is Henry, who grew up on the farm and went to school there, as the son of a female farm worker. The farm owner agreed to sponsor his secondary and tertiary education, and from 2007 he returned to work as the farm's human resources manager. In addition, there is a system of foremen and supervisors: five female supervisors lead women-only work teams, while seven male supervisors lead the rest (human resources manager, 2009). Supervisors also make up most of the members of a 'disciplinary committee', which deals with cases of crime or conflict in the farm compound and oversees (for example) dismissals according to a Code of Conduct (group interview, May 2007).

EMPLOYMENT

Composition of the workforce

By February 2008, Makwembe was employing about 450 people: about 300 were permanently employed; about 100 were temporarily employed for eight to nine months or even longer (normally from March to end November); and about 50 were short-term employees. Some so-called 'temporary' workers in practice work the whole year (January to December), then go on leave. They have the same employment conditions and may get promotions but, in the case of retrenchment, 'permanent employees' have stronger rights. A 'last in, first out' principle and good performance are criteria used (human resources manager, 2008).

Women are the majority among staff. As elsewhere in the country, picking fruit and vegetables is considered to be 'women's work', on account of a perception that they have more 'nimble fingers'. The owner argued that careful handling of crops is a crucial factor in the farm's success, since it takes great skill to pick the crop at the exact right stage of ripening and since damaged produce gets rejected. 'Women are best at caring for the crops. Women are the caring gender. If you want something to be taken care of, you give it to a woman,' he said. At the same time, men dominated in permanent positions. In August 2008, during peak season, of 327 seasonal workers 326 were women (human resources manager, March 2009). An example of low-season figures is in Table 7.

Apparently women face discrimination in access to permanent positions, which is at odds with the owners' view of women as preferred workers and may reflect gendered power relations. Asked about this, the human resources manager (March 2009) said that women 'work in projects' and are 'limited to a certain contracts' while men

are full-time workers and engaged in work that goes on throughout the year, such as irrigation and driving tractors. However, we learnt from women that they were interested in and felt capable of taking on these jobs. Of the seasonal workers (almost entirely women), close to 60% lived in Musina and close to 40% in the farm compound (human resources manager, March 2009). It may be seen as convenient that female spouses of permanent male workers live in the compound and are readily available as seasonal labour, while the opposite pattern (permanently employed women and seasonally available men) would challenge prevailing patriarchal gender patterns.

When extra labour is needed at Makwembe, managers tell staff, and the word spreads. Enough workers were always available during peak season. 'Africans are the best communicators in the world,' said Mr Vosloo. Another interpretation is that Africans on both sides of the border make up a large pool of rather desperate, unemployed labour.

Zimbabwean migrants

Most of the workers are originally from the Limpopo River valley. In Africa you cannot take a river as a border. A river valley is inhabited by people. The river was never, ever respected as a border except during the war years in the 1970s. (Owner, 2007)

Asked about Zimbabwean workers, Mr Vosloo, as quoted above, stressed the historical continuity of labour exchange and human movement between Zimbabwe and northern Limpopo. In his view, the world had 'suddenly discovered' that there were many Zimbabwean migrants in the area, and he had received visits by journalists and the Human Rights Commission during 2007. He suggested a typology of Zimbabweans in the area: (a) *job seekers* on their way south, who often cross the river and cut through the fences; (b) *migrant labour* legally employed on farms;

Table 7: Employment pattern in the low season (March 2009)

	Female	Male	South African	Zimbabwean	Total
Permanent employees	15	109	99	25	124
Seasonal employees	125	0	95	30	125
Total	140	109	194	55	249

Source: Interview, human resources manager, Makwembe, March 2009

(c) *inhabitants of the Limpopo valley* who have been here ‘all the time’, many of whom have South African identity documents (IDs); and (d) *criminals*, the least significant category (‘those you do not even count in hundreds’).

The owner said that workers who were Zimbabwean citizens all had legal permits, and that ‘the other Zimbabweans have South African IDs’, almost all of whom were Venda. One worker said that ‘when a job seeker comes with a South African identity document, you can’t ask whether they are really South Africans’ (May 2007). Many have acquired IDs during a long history of migration, residence and perhaps marriage; it is also well known that South African IDs can be obtained for money. Thus, the ‘real’ situation is that workers who originate in Zimbabwe are much more important for the farm than the number of workers registered as ‘Zimbabwean’ suggests.

Registered Zimbabwean workers had temporary permits valid for one year for those who held a Zimbabwean passport and for six months for those who did not. Workers could travel on these permits, but had to obtain a new permit if they changed employer; this was difficult and a group of workers (2007) only knew about one such case.

Those displaced from Zimbabwe face dangerous conditions when travelling, especially when crossing the Limpopo River. An administrator told us: ‘They get very hungry that side: even when the river is very full they are coming’. A story about a Zimbabwean woman whose baby, carried on her back, was swept away by the torrent, expressed the desperation and danger (administrator, February 2008).

One of the perceived results of more people going past or through the farm is petty theft, primarily of crops. The owner employs security staff and has engaged a private security firm. When culprits are caught, the owner finds it difficult to know what to do (‘they are doing it to make a living’), so they are normally released without being taken to the police for prosecution. Theft of equipment such as pumps was a major cost and annoyance to the owner, who estimated the cost of replacing copper piping stolen during 2007 at R30 000, while the retail value for the thieves might be less than R1 000. Six people living in the compound were caught setting up snares in the bushy

area of the farm (for warthog, kudu and impala) and were facing disciplinary hearings around the time of our visit in September 2008.

Many workers were also concerned with threats to security. First, they expressed a sense of physical insecurity in the farm compound where they lived, and secondly, they recognised that theft of produce could threaten production targets and therefore their bonus payments (group interview, May 2007). Workers and others were also afraid of the *amaGumaguma* (bandits), the South African and Zimbabwean criminals who attack and rob migrants in the border zone on either side of the Limpopo River. The farm owner says that his staff have reported some of them to the police but they have not seen effective follow-up (owner, February 2008).

Working conditions

Based on the government’s ‘sectoral determination’ for the agricultural sector, minimum wages for farm workers were increased to R1 090 per month in March 2008 and to R1 232 in March 2009. Labour inspectors on a visit to Makwembe in July 2008 found things to be generally in order, except that work hours and the method for calculating the right to leave should be stated in work contracts. Compliance with legislation is partly motivated by private sector regulation: Makwembe is EUREPGAP-certified, required by some of its overseas clients, and therefore subject to independent ethical audits of working conditions.

Mr Vosloo claimed that ‘the most rewarding thing for any employer is to pay as well as he can manage’ and that he gained satisfaction from seeing workers use higher incomes to take better care of their health, clothing, schooling and so on. He did not, though, regard the salaries he paid as decent: ‘The good salaries are in the services, not for the primary producers. Workers on farms, in industry and in the mines do not get decent salaries: R1 000 per month is not a decent salary’ (owner, 2008). However, in his view the farm could not sustain higher salaries than were being paid at present. The owner commented on unfair competition due to violations of the minimum wage regulations:

Producer prices are putting us under pressure. The minimum wages are not paid by everyone. There I blame

the Department of Labour. It is their job to see that the law is enforced. It is not acceptable that some do not pay the minimum wages, because they can then sell at lower prices. (Owner, 2007)

Some workers also emphasised the unfair competition due to other farms not paying the minimum wages: 'We want this to change and it should be reported to government' (group interview, May 2007). Here communication between owners, managers and workers created a partially shared understanding of this issue but workers generally stressed the need for higher wages to meet expenses and obligations.

Workers at the pack house in town were members of the Food and Allied Workers' Union (FAWU), with whom the farm management regularly had negotiations. (The owner commented that the labour consultant the farm had to hire for three hours cost them the same as six labourers for a month, that is, around R6 000.) Workers on the farm were not organised in unions. The owner told us that 'a guy came to talk about unionisation' in 1995 but that he never returned and that 'it has been extremely quiet lately'.

TENURE

From farm dweller to farm worker issues

On Makwembe we did not meet farm dwellers with historical claims to land. At least, none were members of the community claiming the farm through the land restitution process. The owner claimed: 'I did not find people here' when he bought the farm 25 years previously, except an elderly woman who since passed away and was buried elsewhere. The owner had demanded that, when workers retire, they move away from the farm – and claimed that this is what has happened, despite provisions of law protecting elderly occupiers. Workers appeared to accept that their relationship to the farm ends when they (or their spouse) no longer work there: 'when you stop working, you go' (group interview, May 2007). In this way the farm is not fully 'home' to staff, who said they tried to maintain a home in a town or village elsewhere. Makwembe illustrates a situation where the shift from 'farm dweller' (an identity based on where you live) to 'farm worker' (an identity based

on an employment status) has gone rather far. This is not to say that the relationship to the farm is merely one of employment, as in an urban setting: the sense of 'home' and 'community' on the farm goes beyond that.

A place to work, a place to live – housing

Makwembe is home to a large number of people. Most but not all of the adults living on the farm are employed there. Many have built homes and brought up children on the farm, while some have another home in a communal area (mostly in the ex-Bantustan of Venda), a nearby town or in Zimbabwe. While they may remit money to family elsewhere, some have their primary home here. This is visible in the workers' compound on the farm, which resembles not so much a 'hostel' situation – as on other horticultural farms in the area – as a 'village'. Unlike the dilapidated homes in compounds on some other farms, here are well-built and well-maintained thatched mud houses, usually surrounded by a small low wall enclosing a yard with plants or trees and occasionally chickens. Many houses are decorated with geometric designs in brown and white. While some people are working, others are at home cleaning, looking after children and maintaining homes and gardens. Clearly poverty exists, particularly among those who lack jobs, and whose lives on the farms may go unrecorded and unnoticed: these are mostly Zimbabweans, often young, often women, who are passing through, living with relatives or friends who manage to stay by attaching themselves to workers and homeowners, as lovers – in order to stay alive. These are precarious livelihoods indeed.

The workers' compound resembles not so much a 'hostel' situation as a 'village'.

Workers live either in self-built mud and thatch houses, or corrugated iron and brick houses built by the owner. Some have communal bathrooms, which are not popular, while some have a small bathroom in their homes. Some complained that the mud houses may collapse during heavy rain, which happened in 2000 when many lost valuable and uninsured personal items, and again in 2009. The owner's programme of building ten additional brick houses per year was discontinued when the minimum

wage was introduced in 2003 and the profit margin came under pressure.

Services were provided to workers. About 70% of houses have electricity. The owner claimed that he wished to expand that to everyone, but said: 'We are having a huge struggle to get Eskom to come here.' Residents paid for electricity, ostensibly according to use, often around R20 per month (group interview, May 2007). Water and firewood were provided free of charge. Deductions from salaries were made for housing, at low rates compared to the Malamula case (see Chapter 6), of R15 per month per room in brick houses and R5 for a mud house.

Residents paid R20 for an extra guest staying – though there was some disagreement about who constituted a 'guest' as opposed to a family member. The rule was that no 'visitor' should stay for more than a week and, unlike on some other farms, no extra payment was charged to

An internal informal economy *within* the farm worker community was striking.

those who had visitors to stay (group interview, May 2007). The owner argued that some workers make money by subletting their homes, particularly to Zimbabweans, charging up to R50 a month per person. Commenting on the growth of the farm compound, the owner said: 'But they have relatives and friends. That is a struggle day in and day out ... There is easily double the number of workers actually staying on the farm.' Families were allowed to take the children of deceased relatives into the household, so the farm played a role as refuge for orphaned children. Interviews also showed that a number of women survived by working as 'nannies' for workers, receiving R200 per month plus board and lodging. This appeared a rather desperate livelihood option.

Social services and health

Some social services are provided for people on the farm. There is an on-farm crèche for toddlers and a public primary school on a nearby farm. Workers commended the presence of a school which now was housed in a formal building (it used to be in a defunct bus) and more teachers had been employed. However, some found it to be of low standard (February 2008). A mobile clinic visited regularly. Workers complained about the

difficulty of calling an ambulance to reach the hospital in Musina in an emergency, since they lacked easy access to a public telephone and mobile phone coverage was weak on the farm (group interview, May 2007). Lack of phone coverage also made it difficult to seek other employment – 'If I have attended an interview, how would the employer get hold of me?' a female supervisor asked. However, workers also said that access to health services had improved over time and was better than on other farms or in Zimbabwe. If workers needed to go to a clinic in town, the farm often provided transport and paid 50% of the consultation fees, in order to 'make them healthier and get them back at work sooner', as the owner said. HIV/AIDS was present but not openly spoken about. The owner said that 'one does not always know', but he believed around ten workers on the farm, mainly between the ages of 25 and 45, had died of AIDS in 2006 alone. He expressed concern about the issue, for human reasons, he said, but also because of the negative economic impact on the farm.

LIVELIHOODS

While wage labour is the most important source of livelihood for those living on Makwembe, some people enjoyed additional (though limited) resources. A few had fruit trees, and the only livestock permitted was poultry. Some had vegetable gardens in the farm village for their own consumption, and some sold the vegetables they produced, mainly within the farm. An internal informal economy *within* the farm worker community where people exchange goods and services was striking. As mentioned, some survived as nannies while others produced crafts, for example a skilled metal worker used his free time to produce pots, pans and kettles to sell to others living on the farm, or in nearby Musina. Makwembe is a source of remittances to families in South Africa and Zimbabwe, a pattern that predates the Zimbabwean crisis. What had increased was the use of the farm as a place of refuge and survival: by orphaned children; by unemployed relatives, often young women; and by travellers who were passing through who obtained shelter, water or food. In these respects, commercial farms such as Makwembe performed some of the functions that refugee camps along the Zimbabwean–South African border might have performed, had they existed.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

It is striking that employees, managers and owners at Makwembe farm did hold some similar perceptions of social justice, and apparent shared interest in the productivity of the farm, but there were still obvious contrasts in power, interests and emphasis. A challenge is to envisage and realise a decent life for workers and others who live there, including forcefully displaced Zimbabweans: the farm thus displays both conventional labour issues and humanitarian ones. As articulated by both workers and the co-owner, Mr Vosloo, decent work with an adequate income is necessary to be able to take care of dependants, particularly children, and to live with dignity. Both workers and owners demanded that the state should be more active in monitoring labour conditions, including wages, and in securing a crime-free environment. Mr Vosloo appeared more disillusioned about the capacity of the state and stressed the threats to the commercial viability of the farm within an environment of competition and rising costs. Gender equality – for example in access to permanent employment, training and leadership positions – continues to be a challenge. While communication could increase shared understanding of challenges and constraints, meaningful empowerment of workers would also require stronger links with and support from outside actors and the ability to organise to advance their claims, both in relation to the farm owners and management, and in relation to the state.

CONCLUSIONS

Makwembe farm is a surprising and impressive green locality and productive enterprise in a semi-arid and rugged terrain on the Limpopo River border between South Africa and Zimbabwe. The following presents some of the major issues that we observed.

Wages are the major source of livelihood and central concern to workers. They said they need improvements in wages, clothing and food. The South African minimum wage has meant an improvement but is too low for a decent living; inflation, particularly rising food costs, are eroding the gains. Some workers said wage deductions are relatively low and that workers on other farms complain more about water, electricity and salaries: the work

conditions are ‘fair ... at least compared to other farms’ (group interview, May 2007), but this is too low a standard. Worker identities are those of ‘workers’ rather than ‘farm dwellers’ with their own independent relationship and claim to the land they occupy. This is partly due to the relatively short time that many have lived on the farm and the livelihood activities they rely on: unlike on many other farms in Limpopo, few are involved with growing their own food, certainly at any scale. However, several do small-scale gardening of vegetables and rearing of poultry, and such practices could be strengthened. Mr Vosloo saw the situation as the best possible and argued that modest wages and inadequate housing are caused by high input costs and low producer prices. So, on Makwembe, the external conditions of farming are used to explain what are agreed to be unacceptable labour and living standards.

For some Makwembe is a home but most appear to consider that their main home is in a town or village, particularly since they expect not to spend their old age on the farm. Workers remain concerned about housing and about infrastructure such as schools, clinics and the mobile phone network; breaking the isolation of the farm is still a challenge.

In terms of production, risk and sustainability, Makwembe has been a commercially successful farm during relatively favourable market conditions of more than two decades. However, the owner characterised South Africa as a ‘high risk’ country, referring to market risk, climate change, energy and plant diseases. The farm has adapted to market risk, first by diversifying and innovating through new production lines and later by concentrating on the most profitable ones. It depends on a well-trained, skilled workforce and has a considerable number of permanent staff, and many seasonal workers return every year for relatively long temporary employment. Their competence give workers leverage for negotiating better conditions but they lack the organisation and power to use it effectively.

The political, economic and social crises in Zimbabwe accelerated dramatically after 2000 and have had profound effects on Makwembe and other farms. Still, Makwembe also shows the long history and social acceptability of cross-border migration and employment. The farm managers and the workers have by and large been able to handle the tensions caused by increased displacement and migration. Importantly, the xenophobic unrest in other

parts of South Africa, particularly in May 2008, did not lead to violence here or in other parts of the Limpopo border zone. Makwembe offers important employment and survival opportunities to the displaced, including jobs,

Makwembe offers important employment and survival opportunities to the displaced.

shelter and a secondary economy in which many Zimbabweans are employed by farm workers themselves. However, crime (including 'cross-border raids' for theft of infrastructure) is among

the serious costs and stress factors that the employer and workers can probably not manage in the long run without a resolution to the crisis in Zimbabwe and support from the governments in both countries.

On gender relations, men and women expressed some satisfaction with their working situations, but women complained of a lack of job security, as they were largely defined as seasonal labour. Women had more access to supervisor positions than on some of the other study farms (particularly Timongo) but some requested more training and access to better remunerated positions

reserved for men. The feminised poverty of dependants who live in the compound but lack employment is serious. They may be forced to resort to paid sex work, or sex in return for food and shelter, and are therefore exposed to the accompanying risks of violence and HIV/AIDS.

Restitution is a fairly remote possibility on Makwembe compared to the other farms studied. The rumour of an un-gazetted claim appeared to worry workers, who feared losing their jobs as the result of a claim, more than the co-owner, Mr Vosloo, who knew that he would be bought out and could either relocate or enter cooperation with new owners. Those who passed the Restitution Act in 1994 hardly anticipated that in 2009 South African farm workers would still be fearful of un-gazetted restitution claims. While restitution must run its legally mandated course, an effected claim of Makwembe could appear to threaten production and human livelihoods. Makwembe illustrates the need for strategies for agrarian change that combine productive employment on the farm with empowerment of, and an ownership stake for, dwellers and workers to improve their tenure, livelihoods, and experiences of justice.



6. Malamula – a citrus farm in Tshipise

HISTORY OF OWNERSHIP AND PRODUCTION

Malamula (which means ‘orange’) is a large-scale citrus and game farm in Tshipise some 30km south-east of Musina. Situated in an undulating savannah landscape studded with baobab trees and rocky outcrops, one might pass it travelling to or from the Kruger National Park further east. The area is semi-arid and would only provide opportunities for extensive livestock or game farming, were it not for the irrigation water from dams in the mountains to the south. Malamula is one of the larger South African producers of citrus for domestic and global markets.

Malamula covers a total area of 5 340ha. The farm is owned as a family estate by a South African family, Mr Johnston, his wife, and his younger brother, who lease the land to a land-holding company that they also control. Mr Johnston, whom we refer to as ‘the owner’, was willing to share knowledge and views on the farm and let the team work independently with dwellers and staff in the compound, fields and pack houses. He came from

Johannesburg to Louis Trichardt to work as a professional, and became connected to the area through his marriage to the daughter of a local farmer. The couple acquired about 4 840ha in 1982, and bought an additional portion of 500ha from a neighbour in 2007. They increased the area under citrus from about 30ha in 1982 to about 430ha in 2009. It is divided between grapefruit, lemons and oranges, mainly for export. The remaining area, almost 5 000ha, is used for game farming and livestock (both at rather small scale) and a small portion for housing for farm dwellers. About 10% of the farm income is from two lodges and small game such as buck and kudu (owner, 2008). The owner mentioned that he keeps about 800 goats for local markets, though workers say that the goats are rarely marketed. Mr Johnston was also involved in farming and agro-processing in Zimbabwe but lost land and business there during the fast-track land reform.

ECONOMIC AND POLICY CONTEXT

Major aspects of the farm’s context are (a) the market conditions in the agricultural sector, partly affected by state policies; (b) the Zimbabwean crisis and labour



migration; (c) government policies affecting labour; and (d) land reform policy, notably restitution.

Market conditions

Post-apartheid agricultural deregulation has had an impact on Malamula farm operations and economy. A shift towards more intensive horticultural production is evident, resulting in production and export growth. The fruit varieties grown also change according to market demands. The farm employs new, imported technology such as specialised temperature-controlled containers and fruit grading machinery. According to the owner, about 90% of the farm income is from citrus. Gross farm income increased in 2007 due to rising global prices for citrus but net income stagnated due to the growing costs of inputs, services and salaries. For example, the price of diesel increased, potassium fertilisers went up by 400%, and shipping costs by 100%. According to the owner, labour costs represent about 33% of the total annual turnover and are significantly affected by minimum wage legislation.

Agrarian relations are not just between the property owners and labour, but include corporations operating through global and national commodity chains upstream and downstream of the farms (Bernstein 2004: 201). An important factor stressed by one of the managers on Malamula is that supermarkets exert downward pressure on farmgate prices, which are far below retail prices. In response, Malamula's management company has also been involved in vertical integration (supply of inputs and processing) for ten to fifteen years. The owner stressed the importance of being competitive in a global environment where he and other South African farms compete with producers in the north who are heavily subsidised by their governments. Also, the South African market economy is not a fully open one but characterised by monopolies in electricity, water supply, rail transport and harbours. He predicted that, in terms of government attention and support, agriculture would continue losing compared to industry, and would have to adapt to that situation. Mr Johnston frequently stressed that he is merely 'a player' in the market and cannot change these market conditions, rules and state monopolies.

The Zimbabwean crisis and labour migration

At Malamula, migrant workers from Zimbabwe make up around 80% of the labour force. As at Makwembe, there are different interpretations of what this really means. The owner said that the crisis in Zimbabwe had caused a huge influx of migrants to South Africa, but claimed that it has not really affected employment on the farm. Like Mr Vosloo, the co-owner of Makwembe, he stressed that labour migration has a long history and that most farm workers come from a belt within 50km north or south of the Limpopo, 'within moving distance of the family'. This, in his view, did not really constitute 'migration'. He also argued that the Zimbabwean workforce had not significantly changed the opportunities and conditions for South African workers, claiming that Zimbabweans were not taking jobs away from them, 'because we always give preference to South Africans when there is an opportunity for employment at the entry level [pickers], but the onus is on South Africans to prove themselves.' About a third of the pickers are new every year, so 'no one feels threatened' (owner, 2007). He did, however, stress the pressure and crime problems caused by distress migration from Zimbabwe. He also argued that for the many Zimbabweans who pass through the area on their way to Johannesburg and elsewhere, the farm provides livelihoods and incomes and thereby contributes to creating a 'zone where crime is less' – a safe haven of sorts (ibid). Once the migrants move south 'across the mountain', the Soutpansberg, however, they have no other livelihood or money and may turn to crime. Workers, though, disagreed with some of his characterisation of the situation; for example, some South African workers felt that the increased supply of migrant labour had exerted a negative pressure on conditions of employment and life in the compounds.

Land restitution

I was progressive, others were not. The rules changed, so I decided to adapt. I saw that now I needed twice the size of the cake if I wanted the same return as before. (Owner, Malamula, 2007)

Two communities in the Nzhelele Valley, totalling some 1 000 individuals, are claiming Malamula under the land restitution programme. The claim had yet to significantly affect the operations at Malamula during the time of our

research, but triggered new relations, joint planning and from 2008 the hiring of some members from the claimant communities. The owner's response to restitution quoted above illustrates the ability to adapt and work within changing constellations of power.

The following were key features of the restitution process. Malamula's owner negotiated with the claimant communities, trying to identify the different needs and interests in participating. He employed a consultant to initiate 'appropriate forums' and entered an agreement with the claimant communities to set up the Nzhelele Valley Initiative to facilitate the creation of a 'strategic partnership'⁴ to manage the farm and initiate area-based planning. He and colleagues approached farmers in the area to find out 'who are willing sellers, who want to continue in farming, and who want to retire to the sea'. Bringing together farm owners and claimants aimed to ease tensions and provide optimism in agriculture:

We try to take away the threat of land reform ... try to take away the perception of threat, the war that is the end of life. There is enough sunlight for everyone to shine, as long as you don't create a shadow for someone else. (Owner, Malamula, 2007)

The owner argued that restitution can mean 'expanding the cake' and that 'restitution only changes the holding of the land'. Around 2002 he had created a separate land-holding company to which his family was leasing the land. Thereby they prepared for a situation where the land would be transferred to a third party, such as a property-holding unit of claimant communities. At present, the family needed return on the capital tied up in the land but after restitution this would no longer be the case, since the sale (which he presumed would be at market price) would release capital. All he would have to do was to set up a new company, 'but that costs R825 and is not a big problem' (owner, 2008). 'Increasing the cake' means that total capital available to the company would be vastly expanded: he hoped to get his 'capital for the land and government brings additional capital, and then you can go into the secondary industry ... we will expand towards

4. According to this model, claimant communities form a joint venture with a private entrepreneur, or 'strategic partner', possibly including former owners, which invests capital and is involved in farm management for a defined period (ten to fifteen years, with the option of renewal) (Dermer et al. 2010).

both the production and the market side.’ He and partners in the Nzhelele Valley Initiative were also bidding for the farms of neighbours who preferred not to join a major new strategic partnership, which would expand the cake in a physical sense.

The owner said that he intended to bring know-how and market connections to the partnership, and argued: ‘Land in itself is nothing.’⁵ We have the ability to utilise the land and they [will] have the land. The ownership will change, but the need for competitiveness will not change’ (owner, 2007). The Nzhelele Valley Initiative had advertised positions and was ‘busy with training ... from basic literacy to top-end’. It was setting up a school with Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) and European Union support, and expected more funds from government during the transfer process. Mr Johnston argued that other strategic partnerships were mainly working with ‘the fat cats’ (he had the Levubu Valley, see Chapter 7, in mind). In his view, patronage was hampering development in South

Supervisors often head teams of workers from the same ethnic group.

Africa. Development takes place ‘in a natural way [when] one is linking decisions not to emotions but to long-term interests.’ His ambition was to create a ‘broad-based environment’: ‘The biggest wealth is created through the employment, and then you must work with the bolts and nuts. We are still going to be there when the others fail.’ He said that the partners had discussed the risk of conflict with workers, but he expected that by ‘expanding the cake’ the company could increase job opportunities and would only have to rely on natural attrition due to retirement or resignations: ‘there will be no firing.’ He believed that workers could benefit from a workers’ trust that would hold a 2% stake in the operating enterprise, not the land. However, he also argued that climbing to the level of management would be more important than such a trust: ‘for people to really have a say they need to work themselves into a role of management. The say in the operation comes through the position that you hold’ (owner, 2008).

MANAGEMENT

With a complex production system and some 800 workers, managing the Malamula farm and related enterprises

required planning and governance systems. A multi-level management system existed, where nationality, ethnicity, duration of employment, gender and race all played a role in the hierarchical structure of roles, positions and work duties. At the apex of the farm hierarchy were the white farm owners. Planning and daily management were primarily done by the two co-owning brothers, of whom Mr Johnston’s brother has the more hands-on role. Dwellers appeared to consider Mr Johnston as the ultimate source of power and a managerial authority that was hard to contest. Below them were a number of middle managers, both administrative and technical, who were predominantly white male South Africans.

In the field and the packing facilities, black foremen or supervisors were responsible for production teams, carrying out field controls and reporting to managers. These are to some extent organised according to gender and ethnicity. As at Makwembe, it was more common that women headed teams of women, such as in packing. In the fields, supervisors of a certain ethnicity often head teams of workers from the same ethnic group. Perhaps this aspect of the management system is used to reduce tensions in the farm as a political space. Foremen or supervisors were often caught between the expectations of the employer and those of the workers, the latter sometimes accusing them of siding with the employer: ‘The head foreman is a problem. He oppresses our grievances. He does not want to tell the white man. He blocks us. He is the white man’s favourite. He has been here for ten years. *Mutenges!* [Sell-out!]’ (farm worker, 2007).

EMPLOYMENT

Malamula’s 800-strong farm labour force was composed of about 550 seasonal and 250 permanent workers, with a roughly equal share of men and women in both categories (owner, 2008). The permanent and seasonal workers made up a loose two-tier structure of the labour force. Permanent workers received monthly salaries throughout the year whereas seasonal workers were employed on a recurrent basis for the picking season from February to September or on a casual basis for specific tasks. At the beginning of October each year, labour demand drops by about two-thirds.

None of the respondents interviewed were members of a trade union. Some farm workers suggested that joining a trade union would provoke antagonism with the owner and that engaging in a strike would be tantamount to self-dismissal. A worker said that ‘the farm owner will have the final say in any dispute, not the trade union. They have no power over him, not even the police [do]’ (middle-aged male farm worker, 2008).

Indeed, the owner largely saw unions as a threat to the social relations between himself and workers. He argued that farm workers are at the bottom-end of the market, which makes it ‘easy to politicise the group. But if you politicise that group they lose out.’ He argued that unionisation is appropriate for trained workers with skills, such as teachers, not for unskilled farm workers, and that attempts to unionise were politicised or done for personal benefit. The government should therefore only define and enforce minimum conditions, not promote unionisation: ‘Government must lift everyone to a common level. Then they can compete and lift themselves further’ (owner, 2007). In a later interview, he elaborated the threat the worker organisation might pose to his authority and to farm relations: ‘The trade unions will only destabilise the environment and make life difficult for all of us, we live in a peaceful environment, and everything is by consensus. Trade unions are for people with skills’ (owner, 2008).

TENURE

On Malamula, a situation had been created where tenure was largely employment-based and temporary. Anyone with historical claims to land had been forcibly removed over time. In the 1990s, the farm owners gradually evicted long-term farm dwellers by depriving them of land to produce their own crops such as sorghum, by banning livestock-keeping, and by destroying self-built houses. The curtailment of these livelihood options caused some farm dwellers who previously enjoyed independent production on the farm to leave or enter into wage labour. Apparently a transition from self-constructed to farmer-built housing around 2000 further weakened any claims they might have had to independent residence and land use. The farm represents the completion of a long historical transition to employment-based tenure, although a few exceptions exist, such as the toleration of some retired workers. We heard of no cases where tenure legislation (ESTA or the

LTA) had been applied, whether because dwellers were unaware of it or because evictions took place before tenure legislation was introduced.

Until the late 1980s farm dwellers could stay in self-built thatched huts without paying rent to the farm owner. The farm owner changed this by constructing block-buildings with tiny single rooms, where farm dwellers were forced to stay. Access to housing on the farm is now inextricably linked to employment. The law provides for deductions for housing, but the conditions of the compounds were deplorable and fell short of official standards: many houses or rooms were tiny, lacked glass windows, and only a few households had electricity.

Therefore the standard deductions were illegal.

Dependants of various categories were tolerated but payments for housing and services were extracted on their account, even where these were close family such as spouses of employees. The owner and management tolerated some elderly (retired) workers who lived in the compound, though it appeared that few availed themselves of this option, probably because of the payments required. Until 2005 workers did not have to pay rent for spouses and relatives but this practice has changed, as a young woman explained:

During the picking season up to six people could be housed in a single room.

If you stay with another person, even your spouse, and the person is not employed on this farm, the owner will deduct R85 from your salary. This is on top of the R180 monthly deductions. So if you stay with two people you pay R170 [extra]. It's not fair. (Farm worker, 2008)

Another practice highlighted by workers was that during the picking season up to six people unrelated to one another but of the same sex could be housed in a single room, the farm owner deducting rent per head rather than per room, as a middle-aged seasonal farm worker explained:

Four of us live in a tiny room but the farm owner deducts R180 from each of us. It would have been better if he

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5. He linked this key statement to his loss of a farm in Zimbabwe: here ‘land’ was just a minor part of the related businesses and market connections that constituted the real loss.

charged per room, then we would pay less. The owner, don't write my name, is greedy, he makes so much money from one room. It is better to rent elsewhere. (Farm worker, 2008)

Tenure was affected by gender and family patterns, since women were sometimes forced to leave the farm after a breakdown of a relationship rather than getting alternative accommodation. In the case of a dispute, a special 'committee' would intervene but it appeared to comprise just one man picked by the owner rather than being elected

Farm workers are not just passive victims but use various strategies to shape livelihoods.

by the farm dwellers. Split families were common, in which case parents and children of primary school age stayed on the farm whereas older children and spouses lived in communal areas or at home in Zimbabwe or Mozambique. There was a primary school within the farm but parents complained of poor quality education. Teachers at the primary school alleged that children of farm workers were imitating parents' sexual activities at school, which could be linked to the congested housing and lack of privacy. The legal status of individuals also affected education: children coming back from Zimbabwe reportedly missed parts of the term when their return during the rainy season was made difficult because this is when the Limpopo River is full and infested with crocodiles. Children in secondary school normally live with relatives away from the farm, since the nearest secondary school is about 10km from the farm and transport is not provided.

Views on tenure differed between the long-term dwellers, recently arrived workers and restitution claimants. An elderly long-term dweller said that the farm was his home, albeit a deficient one:

The idea [we have] is to give us control and ownership of our gardens, give us clean water, free electricity, shops and make sure that the primary school improves for our children. I need to live here [on the farm] because I have been here for decades: this is now my home. (Farm dweller, 2008)

A young and recently employed seasonal worker, on the other hand, said: 'This farm is just a place to work, where we get our wages while building our homes elsewhere. You

cannot plan to live here your whole life, since the place belongs to the owner' (farm worker, 2008). In contrast, some prospective beneficiaries of restitution took a long-term view of their presence on the farm, seeing themselves as future owners and employers at Malamula (group interview, 2009).

In the farm owner's vision, workers and their families would stay in agri-villages on or off the farm, but clearly separated from the productive areas: 'It's better to bring them [farm workers] in a small town where there are shops.' He argued that there is a universal pattern whereby mines, as at Musina, or commercial agriculture, as in the orange producing areas around Valencia, Spain, lead to the emergence of small villages: 'Wherever you go in the world, there are little agri-villages', and this could be created under the Nzhelele Valley Initiative. Separating settlement issues from those of farm management would be a priority under the new strategic partner arrangement.

LIVELIHOODS AND HEALTH

Because of the history described above, wage income is now the major source of livelihood on the farm. However, a diversity of small-scale livelihood strategies endured.

Without official authorisation from the farmer, workers still cultivated open spaces adjacent to their houses. Most grew maize or short-term crops that could be cooked and used as relish. A few grew trees such as paw-paws and banana, which indicate a long-term investment. Some farm workers kept chickens, ducks and pigs at a very small scale. The produce from these farm workers' own farming was mainly consumed within their own households or sold to other residents on the farm.

Beyond these uses of land, workers engaged in multiple non-land-based livelihood strategies as coping mechanisms. Some were involved in micro trading, such as buying cheap clothes from the nearby town of Musina to sell in the farm compound at the end of the month. Others had erected small *spaza* shops (small informal trading stores), where they sold groceries such as salt, soap, *mopane* worms and beans. Four shebeens (informal taverns) were owned by long-term workers, and offered traditional brew at R3 per litre or Black Label lager at R11. These activities show that farm workers are not just

passive victims of circumstance but use various strategies to attempt to shape livelihoods outside of wage-labour relations (Zamchiya 2008).

Jobs at Malamula had helped some individuals in distress get off the roads and into a livelihood. Yet, salary deductions were much higher than elsewhere (for example at Makwembe) and workers found them unfair. One said: ‘The salaries are too low. We just survive on *sadza*’ (maize meal). Both men and women struggled to preserve their dignity on the farm under the pressures of poverty but the conditions, such as the exposure to HIV/AIDS, were gendered. A former teacher, now worker, said that women and girls were exposed to transactional sex and domestic violence:

HIV/AIDS on this farm is on the rise ... diseases and poverty work hand in hand. Nearly a hundred women are not working or are waiting for jobs. Some are married, but may be the third wife. Some sell sex. Many men have two wives, or they marry, get divorced and re-marry rapidly. (Farm worker, 2009)

Interviewing Malamula’s enterprising and visionary owner in the morning and then talking with workers and dwellers in the fields and the compound in the afternoon, we noted the surreal sense that throughout the day we had been studying different farms. One reason is the different socio-economic positions of the owner and the workers; another is the dual geography of the farm, with the contrast between a wealthy owner homestead, linked to an administrative centre, and the fields and compound of relative deprivation. Our team asked the owner whether it would not be good to encourage and allow families to live together on the farm rather than to cause split families and casual sexual relations with the concomitant risk of HIV/AIDS. The owner explained that it would also have been pleasant for him to take his family on business trips to Europe and North America but that costs did not permit this. The analogy appeared to miss the reality of workers’ living conditions and poverty.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Competing discourses on social justice characterise the farm. Workers and dwellers found their living and

working conditions to be poor, and advocated for higher salaries and better housing. Some believed the state should be more active in providing services and in monitoring the employer’s compliance with labour and tenure laws. Viewed from Malamula, the government appeared rather distant but policies that were important and positive for workers included the minimum wage regulations introduced from 2003; labour inspections; regulations concerning the standard of housing (though not fully complied with); and visits by mobile health units. While the owner was scaling up operations at Malamula and setting up a strategic partnership with communities, he stressed that he is a ‘player’ operating within rules and conditions set by the market and the state, which controls central parts of the economy, and that around the world agriculture offers only poorly remunerated jobs. He therefore argued that the state should subsidise labour to improve the living conditions of farm dwellers and create an environment that enables higher farm net incomes leading to increased expenditure on the welfare of workers.

Women and girls were exposed to transactional sex and domestic violence.

The owner was articulate and conversant with the discourses of the market and of post-apartheid political transformation but an emphasis on competition and commercial viability over-rode these values. Asked whether conditions were ‘fair’, Johnston argued that notions of fairness must be assessed in relation to what is economically possible – not against some abstract standard:

You define fairness, then I will tell you ... I do what is best for me. I try to be competitive. Whether it is fair or not, that is not part of my game. That is the game for politicians. This is not a social welfare game. This is business. We play soccer. Soccer players play according to certain rules. Then they may end the game – and then other rules apply ... Fairness is just a perception, a point on a curve of a normal distribution ... The Constitution is wonderful. However, one has to see it in the bigger economy, the need to manage the economy. One has to see if one is achieving one’s goals: the reality is that you need a fair return on your investment. (Owner, Malamula)

CONCLUSIONS

Malamula farm illustrates important trends and responses affecting the tenure security, livelihoods and social justice experienced by workers.

The production system is characterised by commercial adaptation and expansion. The farm owner-managers are engaged in changing the farm to optimise production and financial returns under the prevailing market- and state-controlled conditions. It has expanded its production in response to the demand for citrus products in domestic and foreign markets by systematically building its production skills, knowledge and technology.

Although workers observed recent increases in employment opportunities due to the expansion in cultivated area and production, the long-term trend is to produce more with less labour. This is achieved by increasing labour productivity through a hard incentive and discipline-based regime, such as the piece-rate payment in fruit picking. Lack of unionisation appeared a constraint

on workers' ability to leverage better conditions, and reflected their isolation from the wider society.

A high proportion of workers come from Zimbabwe. The owner's perception is that this is primarily well-established, long-term, and predominantly local work-travel, and therefore not really 'migration'. Our evidence, though, suggests a changed situation characterised by distress migration and new categories of migrant workers, both the well educated from Harare and further afield, and those who aspire to move on to better jobs in urban South Africa.

Farm dweller tenure and livelihoods have been and remain under pressure, being reshaped by the commercial strategies that discourage dwellers' use of time or land for their own production. Tenure to housing depends on employment, and the quality of housing is kept at a minimum to counteract the effect of government wage legislation. Diverse supplementary livelihoods deserve more attention and support but also cannot replace better organisation and negotiation of conditions of employment including the quality of the farm as a place to live.



7. Timongo – fruit and nut farms in Levubu

HISTORY OF OWNERSHIP AND PRODUCTION

South of the Soutpansberg mountains and east of Makhado/Louis Trichardt town lies the fertile Levubu Valley of forested hillsides and rich horticultural farms, where sub-tropical fruits and nuts – banana, mango, litchi, citrus, macadamia, pecan, avocado and others – are grown. The employment, production and foreign exchange earnings of the Levubu farms give them a regional and national significance (Fraser 2008).

In the early twentieth century, the African owners of the Levubu area were mainly Venda and Shangaan (or Tsonga), who practised mixed cultivation. Due to their military strength and the presence of malaria, Levubu was occupied by white settlers relatively late – and after the 1913 cut-off date for restitution claims (Derman et al. 2010). In the 1930s the government established an irrigation scheme for ‘poor white’ farmers, which became fully operational with the construction of the Albasini Dam in the 1950s. African groups were forcibly removed from farmland and hillsides turned into forest plantations.

Many of the dispossessed were later incorporated into the white-controlled agricultural economy as labour tenants and wage labourers (Lahiff 2000; Fraser 2008). Further dispossession took place through apartheid forced removals of farm dwellers to the nearby Bantustans of Venda (to the north) and Gazankulu (to the south). Some communities were left on small fractions of their former land while others were moved up to 50km away, mainly to less fertile communal areas.

Restitution of white-owned farms to communities is now an important, ongoing land reform process – almost the entire valley is under claim. Restitution involves agribusiness companies as ‘strategic partners’ in managing farms together with new community owners (Hellum & Derman 2008; Derman et al. 2010). We chose to study a sub-group of 26 farms in Levubu, called here Timongo, which were transferred to the Shigalo and Ratombo communities, which managed them in cooperation with the same strategic partner, first Mavu Management Services, and from 2007 Umlimi Holdings. Exploring the complex Timongo case, we argue that dwellers and workers were generally marginalised in the restitution process that aimed to transform the beautiful valley.



ECONOMIC AND POLICY CONTEXT

A complex set of pressures has affected farming in Levubu. Liberalisation and withdrawal of state support put pressure on white-owned family farms from the 1980s, while expanding markets in the 1990s and 2000s also created opportunities for competitive enterprises. A long-term production trend has been a shift from vegetables as ‘small-scale cash crops’ towards plantations crops, particularly the commercially successful macadamia nut (Mavu manager, 2007).

In an agrarian economy dominated by a class of landowners who were privileged under apartheid, state and community pressures for land reform increasingly added to the pressures of economic change. Nevertheless, of the three land reform programmes, only restitution has been implemented at significant scale in the Levubu Valley. Restitution claims in Levubu are based on dispossession that took place between 1913 and the 1980s. Three main factors support the case for restitution: claimants in nearby communities had often lived on the lands claimed,

had contested dispossession, and remained involved in agriculture. Even so, some Levubu landowners objected to the restitution process (Fraser 2008) and some claims are still under investigation. Restitution concerns more than 400 farms covering close to 30 000ha with an estimated 10 000 workers (Derman et al. 2010, citing Lahiff et al. 2006). The first phase involved about 5 400ha of private land in 63 parcels being purchased at a price of R219 million from landowners and transferred to seven claimant communities; some 2 600ha of state land, mainly forest plantations, was also earmarked for these communities and the government allocated about R5 million in Settlement Planning Grants and Restitution Discretionary Grants to claimants (Derman et al. 2010).

MANAGEMENT

Strategic partnerships as a new governance system

The Shigalo and Ratombo ‘communities’ successfully claimed 26 family farms covering about 2 000ha. Shigalo

is a contiguous community of about 1 800 beneficiaries, while Ratombo comprises settlements at different locations, whose claims the government lumped together. The Shigalo farms are generally irrigated, and the land intensively used, with banana as the major crop. On Ratombo farms, water is a major constraint and usage is less intensive, mainly for nuts and fruits (Umlimi manager, 2009). Land was transferred to two Communal Property Associations (CPAs).

Through restitution a complex governance system had emerged, in which key actors were: (a) the successful claimant communities represented by elected or nominated CPA leaders; (b) traditional leadership institutions, who are strengthened in the process and hold key positions in the CPAs (Hellum & Derman 2009); (c) the strategic partner (first Mavu, then Umlimi); (d) a joint operating company with each community, which leased the land from the CPAs for an annual rent; (e) the state, primarily represented by the Department of Land Affairs and the office of the Regional Land Claims Commissioner; (f) the agro-food industry, including up- and down-stream businesses; and (g) other communities. Farm dwellers and workers were not powerful actors in the process. Through the consolidation of many family farms into two large corporate entities, the management regime shifted from the personal and paternalist towards corporate 'human resource management'. How it worked out in practice will be elaborated below.

Production challenges

Levubu Valley saw a production decline during the long phase leading up to the transfer of land, as owners reduced their long-term investments in plantations, irrigation and fertiliser. Mavu's general manager, Mr Pullman, said:

The last seven years we have been in the land claim trap. This dragging from the government makes farmers stop investing and causes damage on the ground. Ministers who are flying over Levubu just see that it is green and do not understand the problems and that now one has to invest ... The dragging process is one of the biggest reasons for the problem the operating companies are in. When you stop investing, you start losing ground. (Mavu manager, 2007)

However, Mavu had replanted 16ha of bananas at R15 000 per hectare 'in good faith' and was planning to improve the

economies of scale in banana, macadamia, citrus, guavas and avocados and increase the period of harvesting. Nevertheless, a manager estimated that Levubu's share of national banana production declined from 16% to 4%, and added: '120 tons of vegetables left this area every second day four years ago and today there is one or two tons leaving this area, so there is a substantial big hole in activity' (Umlimi manager, 2008). Thus, a mix of market, political and tenure insecurity shaped investment and management decisions.

The Mavu phase (2005 to mid-2007)

Strategic partner Mavu Management Services formed joint operating companies, which leased the land from the two CPAs for an annual rent equivalent to 1.25% of the purchase price, indexed to inflation. Mavu was formed by three former landowners who wanted to continue to play a role in farming at Levubu, despite resistance from some of the other farmers who saw them as 'renegades'. One of them, Mr Scott-Owen who became the director of Mavu, argued that 'what is happening in Zimbabwe, we need to avoid here'. Mavu presented itself as the key to maintaining and increasing production on restitution land. Its political liaison officer argued that 'the government has made big mistakes in land reform ... One cannot give a car to someone who does not know how to drive.'⁶ The Mavu signboard outside the Levubu office proclaimed: 'Together We Manage Your Future'. This expressed the ambiguous relationship between strategic partner and community as equal ('together') and yet paternalistic ('we manage your future').

As at Malamula, restitution gave entrepreneurial landowners opportunities to 'expand the cake' by releasing capital and gaining more land. Mavu director Scott-Owen said:

The [Land Claims] Commission should focus. It is jumping around from one area to another. We wanted the Commission's agreement that any farm bought in our area will come to us. The reason is economies of scale: we need more developed farms to make our whole venture possible. (Director, Mavu, 2007)

6. The 'car' metaphor for land was also used by an Umlimi manager who asked if someone who has been 'given a BMW would take as well care of it as someone who has earned the money and bought it?' (2009).

Another concern of landowners was to protect and expand their engagement in industries up- and down-stream. Having sold their farms to government, the Mavu directors still owned the Green Farms macadamia cracking factory, the largest in the country; Valley Farms (juice processing); Valley Dry (dried fruit); an oil expressing plant and a local cooperative for input supplies and equipment. Scott-Owen, himself the owner of a macadamia factory with an estimated value of R15–20 million,⁷ explained: ‘We are totally vertically integrated ... We wanted to ensure that we would have supply for our processing plants.’ Mavu had suggested to the government that a new company involving claimant and other communities as shareholders should be formed: ‘Then these communities can start to get vertically integrated into all these companies ... increase their shareholding over time and after fifteen or twenty years buy these companies out. We thought, if we get involved on the management side, we could ensure that supply.’ His macadamia plant was included in the claim but the government excluded it, zoning it as industrial rather

than agricultural land: ‘The Commission refused to buy our factories – too much money – they said no, sorry, we are into agricultural land only’ (Mavu director, 2007). Later the

Mavu claimed that the CPAs made excessive demands for rewards and employment.

government bought the Valley Farms juice factory and made a bid for the macadamia factory (Umlimi manager, 2008) but the plans for community-based enterprises remained unrealised.

In May 2007 a written agreement had yet to be signed between the strategic partner, the communities and the state, so operations were based on a ‘gentlemen’s agreement’. Mavu established a joint operating company with each CPA, holding a 48% share in each. Boards were to comprise Mavu directors (5), CPA leaders (5), and representatives of the provincial Department of Agriculture and the Commission on the Restitution of Land Rights (Mavu director, 2007). By 2007, the relationship between actors was fairly tense. In May 2007, ten Ratombo CPA executive committee members⁸ told us about the difficulty of being poised between Mavu and their community members, and complained about the delay in formalising agreements and positions. In October 2006⁹ the CPA executive committee had communicated to Mavu that it wanted more information on policy issues and

economic transactions and also demanded that qualified CPA members should join the management. It warned: ‘We of the Ratombo CPA chose you as strategic partner because of having enough trust in your company, and we promise full support provided that you treat us as owners of the farms that you are managing and if you become more transparent to us.’ In 2007, Ratombo CPA executive committee members still found processes too informal and messy (*‘deurmekaar’*), with late and irregular calls for meetings lacking minutes and agendas: ‘They are doing business as usual.’ The CPA requested formal meetings, information, and power to influence decisions – challenging Mavu’s paternalist slogan, ‘Together We Manage Your Future’.

Mavu claimed that the CPAs made excessive demands for rewards and employment, a recurrent theme during the two years of research. A Mavu manager said that the Shigalo CPA demanded a vehicle and requested that ‘we must immediately employ people and that we must have a shadow manager for each manager. But where must the money come from? They did not understand that there is no money, when it looks like a successful business.’ Scott-Owen, Mavu director, also complained (as did Umlimi later) that the government development grant offer of 25% of the farms’ purchase price, about R18 million, was too low; they had been expecting R38 million. The grants were also transferred too slowly. Moreover, whereas the Land Claims Commission preferred ten-year strategic partnership contracts, after which communities would take full control, the commercial partners demanded longer contract periods, to be assured of their profits. The companies found it difficult to raise capital, unable to use the community-owned land as collateral. The Mavu directors were investing at their own risk, and Scott-Owen complained:

The three of us have put in R6 million in working capital – not fixed assets. Now we are finished. I don’t want to plough in any more. I asked my partners for R100 000 more each this month. We have got investor fatigue; it’s stressful ... In terms of the proposed deal, we will lose control of the board after three years. We won’t go with that. While our capital is on the table, we need to control the board ... Their property is not going to disappear if the venture doesn’t work out, [but] our capital will. (Director, Mavu, 2007)

Scott-Owen was frank about the commercial goal of the investors: 'We are here to make money. Let us not beat about the bush. We are here to make a profit. We are not here to save South Africa. We are not here to save restitution. We want to make a return our investment. We want to make 30%' (Mavu director, 2007). The need for control by those who brought private capital had already weakened the ideal of equal partnership and reaching the commercial goals also appeared difficult. Mavu pulled out as a strategic partner by mid-2007, to be replaced by Umlimi.

The Umlimi phase (from mid-2007 to 2009)

While Mavu comprised former landowners, Umlimi Holdings was a South African agro-business company established in November 2005. In 2007 it became a subsidiary of a black-owned investment company and entered into strategic partnerships with land-claiming communities in Mpumalanga and Limpopo. The Commission awarded Umlimi (among three contenders) the strategic partnership for the Shigalo and Ratombo communities, and it took over from Mavu from October 2007. Contracts signed in December 2007 were based on a fifteen-year agreement with the Shigalo CPA and a ten-year agreement with the Ratombo CPA, both with an option for another five years. Umlimi was to pay R700 per hectare per month in rental, R42 000 per month (R504 000 per year) to the Shigalo CPA and nearly R70 000 per month (R820 000 per year) to the Ratombo CPA. Contracts included government development funds equal to 25% of farm values. From January 2008 the partners initiated a '100-day-plan' to put in place work plans, budgets, staff and so on (Umlimi manager, 2008).

Umlimi's Levubu office manager, Mr Kotzé, had also been manager of one of the privately owned farms *and* worked for Mavu. He said that Mavu directors, being the former owners of six farms and still owning the processing factories, had their own agenda. The Umlimi project manager at the head office, Mr Madhuku, a Zimbabwean who had worked in South Africa since 2003, said that 'Umlimi is not working *for* the communities but working *with* the communities.' Comparing with fast-track land reform, he said:

There is a lot more structure to this process than there was in Zimbabwe, but still there are also a lot of shortcomings ... You end up getting these farms in a deteriorating state because of the length of the transfer process. But that is how the government operates, and we have got to live with that. (Project manager, Umlimi, 2008)

Managers worried that the ten- to fifteen-year partnership agreements meant that 'you can't develop long-term on these farms now.' Umlimi had therefore introduced shorter-term vegetable cultivation, including sweet potatoes, to get quicker income and depend less on the long-term security that tree crops require. If they got a longer contract period, they would 'also get into trees and things like that' (Mr Kotzé, 2008). Another challenge was professionalisation of farm management. Mr Kotzé said: 'There is quite a lot of work that has to be done in training these people in how systems work, and how things are done. It *will* be done, that is what we are here for. It *will* be done, but not in one day' (2008). Umlimi was involved well beyond the 100-day plan but pulled out during 2009 and went into liquidation in 2010.

EMPLOYMENT

Job losses as a consequence of restitution

The restitution process – a transition from family-owned to community-owned but corporately managed farms – deeply affected farm workers and dwellers. Historically, supervisors and permanent workers had lived on the Levubu farms while surrounding communities from

7. The factory produced 3 400 tons in 2006 and employed 300 staff. With the latest technology it could be operated with ten staff, but the owner did not want to 'draw names from a hat' and 'see 300 people at the gate' (factory owner/Mavu director, 2007).
8. Only one, the secretary, was a woman. A member said that few youth and women participated in the CPA Executive Committee although there had been majority of women in member meetings.
9. Memorandum to Mavu on Ratombo CPA Executive Committee Meeting Resolutions 14 October 2006.

Venda and Gazankulu had supplied seasonal labour. In the 1960s and '70s, forced removals of dwellers took place. New evictions after 1994 were related to downscaling, fears of restitution, and the introduction of ESTA. In 1997 the Nkuzi Development Association started a farm dweller project in the area and found that they received mainly labour-related cases, not eviction cases (former Nkuzi staff, 2007).

After the restitution of land, development companies took over the employment of managers and workers. Mr Pullman, Mavu's general manager, said that farm owners in the area used to meet workers physically every morning, while he now left contact with the estimated 300 permanent and 120 seasonal labourers to middle managers. 'Old' and 'new' workers became commonplace terms on Timongo. 'Old' workers comprised those who used to have their home on farms, many of whom were evicted or displaced, as well as seasonal workers from nearby communities, who now found it harder to be reemployed although they had vital skills and experience. 'New' workers came from claimant communities, whom the strategic partners had an obligation to prioritise in training and employment.

After the restitution of land, development companies took over the employment of managers and workers.

Mr Pullman claimed that 'Mavu took the farms with the people' and 'no one lost jobs', only that 'a few chose to go after a settlement with their former employer' (2007). He said Mavu had tried to avoid retrenchments, having noted that another strategic partner in the area, South African Farm Management (SAFM), had lost a retrenchment case. Yet, another Mavu manager (2007) said that to reduce costs Mavu had laid off workers, mainly from local communities: 'We took over the farms with labour. We did downsize; we had to lay off a lot of labour [but] not more than 20% – both regular and seasonal. It almost got a bit violent.' So, significant downscaling almost certainly took place in the Mavu phase. Mavu's liaison officer said: 'When workers are brought in from the owner communities, certain others will not get employed. Now that we will no longer take them, others feel expelled' (2007).

Mr Kotzé confirmed the pressure from communities, their representatives always asking, 'Why are you not hiring us? Why are we here and not on our farms?' Having

followed the whole transition from private farms to the present, he estimated that during the restitution process, and mainly before the strategic partners came in, 'I would say about 40% of the people in this area ... lost their jobs, because of this transformation.' He also claimed that few or no workers lost jobs in the transition from Mavu to Umlimi in 2007 ('Where possibly allowed by the budget, we took over each and every worker on all these farms'), but we lack evidence on this. Certainly economic considerations played a major role, as Mr Kotzé explained: 'But you have to look at the income of the farms: it doesn't help to employ five hundred people and at the end of the day the farm can't afford to employ all these people' (2008).

The head office manager, Mr Madhuku, further elaborated the difficult balancing act in which Umlimi made no commitments about the level of employment but relied on the need for skills and labour:

The dynamic in the situation is that you have got the traditional farm worker, who always worked in these areas over a long period of time. They are going to find themselves phased out as more and more of the community members take over those positions. And that is a process that we need to manage ... They need to be patient. Not all of them are going to work here. There are, however, many families in the communities and these farms can only take so many people ... There is an informal agreement that we won't just get rid of everyone. And the way we look at it, it makes business sense, at the end of the day: they have got the experience, and if you don't bridge it in such a way, you will have serious productivity problems. But it is difficult to protect them beyond that, from the point of view of saying, 'We guarantee that you will always work here.' Because they won't: it is the communities' farms. (Umlimi head office manager, 2008)

The labour-demanding restoration of farms was an important determinant of employment. Managers estimated that on Ratombo land (where many workers were employed to de-bush and develop the neglected farms), 25% were 'old' and 75% 'new' workers. On Shigalo farms, where the company needed the skilled labour in the banana production, the ratio was about the reverse, with 75% old (Mr Kotzé, 2008). They said that new workers were 'not used to hard working conditions' and needed training, so we 'take them in from outside and let them

work with skilled people', thus making the old workers a resource used in their own gradual displacement. Even so, some new workers said that their relationship with former workers was good: 'They are invited on as seasonal workers' (group discussion, Ratombo CPA members, 2007). Mr Kotzé feared that the new community owners would one day say about the old workers: 'You have got to get rid of these people', and that Umlimi would then have to retrench them – but he felt it would be 'a great cost to the company' and that the new owners should give old workers the 'opportunity to finish their term or to work there because they were also ... building the farms up' (2008). Mr Madhuku from the head office said in 2008 that 'within the law, you cannot ... just chase people away.' Thus, corporate managers were partly defending old workers against the successful claimant communities, and partly also shifting the responsibility for difficult employment decisions away from the company and towards the owner-communities.

Plans had existed about a 'Workers' Trust' to promote the interests of old workers. According to the (unsigned) 2007 settlement agreement with the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights the trust should hold 4% of the equity of the two companies. Both Mavu and Umlimi managers had argued that a trust would be difficult to manage. More importantly, the community owners opposed the idea. According to Mr Madhuku, the government had 'encouraged' such a trust but the owner-communities were saying: 'Now, we are *not* going to have a workers' trust to empower *other* black people as well ... Why should we give shares to people from outside these areas?' (2008). The CPAs prioritised community members, and the workers' trust was never created.

Labour conditions and worker experiences

Despite the contrasts mentioned, 'old' and 'new' workers experienced similar labour conditions. In a group of some 30 men interviewed on one of the fruit farms in May 2007, only one had been living and working on the farm before, while others were hired from Ratombo communities in July 2006. About half now stayed on the farm, only going home at the end of the month, while others went to their homes nearby every evening. Housing, water and electricity (available only in some houses) were provided

for free. They experienced the work conditions as hard. A man said,

Supervisors can be harsh. We cannot de-bush the farm in a very short time. We cannot work like slaves. We are not always happy where we are staying. It is very bushy there; there are snakes; and we have little time to clean it up. We sometimes get injured while working and do not get the necessary assistance. (Farm worker, 2007)

However, workers also appreciated the opportunity to gain an income, learn about agriculture and 'contribute to the development of the country'. Some said, 'We are working on our own land', which encouraged them to work harder in order to make the farm succeed. Despite a sense of ownership, workers raised normal labour issues, such as work hours, salaries and the right to organise. Managers and workers said that government minimum wages were enforced (R985 per month in 2007, rising to R1 090 in 2008, and R1 232 in 2009). For some individuals and families, employment on the Timongo farm meant a shift from destitution to 'being able to buy things' but it was hard to live on a minimum wage that translated into just over R10 a day for each member of a family of four. Single mothers who sent much of their income to their children living with relatives in communal areas complained that they lived in poverty.

Gender and work

Gender affected employment relations at Timongo. A manager said that the ratio between women and men workers had been 90:10 'before' and that now it was about 70:30, suggesting that the reduction in the number of workers and dwellers during restitution had disproportionately affected women. More male workers had been employed due to pressure from restitution communities. The CPA chair for Shigalo confirmed in 2009 that he had forwarded a majority of men for employment.

Men interviewed at a Shigalo farm (2007) claimed that male and female workers were treated equally, got the same tasks and the same wages, and respected each other, also in the living quarters. A group of women interviewed separately confirmed that they have the same contracts

More male workers had been employed due to pressure from restitution communities.

and work conditions as men, but said that women's access to the better-paid supervisor and middle-management positions was difficult. A female worker complained that women who 'spoke up' faced sanctions and risked losing employment, because the all-male supervisors dominated the access to middle managers. Female workers from Shigalo protested against submissive roles (farm worker, 2008).

Gender affected the divisions of farm labour. Women were seen as particularly good at irrigation, harvesting and record keeping and were 'more disciplined, better at their work and more likely to climb' (Mavu general manager, 2007). Umlimi's Mr Kotzé said in 2009 that if you give men an order they 'chat back', while if you give women an order they do it. He explained it by the 'African culture' of women working while men herd livestock or 'sit under the tree'. Yet, managers said that giving women supervisor or leader roles was a 'sensitive issue that caused resistance from male workers and had to be introduced gradually' – and that they were not ready yet do so. In 2009 Umlimi still lacked female supervisors and managers – and a gender policy. While praising women for their quality as workers, the company appeared to exploit their traditionally submissive role and failed to promote equality in the workplace.

Migrants on Timongo

In contrast to the study farms north of the Soutpansberg, Mavu and Umlimi generally did not employ migrant labour, illustrating that not all commercial farms were interested in exploiting the stream of desperate labour from the north, in the Timongo case not least because restitution communities were supplying labour and demanding more jobs. The handful of foreign workers present had been employed for many years ('they are part of the furniture,' Mr Kotzé said) and most had South African identification documents. Security and discipline are important features of the governance system at Timongo, linked to several risk factors perceived by managers: restitution alienated communities close to the farms who used to provide labour, but did not get land; ownership led some claimant community members to dispose of the farm's produce and equipment at will; the Zimbabwean crisis had caused an increasing number of displaced individuals, though it appeared a lesser issue here than on the northern study farms. In 2008 the

Umlimi security manager found only three staff who lacked IDs and working permits, all from Mozambique, and they were given 90 days to get their documents. Otherwise, migrants were rejected and sometimes portrayed as a nuisance when seeking accommodation or stealing from compounds or farms. The Umlimi security manager (2008) said: 'We take them to the police station and they are deported back to their mother country', to be 'on the safe side', since they would otherwise 'end up stealing' from the farms. In one case the security staff had caught a migrant in a field eating bananas. Asked why, the migrant said, 'They were ripe and I was hungry', so the staff had told him: 'Well, you won't be hungry any more, because you will eat food at the police station.'

TENURE

Access to land

Dwellers' and workers' tenure to land and housing was severely affected when farmers uncertain about the future evicted them or, later, management companies did not need their labour. Rights to live on farms and access land were contested but being shifted towards a pattern of employment-based tenure. Managers saw long-term dwellers with historical rights as an anomaly. Whether they had legitimate claims to the land – outside the ethnically defined restitution claim – was not considered. The general manager of Mavu (2007) said that land rights were 'not an issue' and that 'only a few have always been here'. However, his liaison officer mentioned conflict over access to burial sites on the farms and recalled a man who had passed away after living on a farm for 25 years, and whose family could not be traced: 'We have taken over people that we do not know.' Some families had long histories on the land, as illustrated by a family on a Ratombo farm who had held on to land possessed by the family from before European settlers came to Levubu (see also Chapter 10). Apart from such scattered cases of family tenure, dwellers and workers enjoyed only limited access to land (as discussed under 'livelihoods' below).

Housing

Housing was provided free of charge to workers. Mr Kotzé estimated that 80% of the workforce commuted to work by bus or taxi while the rest, mainly 'old workers',

stayed 'in the compound situation'. Both Mavu and Umlimi managers said that the quantity and quality of housing on Timongo was inadequate due to neglect over time, lack of capital, and the needs of new workers from restitution communities. Who had the responsibility for housing – the Commission, the strategic partners, or the owner-communities – was unclear, and Umlimi lobbied with the government: 'Finding the sources of funding within government to address those development issues is difficult ... Housing is what *we* are talking about *now* ... but *they* don't see housing as a priority. But it is a priority for the community, so we have got a bit of a problem there' (Mr Madhuku, Umlimi, 2008).

LIVELIHOODS

In the view of Mavu and Umlimi managers there was little land for additional livelihood activities by workers and dwellers. Mavu had discussed poultry production and fish farming on small plots of unused land with communities (2007). Workers said that some illicit cultivation was going on with the connivance of supervisors who received cuts of the harvest. Mr Kotzé believed 'new villages' could include 'little pieces of land where people can cultivate – cultivating by hand, if I may say so, because there will be no space for tractors to get in there' (2008). He explained that few livelihood options for unemployed spouses existed since the company could not 'open the farm for cultivation for each and everyone, it would be chaos.' He recognised that lack of alternative livelihoods harmed women in particular, but mentioned that if electricity was available he did give women permission to buy 'a decent little fridge' enabling them to 'sell chicken meat or fish or what – I am not a guy that will just close all doors for them.' In reality, beyond waged employment, there were few livelihood options for anyone on the farm.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

These farms and the restitution programme posed several social justice issues, including job losses and the eviction of former dwellers and workers as a consequence of restitution. The high concentration of the state's resources on a few communities appeared questionable. Former landowners and other investors saw opportunities in the strategic partnership model and framed their decisions

in discourses about market-orientation, competition and profitability ('We are not here to save South Africa, we are not here to save restitution'). Labour on these Limpopo farms had historically been highly feminised but the restitution process seemed to have changed the composition towards a greater share of men being employed. Men were favoured in access to manager and supervisor positions and women complained that they had less opportunity to speak up, while the strategic partner companies were afraid of challenging patriarchal relations by appointing female supervisors and lacked a gender policy. It is an example of weak attention to gender in land reform programmes (see Walker 2003). As on the other farms, workers stressed that wages do not provide for a decent living, particularly for female workers, whose income goes mainly to children and other dependants.

The strategic partners insisted that only employees lived in the compounds. Unemployed husbands of female workers and unmarried couples were not allowed. The need for schooling was used to justify the eviction of children and separation from their working parents. The security manager had instructed staff to report children above six years of age to him, so that they could be sent away to go to school: 'They must not keep them here on the farm, because I don't see them having a good future.' Similarly, Mr Kotzé said that retired people 'will go back to their former "homelands" with their houses and their pensions and they will stay there.' While school-age children and the elderly were asked to leave, he stressed that the farm was 'not a military camp' but 'an environment in which we want everyone to be happy and staying nicely' (see also Chapter 11).

Managers had a vision of 'farm villages' on unused parts of community-owned land, which Mr Kotzé hoped would improve access to housing, solve social problems, reduce expenses for transport and facilitate recruitment. Workers we talked to did not appear to share the vision but focused on improving labour conditions, particularly salaries. If some workers saw the future as an extension of the present, it was perhaps hard for them to imagine farm villages where they could independently determine the

Who had the responsibility for housing – the Commission, the strategic partners, or the owner-communities – was unclear.

land use and social life, given the high degree of control, before and now, over housing, movements and livelihoods. The consolidation, so far, of a settlement pattern with split families – workers on farm compounds and families in the communities in communal areas – appeared harmful to family life (see Chapter 11).

CONCLUSIONS

Restitution brought money, skills and opportunities to communities that had been marginalised by forced removals. They got a stronger position for negotiating access to employment and management. Men and women who were previously excluded got jobs in farming and said that they appreciated the income and the opportunity to learn. Some were motivated by working ‘their own farms’.

In general, dwellers and workers on the farms had a weak position both before and in the period studied. Some managers believed that as many as 40% of the former dwellers and workers lost tenure and/or employment during the restitution process. Many evictions happened during the early phase of the restitution process and before the transfer of land. To the extent that dwellers and workers on Timongo farms were protected during the restitution process, it was because it made ‘business sense’ to retain their experience and skills. ESTA, not enforced, offered little protection. The state has a high

level of responsibility for the failure to protect the tenure of dwellers and workers through the restitution process.

Workers experienced a professionalisation of labour management with more emphasis on work contracts, minimum wages and rules and regulations. The managers of strategic partners appeared concerned about job creation and professionalisation, but human resource development appeared rudimentary, as seen in weak attention to gender equality. Workers expressed concern about labour conditions such as work hours, salaries and the right to organise but unionisation or other forms of collective action by workers was also weak.

Restitution abandoned a model centred on individual farmers for a more complex model of corporate-cum-community governance. While the powers of individual landowners had to some extent been broken, the released capital from the sale of their land allowed the Mavu directors to promote their interests in new strategic partnerships. Later the Umlimi agro-business company brought skills and corporate governance to the strategic partnerships and experimented with new ways of operating with the CPAs. The process was challenging and the strategic partners blamed the government for inadequate and delayed funding, lack of follow-up and short time frames.

Uncertainty was high. Mavu withdrew in 2007 and Umlimi in 2009. During 2010 Umlimi and the joint venture companies set up with the Shigalo and Ratombo communities went into liquidation with a Cape Town-based company as curators. One local perception was that the strategic partner ‘took the government money and ran’, but the affair was shrouded in secrecy (personal communication, Bill Derman, based on interviews in Levubu, 2010). Virtually all the workers of the two companies were retrenched. The Shigalo and Ratombo CPAs found themselves in debt. Shigalo hired a former farmer and businessman from the area, who hired back more than a hundred workers and some managers to maintain banana production for the local market, and aimed to restore production. Ratombo pursued a similar strategy. As this experiment in land restitution collapsed, or was transformed again, giving way to different ventures in farming in the Levubu Valley, it was as clear as ever that the conditions that shape the tenure, livelihoods and social justice of farm workers and dwellers were complex and fraught with uncertainty.



8. Mbhongholo – a game farm in Waterpoort

This is not a bloody donkey farm. (Mr Hoffmann, manager, Mbhongholo, 2008)

HISTORY OF OWNERSHIP AND PRODUCTION

Mbhongholo is a game farm located along a dirt road through the vast expanses of flat bush land in the Waterpoort area north of the Soutpansberg and west of the N1 Highway. Along this back road one can see Zimbabwean migrants walking south, alone or in small groups, carrying little else but their clothes and a water bottle. As one arrives at the farm, a guard opens the gate. Driving another kilometre through yellow grasses and acacias, often seeing game, one reaches the main building, where the farm manager lives. About twenty adults, ten of them workers, and fifteen children live here.

Mbhongholo is more isolated than the other farms studied and illustrates problems of access to information, health services and markets that are common on farms in Limpopo.

It represents a long-term trend away from mixed livestock-crop farming by owners and dwellers, often in labour tenancy arrangements, towards game farming. The farm covers 4 300ha and was created in 2003 when a Spanish investor bought and merged six adjacent farms, registering the property under a South African company. Facilities include two game lodges and game include giraffe, zebra, eland, impala, warthog, duiker, steenbok, wildebeest, waterbuck, kudu, grysbok, springbok and an occasional leopard. Plans existed to develop commercial safari operations but, at the time of study, the farm and safari facilities had only been used sporadically by the owner and his family and business contacts. Later in this chapter we summarise different challenges at Tinghala game farm, which had developed safari operations, but where we could not complete our work.

Some farm dwellers at Mbhongholo had long histories on the land and links to other farms in the area, which they had moved between as relations with landowners or in the household changed. In the labour tenancy system, dwellers told us, they had secured access to land for cultivation and livestock in return for working three months per year for the landowner. A pensioner said he



came in the 1950s with his parents, who visited in-laws and found employment on a neighbouring farm. At that time, ‘people were paid one pound and black people were having lots of cattle’. His family’s story speaks of gender roles and the ability to move ahead:

The women were doing domestic work and the men were herding cattle to protect them from lions. We didn’t have cattle at first, then we bought cattle and goats as time went by. Our parents had big fields for ploughing. There was the system of labour tenancy [for] three months per year; the rest of the year we would do our own thing, ploughing our fields. (Farm dweller and pensioner, 2007)

Workers said that with time the number of people living on the farms declined: ‘Before we were many ... I cannot count and finish. There were so many ... there are graves all over here’ (farm dweller, 2008). The scale of the exodus from this farming district, from the 1960s onwards, is difficult to estimate. In the 1990s landowners intensified a struggle against dwellers keeping livestock and accessing graves, and new evictions took place. A conflict over livestock was still evident at Mbhongo.

The owner saw it as highly inappropriate if he and his companions were to spot farm dwellers’ livestock during a game hunt. Mbhongo means ‘donkey’ and refers to an exclamation by the infuriated South African farm manager, Mr Hoffmann: ‘This is not a bloody donkey farm!’ Yet, as this chapter shows, because safari operations were absent, to a certain extent Mbhongo was a donkey farm.

ECONOMIC AND POLICY CONTEXT

Conversion of farms from livestock to game has been a marked trend in South Africa over the past two decades, due to market opportunities and an increase in tourism; 80% of the country’s land designated as being under ‘nature conservation’ is said to be on private land (van der Merwe 2003). The transformation of Mbhongo reflects the purchasing power of European business classes, who find it attractive to own a ‘farm in Africa’, and South Africa’s tolerance of absentee and foreign landownership. Several other game farms in the area were also owned

by Europeans.¹⁰ The mergers are changing the land structure towards larger units, contrary to land reform policy which, in part at least, aims towards promoting smaller farming units.

A restitution claim has been made on Mbhongo and other farms in the area. The young Spanish manager in 2007, Alberto, said that the owner knew this when he purchased the farms in 2003 but accepted the risk, expecting market-based compensation if the claim were to be approved. An NGO based in Makhado promoted the restitution process by organising meetings and sharing information with claimants and the farm dwellers. The latter evidently had mixed feelings about it. Some saw a future of independent farming together with claimant communities. An elderly dweller said that they would plough and keep cattle as before: 'If you keep cattle and you are hungry, you just sell one and then you can feed the children' (pensioner, 2007). Another elderly dweller envisaged families returning from communal areas to live and produce on the farm, changing the landscape and creating a new community.

Others worried about the prospects for production and employment if the claim were to go ahead. A woman from Zimbabwe, Caroline, said: 'We heard about the claim in Levubu and that the bananas are dying because people are not able to plough. So the situation will be like in Zimbabwe. Then we cannot make anything here.' When probed, she explained that dwellers 'depend on the white people to make successful farming'. The Zimbabwean guard, Hector, also saw himself as a likely victim: 'I am not part of the claim. If the claim is settled, the whites will go, and then I will also have to go and look for a job elsewhere. There is no reason to stay: I have no land; my only concern here is money.'

MANAGEMENT

The owner of Mbhongo resides in Spain and takes major decisions via phone and email consultation with the manager, who is in charge of farm operations and personnel management.

In May 2007 Mbhongo's manager was a young man from Spain, Alberto, with no previous experience in Africa. He stressed his 'good relationship' with farm

workers and claimed: 'I know their life perfectly, I know everything about them.' He also felt that workers had filled the role of family and friends, as he was on his own in South Africa. He said that those who were born on the farm 'will stay, they have a right to stay' and that he had not retrenched any farm workers but tried to help them. He had been shocked by the low wages, but later accepted them: some workers were not worth their wages, while others deserved more. He saw a need to 'fire someone who was not needed' and hire more qualified people. He had stopped paying for overtime because it led to conflict but sometimes gave a bonus at his own discretion. Alberto offered farm dwellers transport to town, time off or small loans, noting that his power to withhold these benefits gave him a means of control. He expressed an authoritarian attitude: 'I would like to keep the farm and have the rights over the people ... they should work like in Europe. If I say one thing, this is how it is. I am the master in the house. I want them to understand what a business is.'

The restitution claim caused some uncertainty and souring of relations on the farm. Alberto blamed the South African government for making farming difficult, particularly through the restitution programme, which discouraged the owner from investing in the farm. He disputed the validity of the claim, referring to 'anthropological reports', and found the process to be politicised and unprofessional, and that the land organisation promoting it had given farm dwellers unrealistic expectations. He said that if the claimants obtained the farm, they would 'destroy the fences, chop down the trees, kill the animals and destroy the vehicles – they cannot develop a business plan, cannot compete, they need help', a view that was consistent with his paternalist self-image. Re-entering South Africa after holiday in Europe mid-2007, the young man was found to lack a work permit and he had to return to Europe.

The owner then hired a South African manager, Mr Hoffmann, a former farmer himself, in his early fifties, with extensive experience from game farming, including in Zambia, from where he had recently returned. In

10. The price of game land in the area was estimated in 2008 at between R4 000 and R7 500 per hectare (including the game). The amount of game (and hunting) is rainfall-dependent and is relatively low in this area so that at least 3 000ha is needed for a game farm.

2008 he made a more optimistic assessment of the farm's prospects: '[We will] start hunting safaris soon, that is definitely on the menu ... so that we can bring some money in and start paying for ourselves. Once they start doing safaris it will be perfect. Everything is ready. It is just for the safaris to start. I am positive but, as I said, everything depends on the owner.'

The two consecutive managers wanted to see the farm develop into a successful commercial enterprise. They portrayed themselves as being strict about work, providing benefits to dwellers, but also having limited responsibility for any shortcomings, which they attributed to decisions

Benefits were being used to reward desired behaviour, sometimes secretly and sometimes openly.

by the owner, government policy or commercial setbacks. Caroline from Zimbabwe noted this aspect of powerlessness when she said: 'The manager is just a worker.'

The two managers expressed a similar paternalist relationship with workers. They portrayed them as having a right to be on the farm and as needing employment and improvements in housing, electricity, transport and health; they saw themselves as understanding, being on hand, and doing their best to assist them. As Mr Hoffmann said:

I don't have problems with the workers. If there is a problem I sort it out immediately. But if it's finished, it's finished ... like I am now, I am always. And if I fight now, tomorrow I forget it. I am strict with them ... not strict, not really ... There are no differences between them; they are all the same; they know what they have to do and what not to do – I communicate quite well with them. (Manager, 2008)

Mr Hoffmann emphasised his agency in providing benefits, such as improved housing, and transport. He gave a bicycle to a worker: 'And he is glad for that bicycle. I mean what else can you do? If it depends on me, I would like to see everyone on this farm get his own car, but we will see what the future brings. I also want my people to live like people.'

None of the plans Mr Hoffmann had hoped for were initiated during the following one-and-a-half years,

during which time he also became more pessimistic. In late 2008 he and his wife were seriously injured during an attack by criminals, which added to a sense of precariousness and gloom. In 2008 a serious drought caused the death of 18 kudus and other game on the farm. In March 2009, the manager worried that the owner might sell the farm, due to uncertainty about restitution, commercial failure and problems with workers. He worried about where he could go to find a home and make a living if the farm were sold.

EMPLOYMENT

Workers

The farm employed about ten permanent workers (six men and four women). Two were from Zimbabwe, the rest were South African, had a family history on the farm or in the area, and were full-time 'general workers'. In addition, four adult (working age) men and women, fifteen children and four elderly people (two couples) lived on the farm. Workers got the minimum wage (R1 090 per month in 2008) and got housing and some services (water, electricity, firewood) for free. None of the farm workers was a member of a trade union.

Relationships with the owner and the manager varied among the dwellers. They expressed a feeling of tension between solidarity with other workers and maintaining a good relationship with the manager: workers knew that benefits were being used to reward desired behaviour, sometimes secretly and sometimes openly, such as access to better housing. Grievances in the labour relationship related to payment (low salary, lack of overtime pay, and deductions for absence, such as when collecting social grants or seeing a doctor); arduous work; and conflict over absence from the farm. Workers saw houses as being too small and of poor quality, with some families staying in a single room; transport from the isolated farm was also a problem. Asked about their main messages to government, a group of workers said: 'We need more money ... [The price of] everything has gone up.' A worker commented: 'Our wish is that the current owner treats us well and increases our salary so that we could be able to improve our houses and support ourselves' (group interview, 2008).

Workers and the manager generally claimed that women and men were treated equally and got the same pay, but there was no special effort to address problems faced (mainly) by women. Several complained that some of the work, such as clearing bush and making fences, was too hard for women, particularly when carrying children on their backs.

The fifteen children on Mbhongo live close to their parents, have space and other children to play with but also face issues of poverty, poor housing and isolation. They appeared not to be well nourished. They had to walk a long distance to the nearest primary school. To access secondary school, they had to move to relatives in villages, if their parents could afford the cost. A mother told us that when trying to enrol their children in school from 2005, they had been rejected because the children lacked identity documents. Yet, they had since been taken away by social services to go to school elsewhere (see Chapter 11 for elaboration).

A Zimbabwean family

Zimbabwean migrants walk past Mbhongo on their way from the Limpopo border to Makhado town and on to Gauteng or other parts of South Africa. Caroline, who lived at the gate, estimated that more than 40 would pass per day in 2008, of which just two or three were women. Four men we met on the road told us that they had left home because they had not been able to obtain enough food in the 'dollarised' Zimbabwean economy. One man had seen his two school-age children die of hunger-related diseases the previous week. A high school student had left because no teaching was going on at his school. They chose South Africa over Zambia because the job opportunities and the currency appeared stronger, but had been robbed of all their money when crossing the border, had changed their plans and were now desperately seeking farm employment: 'We just need to get money and return to Zimbabwe' (male migrants, Waterpoort, 2008).

Hector, the Zimbabwean guard at the gate, had come to Mbhongo in 2006 in search of work, leaving behind a wife and children. He got a job as worker. Alberto, the young Spanish manager, had described him as an exemplary worker: 'He does not know anything about the law, he [just] comes to work.' He became the guard, with access to the relatively good house at the gate, where he was now residing with Caroline. Mr Hoffmann later said

that 'sometimes you need someone who is a little outside', since loyalties to workers or neighbours could compromise the work as a guard. Sometimes tensions between the Zimbabweans and the other workers were noticeable: one of them said that migrant labour was lowering wages, another was jealous about the better house given to the guard.

Caroline and Hector sent money and food to their two families monthly, and every second month after she lost her part-time job in the manager's house, which Caroline suspected

happened because other workers spread rumours about her: 'These people normally hate Zimbabweans. I think that's where the problem started. The manager didn't explain to me the reasons for being fired. The people hate me.' Caroline was pursuing alternative income strategies, such as beer brewing and plaiting hair, and wanted to cultivate: 'I would love to have a garden, grow vegetables, carrots, and generate some money.' However, other workers had told her that the manager did not favour this. Her situation appeared precarious. In 2008 she gave birth to her second child – her first being still back home in Zimbabwe. The baby was given a 'birth card' but she had to go to Zimbabwe for a 'birth certificate', and travelled on the identity documents of a friend. Caroline observed, 'If you follow the law, you die here.' Looking at her future, she was torn between the desperate situation back in Zimbabwe and the difficulty of getting by in Limpopo. She hoped her son would find a future with better economic opportunities in South Africa. For herself, she hoped to return to Zimbabwe when economic conditions improved and run a hair salon in a rural town.

Thus, unlike at Makwembe and Malamula, migrant labour was not central to Mbhongo's economy but these two individuals found refuge here and resources to support impoverished relatives back home.

TENURE

We will stay here forever. We are used to this ill treatment by landowners, so we think we will stay, because this is our home. (Farm worker, 2008)

Sometimes tensions between the Zimbabweans and the other workers were noticeable.

Past evictions

The farms that make up Mbhongholo have a long history of forced evictions. Though dwellers may have enjoyed broader tenure rights in the past, they lacked security now and could be evicted at the landowners' convenience. Dwellers told about cases in which women were evicted for allegedly using too much water. Evictions spiked before the merger of the six farms in 2003. One worker told us that his parents had come in 1966 to stay on one of the farms included in Mbhongholo today. In 2002, after he had sought work in Johannesburg, he returned to witness his parents' eviction:

When I returned I found that the owner had robbed my mother. He built her a house in the village [in Nzhelele] but didn't finish it: I had to finish it. My mother and father were living here and had no one to help them. When I came, all their things were packed and the car was waiting. They did not want to go. They were evicted in August 2002, and in April 2003 I returned to work here. My father's mother and my brother and youngest sister had all been buried here, but the owner of the farm refused to permit my father to be buried here [he passed away late 2002, a few months after being evicted]. (Farm dweller, 2008)

The eviction of this elderly couple was probably done in preparation for the sale the following year. The son said the eviction 'robbed my mother': it took away her home and he felt the traumatic experience may well have contributed to the death of his father a few months later. Despite the humiliating treatment of his parents, the son returned to Mbhongholo less than half a year later. As the farm worker quoted at the beginning of the section said, some still regard the farm as 'home' and decide to stay on despite 'ill treatment by land owners'.

Livestock and grazing

Mbhongholo is the scene of a conflict over dwellers' access to land and to owning livestock. Several complained that in the past they could cultivate a piece of land and keep livestock throughout the year, on land fenced and set aside for that purpose, as part of the *drie maand* (three months) labour tenancy system. One elderly man who came to the area as a boy in the 1950s explained the changes since then and the current sense of insecurity:

There is a big change [in life on farms] because now the landowners are even telling us to sell our livestock, and that was not the case before. During the time of [the former land owner], we resided well, but now we are not sure if we will be here next time or next week, because we are being threatened with eviction. I can't tell why. They just come with their bad attitudes that we should not live with our livestock. (Elderly man, 2007)

The dwellers used to keep sizeable herds of goats but from at least the 1990s conflicts had been ongoing. Once a landowner shot the goats of one of the dwellers without prior warning, after which the dweller left the farm – but a land rights NGO secured him some compensation for the goats. At the time of the merger (2003), several dwellers still had up to 60 goats each but were instructed to limit their stock to five goats per person: 'Our parents also had cattle, goats and donkeys but the landowner introduced game farming and sent his manager to tell us that if we wanted salary increases and better housing, we would first have to sell out our livestock,' a worker told us (2008). The manager bought the dwellers' donkeys, lending them back for transport purposes only. A male worker remarked: 'They are robbing us: they say they do not want donkeys on the farm, why then are they buying them from us?' One man said he was denied living in the new house at the gate because he refused to sell his goats. Another, whose wife had been retrenched, was promised that if he sold his donkeys his wife would be re-employed and he could borrow money to buy a car – which he did.

Central to the conflict between livestock and game farming was the contestation of power over land. In 2007, Alberto said, 'We don't want donkeys and goats. The workers are not the owners of the land but they are behaving as if they are. That I don't like.' Managers were squeezed between the owner and the dwellers. Mr Hoffmann said in 2008: 'I could not really do anything except stating the rules and withholding benefits. If I do nothing, I risk losing my job because the landowner was very concerned about this during the last visit.' It appeared that the dwellers were losing the battle over livestock – and a residue of power over land.

Housing

About 35 people in ten households live on the farm. Two households are near the main farmhouse, seven on what

before the 2003 merger were two separate farms, and one household lived isolated on the fringe of the farm. Some homesteads were self-built and some constructed by former owners. Conditions were basic and some complained that a family had to share a single room or that 'we sleep with our food'. This contrasted with the manager's ten rooms and a guard at the lodge having four rooms 'in return for not having livestock' (group discussion, May 2007). Dwellers in general received free housing, water and electricity, though the latter did not reach everyone.

Ms Remahele and Mr Maruleke, an elderly couple, had for the time being secured their tenure on a small corner of the farm, and they illustrated the many dimensions of tenure conflicts – residence, location, cultivation, movement, and water (described in Chapter 11). They had the vision that restitution could restore a community:

What I am expecting, and what I would like to see, is for the claim to be finalised and then the people come back here and then we stay here together. The people will choose where they want to stay ... This farm is very big ... More than 1 000 households can come and stay here ... There will be no white manager; it will be the chief and his people. (Mr Maruleke, farm dweller, 2008)

In his view, cattle that were dying in the villages should come back to graze, and could coexist with the game. However, keeping 'one big farm' could cause problems of theft and straying livestock: 'So there will have to be fences, so the land can be in portions.' Ms Remahele agreed that government should 'put the fences back around these six farms ... so the families will stay according to the farms that they had been evicted from.' The return of the 'village' and transformation of the landscape were interestingly merged with elements of the old farm structure: 'We will be staying in one place as a community, and grazing will be shared, so there will not be just one place for [our] family but there will be separate ploughing fields for each family.'

LIVELIHOODS AND HEALTH

The livelihoods of the dwellers on Mbhongo are generally becoming less diverse and more precarious. Livelihoods based on independent access to land have

withered but this is not a static situation and some dwellers have ambitions to expand their livelihoods – notably through the restitution process.

Wage labour was their most important source of income. Both women and men were 'general workers', generally doing the same work, though three men were 'guards'. All workers reportedly received the minimum salary, R1 090 per month in 2008, and tips during the occasional visits by the owner and his family. The owner determined the wages, consulting his South African lawyers. Mr Hoffmann said, 'I don't want to be involved in that, because that depends only on the owner.'

Social security grants were the second most important source of livelihood but the dwellers had persistent difficulties in obtaining grants, sometimes due to lack of personal documentation, which bars their social and economic rights. Two long-term dwellers were receiving old age pensions. Child support grants (then set at R200 per month) were received for most of the children, but some dwellers had

Dwellers claimed that they sometimes missed benefits because public service vehicles passed by the locked gates of the farm.

problems accessing the grant. One mother reported that she had tried without success to get the grant for her child of nine months and that it had taken four months before she received it for an older child. Several people also complained that the employer deducted R50 for a day's absence to collect the child grant, leaving them with only R150. Dwellers claimed that they sometimes missed benefits because public service vehicles passed by the locked gates of the farm. At times their information about social services appeared scant, based on hearsay from neighbouring farms. Ms Remahele and Mr Maruleke claimed that incorrect years of birth on their identity documents barred them from receiving old age pensions; instead, they survived on a disability grant that an NGO helped them obtain for their son: 'We would have died without his grant.'

Land-based livelihoods had declined. Livestock keeping was more a source of conflict than of livelihood. However, the nutritional and symbolic value of slaughtering a goat was significant and donkeys remain important for

transport. A pensioner remarked: 'I have four goats for the ancestors, which are just to be used for rituals. I also have three donkeys which I use for transport when we are going to town for the pension.' Ms Remahele, an enterprising character, was planning to rebuild the family's herd by providing her labour to other farm dwellers: 'I will make a plan: some will say I can look after their cattle, and after a year they will give me one, and from there I will start.'

Distance made it difficult and costly to access shops and banks, see a doctor or receive a social grant.

Cultivation by dwellers was significant in the past but is now small-scale and intermittent. Some grew vegetables for own consumption while others said they were not

allowed to. Two people said they were cultivating maize at homesteads they maintained off-farm, in villages in the communal areas. Ms Remahele also wanted to grow market garden products but felt constrained by poor access to and from the farm:

We should be like others, so we are able to sell things. I want to see myself growing vegetables and spinach, and then put this in my donkey cart and go and sell it at the pension point in Mopane. But now I don't even have a gate to get out: my donkeys can't get out of the farm. The gate has been closed. Yes, that's how I feel: we are in a kraal, we are fenced in. (Ms Remahele, farm dweller, 2008)

The farm dwellers said their main staple food was *pap* (maize-meal porridge) supplemented with vegetables and chicken feet. The traditional staple, sorghum, was no longer cultivated: 'Because our wives and children no longer eat these things, they don't know it, they prefer the *mielie*-meal you buy from the shop,' said one elderly man. They would rarely have meat other than once or twice a year when the owner distributed game meat from hunting.

Other livelihoods were minimal. A male worker said: 'We used to supplement our incomes by owning *spaza* shops to sell cold drinks and other things and use the money for our children to go to school.' When there were many people on the farms, one worker ran a *shebeen*, and they organised a *stokvel* for the collective purchasing of beer and other consumables. Some workers said they were not 'allowed' to do these activities but they also simply became less viable as the number of people on the farms dwindled.

Health and health care were problematic issues on the farm, linked to poverty, difficult access and gender. A mobile clinic came every month, if the gate was opened, and, in between, dwellers had to go to hospital by car and pay for the transport. Female workers had received information about HIV/AIDS and were tested at the clinic during pregnancy. They had been informed about the use of condoms to prevent the spread of HIV and could get them for free, but men said that they did not think condoms were being used often on the farm. One said he did not use condoms, since he only had sex with his partner, another that he used condoms when away (that is, with other partners) but not with his partner on the farm. Although something of a taboo subject, the farm dwellers confirmed that safe sex was not widely practised (group discussion, September 2008).

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Political change in South Africa in the 1990s has increased dwellers' sense of recognition. An elderly man observed enthusiastically:

Mandela is number one. He rescued us from all our problems. Now after Mandela came out and became the leader, if the landowner troubles you, you can go to town and report it, and then they will give you a letter and the owner will stop bothering you. Before, we had no place to report problems. (Farm dweller, 2007)

His assessment recognises that the state can change social relations on the farm – yet in his enthusiasm he overstates the situation ('rescued us from all our problems'). Achieving equality remained difficult. Despite some sympathy from the owner and managers, dwellers had little control over their lives; several experienced pressure to leave the farm. Rights they had obtained under the South African Constitution had made a difference in some areas: a boy obtaining a disability grant; children being admitted to school; and an agency intervening to protect a water source. Also, NGOs and public officials had visited the farm and contributed to making the farm less closed and more 'porous' than suggested by those who view farms as 'total institutions'. However, these were partial successes. Distance made it difficult and costly to access shops and banks, see a doctor or receive a social grant. Mbhongo exhibits problems of isolation and poor

access to schools, health services, police, social benefits and information.

Ms Remahele, who was keen on bringing vegetables to the market, felt her ambitions were thwarted and she was denied equality (being like others) and freedom (of movement and agency), which she expressed by saying 'we are in a *kraal*', like animals, less than human. Interestingly, another elderly couple we interviewed used the same phrase about *their* situation after being evicted from a farm, lacking access to land and livestock, and feeling locked up in the *kraal* of the village. For them, the farm represented a certain physical freedom, in contrast to the overcrowded communal area (see Chapter 1).

Mbhongholo is different from the other farms, which has implications for the experience of justice. It is smaller and the relations between manager and dwellers are closer. There is not a full hierarchy of middle managers, but a short line from owner to manager to worker or dweller, with face-to-face interaction. The managers emphasised, yet also exaggerated, their closeness to workers. They were genuinely concerned with providing benefits – 'I also want my people to live like people,' Mr Hoffmann said. Their paternalist discourse emphasised their power to determine conditions on the farm, while it was actually rather limited.

A second difference was that dwellers felt more attached to the land through memories of how they or their family members had been active users of land. Dwellers, mainly the elderly, yearned back to a time when they engaged in their own farming activities and controlled more aspects of their lives, being part of larger farm dweller communities and perhaps less heavily regulated by farm owners. For some, restitution held the promise to restore that autonomy. Others appeared to be resigned, hoping to escape or that the commercial success through safari operations would bring positive change. The visions for a more just future were not all congruent.

CONCLUSIONS

Mbhongholo followed a trajectory of change from mixed cultivation or livestock farming to the game farming through foreign ownership that is now a fairly common pattern in the area. However, the transition is incomplete

due to the lingering restitution process, the fact that the owner does not need a financial return from the farm, and other factors.

Public support for tenure security on the farm has been wholly inadequate. Workers remember evictions and killing of livestock by former owners. Despite tenure legislation, dwellers' tenure rights are becoming narrower, particularly their ability to keep livestock and cultivate crops. Wages are the major source of livelihood but as elsewhere salaries of R1 090 in 2008 could hardly support families, even with two adults working. The owner and managers can still effect 'constructive evictions' by withholding employment and curtailing livelihoods. Their vision is to transform the farm into a successful safari company and dwellers with multiple livelihoods into better-off wage earners. For workers and dwellers, though, this argument was tenuous: firstly, they had seen no commercial operations emerge over the previous five years and had little influence on whether they ever would; secondly, as a manager said, workers with skills in game and tourist management might be needed instead of those already living and working there; and thirdly, the safari strategy conflicts with workers' livestock practices. Instead, while awaiting the outcome of the pending restitution claim, they advocated improvements through secure employment and better salaries; rights to keep livestock and to expand their gardening; and improved access to social services and grants.

Some of the dwellers and workers on Mbhongholo articulated a vision of recreating community through land restitution and a return of families from communal areas to the farm, while also fencing the six constituent farms again. Despite a vision of rearing livestock and producing vegetables for the market, the demand for cash incomes remained a priority among those employed. It was not clear how the tensions between competing visions for the future would be taken into account by authorities, or the claimants, in any settlement of the pending restitution claim.

For comparison, Tinghala (see Box 3) had been transformed by foreign ownership and investments into a lucrative safari tourism venture. Like Mbhongholo, it was created through the merging of several farms. The demand for pristine nature and predictable hunting is transforming the ownership structure and landscape in

Vhembe district, and the vast amount of land reserved for recreational use contrasts starkly with the poverty of residents of tiny plots in villages in the communal area just across the N1 Highway – where we interviewed farm evictees. A Tinghala manager emphasised ‘professional’ employment relations based on temporary contractual

relations and monetary rewards, preferring off-farm settlement of workers, which also ensured that few or no workers had a historical relationship to the land. The managers did not wish the attention of research, possibly due to workers’ attempts to organise in a labour union.

Box 3: Abandoned case study: Tinghala game farm

With some similarities and striking differences from Mbhongo, Tinghala (‘lion’) is a 14 000ha luxury game farm located on the N1 Highway between the Soutpansberg mountains and the border town of Musina. Tinghala was created from several farms in 2000. It has lion, elephant, rhino and other game species, and four luxury lodges, one of which is a tented camp. The clientele is primarily foreign and the top end of the market: the cost of accommodation and safari or game viewing is approximately R8 000 per person per night. Trophy hunting, of course, costs extra, and takes place throughout the year, based on applications to nature conservation authorities (trophy hunting prices ranged between R80 000 and R120 000 for a buffalo, R180 000 and R300 000 for a lion, and R350 000 for an elephant (US\$40 000, as estimated by the Tinghala farm manager, 2008). About one-third of the income comes from the lodges, and two-thirds from the hunting. Fruit trees (40 000 mango and about 4 000 citrus) inherited from the previous farm owners were being phased out, since this aspect of the farm was not seen as sufficiently large-scale (manager, 2008). We wished to study this farm as a fully developed game farm but were unfortunately rejected by the managers after the first visit.

Like Mbhongo, Tinghala is also owned by a Spanish investor and businessman. An absentee owner, he employed a general manager and a farm manager (our respondent), who managed the farm with about 60 employees, of whom 40 are general workers (mainly men) and 20 work in the lodges (18 of whom are women). According to the manager, Tinghala is different from a normal game farm in that it attracts the international elite. The owner has brought, for example, the King of Spain and Saudi Arabia’s Minister of Finance to hunt here. In the development of the farm, financial resources have not been a constraint: the owner has stated that ‘it is not a business’ and claimed that no other owner would have spent so much on the land and created so many jobs.

Despite serving a special clientele and not succeeding in the South African market, the manager claimed that the company had ‘a hell of a turnover’. Thus, while we found a more fully developed game farm with safari and hunting operations, the special resources and interests of a foreign investor again shaped its economy, as at Mbhongo. However, this was not unusual since game farms are seen as good investments and attractive places to take business partners and friends. Yet, some game farms in the area had reverted to livestock due to a combination of high running costs, competition for clients, and high beef prices (manager, 2008).

Only some of the employees and their approved dependants live on the farm, and are charged 10% of their salary for housing. Wage employment and tips from visitors are the only on-farm source of livelihood. ‘Small’ children are allowed on the farm but not ‘older’ children. When we inquired about housing conditions, the manager called it a ‘political issue’ and our question caused tension. At the end of the farm tour, the manager said bluntly that we would not be welcome back. Leaving the farm, we were approached by workers who raised a number of issues, including their concern that workers who had tried to join a union had been dismissed. We later met a group of workers and obtained more information, but the atmosphere was marked by tension and a lack of trust even among the workers in the meeting. For these reasons we chose not to pursue the case.

Part III

CHANGE AND STRUGGLES ON FARMS

9. Ownership, employment and management

The rules changed, so I decided to adapt. I saw that now I needed twice the size of the cake if I wanted the same return as before. (Farm owner, Malamula, 2007)

PRESSURES AND RESPONSES

This chapter examines how change and continuity in patterns of ownership, production and management affect the tenure and employment conditions of farm workers and farm dwellers, and considers the role of policy and legislation in reshaping commercial farming and the prospects for farm workers and dwellers to create sustainable livelihoods.

The farms studied were all in a process of flux. Makwembe was in the process of expanding new lines of high-value vegetables and extending into off-farm processing and packaging enterprises, presuming that a pending restitution claim would not proceed; Malamula was in the early stages of negotiating a strategic partnership with claimants; Timongo was the product of a large restitution claim that had seen the consolidation of a number of farms into one production and management unit; and Mbhongholo

had been purchased and consolidated by a private foreign buyer who merged six livestock farms into a single game farm, but investment in infrastructure for a commercial safari venture had been halted pending clarity on a restitution claim. Two had seen substantial consolidation of farms into larger units – one due to game farm conversion, and the other due to the manner in which restitution was implemented.

On all these farms, restitution is a significant feature, influencing decisions about production, management and employment. Employment of claimants and of Zimbabwean migrants are among the strategies used to manage competing demands. And while some farm owners have responded to uncertainty by halting investment, others are investing further and expanding production and employment, in the belief that this will strengthen their leverage in negotiations with government and with claimants.

These few farms, while not representative of the full range of situations, nevertheless demonstrate pressures and responses that epitomise this region and have resonance in other sectors and regions. Among these are the multiple



pressures and opportunities created by restitution, migration and a changing economic environment. They also demonstrate at least three of the major responses to these pressures pursued by farm owners: horticultural intensification, conversion to game farming, and off-farm diversification into up- and down-stream industries.

FARM OWNERSHIP

The farms studied have different structures of ownership, which influence decisions about production and employment as well as the practices of management and control that shape farm workers and dwellers' living conditions. Table 8 summarises the ownership and management structures, area and land under production at the farms studied.

'Family-owned farms'

Makwembe and Malamula farms were bought in the 1980s by white South Africans. Both farms are 'family-owned' in that a few family members are legally the co-owners – in a company or a trust – yet in practice the man (husband

and father to other family members, or in one case the older of two brothers) is considered to be the 'main owner'. Malamula bought up a neighbouring farm of 500ha about ten years ago, acquiring contiguous additional land on which to expand citrus production, while Makwembe had leased land on two neighbouring farms – an adjacent property owned by a parastatal, and a non-contiguous portion of a relative's farm not far away. This structure of ownership was typical of white-owned commercial farms, but has been on the decline since the deregulation of agriculture from the 1980s onwards as corporate ownership has become increasingly dominant in the sector.

'Corporate farms'

Timongo is the one case where the farm is under corporate, rather than family-based, ownership. Here, the ownership of 26 former farms has been transferred to two CPAs representing claimant communities. The CPAs have formed joint management companies with 'strategic partners', agro-business companies working under contract with government. Mavu was the first strategic partner, prior to its withdrawal and replacement by Umlimi in 2008, which in turn withdrew in late 2009. This farm

Table 8: Ownership, production and management at four study sites

Farm	Ownership	Management ('farmer' or 'person in charge')	Production	Total hectares	Hectares under production
Malamula	South African family trust	Owner-operated by white South African man	Citrus (primary), game farming	7 500	500 (primary)
Makwembe	South African family trust	Owner-operated by white South African man	Vegetables, fruit	800 own + leased	265 own + leased
Timongo	Restitution claimants represented by two CPAs	Joint company formed by strategic partner and CPAs	Fruit, nuts, vegetables	2 000 (est.)	1 500 (est.)
Mbhongholo	South African company owned by foreign man	Managed by white South African man	Game farming (not commercial)	4 300	0

Note: CPA: Communal Property Association

was an early example of the strategic partner model now being prioritised in the settlement of restitution claims on high-value land (Deraman et al. 2010). While ownership of the land by a historically displaced community sets it apart from the norm, its ownership structure also reflects dominant trends of the deregulation era: farm consolidation, corporate management and vertical integration. By design this strategic partnership emulates a model that is on the ascendancy in commercial farming, as long-term economic trends and increased exposure to volatile commodity markets have squeezed out smaller operators and dramatically reduced the number of farming units (NDA 2005, 2009).

‘Absentee landlord’

In contrast with the above cases in which the owners are deeply involved in production, employment and human relations, Mbhongholo was bought in 2003 by a foreign private buyer (through a South African registered company) who thus far has used it only for leisure purposes, though he reportedly has plans for a commercial safari hunting venture that appear to be on hold until further clarity emerges about the pending restitution claim. Although owned by an individual, in practice the ‘person in charge’ on a daily basis is a hired manager,

whose primary tasks are to manage the people who live there and the smaller number who are formally employed; to ensure the maintenance of infrastructure like fencing and the monitoring of the wild game that have been introduced; and to prepare accommodation and catering for the owner and his guests when they come to visit. His control over key decisions is constrained by regular instructions from the owner. As at Mbhongholo, Tinghala commercial game farm was created through the purchase and merging of several farms by a European investor through a South African registered company.

Two striking commonalities emerge from these cases. The first is that in recent years all of the farms had expanded, consolidating additional land or portions of farms into larger units as a result of private purchase, leasing of land or restitution. The second is the pervasive contestation over ownership in the form of restitution claims, which is affecting relations on farms and impacting on production and employment decisions.

EMPLOYMENT

The farms studied demonstrate widely divergent situations with regard to employment (Table 9). Most striking is the

Table 9: Employment at four study sites

Farm	Employment*	Women employed	Men employed	Seasonal employment (as part of total)
Malamula	800	400	400	550 (69%)
Makwembe	450	340	110	330 (73%)
Timongo	420	295	125	120 (29%)
Mbhongolo	10	4	6	0 (0%)

* Some of the higher numbers are rounded to the nearest ten, based on variations in the number of people employed during the period of our work. Some numbers are estimates by owners or managers. The figure for Mbhongolo is exact, as at the end of the period of field research.

contrast between three farms primarily engaged in labour-intensive horticulture, employing a large number of staff, most of whom live on-farm in compounds or villages for at least a portion of the year (or on a weekly basis for those who have other homes nearby). They contrast with the Mbhongolo game farm ‘in transition’, where eight kin-related dweller families who have lived there for generations, remnants of the larger community displaced from the constituent farms over time, are engaged primarily in maintenance, pending full operations of a safari venture.

Seasonal work

A second significant variation among the farms is the proportion of the workforce employed on a seasonal basis. Although seasonal employment is a standard feature of horticultural farms, it is certainly not a stable feature. The proportion of seasonal workers had grown rapidly at all of these farms in the past five to ten years, a pattern that both workers and employers explained as a response to the minimum wage. At Malamula, seasonal workers predominantly carried out arduous manual tasks like picking fruits from thorny citrus trees in the heat of the Limpopo Valley, where temperatures can reach 40 degrees Celsius. At both Malamula and Timongo, the proportion of seasonal workers increased while the total number of workers decreased. ‘Seasonalisation’ appeared to have been not merely a function of production requirements, but rather a response by farmers to the policy and economic context.

However, the term ‘seasonal’ obscures the degree to which employment is regular and long-term. For instance, although about half the workers at Makwembe are

considered seasonal, ‘the season’ at this farm extends from March to November – a full nine months of the year – largely because of the different planting and harvesting times of the many different vegetables and fruits being produced at this farm. Some but not all of the seasonal workers are employed throughout these nine months. If one takes into account holidays at the end of the year, their employment looks very much like regular employment and, since many are employed each ‘season’, they seem to be permanent workers. Yet calling them seasonal workers appears *not* to be a strategy by the owner to discriminate in wage terms, since seasonal workers are paid the same as others. Rather, owners appear to use this designation to dissuade the substantial number of ‘seasonal workers’ from considering the farm to be their primary home and bringing relatives to live with them, thus mitigating future claims to employment and avoiding retrenchment costs. It is a strategy to maintain ‘labour flexibility’ and control over settlement.

Gendered employment

Employment in South African agriculture is highly gendered, and these farms are no exception. On the fruit and vegetable farms, women make up a large portion of the workforce. Women are involved in sorting and packing in pack-sheds, with men doing the picking of citrus (considered tough physical work) while picking vegetables (considered to be more delicate work given the potential for damage) is done largely by women. Mr Vosloo at Makwembe, where female workers are by far in the majority, observed that damage to vegetables is a major concern, and that it takes great skill to pick a crop such as melons at just the right stage of ripening.

He expressed the view that ‘if you want something to be taken care of, you give it to a woman’, the well-recognised ‘nimble fingers’ argument used by horticultural farmers elsewhere in the country, including the Western Cape’s fruit industry. This gendered division of labour was reflected in the management hierarchy, where – unusually, based on our experience – four out of seven supervisors were women. A female worker at Makwembe explained why: ‘Women workers, when given a job, are more serious. Women are hard workers, because we have children to support’ (farm worker, 2008). She saw positive changes for female workers in farming due to legislation, landowner compliance and women’s own efforts: ‘I see the landowner following laws required by the government. I see the majority of workers are women, so I think most policies and laws are benefiting women.’ At the same time, the much higher proportion of women among temporary and seasonal staff appeared to reflect a gender discriminatory employment pattern. This affected job security, rights to leave and pension, and salaries. A female worker there told us: ‘The women here in the fields are mostly single [casual workers], but on the farm are both couples and single people.’ She also mentioned the ‘nannies’ who live on the farm, ‘Zimbabwean girls and young women, teenagers, but not the children of the workers’, as examples of women facing difficult conditions.

On other farms, notably Timongo in the Levubu Valley, male workers resisted female supervisors and management was reluctant to challenge this; female workers there reported that access to middle management roles is

difficult for women. A patriarchal pattern prevailed despite the ostensible modernisation of human resource management through the restitution process led by the strategic partner. The farm did not have a gender strategy. As under the former owners, all the foremen were men; there were nine of them. ‘We are used to this system of men being foremen and women not,’ observed a female worker. As a general pattern, a preference for male supervisors, team leaders and managers excluded women from more rewarding positions. This is probably a major reason for an increased gender gap in wages among permanent workers (found by Wegerif et al. 2005: 52, and noted by Yates 2011).

A female worker on Timongo said: ‘You don’t get any pay during maternity leave. No UIF.’ Despite paying UIF contributions, women on maternity leave were not always informed or provided with ‘blue cards’ to claim UIF during their maternity leave. Another problem with public entitlements reported by women was that some could not access child support grants: ‘Yes, people get Mbeki money [the grant], but only those who registered in their villages.’ She claimed that those on the farms had not all been able to register for the grants. It was unclear why not.

Two female workers on Timongo had improved their lives by gaining paid employment, but they also suffered due to the low basic salary combined with their obligations to support children living elsewhere (Boxes 4 and 5). They spoke of the painful separation from their children, whom they can ill afford to visit, and problematic patterns of family life.

Box 4: Employed but poor (I)

Lorena (25) started working at Timongo as a general worker in August 2008, after having been retrenched by SAFM, another strategic partner in the area, for whom she had worked from 2006 to 2008. Her child of six lived with her parents elsewhere, in a village. Of her monthly salary of R1 179 she sent R500 to a stokvel (saving and loan scheme) and R300 to her parents, and was left with about R300 for her own consumption, R10 per day. She said that a salary of R1 500 would suffice. She bought food at the local supermarket and had enough to survive but not to buy good food. For this reason, she was engaged in illicit vegetable gardening on the farm, as were some other workers. Supervisors accepted this and often got a share, while more senior managers were not aware. She was deeply concerned about women being denied access to supervisor and management positions and argued that women should be promoted to these positions so that they could challenge men, including some who were not working or were stealing from the farm. Another priority for her was that the company should provide functional clinics and health care information to prevent the spread of diseases and should provide electricity to all compounds and houses.

Source: Farm worker at Timongo

Box 5: Employed but poor (II)

Tina (25) was 22 when she left school in Grade 11. She got a job at Timongo in June 2008, her first position. Her household in a nearby village comprised herself, two sisters, their mother and her daughter of ten years. She had no contact with the child's father, although he lived in the community. Before she got the job, the entire household survived on one child support grant and assistance from the community. Now she and one of her sisters had been selected by the claimant community CPA to receive a job. Tina's salary was R1 179 per month. She had a free room in the farm compound, which she shared with another woman, and water and electricity. She spent R50 on a monthly visit to see her daughter and the rest of the family. She wished she could see her daughter more often. Her daughter has never visited her, both because of the expense and because she considers the farm a bad environment for a child. She reported that she sent home R600 every month, spent about R400 a month on herself, or R13 per day to cover food, but also clothes, transport, health, entertainment and so on. She mainly bought maize meal, rice and a little milk. Food that she could not afford, and which she thought would be good for her health, included more milk and cheese. She said a salary of R1 600 would be 'okay'. An increase in salary was the most important issue for her. She said she would like to work more overtime, to get double pay and to benefit the company. She felt good about being both an owner and a worker at the farm, which made her more motivated. Regarding the future, though, she said she could not really make a living from this job and hoped to get something better.

Source: Farm worker at Timongo

Just as the commercial farms address problems of unemployment and poverty, they also reproduce gendered patterns of poverty and deprivation. Women are employed independently as seasonal workers on many of these farms, and some of those who are not in a relationship with an employed man find it hard to secure any permanent life on the farms, due to discriminatory practices in the regulation of accommodation. Poverty, primarily among single women and dependants without employment, is gendered and gender patterns affect family life, housing, security and sex (see Chapter 11).

Wages

At all the farms, the introduction of the minimum wage was reported both by workers and by owners and managers as a significant change. It had led to substantial increases in wages – though it was not clear whether this was immediate or whether wages were increased gradually to come in line with the regulated level. During the time of fieldwork in 2008 the minimum government gazetted monthly wage was R1 090 or an hourly rate of R5.59 for those working less than 45 hours a week (RSA 2006: 2–3), rising to R1 232 per month or an hourly rate of R6.31 from March 2009 (RSA 2009: 4).

As far as we could ascertain, government-gazetted minimum wages were implemented for permanent

workers at Timongo, Makwembe and Mbhongo farms. At Malamula, workers did not consistently achieve this under the piece rate payment employed in some jobs. Yet it is striking that, as some commentators had warned before the regulations were introduced, the 'minimum wage' had become a 'maximum wage', at least for workers considered to be unskilled. Farm workers complained that they could not live on the prescribed minimum wages, particularly in the context of rising food prices. Several farm workers claimed that only a net salary of R1 500 per month would meet their basic needs. Farm owners and managers, however, held that it would be difficult to maintain minimum wages due to economic pressures.

Some farms had rather flat wage structures while at others wages ranged substantially between general workers, team leaders and supervisors. At Malamula three regimens of payment were employed, namely monthly rates, hourly rates and piece rates. The owner argued: 'It's different types of people; permanent workers get monthly payments, people that come to do a specific job get an hourly rate. The wage laws make specific provisions for the two types of remuneration.' Malamula's owner explained that the piece rate system prevalent on this farm rewarded productive workers and preserved jobs: 'You need to make sure that workers remain competitive compared to the machine. Otherwise you replace them with machines. There are people without jobs so the workers need to be competitive

with mechanisation.’ Workers remarked on the hard work, exclaiming, ‘Here we work like donkeys’ and ‘On this farm we are working like machines’ (Malamula, 2008). Even though farm workers were generally unhappy about the insalubrious employment conditions, they lacked the confidence to challenge the terms because they considered farmers as having unilateral powers in hiring and firing. Yet some left the farm in search of better living and working conditions, contributing to high turnover in workforce. A Zimbabwean foreman at Malamula remarked: ‘We are expecting about half the people to leave next week because of the harsh conditions. The first week, about twenty people ran away.’

According to the farm workers the production targets are difficult to reach. For example the seasonal farm workers were paid R40.60 for every 60 bags of lemons filled in a day, R28.50 for 40 bags and R11.40 for 20 bags at Malamula

No unions were active, though there had been previous attempts at one farm to recruit members.

farm. Though paid according to the number of bags filled, these were nominally pegged as a ‘number of hours’: 60 bags of fruits were calculated as eight hours, 40 bags as

five hours, 20 bags as two hours and 10 bags as one hour. During one visit, a newly recruited young farm worker from Zimbabwe worked tirelessly for eight hours but could only fill 10 bags of lemons, so his remuneration was R5.70 for the day. Other scholars have also found that permanent workers benefit more than casual workers from the extension of labour legislation to commercial farms (du Toit & Ally 2004; Ewert & du Toit 2005). At Malamula, the monthly income for casual workers could be as low as R300 under the piece rate system, far below the minimum but comparable to the estimated average of R200 for the province before the minimum wage was introduced five years earlier (SAHRC 2003: 107).

In summary, decreases in permanent employment – part of a long-term trend accentuated by the introduction of minimum wages – have been offset somewhat by expanded production in the horticulture farms, though this has been made possible largely through seasonal employment, which now constitutes a higher proportion of the workforce in horticulture than in the past. The majority working on the horticulture farms are women,

who take on labour-intensive work that is perceived by owners and managers (and by some workers too) to be gender-specific, such as transplanting, picking and packing. Men made up more of the workforce where citrus was involved.

Labour on the farms studied was unorganised but, in general, workers were aware that they had labour rights – specifically the right to a minimum wage, to overtime pay and to paid leave – though were often unclear about the details of these rights. Workers stressed that they need information on labour rights and were particularly concerned with regulations on working hours, sick leave, right to holiday and absence, and compensation after injury. No unions were active, though there had been previous attempts at one farm to recruit members. Some workers had had negative experiences with unions that registered members and accepted payments but did not follow up. Some assume that unions would drive a process of change from outside the farm, rather than seeing them as the collective enterprise of workers themselves (Timongo, 2008).

Migrant labour

Migrant workers contribute to the growth of the South African economy and benefit from employment. There is a substantial but variable amount of migrant labour on the farms we studied, ranging from very few foreign workers (on the farms to the south) to as much as 80% of the workforce on the farms close to the border. There are large differences in the conditions migrants find on farms and the roles they play. At Timongo in Levubu, less than a handful of migrants were employed, who all had a long history on the farms, while security personnel arrested newly arrived migrants who were seeking employment or food. At Mbhongo, the small game farm, a Zimbabwean couple had found employment and illustrated (in a manager’s words) that migrants are useful since they do not know about the law, bring no livestock and come only to work. Makwembe, on the Limpopo River, employed about 50 Zimbabwean workers on temporary permits but many more of the workforce had their origin in Zimbabwe. At Malamula, most of the general workers were Zimbabwean, many of whom were newly arrived and on their way elsewhere, seeing the farm as a temporary refuge. To varying degrees all the case study farms were affected by the pressure from displaced

people passing through the area, sometimes causing fears of violence and theft.

Some Zimbabwean workers complained that they were not treated as equal to South African workers, particularly as they were more likely to be considered 'general workers' even if they had specialist skills. A Zimbabwean worker at Malamula said in 2008: 'We are doing different work but we earn the same. I'm a boilermaker. I am not happy with getting the same pay, because I have already trained five guys who have left for that new mine. But I am told to keep my mouth shut.'

Reflecting a certain capacity of the commercial farms to incorporate displaced Zimbabweans, our study did not pick up violent xenophobic attacks during the period in 2008 when these were occurring elsewhere in South Africa (Hassim et al. 2008). However, some South African workers argued that the high level of migration worsened labour conditions for all. Human rights violations were seen. During 2007 and 2008 an unclear South African immigration policy exacerbated the vulnerability of migrants, who were exposed to risk when crossing the Limpopo River border and frequently attacked by criminals. The team's meeting with a young man who had been beaten up and robbed after crossing the border from Zimbabwe illustrated the precarious situations faced by many. Migrants had problems with getting documents, including for their children, and many families were split between Zimbabwe and South Africa. In two farms, women migrants in particular were exposed to severe

poverty and risky coping strategies. A young, unemployed woman on Makwembe was in late pregnancy, had worked as a nanny for a farm worker but now had nowhere to go and faced pressures to engage in transactional sex to get shelter and food. A security manager at Makwembe reported on conflicts and strategies employed by migrants (Box 6).

Zimbabwean migrant workers were generally antagonistic to land restitution processes in Limpopo, due to experiences in Zimbabwe and their exclusion from the citizenship-based restitution programme. This was compounded by reports of exploitation (including under-payment) of migrant labour on redistributed farms and in communal areas (Bill Derman, personal communication). A new category of educated migrant workers, though, was creating pressure for change. A former teacher from a city in Zimbabwe and now a worker on Malamula criticised the lack of public facilities such as internet access, newspapers and a place for workers to meet and discuss current affairs and be connected to the outside world. In his vision, such a place on every farm would facilitate empowerment for children and adults alike. A new type of migrant workers may bring seeds of change.

PRODUCTION TRENDS

As farmers were at pains to emphasise, farms are 'businesses' and beholden to the logic of 'the market'. Their concerns centred on their ability to maintain and increase

Box 6: A security manager at Makwembe

Crowding in the compound sometimes led to conflicts. Some dwellers, especially South Africans, called soldiers in 2004 and 2005 to search the compound for people without papers. 'I think it's all about nationality because people think that then my family will have space to find a job. It happens around March, when all the fruit is getting ripe and they are employing people ... If a [worker] is given a deadline to finish something, and he is not making it, he can employ [a Zimbabwean] to do it. They pay plus minus R10 or R20 for a day.' Thus, informal, subcontracted work is one way the non-employed are surviving. A resident may tell a Zimbabwean: 'I want you to open up a *spaza* shop but you will be working for me, so that way they won't deport you, but I'm not going to pay you much.' Some of the undocumented migrants try to arrange protection by soldiers, by providing goods or facilitating access to sex. 'Many soldiers come to the compounds on the farms and some have girlfriends there, and let some people go in and out. A man can say if you let me go in and out, I can organise a girl for you, and then I can go and catch fish. Some girls are given those Russian packs, the food, some are maybe given money too. There is tinned stuff, viennas and chocolates, meatballs and juice packets, sweets, butter and sugar and milk and coffee. Soldiers get them for free. That is how the soldiers survive: If they concentrated on doing their job, they would be making this place more secure, but they lack interest in doing their jobs.'

production and to assure ‘commercial viability’ as the primary objective of their enterprises. At the same time, they pointed to pressures from both market and state.

Long-term shifts in agriculture both towards greater mechanisation and more professionalised management

Yet the potential for further mechanisation is now limited, given the need for both picking and packing by hand.

have involved the reduction of the labour force, even at the same time that investment and output may be rising. Through the policy shift towards deregulation and liberalisation – starting from the early 1980s and gathering

pace in the early 1990s – there has been a winnowing out of ‘winners and losers’ among commercial farmers, as they are exposed to new economic pressures. This process lends itself towards greater concentration of land and capital in fewer hands, more intensive use of land and of labour, and growing demand for more skilled labour (Atkinson 2007).

The local impacts of these national trends were evident in our study, where we documented a shift towards horticultural expansion and intensification at Makwembe and Malamula. On these farms, operations have expanded over the past decade, with major investments in new production lines, the extension of the area under cultivation, and improved infrastructure – including greenhouses, packing facilities and processing. In contrast, Mbhongo, following its purchase by a foreign businessman, has essentially moved out of commercial production, as all cattle herds on the old livestock farms were removed, and the only agricultural production in evidence is the very marginal production by farm dwellers themselves in the form of small vegetable gardens at their homesteads, a few chickens, and keeping donkeys as a form of transport.

Farmers and managers at the farms we studied consistently expressed frustration with government, citing a combination of state policies driving up input costs and economic conditions leading to volatile prices in output markets. The costs of electricity, water and labour are all publicly regulated and, as the owner of Malamula observed, in these areas farmers are ‘price takers’. Adaptation strategies at this farm included further

investment in horticulture and diversification. The major change the owner has instigated has been restructuring of the labour force. In the ten years from 1997 to 2007, Malamula reduced its permanent workforce by more than 50% (from 1200 to 550) but doubled its output, through a combination of mechanisation and doubling its seasonal employment. Yet the potential for further mechanisation is now limited, given the need for both picking and packing by hand. In practice, it seems that the primary strategy has been the growing reliance on seasonal rather than permanent labour, largely through drawing on Zimbabwean migrants who made up about 80% of the total workforce. Rising global commodity prices have had some positive effects on producers in Limpopo. Malamula’s owner said in 2008 that growing world citrus prices and the falling value of the Rand meant growing export income.¹¹

Similarly, at Makwembe and Timongo, rising labour costs due to the minimum wage, combined with other rising costs, had prompted new adaptation strategies since the 1990s. At Makwembe, the response was also to rely more heavily on seasonal labour, again largely from Zimbabwe, but also to diversify the range of horticultural production lines. Forward contracts with British retailers had brought benefits due to exchange rate fluctuations, but this remained volatile. The ability to secure domestic market share, for both the fresh produce and dried fruit, was key to diversifying its risk.

Climate risk was compounding the economic and political exigencies of the farming environment. Water is a key constraint and risk factor in production that was highlighted at all the farms, with the exception of Mbhongo, where game farming is the only planned commercial activity. The owners of Malamula and Makwembe both cited climate change as one of their main worries, and presented their plans to adapt to climate change as a key part of their business strategies. At Malamula, which is part of the Nzhelele Valley irrigation scheme, water is a continual challenge. At Makwembe, the owner identified climate as a bigger risk than land claims, citing the increased occurrence of severe heat, frost and drought. During the two years of our fieldwork, the area experienced its coldest spell in 60 years, the heaviest frost in decades, extreme heat, and water shortages – and farmers consider that climatic variability is increasing.

THE IMPACT OF RESTITUTION

Restitution is a complex programme that is creating new opportunities for claimant communities and new threats to non-claimant groups, including farm dwellers and migrant workers, although some farm workers and dwellers are involved in land claims, often to other farms than those on which they currently live. Farm dwellers were being gradually replaced by members of the claimant community at Timongo, and initial steps towards integrating claimants as workers were under way at Malamula. At Timongo, the strategic partner told us: 'When workers are brought in from the owner communities, certain others will not get [re-]employed. Now that we will no longer take them, others feel expelled' (Mavu liaison officer, 2007). During the transition to the strategic partnership it was estimated that about 40% of farm dwellers and workers lost their jobs and their tenure – and associated livelihoods – on the farms that were ultimately transferred under restitution (Umlimi manager 2008). An Umlimi manager feared that one day the claimant communities would say, 'You've got to get rid of these people' – of workers who were not members of the claimant communities.

Concerning Malamula, one of the successful Nzhelele valley claimants told us that claimant community members should get preference over Zimbabweans for jobs at the farm. Some of the prospective beneficiaries of the restitution claim already employed on that farm viewed themselves as future employers and suggested that the continued stay of migrant workers should be based on short-term labour relationships, which could be easily terminated. A new farm manager who is part of the Nzhelele Valley claimant community explained: 'There will be no problems with farm workers on this farm because they are Zimbabweans so they can continue to work for us.' Other members of the Nzhelele Valley claimant community think that they will need to retrench some of the migrants when the claim is settled: 'We will need our people to come and work here but we will still need those foreigners with work skills.'

Malamula epitomises the unplanned and ironic outcomes of restitution. By 2008 the Commission had made an offer for the land, which was being negotiated while the owner set up a strategic partnership with two claimant

communities. Malamula's owner argued that 'now I needed to double the size of the cake if I wanted the same return as before' (2007). He claimed that his role would still be needed because 'land in itself is nothing' and because 'the ownership will change, but the need for competitiveness will not change.' He was planning to expand the capital by getting compensation at market value, by bidding for land from neighbouring farms and by using additional government capital to enter secondary industries: 'we will expand both the production and the market side.'

Restitution, then, is not only affecting ownership of farms in the area but has precipitated a range of strategic moves by farm owners, which in turn are reshaping production and employment practices. The losers from restitution are likely to be the existing farm workers and dwellers, particularly Zimbabweans, and perhaps also the farm managers – not the owners. While landowners can sell their land at market price – or join a strategic partnership – managers, some of them ex-farmers with few assets of their own, may be sidelined. Under the strategic partnership model, many farm workers stand to lose their jobs, as priority is given to employing claimant communities. Where claimants settle on and use the land themselves, employment for non-claimants is even less likely.

About 40% of farm dwellers and workers lost their jobs and their tenure on the farms transferred under restitution.

CHANGING MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: NEW INTERMEDIARIES

While managers were common on individually owned farms in Limpopo, it appears that the layer of managers as intermediaries between farmers and workers has been growing during the changes in recent decades. This is particularly true of Timongo at Levubu, where restitution

11. National figures confirm that citrus exports have grown 2% over the last 25 years, but net incomes from exports (in rands per ton) dropped in both real and nominal terms in recent years, from R2 126 in 2001/02 to R1 843 in 2006/07 (not inflation-adjusted) (NDA 2008: 51).

has brought in a corporate management structure on the previously owner-operated farms.

This proliferation of management, who were exclusively male in our study sites, served the purpose of buffering conflict between workers and owners. Those in middle management were able to take credit for the distribution of benefits, such as housing and training, while also enforcing unpopular decisions over which they claim to lack authority (discipline, hiring and firing). Below these were supervisors, who would often perform the same work as those they supervised but receive additional (and unknown) benefits for taking responsibility for ensuring their teams' performance. Owner-managed farms also use middle managers or committees in this way. Most hierarchical systems of control were such that black foremen and supervisors carried out the field control and reported to senior managers, who were white in most instances, excepting a senior manager at Timongo of Zimbabwean origin and the human resource manager at Makwembe. At the apex of this hierarchy were the owners of farms or corporations, who were male and white – either South African or foreign – except at Timongo, in Levubu, where the successful claimant communities were the owners.

The expansion of the chain of management in larger, more corporate farms appears to have transformed established forms of 'domestic governance' into new corporate ones. A striking example of this was the way in which the traditional function of an *induna* – a headman on a farm who would act as intermediary between farm dwellers and the white *baas* – has become professionalised and renamed. We discovered the emergence on farms – particularly as they have become larger, more corporate entities – of 'security' staff who police the compounds and determine who has a right to be there. At Timongo, an ex-policeman and prominent CPA member in the claimant community was hired as 'security manager' with a number of staff to be responsible not only for external security – securing the farm against outside threats, such as theft or violent crime – but also for surveillance of the farm compound to 'see who is there' and dealing with infractions by workers and dwellers. The other horticultural farms had similarly made this transition to formally designated 'security' personnel performing a mix of management and surveillance duties (see Chapter 11 for more on the policing of family life).

White managers may have neither the capital – nor in some cases the education – of established white farmers, who in any case can look forward to being fully paid out for their land. Black land claimants will become the new owners of the farms they manage now – and may or may not want their services (and they may or may not be willing to work for black owners). While, in the past, 'poor whites' could rely on reasonable jobs as farm managers, in the new 'market' environment, and without the help of racism, they may not be able to compete and express acute feelings of marginalisation.

One example is the South African manager hired by the foreign owner of Mbhongo. He had previously worked as farm manager elsewhere in the province, as well as on a game farm in Zambia – a position he preferred but had to leave a few years previously because of health problems (tsetse and malaria). He and his wife and adult children moved back to Limpopo, settling in Makhado, where he could not find a secure job and 'had to take what I could get'. He took over the post as farm manager in June 2007. He had previously worked for the owner on occasion, while living in Makhado, providing security services, and his wife had done catering for parties of the owner when he visited. Now living on the farm, the manager has no other house and the farm is home for him, his wife and his mother-in-law – so the pending restitution claim is a source of worry for him: 'I am just worried for myself. When these land claims come through, where will I go? They have a place, but where will I go? They [the workers] stay here, they are part of the land claims. Where will I go?' At the same time he feels isolated and does not fully trust the farm workers and dwellers. During our period of fieldwork, he and his wife were attacked by unidentified intruders in their home on the farm and were seriously injured. This, understandably, exacerbated his sense of a precarious existence on the farm.

At Timongo, the settlement of restitution claims and the introduction of a strategic partnership has involved a professionalisation and a new form of bureaucracy compared to how the old farmers managed enterprises. This changed governance system has brought with it new discourses. Managers argued that the new rules and procedures they had implemented should improve human resources, safety, wages and housing standards. In some cases this appeared to make individual managers less responsible; one manager refused to answer a question

about gender equality, and referred this to the human resource department. The meaning of ‘corporate’ is not merely about market-orientation but about being in touch with government requirements and versed in managerial practices and systems. Asked about changes in management, a manager at Timongo said,

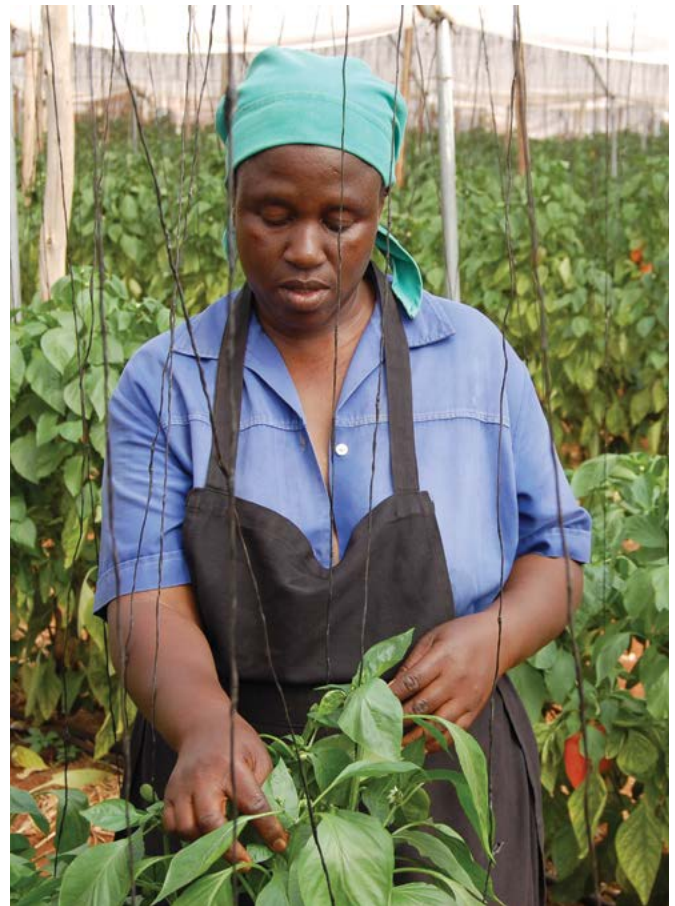
It was a farmer-owned business and now it is a corporate thing. It has definitely changed. A farmer had his way of doing stuff and now there is a company coming in with reporting systems and structures, laws and don'ts and do's and blah, blah, blah ... Because we are not dealing with small farms it becomes a big company now, so you have to drive this thing towards systems and structures, and that is one good thing that they brought. (Manager, strategic partner, Timongo, 2008)

CONCLUSION

Changes in ownership, production and management systems have been prompted by changes in the economic and policy environment. Family-owned farms are positioning themselves in preparation for the next stage of corporate development: building a middle layer of black management (sometimes from claimant communities), structuring their assets in separate legal entities to enable the selling off of the land separately from the operating enterprises, and diversifying into up- and down-stream industries.

Landowners emphasised that land-based power is no longer central; instead, they claim their route to wealth and power is access to information, capital, and integration into business networks and values chains. Not surprisingly, some are therefore dismissive of the prospects that land restitution in itself could provide an avenue towards improved livelihoods and better incomes for claimants. The proximity of Zimbabwe and its white commercial farms taken over by poor black people – and the wider ramifications of economic crisis – have become emblematic of this belief, and a theme owners returned to as evidence that ‘land is nothing’. From the farmers’ point of view, the new ‘strategic partnership’ model is if not ideal at least a step forward.

The future of farm workers and dwellers will hinge in part on their own organisation and mobilisation as a social force, and on government’s policy response, but also on the economic environment of commercial farming and the opportunities available to and strategies employed by farm owners and managers to improve production and increase profits. This is needed to change their position on farms. Despite some owners’ view that ‘land is nothing’, ownership of land continues to form a basis for the denial of farm workers’ and dwellers’ rights. Control of land remains central to the control of labour, residence, family life, sexuality, and movement on these farms – as discussed further in the next two chapters.



10. Tenure and livelihoods

INTRODUCTION

Farm workers and farm dwellers have contributed to creating the rich Limpopo farms, yet during recent decades many have been expelled from their homes and jobs on these farms. This, and the insecure tenure and livelihoods faced by those remaining, pose serious problems of social justice. The political economy of capitalist agriculture – with its class relations, skewed land distribution and corporate transformation – appears to have a declining ability to provide secure tenure. Unlike industrial workers, men and women on farms often seek land-based livelihoods that are independent of wage labour. Therefore, regaining or expanding rights to land could strengthen tenure and livelihoods and even contribute to transforming the structural conditions that cause insecure tenure in the first place (Hall 2003, 2004). However, farm workers and dwellers may only be able to ‘accumulate from below’ if they can contest the power of landowners and the agro-industrial complex (Cousins 2007: 227).

The nexus of power relations, tenure, employment, access to housing and services on farms poses intricate subjects

for analysis and policy intervention. In this chapter we seek to provide an analytical understanding of tenure and livelihoods. We first give an account of interviews with individuals who had experienced farm evictions, then we characterise the tenure situation on the four study farms and finally we discuss how this shapes livelihoods, access to housing and services, and people’s experiences of farms as home.

EVICTIONS: BROKEN RELATIONS, BROKEN LIVES

Stories about farm evictions abound in the rural areas of Limpopo. One meets farm evictees in the communal areas, in poor townships or on other farms, often still in search of housing and livelihoods. We interviewed women and men who had been evicted from farms in our study area in order to gain a sense of the role that their tenure had played in their lives and of the historical context of the farms studied. Three individuals recounted their eviction from farms in the Waterpoort area (where Mbhongo is located) to communal land in the villages of Mabvuka,



Manjii and Tshikuwi in the former Venda. For all of them the eviction was an abrupt and traumatic change, and they were still struggling to secure the housing and incomes needed to mend their lives and be able to care for others.

In 1988, a landowner decided to evict Grace (then aged 42), her seven children and the family's cattle from a farm in Limpopo's low-veld region, where she had lived for more than twenty years and given birth to her children. The farmer wanted Grace's husband to stay as a worker, which he did since there were few other jobs available and farming was all he knew. Grace was made to take the livestock and children to a nearby village, where she still lives. She tried to sustain the livestock, the family's wealth, on the communal land but, while the goats survived, the cattle died. From being tenants with their own livestock and independent access to land, Grace became an evictee and her husband a wage labourer. She saw her children come of age while he could only afford to visit occasionally and lived separated from his family till he died on the farm where he had always worked.

In 1996, two years after the first democratic election, Purana, then 80, and her daughter were evicted from a

farm in the same area. She had lived on the farm since 1950 (when she was in her early thirties) and had buried her husband there. The owner asked her to leave, most likely due to imminent farm tenure legislation and in preparation for selling the farm; indeed, he sold it a year later without the liability of an 80-year-old woman and her adult daughter. She received no compensation or support and left with only her personal belongings to stay with relatives in a former Bantustan. Here she got a rocky plot, where she still lived in 2008 at the ripe old age of 92, with her daughter and grandchildren, in an unfinished house. She was trying to subsist on her old age pension and income from the daughter's casual labour on surrounding farms – they had been evicted with nothing, and yet the family was still available as cheap labour.

In 2003, shortly before South Africa celebrated the first decade of democracy, Sarah (59) and her much older husband Zakariah (91) were evicted from a farm in the Waterpoort area, where they had spent most of their lives. The farm was bought by a European investor who merged it with several others to create a large game farm, as in the different case of Mbhongholo. Unlike in the previous two cases, they were assisted by a land NGO, Nkuzi

Development Organisation, and secured compensation of R20 000 for the loss of their home. They had heard that others evicted at the same time, and who did not get NGO help, had only received R10 000. The cash with which to rebuild their existence was consumed within a year by the costs of moving and the bricks and cement for a house that still stood unfinished. At the time of the eviction, Zakariah was 83, an old man, while Sarah at 51 had few opportunities for employment. They tried to subsist on his pension and were looking forward to the day Sarah would receive hers (at 60). They did not feel at home in their new setting:

Here we are like goats in a kraal. We can just run down the road, back to the farm ... We were staying very nice on the farms. We got firewood, milk for free, meat, and could shoot wild animals. We want to go back, even if there is not a white on the farm. Our graves are there. There we can stay on our own. We can live on his pension. We are not used to the [village] environment. People fight, here are robbers, we have no fields ... Now the whites are saying there are too many [people] on the farms. Our problem is, we were not born in villages. We were on the farms. We were evicted by the Spanish: they said, 'Get Out!' We have never lived in a lokasie [location] before. (Sarah, evictee, 59)

The stories above, together with our farm cases, suggest different categories of evictions:

- *wholesale* eviction of whole families (as with Purana, and Sarah and Zakariah);
- *eviction of unwanted household members*, such as teenage children evicted from Timongo while parent(s) and smaller children remain;
- *eviction of elderly (retired) workers*, observed at Makwembe, Malamula and Timongo; and
- *tenure without livelihood*: an extended household on Mbhongo successfully defended its tenure to a homestead and a (small) plot of land but, without employment and adequate land rights, they are unlikely to be able to survive there. Over time, this will probably result in a constructive eviction.

At a crucial stage of their lives, the elderly people described above were regarded as expendable by farm owners. They

had spent most of their lives on just one or two farms where they had had their own land and livestock. They were asked to leave, and under the prevailing social and power relations saw no option but to comply. Their lives were disrupted, all of them losing much more than a labour relationship: natural resources, a place to live, a place of memories and social networks with others living on these farms. Except in the case of the third couple, they said that no one was there to assist them. Although these evictions took place in different time periods, we see mainly continuity between them. One could say, cynically, that the difference between apartheid (1988) and democracy (2003) was R10 000 in monetary compensation for the eviction, and another R10 000 if one happened to be connected to a land NGO that could argue one's case. The 'compensation' was utterly inadequate even in the most basic material sense of getting adequate housing.

The 'normalisation' of forced movement is striking: nobody used the word 'eviction' and no legal processes were followed. Evictions have indeed remained normal: the authors of *Still Searching for Security* estimate that about four million people left South African farms between 1984 and 2004 and that about two million of these were 'evictions', carried out against the wishes of the workers and dwellers (Wegerif et al. 2005). As many individuals were evicted in the decade after 1994 as in the decade before it. The most vulnerable groups were the elderly, children, women and the unemployed who were not active in farm production. Many of the expelled did not manage to rebuild careers, families and homes in new and different settings; some long to return to the land, the livestock, the milk and the firewood that they associate, not without nostalgia, with lives on farms.

FROM INDEPENDENT TENURE TO EMPLOYMENT

We turn now to a brief characterisation of the four study farms, which have been shaped by the shift in agriculture from state-support to free-market conditions. Independent tenure rights have largely been reduced or extinguished (Table 10). Employees rent on-farm accommodation belonging to the landowner and pay for services through deductions from salaries. Those who have jobs have seen their rights curtailed and tied to their

employment. Loss of employment generally terminates rights to on-farm residence and services. Unlike urban workers, farm workers often have to live at their workplace and become tenants of the firm. While the main trend is away from independent, land-based livelihoods towards wage labour, on all the farms people are pursuing supplementary livelihoods from small food gardens and small-scale businesses, while keeping livestock is contested or prohibited. The following sections will explore these contestations over tenure and livelihoods in more detail.

ACCESS TO LAND

No mine worker can mine gold for an hour for his own pocket. (Owner, Malamula, 2007)

In the past dwellers and workers enjoyed greater access to land on Limpopo farms than at present – whether this was land that they owned and used before white occupation or land they secured through arrangements with private owners. Our farm cases and stories of evictees suggest that

dwellers’ access to land for livestock or crop production has been eroded over time, often culminating in evictions.

Dwellers at Mbhongholo recalled: ‘We used to plough; my father had lots of cattle, goats, and sheep. We were ploughing *kaffirkorn* – *makaha* [sorghum] – and watermelon.’ Elderly workers said they had valued this ability to cultivate and keep livestock, and would still prefer this system. A few hoped that it could be restored through restitution. At Malamula, some dwellers had engaged in their own agricultural production: ‘We used to have big fields where we planted sorghum; the fields ... were put under citrus production by Mr Johnston a few years after he bought the farm in the 1980s’ (farm worker, 2008). Another recalled how livestock production by workers came to an end:

In the early 1990s the farm owner told me to remove my goats from the farm. Mr Johnston said that my goats would contaminate his goats through cross-breeding. He said that he wanted to establish a business environment and that I should understand that I was a worker. (Farm worker, 2008)

Table 10: Tenure and livelihoods trends on study farms

	Makwembe	Malamula	Timongo	Mbhongholo
Who may be on the farm	Workers and approved dependants	Workers and approved dependants	Workers and approved dependants, and a few land tenants	Workers and approved dependants, and a few land tenants
Access to housing	Rented – dependent on employment or close family relationship	Rented – dependent on employment or close family relationship	Rented – dependent on employment or close family relationship	No cost – dependent on history on land and social relations
Access to services	Some free and some on payment basis	On payment basis	Mainly on payment basis	Generally free
Main trend	Towards wage labour only (almost completed)	Towards wage labour only (almost completed)	Towards wage labour and corporate control, but incomplete	Curtailing independent land uses (livestock and cultivation)
Exceptions	None observed	None observed	A few old dwellers with homesteads. Illicit garden plots	One family with own homestead and plot of land
Contestation	Access by visitors, game poaching	Access by visitors, keeping livestock	Access to land for workers/dwellers/new owners	Keeping livestock

This farm worker then moved his goats to a communal area in the Nzhelele Valley where they eventually died because, he claims, they could not 'acclimatise'. Following the reduction in access to land, some dwellers accepted the weaker and narrower employment-based tenure. Others found life difficult without their livestock and left the farm; the deprivation of independent access to land resulted in constructive evictions. Our findings support the view that demise of independent land tenure and tenant production was caused by the expansion of capitalist modes and relations of production (Cousins 2004).

Contestations over land continue, reflecting the competing interests of dwellers and owners. Whether the farm is owned by individuals or restored to communities through restitution (as in Timongo), owners and managers generally see dweller cultivation and livestock production as conflicting with commercial production. A manager at the Timongo restitution farms said that 'we cannot open the farm for cultivation for each and everyone, it would be chaos.' Mr Johnston, owner of Malamula, held: 'They [farm workers] have no right to have animals or to start their own farming. No mineworker can mine gold for an hour for his own pocket. He gets paid a salary. This is not a social welfare environment, this is a business.' This comparison with mining conveys the view that the ownership of farmland is uncontested; that worker production detracts from the owner's commercial output and is tantamount to stealing; and that such 'welfare' considerations do not fit in a 'business' environment.

Keeping livestock is generally not tolerated by owners and is contested on several of the farms. Asked about future livestock keeping, the owner of Malamula said: 'Goats? Then I will not be here.' At Mbhongo, the absentee owner and the manager believed that dwellers' livestock would adversely affect the commercial safari operations that they hoped to develop, hence the manager's emphatic 'This is not a bloody donkey farm.' Implicit is a parallel with South Africa's communal areas, which in the eyes of certain landowners tend to be used inappropriately, including by draught animals. The irony was that for six years from the purchase of the Mbhongo to the time of our study, the game and safari operations were virtually nonexistent, and dweller's livestock farming was one of the few productive land uses: this could quickly earn the farm the dreaded nickname.

The system of labour tenancy – remuneration through access to land – has been virtually eliminated on these farms, though examples of it remain on Timongo and Mbhongo and are vital for the individuals concerned. One of the Timongo farms is home to families who lived there from before white settlers occupied the land and who managed to stay on the farms even during the forced removals in the apartheid years. One such dweller family lives in self-constructed houses, close to family graves, and regards the land that they used to cultivate for self-consumption as rightfully theirs. Leaders of the new community owners have confirmed that the family's tenure will be respected. Yet, the family faces problems with housing, water and adequate livelihoods (Box 7).

On Mbhongo game farm, workers and managers said that farm dwellers have a right to live on the farm but this was contradicted by a steady dwindling of the number of dwellers during recent years, particularly immediately before and after the merger in 2003. Owning a house outside the farm was increasingly seen as necessary to have a place to live in retirement and to pass on to children, a trend also reported from the Eastern Cape (Brandt & Mkhize 2009). Long-established rights to stay on the farm had been replaced with a tenuous, negotiable access that depended on the owner's or manager's approval, which in turn required compliance with rules, such as those relating to livestock, and preferably also employment. One family had secured, in a rather tenuous way, its tenure to a residential plot and some land in a corner of the farm, illustrating the dynamics of change (Box 8).

The observed access to land is the result of a historical process of restricting the scale and type of land use by farm dwellers and workers, restrictions that have been used to execute constructive evictions. Evictees' stories suggest that this pattern is common across farms in Limpopo. One should not exaggerate the strength of past 'rights', which dwellers sometimes remember with some nostalgia. Some rights to land and homes on farms were revocable concessions or privileges that could be arbitrarily withdrawn. Some of those who enjoyed access to land had a position in the management hierarchy, such as the family of a foreman that secured its position on one of the Timongo farms (Box 7). At Mbhongo, the father of an elderly tenant we met had been an *induna*, adviser, to the owner. Thus, access to land and other benefits was shaped by the power structure of farms.

The land access that dwellers and workers still enjoy on farms, such as plots for temporary residence and home gardening or access to firewood, is important in their lives, but is shaped and controlled by owners to narrowly support the reproduction of labour. It does not provide an independent and secure platform for workers and their

families to build assets and capabilities. Tenure security entails the breadth (of rights and resources), their duration (long-term) and assurance (backed by others, particularly those with power). The land access of dwellers and workers on these farms is generally the opposite: narrow, short-term, insecure and dependent, reflecting powerlessness.

Box 7: Farm dwellers on Rondebosch farm, Timongo

Long-term farm dwellers live at Rondebosch, one of the farms of Timongo that has been restored to the Ratombo CPA. Two groups of low, wooden houses are located near a large blue gum (eucalyptus) plantation, where there is a clearing in the forest, which in turn is surrounded by bush and hilly land. There are graves near the houses and a large tree in the distance is a site of other graves. A total of seventeen people are staying here though some of them work elsewhere and come only during weekends. We met Mr Mwebe (aged 61 at the time), his son Henry, and his aunt Ms Dzania. Mr Mwebe showed us the family graves near the houses and we were asked to take photographs of him there: the graves date back at least three generations, have a powerful social and emotional significance and play a role in the defence of the family's tenure.

'White people found us here,' Mr Mwebe said. However, a white settler had secured formal ownership over the area and saw the homestead as part of his farm. His descendant later planted the blue gum trees. When Mr Mwebe was born (1947), the place was still occupied and controlled by his father. There were people staying 'all over' the hill where the blue gum plantation now stands. While Mr Mwebe's father worked for the farm owner, during Mr Mwebe's childhood the family kept livestock and cultivated maize and beans, enough for subsistence. Linda corrects him and says that they could not manage on their own food but also had to work on farms for money, working two days for free (in return for the land) and three days for a wage, making R6 per month, she remembers.

Over time, the expansion of commercial farming and forestry led to conflict: 'The farm system made us stop ploughing. The owner did not want livestock here.' Around 1968, the government used trucks to remove people to the villages of nearby 'homelands' or Bantustans, but one household managed to stay on: the land owner had told the authorities that Mr Mwebe's father was a foreman and much needed on the farm. Through the household that stayed on, the wider family managed to maintain relations with Rondebosch. Linda had always lived there and Mr Mwebe regularly resided there even while working outside on a brick factory until 1994.

There are problems at the homestead: the river sometimes runs dry or the water gets dark with algae; the houses are of poor quality, and the family is far away from a school, the closest one recently having been shut down. Two of the children should have been in Grades 1 and 3 respectively but are not attending school, as it is too expensive to take them somewhere else. The oldest child stayed with a family in a communal area for a while, in order to attend school, but claimed the host family stole the food his parents bought for him. He is now back.

Mr Mwebe says that it is important to live here: 'Yes, it is the right thing, because we were born here. Chief Ratombo has told us to be here. I have to be next to the graves of my grandparents, of my father, and my grandparents on my mother's side.' In May 2006 Chief Ratombo said 'the households should not move' and that they are welcome to work on the farm. The Ratombo CPA had, however, suggested that they should move to a new compound, since it would be dangerous to live under the large trees, which the CPA was planning to fell. Mr Mwebe said that, despite problems, he and his family wanted to remain living there, even if the trees were to be harvested. The CPA leader confirmed that the dwellers could stay.

Sources: Interviews with Mr Mwebe and Ms Dzania, farm dwellers, and a Ratombo CPA Executive Member, 2008

Box 8: Tenure, strained relations and insecure livelihoods (Mbhongholo)

Ms Remahele and Mr Maruleke and two of their sons live in a corner of the farm, more than 5km from the main farmhouse and even further from the gate. Although their homestead is close to the main road, they can only access it by climbing over the tall wildlife fence. The story of this family illustrates the process and outcome of a struggle over tenure and the difficulty of securing a livelihood, particularly when relations with the owner and manager are strained. The family's situation also displays difficulties of life on farms: isolation and poor access to schools and other services. Yet, they were still on the farm and had some control over their homestead and garden, which showed their tenacity and was a source of pride.

Mr Maruleke said that they had been on the farm a long time. His parents had first lived on another farm in the area but his father had been evicted due to a conflict with the landowner, and then came to the present farm, where Mr Maruleke was born (in 1946, as his ID says, or 1941 as he believed). Black people had livestock then: 'We were labour tenants ... We had ploughs and donkeys, so we were able to plough a big area and eat for the whole year. We were growing sorghum, it was our staple.' At the age of twelve, he started working under the labour tenant system, for three (later four) months a year with no pay – 'the other months I was supposed to go out looking for a job.' Before he married in 1971, the system changed to wage payment. They had moved several times: 'This is the sixth home on the same farm,' he said about their current homestead, which they had occupied since 1984.

His wife, Ms Remahele, was born on a farm south of Makhado in the 1940s (though her ID said 1952). She didn't go to school. She met her future husband when he visited relatives in her area. Even after the labour tenancy system stopped for the men, she says, she and other women continued working two days per week for the land owner without pay, cleaning, cooking and looking after children. She said that the owner's wife had been 'a very good person ... I was not even buying clothes. She would just go into her room and give me some clothing.' Only later did she take up farming, which became the family's livelihood when her husband was no longer employed.

When the farm was being sold in 2003, the outgoing owner tried to get the family off the farm. Mr Maruleke argued: 'We have been here at this homestead since 1984. The [previous] owner didn't have a problem; they were saying a person should build where they want.' He observed that today farmers are keeping wild animals and therefore wanted to restrict human homesteads. Assisted by the land NGO Nkuzi, the dwellers demanded compensation to be able to build a family house somewhere else, but they did not accept the owner's offer: 'I wanted them to build an eight-roomed house [for the eight children] and the cost was about R100 000 ... R26 000 was offered at the end. I rejected. I said this was too little.'

The family stayed on. Under the new Spanish owner, the farm manager tried to prevent the dwellers from accessing grazing land, but Nkuzi informed him in writing about the family's ESTA rights. An informal agreement was reached that the household could stay and could fence a small amount of land around its homestead. ESTA thus assisted to protect this family. In 2008, however, the manager claimed that he had never heard about ESTA. His interpretation was that the farm dwellers 'had won their land claim'.

So, while the family's tenure was to some extent acknowledged, the owner and manager kept complaining that they crossed the fence, used scarce water for vegetable farming, and kept donkeys – and they wanted them to be elsewhere on the farm. Protecting the right to water was a struggle on its own. Mr Maruleke said that the owner wanted them to stop pumping water and threatened to install a water meter: 'I refused, because I said the law doesn't allow you to do that.' Again there was support from a legal NGO and 'people from Pretoria' who said water should remain as it was. The owner also suspected that the family engaged in poaching and he instructed that a wildlife count be carried out during early 2009. It found that game had succumbed to drought in late 2008, and there was no evidence of poaching, but strained relations persisted:

The Spanish people who bought these farms came here with one of their seniors and told me to lock my donkeys in the kraal. They called me to the farmhouse and brought someone to interpret for me. They said they would come and shoot the donkeys, so I said come and shoot them. Then they changed and said I should pay R300 a month for grazing and water, so I said they must write it down, but I won't pay because I am not working. That was the end. They left. Now they send this farm manager to say I must move to this small place with the fence. (Mr Maruleke, Mbhongholo, 2008)

The couple rejected a further offer by the owner to get a fenced plot of land with a house with electricity on another part of the farm. They said that they were attached to the piece of land they had lived on since 1984, had graves close by and had access to grazing for twelve donkeys: He said that livestock had died in the past when fenced in and this would happen again. He added: 'They were even promising to write me a letter to say I am the owner. I told them, 'This is mine, and I am not moving anywhere, and even my graves are here.' Ms Remahele and Mr Maruleke had a strong sense of attachment to the land and they nurtured a vision of a better future on the farm following restitution and the return of relatives from communal areas to the farm.

Source: Interviews with Ms Remahele and Mr Maruleke, farm dwellers, Mbhongholo, 2008

ACCESS TO HOUSING

a house with a zinc roof: now we have to travel to the village to honour our ancestors. (Farm worker, 2008)

Most workers and dwellers stay in accommodation rented from landowners. Some stay in self-built round thatched huts but the majority live in farmer-built brick houses in compound settings. Over time there has been a shift to the latter, sometimes as part of an abrupt and forceful change in settlement, as a worker at Malamula explained:

Our own houses were destroyed by the farm owner and we were moved into the new houses. Our huts were scattered but he brought us close together in a compound. Now, for us to stay in the compound, we had to work, and those who did not want to work left the farm. (Farm worker, 2008)

The movement into farmer-built houses was thus a means to accomplish the shift from independent tenure to wage labour. It prompted different responses among those who remained on the farm. Another worker at Malamula, though, was pleased to move into brick houses: 'The owner did a good thing. He showed that he cared, by moving my family into a three-roomed house: now I have electricity and water nearby.' But many expressed sadness over the loss of traditional huts with a cultural significance, which weakened the sense of home on the farm:

I think the white owner did not understand our way of life. I am saddened because we used to offer our rituals to the ancestors in the huts. You cannot hold rituals in

Our observations confirm that housing on South African commercial farms is widely linked to employment (du Toit 2004; Wegerif et al. 2005; Atkinson 2007). Makwembe's owner stressed that 'there are no farm dweller households without a labour relation'. At Timongo, access to housing was mainly based on employment, and this did not change when communities took ownership through restitution; many workers continued to live in surrounding villages and commuted to the farms; those who stayed in the compounds normally had homes elsewhere. Although access to housing depends on employment, family members may share accommodation, subject to restrictions and often to payment, and visitors may stay for short periods. Charging rentals per person, including for children, affects family life (see the next chapter). Following the shift from independent tenure to employment, losing one's employment normally means losing one's house and right to live on the farm, and therefore leads directly to eviction and the disruption of family life.

Historically, accommodation and food rations formed part of a wider agreement, as payment in kind to supplement low farm wages (SAHRC 2003; Atkinson 2007). These have been estimated to be worth about 25% on average of the total value of remuneration and were based on a mutual understanding rather than legal obligations (SAHRC 2003). We observed, though, the trend towards landowners charging cash rentals for

accommodation, even though workers' presence on farms arguably constitutes an essential condition for production and is therefore part of the cost of labour. Except on Mbhongo, farm dwellers pay rentals whether they stay in self-built or farmer-built houses, the amounts varying

Farm dwellers pay rentals whether they stay in self-built or farmer-built houses, the amounts varying from farm to farm.

from farm to farm. At Makwembe the owner deducts R4 per month for self-built and R20 for farmer-built houses. In contrast, each worker has R180 deducted monthly for accommodation at Malamula. Here, some farm dwellers resented these deductions, because the farm owner had destroyed their own houses and made it mandatory to live in the farmer-built compound.

Some housing conditions were inconsistent with government housing regulations (Sectoral Determination, RSA 2006). Deductions for accommodation may not exceed 10% of a farm worker's wage and the house must be at least 30 square metres in size, have a durable and waterproof roof, have glass windows that can be opened, offer electricity and safe water within the house, and a flush toilet or pit latrine in close proximity (ibid: 8). Some houses observed did not meet these requirements and deducting rent for them was therefore illegal. Housing in the compound at Malamula did not comply with the government standards: many houses had no glass windows but frames fitted with wooden planks; many rooms had poor lighting and ventilation, as the shutters could not open. A worker noted that, 'when it rains, green things [fungi] are growing on the walls.' Scratching his itching body, he also complained that their room was infested with lice and that many could not afford to fumigate. A dweller at Mbhongo game farm observed: 'The houses are very small and there are no windows. We sleep with our food in our bedroom ... our water is not good. People came to test the water and said it was not fit for humans.' Dwellers complained that mud houses might fall during heavy rainfall, as happened in 2000 at Makwembe, when some dwellers lost their property without compensation.

Owners and managers frequently acknowledged housing to be a 'challenge'. The owner of Malamula (2008) said: 'The economic environment within which we operate sets

an important framework for what is possible in terms of housing programmes on the farm.' One of his managers concurred, saying that low citrus prices and small returns made it impossible for the farm to invest in houses and services. The owner of Makwembe stressed increasing total costs of which salaries made up about one-third. The minimum wage introduced in 2003 had increased labour costs by an estimated 10 to 20%, and he had responded by 'sacrificing profit' and by halting a programme to improve on-farm housing. A land NGO staff member, though, associated the decline in farmers building new compound infrastructure with the restitution programme, which has created uncertainty with regard to compensation for existing housing and the responsibility for housing provision. A manager at Timongo argued that government should provide housing but 'they don't see housing as a priority ... and we don't have the infrastructure for that.' The housing provided is important for workers, their dependants and migrants but the quality is often below standard and there is no effective enforcement of a right to housing on these farms, whether grounded in historical tenure relations or in the Constitution.

ACCESS TO SERVICES

Historically, tenure for farm dwellers included a package of access to land, housing and services such as provision of water, energy and health care. These were far from lavish and formed part of the paternalist system on farms. To be meaningful, the right to tenure has to include secure access to adequate services, in view of the geographical isolation of farms and because municipalities view themselves as having limited responsibility for public service provision on privately-owned land.

The services provided at some of the studied farms, including water, electricity, firewood, transport and child-care, may be seen as necessary to reproduce labour. The farms tried to recover costs, sometimes at a nominal level. At Makwembe, workers paid for housing and electricity while the farm provided firewood and water for free, regularly offered transport to church or to do shopping, and paid 50% of the costs of medical treatment at the local clinic for workers (farm workers and manager, 2008). At Malamula, workers paid for electricity, firewood and water as part of the general deduction of R180 per individual per month. At Mbhongo, water, electricity and firewood

were provided free of charge. Overall, farm workers on all the farms agreed that there has been a decline in free services offered by the farmers since the promulgation of the minimum wage in 2003 and complained that their increased cash wages were offset by deductions for services: 'Once the government started saying that we should be paid so much, the farm owner was not happy. The owner started deducting money for housing and even the firewood that we collect ourselves' (farm worker, Malamula, 2008).

Public service provision, such as in health and education, is vital for farm dwellers. These services may have improved in some areas but the farm cases suggested that public services were erratic, of inferior quality and constrained by isolation of farms. In some cases, owners' control of access to the farm posed a problem. Workers at Mbhongozolo said they had missed information on housing subsidies because the officials could not get through the locked gate to speak to them on the farm; they had heard later about this from people on neighbouring farms. They also suspected that the manager, who received information by post, screened information about government programmes and services. Both allegations were denied by the manager, who stressed his efforts to keep the farm open for visitors. A Food and Allied Workers' Union (FAWU) official in the area, though, argued that restricted access to farms made it difficult for FAWU to promote labour rights and workers' freedom of association and assembly.

Mobile health clinics that visit farms are an excellent initiative but workers at Mbhongozolo found visits to be irregular and sometimes missed them due to lack of information in advance. The ability to reach other health services was hampered by costs and access to transport, except at Makwembe where management assisted workers with this. The distance to or quality of primary and secondary education was a problem on all the farms (see Chapter 11). This has long-term implications for the farm dweller population; children need education to be able to access opportunities in the economy outside the farms that continue to shed jobs and evict people.

Farm owners have interests in shifting obligations and costs to the state and generally argued that the economic environment is not conducive to them spending on 'welfare' programmes. Some were seeking public funding for accommodation and infrastructure on farms, for

example at Timongo, where the settled claim established a basis for claiming further state funds. In general, our study confirms findings in other parts of the country that, as a result of the minimum wage and changes in the political economy of agriculture, many farmers have withdrawn welfare services they used to provide to workers (du Toit 2004; du Toit & Ally 2004; Atkinson 2007). Atkinson (2007: 90) also argues that the state ought not to enforce welfare services on farm owners, drawing a parallel with urban industrial employers. This appears to overlook the fact that states frequently compel industry to provide (for example) health and holiday entitlements for workers. The dwellers and workers are caught in this standoff between farm owners and the state, having neither the power to negotiate with landowners nor access to government officials to secure public service provision from the state.

Public services were erratic, of inferior quality and constrained by isolation of farms.

Stronger tenure security of farm dwellers could reduce their dependence on farmers for access to housing, electricity, water, training and unions, enabling them to mobilise and lobby for better services.

LIVELIHOODS

Despite their mainly employment-based livelihoods and narrow access to land, farm dwellers engage in other livelihoods strategies – some land-based, others not (Table 11).

We have not quantified the relative importance of different income streams, but dwellers' accounts suggest that wage labour was by far the most important source of livelihood. Many also received child support grants, which at the time of study were R200 per month per child, while relatively few workers and dwellers met the criteria for receiving old age pensions or disability grants. Migrant workers from Zimbabwe and elsewhere were generally unable to access social grants.

Some dwellers and workers produced crops in small gardens or open spaces adjacent to their houses, where they work after hours. Access to land for food gardening is generally tied to housing and employment. At Malamula, dwellers grow vegetables such as spinach, tomatoes and onions used as relish, mainly for household consumption

Table 11: Land-based and non-land-based livelihoods on study farms

	Makwembe	Malamula	Timongo	Mbhongholo
Access to land	No independent access, temporary occupation in compound	No independent access, temporary occupation in compound	Limited independent access, cases of more durable occupation	Limited independent access, cases of more durable occupation
Land-based livelihoods	Food gardens Poultry Firewood	Food gardens Poultry Pigs Firewood Fruit trees (few)	Food gardens Poultry	Food gardens Poultry Firewood Goats Donkeys
Non-land-based livelihoods	Wage labour Welfare payments Spaza shops Services Crafts	Wage labour Welfare payments Spaza shops Services	Wage labour Welfare payments Spaza shops	Wage labour Welfare payments Small trade

Source: Field observations

and sale to neighbours. Most prefer short-term crops rather than the perennial paw-paw (papaya) and banana, which require a long-term investment that would only be justified if there were a greater sense of tenure security. Dwellers appreciated food gardens due to increasing food prices and inadequate salaries.

Owners and managers, too, were generally appreciative of small-scale food gardening and poultry keeping, which helped workers and their families to survive on meagre wages. However, the scale at which people were allowed to produce crops or keep livestock on-farm was contested and was seen as being in ‘competition with the farm business’ by the owner at Malamula. Some Timongo workers illicitly cultivate plots among the commercially developed areas, bribing supervisors so that managers are not informed. A manager there regretted that there were few livelihood options for unemployed spouses:

It is mainly the husband who is working and she [the wife] is staying with him in the compound. And if there is a bit of ground available ... you know, we cannot open the farm for cultivation for each and everyone, it would be chaos. So unfortunately she does not have an income. Ag, but they are getting clever. If there is electricity,

they come to me, and I give them written permission whereby they can buy a fridge, not a mortuary fridge but a decent little fridge, where they can start a little business from. They can sell chicken meat or fish or what. I am not a guy that will just close all doors for them. They can have a small spaza shop, but not a big spaza shop, selling alcohol etc. (Manager, Timongo, 2008)

Some dwellers keep donkeys, pigs, chickens and ducks at a small scale for their own consumption, and sometimes for sale. Poultry is generally accepted whereas keeping of larger livestock is a source of conflict and likely to be seen as an intolerable assertion of power. Some dwellers at Malamula said they wished to keep more livestock but they face resistance from the farm owner. As one reflected, ‘I would have loved to keep more pigs, but there is not enough land and the farm owner does not like many animals on his farm’ (farm worker, 2008); indeed, Malamula’s owner stressed that livestock are at odds with his attempt to create a ‘business environment’. At Mbhongholo, the management is trying to reduce and eliminate the goats and donkeys kept by workers and dwellers, using both rewards (housing, loans) and sanctions (denying access to employment or withdrawing benefits).

Factors that limit farm dweller production on commercial farms are access to land, the status of migrants, and short-term employment. A farm dweller at Malamula said, 'I would have preferred to have a garden for vegetable production but I could not get access to land. Land here is scarce for the workers but plenty for the farmer. The farmer has many hectares that he does not use, as you can see' (farm worker, 2008). Some migrant workers without work permits said that uncertain employment discouraged them from expanding production in their gardens, and a worker who recently arrived from Zimbabwe said: 'They [the police] can come any time and arrest and deport you, and then you have to leave your vegetables and livestock behind' (Zimbabwean farm worker, Malamula 2008). Other workers said that it is difficult to engage in gardening because they only stay in the compound for part of the growing season.

Some farm dwellers are involved in small trade such as buying clothes from nearby towns and reselling them in the farm compounds, especially at the end of the month. One of us bought a khaki cap for R20 from a worker-cum-trader the day after payday. Some workers sell artefacts from Zimbabwe along the roads during weekends, while absconding from work, or when they have no contract. Some dwellers operate barber shops on the compounds, offering haircuts or a shave for an average of R5. Some women plaited hair, charging around R50 per head. Alcohol was sold at shebeens on the compounds across the study sites. These were run mainly by long-term dwellers, who sell home-brewed beer made from

self-farmed sorghum (at R3 per litre) or Kings Brew beer powder (at R6 per 750ml) or commercial beer (at R11 per bottle). Supervisors and permanent workers usually buy Kings Brew or commercial lagers while the cheaper traditional brew was more popular among seasonal, especially Zimbabwean, farm workers.

On Makwembe, Simon and his family represented a relatively successful household that received two wage incomes plus income from Simon's sales as a craftsman (Box 9).

At Malamula, other activities include *spaza* shops that sell groceries to dwellers and create employment for a few. A shop owner said that he deserved support from the government in the form of capital and space to expand. However, an economic development officer at the municipality said he could not help farm workers to initiate their own businesses, since they are in the fields during his working hours. Another officer argued that during farm visits, 'when we talk about the economy, we talk to the farmer, because workers do not initiate economy ... and do not think in terms of economic development' (official, Musina municipality, 2008). He also observed that business success is not always tolerated: 'They get support for trade, and then become successful, and because they are on somebody's land, the owner gets jealous.'

Disdain for farm dweller agricultural production resonates with the observation that commercial farmers prefer to ensure the availability of cheap labour rather

Box 9: Simon, farm worker and craftsman

Simon has been working at Makwembe farm since 1993. Both he and his wife are from Zimbabwe, but they met and married in South Africa, in 2003. They had one three-year old son (born 2005) and, when we met him, his wife's younger sister (a teenager) was living with them. Both he and his wife have temporary work permits for which they have to re-apply every six months, a process that the farm organises. He has been working on this legal basis since 1998. He has family at Beitbridge, about 15km away. When his permit is in order, he visits them via the gate. Otherwise he goes via the river.

The couple make R2 180 per month. They do not receive a child support grant, because they lack South African IDs and a birth certificate for the child. They estimate that they spend about R400 per month on food, and occasionally send money to relatives in Zimbabwe. They do not have a bank account, and rather save money in the house. Simon is a tin maker and, in his free time and when on his annual leave, spends the time on the craft. He says: 'I have to think about the future. I am thinking about what I might do next year. I am saving money. I want to buy something that takes me somewhere.' He wants to buy a car, particularly to visit Beitbridge, and is saving enough to reach the goal.

Source: Farm workers, Makwembe, 2008

than facilitate independent agricultural production, which limits labour availability (Bundy 1972; Morris 1976). Nevertheless, in addition to wage labour, a number of farm dwellers engage in small-scale livestock and crop production and micro-trade. As observed in various studies in South Africa and Zimbabwe, farm workers are not just passive victims of circumstances but use strategies, choices and practices to create livelihoods outside the wage-labour relation (Rutherford 1997, 2001; Zamchiya 2008). We also observed that dwellers and workers doing such economic activities are reluctant to challenge insalubrious conditions on the farms, since they depend on maintaining good relations with farm owners and managers, who give permission or control access to land needed for the businesses. Adversarial relations with managers and owners may lead to loss of employment and livelihoods – and businesses in which farm dwellers have invested. Farm tenure reforms must therefore consider farm dwellers’ livelihoods activities and ambitions, beyond wage employment and the social relations of which they are part.

CONCLUSIONS

On the farms we studied, ownership and control of land by commercial farmers has shifted the major contestation from conditions of tenure to conditions of labour. Wages are the predominant source of livelihood and most of the non-employed have gradually been evicted. This change has been largely completed on Makwembe and Malamula, which are ruled by corporate logic. Owners view farm dwellers through an employment lens that subordinates

Strong alternative livelihoods could improve the bargaining position of workers and dwellers.

their historical link to the land. Farm dwellers and farm workers generally experience insecure and narrow tenure to land, natural resource and residence. As commercial agriculture has been adapting to increased competition and technological change, major risks have been transferred to the dwellers and workers. Responding to the changing economic and political environment, owners abandoned longstanding obligations that formed part of the paternalist system.

The losses and insecurity that farm dwellers have experienced, and still experience, are caused by a history of discrimination. The evictions, living conditions and livelihoods we documented violated many requirements of social justice: the rights to life; to racial and gender equality; to be consulted and heard; and to receive redress for loss of land, housing and livelihoods. The existing approach to providing tenure security, under ESTA, has relied on legal protection and procedural requirements that have hardly been enforced and that do not address the complex social, economic and environmental problems that farms and their owners and workers are faced with. More supportive public policies are needed to shift decision making by farm owners and managers, either through regulation or incentives. Enforcing tenure and labour legislation could contribute to breaking the dependency of workers and dwellers on employers for housing, services and livelihoods.

To promote more secure livelihoods for farm dwellers, rights to use the land and to produce are also required. Being limited to low-wage employment, without options for diversifying their livelihoods, renders this already-marginal population even more vulnerable. Strong alternative livelihoods could improve the bargaining position of workers and dwellers. One challenge is to secure the tenure of the long-term dwellers, for whom the farms are their only home; another is to expand the tenure of dwellers, including recent or temporary workers, to access a greater range of resources; a third is to provide good off-farm alternatives on self-owned land, as the basis for farm workers’ own production, so that they can generate employment possibilities for themselves and their families in or outside farming. A variety of approaches are needed, and it is highly unlikely that one approach can work across the diverse situations on farms. Some approaches ought to entail radical restructuring that turns farm dwellers into farm owners; others would gradually expand the tenure rights and livelihoods activities of workers and dwellers within the confines of the farm. The Constitution guarantees secure tenure and redress for violations caused by racially discriminatory practices of the past but the more recent, but equally callous, evictions of farm workers and farm dwellers of recent years are likely to figure among the major injustices of the democratic era.

11. Family, gender and children

FARMS ARE PLACES WHERE PEOPLE LIVE

A photo shows a group of curious, lively children on the small Mbhongholo game farm, enjoying each other's company and the attention of visitors. Another shows children on the road to the local school, riding on a donkey cart. They are fortunate to be riding, for we met children from Mbhongholo and other farms who had walked more than 6km from the farm to the school and back in the mid-day heat, dejected because the school had been closed that day to be used for a meeting. Their long walk had been futile.

Farms are places where people live. This seemingly obvious point is widely ignored in policy debates about the future of commercial farms. People who live on farms are often considered as units of labour and numbers of employees, while the non-employed constitute a large and often ignored group. The diverse groups of people who live on farms include owners, managers, workers, sometimes with families and other dependants, and those who are not employed but find a niche in the economy of the farm.

Farms provide 'homes' in quite different ways, with widely different implications for human wellbeing. For some, the farm is their *only home*, and their family may have lived there for generations. For others, it is their *primary home*, while they have another home in a town or village. For yet others it is their *secondary home*, since they are there as workers and know that the end of employment means leaving the farm, often returning to family elsewhere. Yet, for a major part of their lives this is where they seek physical protection and social interaction.

Farms are also a place of business. Unlike with other businesses, though, owners, managers, workers and their families often live on the premises of production, as do some people who are not employed. This fusion of the site of employment and the place of residence lends a special character to the social and economic relations on farms. It is also a major source of landowners' often extensive control over the lives of workers and their families, in more intimate ways than in most other economic sectors. Living and working on privately owned land has many implications for the governance of daily life (Hall et al. 2003). Du Toit (1993) showed how social relations on Western Cape fruit farms were structured by discourses of paternalism



and a 'micro-politics' of control, cooperation, resistance and collusion. A paternalist social organisation of family life, from crib to grave, is most in evidence in situations where workers are dwellers who have their home on farms. While workers, dwellers and their families may be micro-governed, they also try to take advantage of personal relations with managers and owners. Rutherford's (2001a) work on commercial farms in Zimbabwe as the locus of 'domestic governance' shows that welfarism and paternalism are based on, and maintain, control over the lives of farm workers and dwellers. In this sense, 'home' is a site of power struggle and not an unproblematic ideal.

A reproduction of old patterns of labour migration, settlement and family is linked to disputes over who may live and be on the farm. 'Security' provides an idiom for the regulation of social relations of family, kin and visitors on farms. Owners and managers employed contested distinctions between 'family', 'visitors' and 'squatters', imposing rules which structure gender relations. Gendered patterns of poverty and the disadvantages faced by women in getting permanent jobs and leadership positions (see Chapter 9) also affect family life, housing, security and sex. Patterns of settlement, rules and poverty also affect

children, who are sometimes unwanted on farms and invariably face problematic conditions of housing, health and education. It is important to understand how patterns of labour, housing and settlement are changing today and whether they allow families and individuals to meet their rights and needs. This chapter draws on farm cases and individual stories to reflect on the nature of family life, gender relations and the lives of children on farms, as they are affected by changing production and settlement patterns.

REPRODUCING THE 'SPLIT' FAMILY

We found that a pattern of 'split families' is being reproduced in new ways on commercial farms, whereby parents and very young children live on-farm, while older children, siblings, spouses and parents stay in towns or villages elsewhere. While mindful that the nuclear family is not a universal ideal, changes in family settlement patterns may compromise the rights and social needs of individuals, particularly if labour migration is combined

with restricted freedom of movement. As Desmond Tutu has observed, in apartheid South Africa 'black family life was systematically undermined by the migratory labour system', not because of a mistake but because black people were not seen as fully human (Tutu 2000). The three large horticultural farms (excepting Mbhongo) are increasingly using and contributing to a migration and remittance economy which appears to reproduce the stark contrasts between formerly 'white' farming areas and former 'black' homelands or Bantustans, and with Zimbabwe increasingly filling the 'labour reserve' function historically associated with these latter areas.

Economic restructuring of farms is one of the causes of the pattern of having permanent and long-term workers live on the farm while some or all other members of the family live elsewhere. Residence on farms is increasingly reserved for staff and ends with the end of employment, regardless of the provisions of ESTA. This reduces the costs of servicing (extended) families and social reproduction. Underinvestment in on-farm housing, reportedly influenced by minimum wage and tenure regulations, is one factor. The practice of charging rent for additional family members also affects the possibilities of family life, while the shift from self-built to farmer-constructed housing has made it difficult or illegal to add extra rooms. A woman worker told us that Makwembe farm had introduced an accommodation charge of R30 per month for a child, which residents were reluctantly starting to pay under the threat of a heavy fine. Malamula charged double rent for spouses, which made some family members stay illicitly on farms or, as intended, made them leave, shifting the costs of social reproduction and service provision elsewhere.

AMBIGUITY OF FARMS AS 'HOMES'

Respondents on farms held widely differing views on what it takes to create a 'home', a complex notion linked to memory, aspirations for the future and practical considerations. An elderly dweller on Mbhongo said that he lived in his sixth home on the same farm, on which he was born in the 1940s. Another elderly worker said that 'I need to live here [on the farm] because I have been here for decades.' As another perspective, a woman worker at Timongo travelled 15km to her home every weekend, and

said: 'No, [the farm] is not my home, it is my workplace. Every Friday I go home, and I come back every Sunday. No one considers this place home, [though] some go home only once a month.' Some workers expressed the tension they felt because, on the one hand, the farm was the place where they had always lived while, on the other, they could only stay as long as they were employed. Timongo restitution farms probably displayed the greatest diversity: here were long-term dwellers with independent tenure; old and new workers in compounds; and workers commuting from surrounding villages and towns.

In discussion with three women from Zimbabwe working on Malamula, one said, 'This place does not feel like home. My home is in Zimbabwe.' Another added, 'We have a vision to go back to Zimbabwe.' The third explained: 'We have a homestead in Zimbabwe and we are renovating it, for we know that one day we will go back. But we can only go back if the state prioritises job creation in companies and on commercial farms' (2008). Thus, 'home' requires the sense of something one owns, cares for and invests in but also a context where employment and services can be found. At the time, Zimbabwe was not home, nor was the South African farm on which they lived.

SECURITY, FAMILY AND SEXUALITY

Security on farms

Both workers and managers emphasised the need for security, many saying that the crime level was increasing, particularly small-scale theft of farm equipment, crops and workers' belongings. Economic transformation and restitution cause uprooting and increased movement of people, less stable social relations and pressures on the social and physical security of farms. The crisis in Zimbabwe brought more people into and through the area, some of them with a desperate need for subsistence, shelter and protection. Malamula's owner argued that farms reduce crime in the area by giving migrants a subsistence alternative to criminal activity. However, on the evidence of the stories told it was not fully effective and we also note that the farms have no obligations to provide for any of the individuals that pass by or approach them for work.

Farmers' responses to security issues were diverse. At Makwembe, the compound has a tall electrified, barbed wire fence around it, to keep strangers out and protect the homes and property of workers and dwellers. Some farms have internal monitoring systems, for example individuals who are paid to provide information to managers, as seen at Malamula. The large area and scattered compounds of Timongo posed a major surveillance challenge and Umlimi built up a security division of four staff with motorbikes headed by a security manager, a retired policeman and a CPA executive committee member. The security staff were now 'policing' the perimeter of the farms to keep

Committees held hearings and passed judgment against those accused of crimes and antisocial behaviour.

out 'intruders'. They also monitored compounds to identify anyone without permission to be there and to control behaviour. Thus, the lines between external security and internal discipline are blurred.

The security manager at Timongo argued that workers should be involved in the security functions: 'Each and every employee who is working on a farm must be the police of himself, he must take care of his property, because he might lose his job if they steal a lot, and then where is he going to work?' When seeing someone stealing, a worker 'should not fold his hands and look away' but should feel that theft was from 'my field', not 'another man's field' (2008).

At Makwembe and Timongo, security functions had a semblance of democracy: elected 'representatives' of workers formed 'disciplinary committees', with powers sanctioned by the farm owner. These committees held hearings and passed judgment against those accused of crimes and antisocial behaviour, often in the forms of theft, domestic violence, drunkenness and destruction of property. Mr Kotzé at Timongo explained: 'What we have organised here is that the whole workforce have elected a disciplinary committee themselves, so it is not a law that is pushed upon them by white management and blah, blah, blah. They have elected it themselves' (2008). This committee handled problems 'in a mature way' rather than 'rushing to the police'. Given their role in deciding who should be removed from the farm as punishment for transgressions – simultaneously evicted and fired – the committees created a buffer between farm owners and workers, as Mr Kotzé confirmed:

- *So that disciplinary committee can dismiss?*
- *They hire and they fire – not me.*
- *And they can tell somebody to leave the farm?*
- *Yes.*

The system has been in operation from 2006 and, as the security manager had stressed, promotes self-enforcement by farm workers: 'Our systems on the farm allow no squatting, because they [the workers] chase squatters away themselves,' Mr Kotzé said. Workers were rarely dismissed, though, 'except hooligans', defined as those who were 'smoking dagga, stealing, drunk on the job, sleeping on the job'. Offenders were given a series of warnings, while certain abuses led to immediate dismissal. The disciplinary committee had fired a young man who physically abused his wife including throwing stones at her and 'cutting off half of her ear with a knife,' Mr Kotzé told us: 'Then I said to the disciplinary committee, now I have had enough. So, they sat down with him and dismissed him, and he was asked to leave the farm.'

Effects on family life and sexuality

Discipline and securitisation shape gender and family relations on the study farms. We saw both commonalities and differences between the study farms. At Mbhongo, relations between the manager and farm dwellers were expressed in direct and regular interaction. The manager knew every family and their members on the farm; workers were able to take up issues of employment and family matters, and the managers often intervened to help or control. 'I also want my people to live like people,' as the South African manager said. To a considerable degree, worker and dweller nuclear families could stay together, although there were pressures on this pattern: schooling took some children away, and some families were orienting themselves towards establishing homes elsewhere. The three other farms were larger, more business-oriented ventures with on-farm worker compounds where tenure was employment-based. From an economic and management point of view, small families were preferred. At Timongo some workers were staying in 'the compound situation', often with a wife or husband and maybe a child, 'but we don't want big families there, because they occupy two rooms,' the manager Mr Kotzé said. However, he also wanted to respect 'private life' and freedom of movement, avoiding making the farm into a 'military camp':

Visits? Visits? I cannot interfere and I will not interfere in a person's private life, so if his grandmother comes to stay with him for three-four days I do not even know it, we do allow it. But we don't allow families to stay for a period of time in the compound. Visits and staying for a long time I do take that as separate ... there is a grey area there ... but we do not stop visits to the compounds ... No, this is not a military camp. It is an environment in which we want everyone to be happy, and staying nicely, working nicely. We would like to create that environment: this is not a military camp. (Manager, 2009)

A widespread practice on the farms was that male workers could live there with a wife or girlfriend, and children, while female workers were not allowed to have unemployed husbands or boyfriends staying with them. A female worker at Timongo complained that, 'only married people are allowed to stay together: a man's wife who is not working can stay with him, but a woman cannot keep a man.' A female worker at Makwembe (2008) complained about the owner's double standards, allowing girlfriends but not boyfriends to stay or visit: 'He told us that a woman cannot marry a man: it is a man who marries a woman.' She noted that it discriminated against women and forced her to sleep away from the farm to be with her partner. As a consequence, single women were more exposed to pressure and violence from men.

Women also had limited options to leave their partners without losing their homes and jobs. In a dispute on Malamula in 2007, a farm worker said that a woman had experienced violence and a break-up of the relationship. A special 'committee', consisting of a man handpicked by the owner, ruled that she should return to the room she had shared with her boyfriend or leave the farm. The farm management sided with the 'committee', so the woman faced a choice between job loss and continued risk of domestic violence, and chose to resign and leave the farm.

Some male workers at Timongo found that gendered rules about family visits made it difficult for them to get visits from their children. One worker argued: 'Visitors should be allowed to stay. Only our wives are allowed, but not others or friends. Children can only stay when they visit their mothers. When the children visit their fathers, they [managers] say they are not allowed, that they will steal.' Security efforts were also linked to a concern of managers,

and some workers, was that 'outsiders' who move onto the farm as lovers were causing a perceived high rate of teenage pregnancy. The same worker explained that teenage mothers staying with the father had been evicted in an unfair way without consulting the parents.

As noted earlier, a study in 2010 found that almost one in two woman workers on commercial farms in Mpumalanga and Limpopo was HIV infected, with a rate of 47% among female workers and 31% among males. The HIV infection rates for two Limpopo sites were 28% and 26% respectively (Maromi & IOM 2010). The study found a particularly high difference between of women and men under 30, and attributes it to:

Workers were not allowed to have unemployed husbands or boyfriends staying with them.

... the high levels of inter-generational sex reported to be happening between older men and younger women, high levels of forced sex, and with relatively high levels of transactional sex reported among participants, together with the very low pay among these workers (between R800 and R1 000 per month for permanent workers and often less for seasonal workers who are paid per day), which does not bring them above the poverty line. (Maromi & IOM 2010: 60)

Timongo and other farms pursued HIV/AIDS sensitisation with the Department of Health. 'We try to work in one or two hours for meetings on this,' said Mr Kotzé, but he also seemed to question or underestimate the extent of the problem and to believe that security as control over the movement of people could control HIV/AIDS:

In the two years that I am on this farm we have not lost one guy or lady to HIV/AIDS. We make sure that the right stuff [contraceptives] is available on each of the farms ... But maybe there are people who are sick, I don't know, we won't see that, but there is no one that we have lost, as far as I know. And that also comes from controlling the compound: if you are chasing unwanted people away, then you also have control over that. (Manager, Timongo, 2009)

In view of the pattern of split families and the scale of the problem, the measures appeared inadequate to control HIV/AIDS among dwellers. The regular separation of

many workers from their partners and family could increase the sexual networking among multiple partners and therefore their exposure to HIV. Transactional sex in return for employment, promotion, protection, accommodation and money from superiors on farms or officials outside farms, as we heard, would aggravate the problem further.

CHILDREN

While the conditions for children on the study farms were diverse, reproduction of a pattern of split families was related to concerns about children and their access to education. Young children are often sent away to relatives or friends due to the closure of farm schools, the absence of secondary schools, and lack of affordable transport or boarding facilities. At Malamula, for example, there was widespread evidence of split families with parents and primary school children living on-farm while older children, spouses and the elderly moved off to communal areas or to Zimbabwe.

At Makwembe on the Limpopo River, the farm village appeared to provide a fairly safe environment for children, and small children had access to a crèche at subsidised rates; there was also a local primary school, but some staff questioned the quality of teaching. However, families and particularly single women faced struggles in securing an acceptable life with their children (see Box 10).

The story of a worker at Makwembe illustrates the vulnerability of a young woman sent away for schooling and the

ambiguity of the farm as her only 'home' and yet not a place where she can live with her child or have a future. She was saving money to get her Grade 12 by correspondence and hoped to study further to get a better job, such as at the local hospital. She had one purpose in mind: to find a way to live with her daughter in town: 'the only way to be with my daughter is to leave the farm' (Box 11).

Changes on and around Timongo farm in Levubu Valley illustrated a number of problems for children and how the way they were addressed reflected security concerns and reinforced split family settlement patterns. The security manager addressed the issue of children with a mixture of paternalism and security concern. A local primary school was closed in 2007, like many other farm schools, while farm workers could not afford the former 'white school' in Levubu ('Blacks also go there now, but only those who have got money'). Therefore he told parents to send the children away from the farm:

As a security I tried to look to those hostels, to find if there are some intruders, those who are not working on the farm, coming only to stay there. Even today I instructed my people to go around to the hostels, to find out if there are little children, those who are above six years and up, so that they must report to me. So that I can talk to their parents that they must take them to school: they must not keep them here on the farm, because I don't see them having a good future. (Security manager, Timongo, 2008)

The security manager also advised new workers from claimant communities that children were better off in the

Box 10: Cost of education and difficulty of securing social grants

A woman supervisor at Makwembe started as a seasonal worker in 2002 and gained permanent employment after four months. She moved to the farm to save time and money for transport and, although she regarded the farm as her home, knew that it would only be for as long as she was working, as per her employment contract. In 2006 she received an RDP house in Musina, where she sometimes stayed, but it was not possible to move permanently as there were no jobs in town. A single mother with a 13-year old daughter, she had also adopted her deceased cousin's two children. Her daughter's boarding school cost her R1 100 per semester (R4 400 per year). She was not receiving child support grants for any of her three children and claimed that she had been told that her supervisor salary of R1 700 per month excluded her from the means-tested benefit [this was not correct]. In 2006 she applied for the grant for her two adoptees but by 2008 was still waiting for the outcome of this application, and feared another rejection. Even a very resourceful worker and mother had problems accessing her entitlements to public support.

Source: Farm worker, Makwembe, 2008

Box 11: The farm is 'home' but not a place for a future with a child

'I was born here. I enjoyed living here, because I had my mum and my dad and my friends. Before, I was at school, in Grade 12, at Musina High, but then I got pregnant and had to drop out, so now I have to raise my daughter. I didn't get a chance to write matric. I stayed with my father's friend ... the father of my child. I first stayed with my auntie and it didn't work out. None of it worked out. Staying with somebody you don't even know is not that great. Now I have my own place. My daughter is in town with her father's mother. I didn't want her to grow up on the farm; I wanted her to get a better education and a better chance in life. I don't have any other home. It is my home. I have a right to stay here, but no, if I am not working then I don't have a right. I've been here my whole life, that's why I call it home. My friends are here, my family is here, I have no other home ... but you can't stay here without working ... I don't have anywhere else to go.'

Source: Farm worker, Makwembe, 2008

communities than on the farm. The absence of a school meant that there was no other way: 'A child must go to school, that's all.' Another reason adolescents had also been told to leave farms was they had no educational or other offers: 'What will they do? They will rely on gambling ... These children have got no job, and they have got nothing to do. So they can resort to crime, stealing.' In one case he had called the police to disperse 13- to 14-year-old children who were 'playing cards and betting'. A plantation manager (2008) said that, whereas before youth often returned back after being dismissed, 'Now they are no longer coming back because the children are afraid of security, who are threatening to arrest them and take them to the police.' Through the security efforts at Timongo, in many cases owners and managers rather than farm dwellers made decisions about children's schooling and residence.

Farm dwellers and workers appeared to respond in two major ways to children and adolescents being sent away. In some cases dwellers themselves decide that their children should stay elsewhere. Some saw farms as having a 'bad influence' on teenagers. A 45-year-old farm worker and mother of five children (aged 1 to 24 years) stressed the problem of schooling: 'While I am still alive, I want my children to go to school. I don't want them to come and work here. There is no school here; the one here is only up to Grade 7. Children need to go to school.' She added, though, that it was also because she did not have the space for them in her room and because the 'environment' on the farm was not good for them (2008). The plantation manager said that he 'brought his wife' to work with him on the farm. When he became a foreman he 'decided my wife should go and look after them, since they are three boys and cannot cook.'

Farm workers were concerned that their children should have a safe and morally appropriate environment and get quality education to improve their opportunities in life. A worker at Makwembe, who had worked at the farm for nearly twenty years and lived in the farm compound with his wife, also a worker, said: 'Our children are in the village, they only visit us during school holidays. I do not want my children to grow up on the farm, for the farm school does not treat children well ... they do much more sporting activities than teaching.' A male worker at Timongo noted the effect of child labour having become unacceptable: 'Before the culture on farms was that a child should be like the mother and father, and supply labour, so the farmers were happy to see children not going to school.' Considering the future, he seemed to accept that the farms were not good places for children. It would be better to give workers higher salaries to enable parents to support their children in living away from farms:

Here there are lots of naughty children. They don't have manners; they were born here, they have no home. We don't want our children to copy them and become like them. The way children are brought up on farms is not the same as in the village. On farms, children do piece-jobs and stay away from school. In the village, there is a bit of money from us and our wives – those of us who support the children and ensure that they go to school.
(Farm worker, 2008)

Thus, negative perceptions of the farms as places for children were fairly widespread among workers, linked to concerns beyond attaining education. A case at Mbhongholo illustrates the fact that many dwellers still struggle with lack of documentation. It also shows weak public support for a family's quest to ensure their

Box 12: Access to schooling: A family at Mbhongholo

At Mbhongholo, farm children lived with their families and could attend primary school, although they had to walk far to get there. For secondary schooling, they had to move to relatives in towns or communal areas. A mother reported that her children had been rejected when she tried to enrol them in a school in 2005:

But the children didn't have birth certificates. We even tried to go to the school there but the teachers told us, no, they could not take them without certificates. They were born here at home; they were never in a clinic; so there is no yellow paper now [no clinic card]. So we came back and we thought there is nothing we could do, so we gave up. Even the children were complaining that they wanted to go to school. (Farm dweller, 2008)

The authorities requested testimony from the farm to prove their long-term residence in South Africa, but due to a conflict with the landowner and manager over tenure, the dwellers did not dare to approach them for this. Rejecting the children due to lack of documentation violated their human and constitutional right to education. Requesting the landowner's intervention also appeared to reflect the view of the farm as 'total institution' to which dwellers belonged. The authorities intervened three years later to enrol the children in school, but did so abruptly, with only a few days' warning, as the children's father explained:

The police came here with some papers to take up the children. They told us the papers were from Pretoria. They told us the government said it did not want children on the farms who are not going to school, so they were now going to all the farms to collect them. (Farm dweller, 2008)

Although traumatic at the time, after the children had been moved to a village and enrolled in school, the family saw it as a move for the better: 'It was actually good that the police came,' the mother said.

children's education, followed finally by the authorities intervening somewhat heavilyhandedly to bring children to school (Box 12).

THE ELDERLY

The practice of evicting the elderly – or 'asking them to leave' – is widespread. Farm owners and managers preferred to get the elderly off the farms, in part so that they would die and be buried elsewhere. This is despite the provision in Section 8(4) of ESTA for long-term tenure security for the elderly – those over 60 years who have resided on the farm for at least ten years. At Malamula, the owner said the policy was to offer retired workers continued residence, but to charge them rent. In practice it appeared that only a few did, and at least one of them (a former *induna*) continued to serve the owner by reporting on conditions and events in the compound. Payment for rental and services makes it difficult or unattractive for

many elderly to stay, yet across the farms we found elderly people who were determined to stay despite some owners and managers not recognising their right to do so. The manager at Timongo, Mr Kotzé, said that the elderly 'will go back to their former homelands with their houses and their pensions and they will stay there', and expressed a paternalist concern and effort to help them in the transition to a life away from the farm:

What I normally do with an old man or an old woman – now this is how I was brought up – first, if he is sick, if there is illness, I will send him to our local doctor, who writes a report with his recommendation. As far as I can, I will give him a letter, stating where he worked, and help him to get [his] pension. That is my personal help to him. Because, there is no more UIF, you know, mos, all those laws, all those things have elapsed so they cannot actually go and claim their money. So that is what, from my point of view, I am doing for those who are old and sick and who are leaving. (Manager, Timongo, 2009)

ALTERNATIVE SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

Our farm cases and interviews with owners and managers suggest that different locations and types of farm worker residence may serve corporate interests. On three of the farms (Makwembe, Malamula and Mbhongo), permanent staff primarily live on-farm, as do temporary staff in the working season. On Timongo, labour is to a greater extent sourced from nearby off-farm communities, and this has been reinforced through restitution; yet, here too some workers live in the on-farm compounds. At Timongo, Mr Kotzé expressed his preference that workers and dwellers stay in well-organised rural settlements on or close to the farm:

The idea I have got on this farm is to create one or two villages and then break down all the other old compounds. Just to put proper sanitation, wash facilities, electricity, and to upgrade people's living standards, to have a crèche maybe, so that the father and the mother can go to work without worrying about the child, because it is in the crèche and is looked after and is safe. So that is the future idea I have got in my head. (Manager, 2008)

This resonates with the vision for settlement expressed by the owner at Malamula farm, who argued that 'It's better to bring them [farm workers] in a small town where there are shops. Wherever you go there are little agri-villages in the world.' The future envisaged by these two managers is to construct a nearby farm compound or village, where workers and their families can live, while limiting responsibilities for the farm enterprise. It could be an external zone, on municipal land, or an internal zone, where the costs in terms of land and social services are nevertheless minimised.

However, there were tensions in these visions. Two contradictory interests have created a certain ambiguity: on the one hand the practical need to have workers close by to reduce the time and cost of daily transport; on the other, the interest among farm owners in avoiding responsibility for the welfare of workers and their families, and therefore in arranging for social reproduction to take place off the farm. Mr Kotzé noted that 'to build a village costs a lot of money and called for the assistance of the municipality, but the municipality has so far rejected carrying the cost

of worker housing on private land' and other public funding was hard to get – 'on which door I have to go and knock, I don't know.' The dominant solution so far had therefore been the move towards split families. There are also tensions between dwellers' and workers' quests for homes with independent land tenure, gardens, goats and livelihoods – and the preference of owners and managers for settlements that *they* can control.

CONCLUSIONS

Farms are places where people live – a point that is often ignored in policy and debates about the future of agriculture. Often considered just as units of labour, many of those who live on farms are *not* employed but have their homes there and have built lives and social relations there, shaping their childhood, adolescence, gender, sexuality and old age.

The rights to family life and to live in accordance with one's culture are enshrined in ESTA. Our findings raise questions about the possibilities for realising the 'right to family life' on farms. Our observations on these commercial farms in Limpopo suggest a continuation of long-established patterns of migrant labour between farms and communal areas. This can be seen in the movement of people at particular stages of life back and forth between these spaces – to communal areas for schooling and back again to farms for employment (and intermittently so for seasonal work) and back again to villages for old age. These patterns, set in place through the Bantustan system, are in the post-apartheid era being entrenched by a number of factors, including:

- priorities for a labour force with merely employment-based claims to residence and land on farms;
- resistance to ESTA: removal of non-working adolescents and young adults, to avoid having non-working adults on-farm, and the removal of elderly people, to avoid burial on-farm;

The future envisaged by managers is to construct a nearby farm compound or village, where workers and their families can live.

- land restitution: while restitution brings about the movement of claimants onto farms they once occupied, it also leads to the removal of farm dwellers, following job losses, and their displacement to communal areas – often the most feasible place for them to go; and
- the crisis in Zimbabwe, which caused a flow of job seekers, sometimes in desperate need of sustenance.

Contrary to official intentions, post-1994 reforms, including land reform and municipal boundary demarcation, have reinforced rather than dismantled the spatial geography of apartheid and the boundaries between commercial farming and communal areas (Ramutsindela 2007). The particular way that land restitution is implemented has ensured continued dualism between these rural spaces, rather than the creation of new in-between types of land uses and settlement. A new corporate model of management and ‘securitisation’ appears to be reinforcing a remittance economy based on migration between commercial farms and communal areas, and increasingly Zimbabwe. Whereas in the past this was considered a ‘labour subsidy’ for accumulation elsewhere (Wolpe 1972), this may no

longer be the case due to the declining role of agrarian production in the communal areas, and the greater significance of social grants. But even if peasant farming is not the means of subsistence, the reproductive labour of people – often women, often the elderly, often unemployed though sometimes receiving social grants – continues to enable farms to employ people without carrying the full costs of social and material reproduction of labour.

This chapter has drawn attention to old and emerging forms of ‘domestic governance’, and increasingly a ‘corporate governance’, of the lives of women and men on farms, extending into who they may live with, on what terms, and how this shapes gender relations and family life. It also draws attention to problematic conditions for children, particularly access to quality education in the face of the closure of farm schools. For farm workers and dwellers to achieve tenure security, livelihoods and social justice in the future, they and society must also grapple with questions and competing visions for where and how farm workers and dwellers and their families can live with dignity from childhood, through adolescence and adulthood into old age.



Part IV

CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD

12. Conclusions

CHANGING CONTEXT AND TRAJECTORIES OF ADAPTATION

Farm worker and farm dweller issues have been understood within the context of colonial dispossession, apartheid monopoly on land ownership and the associated political and economic marginalisation – factors that remain central to understanding the current situation. We have now, which is equally important, examined complex, contemporary patterns of change in the conditions, behaviour and decision-making on selected farms. We suggest that three major drivers of change in commercial agriculture in Limpopo, and in the lives of farm workers and farm dwellers, are market-led economic restructuring, land restitution, and migration or forced displacement.

Market-led economic restructuring

Changing market opportunities and costs are shaping the way actors, particularly owners and agri-businesses, are responding to opportunities and constraints in a liberalised economy. After the withdrawal of subsidies and state controls, markets are major determinants of investor and

owner behaviour; labour is both a resource and a possible liability. Our case study farms illustrate certain trajectories of adaptation to the changing economic context, in particular horticultural intensification, conversion to game farming, and vertical integration into value chains.

Horticultural intensification involves the expansion in cultivation and irrigation responding to growing domestic and international markets for high-value crops. Increasing labour costs spur mechanisation and shifts to less labour-intensive production, as seen on the citrus farm (Malamula) but apparently less on the other horticultural farms. Whereas Malamula citrus farm displayed a systematic move towards producing more with less labour and higher capital investments, the picture at Makwembe on the Limpopo was mixed because of its diverse and labour-intensive vegetable production lines, which are demanded by retailers. It also illustrates the fact that most of the seasonal labour is re-employed year after year, and for around eight months of the year. This is related to the production need for high skills and experience, while the obligations of full-time employment are avoided. There is a clear feminisation of seasonal labour on this farm; so, despite their skills, many women do not attain fully



secure employment. This is consistent with a global trend in export agriculture of prioritising male permanent labour and flexible female casual labour (Dolan & Sorby 2003: 29).

Conversion to game farming responded to investor and tourist interest and, in our one completed case (Mbhongholo) and one aborted case (Tinghala) involved major farm mergers in 2003. Mbhongholo was not typically market-driven but recreation-oriented, even if this was partly by default rather than design. The Tinghala game farm found a ready market demand for its luxury safari ventures. The conversion to game farming tends to cause a reduction in employment and a change in the type of staff needed, but experience from elsewhere shows a mixed impact on workers, with some finding the labour lighter and more rewarding and others losing employment and access to land (Brandt & Mkhize 2009). With wild animals on the farms, the need to control land use is greater, leading to banning of residence outside compounds and of independent production by workers, particularly with livestock. Our two cases represent different economic strategies and different consequences for workers, yet both had sought to shift the people

living on the farms along the gradient from ‘dwellers’ to ‘workers’. At Mbhongholo the purchase and farm mergers caused significant movement of workers off the farms and only one family had secured tenure to land. Managers stated that the residential tenure of other dwellers would be protected but it appeared to depend on employment and good relations. At Tinghala, the dwellers and workers on the constituent farms had been evicted or shifted into the wage labour force, which now resides outside the farm or in housing offered temporarily on the basis of employment, and has weak or no historical claims to the land. Apparently rather draconian control of labour and consequent tense labour relations also led managers to regard research as inconvenient or intolerable.

Vertical integration in up- and down-stream enterprises pursued at Makwembe farm involved fruit and vegetable processing as a diversification strategy, sourcing inputs both locally and across the border in Mozambique. On Timongo restitution farms in Levubu, the former owners sought to remain involved in input supply and processing, which was one of the motivations for forming the first strategic partnership, Mavu. They tried to protect and develop the capital and competence invested in vertical

integrations, and the new land-owning communities and their partners later had to do the same. The owner of Malamula expressed the view that ‘land in itself is nothing’. The necessity of the vertical integration, at least to maintain the large-scale market operations, creates a dependency between landowning communities and agrobusiness partners. Game farming integrates the farm enterprise into new industries of tourism, hospitality and trophy hunting, though at Mbhongholo such conversion through vertical integration had not taken place.

While economic liberalisation is a trend, state policies played a role in regulating economic conditions to varying degrees. The economic environment also involves state

All the study farms were under restitution claims at different stages.

regulation and pricing of key inputs like electricity and water. While state labour inspectors monitor labour conditions, the owner and workers at

Makwembe questioned their dedication and effectiveness, claiming that underpaid workers on other farms caused unfair competition. Minimum wage regulation has raised the wage level but also, according to owners and managers, spurred re-organisation, investment in technology, casualisation of labour and the reduction in some benefits, notably free housing (in general) and, as a specific example, Makwembe’s farm-sponsored house construction programme. As this trend is well known from the literature, a noteworthy finding is also that it is highly uneven and incomplete; for example, charges for housing were modest: very much lower at Makwembe than at Malamula, and housing was free at Timongo and Mbhongholo.

Land restitution

All the study farms were under restitution claims at different stages – from rumours, to gazetted claims, to implemented programmes. In the case of Makwembe and Tinghala (commercial game), claims existed as rumours, and neither workers nor owners expected imminent change. On Mbhongholo and other contiguous farms a claim was pending, some farm dwellers being involved and others not. On Malamula citrus farm the setting up of joint venture companies was in process. On Timongo in Levubu, land had been restored to two communities who initiated cooperation with a strategic partner.

The restitution process here, with its extended period of uncertainty and manoeuvring, caused an estimated 40% decline in employment of ‘old’ workers. Many dwellers had left the farms, and the few who were left – a few of whom had multi-generational links to the land – now had to negotiate their presence with new land-owning communities. As due to the invisibility of farm workers and dwellers, we find that workers and dwellers were generally ignored as a distinct interest group in the restitution process on Timongo.

The land restitution programme is putting significant pressure on landowners to leave farming or enter new alliances with the state, claimant communities and other commercial actors. It creates uncertainty for many actors, including long-term or seasonal workers and managers. Particularly vulnerable are workers, including migrant workers, without links to claimant communities. Since the conversion to employment-based tenure has been almost completed on the major farms, and since the number of dwellers left on Mbhongholo is now probably fairly stable (though not secure for each individual), restitution may now be the factor that threatens the tenure of most workers and dwellers. Some managers employed by the strategic partners expressed the aim of protecting ‘old’ workers and dwellers, so their tenure security may be further weakened by the collapse of these companies. It is a major responsibility of government to ensure that conflict and dispossession do not escalate in this situation.

Migration and displacement

A third factor driving change in agriculture is the intensified migration that followed the political crisis and economic collapse in Zimbabwe, adding numerous individuals subjected to economic and political displacement to the established patterns of labour migration. Labour migration provides commercial farming with enormous benefits and appears to compound already-existing market pressures towards flexible and insecure labour arrangements. Some workers argued that the availability of men and women in desperate need of survival and incomes weakens the negotiating power and labour conditions of all workers. Farms played a role in maintaining agricultural knowledge and skills in the region. They provided livelihoods for some displaced Zimbabweans and temporary escapes from the roads or the terror of the *amaGumaguma* river gangsters. To some

extent farms filled a function one would have expected the Zimbabwean and South African governments to play by providing for the displaced. Therefore, they also contributed to making the politics of denial – which cannot tolerate refugee camps along the South African borders – possible (Derman & Kaarhus forthcoming; Wisborg forthcoming). From 2009, the policy of granting temporary residence permits increased the recognition of the plight of migrants but also sought to maintain a scenario of normality and policies of treating Zimbabwean migration as ‘economic’ rather than ‘political’, ‘which obscures the significant humanitarian and protection needs’ and underpins the denial of refugee status (FMSP 2009: 27).

In conclusion, none of the primary drivers of change on these farms in the Vhembe district of Limpopo – the liberalised agricultural and trade policies that integrate farm in global markets and value chains, the restitution programme, and migration – were designed with a concern for farm workers and dwellers. State policies on land reform and agrarian change were not directed towards farm dwellers and workers, nor did they appear to be drivers of change, with the exception, locally, of the restitution programme. Global and regional drivers of change and trajectories of adaptation create the dynamics, fluidity and high level of uncertainty of the situations within which women and men on farms struggle over tenure, livelihoods and justice.

TENURE SECURITY

On tenure, our qualitative findings cannot revise or confirm the figures on farm evictions provided by Wegerif et al. (2005) but interviews with evictees, a few dwellers, workers and managers on the farms confirm the persistence of evictions. They did not use the term ‘eviction’, considered politically charged, but referred to ‘having to leave’, or ‘being asked to leave’. This idiom reflects the paternalist power of landowners to effect a displacement by telling tenants that they are no longer wanted. Persistent insecurity of tenure is evident in (a) evictions of whole families, (b) the erosion of tenure rights through unilateral decisions by owners, for example over access to land, livestock keeping and housing, and (c) the eviction of individual family members. The latter two dimensions of loss of tenure have not been adequately recognised.

Interviews with evictees included a woman forced to leave with her children and livestock, while the husband stayed on as worker; in another case, an elderly couple was evicted from a farm with minor compensation. On the study farms, examples included: large-scale evictions during the early phases of restitution; elderly people asked to ‘go home and rest’; eviction of children by managers of the strategic partnership (all Timongo, Levubu); eviction of a man after conflict with a manager (Mbhongholo); past constructive evictions of dwellers and workers on Malamula who would not accept the loss of rights to keep livestock; on the same farm, a case of effective eviction of a woman worker denied alternative housing after the break-up of a violent relationship; and examples mentioned above in connection with the introduction of game farming and farm mergers. Tenure legislation (ESTA and LTA) was apparently not significant, or had a mainly indirect impact when dwellers could refer to legislation when facing a threatened eviction, particularly if assisted by a land organisation.

Farm evictions often represent an affront to justice because: (a) the substantive rights previously enjoyed, such as access to livestock ownership, land and housing remain uncompensated; (b) evictions take place without due process; (c) the independent tenure rights of women are disregarded; (d) the needs and voices of children are not addressed; and (e) evictees face unacceptable insecurity and deprivation. In South Africa the movement of women, men and children off commercial farms and into towns, cities and rural areas has been a major demographic trend in recent decades (Wegerif et al. 2005) but state and society have not created the necessary infrastructure and opportunities for evictees to build an acceptable life in new circumstances.

The problems found are not merely due to poor implementation; the legislative approach has a poor grasp of, and measures to deal with, workers’ and dwellers’ complex and interdependent access to land, home and livelihoods and in some cases their deep association with certain places. As generally found in this study, farm owners prefer narrow, contractual relations that depend on employment and limit the rights of dwellers and workers. Tenure policy and legislation needs to recognise the *complexity* and *breadth*

They did not use the term ‘eviction’, but referred to ‘having to leave’, or ‘being asked to leave’.

of tenure. We argue that tenure is less an independent variable that policy and legislation can 'fix' directly, and to quite a large extent a dependent variable, meaning that it is a product of the relations, resources, economic conditions and political practices that govern farms and their context. As evidenced by the farm strategies and restructuring in this context, protecting tenure is truly difficult. Tenure policy must go from the present narrow procedural approach to a broad social justice approach; *regstellende aksie*, action to put things right, would include restoring the access to adequate land and housing, through changes on each farm but also through comprehensive land and agrarian reform to make it possible at scale. This could include tax incentives for subdivision of land, support for small-scale production and marketing, as well as public backing for the collective organisation of farm dwellers and workers.

LIVELIHOODS

Our research confirmed that commercial farms are important sources of livelihood for a great number of people. Formal employment, and the training that it involves, is increasingly scarce in rural South Africa. Owners, managers and workers on commercial farms act in their own interests but deserve recognition for creating this public good. More than 400 workers (and many

Commercial farms encapsulate secondary economies in which non-employed dependants find incomes.

more dependants) derive their major livelihood from each of the two farms, Makwembe and Malamula, which also provide vital livelihoods for migrants from Zimbabwe. An under-researched phenomenon is that commercial farms encapsulate secondary economies in which non-employed dependants, some of them migrants, find incomes and a degree of protection, for example, problematically, as poorly paid nannies or sex workers or, more constructively, as traders, craftspeople and service providers.

We also observed the results of a progressive reduction in access to land and land-based livelihoods on the study farms. The demand for alternative or expanded livelihood options is considerable but varies among the heterogeneous groups of tenants and workers. Some focus

squarely on salaries but some develop small enterprises, as craftspeople or shopkeepers. Many are resourceful livelihoods experimenters but the political recognition, research-based understanding and policy to assist dwellers and workers is lacking. New ways to expand, and increase the synergies between, different livelihoods strategies – wage labour, access to land, and own enterprises – are needed. Recalling the woman dweller on Mbhongo who wanted to be able to load her cart with vegetables and get out of the farm to the market but had a fence in her way, there is a need to understand better and strengthen the reinforcing, two-way linkages between livelihoods and the rights to home, freedom of movement and information. These are needed to be able to pursue trade, to seek employment and to maintain solidarity networks with towns, communal areas and neighbouring countries.

Livelihoods and health are closely connected. Farm workers face diverse health problems, and distances and poor communication make access to health services including mobile clinics a problem. Makwembe farm laudably provides transport to medical services and covers half the cost of treatment, to reduce absenteeism and help workers. In general, salaries provide little opportunity to buy nutritious food, save, meet contingencies and seek medical attention. Some women workers on Timongo reported that their incomes are so low that they cannot afford the kinds of food they need to stay healthy, including milk products and vegetables. This has a serious impact on adults and children alike. HIV/AIDS also seriously harms human wellbeing and 'the bottom-line', as a farm owner said. Contraceptives and public information are provided but the social and material conditions appear to worsen the situation: patterns of casual and transactional sex are linked to split residence and to the desperate economic circumstances of some dwellers and workers, as witnessed throughout the region (FMSP 2009: 52–3). This is in line with findings in other types of communities where poverty, fatalism and dysfunctional behaviour are interwoven (Campbell 2003). After the time of our field visits, research confirmed extremely high HIV prevalence levels of workers on commercial farms in Mpumalanga and Limpopo (Maromi & IOM 2010). Major measures to improve health would be wage increases, improved accessibility (mobile clinics, public transport and employer support for transport) and measures to empower those who are under the pressure to engage in transactional sex. Gendered patterns of settlement and

family must be better understood and incorporated when addressing HIV/AIDS, as also suggested by IOM (2010) and Theyise (2010).

SOCIAL JUSTICE ON FARMS

Farm dwellers and workers face variable but often severe material conditions on farms – especially poor access to land, income and education. Commercial farms are structured by capitalist relations with limited participation in decision making and ownership. These features, somewhat paradoxically, sometimes make it appear ‘academic’ to mention ‘equality’. In the following, we first consider some major issues and groups that we think need more attention and then attempt a synopsis with regard to social justice norms.

Major issues and groups

In the national and regional context of the farms, employment opportunities are scarce but essential for livelihoods, learning and participation. However, many workers endure the menial and exhausting work on these farms mainly as a means of survival or of reaching Johannesburg. Issues of forced labour and rampant (racist) abuse have figured strongly in the debate of rural labour in South Africa (SAHRC 2003; see also statements by COSATU reported by Naidu 2009). We did not observe such conditions on the study farms, and the stereotype of racist, abusive landowners who always oppress victimised workers and dwellers appears distorted. However, the working conditions probably do not meet the standard of fair and decent conditions of labour as required by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (United Nations, 1966: Articles 7 and 8). Workers are unorganised or poorly organised. The minimum wage of about R1 500 per month in 2012 is not adequate for a decent life for the family, as argued by workers and at least one farm owner. Furthermore, not all farms pay minimum wages, or make illegal deductions. Workers also stressed that they need more information on labour rights such as work hour regulations, sick leave, rights to holiday and absence, and compensation after injury. Labour rights should be promoted by public labour inspectors, legal services, and through training of owners and workers, aimed at greater mobilisation and organisation in labour unions.

The right to gender equality features strongly in international, African and South African law but is not strongly promoted on the farms studied. The large horticulture farms provide valuable employment opportunities for women but a feminisation of agricultural labour, due to women’s skills in taking care of crops, is coupled with lack of attention to gender equality in training, promotions and leadership. Women tended to have less secure jobs and be less likely to be promoted. This is probably one of the explanations for the gender wage gap that appears to have emerged after 2000, where a study found that monthly wages of male full-time workers was about 60% higher than for female workers in the same category (Wegerif et al. 2005: 52; Yates 2011: 167). Taking the feminisation of casual labour into account would further increase the gap.

The widespread reproduction of split families disadvantages women workers in particular, since women are frequently barred from living with unemployed partners. Missing or low-quality childcare and schooling disadvantages women more due to the traditional distribution of care responsibilities. On some farms, poverty and unemployment force some women to engage in transactional sex for income or protection. Workers and managers tended to see gender equality somewhat narrowly as a question of equal pay for equal work. While this is important, other dimensions of equality related to promotions, health, mobility and security should also be included. This requires more discussion on farms in forums where male and female dwellers and workers can share experiences and strategise. It also requires state and civil society support and more research on gender in farming. Relevant norms exist in the Constitution, in the United Nations’ Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and in the emphasis on access to land, water, energy and food in the African Charter Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (African Union 2003).

Migrants derive some benefits of employment and contribute to the growth of South African agriculture through their labour, experience and skills. There are vast differences among the study farms regarding the conditions they find and the roles they play. We observed

Poverty and unemployment force some women to engage in transactional sex for income or protection.

practices of inclusion by owners and workers, and the study area did not experience violent xenophobic attacks during the period in 2008 when these were occurring elsewhere in South Africa (Hassim et al. 2008). However, unemployment and underemployment expose migrants, particularly women, to severe poverty and risky coping strategies. Some South African workers argued that the high level of migration worsened labour conditions by weakening their negotiating position. Thus, the economic collapse and political persecution in Zimbabwe put a strain on commercial farms and the people who live there, complicating tenure and livelihoods issues further. Better public services for migrants – reception, documentation, health, legal advice and labour inspections – are needed. While historical and cultural ties facilitate integration and tolerance, these cannot be expected to prevent violent conflict over, for example, scarce work opportunities and inadequate housing on farms.

Children of dwellers and workers may find homes, relatively safe environments and close human relations on farms – but they also suffer under the insecurity and poverty of their parents, the isolation of farms, split families, and uneven or poor quality of public services, particularly in education and health. Their parents reported problems of accessing identity documents and social grants. Access to education was repeatedly brought up by farm

dwellers, also at our workshop in 2009, as one of their major problems. The problem comprises lack of schools; the poor quality of teaching; the difficulty

of transport; problems and costs related to attending school away from the farm, normally living with relatives or friends; and often prohibitively high costs of boarding schools. Evictions affect children through dislocation and the disempowerment of their parents, who are the main duty-bearers concerning the children’s human rights. Moreover, children were sometimes targeted for evictions or systematic pressure to achieve a preferred split-family settlement pattern. The effort to remove children of schoolgoing age from some farms was partly motivated by concern about children’s right to education but the state’s corresponding duty includes making education accessible and affordable. The right to education, to family life and to choose one’s home pose difficult dilemmas for individuals and the government, as officials noted in

Children’s rights require increased investments in rural schools.

our 2009 workshop with them. Children’s rights to all of them require increased investments in rural schools and transport to schools as well as the planning of settlements where farm worker and dweller families have better opportunities to live together. More research is needed on children’s experiences of living on, or leaving, farms.

Paternalism remains a significant feature of relations on farms. Our interviews with landowners and managers confirm that their advocacy of change or benefits for workers avoids changes that could challenge power relations. Similarly, some dwellers articulate their expectations within a paternalist discourse of being provided for, of once again receiving free food rations and firewood on the farm. In many ways paternalist relations appear to weaken agency and be incompatible with an empowered citizenship and participation in democracy (see Mngxitama 2001). While we chose to focus on single farms, there is a need to expand the view to actor networks and alliances and the opportunities that dwellers and workers have for social and political mobilisation – to be able to negotiate with landowners, their organisations and other actors. Agency of workers and dwellers in new patterns of confrontation and cooperation, public leadership, and changes in agrarian power relations – these are all required to make the citizenship of farm workers and dwellers effective.

Synopsis on social justice norms

On the commercial farms of Limpopo, multiple forms of human inequality are striking, though not unique in a country where high economic inequality has multiple ramifications in the lives of women, men and children. Reflecting on the abstract requirements of social justice suggested in Chapter 3, key observations on the conditions of workers and dwellers on the study farms are as follows.

(a) Dignity. Both fundamental and opaque, dignity resonated in diverse experiences and voices on farms. Harm to human dignity includes the exposure to violence on the roads of the border zone, and everyday suffering due to insecurity or poverty. Some expressed their despair over feeling pushed to engage in transactional sex; some over humiliating work conditions, when a day’s labour was not rewarded with a day’s wage. These are infused with the history and persistence of racial inequality. Encouragingly, in our meetings and discussions workers,

managers and owners on farms met us also with assurance and dignity.

(b) Human rights. The human rights culture of post-apartheid South Africa is increasingly a point of reference, although its implications may be unclear and practice deficient. Examples of human rights violations were not the direct, personal abuse that attract the media, but rather systemic violations linked to poverty and, quite often, the extreme vulnerability that deprivation and displacement in Zimbabwe caused for some individuals. We cannot conclude that dwellers and workers are treated as if their human rights carry the same moral and political weight as others. A manifestation of that is the careless treatment of tenure security and evictions, despite the fact that the Constitution has solemnly included the right to secure tenure, and redress for loss of it, in the Bill of Rights. Tenure insecurity of dwellers and workers was predominantly a result of past racial discrimination with regard to labour conditions and access to land; lack of security and redress leads to new violations, such as lack of homes and safety, as the lives of elderly evictees illustrated.

(c) Human capabilities. These are both of intrinsic value and the tools by which individuals grow and fight oppression, and so shape equality and inequality. We saw that some human capabilities, such as to live, to have enough food, to find adequate shelter and bodily protection, are not available for everyone. We also saw great variation, noting for example that the farm village on Makwembe offered opportunities for individuals to care for homes and the environment. That farms could do much better in supporting capabilities for learning and communication, with meeting places and access to media, was argued by a former Zimbabwean teacher, now a worker at Malamula.

(d) Equal opportunity. It remains farfetched for workers and dwellers to have equal opportunity to access positions in society and on the farm, although we noted individual cases that herald change – such as a woman worker who became a supervisor, or a farm worker's son

who got university education through the support of the farm. One barrier is the power hierarchies of farms themselves. They may be changing their character from the paternalist-personal to the corporate-organisational, as seen on restitution farms with 'strategic partners', but economics, education background and other constraints still exclude most male and female workers from the most rewarding positions in the hierarchy. Women are generally disadvantaged in access to leadership positions. That it remains difficult for children of dwellers and workers to access quality education at all levels will extend these inequalities into the future.

(e) Services. Dwellers and workers are not able to access services on a basis of equality. Not only are their facilities inferior to those of the richer and more powerful owners and managers, but they continue to suffer in their marginal position on geographically isolated farms. They are not in a position to negotiate in the new and changing payment regime for services, which imposes a logic of cost-recovery that places a heavy burden on people when considering their present incomes.

Therefore, there are trends and signs of improved conditions and relations on farms, such as the public effort to secure minimum wages and possibly a reduction in racist abuse. However, dwellers and workers are not able to 'transcend' the unequal gender and racial relations on farms collectively and systematically, although individuals sometimes do break through. The stigma of workers as exploited and of landowners as exploiters thus remains, but is probably less pronounced than in the past. This may be a hindrance if painful racial relations obstruct efforts to improve human rights and capabilities, the building blocks of systematic change for equality, freedom and dignity. For farm workers and dwellers to achieve that stature remains an unfulfilled dimension of South Africa's constitutional vision of democracy and human rights for everyone – it still needs to be done.

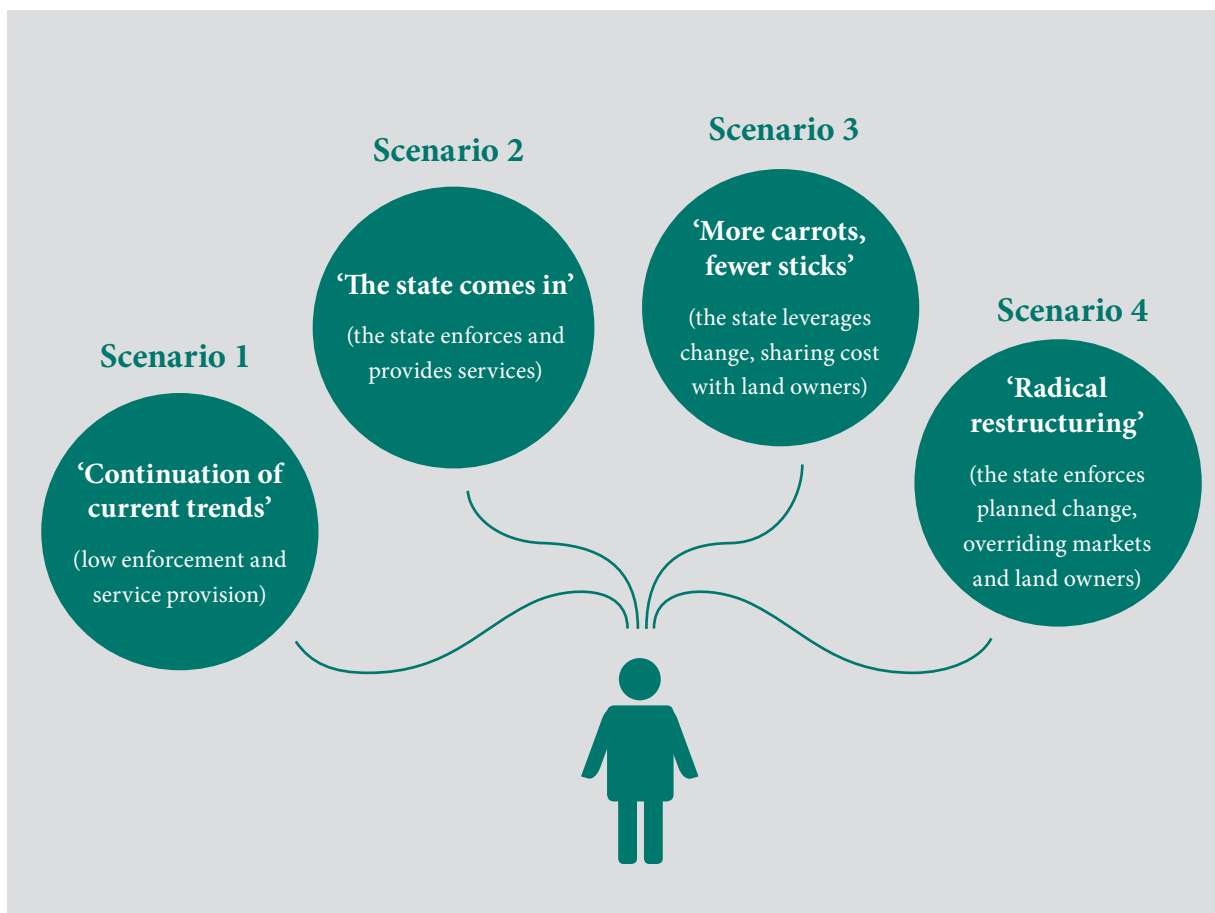
13. Scenarios and action

FROM POLICY CHOICES TO SCENARIOS

The following presents future scenarios, possible development patterns over the coming five to fifteen years. Scenarios are acts of the imagination, neither observed situations nor inevitably trajectories. Yet, we think the scenarios are realistic and illustrate links between policy choices, interventions, actor responses and outcomes. They help us identify major questions and policy choices faced by actors and policy-makers, such as:

- whether the aim is to provide homes, jobs and livelihoods for as many people as possible on farms – or for this population to dwindle over time and move into communal areas, towns and cities;
- whether the constitutional right to secure tenure for people living on land owned by others is to be realised – or abandoned;
- whether development planning and services provision are to encompass commercial farming areas and the needs of people on privately owned land, or to do so indirectly via farmers – or not at all;
- whether ‘farm workers’ and their families are to be able to diversify their livelihoods – or to be limited to wage employment;
- whether policy aims primarily to address worker and dweller issues within the current landscape – or within a fundamentally altered landscape produced through, for example, land reform;
- whether the state plays an active role in transforming tenure and rural relations, by enforcing the law (‘the stick’) or by using financial or other incentives (‘the carrot’) – or neither, or combinations of these;
- whether gender equality and women’s empowerment are addressed as an integral part of agrarian change – or left out as an incidental or internal matter; and
- whether, ultimately, policy is based on the equal concern and respect for people living on farms – or not.

Figure 2: Four scenarios of future change with regard to farm dwellers and workers



In the following we sketch four different scenarios. In Scenario 1, current trends continue with relatively low and ineffective attention to farm workers and dwellers. Scenario 2 involves a greater emphasis on law enforcement and public services. Scenario 3 displays an added emphasis on facilitating development through cooperation and incentives. Finally, Scenario 4 presents a more radical land and agrarian reform, including large-scale redistribution of land, also to people who currently live on farms owned by others. A diagram of the scenarios is given in Figure 2 and a synthesis of each is given in Table 12 (page 122).

When presenting the scenarios, we pay attention to the following: the main policy thrust of the scenario; services; landscape, land reform and land use; employment and livelihoods; the impact on different groups; and, finally, the political and social factors that would make the scenario likely or unlikely.

SCENARIO 1: 'CONTINUATION OF CURRENT TRENDS'

In Scenario 1, law enforcement and service provision continue at a low level. The government is repeating its commitments to protecting farm tenure and occasionally expresses dissatisfaction with landowners. A drawn-out process of legal reform continues, while agriculture and land reform remain low on the political agenda. Concerning *service delivery*, state agencies from central to municipal level are under pressure from urban and semi-urban communities. In commercial farming areas, farmers remain major providers of services, but increasingly at the cost of workers. The state and the public tend to accept that services are inferior on farms, due to the distance and problematic access to farms with 'private property' status.

The *landscape* is unchanged, with sharp divisions between privately owned commercial farms versus villages on communal land, which remains state-owned and state-governed. Workers and dwellers generally live in farmer-owned compounds, paying rentals and fees. The *settlement pattern* is increasingly one of split families: workers live on-farm and family members in towns or rural areas, where they maintain a second home. Displaced dweller families often end up separated and far apart in their search for housing and employment, as do displaced individuals and families from Zimbabwe.

Few dwellers and workers have *access to their own land*, and rights to grazing, collection of firewood and other land uses remain weak and contested. ESTA is not enforced, although the Ministry of Rural Development has proposed reforms in tenure legislation. Civil society organisations are debating a ‘moratorium on evictions’ and class action to charge landowners with illegal evictions. Farm workers and dwellers have been displaced in a number of restitution projects that prioritise claimants in the access to jobs. However, the restitution programme is being phased out while existing projects are being passed onto (new) commercial investors, either through agreements with the leaders of claimant communities or through bankruptcy proceedings.

In the farming sector general trends of *job losses, casualisation of labour and decline in the real value of wages* continue. However, some specialised horticulture and livestock farms succeed in finding global niches and taking advantage of low wages to produce pockets of commercial success and increased employment. These also lead to increasing wage inequalities within farms and in the sector. While employment on farms, as well as in agricultural processing, is scarce, natural resource-based alternatives are also dwindling and seen as a romantic preoccupation of old people.

There is no policy for *gender equality* on farms and only scattered civil society support, focusing on health and education. Women farmers are sometimes celebrated with prizes, but rarely female workers. Women’s employment is still predominantly in casual and seasonal labour; their lower success in getting better remunerated supervisor and technical staff positions may explain why they fall behind men in the average wages received. Nevertheless,

many men are vulnerable due to weak family relations, frequent movement and a negative self-perception because they often fail to meet their own and society’s expectations about being providers for the family.

Migrant labour remains important for commercial farming and the state upholds a flexible migration policy that meets the needs of employers. Labour inspectors visit farms intermittently, and not all farms comply with prescribed minimum standards. Despite Constitutional Court rulings on migrants’ socio-economic rights, there are no interventions to enforce these claims against the state, municipalities or employers. Xenophobia is increasingly reported as an element of conflicts on farms: some farm workers feel insecure and vow to leave the country when acceptable economic and political conditions are restored in the countries they came from.

Children still face disadvantages on farms, particularly in access to quality education. They suffer under their parents’ lack of enforceable social and economic rights. They are rarely consulted and often ‘forgotten’ in tenure cases, land reform and settlement planning. However, a positive trend away from child labour and direct racial abuse is seen, and parents, farmers and officials increasingly accept that children should be able to choose whether or not to live on farms. Therefore, parents push for better access to education, achieving change for the better in pockets of the farming areas.

The South African Human Rights Commission is seeking international funding for a *third major report on human rights and living conditions on farms* to mark the twenty-years-of-land-reform celebrations in 2014 and to set goals for the land reform programme which, as recently announced, is extended to 2024.

Scenario 1 ‘Continuation of Current Trends’ is likely if there is little political will to address farm worker and dweller issues, particularly when it affects the power relations and material conditions that underpin their weak position; if organised pressure from farm dwellers and unions is absent, fragmented or parasitical; and if civil society organisations struggle to obtain resources and fail to cooperate nationally and internationally – and as a result are forced to either ‘cosy up’ with government or tolerate confrontational relations.

SCENARIO 2: 'THE STATE COMES IN'

In Scenario 2, 'the state comes in' by enforcing existing legislation and rights to services. However, we do not see a radical departure from past policies or any new and innovative incentives and partnerships. Government provides minimum-level services, with some variation in quality and sometimes corrupt appropriation of resources. Landowners are pushing for the payment of services by the state or by employees – who are increasingly charged for various facilities and services previously provided as part of employment packages.

Apart from restitution, Scenario 2 mainly leaves the rural *landscape* intact, which means deeply divided. Yet, some movement of people into agri-village type settlements on state land or on community restitution land is seen, and here dwellers' residential land tenure is increasingly converted into leases or ownership. Some workers and former farm dwellers have access to grazing and agricultural land in these new settlements, and others in communal areas. However, conflicts over access to land are frequent and access to credit and input support is almost absent and there is a constraint on small-scale livestock and crop farming. Although the government is formulating new legislation, it still refrains from enforcing democratic tenure reform on state-held 'communal' areas, due to resistance by rural elites and the (perceived) costs. As a consequence, former farm dwellers and workers often face inferior tenure here, along with migrants. In fact, their 'choices' are often between different variants of tenure insecurity and lack of full social and economic citizenship, whether remaining on farms or moving to communal areas or under-serviced urban areas.

ESTA is enforced on farms so the *number of evictions* has been declining, though the change came too late for many; the movement of people off or between farms is often procedurally correct and assisted by the state and/or land organisations. The state introduces regulations to protect farm workers in *restitution* processes. But, due to poor social relations with claimant groups and a desire to avoid open conflict, dwellers and workers often accept minor compensation and resettlement support. Civil society actors and human rights lawyers, representing evictees take the state to court over failure to give effect to the right

of farm workers and farm dwellers to tenure security and tenure redress.

More effective enforcement of tenure legislation has the unanticipated consequence of causing greater *job losses* in farming, partly because it incentivises landowners to 'get rid of' long-term workers and dwellers. Workers who approach the age of 60 rarely get their contracts renewed and lose tenure, a practice that civil society and the state have yet to challenge. In the context of a slow recovery from the economic recession, the state is concerned about job losses but prioritises the mining and manufacturing sectors. Due to job losses and lack of support for alternative livelihoods, rural people's livelihood and food security has generally deteriorated.

Gender relations are not systematically changed in Scenario 2 but women have made some gains. Prompted by foreign and national organisations, the government has designed a policy to give effect to gender equality provisions in the Constitution, CEDAW and the African Union Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa. A programme to support women on farms is in its initial stage, but under-resourced. On some farms vocal women leaders seek to improve access to training and promotions and to work for gender-sensitive housing conditions. Men continue to be vulnerable to strained family relations, negative self-perception and violence. They are mainly supportive when women move forward, but some become antagonistic if they perceive that a general weakening of men's privileged access to jobs and benefits can harm them.

Children still suffer because their parents' political and material conditions and rights are not radically improved. However, public services, particularly improved education, give children more opportunities. They have more of a choice about whether they want to continue living on farms: given unchanged farm conditions and children's greater knowledge of society, they increasingly choose to leave farms as soon as possible. Youth become the agents of self-eviction and a continued depopulation of commercial farm areas, where the power and opportunities remain concentrated in very few hands.

Migrant workers benefit from better monitoring and enforcement of labour law but this has the effect that farm owners find it more bureaucratically demanding to employ

them, which speeds up the shift from labour-intensive to capital-intensive methods of cultivation. Migrant workers are still losers in restitution cases.

Along with the greater emphasis on law, the state is considering how to improve its *human rights* profile. A debate about adopting the 1966 International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights continues but the state argues that it finds itself challenged by having to organise the departmental follow-up of these diverse rights. Civil society organisations activism also causes some representatives of the state to be worried about legal challenges, such as reporting South Africa for failing to enforce international commitments to economic rights and the rights of the child. Like most other countries in the world, particularly those that are net recipients of migrants, South Africa has refrained from ratifying the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

Scenario 2 ‘The State comes in’ is likely if there is political will to enforce tenure legislation and to improve service delivery, but lack of a strong transformative drive by the state, lack of mobilisation and political pressure by farm dwellers and workers, and consequently limited social innovation in the farming sector. Scenario 2 represents greater attention to people on farms, and scattered improvements, but the process is state-centric. Some observers believe that it has stalled more radical action while antagonising commercial agriculture.

SCENARIO 3: ‘MORE CARROTS, FEWER STICKS’

In ‘Scenario 3’, without removing or abandoning legislation, the state brings in a new dimension by providing incentives and leveraging change, including by sharing costs with farmers, agri-businesses and farmer organisations. The state’s approach is more pragmatic and outcome-focused and less prone to blaming commercial farmers or expecting them to provide jobs and secure tenure for dwellers and workers regardless of national policies. A shift is seen towards providing public facilities, including credit and worker-oriented subsidies. Domestic markets are protected to the extent possible within the global trade regime.

The state provides *services* directly to dwellers but more often through farmers as intermediaries, on the basis of cost sharing. Public support, and farm owners’ increasing awareness that good services enhance labour and farm productivity, provide for progress. Both the state and farm owners prefer to service dense settlements, which are being developed both on and off (but close to) farms.

The *access to land* is subsidised by the state and leveraged through tax breaks, and therefore significantly improved both on farms, in nearby *settlements* and on land redistribution schemes that target farm workers and dwellers. The state supports the buying or leasing of land and is much more proactive in allocating housing subsidies for the benefit of agricultural workers and (former) farm dwellers. Landowners are more ready to part with pockets of land because the state offers tax incentives for land allocation and housing development, and because they no longer see the residential and other land rights of workers and dwellers as the road to future restitution claims. Rural people frequently combine employment with productive uses of their own land, supplying to growing local markets that both contribute to and are stimulated by the general agriculture-based growth in the region.

The *landscape* is characterised by increased vibrancy – production, trade, movements of people geographically and socially. This is partly due to programmes in support of residential land and housing, which have nurtured a growing construction industry in rural areas. However, despite the new element of farm worker-owned homes and settlements, the dual structure of rich privately owned commercial farms versus poor state-owned communal areas is still predominant.

The *tenure security* of dwellers and workers is generally improved, and many are getting a range of tenure options. The state funds legal support to protect and enhance residential tenure, both on farms and in new self-owned plots. However, changes are partly incentive-driven, so evictions still occur where landowners see this as being to their advantage, which is particularly the case on unproductive and labour-extensive farms. Some landowners also continue to evict unemployed individuals and youth, when ‘they are no longer wanted’. Due to the relatively weak ‘sticks’ and lack of civil society watchdogs,

'rights-based' tenure security and redress remain empty promises for many.

The state incentivises job *creation* by carrying the costs of training and health insurance in the farming sector. More importantly, it fully uses the degree of domestic protectionism allowed by trade regimes, while promoting and supporting agricultural export. More jobs are created in farming, and due to increasing demand for skilled labour most permanent staff and higher ranked workers get salaries well above minimum wages. A perceived favourable economic environment has led to increasing domestic and foreign investment in farming in the region, which has also pushed up foreign ownership of land. It has a mixed impact, increasing waged employment while putting commercial pressure on land that leads to exclusion of those with less access to capital.

Migration to exploit the economic opportunities on commercial farms is still important, for regional unemployment remains high due to the slow recovery from global economic recession. Some migrant workers become victims of the government's pragmatic 'less stick' approach, which some farmers interpret as a go-ahead for using ruthless labour contractors and for violating labour rights.

In Scenario 3, *women's equal participation* in training and management is increasingly recognised as supporting commercial success and many women benefit from the general economic improvement. Inequalities between different groups on farms are still high, though, and women have not attained income equality, and the inequality between differently positioned women is also rising. Measures to assist the worst-off, which include unemployed and under-employed single women and their children, are missing.

Generally, *children* benefit from better services and because self-employment, secure homesteads and agricultural growth make parents better off. Employment opportunities mean that fewer children choose to leave farms than in Scenario 1 and 2, and some return after spending time in cities, where the competition for jobs and services remains fierce. Educated youth contribute to a regeneration of enterprises in rural areas and enter management positions on farms, in civil society and the corporate sector. This is beginning to alter power-relations and opportunities significantly.

Scenario 3 'More carrots, fewer sticks' is likely if there is mobilisation and demand for land and jobs and if the government prioritises agriculture and agrarian change as a significant area for economic development. The scenario requires that development thinking, policy and practice shift towards facilitation, negotiation and problem solving by the actors in farming – and that they are supported and resourced by public facilities. Scenario 3 is predominantly economic in orientation and, despite the mild protectionism, the scenario is favoured by, and favours, national and transnational agro-industrial corporations. A more principled and fundamental social justice approach is lacking. The state uses bread-and-butter arguments to reject complaints about human rights violations and has not taken special measures to assist the worst-off. Foreign governments that previously supported human rights advocacy and research on land and agrarian issues in South Africa now prioritise 'global' challenges of energy, technology and climate change. Civil society organisations, particularly the 'struggle' land-NGOs from the 1990s, are to some extent bypassed by a socio-economic transformation driven by the state, commercial actors, unions and, to a certain extent, workers. Some land organisations try to assist the many who still face unacceptable conditions on or off the farms; others reinvent themselves as providers of services in the fields of credit, health, legal support and training. Poverty amidst agrarian wealth still exists.

SCENARIO 4: 'RADICAL RESTRUCTURING'

In 'Scenario 4' we see a 'radical restructuring' of the landscape, property rights and social relations in rural areas, perhaps akin to what was envisaged by those who in the 1990s advocated land reform for a 'new South Africa'. While the process is state-led it also responds to a strong worker movement and involves the agrofood value chain, for example the up- and down-stream industries that benefit from farming.

A substantial and fairly *rapid land redistribution programme* has redistributed about half of the commercial farmland, mainly through subdivision and transfer to new owners, often farms dwellers and workers. The dualistic apartheid landscape and settlement patterns have been

radically transformed towards a more diverse, patchy and integrated landscape. Some large-scale farming areas have been converted to smallholder agriculture, others to common pool grazing and conservation areas. The communal areas are transformed into a mix of residential areas, smallholder farms, large-scale commercial farms, and community-governed conservation and tourism areas. Ecological functions and biodiversity play an increasing role in land use planning. Restoration of a variety of Limpopo landscapes underpins the expansion of collective livestock management, local conservation initiatives and small-scale tourism.

The large-scale *restitution* programmes with ‘strategic partners’ has given way to new options: some farms have been transformed (more or less as planned) into community-owned enterprises, and others (through various forms of collapse) into fragmented smallholder farms or larger farms run by former owners or politically well-connected agri-businesses. After the initial, substantial redistribution, the days of land reform are coming to an end – with all its hopes, uncertainty and disappointments – but few regret this since general policy measures, including land tax, production incentives, enforcement of tenure legislation and public services, are becoming effective in achieving desired social and economic outcomes.

Tenure rights have been diversified and many more people live on land that they own. Property rights have been systematically transformed (the critics say ‘abolished’) and transferred to new owners. More diverse forms of individual and collective rights are recognised in law, including inheritable rights of occupation and use. The state has invested in legal support, research and monitoring, to promote tenure security, democratic governance and predictability. Tenure in formerly state-held land has been reformed and now includes a mix of household, individual and community rights, with family ownership as the dominant pattern. Tax incentives and agricultural subsidies favour ownership below certain hectare thresholds, leading to a considerable amount of voluntary transfers from large to small-scale producers, as well as back again in sectors where the economies of scale outweigh tax incentives.

The *state provides services* to dense but not to dispersed settlements, so delivery and quality is still variable. Some

rural communities still experience shortfalls in areas where commercial farms to some extent had provided services in the past. The state is concerned about rising costs but is also pushed by civil society action to improve access to water, energy, health, housing and education – among others.

Markets and employment show significant changes. Wage labour is retained on a core of large-scale, commercial farms, but the total number of agricultural wage labourers has gone down. Commercial farms do well, drawing on a pool of more skilled labourers, who have grown up with smallholder farming. After an initial dip, the net export from agriculture is increasing. Patterns of cooperation are emerging between large and small-scale farms, which enter joint ventures to gain better access to technology, inputs and markets. Self-employment is increased and better supported with public services. Along with changes in landownership, a shift from luxury safari and trophy hunting to small-scale, dispersed and lower-cost ecotourism has proved popular in domestic and foreign markets and retained revenues from tourism in rural areas.

Better *access to land* has diversified the livelihood options available to rural households. Most households try to have at least one individual in formal sector employment, a small enterprise in processing or tourism, and its own production. Although the marketable food production at provincial level is reduced, individual, household and community food security is vastly improved. This is due to expanded entitlements including better access to land. A pattern of urban-based relatives and friends investing in agriculture also promotes the contribution of small-scale agriculture and non-market relations to food security, including for people in urban areas. However, some former dwellers still yearn for the days when commercial farms offered more jobs and free services. High inequality in the access to livelihoods still exists, and those who fall outside have to rely on inadequate social grants. Overall, however, the categories of ‘farm dwellers’ and ‘farm workers’ are becoming less distinct, reducing stigmatisation.

Many women and men benefit from new livelihood options but the state’s commitment to *gender equality* remains weak, as do the gender policies of powerful actors like corporations and unions. Women in small-scale farming often carry triple responsibilities as producers, caregivers and entrepreneurs but their

organisation Women Producers in Farming, uniting small-scale farmers, farm workers and entrepreneurs, is demanding, and heralds, change.

Migration from Zimbabwe has gone down due to the reduced demand for labour from commercial farming but the abuse of migrants in small-scale farming on private and state land is increasing. There is increased trade and other cooperation with the reviving farming sector in Zimbabwe, which is attracting a northward flow of investors and workers including returning migrants.

Children on farms have improved their prospects as their parents have gained new opportunities. However, the high degree of change, movement and tension among actors in farming also translates into uncertainty for children, and even trauma for those who have experienced violence, which is still an aspect of tense human relations. Access to education is still problematic. Yet, reduced material disparities and geographical boundaries are beginning to give meaning to notions of a shared land: this nurtures the agency and mobility of youth through education, training and work – and hope for a better future.

International and human rights remain contested and international actors are divided over the radical developments. Some human rights organisations are supportive and others raise critical questions about property rights, fair process and long-term consequences. It is therefore unclear whether anything substantive is forthcoming on that front, except that researchers interested in human rights are fascinated with the dynamics of change.

Scenario 4 ‘Radical restructuring’ is likely if a massive mobilisation by farm dwellers, supported by trade unions and civil society organisations, puts pressure on the state, landowners and other actors in commercial agriculture. Powerful and well-connected farm worker and dweller organisations cooperate with organisations of small-scale producers. The successful pressure for state accountability and responsiveness is combined with a leftward shift in national politics, linked to the global weakening of market-liberal discourses that is accompanying the rampant (financial, energy, climate, food security and political) crises that characterise the first decades of the millennium. State institutions are better resourced, more efficient and more transparent in

land governance and other economic affairs, although corruption and inefficiency could continue to hamper accountability and contain the threats of a much bleaker future.

FROM SCENARIOS TO ACTION

Drawing on the scenarios

Moving towards recommendations, we draw some lessons from the scenarios. First, scenarios underscore the fact that measures have to be part of broad policies and processes of change, while narrow interventions such as ESTA are the Achilles heel of past approaches to farm tenure. *Scenario 1 ‘Continuation of current trends’* represents persistent insecurity and rights violations and we do not draw much inspiration from it. Yet, some notable qualities are the dynamic adaptation of farming to market opportunities; minimum-wage legislation (if effectively monitored); and the contributions that migrants make to commercial farming and the South African economy, while farms play a role in mitigating the impact of the political and economic crises in Zimbabwe. In *Scenario 2 ‘The state comes in’* the state makes an effort to enforce legislation and provide services but it is still inadequate. We draw on the idea that constitutional rights must be given legal effect but are sceptical of divorcing the right to tenure security from other economic and social rights and the measures of more comprehensive agrarian change. *Scenario 3 ‘More carrots, fewer sticks’* provides examples of a more innovative and supportive developmental state. Still, each of the first three scenarios has fundamental weaknesses: farm workers and dwellers remain unorganised and lack collective agency; the social, economic and spatial boundaries of apartheid persist; and access to resources remains severely skewed. So, we draw significantly from *Scenario 4 ‘Radical restructuring’*.

We discussed the scenarios with workers and others in Limpopo,¹² who engaged with the risks and opportunities that they represent. A healthy response was to suggest various combinations, such as: Scenario 2, enforcement and services, but avoiding the negative effects on

12. Workshops in Makhado /Louis Trichardt with workers from study farms on 20 September 2009; and with government officials and civil society on 21 September 2009.

Table 12: Policy options and scenarios of agrarian change

	Scenario 1: Continuation of current trends	Scenario 2: The state comes in	Scenario 3: More carrots, fewer sticks	Scenario 4: Radical restructuring
State role	Weak enforcement of rights and on-farm service provision continue.	The state enforces rights and provides on-farm services.	The state leverages change, sharing costs with landowners.	The state enforces planned change, overriding landowners and markets.
Settlement patterns	Settlement is increasingly split between sites of employment (on farms) and social reproduction (in towns and communal areas).	The rural landscape remains deeply divided; farm dwellers are moved into agri-village type settlements on state land or community restitution land, with leases or ownership.	Both the state and farm owners prefer to service dense settlements developed on or off (but close to) farms.	Subdivision and redistribution of commercial farms produce radically transformed settlement patterns – away from the dualistic apartheid landscape, towards one that is more diverse, patchy and integrated.
Access to land	Rights to grazing, collection of firewood and other uses remain weak and contested.	Some workers and former farm dwellers have access to grazing and agricultural land in new settlements and communal areas.	Due to state subsidies and tax breaks, access to land is improved both on farms, in nearby settlements and on land redistribution schemes that target farm workers and dwellers.	Access to land is massively expanded, eroding the dualistic structure. Rights of occupation and use are recognised in law, and regulations favour transfers from large to small-scale producers.
Labour market	Job losses, casualisation of labour and decline in the real value of wages continue.	More systematic enforcement of tenure legislation has the unanticipated consequence of greater job losses in farming.	The state incentivises job creation, increasing the demand for better-paid skilled labour.	Wage labour (especially skilled) is retained on a core of large-scale commercial farms, but declines overall.
Likely if:	There is limited political will to address farm worker and dweller rights; organised pressure from farm dwellers and unions is absent or fragmented; civil society organisations struggle to obtain resources and fail to cooperate nationally and internationally.	There is political will to enforce tenure legislation and deliver services; but without a transformative drive by the state or mobilisation by farm workers and dwellers, social innovation remains limited. The process is state-centric and stalls more radical action.	There is mobilisation and demands for land and jobs; government prioritises agricultural growth; agro-industrial corporations respond to state incentives; civil society organisations are bypassed, or reinvent themselves as providers of legal, credit, health and training services.	There is massive mobilisation by farm dwellers, supported by trade unions and civil society organisations which, combined with a leftward shift in national politics, puts pressure on the state, landowners and other actors in commercial agriculture.

employment; or Scenario 3, the developmental state, with some elements of radical restructuring. Many workers, some of whom were migrants from Zimbabwe, and almost all officials saw in Scenario 4 a high risk of negative consequences similar to those attributed to the situation in Zimbabwe. In our view, Scenario 4 can be carefully planned and monitored to avoid Zimbabwe experiences but would realistically involve risks of both violence and abuse of power by state officials. In their responses to Scenario 4, South African officials also saw a threat to 'food security' in South Africa, which to some extent overlooks the high levels of rural and urban food insecurity today. Indeed, human insecurity and structural violence – manifested in evictions, poverty and food insecurity – persist to varying degrees in all the scenarios, and in South African reality – and underscore the need for action and change.

Strategies and action

We have stressed, and shown with the case studies, that farm dweller and workers issues are complex and diverse: complex values are at stake (land, income, rights, belonging and health); groups on farms are diverse (long-term dwellers, full-time workers, migrant labour, seasonal workers, women and men, girls and boys); and farms are extremely different, as places, enterprises and homes, among others.

We have argued that tenure, livelihoods and social justice for farm workers and dwellers are in many respects integral dimensions of life on farms, and need to be understood and addressed in ways that reflect this integration. In this respect we are in line with Naidoo's recommendation of a 'unified approach' that seeks to deal with land, tenure, labour conditions, human relations and social protection in an integrated manner (Naidoo 2001: 206).

Finally, we have shown how farms are contextualised, responding dynamically to the changing economic and political environment, including migration and restitution, sometimes following certain trends, such as towards charging for services to workers, and trajectories of change in their production strategies.

Policy makers, along with other actors, have to address the diversity on farms (values, people, places); the integrated nature of issues (tenure, livelihoods and justice); and

the contextual drivers and strategies of change. This requires changes in power relations and the mobilisation of workers and dwellers to, ultimately, hold the state and society accountable for the human rights and citizenship of everyone who lives or works on farms.

Thus, as we warned in the beginning of the book, we felt an urge to expand and complicate farm tenure issues. Having done that, it is only fair that we acknowledge what difficult subject matter the South African policy makers have been, and are, facing. Making suggestions about priorities, strategies and action, we too face the challenge of addressing 'diverse', 'complex', 'integrated' and 'contextual' issues with a limited set of proposals. In our recommendations for action we seek to identify a strategic thrust, the major action involved, who is responsible for it, and supportive action by others.



1. Farm workers and farm dwellers must mobilise through creating, and being assisted in creating, organisations that promote their interests.

Workers and dwellers need to own the organisations (or unions) as theirs. No other proposed measure is likely to materialise or have broad impact without this factor. The difficulty of organising rural labour effectively is well known. We identify some following steps and responsibilities:

- The state must support workers and dwellers in meeting, initially at district level, to discuss shared interest and initiate cooperation.
- With COSATU and public support, a programme for rural labour unions should be developed, including funding for offices, training, information and transport.
- Farm owners must be informed about and respect the right to organise, including the right of access by unions and the right of leaders to use work time for union matters.

2. The rights to secure tenure and to redress for loss of tenure must be given effect.

- The state must clarify past and existing land rights of dwellers and redress historical loss of land rights through alternative land or other compensation.
- The state must enforce ESTA and must back secure ownership or lease agreements concerning land and housing. As a norm, workers and dwellers should have long-term tenure (ownership or lease) options.
- With public funding, civil society must provide more and better legal services to dwellers, workers and smallholders.
- Land owners must recognise and safeguard the value of tenure security and historical rights to work, land, housing and services and that any termination of rights requires just legal procedures, fair compensation and secure alternative livelihoods.
- Action should be taken against perpetrators of illegal evictions.
- On-farm housing must meet national standards, be primarily funded by farms as operational costs, and supported by the state.

3. A land redistribution programme targeted at farm workers and dwellers must be designed and implemented to address the inequality and dependency caused by lack of land for residence and production.

The state must realise equitable access to land, in these ways:

- Implement substantial redistribution of private and state land.
- Expropriate sites of current dwellings for transfer of ownership.
- Provide land on nearby state or private land to workers and dwellers.
- The state must build its capacity, knowledge and measures to support farm dwellers and farm workers within its land and agrarian reform programme.
- A separate budget line for tenure security, livelihoods and justice for workers and dwellers must be created and linked to clear actions, responsibilities, targets, timelines and indicators.

4. Actors in commercial agriculture and the agencies of the state must develop constructive relations and collaborative programmes to promote production, employment and skills in farming.

Commercial farms should promote the right to work and the experience, knowledge, skills and motivation of farm workers and dwellers should be recognised and developed as the greatest asset in commercial agriculture.

- The state must facilitate a high level of employment and fair work conditions in commercial agriculture, including by providing credit, protecting domestic markets, and subsidising training.
- The value of the knowledge and skills of workers and dwellers must be promoted with training and career planning.
- Farmers and agri-business must invest in workers and dwellers, particularly the younger generations, including providing information and communication technologies.
- The state should introduce an entitlement to annual training and carry a substantial proportion of the costs.
- Worker-friendly incentives and subsidies, including housing, education, training and work clothing, should be introduced and, for example, included in fair trade arrangements.
- The state must support research, extension and experimentation combined with worker training and measures to improve and deepen collaboration between farm owners, managers and workers.

5. All actors must respect, protect and promote human rights and proactively seek out and promote the interests of those who are worst off in different respects and contexts, among others by:

- increasing the efforts to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and reaching farms with treatment and care. Better understanding of highly sensitive issues linked to gendered patterns of residence, movement, sex and violence is needed (Maromi & IOM 2010);
- assisting migrant workers and displaced persons, particularly those who are unemployed and underemployed or exploited in the secondary economy of farms, or who need assistance with documentation and social rights, among others; and
- strengthening the monitoring and enforcement of fair labour conditions, universal respect for minimum wage legislation and increases in the minimum wage in order to improve the buying power of workers, to cope with the rise in the costs of food.

6. Gender equality must be actively promoted on farms, paying attention to the diverse issues affected by gender:

- Training, promotions and leadership should be prioritised for gender equality.
- Issues related to settlement patterns and split families should be studied and debated.
- Men should be included in discussions and measures to improve gender equality.
- Exposure to transactional sex and violence should be studied and addressed through targeted government and civil society programmes.
- Measures to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and provide care must be expanded.
- Address issues related to food security, nutrition and health in the context of the poverty of many workers and dwellers, considering own production, wages, and affordability.

7. Design a public programme for children on farms, with coordinated roles of public bodies, civil society and farmers or farmer organisations.

Girls and boys on farms are a vulnerable group and their erratic access to primary and secondary education is a serious human rights violation. Children are the prime source of tomorrow's successes.

- The state must provide accessible, affordable education and provide and subsidise necessary transport facilities.
- The state should improve monitoring of and support to other agencies in reaching out to farms with IDs and grants.
- Companies in the information sector must account for how they service rural areas, including commercial farms, and these must be made an element of public concessions.
- Transport problems faced by workers and dwellers must be addressed in public planning.
- Researchers should document and analyse the questions related to children on farms, including the right to education.



Final reflections

The eviction stories mentioned in the opening paragraphs of the book reflect systemic violence and unacceptable losses of homes and livelihoods. What, based on our work and reflections, are the prospects for developments along the lines suggested in our scenarios, strategies and action?

As grounds for optimism, we observed that farms created by owners, managers and workers in a challenging environment are in many ways impressive enterprises that have responded to a changing economic, political and social environment. We have reported about harsh employment and living conditions but also important contributions to employment and human livelihoods. The agency of workers and dwellers in making these farms and in keeping them vibrant should be a source of pride and of fairer outcomes for them. The imagined dynamics of the scenarios draw on our observations of aspects of the farm landscape, economy and people that can be part of a real dynamic of development. For example, though we reject ideas of corporate- or state-managed 'agri-villages', the thoughts about new types of settlements on or near farms make sense and require adequate and secure land for residence and livelihoods as a secure base for family life and real choice about seeking employment in commercial farming.

Our interaction in the field and our meetings with other individuals and organisations working in this arena confirm that new understandings are needed of the nexus of political economy, policies and practices that affect farm dwellers and workers. Research can expose substandard living and working conditions, raise public concern and inform changes in policy and practice. On the farms, questions by researchers sometimes affect how employers and workers see and discuss issues, expanding the frontiers of debate. We met an openness and engagement from dwellers, workers, managers and owners on which research depends – and to which it may hopefully contribute. Beyond writing this book, we are committed to sharing our experiences in further debate and research to contribute to change.

However, we have also remarked on limitations and constraints. The comprehensive change in production systems, landscape and the distribution of resources suggested in some of our scenarios require coordinated

and well-resourced state interventions, mobilisation by and cooperation between the unequal and often antagonistic parties in the farming sector. In Chapter 2, we noted that power, agency and change are a thread running through different theoretical perspectives on farms. Landowners' power, based on the control of land, other capital, knowledge and networks, is formidable. It is harder to identify the power that can challenge and balance that of capital and create change away from harsh labour and living conditions. The context of unemployment, poverty and material suffering, from the rural areas of Zimbabwe to the townships of Johannesburg, makes us recognise the livelihood contribution of the farms. This context also means that competition for jobs is intense, and the impetus for improving conditions is weak.

Furthermore, while we think our strategies and actions are worthwhile and realisable, we listed a number of things 'the state must' do, perhaps echoing the many demands made in earlier statements, such as at the Community Land Conference in Bloemfontein in 1994 (see Chapter 2). The demands on the South African state are larger than its capacity and perhaps also the will and priorities of the current ANC leadership. Therefore, pressure and considerable resources must come from actors themselves, particularly farm workers and their organisations. We have identified 'mobilisation' of dwellers and workers – through training, communication, civil society interaction, politics, labour unions, and a stronger base of income and assets for each worker and dweller – but this is a long list. While they are dynamically linked in a positive development process, in a difficult context any one of them may turn into a constraint.

A decisive point, then, is to what extent powerful actors see their interests as consonant with empowerment of dwellers and workers. Here our conversations with owners were predictably mixed: on the one hand, they expressed concern about the wellbeing of workers and their families (the owner of Makwembe said that 'the most rewarding thing for any employer is to pay as well as he can manage', and to see workers use higher salaries to take better care of health, clothing and schooling). The problems lie in (a) the perceived and real constraints on improving labour conditions ('as well as he can manage'); (b) reluctance to accept and support changes, such as labour unions, that go beyond (paternalist) welfare provision and have the potential to change relations; and (c) the fact that the farm

owners' focus and responsibility will prioritise certain workers, often a core of permanent, professionalised staff, to the exclusion of replaceable casual labour. Though owners are not resistant to change, and play deftly with new leaders and circumstances such as the restitution programme, their goal – 'let us not beat about the bush' – is not to 'save South Africa'. The parameter is not 'fairness' but a 'fair return on investment'.

Attention to political and social justice in commercial farming has to go beyond the farm and the class of permanent labour. The problems of those who are 'internally' and 'externally' displaced must also be addressed, as they are an underprivileged segment of the employed, and unemployed in South Africa and elsewhere. This group includes both those who are trying to get by in the secondary economy of the farms and those who are forced to leave and find a few opportunities in communal areas, towns or cities. This requires support for evictees but first of all broader policies, including land and agrarian reform, that expand economic opportunities – as discussed in the scenarios.

We are not optimistic about rapid and deep changes for farm workers and farm dwellers in South Africa. A worker said at a workshop in 2008: 'Everything you have said was said before, but nothing was done.' The Human Rights

Commission has published reports and made recommendations. Comprehensive studies, such as by Hall et al. (2003), Wegerif et al. (2005) and Atkinson (2007), led to debate but not to evident policy changes, mobilisation or renewed practice. During 2009 and 2010 people in towns and cities turned to civic action and violence to protest against poverty, corruption, poor housing and dismal services. We seemed to be witnessing a shift from rights to violence in people's attempts to make the state responsive. By late 2012, in parts of the Western Cape, farm workers, including seasonal workers living in informal settlements, embarked on mass protest action, including through violence, arson and road blockades, demanding that the minimum wage be raised to double its current rate. At this time, it was not clear whether rural women and men across the rest of the country would take similar (or different) individual and collective action to make their demands heard and put pressure on farmers and the state. New strategies, forums, discourses and practices for negotiation and cooperation are yet to emerge. Deeper change towards a shared South African countryside is needed, and is also possible, where power and resources are redistributed to enable women and men who work or live on farms to secure their tenure and livelihoods and become confident agents of justice for themselves, their children and future generations in South African agriculture.



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Burning fields, demonstrations and clashes between police and farm workers: in 2012, farms in South Africa's Western Cape province witnessed a wave of anger and violence during protests against low wages and poor living conditions. Old patterns of ownership and power still produce tense human relations on many of the forty thousand private farms in South Africa. For farm workers and dwellers, tenure insecurity, harsh living conditions or forced evictions have persisted in the democratic era.

This study of commercial farms in Limpopo examines how recent changes – economic restructuring, land reform and migration – are affecting people living on farms, as seen through the eyes of workers, dwellers, managers and owners. Here women, men and children strive to defend their tenure, livelihoods and justice on farms that are being shaped by local and global economic forces. Stark contrasts between constitutional rights and lived realities exist.

Profound changes are needed but there is no panacea. The book presents four future scenarios and discusses the dynamics of conflicts and opportunities that each scenario may bring. Progress will require both struggle and pragmatism: workers and dwellers need the power to organise and negotiate; farmers and farmer organisations have to reconcile production with fair and sustainable social relations; state institutions must lead and provide resources for change; and the public has to engage with rural issues and the making of a less divided countryside.

