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BZS Research Day: 17 June
This year’s Research Day was on the theme ‘Staying Alive in Zimbabwe – Food, Land and Livelihoods’.

The Research Day – in the Nissan Theatre at St Antony’s College – was held in partnership with the African Studies Centre, Journal of Southern African Studies (JSAS) and the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies, University of the Western Cape (PLAAS). In this issue, we are publishing summaries of some of the papers presented. If further papers are submitted, they will be carried in subsequent issues of The Zimbabwe Review.

Message to BZS Research Day, 2017
The Research Day began with a short opening statement by Professor Jonny Steinberg, director of the African Studies Centre and Professor of African Studies. Professor Steinberg was not able to attend in person, but his message to those attending was read out by BZS Chair Pauline Dodgson-Katiyo, and is printed below.

‘It is a great pleasure for the African Studies Centre at Oxford University to be associated once again with BZS’s annual Research Day. Each year at this time the society assembles a large audience to listen to a series of papers on a theme of great moment.

‘It is a privilege to play a small part in hosting every year thoughtful, informative and analysis-driven discussions on contemporary Zimbabwean matters. ‘This year’s theme, Food, Land and Livelihoods is among the most urgent of all and it is very satisfying to see the calibre of the presenters on offer and the thought that has gone into shaping the structure of the discussions.

‘Enormous thanks to the working group which each year conceptualises this event and puts all the building blocks in place.

‘And a special welcome to today’s keynote speaker, Dr Patience Mutopo. It is a pleasure to have you here. Last, but not least, thank you to everybody for coming here to listen to the panellists and to partake in these important discussions.

‘I wish you all a productive, informative day.’

Jonny Steinberg: African Studies Centre

BZS Members’ Meeting and AGM
Saturday 21 October 2017

Our annual Members’ meeting will be held on 22 October at St James’s Church Hall, 11 Prebend Street, London N1 8PF from 2–5.00pm.

The meeting begins with the Society’s AGM and which will be followed at 3.15 pm by our guest speakers. These are yet to be announced, but will address the theme of how the diaspora can build constructive links with Zimbabwe.

St James’s Church Hall is on the corner of Prebend Street and Packington Street, just ten minutes from Angel tube station.
Land, Rural Livelihoods and Food Security: understanding the sustainability question in Zimbabwe

Adapted from the BZS Research Day keynote speech, by Dr Patience Mutopo, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Zimbabwe

The ‘land question’ is central in the political, social and economic debates in Zimbabwe. Land remains an emotive issue in Zimbabwe’s economic, social and political governance.

The present day state of Zimbabwe was born as a result of the liberation struggle which saw land being placed at the centre of the liberation struggle’s political manifesto. Land contestations are about livelihoods and food security. The land beneficiaries have been viewed with different analytical lens as unproductive peasants but, rather, it is important to unearth the realities of present day fast-track farmers based on empirical validations.

Several studies (Mutopo 2015, Murisa 2011, Chiweshe 2012, Moyo and Chambati 2013, Matondi 2012, Mukodzongi 2014 and Shonhe 2017) have demonstrated that there are indeed some forms of agricultural activities that take place on the fast-track farms.

Production outcomes

However a fundamental question has been the issue of production outcomes, along with the viability of small-holder farming and the sustainability questions. Glimpses into rich ethnographic accounts (Mutopo 2015, Scoones 2010, Moyo 2011 and Chigumira 2014) demonstrate that production is taking place on the farms.

When one defines sustainability, it is important to understand it from the poverty, production and employment perspectives. The farmers have always pointed out that they are engaged in mixed farming and therefore some degree of production is happening. Also, compared with the white farmers, they lack financial support — largely because of the tough economic spell currently pervading Zimbabwe.

Analyses of the food question in Zimbabwe depict different levels of food availability, affordability and food accessibility. Quantifications of the available food baskets depend on household dynamics that are grounded in decision-making with regards to the types of crops to grow and also the nature of the farm investments to be undertaken.

Engaging with fast-track farmers

My engagement with the fast-track farmers in South Eastern Zimbabwe serves to point out that, sustainable farming and multiple rural livelihoods have emerged with farmers engaging in different livelihood activities such as trans boundary trading and harvesting of mopani worms – and migration to South Africa and Mozambique as means of creating surplus for investing into farming activities.

The main drivers of the farming activities are women, who got access to land independently of men. And who participated in the land reform with different roles (Mutopo 2014) This has led some to dub the land reform as a ‘women’s revolution’.

However due to cultural repertoires that place men at the centre of land ownership, the land is simply deemed as a male preserve by the women as a way of respecting patriarchy.

Differing perceptions

The new historical phase in Zimbabwe evokes different perceptions: to some it’s unsustainable, to others it must be seen as sustainable because they have been on that physical space for more than 17 years and, therefore, have security in the form of being physically present on the land. This is important in African mythology of land ownership.

Ultimately, it should be borne in mind that the fast-track land pattern is there to stay in Zimbabwe. Consequently scholarship and development thinking should work around this present reality.

References

Panel 1 Land and Livelihoods – the human rights context

Dr Charles Laurie, Dr Khanyisela Moyo

Reaping what you sow: the land seizure era’s legacy of violence and insecurity
Speaker and this summary: Dr Charles Laurie

This presentation showed how the over-arching methods used to evict farmers during the large-scale farm invasions in the 2000s have also been inherited by Zimbabwe’s ‘new’ farmers.

This presentation began with a discussion of the three major datasets that underpinned Dr Laurie’s doctorate at Oxford University.

He personally undertook 111 in-depth interviews with farm workers, farmers, state security officials, war veterans and other stakeholders. He surveyed 34 per cent of commercial farmers operating in 2000 to provide a quantitative foundation for his study. Finally, using a secondary dataset, he mapped 21,491 instances of violence nation-wide over 9 years to give a longitudinal and spatial perspective on violence proliferation nationwide.

Key elements
Charles first identified several key elements that contribute to successful commercial farming.

Aside from the obvious factors such as good climate and soil, he emphasised how a stable economic environment facilitated farmers’ ability to make long-term investments, such as in dams and irrigation.

He identified respect for property rights and security as essential given the capital necessary for commercial farming and the vulnerability of farms and associated equipment. Finally, he explained how a supporting agriculture industry – for example, agronomists and farm equipment specialists – were key to supporting commercial farmers and driving up yields.

Driven from the land
The presentation then turned to a deep-dive on the key factors that drove commercial farmers from their land during the ‘Land Seizure Era’ – the period of large-scale farm invasions that began in February 2000 and ended in about March 2008. Charles set the stage by showing the extensive context of violence that existed during this era, relying on his data-set of 21,491 instances of violence over that period.

Assault and unlawful arrest were rampant, but more serious forms of violence, such as politically-motivated rape, murder and torture, all became relatively common as farm invaders sought to suppress support for the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party and to evict farmers.

Charles noted that the most commonly cited reason leading to eviction (77.4 per cent of participants) was due to breakdowns in farmers’ personal security, that of their families and of their workers.

He presented direct quotations from respondents in order to convey the severity of violence experienced by farmers, for example: ‘Tied up and beaten with my parents, [they] tried to electrocute my father and held hostage. Held hostage for +/- eight hours. Wife and I barricaded in our home +/- three days’.

Farmers also found the breakdown of their ability to run farms as a business to be severely debilitating. 32.9 per cent of farmer respondents cited the breakdown of the country’s economy as a key reason for eviction.

Charles presented excerpts from farmers that underscored their inability to operate farms commercially given the severe breakdown in security from farm invaders who targeted crops, prevented workers from tending fields, and vandalised equipment: ‘Cattle hamstrung, burning of plantations, slashing of crops (tobacco seedbeds)’.

Furthermore, 31.3 per cent of farmers noted that the breakdown in their social future was a key reason for eviction. As friends and neighbours were evicted, remaining farmers felt more vulnerable. Over time with fewer farmers remaining people felt more vulnerable.

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and alone. Farmer networks also had practical benefits in the form of mutual assistance in the event of fires and equipment breakdowns.

**Accumulated pressures**

Ultimately, however, it was the accumulated pressures from breakdowns in security, a weakening economy, fragmenting social ties and relentless interference in farm operations that weakened farmers’ resolve. As one beleaguered farmer put it, ‘I could not farm. There was no law. They [farm invaders] shot or snared all the game, netted the dams, cut all the trees down, burnt the farm, stole everything, intimidated my labour.’

Charles went on to explain that it was this nexus between social and security issues intersecting with the harsh economic climate that drove many farmers away. He presented a graph showing a peak in violence during the presidential election in March 2000. He noted that if security was the only issue to drive farmers away one would expect to see evictions before the anticipated violent election, or soon after the violence had unfolded, but instead farmer evictions peaked in August 2002 – five months later.

He explained that the reason for this delay was because in August of a given year farmers must ultimately commit to the growing of a series of crops.

In August 2002, farmers faced a torrent of challenges and many decided that it was simply too risky to commit to the purchase of seed, fertiliser and other farming ‘inputs’ for a crop they probably could not protect and be unable to harvest and recover their investment.

**The ‘new’ farmers**

Having covered the eviction pressures on farmers in the land seizure era, Charles then shifted his focus to ‘new’ farmers.

He identified four main issues that have carried over from the eviction of ‘former’ farmers into Zimbabwe’s present farming environment.

First is the legacy of severe violence and intimidation used to seize land and assets that he stated has created an environment where ‘might makes right’, undermining present claims to land.

Second, land claims and the business of agriculture are politically driven. This means that farmers are not easily able to rely on agri-science to drive their decision-making or rely on objective rulings from the courts to enforce their claims.

Third, the dwindling agriculture industry means there is less technical support for new farmers. Finally, Charles notes that due to these reasons present-day farmers are less able to make secure long-term investments, thus throttling their capability.

*Dr Charles Laurie is Director, Verisk Maplecroft.*


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**The right to food, transitional justice and post-colonial Zimbabwe’s land seizures**

**Speaker and this summary:**

*Dr Khanyisela Moyo*

The previous speaker relied on qualitative perspectives of several stakeholders to demonstrate that the violent land seizure era had a negative effect on features which are necessary for farmers to be successful.

These features include a stable economic environment, respect for property rights, general sense of security and a supportive agricultural environment. He also highlighted that farmers who were driven out of their land were subjected to many human rights violations including rape.

While respectfully acknowledging and condemning the cited human rights abuses, I am of the view that the analysis presented in the previous talk does not provide a deeper analysis of the structural causes of the violations. This enquiry does not take account of the unsettled status of the right to property in international law (Moyo 2016), or the notion of the indivisibility and inter-dependence of human rights. It also does not consider the view that the post-2000 land invasions were tantamount to a Chimurenga situation and as such one would not have expected Zimbabwe to have an enabling farming environment in the violent land seizure era.

Against this background, my presentation explores two analytical frameworks dealing with the colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwean land seizures. The first is the field of human rights, which links the right to food to a land policy. The other is transitional justice (TJ), which, despite some valid claims of success in terms of adopting restitution as a policy for dealing with past land injustices, has yet not managed to address the right to food and state obligations regarding complex postcolonial land conflicts.
The presentation

Firstly, there is a brief explanation of the normative content of the right to food with a focus on the relationship between the right to food and land reform.

Secondly, there is a discussion of the relationship between transitional justice and postcolonial Zimbabwe’s land seizures.

Thirdly, there are insights on how the two analytical frameworks can assist in the adoption of policies that may help Zimbabwe redress the excesses of the land seizure eras to re-create a stable economic and farming environment.

The right to food – normative content and its relationship with land reform

The right to food is a clearly defined right in international law. It is enshrined in several human rights instruments including Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). In the context of Zimbabwe, the right was not recognised in the country’s first Constitution and has now been included in the 2013 Constitution both as a national objective and a fundamental right.

Often, when Zimbabwean non-governmental organisations document right to food violations, they focus on the partisan distribution of food aid. This is a limited focus which may be misunderstood by a lay-person to mean that the right to food is about charity.

Nevertheless, according to General Comment 12 of the Committee tasked with interpreting ICESCR, three types of state obligations are implied, namely, the duty to respect, protect and fulfil.

In November 2004, state parties to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) endorsed these three levels of state obligations when they adopted the Right to Food guidelines.

FAO Right to Food guideline 8.1 has it that ‘… ‘states should carry out land reforms and other policy reforms consistently with their human rights obligations and in accordance with the rule of law’.

Thus, Zimbabwe’s land reform can be seen as an attempt by the government to implement its right to food obligations, though there are legitimate questions to be asked as to whether the programme was consistent with human rights norms and the rule of law.

Of course, an issue has been raised regarding the discriminatory nature of the land reform process, but this is a moot question considering that one of the land reform programme’s key objectives was to redress the colonial legacy of racially skewed distribution of land ownership.

It has also been stated that the violent land seizure era exacerbated Zimbabwe’s food insecurities and hunger, but in my opinion, this is a premature observation as under the ICESCR member states consented to progressively achieve the full realisation of the right to adequate food. One also must holistically analyse the post-2000 socio-economic and political context when assessing Zimbabwe’s food insecurities in the violent land seizures era.

Relationship between transitional justice and Zimbabwe’s violent land seizures era

Transitional justice is about accountability and redress for victims of past human rights abuses.

Usually, the focus is on four types of approaches namely, criminal prosecutions, truth-seeking, reparations, and reform of laws and institutions to restore confidence and prevent recurrence of abuses.

There is no ‘one size fit all formula’; rather, what each country does depends on its political, social and legal circumstances. Both the Zimbabwean state and civil society have at different epochs engaged with transitional justice mechanisms (Moyo 2014:30-32). Presently, even though there is no consensus as to whether Zimbabwe is a transitional society, the country has a National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) which was established by Chapter 12 (Sections 252 and 253) of the 2013 constitution (Moyo 2014:26-29). Four years later, it is yet to be seen whether the NPRC will deal with the country’s land injustices.

What is known is that the Zimbabwean legal framework has closed the door to restitution as a policy for redressing land seizures. Also, S76(7) of the Constitution cites the colonial era expropriations which were done with no compensation and gives the Zimbabwean government permission to acquire land with compensation only for improvements on the land.

Insights

Zimbabwe’s colonial and postcolonial violent land seizures violated both civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights including the right to food.

Ironically, postcolonial Zimbabwe’s land redistribution programme can be construed as both a postcolonial transitional justice mechanism and a state’s attempt to implement the right to food.

Yet, it can be rightly argued that the post-2000 land seizures were not consistent with human rights

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Arguably, the post-2000 violent land seizure era was a Chimurenga situation and, in common with similar situations, the rule of law and human rights were contested. Thus, Zimbabwe needs transitional justice to mark the move from a Chimurenga situation to a peaceful democratic society which respects, protects and fulfils human rights.

I suggest that the country’s NRPC should facilitate discussions on the truth-about land-related human rights violations. In addition to investigating the truth about land-related violations, it would be useful to consider other transitional justice approaches as well. Policy options for dealing with land injustices in transitional contexts include restitution, land redistribution, tenure reform and compensation (Moyo 2015).

I have already stated that Zimbabwe’s legal framework has already closed the door to restitution but this does not preclude the nation from developing a context specific method for dealing with the victimhood of the disposed white farmers. Also, it may be helpful for Zimbabwe’s land redistribution program to be recognised as a postcolonial transitional justice mechanism which redressed colonial injustices.

This is a recognition of the dignity of black Zimbabweans whose land was unjustly expropriated by the colonialist. Further, land tenure reform could be a good way of restoring confidence in Zimbabwe’s agricultural sector and preventing guarantees of non-recurrence.

References
Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No.20) Act, 2013.

Khanyisela Moyo is a Lecturer at the School of Law and Transitional Justice Institute, University of Ulster, UK.

The song of livelihoods: Zimbabweans are singing again!
The song of livelihoods; Zimbabweans are singing again
The dust settled
The unsettled fettled
Kettle on the boil
Ready for boys heading home the cattle
Embattled nettle-biting warriors
Nomadic coming home home-comers
Women in sari, ululating
Returning from ndari
Cold-fending children in a chari
And the drifter with a goatee
Smoking chalice, stroking his beard
And neighbours who think he’s weird
The ones who never feared, who cheered
Bota motoring tummies of nannies
Sweating for very little
And little boys and girls at the Kines
Lining for Stuart Little
And the ones pining, keen to make a lot
The grotto-lot
The go-to-a-lot-of-trouble to win the lotto lot
Hello motto, the bubble
The ones living inside it untroubled
Ma Shona, Ndebele, ma Nyika
The lot for whom it is cool to say
Aiwa! Zvakadzvanya baba

The older lot
To them, cool is colder
N’anga, maporofita, payroll people
And people on the payroll
Inflatable things on rapturous things
And the trouble ensuing
If they rapture
Matohwe, matamba, makwakwa, magwazhava, makunguruzhu
Makepekepepe one – Dynamos two
Amahlola nyama, e Magumeni
Ibhosvo!
Determbro by baba Dembo
Tururu – tururu! That’s Tuku
Zimbabweans are singing again; the song of livelihoods!

© Dumi Senda, Author and human rights practitioner.
He chaired the Research Day session on Food Nutrition and Culture.
Panel 2 The Political Economy of Food

A summary of the talk given by Arnold Chamunogwa

Our first scheduled speaker, Dr Phillian Zamchiya, was unable to appear owing to visa problems. However, we hope to publish his paper in our next edition. Our second speaker, Arnold Chamunogwa presented a paper entitled Remaking political order on commercial farmlands through partisan authority.

It is summarised here.

Arnold Chamunogwa outlined three key phases of order change in the land issue.

The first key stage was the domestic governance of white farmers. The second was in 2000 – 2002, which saw an intense system of partisan authority. Lastly, from 2002, new forms of authority started emerging, although they were still pushing ZANU structures.

Exploitative control
Before the land reform, domestic governance when white farmers were responsible for maintaining and governing farms where the majority of inhabitants were black farmers.

During this period, people tended to be controlled in an exploitative way – often involving corporal punishment. But, at the same time there were social initiatives, such as health and education provision – and, even after independence, the government depended on farmers for social service provision.

The exploitative nature of the pre-reform system was what motivated ZANU discourse of land reform, and the ‘land occupations’. (Arnold Chamunogwa declined to use the word ‘seizures’).

A continuation of the liberation struggle
The occupations were thus seen as a continuation of the liberation struggle, with the goal of creating a system of order and governance that would match ZANU views and interests.

Electoral politics at that time were closely related to land politics and land reform was based on the idea not on citizenship but on ZANU support. Partisan authority was established that consisted of ZANU district coordinating leadership and youth militia.

Farmworkers were at this point defined as enemies, collaborators, and sell-outs, while the land occupiers were seen (by ZANU) as patrons for people who sought access to land. Land was part of the first, second, and third Chimurengas.

The workers were often unable to accept this. As one land-occupying group put it: ‘We tried to explain that the white farmers were oppressing them, but they just did not get it ... They would ask who is going to look after us if you chase the white farmer away.’

The ZANU discourse was that ‘we [ZANU] are the ones who brought you to the land, so you have to support us’. Violence was justified if the victims were MDC supporters. The authority was, in general, authoritarian and discriminatory and served electoral interests of ZANU and, when it came to taking land, those who were more privileged in the party would take more of it, along with equipment.

When land occupations started committees were set up that had political and social responsibilities.

Changing dynamics and a new narrative
However, he reported that there were different dynamics between farms. Sometimes committees had traditional functions. Some of them were extended traditional authorities. Often committees were incorporated in state surveillance structures and would often reflect competing interests of different institutions.

At the same time, the discourse was changing from patriotic nationalism to restoring order on the farms. The new narrative was that of stability and production: patronage and paternalistic practices were deteriorating – you no longer need a party card to start farming, as you can just pay a joining fee.

This meant that order was restored not only through political campaigns but also through new realities.

This dimension, i.e. an intention to continue with production, he believed, has been overlooked by the media.

‘Doing better than the whites’
As an illustration, he described the way in which the workers in the Mazoe oranges plantations had been organised by local committees of ZanuPF – encouraged to form collectives, building traditional-style housing for themselves, opening a bank account, seeking funding for irrigation, using proper records of work done and paid for, and, in general, kept people working successfully on the farm, and so on.

As one war veteran put it, ‘We had to do better than the white farmers’.

Arnold Chamunogwa is a doctoral candidate in the Department of International Development, Oxford University.
Panel 3 Livelihoods and Entrepreneurship: sustainability and the environment

Tapiwa Chatikobo, Mbongeni Ngulube, Dr Nick James

The first of the three panellists was Tapiwa Chatikobo. We hope to publish a more detailed summary of his paper, Land reform and livestock production in Matabeleland South, in the next issue of the Zimbabwe Review.

In essence, his contribution outlined research carried out in dry areas of Matabeleland South, with low rainfall (less than 650mm a year). He looked at A1 farms (smallholdings), and A2 (large-scale commercial farms) and assessed how farmers had managed (or not) to accumulate wealth, whether through farming alone, or related activities as well.

He noted contrasts in levels of success – even on A1 farms, one farmer now owned a car, solar panels and could sell surplus crops and animals – while another small-scale farmer he studied was struggling.

Meanwhile, on the A2 farms, most income came from livestock – but there was also considerable symbiotic relationship between farming and off-farm activities, including permanent jobs i.e. capital from wage labour invested in livestock, or livestock being sold to purchase property.

He discussed the difference between accumulating from ‘below’ – by working through markets, and those benefiting from patronage, which he described as accumulating from ‘above’. He noted the need for capital to develop farms: without which a farm could not succeed. He also discussed ways in which activities could be constrained or limited by the size of land acquired – though land could be leased or borrowed.

Tapiwa Chatikobo is from the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian studies, University of the Western Cape (PLAAS).

The colour of territory: collaborative production in Zimbabwe

Speaker and this summary: Mbongeni Ngulube

This paper was presented under the heading: Land, remittances, rural farmers and the free market: contract farming in the poultry industry.

‘Aah Ngulube!’ my fieldwork host mother exclaimed, “how can a man wake up in the middle of the day and forget he has children?”

It was 4am. She is in her late 70s, with a small lean frame toughened by years of work; and is one of 150 broiler chicken contract farmers in the village.

‘Don’t you see …’ pointing at over 2 000 day-old chicks, “these little things are the police ..!’ Her casual statement prompted countless questions: in what way are day-old chicks the police? By whose authority, what power and which mechanism – and what sanction do they exact in case of deviance? Some answers lay in the land and in its history.

The colour of territory

British colonisation in the 1890s was planned as a mineral extraction endeavour until the gold-mining slump of 1904 (Fisher, 2010; Lebert, 2006). Land and agriculture then became paramount, leading to the 1930 Land Apportionment Act which demarcated the territory on racial lines: white (large commercial farms) and black (native reserves). These ‘principles of racial separation and hierarchy were inscribed on the territory’s geography’ (Fisher, 2010), what Moore (2005) calls an ‘ethnic spatial fix’. Rhodesia became a white land, farmed via white capital, linked to white domestic and international markets, based on surplus black labour and policed through force of arms.

White farmers had access to inputs, operational capital and annual government subsidies of USD $30,000 in today’s terms, with preferential pricing at the market (Hanlon et al, 2012). But some white farmers resisted white territory through customary land acquisition, interracial marriages and illegal support of black communities. Black resistance was primarily around labour, politics and ultimately armed struggle leading in 1980 to independence through the Lancaster House Agreement. It prescribed market-based land reform (willing buyer, willing seller), consequently leaving land in white control by legal instrument and capital access.

I call this period ‘post-white’.

Jambanja: post-2000 land reform

In 1997, a conjuncture of historic injustice, geopolitics, delayed independence promises of land acquisition (the reason for armed struggle), and strong political opposition collided over a case surrounding government misuse of the War Victims Compensation Fund.

Following riots, white farms were occupied by former war veterans in 1998, and later by state sanction leading to the expulsion of over 4,000 white farmers
In one case, the white farmer (locally named *umlungu*) and the community depend on each other to negotiate tenure security for *umlungu* and benefits for the community. While the relationship remains unequal, the dark-shade of territory brought negotiation confidence for the community. One villager said, ‘*Umlungu* cannot mistreat us after we fought and went to jail for him, he remains here because of us’.

**Production without capital**

This brought my host-mother’s statement to life.

Under contract, *umlungu* provides inputs: day-old chicks, feed, medication, logistics and extension worker support.

At six weeks, all broilers are slaughtered and, after deducting inputs, the villagers retain any profits. But broilers are lab-engineered, ideally require mechanised, sterile environments and are therefore labour intensive by hand. The flock must be kept separate from other livestock for bio-security, drink up to 180 twenty-litre buckets of water per day, kept at optimal temperatures, and fed ad libitum 24 hours a day using solar lights.

Any deviance raises fowl death, recorded as mortality and seen as a loss of profit, feed and labour; so most villagers survive on ‘mortality’ to curb the loss. Extended family and social networks provide 24-hour ‘invisible labour’, while women sleep in fowl runs nine months of the year.

Last year, price fluctuations drove profits down from $400 to $30 or less; and while the villagers complain and recite their defence of the farm, none wish for *umlungu*’s expulsion. *Umlungu* says he’s had to subsidise the villagers, but the recent cash shortage means he sometimes resorts to food vouchers.

*Umlungu* and the community are structurally co-dependent and speak well of the other while struggling to maintain their collaboration despite the absence of money. In this case, production is moved not through capital(ist) circulation, but collaborative relations, a form of barter-production.

This is embodied by the broiler-police, representing market discipline, production efficiency and barter work relations between the parties.

The contract here only legally represents their relationship, it is not the relationship itself (White, 2005), as they negotiate new relations and way of life in black territory.

**References**


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From ‘Fly Frontier’ to ‘Cotton Country’: social change and agrarian transformation in the northwest of Zimbabwe

Speaker and this summary: Nick James

This essay summarises the points raised in reflecting my recently published chapter in Global and Built Environment Review (James, 2017).

Firstly, the chapter aimed to re-engage with the challenges raised with the adoption of ‘new regional geography’ during the 1980s: to combine ‘practical social action’ with conventional geographical enquiry into regions. The book asks what regions are and what they do, and how geographers should understand their functions and power.

Second, regional geography works as a unifying approach towards achieving synthesis, bringing together different understandings to give a fuller picture of the dynamics in the Northwest region. The chapter identifies five geographic undercurrents that characterise the region. In the chapter I am conscious of important debates emerging within geography, including agrarian concerns like ‘agro-ecology’ (Moore, 2015), the methodological challenges in ‘political ecology’ (Peet, et al. 2011) and re-invigorated approaches to ‘sustainable development’ (Polepole, 2015).

Thirdly, the chapter aimed to illustrate the livelihood entanglements and agencies in this part of Zimbabwe.

Frontier country

Often referred to as ‘Gokwe’, the Northwest of Zimbabwe’s marginality, poverty and isolation stand out. Until recently it was known as the main cotton growing area of Zimbabwe. It has ‘frontier’ characteristics, upholding deep political tensions, receiving waves of immigration since the 1950s, new virgin soil to cultivate, prospects for new livelihoods and so on. It is also the habitat associated with significant difficulties including tsetse fly, malaria and cholera. It is hot, dry and difficult and yet people have developed decent livelihoods.

Most people in Gokwe and the Northwest live in areas referred to as ‘communal lands’, others in ‘resettlement areas’ or ‘small-scale commercial farms’. The region has, since the 1960s accounted for a significant proportion of the nation’s cotton, which is the second export earner after tobacco (see James 2006; Mariga, 1994).

In the first section of the chapter, I examine the rapid transformation of a largely peasant economy that took place in the lead-up to the introduction of cotton in the 1960s. For much of the 20th century, the region was known as the Sebungwe and the ‘Sebungwe Planning Region’, with challenges that could be singled out for particular attention by the state.

For example, in 1946, it was described by a colonial administrator thus: ‘Apart from being full of tsetse fly they [Sebungwe] are for the greater part unfit at present for human habitation. When fly has been eliminated and adequate water supplies and irrigation instituted, a reasonable number of natives can be settled’ [emphasis added].

Alexander and Ranger (1998: p.4) point out that: ‘… the whole region was regarded as literally “reserve” territory – empty land into which African populations could be moved when it became “necessary.”’

Following the collapse of the tobacco industry in the area during the 1920s, many men migrated to find work, giving the impression that the area was uncropped. The authorities also actively moved the people out of these areas during the 1940s in preparation for anti-tsetse fly measures. This campaign lasted until the 1960s, including chemical sprays, hunting, tree cutting (‘gochamopane’), fencing etc.

Land use

The second section explores the land use and agrarian characteristics of the region, based on the significant increase in the total number of commercial smallholder farms following major waves of in-migration.

A combination of in-migration of people from the south of the country and the introduction of cotton
saw an unprecedented agrarian transformation.

Initially, people were moved into the area under the colonial state’s direction. However, inflows of migrants increased during the 1960s and intensified after independence in 1980. Eric Worby (1994, p.389) describes the rapid actions to clear land for new settlers: ‘The Rhodesdale residents [from Kwe Kwe] were loaded into lorries and transported into the hot malarial lowlands of the Sanyati and Sebungwe Districts’.

This is also described vividly in Shimmer Chinodya’s celebrated novel Dew in the Morning.

**Institutional developments**

The third section in the chapter explores emerging institutional developments in the 1980s, including the incorporation of the region into a wider market – though some customary and traditional institutions remained powerful, including rest days (Chisi), the headmen’s authority and respect for sacred woodlands. Prohibited areas for cultivation and development included grazing land, areas near dams, sacred woodlands and land adjacent to rivers or wetlands (Nyambara, 1999). This, to some extent, goes back to state conservation policies from the 1930s.

The Northwest, since the 1970s, fitted the label of a ‘food insecurity paradox’ – with significant economic growth, expansion in cotton cropping and the evident creation of wealth but nevertheless, with many households experiencing appalling food insecurity and malnutrition (James 2002).

**Opening up ‘communal lands’**

The fourth section describes the opening up of ‘communal lands’ for commercial exploitation, and subsequent challenges. Native Reserves assigned during the colonial period became referred to as Tribal Trust Lands from 1961 until 1980, when they became Communal Lands. Some of the characteristics of private-sector and state-led economic exploitation gave further strain on people’s livelihoods.

The Northwest also includes National and Safari parks and new wildlife areas. CAMPFIRE (Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources) arguably saw the further process of ‘privatisation’, which was resisted in various conflicts (Hammar, 2001). The agrarian livelihoods were being challenged by new ideas including making use of the wilderness and community-based natural resource management.

**In conclusion**

In conclusion, this is touching on the various complicated aspects of staying alive in one part of Zimbabwe. It fits with a range of emerging debates: African political geography has raised new questions on the extent of non-western or non-capitalist making of places. It is vital to recognise the two-way relationship between people’s livelihoods making those places what they are, and the qualities and structural make-up of places influencing the way livelihoods operate.

**References**


**Dr Nick James** is a geographer with research and teaching interests in development, environment and political ecology.
Panel 4 Food, Nutrition and Culture
Pathisa Nyathi and Dorcas Gwata

The last panel of the day looked at the ways in which people relate to food on a personal, rather than an economic level.

Beyond the frontiers of nutrition: seeking to understand domestication of food and its inherent cultural expression

Speaker and this summary: Pathisa Nyathi

Food provides nutrition, but what is considered food also implies cultural construction. This paper seeks to unravel the more salient aspects of cultural implications of domestication of food from what was once wild, to a point where it is part of the more intricate cultural expressions.

What is considered food is subjected to choices, informed by a people’s culture. Inevitably this has implications in developmental terms, as development is about choices that are sustainable within a culture. This leads to the question of how we approach food aid – how ethical is it to force adoption of wheat, for example, to a community whose staple is maize, disregarding the level of domestication wheat has them?

Domestication of food: the physical terrain

This paper deals with twin concepts of domestication of food, and then seeks to unpack the concept of food as a cultural expression.

In hunter-gatherer societies, women collected fruits, tubers and leaves, while men hunted. Neither animals and plants were part of the physical features of a home. However division of labour already existed, in a simple community.

Then, thousands of years ago, domestication began: people constructed cattle byres and started to cultivate wild plants. Societies became settled, and more complex.

Ndebele society

Using Ndebele society to demonstrate some concepts, we can see how the physical infrastructure was created according to the society’s belief systems. Where rustling happened, cattle byres were centrally located. Harvested crops required storage within the settlement. Since women attended to the crops, they, too were responsible for the grain stores (grass grain bins, called izilulu), which were at the rear of the homestead.

Cultural ideas were infused into the physical structures and began to carry perceptions in line with the community’s worldview. The settlement pattern was an expression of the community’s way of life, including its spirituality.

By studying the particular settlement one is able to journey into the minds of its creators: what is domesticated is altered to fit into existing ideologies and cosmologies. Simultaneously, the existing ideologies undergo alteration to accommodate the new life-style

Entering the realm of ideologies

Acceptance of what constitutes food entails it undergoing cultural transformation. Food is named, and given cultural qualities, so that it sits well with the pre-existing world of ideas, beliefs, and ideologies. It traverses the landscape of ideas. The receiver and the received both undergo changes and find equilibrium.

Once domesticated, food can be seen as part of a community’s cultural heritage – part of their identity.

Staying alive therefore goes beyond the mere availability of food: the community must perceive food as such. Cultural barriers may negate the adoption of particular items: for example, they may prevent expectant mothers from getting a sound diet, or lead to children suffering food deficiency because of cultural injunctions. Cultural barriers can actually mean a difference between life and death.

Cultural expressions

African communities operate within the context of symbolism and metaphor. What we eat, with its pre-conceived qualities, will produce in us particular qualities inherent in that food. Where those are considered negative, the community may place cultural barriers against that food. An example among the Ndebele is where a menstruating woman was forbidden milk, because of the belief that medicinal concoctions applied to cattle could harm women’s health.

Food also entered the realm of totemism, which is important in the understanding African historical origins. Everyone belongs to a kin group, which is associated with a particular animal of bird. A totem may be seen as a people’s spiritual DNA. It is held sacred and may not be killed or eaten. Thus, carnivores are generally tabooed because they eat various totemic animals, which translates to spiritual cannibalism. Dire consequences are believed to visit those who transgress totemic taboos.

Language

Language is an important aspect of culture. New ideas and items are domesticated when they are appropriated.
through a people’s language. Further, language acts as a repository of learned experiences. Domestication of ideas and items, including food, is unthinkable in the absence of language. Through interacting with the environment, both material and spiritual, people extend their vocabulary.

Food and other domesticated ideas find a place in a people’s proverbs, which expresses critical values, ideas and worldviews.

The Ndebele will say in reference to cows, ‘It licks the one that licks it, *Ikhuthu eyikhuthayo*’ – meaning ‘one good turn deserved another’. Thus a cow has gone beyond its role as a provider of food to express ideas about personal and inter-group relations.

Folk tales are another repository of ideas that a community regards as important. They are part of the process of socialisation – cattle, among the Ndebele, for example, have found their way into folklore. Metaphor, too, has the quality of vivid expression and captures powerful images.

**Specific examples of food as a cultural expression**

Ndebele society was both patriarchal and patrilineal. This was expressed in several ways, including food. For example, various beef cuts were distributed to mirror society and its culture.

Cows, an example of successful domestication, entered virtually all aspects of life, including symbolism, taboos, metaphor and language in general. Masculinity, for example, was expressed through the fact that only heads of households, invariably men, ate a cow’s head. (The Ndebele word for the cow’s head *inhluko*, the same word for household head.)

On the other hand, married women were given brisket, from a cow’s chest, *ungiklane* or *ukanethwa*: in a polygamous society, if the numerous wives failed to keep secrets within their chests, the result was going to be strife within a marriage.

When a male beast was slaughtered its sexual organs, *izitshadala*, were first severed and hung on the cattle byre, and later roasted and consumed by men, sometimes mixed with aphrodisiac hers. Bull masculinity was transferred to human bulls.

When a man slaughtered a beast there were reserved cuts for royalty and community leaders. Cuts were an expression of loyalty and subordination. King Mzilikazi Khumalo’s praises have a line that goes, ‘*Wali’ukudl’umlenze kwaBulawayo.*’ This tells how he declined the offer of a leg from King Tshaka Zulu – a hind leg was offered to one that was despised. By contrast, Princess Sidambe Khumalo is said to have consumed a beef dish of boiled blood and casings, meant for those with royal blood.

Bile, *inyongo*, bitter as it is, was considered unique and thus reserved to those different from the living: the ancestral spirits. When an individual was being introduced to the ancestors, bile was poured on his body.

**Circles**

People sat to consume food in a circle. It was served on kneaded food into balls. The circle was important and expressed their cosmology as it related to leadership, solidarity, and sustainability. This was the application of an important perception of the cosmos and an example of the all-important hierarchy of cultural expressions from the cosmos, to cosmology and, finally, cultural practices.

**Conclusion**

The emphasis on this presentation has been unpacking the twin concepts of domestication and cultural expressions.

Domestication is much more than the mere addition of plants and animals onto the physical landscape. It is the more fundamental entry into the architecture of existing cosmologies that matters the most. This is the stage where indigenisation and adaptation occurs when what has been domesticated sits well with previously existing worldviews and values. As this happens, there is mutual transformation of both the added items and the receiving matrix of ideologies, cosmologies, values and beliefs.

What is domesticated must make sense to the people, who apply their cosmologies, worldviews and perceptions. The search goes on till there is some healthy equilibrium between the new and the old, which must be fully integrated.

Food, initially and primarily consumed for its nutritional value, eventually enters a whole complex field of cultural constructs. In the midst of plenty of food people may still starve if ethical considerations are not taken on board to provide the kind of food that has passed the domestication test.

So, when people face starvation do we throw overboard all ethical considerations in the hope they will eat what is offered because the hungry are not choosers? This is an important question that food relief agencies need to understand.

*Pathisa Nyathi is a poet, historian and cultural consultant. He has published numerous books, including Welshman Hadane Mabena (with Marieka Clarke, 2016, AmaGugu Publishers, launched on the 2017 BZS Research Day.*
Nutrition in clinical practice, a global health perspective

Speaker and this summary: Dorcas Gwata

Global health challenges accelerate in poor economies and amid geo-political uncertainty. Infectious diseases thrive in poverty. It is therefore imperative that we discuss and explore measure to strengthen regional responses to health challenges in Southern Africa and improve health security for all.

In analysing global health challenges, Zimbabwe must be viewed in the context of region. The 2008 cholera outbreak there, for example became a regional challenge, just as the ebola crisis defied all boundaries in West Africa.

In Zimbabwe, poor nutrition, particularly in children and women, has coincided with poor harvests, drought and poor economic opportunities. This report draws on information gathered in clinical practices, observations and collaborations with non-governmental organisations in Zimbabwe.

Nutrition statistics

The 2015 Demographic and Health Survey estimated that 27 per cent of under-fives in Zimbabwe are stunted (chronically malnourished), with significant disparities between urban (22 per cent) and rural (29 per cent) areas, and between boys (30 per cent) and girls (24 per cent). Three per cent of under-fives are estimated to be wasted (acutely malnourished), with severe acute malnutrition at one per cent. The rates of exclusive breastfeeding in the first 6 months currently stands at 48 per cent. Only 8 per cent of children 6–23 months are given a minimum acceptable diet. (Dfid – Department For International Development – Zimbabwe 2017)

The Dfid Livelihoods and Food Security Programme (LFSP) aims to improve nutrition through promoting bio-fortified crops such vitamin A maize, iron and zinc enriched beans and millets, and training smallholder farmers on good agricultural practices, various technologies, good nutrition, and financial literacy. (Dfid Zimbabwe 2017)

The nutritional disparities between rural and urban areas could be because people in rural areas have fewer means of income compared to urban areas, which is further complicated by poor health seeking-behaviours, thresholds to seeking help and access to transport to get health care. Patients presenting to health care services with nutritional problems are often also presenting with comorbidities and complex multi-faceted medical complications, such as HIV and poor nutrition or diabetes and poor nutrition.

The gender differences in poor nutrition have been observed across other low-income countries and the evidence base for the difference is still weak.

In mental health terms, suicides amongst farmers are high throughout the world, and are highest in men. Farmers are particularly vulnerable at times of poor harvest. They also have lethal chemicals (eg pest controls) at their disposal.

Poor nutrition will have implications in early marriages and gender violence: we are observing an increase in HIV amongst young women across Zimbabwe, which may be related with poor literacy and the desire to get married in search of better outcomes.

Diet and choice

Africa’s middle-class is growing and, modelling western lifestyles, people are indulging in fast foods at the cost of their health. In the wake of the HIV crisis, and in a culture where ‘big’ is preferred to ‘thin’ (opposite to the western phenomenon), non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and alcohol-related conditions are often neglected.

More critically, in these difficult economic times, poor people having to choose between feeding their children or using the $1 they may have to travel to hospital for treatment. Many households in Zimbabwe are headed by resilient and resourceful women – but the lack of economic enterprise compounds their poor health and social outcomes.

Regional response

There is a need to strengthen regional responses in Southern Africa. The East African region has become increasingly co-ordinated, economically culturally and socially, despite the challenges faced there. The ebola crisis brought the West African response even closer and we are encouraged by the launch of the Africa Centre of Disease Control in Nigeria. Southern Africa region needs to be much more robust coherent regional planning: we need to re-define SADC’s remit and strengthen where possible. We must leverage on the new appointment of Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus, WHO Director General, the first African to hold this post, an important development given that, globally, Africa carries the heaviest burden of disease.

Thank you to Annabel Gerry and Dr Sajil Liaqat of DfiD, Zimbabwe.

Dorcas Gwata is a Zimbabwean Global Mental Health Specialist, who has worked extensively across East and Southern Africa.
In 2009, Petina Gappah burst on the world’s literary scene with a groundbreaking short story collection about her native Zimbabwe, – at the time still in the throes of the ‘fast-track land reallocation programme’.

Elegy for Easterly won the hearts of its readers (as well as the Guardian First Book Award) by managing to be both heart-breaking and witty. The Guardian called it ‘poignant, humane and funny’, and it is perhaps this book more than any other that gave international readers an insight into the sheer ludicrousness of life in Mugabe’s Zimbabwe – even while deploiring and mourning its tragedies and violence.

Crime and punishment

Gappah’s second collection inhabits the same literary terrain, but it is more ambitious and assured. Gappah is a lawyer by training – a fact foregrounded by her 2015 novel, The Book of Memory, in which the protagonist/narrator tells the story of her life from Chikurubi maximum-security prison in Harare, as she awaits the outcome of the final appeal following a death sentence. The twenty short stories in Rotten Row are explicitly organised around the ideas of crime and punishment.

The collection is divided into sections titled ‘Capital’ and ‘Criminal’. Gappah deftly frames the notions of ‘justice’ and ‘literature’ by prefacing each story with a quotation from the Bible, in English and Shona. The book thus signals its willingness to be both inward and outward-looking in the cultural sense. Rotten Row gestures towards national texts and concerns on the one hand, and towards Africa and the wider world on the other.

Readers of Zimbabwe’s literature will recognise echoes of much of the country’s English-language canon in Gappah’s pages – which point writing by Stanley Nyamfukudza, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Dambudzo Marechera and Shimmer Chinodya (among others). Lovers of world literature will be able to draw parallels with writers as diverse as Chimamanda Adichie, Taiye Selasi and Fyodor Dostoyevsky.

Gappah writes with assurance and compassion about a wide range of characters and adopts a range of subject positions and voices – corrupt lawyers and policemen who turn out honest, mourning mothers and gossiping hairdressers, expatriates, travellers, school children, NGO wheeler-dealers, angry spirits interacting with the living, and living people who appear to be ghosts.

The Zimbabwe of these stories is a place in which colonial-era whiteness has lost all cultural authority (while retaining a pathetic vulnerability), and in which entirely new kinds of power networks are on the rise. The stories are couched in a variety of textual forms, including a judge’s sentence, a post-mortem report and an online conversation. The collection gains in complexity and depth by interlinking the stories via recurring characters, themes and motifs: watch out for the re-appearance of a blind beggar led by a schoolboy wearing mismatched parts of a school uniform, and a female character called Pepukai.

Together, the stories amount to a layered and self-aware kind of national allegory.

Hope and symbolism

The final tale, ‘Ladies and Gentlemen, Bob Marley and the Wailers’, refers to the hope of a better social world, made palpable by the appearance of the iconic Jamaican singer at Harare’s Rufaro Stadium during the Independence celebrations.

The powerful symbolism of this memorable cultural event is something that Gappah’s book refuses to let go. As the story’s protagonist re-listens to Marley and the Wailers nearly three decades later, the reference to the Wailers’ ‘lament […] that they had made their world so hard’ (p. 337) reverberates with ambivalence, with poignant and complex cultural symbolism – and also, perhaps paradoxically, with hope.

Ranka Primorac: the University of Southampton.


Introducing Gary Chimuzinga

We welcome Zimbwean-born Gary, who has agreed to take on the task of promoting the Society’s membership. He sees his task as being to use his networks with fellow Zimbabweans to reach people who have a genuine and interest in developments in Zimbabwe.
BRITAIN ZIMBABWE SOCIETY 2017 MEMBERS’ MEETING

Saturday 21 October 2017, 2.00pm–5.00pm
St James’s Church Hall, 11 Prebend Street, London N1 8PF

All members and friends of BZS are welcome

2.00pm-3.00pm BZS Annual General Meeting
3.00pm refreshments
3.15pm GUEST SPEAKERS
To be announced

Contact the Britain Zimbabwe Society

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Ranka Primorac    Victor de Waal
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Association; Zimbabwe Association

Note: There are vacancies on the Executive: please contact
Pat Brickhill if you are interested in joining it.

Britain Zimbabwe Society Membership Form

To join and receive regular newsletters, e-mail discussion forum and conference discounts please print off and send
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