

# **The Land Occupations Movement and Democratisation: The Contradictions of the Neoliberal Agenda in Zimbabwe**

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## **Introduction**

Since the decolonisation of Zimbabwe in 1980, the debate surrounding the country's land question and attempts to resolve it by means of market instruments have failed to redress the colonial legacy consisting of grossly inequitable land ownership. This article provides an explanation of why the resolution of the land question has remained elusive. Despite broad consensus between the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) and the international community that a major land problem exists in Zimbabwe, the land debate has remained shallow. The main reason for this is that the predominantly urban-led civil society has not formally embraced the land reform agenda due to the enduring, class-based orientation of its leadership, especially in the Non-governmental organisation (NGO) movement. This disadvantage has circumscribed rural social movements to informal politics and has given precedence to more organised, middle class civic groups and policy organisations that typically advocate market-based methods of land reform and liberal rights issues. The onset of structural adjustment, as well as 'democratisation' along the multi-party formula, have reinforced the liberal substance of the debate, for 'opposition' movements have accepted the neoliberal terms of the debate. In the process of transition to a liberal economy, informal rural politics, and land occupations in particular, have remained the primary source of advocacy for radical land reform and indeed have succeeded in maintaining land reform on the agenda.

Zimbabwe has not, historically, had an organised civil society that has made radical demands for land reform or land redistribution. Under colonial rule, the land cause was led by the liberation movement, and in the 1970s, was pursued by means of armed struggle.<sup>2</sup> In the post-colonial period, the civil society groupings that have existed have been predominantly middle class and with strong international aid linkages that have militated against radical land reform, while formal grassroots organisations have tended to be appendages of middle-class driven immediately civil society

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<sup>2</sup> T. Chitiyo, 2000. Land Violence and Compensation: Reconceptualising Zimbabwe's Land and War Veterans Debate, Track Two, Vol. 9, No. 1.

organisations.<sup>3</sup> The rural operations of civil society within a neoliberal framework has been characterised by demands for funds for ‘development’ small projects aimed at a few selected beneficiaries.<sup>4</sup> This state of affairs has left a political and social vacuum in the leadership of the land reform agenda. It is within strategic vacuum that the élite in the ruling party, Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic front (ZANU-PF), first engineered the early land occupation movements around 1980, then engineered its gradual demobilisation since 1984, and recently remobilized the movement through the agency of the liberation struggle and veterans.<sup>5</sup> Historically, the GoZ instigated or controlled the resurgence of the land occupation movement by insisting that ZANU (PF), as the people’s government would address the land question ‘once and for all’ on their behalf.<sup>6</sup> It was, however, in 1997 when a shift in power occurred within the ruling party, as the war veterans took center stage, that the land redistribution initiative was brought back to the centre of the development debate, now couched in the more popular arena of liberation and nationalist discourses.

The above leadership vacuum in civil society, together with the neoliberal policy framework, which failed to deliver either land or economic development, has generated centralist and commandist models of land redistribution. On the one hand, the salient land demands of the black elite within both the ruling and opposition parties, made within a liberal electoral and human rights framework have avoided the fundamental issues of economic restructuring and redistribution of resources. On the other hand, the stagnation of the economy has enabled ZANU(PF) to maintain an emphasis on the historical injustice over land redistribution and through this continued to dominate the rural vote. The adoption of a centralized method of compulsory land acquisition on a massive scale was instigated in 1997 by war veterans, who are few in number and in terms of their political base but whose cause has a broad rural social basis and potential for mobilisation. In this sense, the land occupation movement which has emerged is politically organised but socially grounded. It might be instigated centrally but it is differentiated by the many different pulses driving it, including varied local interests of war veterans, traditional and other leaders, and informal community organisations. It is this broad social base that has made it possible for the war veterans and ruling party to mobilise rural people.

Land occupations have been an ongoing social phenomenon in both urban and rural areas of Zimbabwe, before and after the country’s independence. The land occupations represent an unofficial

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3 Sam Moyo, 1994. Conceptualising Land Tenure in Southern Africa: The case of Zimbabwe”, SAPEM, Vol. 7, No. 8, May.

4 Sam Moyo, Brian Raftopolous, and John Mw. Makumbe, 2000. NGOs and Development in Zimbabwe (SAPES Books, Harare).

5 At independence and most of the 1980s, the GoZ had neutralized war veterans. Some observers note that the GoZ had lured the war veterans constituency without meaningfully addressing the issue of demobilization. The power of war veterans was further delegitimised through instruments such as the War Veterans Act and War Victims Compensation Act.

6 Sam Moyo, 1999. “The Political Economy of Land Acquisition and Redistribution in Zimbabwe, 1990-.” Journal of Southern African Studies 26 (1).

or underground social pressure used to force land redistribution to be taken seriously. The 2000-2001 occupations mark the climax of a longer, less public and dispersed struggle over land shortages and land demand in the post independence period. In the past, particularly in the last half of the 1980s, and during structural adjustment (1990-95), peasants routinely resorted to less visible and illegal tactics, having been denied a meaningful voice in the development dialogue. Poaching, encroaching, squatting and trespassing have largely been their only means of participation and, by this means, they have waged a war of attrition against the prevailing property regime.

### **Zimbabwe's Neoliberal Experience in Perspective**

The prospects for democratisation and egalitarian land reform in Zimbabwe diminished as a result of the change in policy thrust from socialism to neoliberalism. The latter was formalised in the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) of 1990, though the shift occurred gradually over the period 1987 to 1996.<sup>7</sup> The external imposition of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) by means of policy-based lending reinforced broadly undemocratic policy making practices, and they influenced also the evolution of land policy towards an élitist agenda.

The imposition of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) throughout Africa in the 1980s was rationalised on the grounds of a perceived political and economic 'crisis' in Africa. Various neoclassical economic and liberal political assumptions about the nature of African policy making processes were used to justify SAPs. First, it was claimed that macroeconomic and sectoral policies in Africa have been irrational mainly because of excessive state intervention in markets, particularly through import substitution policies. Second, and related to the first, it was claimed that the predominant mode of rule in Africa, identified as 'state corporatism', was undemocratic and repressed the necessary pluralistic organisation and participation of civil society in the policy making process. Third, it has been argued that those domestic interest groups that have been able to influence policy in Africa are mostly 'urban based coalitions' which also favour import substitution protectionism and thus distort overall economic incentives.<sup>8</sup> In the case of Zimbabwe, there is now consensus that the

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7 Sam Moyo, 2000. Land Reform under Structural Adjustment in Zimbabwe. Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute. [You could perhaps refer to Brian's 'House of Hunger' articles in ROAPE]

8 For critical discussions, see Thandika Mkandawire, and Adebayo Olukoshi, (eds) 1995. *Between Liberalisation and Oppression: The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Africa* (Codesria: Dakar); Thandika Mkandawire, 1984. "Home Grown Austerity Measures in Zimbabwe" (mimeo: ZIDS working Paper: Harare; Peter Gibbon, and Adebayo Olukoshi, 1996. *Structural Adjustment and Socio-economic Change in Sub-Saharan Africa: Some Conceptual, Methodological and Research Issues*, NAI, Research Report No. 102; Sam Moyo, Raftopolous, B. and John Mw. Makumbe, 2000. *NGOs and Development in Zimbabwe* (SAPES Books, Harare; Sam Moyo, 1999. *Land and Democracy in Zimbabwe*, Sapes Monograph Series, No. 7.

country faced low levels of employment growth, *but no real economic crisis* requiring structural adjustment.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, the policy shift was adopted *without* consultations with the majority of the populace, especially labour, small farmers and small business.<sup>10</sup> However, large business, large white farmer and nascent black indigenous groups, such as the Indigenous Business Development Center (IBDC), supported the resultant ESAP programme, based upon their active consultation by the World Bank. While, the IBDC sought affirmative action for its members, little was offered by ESAP towards far reaching land redistribution programme.

The first victim of the replacement of socialism by neo-liberal economic reform, which attempted to balance the interests of external capital, local white capital and the 'indigenisation' project, was the land question. For sometime, the struggles between local white and black capital for public policy attention in the context of SAP-type macro-economic reforms, overshadowed issues of redistribution and state intervention in, for instance, land markets. But black capital sought its place in a predominantly white elite business system.

The indigenisation lobby transformed the meaning of 'national interest' and 'return of lost lands' by appealing for the de-racialisation 'blackening' of the ownership base of commercial farmland proposing, in effect, on or racial substitution formula for capitalist farming. But the emerging indigenous capital, large white farmer organizations, technocrats and many NGOs supported the changing of the eligibility criteria for access to land from notions of 'landlessness' and 'insecurity' to those of 'capability, 'productivity' and 'efficiency', within the terms of the neoliberal global development paradigm.<sup>11</sup> The changing terms of the land debate combined with optimistic predictions of investment from outside to submerge land reform by other socioeconomic issues such as employment creation.<sup>12</sup> In this context, land reform came to be perceived as almost unnecessary. Meanwhile, the economic reforms implemented benefited mainly the current white large scale

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9 Peter Gibbon, 1990. Existing and Prospective Research on Structural Adjustment, Nordiska Africaninstitutet, Uppsala, Sweden; Peter Gibbon 1995. Structural Adjustment and the Working Poor in Zimbabwe, Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet; Peter Gibbon, and Adebayo Olukoshi, 1996. Structural Adjustment and Socio-economic Change in Sub-Saharan Africa: Some Conceptual, Methodological and Research Issues, NAI, Research Report No. 102; Collin Stoneman, 1992. The World Bank Demands its Pound of Zimbabwe's Flesh', ROAPE, No. 53, pp. 94-96.

10 Lloyd Sachikonye, 1993. "Structural Adjustment, State and Organised Labour in Zimbabwe", in P. Gibbon (ed), Social Change and Economic Reform in Africa, Nordiska Africaninstitutet, Uppsala; Stephen Chipika, 1997. Economic Reform and Smallholder Agriculture in Zimbabwe, ITDG, Policy Research; Thandika Mkandawire, 1984. "Home Grown Austerity Measures in Zimbabwe" (mimeo: ZIDS working Paper: Harare; Thandika Mkandawire, 1984. "Home Grown Austerity Measures in Zimbabwe" (mimeo: ZIDS working Paper: Harare; Thandika Mkandawire, and Adebayo Olukoshi, (eds) 1995. Between Liberalisation and Oppression: The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Africa (Codesria: Dakar)

11 A. A. Ashworth, 1990. Agricultural technology and the Communal Farm sector, Background paper to the World Bank, Zimbabwe agricultural Sector Memorandum, The World Bank, Harare. World Bank, 1995. Zimbabwe Agricultural sector Memorandum, Washington DC. M. Rukuni and C. K. Eicher (eds.) 1994. Zimbabwe's Agricultural Revolution, University of Zimbabwe Publications.

12 ZCTU, 1996. Beyond ESAP: Framework for Long-term Development Strategy in Zimbabwe Beyond the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme(ESAP), ZCTU, Harare.

landowners, for ESAP offered little in the way of new investment resources to the black smallholder and export led growth in commodity production, and did nothing to improve the restrictive land, water and infrastructural conditions of communal areas.<sup>13</sup>

The re-emergence of land reform on the developing world agenda in the mid-1990s and the relaunching of the resettlement programme in Zimbabwe mark the current phase of a dialectic relationship between peasants, government and global institutions. After the failure of structural adjustment to live up to its rural development promises, the land question has resurfaced as a legitimate item on the poverty reduction agenda of the World Bank while, at the national level, the same failure has made demands on the ruling party to redeem its liberation promise.

The years 1997 to 2000 were characterised by economic collapse that ushered in a new period for land reform defined by political and economic crisis. A series of confrontations between organised civil society and the GoZ were witnessed throughout the 1990s. These were led by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), but also independently of it, such as by middle class workers, in particular doctors and nurses.<sup>14</sup> The latter were quite distinct from a whole range of other labour confrontations, for they spelled a break in the social contract between middle class workers and the ruling party. Yet, the major turning point in the political crisis came with the open confrontation between liberation war veterans and government officials in 1997.<sup>15</sup> Following counter-accusations within ZANU (PF) over the validity of the war veterans benefits for their disabilities from a statutory fund set up by the GoZ,<sup>16</sup> The Zimbabwe Liberation War Veterans Association (ZLNWA) confronted mainstream ZANU (PF) leadership. They locked-up its top leadership at the party headquarters, marched in the courts and into the vicinity of the state house.<sup>17</sup> They demanded to be paid Z\$ 50 000.00<sup>18</sup> pensions immediately and that the 5 million hectares targeted by the GoZ be acquired at once. This power play forced a realignment within ZANU (PF). It also created a policy-making vacuum throughout 1998, leading to the establishment of the National Economic Consultative Forum, in which government sought interaction with labour, business and some elements of civil society.

These social upheavals and the concomitant economic decline created a basis and framework within which struggles for political succession emerged, both among personalities and over policy differences within ZANU(PF). The land designations and pension disbursements were answered by

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13 Sam Moyo, 2000. Land Reform under Structural Adjustment...op. cit.

14 Paris Yeros, Labour Struggles for Alternative Economics in Zimbabwe: Trade Union Nationalism and Internationalism, Monograph Series (Harare: SAPES Trust, forthcoming).

15 Sam Moyo, 1997, The reintegration of ex-combatants in Zimbabwe: Over promise and under-delivered, Mimeo, Presented to the African Association of Political Scientists (AAPS), Harare, June.

16 War Victims Compensation Fund

17 July, 1997

18 This figure was later reduced to Z\$ 50 000.00 after protracted negotiations between GoZ and the ZLNWA

capital flight and the withholding of funds on the part of donors, bringing about an economic freefall, as well as new economic policy issues. The costs of Zimbabwe's intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) conflict exacerbated the economic crisis, and generated broader political criticism locally and more critically internationally. The years 1998 and 1999 saw the retreat of the GoZ from its neoliberal policy thrust.

Given Zimbabwe's colonial legacy, the long-standing conflicts over the land question translate into intense electoral political competition, which in turn is marked by polarisation between land reform radicalism and conservative land transfer strategies. Before the June 2000 parliamentary elections, ZANU-PF leaders were calling for a speedy reclamation of land from the "whites," and instigated as well as supported the land occupations, while the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) leaders called for a transparent but not concretely defined market process of land acquisition. The parliamentary election campaign of 2000 was the most highly contested and violence-ridden in the elections history of Zimbabwe. The campaign focused on the land question, the economy and governance issues. The ruling ZANU (PF) party campaigned on the basis of land through their campaign slogan of 'Land is the Economy, the Economy is land'. The main opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) whose formation had been spearheaded by the ZCTU, focused on economic management and governance reforms.

Yet, the land question could not be dislodged from the electoral debate. The ruling party argued that the opposition intended to reverse land reform, and were sellouts to the former colonial masters, given their alleged receipt of financial assistance from white farmers and business, and from civil society organisations linked to donor funding. The MDC accused the ruling party of giving land to its cronies, and of making the land issue a monopoly of ZANU (PF) in spite of their alleged failure to resolve the issue in 20 years. The pressure for land reform must, as usual and of necessity given Zimbabwe's history, build up around elections, making it trite to say that the issue of land reform was being politicised. Rather, the point is that every party must look for a vantage point on land reform so that their political agenda is adequate.<sup>19</sup>

The problem of the MDC alliances and their motives in relation to its campaign for 'change' ("*chinja*"), and how substantive and durable it is in relation to the ZANU (PF) challenges, needs careful analysis. The opposition movements that have emerged since the late 1980s in Zimbabwe have

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<sup>19</sup> The land issue was alleged to be merely a campaign strategy for ZANU (PF) used in every election since 1980. It can be argued that the land issue in Zimbabwe will always be an electoral issue, until it is adequately resolved, and that opposition parties must keep land reform on the national agenda. The ruling party's present compulsory land acquisition programme or 'Fast Track' land and agrarian reform plan are considered by some critics as part of ZANU (PF)'s campaign strategy for the 2002 presidential elections.

had very narrow political interests.<sup>20</sup> All of them have made some valid demands for democratisation, within a liberal electoral and human rights framework, but no wider social democratic demands for redistribution of resources or economic restructuring. It was only PF ZAPU in the 1980s, which along with ZANU (PF) was a player in the liberation struggle, that had an underground radical land reform agenda. The collapse of the economy and the resultant opposition to ZANU(PF) has not as yet yielded a truly social democratic movement for political and social rights based on a more complex understanding of movements such as the land occupations. Rather, what has emerged is a protest movement focused on the urban areas, seeking to overthrow the President, and demanding less corruption and reversal of short term economic problems, such as high prices for basic commodities. As such, ZANU(PF) has been able to continue to hold sway over the rural vote by maintaining an emphasis on correcting the colonial imbalances.

It is important, finally, to identify briefly the present state of the land debate with reference to its evolution in post-colonial period. In the 1980s, the emphasis of land reform was on redressing past land alienation by promoting equal access to land by the majority of the indigenous people with the hope of creating political stability in land property rights. At the same time, land reform was also aimed at achieving economic growth by reducing the size of land holdings per individual and allocating land to diverse beneficiaries that included the landless, former refugees, war veterans, the poor and former commercial farm workers.<sup>21</sup> Land reform, therefore, was implemented for the objective of promoting national self sufficiency, focusing on food security and general agricultural development. It was also intended to enhance labour intensive, small farmer production so as to optimise land productivity and returns on capital invested.<sup>22</sup>

After an initial accelerated process of land reform in the 1980s, when 3 million hectares were redistributed to almost 70 000 families, the pace slowed down, targets were not met and the problems of equity and racial bias in capital and resource ownership markets once again became starkly obvious. Even the black indigenous were dissatisfied. By 1997, about 800 black commercial farmers holding about 10 % of the large scale commercial farmlands had emerged, against 4 000 whites holding about

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20 A series of black élite, middle class movements, the opposition parties and movements, including ZUM, ZUD and the Forum Democratic Party in the 1990s, have failed to capture or fill the void for social democratic demand for redistribution of resources, especially during the period when the land reform agenda had been dropped by GoZ (1986 – 96), and even during the crisis period from 1997 to 2000 in the case of the MDC.

21 Sam Moyo 1987. 'The Land Question', In I. Mandaza (ed.), Zimbabwe: The Political Economy of Transition, 1980-1986. (Codesria: Dakar); Bill H. Kinsey, 1983. "Emerging Policy Issues in Zimbabwe's Land Resettlement Programmes", Development Policy Review, Vol. 1, No. 2; Bill H. Kinsey, 1998. Determinants of Rural Household Incomes and their Impact on Poverty and Food Security in Zimbabwe, Resource Paper for a Discussion on Rural Households Dynamics, Bronte Hotel, 15-16 June.

22 Sam Moyo, 1995. The Land Question in Zimbabwe.....op cit.

10 million hectares. The GoZ had expected to redistribute 50 % of the white controlled land, but 5 million hectares of this remained to be transferred

Over the last twenty years, it has become clear that land reform is not an event, but a process that depends on the policy framework in use. There have been three distinct phases in Zimbabwe's land reform, which reflect both shift in government policy and resources allocations, and changing economic and political processes that have influenced land reform in the country.<sup>23</sup> The first phase (1980 – 1990) was in line with the negotiated Lancaster House agreement, when the GoZ tried to effect the transfer of 8 million hectares of land on a market basis. Government policy was underlain by low profile but extensive land occupation, leading to 40 % of land acquisition targets. In the second phase, from 1990-1996, the GoZ tried a gradualistic compulsory land acquisition processes but faced problems with litigations by farmers which obstructed this approach. The third phase, from 1997, which entailed massive compulsory land acquisition first in 1997 and then in 2000 and 2001 also included negotiations interregnums between the GoZ and, donors (with a Donors' Conference) and landowners seeking collaborative land transfers on the market with external financing. These efforts also collapsed without much redistribution, and led to the re-emergence of massive land occupations.

A critical aspect of land transfers since 1980 had been Britain's willingness to pay for land acquisition as had been promised at Lancaster house. About half the costs of resettlement up to the early 1990's had been financed by the UK. This however was barely 55 % of its promise and expected contributions.<sup>24</sup> In 1997, the newly elected British Labour government proposed that the new DFID poverty oriented, development aid policy be used to guide support to Zimbabwe's land reform. The labour government also denied that it had any historic responsibility for land expropriation in Zimbabwe on the grounds that its members were not of land owning stock. The GoZ responded to this and pressure from its radical wing with mass compulsory acquisitions.

The differences over financing land transfers and at a prescribed poverty reduction approach vis-à-vis the "capable" beneficiary, which emerged in 1996 between the British and the Government of Zimbabwe, had contributed towards the hardening of the GoZ's land reform strategy. Up to this point, the kind of internal policy pressure applied on government by farmers unions, technocrats, and even academics always encouraged the policy towards a conservative position.<sup>25</sup> However, the demands by

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23 Sam Moyo, 2001. *The Interactions* ..... op. cit.

24 It is reported by ruling party officials, by British leaders such as Lord Owen (*The Mail on Sunday*), Andrew Young, that the UK had agreed to pay about £ 75 million, while the USA had offered US 520 million for land acquisition.

25 The Rukuni Commission Report for instance re-emphasised market instruments of land transfer, including land taxation, but argued little for substantial state intervention in the dysfunctional land and capital markets, which limited market based land redistribution.

war veterans in 1997 for pensions and the compulsory acquisition of 1 471 farms represented a new framework and created new momentum and prospects for radical land reform.

This led to the current impasse, which has followed a series of public confrontations between the UK and Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe negotiation mission to London in 2000 was engaged by the UK primarily on political issues, such as the need for governance reform, reducing pre-electoral violence and enforcing the rule of law on the farms, while key land reform principles were side lined. The UK also emphasised the need for SAP-type macroeconomic stability as a basis for offering money for land reform.

The temporary reprieve, from the radical demand for massive land transfers, which had arise from the Donors' Conference in 1998 by calling for a gradualist approach called the Inception Phase Framework Plan (IPFP),<sup>26</sup> was shaky as it had no guarantees. The opposition movement did not back the radical land reform agenda, but instead reiterated the donor conference funding compromise, which had called for transparency, poverty reduction, rule of law and macro-economic stabilisation as the basis for land reform. This had the effect of further radicalising ZANU (PF) and the Government of Zimbabwe. However, growing impatience with the land reform programme had already led some rural communities to take direct action leading to self provisioning of land through the direct farm occupations by 1998. These developments further radicalized ZANU (PF), which by the end of 1999 had pursued the constitutional change route to radically enable massive compulsory land acquisition, and following the failure of this in 2000 had encouraged the land occupations led by war veterans.

The process of land acquisition for redistribution has proved to be very complex process encompassed by wider political forces seeking decolonisation, and by social pressures such as land occupations and political struggles fueled by economic crises and difficulties. The key political transition Zimbabwe experienced at independence, and over succession since 1997, have proved to be critical historical shifts that have tended to trigger mobilisation land reform. The experience has shown that without the economic transition promised by ESAP greater dependence on land for survival and accumulation instigates popular and elite pressures for land redistribution.

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<sup>26</sup> The IPFP, introduced in early 1999, was a detailed plan and budget that set out specific principles and objectives for proceeding with a limited land redistribution exercise over 24 months and involving 1 million hectares of land. The IPFP promised to improve the existing government land acquisition including selecting settlers, procuring finance and, planning infrastructure for the resettlement programme. Same (Clever Mbengegwi, 2001. ...) have called it "putting the GoZ on apprenticeship"

## Rural Civil Society and the Status of the Debate

Radical transformation agendas such as extensive land reform are rarely found on the largely developmentalist framework of discourse on rural civil society. Attempts to understand the typologies and social bases of civil society and peasant organisations tend to place greater emphasis on understanding them as being primarily preoccupied with agricultural economic development projects within a context of market reforms. Many studies of peasant organisations and rural NGOs, tend to espouse the technical, developmental, and economic function of these organisations to the neglect of the class and political processes that define the emergence of contemporary civil society.<sup>27</sup>

The predominance of urban based movements for democratisation and welfare oriented organisations in the discourse on African civil society over the years, also reflects the real paucity of grand cases of rural revolt and rebellion. The impetus for rural transformation thus tends to have been left to the state. Nonetheless, national independence liberation struggles led by middle classes had been critical in fomenting rural civil society political advocacy for structural reform.<sup>28</sup> Dominant research perspectives, including the urban bias, interest groups and new political economy perspectives, have tended to minimise the role of the peasantry in policy advocacy, as does the welfare orientation of rural development studies.<sup>29</sup> 'Urban bias' theory reproduces the image of an essentially undifferentiated peasantry, identifies peasants with agricultural producers and then distinguishes them from urban workers.<sup>30</sup> Such a conception of the peasantry is patently inapplicable given that, for example, 75 percent of Zimbabwean urban workers maintain dual homes in town and country, either because of the high cost of rearing a family in the urban areas or as a source of security against food deficits and old age.<sup>31</sup>

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27 For critical discussion, see Sam Moyo, 1997. 'Policy Dialogue, improved Governance, and New Partnerships-Experiences from Southern Africa', in Kilfe, K., Olukoshi, A. O. and Wohlgemuth, A New Partnership for African Development: Issues and Parameters, Nordiska Africainstitutet, Uppsala; Sam Moyo, 1999. Land and Democracy in Zimbabwe, SAPES Monograph Series, Harare; Muir, A. 1992. 'An overview of the institutional development of the NGO sector in Zimbabwe', For the Evaluation of EEC-NGO Co-financing in the field of Institutional Support to Local Organisations in Developing Countries, Harare, Zimbabwe; Prosper B. Matondi, 1996. The Active Support Role of Environmental NGOs in addressing the Problems of Land Degradation, Unpublished Master in Environmental Policy and Planning Dissertation, Geography Department University of Zimbabwe; D. Mungate, and Sarah Mvududu, 1991. 'Government and NGO collaboration in natural resources in Zimbabwe', ODI, Network Paper 24, London.

28 Sam Moyo, 1994. 'Development and Change in the NGO Sector' Consultancy Report for NORAD, Harare; Brian Raftopolous, 2000. The State, NGOs and Democratisation, in Moyo, S. Raftopolous, B. and John Mw. Makumbe, NGOs and Development in Zimbabwe, SAPES Books, Harare; Sam Moyo, 1999. Land and Democracy in Zimbabwe, (SAPES Monographs Series No. 7).

29 Sam Moyo, 'The Structure and Characteristics of NGOs' in Moyo, S. Raftopolous, B. and John Mw. Makumbe, NGOs and Development in Zimbabwe (SAPES Books, Harare, 2000).

30 Ben Cousins, Amin, N. and Weiner, D. 1993. 'The Dynamics of Social Differentiation in the Communal Lands of Zimbabwe'. Harare: CASS, University of Zimbabwe; Sam Moyo, 1995, The Land Question in Zimbabwe, Sapes Books, Harare; Paris Yeros, Peasant Struggles for Land and Security: A Global Moral Economy at the Close of the 20th Century, Monograph Series (Harare: SAPES Trust, forthcoming).

31 See Paris Yeros, Labour Struggles for Alternative Economics, op. cit.; Loyd Sachikonye, 1993. "Structural Adjustment, State and Organised Labour in Zimbabwe.....op. cit.

In the 1990s, post-modern approaches to the study of peasant communities and their social and political dynamics have tended to ostracise class analysis and differentiation within the rural body polity and organisations of civil society. This new rural development discourse rejects the Marxist structural and class based analyses of peasant communities' organisational and internal dynamics and politics, by highlighting a radical subjectivity of experience, seeking to redefine and express a new social relationship of interest and benefit to local communities.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the multiplicity and diversity of rural civil society organisations is said to obviate the connectivity among them that class analysis seeks.

James Scott suggests that rural civil society organisations are destined to be a localised and dispersed, exhibiting 'every day form of resistance' using minor 'weapons of the weak'.<sup>33</sup> They are not expected to be nationally organised movements because they lack leadership and skills necessary to coordinate on a large scale. They are, therefore, not expected to confront directly the hierarchy and power of the state and the wealthier classes that oppose them.

However, there is a need to examine 'spontaneous' rural civil society movements so that the wider dynamics of emerging rural social forces can be captured.<sup>34</sup> Evidence from the literature in general suggests that African peasants have been an important force in many colonial struggles and a few post colonial rebellions, such as in Uganda.<sup>35</sup> Indeed when the common actions of many peasant organisations are multiplied, they effectively put pressure on the authorities to act on issues of their interests and can expedite action.<sup>36</sup> As has been argued elsewhere,

...the majority of rural people who continue to subsist on marginal lands are increasingly exerting their collective powers to resolve the land question on their own through organised strategies of land occupations, popular protests, renegotiating their electoral votes and other forms of resistance. Recently, illegal squatting or land occupations, albeit of a sporadic nature, have been more influential in keeping the land redistribution issue on the agenda than formal organisations of civil society or their CBO counterparts.<sup>37</sup>

The key aspect that structures political and economic power relations among peasants in Zimbabwe is the significant trend of land alienation and struggles to restore or regain land rights. Land expropriation on a large scale during the colonial era and more recent and localised, smaller scale

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32 Veltmeyer, 1997.....; Mamdani, M. 1987. 'Contradictory Class Perspectives on the Question of Democracy: The Case of Uganda', in P. A. Nyong'o (ed.) *Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa*, London and New Jersey, The United Nations and Zed Books.

33 James Scott, 1985. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, Yale University Press, New Heaven, London.

34 Sam Moyo, 1998. *The Political Economy of Land Redistribution in the 1990s*, Paper Presented to the Centre of African Social Studies, University of London and Britain Zimbabwe Society, 11 March; Mamdani and Wamba did Wamba, 1995.

35 Thandika Mkandawire, 2000.....

36 Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, op. cit..

expropriations underlie the contradictory property relations that have produced post colonial land movements.<sup>38</sup> Land struggles have also arisen in response to men and their heirs having inequitable control of land, and disenchantment with local land administration processes managed by the state, traditional authorities and local committee structures.<sup>39</sup>

Thus even rural civil society organisations can be conceived as a new mechanism for promoting the so called ‘indirect rule system’ wherein they increasingly substitute the local state and traditional authority in organising community infrastructure building and maintenance, in exacting local taxes in the form of labour contributions and cash charges, and the co-management of state and donor initiated development projects.<sup>40</sup> This tendency begs further questions in the debate on the nature and weakness of civil society as provoked recently by various scholars.<sup>41</sup> Since peasant organisations continue to focus on mobilising the rural political constituency, through the delivery of development goods and services which the state can no longer provide, their importance in generating democratic space in the wider society should not be underestimated.

The social and political mobilisation in the name of the unfinished struggle for land has witnessed the polarisation of the land and democratisation debates along class and racial lines. Since 1997 in Zimbabwe, the war veterans have spearheaded a ‘rebellion’ within the ruling party combining greater utilisation of land occupations with the official compulsory land acquisition approaches, in an attempt to resolve the land problem. Although various combinations of different levels of government, politicians, and traditional leaders have differences over these radical land acquisition approaches, landholding segments of the middle class in Zimbabwe are solidly against these two forms of land acquisition preferring market approaches, which they expect to enhance economic stability.

Conflict and political differences have intensified the polarisation around this radical-reactionary axis, reflecting the different values placed on redressing past and present problems of social justice in the context of a neoliberal model of democracy and market reform. In Zimbabwe, mobilisation of labour by the ZCTU, wildcat strikes among farm workers which quickly spread across the country, national strikes by civil servants, the 1997 rebellion among radicals within the ruling party, and the emergence of a strong ‘opposition’ party have posed the greatest political challenges for the state and policy making in the context of debates over the merits and demerits of a neoliberal

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37 Sam Moyo, forthcoming. “Peasant Organisations and Rural Civil Society in Africa: An Introduction.” In Sam Moyo and B. Rhomdhane (eds.). *Peasant Organisations and the Democratisation Process in Africa*. Dakar: CODESRIA.

38 Sam Moyo, 2001. *The Interactions*.....op. cit.

39 Sam Moyo and Ben Romdhane, forthcoming. *Peasant organizations*...CODESARIA, Senegal

40 Ibid.

41 Mahmood Mamdani, 1996. “Citizens and Subjects: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism” Princetown University Press. UK.

development model based on SAPs, global market integration and liberal democratic governance. New notions of nationalism and sovereignty in terms of the formation of key economic, military and land reform policies and their attendant governance framework, have thus become the key contested arena between those seeking to address historical imbalances and social injustice and those demanding democratisation and human rights.

The formal representation of small farmers, the rural poor and the landless in land policy formulation is assumed to be organised mainly through constituency politics, which are dominated by the ruling party and the Zimbabwe Farmers Union (ZFU).<sup>42</sup> ZFU claims to represent all black farmers, particularly small and emerging farmers who have historically been discriminated against by the state and continue to suffer from the deliberate policy biases and market distortions organic to Zimbabwe's bi-modal agrarian structure. Given that over 50 percent of ZFU's membership are poor, while a further 40 percent can barely break even from farming, land policy demands could be expected to be central to the agenda of the ZFU. However, the membership is also widely differentiated and policy is dominated by an élite of 'capable' farmers whose demands are for freehold land for productive purposes and are far from representing the majoritarian black farmer demand for land, which seems to be more realistically reflected in 'informal' land occupations.<sup>43</sup>

NGOs have not been central to land reform or to land and agrarian social movements.<sup>44</sup> Most of them grew out of the social welfare and emergency relief traditions and so did not address structural issues. Some human rights and advocacy NGOs have emerged but these are led by the middle class and members of racial minorities, and focus on political and civil rights, not social and economic rights and social justice based upon redistribution. There is a common middle class belief in the myths that the poor degrade land and that the large scale commercial sectors use land efficiently. This ideology underlies the excessive focus of NGO's on schemes to 'protect' land and to 'educate' the peasantry on sustainable land use, rather than their advocacy for land redistribution.<sup>45</sup> Generally, rural based NGOs and the wider society structures have been and remain a reactionary force rather than an agenda setting one.

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42 Sam Moyo, 1999. Land and Democracy...op. cit.; Michael Bratton, Farmer Organisation and Food Production in Zimbabwe, World development, vol. 14, No. 3.;

43 Sam Moyo, 1995. The Land Question in Zimbabwe, op. cit.

44 This trend of civil society organizations not playing a proactive role in the radical agenda for extensive land redistribution, while challenging the legal property rights regime has become typical of post-apartheid civil society organisations in the region and in South Africa in particular. Thus key academics and NGOs in South Africa find themselves pitted against the RSA government as a slow land reform agenda because of its conformity to neo-liberal goals, rather than leading popular struggles to demand land against large-scale commercial farmers, big capital and international financial institutions. For example the cynical approach is to articulate by Ben Cousins, 2001. Why land invasions will happen here too...mimeo, which only sees narrow political land card rather than the broader need for challenging the settler property rights regime..

45 Ibid

Until a few years ago when the Women's Coalition and Women Land Lobby Group (WLLG) emerged, there was no local NGO, besides ZERO, which had argued for land reform in Zimbabwe. Some NGOs had argued that it is complicated to be involved in land reform, given the state interest in it and its politics. Yet NGOs could easily involve themselves in mobilising resources for settlers on government acquired farms or even to negotiate land transfers with landowners at reasonable prices if they chose a conservative line or mobilize for land expropriation, land restitution and reparations for the rural poor if they were radical. However, at an ideological level, many local NGOs seem to be against land reform. For instance, only 6 project proposals to support land reform were produced by NGOs during the Inception Phase (1998-1999). These include proposals by Development Trust of Zimbabwe (DTZ), Danish Aid People to People (DAPP), Zimbabwe Environmental Research Organisation (ZERO), Women Land Lobby Group (WLLG) and CREATE, which is a group of five mainly foreign NGOs. The few truly Zimbabwean NGO proposals merely sought to train the resettled but hardly any sought to lead the demand for greater land transfers' Only recently when NGOs such as Inyika trust and National Development Assembly have agitated for land redistribution.<sup>46</sup>

The cutting edge of any involvement in land reform by civil society organisations at this stage must be in expanding the access and rights to land of the poor landless and disadvantaged sections of society such as women and farm workers. The acquisition of land from landowners without burdening the state fiscus or beneficiaries with the costs of paying 'fair compensation' is thus a central gap that NGOs have failed to address. This might include directly supporting community demands for land or the land occupations organised by 'illegal' groups of so-called squatters.

### **Informal Politics and the Evolution of Land Occupations**

The rejection of the draft constitution that the GoZ of Zimbabwe embarked upon in 1999 to 2000 was a precursor to the current land occupations in Zimbabwe. Before the draft constitution was put to a referendum in February 2000, the government introduced a number of changes to it, including clauses that reinforced the right to compulsory acquisition, and qualified the existing market criteria for compensation of the land, permitting it to pay only for any improvements to it.<sup>47</sup> The National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), formed to push for constitutional reform, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)<sup>48</sup>, and the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU), campaigned heavily against

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46 These organizations do have close links to groups of ZANU (PF) leaders.

47 It was only in Mashonaland Central were the ruling party support heavily for the referendum, and there was a clean sweep in the 'YES' vote. The former governor of Mashonaland central come in full support of the actions of the veterans.

48 A new labour backed political party launched in September 1999 formed within the confines of the NCA that was anchored by many civil society organizations.

the draft constitution, contributing to its defeat in the referendum.<sup>49</sup> The ZNLWVA came in full support of the occupations and called for more land occupations as a way to demonstrate the need for land. When leaders of the war veterans association and the ruling party realized by the end of March that white farmers were actively campaigning for the MDC, and encouraging farm workers to do the same, farm occupations became violent, becoming intertwined with the political campaign for the June parliamentary elections.

Land occupations in the Zimbabwean debate have been conceptualized in several ways. First, land invasions is the generic term used to denote a negative view of politically organized “trespass” of farms led by war veterans. Invasions involve temporary visits of a few days and sporadic repeat visits. They do not entail the extended stays.<sup>50</sup> They may be called land occupations by those with a benign view of them, or illegal occupations. In the past land occupations were referred in Zimbabwean jargon as squatting. The term land ‘seizures’ is generally used, especially in the media, to cover a variety of phenomena including outright repossession of land through armed liberation struggle and conquest. Land nationalization or expropriation without compensation has not been commonly used in the Zimbabwe debate, except in occasional international media reports with reference to compulsory land acquisition rather than land occupations. Land seizures or even land ‘grab’ however, tend to be used mainly by the independent media to emphasise the negative political action of ZANU (PF) and war veterans. The concepts of land demonstrations has been on the other hand used by the government and/or ZANU (PF) to emphasise the symbolic aspect of the transgressions and to underlie that it is only the GoZ which has the legal right to acquire land.<sup>51</sup> There are also occupations by “opportunists” noted by CFU leaders, which are not formally sanctioned. These are at times used to refer to isolated occupations by middle class and urban dwellers as well as criminal elements who seek personal access in the guise of the ‘land revolution’. It is reported that some local politicians and businesspersons and intellectuals may be cashing in on the land occupations, and even gaining access to land targeted for the poorer<sup>52</sup>.

These broadening forms of participation and conceptualisations of land occupations also reflect the emergence during late 2000 of a certain level of political alliance between the state and various national and local level social forces spanning various classes in opposition to what is seen as international conditionalities against land redistribution in defence of narrow racial interests in land.

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49 Shortly thereafter, there 12 war veterans occupied farms in Masvingo decriing that the white farmers had connived to defeat the constitution in the referendum.

50 Chitiyo, 2000. Land and Violence...op cit refer them to “walk-on invasions” being temporary or “move in” as land occupations.

51 This perspective is usually repeated in the Herald, and has been formally stated by vice president Msika in various press statements.

52 These ‘opportunists’, however, are to be distinguished from those urbanites applying for land under the now broadened Commercial Farm Settlement Scheme which has been intended to build elite black commercial farmers at various scales of farm operations.

However, a land restitution approach to land occupations and/or compulsory land acquisition,<sup>53</sup> which would need to be guided by the formal review of specific historical land claims that are to be restored to specific claimants, has so far not been promoted on a large scale by the war veterans, ZANU (PF) or the GoZ, except in isolated cases (*e.g.*, Svosve, Mazowe, Nharira hills). This is in keeping with the problem that restitution can be too legalistic, bureaucratically cumbersome and slow a process.<sup>54</sup>

The intensive land occupations that Zimbabwe is experiencing today are not generically new since they have consistently accompanied or influenced government efforts to acquire land in the past whether this be on the market or through compulsory procedures. There are important similarities and a few differences between various phases of land occupations which need thorough analysis. However, there is a need to analyse them in the two other instruments of land acquisition – market acquisitions and compulsory acquisitions - which interact with occupations in a politically determined manner, which is socially grounded in a context of demand for land. Thus the amendment of the Constitution and the Land Acquisition Act on this matter reflected major formal effort to challenges the imposed rules on colonial land property rights, in response to the organic or popular pressures that land occupations have brought to the debate. Over the last 20 years land occupations (figure 6.1) have traversed various land tenure categories. White owned commercial land, state land and communal lands. Our study,<sup>55</sup> had ... (Moyo). Research by Murombedzi (1994) shows that land occupations grew extensively during the late 1980s in the Zambezi valley frontier zones.<sup>56</sup> State lands have remained a soft target for occupations for years especially in Matebeleland and in Manicaland where forest and parks are predominant.

Thus although land occupations have remained on the national development and rights agenda civil society organizations, formal opposition political parties and the private sector have paid scant attention to them. The character of the occupations have changed slightly but their essence has remained the same. The first phase of land occupations can be termed one of ‘low profile, high intensity’ occupations. These occurred throughout the country, from 1980 to 1985, while a parallel process of “accelerated” land resettlement funded mainly by British funds was initiated to formalize some of the occupations, and to assuage parallel land pressures. These early land occupations were led by landless communities inspired by war veterans , ZANU (PF), “dissidents” in Matebeleland, and by

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53 See also Nelson Marongwe 2001. Land Conflicts in Zimbabwe, ZERO Monograph, who advocates for more of the land restitution approach based upon some empirical demands he has observed...

54 Sam Moyo, 1995. The Land Question, .....op cit.

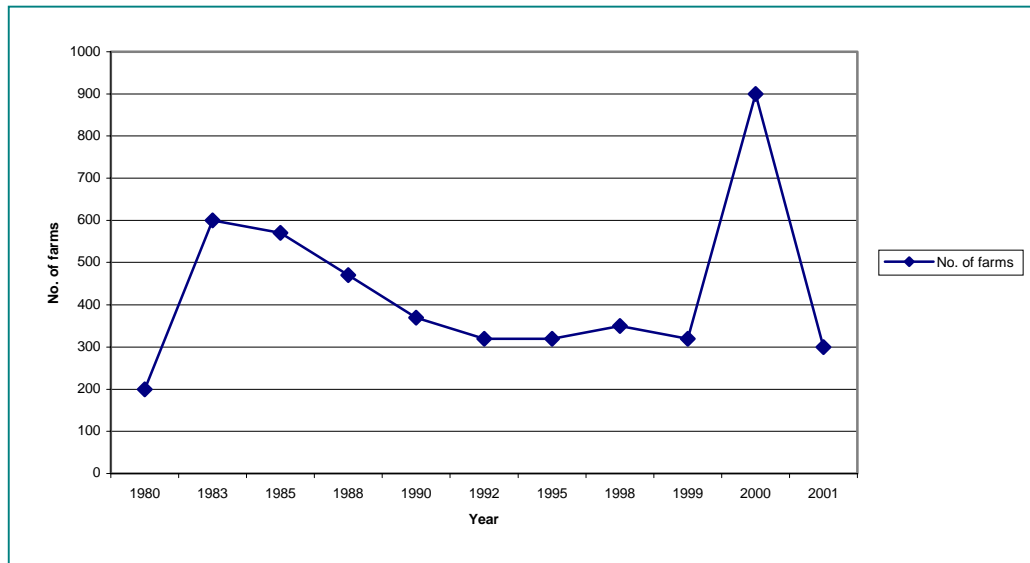
55 Sam Moyo, 1995. The Land Question...op cit.; Sam Moyo, 2000. Land Reform under Structural Adjustment in Zimbabwe. Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute; Sam Moyo, 1998. The Socio-economic Impact....op cit; Sam Moyo, 2001. The Interactions....op cit.

56 Murombedzi, J.C. 1994. The Dynamics of Conflict in Environmental Management Policy in the Context of CAMPFIRE. Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Zimbabwe.

others leaders such as traditional leaders and spirit mediums. They were tacitly supported by ZANU (PF) and PF ZAPU structures albeit without the public flaming of the political basis of the mobilization. While government distanced itself from the occupations its leading rights financed them.

**Figure 6.1: Estimated frequency of land occupations on commercial and stateland: 1980-2000**

Notes: These data from various records including GoZ squatter committees reports, police records, provincial interviews, review of cases



studies, the CFU and the media.

The period between 1985 and 1996 witnessed what we can call in relative terms ‘normal low intensity occupation’. These occupations took place in the context of dwindling resources for continued land resettlement and economic liberalisation which resulted in many people losing their jobs in urban areas and the mines. During the 1990s landless communities increased ‘illegal’ occupations of land and poaching of natural resources in private, state and ‘communally’ owned lands, and in urban areas.<sup>57</sup>

The incidence of land occupations in the 1980s tended to coincide in intensity with the period when most of the land was acquired in Zimbabwe on the market using the willing seller-willing buyer instrument. Local ‘squatter’ communities made themselves beneficiaries by occupying mainly abandoned and under utilised land, most of which were in the liberation war frontier zone of the Eastern Highlands. In this ‘community led’ occupation approach, communities, through ‘squattling’, led land identification and land central government came into purchase such land at market prices,

<sup>57</sup> Sam Moyo, 1995. *The Land Question*....op. cit.; Sam Moyo, 1998. *The Land Acquisition Process in Zimbabwe - 1997/8*....op. cit.; Sam Moyo, 2000. *Land Reform Under Structural Adjustment*....op. cit.; Sam Moyo et. al., forthcoming, *The Land Occupations In Zimbabwe*... op cit.;

thereby formalizing land occupations in what they called then an ‘normal intensive land reform’. In other words, the pressures on the ground, no matter which social force and how they were organised, reflect the organic relationship that has existed between the ruling party, war veterans, local politicians and various rural communities. Thus occupations were a major impetus in the state’s negotiations for resources to finance market processes of land acquisition.

Thus the occupations cannot be claimed to have been spontaneous. Zimbabwe hosts a facile debate which oversimplifies the question of spontaneity of land occupations vis-à-vis politically mobilised occupants. In my analysis rarely in the 20 years have occupations been spontaneous, since they were mostly planned through either liberation movement, local Members of Parliament (MPs) and party structures while the intensity of political support to the occupants may differ in form between the 1980’s and 1997/2000 period, the substance has been similar. Even when the state practiced extensive evictions of “squatters” during the 1985 –1993 period, they turned a blind eye and used kid gloves on the many other squatter cases. This led landowners to attempt their own evictions. Some of which were even more brutal.

However, Government has used forced evictions to restrain land occupations, especially during the transition to the liberalized economic policy framework. The brutality with which these evictions were carried out, both by police and farmers, were reminiscent of colonial era evictions carried out in the decades prior to Independence.<sup>58</sup> This was coupled with increasing violence by property owners, particularly white farmers, against illegal occupants, often with implicit or explicit state approval.

Land ‘self-provisioning’ or popular struggles for land have been circumscribed by the central government through its ‘squatter policy’, regular promises of land redistribution and other agricultural support schemes intended to improve the intensity of communal area land use and returns *in situ*. However, ‘squattling’ as a concept is problematic and manipulable because the term gains meaning within a particular moral framework that is codified as ‘law’ by the state. Shiku (2001) points out that Rhodesian law defined a squatter as ‘ an African whose house happens to be situated in an area which has been declared European or is set apart for some other reason’.<sup>59</sup> In any case, the squatter policy failed to stem squattling, mainly because of legitimacy problems at the local level. Instead demands for land redistribution grew among the poor due to growing poverty and the retrenchment of workers, as well as among the wealthier due to their expanding focus on accumulating capital through emerging markets based on land and natural resource uses.

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58 See Paris Yeros, ‘The Moral Economy of Squatting and Squatter Control in Shamva District’, in Moyo et. Al (eds.), *Land Occupations in Zimbabwe*, op. cit.

59 V. Shiku, 2001. *The Problem of Squatting in Zimbabwe: A Police Perspective*, Unpublished Master in Policy Studies Project, Southern Africa Regional Institute for Policy Studies, Harare.

The severe drought during the 1991/92 farming season led to extensive commercial farm retrenchments adding to the pressure on communal area land resources.<sup>60</sup> During this period the state had a legal framework to resolve the land question through compulsory land acquisition but did not succeed in using the instrument. The grounds for severe conflicts were created during this time, as captured in recent research on new land uses in the Mashonaland provinces.<sup>61</sup>

The last phase of high intensity and high profile land occupations began in 1997, although many scholars, political analysts and some of the media, seem to conveniently forget this by focusing the analysis of the Zimbabwe land conflict from the occupations that followed the February 2000 constitution referendum. In August/September 1997, the more high political profile community-led land occupation approach seemed to emerge again and isolated land occupations started to occur, with the explicit aim of redistributing land from white farmers to landless villagers and war veterans. These occupations augmented existing low profile land occupations, which had remained throughout the country. The high profile occupations came in waves, starting with just about 30 cases in 1997 and 1998, mostly on farms, which had been identified for compulsory acquisition.<sup>62</sup> The squatters later 'agreed' to 'wait' for their orderly resettlement and in some cases were evicted by the government in 1998.

Then a new wave of high profile and high intensity land occupations arose, from a handful in February to just below a thousand cases by 2000. The scale and form of land occupations in Zimbabwe has been the subject of a propaganda war in the media and on the Internet. The key thrust of the Commercial Farmer's Union (CFU) on land occupation is to exaggerate the scale of such invasions. Police records and field evidence suggest that when all the invasions were counted including 're-visits' or repeat invasions following withdrawal by occupants, the maximum number has been about 800. However CFU data has placed pre-election occupations at about 1 700 while its post election figures in December 2000 stood at about 685 occupations and declined to 450 farms by April 2001. About 250 of the latter cases involve formal allocations of land to settlers by government on land which is being processed for compulsory acquisition.<sup>63</sup> Data from the war veterans' list do not go beyond 1 000 farms occupied. Available information bulletins suggest that about 300 farm occupations have been marked by violence, and serious human rights abuses, including rape and torture. This covers the period both

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60 Sam Moyo, 2000. Land Reform under structural adjustment....op cit.; Sam Moyo et al. forthcoming, The Land Occupations in Zimbabwe....op. cit. According to Chitiyo, 2000. Land and Violence... op cit. the droughts of 1992 and 1995 made the situation more desperate

61 Sam Moyo, 2000. Land Reform under structural adjustment....op cit

62 Sam Moyo, 1998. The Land Acquisition Process in Zimbabwe - 1997/8....op. cit.

63 I have referred to these rising cases as "prematurely" resettled land because one school of thought in GoZ argues that once the government has begun processing land acquisition orders in the administrative courts, it is only a matter of time for such a farm to become its property, notwithstanding the bottlenecks that farmer litigations bring.

before and after the June elections (see CFU internet reports). Interestingly neither the war veterans and the ruling party, nor the government have refuted this public image, which literally multiplied by two the scale of land occupations.

The origins of the land occupations and their control is contested. The first few occupations of February begun in Masvingo under the local leadership of a few war veterans and local communities, only to be followed in late February by a controlled and orchestrated country-wide land occupation movement led by the ZNLWA. It appears that the ZNLWA and ZANU (PF) only gained full control of the occupations around May 2000 as numerous localized and contradictory waves of them emerged between February and then.<sup>64</sup>

**Figure 1.0: Dimensions of Land Occupations in Zimbabwe**

Dimension	Method	Scale	Facilitators	Publicity method
Symbolism	Demonstrative	Small Scattered level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities</li> <li>• Traditional Leaders</li> <li>• War veterans</li> <li>• Peasants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government</li> </ul>
Intimidatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived violence</li> <li>• Prompting land occupants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Localised</li> <li>• Intense in some areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• War veterans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attracts media</li> <li>• Landowners</li> <li>• Opposition</li> </ul>
Physical seizures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invasion</li> <li>• Land grabbing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wide spread</li> <li>• (2000)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• War vets</li> <li>• Ruling party</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media</li> <li>• Human Rights organizations</li> <li>• Donors</li> </ul>
Social mobilisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instigate people to occupy land occupation</li> <li>• Electoral campaign</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widespread</li> <li>• Intense in some parts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities</li> <li>• Political party</li> <li>• War vets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human Rights organizations</li> <li>• Farm Unions?</li> </ul>
Political campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political re-education</li> <li>• Intimidation</li> <li>• Propaganda war</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intense during election (bye elections)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• War vets</li> <li>• Opposition parties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media</li> <li>• Opposition</li> </ul>
Legitimate compulsory acquisitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-empt aimed</li> <li>• Formalise occupation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widespread</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GoZ technocrats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government</li> </ul>

Source: Author's Conceptual Matrix from Interviews and Empirical Evidence

The current round of land occupations can be analysed in terms of various dimensions of their intended effects, which are pursued either individually or as combined goals. These varied intentions also reflect the perspectives and goals of different 'wings' of the ruling party from the extremists

<sup>64</sup> Interviews show cases where local chapters of war veterans led occupiers and/or some community led occupations exhibited different forms of discipline with regard to: focusing on unused land; local coherence or linkages to district level or provincial structures of

seeking outright 'repossession' of the land by physical seizure to the more 'liberal' middle of the road leaders seeking merely to demonstrate the right of Zimbabweans to compulsorily acquire the land. Nonetheless these basic dimensions show the complexity of the process, which has firstly a political (partisan and non-partisan, electoral and non-election orientated) framework and objectives, and which is then socially grounded by invoking existing sentiments in favour of land repossession based upon grievances over historic injustices.

At another level, the land occupations can be viewed as a mobilization process of expanding the social constituency of land occupiers, through this campaigning for electoral support and creating the political legitimacy for the formalisation of massive legal compulsory land acquisition. Indeed the purely political character of the land occupations have been transient.

Given that the present period land occupations occurs during a political transition, which began as an internal ZANU (PF) challenge to the authority of the existing President and the ruling top brass, some elements of contradictions among various political tendencies in ZANU (PF) appeared to be reflected in the occupations. This 1997 internal revolt, which was followed by an external succession battle and the emergence of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999, divided the ruling party, with the land occupations receiving tacit support from the President and radicals in the ruling party as well as some and liberation movement based civil society organisations. Thus different criteria were used for instance in farms to occupy. Parts of farms or whole farms which are not used at all were targeted to establish camps by an apparent more disciplined wave of invaders, while a few occupations targeted MDC members.

After the elections the GoZ and the war veterans however shifted the basis of targeting farms to include productively used land subject to other policy criteria of multiple farm ownership, foreign ownership and contiguity to communal areas. In some cases farms owned by black politicians or high profile people were occupied contrary to the radical ZANU (PF) indigenisation perspective. There also seemed to be some class alliance emerging either for or against the occupations. In some cases war veterans linked up with peasants and farm workers yet, in others, peasants refused to be cajoled into the occupations. Depending on the 'behaviour' of the farm owner, some farm workers and war veterans teamed up to remove the owners. Members of the urban petty bourgeoisie also joined in the land occupations. The majority of the urbanites were opposed to anarchy on the farms, rather than to the occupations per se.

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ZNLWA; absence of violence; defiance of government officials and ministers; land use or production strategies; formation of local associations for development; urban participation etc.

The question of who is involved in the current occupations has been a subject of cynical debate in which the prime focus has been to minimise the importance of both the war veterans' leadership and their level of capacity to hold widespread occupations. Thus the army and GoZ are attributed leadership on the one hand, while children, youth and women are said to have been cajoled, paid or even forced, to join occupations. As a result, the occupations have been characterised as either contrived or farcical or narrowly instrumental for electioneering. However, the fact the farm workers and people from communal areas, including those on resettlement waiting lists, have joined the occupations to enhance their chances for resettlement has not been properly analysed. Thus the organic and deep seated local pressures for land reform, and even anger from past injustices and deprivation, are underestimated in this critique.

One of the major contestations in the Zimbabwe land occupations debate is the degree to which they have been led by an homogenous command structure under a single ZANU(PF) leadership linked to military chiefs and the head of state. Empirical observations show that parallel to the many high profile centrally orchestrated war veterans led occupations of the 2000 there were numerous occupations, which can be differentiated at provincial and local level which either preceded or copied the former, which emerged from more diverse organisational formations and interests. Such interests would include some Provincial Governors who are seen to be more militant in terms of land reform (Mashonaland North, Mashonaland Central and Manicaland), specific independent branches of the ZNLWA, individual MPs and other traditional leaders. In many cases it would appear that the ZNLWA came to hegemonise locally initiated occupations.

These local initiatives for instance, would be more active in both their tacit support of occupations and in their aggressive tendency to demand massive gazetting of land for compulsory acquisitions through legal channels. Secondly, there are other locally driven and differentiated occupations led by war veterans within their own districts (Wedza, Mazowe, Marondera), in which members of war veterans associations have taken a leading role which can be seen as antagonistic to a central command in terms of which land and how it should be occupied.<sup>65</sup> This led to the formation of numerous semi-autonomous farmer associations comprising war veterans, community members and urbanites who originate from those regions. Thirdly, there are a variety of locally differentiated land occupations that were community instigated and led, which were then 'formalised' or 'legitimated' by the procurement of war veterans to nominally lead the occupations. Different varieties of such

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<sup>65</sup> During April and May 2000, there were fear of a 3-way split among the war veterans occupying land, while the extent to which specific local grievances instigated independent "copy-cat" occupations has not been fully documented.

community based occupations included those led by traditional leaders or notable persons and those driven by the desire for restitution of land with spiritual value (Mazowe District).

Another variant of such occupations includes those led by communities with grievances against farmers. Such grievances include those in which the landowner may or may not have a history of being anti the liberation movement in the sense of undermining the war effort or anti workers in the sense of their maltreatment, poor wages and racism.<sup>66</sup> Some farmers were identified necessarily if at all for being aligned with opposition politics during the 2000 elections, although some such cases exist. Moreover, there are a number of community led land occupations within provinces and districts of predominantly MDC vote, such as Matebeleland, in which it has been suspected that some alliance between opposition interests and war veterans has been struck in the interests of securing land through occupations. In addition, there are those occupations that are very much led by urban-based people mobilising some elements of their communities, including war veterans and local bureaucrats, thus seeking the formalisation of occupations by war veterans. When these locally based veterans are pitted against those who are centrally organised, one finds there are important contradictions, contestations and negotiations in the occupation process and movement

In some locations, we see land occupations through their associations plan land uses, allocation, cropping regimes and beneficiaries that are different to those presented to them by local government. In many cases, we see the absorption of farm workers into the land reform process. Despite the perception of a largely non-citizen farm workforce, 80 percent are Zimbabwean<sup>67</sup> and have frequently joined the land occupation movement, contrary to suggestions that they are not involved and are always in confrontation with war veterans and marginalised by the state.

Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge the fear by GAPWUZ that many farmworkers have been rendered unemployed and homeless by the occupations. The problem is that much of the debate on this relates to the expectation of job losses on compulsory land acquisitions which have so far not been completed. The data tends to be speculative more than actual.

In many ways, apart from the period February to April 2000, in which the central war veterans' leadership played a leading role in the occupation movement, evidence across the country suggests a large scale response to the movement by various community and interest groups that have tried to coopt the war veterans' movement. The war veterans have, in turn, tried to claim hegemony over the spread and growth of the occupation movement.

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<sup>66</sup> Evidence from Wedza, Mazowe and also from other case studies by N. Marongwe show much of the trends.

<sup>67</sup> See also Mhishi, 2001.... MPS thesis; Sarah Musungwa, 2001.....; Prisca Mandimika, 2001....; V. Shiku, 2001....: Magaramombe suggests that 8% of settlers are farmworkers. This may reflect a growing accommodation of farmworkers, including for their political persuasion towards ZANU (PF).

We need to add to this complex evolution of the land occupation movement the pervasive criminal and opportunistic aspect, in which individuals, claiming to be war veterans or members of the ruling party leaders used the occupation movement to intimidate farmers to extort money, poach wildlife and firewood or assume sharecropping rights on farmers' crops or even used pieces of land for their own cropping activities. This suggests that once ridden the land occupation 'movement' tiger is less easily managed than might be expected by both ZANU (PF) leaders and their opponents who expect them to control it. Within this context, the 'radical' elements of ZANU(PF), who have pro-actively supported land occupations, have the burden of justifying the land occupation movement in the context of sporadic and wanton violence and lawlessness, which undermines the growing social base that had been mobilized around land occupations after the early 2000 period when occupations had been dominated by war veterans.

We have seen in this context that both ZANU(PF) and the state have followed behind the land occupations movement and tried to co-opt and contain it as in the past within the framework of the evolving land acquisition programme. Indeed, the post-election July 2000 act of gazetting over 3 000 farms for compulsory acquisition reflects not only a response to the perception of the aggression of farmers, in collusion with the MDC, but also, and importantly, an attempt to create physical space to accommodate the mushrooming land occupations movement generated so far, while negotiating international community support for Zimbabwe's land reform.

### **Implications for Democratisation**

What can be learnt from Zimbabwe's recent experience concerning the importance of social movements that are differentiated and adopt different strategies is that, while their roles and actions might be contradictory, they can also provide some progressive movement on issues such as democratisation and land reform. However, this can also produce negative feedback in the form of violence and abrogation of civil rights. In Zimbabwe, it can be expected that the negative consequences will be relatively short term, as against the long term benefits of assuaging historical grievances and addressing a problem that has been neglected for twenty years by a model of reconciliation which did no include justice or reparation.

One lesson concerns how a formal policy can evolve and be refined over a very short period after having been static over the longer term (twenty years in this case). There have been great shifts in Zimbabwe's land policy in the past five years, particularly the last two, which have seen the policy debate moving to more radical options because of the failure of negotiations and indeed, even shifts

within this more radical policy movement. The major implication is that most of the players are pushed to attempt land transfer within a legal framework of compulsory acquisition, even if this is done under threat of non legal action. Such transfer is now being discussed in terms of a much larger scale and far greater pace.

There are a number of positive implications of the current land occupations. First, the delivery of land will increase the possibilities for a wider range of rural and urban poor and middle class people participating in the economy. This reinforces the social and economic basis for democratic growth, undergirded by the interests of a larger segment of the population wanting to defend the new regime. The economic benefits will form the basis for more positive and participatory rural and agrarian policy formation.

Second, land transfer will weaken the hegemony and segregation of the current advantaged white minority. It challenges the current conditions and inadequate rights of farm labourers, questions the injustices perpetrated against them by landowners and raises the question of their rights to land.<sup>68</sup> The recognition of the need to address what happens to farm workers has brought to the fore the bogus defence of farm workers' rights by commercial farmers and some NGOs favouring the status quo, and exposed this form of enclave politics.

Third, land transfer will make the agricultural sector more efficient by having many more people engaged in producing for the economy. Used concurrently with the downsizing of land holdings, land acquisition and resettlement will increase the current 4 500 commercial farmers and involve more indigenous blacks on more smaller sized commercial farms. If all these commercial farmers adopt more efficient methods, they could produce more than in the past on the land available to them.

Fourth, the Zimbabwe experience echoes that of the Chiapas in Latin America, in which informal and new types of movements have captured and maintained space for themselves in which they are recognised and able to undertake direct negotiations with farmers and the state.<sup>69</sup> In Zimbabwe, such associations, which include the Nharira Association of traditional cultural leaders and the Nyabire Association, may have been mobilised by the war veterans but they have now taken on their own forms and are difficult for government to ignore.

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68 Sam Moyo, Blair Rutherford and Dede Amonr-Wilks, 2000. *Farmworkers, Land Reform and Changing Social Relations for Farm workers*, ROAPE, Vol. 27, No. 84.; Dede Amonr-Wilks, *In search of hope: Zimbabwe's Farm workers*, Panos and Dateline Southern Africa, 1995.

69 See also H. Bernstein, 2001. "The Peasantry in Global Capitalism: who where and why" in Leo Pantich and Colin Leys, *Working Classes: Global Realities*, Socialist Register, Merlin Press, , pp. 25-52; Justin Paulson, 2001. *Peasant Struggles and International Solidarity: the Case of Chiapas*", in Leo Pantich and Colin Leys in Leo Pantich and Colin Leys..op cit.: Judith Adler Hellman, 2001. "Virtual Chiapas: A Reply to Pulson", in Leo Pantich and Colin Leys in Leo Pantich and Colin Leys,..... op cit.

Fifth, the occupations have confronted bad past and present race relations by forcing intensive interaction and discussion between whites and blacks in different roles. It has also raised the issue of the different values placed on the deaths of blacks and whites, particularly as reflected in international media coverage, and challenged the notion of reconciliation without truth, justice and reparation.

Sixth, there has been broad participation in the call for restitution, by traditional leaders, spirit mediums and others who are beginning to reclaim their historical rights to land and resources on the basis of its sacred or cultural value in addition to its productive potential.<sup>70</sup> For example, in Mazowe District, three of the fifteen land occupations are aims made have been for the return of sacred places.

Seventh, the demand for land of the Zimbabwean population has been brought to the attention of the international community, including neoliberal NGOs. The media has been both a recipient and a source of such information, although their heightened interest at the moment has tended to increase the impression that this is a situation that has only just arisen. The confrontation has brought the role of the British into the spotlight and shifted the perception of land reform from that of a development issue to that of a restitution and justice issue.

The positive outcomes outlined above are all necessary conditions for democratisation. However, they are not sufficient and there have also been some negative aspects. Past studies had all predicted that inadequate land delivery would precipitate violent confrontations in future.<sup>71</sup> Policy makers (GoZ) and farmers did not take such predictions seriously as they continued their laissez faire attitude towards land reform. Notwithstanding this observation, the widespread occurrence of violence, including its impact on the 2000 parliamentary elections, has been the most negative effect of the land confrontation, causing the abrogation of physical safety and threat to political participation.

There has been an instrumentalisation of violence although the scale of it has been exaggerated and it has been wrongly made the focus of the whole land reform issue. In fact, compared to rural and urban violence in South Africa,<sup>72</sup> Ireland or Brazil, the level in Zimbabwe has been quite low. Any level of violence is bad for democracy but there has not been any examination of the extent to which the violence in Zimbabwe is incidental to a broader anger and wider undemocratic culture. Violence has, in any case, increased in response to economic decline and poverty, so that the land occupations

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70 See also Marongwe, 2001. ....op cit.

71 Jeffrey Herbst, 1991. The Dilemmas of Land Policy in Zimbabwe, in *Africa Insight*, 1991, Vol. 21, NO.4, p.269-277; Jeffrey Herbst, 1990. *State and Politics in Zimbabwe*. Harare, University of Zimbabwe Press, 1990; Palmer, 1990, Sam Moyo, 1994. *Conceptualising Land Tenure*....op cit.; Sam Moyo, 1995. *The land Question*...op. cit.; Sam Moyo 1987. 'The Land Question', In I. Mandaza (ed.), *Zimbabwe: The Political Economy of Transition, 1980-1986*. (Codesria: Dakar); Alexander Jocelyn, 1993. *The Unsettled Land: The Politics of Land Distribution in Matabeleland, 1980-1990*", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 17, No.4, Oxford University Press; William A. Master, 1994. *Government and Agriculture*, Praeger, London;

72 In South Africa land occupations in peri-urban areas involve over 3 million people over the last 10 years, while over 200 farmers have been killed.

cannot be seen as the main or only instigator. A more careful assessment of the exact scale and causality is needed.

One major offshoot has been opportunism, comprising criminal acts such as cattle rustling, extortion and pilfering of farm produce, work stoppages etc. This element is now recognised by the war veterans, Government and farmers but Government has been unable to control it without becoming embroiled itself. Some argue that such cases are exaggerated by the CFU, while the latter allege that the government deliberately refuses to control this violence for its own political advantage.

The fact that the occupations have, in some cases, been violent needs to be understood in terms of the real animosity between the occupiers and those elements of Government that are seen not to be serious about land reform. This is a longstanding and endemic grievance. There is no doubt that land occupations have generated, in certain localities, electoral apathy (unwillingness to participate in the electoral process). There is also evidence that farmers and farm workers as well as opposition youths have been the source of some electoral violence in rural areas in which pitched battles have been waged sporadically.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, the death of two of the four commercial farmers and some farm workers killed in the context of land occupations resulted from prior attacks on ZANU(PF) youths, although the upper hand in such violence has belonged to the latter.

The land occupations movement also has to be seen in the context of deep division in ZANU(PF) over the strategy of land acquisition, with a growing segment rejecting not just market but also legalistic compulsory acquisition because of their history of failed implementation, in favour of land seizures and occupations as a strategy. In this vein, we have seen a different movement in which certain elements of the ruling party seek to halt occupations,<sup>74</sup> preferring a focus on compulsory acquisition methods, in combination with negotiated land transfers based on dialogue with farm owners. It is this divergence of views and split in the command structure that explains, to a large degree, some of the underground and uncontrolled violence and lawless aspects of the occupations which, as the evidence shows, have been focused around half the provinces including Mashonaland central, Mashonaland East and Matebeleland North.

The violence associated with the recent occupations and leading up to the 2000 election is suggested by some analysts and opposition leaders to have enabled the ruling party to maintain

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<sup>73</sup> It was alleged at one time that farmers were training defence militias, to which the state reacted by deploying military and paramilitary elements as a security measure against an alleged or expected armed resistance movement 'to the land occupations' by farmers in collaboration with opposition parties. According to Chitiyo, 2000. *Land and Violence* .... Op cit. Farmers and their workers armed themselves for confrontation with the war veterans and peasants.

<sup>74</sup> For instance major movements were made by the Ministry of Home Affairs in April and by the Vice President Msika in May 2000, and by the Ministry of Local Government and National Housing for occupier to move off the land. These were contradicted by the President and challenged by his spokesmen.

dominance over the rural electorate. This dominance has always existed anyway in some rural areas but the mobilisation for land reform tended to countervail any mobilisation by the opposition. It has been argued that opposition party structures were undermined but the degree to which these actually existed outside of small towns is yet to be fully demonstrated. The few existing studies of this tend however, to underplay the strength of ZANU (PF) in most of the rural areas and appear to teleologically follow the post constitution referendum triumphalistic analysis which overestimated the growth of the rural MDC structures in communal and farm areas outside of the larger rural and peri-urban centers where the MDC structures grew out of existing ZCTU structures. This is an area which calls for more rigorous research however.

The land occupations have so far failed to correct the inherited injustices of the justice system and property laws in an orderly fashion. By encouraging, rather than evicting, the occupiers and by premature resettlement of people on farms where the legal processes of compulsory land acquisitions were not complete, Government has overridden, instead of corrected the legal system. In one perspective the government has broken its own 'rule of law'. However, the land occupations and 'fast track' resettlement, including the litigation that took place in the Supreme, Constitutional and administrative courts have highlighted the debate on the relevance of the existing property rights structures and the laws that defend them. The Supreme Court's judgment of December 2000, giving Government six months to sort out the land issue represents a recognition of the need for change and the injustice of the current situation.

The changes to the Land Acquisition Act can be seen as signs of an attempt to find legal means of land reform, even though it is difficult for a neoliberal justice system to deal with such major problems of public interest. The introduction of the new Rural Occupiers (Prevention from Eviction) Act, of 2001, also shows the government effort to legalise the process of occupations, while the legal transfer of land proceeds. The rushed legislative changes, which might appear democratically facile, have brought to the fore the importance of an historical jurisprudence problem over property rights which requires special legal activism for it to be resolved.

## **Conclusion**

In developing and peripheral economies, such as Zimbabwe's, where a large proportion of the mainly rural population depends on the land and natural resources for their livelihood, employment and accumulation, it is crucial to recognise that addressing the land question in terms of contemporary equity and historical social justice are essential parameters within which broader political reform and

democratisation questions must be addressed. It would appear to be almost impossible to focus on liberal political rights in contemporary democracy movements without understanding the deep seated social and political enmity and contradictions with regard to the land question which undermine rural mobilisation for democratisation. It has been seen that most formal political organisation, be it among the ruling party or the opposition, has tended to neglect the deep rooted demand for land reform and pretend that the simmering land occupation movement is insignificant, even though this movement has been crucial both in the early 1980s and in the current crisis in forcing the land reform issue onto the political agenda.

It is self evident that the neoliberal, developmentalist model and structure of civil society organisation, dominated as it is both financially and technically, by development and human rights NGOs, has been unable to address the pressing problem of land reform because of its general disconnection from the informal rural and urban social movements that have, over the years, pursued land occupations, resource poaching and all sorts of underground strategies to gain access to resources and other rights.

The result of this is that the land occupation movement has been hegemonised and controlled by war veterans and the ruling party, which has also demobilised it at various points in alliance with middle class interests within the state, opposition parties and NGOs, only to coopt it as it re-emerged during the major post independence political and economic crisis which escalated in 1996 and 1997.

It is polarising and futile to simplify democratisation in such a way that the idea of changing government is privileged over and above the content of change.<sup>75</sup> The idea of physically restructuring land and property relations is one example in which the historical unfolding of the process might seem to force change in what appear to be authoritarian ways but which might yield a framework for future democratisation. Moreover, it is too simplistic to pin the problem of achieving democratisation in Zimbabwe mainly on the tactics of the land occupation movement and the 2000 election. It is clear that the absence of the social and institutional infrastructure necessary for promoting true and widespread democratisation in rural Zimbabwe is a major bottleneck which compounds the weak strategy of civil society and opposition movements. The lopsided racial access to information, education, physical resources and political experience in handling the contradictions of social democratic are yet to be redressed.

Therefore, much of the negative fallout from the occupations movement, including its use for short term political gain, has to be weighed more seriously against the longer term gains to the broader

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75 See also Bratton and Wade on the wider problems of multiparty democracy in Africa.

democratisation process, of creating space for awareness and participation in the basic social struggles hitherto dominated by formal state structures and urban dominated civil society organisations. Indeed, one of the major lessons and experiences is that the neoliberal development and policy framework of land reform can be challenged, thus creating pointers towards a new dispensation of policy formulation.