

Zimbabwe's land reform: challenging the myths

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Abstract

Most commentary on Zimbabwe's land reform insists that agricultural production has almost totally collapsed, that food insecurity is rife, that rural economies are in precipitous decline, that political 'cronies' have taken over the land and that farm labour has all been displaced. This paper however argues that the story is not simply one of collapse and catastrophe; it is much more nuanced and complex, with successes as well as failures. The paper provides a summary of some of the key findings from a ten-year study in Masvingo province and the book *Zimbabwe's Land Reform: Myths and Realities*. The paper documents the nature of the radical transformation of agrarian structure that has occurred both nationally and within the province, and the implications for agricultural production and livelihoods. A discussion of who got the land shows the diversity of new settlers, many of whom have invested substantially in their new farms. An emergent group 'middle farmers' is identified who are producing, investing and accumulating. This has important implications – both economically and politically – for the future, as the final section on policy challenges discusses.

Introduction

Zimbabwe's land reform has had a bad press. Images of chaos, destruction and violence have dominated the coverage. While these have been part of the reality, there is also another side of the story. There have been important successes which must be taken into account if a more complete picture is to be offered. This paper argues that the story is not simply one of collapse and catastrophe; it is much more nuanced and complex, with successes as well as failures.

As Zimbabwe moves forward with a new agrarian structure, a more balanced appraisal is needed. This requires solid, on-the-ground research aimed at finding out what happened to whom and where and with what consequences. This was the aim of work carried out in Masvingo province since 2000 and reported in the book, *Zimbabwe's Land Reform: Myths and Realities* (Scoones et al, 2010). This paper offers an overview of the main findings¹. The question posed for the research was simple: what happened to people's livelihoods once they got land through land reform from 2000? Yet, despite the simplicity of the question, the answers are extremely complex.

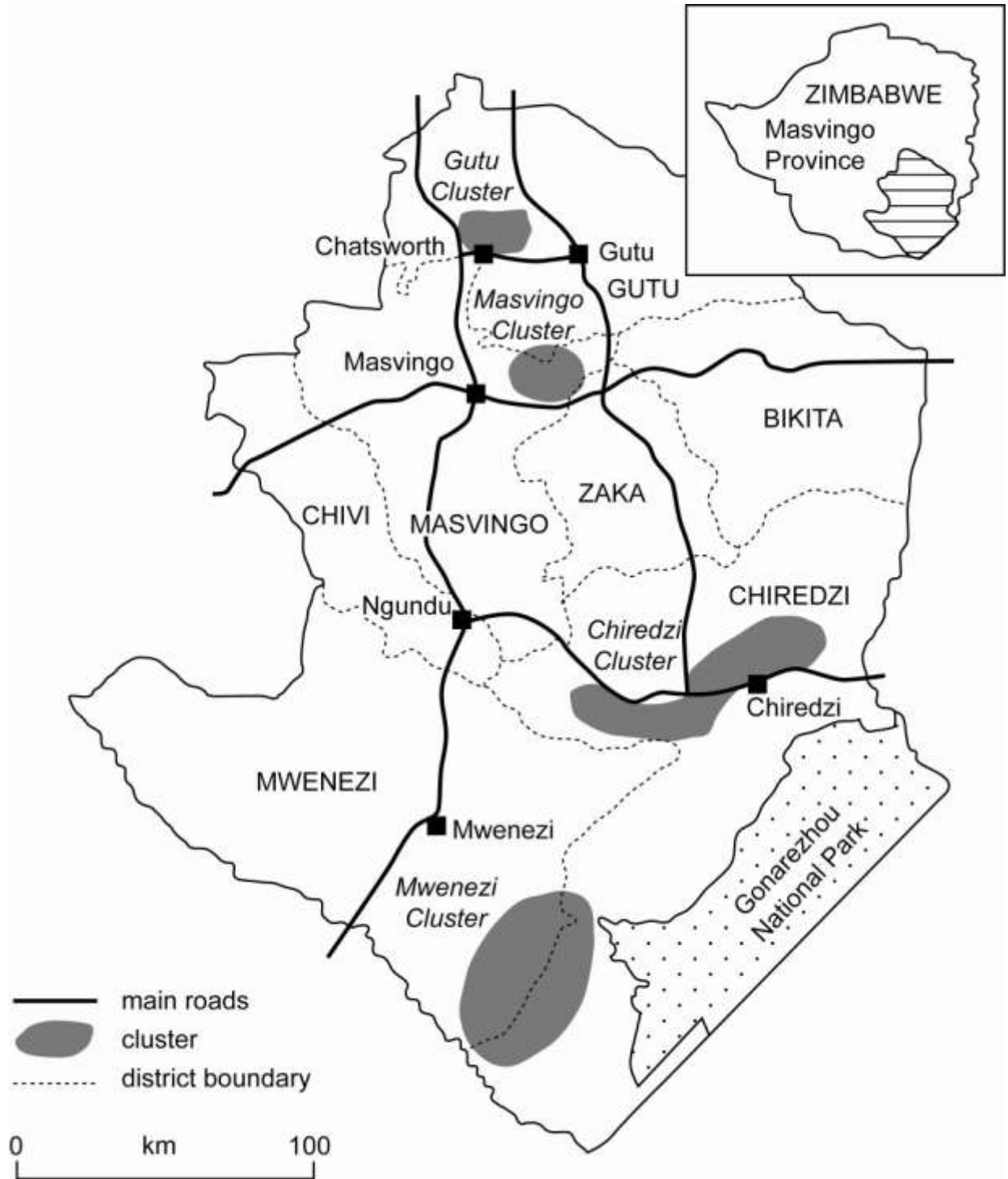
The research involved in-depth field research in 16 land reform sites; in some sites over a decade from 2000. The research sites were located in four research 'clusters' across the province, involving a sample population of 400 households. Masvingo is a relatively dry province, with average annual rainfall ranging from around 1000mm to under 300mm. Former land uses of the research sites included livestock ranches (sometimes with limited irrigation plots), with low capitalisation and limited labour forces, as well as, for several A2 sites, irrigated

¹ The paper draws from the book, as well as a series of feature articles prepared for the Zimbabwean newspaper (see <http://www.ids.ac.uk/go/news/zimbabwe-s-land-reform-ten-years-on-new-study-dispels-the-myths>).

farms, including those linked to sugar estates in the lowveld. Different types of survey were conducted in these sites between 2000 and 2010, including a full census (N=400 in 2007-08), a stratified sample survey (N=277 in 2008, stratified according to cattle ownership, a key indicator of wealth) and individual household biographies (N=110, across all 'success groups'), as well as more qualitative observations in all sites. Records of crop production, sales and inputs were carried out each season, and livestock and other asset holdings were monitored, in all cases through recall interviews. A detailed study of investment took place in 2007-08, involving assessments for all households. The research team included a group of field researchers resident in Masvingo province – in Masvingo, Hippo Valley and Chikomedzi. The study area stretched from the relatively higher potential areas near Gutu to the sugar estate of Hippo Valley to the dry south in the lowveld, offering a picture of diverse agro-ecological conditions (Figure 1). What we found was not what we expected. It contradicted the overwhelmingly negative images of land reform presented in the media, and indeed in much academic and policy commentary besides. In sum, the realities on the ground did not match the myths so often perpetuated in wider debate.

Most commentary on Zimbabwe's land reform insists that agricultural production has almost totally collapsed, that food insecurity is rife, that rural economies are in precipitous decline, that political 'cronies' have taken over the land and that farm labour has all been displaced. The reality however is much more complex. In our research we needed to ask far more sophisticated questions: Which aspects of agricultural production have suffered? Who is food insecure? How are rural economies restructuring to the new agrarian setting? And who exactly are the new farmers and farm labourers? By countering one myth of disaster and catastrophe, we must of course be wary of setting up an opposite myth of rose-tinted optimism. Instead, we should offer an empirically-informed view based on detailed analysis and solid evidence. This has been the aim of our research, and we offer a taste of the findings below.

Figure 1: Map of Masvingo province, showing study areas



Of course a focus on Masvingo province gives only a partial insight into the broader national picture. With most land being previously extensive ranch land, with pockets of irrigated agriculture outside the sugar estates, it is clearly different to the Highveld around Harare, where highly capitalised agriculture reliant on export markets did indeed collapse and where labour was displaced in large numbers (Sachikonye, 2003). But the picture in the new farms of Masvingo is not unrepresentative of broad swathes of the rest of the country, as research across multiple districts, from Mazoe to Mutoko to Mangwe is now showing (Moyo et al 2009; Matondi 2010; plus contributions to this special issue from across the country, see Cliffe et al for an overview)². Smallholder farmers have dominated the allocations under the 'Fast Track Land Reform Programme' (FTLRP), and many are doing well; surprisingly so given the parlous economic conditions over much of the past decade.

But any good analysis must take a differentiated view, unpacking diverse trajectories; successes as well as failures. Contributions to this special issue demonstrate this diversity, much of which is encompassed in the Masvingo study. For example Zamchiya (this issue), shows how some high-value sites were captured by elites in Chipinge, while in peri-urban Goromonzi, Marongwe (2009, this issue) shows how allocation of A2 farms was manipulated by political connections. These were all patterns observed in Masvingo province, as shown below. But individual cases should not detract from a balanced overall assessment, and only a broader overview can provide a firm basis for thinking about future policy. Subsequent sections of this paper offer such an overview of the key findings from the Masvingo study, starting with a summary of the broader national changes before focusing on the results from Masvingo province.

² The papers produced as part of the Livelihoods after Land Reform small grants competition show an extraordinary range, but again some important common themes (<http://www.lalr.org.za/zimbabwe/zimbabwe-working-papers-1>)

A radical change in agrarian structure

Across the country, the formal land re-allocation since 2000 has resulted in the transfer of land to nearly 170,000 households by 2010 (Moyo, 2011a: 496). If the 'informal' settlements, outside the official 'fast-track' programme are added, the totals are even larger.

Events since 2000 have thus resulted in a radical change in the nation's agrarian structure (Table 1). At Independence in 1980, over 15m hectares was devoted to large-scale commercial farming, comprising around 6,000 farmers, nearly all of them white. This fell to around 12m hectares by 1999, in part through a modest, but in many ways successful, land reform and resettlement programme, largely funded by the British government under the terms of the Lancaster House agreement (Gunning et al 2000).

The Fast Track Land Reform Programme, begun in 2000, allocated to new farmers over 4,500 farms making up 7.6m hectares, 20% of the total land area of the country, according to (admittedly rough) official figures. In 2008-09 this represented over 145,000 farm households in A1 schemes and around 16500 further households occupying A2 plots (Rukuni et al 2009)³, equivalent to 11.7% of farm households in the country⁴.

³ Total land allocations have continued to increase. Moyo (2011a:497) claims that total land allocations amount to nearly 9m ha by 2010, as more larger A2 farms have been allocated.

⁴ Nationally, the agrarian structure now includes smallholder farms (made up of communal area households (82.1%), old resettlement households (5.4%) and A1 households (10.5%) medium-scale farms (made up of old small-scale commercial farms (0.6%) and A2 farms (1.1%)) and large-scale farms, conservancies and estates (0.4%). In other words, today 98% of all farms can be classified as smallholdings (Scoones et al 2010: 6).

Table 1: Changes in the national distribution of land, 1980-2009

Land category	1980	2000	2009
	Area (million ha)	Area (million ha)	Area (million ha)
Communal areas	16.4	16.4	16.4
Old resettlement	0.0	3.5	3.5
New resettlement: A1	0.0	0.0	4.1
New resettlement: A2	0.0	0.0	3.5
Small-scale commercial farms	1.4	1.4	1.4
Large-scale commercial farms	15.5	11.7	3.4*
State farms	0.5	0.7	0.7
Urban land	0.2	0.3	0.3
National parks and forest land	5.1	5.1	5.1
Unallocated land	0.0	0.0	0.7

Source: derived from various government sources and compiled by the African Institute of Agrarian Studies * includes all large commercial farms, agro-industrial estate farms, church/trust farms, BIPPA farms and conservancies (Scoones et al 2010: 4).

Overall, there has been a significant shift to many more, smaller-scale farms focusing on mixed farming, often with low levels of capitalisation. Much of this expansion of agricultural activity is on land which was previously under-utilised (Moyo 1998), and in the Masvingo case often involving a transfer of land which was used for ranching at low stocking rates with limited herding labour to more intensive smallholder crop and livestock production. But this is not to say that large-scale commercial units no longer exist. Especially important in Masvingo province is the estate sector, including for example the major sugar estates in the lowveld. These largely remained intact following land reform, with out-grower areas being transferred to sub-divided A2 plots. Today, there are still around 3.4 m hectares under large-scale farming, some of it in very large holdings, such as the 350,000 hectare Nuanetsi ranch in Masvingo province⁵. There are,

⁵ Moyo (2011a:514-7, 2011b: 262) divides this between large scale farms, including white and black owned farms and new A2 farms (1.5m ha, including about 500,000ha allocated to 200 very large scale A2 farms) and estates/conservancies/institutions (1.2m ha). However, in the absence of a detailed land audit these aggregate figures are prone to error, and remain estimates.

however, perhaps only 200 white-owned commercial farmers still operating across 117,000 ha nationally, complemented by 950 black-owned large scale farms on 530,000 ha (Moyo 2011a:514). Most white-owned farms were taken over, with a substantial number of farm workers displaced.

Two main 'models' have been at the centre of the land reform process since 2000 - one focused on smallholder production (so-called A1 schemes, either as villagised arrangements or small, self-contained farms) and one focused on commercial production at a slightly larger scale (so-called A2 farms). Much larger A2 farms, replicating the large-scale farms of the past, have also been created, many later in the land reform process (Moyo 2011a,b).

In practice, the distinction between these models varies considerably, and there is much overlap, with some self-contained A1 schemes, for example, being very similar to smaller A2 schemes. As Zamchiya's study (this issue) shows, processes of land allocation, rather than their administrative definition, have more importance in understanding who ended up on the land and what happened next. Most A1 schemes, and all 'informal' land reform sites, were allocated following land invasions starting from 2000⁶. These had diverse origins, but were usually (but not always) led by war veterans and involved groups of people from surrounding communal areas and nearby towns (Chaumba et al, 2003; Moyo 2001). More formal allocation of plots happened later, with the pegging of fields and settlement sites as part of the 'fast track land reform programme' (FTLRP) and the issuing of 'offer letters'⁷.

⁶ Exceptions exist, such as the case studied by Zamchiya (this issue) which involved A1 self-contained schemes allocated by the state and not through land occupations, showing more similarity with the A2 pattern elsewhere.

⁷ These are documents providing a permit to occupy the land, but no formal title or lease.

Depending on the pressure on the land, the local demands and often the discretion of the planning officers, A1 sites were demarcated as villages (with shared grazing and clustered homesteads) or 'self-contained' plots, with houses, arable fields and grazing within a single area. The 'informal' A1 sites, by contrast, were usually organised in line with local preferences. These sites, with their origins in land invasions, took on a particular social and political character, organised initially by a 'Seven Member Committee', often with a war veteran base commander in the lead. Later these became village committees, and were incorporated into chiefly authorities and local government administrative systems (Scoones et al 2010: 188-212). By contrast, A2 schemes were allocated later (from around 2002) as a result of business plan applications to the Provincial and District Land Committees.

The membership of each of these 'schemes' is thus highly dependent on the politics of the allocation process, with final outcomes highly contingent on local situations. The land invasions, while of course highly politicised, and supported by ZANU-PF and the military, had diverse origins and participation: some were made up largely of poor, local villagers from nearby areas, while others involved a smaller group of organised war veterans (Hammar et al 2003; Marongwe 2003). In our Masvingo cases, each site was different (Scoones et al, 2010:46-51). A2 schemes by contrast required a formal application process, and officially there were strict criteria for acceptance. Many who applied were civil servants, often linked to the agriculture ministry, who had few strong political connections if any; although in some instances were able to manipulate the administrative procedures in their favour⁸. The most obvious, and often blatant, corrupt practices linked to political patronage were associated with the later allocation of larger A2 farms, especially around the time of the 2008 elections when the struggle for power

⁸ Political manipulation of allocation processes was more common in areas close to towns (Marongwe this issue) and where high value crops were at stake (Zamchiya this issue).

and the deployment of political patronage by the ZANU-PF elite was at its height. Moyo (2011a: 514) reports 53 large-scale A2 farms in Masvingo province across 110,719ha.

In sum, the land reform has resulted in a very different farming sector, with a radically reconfigured agrarian structure. While the old dualism has been disrupted, with many more smallholder farmers on the land, elements of the large-scale farming structure remain. Yet despite these major changes, the new setting, as we show below, is not without considerable entrepreneurial dynamism and productive potential. This major restructuring of course has had knock-on consequences for the agricultural sector as a whole. Any radical reform will of course have a transitional phase, as production systems, markets and trading priorities readjust (Kinsey 2003), but the key questions are how long will the transition take, and what form will the agriculture sector take in the longer term? In the period between 2001 and 2009, national production of wheat, tobacco, coffee and tea all declined, as did the export of beef (Scoones et al, 2010: 148). Compared to 1990s averages, wheat production decreased by 27% and tobacco production by 43%, with more dramatic declines from 2006 (Moyo 2011a), yet some recovery, particularly for tobacco, in 2010 and 2011 (Anseeuw et al 2011). Equally, national maize production has become more variable, because of the reduction of irrigation facilities and significant droughts have resulted in shortages, with average production over this period down by 31% from 1990s levels. However, other crops and markets have weathered the storm and some have boomed. Aggregate production of small grains (sorghum and millet) has exploded, increasing by 163% compared to 1990s averages, while cotton production has also increased, up 13% on average by 2009. The agricultural sector therefore has certainly been transformed, and there are major problems in certain areas, but it certainly has not collapsed.

Transforming land and livelihoods in Masvingo province

Aggregate figures – with all the necessary caveats about their accuracy - only tell one part of the story. To get a sense of what is happening in the fields and on the farms, we need a more local focus. Only with such insights can we really begin to understand the impacts of Zimbabwe's land reform. In this section, we zero in on Masvingo province in the central south and east of the country.

In Masvingo province about 28% of the total land area was transferred as part of the FTLRP, according to 2009 official figures. Much of this land was previously cattle ranches, with limited infrastructure, low levels of employment and only small patches of arable land outside the irrigated lowveld areas. This was taken over by over 32,500 households on A1 sites (making up 1.2 m hectares) and about 1,200 households in A2 areas (making up 371,500 ha), alongside perhaps a further 8,500 households in informal resettlement sites, as yet unrecognised by the government. Although there is much variation, the average size of new A2 farms is 318 hectares, while that of A1 family farms is 37 hectares, including crop and grazing land⁹. At the same time one million hectares (18.3% of the province) remains as large-scale commercial operations, including some very large farms, wildlife conservancies and estates in the lowveld that remained largely intact (Moyo 2011b).

Table 2 offers an overview of the socio-economic characteristics of the different sites in our study, presented in relation to the four districts and the four different types of resettlement 'scheme', highlighting the diversity of contexts, livelihood assets and strategies. Land holdings vary significantly between the 'scheme' types, with the A2 small-scale commercial units having

⁹ The acquisition of whole farms without subdivision to create 'large-scale A2' farms has occurred in recent years and has been characterised by political corruption. In Masvingo province, these farms average over 2000ha.

the largest land areas. A1 self-contained scheme areas include both grazing and arable land, while A1 villagised and informal areas represent only the arable land. Maize production and sale varies significantly, with A1 self-contained schemes performing best and, with a few notable exceptions, A2 schemes performing poorly. Average crop production levels unsurprisingly decline between the relatively wetter sites of Gutu and Masvingo to the dry area of Mwenezi. Cattle ownership is highest in the A2 ranches of Mwenezi, although with stocking rates still low and cropped area minimal¹⁰. The overall profile of the new settlers is presented in the table, referring to the age and educational qualifications of 'household heads'. A2 farmers tend to be slightly older and better educated, but overall, compared to nearby communal areas, this is a relatively well educated and young population.

¹⁰ Stocking rates on the Mwenezi A2 ranches average 14.4 ha per animal, although herd sizes are building up. Recommended rates are around 10 ha per livestock unit for beef production in this dry area.

Table 2: A socio-economic profile of the study sites (average amounts across survey households)

Cluster	Gutu			Masvingo			Chiredzi		Mwenezi		
	A1 self-contained	A1 villagised	A2	A1 self-contained	A1 villagised	A2	Informal	A2	A1 villagised	A1 informal	A2
Age of household head	39	34	43	36	40	43	37	46	n.d.	33	44
Educational level of household head	Form 2	Form 2	Form 3 or higher	Form 2	Form 2	Form 3 or higher	Grade 7	Form 3 or higher	Grade 7	Grade 7	Form 2
Land holding (ha)	35.5	4.0	232.1	33.0	3.9	167.0	6.2	39.1	7.9	8.0	868.7
Area cropped (ha)	5.6	3.1	6.6	8.4	3.4	n.d.	4.6	16.8	3.6	4.0	0.5
Cattle owned (nos)	6.9	5.4	25.2	11.9	4.4	11.7	4.4	14.8	4.7	4.9	60.3
Maize output in 2006 kg	2790	2627	3133	7385	3140	65000	2256	2582	449	104	n.d.
Sales (GMB and local) in kg in 2006	1310	1157	896	5283	1766	54563	378	1357	104	0	n.d.
% owning a scotch cart	32%	24%	20%	68%	63%	75%	40%	33%	55%	50%	64%
House type (% with tin/asbestos roof)	43%	40%	25%	45%	44%	100%	42%	78%	96%	100%	100%
% receiving remittance	44%	39%	15%	n.d.	23%	0%	21%	28%	44%	52%	64%

Source: Survey data, 2007-08 (n.d. means no data available, or not applicable) (Scoones et al 2010: 44)

This radical transformation of land and livelihoods has resulted in a new composition of people in the rural areas, with diverse livelihood strategies. In order to understand more about who was doing what we undertook a 'success ranking' exercise in all 16 sites across Masvingo province. This involved a group of farmers from the area ranking all households according to their own criteria of success. A number of broad categories of livelihood strategy emerged from these investigations (following Dorward (2009) and Mushongah (2009)). These are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Livelihood strategies in Masvingo province

Category	Livelihood strategy	Proportion of households
Dropping out (10.0%)	Exit – leaving the plot	4.4%
	Chronically poor, local labour	3.3%
	Ill health affecting farming	2.2%
Hanging in (33.6%)	Asset poor farming, local labour	17.8%
	Keeping the plot for the future	10.3%
	Straddling across resettlement and communal areas	5.6%
Stepping out (21.4%)	Survival diversification	2.8%
	Local off-farm activities plus farming	5.3%
	Remittances from within Zimbabwe plus farming	5.0%
	Remittances from outside Zimbabwe plus farming	4.4%
	Cell phone farmers	3.9%
Stepping up (35.0%)	<i>Hurudza</i> – the ‘real’ farmers	18.3%
	Part-time farmers	10.6%
	New (semi-)commercial farmers	4.7%
	Farming from patronage	1.4%

Source: summarised from Scoones et al (2010:228-229)

Over a half of all the 400 sample households – across A1, A2 and informal resettlement sites - were either ‘stepping up’ – accumulating assets and regularly producing crops for sale – or ‘stepping out’ – successfully diversifying off-farm. These households were accumulating and investing, often employing labour and ratcheting up their farming operations, despite the many difficulties being faced. But not everyone has been successful. 46.5% of households were finding the going tough, and were not regarded as ‘successful’ at this stage. Some were really

struggling and only just 'hanging in'; others were in the process of 'dropping out', through a combination of chronic poverty and ill health. Joining the land invasions and establishing new farms in what was often uncleared bush, previously not used for arable agriculture, was not easy. It required commitment, courage and much hard work. It was not for everyone.

Others without start-up assets have been unable to accumulate, and have continued to live in poverty, reliant on the support of relatives and friends. Some have joined a growing labour force on the new farms, abandoning their plots in favour of often poorly-paid employment. Within the 'stepping out' category, some are surviving off illegal, unsafe or transient activities that allowed survival but little else. Still others are straddling across two farms – one in the communal area and one in the new resettlement – and not really investing in the new areas, while some are simply keeping the plot for sons or other relatives.

It is not surprising that there have been such variable outcomes. In the period since 2000 there has been virtually no external support. Government was broke and focused support on the elite few, and the NGOs and donors have shied away from the new resettlement areas for political reasons. Instead, most new farmers have been reliant on their own connections, enterprise and labour. Without support to get going, many have found it difficult, and it has been those with a combination of access to assets, hard work and luck that have really made it.

Overall, in our study sites there is thus a core group of 'middle farmers' – around half of the population – who are successful not because of patronage support, but because of hard work. They can be classified as successful 'petty commodity producers' and 'worker peasants' who are gaining surpluses from farming, investing in the land from off-farm work and so are able to 'accumulate from below' (Scoones et al. 2010; cf. Cousins 2010). This is, as discussed below,

having a positive impact on the wider economy, including stimulating demand for services, consumption goods and labour.

New land, new people

One of the most repeated myths about Zimbabwe's land reform is that all the land went to 'Mugabe's cronies'; those with access to elite connections and benefiting from political patronage. This did, of course, happen, and continues to do so. Tackling such extreme excesses of land grabbing through a land audit, as provided for in the 'Global Political Agreement' for power sharing, remains a major challenge. But elite capture is not the whole story of Zimbabwe's land reform; nor indeed the dominant one.

Who got the land and what is the profile of the new settlers? Our study of 400 households across the 16 sites from Masvingo province showed by far the majority of the new settlers are ordinary people (Table 4). While 'ordinary' is certainly a category that lacks clarity, these are essentially people who had little or very poor land in the communal areas or were unemployed or with very poorly-paid jobs and living in town. About half of all new settler households were from nearby communal areas and another 18% from urban areas. These people joined the invasions because they needed land, and thought that the new resettlements would provide new livelihood opportunities. As discussed further below, this was not a politically-organised grouping with strong connections to ZANU-PF. The remaining third of household heads was made up of civil servants (16.5% overall, but increasing to around a quarter of all settlers in A1 self-contained and A2 sites), business people (4.8% overall, but again proportionately higher in the A1 self-contained and A2 sites), security service personnel (3.7% overall, employed by the police, army and intelligence organisation) and former farm workers (6.7% overall).

Table 4: Settler profiles across schemes

	A1 villagised	A1 self contained	Informal	A2	Total
'Ordinary': from other rural areas	59.9	39.2	69.7	12.2	49.9
'Ordinary': from urban areas	9.4	18.9	22.6	43.8	18.3
Civil servant	12.5	28.3	3.8	26.3	16.5
Security services	3.6	5.4	3.8	1.8	3.7
Business person	3.1	8.2	0	10.5	4.8
Former farm worker	11.5	0	0	5.3	6.7
N	192	74	53	57	376

Source: Census data, 2007 (N=376), including all sites (Scoones et al 2010: 53)

Farm workers made up 11.5% of households in the A1 villagised sites, with many taking an active role in the land invasions. In one case a farm worker organised and led the invasion of the farm where he had worked. Given that in other parts of the country, farm workers were displaced in large numbers, often ending up destitute, living in camps on the farms (Chambati this issue), this is perhaps surprising. Yet this reflects the extent and nature of labour on the former large-scale farms in Masvingo province. Unlike in the Highveld farms, where large, resident labour forces existed without nearby communal homes, our Masvingo study sites were formerly large-scale ranches where labour was limited, and workers came, often on a temporary basis, from nearby communal areas, and were not permanent residents attracted originally as migrant labour from nearby countries.

Across all of these categories are 'war veterans'. As household heads they make up 8.8% of the total population. The category 'war veteran' is however diverse and again perhaps misleading. Prior to the land invasions, most were farming in the communal areas, a few were living in town,

while some were civil servants, business people and employees in the security services. At the time of the land invasions in 2000, many indeed had long dropped their 'war veteran' identity and had been poor, small-scale farmers in the communal areas for 20 years since the end of the liberation war. Those who led the land invasions were often able to secure land in the A1 self-contained plots, but many were sidelined in the allocation of larger A2 farms. However, most were not well connected politically before 2000, although through the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association, they became so and part of the political drive towards land reform, although with multiple disputes with the party leadership (Sadomba 2011).

Land was allocated unevenly to men and women. In most cases it is men whose names appear on the 'offer letters', the permits issued to new settlers by the government. Yet women were important players in the land invasions, providing support to the base camps during the '*jambanja*' period, and subsequently investing in the development of new homes and farms, as wives, sisters, daughters, aunts and so on. However, across our sample only 12% of households had a woman named as the land holder on the permit. The highest proportion of such cases was in the informal settlements, as women often saw the land invasions as an opportunity to make a new independent life and escape abusive relationships or accusations of witchcraft, for example (cf. Manjengwa and Mazhawidza, this issue).

So who amongst these groups are the so-called 'cronies' of the party, well-connected to the machinery of the state and able to gain advantage? As discussed above, those able to gain land through patronage included those who grabbed often large farms around 2008, as well as some of the A2 farmers able to manipulate the system. While the A2 farmers in our sample are certainly more 'elite' than those who invaded farms and took on small A1 farms, many could not be described as rich or politically well-connected. Former teachers, extension workers, office clerks and small-scale business people dominate this group. Others however have political

connections that have allowed them access to patronage support from the state during the last decade. These are often absentee land owners – so-called ‘cell phone farmers’ – presiding over often under-utilised land, perhaps with a decaying new tractor in the farmyard. Yet, despite their disproportionate influence on local politics, these well-connected elites are few-and-far between, making up around 5% of the total population in our study areas (see the categories ‘cell phone farmer’ and ‘farming from patronage’ in Table 3, for example). A few gained access to farms with good irrigation infrastructure (such as in the sugar estates), but there is no consistent pattern in their distribution, as others took on dryland ranches. Perhaps because of the distance from Harare, the relatively poorer agro-ecological conditions, the lack of high value infrastructure and the particular local political configurations, in Masvingo province such elite capture is not the dominant story, despite the media assumptions. Masvingo is of course not Mazowe or Marondera, but even in such Highveld areas the situation is much more diverse than what mainstream portrayals suggest with the new land reform areas dominated by smallholder farmers in A1 schemes, as Matondi (2010) and Sadomba (2011) attest for Mazowe, for example.

How much land did each of these groups get? Table 5 shows this for each of the scheme types, dividing the A2 sites into irrigated and dryland farms. For the A1 villagised and informal sites, the area measurements refer only to arable land, while for the other sites it represents the whole allocation to the households. Land cleared represents that where arable fields had been created and cultivated in 2007-08. The data shows that, for each of the scheme types, so-called ‘ordinary’ settlers did not receive any less land than other groups; in some cases more. Business people and civil servants were able to clear more land in most instances, due to access to resources to hire labour. Those linked to the security services – the group most likely to be associated with the political-military elite – received marginally more land than the average in the A1 self-contained and informal sites, but less in other sites.

As Table 5 shows, the different 'scheme' types thus create a pattern of differentiation within the land reform areas, with A1 villagised and informal sites receiving the least arable land, although with access to communal grazing (not included in the data). A1 self-contained land (including both arable and grazing) is larger, and where the highest areas of land cleared for production are observed. But it is the relatively small number of A2 farmers who receive the largest land areas, including some large ranches in the dryland areas, where very limited areas are cleared for arable production, as well as often quite large plots with irrigation potential. Compared to the small-scale farmers on the A1 schemes where intensive mixed farming has taken off, the A2 farmers have found the establishment of new farms much more difficult. With larger areas, the need for equipment and labour, as well as financial investment, the economic conditions pertaining for much of the study period made getting new enterprises going was very difficult. This is reflected in the relatively low areas cleared and low stocking rates, for instance.

Table 5: Land owned and cleared by settler and scheme type

	A1 villagised		A1 self-contained		Informal		A2 dryland		A2 irrigated	
	Ha owned	Ha cleared	Ha owned	Ha cleared	Ha owned	Ha cleared	Ha owned	Ha cleared	Ha owned	Ha cleared
'Ordinary' – rural	4.8	3.8	31.9	9.3	6.6	5.1	247.0	7.0	-	-
'Ordinary' – urban	4.1	3.5	35.1	9.3	6.6	5.4	194.5	3.5	84.5	31.2
Civil servant	4.1	3.5	35.5	7.3	7.5	5.3	248.3	16.0	67.8	24.4
Security services	3.8	3.5	36.3	9.7	6.7	6.5	-	-	54.0	9.0
Business person	4.0	4.0	36.4	14.1	-	-	272.0	5.0	39.6	32.5
Farm worker	4.4	3.9	29.0	8.5	8.0	4.0	-	-	-	-
Average	4.6	3.8	33.9	8.9	6.7	5.1	232.0	8.7	70.2	27.3

Source: Census data, 2007 (A2 dryland excludes Asveld farm due to lack of area data)

The land reform has thus involved diverse people with multiple affiliations. Being influential in the land invasions, war veterans often managed to secure better plots, although not always larger ones¹¹. We were unable to ascertain party affiliation of those on our sites, but figures from recent elections suggest that there are significant numbers of MDC opposition supporters in these areas, even if they do not admit this publicly¹². Given the often violent clashes associated with electoral politics, especially linked to ZANU-PF youth militia, many sensible people carry a ZANU-PF party card, even if they vote for the opposition. Many of those who joined the land invasions could not be regarded as 'cronies' in any reasonable sense; many had no party affiliation, they were simply interested in gaining access to land so long denied them¹³. While

¹¹ War veterans had land areas above the average in the A1 villagised schemes only (at 6.8ha). In all other instances their land holdings were actually on average marginally lower than the average.

¹² The MDC-T party won in seven of the 15 constituencies across the four districts of our study area in the 2008 parliamentary election, taking 41.2% of the vote, against ZANU-PF's 52.3%. ZANU-PF maintained its stronghold in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts, but lost in Gutu and parts of Masvingo district (Scoones et al, 2010:29).

¹³ In this respect, we disagree with Zamchiya's analysis (this issue) which assumes that nearly everyone is a 'crony' and/or a 'party supporter', rather than accepting that people switch allegiance opportunistically to gain strategic advantage, as described by Mkodzongi (this issue). Such an alternative interpretation recognises the complexity and contradictions of public and private politics in the highly contested Zimbabwe setting, which of course varies significantly by region.

the land invasions clearly became highly politicised, and the atmosphere of the 'base camps' on the invaded farms was tightly ordered and politically controlled (Chaumba et al 2003), those who ultimately benefited were much more diverse than those with close political ties. Again, as discussed above, who got the land in the A1 sites very much depended on the very particular dynamics of an individual invasion, who was leading it and how contested the farm was.

The large group of civil servants, particularly on the A2 plots - and in our sample especially in the sugar estates - were often teachers, agricultural extension workers and local government officials. While not being poor and landless from the communal areas, most could not be regarded as elite, nor often particularly well-connected politically. Indeed, in simple financial terms many were extremely poor, as government wages had effectively ceased during the economic crisis to 2009.

The net result is a new mix of people in the new resettlements. In the A2 schemes, for example 46.5% of new farmers have a 'Master Farmer' certificate¹⁴, while in the A1 self-contained schemes 17.6% do. 91.6% of A2 farmers had at least three years of secondary schooling, while this proportion is 71.6% and 44.8% in the A1 self-contained and villagised schemes respectively. The new resettlements are dominated by a new generation of farmers, with most household heads being under 50, many born since Independence. A2 schemes are dominated by the over 40s, but often include people with significant experience and connections. That overall 18.3% of households came from urban areas (increasing to 43.8% in the A2 schemes) is significant too, as connections to town have proved important in gaining access to services and support in the absence of official programmes in the rural areas.

¹⁴ A quite rigorous agricultural qualification, the result of training by the ministry of agriculture's extension arm.

These data from Masvingo province are reflected in other studies from other areas of the country (Moyo et al 2009; Matondi 2010 and contributions to this issue reviewed by Cliffe et al). The overall picture is complex, but a simple narrative that land reform has been dominated by grabbing by elites is clearly inaccurate. Land previously occupied by a single farmer, often absent but with a manager and a few workers resident, is now being used by a highly diverse group of people. Overall, the new resettlements are populated by younger, more educated people with a greater diversity of backgrounds, professional skills and connections than their neighbours in the communal areas and old resettlements.

The land reform has resulted in a new social composition of people on the land, with a diversity of people from different backgrounds, with new skills, connections and sources of capital for investing in production. The new resettlements are therefore not a replication of the 1980s resettlement schemes or an extension of the communal areas, nor are they simply scaled-down version of large-scale commercial farms. Instead, a very different social and economic dynamic is unfolding, one that has multiple potentials, as well as challenges.

Investing in the land

One of the recurrent myths about Zimbabwe's land reform is that investment has been insignificant in the new resettlements: the land lies idle, people are not committed to farming and infrastructure is destroyed, neglected or non-existent. Perceptions of a lack of order and poor tenure security have further contributed to this view. Many assume that investment will not proceed without legally enforceable property rights, yet in our sites no leases have been agreed, and in some sites 'offer letters' (permits to occupy issued by the state) have not even been issued. Our studies have shown this narrative of low investment, disorder and lack of development is far from the case. Unlike the old resettlements which were plagued by a sense

of insecurity, at least in the 1980s, due to the permit system and top-down imposition of planning requirements (Bruce 1990), it seems that trust in local authorities, combined with political assurances from across the political divide, has been sufficient for many to invest significantly in the new resettlements. This is of course not to say that insecurities do not exist. In the 'informal' settlements, unrecognised by the state, threats of eviction continue, and appropriation by political elites, particularly around the 2008 election period, represented another source of insecurity. Certainly, unstable macroeconomic factors until 2009 added to this and undermined opportunities for capital investment. But, despite this, impressive strides have been made in clearing the land, in purchasing livestock, equipment and transport and in building new settlements.

In developing their farms, most new farmers have had to start from scratch. For the most part the Masvingo study sites were ranches: large expanses of bush grazing, with limited infrastructure. There were scattered homesteads, a few workers' cottages, the odd dip tank, small dam and irrigation plot, but not much else. When groups of land invaders took the land they established 'base camps', under the leadership of war veteran commanders. Surveys of soil types and water sources were undertaken by the land invaders. The new settlers then pegged fields and marked out areas for settlement. Soon, once the official FTLRP was launched, officials from the government arrived and imposed an official plan, based on land use planning regulations, as well as much pressure to accommodate more people. Some had to move their shelters and clear fields anew. But, within a remarkably short time, people began to invest in earnest. There was an urgency: fields had to be prepared for planting, structures had to be built for cattle to be kraaled in, granaries had to be erected for the harvests to be stored, and homes had to be put up for growing numbers of people to live in.

A peopled landscape of houses, fields, paths and roads soon emerged. Human population densities increased significantly and livestock populations grew. Stocking densities on beef ranches were recommended to be around one animal per ten hectares; now much larger livestock populations exist, combining cattle with goats, sheep, donkeys, pigs and poultry. Investment in stock has been significant, with cattle populations in particular growing rapidly, especially in the A1 sites.

One of the major tasks facing new settlers has been clearing land. In A1 village sites, on average each household had cleared 6.8ha by 2008-09, while in A1 self-contained and A2 sites an average of 13.3ha and 23.7ha had been cleared. In the A1 sites most of this was being cultivated, while in the A2 sites much less intensive land use is observed (Table 5). In addition, people have constructed numerous gardens, all of which have required investment in fencing. In addition, people have dug wells, built small dams, planted trees and dug soil conservation works. Investment in fields was complemented by investment in farm equipment, with ploughs, cultivators, pumps and scotch carts purchased in numbers.

Building has also been extensive in the new resettlements. Some structures remain built of pole and mud, however, after a year or two, when people's sense of tenure security had increased, buildings using bricks, cement and tin/asbestos roofing increased. Some very elaborate homes have been built with the very best materials imported from South Africa.

Transport has been a major constraint on the new resettlements. With no roads and poor connections to urban areas, there were often no forms of public transport available. This was compounded by the economic crisis, as many operators closed down routes. This had a severe impact. Lack of access to services – shops, schools, clinics – and markets meant that people

suffered. Investing in a means of transport was often a major priority. Bicycles in particular were bought in large numbers, but also cars, pick-ups and trucks.

What is the value of all this investment? A simple set of calculations which compute the cost of labour and materials used or the replacement cost of the particular item show that, on average, each household had invested over US\$2000 in a variety of items in the period from settlement to 2008-09 (Table 6).

Table 6: The value of investments in the new resettlements¹⁵

<i>Focus of investment</i>	<i>Average value of investment per household (US\$)</i>
Land clearance	\$385
Housing/buildings	\$631
Cattle	\$612
Farm equipment	\$198
Transport	\$150
Toilets	\$77
Garden fencing	\$29
Wells	\$79
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$2161</i>

Source: Scoones et al (2010: 87)

This is of course only a small subset of the total, as such private investment does not account for investments at the community level. Across our sites, churches have been established, schools have been built, roads cut and areas for shops carved out as part of community efforts. Labour and materials have been mobilised without any external help. In the A1 sites in particular this highly-motivated and well-organised pattern of self-help has dominated (cf. Murisa, this

¹⁵ The values were calculated using US dollar-equivalent replacement costs for labour, materials, equipment etc., based on an average investment per household across the full sample of 400 cases (Scoones et al 2010: 77-87).

issue). While the state has been present, it has not always been helpful. The re-planning of village and field sites was resented by many, as the land use planning models dating from the 1930s were re-imposed, with fields removed from near rivers and streams and villages placed on the ridges far from water sources. Planning laws were also invoked in the destruction of nascent business centres as part of Operation Murambatsvina (Potts 2008).

Extension workers are few-and-far-between and veterinary care almost non-existent. Instead, people have used their own knowledge, skills and connections in developing their agriculture, often relying on those with Master Farmer qualifications which they had gained in their former homes in the communal areas. Without dipping, the explosion of tick-borne animal diseases has been devastating, but many farmers have purchased spray-on chemicals, often organising themselves in groups to tackle the problem.

So without the state and without the projects of donors and NGOs – and significantly without formal title or leasehold tenure - the new settlers have invested at scale. Extrapolating the results from our sample and for the limited set of items assessed to the whole province this adds up to an investment of US\$91m across all new resettlements; a substantial amount by any calculation (Scoones et al 2010:86). Such a level of investment suggests that in most resettlement sites (perhaps with the exception of the ‘informal’ sites, where no ‘offer letters’ have been issued) there is a sufficient sense of security of tenure to allow investment at scale, undermining the claim that what is needed now is a formalisation of tenure regimes and the offering of some form of title (Matondi 2010).

But is this an argument that people can just do it on their own, and should be left to their own devices? Emphatically: no. There are plenty of things that need to be done, and where external support is necessary. In order to get farming moving in the new resettlements a significant

investment in infrastructure – roads, wells, dams, dips and so on – will be needed. This is unlikely to come from individual and community contributions, although the considerable entrepreneurial initiative and deep commitment to investment in the new resettlements is an important platform on which to build.

A smallholder agricultural revolution in the making?

A recurrent myth about Zimbabwe's land reform is that it has resulted in agricultural collapse, precipitating widespread and recurrent food insecurity. There is little doubt that the agricultural sector has been transformed, as discussed above, but our data show that there has been surprising resilience in production.

Take maize production on the resettlement farms in Masvingo province. We tracked production on all 400 farms in our sample over seven seasons between 2002 and 2009 (Table 7). The data shows a steady increase in output over time as farms became established, and draft power and other inputs were sourced. The trend was not smooth, however, and the major droughts in this period saw low yields. Availability of seeds and fertiliser was also highly variable across years, with various government schemes delivering patchily and unreliably. And patterns of differentiation across households were also very evident.

Table 7: Percent of farmers harvesting greater than a tonne of maize

District	Scheme Type	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Gutu	A1 self-contained	18.4	50.0	45.5	75.0	63.4	28.6	61.5
	A1 villagised	13.3	39.1	24.0	79.3	63.3	36.7	78.6
	A2	0.0	0.0	44.4	75.0	66.7	n.d	63.6
Masvingo	A1 self-contained	55.3	63.2	56.4	100.0	100.0	51.3	100.0
	A1 villagised	28.0	38.1	45.8	95.7	91.2	15.8	77.9
	A2	0.0	25.0	25.0	n.d	75.0	75.0	100.0
Chiredzi	A2	14.3	38.5	46.2	50.0	66.7	50.0	88.9
	Informal	18.8	10.2	3.9	86.5	51.0	24.5	62.5
Mwenezi	A1 villagised	26.9	8.0	0.0	4.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Informal	11.5	11.5	0.0	0.0	26.7	6.7	0.0

Source: Maize census, 2003-09 (N=400; n.d = no data) (Scoones et al 2010: 108)

As Table 7 shows, in the better rainfall years of 2005-06 and 2008-09 the proportion of households producing more than a tonne of maize – sufficient to feed an average family for a year - was significant across all sites. For example, following the 2009 harvest between 63% and 100% of households outside the lowveld sites in Mwenezi produced more than this threshold. If sorghum and millet were added to the tally, more than 60% of households, even in the dryland Mwenezi sites, produced sufficient for self-provisioning. Surpluses may be sold or stored, providing a buffer for future years. Around a third of households sold maize, sorghum or millet regularly in this period. For example in 2009 two-thirds of such households in the A1 self-contained settlement sites sold over a tonne of maize, although marketed output was not so high on the A2 farms, by contrast.

A major constraint especially to maize production in this period, however, has been input supply – both of seed and fertiliser. Local production of agricultural inputs declined dramatically from 2000 due to the economic conditions prevailing. Attempts to provide inputs through government programmes – whether the Agricultural Sector Productivity Enhancement Facility, Operation

Maguta or the Champion Farmer programme – largely failed. The agricultural policy environment until 2009 was characterised by “heavy-handed state intervention funded through quasi-fiscal means which distorted markets and incentives and undermined the economy” (Scoones et al 2010: 99). These schemes benefited some, but they also opened up significant opportunities for corruption. Most new resettlement farmers had to source their own seed, reverting to local re-use and imports from South Africa. Fertiliser use dropped dramatically, although the new farmers had the benefits of relatively virgin soils for a period.

By contrast, in some sites, cotton production has boomed. This is particular so in the ‘informal’ site of Uswaushava in the Nuanetsi ranch. Here cotton production has increased significantly (Table 8). Cotton sales provide significant cash income for nearly all households. Six different private cotton companies operate in the area, supplying credit, inputs and marketing support - allowing cotton producers to access inputs and other support through other means. New cotton gins have opened up too, creating employment further up the value chain.

Table 8: Changes in cotton production in Uswaushava, Chiredzi cluster, 2001-2008 harvests

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
% farmers growing cotton	18%	35%	29%	35%	29%	68%	92%	89%
For cotton farmers, average area planted to cotton (ha)	1	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.4	1.7	1.7	2.1
For cotton farmers, average output of cotton (bales = 200kg)	2.3	1.7	0.8	1.6	0.6	5.8	7.5	6.4

Source: Annual crop census (Scoones et al, 2010: 114)

Investment in cattle has been particularly important across the sites, but particularly in the A1 schemes, and for certain ‘success groups’¹⁶ (Table 9). Contrary to the pattern noted by Dekker and Kinsey (this issue) for the old resettlement areas, cattle numbers are increasing in the new resettlement areas, providing an important source of draft power, milk, meat and cash sale and savings. Particularly dramatic increases in holdings since settlement are seen in the A1-self contained sites (across all ‘success groups’), and in the top success group in the A1 villagised and informal sites. Again, by contrast, the A2 farmers were accumulating less, often because of disease outbreaks and theft.

Table 9: Mean cattle holdings: changes by scheme type and success group

Scheme type	Success Group 1		Success Group 2		Success Group 3	
	At settlement	2008	At settlement	2008	At settlement	2008
A1 villagised	6.3	10.4	4.5	4.5	1.9	2.6
A1 self-contained	11.2	16.2	1.3	10.9	0.9	3.7
A2	18.9	20.5	13.6	14.8	11.1	4.4
Informal	7.5	12.5	4.5	3.8	0.0	0.5

Source: Survey data, 2007-08 (N=177) (Scoones et al 2010: 118)

Markets are key to the resettlement farming enterprises, and these are expanding in new ways around different commodities (see Mavedzenge et al 2008, for example, for livestock). These are new markets, often operating informally, sometimes illegally. Compared to those that existed before, they have been radically reconfigured by the restructuring of the agrarian economy following land reform and deeply affected by the economic crisis that plagued the country for much of the past decade. Detailed studies by Mutopo (this issue), for example, show

¹⁶ As discussed above, this is the local characterisation of ‘success’ used in the study to differentiate settlers, with success group 1 being the most ‘successful’ according to local criteria. Cattle ownership and accumulation was, unsurprisingly, one of the key indicators.

the gendered dimensions of such new informal markets, as well as their impressive dynamism. Yet, since they are evolving at such a pace, it is difficult to keep track of how agricultural markets work, and formal data on agricultural production and sales is very shaky indeed; and inevitably highly politicised with different arms of government and different international agencies presenting figures, based on very little ground-truthing, to support a particular view. The statistical basis for assessing the success or otherwise of land reform at a national level thus remains extremely limited, and so detailed local studies of the form of production and the functioning of markets are essential to build a more complete picture.

While across our research sites there are of course some who produce little and have to rely on local markets or support from relatives, overall we did not find a pattern of production failure, widespread food insecurity and lack of market integration. On the contrary, we found a highly differentiated picture, but one which has at its centre smallholder agricultural production and marketing; one that could, given the right support, be the core of a new 'green revolution' in Zimbabwe. By contrast to the previous boom in smallholder production in the early 1980s following Independence, the Masvingo sample suggests a larger proportion of farmers is involved. Around half are succeeding as 'middle farmers' and a third as highly commercialised producers, compared to only 20% in the 1980s (cf. Stanning 1989); and of course at a much larger scale than the rather isolated successes of that earlier period (Eicher 1995, Rohrbach 1989).

Dynamic local economies

Of course on-farm success can result in off-farm economic growth, as linkages are forged in local economies (cf. Delgado et al 1989). This is an important dynamic in the new resettlement areas, given the geographical juxtaposition of new resettlement areas of different types, with old

communal and resettlement areas. Since 2000, the rural economy has been radically spatially reconfigured, with the old separated economic spheres of the large-scale farms and the communal areas being broken down. The result is a shift to new sites for economic activity, connected to new value chains and new sorts of entrepreneur, linking town and countryside.

The dynamic entrepreneurialism resulting should, we argue, not be underestimated and represents an important resource to build on. Across our sites, we have small-scale irrigators producing horticultural products for local and regional markets; we have highly successful cotton producers who are generating considerable profits by selling to a wide number of competing private sector companies; we have livestock producers and traders who are developing new value chains for livestock products, linked to butcheries, supermarkets and other outlets; we have traders in wild products, often engaged in highly profitable export markets; and we have others who are developing contract farming and joint venture arrangements, for a range of products, including wildlife. We also have an important group of sugar producers with A2 plots on the lowveld estates who, very often against the odds due to shortages of inputs, unreliable electricity supplies and disadvantageous pricing, have been delivering cane to the mills, as well as other diverse markets, alongside diversification into irrigated horticulture production on their plots.

The new farmers are also employing labour (Table 10; see Chambati, this issue). This is often casual, low-paid employment, often of women, but it is an important source of livelihood for many – including those who are not making it as part of the new ‘middle farmer’ group identified above. The new resettlements sites have become a magnet for others, and households on average have grown by around three members since settlement through the in-migration of relatives and labourers (cf. Deininger et al., 2004 for discussion of a similar dynamic in the old resettlement areas). On average, A2 farm households have employed 5.1 permanent workers

and regularly employ 7.3 temporary labourers, while those households in A1 schemes and in informal resettlement sites employ on average 0.5 permanent workers and 1.9 temporary labourers. Comparing this level of employment with what existed before on the former cattle ranches, where perhaps one herder was employed for each 100 animals grazed over 1000ha, the scale of employment generation afforded by the new resettlement farms is considerable.

Table 10: Patterns of permanent and temporary labour hiring for cropping and livestock rearing

	A1 and informal					A2				
	Tempor ary cropping	Tempor ary livestock	Perman ent both	Perman ent cropping	Perman ent livestock	Tempor ary cropping	Tempor ary livestock	Perman ent both	Perman ent cropping	Perman ent livestock
Percent age of hhs employ ing workers	20	13	9	11	9.3	67.6	43.5	44.8	71.9	43.3
% of these female	48	31	26	32	25	27	7	23	26	28

Source: Survey, 2007-08 (N=177) (Scoones et al 2010:132)

There is frequently a sense of optimism and future promise amongst many resettlement farmers we have worked with. SM from Mwenezi district commented “We are happier here at resettlement. There is more land, stands are larger and there is no overcrowding. We got good yields this year. I filled two granaries with sorghum. I hope to buy a grinding mill and locate it at my homestead”. Comparing the farming life to other options, PC from Masvingo district observed: “We are not employed, but we are getting higher incomes than those at work”. Despite the hardships and difficulties – of which there are many – there is a deep commitment to making the new resettlement enterprises work.

Future policy challenges

Despite the political and economic challenges that Zimbabwe continues to face (Raftopolous 2010), along with outstanding legal challenges and concerns of the international community, there is a broad consensus that Zimbabwe's land reform is not reversible. To move ahead, a sustainable and democratic political settlement is clearly an essential precursor, one that balances rights (of different sorts, and not only those over former private freehold property) and redistribution (and so issues of equity, broad participation in economic activity and redress of historical disadvantage). But whatever new political alliance runs the country in the future, a major challenge remains: what should be done in the new resettlements to build a sustainable, growth-oriented agricultural base? As we found in Masvingo, and others have discovered elsewhere in the country, there is much to build on in terms of basic investment, as well as the skills and knowledge of the new settlers. The challenge is a new one however for agricultural research and development. As the head of extension in the province put it: "We don't know our new clients: this is a totally new scenario"¹⁷. Responding to this scenario requires careful thought. As discussed, the new resettlement areas are not a replication of the communal areas, nor are they a scaled-down version of the old commercial sector. These are very different places with new people with new production systems engaging in new markets – all with new opportunities and challenges. The new farmers are often highly educated, well-connected and with important skills. Support for marketing or input supply via mobile phone updates, or agricultural extension or business planning advice offered via the Internet offer real opportunities, for example. If given the right support, we argue, the emergent group of new 'middle farmers' on the new resettlements, both A1 and A2, can drive a vibrant agricultural revolution in Zimbabwe (Scoones et al 2010).

¹⁷ Comment by the provincial agricultural extension officer at a workshop in Masvingo in 2006.

This has of course happened before: with white commercial farmers from the 1950s and with communal area farmers in the 1980s (Rukuni et al 2006). But both past agricultural revolutions required support and commitment from outside, something that has been starkly absent in the past decade. Zimbabwe's green revolution of the 1980s has been much hailed, but this was mostly in high potential communal areas and was quickly extinguished following structural adjustment. The nascent green revolution in the resettlement areas potentially has far wider reach, both geographically and socio-economically. But if the new resettlements are to contribute to local livelihoods, national food security and broader economic development, they unquestionably require investment and support. This means infrastructure (dams, roads), financing (credit systems), input supply (fertilizer, seed), technology (intermediate and appropriate) and institutions and policies that allow agriculture to grow.

Getting agriculture moving on the new resettlements through building on existing achievements must be central priority for policy today. What should the top priorities be now? A commentary on our book's conclusions, suggested that these were merely 'gestural' and would surely be made irrelevant by the on-going political contests at the national level¹⁸. Yet the existence of a pervasive, violent, militarised corrupt politics, which entrenches certain positions and dominates a negative cycle of elite capture, does not mean that there are no countervailing forces, driven by other interests. We believe that the political struggle for an accountable, democratic politics must be linked to changing practices on the ground, and to energised policy thinking that takes the new realities into account. With a new progressive narrative on land and rural development, for example, a new vision for Zimbabwe might yet emerge which cuts across currently extreme politically-entrenched divisions. This means, we suggest, that engaging with a future policy

¹⁸ <http://anothercountryside.wordpress.com/2011/03/23/potential-of-zimbabwe-land-reform-limited-by-violent-state/>

agenda is not simply irrelevant hand waving, but a practical means to realise broader, widely shared, goals. Here we identify three inter-related challenges.

First, security of land tenure is an essential prerequisite for successful production and investment in agriculture. Tenure security arises through a variety of means. Existing legislation allows for a wide range of potential tenure types, including freehold title, regulated leases, permits and communal tenure under 'traditional' systems. All have their pros and cons. Policymakers must ask how tenure security can be achieved within available resources and capacity; how safeguards can be put in place to prevent land grabbing or land concentration; and what assurances must be made to ensure that private credit markets function effectively. Lessons from across the world suggest there is no one-size-fits-all solution centred on freehold tenure (World Bank 2003), despite its continued allure in the Zimbabwe debate (Rukuni et al 2009).

Instead, a flexible system of land administration is required – one that allows for expansion and contraction of farm sizes, as well as entry and exit from farming. Informal (actually illegal) land rental markets are already emerging on some sites, allowing land transfers to occur. While the excesses of elite patronage and land grabbing must be addressed through a land audit, a successful approach, overseen by an independent, decentralised authority, must not be reliant on technocratic diktat on farm sizes, business plans and tenure types alone. This will mean investing in land governance - building the effectiveness of local institutions to manage resources, resolve disputes and negotiate land access in clear and accountable ways. Without attention to these issues, conflicts will escalate as uncertainties over authority and control persist. This will have damaging consequences for both livelihoods and environmental sustainability. Support for rebuilding public authority from below must therefore be high on the agenda, linked to a revitalisation of local government capacity. Only with this longer-term effort,

will a more accountable and democratic approach to land be realised, and the depredations of a greedy elite avoided.

Second, as discussed above, land reform has reconfigured Zimbabwe's rural areas dramatically. No longer are there vast swathes of commercial land separated from the densely-packed communal areas. The rural landscape is now virtually all populated. Links between the new resettlements and communal and former resettlement areas are important, with exchanges of labour, draft animals, finance, skills and expertise flowing in all directions. As a result, economic linkages between agriculture and wider markets have changed dramatically.

This has given rise to the growth of new businesses to provide services and consumption goods, many only now getting going. Yet the potentials for economic diversification – in small-scale mining, hunting, cross-border trade and a host of other enterprises – are currently constrained by legal and regulatory restrictions. While a regulatory framework will always be required, it must not be excessively and inappropriately restrictive. Businesses must be encouraged to flourish in support of rural livelihoods, capturing synergies with local agricultural production.

To make the most of the new mosaic of land uses and economic activities, an area-based, local economic development approach is required. This would facilitate investment across activities, adding value to farm production. Today, with a new set of players engaged in local economic activity, many possibilities open up. An area-based approach needs to draw in the private sector, farmer groups and government agencies, but with strong leadership from a revived local government, with rethought mandates and rebuilt capacities. Investing in such capacities and building local economies will in turn improve sources of local revenue beyond patronage and so build systems of local accountability.

Third, reflecting a wide range of interests, the new resettlement farmers are highly diverse in class, gender and generational terms. This diversity has many advantages, adding new skills and experiences, but it is also a weakness. Formal organisation in the new resettlements is limited. The structures that formed the basis of the land invasions – the base commanders and the Committees of Seven, for example – have given way to other arrangements, and there is often limited collective solidarity. There are of course emergent organisations focused on particular activities – a garden, an irrigation scheme, a marketing effort, for example – but these are unlikely to become the basis of political representation and influence. Because politics has been so divisive in recent years, many shy away from seeing political parties as the basis for lobbying for change, and there are few other routes to expressing views.

Building a new set of representative farmers' organisations, linked to an influential apex body, will be a long-term task, and will be highly dependent on the unfolding political alliances in rural areas. As we have shown, the new resettlements are characterised by an important and numerically large 'middle farmer' group. There is also a significant group of less successful farmers with different needs and interests. And there are those elites reliant on political patronage who, despite being relatively few in number, are disproportionately influential.

In contrast to the past when smallholders could easily be marginalised and were courted only at elections for their votes, the new farmers – and particularly the burgeoning group of 'middle farmers' - now control one of the most important economic sectors in the country, and must be relied upon for national food supply. Today, the politics of the countryside cannot be ignored, and organised farmer groups may exert substantial pressure in ways that previously seemed unimaginable.

For this reason, the debate about land, agriculture and rural development urgently in Zimbabwe urgently needs to move beyond the ideological posturing of ZANU-PF, wrapped up in violent nationalist rhetoric, or the startling silences on land issues by the opposition political parties and civil society. A new narrative on land is urgently needed, based firmly on the realities on the ground. How the new configuration of political forces will pan out in the future is a subject of fierce contest, but the role of diverse agrarian interests, including new small-scale farmers, will certainly be important.

Reframing the debate on land in Zimbabwe

The Masvingo study has challenged a number of recurrent myths about Zimbabwe's land reform: for example, that there is no investment going on, that agricultural production has collapsed, that food insecurity is rife, that the rural economy is in precipitous decline and that farm labour has been totally displaced. Getting to grips with the realities on the ground is essential for reframing the debate. This is why solid, empirical research is so important. Only with these facts to hand can sensible policymaking emerge. Evidence rather than emotion must guide the process. While it remains essential to address abuses of the land reform programme according to strict criteria set by a land audit, it is also important to focus on the wider story, dispelling myths and engaging with the realities of the majority.

Land and politics are deeply intertwined in Zimbabwe. The current impasse cannot be resolved by technocratic measures alone: plans, models, audits and regulations are only part of the picture. A reframed debate must encompass redistribution and redress, as well as rights and responsibilities. The recent divisive debate on land in Zimbabwe has seen these as opposites, creating what has been called a 'dangerous rupture' in Zimbabwe's political discourse (Raftopolous 2009).

The past decade of land resettlement has unleashed a process of radical agrarian change. There are now new people on the land, engaged in multiple forms of economic activity, connected to diverse markets and carving out a variety of livelihoods. Bringing a broad perspective on rights together with a continued commitment to redistribution must be central to Zimbabwe's next steps towards democratic and economic transformation. Only with land viewed as a source of livelihood and redistributed economic wealth, and not as a political weapon or source of patronage, will the real potentials of Zimbabwe's land reform be fully realised.

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