

Do we over-emphasise the importance of youth aspirations? ([https://www.future- agricultures.org/blog/do-we- over-emphasise-the-importance- of-youth-aspirations/](https://www.future-agricultures.org/blog/do-we-over-emphasise-the-importance-of-youth-aspirations/))

Posted on June 7, 2018 by [Samuel Price \(https://www.future-agricultures.org/author/samuel-price/\)](https://www.future-agricultures.org/author/samuel-price/) - [Our blog \(https://www.future-agricultures.org/category/blog/\)](https://www.future-agricultures.org/category/blog/)



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By [Jim Sumberg \(https://www.ids.ac.uk/person/jim-sumberg\)](https://www.ids.ac.uk/person/jim-sumberg)

In 1977, Kenneth Roberts of Liverpool University suggested it was a mistake to over-emphasise the role of aspirations and choice in determining how young people in the UK entered the labour market. Specifically, he wrote: “neither school leavers nor adults typically choose their jobs in any meaningful sense: they simply take what is available.”

Fast forward 40 years and we see that aspirations – and questions around them – have a central place in debates about Africa’s youth employment challenge. What do African youth aspire to? What factors influence their aspirations? Are their aspirations realistic, and how do they change over time? Can or should young people’s aspirations influence policy and programming? What research methods are useful when investigating aspirations?

But are today’s policymakers, development planners and researchers making the very mistake that Roberts warned against? Are they (we) over-emphasising the role of aspirations and choice in determining how young rural Africans enter the labour market?

Roberts’ warning was rooted in an analysis of what he called the “opportunity structures,” which, he theorised, create distinct routes that govern both young people’s entry into the labour force and subsequent career progress. These opportunity structures are formed by the inter-relationships within a web of determinants including place, family origins, gender, ethnicity and education, and labour market processes. It is not so much that opportunity structures leave the individual with absolutely no choice or room for manoeuvre, but rather that for poorer, less well educated, socially and/or geographically marginalised young people, choice is likely to be very tightly constrained. Put another way, opportunity structures mean that regardless of aspirations, for many young people the world (of work) is definitely not their oyster.

The main implication of opportunity structure theory is that change in how young people enter and progress in the labour market will come about, not as a result of higher aspirations, better choices or a few sessions of skills training, but by changing the determinants identified above and/or their interactions.

More specifically, it is through investment in infrastructure, and initiatives that address inequality by breaking down entrenched class and social barriers – opportunity structures – that real leverage can be applied to the youth employment challenge. Quality education is obviously a central part of the story, as is the governance of the labour market in ways that fully respect the principles of decent work.

Wait a moment, this sound like a long-term, back-to-basics social and economic development agenda, not the kind of high profile, youth-specific employment policy and programming that so many commentators are calling for.

Indeed!

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Race and privilege in Zimbabwe: a rural and urban divide (<https://www.future-agricultures.org/blog/race-and-privilege-in-zimbabwe-a-rural-and-urban-divide/>)

Posted on June 6, 2018 by [Lesley White](https://www.future-agricultures.org/author/lesley/) (<https://www.future-agricultures.org/author/lesley/>) -
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(<https://www.future-agricultures.org/blog/race-and-privilege-in-zimbabwe-a-rural-and-urban-divide/>)

A recent paper in (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/africa/article/not-all-whites-are-farmers-privilege-the-politics-of-representation-and-the-urbanrural-divide-in-zimbabwe/AD24AD99B7C6C456B12F426FFF15468B>)Africa

(<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/africa/article/not-all-whites-are-farmers-privilege-the-politics-of-representation-and-the-urbanrural-divide-in-zimbabwe/AD24AD99B7C6C456B12F426FFF15468B>) by Rory Pilosof and Jacob

Boersema offers a nuanced and differentiated account of ‘white’ attitudes to land reform. Distinguishing urban-based whites and ‘farmers’ (although recognising the blurring and connection between the two), they highlight that there was not a simple racialised solidarity in the face of the land invasions.

Interviewing urban whites, they surprisingly found limited sympathy for the plight of the farmers. Their informants argued that farmers had “retained their power, settler identity and colonial attitudes” and “had called the attacks upon themselves”. While white owners of businesses in town were worried that the invasions might spread and affect their properties, this in the end did not happen (although ‘indigenisation’ policies certainly caused some problems).

One urban informant thought that “the suffering of white farmers was overplayed, particularly internationally. He argued that the farmers used their white privilege to mobilize international sympathy, while at the same time bringing the whole white community into disrepute for drawing attention to whites and

(inadvertently) to their continued privileged position in the country. He also contended that farmers were not the only ones put under pressure in the years following 2000. Civil servants, opposition supporters, unemployed workers, the urban lower class and evicted farm workers also faced hardships.”

The paper notes that “White farmers certainly suffered... but their wealth also assured them relative comfort after their evictions. Urban whites claimed that many farmers maintained a comfortable lifestyle due to the wealth they had accrued as farmers.” The paper argues that “urban [white] privilege has remained invisible because white Zimbabweans and white privilege are imagined to be connected to the land and to being a farmer”. Maintaining this stereotype of course helped to conceal the on-going benefits of white urban privilege, which had remained intact through this turbulent time.

The paper observes that urban whites “still defend their privilege, although in a different way than the farmers do: not by denial but by naturalizing it or by pointing to the new black elite”. A greater reflexive awareness of privilege was seen among the interviewees, a direct result of the post 2000 situation. While racialised tropes are still trotted out, particularly by the older generation, an appreciation of the impacts of race, class and white privilege was evident amongst others, even if defended and legitimised.

Given the often simplistic, essentialised and racialised accounts of Zimbabwe’s recent history, this paper is extremely useful. Not all whites are the same (of course). As has been pointed out many times, ‘rural’ whites (farmers) were not uniform either, with different groupings associated with the CFU, JAG or independent. As the outcomes of land reform show, the attitudes of different farmers to their workers and surrounding communities over time had a huge impact on how land invasions played out initially, even if land was later acquired by those distant from local political accommodations.

The international media wanted a good vs bad, white vs black story grossly simplifying a complex situation. Stereotyped heroes and villains were presented alongside the highly selective media imagery of violence and chaos. These misleading simplifications of course helped no-one, except perhaps a few journalist hacks and newspaper editors looking for racially-inflected copy from the ‘dark continent’.

This manufacturing of a storyline of course helped push both Mugabe/ZANU-PF and the British government into extreme positions, peaking under Tony Blair’s premiership, when he was rumoured to have threatened armed intervention by the former colonial power on behalf of beleaguered whites (confirmed again by Thabo Mbeki in a [recent interview \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWm9eKGm8nU\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWm9eKGm8nU)). No wonder many whites in Zimbabwe thought this was the worst sort of ill-informed ‘diplomacy’ from the mother country.

Given the diversity of perspectives seen across informants, and the political imperative to move beyond these racially divided positions, the paper concludes with a challenge: “Whites will need to move beyond acknowledgement, become less defensive, and take more robust steps to undo the advantages they have enjoyed.”

38 years after Independence, this is rather a shocking indictment of Zimbabwe’s post-colonial story.

This is the eighth in a series of short reviews of new work on agriculture and land in Zimbabwe. Nearly all of these studies are by Zimbabwean researchers, reflecting the growing research capacity and ability to comment on important issues of

policy in the post-Mugabe era. If there are other papers or books that you think should be included, please let me know!

This post was written by [Ian Scoones](http://www.ianscoones.net/) and first appeared on [Zimbabweland](http://www.zimbabweland.wordpress.com/)

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From the Fogera Plain: how one man helped to build a regional industry (<https://www.future-agricultures.org/blog/from-the-fogera-plain-how-one-man-helped-to-build-a-regional-industry/>)

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(<https://www.future-agricultures.org/blog/from-the-fogera-plain-how-one-man-helped-to-build-a-regional-industry/>)

With few services and a lack of basic necessities, life for farmers in rural Ethiopia is challenging enough. This is to say nothing of life 4 decades ago, when Tegegne Gizachew was born in the Fogera Plain region of Ethiopia. This week's blog traces the growth of Gizachew's rice operation – from small-scale producer to a large-scale processor and investor – and his instrumental role in the development of a regional industry.

Tegegne Gizachew was born in the 1970s in a rural village named 'Shina Teklehaymanot', in the Fogera Plain region of Amhara, Ethiopia. Gizachew began primary school at the age of eight, and after 7 years of primary education his parents were able to send him to the district town of Woreta – 12km from his home

village – to attend high school. In this modest achievement, Gizachew was already in the fortunate minority; few parents or guardians in the rural areas could afford to send their children to school.

Drop-out to start-up

Shortly after Gizachew's arrival in Woreta, civil war between the then Derge government and opposition forces intensified close to the town, disrupting transportation and most of the town's public services. The town's schools soon closed as a result of the unrest, and Gizachew began petty trading in order to make a living – an experience that would continue to influence him even after resuming his education. Reflecting on the prospects of a college education, and the little remuneration that a civil servant in Ethiopia receives, Gizachew left high school before graduating in the 10th grade, requesting seed money from his father in order to start his own business.

His father was able to give him ETB 600 (around USD 120), which allowed Gizachew to run petty trading in grain between Woreta and its neighbouring districts, and helping him to forge a broad spectrum of business links as he travelled from town to town.

Rice expands

Until the early 1990s, rice was not a popular crop in Ethiopia, and its production was limited to 'Producers' Cooperatives', who stymied the dissemination of rice seeds for non-members, and which only collapsed with the fall of the Military Command Economy system in 1990. Political change after 1991, characterised as it was by a new free market economy, created favourable conditions for the expansion of a rice market. On the production side, the collapse of cooperatives opened the door to independent producers; while privatisation at the policy level enabled the importation of processing machinery. Credit reform also encouraged the emergence of more private enterprises – like Gizachew himself – who could now engage in large-scale rice processing and wholesale trade.

After 10 years spent developing his business, and recognising a growing market for rice, Gizachew began to look further along the production chain. He discovered significant issues in the processing stage of rice production – with Woreta housing only two inefficient rice milling and polishing machines, and virtually no rice-trading presence within the town. In response, Gizachew purchased three Chinese-made rice milling and polishing machines from Addis Ababa in 2001, at a value of ETB 300,000 (around USD 30,000). The short-term returns allowed Gizachew to reinvest and purchase more machines immediately.

The pull factor

Gizachew's decision to engage in rice processing marked a significant turning point in the growth of his business, and a growing community of relatives and independent farmers involved in rice production enabled him to expand the processing side of his business beyond his own production capacity. As a pioneer of efficient rice processing in the area, Gizachew shared his industry knowledge to others looking to invest in their own processing operations. With investment in the processing industry now flowing into the region from multiple sources, Woreta became a hub for rice processing – this in turn widened the local market for rice production, with Woreta's now significant rice processing capacity facilitating the expansion of rice-producing farms in the Fogera Plain, and neighbouring districts.

Hundreds of workers have found employment in the district's manifold rice processing operations – now exceeding 100 in total – a number of which have been established in the outlying, rural towns that have access to electricity. This offers an unusually prudent bulwark against the over-concentration of capital – human

and financial – which so often accompanies the emergence of a regional industry. Commercialisation of the rice sector in the district has also helped the scaling-up of various individual processing operations, whose new market in retail and wholesaling has itself benefited from the explosion of rice production.

Time to diversify

Not content with the establishment of a regional industry, Gizachew began to seek opportunities elsewhere. His investments to date – in Ethiopia’s country-wide public transport sector, and housing construction in Addis Ababa – exhibit an ongoing engagement with social development and enterprise. Having installed more than 15 rice processing machines, and recently investing in more up-to-date technology for the rice sector, it appears that broadening his vision has not come at the cost of Gizachew’s commitment to Woreta and Fogera Plain.

Starting out as a small, rice producer on family plot, Gizachew now employs more than 450 full- and part-time employees. Not only has the establishment of an intra-regional value chain – from production to processing – provided livelihoods to thousands of farmers, it has also contributed to the transformation of rural food production in the region, from subsistence to commercial production.

By Agajie Tesfaye, Abebaw Assaye, Dawit Alemu and Tilahun Tadesse

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Labour and Zimbabwe’s new agrarian structure (<https://www.future-agricultures.org/blog/labour-and-zimbabwes-new-agrarian-structure/>)

Posted on May 24, 2018 by [Samuel Price \(https://www.future-agricultures.org/author/samuel-price/\)](https://www.future-agricultures.org/author/samuel-price/) - [Our blog \(https://www.future-agricultures.org/category/blog/\)](https://www.future-agricultures.org/category/blog/)



(<https://www.future-agricultures.org/blog/labour-and-zimbabwes-new-agrarian-structure/>)

This post was written by [Ian Scoones](http://www.ianscoones.net/) and first appeared on [Zimbabweland](http://www.zimbabweland.wordpress.com/)

Walter Chambati, acting director of the Sam Moyo African Institute for Agrarian Studies, has probably contributed more than anyone to our understanding of how wage labour relations have changed following land reform.

His most recent [paper](http://journals.sagepub.com.ezproxy.sussex.ac.uk/doi/full/10.1177/2277976017721346) (<http://journals.sagepub.com.ezproxy.sussex.ac.uk/doi/full/10.1177/2277976017721346>), in the Agrarian South special issue dedicated to the life and work of [Sam Moyo](https://zimbabweland.wordpress.com/2015/11/23/a-tribute-to-sam-moyo-a-giant-of-agrarian-studies/) (<https://zimbabweland.wordpress.com/2015/11/23/a-tribute-to-sam-moyo-a-giant-of-agrarian-studies/>), makes the case that wage labour exists across farms of all scales in Zimbabwe, and is not the preserve of large-scale capitalist agriculture. Indeed, as processes of differentiation occur in the new resettlement areas, demand for wage labour – often as short-term piecework – has grown.

Based on studies in Goromonzi and Kwekwe in 2006 and 2014, the paper shows the different patterns of labour utilisation across sites and farm types. In Goromonzi and Kwekwe respectively, 87% and 81% of A2 households hired permanent workers, with 5.5 and 2.7 hired on average. In the A1 areas, 32% and 22% of households hired permanent labour, with 0.9 and 0.7 workers hired on average. Casual, temporary labour was much more important in the A1 areas, although with greater rates of hiring than nearby communal areas with around 60% of households hiring regularly.

In other words there is a vibrant labour economy in the resettlement areas, but it is highly differentiated. It also varies in terms of the conditions offered. Chambati argues that the focus on ‘work’ as paid wage work may underestimate the extent of labour hiring, as cash wages are combined with in-kind arrangements very often. Yet, he argues such ‘informal’ wage labour has a very different character and conditions of employment compared to the full and part-time labour of the past. He concludes:

“There is continuation of the super-exploitation of agrarian wage labourers that is reflected by the payment of poor wages and differing degrees of the institution of the residential labour tenancy in both the old and new farm compounds. Landlessness and/or land shortage continues to be a key characteristic of farm wage labourers as in the past suggesting the persistence of the labour reserve dynamic.”

This is an important conclusion, with major implications for policy. If land reform has simply replicated the inequalities of the past, but in a new form, then the progressive gains of land redistribution have to be qualified. A key challenge then is to think hard about how labour becomes incorporated into the new agrarian system. Not just in the precarious, temporary, informal ways described in this paper (and seen [across our study areas too](https://zimbabweland.wordpress.com/2015/12/07/what-happened-to-farm-workers-following-zimbabwes-land-reform/) (<https://zimbabweland.wordpress.com/2015/12/07/what-happened-to-farm-workers-following-zimbabwes-land-reform/>)), but allowing labourers to have rights and so the provision of minimum conditions, as well as rights to land.

This is after all not a simple replication of the old wage labour reserve economy but a new dynamic where wage labour combines with small-scale agriculture, disturbing old class positions and identities. The old ‘farm worker’, trapped in a paternalistic relationship with a large-scale capitalist farmer, is rarer these days; instead those supplying labour to diverse new farms have different livelihood profiles and are constructing new identities, often as ‘[worker-peasants](https://zimbabweland.wordpress.com/2013/05/27/the-new-farm-workers-changing-agrarian-labour-dynamics-following-land-reform-in-zimbabwe/)’ (<https://zimbabweland.wordpress.com/2013/05/27/the-new-farm-workers-changing-agrarian-labour-dynamics-following-land-reform-in-zimbabwe/>), combining part-time wage work with farming. This dynamic remains poorly understood, and varies dramatically across the country, by gender and age.

Studies of new labour dynamics and the implications for rights, welfare, livelihoods and economy remain priorities for post-land reform research and policy debate.

The work of Chambati – alongside [Andrew Hartnack](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/23323256.2017.1387500)

(<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/23323256.2017.1387500>), Leila

Sinclair-Bright ([http://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar_url?](http://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar_url?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.era.lib.ed.ac.uk%2Fhandle%2F1842%2F23450&hl=en&sa=T&ct=res&cd=3&ei=MR-EWp6XLZCGmgGZmJXACg&scisig=AAGBfm0aPIS3OCXH04XpDDFJEgHjG_CY7w&noss=1&ws=1366x596)

[url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.era.lib.ed.ac.uk%2Fhandle%2F1842%2F23450&hl=en&sa=T&ct=res&cd=3&ei=MR-EWp6XLZCGmgGZmJXACg&scisig=AAGBfm0aPIS3OCXH04XpDDFJEgHjG_CY7w&noss=1&ws=1366x596](http://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar_url?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.era.lib.ed.ac.uk%2Fhandle%2F1842%2F23450&hl=en&sa=T&ct=res&cd=3&ei=MR-EWp6XLZCGmgGZmJXACg&scisig=AAGBfm0aPIS3OCXH04XpDDFJEgHjG_CY7w&noss=1&ws=1366x596))

and others – offers some important pointers on the way forward, getting us beyond the unhelpful characterisations of much commentary.

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Price wars: an oil palm saga in Ghana (<https://www.future-agricultures.org/blog/price-wars-an-oil-palm-saga-in-ghana/>)

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By Fred Dzanku, William Quarmin and Gertrude Dzifa Torvikey

Image: 'Jukwa Village and Palm Oil Production, Ghana

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The grip of the 'Big Two' over Ghana's oil palm processing industry has been loosened by the entrance of a third player, touting a novel and 'farmer-inclusive' business model. However, short-term shake-ups don't always lead to the long-term change they set out to achieve.

In 1988, only one large-scale oil palm processor, Norpalm Ghana Ltd (NORPALM), operated in the oil palm-rich enclave of Western Ghana – until, in 2004, NORPALM was joined by Benso Oil Palm Plantation Ltd (BOPP). Since then, these two companies have gradually increased their market share, by offering price incentives to consolidate their market positions, particularly during periods of price volatility. While the two companies have always provisionally competed for palm fruit from farmers in the oil palm rich region, minimal price competition has led onlookers to accusations of collusion.

Enter player three

In 2013, however, B-BOVID – a medium-scale palm fruit processor – arrived on the scene, proclaiming farmer-inclusiveness in the oil palm industry, from farm to processing, with its widely-dispersed mantra: "We are here for the welfare of the farmers." The only question was: how were they going to achieve this mission given the dominance of the 'Big Two?' Both BOPP and NORPALM run their own plantations employing hundreds of contract and outgrower farmers. B-BOVID, on the other hand, lacked any contractual arrangements with farmers; instead, it introduced a 'passbook' system allowing farmers and contractors to keep records of their transactions with B-BOVID – the incentive here being access for farmers to

secure loans from B-VODID or B-BOVID-linked financial institutions. B-BOVID then implemented a strategy called the 'price-sharing model' (PSM). Farmers who subscribe to the PSM were to become shareholders of B-BOVID, and any profits earned from processing the palm fruit were to be shared as dividends between B-BOVID and subscribed farmers.

To signal their intent and breathe life into their widely-announced mission, in 2014, B-BOVID raised the farm-gate price of fresh palm fruit bunches in the enclave by 22%, initiating a ferocious price war with the Big Two. In addition, they paid a premium to farmers who supplied palm fruit with a higher oil content. The buzz created around this first significant price variation of its kind helped to established B-BOVID as a third and alternative force in the south-western oil palm region, attracting ever increasing numbers of farmers to their model. Taking advantage of the depth of their collective pockets, NORPALM and BOPP went on the counter-offensive, raising the palm fruit unit price by twice that of B-BOVID. Inevitably, financial constraints crippled B-BOVID's ability to continue the price war with the Big Two, until B-BOVID were paying lower prices for palm fruit than NORPALM and BOPP.

Farmers win?

Interestingly, many farmers continued to sell their produce to B-BOVID, even after the Big Two outcompeted them for purchasing prices. Evoking the sense of empowerment that B-BOVID gave to producer, one farmer stated that "Before B-BOVID came, contractors were cheating us. B-BOVID deals directly with farmers regardless of the size of their farms and the quantity of produce. This is why we prefer selling to them."

Without a doubt, the price war influenced the way oil palm-producing households participated in the market. First, the presence of B-BOVID provided many farmers with an additional market outlet for their oil palm harvest. Indeed, while the larger processing companies would not buy less than 1 t of produce, B-BOVID would purchase any quantity offered by sellers – a relief for those suffering a poor harvest, or hoping to sell oil palm fruit in the lean season. Second, these farming households were given the opportunity to sell directly to a processing plant, thus eliminating intermediaries. And third, thanks to the quality premium paid by B-BOVID, farmers could divide their produce by quality, selling different quality fruit to different markets.

The price war thus broadened the opportunities for farmers to commercialise. Rising farm-gate prices increased direct access to processors and differential pricing led to one definitive outcome – higher revenues. The effects of B-BOVID's entry into the oil palm market and the resultant price competition can be said to have been generally positive.

Short-changed

However, the problem with price wars like the one initiated by B-BOVID is that they are often short-lived. In this case specifically, farmers who jumped on the price hikes and committed to B-BOVID became the eventual losers. When NORPALM and BOPP raised their prices above an affordable threshold for B-BOVID, contractual commitments to the latter meant that farmers could not immediately take advantage of the new prices offered by the Big Two. Not only did the losing farmers then receive relatively lower prices, but any hopes for a price-sharing model to take hold in the long-term were dashed.

So what lessons can we take from price wars characterised by spikes in buyer-determined farm-gate prices? In the short run, while price hikes last, farmers may gain from higher gross margins. However, questions remain over the sustainability

of price hikes in opening routes for agricultural commercialisation for farm households. The case of Ghana's oil palm rich Western region has shown that incentive-rich mechanisms – such as varying commercialization arrangements (i.e., nucleus farm scheme, out-grower scheme and a combination of both) – provide a more sustainable basis for boosting agricultural commercialisation.

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Why merely owning land isn't enough to empower Africa's women farmers

(<https://www.future-agricultures.org/blog/why-merely-owning-land-isnt-enough-to-empower-africas-women-farmers/>)

Posted on May 18, 2018 by [Samuel Price \(https://www.future-agricultures.org/author/samuel-price/\)](https://www.future-agricultures.org/author/samuel-price/) - Our blog (<https://www.future-agricultures.org/category/blog/>)



(<https://www.future-agricultures.org/blog/why-merely-owning-land-isnt-enough-to-empower-africas-women-farmers/>)

This post was written by [Agnes Andersson Djurfeldt \(https://theconversation.com/profiles/agnes-andersson-djurfeldt-472309\)](https://theconversation.com/profiles/agnes-andersson-djurfeldt-472309) and first appeared on [The Conversation \(https://theconversation.com/why-merely-owning-land-isnt-enough-to-empower-africas-women-farmers-95950\)](https://theconversation.com/why-merely-owning-land-isnt-enough-to-empower-africas-women-farmers-95950)

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In the agricultural sector – the [major employer](http://www.fao.org/docrep/015/i2490e/i2490e01b.pdf) (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/015/i2490e/i2490e01b.pdf>) for poor people in Africa – assets like land and livestock are owned and controlled mainly by men.

It makes sense, then, that many donors, national governments and civil society groups [believe](http://www.fao.org/resilience/news-events/detail/en/c/147997/) (<http://www.fao.org/resilience/news-events/detail/en/c/147997/>) rebalancing asset and land ownership in favour of women will greatly empower women. The argument is that increasing women’s access to, control and ownership of land will lead to stronger bargaining power and higher incomes. It is also [posited](http://www.fao.org/resilience/news-events/detail/en/c/147997/) (<http://www.fao.org/resilience/news-events/detail/en/c/147997/>) as a way to strengthen women’s “voice” within households and communities.

But the reality in communities is very different. Our recent book, [Agriculture, Diversification and Gender in Rural Africa](http://fdslive.oup.com/www.oup.com/academic/pdf/openaccess/9780198799290.pdf) (<http://fdslive.oup.com/www.oup.com/academic/pdf/openaccess/9780198799290.pdf>), drew on a unique, longitudinal data set covering around 2000 households in 15 regions in six countries: Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. This data, coupled with more detailed qualitative [research](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264837717306683) (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264837717306683>) carried out in three villages in Malawi, highlights the limitations of approaches that rely on gender-based redistribution of land from men to women.

We found that even when women own land, their husbands are still perceived as household heads. As such, men have better access to public resources such as subsidised fertilisers and agricultural advisory services.

The findings suggest that genuinely empowering women and girls within agriculture requires interventions that go beyond the issue of land redistribution. Instead, policymakers and development agencies should adopt a multifaceted approach that includes aspects beyond agriculture. These include issues of sexual and reproductive rights, for instance, and freeing women from the heavy and time-consuming drudgery of domestic work in poor, rural settings.

Ownership and demands on women’s time

Female landholders have less land than men in five of the six countries we studied. This means they have lower access to one of the most important resources in rural Africa.

The quantitative data we collected confirms the existence of gender-based gaps in farm sizes – female landholders have smaller farms in all countries except Kenya. And the gaps have grown in most of the regions since 2002, when the study started. In countries where average farm sizes have increased – Ghana, Zambia and Tanzania – men have tended to benefit more from this growth than women.

In parts of Malawi and Zambia, matrilineal systems mean that women control and inherit land. But this hasn’t made a real difference to women’s lives. This is because of their other responsibilities, as well as societal bias and pressures.

Then there’s the issue of the responsibilities that women bear, which interfere with their ability to focus on the business of farming. Through qualitative interviews in the three Malawian communities, we discovered that there are many demands on women’s time and labour outside agriculture. To take just a few examples, women are expected to care for ill relatives, children and infants, as well as being expected to collect firewood and water.

A woman cannot juggle these demands with participating fully in agricultural production, even if she is the owner of the land. Gender norms around the division of labour enable men to avoid time-consuming domestic work.

Women's relative lack of empowerment is also related to their limited mobility, which makes it harder for them to reach markets. Women are fettered by their domestic responsibilities, controlling husbands and by the potential dangers of moving around on their own, particularly at night.

This means that women do not possess the power to control the income from products sold in agricultural markets.

Men's relative superiority within the household and local communities is compounded by government policies that strengthen the male household head norm. For instance, governments divert substantial public resources into subsidisation programmes that favour household heads.

These programmes also withdraw resources earmarked for agricultural extension services for women. This means that areas that lose funding are those that would empower women – not in terms of land ownership, but in terms of support.

Sustainable solutions

These findings suggest that empowering women farmers requires more than just ensuring they own land and assets. Women need support to deal with the many demands on their time. For example, addressing poor health among children might free up more time for women farmers who are also mothers. Improving women's ability to get around easily is also important.

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Changing gender relations after land reform in Zimbabwe (<https://www.future-agricultures.org/blog/changing-gender-relations-after-land-reform-in-zimbabwe/>)

Posted on May 16, 2018 by [Samuel Price \(https://www.future-agricultures.org/author/samuel-price/\)](https://www.future-agricultures.org/author/samuel-price/) - [Our blog \(https://www.future-agricultures.org/category/blog/\)](https://www.future-agricultures.org/category/blog/)



(<https://www.future-agricultures.org/blog/changing-gender-relations-after-land-reform-in-zimbabwe/>)

This post was written by [Ian Scoones](http://www.ianscoones.net/Home.html) (<http://www.ianscoones.net/Home.html>) and first appeared on [Zimbabweland](https://zimbabweland.wordpress.com/) (<https://zimbabweland.wordpress.com/>)

There have been a number of excellent publications on shifts in gender relations after land reform. A piece in *Agrarian South* by Patience Mutopo, Jeannette Manjengwa and Manase Chiweshe, *Shifting Gender Dimensions and Rural Livelihoods after Zimbabwe's Fast-Track Land Reform Programme*, reflected on work in Mwenezi, Mazowe and Chinoyi. Framed within a narrative of 're-peasantization', they conclude:

“The return to the rural areas by women from every class has led to the formation of new agri-business activities among women, which has shaped new social production relations. In so doing, women have also redefined gender roles and household governance, negotiated with patriarchy in establishing niche land-based livelihoods, and created new migration patterns for themselves, where previously they had been confined to the household.”

Based on the early Utete audit report of 2003, only 18 percent of farms in A1 and 12 percent of farms in A2 are held by women. But, as the paper shows, this does not tell the whole story of access. The negotiation of access to land and land-related businesses in the context of patriarchal marriage and community relations has been possible for many (see earlier blogs on this theme, [here](https://zimbabweland.wordpress.com/2014/10/13/gender-relations-and-land-reform-in-zimbabwe/) (<https://zimbabweland.wordpress.com/2014/10/13/gender-relations-and-land-reform-in-zimbabwe/>) and [here](https://zimbabweland.wordpress.com/2017/05/15/women-and-land-challenges-of-empowerment/) (<https://zimbabweland.wordpress.com/2017/05/15/women-and-land-challenges-of-empowerment/>)).

Based on research in Mazowe and Goromonzi, Manase Chiweshe, Loveness Chakona and Kirk Heilliker argue in a paper in the *Journal of Asian and African Studies* (<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0021909614541083>) that:

“...radical socio-spatial reorganisation such as fast track may destabilise systems of patriarchy. In the case of fast track, there has been a reconfiguration of relations between men and women yet this is uneven and contradictory and remains within the confines of patriarchal structures, practices and discourses. At the same time, women have manoeuvred and negotiated at local levels to enhance their lives and livelihoods.”

Patience Mutopo's important [book](https://brill.com/view/title/25468) (<https://brill.com/view/title/25468>), based on extensive fieldwork in Mwenezi, shows this very well, documenting the importance of new migration and trading routes for women, who with access to land (often formally held by husbands) are investing in agricultural and livestock production in this extremely dry part of the country.

In a more recent [paper](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09744053.2017.1329808) (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09744053.2017.1329808>) in *Africa Review*, Sandra Bhatasara and Manase Chiweshe argue that there is a need to go 'beyond gender' and the fixation on the survey figures on land holding status. Proposing an 'intersectionality' and 'agency' perspective, they argue that multiple dimensions of difference interact to determine access, and women, even in constrained settings, can exert agency using a range of approaches, overt and more hidden. It is an approach focused on social relations rather than social status or categories that is advocated. They argue:

“Whilst women appear losers as portrayed in many studies, was it only gender that determined access? What about age, nationality, class, political affiliation and traditional roots among other aspects? How did the 18% quoted in several studies get land? What about married women in this debate? Were women just victims in the FTLRP?”

They conclude that land access needs to be understood within an intersectionality framework, arguing that “women were not merely victims but used versatile tactics and strategies to get land”.

This focus on agency, social relations and multiple, intersecting dimensions of difference seems an important step forward in the on-going debate about gender and land reform, moving beyond the numbers game to a focus on processes by which land access is gained. It does not make the case that all is well. Zimbabwean rural society is extremely patriarchal, with women often excluded and subject to violence, but it opens up more opportunities beyond a victimhood narrative.

This is the sixth in a series of short reviews of new work on agriculture and land in Zimbabwe. Nearly all of these studies are by Zimbabwean researchers, reflecting the growing research capacity and ability to comment on important issues of policy in the post-Mugabe era. If there are other papers or books that you think should be included, please [let me know](http://www.ianscoones.net/Home.html) (<http://www.ianscoones.net/Home.html>)! (<http://www.ianscoones.net/Home.html>)

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Promoting Ethiopia's Rice Industry for Import Substitution

(<https://www.future->

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Posted on May 11, 2018 by [Lesley White](https://www.future-agricultures.org/author/lesley/) (<https://www.future-agricultures.org/author/lesley/>) - Our blog (<https://www.future-agricultures.org/category/blog/>)



(<https://www.future-agricultures.org/blog/promoting-ethiopias-rice-industry-for-import-substitution/>)

Prepared by Dawit Alemu

Image:[P1100852](#)



Opening speech, HE Dr Kaba Urgessa, State Minister, MoANR

(<https://www.flickr.com/photos/alandmarie/12452744523/in/photolist-dNDKez-4HLSw-9YfRmC-jYpz6M-9LRsrw-8KHQX-qDc7sG-jYrmwL-4rJxBL-aB3PBy-j7duUk-aB3PpW-JN228D-wzPH57-JMZHYc-HYx6xk-HYxgQK-Ju3Mm3>)(CC BY-NC-ND 2.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/>)

With the considerable increase in rice consumption in Africa, sourced mainly from imports, and the burden this is creating on meagre foreign currency reserves, a number of initiatives are currently being implemented by African countries with support from development partners to reverse this situation. At continental level, the main initiative is the Coalition for African Rice Development (CARD), predominantly supported by the Japanese government which aimed to double domestic rice production in Africa from 2008 to 2018. A second phase of CARD is currently being planned.



Rice consumption in Ethiopia has also increased considerably in recent years, and although domestic production has increased, imports have also had to rise to meet demand. Recognising the importance of rice in Ethiopia and the need to review the status of rice R&D, a policy seminar entitled “Rice Industry Promotion and Import Substitution in Ethiopia” was held

on March 26, 2018 at the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research. The seminar was organised by the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resource (MoANR) in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The objectives of the event were to: (i) share experiences from Asian countries, especially in relation to the green revolution; (ii) discuss the status of rice R&D; and (iii) deliberate on possible intervention options for the sector’s development in light of the observed challenges and opportunities.

The first presentation was on the Asian experience in rice sector development by Professor Keiji Otsuka from Kobe University in Japan, while a second focused on the importance and comparative advantages of rice in Ethiopia based on APRA background research work “A historical analysis of rice commercialisation in Ethiopia: the case of the Fogera plain” by APRA Ethiopia Team represented by Dawit Alemu. The third presentation was by Shiratori Kiyoshi from the EthioRice project on the status of the national rice research and training center, and the last was made by Melese Liyhe from SasaKawa Global 2000 (SG 2000) on the organisation’s experiences of introducing rice and associated technologies to new areas in Ethiopia.

The advantages of rice, and observed trends in domestic rice production, imports and the level of self-sufficiency that the four presentations highlighted, enabled participants to discuss what needs to be done to fully exploit the opportunities rice provides in Ethiopia. The key advantages of rice are: (i) the existence of suitable agro-ecologies for rice production, which could help to address food insecurity and utilise resources more efficiently; (ii) the compatibility of rice with local farming systems and traditional foods, especially with the production of ‘ingera’ (a sourdough flatbread); (iii) the economic incentives of rice production due to its higher yield and higher unit price than other popular cereals, such as teff; and (iv) the possibility of import substitution, which would reduce rice imports and the associated burden on foreign currency reserves.

However, although domestic rice consumption has increased, overall self-sufficiency has been declining considerably over recent years. The data from APRA’s research indicates that the extent of rice self-sufficiency decreased from about 70% in 2008 to about 30% in 2016 (Figure 1).

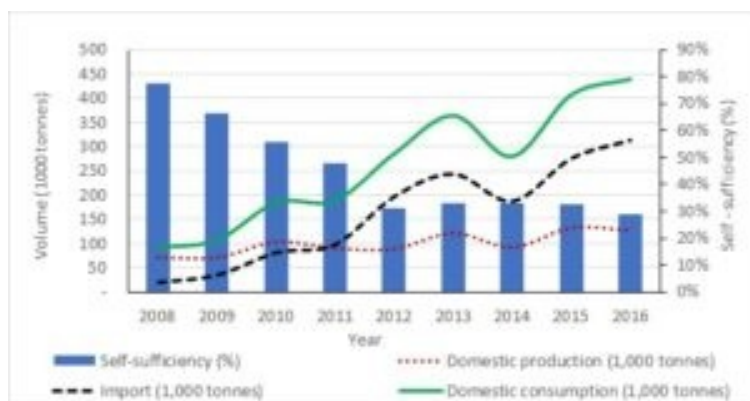


Figure 2: Trends in production, imports and self-sufficiency in rice (2008 – 2016)

Source: , In Press

The rate of increase in rice consumption has outweighed the rate of increase in domestic production, which has to be met by rice imports. For a country like Ethiopia, which is dependent on exports of agricultural products to generate required foreign currency, the burden rice creates is a serious challenge. Data from the Ethiopia Revenue and Customs Authority indicates that rice imports increased from 22,500 tonnes in 2008 to 311,827 tonnes in 2016, which is financially an increase from US\$12.07 million in 2008 to US\$170.69 million in 2016. In addition, the proportion of poor quality rice imports (broken rice) is increasing. In 2016 poor quality rice was estimated to make up about 20% of total rice imports, and as a result of its low cost is posing a serious challenge for domestic rice competitiveness.

The seminar concluded with the following key recommendations:

- To conduct research to generate information about the key factors that determine the competitiveness of domestic rice, the extent of smallholder farmers' commercialisation and its determinant factors, and the key challenges and opportunities in the development of the rice value chain; and
- The need to develop domestic capacity in rice R&D. The immediate operationalisation of the National Rice Research and Training Center at Fogera was agreed to be a top priority and the Director General of the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) was assigned to lead a committee that will follow the mobilisation of resources and immediate operationalisation of the centre in collaboration with MoANR.



Partial view of participants

In this regard, the APRA research plans in Ethiopia were found to be very relevant, especially in documenting: (i) the trends in rice commercialisation; (ii) its contribution to agrarian transformation in the Fogera plain; and (iii) the policy and development related factors which play a crucial role in enhancing commercialisation of the rice

sector, and advancing socially inclusive livelihoods, in order to inform policy makers and development practitioners. The APRA Ethiopia team will organise a similar national policy dialogue once their research outputs are complete.

Note: The seminar was attended by the State Minister of MoANR, HE Dr Kaba Urgessa; the Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of Japan, Mr Akira Uchida; the Chief Representative of JICA, Mr Ken Yamada; the Director General of EIAR, Dr Mandefro Negussie; country director of SG 2000, Dr Abera Debelo; senior directors of MoANR; senior researchers of the Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI), EIAR and regional agricultural research institutes; and private actors (rice seed producers, processors and traders).

Dawit Alemu, Agajie Tesfaye, Abebaw Asaye, Degu Addis, John Thompson, and Rachel Sabates-Wheeler

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Agriculture, Diversification, and Gender in Rural Africa: Longitudinal Perspectives From Six Countries

(<https://www.future-agricultures.org/blog/agriculture-diversification-and-gender-in-rural-africa-longitudinal-perspectives-from-six-countries/>)

Posted on May 2, 2018 by [Lesley White \(https://www.future-agricultures.org/author/leslev/\)](https://www.future-agricultures.org/author/leslev/) - [Our blog \(https://www.future-agricultures.org/category/blog/\)](https://www.future-agricultures.org/category/blog/)



(<https://www.future-agricultures.org/blog/agriculture-diversification-and-gender-in-rural-africa-longitudinal-perspectives-from-six-countries/>)

Written by Agnes Andersson Djurfeldt

Image: [CIAT \(https://www.flickr.com/photos/ciat/27557815110/in/album-72157670005588676/\)](https://www.flickr.com/photos/ciat/27557815110/in/album-72157670005588676/) (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)
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The past decade and a half have witnessed a push for smallholder-based agriculture among policymakers, donors and civil society as the way to lower poverty and increase food production. Concurrently, policies and frameworks are being drafted that aim to reduce gender-based injustices by empowering women and girls within agriculture, often by linking women to agricultural markets or targeting women as recipients of farm inputs.

The findings from a [new publication](http://fdslive.oup.com/www.oup.com/academic/pdf/openaccess/9780198799290.pdf) (<http://fdslive.oup.com/www.oup.com/academic/pdf/openaccess/9780198799290.pdf>), drawing on a unique dataset tracking the livelihoods of nearly 2,000 small farmers surveyed in 2002, 2008 and 2013 in Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique, shows the mismatch between these policies. A better route to women's empowerment may be through the non-farm sector and a broad-based approach to rural development that considers the full scope of rural livelihoods.

In general, the period between 2002 and 2013 shows increases in agricultural production, as well as commercialisation, among the sampled households, but there is also a polarisation of agricultural resources. While farm sizes have increased at the top of this distribution, they have not dropped at the bottom, which suggests that farm expansion has not occurred at the expense of poorer farmers, although gaps have widened. The same pattern can be seen when the size of farms held by women are compared to those held by men – the gaps have widened, but this has not happened as a result of redistributing land from female farm managers. Better off farmers and male landholders have therefore responded to market improvements by increasing their farm sizes.

The survey data confirms expected gender gaps in access to agrarian resources, but it also shows that female landholders have poorer access to male labour. In turn, this means that women's opportunities to produce a surplus that can be sold are smaller. In this sense, better market opportunities have also bypassed female landholders. Gender-based cash income gaps widened over the period of the study, driven by differences in agricultural commercialisation, as better access to agrarian resources among male farm managers translate into higher incomes. Gender gaps in income are also much wider within households (i.e. between the wife and the husband) than between households.

By contrast, diversifying out of agriculture into non-farm sectors is a gender neutral process, which suggests that there may be untapped prospects for reducing poverty here, among women especially. While access to farm-based assets increased among male-headed households, more general patterns of improved livelihoods can be seen in rising household standards and the accumulation of non-farm assets, which are largely gender neutral. The lack of growth in farm-based assets among female-headed households – despite the apparent increase in living standards across the board – suggests that female landholders reinvest any surplus income into non-farm assets rather than agrarian resources. Intra-household patterns of income generation also show that women within male headed households have better access to incomes from non-farm sources, with some of these income streams being biased towards women.

A one-sided focus of agricultural policy on closing gender asset gaps and gender-based differentials in agricultural productivity may, therefore, be missing opportunities for broadening such approaches to include non-farm linkages that may be as, if not more, important to enhancing women's livelihoods.

View [Agriculture, Diversification, and Gender in Rural Africa](http://fdslive.oup.com/www.oup.com/academic/pdf/openaccess/9780198799290.pdf) (<http://fdslive.oup.com/www.oup.com/academic/pdf/openaccess/9780198799290.pdf>)

Read an interview with Agriculture, Diversification and Gender in Rural Africa editors, Aida Cuthbert Isinika and Fred Mawunyo Dzanku in [Spore Magazine](http://spore.cta.int/en/bookreviews/interview/agriculture-a-springboard-to-livelihood-diversification.html). (<http://spore.cta.int/en/bookreviews/interview/agriculture-a-springboard-to-livelihood-diversification.html>)

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The gaze from space: how satellites can deceive (<https://www.future-agricultures.org/blog/the-gaze-from-space-how-satellites-can-deceive/>)

Posted on May 1, 2018 by [Lesley White](https://www.future-agricultures.org/author/lesley/) (<https://www.future-agricultures.org/author/lesley/>) - Our blog (<https://www.future-agricultures.org/category/blog/>)



(<https://www.future-agricultures.org/blog/the-gaze-from-space-how-satellites-can-deceive/>)

There has been a proliferation of studies using remote sensing analyses of land use in Zimbabwe published recently. I seem to get sent loads to review. One by Simbarashe Jombo, Elhadi Adam and John Odindi came out recently in [Land Use Policy](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264837716309681) (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264837716309681>). It nicely illustrates the problems with this sort of study.

The paper is based on the analysis of Landsat data at five time intervals from 1992 to 2014 from Chipinge. It boldly proclaims that “deforestation, land degradation, overgrazing, reduced fallow periods and other anthropogenic activities attributed to the FTLRP have led to significant land use and land cover changes”.

Wrapped up in this sentence are a whole set of assumptions. By changing land use through anthropogenic intervention (which after all was what land reform was about), of course landscapes will change. Trees will be cleared to create fields; fallow will reduce, as land use is intensified; and more livestock will make use of the land as farmers invest and accumulate. From the point of view of production efficiency and livelihoods all these changes may be good things. Just observing land use change from space tells us nothing about the outcomes and their positive and negative consequences.

This paper is far from alone in making unfortunate elisions between observations of change to assumptions about implications. It falls into the trap of assuming that all change is bad, and that more people and livestock will inevitably result in 'overgrazing' or 'land degradation'. It may not be the case, as people invest in soil erosion control, plant trees (in new places), and manage livestock in different ways to previously.

I won't reiterate the old debate about overgrazing and carrying capacity in Zimbabwe, but we have to remember that what is an appropriate stocking rate is in large part an economic and social judgement, not a scientific one. [Here's a paper by me, now nearly 30 years old](#)

https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/33946416/27b.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1525072834&Signature=s8%2BCx4cCUtzVRbjGbwdBplKPYgk%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DECONOMIC_AND_ECOLOGICAL_CARRYING_CAPACIT.pdf.

I thought we'd got over this by now! As is well demonstrated across semi-arid areas, with flexible movement and opportunistic use of non-equilibrium rangelands permanent degradation (or [desertification](#) <https://zimbabweland.wordpress.com/2016/07/25/why-we-should-stop-talking-about-desertification/>) in other parlance) is unlikely.

So comparing air photos or satellite images of former commercial farms and new resettlements showing one to have more standing biomass and the other less tells us nothing much more than the fact that one has less utilisation than the other. Degradation occurs when the economic value of a resource declines permanently. Evidence of heavy grazing, bare areas and short fallow cultivation cycles don't prove degradation, as management and inputs may ensure longer term use is sustained.

The myths constructed about [land degradation in Africa](#) <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Lie-Land-Challenging-Received-Environment/dp/0852554095>) are legion, and very well documented. The enthusiasm for remote sensing comes in a long line of science deployed for political purposes. Of course this doesn't mean that land degradation doesn't happen. We just have to be clear about what we mean by degradation or 'over'grazing or desertification or deforestation.

I have written before about concerns around [deforestation driven by tobacco production](#) <https://zimbabweland.wordpress.com/2014/01/20/going-up-in-smoke-the-environmental-costs-of-zimbabwes-tobacco-boom/>) and curing in new resettlement areas in Zimbabwe. Unless (as white farmers did from the 1940s) technological developments occur (such as rocket barns and more efficient use of woodfuel for curing), the loss of such woodlands will result in degradation with economic consequences (along with aesthetic and biodiversity losses too).

Equally, intensive use of [soils](#) <https://zimbabweland.wordpress.com/2015/03/16/why-an-integrated-approach-to-soil-management-is-essential/>), without attention to soil health, may result in the loss of soil organic matter below a critical threshold, with additions of organic or inorganic fertiliser becoming less effective. With addition of appropriate inputs, a decline in soil nutrients is not a problem per se (this is what cultivation does), the concern is when the efficacy of such inputs declines.

Having established that land use has changed (big surprise!) due to land reform (in all the expected directions except a supposed decline in small farms in the last time period, which seems odd given what is happening on the ground), the second part of the paper then tries to 'explain' this assumed 'degradation'.

A set of explanations are offered based not on any empirical data but selective readings of various studies, exposing the authors' clear biases. They conclude: "a land reform programme should go beyond land acquisition and sentimental resettlement as this will likely lead to deterioration of land and associated resources, hence further poverty". Instead they recommend (again following a well-worn narrative) the need for private property rights and investment in commercial agriculture.

But in order to tease out the causal connections and the implications of land use change, satellite imagery can only tell one part of the story – and actually a very limited one. The paper comments that "traditional ground based mapping techniques [are] often time consuming, expensive and tedious". But sometimes time and tedium are needed to find out what is really happening on the ground.

Too many of these sort of studies rely on easily-available imagery and fancy computing techniques without ever going to the field. To understand degradation dynamics requires talking to people and understanding field complexities; otherwise the interpretations (as in this paper – it is not alone given my reviewing experience) are simply misleading.

Sustainability (and so degradation) is necessarily a political construct, one that requires deliberation on what landscapes are desirable in what form, for whom. Using satellite imagery to construct an argument that land reform was a bad thing exposes an ideological position hidden behind a misleading gaze from space.

This is the fifth in a series of short reviews of new work on agriculture and land in Zimbabwe. If there are other papers or books that you think should be included, please let me know!

This post was written by [Ian Scoones](http://www.ianscoones.net/) and first appeared on [Zimbabweland](http://www.zimbabweland.wordpress.com/)

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