

CHANGING LABOUR, LAND AND SOCIAL RELATIONS ON COMMERCIAL FARMS: A CASE STUDY FROM LIMPOPO, SOUTH AFRICA

**A minithesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Masters Philosophy in Land and Agrarian Studies.**



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DECLARATION

I declare that 'Changing labour, land and social relations on commercial farms: A case study from Limpopo, South Africa' is my own work. All other sources, used or quoted, have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. This thesis has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Phillan Zamchiya

November 2008



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Signature

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ABSTRACT

CHANGING LABOUR, LAND AND SOCIAL RELATIONS ON COMMERCIAL FARMS: A CASE STUDY FROM LIMPOPO, SOUTH AFRICA.

Phillan Zamchiya

MPhil Mini-thesis (Land and Agrarian Studies)

Over the past fifteen years, the South African government has extended various land, labour and social rights to farm workers, ranging from provisions of basic labour rights in 1993 to the minimum wage in 2003. Literature suggests that social relations on commercial farms do not remain static in the context of policy changes. This thesis sets out to understand the ways in which social relations have or have not changed, on one commercial farm in Limpopo province, South Africa, and to establish factors that impede or promote such change as well as the consequences for farm workers' daily lives. Drawing from the interpretive and critical social science philosophical perspectives, the thesis adopts a qualitative research methodology that takes into consideration the experiences and perceptions of farm workers, farm managers, the farm owner and key informants from government institutions and civil society. At a theoretical level the study is informed by four paradigms namely: the materialist perspective; the total institution thesis; paternalism; and structuration theory. It considers three overlapping conceptual models of understanding relations between farm owners and farm workers namely the welfarist, workerist and transformative models.

The paper argues that, in the past decade, the extension of farm labour and tenure laws to the farm sector has eroded the welfarist relations between the farm owner and farm workers. There is now a rise in workerist relations in a context of unequal power relations tilted in favour of the farm employer. The thesis concludes that in order to adequately understand land, labour and social relations, one has to consider the politics of land ownership as well as the politics of agricultural capitalist employment.

KEYWORDS

Farm worker, Housing, Independent production, Labour rights, Land reform, Limpopo, Transformative, Wages, Workerist, Welfarist.



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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CSS	Critical Social Science
DoA	Department of Agriculture
DoL	Department of Labour
DLA	Department of Land Affairs
ESTA	Extension of Security of Tenure Act 62 of 1997
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
LRA	Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995
LTA	Land Reform (Labour Tenants) Act 2 of 1996
ISS	Interpretive Social Science
NMC	National Manpower Commission
NP	National Party
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NVI	Nzhelele Valley Initiative
PLAAS	Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies
RF	Rural Foundation
SAAU	South African Agricultural Union
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
SAMP	South African Migration Project

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

In many parts of the world, land, labour and social relations between farm workers and farm owners are contentious, linked to processes of history, globalisation, migration, economic changes in farming and micro politics on commercial farms (du Toit and Ally 2004; Ewert and Hamman 1999; Kay 1995; Loewenson 1992; Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks 2000; Pahle 2007; Rutherford and Addison 2007). Democratisation trends in highly unequal developing countries such as in Brazil, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa hold promises of greater participation and better living and working conditions for farm workers. In some situations, as in Taiwan and South Korea, policy interventions based on providing land to farm workers and tenants have been drivers of positive change for social relations on farms (Adams 2000; Griffin, Khan, and Ickowitz 2002; Kay 2002). In other situations, as in Namibia and Zimbabwe, policy interventions based on provision of labour rights have been weak, ineffective and not adequately grounded in local conditions in the farming sector (Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks 2000; Werner, Stankovitch and Brabbury 2001).

In South Africa, the government has extended various land, labour and social rights to farm workers, from provisions of basic labour rights in 1993 to the minimum wage in 2003. This minithesis sets out to understand the extent to which these various rights have changed land, labour and social relations on a particular commercial farm in Limpopo province, with a focus on the factors that impede or promote such change, as well as the consequences for farm workers' lives. The study considers the experiences and perceptions of farm workers, farm managers, the farm owner and key informants from government institutions and civil society. It considers three overlapping conceptual models namely the welfarist, workerist and transformative models of understanding relations between farm workers and farm owners (Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks

2000). The models provide a conceptual framework for an illustrative analysis of land, labour and social relations on the farm.

The following section outlines the historical background to land rights, agriculture and social relations on commercial farms in South Africa. According to Bernstein (2004: 197), understanding relations between farmer and farm workers entails an investigation of historical trajectories.

1.2. Historical background

This section provides a history of land and social relations on South African commercial farms drawing mainly from the Marxist historiography.

1.2.1. The history of land and agriculture in South Africa.

The existing land, labour and social relations on commercial farms are a product of both the history of colonial conquest and apartheid dispossession (Atkinson 2007; Hall 2004; Ntsebeza 2007; Walker 2007). The establishment of colonialism dating back to the 17th century, when the Dutch East India Company initially established its refreshment station at the Cape in 1652, led to processes of white settlers appropriating some of the land for agricultural production and forcing indigenous communities on to marginal lands (Bundy 1972, 1979, 1988; Mafeje 1988, 1997). After the appropriation of land, the colonialists, where possible, introduced commodity farming in order to service expanding urban markets. According to Houghton (cited in Bundy 1972), Africans' failure to adapt to commodity farming is "the root cause of their distress". However, critical empirical evidence by revisionist historians shows that initially Africans adapted quite well to commodity farming (Bundy 1972, 1987, 1988; Keegan 1986, 1988). Mafeje (1988, 1997) notes that, "African peasants were the most dynamic agricultural producers in South Africa" in the second half of the 19th century. African peasants engaged in commodity farming partly as a way of meeting tax and other obligations without having to work directly for the colonisers (Rennie 1978). However, the discovery of minerals in the

1880s led to the demand for labour in the mining sector (Morris 1976). The colonial authorities changed their strategy from that of encouraging a class of African farmers to emerge to forcing Africans to become wage labourers (Bundy 1972, 1988; Keegan 1986, 1988). The development of capitalist relations of production in the mining sector therefore led to the transformation of social relations of production in the countryside (Bernstein 1996; Bundy 1972; Morris 1976). Bundy (1972:388) stresses that the “emergence and decline of the peasantry was a necessary component of, and not separate from the process of capitalist development in South Africa”. In order to destroy the African peasantry the colonial government promulgated anti-peasant legislation such as the Glen Grey Act of 1894 that limited the amount of land Africans could access for agricultural purposes in the reserves.

The deprivation of land for indigenous communities contributed to changes in survival strategies amongst the *Khoi-Khoi* from pre-colonial hunting and gathering to subsistence farming and eventually to wage labour on the appropriated white settlers’ farms and white-established industries (Bundy 1972; Rennie 1978; Morris 1976). The African communities who were forced to work on the white farms to eke out a living endured exploitative relationships with the owners. The farm workers did not have any recourse to labour laws as the law was not applicable to them. Masters and servants laws were passed, deeming every command from the employer to be lawful (Hamman 1996:355). Disobedience by farm workers was punished by forfeiture of wages, forced labour and physical assaults (Hamman 1996). Conditions of slavery characterised the relationship between the blacks and white settlers. Colonial authorities viewed farm workers as falling under the governance of the white farmers. This practice, according to du Toit (2004), assumed that ownership of land gave the white settlers the right to govern and dominate those who worked on the farms. Blacks were placed in deeply authoritarian relationships of “servitude and dependence” (du Toit 2004) that were difficult to erode.

After 1910, the Union of South Africa government further legalised the process of dispossession and displacement of black communities through the promulgation of the Natives Land Act No 27 of 1913 (Union of South Africa 1913). This Act formalised

division of land by race through reserving 92 per cent of South African land area for white settlement and less than eight per cent or nine million hectares for blacks (Union of South Africa 1913). Even the Union of South Africa government acknowledged that the land designated for Africans was inadequate. The government instituted the Beaumont Commission which recommended the expansion of the land area of designated native reserves in 1916 (Keegan 1986). It was only in 1936, that more land was allocated to blacks (Union of South Africa 1936). The Natives Trust and Land Act of 1936 proposed to increase the land accessible to blacks in the reserves by six per cent or 6.2 million hectares even though much of it was marginal and unproductive (Union of South Africa 1936). The African farmers in the designated reserves did not receive much agricultural support from the colonial government but on the other hand the white farmers benefited from government subsidies (Hall 2004; Ntsebeza 2007). Apart from government subsidies the white farmers benefited from cheap labour in the designated reserves created to reproduce and subsidise the cost of mining and farm labour (Wolpe 1972). The colonial authorities decided that African peasants should be “sellers of labour” rather than “sellers of produce” and were determined to see the retreat of black peasants’ agricultural economy (Bundy 1972).



Despite the promulgation of legislation that aimed to undermine peasants’ independent agricultural production, some of the Africans continued to farm in white areas. Many of the landed whites disregarded the laws that sought to regulate land, labour and social relations on the farms (Keegan 1986). According to Keegan (1988), “Law in a racially divided society is often a symbol rather than a practical code regulating relations”. The indigenous blacks continued to enter into clandestine arrangements with white farmers such as sharecropping arrangements and labour tenancy. In sharecropping arrangements, black tenants on white-owned land agreed to pay a share of their produce to white landlords in exchange for staying and producing on the white-owned land (Keegan 1986, 1988). The arrangement under labour tenancy was that indigenous blacks would pay for access to agricultural land on the white landlord’s farm through devoting a defined period of their time to work on the fields of the landlord. According to Rennie (1978) and Greenberg (1980) labour tenancy was akin to relations of serfdom in the primitive feudal system. In some areas labour tenancy emerged where white farmers had limited control

of capital and this form of labour tenancy allowed the indirect appropriation of surplus labour (Morris 1976).

In 1948, the Nationalist government continued to support unequal land, labour and social relations on the white-owned farms. The apartheid political philosophy on farm worker development is largely captured in the words of Dr Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd, known as the ‘Architect of Apartheid’, who was then Minister of Native Affairs and who later became the Prime Minister of South Africa from 1958 to 1966:

On the farms there is no question of equality. The relationship of master and servant is maintained on the farms, and there is no danger that conditions on the farms will develop in the same way as in the cities, where they are working with the Europeans on an equal footing (Verwoerd 1950 cited in Gordon 1991:55).

The National Party’s policies also involved the continued forced removals of black tenants to the homelands in the 1960s and early 1970s. The apartheid government forcefully removed about 1.1 million black tenants from the white designated farms between 1960 and 1983 (Platzky and Walker 1985). The blacks that remained on the farms had to be in a labour contract, as wage workers, with the landowners.

Even though the land question was not overtly central to the liberation struggle of South Africa, liberation movements highlighted that a democratic South Africa would consider the redistribution of land and land rights to the dispossessed communities. This is qualified in the African National Congress’s (ANC) Freedom Charter adopted on 26 June 1955 which stated that: “Restrictions of land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended, and all the land re-divided amongst those who work it to banish famine and land hunger” (ANC 1955).

From the early 1980s, the apartheid government embarked on a gradual deregulation and liberalisation of the agricultural sector. The state reduced subsidies and support for white farmers. This shift was primarily facilitated by domestic fiscal pressures, like the 18.6 per cent rise in inflation in 1986, rather than growing international ideological pressure for states to adopt liberal structural adjustment programmes (Lipton 1996:415). Even though

farmers continued to receive significant subsidies amounting to a financial value of R4.2 billion from the 1970s to 1994 (Kirsten and Van Zyl 1996:231; Wegerif, Russell and Grundling 2005:29), liberalisation and deregulation was already having an impact on existing labour, land and social relations on commercial farms before the end of the 1980s (Lipton 1996).

White farmers had initiated the establishment of the Rural Foundation in 1982 that aimed to improve service delivery to farm workers for advancement of social and economic development. The Rural Foundation was mainly funded by the government Department of Welfare and Population Development but it also received funds from the private sector (Beinart and Murray 1996). According to Mayson (1990) the Rural Foundation managed to introduce some modern management systems in the governance of social relations on commercial farms. However, du Toit (1993) stresses that the Rural Foundation embodied the white farmers' philosophy to co-opt farm workers and to reinforce the system of paternalism. The Rural Foundation closed down in May 1998 due to a decline in funds from the Department of Social Development (Atkinson 2007:133). The welfarist approach to farm worker development based on philanthropy did not last.

Increased insurgency by liberation movements from the late 1970s to the late 1980s partly forced the National Party (NP) to engage in negotiations with the ANC and other liberation movements (Bernstein 1996). The negotiated settlement of the early 1990s between the National Party and the ANC partly influenced the policy approach for a new government of national unity (Lipton 1996). During the transitional phase white farmers were placed in strategic positions to influence land reform in a way that suited and protected their interests (Lipton 1996).

In the early 1990s, the National Manpower Commission (NMC), an advisory body on labour affairs, investigated the possibility of extending the Labour Relations Act and Wage Act to the farm workers. The South African Agricultural Union (SAAU) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) reached an agreement to institute an Agricultural Labour Act in 1993, which contained provisions of the Basic Employment Conditions Act and Labour Relations Act (LRA) (Hamman 1996).

The following section provides an overview of the post-apartheid policy context.

1.3. South Africa after 1994: Setting the context

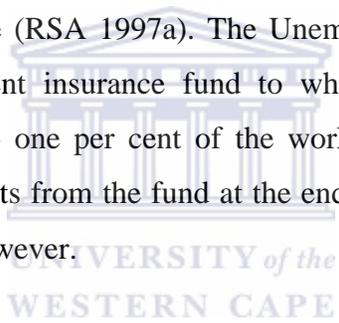
From 1994, the new South African government introduced a range of agricultural, labour and tenure policies meant to bring improved living and working conditions in the farm sector (Hall 2004, 2007; Wegerif, Russell and Grundling 2005). A two-pronged approach, namely social regulation and agricultural deregulation, underpinned the government's approach in restructuring labour relations (du Toit 2004). Deregulation involved trade liberalisation of the agricultural sector as well as the removal of government subsidies to commercial farmers by the government. The post-apartheid government accelerated the shift from a "highly regulated and protected industry to one free from all constraints, unsubsidised by government and capable of competing with the best in the world", according to the Department of Agriculture (DoA 1998). From the mid-1990s this path was aided by the government's broad policy approaches dominated by neo-liberal support of free markets and free trade.

The assumption of the political leadership within the ANC was that deregulation would either force out of the sector uncompetitive farmers who relied on inefficient and exploitative labour relations or would force them to shift to modern business practices that would result in better social relations (du Toit 2004). The assumption was that cheap and right-less labour compromised productivity and efficiency. Scholars such as Lipton (1993:373) also argued that deregulation of South African agriculture would promote "business-like relationships". However, Marsden (1992), in a more generic argument, had earlier predicted that one would expect new labour arrangements under neo-liberal reform to show "higher levels of exploitation and declining levels of social rights".

In a complementary strategy of social regulation, it was government's philosophy that the extension of urban type labour legislation to rural farming areas would transform oppressive apartheid labour relations on commercial farms (du Toit 2004). Even though it was acknowledged in policy debates that the approach would lead to potential job

shedding the officials believed that conditions would be better for the remaining farm workers (du Toit 2004). The emphasis on farm worker development was an extension of civil and political rights to farm workers of which labour rights was one component.

Another important dimension of the government's pro-worker approach was the introduction of the Labour Relations Act (1995) to all employees including those in the agricultural sector. The Act confers rights on farm workers to join trade unions, strike or seek mediation in labour disputes (RSA 1995). According to the DoA (1998), the poor living and working conditions of farm workers could be addressed through extending urban type labour rights and other legal protections to the farming community. Some of the laws extended to farm workers include the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 that regulates maximum working hours, remuneration for over time work as well as annual leave and sick leave (RSA 1997a). The Unemployment Insurance Act 63 of 2001 created an unemployment insurance fund to which employers and employees contribute an amount equal to one per cent of the worker's wage (RSA 2002). Farm workers are entitled to payments from the fund at the end of employment. The Act does not cover seasonal workers, however.



The new democratic government's worker rights approach to farm worker development became more defined in March 2003 when the Department of Labour (DoL) introduced a statutory minimum wage for farm workers. The Sectoral Determination 8 of 2003 (RSA 2003) has been superseded by Sectoral Determination 13 of 2006 (RSA 2006). The law is a promulgation in terms of section 51(1) of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, No 75 of 1997, that regulates employment conditions and prescribes minimum wages in the agricultural sector (RSA 2006:1). The Sectoral Determination applies to all farm workers in all farming activities in South Africa, but excluding the forestry sector (RSA 2006:2). Under the law the farmer must pay the farm worker at least a minimum wage of R1 090 or an hourly rate of R5.59 for those working less than 45 hours a week¹ (RSA 2006:2-3). The extent to which farmers abide by this or whether the law is followed is one of the issues researched in this dissertation.

¹ The figures apply to a period between 1 March 2008 and 28 February 2009.

The argument supporting the adoption of a minimum wage was that policy interventions would erode the low wage/ low productive pattern and replace it with a more business orientated approach that would result in better wages for the farm workers (du Toit 2002).

In terms of the Sectoral Determination, a farmer may deduct an amount not exceeding 10 per cent of a farm worker's wage for accommodation if the house has a roof that is durable and waterproof; glass windows that can be opened; electricity inside the house; safe water within the house; a flush toilet or pit latrine available in close proximity and if the house is not less than 30 square metres in size (RSA 2006:8). Section 6 (a) stipulates that where more than two farm workers share accommodation, the total deduction may not exceed 25 per cent of the applicable minimum wage paid to an individual worker (RSA 2006:8).

On land relations, the Department of Land Affairs (DLA) introduced land tenure reform, as part of its land reform programme, to improve the tenure security of farm dwellers (DLA 1997:3). Consequently, the post-apartheid government passed the Extension of Security of Tenure Act 62 of 1997 (ESTA) and the Land Reform (Labour Tenants) Act 2 of 1996 (LTA) in order to secure tenure rights for farm dwellers. ESTA aims to secure farm dwellers' tenure rights and prohibit arbitrary evictions (Hall 2007:95). Section 4 also provides measures to facilitate long-term security of land tenure for farm dwellers by purchasing land with state assistance (RSA 1997b:5). ESTA is applicable to all farm dwellers living on land designated for agricultural purposes with the consent of the owner (RSA 1997b:4).

The procedure for eviction of those farm dwellers whose right of residence arises solely out of an employment contract are determined by ESTA (RSA 1997b:7). Section 8 (2) of this Act states that: "The right of residence of an occupier who is an employee and whose right of residence arises solely from an employment agreement, may be terminated if the occupier resigns from employment or is dismissed in accordance with the provisions of the Labour Relations Act"(RSA 1997b:7). To a category of farm workers, whose right of

residence is only determined by a labour contract, the significance given to employment as the basis on which people acquire tenure rights reinforces the link between tenure and employment.

On the other hand, the Labour Tenants Act (LTA) differs with ESTA in that it is only applicable to farm dwellers that have or have had access to some of the land for cropping or grazing purposes (RSA 1996:2). LTA enables farm dwellers that are living on farms as labour tenants to become independent owners of land and to become producers on their own. The Act stipulated that labour tenants had until March 2001 to submit applications to upgrade and secure their tenure rights including full ownership of the land they occupied (RSA 1996). Only 20 400 claims were lodged by the closing date (Roth and Yates 2004). However, a significant proportion of the labour tenants was left out of this process as either they were not aware of the law or had difficulty in accessing legal representation (Wegerif, Russell and Grundling 2005).

The next section elaborates the research problem and significance of the study.

1.4. Research problem and justification

While policy interventions ranging from basic labour rights in 1993 to the minimum wage in 2003 have created a framework for the improvement of tenure, labour and social relations, the extent to which this has happened in practice has received little scholarly attention in Limpopo province. Most of the academic studies of on-farm land, labour and social relations have focused on the Western Cape (du Toit 1993; du Toit 2004; du Toit and Ally 2004; Ewert and Hamman 1999; Ewert and du Toit 2002; Graaf, Louw and Merwe 1990; Levin 1996; Hamman 1996; Nasson 1988; Tom 2006). Studies carried out in different geographical areas may provide different answers to the nature of land, labour and social relations on farms (e.g., Addison 2006 and Nasson 1984).

Literature suggests that the way workers and farm owners relate do not remain static in the context of policy changes (e.g., Addison 2006; Bernstein 2004; Bundy 1972; du Toit

2002; Morris 1976; Werner, Stankovitch and Brabbury 2001). Bismarck² (2007: pers.comm) reinforced this observation during my exploratory fieldwork³ when he said: “For every policy change there is a reaction”. Nevertheless, scholars do not agree on the ways in which land, labour and social relations change in the context of policy interventions and on factors that shape such relations. A question on which there remains substantial intellectual debate in post-apartheid South Africa is: In what ways have land, labour and social relations changed or not and why?

With some notable exceptions,⁴ the few studies of agricultural labour relations focusing on Limpopo have largely ignored the perceptions of farm workers. Although research on farm workers has provided information on labour, migration and wage levels, there is little qualitative data to help clarify what this means to farm workers in the way they relate to farm owners.

This thesis is an attempt to contribute to a body of academic knowledge on the nature of land, labour and social relations in South Africa. It seeks to enhance a nuanced understanding of land, labour and social relations on a particular farm in post-apartheid South Africa. The study may also provide a foundation upon which scholars can design further studies. Apart from academic aims this thesis may be of relevance to policy makers and non governmental organisations (NGOs) undertaking interventions to transform land, labour and social relations at a local level. It is through understanding the local situation and farm workers’ experiences that one can get to understand better why problems persist on commercial farms and what type of policy approaches can work to improve land, labour and social relations.

² Bismarck is the pseudonym of the farm owner in my case study

³ The exploratory fieldwork helped me to refine my research proposal

⁴ The work of Rutherford and Addison (2007) stand out. See also Addison (2006).

1.4.1. Research objectives and research questions

The purpose of the research is to provide a “view from the farm”⁵ so as to derive a nuanced understanding on the ways in which land, labour and social relations have changed or not on a particular commercial farm in post-apartheid South Africa. Other related objectives of the study are to:

- Identify factors that impede or promote such change
- Highlight the consequences such change or lack of it, may have on the way farm workers relate to the farm(er)
- Provide a possible recommendation for policy makers

Following the research problem and objectives, the main question the research seeks to answer is: **In what ways have land, labour and social relations changed or not on the commercial farm and why?** In order to adequately address the main research question other related questions include:

- What are the factors that impede or promote such change?
- What is the effect of such change or lack of it on the ways farm workers and the farm owner relate?
- What then is possible for policy to bring about changes in on-farm relations?

The next section discusses the research methods used in an attempt to answer the above research questions.

1.4.2. Research process and methods

This section only sketches the broad picture of research methods and process as the minutiae of the research approach is the subject matter of Chapter 3.

⁵ The phrase was used by du Toit (1995) in his study of farm workers in the Western Cape.

Drawing from both the interpretive and critical social science philosophical perspectives (Neuman 2003) the thesis adopts a methodology that embraces qualitative methods of research. These include desktop policy review, literature review of secondary sources and analysis of primary documents related to farm worker studies. This is complemented by observation, in-depth interviews and semi-structured interviews with farm workers, commercial farmers, government officials and various activists working on farm worker issues. Following Neuman (2003), principles of anonymity, confidentiality plus voluntary and informed consent inform the ethical dimension built into the research.

1.4.3. Data Analysis

I recorded the collected data in the form of field notes and then manually coded the data into five thematic areas, namely wage-ration nexus; housing; trade unionisation; land and own production; and dynamics of migrant labour. The thematic areas provided a foundation for identifying and analysing emerging patterns showing changes and similarities in labour, land and social relations on the commercial farm. Details of data analysis techniques are the subject matter of chapter 3.

In the next section I present an overview of the conceptual framework.

1.5. Conceptual framework

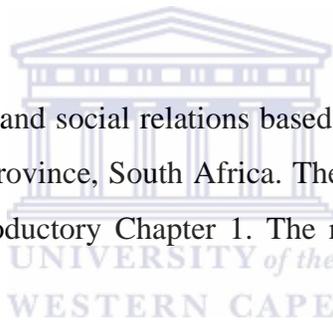
The study considers three conceptual models of understanding how farm workers and farm owners relate, as developed by Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks (2000). These are the welfarist model, the workerist model and the transformative model (Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks 2000). Chapter 2 of the thesis discusses these models in detail. The three models have been used both as interpretive lenses, to understand land, labour and social relations on farms, and as prescriptive frameworks, to determine what measures are required to bring about change in the way farm workers and owners relate.

The essence of the workerist model is that academics can analyse social relations by looking at farm workers solely as full-time proletarians. The fulcrum of the welfarist model is that scholars can adequately understand social relations by looking at farm workers' struggles as centred on welfare services. The transformative model is presented by Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks (2000) as an alternative to the welfarist and workerist models. Its core is that the politics of land ownership and land access is central to understanding structural conditions of poverty and exploitative social relations that exist on commercial farms.

The following section outlines the structure of the thesis.

1.6. Thesis outline

This is a study of land, labour and social relations based on one commercial farm in the Vhembe district of Limpopo Province, South Africa. The thesis is organised into six (6) chapters inclusive of this introductory Chapter 1. The rest of the thesis is outlined as follows:



Chapter 2 reviews scholarly attempts to understand and explain land, labour and social relations on commercial farms. My review of the literature identifies four paradigms: the materialist perspective; the total institution thesis; paternalism and structuration theory. Secondly, the chapter develops the conceptual framework of the thesis. It reviews and defines the workerist, welfarist and transformative models as developed by Rutherford, Moyo and Amanor-Wilks (2000) to indicate how they are understood for the purpose of the thesis.

Chapter 3 presents the research design, methodology and methods. The chapter explains why the selected qualitative methods of research are appropriate for the study. Firstly, it outlines the basic principles of two social science philosophical perspectives, namely the interpretive social science (ISS) and the critical social science (CSS) paradigms, their

tensions and how they contributed to the study. Secondly, it explains the research design, field methods, data analysis techniques and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 introduces the case study and presents a narrative analysis of empirical data. This is what some scholars call the “realist tale” approach (Neuman 2003). The descriptive data is presented through five themes namely, wage-ration nexus; housing; trade unionisation; land and own production; and dynamics of migrant labour.

Chapter 5 moves to an illustrative analysis of empirical data detailed in Chapter 4. The chapter relates the data to the theoretical framework which shows patterns that depict changes in some aspects of land, labour and social relations as well as continuities with the past. The data also reveal factors that have promoted or impeded such change and the consequences for farm workers’ living and working conditions.

Chapter 6 concludes the study by summarising the empirical findings in relation to the research questions. The chapter also sums up reflections on the research design, methods, literature review and conceptual framework in relation to the research findings. Based on the reflections the chapter also provides recommendations on how to approach further studies related to land, labour and social relations on commercial farms.

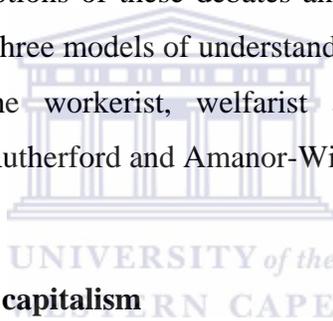
1.7. Summary

In summary, this chapter is introductory. The chapter provides the historical background of South Africa’s transition to the current capitalist agricultural society as well as post-apartheid policy context. It introduces the research process, design and methodology of the thesis. The chapter ends by providing a thesis outline. In the next chapter I discuss my literature review and conceptual framework.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, I recount scholarly attempts to explain land, labour and social relations on commercial farms. Some of the recent writings on farm workers concentrate on empirical findings and miss the historical theoretical debates which provide a useful framework for understanding land, labour and social relations on commercial farms. Therefore much of my literature review identifies four paradigms: the materialist perspective; the total institution thesis; paternalism and structuration theory. Secondly, I discuss the assumptions of these debates and relate them to my conceptual framework, which is based on three models of understanding how farm workers and farm owners relate. These are the workerist, welfarist and transformative paradigms (Magaramombe 2001; Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks 2000; Rutherford 1999).



2.2. Agrarian transition to capitalism

Most Marxist scholars argue that the mode of production shapes social relations on farms and therefore there is a need to trace the transition to capitalist agriculture in South Africa (Beyers 1971; Morris 1976). Following Lenin, most Marxist scholars argue that the South African transition followed a Prussian path, “accumulation from above”, which meant that the pre-capitalist white land owners transformed into agrarian capitalists (Bernstein 1996; Byres 1991; Cousins 2004; Morris 1976). The demise of the peasantry through capital accumulation of the landed white owners resulted in some peasants becoming agricultural wage labourers. The landlord class in South Africa relied on the state, which promoted cheap labour through the maintenance of political and legal controls over the labourers (Morris 1976). This differs with the American path, “accumulation from below”, where the transition to capitalist agriculture emerges through capital

accumulation by peasants and other small scale producers (Bernstein 1996; Byres 1971; Cousins 2007).

The transition to a capitalist mode of production varied from region to region within South Africa. According to Cousins (2007:226) there is no single pathway to transition because of competing interests that include agricultural labour, agrarian capital and landed property. For example, the Cape of Good Hope was subjected to the effects of colonial capitalists' agricultural economy earlier on than in most regions (Beyers 1971). In the Northern Transvaal⁶, the study region of this thesis, the colonists settled much later due to distance from the coast and resistance from African kingdoms (Lahiff et al 2008). In areas in the far north, the location of the study area, the colonialists appropriated land starting in the late 19th century (Thompson 1995).

Some scholars now understand the features of agricultural labour as a reflection of the needs of capitalist farmers. For some of these scholars farm workers' struggles were similar to those of industrial workers (Krikler 1987; Marcus 1989). What mattered in their analyses was that farm dwellers were wage labourers, so the conditions of the farm dwellers should be understood in terms of the low value of the wages (Krikler 1987; Marcus 1989). For these scholars the problem is weak agrarian capital. Typically, the focus is on debates about capitalist formation and transitions and farm workers become mere ciphers in these narratives about capital and labour.

2.2.1. The new agrarian question of labour

More recently, Bernstein (2004) argues for a reconsideration of the agrarian question and notes that the agrarian question of capital is no longer an important factor for capitalist industrialisation. He argues that the agrarian question of capital has been resolved in South Africa. For Bernstein, the productive capacity of capitalist agriculture is a clear indication that the agrarian question of capital has been resolved in South Africa (Bernstein 2004). On the other hand, the agrarian question of labour or of the

⁶ Present day Limpopo province

dispossessed has not yet been resolved, that is capitalism is failing to provide adequate and secure employment for the poor and the demand for land is in response to the problem of reproduction of labour rather than to contribute to agricultural industrialisation (Bernstein 2004; Cousins 2004; Cousins 2007; Moyo 2004, 2007). The incomplete agrarian question of labour in South Africa is to contest monopolistic privileges of white commercial farmers and create conditions for ‘accumulation from below’ (Cousins 2007:227). Unemployment, food insecurity, insecure self-employment and poverty still need to be resolved (Cousins 2007:227).

The class analysis that refers to the context of unequal agrarian relations as premised on unequal land distribution has led to debates about the need for redistribution of assets to the landless (Moyo 2004). Various scholars argue that, giving the dispossessed rights to land assist in transforming the structural conditions that lead to their poor living and working conditions (Hall 2003, 2004; May 2000; Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks 2000, Wegerif, Russell and Grundling 2005; Werner, Stankovitch and Bradbury 2001). Land rights provide independent tenure security for the dispossessed and ensure that they have better livelihoods (Moyo, Rutherford, Amanor-Wilks 2000; Wegerif, Russell and Grundling 2005). Apart from that, the provision of land for production augments the meagre salaries that farm workers get (Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks 2000). Therefore one way forward is to make land available for farm dwellers so as to link rights with opportunities for independent tenure and land-based livelihoods (Hall 2003, 2004).

However, other scholars note that the argument to articulate exploitation by pointing to “structural inequality of resources access in the countryside” (Bernstein 2004:203) and to address them through redistributive “egalitarian solutions is archetypally populist” (Byres 2004:25). This is because there is a weak evidence for a link between land reform and agricultural productivity. Nevertheless, the compelling aspect of the above neo-populist redistributive ideology is that it claims to provide an alternative to problems of employment and insecurity prevalent in rural labour to an extent that materialist analysis does not (Bernstein 2004).

Sender and Johnston (2004) add a new twist by challenging neo-populists on their own terrain of reducing rural poverty. They argue that land reform affects the poor in rural labour markets through loss of jobs and rural wage-earning opportunities. Basing their argument on empirical data from the Western Cape, they argue that contemporary capitalist agriculture provides greater employment and survival benefits to the rural poor - especially for farm workers - than any benefit from their own small-scale farming activities (Sender and Johnston 2004).

2.3. The legacy of paternalism

Another school of thought apply the social history approach to the analysis of South African agrarian relations. The main argument is that social relations on commercial farms are not only shaped by economic considerations of ownership but by local traditions, identity and culture (Dooling 1992; du Toit 1993, 1995; Ewert and du Toit 2002). One of the key determinants of the nature of social relations on farms was the history of slavery. Dooling (1992) argues that relations in slavery gradually led to the development of paternalistic relations between the master and the slaves because of the day-to-day contact between them (Dooling 1992). From there arose a philosophy that described the farm as a family-like community (du Toit 1995). The philosophy “legitimated the master’s rule and emphasised the master’s absolute and despotic power over the child, his worker” (du Toit 1995:56).

The family-like community entailed obligations that were beyond the waged employment (du Toit 1993, 1995). The farmers expected commitment from the workers and the latter expected benefits such as food rations and protection. “It was paternalistic discourse that provided the framework within which claim and counter-claims could be made and justified” (du Toit 1995). Wages were paid in kind and some scholars argue that the provision of welfarist rations was not a sign of generosity but was a mechanism to control the workers (du Toit 1995; Nasson 1984).

The obligations were not legislated; hence paternalism relied on local traditions that legitimated the hegemonic control of the farmer (du Toit 1993). Under this framework the farmers insisted on the special family relationship and argued that any outside influence would threaten the harmonious relationship that existed between farmer and worker (du Toit 1993; 1995). Paternalism offered protection for farm workers but at the same time trapped them in unequal power relations of dependency, which could limit possibilities of resistance (du Toit 1995). The scholarly genealogy of paternalism in South Africa refers narrowly to the history of social relations on commercial farms in the Western Cape and its application to other parts of South Africa may not be generalised.

More recently, there is widespread agreement among scholars that traditional paternalism is being eroded as farmers battle to adjust to new government policies. The restructuring of the agricultural sector, which resulted in the loss of substantial state subsidies and tariff protections, has partly resulted in some farmers failing to cope (Addison 2006; Atkinson 2007; Hamman 1996; Wegerif, Russell and Grundling 2005). For example, Hamman (1996) noted that the increasing costs of operations due to deregulation resulted in some farmers introducing rentals for housing on farms. Some farmers adopted the concept of “productive house”, whereby every household had to provide at least two adults to work for the farmer and rental costs were then calculated on a family rather than an individual basis (Hamman 1996). A survey of some commercial farms by du Toit (2004) found that 11 per cent of farmhouses on 77 farms were not occupied. In an extreme case, Ewert and du Toit (2002) found that farmers knocked down worker housing. In these specific cases farmers blame operational costs and tenure legislation. Tenure legislation had an effect on land, labour and social relations as Ewert and du Toit’s (2002) study found that farmers preferred not to employ those aged above 40 in order to avoid having their farm workers qualify for life-long tenure under ESTA.

With the advent of pro-worker legislation and tenure laws in post-apartheid South Africa, studies indicate that many farmers have shown a significant reluctance to provide paternalistic rations for farm workers as a component of “social responsibility” of the welfarist era (Addison 2006; du Toit 2004; Ewert and du Toit 2002). In the entire survey

of farm workers on 42 wine and fruit farms, Hamman (1996) found no “single farm where food or substantial amounts of farm produce still forms [formed] part of the remuneration package”. As a result of the minimum wage some farmers have withdrawn the welfarist services they used to give to their workers (Atkinson 2007; du Toit 2004; du Toit and Ally 2004). Du Toit (2004) notes that workers’ access to social services is no longer dependent on the farmers’ goodwill. Atkinson (2007) and Wegerif, Russell and Grundling (2005) note that where farmers still provide the welfarist services, farm workers pay for them through monetary deductions from their meagre wages.

2.4. The total institution and domestic governance

The total institution thesis is one of the theoretical paradigms used to understand relationships on farms. This perspective emphasises the ways in which farmers exerted control over farm workers’ lives. The term “total institution”⁷ was first coined by Goffman (1961) and later made famous by Michel Foucault to show the ways in which prisons and hospitals ensure total control over the inmates. The lives of the inmates were subjected to institutional surveillance (Foucault 1977, 1987). In his study of farm schools in the Western Cape, Nasson (1988) argued that South African farms are similar to total institutions like prisons and hospitals. In this situation dominance is exerted over the farm workers and their lives and livelihoods are regulated in a way that is impossible to resist. This is related to Rutherford’s (1997, 2001a) concept of domestic governance which described the way farm workers’ living and working conditions in Zimbabwe were regulated by the unilateral decisions of the farm owner rather than by public procedures (Rutherford 1997, 2001a:11-13). Both concepts emphasise the hegemonic power of farm owners over the farm workers, which is hardly regulated by external or public influence.

Other scholars have criticised the total institution thesis arguing that the dominance of farm owners over the lives of farm workers was not absolute (du Toit 1993, 1995; Graaff, Louw and van der Merwe 1990). They argue that South African farms are now more

⁷ This term was coined by the US sociologist Erving Goffman (1961) when discussing prisons and mental hospitals

“porous” to outside influence in the form of radios, television, migrant labour, urban influences and activities of NGOs (du Toit 1993, 1995; Graaf, Louw and Van der Merwe 1990). More recent research also shows that the degree of closure is now compromised by activities of trade unions and community organisers even though they are limited (Addison 2006; Ewert and du Toit 2005; Rutherford and Addison 2007; SAHRC 2003). Nevertheless, some commentators still explain that the low rate of trade union membership amongst farm workers in Limpopo province, “with estimates ranging between 6% and 7%”, is due to the difficulty in accessing the farms that are closed to the outside world (SAHRC 2003; Wegerif, Russell and Grundling 2005).

2.5. Political economy of migrant labour

Scholars have analysed migration dynamics from different theoretical perspectives and I will explore the debate from a historical materialist approach. My interest in reviewing this literature is linked to general information in regard to statistical data in my area of study. Various estimates indicate that about 20 000 Zimbabweans are living and working in the Soutpansberg zone⁸, which suggests that about 80 per cent of the agricultural labour force is Zimbabwean (IOM 2004). Similarly, a survey of four commercial farms in this zone by Rutherford and Addison (2007) show that 82 per cent of the farm labour force is from Zimbabwe.

Historical materialist writers argued that migrant labour was part of the accumulation strategies of South Africa’s capitalist economy (Crush, Jeeves and Yudelman 1991; Murray 1981; Posel 1991). The central argument was that migrants were cheaper than local South Africans (Crush, Jeeves and Yudelman 1991). Recent research on migrant labour vindicates this view: A key finding among scholars is that commercial farmers in Limpopo province employ migrants because they are desperate and vulnerable to exploitative practices, such as the payment of wages below the minimum wage (Addison 2006; Human Rights Watch 2006; Lahiff 2000; Rutherford and Addison 2007; SAHRC 2003). Addison (2006) emphasises that the employment of migrant labour is one of the

⁸ My area of study is located in the Soutpansberg zone

responses by farmers to the neo-liberal restructuring of the agricultural sector in South Africa.

However, this accumulation strategy arises from more than wage differentials as farmers seek to benefit from the “docility” of the migrant labour and the opportunities to institute ethnic control of the labour system (Johnson 2007; Moodie 1994; Murray 1981). Another reason was that migrants pose fewer threats to the control of land by white farmers given the new farm tenure legislation that gives farm workers certain rights to claim secure tenure rights to land (Addison 2006; Atkinson 2007; Lahiff 1997, 2000). Lahiff (1997) highlights how some commercial farmers in Limpopo province evicted locals and replaced them with Zimbabweans at a time when the post-apartheid government introduced farm labour and tenure legislation. One of the limitations of the historical materialist approach is that it gives little attention to non-economic considerations. Consequently, a range of research that focuses on socio-political and religious reasons has emerged (Beinart 1987; Coplan 1994; Harries 1994, Rutherford and Addison 2007).

2.6. Structure and agency

The theoretical paradigms explored so far, apart from the works of social historians, present farm workers as passive victims. However, economic considerations or institutional factors do not exert absolute control over people’s lives as individuals do have the choice to respond to such structures (Giddens 1986, 1989). This philosophy emerges from proponents of the subaltern school of thought who argue that workers are independent agents who engage in their own forms of action (Guha 1974; Arnold 1984). Based on the work of Giddens (1986) some scholars advance the structuration approach as a way to understand farm relations (Graaff, Louw and Van der Merwe 1990; Rutherford 1997). These scholars argue that farm workers do have choices that assist them to shape their destiny. Rutherford, (1997, 2001a), in his study of commercial farms in Zimbabwe, also challenges the limited discourse of understanding farm workers in terms of their “belonging to the farm(er)” which undermines understanding the agency of the farm workers. This has resulted in the exclusion of most farm workers in national development projects. Rutherford (2001b) emphasised that it is imperative to look at the

strategies and practices of farm workers through which they struggle to make livelihoods and build on them.

Another related theory some scholars use to understand farm workers' daily struggles is through Scott's (1985) sociological model of "everyday resistance". Scott (1985) argued that peasants and workers engage in covert actions through which they try to improve their position in agrarian class relations. He emphasised individual acts of resistance like sabotage, arson and acts of petty revenge. These "weapons of the weak" (Scott 1985) may have great effects. This analytical approach was criticised by other scholars (e.g. Hart 1991; Korovkin 2000; Walker 2008). Korokvin (2000), in her analysis of peasants in Ecuador, argued that there is a shift from covert to overt peasants and workers' organisation. More recently, in a study of peasant politics in China, Walker (2008:463) argues that since the mid-1980s, rural collective and overt protests have "become the everyday form of Chinese peasant politics".

In a study of farm workers on two commercial farms in Limpopo, South Africa, Addison (2006) had two contrasting findings. On Maswiri Boerdery citrus farm Addison (2006: 91-108) details how farm workers transcended the traditional forms of covert resistance by engaging in a mass strike over payment regimens in 2005, while on an adjacent farm the farm workers still largely resorted to acts of petty resistance. This vindicates my argument, following Werner, Stankovitch and Bradbury (2001) that the world of social relations on commercial farms is complex and each farm may provide a distinct terrain upon which land, labour and social relations unfold.

2.7. Conceptual framework

In the next section I discuss my conceptual framework based on three models of analysing how farm workers and farm owners relate as founded by Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks (2000). The three scholars characterised the main frameworks in which most scholarly initiatives and political interventions have understood and addressed problems of farm workers in post-colonial Zimbabwe and identified two models: the

workerist and the welfarist models. In an apparent oversight, Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks (2000) do not provide the scholarly genealogy of the models yet they constantly refer to their “proponents”. Nevertheless, the scholars argue that the two models are inadequate and go further to develop the transformative model as an adequate tool to analyse social relations on commercial farms. The transformative model is both analytical and prescriptive. To the best of my knowledge this threefold typology model has not been applied in mainstream analysis of land, labour and social relations on South African commercial farms in post-apartheid South Africa. I shall discuss how the three models can be a basis for analysing relations between farm workers and farm owners.

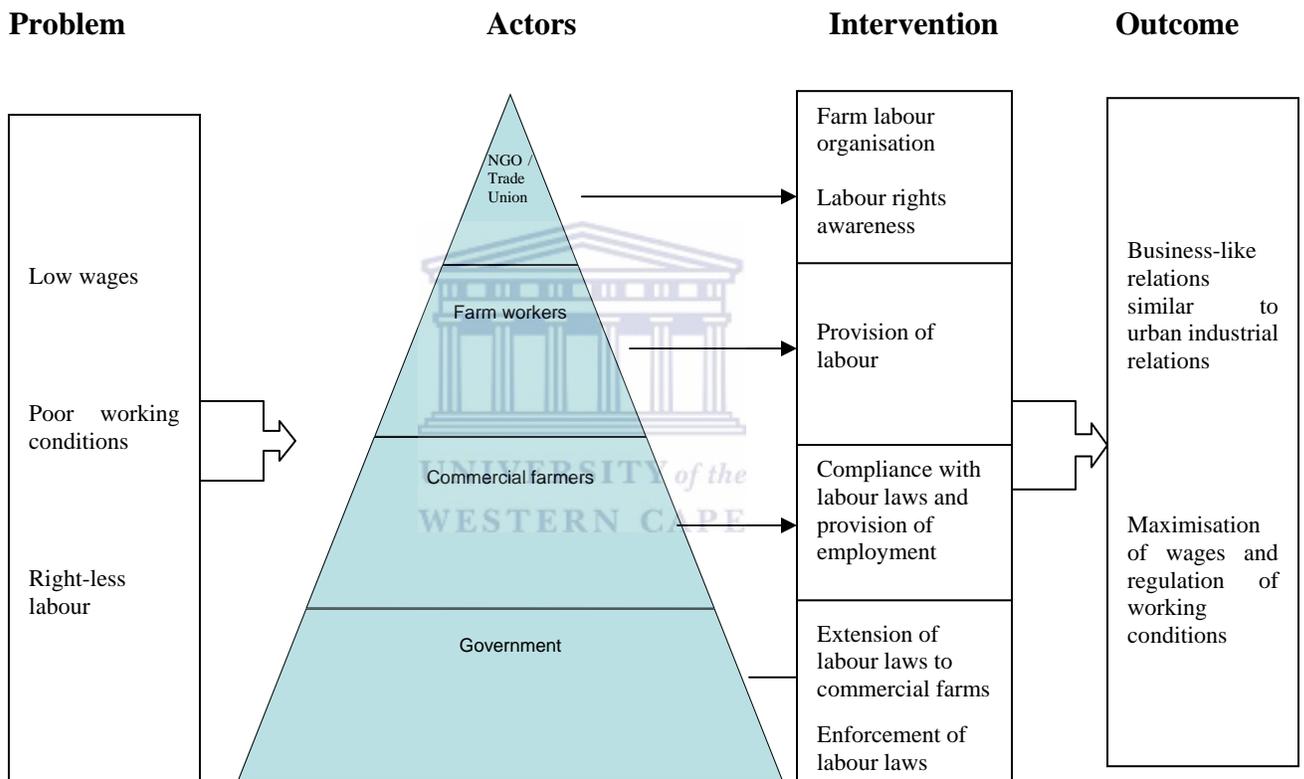
2.7.1. *Workerist model*

The essence of the workerist model is that academics can analyse social relations by looking at farm workers solely as proletarians (Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks 2000). According to the three scholars, proponents of the workerist model note that an analysis of struggles over wages and working conditions provides a better understanding of how farmers and farm workers relate. Beyond the wage labour relations other issues are secondary. These arguments are consistent with neo-Marxist perspectives advanced by Krikler (1987) and Marcus (1989) that analysing farm workers’ struggles for wages and working conditions in the context of capitalist relations of production is the pinnacle of understanding social relations. Other proponents of the workerist school of thought argue that current capitalist agriculture actually benefits farm workers more than any attempts to provide them with land for their own farming (Sender and Johnston 2004). According to Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks (2000) relations in this setting are presumed to be characterised by business-like relationships that are similar to labour relations that exist in the urban setting.

At a prescriptive level, proponents of the workerist model argue that the government should extend labour rights and minimum wage legislation to farm workers. To these advocates of the workerist model the state should play a more central role in regulating

labour relations between farm owners and farm workers (Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks 2000). Trade unions are also envisaged to play a prominent role in ensuring that farmers adhere to the labour laws. The unions' role is defined as that of fighting for maximisation of wages and labour rights. The model can be shown diagrammatically below:

Figure 1: The workerist model



Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks (2000) criticise the workerist model as a way to adequately understand the way in which farmers and farm workers relate. They argue that the workerist model ignores the struggles for land and land rights that distinguishes farm workers from urban industrial workers. To them the main role of the trade unions should be to fight for land and land rights. Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks (2000) further argue that often farm workers engage in their own agricultural activities and micro-trade

activities on privately-owned commercial farms, which exposes the inadequacy of the workerist model in describing the nature of farm worker livelihoods.

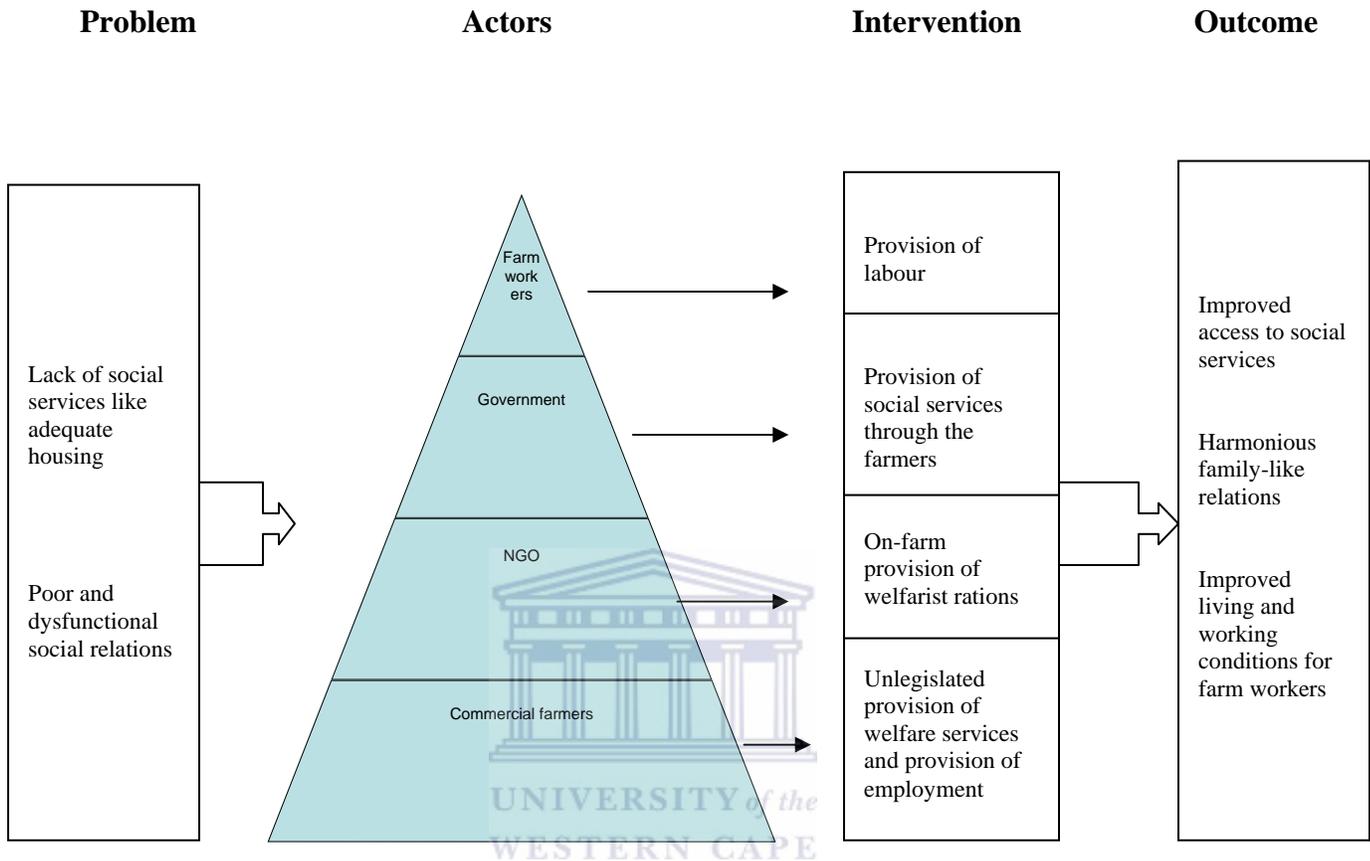
2.7.2. *Welfarist model*

The fulcrum of the welfarist model is that the politics of farm workers' access to social and welfare services shape relations between workers and farm owners (Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks 2000). According to Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks (2000), master-servant and paternalistic relationships usually characterise the way farm workers and farm owners relate under a welfarist model. This shows that paternalism can only be one component of welfarism.

The welfarist model is based on the philosophy that the farm is a family-like community where welfarist provisions constitute an expression of goodwill by the farm owner (Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks 2000). This characterisation is analogous to Dooling's (1992) description of the farm as a family community where the farmer acts as the father providing for his family [the farm workers]. Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks (2000) argue that to advocates of the welfarist model the farm is best understood as a stable institution where outside interventions against the will of the farmer constitute a threat to the family-like relations which are largely beneficial to farm workers in terms of access to social services.

As articulated by Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks (2000), proponents of the welfarist model prescribe the continued provision of voluntary and welfarist services to farm workers in order to improve the living and working conditions of farm workers. Government and NGOs may play a role, based on the terms and conditions of the farm owner. In South Africa, this is illustrated by the activities of the Rural Foundation that aimed to improve the welfare of farm workers through provision of social services as highlighted by Mayson (1990). The model can be depicted diagrammatically as shown below:

Figure 2: The welfarist model



Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks (2000) do not accept the welfarist model as an adequate way to understand the complex world of social relations nor as a prescription for change, for three reasons. Firstly, they argue that welfarist provisions need to be analysed not only as acts of kindness but as tools of control that place farm workers in a relationship of dependency and patronage. Secondly, they argue that proponents of the welfarist model promote the existence of a farm as private property closed from public interference. In this setting social relations are regulated by the unilateral decisions of the farm owner articulated by Rutherford (1997) as domestic governance. Thirdly, and more importantly to them, the welfarist model ignores the centrality of the politics of land and land rights in understanding social relations on commercial farms.

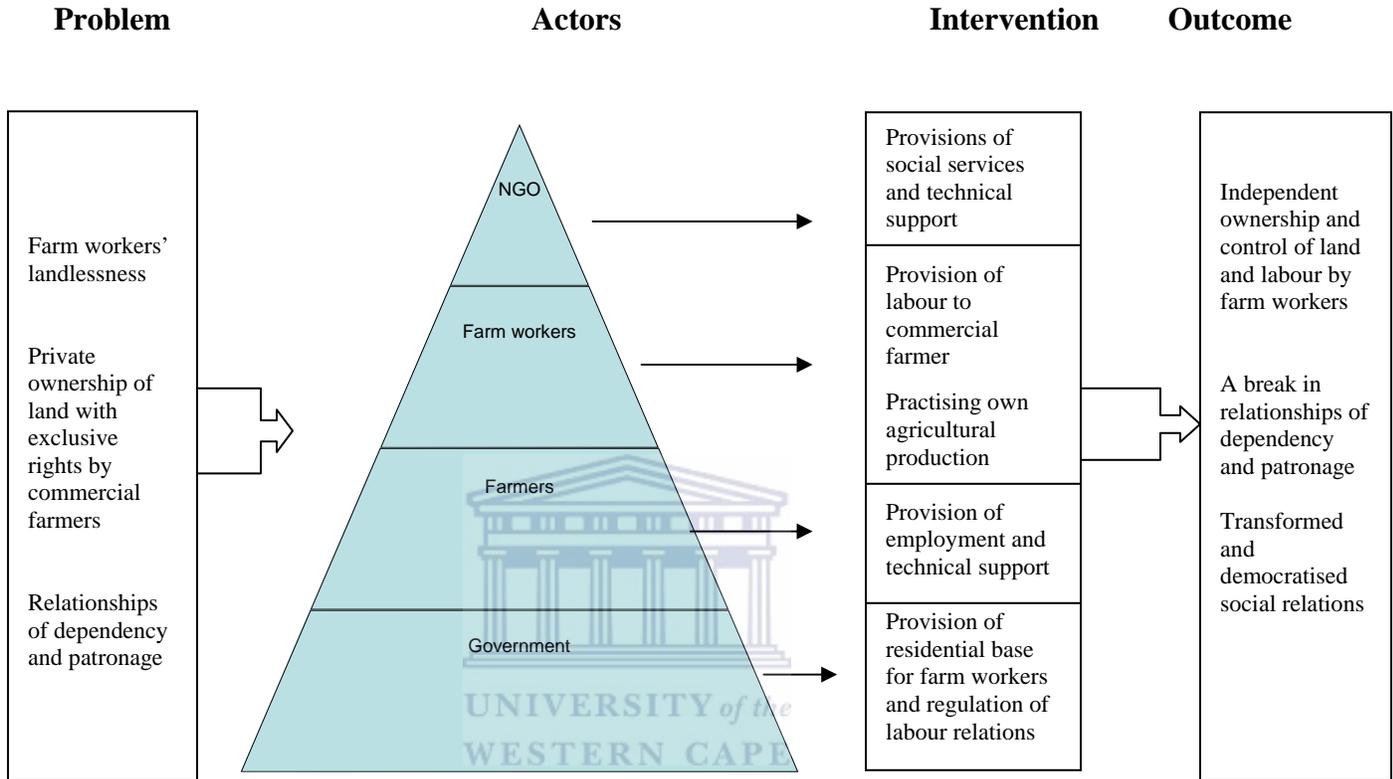
2.7.3 Transformative model

The transformative model was developed by Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks (2000) in response to their analysis that the workerist and welfarist models are conceptually inadequate and lead to inappropriate prescriptions for farm workers based on social welfare or labour rights. The essence of the transformative model is that the politics of land ownership and land access is central to researchers' understanding of structural conditions of poverty and the exploitative social relations that exist on commercial farms (Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks 2000). According to the three scholars, agrarian relations are best understood in terms of unequal land ownership. To Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks (2000) ownership of land is the *ultimate* source of power and landlessness forces farm workers to be in exploitative labour relationships. This is analogous to a widespread argument that lack of land amongst farm workers forces them to remain in subservient relationships of patronage (Ewert and du Toit 2005; May 2000; Moyo 2004).

The transformative model also has a prescriptive element in that it advances the provision of "a residential base for farm workers" within the proximity of the farm (Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks 2000:195). Farm workers will get independent tenure security, houses and opportunities for self-agricultural activities but at the same time maintain employment with the farmers (Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks 2000). In their view this undermines the dependency relationship and increases the bargaining power of farm workers. Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks' (2000) argument corresponds with Griffin, Khan and Ickowitz's (2002) thesis that access to an independent piece of land significantly increases the bargaining powers of rural wage workers. Another concern of this transformative school of thought is that redistribution of assets will "rupture the systems of labour controls and bring to an end the monopoly and monopsony powers of large landowners" (Griffin, Khan and Ickowitz 2002:283-4). The government is envisaged to play a central role in both providing the land and regulating the employment relationship.

The diagram below illustrates the transformative model.

Figure 3: The transformative model



2.8. Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed attempts by different groups of scholars to explore and make meaning of land, labour and social relations on commercial farms. The materialist perspective outlined that on-farm social relations are shaped by the mode of production whereas the paternalism school of thought argues that relations are also shaped by culture, identity and micro-politics. Another related framework for analysis is the total institution that explains on farm relations in the context of the farm being cut off from outside influence. The materialist theory is also related to the dynamics of migrant labour. However, I also note that farm workers are not just victims in this web of

relations but also use their agency. This chapter ends by discussing the three models that provide a holistic guide to analyse both primary and secondary data. In the next chapter, I discuss the research design, methodology and methods upon which the thesis is based.



CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The research approach to my study is informed by the interpretive and critical social science perspectives that advocate the adoption of qualitative methods of research. In an attempt to explain the research strategy, I first relate the basic philosophical assumptions of the two perspectives to my study and briefly mention how the approaches have been of significance to studies on farm workers in the past. Secondly, I explain the research design and specific research methods used to meet the research objectives. The chapter also reveals the ethical considerations built into the study.



3.2. Interpretive Social Science (ISS)

The interpretive social science (ISS) perspective can be traced to Marx Weber (1864-1920) and William Dilthey (1833-1911) (Neuman 1997, 2000). It emerged as an alternative to the positivist school of Auguste Comte (1798-1857) which was the main research approach in the natural science field (Hughes 1990). The thrust of the positivist perspective was that science is objective and could be explained by answering empirical questions rather than questions about human values (Yin 1984). Dilthey (1833-1911) (cited in Neuman 2003:76) asserted that ISS is founded on an empathetic understanding of social life and “the goal ...is to develop an understanding of social life and discover how people construct meaning in natural settings”. ISS adopts a practical orientation concerned with how people relate and interact in their daily lives.

ISS emerged from the thinking that science is value laden and subjective (Neuman 2000). The study of land, labour and social relations on a commercial farm could not be best explained by quantitative measurements because as Hughes (1990) noted, human behaviour can not be explained by natural or universal laws of action. ISS is based on an

in-depth understanding of social behaviour (Neuman 2003) which I pursued in understanding how farm workers and the farm owner relate on the commercial farm.

An ISS approach favours qualitative data hence the research methods I used in the study included field observation and open-ended interviews. Consequently I had to spend some time living with the studied group. This helped me to analyse farm workers' voices and sentiments in the context of their daily survival. According to Chileshe (2005), "the interpretive approach holds that patterns of human behaviour are not due to pre-existing laws but they are created from the evolving systems of meaning generated through social interaction." Therefore it was important for me to observe and understand the daily interactions of the actors related to my study.

Other scholars have used an ISS approach in studies related to on-farm relations, for example, in du Toit's (1993, 1995) studies on the micro politics of paternalism on commercial farms. His main aim was to look at how paternalism marginalises the voices of farm workers. Addison (2006) took into consideration the perspectives of farm workers in his study of migrant farm labour. He managed to explore localised labour and social relations on particular commercial farms. The ISS approach has also influenced and shaped other studies of farm workers such as Mayson (2003) and Tom (2006).

The research approach can be criticised for taking a micro-level analysis while not putting much emphasis on the broader context. This is one of the most criticised aspects of the ISS approach (Chileshe 2005; Neuman 1997, 2000, 2003).

3.3. Critical Social Science (CSS)

The critical social science approach is traced back to Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), and was further developed by other scholars such as Theodor Adorno (1903-1969) (Neuman 2003:81). CSS views social science as "a critical process of inquiry that goes beyond surface illusions to uncover the real structures in the

material world in order to help change conditions and build a better world for themselves [for the studied groups]” (Neuman 2003:81).

The central aim of CSS researchers is to *change* social relations through exposing underlying structural conditions that shape social relations. According to the CSS philosophy, research informed by the interpretive approach could become too subjective and ignore the actual conditions in which social relations unfold (Neuman 1997, 2000, 2003). For example an ISS approach may obscure important issues of structural or material conditions that may result in research findings reflecting “cultural or psychological attitudes” (Johnston 2007:500). The CSS researchers argue that it is through understanding the actual conditions that one can recommend possible interventions that empower the less privileged.

I make reference to structural forces in explaining the ways in which land, labour and social relations are changing on the commercial farm I studied. Other scholars have also partly used the CSS approach; for example, Addison’s (2006) study on farm workers’ living and working conditions and how they practice politics is partly guided by elements of historical materialism and the premises of materialist analysis. Nevertheless, my main focus was on perceptions of the farming community and their subjective meanings so as to obtain information that may enrich the empathetic understanding of what transpires on the commercial farm.

Beyond the case study, to relate the perceptions of farm workers with actual conditions, I relied on information from key informants, various government officials and some NGO workers.

3.4. Choice of study area

The study was carried out in Limpopo province because it provides an opportunity to learn about land, labour and social relations on commercial farms. This is because of the centrality of agriculture as an employer, the development of land reform projects that affect farm workers, the widespread presence of migrant farm labourers⁹ and widespread poverty among its populace. Limpopo province remains one of the poorest provinces in South Africa. About 90 per cent of its population lives in the rural areas and it has the worst indicators of poverty of all provinces in the country and an official unemployment rate of 34 per cent (HRW 2006).

Limpopo province's total land area covers 11 960 600 hectares of which 10 548 290 hectares constitute farm land (DoA 2006a). Of this farm land 37.7 per cent is suitable for arable farming, 50.1 per cent for grazing and 12.2 per cent is suitable for wildlife (DoA 2006b). There are about 5 000 farming units in Limpopo province (Statistics South Africa 2002). White farmers who mainly practice large scale farming occupy about 70 per cent of the total land area (DoA 2006b). These farmers engage in varied production that includes livestock, citrus, vegetables and game farming.

Limpopo is largely a rich commercial agricultural area. About 45 percent of the R2 billion annual turnover of the Johannesburg fresh produce market comes from the agricultural industry in Limpopo (DoA 2006b). Limpopo also produces about 25 per cent of South Africa's citrus fruit (DoA 2006b). Agriculture contributes about 16 per cent of the gross geographic product of the province (DoA 2006a). The significance of agriculture is greater when one considers downstream and upstream industry that is interrelated to other sectors of the local economy.

⁹ Estimates indicate that about 60 000 Zimbabweans are living and working in the province and a significant percentage of the migrants are working on the commercial farms (IOM 2004).

The commercial farming sector employs about 17.5 percent of the economically active population in Limpopo (Statistics South Africa 2002). This makes agriculture an important provider of employment. The major component of the labour force is seasonal labour (DoA 2006a). There is a trend towards casualisation of jobs as permanent jobs are being replaced by contract or piece work arrangements (Rutherford and Addison 2007).

There are complex land reform developments in the area that challenge the ownership of farm land in the province. Recent figures indicate that about 70 per cent of white owned farms in Limpopo are under claim from black communities under the Restitution of Land Rights Act No. 22 of 1994 (Derman, Lahiff and Sjaastad 2006). This development provides an opportunity to look at what land reform means for farm workers.

The living and working conditions of those who work the land is under researched. The above factors provide an opportunity to learn and provide knowledge on the nature and factors shaping land, labour and social relations on commercial farms.

3.5. Research Design

Initially, I was undecided about whether to choose one or two case studies for the thesis. The choice was between depth and breadth given the limited time and scope of a mini-thesis. Since my study is based on interpretive social science philosophy, which entails a qualitative approach, the thesis focus is on depth rather than breadth. However, following Sayer (1984), Cousins (1995) noted that this difficulty transcends the depth versus breath argument as it centres on the choice between extensive and intensive research designs. Intensive research tends to focus on explaining how certain processes work in a particular setting, whereas extensive research aims to provide descriptive general patterns applicable to a broader population (Cousins 1995; Sayer 1984).

Intensive research usually uses qualitative methods for an emic understanding of the studied group. On the other hand, extensive research tends to use quantitative research methods. My study has a focus on how farm workers actually relate to farm owners which is typical of an intensive research focus. This approach differs from extensive

research which tends to focus on “taxonomic groups” whose relations are formal or who may not actually interact with each other (Sayer 1984; Cousins 1995:64).

Given the nature of the study, time limitations and the scope of a minithesis, I settled on a single case study [Manor Farm]¹⁰ for an intensive ethnographic study. Manor Farm was also studied by Addison (2006). However, Addison (2006:90) acknowledges that he “may place undue emphasis on the stability of labour relations” on the farm. He studied two farms and admits that there is “somewhat uneven treatment to the two case studies, as the Maswiri case receives more attention” (Addison 2006:90-91). He spent only four days at [Manor Farm] as compared to ten days at Maswiri which left him “with more information about Maswiri” (Addison 2006:91). This study is an attempt to carry a more in-depth investigation on the nature of land, labour and social relations on Manor Farm.

3.5.1. *Sampling*

After identifying my case study I moved on to the selection of respondents. Initially I set a specific number (30) for farm worker interviews but later changed my approach and focused more on covering a broad range of different actors on the farm¹¹, for example: men and women, the young and the old, the new workers and the old employees, the migrants and the locals, the seasonal and the permanent farm workers, the managers and the owner. It was important for me to cover the range because these differences were likely to influence variations in experiences and perceptions.

However within these different categories my focus was not on the numbers as, “[t]he purpose [in an ISS approach] is less to generalise to a large population than it is to gain a deeper understanding” (Neuman 2003:213). As the interviews progressed amongst the different groups, I would be referred to different informants who had particular living and working experiences. I would then follow up for interviews, a process best described by Bentzon et al (1998) as the “dung beetle” method of sampling or snowballing.

¹⁰ Manor Farm is the pseudonym of the farm I studied

¹¹ In total I eventually interviewed 42 farm workers.

Nevertheless I made sure that this approach would not distract me from my objective of covering different actors.

Since I had resolved not to determine optimum and maximum number of interviews, I stopped when the interviews started producing the same threads and issues over and over again in such a way that new information could hardly be obtained. This technique of sampling data until no new data is likely to emerge is scientifically known as “sampling to redundancy” (Durkheim 1938:45). This ensures high quality ethnographic data. The reason for “sampling to redundancy” (Durkheim 1938:45) was to ensure that though my results may not be generalisable to land, labour and social relations on other farms they would at least be transferable to other farm workers on the same commercial farm. Durkheim (1938:45) argues that it is more convincing to transfer findings when one had used the technique of sampling to redundancy.

3.6. Field Methods

Having decided my research approach, study area and sampling techniques I used qualitative research methods in order to obtain the data. Therefore, field methods included observation, semi-structured and open-ended interviews, which were carried out in different periods between 2007 and 2008. I made four study visits to the research site.

The first visit to the research site in May 2007 was mainly exploratory. The visit helped me to get a basic understanding about the farm size, nature of production, livelihoods, size of labour force and living conditions. I carried out oral interviews with the farm owner and with the farm workers. This visit enriched my background information about the commercial farm obtained from Addison’s (2006) study of the same farm. This general information and an understanding of the farm later helped me to sharpen the development of the research proposal for this study.

The second visit was in mid-February 2008. I had an opportunity to interview the farmer and the farm workers on whether there were any changes in the living and working

conditions of farm workers. Observation was also a key component of the first and second visits. The second visit enabled me to establish links with the farm workers and farm owner as some could give me their personal contact details. The visit also helped to build trust with the farm workers and the farm owner. The relationship of trust was helpful later on when I was conducting open-ended interviews and semi-structured interviews on the nature of land, labour and social relations existing on the farm.

My third and fourth visits were in late February and the end of June 2008 respectively. This is when I had consistent time to observe. I used observation, carried out open-ended interviews and semi-structured interviews with the respondents as detailed in the following sections.

3.6.1. Observation

During my third visit I spent a week (from February 23- 28) residing at the farm to record my impressions of both the study area and the activities of the studied group as well as to conduct interviews. As Neuman (2003) suggested, I used all the senses, what I saw (compound houses), smelled (from the ablution facilities), heard (perceptions on the situation), tasted (the traditional brew) or touched (the thorny lemon trees). According to Neuman (2003:381) “field researchers believe that the core of social life is communicated through the mundane, trivial, everyday minutiae.” Observation provided a background context to help me understand the responses I received from in-depth and semi-structured oral interviews.

Bentzon et al (1998:156) warn researchers of differences that may occur between what people say are their operative norms and their actual practices. For my study the farm owner and farm managers were articulate about the official line they were supposed to be following. It could have been easy to be hoodwinked into this ideal world where land, labour and social relations have positively changed. Bentzon et al (1998:156) state that an appropriate method should reveal some of the differences between the envisaged and what actually happens in a setting.

During observation I openly introduced myself and my research intention, what Whyte (1991) called an overt approach. Some of the farm workers were not impressed by the academic study intention because given their dire conditions they prefer research that promises to change their conditions. Nevertheless, I did not compromise on my overt approach and this expectation from the studied group wore off as the research progressed.

3.6.2. Open-ended interviews

According to Bentzon et al (1998) one of the most effective methods of collecting qualitative data is through open-ended interviews. The open-ended interviews were unstructured and involved asking open questions, listening, further probing and recording the information. The interviews were in a conversational style and the discussions would lead up to the next question, hence I had the space to follow up on important issues raised by the respondent and probe deeply on unclear issues. At times I would adjust questions to take into account specific farm worker conditions and according to Bentzon et al (1998:162) this type of flexibility is the hallmark of good research. The perceptions of the farm workers, farm managers and farm owner revealed subjective meanings, which were important in providing answers to the ways in which land, labour and social relations are perceived to be changing or not on the commercial farm.

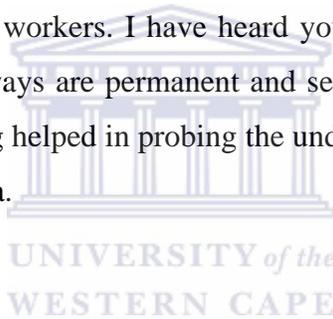
I also used triangulation, which meant asking the same question to different actors so as to verify some of the information (Bentzon et al 1998; Neuman 1997, 2000, 2003) and to expose any different perceptions.

3.6.3. Semi-structured interviews

After identifying general thematic areas based on the open-ended interviews I then developed an interview guide which I used in interviews with government officials, farm managers, farm owner, farm workers and key informants. The main idea was to obtain insights relevant to specific themes. I interviewed officials from the departments of

labour; land affairs; local government and key informants from Nkuzi Development Association; and the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS). This approach draws mainly from CSS perspective that seeks to understand the actual conditions rather than mere subjective meanings of the studied group.

I could discern that “descriptive, structural and contrast” (Neuman 2003:393) types of questions were central in my field interviews. The descriptive questions were usually about the farm workers’ experiences and activities, such as, “Could you tell me about the activities that you do on the farm?” Structural questions would come after obtaining certain information, for example, “Are there any type of residents other than the workers who stay in the compound?” In other instances contrast questions would come up in order to obtain information about contradictions and to explain them; for example, “You seem to have different categories of workers. I have heard you call some permanent and you call others seasonal. In what ways are permanent and seasonal workers different?” This kind of approach to questioning helped in probing the underlying issues and enriching the quality of my ethnographic data.



3.7. Data analysis

In the past, most qualitative researchers did not explain how they analysed data (Neuman 2003). Bentzon et al (1998) argued that there is no given single standard to the analysis of qualitative data. There are seven strategies researchers may use to analyse qualitative data: the narrative; ideal types; successive approximation; the illustrative method; path dependency and contingency; domain analysis; and analytic comparison (Neuman 2003:47). I used the narrative approach so as to provide concrete details of the findings and the illustrative method so as to relate the data to theory and the conceptual framework.

Once I had the raw data collected during fieldwork, transcripts of interviews plus personal observations in the form of field notes, I manually coded the data into themes or concepts. For example, information on the provision of electricity would be placed under

housing and services. From there I tried to link the themes into the broader conceptual framework like considering whether the provision of housing and services by the farm owner is a case of welfarism. Establishing this relationship between concepts helped me to weave my data into the broader workerist, welfarist and transformative conceptual models. Patterns emerged, which showed changes in some aspects of land, labour and social relations as well as continuities with the past.

3.8. Ethical considerations

The interpretive social science and the critical social science perspectives both recognise an ethical dimension to research. My research was on human informants, mainly farm workers, so there was a need to build ethical practice into the research design. The information I was collecting on land, labour and social relations was very sensitive. There were potential costs to the farm workers if the farm owner or manager was to know the names of respondents exposing the unsavoury part of labour relations on the farm. Exposing informants could possibly result in loss of a job, which would also mean losing one's tenure on the farm. The principles of voluntary and informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality guided my ethical practice.

3.8.1. Voluntary and informed consent

While conducting my interviews I used the overt approach, whereby the objectives of the study were explained to the respondents who were then asked for permission to conduct the interviews. In most of the interviews the farm workers gave me voluntary verbal consent to record their interviews and use the information for my thesis.

3.8.2. Anonymity

Prior to the interviews, farm workers, managers and owner were informed that their real names were not going to be used. Consequently I use pseudonyms for farm workers,

managers and owner cited in this thesis. However, I use the real names for my key informants as they raised no objection to that. At times it was difficult to protect the subject's identity. For example, there was only one black manager on the farm and with this information one could tell the real identity of the specific respondent even though his real name was never recorded. However, the possibility of identifying the subject's identity was minimised by using a pseudonym for the farm. Given the complexity I also applied the ethical principle of confidentiality highlighted below.

3.8.3. Confidentiality

During my stay on the farm, the owner requested information from me on what the farm workers were saying. Due to ethical consideration and a sense of moral duty I chose not to reveal the details at that stage though I risked having my stay cut short by the temperamental owner. However, the owner backed down and I promised to give him an overview of the workers' views at the end of my study in a summary form. The information will be guided by strict ethical principles of anonymity and confidentiality. Following Dison (2007:29) the information will be presented to the farm owner in "relation to research themes rather than in terms of the narrative of a particular person".

3.9. Conclusion

I have outlined how the research was designed in order to get an in-depth understanding of changing land, labour and social relations within a farming setting. I have explained the philosophical motivations for choosing a qualitative research methodology and a single case study. The sampling techniques for farm workers and the particular research methods (observation and interviews) were also detailed in the chapter. I also presented the ethical considerations critical to this study. Data analysis techniques were also outlined. I have hinted at the tensions that emerged during the research process and how they were addressed. In the following chapter I present my research findings from Manor Farm and my analysis of these findings.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the study site and empirical findings from Manor Farm. I present the data in a narrative way, in what some scholars call the “realist tale approach” (Neuman 2003), so as to capture the perceptions of the studied group in detail. The data is presented under five themes namely: wage-ration nexus; housing; trade unionisation; land and own production; and dynamics of migrant labour.

4.2. Study Site

Manor Farm is located in rural Tshipise in the far north of Limpopo about 30 kilometres from Musina town. There are a lot of commercial farms in the area, as shown by Figure 4. The farm covers a total land area of 5 340 hectares (Squealer 2008: pers.comm). The farm is owned by a white commercial farmer who bought about 4 840 hectares, in 1982 and a portion of 500 hectares in 2007 (Bismarck 2008: pers.comm). About 430 hectares are under citrus production and 4 840 hectares are under game farming, livestock production and housing for farm dwellers (Squealer 2008: pers.comm). The owner claims he keeps about 800 goats to sell to the local market though farm workers claim that the goats are not used for any purposes. Game farming is limited and there are only small animals like buck and kudu.

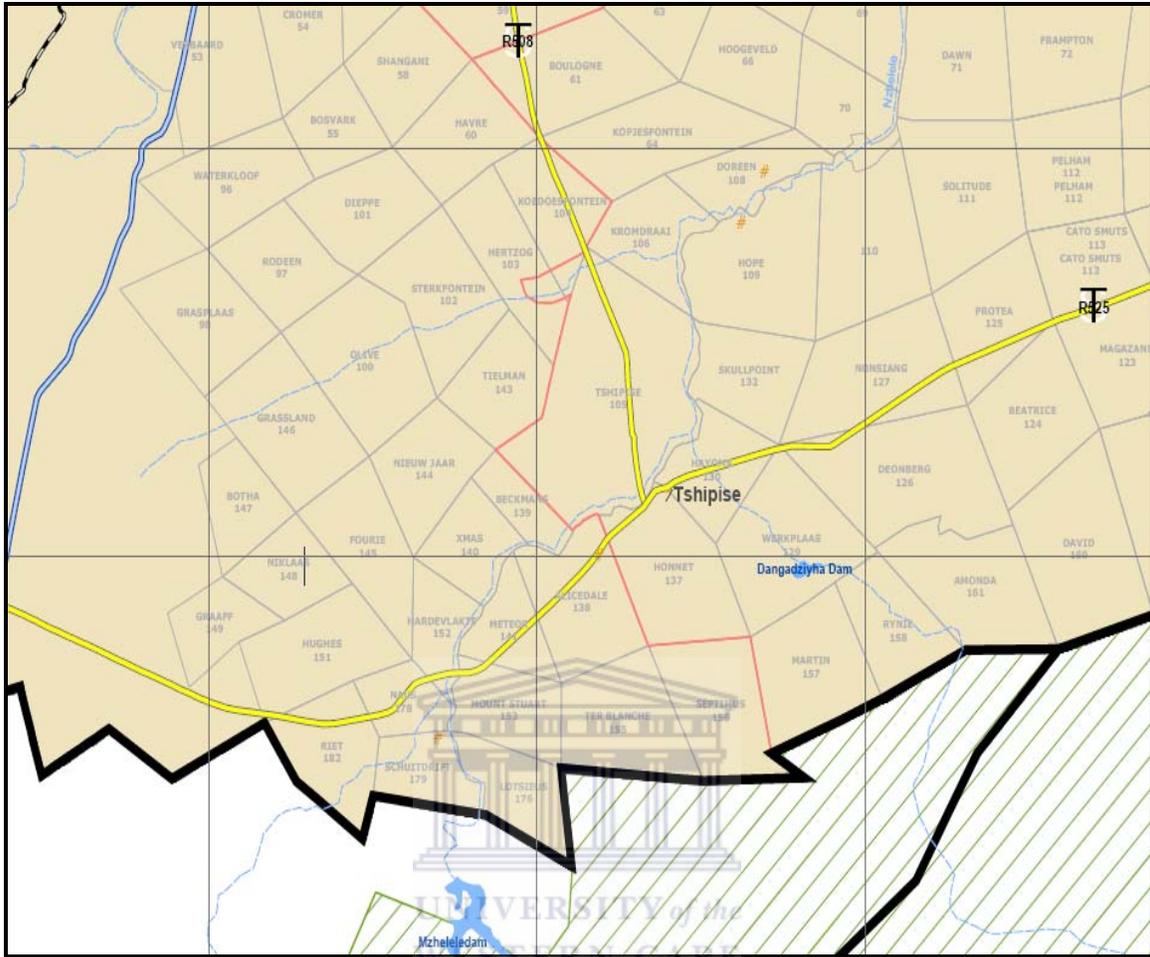


Figure 4: Map showing commercial farms around Tshipise¹²

The owner specialises in citrus production. When the farmer purchased the farm in 1982 only about 30 hectares were under citrus production but the number of hectares under production had increased to about 500 hectares by 2008 (Bismarck 2008: pers.comm). The farm mainly produces grapefruit, lemons and oranges, for export. According to the farm owner about 90 per cent of the farm income is derived from citrus. The hectares for citrus production are divided into the following blocks: Oldland (18 387 orange trees); Newland (18 144 orange trees); A block (10 863 orange trees); Durban block (8 438 orange trees); B block (10 920 orange trees); G Block (8 305 orange trees); H block (9 327 orange trees); 1c block (837 orange trees); Y and Teacher blocks (1 983 fruit trees in

¹² Map was developed by this researcher

total); Lemons orchard (21 418 lemon trees); Madumba (23 194 grape fruit); E block (9 058 grape fruit); F block (8 596 grape fruit) (Squealer 2008: pers.comm).

As a result of the nature of production the farm employs about 800 farm workers. At the time of fieldwork the farm owner estimated the labour force as composed of 550 seasonal and 250 permanent workers. The proportion between men and women is about 50/50 in both categories (Bismarck 2008: pers.comm). The farm owner claimed that in 1982 the farm only employed 60 farm workers. There is a loose two-tier structure of the labour force consisting of permanent and seasonal workers. The permanent workers receive monthly salaries throughout the year whereas seasonal workers are employed on either a regular basis during the peak season or on casual basis for specific tasks. Employment for the seasonal workers is available for the duration of the picking season which starts in February and ends in September. At the beginning of October labour demand drops by about 70 per cent (Bismarck 2008: pers.comm). The permanent workers also pick and pack fruit alongside the seasonal workers during the peak season; however during off-peak season the permanent workers are engaged in pruning, cleaning, spraying or in any other farm work at the discretion of the employer.

A significant proportion of the labour force is composed of migrants. Most are from Zimbabwe and a few are from Mozambique. There is an inverse proportion of South Africans to migrants at the different levels of the labour hierarchy. At the lower level are seasonal workers, comprising mainly of Zimbabweans and a few South Africans. At the higher level is the permanent category, which comprises mainly South African citizens and a few long-term Zimbabwean migrants. Social identity underpins the hierarchical structure of labour organisation on the commercial farm.

The hierarchical systems of control are such that the black foremen and supervisors carry out the field control and they report to the managers, comprising of three whites and one black. At the apex of the farm hierarchy is the white farm owner. Black South Africans and a few long-term Zimbabwean migrants occupy places within the ranks of supervisors while most of the migrant labourers occupy the lowest rung. This situation creates power

struggles between worker and employer and struggles between worker and worker also become part of the daily life.

Two Nzhelele valley communities are claiming the farm under the Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994¹³. The farm owner has entered into an agreement with the claimant communities to set up the Nzhelele Valley Initiative (NVI) that will facilitate a strategic partnership¹⁴ to manage the farm. In May 2007 there were no farm employees from the claimant communities but in February 2008 there were about 25 employees, mainly working in the pack shed, from the claimant communities (Bismarck 2008: pers.comm). By March 2008, a significant number of members from the claimant communities were working on temporary or seasonal basis with the option to become permanent workers.

4.3. Wage-ration nexus

This section presents findings on the historical nature of wage-ration relationship on Manor Farm and the changing trends in such relations since the extension of labour legislation to commercial farms in the past decade. The section also captures how farm workers and the owner explain the existing wage-ration relationship.

Some of the old permanent workers note that the farm owner used to pay them in cash but also gave them a substantial quantity of rations during apartheid. One old permanent worker said that: “I used to get R200 but it was a lot of money because it could buy many things; but we had little to buy because we did not pay for the houses” (Zimuto¹⁵ 2008: pers.comm). Another woman from Zimbabwe also concurred: “The owner used to give us little money but we used to go and fish in his dams and harvest *mopane* worms¹⁶ closer to his yard. Now we have better money but we need to buy relish” (Sithole 2008:

¹³ The Restitution Act provides a provision for people unfairly dispossessed after 1913 to lay claims for that property or seek compensation.

¹⁴ According to this model the claimant communities must form a joint venture with a private entrepreneur (usually the farmer), in which the entrepreneur – the so-called ‘strategic partner’ – invests capital and is involved in farm management decisions for a period of 10 years, with the option of renewal for a further period (Derman, Lahiff and Sjaastad (2006).

¹⁵ For ethical considerations I use pseudonyms for farm workers.

¹⁶ Indigenous edible worms that grow on *mopane* trees.

pers.comm). When I sought detail at my last field visit the two explained to me that, apart from the cash wages, weekly each worker used to get a weekly ration of five kilograms of mealie meal, one litre of milk, about a kilogram of oranges, lemons or grapes, about 500 grams of salt and occasionally beef meat. Apart from that, the owner provided free transport to town every month end, gave free medical assistance when workers were injured on duty and provided computer lessons at a block near to the pack shed for those who were interested in attending.

The farm workers note that the payment system has changed since the new government came to power and introduced the minimum wage: “Once the government people started saying that we were supposed to be paid so much, the farm owner was not happy. It was then that the owner started deducting money for housing and even firewood that we collect on our own” (Manjengwa 2008: pers.comm). The older generation of employees still look to the employer as someone who should make provisions: “He [Bismack] must still find ways of providing us with houses for free and let our families stay here for free as we used to do” (Azike 2008: pers.comm). Such an expectation captures the view that farm workers have expectations and claims that extend beyond cash and labour rights.

The farm owner explained that he had stopped the farm workers from harvesting *mopane* worms in the forest near to his house since 2003 because there was an increase in criminal cases in that year. According to Bismarck (2008: pers.comm) the reason for stopping fishing at his farm was that the game farm had improved to what the farm owner calls a world class resort: “We have a tourism set up; we can’t have a tourist fishing then we have 600 farm workers fishing there. Fishing is recreation not a source of income. It is the ability to enjoy fish and nature; it’s recreation” (Bismarck 2008: pers.comm). On the erosion of welfarist provisions the farm owner said that the economic environment is no longer conducive to buying goods for farm workers. The farm owner elaborated that even though citrus prices went up in 2007, “the price of diesel has gone up, potassium for fertilizers has gone up by 400 per cent and shipping costs have doubled” (Bismarck 2008: pers.comm). This corresponds more closely to Bernstein’s (2004:201) argument that agrarian relations are not just a set of social relations between the landed property

owners, agrarian capital and labour but are affected by capital upstream and downstream of agriculture operating through global and national circuits of commodity chains. The farm owner further emphasised that the economic condition was worsened by “labour costs that cover about 33 per cent of the total annual farm turnover so we [they] have to adjust to the rules of the game” (Bismarck 2008: pers.comm). Based on these explanations the owner says he is not in a position to provide salt or meat but he still provides five kilograms of maize meal every Sunday to each farm worker.

Farm workers claimed that almost everybody used to get the same monthly salary of R300 before the minimum wage in 2003. A survey that year by SAHRC (2003:107) on South African commercial farms showed similar trends in that the average cash wage for a farm worker in Limpopo province was estimated at R200 per month. However the farm workers on Manor Farm claimed that some of the supervisors and the boss’s favourite workers used to get more money. In early February 2008 the farm owner explained that he had adopted two defined types of payment since the introduction of the minimum wage: the monthly rate and the hourly rate. He explained that: “It’s different types of people; permanent workers get monthly payments, people that come to do a specific job get an hourly rate. The wage laws make specific provisions for the two types of remuneration” (Bismarck 2008: pers.comm).

However, one of the farm managers and some of the farm workers contradicted the owner’s claims in separate interviews and stressed that there were two types of wage payments, namely the monthly rate and the piece rate system rather than the hourly system. During my last visit to the farm the owner conceded that he was actually using the piece rate system in order to ensure that productive workers were rewarded more than less productive workers. The owner said the piece rate system was a way to maximise production by farm workers and to preserve the jobs of the farm workers. The farm owner said, “You need to make sure that workers keep competitive to the machine. Otherwise you replace them with machines. There are people without jobs so the workers need to be competitive with mechanisation”. The hard work is evident in farm workers’

voices such as “here we work like donkeys” (Gwata 2008: pers.comm), and “on this farm we are working like machines” (Matutu 2008: pers.comm).

The farm workers explained that under the monthly rate and piece rate system permanent workers receive a monthly rate whereas the seasonal workers are paid according to production targets. During the time of fieldwork the seasonal farm workers were paid R 40.60 cents for every 60 bags of lemons filled in a day, R 28.50 for 40 bags and R11. 40 for 20 bags (Squealer 2008: pers.comm; Farm workers pers.comm 2008). The number of hours was not determined by the time spent in the field but by the number of bags filled: 60 bags of fruits were calculated as eight hours, 40 bags as five hours, 20 bags as two hours and 10 bags as one hour. On my third field visit to the farm there was a newly recruited young farm worker who worked tirelessly for eight hours but could only fill 10 bags of lemons, thus his remuneration was R5.70 for the day. Most of the permanent workers received the minimum government gazetted monthly wage. Other scholars have also found that permanent workers benefit more than casual workers from the extension of labour legislation to the commercial farms (Ewert and du Toit 2005; du Toit & Ally 2004).



The farm owner makes a monthly deduction of R180 from all the farm workers for an ambiguous provision of services regardless of whether they are in the permanent or seasonal category. Even the salaries of four seasonal workers who reside off the farm are also affected by deductions. The farm workers say that it is difficult to break down the costs of each deduction. This is because “the owner just tells us the deductions are for electricity, water, and crèche, firewood, housing and maize meal” (Chengetai 2007, 2008: pers.comm). The farm workers are not given individual pay slips (Mufoweti 2008: pers.comm). From my survey, the monthly income for some farm workers could be as low as R300 per month because of the piece rate system. One of the young male farm workers told me that: “I only got R244 this month after deductions after trying my best in the field, it seems I can not pick more lemons so I am leaving to try my luck in Pretoria in the urban industries” (Bhora 2008: pers.comm).

Apart from the systematised monthly deductions, a system of punitive deductions was also in place. The farm workers used a punch card system. I noticed that at the start of a day's work, each individual fruit picker was given a card, orange in colour, with encircled numbers 1-60. These numbers would be punched by the field foreman for every bag of lemons filled. The number of holes punched would be recorded by the foreman for payment at the end of the month. After having their card punched by the foreman I observed that some fruit pickers would pretend to place the bag in the trailer and then return to the line with the same bag. In this way the fruit pickers would have one bag counted twice. This is consistent with Addison's (2006) observations on the same farm. At a theoretical level the finding corresponds with Scott's (1985) conceptualisation of the weapons of the weak in every day resistance.

One day I noticed a young man submitting a bag of lemons that the foreman did not record on the punch card. The young worker explained to me that he was supposed to fill two bags of lemons without these being officially counted for payment purposes as a form of punishment for not removing twigs in his bag. The other workers interjected, saying, "its bag *hara mudhara*¹⁷" (Farm workers 2008: pers.comm). When I asked the foreman to explain the system he simply said, "It is my prerogative to determine the number of bags per offence" (Chinja 2008: pers.comm). This happened in full view of one of the farm managers who remained silent.

The above empirical data shows that despite the extension of labour legislation and the introduction of the minimum wage to farm workers there is largely non-compliance with the labour laws in regard to seasonal workers. Payments are better for permanent workers who are paid the legislated minimum wage, but the employer has withdrawn most of the payments in kind since 1997. The land owner explains these changes in terms of harsh economic factors. In the next section I discuss the theme of housing.

¹⁷ "A free bag big man"

4.4. Housing

This section presents how farm workers used to access and own houses on the farm and how this has changed. It also details farm workers' current housing and living conditions on the farm and how various actors explain these conditions.

Some of the long-term permanent workers used to stay in self-built round thatched huts until the late 1980s. This was when the current farm owner started to build block buildings that were divided into tiny single rooms. People were forcefully moved from their huts into these block rooms in a compound setting. One of the long-term permanent workers explained:

Our own houses were destroyed by Mr Bismarck and we were moved into the new houses. Our huts were scattered but he [farm owner] brought us close together in a compound. Now for us to stay in the compound we had to work and those who did not want to work left the farm (Sithole 2008: pers.comm).

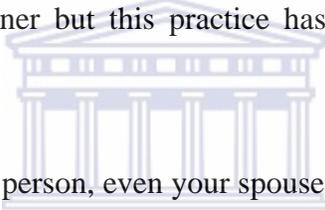
This is similar to an observation by scholars that farm employers in post apartheid South Africa now consider access to housing for farm workers on the basis of an employment relationship and this creates the possibility that loss of a job also means of shelter (Atkinson 2007; du Toit 2004; Hall 2004; Wegerif, Russell and Grundling 2005).

The movement of farm workers into the farm owner's compounds comprising of a row of separate rooms prompts two distinct responses amongst the long-term permanent workers who remained on the farm: happiness to move into brick houses, and sadness over loss of traditional huts: "The owner did a good thing, he showed that he cared, by moving my family into a three roomed house. Now I have electricity and water nearby" (Azike 2008: pers.comm). In contrast, another opined:

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

a house with zinc roof. Now, we have to travel to the village to honour our ancestors (Johannes 2008 pers.comm).

The farm owner built the last block of houses between 1998 and 2000. Kwindia Ndiafhi, a land activist working for Nkuzi Development Association in Limpopo, associated the decline in building of compound infrastructure with the restitution land reform programme. Until the end of 2003 farm workers used to stay in the farm owner's houses without paying rentals. From around 2003 there was a blanket monthly deduction of R180 inclusive of accommodation rentals. Some long-term permanent workers expressed disappointment over the deductions because the farm owner had destroyed their own houses and was now making it mandatory for the farm workers to pay for occupying the owner's houses. Until 2005 farm workers could live with their spouses and relatives without paying rent to the owner but this practice has changed, as explained by one female worker:



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

Another practice highlighted by the farm workers was that during the picking season up to six people unrelated to one another but of the same sex live in a single room. A new seasonal worker noted that even if the farm workers are many in one room, the farm owner deducts per head and not per room. He said that:

Four of us live in a tiny room but the farm owner deducts R180 from each of us. It could have been better if he charged per room then we were going to pay less. The owner, don't write my name, is greedy, he makes so much money from one room. It is better to rent elsewhere (Muchemwa 2008: pers.comm).

This differs with the shift in practice noted by Hamman (1996), in a study of farm workers in the Western Cape, whereby every household on the farm had to provide at least two adults to work for the farmer. Under this system rental for the house was paid per household. Hamman (1996) attributes this to increasing farm operations that required additional labour. My findings show that the farmer now charges rentals per adult occupant.

From my own observations, most of the houses had no glass windows, the frames were fitted with wooden planks. I also learnt that only eight houses had electricity. In some of the rooms there was poor lighting and ventilation as the windows could not open. One new seasonal worker explained that: “when it rains there are green things [fungi] growing on the walls” (Mutowe 2008: pers.comm). When I further asked why he was periodically scratching his body he replied: “our room is infested with lice and only those who can afford medicine can fumigate their rooms” (Mutowe 2008: pers.comm). When I visited one of the toilets nearer to a *shebeen* on the compound I could not go beyond the door. There were green flies, wobbling worms and a stinking smell. The farm workers explained that they occasionally clean the ablutions but they could not afford to buy disinfectants to kill the worms and the germs.

The farm owner explained that the cash flow determined what he was able to do in terms of developing houses for farm workers: “The economic environment, within which we operate, sets an important framework for what is possible in terms of housing programmes on the farm” (Bismarck 2008: pers.comm). Jones (2008:pers.comm), the pack shed manager, concurred with the farm owner and elaborated that even though supermarkets sold citrus products at high prices farmers had small returns that made it impossible to invest in houses and services: “At Woolworths an orange costs about R5 but farming costs of an orange are around 16 cents. We are paid about 20 cents per orange. The rest of the costs are distributed along the trade chains. We can not explain this to workers because they do not understand” (Jones 2008: pers.comm).

As a matter of interest, I checked the price of oranges in Rondebosch Woolworths supermarket around March 2008 and found that a bag of eight oranges cost R48.26, which corresponds to the manager's assertion. This is a matter of investigation which is beyond the scope of this minithesis. But a comprehensive analysis of value chains and the downward pressure supermarkets are able to exert on farm gate prices may help explain changing social relations on the commercial farm.

The farm owner's preference for a situation where farm workers would stay off the farm was implicit in these words:

It's better to bring them [farm workers] in a small town where there are shops. Wherever you go there are little agri-villages in the world. The town Musina is there because of the mine. People come in to service the town. The primary generator is the mine. It is either the mine or agriculture. Valencia [In Spain] was formed around the oranges (Bismarck 2008: pers.comm).

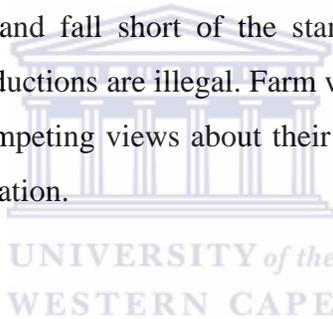
This corresponds with Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks' (2000) argument to provide a residential base for farm workers within the farming zone. What is striking is Bismarck's confidence in emphasising the need to take farm workers off his land without fear of losing control over labour. This suggests that the farmer's ability to control the farm workers may not be entirely based on the fact that they live on his land but is also characterised by the nature of labour markets.

Farm workers have competing views about their tenure on the farm. One old worker views the farm as his home:

The idea is to make us control ownership of our gardens, give us clean water, free electricity, shops and make sure the primary school improves for our children. I need to live here [on the farm] because I have been here for decades (Johannes 2008: pers.comm).

A young seasonal worker was of the view that: “This farm is just a place to work, where we get our wages and build our homes elsewhere. You can not plan to live here all your life because the place belongs to the owner” (Chengeta 2008: pers.comm). What is striking about both views is that ownership and control of land is central to the explanations about future preferences.

In this section I have detailed how farm workers used to build their own homes and stay with their families without paying any rentals to the farm owner. The farm owner changed this practice by building his own houses where farm workers used to stay without paying rentals until 2003. Access to housing on the farm is now inextricably linked to securing employment. From 2003 the farm workers have been compelled to pay monthly rentals for housing. Even though this practice is provided in law the conditions of the houses are deplorable and fall short of the standards laid out in the Sectoral Determination therefore the deductions are illegal. Farm workers also do not see things in the same way as they have competing views about their tenure on the farm. In the next section I discuss labour organisation.



4.5. Labour organisation

In this section I discuss the nature of labour organisation on the farm and the factors that are impeding farm worker unionisation.

Amongst all the farm worker respondents there was no one who was a member of any trade union. One of the long-term permanent workers said that:

Before the new Mandela government we only heard about trade unions in the retailing factory. We used to have our own way of dealing with the farm owner without these trade unions. We used to negotiate and sometimes the farmer would understand (Azike 2008: pers.comm).

Most of the long-term residents noticed change around 1997 as one worker explained: “It was around 1997 when we heard about a trade union called TASA [Trade Union of South African Authorities (TUSAA)]. The union recruited members from the neighbouring Maswiri farm and on the other part of [Manor Farm] which was owned by Mr Smith” (Sithembile 2008: pers.comm). The farm workers were largely unaware of TUSAA’s origins. Shirinda (2008: pers.comm) clarified that TUSAA had membership at Tshipise Aventura, a subsidiary resort company of Protea Hotel. The TUSAA leadership then decided to increase its membership by mobilising farm workers around commercial farms in Tshipise area.

One of the female long-term permanent workers said that:

The TUSAA people were not allowed at this farm, the farm owner did not want to see trade unions, but they were allowed to mobilise on parts of [Manor Farm], which were owned by [Mr Smith]. We heard that that they (TUSAA) organised a strike and the workers were fired by [Mr Smith] and told to leave their houses. I became afraid to associate with these trade unions (Madhuve 2008: pers.comm).

The farm workers who were dismissed by Mr Smith did not get any help from TUSAA and were also charged with public violence by the police (Shirinda 2008: pers.comm 2008). My research and that of other scholars (e.g., Atkinson 2007; SAHRC 2003; Wegerif, Russell and Grundling 2005) show that one of the limitations of trade unions mobilisation is difficulty in accessing farms. However, what is striking about the operations of TUSAA is that inaccessibility alone is an inadequate explanation as the approach of trade unions also deserves close attention. Ewert and du Toit (2005:329-330) earlier noted that the “export to the farms of the Fordist models of trade union organisation in South Africa’s urban workplaces” which are overt and adversarial are not suited to a context where the owner’s power is so hegemonic.

The farm owner explained that he did not want trade unions because they manipulate the farm workers:

Every time I have seen outsiders creating friction between employer and worker, the employer clamps down on the worker. The trade unions will only destabilise the environment and make life difficult for all of us. We live in a peaceful environment, and everything is by consensus. Trade unions are for people with skills (Bismarck 2008: pers.comm).

In contrast to the farm owner's views about trade unions and the harmonious nature of the farm are views from one young farm worker:

A strike would be helpful so that the white man can increase money [our wages]. The people are afraid that their jobs may end, especially permanent. There is also fear of being deported [amongst migrant workers]. It's difficult to organise as one. I have never seen any trade unionist (Muchemwa 2008: pers.comm).

The farm manager, Squealer, also contradicted the farm owner's views about the farm as a place where there is consensus and dismissed claims about farm workers' need for more money as he said:

Even people in the government are always complaining about money. They have to go to the government, via government, not us. They are just complaining but the point is that the salary that the department is proposing we are meeting it (Squealer 2008: pers.comm).

One of the government labour inspectors explained how difficult it was for trade unions to access farms in order to mobilise farm workers:

Any political meeting needs to be sanctioned by the boss. The farm owners make it difficult for trade unions to access the farm, especially around Tshipise. The owners require appointments and even when you get the appointment and access

you can not move freely within the farm without farm owners knowing what you are doing (Netsianda 2008: pers.comm).

The trade unionist from FAWU (Food and Allied Workers' Union) also concurred that access to commercial farms was made difficult by the fact that farmers were generally not receptive to the idea of unionisation. However Malepe, the FAWU organiser in Limpopo province, could not point specific activities related to Manor Farm. The difficulty in access to commercial farms was defensive and a legitimisation of non-action.

The explanation on restriction of movement resonated well with my experiences during my stay on Manor Farm. The restriction in freedom of movement and the surveillance mechanism corresponded to some of my previous experiences when I was in prison¹⁸. The prison wardens had to grant permission for one to move from one cell to another. Similarly, on Manor Farm, I also needed permission in the form of a pass¹⁹ to move to different places like the compound, pack shed and citrus fields. The farm workers required passes to visit the farm offices, residence of the owner, workshop garages, goats kraal, fish dam, and the area fenced for game farming. This resonates with the farm control thesis (Nasson 1988) which articulated elements of dominant control over the movements and lives of inmates.

However, Manor Farm is not an austere total institution as in the analysis of Nasson (1984, 1988). During my stay on the farm, some officials from the Department of Labour managed to gain access once. They gained access to the pack shed to distribute pamphlets with information that government had set the new minimum wage at R1 090 with effect from 1 March 2008. Another striking feature is that some of the farm workers did not see this intrusion as undermining the farmer's dominant governance. One farm worker remarked to me: "They were playing, these officials must be able to force the owner to

¹⁸ This researcher was locked up at Harare remand prison on allegations of inciting students in Zimbabwe to insurrect against the government of President Robert Gabriel Mugabe in 2003.

¹⁹ When a visitor gets authority to visit the farm from the farm owner, upon getting to the farm gate, the security guard on duty issues a small piece of paper with space to write one's name. The paper also has space for the visited person to sign as a way of acknowledging the visit. Upon leaving the farm, the security guard checks whether the signature of the visited person is there and then allows you to move out.

pay that amount otherwise it would be the same old story” (Sibongile 2008: pers.comm). Another permanent male farm worker voiced that, “*Hapana law pano, anotonga*”²⁰ (Zimuto 2008: pers.comm). These words show the sense of powerlessness among the farm workers and also reveal the hegemonic power of the farm owner. In some ways, therefore, my findings seem to concur with pessimism of proponents of the total institution thesis who viewed farms as spaces with no possibility of resistance (Nasson 1988). At a theoretical level, this criticism can easily be rebutted on the basis that powerlessness does not equate to lack of agency among individuals.

The above empirical data shows that despite the legalisation of trade unions on the farms, trade unions are still absent from the farm. This is mainly due to restricted access to the farm, the employer’s disdain for the unions, the history of dismissals and evictions for farm workers who had joined unions and the approach of trade unions. The legislation has not assisted in breaking the hegemonic power of the farmer over his workers. The next discussion is on the theme of land and own production.

4.6. Land and own production

This section presents findings on how farm workers transcend the wage-labour relationship by engaging in livestock and crop production both in the past and in the post-apartheid era. I also show how the farm workers use their agency by engaging in other micro-trade activities despite the farm owner’s disdain for such activities.

On Manor Farm, some of the long-term permanent workers used to engage in own agricultural production before Bismarck bought the farm in 1982. Mr Azike recounted how the farm workers used to produce: “We used to have big fields where we planted sorghum; the fields where we used to grow sorghum were put under citrus production by Mr Bismarck a few years after he bought the farm in the 1980s” (Azike 2008: pers.comm). This was also confirmed by other long term permanent workers such as Mr Johannes. From then on some of the workers like Mr Johannes and Mr Azike had to buy

²⁰ “Thee is no law here, he [farm owner] rules”.

sorghum from the adjacent communal areas and this meant that they had few options but to work for the farmer. The farm workers still use the sorghum to make a traditional beer brew and to make *pap*²¹. Apart from sorghum production one of the workers recalled how the farm owner ordered him to remove the goats from the farm:

It was around the early 1990s when the farm owner said that I was supposed to remove my goats from the farm. He said that my goats were going to contaminate his goats through cross breeding. Mr Bismarck said that he wanted to establish a business environment and I was supposed to understand that I was a worker (Johannes 2008: pers.comm).

Mr Johannes said that he moved the goats to his communal area of origin in Nzhelele valley and they eventually died because they could not acclimatise. He further elaborated that some of the farm dwellers left the farm and went to stay in Nzhelele valley because they thought their lives would be difficult without their livestock.

During my field visits I observed that farm workers are still involved in small scale production and micro-trade activities. One cloudy day²², I observed that some of the workers, particularly long-term residents, were busy working in their small gardens, weeding, pruning and cultivating their vegetables. During my last field trip, I also observed some farm workers working in the night, around 19:00 h in the evening. Even during normal working hours I saw a farm worker working in his small garden in the farm compound. When I asked for an explanation the farm worker said:

When we go for second picking in the field, the lemons will be very few and it's difficult to fill some bags so I find it better to abscond and work in the gardens because I can sell five (5) bundles of *covo* a day for about R15 [altogether]. This

²¹ Thick porridge is staple food to most farm workers on Manor Farm. It is prepared from sorghum meal or maize meal.

²² Fruit pickers do not work when the weather is cloudy because the lemons develop spots if they are picked on a cloudy day.

is much better, sir, than going there for about two bags for only 10 rands (Silas 2008: pers.comm).

The few workers with gardens grow green vegetables such as *tsunga*, *rape*, *choumelio* and *covo* used as relish. The farm workers cultivate open spaces adjacent to their houses. Most of the farm workers prefer to grow these short-term crops rather than long-term crops. A few grow paw-paw and banana trees as well as maize, which indicate a long-term investment. The small scale production in the compound is mainly for household consumption and to sell some to on-farm neighbours.

One of the new seasonal workers explained that he would prefer to have a small garden because the price of food was going up. When I first visited the farm, a bundle of *covo* cost R2 and at the end of my field work it cost R3. He said, "I would have preferred to have a garden for vegetable production but I could not get access to land" (Munjodzi 2008: pers.comm). When I further interrogated the farm worker's views in regard to the availability of land on the farm he explained: "Land here is scarce for the workers but plenty for the farmer. The farmer has many hectares he does not use as you can see" (Munjodzi 2008: pers.comm). Some of the new seasonal workers raised fears over the uncertainty of their employment which is a barrier to expanding own production. One such new worker from Zimbabwe articulated the fear of being deported: "They [police] can come any time, arrest and deport you and you then leave your vegetables and livestock" (Gwata 2008: pers.comm). Some of the new and old seasonal workers highlighted that it is difficult to engage in gardening because of the seasonality of their stay on the compound. From my survey, shortage of land, lack of capital and time are some of the factors that prevent some workers from engaging in own production.

Apart from the production of vegetables, maize and fruits, some farm workers keep chicken, ducks and one old permanent worker kept two pigs. When I asked him why he kept only two animals he said, "I would have loved to keep more pigs but there is no enough land and the farm owner does not like many animals on his farm" (Azike 2008: pers.comm). The farm owner unequivocally stressed that:

They [farm workers] have no right to have animals or to start their own farming. No mine worker can mine gold for an hour for his own pocket. He gets paid a salary. This is not a social welfare environment, this is a business (Bismarck 2008: pers.comm).

The farm owner views farm workers as wage labourers who are not entitled to use land on his privately-owned farm. This is akin to Atkinson's (2007:90) attempt to draw parallels between farm owners and urban industrial employers in her argument that the state must not enforce voluntary aspects of welfarism through legislation. Even though the owner does not like farm workers' own production he was aware of the small scale activities in the compound and ignored them as long as they were "not in competition with the farm business" (Bismarck 2008: pers.comm).

Some farm workers are also involved in some micro-trading activities such as buying cheap clothes from Musina town and reselling them in the farm compound, especially at the end of month. This researcher bought a khaki cap for 20 rands from one farm worker trader in the compound, a day after pay-day for the farm workers. There are also three barber shops on the compound which are operated by farm workers. The barbers usually open after working hours, around 17:00h between Monday and Friday, and around 13:00 h on Saturdays. A simple hair cut and shave cost R5. Farm workers augment their wages through these small scale trading activities. The structuration theory of Giddens (1986) and its application to farm workers by Rutherford (1997, 2001b) clarify issues. The activities show that farm workers are not just passive victims of circumstance. It shows the strategies, choices and practices of farm workers that help shape their livelihoods outside the wage-labour relation. These farm workers engage in multiple livelihood strategies, land based and non-land based livelihood strategies as coping and adoptive mechanisms used in eking out livelihood sustenance in a changing environment.

Other activities include *spaza* shops²³, where farm workers sell small groceries such as salt, soap, *mopane* worms and beans. Operating a small scale business on the compound requires some workers to maintain good relations with the owner as articulated by one farm worker: “Once you have a *spaza* shop like me, you need to keep your job very secure. You do not need to anger the farm owner because once he is angry he may fire you and what happens to my investment? I leave it here” (Sachez 2008: pers.comm). Another *spaza* shop owner said that he was a talented business man who needed support from the government in the form of capital and space in order to expand and prove his expertise. However, an economic and development officer from Musina municipality had a different view:

If we go to the farms, when we talk about economy we must talk to the farmer because workers do not initiate economy. Unless we talk to the management of the farm, the workers themselves do not think in terms of economic development (Shirindza 2008: pers.comm).

Another local economic development officer said that farm workers are difficult to reach in order to teach them about initiating small business projects because during working hours they will be in the fields.

There are also four *shebeens*²⁴ on the compound owned by long term permanent workers. The farm workers sell traditional brew at R3 per litre and one Black Label²⁵ at R11. The traditional brew is more popular amongst the seasonal farm workers because it is cheaper and this researcher also liked the taste. Supervisors and permanent workers usually buy the Black Labels. According to one *shebeen* owner, these activities augment their salaries. Other farm workers also order artefacts from Zimbabwe and sell them along the main road near Tshipise shopping centre. This is possible for workers during weekends or when they abscond from work and during off-peak season when they are not on a labour contract.

²³ Self erected small shops

²⁴ Places where farm workers sell liquor from their own houses

²⁵ South African made lager

Nevertheless, the government has not wholly ignored these micro-trade activities on the farm, as an economic and development officer from Musina municipality confirmed that:

Because they are on somebody's land, they get support for trade, and then become successful and the owner gets jealous. Like someone we supported on one farm who was farming successfully. Now that she was selling her products the farm owner wanted to know the real income and get rent. The government gave her land and she is [now] successful (Shirindza 2008: pers.comm).

Implicit in this quote is the farmer's disdain for own agricultural production by the farm worker. This resonates with the observation made by revisionist historians on white farmers' determination to maintain exploitation of labour rather than facilitate workers' independent agricultural production (Bundy 1972; Morris 1976).

In this section I have presented how farm workers engage in livestock and crop production plus other micro-trade activities that fall outside the duties prescribed by the employer. These own production activities were also evident at a larger scale during apartheid. Even though the farm owner banned some of the activities like keeping goats, the farm workers still manoeuvre to engage in other activities albeit at a lower scale. The micro-activities largely depend on the will of the farmer and some farm workers are determined to maintain good relations with the farm owner in order to protect their businesses. The next section presents findings related to migration dynamics.

4.7. Dynamics of migrant labour

This section shows how migrant workers are adversely incorporated in the labour hierarchy. It shows the role of migrant workers in regard to how farm workers and the farm(er) relate. The section also captures perceptions around the future of migrant workers in view of the land restitution claim on the farm.

During the late 1990s the farm owner gradually replaced South African citizens (mainly Venda speaking) with Zimbabweans (mainly Shona speaking). Land activist and one of my key informants, Shirlemi Shirinda, explained it in these terms: “He [farm owner] was clever, he did replace South Africans gradually, and there were no cases of large scale dismissals. When people left their jobs that is when he would replace them with Zimbabweans” (Shirinda 2008: pers.comm). Some of the respondents claimed that South African workers left because of bad labour relations. The farm owner indicated that after 1994, the new government created a new environment for its citizens hence the South Africans opted to leave farm work to pursue other alternatives like working in the urban factories.

In the farm owner’s view, it is a world-wide practice to employ migrants: “Manual labour is done by migrant workers. That is how it is done in America and Spain. There is nothing sinister about that. Someone like me cannot affect the environment, we can only play in the environment” (Bismarck 2007: pers.comm). However, some South African workers held different views over the recruitment of Zimbabweans, as articulated by one of the farm workers: “They want those [Zimbabweans] because they don’t question anything about their rights” (Miranda 2008: pers.comm). Some of the Zimbabweans tend to concur through statements such as: “As a Zimbabwean I have no right to say anything, we are here to work” (Wasu 2008: pers.comm). An official from the Department of Labour and a land activist from Nkuzi explained that farm owners around Tshipise area prefer Zimbabweans because farmers can manipulate the minimum wages (Kwinda 2008: pers.comm; Netsianda 2008: pers.comm). This is because the migrants are largely undocumented and so it is difficult for them to take action against employers that violate labour law. Previous research in Limpopo shows that migrants in the agricultural sector are vulnerable to super-exploitation and usually receive wages below the minimum wage (Addison 2006; Human Rights Watch 2006; Rutherford and Addison 2007; SAHRC 2003).

Some of the migrant farm workers also expressed the opinion that the owner employs them in order to control farm workers of different ethnic groups working on the farm. For

example, one Zimbabwean man mandated to supervise a group of South African locals in the pack shed said “*anotishandisa kuti maVenda ashande*”²⁶ (Muzaya 2008: pers.comm). From my survey, there were also Venda supervisors leading groups of mainly Shona speaking Zimbabweans. This is in contradiction with Addison’s (2006) study that indicates that all the foremen at Manor Farm were from Zimbabwe. For some of the supervisors, it appears the classification is designed to prevent workers from drawing on social kinship relations that may enable them to organise against the employer (Muzaya 2008: pers.comm). In a separate study on migrant farm workers, Johnston (2007) shows that ethnic control is one reason for farm owners to employ migrant labour. According to Dixon (1991), in a more generic conceptualisation, ethnic and social cohesion within a group may create an opportunity for insurgency as groups can easily identify on issues of discontent. A certain level of identity diversity is built into the hierarchical system to maintain farms as non-threatening political spaces.

The influx of migrant Zimbabweans has affected the traditional paternalistic relationship. What is striking is how the long-term permanent migrants and long-term South African workers view the owner as someone who should still provide some elements of paternalistic provision. On the other hand, the new labour force, mainly comprising Zimbabweans, does not see the owner as a father in a family setting with an obligation to provide welfarist services for them, “we see him as the boss whose only job is to hire and fire” (Wasu 2008: pers.comm).

Zimbabwean farm workers expressed the need to access land for independent production in conjunction with farm employment in order to supplement cash income. The farm workers further explained that they needed employment in order to get a constant flow of cash since they are living in a monetized economy. However, levels of identity consciousness prompt self-exclusionary responses amongst some of the migrant workers in terms of getting land:

²⁶ The farm owner uses us so as to make the indigenous Venda work.

I don't think I should get land because I am not permanent but only temporary. I think the land is for South African citizens only.... [But] maybe those Zimbabwean citizens who are permanent should get something. If I become permanent I would need a place to farm. I would love to plant maize (Lihaka 2008: pers.comm).

However, even the long-term Zimbabwean migrants feel that their nationality disqualifies them from seeking more land even though they express a subjective demand for land through gardening activities. One of the female migrant workers explained that: "You can not apply for land in a foreign land", and after further probing, the woman explained, "Because it's difficult to get South African identity documents" (Buhle 2008:pers.comm). The above quotes suggest that these views were connected to her citizenship and identity. These are not concepts I can explore in detail within this thesis.

From around February 2008 I gathered that the farmer was replacing Zimbabweans who were leaving the farm with claimant community members²⁷. One of the claimants told me that they would prefer Nzhelele valley claimant community members to get preference over Zimbabweans for opportunities in farm employment. Some of the prospective beneficiaries of the restitution claim employed on the farm suggest that the continued stay of migrant workers should be entirely based on a labour relationship as opposed to ownership of land. They view themselves as future employers of the migrant labour force as elucidated by a new farm manager who is part of the Nzhelele Valley claimant community: "There will be no problems with farm workers on this farm because they are Zimbabweans so they can continue to work for us" (Squealer 2008: pers.comm). Other members of the Nzhelele Valley claimant community think that there will be need to retrench some of the migrants when the claim is settled: "We will need our people to come and work here but we will still need those foreigners with work skills" (Sikhohlisiwe 2008: pers.comm). This shows that some members of the claimant community also view the migrant workers just as workers.

²⁷ These are members from the Nzhelele valley community who are claiming the farm under restitution

The deputy director general of the national department of land affairs sees no solution to the plight of migrant workers because of their nationality: “There is nothing we can do, this programme [land reform] is for South Africans, and those migrant workers are disqualified because of their nationality, e-eh because of their citizenship” (Makgalemele 2008: pers.comm). The “e-eh” shows the consciousness on the complexity of the problem. Even though some scholars like Atkinson (2007) draw parallels between urban industrial workers and migrant farm workers the above formulation indicates that, unlike in the urban areas, where some migrant workers easily purchase land and houses, the farm is a different place, where citizenship and nationality underpin the government’s land reform programmes. This is an area that requires further scholarly investigation.

The empirical data suggests that the farm owner largely employs migrants in the lower rung of the labour hierarchy. This practice is mainly because migrants are vulnerable and have limited choice. Another striking finding is that, apart from nationality, rank and duration of employment also play a role in shaping land, labour and social relations on this farm. The data also show the uncertainty of migrant labourers in the wake of land restitution on the farm.



4.8. Conclusion

The striking feature throughout the five themes I used to present my empirical data is the difference between the ideals laid down by pro-worker and pro-dweller legislation and the reality of day-to-day life on the farm. The on-farm relationship is characterised by low wages, poor housing conditions, low unionisation, landlessness and manipulation of migrant labourers. Farm workers, farm managers and farm workers explain these relations in different ways. The farmer and farm managers raised the prevailing economic environment and effects of globalisation to explain land, labour and social relations on the farm. On the other hand, some workers related these conditions and practices to changes in legislation, intensification of citrus production and the hegemonic power of the farm owner both as employer and owner of land. I now move from the narrative analysis to the illustrative analysis in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: CONTINUITIES AND CHANGE

5.1. Introduction

This chapter continues the analysis of empirical data from Chapter 4. Here I relate the empirical data to my conceptual framework. This illustrative approach depicts the complex nature of land, labour and social relations on Manor Farm as it reveals changes in relations as well as similarities with the past. I argue that some aspects of welfarist relations are still evident and the farm owner's hegemonic power remains but a fundamental shift has occurred from traditional family-like relations in terms of how the farm owner and workers relate. This shift relates to a rise in workerist relations. The shift is due to myriad factors with ownership of land being the central reason. This has had some negative consequences for farm workers' living and working conditions.

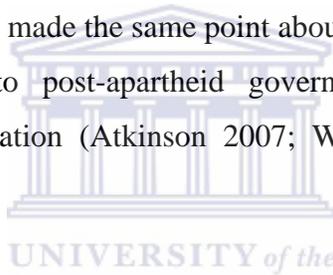
5.2. The end of a welfarist era and rise of workerist relations?

In this section I argue that the erosion of the welfarist bedrock signifies the rise of workerist relations. I look at six factors, namely gradual evictions of farm workers; the new management style; decline in welfarist rations; payment of legislated wages to permanent workers; absence of trade unions and limited interference of the state.

Gradual eviction of farm dwellers that had previously lived and produced independently on the farm during the 1980s signified the emergence of a wage-labour relationship. The farm dwellers were evicted through the banning of livestock, reduction in land for cultivation and destruction of traditional huts as highlighted by Azike (2008: pers.comm) and Johannes (2008: pers.comm) in reference to fellow farm dwellers who were forced to leave the farm. This kind of eviction is conceptualised by Wegerif, Russell and Grundling (2005) as "constructive eviction" in that the farm owner makes farm dwellers' lives so

unbearable that they have no option but to leave. The farm workers explain this change in terms of intensive citrus production introduced on the farm whereas the farmer indicated that his intentions after buying the farm in 1982 were to introduce a farming business.

The decline in welfarist provisions that were a characteristic of the welfarist relationship shows a change in the way workers and farm owner relate. This change is illustrated by the withdrawal of welfarist provisions of fish, salt, milk and *mopane* worms. The few welfarist rations that remain such as mealie-meal²⁸ and housing are merely to cover the basic survival needs of the farm workers. Moreover, on closer analysis the farm workers now pay for such services at market rates through hefty deductions. The services are now commercialised rather than based on the goodwill of the farmer. The farm owner blames the harsh economic environment in which he operates, which is exacerbated by global conditions. Other scholars have made the same point about the decline of welfarist rations on commercial farms due to post-apartheid government policies of agricultural deregulation and labour regulation (Atkinson 2007; Wegerif, Russell and Grundling 2005).



At the surface, one can describe these relations as neo-paternalism. However, proponents of neo-paternalism note that in such relationship paternalism exist side by side with modern management systems but remains dominant (Ewert and Hamman 1999). However, my particular finding here is of welfarism that has not retained most of its paternalistic features. The welfarist provisions on Manor Farm can be described by what I define as neo-welfarism, highlighting an ambiguous situation where farm workers receive welfarist rations but at the same time are charged the monetary value. This marks a new era of commercialisation of welfarism on commercial farms signifying the rise of workerist relations.

Moreover, the management style of the farm and proliferation of intermediaries in the management hierarchy has also contributed to the erosion of social contact. In the 1980s the farmer used to have one manager and he was more directly involved in overseeing the

²⁸ Mealie meal makes the staple food for almost all farm workers.

farm workers. From the late 1990s there has been an increase to four managers on the farm. General workers now report to the supervisor who in turn report to any of the four managers who will finally report to the white farm owner. The feedback also comes through the same hierarchy. This differs from Dooling's (1992) analysis that social relations on commercial farms hinged on the day-to-day interactions between workers and farm owners. The system of management reinforces the growing social distance between the general workers and the farm owner and affects the bonds and obligations between the two parties.

Apart from the decline in welfarist provisions, there are changes and continuities in the discourses used by farm workers and farm owners. There are ambivalences in discourses in the way the farmer explains social relations on the farm. This point is illustrated by the farmer's reference to the farm as a harmonious community (signifying a welfarist discourse) whereas at other times Bismarck's (2008:pers.comm) emphasis that farm workers should be regarded in the same way as mine workers illuminates a workerist discourse. The latter discourse corresponds more closely to the analysis by proponents of the workerist model that farm workers should solely be understood as workers (Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks 2000). A closer look at the ambivalences suggests that some things have changed while others have remained the same.

Furthermore, all farm workers do not see things in the same way. As shown in Chapter 4, there are differences between the old and the new employees, supported by the old employees' welfarist discourse regarding expectations of rations, contrasted to the new employees' workerist discourse. The turnover in the labour force has resulted in a more workerist discourse from the farm workers as the workforce is dominated by new seasonal rather than old permanent workers. This has been reinforced by the presence of new migrant labour without much attachment to the farm(er).

Another significant change highlighting the rise of workerist relations is the payment of legislated minimum wages to permanent workers from 2003. The farm owner explains this change in terms of the new minimum wage laws. Prior to 2003, Bismarck unilaterally

decided how to remunerate his workers, whether permanent or seasonal. However, his power has not been effectively compromised as he evades the law by using the illegal piece rate system for seasonal workers. As a result the payment of seasonal farm workers in practice is not regulated by public procedures but by “domestic governance” (Rutherford 1997, 2001a). Other scholars have rightly predicted that extending legislation to the farms would be of more benefit to the permanent workers than seasonal workers (Madsen 1992).

My empirical findings show a rise in workerist relations but there are three areas in which the workerist lenses do not adequately describe relations and practices on the farm. Firstly, farm workers are engaged in production of crops for self-subsistence and for sale in the farm compound which contradicts the ideals of the workerist model. Others are engaged in micro-trade activities such as clothing, *mopane* worms and other services such as barber shops and *shebeens*. This shows that the workerist relations are not fully established at Manor Farm. Following Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks (2000) I argue that these activities reinforce the argument that it is reductionist to look at farm workers as mere proletarians. As Ewert and du Toit’s (2005) noted, such an analysis fails to capture some of the activities that exist outside mere proletarian relations.

Secondly, proponents of the workerist model noted that trade unions play a central role in representing regulated labour rights for farm workers. In contrast, my research shows that relations between farm workers and owner are not regulated by trade unions. This is because of the weakness of the trade unions and the farm owner’s mistrust of trade unions which is shared to a degree by workers.

Thirdly, interventions by government officials are limited to raising awareness on minimum wage increments without programmes to enforce such labour laws. This point is illustrated by farm workers’ concerns about the failure of government officials to ensure that Bismarck implements the law. This is also consistent with my observations of activities by government officials during my stay on Manor Farm. Based on the limited role of government officials and absence of trade unions, the rise in workerist relations is

characterised by unequal power relations with the vested interest of the farm owner dominating.

5.3. Consequences for farm workers

Farm workers generally feel insecure about their tenure and jobs because they regard Bismarck as having unilateral power to decide their fate. Consequently, some farm workers opted to leave the farm, as indicated by Bhora (2008: pers.comm) who could not hope for improvement and left for Pretoria in search of better employment. At least some farm workers could leave and look for employment elsewhere, unlike during the period of Masters and Servants laws when workers were bonded to a specific employer. However, there are other older farm workers who had no choice but to remain in the circuits of life at Manor Farm.

The consequences have been more severe for seasonal workers who have to live on payment pegged below the minimum wage. This is unlike in the welfarist era when farm workers mainly relied on rations and access to natural resources as part of their livelihoods. This vindicates du Toit's (1995) prediction that legal changes would close off other opportunities like services provided at the discretion of farm owners. The welfarist rations that remain on Manor Farm are commercialised in a context I have defined as neo-welfarism.

As Scott (1985) conceptualised, these farm workers are not just passive victims but they also engage in petty acts of revenge like "cheating". This point is illustrated by fruit pickers who would strive to have one bag of lemons counted twice. Other farm workers use their agency to engage in trade activities, gardening and small livestock rearing so as to supplement their wages. This corresponds with Giddens's (1986) theorisation that individuals do have the capacity to make choices to respond to unfavourable situations.

5.4. Toward a transformative model

Although farm tenure and labour legislation has been passed in the past decade, farm workers are still located in relationships of dependency and patronage. I propose five reasons why landlessness and private ownership of rights is important in understanding how workers and farm owner relate.

Firstly, I found that it is difficult for trade unions, land activists and even government officials to gain access to the commercial farm to provide social services, raise awareness on labour rights or inspect labour conditions. This difficulty mainly results from the fact that Bismarck owns the farm as private property and in practice he determines who gets access to the farm. External activities that seek to undermine the cycle of dependency and exclusive control of the farm owner depend on the farmer's willingness to collaborate.

Secondly, from empirical evidence provided in this thesis, farm workers who engage in multifarious economic activities are reluctant to challenge labour conditions on the farm. This is because their small trading activities rely on maintaining good relations with Bismarck who owns the land upon which they operate. The link between land tenure and (un)employment status makes the prospect of challenging labour conditions more risky as adversarial relationships may lead to job losses which in turn leads to eviction and results in loss of investments.

Thirdly, when Bismarck bought the farm he gradually evicted some of the farm dwellers from the farm. This was through depriving them of land to produce their own crops such as sorghum and banning of livestock such as goats. Following the destruction of their sources of livelihoods this resulted in some of the farm dwellers who had previously lived and produced independently on the farm opting to enter into wage-labour relationships.

Fourthly, farm workers lost access to some natural resources on the farm that were important for their dietary needs. My research and that of other scholars show that this form of natural capital is important for the survival of farm workers (e.g. Hall 2003, 2004; Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks 2000; Wegerif Russell and Grundling 2005).

The termination of access to resources was at the discretion of the farm owner who had the exclusive rights to determine access to parts of the farm. This shows that the question of ownership of land is central in shaping relations between farm workers and the farm owner.

Fifthly, the fact that farm workers live in the owner-built houses in the compound is subject to manipulation by Bismarck who heftily deducts farm workers' wages for substandard housing that does not meet legal requirements for deductions. Moreover, the municipality finds it difficult to improve housing conditions of farm workers because they stay on somebody else's private land.

Up to this point, it appears my analysis resonates with Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks' (2000) transformative model which presumes that access to land and land rights could potentially break the cycle of dependency, control and exploitation of farm workers. To the three scholars this entails land reform premised on creating a "residential base for farm workers" independent of the farm owner. In this idealised context farm workers could continue to work for the farm owners but also enjoy independence from domestic governance. Consequently, this would increase the farm workers' bargaining power. Other scholars have also argued for independent access to land within a designated portion of land in the same farming zone as a way to undermine the farmer's control on farm workers (Wegerif, Russell and Grundling 2005).

The continued role of capitalist farmers as employers as well as the desire for an end to exploitative labour control is what I find problematic with Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks' (2000) transformative model. This is because they underestimate other aspects of control under capitalist agriculture. I have already highlighted how Bismarck (2008: pers.comm) said that farm owners would always find ways to react to policy change. The power of the owner is also located in his position as the employer and owner of the land. This is illustrated by some of the respondents who refer to him as the boss whose power is in hiring and firing. Moreover, the employer wants people to work like "machines" (Bismarck 2008: pers.comm) when most of the farm workers' fruits would

accrue to him. Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks' (2000) analysis focuses on land and labour while ignoring the question of who controls capital.

As long as there is a wage-employment relationship on Manor Farm there is likely to be exploitation of labour, that is, surplus appropriation of labour. Even if one uses the term exploitation in what Byres (2004:39) calls the neo-classical sense of "labour not being paid its marginal product" evidence suggests that the capitalist farmer will still use other systems of control in order to influence wages and labour conditions. For example, Bismarck still pays seasonal workers less than the stipulated minimum wage and he illegally deducts money for housing even from the four farm workers who do not live on the farm.

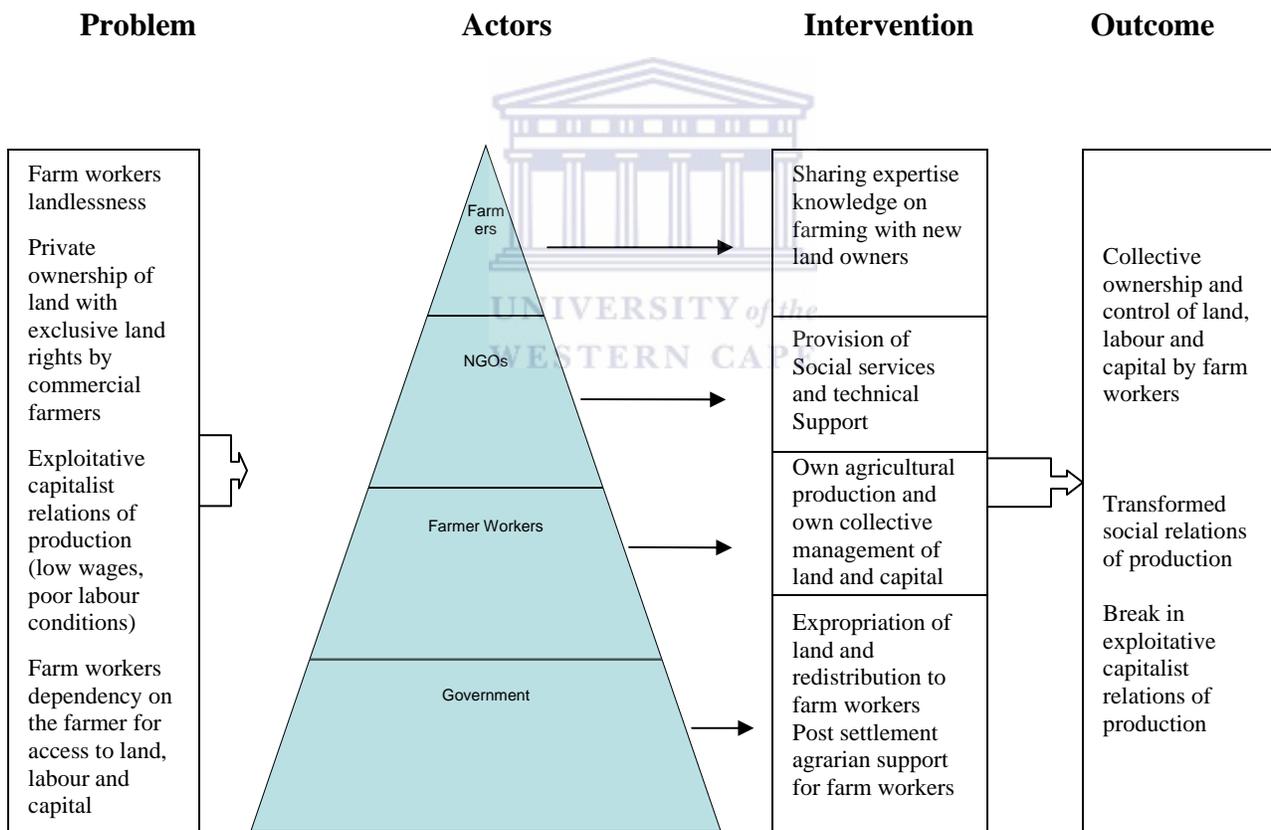
Access to land that is independent from the farm owner does not necessarily result in increased bargaining power for farm workers. Sender and Johnston (2004) noted that there is no solid empirical evidence to demonstrate this presumption. Johnston (2007) observed that South African farmers employ various strategies such as employment of migrants to reduce the bargaining power of farm labourers. My research demonstrates this point through Bismarck's recruitment of Zimbabweans who could be easily controlled due to their vulnerability, as pointed out by Wasu (2008: pers.comm) who referred to himself as having no right to complain about labour conditions but was compelled to work for the farmer on his own terms.

It is based on this research at Manor Farm that I disagree that the argument advanced by Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks (2000) adequately represents a transformative model. I would rather define it as a neo-workerist model in the sense that it represents a hybrid idea, in which farm workers remains proletarians but find time to practise their own agricultural production.

In order to adequately understand land, labour and social relations on commercial farms one has to consider the politics of landlessness and exclusive ownership of land as well as the politics of agricultural capitalist employment. I therefore suggest my own version of

a truly transformative model, which entails provision of land to farm workers as well as a break from capitalist employment; a transformative model that entails turning farm workers into Manor Farm owners. Even though some farm workers prefer access to land in conjunction with employment the primary reason is to get cash income for survival. Collective ownership of Manor Farm will allow farm workers to generate as well as control the farm income. Furthermore, a land-to-the worker programme ends exclusive ownership of land and brings to end exploitative capitalist relations of production. I illustrate the truly transformative model diagrammatically below:

Figure 5: Truly transformative model



While farmer workers are likely to suffer from effects of global market restructuring, emphasised by Bismarck (2008 pers.comm), initiatives like cooperatives and marketing associations will provide access. The blueprint of how such a farm will operate should be subject to research.

My proposal is a possibility that may be difficult to implement in this context given the fact that Manor Farm is being claimed under restitution.

5.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that there is a significant shift from welfarist to workerist relations on the farm. I have presented the inadequacies of the welfarist and workerist models in ignoring access to land and land rights as central in determining land, labour and social relations on the farm. Consequently I argued in the same light as proponents of the transformative model that landlessness contributes to farm workers remaining in relations of dependency, exploitation and patronage. However, I have gone further to articulate my own argument in that both a break from capitalist employment as well as ownership of Manor Farm by the farm workers can adequately describe a transformative model.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1. Introduction

The minithesis has explored the nature of land, labour and social relations that exist on Manor Farm, in Limpopo, South Africa, with a focus on the factors that shape these relations. The study looked at the changes through five key themes: wage-ration nexus; housing; trade unionisation; land and own production; and dynamics of migrant labour. Although the thesis may prove relevant to academics and to policy makers concerned with issues of land, labour and social relations at a local level, it has methodological and conceptual shortcomings. In this conclusion, I provide the empirical findings and reflect on them in relation to theory, methodological and conceptual frameworks and implications for understanding relations between farm workers and the farm owner.

6.2. Empirical findings

This thesis found a significant erosion of welfarist relations on Manor Farm and a rise of workerist relations. This is illuminated by the following six factors: gradual evictions of farm workers; the new management style; decline in welfarist rations; payment of legislated wages to seasonal workers; absence of trade unions; and limited interference of the state. There are also continuities, albeit much diminished, in provisions of basic rations and farm workers' own agricultural activities. This shift is explained in terms of the economic environment; the changes in production; the farmer's capitalist attitude; effects of globalisation; promulgation of tenure laws and labour laws. The shift has had unintended consequences for farm workers especially seasonal workers.

The workerist relationship is characterised by unequal power relations tilted in favour of the farm owner, meagre wages especially for seasonal workers, landlessness, appalling living conditions and low unionisation. The farmer still manipulates the law through piece rate systems and deductions with little overt resistance from the farm workers. One of the main reasons is that farm workers live on somebody's privately owned property

and work for him. This gives the owner much discretion over the living and working conditions of the workers despite labour and tenure laws. Despite a rise in workerist relations, some of the farm workers still carry out activities that transcend this paradigm, such as gardening, and express the need to access land independently for growing crops.

In summary, the welfarist relations are largely eroded on Manor Farm and have been replaced by unequal workerist relations influenced but not determined by law.

6.3. Theory into Practice

The theoretical perspectives I have drawn on have provided a useful framework to help understand land, labour and social relations on Manor Farm. I now provide reflections on the theoretical debates. The materialist perspective was essential in highlighting the importance of economic factors in shaping relations between the farm owner and workers. This point is illustrated by the explanations of Bismarck (2008:pers.comm) and Jones (2008:pers.comm) on why there are limited intervention programmes to improve the conditions of farm workers. On the other hand, the approach of paternalism studies has enabled me to capture non-economic considerations such as identity and discourse. This is illuminated by the old workers' welfarist discourse as opposed to the new workers' workerist discourse. The total institution thesis has helped to show that Manor Farm is not an austere total institution but is porous to outside influence as signified by the activities of government officials from the labour department. However, domestic governance is still characterising relations between the workers and the farm owner. At some juncture the theories discussed above would cast farm workers as helpless victims. This is where the structuration theory (Giddens 1986) and Scott's (1985) "weapons of the weak" have shown that even under difficult conditions farm workers can use their agency.

6.4. Research Design and Methodology

In retrospect, similar studies on land, labour and social relations can be enhanced by looking at two or more commercial farms. Although I provide a detailed case study, working on more farms could have enhanced comparability and the generalisability of the study. However, as concluded in Chapter 3, there were some trade offs and some of the detailed findings might not have been captured if I had spread my time and resources across two or more farms. Moreover, the nature of relationships that the thesis attempted to understand required an intensive focus through interviews, repeated visits, probing until there was likely to be no new data emerging on themes, observation of farm activities and also building trust with the farm owner and the farm workers. Furthermore, the limited scope in a minithesis justifies the narrow focus.

The lesson to draw from my study is the relationship between ISS and CSS perspectives. A constant problem was the integration of the perceptions of the respondents with the need to investigate the actual structural conditions in which social relations unfold. I treat the two research perspectives at different lengths and the outcome was a predominant focus on the perceptions with limited attention to actual conditions. On reflection, data collection and the two social science perspectives could have been more closely integrated through extending the research design conceptualisation and practise. However, one of the major justifications for the design of the research was to ensure that studies of land, labour and social relations should include the perceptions of the farm workers.

6.5. Conceptual Framework

In chapter 2 I presented the workerist, welfarist and transformative models and concluded that the three paradigms provide a potentially useful conceptual framework for the analysis of land, labour and social relations on this farm. In retrospect, the potential value of the three models lies in disaggregating a range of assumptions: labour rights, social services, and land rights which are likely to influence land, labour and social relations.

The conceptual framework has facilitated the analysis of huge empirical data of varying themes and aided the integration of the research findings in order to help show the ways in which land, labour and relations unfold on Manor Farm. My conclusion is that the models have, at great length, demonstrated value as analytical tools.

The models are useful in looking at empirical data at a local level. However, the framework does not adequately address the dimension of global factors such as restructuring global commodity chains, economic changes and agro-food market systems which in turn affect on-farm relations (du Toit 2002). It is therefore imperative to view changing labour, land and social relations through these three overlapping models, with consideration of the external factors.

An important lesson is that research on land, labour and social relations should incorporate a multi-disciplinary approach so as to understand better some of the external dynamics such as economic changes, global commodity chains and agro-food systems that influence these relations. Therefore any future model that intends to look at land, labour and social relations should not only look at the elements of the welfarist, workerist and transformative modes but should consider both internal and external factors.

6.6. Conclusion

Finally, the primary aim of this minithesis was to look at the nature of land, labour and social relations in the past fifteen years in the context of attempts to reform the traditional dependent and exploitative relations on farms in the post-apartheid era. The harsh economic environment; changes to intensive citrus production; the farmers' capitalist attitude; effects of globalisation; promulgation of tenure laws and labour laws have largely led to the erosion of the welfarist bedrock and a rise in workerist relations on Manor Farm. Notwithstanding this shift is the continued centrality of the farmer's control over a wide range of activities and practices including working conditions; access to the farm by external actors; payment of wages to seasonal workers and production activities

on his farm. The consequences for farm workers have been paltry wages which are worse for seasonal farm workers, fear and insecurity over tenure, poor living and working conditions and low unionisation. This complex world of social relations is to a large extent clarified by the workerist, welfarist and transformative models (Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks 2000). However, this minithesis goes beyond the conceptualisation of the three models and concludes that a truly transformative model entails not just provision of land to farm workers but a break from agricultural capitalist employment. This can be achieved through turning the farm labourers from workers into Manor Farm owners.



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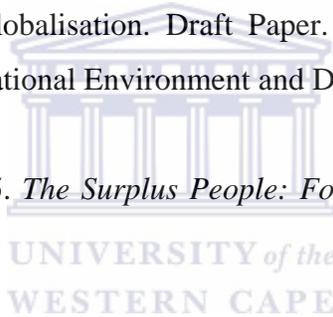
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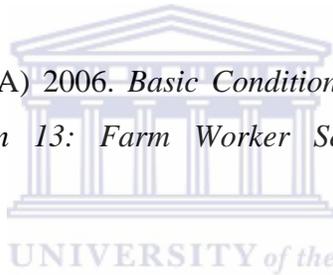
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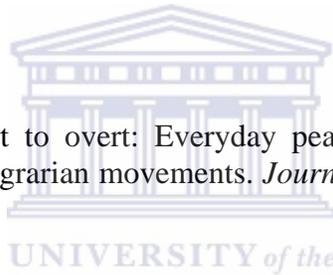
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Interview lists

Farm workers

Date	Pseudonyms	Gender	Age	Status
27-02-2008	Azike, H	Male	old	permanent
23-02-2008	Bhora,P.	Male	young	seasonal
26-02-2008	Buhle, J.	Female	middle	permanent/supervisor
26-05-2007/25-02-2008	Chengeta,M.	Male	middle	seasonal
26-02-2008	Chinja, T.	Male	middle	permanent/foreman
26-06-2008	Gwata, H.	Male	young	seasonal
26-06-2008	Johannes, T.	Male	old	permanent
26-03-2008	Madhuve, A.	Female	old	permanent
13-02-2008	Miranda, O.	Female	young	permanent
23-02-2008	Manjengwa, M.	Male	middle	permanent
24-02-2008	Muchemwa, F.	Male	young	seasonal
13-02-2008	Mufoweti, S.	Female	young	seasonal
25-02-2008	Munjodzi, M.	Male	young	seasonal
13-02-2008	Mutowe, T.	Male	young	seasonal
27-02-2008	Muzaya, Z.	Male	middle	permanent/supervisor
25-02-2008	Sachez, D.	Male	middle	permanent
25-02-2008	Sibongile,T.	Female	middle	seasonal
25-02-2008	Silas,M.	Male	middle	seasonal
24-02-2008	Sikhohlisiwe,T.	Female	middle	permanent
26-06-2008	Sithembile,N.	Female	old	permanent
25-02-2008	Sithole,D.	Female	middle	permanent
24-02-2008	Vhuso,T.	Female	young	seasonal
13-02-2008	Wasu,M.	Male	middle	seasonal
25-02-2008	Zimuto,M	Male	old	permanent

Key informants

Date	Name	Institution	Position
01-07-2008	Magada, M.	Limpopo provincial department of land affairs	Communications officer
17-09-2008	Malepe,Z.	FAWU	Union organiser Limpopo province
28-06-2008	Ndiafhi,K.	NKUZI	Land reform implementation project officer
27-06-2008	Netsianda, D.	Limpopo provincial department of labour	Labour relations inspector
04-07-2008	Shirinda, S.	PLAAS	Senior researcher
02-07-2008	Shirindza, H.	Musina municipality	Local and economic development officer
11-03-2008	Makgalemele, N.	National department of land affairs	Deputy Director General, land planning and information

Farm managers and farm owner

Date	Name	Gender	Status
26-05-2007/13-02-2008/23-02-2008/26-06-2008	Bismarck, J.	male	Farm owner
23;02-2008/25-02-2008/26-06-2008	Squealer, L	male	Farm manager
28-02-2008	Jones, M.	male	Farm manager