

Cattle, Commercialisation and Land Reform: Dynamics of social reproduction and accumulation in Besters, KwaZulu-Natal.

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ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

The thesis examines the processes of social differentiation amongst households living on farms transferred through South African land reform, and the degree to which the ‘commercialisation’ of the cattle economy accounts for these processes. The evidence is drawn from six farms owned by Communal Property Associations (CPAs), which are part of the Besters Land Reform Project in the Besters District of KwaZulu-Natal.

Drawing on the scholarship of critical political economists, the thesis shows that social differentiation is a dynamic process that both underlies and exacerbates conflicts over the commercial production of collectively owned cattle. This finding is derived from examining the articulation of three analytically distinct processes. These are the diversification of livelihoods in response to diminishing opportunities for regular wage employment; the social stratifications arising partly from the unequal ownership of cattle; and the differential claims on and extractions made from CPA land and cattle production.

The thesis shows that some households are able to accumulate agricultural capital and expand their cattle herds by securing and synchronising a range of livelihoods, including wage employment, social grants and subsidies from CPA farm production. Others, unable to synchronise livelihoods arising from social processes that often run counter to one another, find their cattle herds depleted as they draw on them to survive. When their agricultural production declines, their capacity to generate a livelihood sufficiently robust to withstand shocks is put at risk. This places the collectively owned land, income and assets of the CPAs at the centre of a

politics defined by the contradiction between meeting the needs of social reproduction on the one hand, and accumulating farm capital, on the other. This is evidenced in the dynamic nature of the hybridised farm systems in which cattle farming for multiple purposes co-exists with the production of cattle as commodities. Reflecting this materiality, the politics of the CPA draws on older relationships of kinship, underpinned by ceremonial uses of cattle that both reflect and generate broader socio-economic inequalities. The outcome of this fluid and complex ‘politics of the farm’ determines whether land reform produces a small number of ‘winners’ or a greater number of households involved in agricultural petty commodity production. Social differentiation is exacerbated on farms that disband collective production, while households are both more likely to continue farming or to re-enter agricultural petty commodity production where CPA production provides capital and labour inputs.

The implications of these findings are that the problems of production on many land reform farms cannot be explained simply in terms of CPAs as troubled institutions. Rather, the dynamics of differentiation constitute CPAs and their enterprises as sites of struggle that render collectively owned production unstable under current land and agrarian policy frameworks. Policy priorities that take cognizance of this politics and support farm level adjudications of member’s rights to land, capital and cash, and support agricultural capital accumulators to exit communal property arrangements could result in limited transformations of the agrarian structure.

KEY WORDS

Land and agrarian reform (South Africa), commercialisation, social differentiation, class formation, social reproduction, capital accumulation, communal property associations, cattle farming, rural livelihoods.



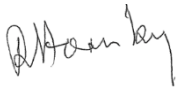
DECLARATION

I declare that *Cattle, commercialisation and land reform: Dynamics of Social Reproduction and Accumulation in Besters, KwaZulu-Natal* is my own work, and that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

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Date:

Signed:



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The people of Besters took me into their homes, shared their lives, ceremonies and farming stories with me, alerted me to events they thought I might be interested in, and became my friends and home from home. There are, however, a few people in particular, I wish to acknowledge. Jabulani Shabalala, with whom I share a passionate interest in cattle farming, spent many evenings talking late into the night about the hundreds of small details of his life on farms, his hopes for land reform and the promises that the Mphuzanyoni cattle represented to him. His wife, Ma’Nene and daughter Nombulelo waited for me to find my feet in the strange environment without ever making me feel a foreigner, helped me arrange interviews and to interpret what I was hearing. The Msimanga family at Nkuthu Kayishazwe welcomed my whole family with a warm and generous openness that is often difficult to find in South Africa’s fraught social spaces. Gogo encouraged me to do my work and spent long hours explaining, with astonishing honesty, relationships between members of her family, between households on the farm, and with the commercial farming neighbours; her sons, Mhle, Xolani and Sbu, called me regularly at home to see how I was and to update me on their lives. Their wives, Ma’Ndaweni, Ma’Dlamini and Ma’Zimu, warmly embraced me while making their kitchens and lives open to me. The Khoza family at Nyakanyaka Yomshini, despite Paulina’s debilitating ill-health, let me stay with them and let me know when burial ceremonies, including Paulina’s funeral, were taking place on the farm. And the children of all these families provided many hours of play and fun after a hard day’s work in the sun. The relationships that developed eased the uncomfortable

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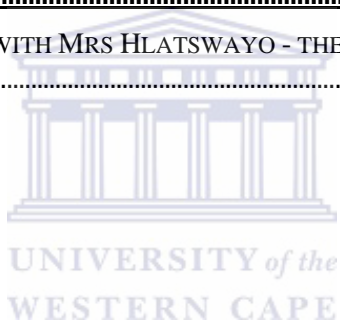
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1. SITUATING SOUTH AFRICA'S AGRARIAN QUESTION

1.1. Introduction

An important policy objective in South Africa's post-apartheid land and agrarian reform has been to address the extreme dualism of the agrarian structure inherited from its colonial and apartheid history by using land reform to redistribute land and drive rural economic growth (DLA, 1997: 9-14). However, not only has this objective not been achieved nearly 20 years after the first democratic elections (Hall and Cliffe, 2009: 1; Hall, 2009a: 41-2), the reforms have also generated a dualism of a different kind. Debates about the changing aims and objectives, and successes and failures of land and agrarian reform are often couched in a set of explicit oppositions: politics versus economics, white versus black farmers, small versus large farmers, commercial versus subsistence farmers, and group versus individual farming. Attempts to recognise that the terrain is more complex and dynamic, such as by Hall and Cliffe (2009: 4) and Jara and Hall (2009: 216), nevertheless often resort to the same terms, hence, semi-subsistence, semi-commercial or commercially-orientated smallholders or peasants. While these oppositions are useful to describe the features of the agrarian structure, they tend to direct attention to the ends of the polarities rather than to the relationships that explain them.

In this thesis, I use a class-analytic approach to examine how the commercialisation of the cattle economy gave rise to new dynamics of social differentiation on the Besters Land Reform Project in KwaZulu-Natal, a project widely presented as an example of successful land reform. (Binswanger *et al*, 2008; Denny-Demitriou, 2009; Natal Mercury, 2007; Hofstatter, 2007) In the Besters context, instead of clear-cut polarities and oppositions, I found a world bursting with relational tensions and conflicts in relation to livelihoods, social organisation and local-level politics. At the heart of these was a fundamental contradiction between social reproduction and capital accumulation, a key contradiction of the capitalist mode of production as analysed by Marx, which generates struggles at multiple levels of production and in social relations. These struggles are key to shaping the dynamic processes of social differentiation taking place on the farms and

to understanding a distinctive local politics that places commercial farm “projects” established through land reform at risk. Certainly there are winners and losers, but they cannot be inferred directly from the policies that inform the project. They emerge rather as the outcome of complex interactions between historical structures of opportunity and constraint, and actions taken in response to these. These incipient class formation processes exist as shadows rather than structures: consolidations, gains, reversals and losses, shaped partly by local and contingent factors and partly by how processes unfolding locally intersect with broader social processes.

The South African context with its “extreme and exceptional” history (Bernstein, 1996b) is one that is different both from other countries in the sub-region and from the historical context in Europe that shaped the classic formulation of the agrarian question with regard to the role of agriculture in the transition to capitalism. It thus raises the tension between the analysis of capitalism as an ineluctable process of history at large and the very particular paths of its development in different places at different times. The distinctive nature of rural poverty in South Africa sharply raises the question of what role, if any, land and agrarian reform has in addressing issues of “employment, simple reproduction, poverty and inequality in contemporary conditions of structural ‘surplus labour’ (O’Laughlin *et al*, 2013: 4)”; conditions arising from South Africa’s particular recent and distant past in relation to the rapid changes that have taken place in commercial farming since the 1970s (Bernstein, 2010b:1-8; Bernstein, 1996a) and its incorporation into what Weis (2007) calls the “global food economy”. This is important in the South African context because it is widely argued that land reform in South Africa has failed to boost production on transferred farms, improve the quality of life and livelihoods of beneficiaries, and to meet policy targets for land transfer (Hall and Cliffe 2009: 6), although the degree, extent and definition of this failure has recently been questioned (Cousins, B and Dubb, A. 2013; Aliber *et al*, 2013: 3-4). Despite these contentions, it is not entirely clear what the social, economic and political processes are that undermine land reform objectives.

These issues are located in important and interconnected debates with a vast body of associated literature across many disciplines. In this thesis, I have drawn particularly on

the concepts of petty commodity production and social differentiation, as elaborated by Gibbon and Neocosmos (1985) and Bernstein (1986, 1988) as well as accumulation paths (Byres, 2002: 55), in order to facilitate a relational and dynamic analysis of social change on the farms at Besters. I use this in an attempt to answer the question raised by Cousins (2013: 117) of whether “accumulation from below” is occurring or could occur in land reform contexts in South Africa. The case study of the Besters Land Reform Project provides a useful lens for assessing the social dynamics that underlie the agrarian transformation that is taking place in the South African countryside and helps to extend the range of explanations for why land reform projects sometimes fail.

This chapter sets out the context, questions and rationale that inform this thesis. I begin by sketching the Besters Land Reform Project and describe how it came about. I then consider the dualistic features of South Africa’s agrarian structure and how aspects of the “dual economy” metaphor have been carried into land and agrarian policies and converged on the notion of “black emerging commercial farmers”, support for whom is a strategy sometimes described as “backing winners”. While the strategy has generated many critiques, both critics and proponents tend to neglect a vital area of rural class formation, namely, how agricultural commercialisation fosters social differentiation in land reform contexts. I then frame questions related to this neglect in debates about the agrarian question and social differentiation, before describing the methodology and research design I used to undertake the research. I conclude the Chapter by outlining the structure of the thesis as a whole.

1.2. The Besters Land Reform Project

The Besters Land Reform project is in the north of the Emnambithi/Ladysmith local municipality, which lies in the north-west of the KwaZulu-Natal province. In 2005, land reform resulted in the transfer of thirteen farms to 170 former labour tenant and farm worker households organised into groups of owners holding land through Communal Property Associations (CPAs). It was a case in which the land claims of labour tenants and farm-resident employees were settled through local negotiations with the landowners rather than through government’s typically centralised top-down approach. Although the claimants had registered claims in terms of the Land Reform (Labour Tenants) Act of

1995, the process of implementation conformed to the “willing buyer, willing seller” model of land reform promoted by the World Bank and approved by the South African government. Landowners received market prices for the land they had sold within two years of agreements being reached, a pace of implementation rarely seen in land reform. The amount of land and project funds secured had exceeded what might have been expected had the land claims been settled through the labour tenant policy provisions. Most importantly, within two years, a number of the CPAs were selling weaned oxen along with maize and soy crops, signalling that successful commercial production was taking place. A World Bank report (Binswanger *et al*, 2008), along with landowners, officials, researchers and media described the project as an example of successful, locally negotiated, decentralised land reform in which everyone was a winner.

The land transferred was about 21% of the farmland in the district, and amounted to a mean land allocation of 88 hectares and mean expenditure of R148,000 to each beneficiary household, with a total project cost to the state of R25,24 million. The project had managed to secure access to the greater amounts of beneficiary grant available through the Land Redistribution and Agricultural Development Programme (LRAD) as well as additional project finance through the Department of Agriculture. Success was also attributed to purchases of capital assets (cattle, tractors, fire-fighting equipment), farm plans developed by local farmers and a two-year mentoring programme involving the sons of local white farmers. Binswanger *et al* (*ibid*) attributed this outcome to the increased project finance resulting from multi-stakeholder involvement, including a number of government departments, and successful local negotiations.

However, by 2007 the characterisation of ‘success’ was being muted by growing concerns over the widespread and escalating conflict on the transferred farms, along with the collapse of the overarching multi-stakeholder governance committee, a non-profit company by the name of Abrina. When I initially visited the farms in 2010 to obtain permission to undertake this research, allegations of corruption and misappropriation of funds directed at individual CPA committees, their members and Abrina were rife. Conflicts between the land reform farm residents and neighbours (both commercial farmers and people on land under a traditional authority), between households, within

households, and between CPA members and their committees were constantly alluded to, while cattle theft on some of the farms became the shorthand for all that had gone wrong. Binswanger *et al* (*ibid*) argued that the institutions at farm level were weak – the CPA constitutions and ‘house rules’ required supplementation. The authors, recommending a liberal technical fix, advised that “standard sanctions be determined for breaches and a committee within each CPA be established to deal with infringements” (*ibid*: 34). Nevertheless, “strong leadership” and “cohesion within the CPA” (*ibid*) had played a role in those farms continuing to enjoy success.

In addition to the conflicts, the staff at the Department of Agriculture were concerned at declining productivity on the farms and claimed that the land reform beneficiaries were not “proper farmers”. (Gwamanda, 2011) Although it was difficult to obtain verifiable evidence of production collapse, the officials made three claims that stood out. The first was that the evidence of declining production was in the number of CPAs that had divided up their collectively owned cattle as a result of internal conflict and distributed them to their members. The second was that the beneficiary households were farming cattle to increase their dignity or social status rather than to produce beef cattle for sale, as the former white owners of these farms had done. The third claim was that the farms were being overgrazed because the beneficiaries were reluctant to sell their livestock. The solution, according to these officials, was that the farmers needed to be trained to become commercial, and that commercial farming entailed, at the least, regular sales of young oxen primarily at formal stock-sales. (DoA meeting, 2011)

This thesis has involved the interrogation of these various claims. What has become clear is that the Besters Land Reform Project is more than a case of successful land transfer and commercial farming. It is also a case that illuminates debates about different farming systems and the various purposes they serve. The group- or CPA-owned cattle herds remaining on some of the farms are run on commercial lines and are thus similar to commercial beef production systems in the district. Alongside these, however, are the much smaller household owned cattle herds that are kept for a range of purposes, including sales, but also for social and ceremonial purposes. Although the Besters’ agro-

ecology is primarily suited to cattle production, much farming at household level includes producing a range of livestock and crops both for home consumption and sale.

Land reform has thus, in effect, reproduced an “architecture” of farm production that has structural similarities with labour tenancy. The allocation of commercial beef herds to CPAs replicated the farm production system of the previous white farmer, while the agreement secured by labour tenant land claimants to be allowed to own cattle separately from the CPA and to have land for household cropping has allowed the continuation of familiar household farming systems. However, the relationship between the household and group-owned cattle herds, how this is managed, and the different rationales underpinning the different production purposes and strategies is less often noted in the characterisation of the project as either succeeding or failing. Furthermore, the labour regimes had changed profoundly. The various struggles over conditions of labour tenancy and the contradictions generated by the “land for labour” contract had been replaced by ways of organising work on farms and in cities. These struggles were acute following the rapid changes in the conditions for agrarian capital accumulation in the 1970s and its accompanying demands for a smaller, skilled workforce, on the one hand, and the prospect of land claims under a democratic government, on the other. Although the conflicts on CPA owned farms cannot be attributed to the same labour regime, their source nevertheless lies in household struggles to resolve the contradiction between social reproduction and accumulation albeit under new conditions.

What is also not noted in commentaries about the success of the Besters Land Reform Project is the striking fact that the largest income source of households living on the farms is not farming but off-farm wage work, followed by social grants. While income from farming is the third largest source of income, and thus not insignificant, this is, for most households, mainly the result of farming at household level and not farming at CPA level. However, what this research shows is that for the few “emerging commercial farmers”, or accumulating petty commodity producers, the positive links and relationship between their own farming, CPA farming, social grants and, in some cases, off-farm wage employment is key. In contrast, those households unable to secure and synchronise their livelihood strategies find that their cattle herds are depleted, their agricultural

production is in decline and their capacity to generate a secure livelihood is at risk. A critical factor shaping a household's particular trajectory is thus the influence it can exercise over CPA decisions. This places the CPA and its assets at the centre of a politics that not only has a dynamic impact on who wins and who loses on the farm, but which draws on older lineage contestations, which in turn shape how power is wielded on the farms.

Despite the continuities between past and present, the changes in ownership and locus of decision-making fashioned by land reform on the Besters farms, combined with new, albeit increasingly limited, opportunities for permanent off-farm wage employment have together created new spaces for reconfiguring petty commodity production on the farms. While the historical social patterns leading up to and shaping land reform allowed for some former labour tenants (particularly those who are men) to derive greater benefit from land reform than others, the structural changes both on the farms and more broadly after land reform have created spaces for some to begin to accumulate capital and expand their farming, while others struggle to straddle the multiple rural and urban livelihoods necessary to secure their reproduction, i.e. an incipient class formation process is at the root of the conflicts.

1.3. Agrarian structure and “emerging commercial farmers”

Despite considerable recent empirical evidence and long theoretical debate raising doubt about whether South Africa has a dual economy, land and agrarian policy reform is increasingly centred on the notion of the emerging commercial farmer as a means of bridging these two disconnected economic worlds. At one level, the notion of dualism is a useful metaphor and shorthand for the stark inequalities inscribed in the racialised pattern of landholding and wealth in the countryside (Du Toit & Neves, 2007: 149). On the other, when this metaphor becomes a means of analysing a problem, then the policy prescriptions are at risk of neglecting the real relations that underlie the metaphor.

In 2003, former President Thabo Mbeki characterised South Africa as having a “dual economy”: one modern and developed and the other underdeveloped and poverty stricken (Mbeki, 2003). Mbeki used the metaphor of a double story building with the state bridging the divide between the two floors by building ladders to facilitate the movement

of the poor to join the rich on the top floor. The dual economy thesis resonates with debates in the 1970s between Marxists and neoclassical economists about the relationship between race and class in South Africa's history. Lipton (1977), for instance, argued that the agrarian structure was the result of political distortions of what would otherwise have been a linear economic growth pattern, while Wolpe (1972) argued that the native reserves with their subsistent agriculture were integral to ensuring the supply of cheap, migrant wage labour on the back of which mining was able to industrialise.

Nevertheless, the dualistic characteristics of South Africa's agrarian structure are well documented and can be summarised by referring to three core features: ownership of land and capital; methods of production and levels of productivity; and state support. The primary owners of agrarian capital and land are a small, albeit rapidly declining number of mainly white farmers, about 40,000 in 2007, down from 58,000 in 1993 (Aliber *et al*, 2013: 15), who own about 85% of the country's agricultural land. On the remainder of the countryside reside a growing number of black farmers, approximately 2,75 million in 2010, up from 2,2 million in 2002 (*ibid*). The white farmers own their farms in private ownership while most black farmers access land in the former Bantustans through the institutions of chieftaincy¹. The average farm size of the larger owners is 1,200 hectares (Gbetibouo and Ringler, 2009: 7), while the arable land sizes held by black farmers are described as "very small" (Vink and Van Rooyen, 2009: 32).

Production systems are also described in dualistic terms. Black homeland farmers are often described as part-time farmers who use low-input, "traditional", labour-intensive production systems for mainly subsistence purposes (Fényes and Meyer 2003; Louw, 2013), while large-scale farmers are described as full-time, commercial, capital-intensive farmers who use modern production technologies to secure high levels of productivity and are export-oriented. Historically, the institutional infrastructure of agricultural support has also differed in quality, availability and accessibility between commercial and subsistence farms (Coetzee and Van Zyl, 1992; Hall, 2009: 121), resulting in poverty

¹ This simplifies a highly contested debate in South Africa about how land is at the centre of colonial and current distortions of custom and traditional authority, which is well summarized by chapters by different authors in Claassens and Cousins (2008).

concentrated in the former homelands. (Binswanger and Deininger, 1993: 1451; Lipton, 1996: 409-412).

However, empirical evidence has begun to challenge the idea of two independent economic spheres, suggesting far more blurring and interpenetration of categories than the metaphor allows. Attempts to clarify the definitions of big- and small-scale farmers have drawn attention to the differentiating dynamics on either side of the divide (Kirsten, 2011; Cousins, 2010). Rapid concentration of agricultural land and capital along with the dropping out of less efficient producers has been occurring since the late 1980s, forged by a section of agrarian capital that successfully pushed for a fundamental restructuring of the sector through de-regulation, the dismantling of the marketing boards and the elimination of subsidies and cheap credit. By 2005 private companies owned 0,6% of all farms in 2007 but produced a third of the total income (Liebenberg, 2013: 28). This concentration of production, evidenced in the beef sector in the declining number of feedlots that produce most of the country's beef, has been accompanied by the integration of what is now being called the "agribusiness sector" (Greenberg, 2013: 10-11) into global commodity chains (Hall, 2012; Greenberg, 2013), and the financialisation of the production process (Anseeuw, 2013). These changes have resulted in both a decline in, and restructuring of wage employment on farms, with full-time employees declining by 36% between 1993 and 2007 (Aliber *et al*, 2013: 15), and an increased substitution of full-time workers with seasonal or contract workers.

Processes of differentiation are also reported amongst farmers in the former Bantustan areas. Aliber *et al* (2013: 15), with some caution about the data, shows that in 2010 there were 150 000 "commercially-oriented" smallholders and 2,6 million "subsistence-orientated" households. The commercial smallholders grew by 29% between 2002 and 2010, contributed R5,3 billion to rural incomes, and employed in the region of 10% of agricultural workers nationally (Aliber *et al*, 2013: 15).

Theoretical scepticism about the "dual economy" thesis and solutions to it also abound (Renolds and Van Zyl, 2006). Cousins (2005: 221), for instance, asserts that not only does South Africa have a single integrated economy, it is precisely the "successful

policies” within the ‘first’ economy that “create the structural disadvantage” in the ‘second’ economy. Du Toit (2004: 11) agrees arguing that it is not exclusion from the economy that has created an “impoverished periphery” but “150 years or more of forcible incorporation into the economy and racialised capitalism”, with accumulation from below constrained by the “depth of corporate penetration into the economy as a whole”.

Cousins frames the problem in class terms. Drawing on Bernstein (2004), he argues that the concentration, scale and productivity of agrarian capital confirms that the key question today is not one of capital investment at a global level but of labour reproduction, particularly in less developed countries. “Labour pursues its reproduction in conditions of ever more insecure wage employment combined with ‘informal sector’ and survivalist activity, across a range of sites: urban and rural, agricultural and non-agricultural, wage and self-employment” (Cousins, 2005: 266-7). Struggles for land reform can be explained by these fragmentations of classes of labour and their struggles for survival.

Du Toit and Neves (2007), however, question the notion that power is centred in solid class oppositions with their unequal and differentially distributed social and spatial effects. Rather, the limits of the dual economy metaphor lies in its failure to grasp that power has multiple sources and coalesces around dispersed nodal points. This is a complex landscape of multiple intersections and effects: “supermarkets and roads can bring cheaper food ... [but they] also eviscerate local agrarian systems” (*ibid*: 170), which impacts on the configuration of “complex, spatially extended and distributed” livelihoods and economic activity that are a “... ‘rhizomic’ structure of extended kin networks” (*ibid*: 169). In their view the connections between class, kinship and gender should be viewed not as simple, linear and static constellations of power and identity, but as complex, dynamic and fluid relations that together explain particular social structures and the forces that drive change.

Despite the substantial debate about the accuracy and usefulness of the dual economy thesis, the idea continues to be used to describe South Africa’s economy (see, for example, the business media, MoneyWeb and the World Bank’s South Africa Review,

2014) and to be the basis for the formulation of policy interventions. One such response is apparent in the growing convergence in land and agrarian reforms since 2001, centred on the notion of the emerging commercial farmer as a bridge between the disconnected economies, as is discussed further in chapter 3.

Although land reform in South Africa has been through a number of phases (Greenberg, 2013: 9), these are characterized by a shift in emphasis rather than radical discontinuity (Hebinck *et al*, 2011) and continue to reflect ambivalences around questions of farm size and viability, moving between an emphasis on small-scale farming and its claimed efficiencies and then to models that emphasis the economies of scale and productivity of large-scale commercial farming. Nevertheless, the land and agricultural policy convergence on the notion of the “emerging commercial farmer” reflects the continuity in emphasis on integration into commodity markets.

The most recent of these policy developments, the Recapitalisation and Development Programme Policy (DRDLR, 2013), aims to support “black emerging farmers” to run “successful agricultural business” through their rapid integration into agricultural value chains with the help of “established agriculture” (*ibid*, 10). The strategy depicts the linear and progressive “graduation” of farmers through various scales of farming and increasingly complex production and market structures. The policy states that this recognition of difference departs from the idea that farmers are “homogeneous” and is thus sensitive to their different needs and different levels of development in terms of technical capacity (farming, business management and marketing, access to resources and willingness to take risks (*ibid*, 13). Class differentiation is thus reinterpreted in neoclassical terms of differential access to skills and markets familiar in Lipton’s work (1985).

A theme of continuity that emerges across the policies is the intensification of market relations. This includes the deeper integration of land reform beneficiaries into up- and downstream agricultural commodity markets, skills development through the mentoring provided by the large commercial farm sector, the deeper involvement of agri-business through partnerships as a substitute for the state’s minimalist role, and, as a result, the

“graduation” of the emerging commercial farmer from subsistence to export producer. What the policies fail to consider is that these processes are also accompanied by the ‘shaking out’ of those who do not ‘graduate’.

The ambivalence around scale apparent in land reform policy development thus disappears when it comes to deepening market integration. The “emerging black commercial farmer” is the agent recruited to the cause of eliminating both agrarian dualism and securing success in land reform through market integration. Land reform’s “willing buyer, willing seller” principle thus converges with the idea of the “proper” farmer as one who “farms as a business” (Sumberg, 2010). In the process, class differentiation is subsumed into the neo-classical economist concerns with differential access to markets, which render class struggles invisible through technical notions of skills development and notions of the rural poor as a homogeneous mass.

1.4. The agrarian question and social differentiation

The strategy of “backing winners” (Lahiff, 2007:14) in the form of prioritising emerging commercial farmers as beneficiaries of policy can be looked at in a number of different ways. From the perspective of land and agrarian policies, “losers” are those who do not want to farm productively but want to benefit for “welfare” purposes or to subsidise their own farming inputs (DRDLRa, 2013: 11). Their exclusion from programmes intended to develop emerging black commercial farmers is a strategy aimed at guaranteeing the success of land and agricultural reform. Mather (2002: 352-3), on the other hand, argues that while the bias to establishing black farmers as commercial agricultural producers has been present in land policies from the start, policies such as LRAD (and more recent policies mentioned above) represent a significant shift in political alignment, with a partnership emerging between white commercial agriculture and the state aimed at developing a globally competitive class of black commercial farmers. Given the long history of failed strategies to create “committed yeoman farmers”, Mather asks whether reform should not instead be geared towards the “real interests of the poor”, namely, secure tenure, access to land and its resources, and employment (*ibid*, 353). Hall (2004: 60-1) adds to this that the strategy of creating of a new class of black commercial farmers in a context of constrained budget allocations, agricultural deregulation and limited post-

settlement support (amongst other things) challenges the possibility of a comprehensive pro-poor agrarian reform able to provide livelihood opportunities for the rural poor and landless.

In other words, where the state sees the strategy of picking winners as insuring against land reform failure, Hall and Mather suggest that the strategy of picking emerging commercial farmers results in the rural poor losing out, and Mather does not explain his observation that policies geared at promoting black commercial farmers have often failed but rather uses it to provide evidence for re-targeting the poor.

There is, however, another dimension to the problem, and that is the way in which processes of commercialisation are intertwined with broader processes of social differentiation at a time when the South African state is constrained by the dictates of neo-liberalism and a home-grown structural adjustment. As the land and agrarian policies reviewed above show, the state assumes that it can shift “distressed” land reform farms into productive commercial farms through deepening market linkages and increasing the role of the commercial farm sector. In the context of the rapid rate at which white commercial family farms are disappearing while a small number are consolidating as agribusinesses invested up and down the agricultural value chain, these policies provide a minimalist role for the state to protect land reform beneficiaries from these processes of differentiation. Cousins (2013: 117), arguing that processes of differentiation are also implied in the contrast made between a large number of subsistent or semi-subsistent farming households and a smaller number of semi-commercial or emerging commercial small-holders, observes that the causes underlying these processes of differentiation are not often discussed in the South African agrarian literature. How processes of commercialisation and social differentiation on land reform farms shape “winners” and “losers” within the “winning” group (the group that has benefitted from redistributive state programmes), and what this may imply for understanding the nature of rural poverty and unemployment, is also neglected in the literature. In effect then, the focus on the broader winners and losers associated with the commercialisation of production in land reform contexts means that the nature of the incipient class formation processes taking place within land reform contexts is often neglected.

The linked concepts of social differentiation and class formation help capture some of the dynamism present in rural social movements. They stand in contrast to the assumption of peasant homogeneity on the one hand (Bernstein, 2010a) and to social analyses based on descriptive concepts of stratification on the other. As Patnaik (1987: 15) observes:

“Since the most blatantly obvious feature of the agrarian structure is the extremely unequal distribution of the means of production ... the neoclassical assumption of a homogenous agrarian structure does such violence to reality that it is unacceptable to ... [the school of] agrarian neopopulism. This school does recognise the groups within the peasantry, but confines discussion to a purely empiricist level, using categories such as ‘big’, ‘medium’, ‘small’ and ‘marginal’ cultivators.”

For Bernstein and Patnaik, rural social differentiation is located in questions about the nature of on-going class formation processes within the historically uneven development of capitalism on a world scale, and the role of agriculture in generating the capital necessary for this development. In terms of Marx’s classic formulation of what has come to be termed the agrarian question, primitive accumulation in agriculture allows a surplus to be extracted that can be used to fund industrialisation. This process of capital accumulation, however, is also accompanied by land dispossession and the destruction of the peasantry as the populace gradually differentiates into two antagonistic social classes, capitalists locked into a logic of competitive accumulation, and a working class with no way of reproducing itself except through the sale of its labour. Many thinkers, beginning with Engels, Lenin and Kautsky (Akram-Lodhi *et al*, 2009) but including key contemporary thinkers such as Byres (1991, 1996, 2002) and Bernstein (1996a, 2009, 2010a and 2010b), have noted that the role of land and agriculture in this dynamic has taken divergent concrete forms depending on the history of how capital accumulation has taken place in specific localities, the struggles that have accompanied and shaped it, and when it has taken place in relation to the establishment of capitalist social relations elsewhere in the world.

The literature on class and agrarian change is reviewed in Chapter 2, so suffice for now to say that the role of land reform and agriculture in national economic development,

particularly in less wealthy parts of the world, has been problematised (Friedman and McMichael, 1989) and is increasingly contested. This has generated new concerns and claims about the nature and conditions of existence of the peasantry. Thus, some claim that the pace, scale and degree of change in the organisation of an industrial, corporatised food economy over the past 40 years places the future of farming itself at risk (Weis, 2007) and its spatially uneven impact across the globe raises questions about whether the peasantry has disappeared (Hobsbawm, 1994: 289), is “disappearing” (Bryceson, 1999, 2000), is being reproduced in a populist discourse (Brass, 2000), is the new emancipatory agent (McMichael, 2006), or has reached the limits of its analytical and historical usefulness (Bernstein, 2010a).

Underlying these concerns is what role land reform and agriculture play today in social reproduction processes. Bernstein suggests (2003: 20) that land reform is best understood as a social movement in response to both the “contemporary ‘fragmentation’ of labour as a feature of ‘globalisation’, and experienced as mounting pressures on the reproduction of labour in both agricultural petty commodity production and wage employment, and the ways they are linked”. By contrast, Cousins (2013) suggests that land and agricultural reform could be configured to play a role in establishing paths of accumulation that are able to transform the social inequalities characteristic of capitalist development; what Lenin saw as the progressive processes of “accumulation from below”. Mather’s (2002) argument that land and agrarian reform is geared at de-racialising the structure of agrarian capital without restructuring it, suggests a third possible accumulation path. This partial incorporation constitutes a version of what Lenin (1982) termed “accumulation from above”, in which state resources and power are used to build the agrarian capital of a small rural elite, an accumulation path Morris (1976) argues characterised the early development of white agrarian capital in South Africa. However, these questions cannot be answered in the abstract but require an understanding of the concrete conditions on land reform farms and how these are changing in response to broader changes in the society. The case study of the Besters Land Reform Project provides a means for analysing these conditions and the processes that are driving social change on the farms.

1.5. Research objectives, rationale and significance

This thesis thus aims to fill a gap in the policy and theoretical literature, namely how the commercialisation of farming in land reform creates contexts in which processes of social differentiation take place, and what consequences this has for local struggles over land and productive resources. While there is often a concern in the land reform, farm production and farm systems literature with winners and losers defined in various ways, the traditional concerns of political economy on processes of class formation and the struggles that accompany rural social differentiation appear to have fallen out of favour in the South African academic world. As a result, there appears to be a tendency to neglect, in land reform contexts, the key political economy questions, which for Bernstein (2010a: 22) are: Who owns what? Who does what? Who gets what? What do they do with it?; and whether and how answers to these questions illuminate the social processes associated with the development of the “corporate industrial” nature of the global food economy (Weis, 2007: 187).

Much of the research on land reform focuses on the politics of policy development (see, for example, Hall, 2010; Hall and Jara, 2009; Hall and Cliffe, 2009, and Hall, 2009) and the successes or failures in achieving its social, economic and political objectives (Aliber and Hall, 2010; Lahiff, 2007), and often framed, albeit critically, in terms of livelihoods (Tapela, 2005; Aliber *et al*, 2013). The literature on agricultural production, on the other hand, is most often focused either on the large-scale farm sector in a highly technicist way in terms of technological development or economics (Louw, 2013: 24), or on the financial and social value of the multiple purposes of small-scale farm systems (Shackleton *et al*, 2000), the economics of small-scale farming most often in the former Bantustans (Lipton, 1996), and the efficiencies and employment-creating role of small-scale farmers in market-led agrarian transformations (Binswanger and Deininger, 1993). None of these approaches easily allows the relationship of land reform to the macro-reconfiguring of the national agrarian structure to be explored, nor what effect this may be having on the “bifurcated” agrarian structure and its realignment or deepening through new “processes of segmentation, inequality and exclusion” (Akram-Lodhi *et al*, 2009: 215) and the ways in which recent changes to capitalism drive these processes, particularly in poor countries (Byers, 2003: 54). Critical or Marxist political economy

approaches, with their class analytical focus on social differentiation, pull these strands together.

The move away from materialist political economy approaches to agrarian change is not isolated to South African rural social analysis. It follows international trends that began in the 1980s that critiqued Marxist analyses of social change as providing homogenising and reductionist explanations in their focus on structure at the expense of agency (Harriss-White and Heyer, 2010: 15). However, a number of recent (neo-)Marxist scholars (Sayer, 1992 and 2000; Harriss, 2007; Da Corta, 2010; Capps, 2010) have argued that a materialist political economy approach is not necessarily functionalist or teleological, that such judgements were based on narrow and often inaccurate interpretations of Marx, and that on the contrary, a critical political economy approach to agrarian change is capable of delivering analyses that illuminate the dynamic and contingent social relations that both shape, and are a response to material economic conditions, without neglecting the class differentiating significance of these conditions on struggles around social reproduction.

There are, however, notable recent exceptions to this gap in the South African academic literature, in addition to the long and rich Marxist and social historiography on various aspects of peasant production in the former Bantustans (including Wolpe 1972, Legassic and Wolpe 1976, Morris 1976, Bundy 1988, Marks 1986, Delius 1984, Beinart and Bundy 1987). Cousins' (2013) focus on petty commodity production and rural accumulation paths, Aliber *et al* (2013) on the differentiating effects of trajectories of livelihood change on the land reform farms in Limpopo province, Hickey and Du Toit's (2007) analysis of the adverse incorporation of smallholders into value chains, and White *et al*'s (2013) argument that corporate land deals generate new processes of social differentiation and rural accumulation, are all useful in addressing the neglect of the questions posed by critical political economy perspectives, particularly in respect to social differentiation. They thus help to supply the theoretical tools to consider social differentiation in land reform contexts.

In this thesis, I aim to contribute to filling these gaps by focussing on whether the commercialisation of farming in land reform contexts is altering how small farm

producers organise their social reproduction, and what effects this may be having on processes of social differentiation and class formation, with their gendered dimensions. In particular, I use the concepts of social reproduction, capital accumulation and petty commodity production in order to analyse the dynamics of differentiation and class formation in communal property contexts, where commercial and multi-purpose farm systems are sometimes combined. An analysis using these concepts, I argue, provides a more rounded and full explanation than those currently available as to why so many land reform projects in CPA contexts fail in South Africa. In this respect, this research contributes to re-asserting the usefulness of political economy approaches to illuminating particular aspects of agrarian reform, while also contributing to policy development by drawing attention to the differentiating dynamics present on some land reform farms.

Many other ways of approaching the land question and social differentiation are excluded from this approach. Perhaps the most important of the contemporary approaches are those located in post-structuralist theories, which combine political economy and discourse analyses to produce insightful accounts of the effects of power and the politics of identification. In the South African agrarian literature, this is well exemplified by Du Toit (2004) and Hickey and Du Toit (2007) in the focus on the processes by which small farmers are adversely incorporated into markets. Anseeuw and Alden (2009) also combine the structural approach of political economy with a discourse analysis to explain how a particular post-colonial politics becomes institutionalised along with its contours of tension and change. Discourse analysis provides insight into the colonial and liberation narratives that are the source of on-going vibrancy in discourses of national identity, authentic citizenship and symbolic restitution, which provide political legitimacy and policy action for nation-building projects, which have, however, been “rendered suspect by neoliberalism” (*ibid*, 33). In a not dissimilar approach but focusing on restitution in South Africa, Walker highlights how “the master narrative of loss and restoration” (2008: 16) has failed to link a history of dispossession with the intervening years of social and economic change. Hart (2002) also uses a mix of a political economy approach and discourse theory to critique the neo-liberal framework within which globalisation is unfolding and the way it re-organises rural space and livelihoods transnationally in small towns in South Africa and Taiwan.

There are also a number of other important theoretical disciplines with their associated foci and methodologies that are not dealt with in this thesis. Development theory encompasses many of the issues considered here, investigating as it does relationships between the development of capitalism regionally, nationally and globally, and the socio-political changes and ideologies that accompany these, particularly the impacts of these changes on rural poverty. Most closely aligned to the concerns and approach in this thesis is the investigation of development issues through a political economy framework (see, for instance, Harriss-White and Heyer, 2010), which includes agrarian issues, class formation processes and the contemporary segmentation and exclusion of particular classes of labour. However, this thesis does not consider in any detail contemporary debates about development theory or the discourses in which they are located.

1.6. Research questions and design

My research has focused on four questions drawn from a review of the theoretical literature on the contemporary nature of the agrarian question and processes of class formation associated with it, as well as the land reform and farming systems literature in South Africa. These questions are:

- What is the trajectory of the farming systems practised by land reform beneficiaries at Besters, and how “commercial” are these in character?
- Is the commercialisation of farming at Besters generating processes of social differentiation and class formation, and if so, by what mechanisms?
- Are some land reform beneficiaries beginning to engage in agrarian accumulation, and if so, does this account for the emerging differences between them?
- What other forms of social differentiation are there at Besters and how do these articulate with class formation processes?

As pointed out above, the processes of social differentiation that shape class formation do not follow an abstract or idealised path but are forged in contexts with specific histories and in relation to other current social dynamics. Bensaid (2002) argues that for Marx

classes are not abstractions that precede the individuals that belong to them; rather, they form in relationships of struggle that have multiple determinations, which shape their concrete manifestation. Marx does not “‘define’ a class: he apprehends relations of conflict between classes. He does not photograph a social fact labelled ‘class’; he has his sights set on the class relation in its conflictual dynamic. An isolated class is not a theoretical object, but a nonsense” (Bensaid, 2002: 111). The study of these processes thus requires a methodological approach that is based on an understanding of class as an abstract concept, on the one hand, and on the particular conditions that shape the concrete form of class on the other.

In developing my research design, I drew on Sayer’s key distinction between intensive and extensive designs (Sayer, 1992: 242-4). Extensive designs are aimed at identifying the “formal relations of similarity” (*ibid*: 243) in taxonomic groups in order to describe their generalizable features. This generally involves surveys of a representative population or sample that is analysed statistically. Intensive designs, by contrast, aim to identify “substantial relations of connection” by considering how particular processes work, what different agents do and what and how changes are produced in causally connected groups. Methods used in this type of design generally include open-ended, interactive interviews, ethnography and qualitative analysis. The explanations of events or objects in intensive designs are causal but not necessarily widely representative, and whereas extensive designs allow individuals to be compared on the basis of classification, they are weak for identifying causal and necessary relations. In so far as intensive designs identify structures and mechanisms of causality, they may be more generally applicable, although further research would be required to determine this.

My approach to the case study of Besters land reform has been to use a combination of intensive and extensive research designs, in an approach of cascading intensity. It is a single land reform “project” but is made up thirteen of farms, each owned by a CPA with farm residents ranging from three to 28 households. The extensive design – which included the statistical analysis of a socio-demographic and asset survey of 84 households on six of the farms and a district data base of cattle sales - allowed the construction of different taxonomic groupings of the population based on a number of variables (such as

assets, sales, cattle ownership) across the farms and the district. From these descriptive characteristics, four groups based on asset differences were identified with whom to conduct open-ended and interactive interviews and conversations. This phase consisted of 125 open-ended interactive interviews, including multiple interviews with some respondents, which focussed on the life history of members of households, dynamics of group production, and kinship relations and ceremony. The purpose here was to identify the mechanisms that could explain the dynamics underlying the descriptive structure of relationships. Other methods included analysing grey literature (particularly official project literature), interviews with officials and farmers, and attendance of meetings. Finally, I stayed with five families on four different farms for periods of up to nine weeks to undertake ethnographic participative immersion research in order to observe household dynamics, production cycles and cultural activities, and how these intersected with cattle production.

1.7. The structure of the thesis

In Chapter 2 I consider perspectives on the agrarian question and its history in South Africa focussing on differences in the neoclassical economics (in particular Merle Lipton) and critical political economy traditions (specifically Morriss 1976 and Legassick and Wolpe 1976). While neoclassical economists argue that the current agrarian structure is the outcome of policy distortions that land redistribution to small-scale farmers can undo, critical political economists locate the debate in the class relations that underpin changes in the relationship between agriculture and industry in the development of capitalism. However, these political economists have themselves neglected the processes of differentiation amongst petty commodity producers. (Levin and Neocosmos 1987) More recent approaches (Bernstein 1988, 2009, 2010a, 2010b and O’Laughlin 1996, 2009, 2010) suggest that differentiation, and thus accumulation, is the result of the articulation of two key but distinct processes: the diversification of livelihoods as a response to the social reproduction crisis generated by the reorganisation of work and the fragmentation of the working class, and the social stratifications resulting from differential ownership of agricultural means of production (cattle, implements and land). The chapter defines the key concepts used in this thesis, namely, petty commodity production, social differentiation, social reproduction and accumulation.

In Chapter 3, I locate agricultural petty commodity production in South Africa in two literatures: land reform and farm systems. In the land reform section, I argue that despite policy ambivalence around scale and farm viability, there has been a convergence in land and agrarian policy around the “emerging commercial farmer” as the beneficiary of market-led land reform and one who produces commodities for sale. The notion of such a farmer nevertheless suffers from the same critiques of neo-populism that are levelled at the neoclassical economists’ assumption that small scale-farmers are a homogeneous social category. This non-existent social category, as a target of policy, also raises the question of what farming systems are appropriate on land reform forms. In the farm systems literature, there is a distinct dualism in how farming is understood, valued and written about. On the one hand, there is a vast literature on economics and technologies of commercial farming and on the other a growing literature on the social and financial values of multi-purpose farming. However, there is very little written on how different farming systems intersect and articulate in land reform contexts, sometimes creating hybrids of large- and small-scale systems, and with what consequences for social differentiation.

The methodology and methods I use in the thesis are described in Chapter 4. I locate the class dynamics central to petty commodity production in Marx’s distinction between essential or necessary relations and their phenomenal expression (Bensaid, 2002). I outline the realist methodology of Sayer (1992), which I argue is appropriate for investigating social differentiation, and briefly consider Oya’s (2004, 2007) approach to researching class formation processes and petty commodity accumulation in Senegal. The bulk of the chapter describes the specific methods used in the field, emphasising the research design and how it relates to the research focus.

In Chapter 5, I provide a historical and geographical context to the Besters land reform project. The geographical context notes the role of farming in the local economy, the decline in manufacturing and socio-spatial demographic characteristics of the district. The history reviews the struggle over land in the 19th century, the struggle over labour in the 20th century, and the struggle over agricultural capital accumulation in the period of land reform (1995-2005). The focus is on the key determinants of how land reform

unfolded in Besters, and the extent to which these processes shaped the subsequent organisation of production and the social systems within which it was located. The main conclusion is that land reform represented two lines of substantial continuity with the past. Firstly, it resulted in distinct winners and losers, whose class, gender and race dimensions had powerful resonance with past social structures. Secondly, it resulted in a farm production “architecture” that has structural similarities with labour tenancy. Despite these similarities, however, new important differences had emerged, which created new spaces for reconfiguring petty commodity production on the farms.

Chapters 6 and 7 describe life on the farms in terms of the structure of households, livelihoods and production systems. Contrary to the neo-classical economists’ assumptions of both homogeneity and efficiency-equity outcomes of small scale farming, Chapter 6 shows that livelihoods are diverse, wage and social grant dependent, with crop production boosting consumption and cattle used primarily to generate cash and for ceremony. Furthermore, the types of livelihoods and the income they generate are highly differentiated along gendered and generational lines, which are most pronounced in cattle ownership and wage income. Chapter 7 analyses in detail the differences between idealised notions of commercial farming and how farm production is actually managed and undertaken on the different land reform farms. What emerges is a complex hybridisation of farming systems that is distinctly different from the purely commercial farm models presented in technical reports.

Chapter 8 analyses how social relations are reproduced on the Besters farms. While the history of each CPA shows that “community” is largely a misnomer, some of the farms nevertheless have dense webs of lineal connectedness, with more dominant families tending to occupy CPA committee positions. I then consider three examples of what Wolf (1996) calls the cultural fund, namely, marriage, burials and the provision of Christmas meat at two CPAs. I focus particularly on these because of their integration with cattle production. I find that while these ceremonials cement bonds between families, thus contributing to CPA functionality, they also elicit and reproduce the growing social inequality that undermines CPA cohesion. A key dynamic at play is the struggle over lineage and how this contestation shapes CPA structures.

Chapter 9 uses the Bernstein's (2010a: 18-20) concept of "replacement funds" to examine the struggles over CPA production on different farms. These are key components of production systems that have to be replaced from the income derived from production ie those elements of the production process have to be reproduced. Three funds are necessary to reproduce the conditions for production on the farms. These are operational inputs (eg. mineral licks, dips), capital investments (eg. infrastructure, breeding stock), and a consumption fund (which generally refers to wages but in CPAs also refers to dividends and other benefits payable to members). I find that CPAs struggle to replace all three funds and constantly juggle to satisfy members' demands for dividends against income allocations to operational inputs and expanded production in order to remain profitable. These contradictions become acute when contingent factors such as droughts or weaner and input price fluctuations affect income.

In Chapter 10 I consider the processes of social differentiation taking place on the farms. I use a number of typologies, including assets (as a proxy for wealth), and livelihood and farming trajectories. I use the differences in wealth status and the trajectories to identify the underlying processes that explain why some cattle owners are expanding production while others are either maintaining or falling out of production. I find that it is not the presence of multiple livelihoods per se that differentiates households but a combination of factors including whether households can effectively synchronise a range of livelihoods, the density and depth of the livelihoods, the subsidisation and replenishment of household farming from CPA production, and the experience of severe shocks, such as the death or retrenchment of the household head.

In the concluding chapter, I revisit my research questions and conclude that how petty commodity production articulates with production at CPA level in a context of multiple livelihoods is key to explaining the dynamics of differentiation on the Besters land reform farms. The result is a complicated social reproduction-accumulation dynamic at work on the land reform farms, which is the result of, but also shapes accumulation paths from "above" and "below". The different decisions CPA's have made about collective production have generated different patterns of accumulation, with a more widespread but slower rate of accumulation where CPAs continue to subsidise agricultural petty

commodity production, while a narrower more extreme differentiation is occurring where CPA production has collapsed. This conclusion contrasts both with the neoclassical economist assumptions of homogeneity implied in inverse relation between scale and production and with assumptions in critical political economy that social differentiation amongst small farmers results from the contradictory dual class position in petty commodity production. Some policy revision is thus required. The chapter also outlines the limits of the thesis.



2. THE AGRARIAN QUESTION, PETTY COMMODITY PRODUCTION AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF “ACCUMULATION FROM BELOW”

“The reproduction of the capitalist mode of production is always a contradictory movement such that, in the very process of reproduction, different classes and fractions within classes come into conflict” (Wolpe and Legassick, 1976: 89).

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I trace the development of the two primary concepts used in this thesis, namely, petty commodity production and social differentiation, along with two other related key concepts, namely social reproduction and capital accumulation, by considering debates on the role of farming in the development of agrarian (and other productive) capital in South Africa.

I begin by focusing on the views of neo-classical economists (particularly Merle 1977, 1985, 1996, 2006) who argue that land and agrarian reform that supports small-scale farmers will create the conditions for an equitable, labour-intensive growth path, which will mitigate, if not undo, the colonial and apartheid legacies of poverty and inequality. This view, which has had active proponents in the World Bank, tends to dominate the market-led land and agrarian policy reforms in South Africa today (Deininger, 1999: 664-666; Binswanger and Deininger, 1992: 87; Weideman, 2004: 223-224; Williams, 1996b: 139-140). However, there is a long-standing and rich Marxist-derived tradition that approaches these questions very differently, often with useful internal contrasts in emphasis, and with different implications for politics and economic development.

Marxist-derived political economy approaches are considered through the lens of debates on the nature of the Agrarian Question, the different meanings associated with it and whether or not such a question still has relevance. In the South African context, I consider three influential perspectives on this question: the role of the Bantustans² in the

² A brief word on language is necessary. This chapter is full of highly contentious terminology, in some cases highlighting important theoretical contestations. However, I do not intend to review the terminology

production of cheap migrant, wage labour (Wolpe, 1972, and Wolpe and Legassick, 1976), the process of agrarian capital formation through a path of “accumulation from above” (Morris, 1972) and agricultural petty commodity production with its potential for a progressive path of capitalist development through “accumulation from below” (Levin and Neocosmos, 1987).

However, if these questions have been the subject of historical contestations on how to understand the Agrarian Question, the term itself is now contested, as scholars focus on whether, and in what sense, agriculture in the developing world is still relevant in understanding the globalized nature of capitalism and its conditions for accumulation. Since this is a wide ranging debate with many nuances (see Brass, 2000; Bryceson *et al*, 2000; Ramachandran and Swaminathan, 2002; and Akram-Lodhi and Kay, 2009), I focus particularly on the views of Bernstein (2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010a&b, 2011, 2012), O’Laughlin (1996, 2004, 2009) and Cousins (2011, 2013) to provide analytical tools for understanding the contemporary South African context. Of central importance here is Bernstein’s argument that under current global conditions of capital accumulation, the classic Agrarian Question of capital formation and class struggle has been replaced by a new Agrarian Question of *labour* and the diversification of livelihood strategies and social reproduction processes that this entails. Understood in this way, wider changes in the countryside intersect in complex ways with the class differentiating dynamics inherent in petty commodity production systems.

2.2. Neoclassical economists: small farmers and equitable growth

A central assertion of the neoclassical economics perspective, and in particular the neo-

debates in detail. In relation to apartheid terminology, I follow Wolpe (1972) and others in using the term Bantustan, rather than homeland, to describe areas set aside for African occupation, not because this is a more acceptable term but because there is no acceptable term for describing such dehumanizing mechanisms. In terms of political economy traditions, I use “Marxist-derived” to designate the large body of theorizing that follows a Marxist lineage. Within that, I loosely follow Browning and Kilmister’s (2006: 3-5) term “critical political economy” to indicate more recent Marxist approaches that refocus attention on agency (particularly class struggle) in social explanations but distinguish them from the post-modernist emphasis on contingency and difference derived from a skepticism about “grand narratives”. Finally, I follow Cousins (2013: 118) and Bernstein (2004b: 190; 2010a: 103) in referring to small farm producers as “petty commodity producers” rather than semi-commercial, commercializing or semi-subsistence peasants or small holders. “Small farmers” is a descriptive rather than analytical term.

institutionalist variant thereof, is that an agricultural development strategy that promotes small farms can achieve both equity and efficiency, objectives often viewed as mutually exclusive in market economies (Ellis, 1993: 201). In this section, I review the core propositions of the proponents of this view by considering firstly, a debate that took place in the *Journal of Agrarian Change* in 2002-2004 and came to be known as the GKI debate, and secondly, by considering how similar arguments have been deployed in the South African context.

Originating in Chayanov's (1966) argument that peasants are efficient partly because they produce only what they need for their own reproduction, the more recent views of Berry and Cline (1979), Carter (1985), the World Bank (1975 and 2003) and Griffin, Khan and Ickowitz (2002, 2004) (or GKI) are associated with the nature of economies of scale in agriculture and the effects of fragmented markets in land, labour and capital. At the core of these views is the general claim that there is an inverse relation between the size of land and productivity or yield (ISPR) in agricultural production, and that small-scale farmers are therefore more efficient than large-scale farmers. Griffin *et al* (2002) argue that this inverse relationship arises in contexts of fragmented land, labour and capital markets, is backed up by empirical evidence and suggests that it underlies a two-way positive causality between land redistribution and overall economic growth.

The GKI paper argues that the core focus of land reform should be to undo land concentration and the "inefficiency, inequality and poverty which this creates" (*ibid*, 284). The case for redistributive land reform is two-fold. Firstly, many countries have followed development strategies characterized by both an urban and an intra-agricultural bias towards large farms, with negative impacts on total agricultural output. Secondly, small peasant farmers and large farmers operate in fragmented credit, land and labour markets, where the "law of one price" does not prevail and thus "small farmers often adopt different techniques of production from large land owners" (*ibid*, 285).

In financial capital markets, large landowners have access to formal lending institutions with lower interest rates than the informal credit markets small farmers are forced to use. Differently structured incentives in land markets result in low volumes of land for sale:

the poor only sell land when they are severely distressed and would pay high prices to rent land; large landowners have abundant land and therefore could sell and rent land to small farmers. However, while small farmers pay more for land and credit than large landowners, the reverse occurs in labour markets because the opportunity costs of labour are lower for the poor than the rich. As a result, large landowners do not sell or rent land to the poor because in fragmented markets, their control over land gives them monopsony power in localized labour markets (*ibid*, 285).

The result of these fragmented factor markets and price differentials across farm size results in the inverse farm size to production ratio (ISPR): since large landowners face a relatively low ratio of interest to wage rates, they have the incentive to adopt high capital to labour ratios, and thus to mechanise rather than employ labour. Small farmers, on the other hand, face the reverse incentives and thus economise on capital by adopting higher labour rates. Furthermore, the ratio of low land rental rates to high wage rates incentivizes large landowners to cultivate extensively, while small farmers who have abundant labour and face high land costs tend to cultivate land intensively. The implication is thus that yield is often higher on small farms due to increased land productivity, while the productivity of labour tends to be higher as farm size increases. The question then arises as to which ratio a country should maximize, and the authors argue that it depends on total factor output; in situations where there is abundant labour with land and capital scarcity, small farms have “higher total factor productivity than large and hence utilize resources more efficiently” (*ibid*, 287).

GKI then look at the political mechanisms used to control the supply and price of labour to large scale farms. They suggest “even where labour is abundant in the physical sense that there are potentially lots of ‘bodies’ available to undertake work, large landowners encounter a natural resistance from people to engage in arduous work when most of the fruits of their efforts accrue to the landowner” (*ibid*, 287). A system of social, environmental and institutional controls over labour markets is thus required in order to mobilise and organize sufficient labour for production and the extraction of “effort”. Amongst other things, the controls involve segmenting labour markets into non-competitive groups through the introduction of discriminatory mechanisms, such as caste,

race or gendered differences. The combined controls tilt bargaining power in favour of large landowners creating “monopsony power in an archipelago of small, fragmented labour markets”, which reduces wage rates to below competitive market rates (*ibid*, 287).

The argument is drawn together into four implications. Firstly, land concentration suppresses the rural wage rate such that “compared with competitive conditions, there is *exploitation of labour*” (*ibid*, 290, author italics). Despite this, the marginal cost of (employing more) labour is higher than its opportunity cost (in substituting it) resulting in low labour employment rates. Secondly, as a result of the surplus of rural labour, the “reservation wage” at which urban workers are willing to work is lowered, thus contributing to urban poverty. Thirdly, land concentration brings down total output, and is thus both inefficient and lowers average income levels. However, incomes of large landowners are significantly raised resulting in an unequal distribution of income. And finally, because there is less employment and at lower rates of remuneration, the total income received by workers is reduced. In summary, “land concentration produces widespread rural *poverty* ... [and] a redistributive land reform that reduces land concentration would have multiple benefits” (*ibid*, 291, author’s italics). The agrarian problem, they conclude, relates to the monopolization of land and the effects this has on the monopsony power of large landowners over labour markets.

Merle Lipton (1986), amongst others (Van Zyl *et al*, 1996; Van Zyl *et al*, 2001; Vink *et al*, 2003) uses a similar set of arguments to suggest that in South Africa the political systems of colonialism and apartheid between 1910 and 1970 distorted what would otherwise have been the development of capitalism along paths similar to the way it developed in other middle-income countries. In South Africa the comparatively low contribution of agriculture is the result particularly of an “intra-agricultural bias, which involves incentives, laws and institutions [that] favour large farms and discriminate against smaller, more labour intensive farming”, a bias associated with apartheid as a political system (Lipton *et al*, 1996; iv). This bias was visible in, amongst other things, the effects of the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts that severely restricted black farmers’ access to land and infrastructure while creating abundant serviced land for white farmers, the negligible expenditure on agriculture in the Bantustans, along with investments in cheap

credit, research and marketing boards to support white agriculture, and the array of laws that funneled, coerced and controlled the supply of black labour to white farms, mines and factories. This led to a growth path involving the concentration of agrarian capital in white hands at the expense of the development of a broad-based smallholder sector (Lipton, 1996: 433; 1977: 72-85).

However, notwithstanding these institutional and policy biases, black farmers have “produced more per unit of input than is generally believed” and “compare favourably in their outputs and yields with large-scale capital-intensive farmers”. (Lipton, 1977: 72) Lipton also makes three particularly pertinent observations. Firstly, she notes that adult men are usually absent from their families in the Bantustans (*ibid*: 74). Despite this, she proceeds to argue that her estimates of increased outputs from farming explain “voluntary employment” in which blacks are able to turn down jobs on mines and farms or hold out for higher wages (*ibid*, 82). Secondly, she observes that timely credit is key to mitigating farming risks and preventing farmers from being driven out of farming (*ibid*, 76). Thirdly, she argues that the large livestock holdings in the Bantustans, far from being “quaint tribal custom” (*ibid*), are a saving strategy in the context of severe constraints on investment avenues and that it is “economically rational and profitable for the individual black farmer, with free access to communal grazing, to accumulate as much livestock as he can” (*ibid*, 77)

These observations suggest an implicit line of argument that Lipton does not develop, namely, that farming in the Bantustans was highly differentiated and dynamic, with some people investing in cattle and crop production and others falling out of production. Instead, she flattens out differences in the capacity of different farmers and households to generate capital for investment, including through wages, or the dynamics that drive investment into different types of agriculture. While she acknowledges that one impact of male migrancy was the feminization of Bantustan labour and notes the ways that this limited the type of farming undertaken, she does not explore wider questions of the differential capacity of households to mobilise and manage labour for farming as and when it is required.

Binswanger and Deininger (1993: 1452) attempt to resolve the question of cheap household labour by arguing that small farms do not incur the labour supervision costs associated with large farms because members of families share the profits and risks. However, this view assumes there is available family labour to supervise in the first place. Lipton *et al* (1996: vi) simply reiterate that African farmers will tend to economise in their use of capital as the scarce factor and maximize their use of labour as the abundant factor, despite Merle Lipton's own evidence that Bantustan agriculture is subject to gendered labour shortages that impact on agricultural productivity.

Lipton also appears to be ambivalent about the consequences of discrimination against small farmers. On the one hand, she argues that bias has led “erroneously” to the view that there are two distinct agricultures in South Africa, a large-scale, capital intensive, efficient, white dominated sector and an undeveloped black sector “burdened with traditional ‘tribal’ customs and attitudes” (Lipton, 1977: 72); and, on the other, she and others argue that urban policy bias together with “land grabs” (Eastwood *et al*, 2006: 1342) led to the premature ‘deagriculturalization’ (Lipton and Lipton, 1994: 24, Eastwood *et al*, 2006) of the former Bantustans and to rural households whose livelihoods have now “specialized” in dependency on remittances or social grants.

Despite this ambivalence, Eastwood *et al* (*ibid*, 1343) argue that empirical research confirms that deagriculturalization is mitigated in areas with better distributions of farmland, that small-scale agriculture provides a path for broad-based growth, and that such a path is thus feasible in South Africa. This possibility holds enormous appeal. Redistributive land reform that shifts large, capital intensive white-owned land holdings into the hands of small, labour intensive black farmers and achieves rapid agricultural growth with significant reductions in rural and urban poverty and inequality would reverse the effects of the dispossession-accumulation growth path of apartheid capitalism (Lipton, 1996, Binswanger *et al*, 1995, Eastwood *et al*, 2005, Binswanger and Deininger, 1993, 1997, Lipton, 1977, 1985, 1996, 2006 and Lipton and Lipton, 1994). The claimed efficiencies and labour intensity of small scale farming thus provide a core justification for land and agrarian reform in South Africa, and regularly re-emerges in policy frameworks, the most recent being the National Development Plan (NPC, 2011).

Lipton's view that the productivity of small farmers in the former Bantustans has been under-valued and under-recognised is shared by a number of researchers (such as Shackleton *et al*, 2000a&b, Dovie *et al*, 2006; Andrew *et al*, 2003 as discussed in the next chapter). More recently, Aliber *et al* (2013: 15-16) show (with some cautions about the data) that not only do "commercially-oriented" farming households make up nearly 6% of 2,6 million farming households in the former Bantustans and coloured Reserves, but they grew by about 25% between 2002 and 2010, and produce an average remuneration per hectare of R570 compared with R370 from large scale commercial farming (when the arid areas of the Northern Cape are included).³

Lipton's work is useful because the historical perspective within which she locates her understanding of small-scale farming puts the relationship between apartheid and capitalism at the centre of her analysis, and because she recognizes that differences exist amongst small-scale farmers. However, her views, and those of other neoclassical economists, have been criticized on a number of grounds, of which four are relevant for my purposes. (See also Crais' 2011 critique of the blindness of liberals and Marxists in this debate to the context of colonial violence within which all these changes played out.)

Firstly, despite recognizing differences between small farmers, her view ultimately is that a relatively homogenous group of small farmers would emerge if factor market distortions were removed. This renders invisible key dynamics of differentiation, with the associated exploitation of household labour (Levin and Neocosmos 1987; but also Byres' critique of Griffin *et al*, 2004: 23), which often has dimensions that are gendered and generational (Crehan, 1995) or related to lineage and kinship (Peters, 2004; Guyer, 1981). Indeed, the feminization of labour and deployment of poorer relatives and children to undertake labour are likely to be the result of labour scarcity, not its abundance, in the former Bantustans, which may itself impose constraints on production (Aliber *et al*, 2013: 16; Monde, 2011: 86).

³ Aliber *et al* (2013) warn that the figures need to be interpreted with care given that there are discrepancies between data sources and no controls for land quality.

Secondly, the analysis rests on a voluntarism in which the rural poor can choose whether to be farmers or wage workers (Dyer, 2004: 56), a consequence of the methodological individualism used in neo-classical economics (Ellis, 1993). This assumption disregards the structural features of the rising organic composition of productive agricultural capital, which tends to displace primitive accumulation and sets in motion the tendency to proletarianisation (Legassick and Wolpe, 1976). Byres (2004: 36) adds further that the causal explanation for the efficiency of the inverse relationship is that small producers are “locked into surplus appropriation relationships that push them down to bare subsistence” as a result of social reproduction within capitalism being necessarily subject to the “dull compulsion of economic relations” (Marx, 1867 chap 28). As Dyer (2004: 59) argues, there is a difference between being driven to labour intensively and being enabled to, and suggests that increased output is therefore not so much an indication of efficiency as of distress. “Poverty and unemployment, rather than leisure preference, are the main reasons why small farmers intensify family labour use” (*ibid*: 56). Lipton’s analytical focus labour and agricultural markets grants them a legitimacy that ignores the violence involved in their creation, maintenance and imposition.

Thirdly, the idea that capitalist production can exist without exploitation or result in inequality structured by class is indicative of a “neo-classical neo-populist” position (Byres, 2004b) Levin and Neocosmos (1987) argue that the “resolution” of capitalism’s contradictions in Lipton’s thinking is possible only because she separates the political from the economic in her analysis, thus rendering apartheid a political regime that acted, for no good economic reason, in the favour of white farming interests. Byres (2004b: 29) adds that neo-classical neo-populist analyses neglect the role of agrarian relations in capitalist development and thus do not consider the different possibilities offered by “capitalism from above” (from the ranks of the landlords) and “capitalism from below” (from the ranks of richer peasants). This is a weakness that “reveals an unfortunate absence of historical perspective” and an essentially static rather than dynamic approach. Byres (2004a: 13) argues further that the likely outcome of land redistribution is the re-concentration of land ownership in the hands of a few as a result of market forces, particularly as risks increase to maintain competitiveness, which enhances the “dampening effects of credit constraints” (Carter and Olinto, 1998: 11).

Finally, Hall (2010: 26) and Dyer (2004: 51) argue that the validity of the inverse relationship between size and productivity is contingent on a range of factors that can only be empirically determined: the quality of the land, the nature of the crop, the technology required to produce it, the availability of family and hired labour at different times of the year, the costs of labour and of capital and variable inputs, as well as the structure of and access to commodity markets and price fluctuations. To assume its validity *a priori* is an ideological position related to advocating market liberalization, which “hinges on a dubious universalizing logic” (Hall, 2010: 26). Byres agrees, stating that “[a] central fallacy in this whole approach is the assumption that the inverse relationship holds for all times and all places” (Byres, 2004b: 36).

These critiques pose serious questions about whether or not small farming can address equity and efficiency simultaneously. Sender and Johnston (2004: 159) sum up the skepticism of the political economy view when they argue that the World Bank’s policy prescriptions provide little empirical evidence but “peddle the same ahistorical vision of an egalitarian co-operative African countryside inhabited by ‘small family farms’, who will use ‘undistorted’ markets to achieve dynamic capitalist accumulation with no workers, capitalists or poverty”. Such prescriptions, they claim, have little relevance for the poor. I now consider an alternative tradition for understanding the relationship between agriculture and capitalism, namely, classical Marxism and more recent versions of critical political economy.

2.3. The classic formulation of the Agrarian Question

The Agrarian Question was classically concerned with the persistence of the peasantry in Europe and whether or not, and in what way, this persistence indicated an incomplete transition from a feudal mode of production to a capitalist mode. Capitalism, with its two primary and antagonistically positioned classes, was expected by some Marxists to simply dissolve the peasantry. The “unresolved Agrarian Question” is thus today associated with the argument that it is relevant mainly in poor countries in which obstacles located in the countryside continue to prevent economic development from

occurring. It is closely associated with the ongoing debate about the nature of the peasantry and whether or not it has disappeared (Bryceson *et al*, 2000), is being “eliminated” (Kitching, 2001), or continues to exist (McMichael, 2006; Douwe van der Ploeg, 2008) but with new rounds of peasant dispossession associated with the consolidation of a globalised corporate food regime and suggesting “a new wave of primitive accumulation” (Bernstein, 2010a: 87). In other words, the presence in poor countries today of socially differentiated peasantries is, in some analyses, taken to mean that the Agrarian Question, in the sense of an incomplete transition, remains unresolved. This section aims to summarise the origins of this debate in order to draw its connections to the South African context in the remainder of the chapter.

The debate began with Marx’s analysis in Volume One of *Capital* of the role of primitive accumulation in the transition to a capitalist mode of production in 18th century England. He showed how the enclosure of the commons, the brutal dispossession of the peasantry, and incentives by some landlords to encourage tenant investment in production resulted in the differentiation of the peasantry into capitalist farmers and wage labourers. A surplus from agriculture was extracted through high taxation, and growing levels of “free” labour (in Marx’s double sense of “free from the means of production| and “free to sell the commodity of labour power”) created the initial conditions for urban industrialisation, which in turn produced the conditions for agricultural industrialization and the cheaper production of food. However, Marx also argued that while “[t]he expropriation of the agricultural producer from the soil is the basis of the whole process, [t]he history of this expropriation assumes different aspects in different countries, and runs through its various phases in different orders of succession, and at different historical epochs” (Marx, 1976: 876). Engels, Kautsky and Lenin, and later, Preobrazhensky, developed Marx’s observations on the transition to capitalism to account for the changes to and the persistence of peasant production into what came to constitute the core meaning of the Agrarian Question (Byres, 2012: 13).

The key aspect of the Agrarian Question for Engels (1950: 381-2) was a political one related to the potential role of the peasantry in capturing power in contexts where a developing capitalist mode of production had not yet displaced pre-capitalist social

relations and where large peasantries still existed. Engel's analysis of the "emerging globalization of the food system" (Akram-Lodhi and Kay: 2009a: 7) also indicated that peasant producers were collapsing under immense pressures from cheap imports and internal differentiation. A key question for Engels was which parts of a highly differentiated peasantry could be politically mobilized to support the urban proletariat in revolution. The agrarian question was, for Engels, thus a "question for and about labour" (Akram-Lodhi and Kay: 2009a: 7). Kautsky (1988) and Lenin (1982), by contrast, were both concerned with the formation of agrarian capital and processes of rural accumulation.

Although Kautsky analysed how in Europe agrarian capital was formed as farming was drawn into monetized circuits of commodity production and exchange through increasing dependency on cheaper manufactured inputs, he is perhaps best known for asserting that capitalism did not threaten the small farm or the peasant with extinction, and that capitalization of agriculture proceeds slowly and haltingly. "... [I]t becomes clear that the small holding is not in a process of rapid disintegration, that big holdings are only gaining ground slowly, in places even retreating" (cited in Banaji, 1976: 45). Kautsky argued that the family farm and peasant forms of production based on family labour are able to co-exist with capitalist relations of production as a result of their capacity for under-consumption and self-exploitation.

By contrast, Lenin's contribution lay, firstly, in his recognition that rural class structures fragment with the formation of agrarian capital. He identified six "types of rural inhabitant" (Lenin, 1982: 131) that occurred with the development of agricultural capital and the inevitable process of de-peasantisation, thus prefiguring concerns with rural class typologies. Secondly, Lenin recognized that accumulation could occur in ways different from the English path and was therefore not "path-dependent" (Akram-Lodhi and Kay: 2009a: 10). In addition to the English path, Lenin identified two other paths of capitalist transition: the Prussian path, in which large feudal landlords, the 'Junkers', were able to transform into capitalist commodity producers and coercively convert the peasantry into wage workers with support from the state. He distinguished this "capitalism from above" path from the (North) American "capitalism from below" path in which a wage labour-

capital relation began to grow from within a rapidly differentiating peasantry. Lenin suggested this latter path was more progressive as it evolved with some political freedoms and was characterised by the rapid transformation of the productive forces and growth of home markets, economic conditions more favourable to the masses than other forms of capitalist transition.

Preobrazhensky's concerns with the early Soviet socialist context brought an additional layer of meaning to the agrarian question: the possible role of the countryside in securing a surplus for urban industrial development in contexts where conditions for accumulation outside of agriculture were highly constrained. As Byres (2012: 14) puts it: "The agrarian question became, in part, the degree to which agriculture could supply that surplus, the means by which the fledgling socialist state might appropriate such surplus, and the speed and smoothness of the transfer."

Drawing these layers of meaning together, Byres (2002: 55, and elsewhere) has suggested a framework in which the agrarian question can usefully be viewed. These three "problematics", as Bernstein (2009: 241) has called them, involve:

- A political aspect related to the role of agrarian classes (both peasants and agricultural workers) in struggles for democracy and socialism.
- A production aspect related to the development of productive forces and the social relations of production.
- An accumulation aspect related to whether and how the above transformations contribute to the accumulated surplus necessary to support industrialization.

Byres (2012: 14) points out that the agrarian question viewed this way thus concerns both urban or industrial transformations and rural or agricultural transformations. When these are analysed using the three problematics, it becomes possible to theorize transformations in which the agrarian question is resolved in its broadest sense without capitalist agriculture becoming dominant in the countryside, or those in which the agrarian question itself no longer has significance, in so far as globalization will industrialise the developing world without transforming farming in those environments. This possibility is considered further in section 3.

2.3. The Agrarian Question in South Africa

The Marxist tradition described above has given rise to rich analyses of South Africa's Agrarian Question, which produce accounts very different from those of Lipton and other neoclassical economists. In this section, I consider the three distinct accounts of Wolpe (1972), Morris (1976) and Levin and Neocosmos (1987).

2.3.1. *Apartheid's Bantustans and the social reproduction of cheap wage-labour*

A central feature of Wolpe's (1972) account was his attempt to explain the migrant labour system as a means of maintaining the low cost of reproducing labour power through the articulation of a pre-capitalist mode of production with a capitalist one. Although Wolpe's articulationism and structural Marxism were thoroughly critiqued after his initial thesis was published, his views remain influential in thinking about the relationship between segregation, apartheid and the development of capitalism locally and in relation to its development on a world scale.

Sitas (2007) points out that three major discourses dominated in the 1970s, when Wolpe's thesis on the pre-capitalist reserve economy articulating with the capitalist industrial economy was published. Firstly, on the theoretical front, liberals (particularly O'Dowd, 1978) were arguing that the social formation was the outcome of two independent causative processes: the influence of race at the political level and manifest in Apartheid, and at the economic level, growth and its Pareto-optimal "trickle down" distributions through expanded employment. In this view, apartheid was irrational and would eventually be undermined by economic growth because economic drivers are colour blind. Secondly, dependency theory (Frank, 1967) was emerging as an analysis of imperialism to explain the persistence of under-development in colonies that were now independent. Key to this explanation was the idea that colonies were the marginalized and structurally subordinated peripheries of central metropolises in extractive economic relations, and in South Africa, this was applied to the relationship between the rural Bantustans and the industrialised urban core. In many respects, this is the forerunner of the present day "dual economy thesis" with its disregard of the exploitative class relations

necessary for surplus appropriation. Thirdly, on the political front, Fanon's (1961) influence on the emerging black consciousness movement was growing, in particular the idea of the revolutionary potential of peasants in alliance with the urban poor to overthrow colonial domination (Sitas, 2007: 41). While the ANC and its SACP partners had resolved that the national democratic revolution would be led by the African working class, its position was not dissimilar from the populist aspects of the black consciousness movement in its reluctance to theorise the rapidly differentiating and changing nature of rural populations, and therefore to develop political positions on the agrarian question (see, for example, Drew, 1996).

Wolpe's response was to argue that labour power under the segregationist policies of colonial government was cheap because capitalism "articulated" with the pre-capitalist mode of production in the "reserves". This articulation made it possible for labour power to be reproduced partly outside of capitalism. The difference in the surplus value between labour power reproduced entirely by wages and labour power partly reproduced through an external "reserve economy" was then appropriated by industrial and mining capital. However, the "equilibrium" between wage and reserve production of the labour force was "inherently fragile". The declining contribution of the reserve economy was accompanied by growing levels of rural and urban poverty, an ever increasing, permanent urban proletariat and conflict over wages and profits, which apartheid sought to contain.

Wolpe's articulation theory has been critiqued from multiple perspectives (see, for instance, Delius and Bozzoli, 1990; Marks, 1986; Mafeje, 1981; Kaplan, 1977). I focus here on two. Firstly, the failure of articulation theory relates to its inability to explain how a pre-capitalist mode of production secures its own conditions of reproduction where capitalism is the dominant mode of production (Bernstein, 2003; Levin and Neocosmos, 1987). If it is unable to secure these conditions independently of capitalism, then it is unable to reduce the wage costs of the social reproduction of labour power, and thus the basis on which capital is able to extract an additional surplus from labour disappears. Indeed, evidence (James, 1987: 70; Levin and Neocosmos, 1987) reverses Wolpe's central hypothesis that rural agriculture in the reserves subsidises urban wages by asserting instead that it is transfers from urban wages that make rural agriculture

productive, and that the higher these wages are, the more productive is the agriculture. Murray (1981) and Ferguson (1990) make similar observations about young male migrant mine workers from the Lesotho highlands using wages as sources of investment in cattle for, amongst other things, a pension fund, or the generational components of social reproduction.

The second critique relates to Banaji's (2010: 5-6) observation that many forms of labour regime occur under capitalism, and that different forms of domination and exploitation should not be confused with different modes of production. Thus, the existence of a highly constrained or unfree labour regime, such as the one secured through the establishment of Bantustans under colonial and apartheid governments did not necessarily indicate the existence of a previous mode of production. The dominant mode of accumulation on a world scale is the decisive distinction, not the form of labour exploitation.

In later work, Legassick and Wolpe (1976) discarded articulation theory in their analysis of rural social formations in South Africa. Legassick and Wolpe argue that an understanding of labour markets, and the emergence of a reserve army of labour, requires consideration of how South Africa is positioned in relation to the dynamically changing process of world capital accumulation on the one hand, and a consideration of the specific history of how capitalism entered into and transformed non capitalist social relations and modes of production in South Africa on the other. They argued that the rising organic composition of industrial capital, rapid concentration in mining, manufacturing and agriculture and significant subsequent economic growth in South Africa in the 1960s resulted in a surplus population that came to be organized as an "industrial reserve army". The state intervened in managing this growing army of labour through its control and distribution in a network of reserves, which made social control easier and cheaper (*ibid*, 95). However, an analysis that asserts the inevitability of labour force contraction is inadequate if it fails to recognize the ongoing restructuring of the reserve army of labour as a result of the "class struggle taking place in determinate conditions of capital accumulation", which generates social agents that "oscillate"

between the “lumpen-proletariat, petty commodity producers and petty army of labour” (*ibid*, 92).

In this context, the power of Wolpe’s thinking was three-fold. Firstly, he argued against liberals that apartheid as a system of racial domination was integral to the exploitation of cheap black labour. However, while race is not an “irreducible constituent and determinant of social structure” (Wolpe, 1986: 111), neither do concrete class categories reflect in a uni-dimensional way the abstract relations of production (*ibid*, 119). Secondly, Legassick and Wolpe (1976) highlighted the increasingly complicated links between national and global capital, countryside and city, reproduction and production, and the social welfare functions of gendered homestead farming systems and the increasingly refined institutionalized control of labour through a system of migrant labour and pass laws on the other. And thirdly, Legassick and Wolpe (1976) attempt to account for the differential and contradictory outcomes of social dynamics on different segments of the population. Thus, for Wolpe, in contrast to Lipton and the other neoclassical economists, understanding a social formation requires analysing the forces that drive expanded reproduction, the contradictions, fractures and changes these generate in different spaces and times, and how existing forms of social relationship relate to specific regimes of accumulation.

Nevertheless, Legassick and Wolpe (1976: 99) conclude that “the South African case does not constitute an exception to the general rule that ... the penetration of capitalist relations into agriculture generates an absolute repulsion of labour from the soil”. In this respect, Levin and Neocosmos (1987) suggest that Wolpe ultimately subscribes to the thesis of “linear proletarianisation” in which processes of initially primitive and then expanded accumulation erode pre-capitalist farming systems resulting in an inevitable proletarianisation, whereas the process is much more uneven and contradictory.

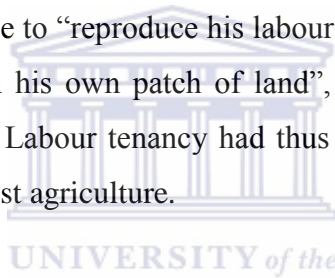
2.3.2. The forging of the ‘Prussian path’ and the resolution of the Agrarian Question

The third view, also in the tradition of radical political economy derives from Mike Morris' (1976) argument that the agrarian question was resolved in South Africa through what Lenin described as the "Prussian path" of capitalist transition. In this section, I consider Morris' view at some length because Morris identifies the transformation of labour tenants into wage-workers as key to the path of accumulation and development of agrarian capital.

Morris investigates the period of South African history from 1930 to 1950, and tries to answer two questions. Firstly, why did labour tenancy dominate agriculture even in its capitalist phase in South Africa? Secondly, how did changes to this distinctive labour regime within capitalist agriculture come about and with what consequences for relationships between town and countryside (*ibid*, 309)? Morris' answer, in short, is that different phases of class struggle between farm owners and labour tenants took place in conditions structurally shaped by the uneven development of capitalism and the role of the state in mediating competition between national and international capital, and that the failure of labour tenants to organize and assert themselves as a "class for itself" led to off-farm migration as a substitute for class struggle. South Africa did not follow the classic "primitive accumulation" form of England (Morris, 1988: 69).

The "Prussian path" in Morris's conception (1976: 310) relates to the power of the Boer landlord estates, the "feudal Junker economy", to act from above as agents of capitalist transformation with support from the state to keep peasants politically and economically subservient to the landlord class. The discovery of minerals in the late 19th century both rapidly developed a capitalist mode of production in mining and boosted home markets for agricultural commodities, shifting landowners from rental income earners to agricultural commodity producers. This created the impetus to eliminate the peasantry (as competitors) and to transform it into wage labour. "A powerful landlord class ... with unrestricted political rights to enforce their domination [and] supported by state power" (*ibid*, 310) was able to secure labour, despite competition from mining and manufacturing, by forcing African peasants into labour tenancy arrangement while keeping wages low.

Labour tenancy involved the provision of labour services without wage payments in return for land for residence, crop cultivation and grazing, and frequently involved the tenants' use of his own implements to undertake the labour required on the landlord's holding. However, by the 1930s, the dominance of the capitalist mode of production in agriculture was indicated by two main shifts in labour tenant regimes: the first was a move from labour rent to predominantly wage labour, paid either in cash or kind, or combinations thereof; the second was the wrenching of labour tenants from their means of production as the use of landowner implements became increasingly widespread. This meant that the appropriation of surplus labour no longer took the form of a direct (feudal) labour rent – time allocated to labour in lieu of cash rent - but was now indirectly appropriated through its embodiment in the commodity produced. Furthermore, the labour tenant was no longer able to “reproduce his labour-power by the means of his own products of his own labour on his own patch of land”, highlighting the importance of wages for social reproduction. Labour tenancy had thus become a “variant” form (*ibid*, 308) of the transition to capitalist agriculture.



Central to the emergence of this “variant” path was the uneven development of capitalism. While “feudal agriculture” was slowly transforming from above, the rapid introduction of a large-scale capitalist mining sector was nothing short of a “shock” to the entire social formation, and resulted in two structural contradictions. The first was a crisis related to agricultural commodity prices. The depression in the 1930s weighed more heavily on agriculture than either mining, which suffered little, or manufacturing, which recovered rapidly on the back of the mining sector. A squeeze on agricultural prices created a generalized crisis putting the very survival of agriculture at risk as the costs of production began to exceed returns, pushing farmers into greater levels of indebtedness. The second contradiction was mining and industrial capital's growing demand for cheap, black labour and farm labour responses to this demand, to move to where wages were higher. By the late 1920s, and into the next two decades, labour shortages on farms were so acute that they affected both seasonal and permanent labour. Where, in the 1930s,

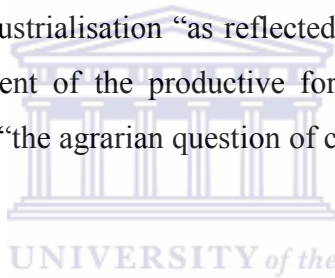
most labour had been drawn from the Bantustans, by 1940 the farms themselves had become sources of urban labour and massive migration to towns was taking place.

The class struggle in the countryside intensified between the 1930s and 1950s as labour tenants fought to hold onto their access to land and livestock while agricultural capital grappled with structural conditions and drought by attempting to increase productivity and change conditions of employment, by reducing the land available for cultivation and grazing without increasing wages. Labour tenants responded with hostility to the changes and migrated from one contract to another. Their struggle was thus not simply a defence of their incomes but an attempt to maintain the labour tenancy system that gave them partial access to land. Nevertheless, their inability to transform their economic struggles to survive into a political class struggle gradually transformed their intermittent migration to towns to seek wage work, as an integral part of the labour tenant system, into permanent migration from farms to towns. However, migration as a substitute for political class struggle also exacerbated the farmers' crises.

At the heart of this new migratory impulse was the generational distribution of farm wage income. Labour tenancy was organized around the reproduction of the household as a unit of production and consumption. The labour tenancy contract was thus negotiated with the head of household. However, the head of household required the labour of his children to fulfill the conditions of the contract. The payment in kind (and cash), however, went to the head of household as the contract holder. For younger sons (and to some extent daughters), the economic class struggle had a "double and contradictory effect" (*ibid*, 327): not only did they labour without benefits in kind, the curtailment of access to land by farmers as a result of the structural changes meant that opportunities for sons to accumulate livestock independently were increasingly limited. However, from their perspective, the very fact of labour tenancy also curtailed the possibility of increased wage work on farms. The choice to migrate also resulted in the farmer evicting the head of family, who was then often also forced to migrate to the towns. In migrating as a substitute for open political class struggle, labour tenants thus reproduced the precise

conditions that gave rise to the crisis that bore down on the dominant class in agriculture in the first place.

This moment of struggle was finally resolved under apartheid, which represented the restructuring of “the relations of exploitation to cope with agriculture’s labour crisis” without destabilising urban labour supplies (Davies *et al*, 1976: 27). It achieved this through the renewed effort to destroy labour tenancy, the provision of prison labour to farms and the intensification of controls over labour migration and movement through influx controls and the homeland system. Apartheid represented the “second moment” (as Bernstein, 2011: 1) of South Africa’s Prussian path in which the farming interest gained a central position in the state, securing extensive subsidies, market regulation and trade controls, often in conflict with mining and manufacturing capital. The result was an acceleration of agricultural industrialisation “as reflected in the degree of concentration, scale, practices and development of the productive forces in capitalist farming”, and which meant that by the 1960s “the agrarian question of capital was resolved” (Bernstein, 2011: 1).



Morris, however, goes to great lengths to show that labour tenancy is a form of wage labour in order to claim that a capitalist mode of production prevailed in agriculture. He thus argues that surplus appropriation occurs indirectly through the embodiment of labour in the commodity as a result of labour tenants’ dispossession of their ownership of the means of production, which forces them to depend on wages (cash and in kind) for their social reproduction. Banaji (2010: 54), however, argues that this type of argument rests on the “simple category” of wage labour understood as a commodity whereas Marx was concerned with a “concrete category” of wage labour as “capital-positing, capital-creating labour”. Countries caught up in world-economy processes as colonies created “unprecedented” examples of capitalist relations of production being mediated by “archaic ... forms of subjection of labour” (*ibid*, 62).

Morris’s assumption that a particular mode of production is necessarily accompanied by a particular form of free wage-labour exploitation results in an account, as Levin and Neocosmos (1987: 69) point out, that subscribes to an underlying notion that these are

capitalist processes of “linear proletarianisation”, which result in a “mass of undifferentiated proletarians”. This homogenisation of rural people not only renders invisible differences amongst them, thus enabling the construction of the notion of “the people” (or “the community”), which is also a form of populism, but also tends to ignore regional diversity as well as how “forces from below” may have contributed to the transformations taking place. Finally, Levin and Neocosmos (*ibid*: 79) suggest that labour tenants should be viewed as petty commodity producers rather than disguised proletarians for whom prices for goods produced are, in Banaji’s terms, “concealed wages” (2010: 98).

2.3.3. *Petty commodity production and social differentiation*

The critique of linear proletarianisation directed at Wolpe and Morris suggests that class formation processes are more complex than their analyses of countryside dynamics suggest. Levin and Neocosmos (1987: 67) argue that small farm production should be viewed as petty commodity production rather than as small-scale farming (in the Lipton schema) or peasant production (in Wolpe’s early articulation thesis). Furthermore, they assert that petty commodity production has been taking place in the former Bantustans, creating a neglected area of class struggle and formation that is important for understanding the potential forces for democratization. Their argument is located in an older debate that took place in the 1970s and early 1980s about the place of the peasantry in the development of capitalism in African (socialist) economies.

Gibbon and Neocosmos (1985) argued that Bernstein’s work (in 1976, 1979 and 1982) superseded the dominant theories that had attempted to address questions about the “status and relation to capitalism of [not so much] postcapitalist institutions and economic forms as precapitalist ones” (Gibbon and Neocosmos, 1985: 154). Amongst these dominant theories were dependency theory and political analyses that aimed to show that the ruling class was constituted either as a bureaucratic bourgeoisie or as an alliance of finance capital and local ‘compradors’. Bernstein challenged these perspectives arguing that there is a single system of production (thus avoiding the

problem of dualism) in which capitalism regulates the conditions of peasant production. The relationship between the peasantry and the state is thus one of struggle, and requires specific investigation.

However, despite identifying a core theoretical problem, Bernstein nevertheless reproduced the “peasant essentialism” that he had critiqued. Although he referred to the peasantry as petty commodity producers and thus kept the definition within a materialist ambit, he nevertheless moved ambiguously between characterising it as having a subsistence logic and as being driven by the need to meet the simple reproduction needs of the household (as the unit of production) and its members (the producers), as though these notions were interchangeable. Thus, “despite claims to the contrary [Bernstein] tends to define petty commodity production not in terms of social relations of any sort but rather as a type of subjective calculation on the part of the individual petty commodity producers...” (*ibid*: 161). This Chayanovian-type reductionism leads to analytical problems, the most important one being that a peasant mode of production, existing independently of capitalist social relations, and in some sense articulating with it, has crept back in.



Gibbon and Neocosmos argue instead that a social formation is capitalist if it undertakes “generalised commodity production” and is founded on the contradictory relation between wage-labour and capital. This does not mean that all enterprises conform to a pre-determined “type”, which contains both capitalists and wage labourers and against which all other types are measured. What makes enterprises capitalist or not is “the relations which structurally and historically explain their existence”, and what needs to be shown is that “the social entities and differences which form the social division of labour in such formations are only explicable in terms of the wage-labour relation” (Gibbon and Neocosmos, 1985: 169). Nor does generalised commodity production require that all elements of production be fully commoditised but rather that “individuals are unable to reproduce themselves outside the circuits of commodity economy and divisions of labour generated by the capital/wage-labour relation” (Bernstein, 1988: 261).

In 1988, Bernstein accepted Gibbon and Neocosmos's critique and attempted to re-theorise the relationship between capitalism and petty bourgeois production from the perspective of class relations. In doing so, he took as a starting point that petty commodity production is "exclusively constituted (as well as destroyed and recreated) through the basic social relations and dynamics of the capitalist mode of production" (Bernstein, 1988: 259). As such, it conforms to the general conditions of all capitalist production, namely:

- Generalised commodity production for exchange value,
- Private production with "relative specialisation"
- Regulation through the same laws of competition and accumulation applicable to all capitalist production (*ibid*: 262).

What makes petty commodity production distinctive, however, is that it combines the class positions of capital and labour within the same productive entity (the household) and sometimes the same person in a contradictory "unity" (Bernstein, 2010a: 103). It is contradictory in that at a theoretical level the essential condition of capitalism is the prior separation of, and contradictory relation between, capital and labour, and this contradiction is internalized in the basic conditions of existence and reproduction of petty commodity production. There are three levels of contradiction.

The first relates to the distribution of the class positions of capital and labour between the social groups of the entity, particularly along lines of gender, age and lineage, as indicated by divisions of property, labour, income and consumption (Bernstein, 2010a: 103; O'Laughlin, 1996; Bozzoli, 1983). For instance, older men (household patriarchs) may occupy the place of capital while his wife/wives and children occupy the place of labour, a relationship of exploitation that, in some cases, has been structured and represented "ideologically by idioms of kinship" (Brass cited in Bernstein, 1988: 266).

The second contradiction is that petty commodity producers must reproduce themselves as both capital and as labour. The reproduction of petty commodity production as capital involves replacing the various technologies and means of production (machinery, seed, breeding stock etc), while the reproduction of itself as labour involves replacing both the daily requirements of producing labour (food, shelter, clothes etc) as well as the

requirements of future (and past) generations of labour (children and the elderly). In addition to the consumption and replacement funds, surplus is also required for a ceremonial fund, which enables activities, rituals, rites and celebrations, which, amongst other things, are mechanisms for the re-enactment and reproduction of social relations (Wolf, 1966: 97, Bernstein 2010a; Comaroff, 1990). Bernstein (2010a: 103) argues that the contradiction relates to the distribution of income between different funds, particularly the capital replacement fund (including rent) and the consumption fund. Wolf (1966: 97) also emphasizes the internally contradictory nature of the ceremonial fund, which, in the act of reproducing “orderly” social relations also “breed[s] disorder” in the social group.

The third contradiction is that the combination of class positions is the source of differentiation between petty commodity producers. In some cases petty commodity production is able to reproduce and expand itself as capital (through the exploitation of family labour). If this happens, it may begin to employ wage labour and thus become capitalist production. In other cases, it continues to reproduce itself as capital and labour at the same scales as before, what Lenin (1967) called “simple reproduction”. In the final case, petty commodity production fails to reproduce itself as capital and therefore begins to fail to reproduce itself as labour. This forces members of the household to seek wage work outside of the producing entity. However, in contexts where wage work is difficult to find and secure, the tendency to proletarianisation puts the family under a reproductive squeeze, where reproduction through both wage labour and petty commodity production is constrained.

It follows from the theoretical definition and essential relations of petty commodity production that these producers are not a “class” and are therefore not exploited by another class (Bernstein, 1988: 265). Indeed, this concern with petty commodity producers as a class tends to result in the neglect of the class relations within petty commodity production, with their differentiating effects. Nevertheless, petty commodity producer can be subjected to pressures from various capitals, including “extortion and squeezing” (*ibid*), although they can also benefit from particular relations with state and capital.

Building from this argument, Levin and Neocosmos argue (against both analyses that homogenize small scale farmers and those that subscribe to theses of linear proletarianisation) that capitalist development in South Africa has involved the creation of both petty commodity producers and a proletariat (1987: 67). The general acceptance of the “Prussian path” thesis means that regional diversity and “forces from below” have tended to be neglected in accounts of agrarian dynamics and transformation, as have processes of social differentiation (eg. Bundy, 1988). And where the character of accumulation is analysed as being shaped by the “dynamic relationships in African societies” (Levin and Neocosmos, 1987: 69), such as in Beinart’s (1982) account and thus goes some way in accounting for processes of rural differentiation, this too is constrained by a descriptive methodology (see also Morris, 1988) and ultimately resorts to explaining differentiation as a process of proletarianisation rather than understanding the differentiating effects of local petty commodity production.

Certainly, recent empirical data suggest processes of differentiation continue to occur amongst farmers in the former Bantustan areas. Aliber *et al* (2013: 15), for instance, report that in 2010 there were 150 000 “commercially-oriented” smallholders, earning on average R35,000 per annum and 2,6 million “subsistence-orientated” households, earning on average R1,000 per annum. The commercial smallholders grew by 29% between 2002 and 2010, contributed R5,3 billion to rural incomes, and employed in the region of 10% of agricultural workers nationally (*ibid*). However, the social relations underlying and driving such changes are obscured in this account by the descriptive terminology.

Levin and Neocosmos argue that land reform will create space for even greater expansion of petty commodity production with its more progressive path of accumulation from below. However, it will lead “to a clear differentiation of the peasantry” and give rise to “antagonistic classes of capitalist agriculture” (Levin and Neocosmos, 1987: 78-9). Land reform should therefore be undertaken on the basis of an “accurate understanding of social class differences amongst agricultural producers” (*ibid*: 80) in order to avoid homogenising small farmers in the “manner of rural populism” (*ibid*). It is thus necessary to analyse the nature of petty commodity production in black rural areas “in order to discern processes of class formation” (*ibid*: 85). Bernstein agrees, but observes further

that the tendency to differentiation within petty commodity production is a “theoretical proposition” and not a necessary empirical fact. “Whether differentiation of PCP occurs, the extent to which it occurs, and the specific mechanisms through which it occurs, are always the effect of particular conditions of competition and class struggle requiring concrete investigation” (Bernstein, 1988: 264).

2.3.4. *The Agrarian Question of labour and possibilities for “accumulation from below”*

More recently, Bernstein (2009, 2010b) has argued that with the emergence of highly globalized forms of agricultural production in the 1970s, a new formulation of the Agrarian Question, as one not of capital but of *labour*, is now required. This view of a “decoupled agrarian question” (Akram-Lodhi and Kay, 2009b: 316) stands in contrast to a number of other formulations⁴, which continue to emphasise the importance of agrarian issues to neo-liberal processes of capital accumulation and the class struggles that accompany them (Akram-Lodhi and Kay, 2009b: 315-7).

The Agrarian Question today arises in a context very different from that in which the classical version was developed. Today, as O’Laughlin (2009: 191) puts it, the concern is with the “position of rural people and agricultural production within global capitalism”. Byres (2009: 57) similarly argues that a “major actor in the drama ... is now global capitalism, as transnational capital makes a powerful assault on poor countries ... and influences both the process of capitalist industrialization and the nature of capitalist development in the countryside”. The changes, which began in the 1970s, have involved rapid increases in the pace and scale of agrarian capital integration, concentration and financialisation, and signal what Weis (2007) calls the emergence of a global industrialised food economy. Farming, as the dominant means of social reproduction for most people throughout history, is now distinct from agriculture as industrial enterprise.⁵ Significantly, the agricultural sector is no longer regulated simply by the social relations

⁴ These include McMichael (2006) and Araghi (2010) whose arguments I do not consider here.

⁵ Friedman and McMichael (1989) attribute this to the development of corporate international agribusiness with its roots in 19 century North America.

between classes or by the sum of different agricultural enterprises but is “increasingly, if unevenly, integrated, organized and regulated by relations between agrarian classes and types of farms, on the one hand, and the often highly concentrated capital upstream and downstream of farming, on the other hand” (Bernstein, 2009: 248).

Bernstein argues that these changes mean that farming, as a source of accumulation through continual increases in labour productivity, production of cheap food and the generation of a surplus for industrial development, is no longer a concern for capital on a global scale. However, owing to the uneven development of capitalism, this resolution has occurred without resolving the role of rural accumulation in supporting national industrialisation in particular countries in the South (Bernstein, 2009: 250), resulting in masses of unemployed wage workers, and raising the prospect that we are now faced with an agrarian question of labour.

While the globalization of capital has resulted in growing numbers of people who are compelled to sell their labour power, directly or indirectly, in order to secure their reproduction, the conditions for social reproduction, particularly in the south, are increasingly constrained, precarious, oppressive and informal. This has resulted in the fragmentation of classes of labour, who survive through complex combinations of wage employment (that is itself shifting from permanent to seasonal and contract based employment), and insecure small-scale farming and informal-sector (‘survival’) activity, which are subject to “forms of differentiation and oppression along intersecting lines of class, gender, generation, caste and ethnicity” (Bernstein, 2009: 250-1. See also Lerche, 2010: 72).

In terms of the classic formulation of the agrarian question, “once pre-capitalist landed property ... is destroyed, and a fundamental condition of capitalist agrarian transition [is] thereby satisfied, *there remains no rationale for redistributive land reform*”. (Bernstein, 2004: 199, author’s emphasis.) However, the global changes in capital and the generation of a multiplicity of marginal and survivalist strategies of reproduction suggest that the recent land reforms (in Zimbabwe and South Africa) can be thought of as struggles of surplus populations to reproduce themselves in ways that have been disconnected from

how capital is organized and wage labour mobilized. Thus, the crisis in rural livelihoods associated with a new agrarian question of labour and its fragmentation may explain contemporary land struggles. Nevertheless, Bernstein warns that the redistribution of land from large land holdings to “worker-peasants” should not suggest that these producers are immune to class differentiation and its tendency to generate inequality (Bernstein, 2003). He suggests that differentiating processes in petty commodity production, along with the class stratifications that exist as a result of differences in the ownership of land, cattle and means of production (see also O’Laughlin, 1996), intersect in complex ways with the increasing struggles of the rural poor to reproduce themselves.

Although Bernstein warns that the applicability of his various theses to specific contexts of types and sectors of agriculture and forms of agrarian labour and capital requires investigation, Byres (2009: 58) is critical of claims that express a “world system determinism”, particularly since the politics of land reform in South Africa has involved broad social groupings (and not just labour) and is intimately connected to the way in which the national question is formulated in postcolonial contexts. Furthermore, Akram-Lodhi and Kay (2009b: 320) suggest that Bernstein’s arguments are “partial” explanations in that they do not account for the diversity and specificities present in poor countries today. Akram-Lodhi and Kay, for instance, argue that distinct “traits of accumulation” (*ibid*, 318) under the contemporary restructuring of agriculture can be found by considering linkages between agricultural production for export and peasant production for home markets. Where the linkages are strong, rural accumulation has expanded to the benefit of the economy as a whole. Where linkages are weak (for example, in South Africa) however, aggregate rural accumulation has resulted in non-labour absorptive, “equality-deteriorating patterns of rural growth” (*ibid*, 320), which has “generated a reproductive squeeze within the increasingly fragmented peasant sector” (*ibid*, 322). Akram-Lodhi and Kay suggest that in these latter conditions, Bernstein’s argument that agrarian labour has been “decoupled” from capital accumulation is a strong explanation of the crisis in livelihoods.

O’ Laughlin (2010: 193), echoing Bernstein’s observations about the fragmentation of labour, highlights both the gendered dimensions of the changes and their regional

diversity and specificity in Southern Africa. Where rural livelihoods and investments in agriculture and cattle had once depended on (male) migrant labour remittances, chronic unemployment and underemployment has disrupted the flow of remittance income. The consequences are multiple. Where wage labour was once the best form of social security in an environment of high risk farming, today a “plot of land is, in many places, the best form of social security against the vagaries of wage employment” (*ibid*, 205). Instead of “capitalists hungry for cheap labour tearing peasants away from the fabric of rural life” (*ibid*, 199), there is now “a fragmented proletariat” combining farming with off-farm labour, and “[o]ld linear sequences [of social transformation] are destabilized” as workers and families float between rural and urban areas, industry and small-scale farming (*ibid*). Furthermore, a “growing class differentiation within rural communities [is] evident not only in income and housing, but also in the size of herds and landholdings, in the type of agricultural techniques employed, and in the yields achieved” (*ibid*, 200). Finally, the relationship between land, gender and class, in a context so defined by the gendered dimensions of migrant labour, colonial constructions of chiefly power and patrilineality, is “complex”, “historically shifting” and “unstable” (*ibid*, 201).

Drawing on O’ Laughlin’s and Bernstein’s observations about the crisis in livelihoods and the class fragmentation associated with neoliberal agrarian restructuring, Cousins (2013: 116) asks whether, in the South African context, an expanded redistributive land reform programme together with other state support could support the establishment of agricultural petty commodity producers who begin to accumulate from below. They could play a role in resolving South Africa’s unemployment crisis, diversify production and generate new conditions for growth, and complete the national democratic struggle.

Following Morris, Cousins argues that the agrarian question of capital was resolved in South Africa through the Prussian path of “accumulation from above”, which resulted in the concentration of agrarian capital and labour productivity apparent in the emergence of a large-scale, (white) commercial farming sector. However, despite market liberalization from the late 1980s and the dismantling of the production and marketing monopoly institutions and regulations that characterized the Prussian path, by 2010 agrarian capital still farmed over 70% of the countryside. Furthermore, many of the key institutions of

apartheid agriculture had appropriated forty years of state subsidy through privatization (Amin and Bernstein, 1996), and had become important players in an increasingly dense concentration of national and international capital up and downstream of primary farm production (Greenberg 2013: 4; Bernstein, 2013: 29; 1996). Like capital elsewhere, this reorganization has included processes of financialisation (Anseeuw, 2013), with former co-operatives registering as agribusiness companies on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange and trading in futures, mergers and acquisitions (including by world players such as Monsanto and Walmart), and global mobility as farmers and agribusinesses expand into other parts of Africa, reorganizing (and re-regulating) the agricultural value chain as they expand (Hall 2012).

While this efficient “repositioning” of agrarian and agribusiness capital “laid the ground for the subsequent ‘normalisation’ [of capitalist agriculture] qua ‘deregulation’/‘liberalisation’” (Bernstein, 2013: 42), it also created “contradictions and disjunctures” in land reform policy (Greenberg, 2013: 2). At the core of these was the unresolved nature of the two other problematics of the agrarian question: the questions of politics and class, or what Cousins (2013: 120) calls the “agrarian question of *the dispossessed*” (author’s italics).

As in other parts of Southern Africa, and notwithstanding significant economic and other differences, the class relations of the dispossessed in the South African countryside are most manifest in what O’ Laughlin (1996: 7) terms the combination of two distinct social processes, which may have different “rhythms”. The first is the new social divisions that emerge amongst the unemployed and partially employed as a result of labour reorganization and the consequent fragmentation of the working class. This results in the “diversification of rural livelihoods”, in which social reproduction occurs through “spatially extended” combinations of (often intermittent) wage work, social grants, own farming and own (socially regulated, survivalist) enterprise (Neves and Du Toit, 2012: 133, 144-5). The second social process is the “class stratification” that occurs as a result of the unequal ownership and control over land, agricultural means of production (tractors in particular), and cattle. Class formation processes are thus more complex than the notion of petty commodity producers subject to differentiating internal dynamics

allows. Even the various qualifiers of class position (e.g. “worker-peasant”) typical of class typologies tend to present these identities as relatively static whereas class identities now shift and flow between designations of “worker”, “petty commodity producer” and “capitalist”.

Despite these changes, successful small farmers have emerged in South Africa, in response to the right conditions (such as access to irrigated land and markets), as they have in other parts of Africa (Scoones *et al*, 2010, Oya, 2010), and there is evidence of social differentiation in levels of production and in asset and livestock ownership (Cousins, 2013: 125, 134). However, Cousins (*ibid*) argues that differences in household income are the result of combinations of employment status and “differential ownership of the means of agricultural production” (Cousins, 2013: 134) rather than petty commodity production and processes of internal differentiation. While he is thus skeptical that a path involving accumulation from below will transform the South African countryside, Cousins’ conclusions are derived from an analysis of farming in a former Bantustan context, which has a particular communal property regime and has been neglected as a target of post 1994 land and agrarian reform. It is therefore possible that different patterns of accumulation, and class differentiation are occurring in land reform contexts in South Africa, even if land reform remains very limited in scale.

2.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that the possibility of a new class of agrarian capital accumulators “emerging” in South Africa is a question that requires an understanding of complex set of factors and how they interrelate. These include the specific historical conditions under which agricultural accumulation has occurred in South Africa; the manner in which rural class formation in concrete contexts has been shaped by agrarian transformation at a world scale, and particularly by the “moment of globalization”; and how class articulates with, shapes and is shaped by, other social differences in highly localized contexts (Oya 2004). I have demonstrated this by locating the issues in relation to the classic problematic of the Agrarian Question. However, as Banaji (1980: 46) notes, the Agrarian Question is concerned not so much with the future of small scale farming as

with all the changes that agriculture is subject to under the domination of capitalist forms of production. Thus, “we should ask: *is capital, and in what ways is capital, taking hold of agriculture, revolutionising it, smashing the old forms of production and of poverty and establishing new forms which must succeed?*” (author’s italics).

In this respect, I have suggested that the neo-classical economists’ focus on equity and efficiency and the acceptance by radical political economists’ of the thesis of “linear proletarianisation” both tend to homogenize small farm producers by neglecting the ongoing processes of class differentiation internal to petty commodity production. The result is a shared neo-populist position in which rural politics is constructed around notions of “the people” or “the community”. Instead, I have argued, along with critical political economists, that the concrete forms of petty commodity production are the outcome of class struggle and are thus a matter of investigation.

A central concept thus emerging from this chapter is agricultural petty commodity production, which I use in this thesis in preference to the descriptive and homogenizing notion of “small-scale farmer”. This class-analytic definition underpins the core framework that I use to analyze the social differentiation that results from three capital-labour contradictions: the distribution of class positions across the productive entity (the household) along gendered, generational and kinship lines; the surplus that must be generated from production to supply the funds of consumption, replacement and ceremony, and which are necessary to reproduce both labour and capital; and the differentiating dynamics between producers resulting from the internal combination of class positions in which some exploit household labour and expand capital, some continue to engage in simple reproduction, while others are squeezed out of production and forced into wage labour.

However, new dimensions of the concept of “social differentiation” have emerged with the “moment of globalization”, which has been accompanied by both the massive concentration, integration and financialisation of agrarian capital across the globe, and the diversification of livelihoods in response to the growing crisis of reproduction resulting from the reorganization of wage labour. The Agrarian Question of labour conceived as a question of consumption and reproduction thus intersects in increasingly

complex ways with the internal dynamics of differentiation within petty commodity production, raising questions about whether or not the latter can transform the rural structure through paths of accumulation “from below”. Thus, in addition to petty commodity production and class differentiation, this chapter provides the additional concepts used in this thesis to examine the nature of the changes in the South African countryside, namely, social reproduction and capital accumulation.

The next chapter considers a further two sets of theoretical debates necessary for understanding the organization of, and possibilities associated with agricultural petty commodity production today, namely, land reform and the nature of farming systems.



3. LAND REFORM AND CATTLE FARMING SYSTEMS

3.1. Introduction

Land reform in South Africa is typical of the new wave of “market-friendly” reforms which began in the early 1990s under the ascendance of a neoliberal hegemony and which marked the end of state-led developmentalism (Bernstein, 2004: 192). While there is widespread consensus that land reform is politically important (Walker, 2008: 231; Hall, 2009: 23), its relationship to the other two aspects of the agrarian question as described in the previous chapter, namely production and accumulation, is much more contested. These debates focus on the purpose of land reform and how it is undertaken. A related set of issues is the nature of the farm systems land reform should aim to produce and whether these systems should replicate the large-scale commercial farm model that currently dominates the countryside or whether new farming systems should be adopted that are more relevant to the fragmented, mobile classes of labour struggling with a generalized reproductive crisis.

In this chapter, I discuss agricultural petty commodity producers in relation to land reform policies and implementation modalities, and the different farming systems with their respective ‘logics’ that prevail in the countryside. My focus in the first section is to locate land reform in South Africa in the international debates about market-led land reform and the more recent emphasis on decentralized, negotiated land reform. I then consider the phases that land reform in South Africa has gone through from the perspective of the continuities and shifts and what these reveal about nature of the land reform being undertaken.

I then consider the farm systems literature, in which there is a distinct distinction in how farming is understood, valued and written about. On the one hand, there is a vast literature on economics and technologies of commercial farming (which I review briefly through the beef industry) which underpin discourses of farming viability. On the other hand, there is a growing, albeit politically neglected, literature on the social and financial values of multi-purpose farm production systems in the former Bantustan areas. While these different discourses are useful in drawing attention to the key rationales and

normative features of commercial farming, on the one hand, and to the social and relational aspects of small farming in the former Bantustans, on the other, there is very little written on the actual, rather than policy intended, farming systems of petty commodity producers in land reform contexts.

3.2. Land reform in South Africa

3.2.1. The emergence of market-based land reform

El-Ghonemy (2001: 105) says “no other policy issue is more susceptible to shifts in ideology and the balance of political power than the transformation of land property rights”. Land reform is diverse and contested across different localities and historical periods (Borras and Franco: 2010: 6). It is a “many splendoured thing” (Griffen et al, 2002: 279), which has involved various and multiple combinations of changes in the distribution of ownership, structures of tenure, patterns of land uses, forms of production. It is precisely this mix of ideology, contestation and political power that explains the re-emergence of land reform in a market-led guise in the 1990s.

Following the 2nd World War, land reform was driven by “developmental” states with diverse ideologies (Byers 2004, Barraclough, 1999). Socialist countries used state ownership and collectivisation to stimulate agricultural accumulation and the transfer of surplus to fund urban industrialization (Byers, 2004), while capitalist countries used land reform politically to stem the spread of communism and economically to increase production. Following the decolonisation period in Africa in the 1950s and 60s, land reform disappeared from the development agenda of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to return in a new market-friendly form as a focus of World Bank policy in the 1990s⁶ (Borras, 2003: 367-8).

The World Bank economists, Deininger and Binswanger (1993: 1244-1248), were amongst the first to argue the case for market assisted land reform in 1993. Since the

⁶ This new form has been described in various ways including market-led agrarian reform, market-assisted land reform and market-based land reform.

arguments are examined at length in Chapter 2 as part of the neoclassical economist position, they are summarized here. Deininger and Binswanger argue that evolution of the structure of agricultural development and property rights followed a linear progression from manorial landlord estates to family farms establishing stable systems of production within a market economy, except where manorial estates were organised as haciendas through state policy distortions of the market that favoured the development of large owner-operated “Junker estates” (Binswanger and Deininger, 1993: 1246). The Junker estates (such as those in South Africa, Zimbabwe and most of South America) developed through seeking rents from urban industrial sectors, trade barriers and subsidies, which transformed the estates into highly mechanised commercial farms that eliminated hired labour and resulted in tenant evictions. The result was a bifurcated structure, which excludes the poor from land markets and makes it unlikely that “voluntary” land market transactions will increase efficiency or equity. The result is political instability, declining agricultural production and reduced economic performance. However, the first type of land reforms “provided increased incentives for tenant-owners to work and invest and so increased output and productivity” (*ibid*: 1246).

By 1999, Deininger and Binswanger’s arguments had condensed the World Bank’s position on land reform into four key elements (Deininger and Binswanger, 1999: 2; Wolford, 2007: 556-557; Hall, 2010: 31):

- The necessity for redistributive land reforms where non-market forces had resulted in bifurcated or highly unequal land ownership structures and agricultural capital investments.
- Small owner-operated farms to achieve efficiency and equity gains.
- Secure property rights to ensure returns to effort and investment and as a basis for a land market.
- A policy and regulatory environment that allowed markets to transfer land from less to more efficient users.

For the World Bank then, market-assisted land reform (MALR) was a mechanism for providing “an efficiency- and equity-enhancing redistribution of assets” (Deininger and

Binswanger, 1999: 651) that would overcome the “long-standing problems of asset distribution and social exclusion” (*ibid*: 249) without incurring the fiscal, economic and bureaucratic costs of state-led agrarian reforms. Other characteristics of the approach that have more recently been emphasized are the negotiability of land reform and multi-stakeholder or community driven land reform processes (El-Ghonemy, 2002: 231; Binswanger and Nguyen, 2004; Binswanger and Aiyar, 2003).

However, their views, which are based on a curious teleology that diminishes, if not eradicates, historical specificity, have been contested even among proponents. Christiansen (1993: 1549-1566), for example, cautions the World Bank about its expectations. He argues that “the dual objectives of attempting to address welfare goals in agriculture while seeking to duplicate the high levels of productivity that characterize the [large scale commercial sector] are likely to be mutually incompatible, at least in the short to medium term” (*ibid*: 1552), that “multiple sources of income, including off-farm sources, should be encouraged rather than prohibited” (*ibid*: 1553), that policies supporting cheaper urban food supplies partly account for “the uneven development of the rural markets and small farmer incomes” (*ibid*: 1555) and that the understanding of the operations of the rural economy “and in particular the behavior of households” is poor and fragmented (*ibid*: 1562).

While there is a fairly wide consensus that the access of the poor to land is important in mitigating the social, political and economic costs of persistent and growing inequality in developing countries (see Kay, 1998; Carter and Coles, 1998; and de Janvry and Sadoulet, 1996; Hall and Cliffe, 2009), the market-led land reform proposals have nevertheless been critiqued from a range of empirically-based and theoretical perspectives. These include concerns that policies aimed at market expansion should complement, not replace, state-administered land reforms (El-Ghonemy, 2002: 242), since market mechanisms on their own are likely to be financially onerous for government (Griffen *et al*, 2002: 321). More radical critiques are concerned that the approach is less about transferring land to the landless than with creating markets in land (Putzel, 2002: 223), and that even if it does successfully create vibrant markets in land, the dynamics and structures of power would act as barriers to making land markets work

for the poor (Borras, 2003: 389; Riedinger, Yang and Brook, 2001). Furthermore, since land reform has historically opposed, often violently, the interests of large landholders against the interests of the landless or peasants, the negotiability of the market friendly approach suggests a degree of consensus that is “something of an anomaly”(Hall, 2010: 25).

At the heart of the more radical concerns is Borras’ critique (2003a: 367-370; 2003b: 109) that the market-led land reform, or the “neo-liberal” (Wolford, 2007: 550) model of the World Bank, developed out of a flawed “pro-market” critique of state led agrarian reform. This critique – that bureaucracies become centralized, inefficient, corrupt and unresponsive while landlords seek to evade and subvert land reform and land market distortions prevent efficient farmers from acquiring land – forms the core characteristics of the market approach. These are: voluntary transactions in which willing sellers are encouraged by progressive land taxes and payments at market rates to supply land markets; demand driven targeting of beneficiaries; decentralized and privatized implementation agents with the state’s role limited to providing a facilitatory framework and finance to buyers; and “viable farm plans that emphasize diversified, commercial farming” prior to purchase (Borras, 2003a: 370-375).

However, Borras (*ibid*) provides evidence from Brazil, Colombia and South Africa, where this approach has been implemented, to show that the outcomes the World Bank predicted have either not materialized or have been much slower than expected. For instance, implementation has been centralized rather than decentralized (in Colombia and South Africa), land prices have gone up and not down (Brazil and Colombia and perhaps South Africa), and buyers have tended to be wealthier peasants, suggesting elite capturing. Furthermore, none of the countries developed and implemented progressive land tax policies to improve land supply, and in addition, the land made available for sale was often agriculturally marginal or far from services and markets while post-transfer development support has either not been forthcoming or has been slower than expected. In summary, the market “cannot carry out a redistributive function ... in the manner predicted by its proponents” (Borras, 2003a: 390).

This means that the key assumptions of the market-assisted approach should be re-examined. Borras (*ibid*: 386-389) suggests that the shortcomings are not the result of technical and administrative failures but attributable to the core assumptions of the approach itself. The first of these is the assumption that with the right institutionally determined incentives, rational agents are driven by market logics rather than politics whereas the evidence suggests that dominant classes both have, and exercise the power to influence land prices. Secondly, the assumption that willing buyers and willing sellers have equal power to negotiate land reform does not take into account that the “processes of organizing, processing and articulating demands [are] constrained by the very social and political environment that necessitates the land-based demands of the poor” in the first place (*ibid*: 389). Thirdly, contrary to the assumption that decentralization encourages transparency and accountability, Borras (*ibid*: 390) cites research indicating that enclaves of local authoritarianism dominate local polities and are more likely to act in the interests of elites and against the interests of the poor.

It is in this contested space that the importance of the re-entry of land reform on the agenda of international development institutions over the past two decades lies, along with the international debates about market-led or assisted land reform, on the one hand, and their localized national configurations and adaptations of this general structure on the other. As Hall (2010: 38) notes:

“The international debate concerning the theoretical coherence and empirical outcomes of [market assisted land reform] MALR appears to be growing and fracturing, as the scope of debate extends beyond the mechanisms for the acquisition of land and the selection of beneficiaries to its location within processes of agrarian and even macroeconomic change. This unfolding debate therefore forms a highly contested context for policy discourse on the parameters of land reform in South Africa.”

3.2.2. *Continuities and shifts in the phases of land reform in South Africa*

Land reform in South Africa has been through a number of phases (Greenberg, 2013: 9). However, these are characterized by a shift in emphasis rather than “radical

discontinuity” (Hebinck *et al*, 2011). The shifts have been the result of pragmatic, although sometimes less than coherent attempts, to accommodate competing interests and objectives (see Hall, 2010), which often reflect ambivalences around questions of farm size and viability. (See, for example, Standing and Johnston, 2004: 144-5.) More recently, however, land and agricultural policies have converged around the notion of the emerging *commercial* farmer, a concept emphasizing integration into commodity markets. This section shows how despite contestation, the market-driven aspects of land reform have survived the shifts in different phases.

The first phase of land reform was shaped by the compromises made in negotiating the end of apartheid, which emphasized the land market principle of “willing buyer, willing seller” as a key pillar of land policy (DLA, 1997: 17-18). However, three distinct interests shaped how this principle unfolded in policy. The World Bank’s interest was to promote negotiated land reform and small-scale farming along with markets as the primary redistributive mechanism once initial distortions had been removed (see Binswanger and Deininger, 1993). The commercial agricultural sector was concerned about “viability”, a notion embedded in the ratio between land size and economic units of production (Cousins and Scoones, 2010), which it linked to its role in securing national food security and export revenue. The ANC and its struggle allies, which had not fully elaborated a position on the agrarian question when negotiations began (Marais 2011), emphasized an African communitarianism that highlighted the communal, social and egalitarian aspects of African production systems (Li, 2010: 389). These also resonated with the neo-populist notions of “the people” that were incorporated in the People’s Charter and under which the United Democratic Front had so successfully mobilized resistance to apartheid in the 1980s and early 1990s.

The outcome of these struggles over early redistribution policy was a financial grant system (the Land Reform Settlement and Acquisition Grant or SLAG) that provided low levels of financial support (initially R16,000 per household) to poor households to enable them to participate in land markets.⁷ The concern with viable productive units combined

⁷ Interestingly, Aliber *et al* (2013) reminds us that average farms prices at the time were R900 per hectare, and thus a grant of R15,000 would have been sufficient to purchase about 17 hectares of land.

with the notions of African communalism and an anti-smallholder view in the ANC (inherited among other things from Stalinist and Soviet traditions of thought on the agrarian question), resulted in large-scale commercial farms being transferred into the ownership of groups of grant beneficiaries organized into legal entities.⁸ Although this early phase has been compared favourably with later policy phases as having been supportive of small-scale farmers (Aliber *et al*, 2013: 23), by 1998 the large scale farm sector, government and NGOs all agreed that land reform was failing, although there was little agreement on either the definitions or causes of failure (Aliber *et al*, 2013: 3).

The second phase began with the Department' of Land Reform's review in 1998. The multi-purposes of land reform, small grants geared at households and the collective nature of projects had, by 2001, given way to the Land Redistribution and Agricultural Development Programme (LRAD) with its focus on individual "emerging" or "entrant" commercial farmers (Hall and Cliffe, 2009: 7, Aliber *et al*, 2013: 29, 288). This phase was characterized by larger expenditures per individual or project (Hall and Aliber, 2010: 58), with grants to individuals arranged on a sliding scale relative to "own contribution". The consequence was a strategy of "backing winners" (Lahiff, 2007: 14) in that the qualifying beneficiaries were now wealthier individuals who intended to farm commercially, with big increases in the size of land transferred to the individual beneficiary.

In 2005 and 2007, the resolutions at the National Land Summit and ANC's annual congress in Polokwane urging a return to a focus on small-scale farmers seemed to signal the start of yet another new phase in land reform. The signals, however, have diverged in practice, with the National Development Plan (2011) promoting small scale farmers on the one hand, and the State Land Lease and Recapitalization and Development policies (2013) continuing to adhere to the ideal of large-scale farming on the other. The question of farming scale thus remains an area of policy ambivalence. However, the continued emphasis on market integration is evident on both sides of the policy divergence.

The National Development Plan (NDP) (NPC, 2011) aims to create a million jobs in

⁸ The Communal Property Associations Act (1996) was enacted for this purpose.

agriculture by 2030 through the establishment of small farmers mainly on irrigated land, the rationale of which is captured in both the ISPR arguments outlined in the previous chapter and the abstract multiplier effect (Aliber, 2013: 10) on employment of up and downstream linkages in the agricultural value chain. It is also a view that is consistent with aspects of the neoliberal macro-economic framework, Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) that was adopted in the late 1990s. The aim in both the NDP and Gear is to establish small black farmers producing for (export) markets on farms redistributed through land reform.

What is striking is the absence of a discussion on the trade-offs being made. This is captured in Deininger's defence of negotiated, market-led land reform models in South Africa and elsewhere (1999: 17):

“First ... the farm models provide full employment of the family's labor force throughout the year. Second, farm plans are characterized by a focus on high value crops rather than traditional bulk commodities ... Third, all plans include a significant "garden plot", setting aside about one hectare for domestic consumption needs (including chickens, one pig, and a cow) and intensive cultivation of vegetables or fruits, the surplus of which is to be sold in the market.”

However, Lahiff *et al*'s (2008) case study of the livelihood impacts of smallholder agriculture on land reform farms suggests other social processes at work. They found firstly, a significant drop out from the original beneficiaries to the final users of the farms; secondly, that an exceedingly small number of users sell agricultural produce on a regular basis and that of those who do, most use family labour. Of those who employ labour, there is a tendency to use migrant labour from neighbouring countries, to pay wages lower than the legal minimum wage and to use seasonal rather than permanent labour; thirdly, most of the users of the land reform farms produce for their own consumption, reflected in the type of crops grown (staple food crops) with only “occasional sales and gifts of surplus crops, particularly vegetables” (*ibid*, 2008: 61). The authors therefore conclude that the main livelihood benefits of land reform come in the

form of opportunities for self-employment and in boosting household food supplies. Strikingly, they note that “the net contribution to households in the great majority of cases is well below what could be earned by a single worker receiving the statutory minimum wage, although not necessarily much less than the wage rates at the bottom of the informal labour market (eg. The wages earned by casual workers on these farms)” (*ibid*, 2008: 64). Nevertheless, the unavailability of labour and cash to purchase operational inputs and capital assets limited the scale of cropping.

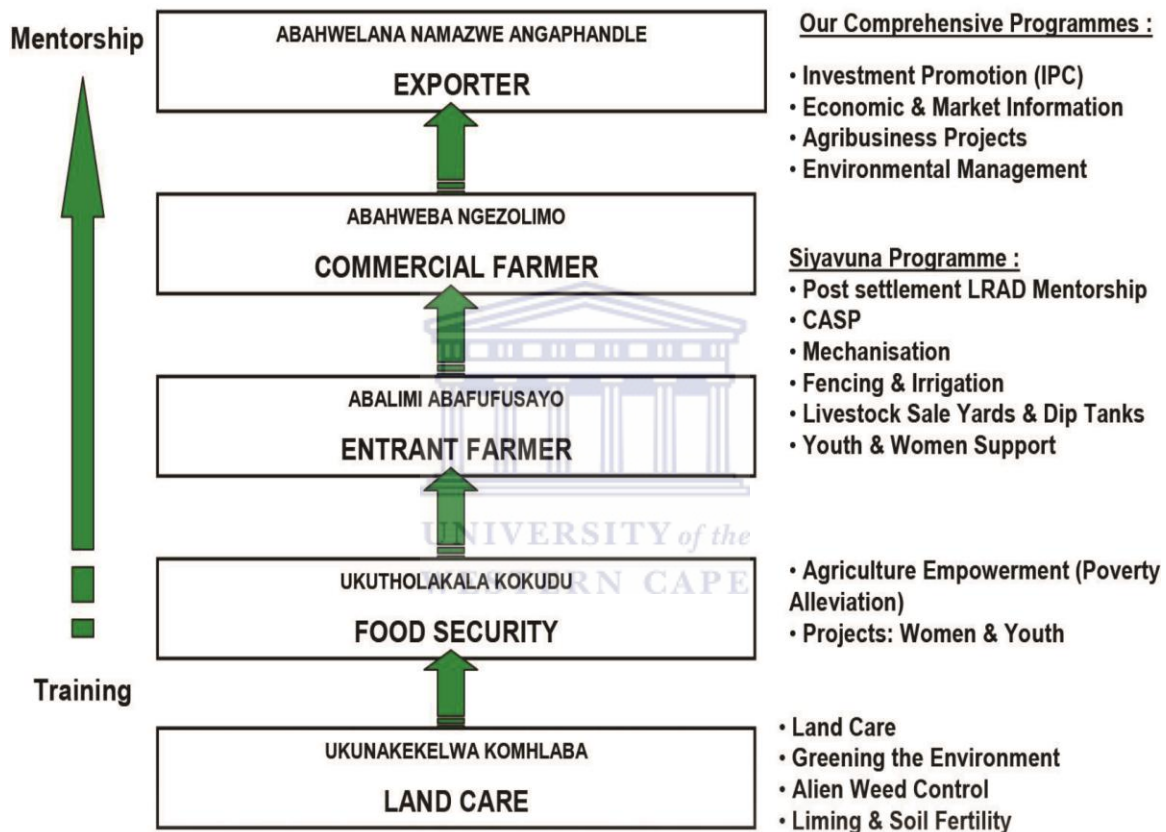
Although Lahiff *et al* dispute Deininger’s optimism about land reform, they nevertheless stop short of asking how the social conditions of production are themselves reproduced; how, in other words, capital and labour are reproduced in a environment of capital constraint and what tensions, struggles and trade-offs inform decisions about whether to reproduce capital or labour. Despite their observations about differential conditions of labour reproduction and capital constraints, the authors conclude that the key limits to farm expansion are water, soil quality and topography. (*ibid*, 2008: 60) In this sense, they, like Deininger, seem to assume that land reform has “no need to confront those awkward questions of class and class struggle that are central to capitalist transformation” (Byers, 2004: 19), and whether and how these are being reconfigured in market-led land reform contexts.

A similar continuity in market integration is present in policies that promote large-scale commercial farm models, such as those expressed initially in LRAD and later reflected in the Recapitalisation and Development Programme Policy (Recap) (DRDLR, 2013 b). The Recap policy aims to support “black emerging farmers” to run “successful agricultural business” through their rapid integration into agricultural value chains with the help of “established agriculture” (*ibid*: 10). These themes – farming as business, value chain integration and partnerships with established interests – are also reflected in an increasing number of agricultural and land reform policy positions.⁹ The explicit aim is to address

⁹ These include the Comprehensive Agriculture Support Programme in 2004, the Commercial Farmers Support Programme (CFSP) in KwaZulu-Natal in 2009, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Spatial Economic Development Strategy (KZNPSSEDS) in 2009, the KwaZulu-Natal Agri-Business Development Agency Bill

the perceived failure of land reform by building connections between the first and second economies. In 2009, the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Spatial Economic Development Strategy presented what it termed the “agrarian revolution” as the “movement” of subsistence farmers “upwards towards the first economy” (KZN, 2009: 62). The strategy depicted the movement diagrammatically (KZN, 2009: 63) as follows:

Figure 1: Government policy to support farmer development



While this diagram is adapted in subsequent policies (DRDLR, 2013a: 35; DRDLR, 2013b: 8) the key idea of graduation in a linear and progressive fashion through increasingly complex production and market structures, and as a result of agribusiness partnerships and mentoring, is also reflected in the State Land Lease and Disposal Policy

(2012), the National Development Plan (NDP) in 2011, the Comprehensive Rural Development Support Policy (CRDP) in 2013, the State Land Lease and Disposal Policy (SLLDP) in 2013 and the Recapitalisation and Development Programme in 2013.

with its four categories of beneficiary (household, small-scale, medium-scale and large-scale farmers), who graduate from one category to the next (DRDLR, 2013: 13). The policy states that this recognition of difference departs from the idea that farmers are “homogeneous” in that “farmers, whether subsistent or commercial, have different needs and are at different levels of development in terms of technical capacity (farming, business management and marketing, access to resources and willingness to take risks” (*ibid*, 13).

Thus, a theme of continuity that emerges across the policies, regardless of production scale, is the intensification of market incorporation. The core concepts in which this continuity is embedded are:

- The deeper integration of land reform beneficiaries into downstream agricultural commodity markets as sellers of agricultural commodities.
- Increased capitalisation and investment in farm production, and thus the integration of land reform projects into commodity markets as consumers of upstream agricultural goods and services.
- The assumption that beneficiary farmers need to receive skills development and training, which are provided mainly through mentoring from the large commercial farm sector.
- The linear and progressive movement of farmers through increasingly complex farm production processes and market requirements, beginning with subsistence production and ending in production for export.
- A minimalist role for the state as providers of policy frameworks and finance, and contracting of private sector service providers.
- The deeper involvement of agri-capital in providing capitalisation, training and market integration through partnerships, mentorship and service contracts.

The ambivalence around scale apparent in policy development thus disappears when it comes to deepening market integration. Land reform policy has consolidated around the idea of the “emerging black commercial farmer”, an agrarian agent who graduates

seamlessly from small subsistent food producer to large scale export commodity producer, and who, as a result, is recruited to the cause of eliminating dualism, and land reform failure, through market integration. Land reform's willing buyer-willing seller principle has thus converged with the discursive dominance of the idea of a "proper" farmer as one who "farms as a business" (Sumberg, 2011: 2), and in this sense the convergence between land and agricultural reform is complete. In the process, social differentiation is subsumed into the neo-classical concerns with differential access to markets, which obscures, amongst other things, class struggles, through technical notions of skills development and homogenous notions of the rural poor.

While policy ambivalence around scale is thus matched by policy continuity around market integration, different theoretical perspectives, with the exception of Stander and Johnston (2004), are nevertheless skeptical about the endorsement of the large scale, commercial farming model, although for different reasons. Binswanger *et al* (2008: 30-32) argue that South African land reform's unique concern with production collapse should the subdivision of highly capitalised, complex agricultural enterprises occur is misplaced. In their view, the key land reform problem is not with small farm sizes but with the communal management of commercial production, which creates disincentives related to free rider problems (*ibid*, 2008: 33). Lahiff (2007: 4), on the other hand, is concerned with the policy shift "away from land access ... towards the maintenance of agricultural productivity within a 'commercial' context", which implies that "those who cannot run a business should not have access to land" (*ibid*, 2007: 14). Increasingly, land reform benefits are expected to take the form of a share of profits and, in some cases, wage employment, with or without the option for residential settlement. Finally, Hall (2009: 5) argues that in order for land reform to catalyze structural changes in society and the economy, it must "change patterns of investment (capital), productive land use (land) and employment (labour) – in other words, it needs to change the mix of factors of production and restructure farming systems". And yet, debates on farming systems are themselves subject to fierce contestations.

In the next section, I review the literature on cattle farming in a range of farming systems in South Africa, beginning with cattle farming as part of the beef production industry and

then considering the role of cattle farming within the multiple-purpose farm systems that dominate the former Bantustan areas.

3.3. Farming Systems

3.3.1. The Structure of Beef Farming and changes to it

Notwithstanding the NPC's (2011) emphasis on irrigated small farms, the agronomic conditions and relative absence of irrigable water countrywide means that livestock grazing is the dominant form of rural land use on 68.6% (DAFF, 2012: 5) to 80% (NDA, 2006: 2) of South Africa's land surface, while "potentially arable land" makes up 13.7% (DAFF, 2012: 5). Cattle farming and beef production¹⁰, is a dominant agricultural sector in many of the drier parts of the country. But beef as an agricultural sector has undergone a number of changes since deregulation that have an important bearing on the possibilities of commercial production on land reform farms.

Cattle farming is a growing economic sector nationally, with income increases from commercially farmed beef of 12.3% between 2002 and 2007, relative to stagnant or declining incomes from cereals. (Stats SA, 2007: 6) The key changes are reflected in Table 1 below.

¹⁰ I loosely distinguish between beef farming, which designates the farming of cattle for the specific purpose of producing meat as a commodity, and cattle farming, which incorporates the multiple purposes of raising cattle, including sale, ceremony, meat, bridewealth, milk and traction, amongst others.

Table 1: Changes over time in cattle numbers, slaughter, consumption, import and prices

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	% change
Cattle no's (mln)	7,900	12,900	13,500	13,500	13,700	+ 73,4
Slaughter (mln)	2,261	2,592	2,950	2,302	2,897	+ 28,1
Consumption (000 tons)	549	624	714	554	864	+ 57,4
Consumption/capita (kg/year)	24,15	21,99	20,16	12,69	17,07	- 29,1
Imports (000 tons)	140	109	68	42	56	- 60
Prices (c/kg)	44,9	202,4	474,9	837,7	2,216	+ 4837

Adapted from DAFF (2012): Abstract of Agricultural Statistics

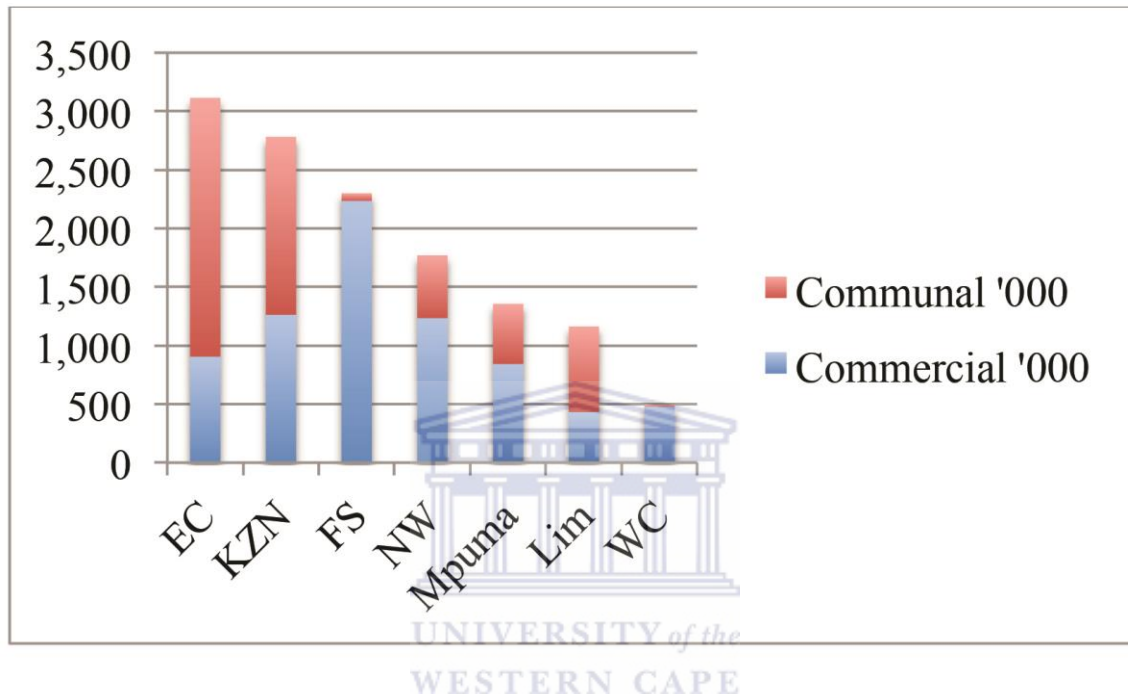
Despite decreases in per capita consumption of beef that is linked to stagnating disposable income (NDA, 2004: 178), the total national cattle herd has fluctuated but increased overall by nearly 74% since the 1970s. The herd expansion is possibly in response to increases in the nominal meat price of nearly 5000% over the 40 years although the real price declined marginally but erratically between 1970 and 2004 (NDA, 2003: 183). South Africa remains a net importer of beef (NDA, 2004: 180), although imports have declined by 60% since the 1970s (DAFF, 2012).

KwaZulu-Natal has the second highest number of cattle, after the Eastern Cape, and is followed by the Free State. This, however, includes dairy cows, with the calculated percentages of dairy cows being 34% in the Eastern Cape, 25% in KwaZulu-Natal and 13% in the Free State (NDA, 2006: 8). Beef farming is the third most important agricultural commodity sector in KwaZulu-Natal, producing the third highest gross farm income (R1,4 bln) on commercial farms after sugar (R2,3 bln) and broilers (R1,7 bln), (Stats SA, 2007: 11), but excluding forestry.

There are also significant provincial differences in the distribution of the ownership of cattle between “commercial” and “communal” farmers, as shown in Table 2 below. The

Eastern Cape has the greatest number of communal cattle owners (2,2 mln of a total herd of 3,1 million in 2004) followed by KwaZulu-Natal (1,5 mln of 2,8 mln), with the Free State and Western Cape having the fewest communal cattle farmers across the country.

Table 2: Distribution of cattle ownership across commercial and communal farmers



Source: Adapted from NDA (2004)

Along with these ownership trends, the red meat industry has undergone structural changes since the early 1990s. In 1992, the Kassier Report argued that new participants were being excluded as a result of market distortions and unfair competition arising from high levels of concentration and vertical integration, and recommended extensive deregulation as a solution. Consequently, red meat production went from being a highly regulated to a totally deregulated industry, with major upheavals for how the industry was organized.

Deregulation involved the dismantling of number of regulatory policies, such as the movement of meat from controlled to uncontrolled areas, controlled selling of meat and animal products (the setting of floor prices, standards for carcass auctions, restrictions on selling of offal, hides and skins), restrictions on abattoir establishment, and permits and

quotas to control supply (including import and export functions being restricted to the Meat Board) (Jooste, 1996; Karaan *et al*, 1993: 27). The further deregulation in 1997 of the agricultural marketing legislation subjected red meat prices to market pressures.

Notwithstanding the Kassier Report's expectations that deregulation would increase participation, the structural changes have resulted in the further vertical integration of the beef supply chain driven by the concentration in the feedlot industry (SAFA, 2013; NDA, 2003: 172) which now consists of nine primary players¹¹ (SAFA, 2013; NDA, 2003: 175), and a de-concentration in the ownership and number of abattoirs, whose numbers have increased.

Vertical integration has involved larger feedlots moving into abattoir ownership and meat processing, with the nine main feedlots all owning abattoirs as well as directly supplying wholesale and retail markets. (SAFA, 2013) Between them, the primary feedlots now produce and market 70 to 80% of beef from the commercial farm sector, with a 20% increase in standing stock between April 2008 and April 2013. (SAFA) Feedlots purchase weaners at about 200 kg either from auctions or directly from producers. (NDA, 2003: 189) However, feedlots are capital-intensive enterprises requiring significant investments in fixed assets and highly dependent on the maize-beef price ratio and regular throughputs to generate cash flow. Together these constitute new barriers to entry for small producers.

In terms of abattoirs, where the regulated distinction between controlled and uncontrolled areas favoured large contract abattoirs in controlled areas, the discontinuation of this distinction saw the emergence of many new and smaller abattoirs in "traditional beef producing areas" as controls over places of slaughter and the transport of meat were eased (NDA, 2003: 177). The NDA also suggests that these new abattoirs are able to lower overhead costs and respond more quickly to changing market conditions, thus achieving quicker economies of scale. However, although there are 341 registered abattoirs, 60% of all slaughters occur in only 71 abattoirs, suggesting that re-concentration may be taking place (NDA, 2003: 176).

¹¹ The main feedlots are Karan Beef, Kolosus, Sparta Beef, SIS, Beefcor, EAC, Crafcor, Chalmar Beef and Beefmaster. Only one of these, Crafcor, is in KwaZulu-Natal.

An indication of the importance of the commercial beef producing sector is its capacity to generate employment, with an estimated 2,1 million people dependent directly and indirectly for income on animal production and related agri-business linkages up and downstream. Its importance is also measured in terms of its contribution to national GDP, in which animal production contributes 41% of the agricultural GDP (DOA, 2006: 12), and in terms of increased incomes with cattle producers earning 3.4% more in 2012/13 than in 2011/12 (DAFF, 2013: 4).

3.3.2. Commercial Beef Farming Production Systems and Measures

Production in beef farming is measured through two efficiency criteria: management efficiency measured in terms of profitability and fodder flow and production efficiency measured in conception and weaning rates, off-take percentages and herd structure. (Gertenbach, 2000). Related to these efficiencies, technological developments in genetics, feed-weight conversion ratios, and the grazing capacity and management systems for different rangeland conditions are emphasized.

Gertenbach (2000) classifies beef production systems according to the age at which the animals produced are sold. In terms of this classification, there are three primary production systems: the weaner system, the long yearling or tolly system and the two-year old system. The weaner system, as the first step in the production of beef as a commodity, is the “engine room” of beef production (Gertenbach, 2000) and the lowest labour, costs and time input system. Labour requirements in the weaner system are approximately three workers to 67 breeding cows (Niland, 2010), with annual cost of production in the Besters area estimated to be R1,590 per breeding stock unit (Smythe, 2012). Weaners are then sorted and channeled into the next phases of production: feed-lotting, growing out on grass, and re-stocking.

Commercial beef production involves managing two inter-related processes: breeding, and producing feed to match fodder requirements. Breeding tends to be managed in one of two ways, controlled breeding, in which bulls are introduced to cows and heifers for short periods of one to two months during the year, and uncontrolled breeding, in which

bulls are left to run with cows all year round. Controlled breeding is the preferred commercial system because it simplifies general herd management, which includes matching feeding to fodder requirements, pregnancy monitoring and testing, controlled weaning, castration and dehorning and the administration of veterinary regimens in relation to pregnancy and calving cycles. Controlled breeding, however, requires a higher bull-cow ratio (1:25) because of the high seasonal demand on bulls, and a sufficient number of delineated and fenced camps to manage heifers, bulls, pregnant and calving cows and weaned calves separately from each other. Uncontrolled breeding provides a year-round supply of milk and animals for sale but complicates total herd management in terms of fodder flow and veterinary regimens.

Matching feeding to fodder requirements is largely determined by how the environment shapes fodder production (Gertenbach, 2000). For instance, in areas where sourveld is dominant, cows can be expected to lose between 8-11% of their mass over winter as a result of being fed on hay and supplementary proteins and minerals rather than the high protein grasses available year round, albeit in smaller fodder quantities, characteristic of sweetveld. Since conception rates are influenced by changes in the cows' mass, bulls, in sourveld areas, are introduced into the breeding herd in about November, when increased rainfall improves fodder production and cows begin to put on weight.

The profitability of commercial beef farming is determined by its economic efficiency, which is measured by how close a farmer comes to meeting or exceeding a set of external targets on a range of production indicators. The most important of these are weaning and conception rates, and mortality rates. Gertenbach (2000) states that mortality rates should be at 3% or less of the herd, while commercial farmers in the province say they aim for mortality rates of 1% and less (Smythe, 2012: pers com; Niland, 2010: pers com).

The weaning percentage target for commercial beef farmers is 80% (Gertenbach, 2000) but is increasingly aimed at 85% or higher in order to maintain profitability (Smythe, 2012: pers com; Niland, 2010: pers com). The weaning percentage is calculated on the number of calves that reach weaning age from cows and heifers exposed to a bull. The figure brings together a number of factors that affect weaner production, including

nutrition, cow fertility, breed-type (which affects calf size, the single biggest cause of calf deaths immediately after birth) and management regime. The figure varies for first time calving heifers (90%) and drops to 75% for heifers with second calves. These differences relate to declining fecundity as a cow ages on the one hand, and to the physical stresses a first time calving heifer is subjected to in producing and suckling a calf at the same time as she is maturing, a stress that reduces or delays conception rates in the heifer's second calving year. However, since replacement heifers in a non-expanding herd are never more than 15% (Gertenbach, 2000) to 20% (Smythe, 2012: pers com) of the total herd, this variation has little affect on the overall weaning percentage, and an 80% weaning rate is therefore a key indicator of overall herd productivity.

In summary, indicators in commercial beef production systems measure the efficiency with which the end output (usually weaners) is achieved in relation to the inputs (primarily fodder and genetics) required to produce it. The efficiency ratio depends on the overall management of the system, of which the two primary indicators are grazing capacity (stable fodder production) based on a rotational grazing regime and weaning or calving percentages (maximum economic or beef output).

Communal or subsistent cattle systems, from this perspective, are economically marginal and low producing (DAFF, 2011), and generate concerns about the impact of overgrazing on local ecologies (Schwalbach, 2001). As Andrew *et al* (2003: 7) suggest: "There is a tendency for observers to ... use the commercial production system, as practiced by white farmers under freehold tenure, as the yardstick of 'best practice' with respect to rangeland use."

3.3.3. *Multi-purpose farm systems and rangeland ecology*

Although the commercial beef production system described above tends to dominate policy on cattle production, there is a wide-ranging alternative literature on farming systems, which has been the subject of intense debate in a recent edition of the *Journal of Range and Forage Science*. In the key paper, Vetter (2013: 3) argues that the policy

framework that promotes the commercialization of cattle in order to improve economic productivity and the condition of communal rangelands is misdirected. It should instead aim to improve the contribution of rangelands to rural livelihoods, ensure benefits are equitably distributed, and use recent research on managing rangelands rather than outdated notions of sustainability. At the core of Vetter's argument is the view that communal farming systems are characterized by dynamic interactions between rangelands, livestock, people and property that is more complex than the underlying assumptions of beef production, in which grazing capacity, increased off-take and sales, and rotational grazing are dominant notions (Allsop, 2013: 67).

Barrett (1992:2), however, warns that the wide heterogeneity in both household economies and farming purposes means that a typical "communal farming system" does not exist although there are overlaps and commonalities. Differences include the range and importance of different livestock holdings, including "micro-livestock" (Andrew *et al*, 2003: 8), the interdependency of crop-livestock production (Letty and Alcock, 2013: 46), the socially differentiated (Swarts and Aliber, 2013; Kleinbooi, 2013; Hall and Cousins, 2013) and "entangled" (Ainslie 2013: 37), often non-financial purposes of crop and livestock farming (Tapson, 1991), and the multiple livelihood uses of rangelands (Shackleton *et al*, 2000). Cousins (1996: 166-7), for instance, considers three dimensions to this literature, namely, the "multi-faceted system of provision" derived from the natural resource base, the political/institutional controls over nature resource use, and ecological dimensions of intensive natural resource use. In this section, I focus on multi-purpose cattle holdings and ways of valuing them, the social relations that underpin such systems and the debates about how to assess the ecological robustness of rangelands.

3.3.3.1. *Multi-purpose cattle herds*

A number of studies in the former Bantustans show that cattle are kept for a range of purposes, including the provision of draught power (Auerbach *et al*, 1991; Heron, 1990), manure and transport for cropping (Barrett, 1992: 6), as savings in small herds and investment in bigger herds (Van der Waal, 1991), milk, meat and hides for consumption, as well as ceremony, bridewealth and social status (Tapson, 1991; Vink, 1986). Bayers *et al* (2003: 7-8) found a similar range of functions in four land reform sites in KwaZulu-

Natal. These included milk and meat consumption, ceremonial slaughter, sales (mainly for cash to meet domestic needs), savings, bridewealth, draught and, in some sites, skins for traditional attire. Less frequent reasons for keeping cattle were manure for tillage and as a source of status, while the reason given for irregular sales was that owners were still “building”¹² their herds. Twine (2013: 41) suggests that policies that emphasize commercial production and neglect these other functions are likely to benefit only a few wealthier people while being resisted by most farmers, and could undermine important social relations and risk-minimizing livelihood strategies.

Bayers *et al* (*ibid*) also found differences in ranked uses between two sites, with one site recording savings for bridewealth as the main reason for keeping cattle along with savings generally, while in a second site the main uses were savings, draft and milk. Similarly, Vink (1986) argues that in Lebowa in 1984/5 large herd owners kept cattle mainly for investment, the supply of milk and meat and for the social prestige related to maintaining customs rather than for cash income from sales while Tapson’s (1991: 9-14) research in (former) KwaZulu in 1982/3 emphasizes that the importance of cattle for milk supply, suggesting the herds are dairy rather than beef cattle (*ibid*: 10). Tapson also noted that the majority of slaughtered cattle are used in wedding and burial ceremonials (*ibid*: 12), and that cattle represent accumulated “repositories of wealth” incurred as a result of the difference between household income and consumption.

Clearly, while cattle are kept for multiple purposes, the primary purposes are ranked differently in different contexts and households. Cousins (1996a: 181) argues that the determinants of primary function may depend on the regional significance of particular factors. A dry agro-ecology where cropping is limited may make livestock sales for cash more important while the economy of a region may influence whether tractors and land are available and affordable, determining the importance of cattle as draught. In regions where migrant labour is prevalent, cattle may provide a useful form of savings or investment. These different purposes also influence decisions on herd composition: oxen are likely to be privileged where draught is a priority function and fertile cows where

¹² The word used was “*siyaphemba*”, which describes blowing the embers of a fire to increase the flames. It also means to start something new.

milk is important (Murray *et al*, 2003: 9).

There is contrasting evidence on the reasons for sales and on the relationship between herd size and decision to sell (Bayers *et al*, 2003: 8, Tshintsha Amakhaya, 2012: 63-4; Karaan *et al*, 1993). In a useful analysis of herd size dynamics, Tapson (1991: 6) shows that of the reasons for herd deductions, sales and slaughter were lower than lobola (bridewealth) payments, with mortality highest at 8.5%. In terms of herd additions, purchases closely matched sales (3.3%) with lobola receipts accounting for 5.8% of herd growth. The logic of cattle keeping, in other words, is quite different from the single purpose production of weaners described above, and sales for cash do not have a necessary link to herd size. Cousins (1996a: 181) concludes that sales tend to be “occasional, driven by immediate need for cash for the household, and are often of an ‘emergency’ nature”.

However, Twine (2013: 41) raises concerns about the “mutually exclusive distinction between ‘subsistence’ and ‘commercial’ livestock farming in policy”. Atkinson (2013: 30), contra Vetter, also questions the strict dichotomy between subsistent and commercial farming, which in practice “comfortably ... co-exist” despite government ambiguity around both commercial and subsistent farming. Instead of privileging one form and scale of farming over another, Atkinson (*ibid*: 33) argues that support is needed for a range of small to large scale, subsistent to commercial, and full and part-time farming in a variety of private, rental and common tenure arrangements.

Nevertheless, these variations across time, region and household in the purposes of keeping cattle show that their value cannot be reduced to the single purpose of commodity for sale. Multi-purpose herds also have high rates of economic return per hectare compared with commercial production if all the functions are valued (Cousins, 1996a: 71) and provide returns of up to 33.1% on capital in cattle keeping households (Shackleton *et al*, 1999). This “invisible capital” (Cousins, 1999) is of key importance as store of wealth that can mitigate the effects of destitution amongst rural households affected by high unemployment and HIV and Aids (Andrew *et al*, 2003: 11)

3.3.3.2. *Social relations*

Two aspects of the social relations that underpin multi-purpose farming (and specifically cattle) systems are highlighted here: the differentiated and socially complex nature of cattle ownership and common property regimes.

Data on cattle numbers, herd sizes and ownership in communal areas vary greatly across areas and over time. Between 1924 and 1974 when human population growth was rapid, numbers fell by about 30% but between 1995 and 1999 they increased from 36% to 52% of the national total (Andrew et al, 2003: 10). The proportion of cattle owners varies from around 10% in Lebowa up to 75% in some areas of KwaZulu-Natal (*ibid*). Recent data from dip tank records in two KwaZulu-Natal locations (Letty, B, 2011: pers com) confirms ownership variations: nearly 23% of households owned cattle in one site while in the other 56% of households owned cattle. Mean herd sizes were similar, around 10 cattle, with range between 43 and 50.

Data in Table 3 below show that cattle herd sizes owned by “emerging/communal” farmers vary substantially between regions and households.

Table 3: Herd sizes per province in the communal/emerging sectors vs the commercial sector

Province	Sample size (no)	Herd size (%)					Av herd size (no)
		1-25	26-50	51-100	101-150	>150	
KZN	316	93	6	1			12
N Cape	11	9	9	27	18	36	231
Gauteng	13	54	8	23	15	0	40
E Cape	173	75	8	11	5	1	28
Mpumalanga	113	74	16	6	2	2	24
N. West	120	74	18	5	2	1	22
W. Cape	13	69	23	8	0	0	21
Free State	33	91	3	3	3	0	14
Limpopo	398	92	6	2	0	0	13
Communal/ emerging	1190						19
Commercial	90						413

Source: Scholtz *et al* (2008:3)

Unfortunately the study does not clarify how the “emerging” sector is defined or distinguished from the “communal” sector but indicates that 81% of the sample was taken from the communal sector and 12% from the emerging sector (Scholtz, 2008: 2).

Cousins (1996a: 181) suggests that these difference are indicative of class differentiation. “The role of stock is also influenced by the class identity of the owner [and is] a

reasonably reliable indicator of social differentiation.” As a form of petty commodity production, cattle accumulation strategies in the former Bantustans have relied on a power nexus outside of production that is typical of accumulation from above. “Class formation processes in the former homelands have probably led to a concentration of a significant proportion of livestock in the hands of an elite composed of ‘traditional’ leaders, bureaucrats and businessmen...” (*ibid*: 182).

Andrew *et al* (2003: 8) show that livestock holdings are differentiated along gendered lines. Cattle ownership is located in male heads of family and bequeathed, through widows, to sons, while women tend to own and produce livestock that can be managed closer to the domestic sphere, such as poultry and pigs. However, labour constraints, including the shift to female management of household labour, have resulted in these “normative roles” being ignored, while the type of livestock owned has changed alongside changes in household composition (due to migration and Aids) and the provision of social grants. The latter have enabled women-headed households to assert a preference for “culturally unencumbered types of livestock (that is, those not likely to be subject to interference by men)”, that can be sold easily and whose management close to the homestead is “better suited to the daily routines and labour constraints of these households” (*ibid*, 2003: 8).

Ferguson (1994) in his study in Lesotho also shows how cattle holdings are subject to struggles that have gendered and generational dimensions to them in migrant labour contexts. Cattle are relatively secure form of savings for young male migrants workers attempting to save for old age because of the “livestock-cash barrier”. This is a barrier that men construct through a “bovine mystique” (*ibid*: 146-7), which makes it difficult to sell cattle and conserves them as savings against the urgent consumption claims of wives (and children at home), who try to break down the mystique.

Tapson (1991: 13) argues that there is also value in “cattle redistribution” through cattle loaning (*ukusisa*) and sharing of milk and ploughing. Shackleton *et al* (1999) estimated that the net annual value of livestock (including goats) to all households (including non-stock owners) was R1,431. Where Tapson suggests that sharing cattle goods and services is undertaken to reduce the visible inequalities associated with differential holdings, Guy

(1979) adds that historically such sharing mechanisms also helped reduce risk (of theft, drought, disease), while McClendon (1997) shows how the institution of *ukusisa* was adapted and transformed in response to land constraints resulting from colonial and apartheid restrictions on African land access. These sharing mechanisms are thus socially complex and adaptable.

In an insightful paper, Ainslie (2013: 35) sums up the socio-cultural nexus of cattle holdings as follows:

“... [C]attle and goats, which are at once culturally potent icons and economically valuable commodities, are sites of contestation both within households and in rural communities, precisely because the processes of acquiring, keeping, exchanging and consuming them pull people in different directions and commits them to each other in complex and layered webs of relations”.

Cattle holdings thus both shape and reflect class and gendered social relations. A second, albeit inter-connected, set of social relations underpins the common property regimes in which multi-purpose livestock are often farmed. This is touched on briefly here because CPAs, although they are privately owned parcels of land are also a form of hybridized, common property regimes in that the natural and other resources of the farm are shared and regulated by the members of the group. (Cousins and Hornby, 2002)

Cousins (1996: 168) notes that common pool resources are those that can be used by more than one agent either at the same time or sequentially, and where exclusion from resource use is either difficult or costly to effect. A key issue in common property regimes is the definition of users, particularly who is excluded, and the terms and conditions of use. The socio-economic structure of users can impact on resource use, particularly where interests are not homogenous, a problem compounded in large groups of users. Conflict between users can occur along many axes, such as different resource uses (grazing and cropping), and different user demands on the resource (commercial production against more subsistent type production). A risk in multiple user contexts is that the resource is “captured” by a few local elites.

Rules for regulating resource management can be arranged in many different ways (Bennet, 2013: 78), including combinations of “customary” and “emergent formal” institutions, or what Cousins calls hybrid institutions (1996: 170). Cousins (*ibid*: 171) and Cousins and Hall (2013: 14) suggest that a flexible and enabling policy environment is required to support the evolution of common property regimes so that the rights and interests of less powerful members are guaranteed and elite capturing prevented. In land reform contexts in South Africa, CPAs are often legally responsible for regulating the resource use of members on particular farms according to constitutions that conform to the requirements of the Communal Property Associations Act (1996). However, the disjuncture between how these constitutions define both the membership and the purposes of association and actual and normative realities of communal arrangements has generated indeterminacy and conflict on many land reform farms (Cousins & Hornby, 2002: 25).

3.3.3.3. *The ecological robustness of different rangeland management systems*

Rangelands, as a form of common property, are often thought to be open access resources and thus subject to Hardin’s ‘tragedy of the commons’, with free riders exploiting resource to the point of degradation (Bennet, 2013: 77). This is expected to result in overgrazing that causes damage to the density and composition of the basal cover, and results in soil erosion, the permanent deterioration of the rangeland and the declining productivity of livestock dependent on it. From this perspective, adherence to grazing capacity and rotational grazing in fenced paddocks is a measure of management practices that sustain rangeland health. Land reform in South Africa has generated much debate over rangeland management in common property environments (Bennet, 2013: 78) and concerns that carrying capacity is not being adhered to. These assumptions about rangelands have, however, been subjected to thorough critique.

Behnke and Scoones (1990: 2-3) show that the conventional approach to carrying capacity depends on a theory of the successional emergence of plant species following a disturbance. This theory, however, emerged in temperate, agro-ecological contexts very different from those of African rangelands, and is also challenged by the idea of an

ecological carrying capacity developed for wildlife range management. In the latter, an equilibrium point is reached between forage production and livestock population, which accommodates higher livestock density than conventional grazing capacity measures but not necessarily in good condition. For Behnke and Scoones a biologically optimal carrying capacity cannot be defined “independently of the different management objectives associated with different forms of animal exploitation” (1990: 7). Conventional grazing capacity is thus better viewed as an economic grazing capacity intended to meet consumer demands for high-grade meat, and farmers who keep cattle for multiple purposes are rational to adopt different strategies in relation to rangelands.

Furthermore, the idea that exceeding grazing capacity limits will result in permanent rangeland degradation and consequently soil erosion is complicated by erratic rainfall patterns typical of African pastoral systems. The notion of a system in equilibrium works when exogenous factors, such as drought, fire or the rapid densification of human settlement, are the exception; but where such events are frequent, then the system must be seen as being event-driven. In grazing systems in equilibrium, plant growth and livestock population relate directly to one another, but in event-driven systems both plant growth and livestock population are “held in check” by the same external physical conditions rather than their relation to each other. (*ibid.*: 12) The changes in vegetation in such rangelands cannot, therefore, in any simple way be attributed to livestock density. Rangeland management then becomes a “game of calculating probabilities”, seizing opportunities and avoiding risks (*ibid.*: 13). This very different understanding of rangelands should be accommodated in post-apartheid land tenure policies in order to develop coherent approaches to farming and decentralized, flexible community-based management institutions in these contexts (Bennet, 2013: 81; Allsopp 2013: 67, Hall and Cousins 2013: 14, Bennet *et al.* 2013: vi).

To summarise, in multiple purpose cattle systems, high stocking rates make good economic sense, and optimum stocking is higher than in single purpose systems (such as commercial beef herds). Herders making opportunistic use of the highly localized/micro-level, “patchy” variability of rangelands are able to achieve higher stocking rates. In addition to micro-variability, evidence suggests that arid or semi-arid rangelands are non-

equilibrical in that external factors (such as droughts or fires) may have a greater impact on the ecology than the interactions of rangeland users and the biology of the rangeland. An important policy implication is that measures to force down stocking rates, enforce fenced, rotational grazing schemes and privatize the commons will not only be resisted but have had limited success and are probably unnecessary (Vetter, 2013: 3; Cousins, 1996: 172). However, socially differentiated interests in cattle and rangeland management can generate conflict and the tendency for local elites to grab common property resources.

In conclusion, Cousins (1996: 200) argues that struggles over rangelands, including in land reform contexts, tend to occur “along several axes simultaneously, or in close succession”. He lists these as:

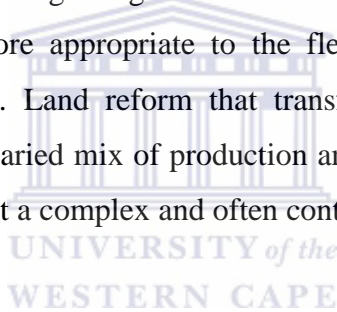
- The generalized struggle for land takes a particular form in common property regimes, and is an area often neglected in analysis of land reform.
- Membership rights of user groups are often contentious, particularly whether the rights belong to the household or the adult individual.
- Boundary disputes have occurred in land reform contexts.
- Operational rules of resource use in emergent property regimes may be difficult to define in what are *de facto* open access situations.
- The authority to enforce rules can be a contentious issue, and the appeal to external authorities can exacerbate rather than resolve these disputes.
- Relationships to external authorities are likely to be fraught once land rights are secured, particularly around stocking rates and different understandings of and solutions to environmental degradation.

3.4. Conclusion

The land reform policy of transferring of farms into group ownership has created a framework that is likely to multiply the range of farm production systems. However, the gradual convergence in land and agricultural reform policy around the notion of an “emerging commercial” farmer, with a production system tightly linked into commodity

markets and overseen by the existing large scale commercial farm sector, assumes a logic that involves a linear progression from subsistence to commercial production. The alternative farming systems literature, however, shows that African farming systems are often heterogeneous with farmers seeking multiple purposes that are defined, not simply by profitability, but by a range of factors and circumstances that are often quite local, specific and socially embedded. Livestock ownership is also highly differentiated along both gender and class axes, indicating a complex and contradictory set of social relations underlying production decisions and strategies as well as rangeland management in communal property settings.

Furthermore, conventional approaches to grazing capacity are most appropriate to equilibrial rangelands (in temperate climates) geared at single purpose economic production rather than ecological grazing limits in both equilibrial and non-equibrial rangelands, which may be more appropriate to the flexible, opportunistic grazing in multi-function livestock herds. Land reform that transfers cattle farms to groups of owners is likely to result in a varied mix of production and range management strategies as beneficiaries struggle to meet a complex and often contradictory set of socially defined needs and interests.



4. RESEARCHING RURAL SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION AND CLASS FORMATION

4.1. Introduction

In Chapters 2 and 3, I argued that the processes of social differentiation in petty commodity production do not follow an abstract or idealised path of class formation but are shaped in contexts with specific histories and in relation to other current social dynamics. The study of these processes thus requires a methodological approach that is based on an understanding of class as a concept, on the one hand, and on the specific conditions that shape the particular and concrete forms of class on the other. The approach used here is based on the methodology of the realist philosopher, Sayer (1992).

4.2. Methodological considerations

Bensaid (2002) argues that for Marx, classes are not abstractions that precede the individual cases that belong to them; rather, classes form in relationships of struggle over the conditions that determine necessary over surplus labour time; the conditions, in other words, of exploitation that enable capital accumulation. Furthermore, classes cannot simply be associated with sources of income – wages, profit, ground rent – and the endless fragmentations and stratifications that differential income results in. Class relations arise rather from multiple determinations that include exploitation, stratification, commodification and specialisation, and which shape the relations between classes in concrete contexts. Marx, Bensaid argues (2002: 111) views class as a relation and thus it is not an isolated theoretical object. Furthermore it is by its nature a relation defined by a conflictual dynamic.

Oya (2004: 290) argues that this relational ‘apprehension’ of class means that the study of class formation processes requires an approach focused on three principles. These are:

- Firstly, an understanding of the historical conditions that established the prevailing “hierarchical patterns in local social structures” and how these are reproduced;
- Secondly, an appreciation of how a particular locality in both a spatial and historical sense limits the application of theory and concepts;
- Thirdly, the recognition that the concept of social differentiation is integrally linked to dynamic conceptions of social change, and is thus key to explaining changes in concrete phenomena such as “social structures, production patterns and the organisation of the rural household”.

However, the objects of the social sciences, such as class formation processes, are a ‘structured mess’ because people interpret the world and adapt their responses in ways that are unpredictable, and cannot be linked back to the material circumstances that give rise to them in any easy relationship of causality. Explanations of the relationships between conditions and actions are therefore “relatively incomplete, approximate and contestable” (Sayer, 1992: 232). Within these limits, however, it is possible to provide explanations of social processes by using different kinds of research (abstract and empirical) and explanation (generalisation and synthesis).

Empirical research is an investigation into “the contingent forms of combinations of abstract elements which comprise the concrete” (*ibid*: 238). The concrete is not so much the realm of actual events or objects but the “synthesis of many determinations” (Bensaid, 2002: 102) each of which requires isolation through abstract research. The concrete is thus not that which is given or apprehended by statistical data but is rather a “conceptual construction” (*ibid*), and it is in the space between this construction and the empirically given that knowledge is possible. Knowledge of the realm of the actual is, in this sense, always partial, and abstractions are “indispensable for providing some of the means by which we study the concrete” (Sayer, 1992: 239).

However, abstract concepts, such as class and petty commodity production, are themselves derived from processes of abstraction that begin with the concrete. There is thus a danger of over-extending abstract research and expecting it to explain events deductively and directly from basic concepts without empirical research, a problem

with some Marxist research. Abstract constructions such as class typologies are, as Oya (2004: 294) notes, a mid point of research in class formation processes and trajectories of accumulation but they are not the end point. They can only be used to help identify preliminary research objects but the concrete reality and dynamics driving changes in these pre-identified groups requires empirical research.

However, it is possible to extend abstractions across concrete events and objects in so far as the necessary relations (the relations that make them possible), conditions or properties they describe exist elsewhere. “Abstraction ... does not expect to find successful generalisations at the concrete level; but in abstracting from the particular contingencies that co-determine concrete objects, they are likely to produce a conception characterised by generality” (Sayer, 1992: 239). Generalisations, then, are attempts to extrapolate findings about a specific aspect of a system to the rest of the system, but such reductionism is particularly risky the more heterogeneous the system is. Finally, research as synthesis aims to bring abstract and concrete research together with generalizable findings that cover a “wide range of constitutive structures, mechanisms and events in order “to explain major parts of whole systems” (*ibid*, 236).

How does this apply to the investigation of petty commodity production, of whether it is subject to processes of social differentiation, and if so, what drives these processes? The short answer given by Bernstein (1986: 20) is that “[w]hether differentiation of PCP occurs, the extent to which it occurs, and the specific mechanisms through which it occurs, are always the effects of particular conditions of competition and class struggle that require concrete investigation”. Bernstein is reminding us that while the essential (or abstract) relation governing petty commodity production today is that between wage labour and capital, the phenomenal (or concrete) forms assumed by petty commodity production in specific contexts may resemble pre-capitalist phenomena, including the structure of households, household labour and certain types of labour process (Bernstein, 1986: 13; Gibbon and Neocosmos, 1985: 184). The key matter of investigation is therefore the relationship between the phenomenal form in particular conditions and the essential relations that explain it (Bernstein, 1986: 13).

4.3. Research design

The nature of the object to be explained determines the appropriateness of a particular methodological design (Sayer, 1992: 232) but choices in research design are required given the heterogeneity and complexity of concrete social relations (*ibid*, 1992: 241). Since actual individual cases are unlikely to be identical in the areas of interest, it is necessary to limit the range of definitional criteria when examining a large number of individuals with the intention of comparing and generalizing. However, because of the heterogeneity and multiple determinations involved in individual cases, such studies tend to exclude properties that differentiate between individuals. “In other words, their samples tend to be distributively unreliable, even when stratified” (*ibid*). However, the alternative of studying a fewer number of individuals but in terms of a wider range of considerations results in neglect of those parts of the system that are different from the focus of investigation. This dilemma can be partly resolved by combining what Sayer calls extensive and intensive research designs (Sayer, 1992: 242-4).

Extensive designs are aimed at identifying the “formal relations of similarity” (*ibid*: 243) such as patterns, regularities and distinctive features in taxonomic groups in order to describe generalizable features. Extensive designs are thus concerned with discovering some of the common properties and general patterns of a population as a whole. Intensive designs, by contrast, aim to identify “substantial relations of connection” by considering how particular processes work, what different agents do and what and how changes are produced in causally connected groups. The primary questions in intensive designs are thus concerned with how a causal process works out in a limited number of cases. The explanations of events or objects are causal but not necessarily widely representative, and whereas extensive designs allow individuals to be compared on the basis of classification, they are weak for identifying causal and necessary relations. However, “... although at the level of concrete events the results may be unique, in so far as intensive methods identify structures into which individuals are locked and their mechanisms, the abstract knowledge of these may be more generally applicable, although it will take further research to establish just how general they are” (*ibid*: 249). The combination of intensive and extensive research

designs thus aims to produce a “coherent description and explanation” in order to represent or “mirror” an object (*ibid*: 251) so that it can be thought about.

4.3.1. Case study approach

The key design feature of my research was a case study approach. Yin (2003) argues that a case study design is particularly useful when the study aims to answer “how” and “why” questions and where contextual conditions are either relevant to explanations of the phenomenon or the distinction between phenomenon and context is unclear. Case studies, according to Baxter and Jack (2008: 544), help to identify the multiple facets of a phenomenon and how they relate to one another, and thus aim to reveal the “essence of the phenomenon”. For Miles and Huberman (1994: 25) the unit of analysis is the case, which they define as “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context”.

In my study, the object of analysis is the nature of the class formation processes occurring in petty commodity producing households within the Qeduzizi-Besters Land Reform Project. I undertook research of cascading intensity on six of the farms that were part of the project. The purpose of researching more than one farm was to allow comparison between conditions for petty commodity production in order to identify and isolate the locally contingent causal relations that could explain class formation processes on particular farms.

However, the “boundedness” of the case study is at times blurred as a result of variations in basic project data. The Binswanger *et al* (2007) report identifies the Qedusizi-Besters Land Reform Project as consisting of 15 farms, of which 14 were transferred into the ownership of Communal Property Associations (CPAs). However, an Agribusiness Development Agency (ADA) (2012) report states that only 12 farms were transferred. The Binswanger *et al* (*ibid*) report also states that the project involved the transfer of 14,700 hectares and 199 households, whereas the ADA data indicates that just over 12,000 hectares were transferred to 166 households organized into CPAs. A further complication is that my own data on the number of households

on six of the farms vary slightly in places from both the Binswanger *et al* report and the ADA report.

In particular, my research found 28 households at Ngulakayishazwe CPA as opposed to 26 (in Binswanger *et al*) and 27 (ADA). At Mphuzanyoni, there are 24 households as opposed to 22 and 19 respectively. The Mphuzanyoni CPA chairperson said the original agreement during land reform negotiations was that 24 households would benefit but she discovered in 2013 that the membership list registered with the Department of Rural Development and Land Affairs (DRDLR) is 20 households. Despite this, all 24 households live on the farm and have received benefits from the CPA since the transfer. My data on Nyakanyaka Yomshini is the same as the Binswanger *et al* report with 16 households. The ten households reflected in the ADA report are one group resulting from a CPA membership split during which the farm was informally subdivided. However, officially the Nyakanyaka Yomshini CPA constitution still consists of 16 households. On Sizisizwe, I recorded ten member households, as does the ADA report, as opposed to 13. However, only seven households are resident on the farm; the other three have not yet moved and there is no indication of their intention to move. In Zizimele, I recorded 16 households, as opposed to the Binswanger *et al* report of 14 and the ADA report of 17. In my data, this is the result of sons in two households creating their own independent households, and it is possible that the ADA report reflects that this process is ongoing.

The importance of these variations emerges in trying to quantify the distribution of project benefits across households and in understanding the precise mechanisms of how processes of change are taking place. For instance, on Zizimele, the increasing number of households suggests that processes of new household formation and establishment are taking place, whereas this is constrained by compliance to CPA constitutions on other farms, particularly Nkuthu Kayishazwe, where households contain within them sub-familial units.

I dealt with these data variations by using my own data on the six farms I visited, since this information was verified on each of the farms through discussions with CPA committee members and visits to most households resident on the farms. On the other

four farms where the Binswanger *et al* and ADA reports differ, I use the ADA data because it is based on a household survey and has been collected more recently than the Binswanger *et al* data. I also use the ADA data for the number of farms transferred since this data was triangulated through my participation in meetings between farm residents, DRDLR officials and ADA consultants, and a number of other ADA reports. In summary, my research sample involved six of the twelve farms transferred and 86% of households in those six farms, as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: The sample of households per CPA

CPA Name	Farm Name	Sample of households		Total
		n=	As % of total	
Zizamela	Remington	15	93.8%	16
Nyakanyka Yomshini	Spitskop	15	93.8%	16
Ngula Kayishazwe	Maritsmouth	26	92.9%	28
Sizisizwe	Union	7	70%	10
Nkuthu Kayishazwe	Trekboer	3	100%	3
Mphuzanyoni	Walkershoek	18	75%	24
Total		84	86.6%	97

4.4. Extensive methods

The extensive methods involved three surveys. The first was a socio-demographic survey of the households described above, in which data was collected on household composition; household assets (durable and agricultural); household and individual incomes and income sources; farm production (including livestock ownership, land use, and labour). I analysed the data using SPSS and Excel, with the analysis focused on statistical descriptions, mainly measures of central tendency, dispersion and limited relationships between variables.

The second survey was derived from data on cattle sales at the district auctions collected by auctioneers, which I analysed using Excel, again mainly focusing on statistical descriptions of central tendency and dispersion. This data provided a district context for the sales of cattle from the farms in the case study area. It was also useful in verifying cattle sales data collected through the socio-demographic survey, as well as providing longitudinal data over a span of four years. Furthermore, I used it to triangulate data obtained through interviews and (in one case) bank statements on sales of CPA cattle over an extended period.

The third survey was a cattle register with 21 households selected from four wealth groups (described below). It intended to track herd changes and farm expenditure on a monthly basis. There were two reasons for undertaking it. Firstly, I had noticed in the socio-demographic survey that some respondents were unsure how many cattle the household owned or when cattle died or were sold. Secondly, I had inadequate information on herd composition and costs of production, the importance of which only became apparent to me later. Because the information had to be captured monthly for a year, I trained household members to fill in the forms and I monitored progress every second month. However, it was not a successful tool, with 11 households either not filling in the forms at all or gradually dropping out over the year. I was therefore only able to use the data in a very general or illustrative way.

4.5. Intensive methods

The intensive methods involved two main types of research tool: a range of open-ended interviews, and participatory immersion. The two main types of interviews involved life histories and production information, and were based on a pre-selected sample of households.

4.5.1. Selection of sample for intensive methods

A key aspect of my research design was the selection of respondents for life history and production interviews. These in-depth interviews were intended to illuminate the

underlying relations that would help explain the descriptive patterns that emerged from the socio-demographic survey. The plan was to divide the surveyed households into four hierarchically ranked (that is, taxonomic) wealth groups and to select respondent households from each group for the life history and production interviews. My dilemma was which criteria to use to determine these groups.

The socio-economic survey collected data on assets and income. Either of these proxy indicators of wealth would potentially have allowed me to interrogate the relationship between farm production and investment capital derived from other income, such as wages, a characteristic feature of small farm production in many Southern African countries (Bernstein, 2010: 109; Scoones *et al*, 2010: 226-229). However, income is often considered an unreliable indicator of wealth because respondents tend to under-report income, and many studies have thus used household assets as a proxy indicator of wealth instead (Filmer and Pritchett, 2001: 128; Córdova, 2008: 1-2.). My socio-economic survey at Besters showed clear evidence of such under-reporting in that the respondents, heads of households, did not always know how much their employed adult children earned. For instance, 20,7% of the 518 adults were employed in permanent work, but in 39,2% of these cases the wage income was unknown. Furthermore, the wage income of adult children cannot be assumed to be the income of the “household” in that many respondents said their employed children did not contribute to household running costs. Asset data thus seemed a more useful way of dividing the population into taxonomic wealth groups.

Asking respondents whether or not they possessed a range of durable and productive assets, including domestic, electronic and communication, transport and agricultural assets, generated the asset data. Each “yes” answer for a functionally operating asset produced a value of 1, with the total sum generating a nominal value with which to compare the relative asset wealth of households. The range in asset values was 45, with the first quartile seven, the median 12 and the third quartile 17. From the quartiles, I created four asset groups.

Table 5: Number of households per Asset Group

Asset Groups	Value Range	Number of households
1	0-7	23
2	8-12	20
3	13-17	20
4	18-45	21
TOTAL		84

While assets may be more reliable than income, there was evidence of data distortion. Firstly, even with a careful introduction of myself as a student, respondents were not always able to distinguish my data collection from that of government, in which “registration” (“*ukubala*”), often in the form of a survey, precedes a developmental intervention. One instance illustrates this vividly. A woman responded, “no, we do not have this” to most questions about assets, often adding “we are very poor in this household”. After the interview, which took place midday on an extremely hot day, I asked for drinking water. The water arrived with ice, and yet the woman had said the household did not possess a fridge or a freezer. The second distortion became apparent during the life history interviews when I discovered that many households that owned working animal-drawn equipment no longer use this equipment. This suggested that these were no longer productive assets. Had I known this prior to the interviews, I may have reviewed the reliability of assets as a proxy for wealth given the possible bias towards asset accumulation in those households facing different sorts of challenges in hiring tractors, ploughs, planting equipment and trailers.

However, I also, considered using indicators for farming “success” groups developed through participatory processes. To generate the success groups (SG), I loosely followed the methods Scoones *et al* (2010: 60) used in their research on Zimbabwean land reform farms. This is a version of wealth ranking in which surveyed households are allocated a success ranking based on criteria developed through participation.

Scoones *et al* used small focus groups of knowledgeable local people (leaders, councilors etc) who knew all the members of the area to criteria for livelihood success. The group then sorted all the households into one of three or four groups, depending on the ranking discussions. Each household allocation was based on a description of the household against the criteria already developed, which resulted in a further refinement of the ranking criteria.

The process I used differed from Scoones *et al* in three main ways. Firstly, the discussion on criteria took place during two workshops to which all surveyed households were invited and not in a focus session with key informants. Secondly, because of debates in South Africa on what constitutes a farmer (in terms of identity, definition, and characteristics) as well as the failures of land reform, I was interested in local perceptions of how success and failure in terms of farming is understood in Besters. I therefore began the discussion on what the characteristics of a farmer are and then moved on to a discussion of criteria that could be used to differentiate farmers and to determine who successful farmers are. Thirdly, the participants were reluctant to rank people not present at the workshop. I therefore used the information obtained from the surveys to rank people against the success criteria had developed during the workshop. This, however, meant that we did not get the opportunity to revise and refine the criteria during application, as Scoones *et al* had been able to do.

The development of the characteristics of a farmer involved two steps. Firstly, participants were divided into small groups of five to six people each. The first group reported the criteria it had developed and each subsequent group noted its additions to these criteria. The criteria were then discussed and agreed. There was general agreement in both workshops that farmers are recognised by three primary characteristics, namely, livestock ownership, cropping activities and the possession of agricultural equipment. A group at one workshop also added that farmers are people who harvest natural resources, such as thatching, *imifino* (green leafy vegetables that grow wild) and small animals that are hunted. However, others disagreed, saying that many people who are not farmers also undertake these activities, and as a result we did not include this as a characteristic of a farmer.

Discussion around success groups then related to the extent to which farmers vary and can be distinguished from one another around the agreed characteristics. The discussion resulted in some heated debates. Firstly, for some participants, cattle (and to a lesser extent goat) ownership is the most important criterion determining who is a farmer at Besters because some of the farms do not have arable land or water for irrigation and are therefore not suitable for crop production. This is the case at Mphuzanyoni, Sizisizwe, Zizamela and to some extent, Nkuthu Kayishazwe (the arable lands are in the river flood plains) while Nyakanyaka Yomshini and Ngula Kayishazwe do have substantial arable lands (flat lands with fertile, well draining Hutton and Clovelly soils).

Secondly, and related to this, was whether ownership of all the different agricultural assets (livestock and equipment) would place a household in an equal or better success group than a household that only owned one asset. For instance, if two households both owned 20 cattle but one also owned 10 goats, would the latter be viewed as more successful than the first homestead? A further example was that no household at Sizisizwe is going to invest in a tractor when conditions are not suitable for cropping on any scale; would this then place all households at Sizisizwe in a lower success group than households that owned tractors on farms with arable land? It was ultimately agreed that although in practice these additional criteria are important in differentiating between households, the agro-environmental differences between farms mean that comparative criteria are not easy to determine.

Thirdly, there was much debate related to cattle. An initial view at one workshop was that people in the least successful group would own 10 cattle. Alternate views were five cattle, five to 10 cattle, zero to 10 cattle and finally everyone agreed that a person who does not own any cattle is not a farmer and therefore the criterion agreed was 1-10 cattle. The most successful group also created some debate. It was first suggested that a person in this group would own 100 or more cattle. This was then reviewed to 60-100 and then agreed that it should be 50. This debate was as a result of the wide variations in the top end of household herd sizes as well as differences in CPA

constitutions about the allowable number of cattle. It was also noted that although the CPAs all have limits to household cattle ownership, there are households that have exceeded the limits. One person suggested that the issue could only be assessed fairly if the upper limit were determined using a farm's grazing capacity because while the constitutions may limit all households to, for example, 50 cattle, most households have not reached the limit and therefore some households could have more without the overall farm limit being exceeded. In the end, it was agreed that the upper limit of success could not be more than 50 cattle because it would be wrong to suggest that it is acceptable for households to own more cattle than the CPA rules of a farm allow. However, the discussion had implied that it was well known that there were households that exceeded the CPA constitutional limits.

Two further discussions were also relevant to the usefulness of these criteria for differentiation from the perspective of farmers on the Besters land reform farms. During discussion of the success groupings, a participant noted that people's success in farming is not a linear process of improvement but rather one that goes forwards and backwards. "A person can succeed one year and fail at another time" (Nkiane, 2011: pers com). Then, in a discussion about the problem of why young people do not want to farm, one of the participants observed that the farms that had previously supported one farmer and his (or her) family were now expected to support multiple families, and that the reason children don't want to farm is that there is "no money in farming". Notwithstanding these concerns, criteria for differentiating farming success groups were agreed, and are reflected in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Workshop Criteria for Differentiating Farming Success Groups

Success Groups	Cattle	Goats	Cropping land	Equipment
4	50	30	2-3 hectares	Tractor
3	30	20	2-3 hectares	Tractor hire
2	20	15	<i>Isivandi</i> (small field)	Ox drawn equipment
1	1-10	1-10	Garden	Hand tools

The next task was then to use these criteria, along with the discussions, to rank the farming households from the survey into success groups. To do this, I developed numerical values that privileged the ownership of cattle, while recognizing the importance of owning goats, agricultural equipment, particularly tractors, and cultivation for some households. There were risks of biasing the ranking of individual households: the percentage of households that do not own goats is much higher than for cattle ownership, and, where CPAs had been given tractors in terms of the Land Redistribution and Agricultural Development Programme (LRAD), many households rented the CPA tractor and thus had stopped using oxen for cultivation. I therefore assigned numerical value somewhat intuitively to different agricultural assets and activities as shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Assigning farm assets and activities a numerical value

Cattle		Goats		Land cultivated		Equipment	
Number owned	Value	Number owned	Value	Type used	Value	Type owned	Value
0	0	0	0	Garden	1	Hand tools	1
1-5	1	1-10	1	Small field	2	Oxen/hire tractor	2
6-10	2	11-20	2	Large field	3	Own tractor	3
11-15	3	21-30	3				
16-20	4	31-40	4				
21-25	5						
26-30	6						
31-35	7						
36-40	8						
41-45	9						
46-50	10						
51-	11						

I then used the household survey data to compute a total ‘success’ score for each household and created four ‘success groups’ based on quartiles (see Table 8).

Table 8: Number of households per success group

Success Groups	Value range	Number of households
1	1-4	25
2	6-7	17
3	8-11	21
4	12-21	21
TOTAL		84

The final step in determining the best way to divide the population into four groups from which to select households for life history interviews was to compare the success and asset groups. A similar comparison Scoones *et al* (2010: 60, 223-4) undertook had indicated substantial overlap in the two ways of grouping a population. To do this, I looked at the distribution of farming success groups (SG) against asset groups (AG). This is reported on in Chapter 10; but the distribution indicates a significant correlation between farming success groups and asset groups. The conclusion therefore is that either asset groups or success groups can be used as criteria for dividing a farming population into taxonomic groups. I decided to use asset groupings as the primary criterion for determining who to interview further, mainly because assets, as reflections of consumption, are more open in relation to sources of income.

4.5.2. Semi-structured interviews

I undertook four different kinds of semi-structured interviews with different sets of informants: the first were key respondents; the second life history and production interviews with selected farmers on the case study site; the third, with 32% of households on the farms that were available to be interviewed, were on themes arising from the research process, namely “traditional” farming and kinship relations; and the fourth involved interviews with farmers who had kept cattle registers during 2012. These are listed in the Table 9 below.

Table 9: Semi-structured Interviews: respondents, number and reasons

Theme of interview	Number of interviews	Overview of the interview
Key informants	14	The interviews with individuals lasted between 45 minutes and two hours each. Two respondents were interviewed twice. All were face-to-face interviews except one that was telephonic.
Life history	29	Respondents were from 25 households, and were in most cases the household head. They took from 45 minutes to two hours depending on the respondent's availability. In four households, spouses were interviewed separately in addition to the head of household.
Farm production and dynamics at CPA level	Focus group: 6 Individual: 20	There were two kinds of interviews: focus group and individual. The focus group were held with CPA committee members on all six farms, and lasted about 1½ - 2 hours each. The individual interviews took from 30 minutes to 1½ hours. In two cases (Mphuzanyoni and Nkuthu Kayishazwe), numerous informal discussions also took place, amounting to in excess of eight hours each. Respondents came from four farms: (Nyakanyaka: 10; Mphuzanyoni: 4 interviews with 2 people; Ngula kayishazwe: 4; Nkuthu Kayishazwe: 2)
“Traditional” farming	27	These were short issue specific interviews of 15-30 minutes each on the purposes of farming. Respondents were randomly selected according to availability on all six farms.
Kinship relations	29	27 of these interviews took place with the same respondents and at the same time as the traditional farming interviews. In addition, two in-depth interviews, one of 4-5 hours and the other about 2 hours, were held with an elderly female head of house, her sons and their wives, and her daughter.

4.5.3. Key informant interviews

The first set of interviews, with key informants, was undertaken with people identified for their specialist knowledge or informed perspectives about certain aspects of the farming dynamics on the Besters land reform farms. The respondents included four

commercial beef farmers, three government officials in the Land Reform and Rural Development Department, an agricultural consultant, a stock auctioneer company representative, a member of the Landless People's Movement at Besters, a young unmarried stock owner on one of the farms who was also employed as a wage worker on a commercial farm, a women Communal Property Association chairperson, and the leader of the split off group on one of the farms. These interviews covered beef farm production, stock sale structures and trends, agro-ecological conditions for farming at Besters and on the farms, government's land reform priorities particularly at Besters, the history of the Besters Land Reform project, and the dynamics and specific issues on some of the farms.

4.5.4. *Life history interviews*

The purpose of the life history interviews was to obtain information that would help explain the “order of structure” (Levi-Strauss, 1983: 16) obtained from the descriptive, synchronic information derived from the survey data. Although life history interview techniques are subject to the unreliability of memory, they do provide longitudinal, diachronic information in that they identify trends over time, the “order of event” (*ibid*), and thus provide indication of antecedent events that informed the dynamics giving rise to the current structures evident from the survey data. Of the 84 households surveyed, 25 (30%) were selected for life history interviews. The distribution of households across asset groups that participated in the life history interviews is shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Selection of life history interview respondents

Asset Group	Number of households
1	6
2	6
3	9
4	4
Total	25

The interviews undertaken with these respondents were of a semi-structured, open-ended format, beginning with the request to “please tell me about your history, where you came from, how your parents farmed and how your family has lived until today”. During the interview, I then prompted particular answers relating to employment outside of the family and its conditions, the labour undertaken in the family, livestock holdings and when cattle were used and for what purposes, cropping practices and how these practices had changed. The interview also focused on other assets, how they were acquired and what they were used for, including farming skills.

4.5.5. CPA and farm production interviews

The purpose of these interviews was two-fold: firstly, to understand issues related to the history of the Besters LR project, the specific histories of each farm and the beneficiaries on each of those farms; secondly, to understand and interrogate production at CPA level and the dynamics that enabled or constrained production on the different farms, including the particular intersections of household farming with CPA farm production on the farms.

Focus group interviews were held with CPA committees and other interested members on the six farms that make up the case study in this research. These were initial, exploratory interviews conducted through semi-structured, open-ended questioning techniques; for example: “Tell me how you came to get this farm? And then what happened? What made you decide that?” Some of the specific questions asked related

to the number of cattle and other assets received during land reform, what had happened to these assets since the CPAs had received them, where the current residents came from and how they came to be together on this particular farm. Preliminary questions also included how the farm was managed in terms of household and CPA farming activities, labour employment and whether benefits had been distributed and how this was decided.

The individual interviews were of three types. The first type took place mainly at Mphuzanyoni and involved in-depth, semi-structured, multiple interviews with two key informants: the CPA chairperson, who was identified both because she was the chairperson and diligently attended all government-called meetings, and the farm manager, who was best placed to answer detailed questions about production and how decisions were taken, as well as questions about how CPA cattle production intersected with household livestock production. I also stayed at the farm manager's house on a number of occasions and these more formal interviews were based on observations and numerous less formal discussions.

The second type of interviews took place at Nyakanyaka Yomshini and Nkuthu Kayishazwe and followed the same selection criteria as the life history interviews. While this was intentional in order to observe whether and how social differentiation affected decision-making at CPA level, it was also based on the idea that multiple interviews created relationships that allowed for more productive interviewing. These interviews focused on CPA cattle and maize production, how this intersected with household cattle production, CPA dividends and how they were managed and the history and interpretation of the CPA conflicts and splits. I also floated my emerging interpretation of the underlying dynamics with a number of the respondents in order to deepen it and to hear alternative views or contestations of it.

The third type of interview took place at Ngula Kayishazwe, with households that had been involved in keeping the monthly cattle registers. One of the households, the owner of the biggest herd of cattle in the case study area, was not available to be interviewed because he had sick cattle on the day of the interview, and was unavailable for alternative arrangements. I had also planned to undertake interviews

with households at Mphuzanyoni, Zizamela and Sizisiswe, but I became ill during the field trip and was not able to record in discussions effectively. These interviews were short, mostly 20 – 30 minutes, except at Ngula Kayishazwe, where we held an extended discussion around the resources of the CPA, particularly grazing camp rotation, fencing and firebreaks, and the CPA's tractor.

4.5.6. Interviews on “traditional” farming and kinship relations

These were mainly short, issue-specific interviews in that they were interviews intended to garner opinion and information on issues that had arisen during the research. They are grouped here because the two issues were discussed with respondents in the same interview. The respondents were selected only on the basis of their availability on the day of the interviews, and had to be either the head of house, his wife or mother.

Some definitional clarification is required. By “traditional” farming, I am referring in particular to the keeping of cattle as a means for a man to improve his “*isithunzi*”, or social position. The issue, and name, had emerged when the head of Agricultural Extension Services in Emnambithi Local Municipality told me that people on the Besters farms “are livestock owners but they are not really farmers” because they keep cattle for “the purposes of *isithunzi*, not commercial farming” (Gwamanda, 2011: pers com). The social dynamics involved in farming for the purposes of augmenting *isithunzi* are also touched on in the review of multi-purpose farming systems in Chapter 3.

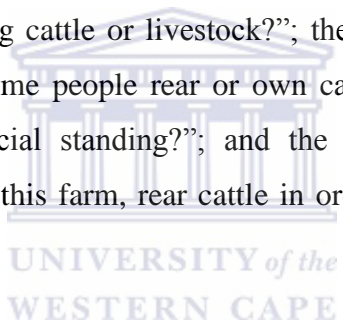
According to this official and his colleagues, the Department of Rural Development and Land Affairs had erred in transferring farms to people who did not want to be farmers. I asked whether in their view selling cattle on a regular basis constitutes an adequate definition of farmer. The officials thought not, that people do sell cattle when they have problems but that this is not inconsistent with keeping cattle for the purposes of improving social standing. Even the R5,4 million rand budgeted by the Department of Agriculture for the provision of fencing, dips, cattle licks and equipment and the

R10 million budgeted by Department of Rural Development and Land reform for recapitalisation at Besters would not, according to the officials, make a substantial difference to people becoming “proper” farmers. An indication that the land reform beneficiaries were not “proper” farmers was the association of farming with cattle ownership. One official told participants during a workshop that government is investing in land reform and agriculture in order that people contribute to national food security and that people at Besters should be undertaking more crop cultivation than they are, and that failure to do this is wasting the asset that government has given them. Government has given people “soil” (*umhlabathi*) which they must use in order to “farm properly, like the white farmers do”. Commercial farming, this official said, generates incomes and livelihoods for the youth in the future. In terms of cattle, this means that the people on the Besters land reform farms must “take out the young cattle, sell them, get money and reinvest the money in order to live well”. They must not “step out your door, look at your cattle and count them, and then be satisfied at how many you have”. In this sense, *isithunzi* farming stands in sharp contrast to the commercial logic of farming for profit. The possibility that farming for *isithunzi* purposes was widely present at Besters warranted investigation since it seemed to suggest that the class relations associated with agricultural petty commodity production might be more complex than a mechanistically applied materialist approach would reveal.

The word “*isithunzi*” is defined in the dictionary (Doke *et al*, 1990) as moral weight, influence or prestige. The examples given are “*eleka ngesithunzi*” (to feel the weight of overpowering influence) or “*ukuzihluba isithunzi*” (to lower oneself in estimation). *Isithunzi* also means soul, as in a person’s soul has now departed and the person has died. Words with the same root, “*thunzi*”, but with a different prefix (*ama-* or *imi-* (pl)) refer to shadows and the dulling of light, and shade, as in the shadows cast by trees. Shadows and shades are imbued, in Zulu, with connotations of ancestors, graves, ageing and dying. A man, for instance, might sit “*emithunzini*”, in the vicinity of his father’s grave, in order to talk to him. Berglund (1976: 29-30), justifying why he uses the word “shade” rather than “ancestor” in his study of Zulu symbolism, argues that

“ancestor” suggests a “separateness between the living and the dead” whereas the more accurate concept is one that assumes “a very close and intimate relationship and association within the lineage between the departed and their survivors”. The etymology and social connotations of *-thunzi* then seem to suggest connections between status and social standing, lineage and kinship, and men’s cattle holdings, which gave some weight to the Department of Agriculture officials view that the kind of farming occurring at Besters is inconsistent with the logic of commercial farming. I was therefore curious about how these farmers would respond to the idea that they farmed cattle in order to improve their social standing.

The interviews concerning livestock ownership and social standing were structured around three consecutive questions: the first was “what is the purpose for this household of rearing or owning cattle or livestock?”; the second was: “what do you understand by the idea that some people rear or own cattle or livestock in order to increase their *isithunzi* or social standing?”; and the third was “do you in this household, or other people on this farm, rear cattle in order to increase your or their social standing?”



The same respondents were also asked about their relationships to other households on the farms on which they resided, or other farms that were part of the land reform project. The decision to interrogate kinship relationships on the land reform farms had emerged following a presentation of my early research findings to a workshop at PLAAS, the University of the Western Cape, in 2011 that included STIAS fellow, Pauline Peters. I had asked for advice on a difficulty I had in relation to the household as a unit of analysis at Besters. What I saw at Besters was multiple, intersecting loci of farming, which seemed to raise questions around the household as a *unit* of production. For instance, farming was sometimes occurring at CPA, household and individual level, with various labour and management regimes, while on other farms, farming was taking place only at household level, and often involved only a few members of the household. Was the household a useful way of approaching the way farming was structured on these farms? Furthermore, there was huge diversity in how

households were structured around wage work and farming, which made the household appear to be a loose association of social connection rather than a tightly bounded, coherent productive entity. Peters advised that rather than abandon the household as a unit of analysis, I should deepen my research to include a better understanding of how kinship is structured as an important although not exclusive basis for understanding the social relations of production and consumption. The first step in doing this was to establish whether there are relations between households on the farms and how these are described locally.

The questions posed in the short interviews took the form of: “Do you have any relatives living on this farm or other farms that the government bought under the land reform programme?” If the answer was yes, it was followed up with: “How are you related to this (these) other families?” It quickly became apparent that the mere fact of relationship was insufficient to explain the dynamics and organization of production on particular farms. This led me to try and obtain an in-depth understanding of the structure and relationships in one family, focusing on kinship and marriage.

I selected a particular family for three main reasons. Firstly, I had stayed with the M’s a number of times and had a good relationship with the household head, who was willing to take the time to have an extended discussion about her family’s relationships. Secondly, the family ranked highly in terms of cattle ownership and sold cattle regularly at the local cattle auctions. And thirdly, I had been invited to three weddings involving relatives, which allowed me to see the use of cattle in weddings and how different relatives negotiated their ceremonial cattle requirements. The interview began by laying out the family tree using flexi-flans made out of pipe cleaners, on which gender and marital status could easily be marked. During the process, discussions took place about the marriage process, burials and relationships to the deceased, how Zulu lineage is structured including asking about relationships identified by anthropologists (particularly Gluckman, 1940 and 1950; and Krige, 1936) and historian Jeff Guy (1994), and what changes had taken place.

Despite the amount of time spent on this, the relationships and the institutionalized processes of reproducing and cementing lineage as well as dynamics that undermine and transform lineage relations remained in many respects opaque in the details of how they related to the organization of farming at household and CPA levels. Ultimately, I had to accept that the amount of time and resources I had available were insufficient to provide a detailed enough understanding of kinship relationships to unravel the minutia of connections and tensions that could explain the dynamics at play in farm production. However, the investigation of these relationships did provide a picture, if somewhat hazy, of the structuring effects of kinship and how this intersects with some production dynamics on particular farms.

4.5.7. Participant Observation

From October 2010 through to June 2013, I had 13 opportunities to stay with five families on four farms for periods ranging from two to 18 days. In total, I spent 93 nights on the Besters land reform farms. I first used participant immersion and observation as a research technique working as a journalist reporting on the lives of the rural and urban poor in KwaZulu-Natal in the mid 1990s and then as a researcher for a land rights NGO from the mid 1995 to 2005. I also used it as a primary research tool during the fieldwork for my Master's degree. My use of the technique is, in this sense, built up over years of practice rather than through an academic review and evaluation of the process. Nevertheless, my own experience of the strengths and limitations of the technique fits with anthropological descriptions, namely, that it builds trust, which often enables one to get behind the public image presented in once-off interviews; it locates particular pieces of information within a more complex social environment of meaning and activities, which provides a more rounded perspective on data collected through other methods; and, through participation, one gets a fuller sense of what is entailed in actual activities and social processes within specific agro-ecological contexts (Lefevre, 2004).

The opportunities to stay in family homes and participate in daily lives and activities were divided into three types. The first involved staying with families and spending

the days undertaking surveys and interviews that limited participating in family life to mornings, evenings and times in the day when interviews were cancelled or emergencies arose that required my help (such as a water shortage in one case, and an emergency medical problem in another). A key value of these opportunities is that they provided a chance to discuss information obtained from interviews that was unclear or required contextual information. There were ten of these opportunities.

The second type of opportunity was trips arranged with no purpose other than to “hang out” with the family and participate in activities that were taking place. Since these were visits at my request, they sometimes involved many days structured only by activities of daily living. However, they provided an opportunity to observe family structure and to see which members are present and absent and why, what activities are undertaken on a daily and weekly basis, who is responsible for these and how they understand that responsibility, and perhaps most importantly, what issues arise as overt and covert tensions and conflicts. There were four of these opportunities. As the years of involvement progressed, I was also at times invited to stay or visit particular people who simply wanted to talk to me about events taking place. Two particular occasions stand out where women involved in the CPA committees were struggling with how to deal with the unfolding conflicts.

The third type of opportunity was invitations to be present for certain events, namely three weddings. I was also present for three burial processes. This enabled me to take part in activities that reproduce, or re-enact the sense of group, and generated insights into the community acting as community, and its moments of despair, celebration, and co-operation. These are summarised in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Participant observation: the farms and households

CPA	Family	Dates	Number of days	Total
Zizamele	Shabalala	7-17 October, 2010	10	
		7-9 March, 2012	2	
		20-25 November, 2012	5	17
Mphuzanyoni	Shabalala	26-30 October, 2010	4	
		21 Nov-11 Dec 2011	18	
		22-28 March 2012	7	
		20-26 May 2012	6	
		15-18 Nov 2012	3	38
Nyakanyaka Yomshini	Khoza M	2-14 November 2010	12	
	Khoza P	28 June – July 2012	8	
		3-6 November, 2012	3	23
Nkuthu Kayishazwe	Msimanga	24 June -1 May, 2012	8	
		1-3 November, 2012	3	
		26-30 June, 2013	4	15
Total				93

4.6. Observations on field research

Any research design creates challenges in the field or in analysis or both. My preferred method of research is participant observation because it builds a depth of

understanding over time against which one can assess observations and other data. However, it is a complex, and often contradictory undertaking: with enough familiarity the relationship between researcher and researched blurs, and events and social relationships that, at first glance, may have aroused curiosity become ‘normal’ and gain an everyday legitimacy that makes them difficult to interrogate. Also, since participant observation puts one into the lives of, and in relationships with those observed, it is perhaps even more important than with other research methods to be aware that the people being observed are also observing, and relating to one on the basis of those judgements. I am an outsider to Besters in terms of race, class and language, and it would be naïve to assume that those who I was observing were not structuring their relationships to me in terms of their interpretations of what my presence meant. But the longer I stayed and the more often I returned, the more ‘un-strange’ I became, and my competency in Zulu gradually allowed me access to conversations and stories, and to clarifications and interpretations of what I heard. I conducted all the life history and farm production interviews as well as the interviews related to family structure and ceremonies in Zulu, and participated in many informal discussions in Zulu. However, for the quantitative survey and interviews about relationships and *isithunzi* farming, I had a research assistant who lives in the area and who conducted the interviews while I made notes, which I later typed up using recordings to supplement the information.

All research, but particularly participant observation techniques, also raise difficult ethical considerations: I was often privy to conversations, interactions and actions that an occasional visitor would not see. Where these provided important insights but revealing the people involved seems invasive, I have used pseudonyms.

On the other end of the methods range is the structured survey and statistical analysis. These are not familiar tools to me, and I often felt out of my depth as I struggled to understand the nature of the relationships between variables. However, there were few moments that were as exciting as suddenly seeing a pattern emerge that either confirmed conclusions I’d drawn from other methods or contradicted them so thoroughly that I was forced to step back and think again. The “objective” data of

surveys are satisfyingly concrete; indeed, the urge to run more and more tests to check yet another idea, another hypothesis, is extremely strong. Ultimately, however, I came up against the fact that this type of data in a case study is mostly descriptive; a case study like this one is too small a sample to produce generalizable conclusions and the more one breaks up the data into categories, the less significant are the relationships between variables. Nevertheless, it beds descriptions down into greater certainties that, together with more qualitative data and conceptual analysis, opens up the social dynamics in the case study to a richer and more nuanced explanation. I am not able to say that my account of these dynamics is the only account possible; the range of contingencies, what counts as contingent and what is essential to the dynamics present, is, in the end, a matter of interpretation. Analysis of social dynamics is less a science than a creative, but robust attempt to construct a convincing account.

4.7. Conclusion

This chapter has described the range of research methods I used to obtain and analyse information in order to describe the people, their families, their farming and other livelihood activities at Besters, and to uncover the “essential” or causal relations that provide explanation for why petty commodity production takes the “phenomenal” or concrete form it does in Besters. The methodology is located in Sayer’s realist approach to social explanation, which recognises against radically contingent epistemologies that there is an empirical reality “out there”, but argues - against empiricist views - that it can only be partially apprehended. Furthermore, realist methods locate social explanation initially in theoretical constructions or abstractions, which nevertheless require investigation in order to identify their concrete and specific forms. To the extent that there are necessary conditions to these concrete forms, the explanation is generalizable to other contexts that share these conditions, but it is likely to be partial. In the next chapter, I consider some of the historical conditions that have shaped the concrete forms of petty commodity production in the Qedusizi-Besters Land Reform Project.

5. STRUGGLES OVER LAND, LABOUR AND CAPITAL ACCUMULATION AT BESTERS

“Struggle over the forms of redistribution is an arena of class struggle...” (Legassick and Wolpe, 105)

5.1. Introduction

This chapter describes key moments in the evolution of the structure of agrarian relations in Besters over the past 200 years and identifies three driving forces in these processes, which ultimately shaped how the Besters Land Reform Project unfolded. These forces were: the struggle over the ownership and productive use of land in the mid 1800s, the struggle over the terms and conditions of labour in the first half of 19th century, and the struggle over the conditions for agricultural capital accumulation from the late 1980s until 2005. These struggles are, of course, deeply interwoven and not limited to particular historical epochs. However, focussing on moments of struggle in different epochs helps provide a picture of the historical antecedents that partially explain social dynamics on the Besters land reform farms today.

The questions driving the chapter are informed by certain puzzles that arose during the research. These are, firstly, why labour tenancy, and thus an ongoing connection to land and farming, persisted in Besters long after it disappeared in most other areas of KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa; secondly, why it developed in such diverse ways on different farms in Besters; and thirdly why some land reform beneficiaries appear to have made the transition to agricultural petty commodity production more easily than others. While this chapter examines some of the historical struggles that have shaped the social structure found in Besters today, it is not possible to do justice to the wide range of historical and anthropological interpretations of these processes. The chapter is therefore suggestive rather than conclusive. Its main aim is to provide a context for the detailed analyses in subsequent chapters of the social dynamics on the farms today.

5.2. The project area of Besters in the Emnambithi/Ladysmith Local Municipality

The Besters Land Reform Project is located in the north of the Emnambithi/Ladysmith local municipality (ELM), which lies in the north-west of KwaZulu-Natal on the border with Free State Province. The two main urban centres are Ladysmith and Colenso, but the areas of Driefontein, Watersmeet, Peacetown and Matiwane's Kop, which are found adjacent to some of the land reform farms, are also fairly densely settled. Ladysmith is located nearly midway between Johannesburg and Durban, with the linking national N3 road forming the western boundary of the ELM.

The total local municipal population in 2010 consisted of nearly 52,000 households with a mean size of 5.4, of whom more than half were female, half were under the age of 24 and (in 2002) 86.3% were African (IDPs, 2002 and 2012). By 2010, over half the population lived in Ladysmith and Colenso, and a rapid movement of rural population to settlements on the periphery of Ladysmith was taking place. (IDP, 2002) A population growth rate lower than the national rate, the relatively low numbers of children under five (11.26%) and the low proportion of adults between the ages of 20-29 (17.9%) suggest that HIV infections and Aids have taken their toll (IDP, 2002).

Like other areas in South Africa, this municipality has high income and resource disparities. Nearly half of all households in 2010 had annual incomes of below R42,000 in a range of R2,400 to R2,4 million. (IDP, 2012) While half (52%) the population was old enough to work, only 30% were employed while 29.3% were unemployed and 40.6% were "not economically active" (2012: 123). Over 7% of the adult population has no education, many of whom are resident on farms, including the land reform farms (ADA, 2012a, b).

While the ELM has the most diversified economy in the District (IDP, 2002), dynamic changes are taking place (IDP, 2012: 103-105). The biggest sector is the tertiary sector¹³ dominated by retail and catering. From 2001 to 2008, it expanded by 8.5% with a total output of R5,3 billion in 2008, while output in the secondary sector, dominated by manufacturing, declined from R4 billion to R2.9 billion. Agriculture grew at an average annual rate of 11% over this period and contributed 96% to the primary sector, while coal mining crashed to a fraction (14%) of its 1998 output. Primary sector output as a whole, however, was a small economic contributor, with a total output of R327 million and a contribution of 3.4% of total GDP in 2008.

The commercial farm sector is the major land user, (IDP, 2013/4: 166) with grassland for the extensive production of beef using nearly 60% of land in the ELM. This pattern of land use is the focus of a debate, with some planners suggesting that commercial farm land is underused and should be converted to crop and forestry production to facilitate development (IDP, 2012:314). However, others note that on the basis of soil type only 27% of farm land has “good to moderate agricultural potential” (IDP, 2002:43), further limited by a relatively low (by provincial standards) annual summer rainfall of 750-850 mm (ADA, 2012) and geologically limited access to ground water for large scale irrigation (IDP, 2002). Currently, only 0,9% of land is under irrigation for commercial crop and cereal production, while 2,3% is under commercial dry land production and 2,5% is used for “semi-commercial subsistence cropping”. The area is also prone to droughts in January that put the most commonly grown crop, maize, at risk of compromised pollination (Smythe, 2012: pers com). Furthermore, the Department of Agriculture’s Bio-Resource Unit (BRU) characteristics for the area indicate the dominance of dry, moist and transitional tall grassveld, with *Hyperhennia hirta* (common thatch grass) the dominant grass species but with *Themeda triandra* (red grass), *Eragrostis plana* (Fan lovegrass) and *Eragrostis curvula* also found in different densities on the various farms, (ADA, 2012) indicating grasslands suitable for cattle production. There also appear to be limits to agricultural expansion: the 2013/4 IDP (172-3) notes

¹³ The tertiary sector consists of wholesale and retail trade, catering and accommodation, transport, storage and communication, finance, insurance, real estate and business services, including services provided by government.

that the grazing capacity, along with dryland agriculture, is fully utilised, and that further agricultural development will have to rely on increased river water irrigation.

Despite these constraints, the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform budgeted nearly R25 million in 2012/13 for infrastructure rehabilitation and establishment, and improved beef production on land reform farms, and a further R2,3 million for land purchase to settle a labour tenant claim. These budget allocations are likely to increase substantially in the future to settle 252 unresolved restitution land claims to over 33 000 hectares. Furthermore, the IDP states that only 22 of the 394¹⁴ labour tenant claims have been settled through land transfers (IDP, 2013/4: 169-171).

In summary, the municipal area within which the Besters land reform project falls is undergoing urbanisation, has a growing service and declining manufacturing sector, and these trends are accompanied by high levels of unemployment, which contribute to the persistence of poverty and inequality. While some land redistribution has occurred, it has clearly been a limited intervention relative to the number of unresolved restitution and labour tenant claims in the district as a whole. However, agriculture on its own is unlikely to generate sufficient growth to address deeply-rooted problems of poverty and unemployment.

5.3. The history of the struggle over land in Besters

Although Besters is located outside the main sites of British, Boer and Zulu struggles over land, trade and authority that defined the 1800s, it was not excluded from the massive social dislocations that accompanied these struggles¹⁵. While the historiography

¹⁴ The IDP does not clarify how a claim, settled or not, is defined. The figure of 22, however, suggests that resolved claims are defined as farms acquired since the figure correlates with some land reform figures used, whereas the actual number of beneficiaries involved was much higher, as was discussed in Chapter 4.

¹⁵ A map drawn in 1900s (Creswick, 1900) shows Besters as a railway siding on a line that runs from Durban through Ladysmith and on into the interior, marking it as a blip on the radar of colonial Britain's industrial and trade policies. An earlier sketch map of Natal in 1812 put together by Shepstone (Guy, 2013: no.1) shows a densely settled area: the AmaZizi occupy the land between the Thukela and Klip rivers and the AmaKwamiya occupy the area alongside them that is today Besters. However, by the mid 1860s, a second sketch map (Guy, 2013: no.2) shows that of the original 94 tribes in Natal in 1812 only 40

of this period is debated and contested,¹⁶ it is clear that these struggles transformed the landscape, and influenced who had claim to, and could occupy and use the land. By the late 19th century, however, the Boers, many of whom trekked to the Free State following the Anglo-Boer wars in the second half of the century, owned most of the land at Besters while Swazi refugees lived on and used the land.

The Boers' claim to land (that included Besters) was based on vacancy, purchase, conquest and documentation. On their arrival from the Cape in 1837, they had attempted to purchase large tracts of land from the Zulu king. Although they argued that it was unoccupied, their own accounts describe how they looted the crops of the surrounding homesteads in order to survive (Guy, 2013: 40). However, the impacts of Zulu territorialism, which emerged during the Mfecane, had led to a visible trail of destruction, which may account for what appeared to be an empty landscape (Laband, 1995; Guy, 2013). The subsequent battles at Blood River, and a Boer alliance with the brother of Zulu King Mpande to unseat his throne in exchange for land (Laband, 1995: 126), cemented the notion that Boers had paid for the land with their money and their blood (Guy, 2013: 39). Against their money and their blood, however, stood the fact that they had largely been unable to take occupation of the land.

Following Britain's annexation of Natal in 1843, a Commission to investigate land claims not only reversed the Boers' annexation of parts of the Zulu Kingdom, but also found that few of the Boer claims to farms met the requirement of active use or residence, a requirement they could not meet precisely because they were under threat from African populations settled on and using the land (Guy, 2013: 46-48).¹⁷ Despite trekking anew to

remained, and in the Besters area, the only African settlements are those clustered around Ladysmith. (See also Laband, 1995: 20)

¹⁶ See Laband (1995:14-15) for differences in historiographical emphasis. Cobbing (1988) suggests the causes of the violent disruptions lay not so much in Zulu militarisation, the Mfecane, which became a convenient narrative to justify colonial atrocities, but in the colonial search for labour, including slaves. Hamilton (1995) challenges Cobbing's interpretation but nevertheless investigates the narratives behind (mainly) colonial texts, which shape how the historical "evidence" is understood, allowing for more nuanced interpretations to emerge, while Etherington (1995) attempts to sketch the similarity in the structure of the narratives underlying the Great Trek and the Mfecane.

¹⁷ Following the Cloete Commission's adjudications, a group of Boers claimed to have bought land, which included Besters, from King Mpande, in 1847 in perpetual ownership (Laband, 1995: 127), the basis of the

the highveld to escape Britain's growing interventions in the province, including military ones, and to find "free" land on which to settle, many Boers retained their connection to the land in Besters. The area, which consists of the mixed sweet and sour grasses that provide excellent grazing for cattle, particularly in the winter months, was a resource that was important to the cattle-based production systems of both Boer and African homesteads (Guy, 1994:4-9; Laband, 1995:127).¹⁸ Even today, many owners of farms in Besters also own land in and reside in the Free State.

While the Boers may have secured their conquest of the land in Besters, they continued to struggle to secure the labour and capital necessary to respond to the growing market opportunities opened up by the discovery of minerals in the second half of the century. As Guy suggests (*ibid*: 50): "[I]t was assumed that land and labour were plentiful: they were not; only people were, and, without their labour, land lacked value as capital ...". While the African system of homestead-based production had begun to come under pressure across the province from colonial taxation and land dispossession intended to drive an expanded supply of labour to settler farms, labour shortages continued in Besters, largely as a result of Shepstone's locations policy (Guy, 2013: pers com).

Shepstone's locations policy of the mid-1900s attempted both to protect the land of African chieftaincies from settler claims to private ownership, and to contain them geographically as a basis for extending colonial authority (Guy, 2013) through a series of manipulations that allowed him to relocate, combine, consolidate and establish new chieftaincies, often as a reward for loyalty and subservience (Guy, 2013: 316-7), Shepstone found a pragmatic solution to the land and labour contestations between settler and African. This solution also created the framework of the particular growth path that developed in South Africa. The locations were like sponges, "areas of changing density

short-lived Klip River Republic. Mpande, however, later disputed the transaction, which apparently was also never paid for. (Brookes and Web, 1987:63)

¹⁸ Laband (1995: 183) points out that mixed sweet-sour veld constitutes a seasonal part of a total grazing regime that includes sourveld grazed in the early spring, tall sweetveld in the winter and the mixed velds in between. But the grasses grow in different microclimates thus ideally requiring movement between them. "Effective management of herds, therefore, requires the control of large and varied tracts of land. And therein lay the source of conflict" between Boer, Swazi and Zulu pastoralists over land.

and extent, absorbing surrounding populations when external pressure demanded it, extruding them when other conditions made it necessary” (Guy, 2013: 113). By 1847, Shepstone had identified seven locations in colonial Natal, but none was in or near Besters, possibly because it was not occupied by a chieftaincy of sufficient social status to make a claim that warranted Shepstone’s recognition. And yet, there is evidence that by the mid 1800s, the land in Besters was productively, albeit often tenuously, occupied.

One area of occupation was Driefontein. The people who had settled there had come via their “ties of kin, church and community” (Walker, 2008: 79), most immediately from the Free State but more distantly from Swaziland, where the Wesleyan missionary, James Ellison, had established himself. Etherington (1978) shows how many of the Africans settled on missions in Natal became successful peasants, investing in ploughs and new crop technologies and producing food for a burgeoning settler community. As successful peasants, they not only refused to provide labour in any abundance to their Boer neighbours’ farms, they often farmed in competition with them.

A number of households currently on the Besters land reform farms trace their presence in the area today to a split within the royal Dlamini clan in Swaziland that occurred in the mid-1800s (Shabalala, pers com; Khoza, pers com; Msimanga, pers com). The social pressures that gave rise to the deepening of both Zulu and Dlamini power in the region brought the Shabalalas into waves of conflict with both the Dlamini and the Zulus from the 1850s, and forced them to flee the area that they occupied alongside the Phongola river on the boundary between Zululand and Swaziland (Bonner, 1982)¹⁹. They followed the missionary route between Swaziland, Harrismith and Besters, to settle in the good

¹⁹ The Shabalala who heads this lineage is referred to as “the brother of Dlamini” (Bonner, 1982: 11), a clan that became dominant in Swaziland between 1852 and 1865, and as the uncle of Ngwane, a clan which, before the rise of the Zulu, was settled on vast area on either side of the Phongolo river (Laband, 1995: 12). The Ngwane were later exiled from Swaziland and settled in north-west Natal. (Guy, 2013) Walker (2008: 80-81) also provides oral evidence that the Shabalalas became part of the *amakholwa* (Christian) syndicate who, in 1812, purchased a farm (Cremin) to the east of Besters, and who originated from the Phongolo river area. The people of Cremin were forcibly removed in 1977 to Matiwane’s Kop, where Inkosi Shabalala resides today. In summary, the people who live on farms at Besters today were refugees who came from Swaziland in the 19th century.

grazing lands of the latter. These lands had been relatively “emptied” as a result of the Zulu incursions but were now beyond the direct control of the Zulus and other dominant chieftaincies, as a result of both Boer land appropriations and then British interventions in settling land disputes. However, as refugees with little military capacity or other power based in social connectedness, in an area dominated by Boer ownership, Shepstone might have deemed their occupation of land unimportant.

The colonial government’s marginalisation of both the people who owned and those who occupied the farms of Besters meant that the locations could not serve as reserves of cheap labour for Boer farm owners, while the Shabalala refugees’ access to productive land remained unprotected and precarious. These conditions favoured the establishment and persistence of labour and share-cropping tenancies, in which people displaced by the militarisation of the Dlamini and Zulus provided labour to the Boers, whose actual homes were often on other farms in the Free State, in return for the use of some of their grazing and arable land.

5.4. Changing labour regimes: from labour tenancy to wage work

While there is broad agreement that share-cropping had “outlived its usefulness” by the first decade of the 20th century (Van Onselen, 1996: 7), there has been much debate about the labour tenant regimes that replaced it. Various groupings of agrarian and industrial capital had, prior to 1994, characterised labour tenancy as an archaic, feudal “relic” (Williams, 1996a: 226). Banaji (2010: 62), however, argues that “archaic” forms of labour subjection can underpin capitalist relations of production, particularly in colonial contexts caught up in world economic processes. Similarly, while Morris (1976; 1988), as shown in Chapter 2, argues that labour tenancy was transformed into a form of wage labour that defined the moment of transition to capitalist agriculture, Levin and Neocosmos (1987) suggest that in depicting labour tenants as “disguised” proletarians, Morris seems to assume that proletarianisation is an inevitable and linear process. The result is that he neglects processes of differentiation and thus the possibility that labour tenants might be best understood as petty commodity producers with insecure access to land.

Despite the growing alliance between white farmers and the state in the 20th century (Morris, 1976; O' Meara, 1983) and the increasingly “controlled, regular and certain labour force” (Hornby, 1996: 31) on most farms across the country, the process of proletarianisation was geographically uneven and resisted by labour tenants, and sometimes by farmers too. Williams (1996a: 226) notes that as late as the mid 1970s, “some farmers went back to labour tenant contracts when they found that they could not recruit reliable and competent workers for cash wages alone”. Labour tenancy, as Williams (*ibid*) argues against Morris, is a form of labour regime integral to particular, concrete capitalist relations of production, and adapts to the “intermittent, irregular and unpredictable nature of productive labour in agriculture” (Keegan 1986: 122), particularly where agriculture is under-capitalised.

By 1995, when the Land Reform (Labour Tenants) Act was passed, labour tenancy had not quite disappeared in northern parts of KwaZulu-Natal. However, it had changed and was now characterised by a highly variable and complex mix of adaptations. These adaptations nevertheless failed to resolve the contradictions of agricultural capital accumulation in a post-apartheid, deregulated environment. These new conditions required fewer, skilled wage workers and the efficient and productive use of land, but at Besters labour tenancy continued to supply abundant low-skilled labour, resident on and using some of the farmland. The following section describes some of the changes to labour tenancy at Besters that preceded the land reform initiative.

5.4.1. Changes to own-farming

By 2010, the homestead farming associated with labour tenancy was a system most people had known as children, but which had drastically changed in their lifetimes. The mixed farming system comprising a range of livestock and crops was geared to meeting the multiple requirements of social reproduction, primarily food, agricultural equipment, ceremony and social connectedness (marriage). Less often, surplus was sold for cash income. Descriptions by older respondents at Besters of the farming systems in place in the 1950s-1990s indicate emerging differentiation between those households who regularly sold commodities (butter, milk, cattle) and those able to produce only for their own consumption. However, petty commodity production became increasingly constrained in the late 1970s with new squeezes on land availability, the introduction of

low cash wages, and new and stricter controls over cattle and the range of livestock types allowed. By the late 1980s, these controls were widespread across the district and evictions (a primary instrument for disciplining labour) escalated with the prospects of land claims under a new democratic dispensation. The effects of these changes played out differently across generations and genders, with heads of households paying their sons' bridewealth in return for their labour, in order to continue to hold the tenancy contract, while daughters, who also provided labour, were "slaves to whites and mothers-in-law" (Winnie Shabalala, pers com).

The livestock kept by labour tenants were mainly cattle, goats and chickens, but also included some horses, donkeys, sheep, pigs and other poultry. Cattle uses included oxen for traction, manure for grain and vegetable production, milk, bridewealth (*ilobolo*) and other ceremonial uses.²⁰ In the majority of cases, fathers had provided all or some of the cattle for their sons' bridewealth payments because they had "held the [labour tenant] contract" for their fathers, or because that was the familiar practice: "this is how it was done since I had no cattle of my own" (Gamede, 2011: pers com). Herd sizes varied from zero cattle, particularly when men were young, to herds in excess of 70, with some households having sufficient oxen for independent ploughing (a minimum herd size of about 23 cattle was required, according to respondents) while others needed to co-operate with other households in order to plough. Ownership of livestock was gendered, with men, particularly heads of homestead (and therefore at times widowed women), owning cattle, horses and in most cases the goats, while women usually owned the poultry, particularly chickens.

A variety of crops was grown in fields, including maize, sorghum, beans, indigenous pumpkins, and, in smaller fields and gardens closer to the house, crops such as spinach, potatoes, peanuts, tobacco, tomatoes, onions and chili. Many older respondents talk about this time as one when "we still had fields and did not have to buy food"; the days when "we still knew how to work" (B. Shabalala, 2011: pers com). While work around cattle –

²⁰ These included burials, births, coming of age events, weddings, *ukutwasa* (the call to be a *sangoma* or spirit medium) and an ox allocated to "protect the house" (Khoza, 2012: pers com).

dehorning, castrating, herding and ploughing – tended to be the work of men and boys, often collaboratively with other households, weeding and harvesting tended to be the work of women and children. However, there were also respondents who said the field work was undertaken by “everyone in the family”.

Not all farm production was for own use, however. Many respondents remembered their fathers selling cattle periodically in order to supplement the household’s cash income. “We did not get paid wages so we lived through our cattle” (J. Shabalala, 2011: pers com). Cattle were sold at the “stock sales of the whites” and to people looking for cattle to buy, including white farmers and “*amajuda*”²¹, people who travelled the farms to buy livestock. One respondent also said her grandmother had made butter from the milk of the family’s cows, which was sent to Durban daily by train. Many women also said they had sold thatching grass, woven grass mats, and one woman said she sometimes “stole my husband’s maize to sell” if he refused to sell cattle.

From the late 1970s and early 1980s onwards, farmers began to exert control over a wider range of resources than just the labour of their tenants. First, they began to squeeze the access that labour tenants enjoyed to land, reducing both their access to fields for independent cropping and the size of fields that they used. Access to fields was replaced with provisions: daily allowances of milk and maize from either a certain number of rows from the farmer’s maize crop, or purchased maize meal, the price of which, from the late 1980s, was deducted from wages. Secondly, there was increasing pressure on labour tenants to reduce cattle numbers. The landowner-farmers had allowed varying herd sizes, from five cattle to 30 or more. Herd size reductions were accompanied by the levying of new grazing rents, particularly from the late 1980s. The landowner-farmers used rents partly to control herd sizes, by doubling and tripling rents for cattle in excess of the permitted herd limit. Thirdly, cattle management practices on farms also began to change. Smaller herds were now often run together with the farmer’s cattle, and received the same feed supplements and veterinary inputs, costs that became incorporated into the

²¹ It’s not entirely clear what *AmaJuda* refers to. It is a plural noun and seems likely to refer to people of the Jewish religion but this wasn’t confirmed. The description was of white people who travelled the countryside to buy livestock, mainly cattle.

grazing levy deducted from wages. Not only did this give farmers increased control over the herds of their tenants, it also gave them control over the grazing management and disease and parasite control that they feared put their own cattle at risk (Smythe, 2012, pers com). Finally, landowner-farmers began to restrict the type of livestock they allowed their tenants to keep, refusing to allow goats, pigs and dogs in particular.

These changes did not take place on all farms, however. A key differentiating factor between the farms appears to be whether or not the landowner-farmer resided on a second farm elsewhere and how actively incorporated into the farmer's enterprise the labour tenant farm was. Where the landowner-farmers were resident in the Free State, fewer changes to herd size and field usage took place on their labour tenant farms in KwaZulu-Natal. Thus, on some farms, particularly Nkuthukayishazwe, Ngulakayishazwe and Zizimela²², labour tenants continued to have access to their own separate grazing fields, or the run of the farm with farmers' sheep and cattle being sent to the farm for winter grazing only.

In the case of two of the land reform farms studied here, Mphuzanyoni and Nyakanyaka Yomshini²³, the farmers lived in the district and used the land occupied by the labour tenants as part of their own farming operations. Indeed, the grandson of one of these farmers who still farms in the area today, says his family "never had labour tenants ... we allowed them cattle because they wanted them but they were not labour tenants" (Smythe, 2012, pers com). Similarly, at Mphuzanyoni, the land owner farmed the land and ran the labour tenants' cattle with his own. In both these cases, herd limits were strictly imposed, with fines administered and cattle forcibly sold where limits were exceeded. The eventual elimination of independent cropping occurred at Nyakanyaka Yomshini when the farmer expanded his own maize production. Although fields were not reduced at Mphuzanyoni, this is a dry farm with shale soils and thus relatively marginal

²² Zizimela, however, does not share an identical history to that of the other two farms. Some years prior to land reform, the farmer who lived in the Free State sold the farm and the new owner leased the land to the people residing on it. Nevertheless, in terms of production issues, the pattern is the same.

²³ These are names for the Communal Property Associations that took ownership of the farms during land reform, and are not the original farm names.

for crop production, even amongst labour tenant households. On three of the other farms, Inkuthukayishazwe, Ingulakayishazwe and Zizimela, herd size limits were imposed, albeit at a higher limit (30 head as opposed to 10 and 15 on the other two farms respectively). Grazing fees were not paid and respondents talked about the landowner-farmer “ignoring” limits being exceeded. In these cases, the farmers’ primary production took place on their farms in the Free State, with the farms in Natal being a source of labour and a place on which to graze cattle or sheep over the winter months.

Asked how they had responded to the changes on the first two farms in particular, some older respondents said they had not been happy but could do little about it, while others had left to seek better options on other farms.²⁴ Leaving farms when conditions no longer supported their farming needs might be construed as the voluntary actions of labour tenants exercising choice. However, under circumstances where pass documents from previous employers were required before a labour tenant could move to a new employer, where labour tenants had little power to negotiate the terms of their contracts, and where the generalised practices around terms of contract were changing, the seeking out of new opportunities must be seen, as Morris (1976) points out, as a weakened form of resistance against a social reproduction crisis. What emerges is a pattern of labour tenants constantly seeking out of spaces where they could undertake and expand their own farming with limited interference.

The picture, then, is of locally variable arrangements around the type and intensity of own farming allowed, which, while dependent on the decisions of individual landowner-farmers, were also shaped by the structural features of geographical features, patterns of land ownership, labour regimes and new production imperatives that from the late 1970s brought farms into more intensive production.

²⁴ This is in the broader context of large scale evictions from farms, and reports of abusive relationships. (See, for instance, Hornby, 1996.) These are not reported here because the people interviewed in this research had all remained on farms in various “wage-hoe” relationships.

5.4.2. *Labour: the shift to wage work on farms*

An important change that took place in the lifetime of respondents is the introduction of wages, contracts and full-time work. A second change, more ambiguously reported on, is that landlord-farmers began to demand the labour of all family members, i.e. men, women and children, with women's labour receiving very low remuneration.

Older respondents said they had "held" labour tenancy contracts as young men for their fathers either without payment or payments of a few rand every six months when labour rotated (Gamede, Shabalala J and B, 2011). By the mid-1970s, low wages ranging from R1-R30 for six month periods were being paid regularly at the end of labour rotations, although some women said they only ever received in-kind payments (chicken entrails or salt) (W. Shabalala, 2011). While it is difficult to determine the exact amounts paid or when exactly the practice of cash wages became widespread, those who received such wages recall that they were sufficient only to purchase clothes and cigarettes. Their other needs were met by the household economy.

By the late 1970s changes were occurring. "When I first worked, I worked six month at a time, earning R6 at the end of the rotation. Then in 1981, this system of *isithupha* (six month rotations) finished and I got a contract, and then I was paid R40 a month and a sack of meal" (M. Khumalo, 2011). The practice of contracts with wage payments continued to spread in the 1980s. "This contract situation came into place after Boshoff told us to stop ploughing in 1987. After that, I worked 11 months and got paid R166 a month" (*ibid*). In the 1990s, there are reports of annual wage increases with wages rising to about R800 a month by 2000, and, in some cases, to R1,800 - R2,000 a month for full-time work by 2011.

These changes in the terms and conditions of employment cannot be understood simply as a process of proletarianisation on the farms in Besters, although that was their consequence. While farmers may have initiated them as a response to economic pressures to increase labour productivity, by the late 1980s they were also undertaken as land owners responded to political change and anxiety about how land reform would unfold. The Natal Agricultural Union advised landowner-farmers to create "clean" employment contracts in which all forms of remuneration were given financial value, accounted for

and included in employment contracts (Hornby, 1996: 4). Although this labour regime and the changes to it are a dominant story at Besters, there were exceptions and a few people worked full-time and were paid monthly, albeit very low wages. Nevertheless, what is apparent is that over a lifetime, many individuals moved between full-time wage work on farms, rotational labour-tenancy and full-or part-time urban wage work depending on opportunities, social obligations and household needs for labour and cash.

Changes to who was required to work emerges from interviews with respondents that farmers in the 1970s began both to require all old enough children²⁵, men and women, to work the rotations, and to limit the withdrawal of family member's labour. For instance, when a household head wished to retire from providing labour or to withdraw a child's labour to take care of their own farming needs or to send them to school, the contract was often terminated and the household forced to leave the farm. "My father and brothers worked at Booyens. Then sometime in 1970, we came to Boshoffs, and he wanted all my brothers and sisters to work rotations" (Mam'Khumalo, 2011: pers com).

The nature of the work, as well as how it was "remunerated", had gendered dimensions, with women working in gardens, houses and sometimes dairy and food processing operations while men tended livestock, drove tractors and maintained farm infrastructure. While fathers paid some or all of their sons' bride-wealth in return for their labour to hold the contract, daughters often received nothing from either their fathers or the landlord-farmer. One woman expresses the narrow range of choices: "I ran away from the work at Smythe's and from my mother's house and I began to work for Gogo [her husband's mother], cooking for her, collecting firewood, hoeing her fields and fetching water. I was the first *makothi* (young wife) so I did everything... it is better now, those old ways used to oppress women. This new of way of equality, this 50-50 system, is better" (MaNgwenya, 2011: pers com).

There are also suggested differences in labour productivity and specialisation between work then and now. Many respondents observed that while wages for farm work are

²⁵ These ages appear to range from seven or eight years old to mid-teens but are difficult to pin down exactly because many people do not know their ages. Certainly, nearly all respondents reported that requirements to work interrupted their schooling.

better today, there are fewer workers on the farms. “At that time, there were five or six of us to mend the fences but today you find this is the job of one person. Machines are used now instead of hands” (Zikhalala, 2011: pers com).

5.4.3. *Labour: part-time off-farm wage work*

Many young men, in particular, migrated to urban centres, such as Ladysmith, Durban and Johannesburg to find work during the six months that they were not required to work on the farms. These jobs mainly involved physical labour in construction, and occasionally manufacturing, rather than mining, possibly because of the intermittent nature of their availability. In a few cases, the men were able to rotate both farm work and off-farm jobs with brothers, which provided continuity in both fulfilling the conditions of the labour tenant contract as well as retaining the off-farm job. For others, the constant challenge of finding wage work caused them to abandon the search, and instead they worked at home “helping” their fathers. Some young men left the farms altogether for a period and found full-time wage work, and, in a few infrequent instances, began to specialise (as drivers) and to earn higher wages, which were later invested in cattle. The point should be made that there were undoubtedly young men who found permanent work off farms, settled in urban centres and never invested wages in cattle, as Morris’ (1976: 327) analysis suggests. However, clearly this was not a linear or uni-directional process, as evidenced by the people I interviewed, who had, by default or choice, found themselves on the land reform farms.

For those who remained or returned to the farms, significantly higher off-farm wages facilitated investments in livestock. “I preferred the six month system because I could buy a goat, because the money in town was better” (J. Shabalala, 2011: pers com). Higher urban wages also funded necessities for men wanting to start families, such as investments in livestock and bridewealth, and also children’s schooling. Many younger men gave their wages, except for small amounts for leisure, to their parents.

While it is evident today that daughters are now also migrating to urban centres to work, life history interviews indicate that this is a recent trend. In the past, unmarried daughters stayed at home during their off-rotations and undertook domestic and crop production

chores, including tending fields and gardens. “At that time, I stayed at home during my off-times ... we had cattle and I milked them, and we used to plough a field with oxen” (Mam’Khoza, 2011: pers com).

5.4.4. *What the changes have meant*

These different combinations of labour regime with farming system came together in a multitude of different ways in particular households. Perhaps what is most important about this complex range of variation is that, by 1995, it was increasingly difficult to apply a strict distinction between proletarian wage worker and labour tenant at Besters. These were increasingly complex mixtures of “wage and hoe” or “hoe and wage”, largely organised along household lines but with gendered and generational dimensions shaping who did what labour, where, and for whom. However, the land reform law of 1995 had, in effect, re-legalised the existence of labour tenancy at a time when the conditions for landless petty commodity production were increasingly constrained.

As the above examples suggest, labour tenancy as a system of farmland access and labour mobilisation was neither static nor did changes take place without contestation. Williams (1996a) suggests that contestation took place around three primary contradictions.

- Firstly, while the (male) tenant gained access to the land, he relied on the labour of his wife and children to secure the contract, a condition that generated gender and inter-generational conflict. This became increasingly acute as social conditions changed and the patriarchal authority of the father was undermined (see also Van Onselen, 1997).
- Secondly, because of this, the farmer’s control over labour was partial and indirect, but the resulting low level of productivity means farmers attempted to apply an ever more exploitative labour regime, which required more direct control over labour bringing farmers into conflict with fathers, as heads of house, and their labouring children.
- Thirdly, the greater the farmer’s success as a result of cheap labour, the greater the need he had of his land and therefore the less land he had available for his labour tenants. All these structural contradictions have been apparent in the

histories of the labour tenants at Besters and were evident in the changes to labour tenancy that had taken place.

A number of other social and political changes, however, intersected with these contradictions to render labour tenancy an increasingly unstable arrangement after 1970. The “golden period” (Bernstein, 1996: 12) of apartheid (1963-1972) had resulted in both a more capital intensive agriculture and in the need for less agricultural labour. This aspect of capitalist development sharpened considerably as the world recession and increasingly militant local resistance brought South Africa’s “racial Fordist” (Gelb, 1991:17) accumulatory regime into crisis. One effect of this crisis was the gradual termination of state protection and support for white agriculture in the 1980s, partly in response to mining and manufacturing demands for more efficient food production. Increased competition and the need for efficiency in the commercial farm sector resulted in greater demands on labour productivity, specialisation and labour supervision, a shift inconsistent with the mediated labour arrangements involved in labour tenancy. It came at a time when negative growth resulted in a massive shedding of mining and manufacturing jobs, and the national shortage of farm labour in the earlier part of the century had now become an abundance of labour in reserve. The need for on-farm labour tenancy as a functional response to labour shortages was in decline. The rapid increase in the real value of agricultural land from 1955-1978 and again more recently in 2000 (Obi, 2006: 159-160) also meant that the land that had been set aside for occupation by labour tenants for their own farming suddenly carried an increasing financial value, which urged a logic of either bringing it under commercial production, putting the labour tenant’s access to land at risk, or selling it in order realise the capital value, forcing a renegotiation of the labour tenancy contract. Finally, the regime of rural power on farms that was condoned by apartheid officialdom came under increasing attack leading up to elections in 1994 (Sato, 2006).

These factors all combined to cause a new wave of evictions from farms (Wegerif *et al*, 2005, Hornby, 1996: 36) across KwaZulu-Natal, often involving violence as land owners confronted and reacted to the combined forces of liberalisation and impending land reform. The Labour Tenants Act (1996), together with the enactment two years later of

the Extension of Tenure Security Act, which regulated the eviction of farm “occupiers”, raised the social and financial costs to farmers of eviction and of contesting labour tenant claims to land. This, combined with a desire for a “permanent solution” that would create economic stability for farming, led a group of white commercial farmers in Besters to engage government and the people resident on their farms in a district-wide negotiated land reform settlement (Henderson, 2011: pers com).

If labour tenancy had emerged in Besters as an accommodation of the land and labour needs of marginalised Boers and Africans in the 19th century, the conditions for its (mutating) persistence as a source of labour on the marginal (for arable purposes) but seasonally useful (for grazing purposes) land had begun to unravel in the 1980s. Not only was labour tenancy no longer necessary to agrarian capital accumulation but it now carried an increasingly high social and political cost on the commercial farms in Besters.

5.5. How the Besters land reform project unfolded

In 2007, a number of media carried articles on the successful land reform project that had been undertaken in Besters. The Premier of KwaZulu-Natal at the time, Sbu Ndebele, was reported as saying that 199 households, with a total population of 2500, had acquired 14 cattle farms in a successful “bottom-up area-based” land reform (Mercury, 2007: 13). The Financial Mail (2007) similarly reported that within a five year period “productive cattle ranches totalling 14,700 ha, or 23% of the district’s white-owned land” had been transferred, an amount of “five times more than national transfers in 13 years”, and had resulted in land values escalating from R1,000 to R3,000 a hectare. Citing a co-author of a report released at the time, the World Bank economist Hans Binswanger, the article states that the key difference at Besters is that the state’s role was confined to what it “should do”, namely: “set the ball rolling by ensuring compliance with land policy and law, aided negotiations and swiftly and efficiently concluded farm valuations. The details were left to the farmers and tenants to thrash out”. This section assesses these claims and their underlying rationale.

There were three primary determining factors that shaped the immediate history of the Besters project, namely, the labour tenant claims made in terms of the Land Reform (Labour Tenants) Act of 1995, the shift from the Settlement Land Acquisition Grant (SLAG) mechanism to the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development programme (LRAD) and a new emphasis on a decentralised, multi-stakeholder negotiated settlement approaches to land reform. The coming together of these three factors brought to a conclusion a long process of negotiations that had begun in 1996, when the Department of Land Affairs (DLA) had encouraged labour tenants to lodge claims.

The new grant finance mechanism brought in by LRAD, as described in some detail in Chapter 3, allocated funds to individuals rather than households, based on a sliding scale determined by an individual's own contribution. The lowest grant allocation was R15,000 if the individual owned no equity, with an additional R5,000 of assumed labour contribution termed "sweat equity". Since it was decided at Besters that cattle could constitute an "own equity" contribution, this basic amount increased according to the number of cattle owned, with each animal valued at a standard rate of R2,700. A person who owned five cattle, for example, would be allocated a grant of R28,800 and a person with ten cattle would be allocated R37,156. As a result, the amount of grant allocated against each household was significantly higher than would have been the case had the project proceeded using the Settlement Land Acquisition Grant (SLAG) mechanism of a R20,000 per household. For example, the LRAD grant allocated against one particular household amounted to just over R345,000 (DLA, 2005)

However, although LRAD was used to provide the financing for land reform at Besters, the project pooled individual grants, in a manner similar to SLAG, and transferred properties to Communal Property Associations (CPAs) with a standard constitution defining members and their rights. Despite LRAD grant allocations to individuals, the members of the CPAs were defined as households, and notwithstanding the variations in allocations, the constitutions allocated rights to a residential site, grazing and arable land equitably, and rather ambiguously, to members of households. While the purpose of LRAD was to support and develop commercial farmers, the constitutions limit arable land allocations to one per member, with ambiguity about whether "member" in this case

refers to a member of a household or a member of the CPA, namely, a household. There were thus a number of ambiguities and misalignments amongst the policies used at Besters. An important unintended consequence was that some individual members of households argued that they were entitled to the benefits flowing from land reform because their names had been used to secure the grants, while others argued that they were most entitled because they wanted to use the land to farm and, as a result, had the backing of officials and commercial farmers.

The Besters project was among the first attempts to undertake a decentralised multi-stakeholder approach to land reform. The approach was a response to various aspects of the mounting critique described in Chapter 3 that saw the failure of land reform as occurring at multiple levels. The slow pace of land reform, its complexity and failure to develop appropriate production incentives was the result of a technocratic, government-led process dominated by consultants and with centralised approval mechanisms. The decentralisation of decision-making, combined with participation of all stakeholders, was expected to meet a number of objectives. These included the quicker identification of appropriate land for different beneficiaries; creating a better match between the agricultural potential of the land, the production needs of beneficiaries and land uses; resolving competing land rights claims and uses in a more socially and environmentally sustainable way; and providing better aligned, appropriate and targeted (technical and financial) support and in greater quantities (Hall, 2009a; Henderson, 2013: pers com, Binswanger *et al*, 2008; Deininger, 1999). This process at Besters resonated with an emerging consensus among academics, NGOs and Aid organisations that decentralised “territorial” negotiations were both more efficient and sustainable (Quan and Nelson, 2005).

5.5.1. The initial impetus at Besters

In 2002, the DLA approached the Besters white commercial farmers to participate in a survey of land claimants, as a first step to settling the claims, which prompted a series of decisions and negotiations. Under the leadership of the Farmers’ Association, farmers agreed to support the process if their interests were met. These were:

- Guaranteed inclusion in the process
- A “lasting and economically viable outcome” was achieved
- Land transfer was “orderly” and did not jeopardize the “agricultural potential” of the area,
- The principle of “willing buyer, willing seller” was adhered to (Binswanger *et al*, 2008: 10).

DLA agreed to these conditions, and to requests that claims be settled, in the first place, on farms that owners wanted to sell, whether or not these were the portions of land labour tenants had claimed, and that DLA help establish the negotiating structures.

Binswanger *et al* (2008) argue that the agreement paved the way for farmers to include all the people resident on their farms in the negotiations, whether or not they had lodged land claims. It also shifted the trajectory of settlement from small individual or household-owned farms scattered throughout the district to large farm purchases under group ownership. “Farmers came together and agreed that certain people would be moved off farms and joined with others to purchase farms available for sale. DLA agreed because they wanted to pilot settling labour tenants in bulk” (Mabaso, 2011: pers com).

5.5.2. *The stakeholders*

The three primary stakeholders were the claimant/occupiers, the (white) commercial farmers and government departments and the municipality.

The “beneficiary” group consisted of approximately 200²⁶ households, of which 140 had claimed land in terms of the Labour Tenants Act, while another 60 were resident on farms in the Besters area. Many were multi-generational occupants of the farms they were residing on, while others had, over time, moved from farm to farm across the district. There were 573 individuals eligible for LRAD grants, who between them owned 1 984 cattle, 133 horses, 768 goats and some sheep (Binswanger *et al*, 2008: 11).

²⁶ These figures come from the Binswanger *et al* (2008: 11) report. Other subsequent reports, mainly from the Agribusiness Development Agency (ADA) in 2012, record fewer numbers of households involved in the project. The actual numbers of household benefitting could not be confirmed in the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform records in the Ladysmith District Office because files were missing.

During on-farm negotiations that included the DLA official and the Farmers' Association representatives, the claimant/occupiers expressed the following preferences:

- Continued full-time employment on farms, along with maize production for exchange and consumption and increased access to grazing.
- *In situ* settlement and improved access to basic services. If it was necessary to move, they wanted housing provided and compensation for the costs of moving. They also expressed concern about personal and stock security if they had to live too close to other households, the cost of transport to get to town and work, and the provision of technical support to farm.
- Support to negotiate with both white farmers and government.

The 55 commercial farmers were all white and, after land reform, the 52 remaining farmers continued to own about 55,000 hectares of the total farm land (about 79%). Many had owned their farms for a number of generations, with a substantial number owning multiple farms, some of which were in the Free State. Farmers were concerned that their farms would be fragmented if claims were settled *in situ* and that “unsustainable” farming practices would be adopted on the land reform farms, which would weaken the local economy (Smythe, 2012: pers com; Tedder, 2012: pers com). Although they preferred to have their labour close by, they were not concerned about land reform causing labour shortages, and after land reform, farmers continued to source 90% of their labour from people either resident on their farms or the land reform farms, with the remaining 10% from other areas (Binswanger *et al*, 2008).

The primary government department involved was Land Affairs, which is responsible for the implementation of the Labour Tenants act. The Department of Agriculture became involved to co-implement LRAD, to oversee their own programme, Siyavuna (“we are harvesting”) and a mentoring programme. Other government departments were drawn in, particularly Housing, Economic Development and Water and Environment, but did not, in the end, provide concrete support and resources. The local municipality was involved primarily through the incorporation of land issues into integrated development plans (IDPs).

5.5.3. *The process unfolds*

The process involved a number of semi-parallel steps, beginning with farmers developing a common vision and implementation plan from August to September 2003, while the DLA undertook a survey of claimants in September 2003. The information from these two processes shaped how the project unfolded. The farmers' implementation plan included a negotiation strategy, clustering farms into sub-areas or cells, identifying farms for sale, quantifying households (and labour tenant claimants) resident on farms, and planning the issuing of (Section 17) notices acknowledging labour tenant status for when structures and agreements were in place that would render claims less threatening (in December, 2003). An overarching cluster committee was formed, representing farmers and claimants from each of the cell clusters, as well as DLA, the local municipality, the Department of Agriculture and NGOs, particularly the Landless People's Movement.

The survey information was used to create an initial match between groups of households and particular farms available for sale, which was then completed through negotiations at cell and farm level. The claimants/occupiers were batched against the assessed value of their livestock and other assets in order to ensure that the grant entitlements matched the farm price and claimant aspirations. These three key criteria - total available grant, number of claimant/occupiers and farm price – were constantly adjusted as the negotiations proceeded (Henderson, 2013: pers com). By April 2004, negotiations were complete. They had taken four months.

However, for people on the farms, it was a “tough time ... People were confused about what exactly was being offered and with what conditions. The information was unclear and the DLA officials and landowners kept changing and saying different things. There were terrible fights” (Mabaso, 2012: pers com). Many claimants did not want to move and resettle on new farms and were aware that their rights in terms of the Act meant that they could not be compelled to do so. But the negotiated process had over-ridden their legal entitlements and “to this day, those who refused to move have not had their claims settled” (Mabaso, 2013: pers com). As noted above, that includes over 200 claims.

Other issues also emerged: some of the farms offered were rejected by the claimants because they were too dry or too close to dense settlements with higher risks of livestock

theft, and, in some cases, claimants were divided between those willing to move to particular farms and others who were not. The balance was only tipped in favour of moving when land owners, DLA officials and municipal officials promised claimant/occupiers that they would receive housing and support for resettlement (Ngula Kayishaze and Nyakanyaka Yomshini Farm Focus Groups, 2010). In the event, these promises never materialised or were only very partially fulfilled, but they served the function of enabling agreements to be reached.

Once agreements were in place, farms were valued and prices negotiated between land owners and DLA officials. These negotiations took place around two sets of land valuations, with agreements being reached when the farmers accepted the land price of the government valuers and the DLA agreed to compensate farmers for the value of buildings and infrastructure, bringing the actual price paid closer to the valuator's appointed by the Farmers' Association. Prices were agreed in November 2004 about 15 months after the initial process had begun.

With price negotiations concluded, a number of bureaucratic processes kicked in: a project identification report was approved on the basis of which a planning grant was released. Sale agreements were then drafted and the farms transferred to CPAs. The cluster committee, known as Qedusizi ("end of difficulties"), which had overseen the negotiations, was registered as a Section 21 not-for-profit company under the name of Abrina. In January 2006, it received the remainder of the total grant allocation after the farm sellers had been paid. A committee consisting of the chairperson from each of the 14 CPAs and seven farmers from the district was set up to run the company, whose task was to plan for the settlement and development of the farms. The management of the company and facilitation of the process was paid for from the planning component of the LRAD grant.

Consultants were contracted to establish the CPAs, develop individual farm plans and provide various services and the installation of infrastructure. Two mentors, adult sons of farmers in the area, were appointed to manage the farms and then to train the beneficiaries to run them. The consultants appointed to develop farm plans were also members of the commercial farming community, as were the contracts awarded for

installing boreholes, establishing pastures and crops, and sourcing and providing fire-fighting water tanks, and the machinery and equipment purchased for the beneficiaries was often purchased second hand from the commercial farmers (Ngula Kayishazwe Farm Focus Group, 2010). Land reform had created a substantial if temporary secondary agricultural economy, with commercial farmers as the primary beneficiaries.

The project sourced funding from a number of government programmes and planned on an expected budget of R62.2 million, excluding payments to mentors. However, it received none of the housing funds budgeted for and only a fraction of the expected funds from the Department of Agriculture, while there were unexpected funds from a land care grant. The total amount actually received was less than half what was planned on: R25,24 million, as shown in Table 12 below.

Table 12: Funding amounts received and planned for

The grant	Approved/ planned for	Amount (mln)	Received (mln)	Date received
DLA LRAD planning grant	✓	R1,25	✓	Jan, 2006
DLA LRAD grant	✓	R21.95	✓	Jan, 2006
Dept of Agriculture Siyavuna fund	✓	R9	R1.04	Feb,2006
Dept of Agriculture Land Care Grant	x	R1	✓	March, 2006
Dept of Agriculture: mentor programme	✓	Direct payment	✓	2005-7
Dept of Housing, People's Housing Process	Planned	R30	x	
Dept of Economic Development	Planned		x	

Source: Adapted from information in Binswanger *et al* (2008: 22-23) and Henderson (2013, pers com)

The difference between planned for funding and the actual funding received also resulted in the expected ratio of expenditure between land purchase and farm development shifting significantly. In 2008, the project expected that the land cost as a proportion of total expenditure was going to be less than 22% (see Binswanger *et al*, 2008: 23), but it became the most expensive item, constituting 54.7% of the funds that were actually secured. This contributed subsequently to a widespread perception that money had “disappeared” and that white farmers and other members of the Qedusizi/Abrina committee had appropriated it for their private purposes and renegeing on negotiated agreements.

Table 13: Percentage allocation of funding between expected and actual costs

Purpose of funding	Actual amount spent (mln)	% of planned budget	% of actual expenditure
Housing	0	47.5%	0%
Farm development	R9.15	28.7%	40.4%
Land purchase	R13.8	21.8%	54.7%
Planning	R1.25	2.0%	4.9%
Total	R25.2	100%	100%

Once the sellers had been paid for their farms, the remainder of the grant was spent on farm infrastructure and development. Payment of R6 million to Abrina in 2006 were spent on cattle purchases and farm cattle management facilities in order to “establish the commercial herds in each CPA” (Binswanger *et al*, 2008: 22), in addition to drilling of boreholes, establishment of eragrostis, planting of maize and soya, and purchases of tractors, grass cutters, generators, some pumps and veterinary supplies. Money was also allocated to fencing, specialised bulls, CPA employees and repairs and maintenance of

water and farm equipment. The land care grant was spent on repairing dongas and preventing soil erosion.

However, all the farm plans had included specific agricultural projects for women and the youth, most specifically pigs, chicken and egg and vegetable production, which were not implemented. Furthermore, boreholes were drilled on many farms but the water pipes and pumps were not supplied, rendering them non-functional. This discrepancy between plan and implementation was due to the shortage of funds as a result of the Department of Agriculture's Siyavuna grant not being allocated in full (Henderson, 2013, pers com). Furthermore, the promises of housing, which had been instrumental to reaching agreements that involved resettlement, did not materialise.

Although grants were obtained against individuals, the amount remaining after the owners had been paid out was pooled in a total project fund. The decision to pool grants was taken collectively and was uncontested at the time (Henderson, 2013, pers com; Mabaso, 2011, pers com). However, it resulted in a very uneven distribution of assets, with some CPAs receiving cattle and tractors while others didn't, and an unequal distribution of land measured per household. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 7, so I will not repeat it here, but it continues to be a source of discontent and grievance over how project funds were used, and who benefited and who lost out. A key reason for the unequal distribution relates to the technical assessments of the land: cattle distributions per farm were determined by the grazing capacity of the farms available for purchase and the number of cattle claimants/occupiers who were to resettle on them already had in relation to this capacity (Henderson, 2013: pers com). This resulted in a range of CPA cattle purchased as a mean per household of 24.7 that bore no relation to the individual LRAD grant allocations.

The claimants who received the fewest assets and cattle continue to be aggrieved about how land was allocated and decisions about cattle made. "First we were told we will get the land where we lived, and we were happy. Then we were told we will get a farm but we must move. We were not happy When we got cattle, this farm was too small Our lives were better before" (Sizisizwe FG, 2010).

5.5.4. *The outcomes*

The outcomes of the Besters land reform negotiations remain impressive although they are not exactly as they were presented at the time, and some stakeholders have had more of their needs and interests met than others, an issue that has not been reported on.

Binswanger *et al* (2008: 16) argue that the locally negotiated settlement had been a “win-win” outcome in that it increased of the number of beneficiaries relative to the original claimants by nearly 2.5 times, the amount of land transferred by a factor of 2.6, with an average land benefit to each household of 73.9 hectares, and farm capitalisation adding a further value of an average of R126,800 per household. However, these quantifications were premature. Only 13 of the 14 farms identified for sale and a small subdivision in one case have been transferred due to contested occupation and ownership. The total number of hectares transferred was thus only 17% of the district’s farmland. It is also clear that the interests of some stakeholders were more adequately met than those of others. While just over 170 households (rather than the 200 reported) “benefited”, a number of these have never moved, due to the costs of relocation and the absence of promised housing. Furthermore, the cost of land purchase relative to farm development was over 50% of the budget, with white commercial farmers also receiving a considerable portion of the budget for subsequent consultancy and project management services.

The commercial farming community’s active involvement in the project substantially secured their interests in how land reform played out, namely:

- They shaped the structure of production on the land reform farms through the sale of large farms, planning production on individual farms, ensuring sufficient expenditure on infrastructure, pasture establishment and land rehabilitation, and providing mentoring services.
- They sold the farms that they wanted to sell at prices they wanted to receive. These included farms used for seasonal grazing and labour provision where owners resided in the Free State, and farms neighbouring the relatively densely settled areas of Waters Meet, Peacetown and Matiwane’s Kop with their increased risks of stock theft.

- They were able to secure off-farm settlements for labour tenants and occupiers without any trade-offs in relation to secure labour supply, political representation of their role in land reform or drop off in cattle sales and yearling inputs into feedlot production that some of the bigger Bester's beef farmers had moved into.

In summary, for white commercial farmers in the district, land reform had resolved a growing tension in a rapidly changing and contested labour regime that was no longer functional in the demanding conditions that required greater farm efficiencies, which required a smaller, specialised labour force, and more intensive use of land, and it had secured this resolution with no unwanted costs to the farmers. However, what is less often presented in reports on the successes of Besters is that not all land claims were settled, nor did those settled usher in the expected peaceful and conflict-free rural relations.

As a group, the claimant/occupiers who did participate in the project have benefitted in so far as they are now members of CPAs and cannot easily be evicted from those farms. This contrasts with the ongoing conflicts on numerous other farms in Besters around livestock impounding, restricted grazing and rising levvies, evictions, controlled family access and house extensions and repairs (Mabaso, 2013: pers com; Msimanga, 2013; Field Notes, 2013). However, not all claimant/occupiers received the land that they were living on and using, nor did they receive housing and resettlement support. Land reform has, in some instances, confirmed anxieties about increased stock theft and reduced access to grazing and arable land. The uneven distribution of land reform funds, although agreed to by the Qedusizi committee, resulted in some farms receiving significantly higher allocations of budget in the form of cattle, farm machinery, infrastructure development and mentoring than others.

The interests of household members were also differentially met. The commercial farm model brought into play by the LRAD grants privileged men, who were either heads of households or the oldest married son, and who were either available full-time or had the skills and knowledge to farm cattle. Younger siblings, particularly sisters, and daughters, became expected to leave the farm to find work and (marital) homes elsewhere, although their names had been used in grant determinations. This trend was probably already in

place at the point of land reform but it was consolidated and speeded up through the loss of low skill, frequently seasonal farm and domestic work. Budgetary allocations also privileged commercial farming interests over the interests of (particularly) women in reducing domestic labour, through the provision of decent homes and on-site water and electricity, although these had been a condition of resettlement. As the men at Nkuthu Kayishazwe commented: “We were very happy when we were told these are your cattle because we got what we wanted” but none of the preferences of women and youth expressed during planning were met (Nkuthu Kayishazwe FG, 2010).

From the perspective of government, Besters land reform has also had mixed successes. It has provided government with an all-important land reform “success” story in that a willing buyer, willing seller project has produced farmers who sell cattle on a regular basis, resulted in a fairly rapid transfer of significant tracts of commercial farm land, and avoided a racialised conflict over land and labour tenancy in the district. However, while land reform has not put the local agricultural economy at risk, it has not resolved conflicts on white-owned farms and it has generated a new range of conflicts on CPA owned farms, which continue to absorb the time and effort of local officials and councillors.

As noted above, Binswanger *et al* (2008) argue that the Qedusizi project at Besters has provided a good example of the limited, facilitatory role that governments should play in land reform. This analysis of winners and losers, however, suggests that Borras’ (2003: 386-389) critique of market-assisted land reform applies to Besters. Firstly, the assumption that with the right institutionally determined incentives, rational agents are driven by market logics rather than politics is contradicted by the evidence that dominant classes exercise their power to influence land prices. Secondly, the assumption that willing buyers and willing sellers have equal power to negotiate land reform does not take into account that at Besters the “processes of organizing, processing and articulating demands [were] constrained by the very social and political environment that necessitate[d] the land-based demands of the poor” in the first place (*ibid*: 389). Thirdly, contrary to the assumption that decentralization encourages transparency and accountability, Besters provides evidence that enclaves of local authoritarianism dominate local polities and are more likely to act in the interests of elites and against the

fragmented and differentiated interests of the poor. Decentralised decision-making and local, multi-stakeholder negotiations may improve aspects of land reform delivery, but they do not neutrally adjudicate the political struggles entailed in land reform.

5.6. Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that land reform at Besters should be seen as a moment in a long history of class struggles over land, labour and agricultural capital accumulation. A key feature of the early history of Besters was its marginality in terms of an agro-ecological space unsuited to capital intensive farming, and the political marginality of the Boers and the Africans who settled the land in the 19th century. This marginality contributed to a mutual, if fraught and contested, accommodation of agricultural petty commodity production and large-scale capitalist farming, first as a labour tenant regime and then later in the new accumulatory environment in which land reform unfolded.

At one level, the representation of the Besters land reform project as inclusive, participatory and successful has had more success as a political discourse within public struggles over the representation of land reform than it has in restructuring agrarian relations at Besters. The key structures were in place and the key decisions that shaped how the project unfolded had been taken long before claimants/occupiers were included. The cluster approach, combined with agreements to use a willing buyer, willing seller model meant that the rights of labour tenants to the land they lived on and used were overridden. The decision to spend excess grant money on commercial production meant that the interests of women and young adults to establish smaller homebased enterprises and to have basic services were not prioritised. This neglect meant there were clear winners and losers during land reform, the impacts of which continue to shape the unfolding of social relations on the farms. However, at another level, land reform has made it possible for many benefitting households to continue to secure their social reproduction through combinations that include agricultural petty commodity production and wage labour, which non-benefitting households that remain on commercial farms appear less able to do. In Chapter 6, I describe in more detail the social reproduction processes on the farms that are the subject of this study.

6. LIFE ON THE FARMS: MIXED FARMING SYSTEMS AND MULTIPLE LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES

6.1. Introduction

This chapter describes and analyses the structure of livelihoods on the farms at Besters. A key component of this structure is agricultural production and how it is organized to meet the needs of households. As Chapters 2 and 3 indicated, much of the land and agrarian reform policy documents construct farmer categories as groups or individuals whose income is derived only from farming. Recent policy attempts to incorporate the concept of differentiation use it to describe the process of farmers “graduating” from subsistent to export production through market integration. This chapter aims to show, firstly, that household farming at Besters is mixed and serves multiple purposes; secondly, that ownership, use of and income from livestock differs between households and is unequal along gendered and generational lines; and thirdly, that the livelihood strategies of households and individuals depend on off-farm wages and social grants as well as farm income. The chapter thus raises questions around three key assumptions that often underlie discussion of small farmers and ‘commercialisation’, namely that farming is a full-time or primary livelihood that its single purpose is to generate cash income through sales, and that with the support provided by land and agrarian reform, farm production will expand in a linear fashion.

The chapter begins by outlining agrarian policy as it plays out on the ground at Besters. The focus of this policy is on integrating farming at Besters into commodity chains, with farmers assumed to be an undifferentiated category with a single interest in commercial farm production. Data on cattle sales in the district confirm aspects of this assumption. However, I then describe the demographic structure of households, the mixed farming that they undertake and how livestock, particularly cattle, are owned and used. A more complex farming system with differential ownership of stock emerges from the description, in stark contrast to the assumptions underlying the ‘commercialisation’ model. This is further confirmed in the final section, which shows that not only are livelihoods mixed but farming also provides less income than both employment and

social grants. In addition, the income distribution from the different sources, including farming, is highly differentiated and unequal amongst households and along gendered and generational lines. The picture that emerges is not of a group of individual, full-time farmers, but rather something akin to Bernstein's (2009: 250-1; see also Lerche, 2010: 72) notion of 'fragmented classes of labour' who survive through complex combinations of various forms of wage employment, small-scale farming and survivalist, informal sector activities.

The description of the structure of farm production and livelihoods and the questions raised in this chapter thus lay the foundation for the understanding of the social processes shaping small-scale farming in Besters presented in subsequent chapters. It builds on the previous chapter by considering some of the continuities and changes to the farm production and wage work of labour tenant households that land and welfare reform have brought about on the farms. The relationship between farm production at household and CPA levels and the emergence of hybridized farm systems with echoes of the architecture of labour tenant farming are considered in the next chapter. Together, this chapter and the next create the basis for the analyses in Chapters 8, 9 and 10, which examine the relationships between livelihoods and farm production systems at Besters in accounting for the specific relationship between processes of social reproduction and capital accumulation on the farms.

6.2. Policy on the ground at Besters

In Chapter 5, I argued that the interests of local white capitalist farmers, government and (male) petty commodity producing labour tenants came together at Besters in structuring the production on land reform farms as large-scale, commercial cattle farms. This, along with early evidence of profit accumulation by the CPAs and the method of local negotiations that had delivered this outcome, was the basis for declaring the project an example of successful land reform. As a result of this designation and pressure to maintain it, Besters was subsequently identified for further funding in terms of new government policies to recapitalize struggling land reform projects (Dlamini, 2012, pers com; Gwamanda, 2011 pers com). This has resulted in government-funded infrastructure

investments (in dips, roads, cattle holding facilities), a veterinary programme to provide cattle dip and vaccinations, as well as proposals to develop commercial agricultural enterprises in partnership with the private sector.

The first of these enterprises involves the original 14 CPAs and a number of other land reform farms from the area in a joint venture with the private sector, in order to integrate the land reform farms into the beef value chain. (DoA, nd)

“This proposal would provide funding for the establishment of a feedlot in Qedusizi/Besters, provide for a joint venture with a private abattoir, meat-packaging and distribution company as well as provide additional funds to increase the cattle herd and promote better beef production in the CPAs” (Binswanger *et al*, 2008: 23).

In 2012, government contractors built feedlots on two CPA farms (Nyakanyaka Yomshini and Ngula Kayishazwe). Although Binswanger *et al* reported at the time that CPA members were enthusiastic about the proposal, a CPA committee chairperson reflected the concerns of other members when he told me that although the feedlot infrastructure had been built, he did not know whose cattle would be put in it, who the partner was, or how the project would work (Khumalo, 2012: pers com). He was concerned because conflicts on both farms selected for the feedlots were escalating and had already resulted in CPA cattle being divided up and distributed to households. The proposal of one CPA farm manager to “try out” a small feedlot on one farm before expanding the scale of the operation had fallen on deaf ears (J. Shabalala, 2011: pers com). Requests from members of the various CPAs at a workshop organized by the Department of Agriculture (2011) to “forget about putting us altogether” and to plan with specific farms and farmers were also disregarded. While for government it was important to allocate funds to large-scale commercial farming activities, the farmers on the Besters’ land reform farms recognized that their interests were not always identical with each other.

The second enterprise, facilitated by the Department of Agriculture Veterinary Services, involves a partnership between Vleissentraal (a privately owned livestock auction

company) and a land reform farmers' association, established by government and involving a total of 45 different CPAs. The project centres on the erection of mobile stock sale yards in order to auction the cattle of land reform farmers. The farmers' association is given 6% of the sale turnover to subsidize the costs of transporting cattle to and from the sales, and as "prizes for participation" (Hadebe, 2012: pers com). According to one key informant the "concept of the rural stock sale is taking off" (Malonie, 2012: pers com), with government allocating significant resources to it, indicating the preoccupation of the state with market integration as a primary mechanism for agricultural development.

However, while the chairperson of one of the CPAs approves of the plan because it is "time blacks have their own things instead of relying on whites [for cattle selling facilities]" (Mavimbela, 2012; pers com), other farmers on the CPAs would prefer a more strategic risk-minimizing approach: "We should work with the Besters Farmers' Association because they know what the buyers want and together we can supply that" (Shabalala, 2012: pers com). In the event, farmers from the land reform farms, whose production has long been integrated into market circuits, are strategically targeting both the Land Reform Farmers' Association and the Besters Farmers' Association sales with their decisions informed by their reasons for selling and where they think they are likely to get the best prices for their cattle.

Although these developments are lodged locally in discourses of "race" and "success", they are consistent with the broader direction of recent government policies (particularly the Recapitalisation Policy of 2013) that aims to deepen the integration of production on land reform farms into formal commodity chains. As the brief description above makes clear, 'policy on the ground' translates into developing commercial farmers, who produce agricultural commodities for sale, are linked into input and output value chains, and who develop in this direction through partnerships with the private sector. The view of farming "success" here is one that, as Cousins and Scoones (2009: 3) have argued, links together a normative conception of farming as large scale commercial production with the notion of viability, understood as involving economic returns and profitability. This notion of success is key to determining how the state allocates budgets.

For the land reform beneficiaries at Besters, the continuation of government involvement and support depends on compliance with this notion of success, that is, however, often at odds with how households actually structure their farming and livelihoods. As a result, how success is interpreted locally has become a site of struggle, with different farm groupings claiming that they alone are compliant with government's requirements and that other groups are jeopardizing "government's project".

Government says we must farm the land it has given us, but this is difficult because some people do not want to work with us, but if we don't work together, government will not help us (Khoza, 2012: pers com).

Although this struggle is expressed in terms of government wishes, what underlies it is the disjuncture between the policy assumption that a farmer is a single entity (either an individual or a CPA) producing commodities for markets and the reality that farming households are highly differentiated units of production and consumption deploying a multiplicity of livelihood strategies. The next section briefly compares sales data of white, black and CPA cattle owners, which confirm the general conclusion that land reform has successfully increased the income of black farmers in the district, but also suggests that different production rationales exist for different farmer categories.

6.3. Cattle production in the Besters district

Data from 42 cattle sales held in Besters between October 2009 and June 2013 indicate that small black farmers are selling increasing numbers of cattle through formal sales, both in aggregate and as a proportion of total cattle sold in the district. Although there was a decline in total cattle sold between 2011 and 2012, possibly as a result of drought the previous year, the proportion of black owned cattle for sale declined only by 1%. This is shown in Table 14 below.

Table 14: Number of cattle sold at Besters auctions by year and race of owner

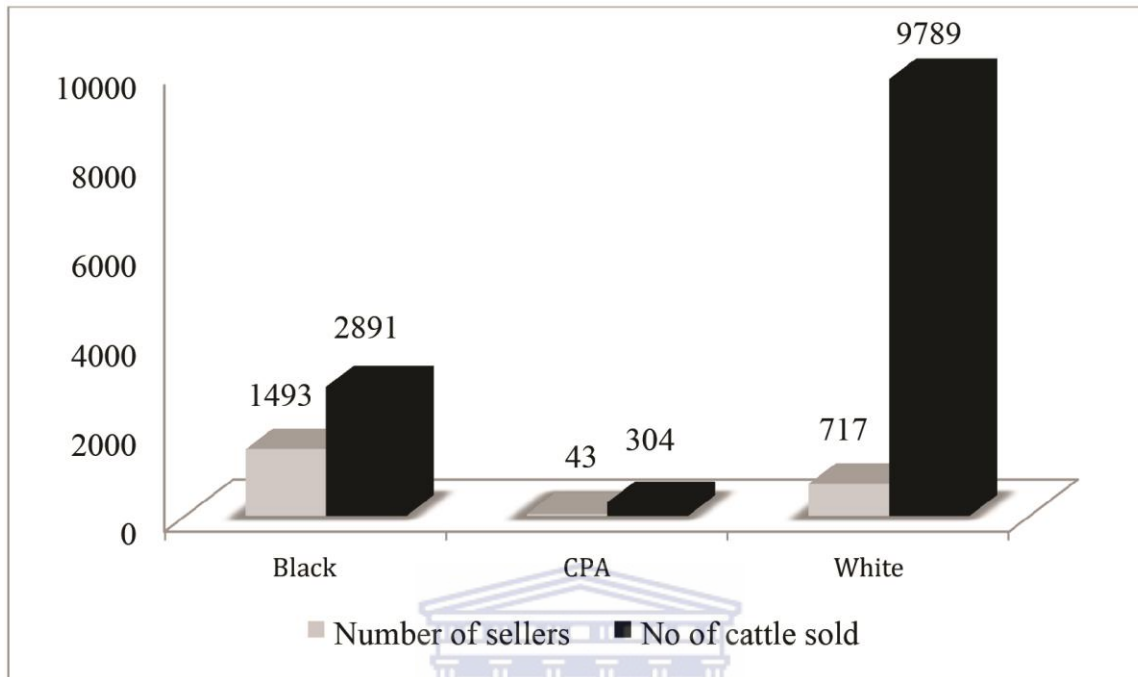
	Black owned	As % of total	White owned	All
2010	568	18%	2557	3125
2011	1083	28%	2818	3901
2012	814	27%	2253	3067
To June 2013	627	24%	1963	2590
Total	3092	24%	9591	12683

Source: Adapted from AAM Cattle Auctioneer data for Besters

However, the pattern of sales is different between black and white farmers. As data in the Table 15 below indicates, there are more black farmers selling cattle in the district than white farmers, but they sell fewer numbers of cattle at a time (a mean of 1.9 per sale event as compared to 13.7 cattle per sale event for white farmers, and 7.1 cattle sale event for CPAs²⁷). In other words, the cattle of white farmers and CPAs are more likely to be sold in lots than are the cattle of black farmers, which tend to be sold either individually or in very small lots. Since the lots at the auctions are organized according to cattle of similar weight, age and grade, the data suggests that white farmers and CPAs produce more animals of similar grade for sale at once than do black farmers. This results from a combination of factors, which are discussed in more detail in the next chapter but include the much larger herd sizes that white farmers and CPAs own, different management regimes and different reasons for selling cattle.

²⁷ The data do not specify the number of times a particular farmer sells cattle during a sale. They only specify the number of sales. Therefore, one farmer may sell more than once during a sale, and each of these “events” counts as one in the data.

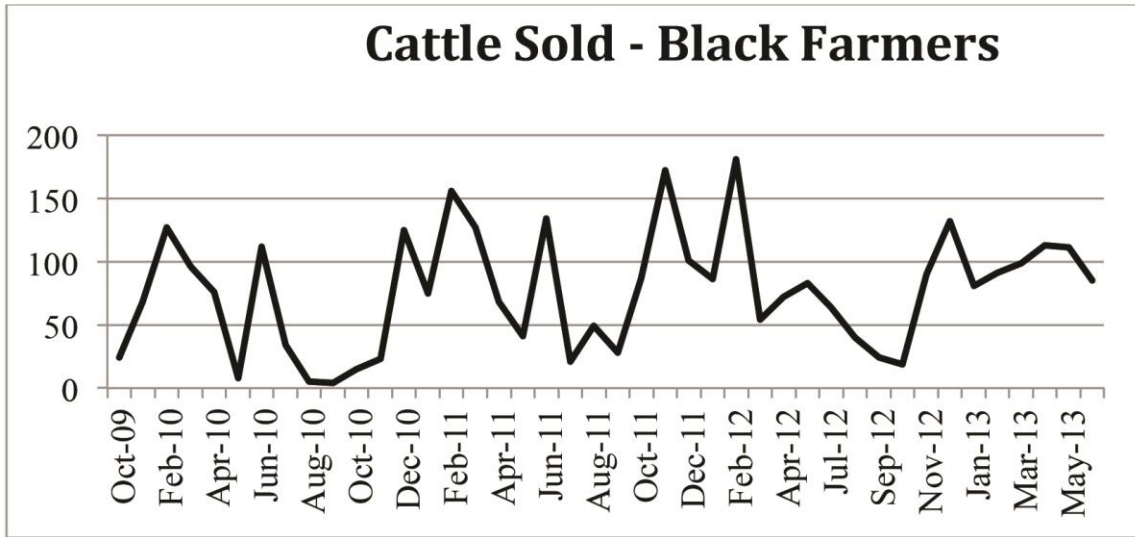
Table 15: Total cattle sold at Besters by farmer type from mid 2009 – mid 2013



Source: Adapted from AAM Cattle Auctioneer data

That the three ‘types of farmer’ have both different management regimes and different reasons for selling cattle is also suggested in the different timing and frequency of sales, as tables 16, 17 and 18 below show. Individual black farmers tend to sell cattle three times a year, in February, June and December, as opposed to once a year at the February weaner sales, which is when most of the cattle owned by white commercial farmers are sold.

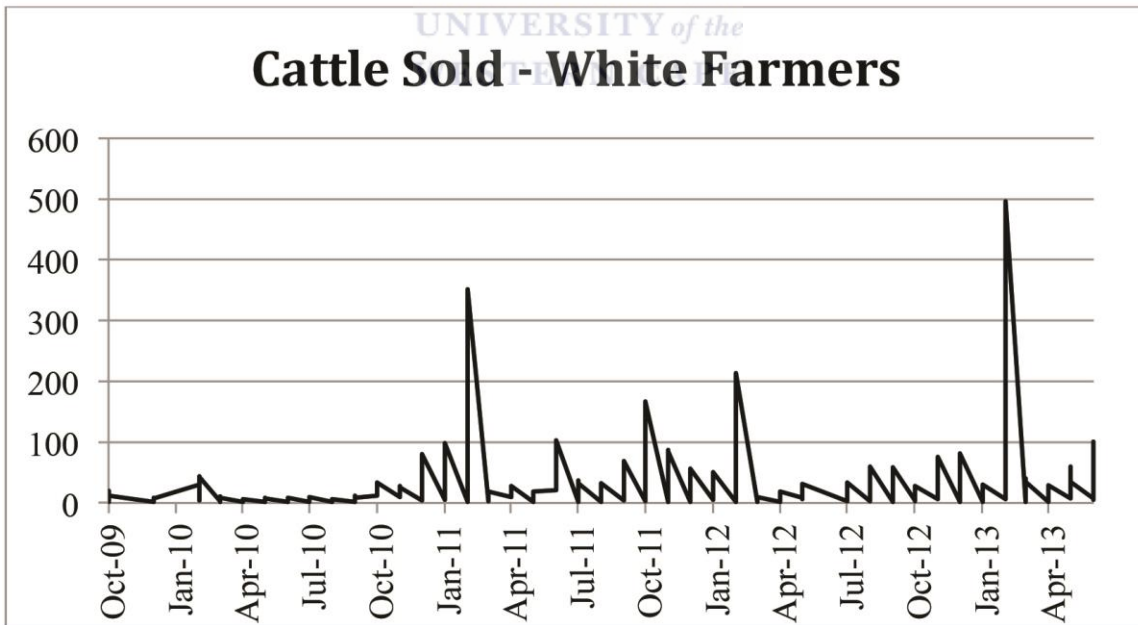
Table 16: Cattle sale frequency: black farmers at Besters



Source: Adapted from AAM Cattle Auctioneer data

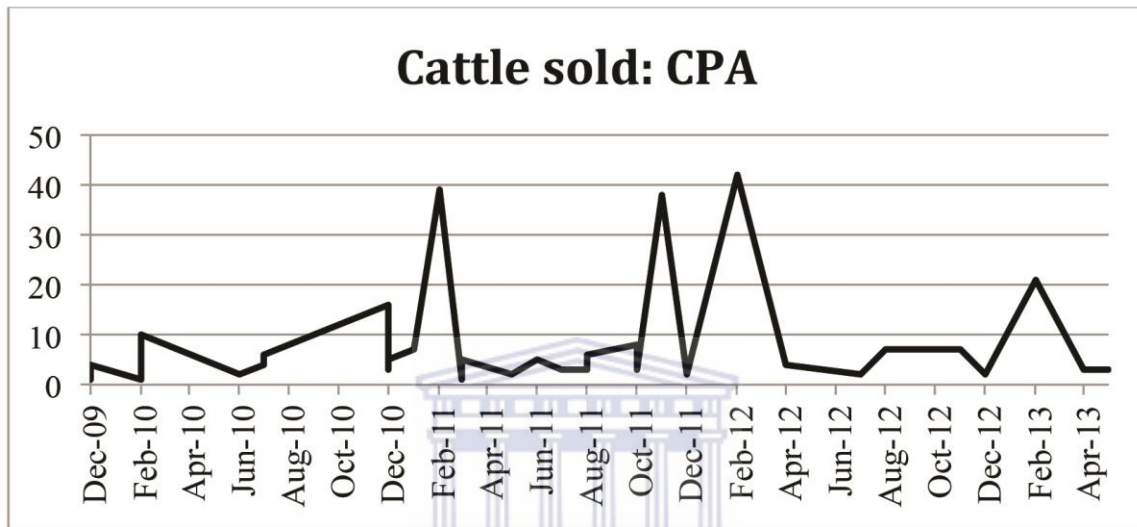


Table 17: Cattle sale frequency: white farmers



The pattern of sale frequency is also different for CPAs, which, like white commercial farmers, tend to sell cattle mainly in February at the weaner sales, but unlike white farmers, also sell at the November/December sales, which corresponds to the time that CPAs distribute their cash dividends to members.

Table 18: Cattle sale frequency: Besters CPA cattle



The cattle sales data shows that while black farmers are selling more cattle than they used to, there are different patterns of sales between them and white commercial farmers and CPAs, which suggests different production dynamics between the farmer categories. The structure of the household is an important determinant of small farm production. In the Besters' land reform context, households also constitute the members of the CPAs, which own the land and cattle enterprises. The structures of both households and of CPAs are thus considered in the next section.

6.4. The structure of households on the Besters farms

The numbers of households on the different CPAs range from three to 28, with a total population of the sampled households (which constitute 86.6% of the population) of 904 people. There are slightly higher numbers of women (30%) relative to men (28%), with large child populations (43%). The households are larger than those described in other

studies²⁸, with a wide range in size: nearly a third of households have 17 or more members, while just on a quarter have one to eight members. While most households are also multi-generational, there are variations amongst the different farms in the composition and size of households, as summarized in Table 19 below.

Table 19: Composition of households in different CPAs at Besters

CPA's*	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	As % of Total
Households (N =)	16	16	28	10	3	24	97	
Households (n =)	15	15	26	7	3	18	84	86.6%
% of HH	18%	18%	31%	8%	4%	21%	100%	
Sum of men	53	43	77	18	18	41	250	28%
Mean no. of men	3.5	2.9	3.0	2.6	6.0	2.3	3.0	
Sum of women	53	47	66	24	19	60	269	30%
Mean no. of women	3.5	3.1	2.5	3.4	6.3	3.3	3.2	
Sum of children	73	63	120	34	31	64	385	43%
Mean no. of children	4.9	4.2	4.6	4.9	10.3	3.6	4.6	
Sum of members	180	153	262	76	68	165	904	
Mean house size	12	10	10	11	23	9	11	
Mean no. of generations	3.0	3.0	2.7	3.0	3.7	2.8	2.9	
Sum present most nights	102	131	178	57	55	126	649	72%
Mean present most nights	6.8	8.7	6.8	8.1	18.3	7.0	7.7	

*1=Zizamela; 2=Nyakanyaka Yomshini; 3=Ngula Kayishazwe; 4=Sizisizwe; 5=Nkuthu Kayishazwe; 6=Mphuzanyoni)

²⁸ The mean of 11 members compares to the 5.4 for the Mnambithi Municipal area as a whole, as noted in Chapter 5. Mhongo and Budlender (2013: 48) report a mean household size in Msinga, KwaZulu-Natal of 8.9 while Tshintsha Amakhaya (2012: 24) reports that only 2.4% of a survey of 1,735 rural and semi-rural households across the country had more than ten members.

Nkuthu Kayishazwe (no. 5 in Table 19) is clearly an outlier in the data in that the mean household size is considerably larger than that of households on the other farms, all three households are ‘compound’ in character (with married sons and their families resident within their fathers’ households), and they have the greatest number of generations (3.7) across the farm population. However, not too much should be made of these differences, since this CPA makes up a small percentage (4%) of the total sample of households, and the different histories of the farms, their location relative to the town of Newcastle, and the particular form of labour tenancy experienced by them in the past are likely explanations of some of the variations.²⁹

In addition to household differences between farms, the gender of the household head also influences the composition of the household and its size, as shown in Table 20 below. Of the households surveyed, 27% were female headed; these are larger than those with men at the head (a mean of 14 versus 10 members), are more likely to be multi-generational, and have more people present most nights (10 versus seven). Although the gender of the household head makes no difference to the percentage of children in the households, male-headed households have a lower mean number of children and slightly greater distribution of men to women (28% versus 27%) than female-headed households, which have a higher proportion of women (31% to 29% men).

The age profile of households, when children are included, is young with 67% of people below the age of 30 years. Since, as is shown later, adults younger than 30 years of age are unlikely to have a secure income source, this percentage indicates a high dependency ratio. Furthermore, although 72% of people are home most nights, only 64% of adults are found at home on most nights, which suggests an even younger population who are

²⁹ For instance, this CPA shares with Ngula Kayishazwe and Sizisizwe a history of a particular form of labour tenancy in which landowners resided in another province, the Free State, and used the farms as labour dormitories and for winter stock grazing. It is also similar to Ngula Kayishazwe and Zizimele in that households were not required to relocate their homes during land reform. Local explanations for this household structure referred to “our culture”, particularly the fact that married sons remain in the homestead until the death of both parents, and to the CPA constitution, which prohibits new households being established on the farm.

present on most nights. This clustering of children and young adults suggests that households are important as consumption hubs.

Table 20: Composition of male and female-headed households at Besters (n = 97)

	Male Headed Households		Female Headed Households		All Households	
	Total	% of total	Total	% of total	Total	% of total
Gender of Head	61	73%	23	27%	84	
Population	587	65%	317	35%	904	
Mean house size	10		14		11	
Sum of men	164	28%	86	27%	250	27.7%
Mean of men	2.7		3.7		3.0	
Sum of women	172	29%	97	31%	269	29.8%
Mean of women	2.8		4.2		3.2	
Sum of children	250	43%	135	43%	385	42.6%
Mean of children	4.1		5.9		4.6	
Mean no present most nights	7		10		8	
Mean generations	2.8		3.1		2.9	

However, as Table 21 below shows, nearly half of adult men and women in these households are between the ages of 30 and 59, with slightly more women (9%) over the age of 60 than men (7%).

Table 21: Demographic features of households at Besters (n= 84)

	Mean	Median	Range	Proportions
Household size	10.8	9	1-29	29% have 1-8 members; 39% have 9-16 members; 32% have 17 and more members
Age of adult males	35.4	31	18-99	45% < 30 years old 49% between 30-59 7% 60 years or >
Age of adult females	36.7	32	18-96	41% < 30 years old 49% between 30-59 9% 60 years or >
No of generations	2.9	3	1-5	25% have two generations 74% have three or more generations
% Adult present all or most nights	64%	74%	0-100%	

In summary then, although households in the sample share some similar characteristics (being unusually large, multi-generational and with a young population), there are also variations in the structure and composition of households across farms and in relation to the gender of the household head. The key reason for the large size of households appears to be the presence of the majority of people at home on most nights, and the high number of children and young adults, confirming that the household is organized as a hub of consumption³⁰, in which farm production may be important.

6.5. The structure of household agricultural production

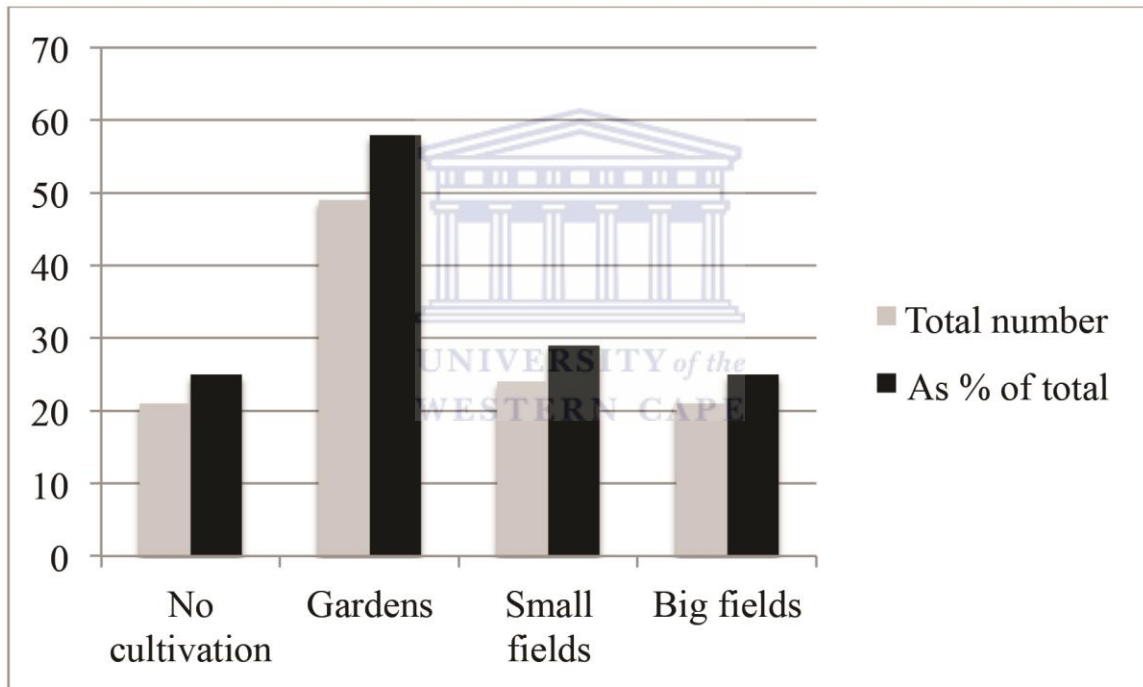
Agricultural production at household level is characterized by a mixed crop and livestock production system, with crops and small livestock produced mainly for household consumption while cattle are produced for ceremony, bride wealth and sales.

³⁰ The notion of a “unit” of consumption obscures the organization of consumption within households, particularly where there are residential sub-units and working, unmarried adults, who fund a part of their own consumption (clothes, leisure, furnishings), and either provide for their own food or make partial contributions to food for the household as a whole (albeit an arena of contestation). A loosely organized hub of consumption, which is subject to ongoing negotiation and contestation, is thus, I suggest, a better description of the social relations.

6.5.1. Crop production

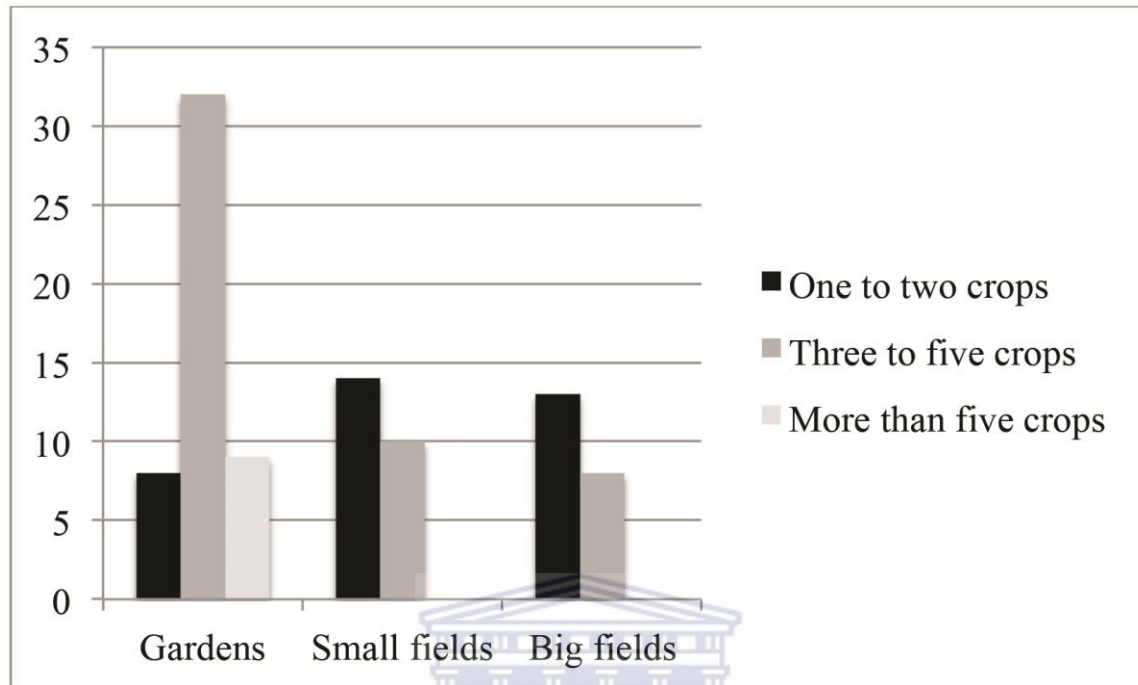
Despite the description of agricultural production by land reform beneficiaries in the Besters district in the previous chapter as comprising mainly cattle farming, 75% of households in the sample survey undertook some cropping. However, of these households, most (78%) planted their crops in small gardens close to their houses, while only 30% cultivated small fields close to homesteads (*isivandi*) and only a quarter cultivated large fields, as shown in Table 22 below.

Table 22: Crop production in big fields, small fields and gardens at Besters



A wide variety of crops are grown in gardens, where most households cultivate more than three crop types, while crop variety is greatly reduced in both large and small fields.

Table 23: No of crop types produced by household by type of arable land at Besters



The most frequently grown crops are pumpkins (38 households), followed by spinach (36), white maize (32), tomatoes (28) and yellow maize (27). Since a wide variety of pumpkins and spinach also grow wild in Besters, it is possible that some of these crops are harvested but are not actively cultivated. Most (61) households grow crops for household consumption but some (21) also said they give some of their harvest away to neighbours and people who ask. Only 11% of households cultivating crops sold a portion of their harvests.

The overall picture of those households who sell surplus crops is one that indicates small amounts of production with low cash returns. There is a range of annual incomes from crop sales, varying from R25 to R1,380 per annum. The two households that generate higher cash incomes from crop sales live on farms with good arable soils, are headed by men who are also CPA chairmen, who, in one case, is the driver of the CPA tractor, and in the other case, is the owner of a tractor. However, in nearly all cases, including these two, income from crops was considered to belong to women.

To illustrate these patterns, some case vignettes are provided. Jabulani Makhuba is a CPA chairperson. His primary income is from being the hired driver of the CPA tractor and cattle sales. His wife, Sibongile, said she receives an income from the sale of crops, among other sources. The household has five large fields and two small fields from which they harvested 3,6 tons of white maize and 100 kgs of beans. They use family labour, stating that all the men, women and children, with Jabulani driving the tractor, provide unpaid labour. They sold some of the harvest in 2010, but could only recall an income of R300 from the beans, which went to Sibongile, although the sale of crops was cited as belonging to Jabulani and the household's most important source of income. This anomaly was not explained at the time and it was only noticed during data analysis.

Similarly, Bonginkosi Khumalo is also a CPA chairperson. His primary income sources are wages from his job as a driver for a construction company and cash from cattle sales. Like Sibongile, his wife, Thobile, receives an income from crop sales, amongst other sources. Since 2009, the Khumalos have used two fields of one hectare each and one small field near the homestead, in which they grow white and yellow maize, potatoes and indigenous pumpkins. Bonginkosi owns a tractor and prepares and plants the fields, with family members providing unpaid labour. In 2010, they harvested 1,4 tons of yellow maize and 1,4 tons of white maize along with approximately 300 kgs of potatoes. From this harvest, Thobile sold 600 kgs of yellow maize and 200 kgs of potatoes for a total of R1,380.

By contrast, Bonisiwe Mpembe sold traditional pumpkins for R150 in 2010. The household also grew a small amount of white maize in a small field near the homestead, which they consumed. Similarly, Kate Thabede, a pensioner and head of a household, sold chillis and various seedlings to generate an additional income of R120 in 2010. The household cultivated a garden and small field with unpaid labour provided by four adult family members, two men and two women. They produced indigenous pumpkins in the small field and eight different vegetable varieties from the garden.

Given the types of crops grown, the types of plots on which they are grown, and the low number of households selling their surplus, it is clear that the primary purpose of crop production at household level on the Besters' farms is own consumption and not

commodity production. Crop production mainly in gardens for own consumption is fairly widespread, although cultivation and yields are erratic everywhere. Consistent with this, household members provide unpaid labour, which, in addition to women's labour, frequently includes the labour of children and men. A secondary rationale relates to social investments in the form of gifts. It isn't clear that these are gifts only of surplus but insufficient data was collected on this to make any further comments.

Despite evidence early in the land reform project of crops grown at CPA level as commodities for sale (as discussed in Chapter 7), crop production at household level has not followed this path. Even where surplus crops are produced and sold, sales are erratic and the quantities and returns are low. Perhaps because of this, the income is generally deemed to belong to women. This pattern is consistent with the bio-resource characteristics of the farms described further in Chapter 7, particularly the relatively low rainfall and the absence of irrigation (see Cousins 2013 for an analysis of crop cultivation in Tugela Ferry, where irrigation exists). The main reasons those households who didn't cultivate crops gave for not using the arable land to which they had access was, firstly, the lack of capital to purchase inputs or equipment and, secondly, drought or the lack of sufficient water for irrigation.

6.5.2. Livestock production

While a range of livestock is produced at household level in Besters, including pigs, turkeys, ducks, donkeys and horses, the main livestock held are cattle, chickens and goats, with over 90% of households owning and producing cattle (94%) and chickens (91%) and more than half producing goats (57%). As Table 24 below indicates, the patterns of ownership vary with each livestock type. Not only are cattle the predominantly owned livestock, with relatively large herds, the range in the herd size owned is also large and the ownership is dominantly male. This is different for chickens, also a dominant livestock type. The mean flock size for chickens is relatively small, the range of hens owned much narrower than cattle ownership, and most chicken owners are women. Goat ownership is more equally distributed between men and women, although

fewer households' own goats, the herds are relatively small and the differences in herd sizes more limited than in relation to cattle in particular.

Table 24: Household livestock ownership at Besters (n=84)

	Cattle	Goats	Chickens
Total household stock	1813	673	1249
% households with stock	94%	57%	91%
Mean stock owned	22	8	16
Median stock owned	18	4	6
Range	154	40	56
% of women owners	24%	37%	87%

These data differ from other recent information about household livestock ownership in South Africa: a small national survey (Tshintsha Amakhaya, 2012) found that 35% of households owned chickens, while 30% owned cattle and less than 20% owned goats. However, the survey also found that 92% of labour tenant households in the AmaJuba district of KwaZulu-Natal owned cattle, although the herd sizes were smaller than in Besters, with a range of eight to 11 cattle per household (*ibid*: 57-9). Similarly to Besters, most of these labour tenant households owned chickens (95%) and goats (66%).

The Bester's data also differ from those on cattle ownership in the traditional areas of Msinga and Mathintha in KwaZulu-Natal, which shares some environmental characteristics with Besters, although it is drier. There, goats are the dominantly owned livestock, with only 56% and 23% (in the two areas, respectively) of households owning cattle and mean herd sizes of 5.6 and 2.3 per household (Letty, 2011: pers com). This would seem to indicate that the widespread ownership of relatively large numbers of cattle at Besters is consistent with the labour tenant history of the area. However, an analysis of the patterns of cattle ownership across the farms, while partially confirming the significance of labour tenancy, also indicates that other factors are at play.

Table 25: Household cattle ownership across the CPAs at Besters

	1*	2	3	4	5	6	Total
% of households with cattle	81%	94%	100%	88%	100%	100%	94%
Total no of HH cattle	200	338	666	101	197	311	1813
Mean no of cattle: all	13	23	25	14	66	14	22
Mean no of cattle: owners	17	24	25	17	66	14	23
Range of cattle /homestead	0-50	0-44	1-154	0-23	38-94	2-51	0-154

***1= Zizamele, 2= Nyaka Yomshini, 3= Ngula Kayishazwe, 4= Sizisizwe, 5= Nkuthu Kayishazwe, 7= Mphuzanyoni**

Zizamele, with the lowest cattle ownership percentage per household, not only has bioresource characteristics that least support cattle production (discussed further in Chapter 7), it also does not share the labour tenant history of the other farms. The households at Sizisizwe, with the next lowest cattle ownership percentages, however, do have a labour tenant history, but land reform resulted in significant relocation of homes to a farm with the smallest land to household ratio. On the other hand, every household at Ngula Kayishazwe, Nkuthu Kayishazwe and Mphuzanyoni owns some cattle. This is the result both of a history of labour tenancy and the different CPA production paths followed on the farms after land reform. In particular, these differences involved the disbursement of CPA-owned cattle to households at Ngula Kayishazwe and Nkuthu Kayishazwe and the payment of annual CPA dividends to households in the form of heifers at Mphuzanyoni. Since the history of labour tenancy and the production decisions on each farm are discussed in detail elsewhere (farm histories in Chapters 5 and 8, and production dynamics in Chapters 7, 9 and 10), suffice it to note here that cattle ownership patterns on the farms reflect both broader district and local farm histories in terms of labour tenancy, as well as subsequent CPA decisions about production. Labour tenancy is an important contextual history but it is not the only determinant of differential cattle ownership on the land reform farms today.

Furthermore, differences in cattle ownership are apparent between male and female-headed households as well as individual men and women. While some women do own

cattle, men and male headed households are more likely to own cattle, own most of the cattle on the farms, have overall bigger individual herds and a wider range in herd size than do individual women and women headed households. This is summarized in Table 26 below.

Table 26: Gender differences in cattle ownership at Besters

Cattle owning categories	Total	% cattle owners	Structure of herds owned		
			Total	Range	Mean size
Male headed household	61	95%	1374	154	22.5
Female headed household	23	91%	439	94	19
Individual adult men	249	38%	1364	77	14.4
Individual adult women	269	13%	446	76	12.7

Thus, although female-headed households make up just over a third of all households (35%), and there are more adult women in both male and female-headed households, the distribution of cattle ownership is, in the main, heavily in favour of men and male-headed households. However, as Table 27 below shows, this changes in female-headed households, where individual women own more cattle than do men. While one explanation is that cattle ownership is concentrated in the head of the household³¹, it would also seem to be the case that the gender of the household head works more generally to shape the distribution of cattle ownership between men and women members of the household. The most extreme differences in men and women's ownership of cattle occur in male-headed households, where individual men own 87% of the cattle.

³¹ While observations during ethnographic research confirm this, it also became apparent to me that although normatively speaking, cattle ownership is said to reside in the head of house, in actuality, individual members have claims of ownership to animals in the household herd.

Table 27: Gendered structure of cattle ownership by household head at Besters

Gender of HH	Household members			Cattle owned by women		Cattle owned by men		Total cattle owned	
	Men	Women	Total	Total	As %	Total	As %	Total	As %
Male	165	171	336	180	13%	1204	87%	1384	76%
Female	84	98	182	266	62%	160	38%	426	24%
Total	249	269	518	446	25%	1364	75%	1810	100%

However, there are also some indications that this pattern of gendered cattle ownership is in flux. As is discussed further in Chapter 8, some households are ensuring that both married and unmarried adult daughters inherit cattle (Gogo Msimanga, 2012: pers com) along with sons. Furthermore, some women (sisters and wives) are cattle owners in their own right and can decide to sell these cattle and use the money as they see fit. “I can sell them because they are cattle I bought with my own money, but I will consult with my husband” (Ndaba, 2011: pers com). When I sought to clarify how it has come about that women are now independent cattle owners, I was told: “Since many men can no longer find work, and we women have child grants, we can now buy cattle in order to feed our children” (Ndaba, *ibid*). Nevertheless, this shift should not be exaggerated. One woman explained light-heartedly that husbands can easily take cattle that belong to their wives and use them to pay *ilobolo* for a second wife, indicating limits to the notion of women’s exclusive and individual ownership claims over cattle. (See Appendix 1, which reflects on this conversation.)

While the ownership of livestock is important, what households do with their livestock is also important in determining the nature of production and its rationale, and here too, there are differences between the types of livestock kept.

Table 28: What households at Besters do with their livestock

Uses of livestock in 2010	Cattle		Goats		Chickens	
	Number	% total	Number	% total	Number	% total
No of households that sold livestock	62	74%	18	21%	18	21%
Total livestock sold	201	11%	52	8%	752	74%
Proportion sold at stock sales	139	69%	0	0	0	0
Proportion sold informally	61	30%	all	100%	all	100%
No households consuming stock	30*	36%	25**	30%	61***	75%
Total stock for home consumption	56	3%	82	11%	2036	199%

* (n=84), **(n=82); *** (n=81)

In Table 28 above, the percentage of total livestock sold and consumed at home was calculated as a percentage of the total livestock owned at the time of the survey. This can only be indicative of the relative importance of sales and consumption in small livestock, since for goats and chickens their greater rates of reproduction over a year means total stock numbers fluctuate more rapidly than they do for cattle. For instance, in the case of chickens, the amount consumed over the year was nearly double the amount owned at the time of the survey, indicating regular off-take from the flocks.

While all the livestock types are both consumed and sold, there are differences between livestock, the most important being that firstly, most households sell cattle whereas only a quarter of households sell chickens and goats; secondly, cattle are most likely to be sold at organised auctions whereas goats and chickens are sold on local or informal markets; and, thirdly, most households consume chickens in relatively large quantities whereas only a third of households consumed cattle, and this involved only 3% of the total herd. (The role of cattle consumption in ceremonies is considered in further detail in Chapter 8).

The financial value of these different uses also indicates their different production rationales. The mean price received at the Besters' stock sales for cattle sold by black farmers and CPAs in 2010 was R4,507 per head (AAM auction records). Using this figure, the total value for cattle sold from the six farms in 2010 is about R906,000³²; and the value of cattle consumed is R252,000, or just over a quarter of the total sale value. In terms of goat sales, the mean price received for goats on the farms was R705 (own survey data). The total value of goats sold was therefore approximately R36,700, while the use value of consumed stock was R57,800, or just over one and a half times the sale value. With a mean price for chicken of R48.20 (broilers sold mostly for R50 a chicken, while the price of Zulu chickens was mostly between R30 and R40 a chicken), the total value of sold chickens across the farms was approximately R36,300, and the use value of consumed chickens was R98,100, or more than two and a half times the sale value. Furthermore, the sale of chickens was highly concentrated in one household that sold more than half of all chickens sold (64% of chickens sold) and earned 66% of the total sale value. These relative values and their distribution across households suggest that cattle are more important as cash generating commodities than are goats or chickens, whose main value is in their use as consumption.

Shackleton *et al* (2000a,b), however, have argued that this method of value calculation under-values the multiple uses of livestock, including manure, milk, traction, skins and ceremonial distribution of meat, as discussed in Chapter 3. Quantifiable data were not collected on these other uses of livestock in Besters. However, from my observations when I stayed with a number of households, it was apparent that although cows are milked, this occurs only in summer when milk is abundant, and only one or two cows are milked and mainly for children's consumption. The cattle at Besters are therefore not primarily 'dairy herds' ie kept mainly for milk production, in Tapson's sense (1991). Furthermore, of the six households I stayed with, the two that have gardens use goat

³² Note that this value is higher than the cash value for sold farm produce that I recorded in the survey, which, in 2010 was R843,276. There are a number of possible explanations for this discrepancy. Firstly, it's possible that households understated the income from cattle sales in the survey. Secondly, since the black farmers referred to in the AAM data do not all reside on the Bester's land reform farms, it is possible that there are factors here that account for the elevated mean prices. Nevertheless, the figures are sufficiently close to indicate that the income earned from cattle sales on the land reform farms lies somewhere between R840,000 and R906,000.

manure, because they kraal their goats, but not their cattle. While some crop producers do use cattle manure as their primary fertilizer (Mabizela, 2012: pers com), and thus do kraal their cattle, others indicated that they purchase fertilizer for their fields (Khumalo, 2012: pers com). In only one household did I observe the use of oxen for animal traction, while other households either hire CPA tractors or cite the absence of tractors as a reason for non-cultivation. Similarly, there appears to be little use of cattle skins, except for one man who makes whips for sale from skins. The value estimations of cattle based on sale price therefore are arguably slightly lower than the value derived from multiple uses, but not significantly so. Nevertheless, as Chapter 8 shows, cattle and goats do have ceremonial and social (lineage) values that cannot be determined from monetary values alone.

There are also gendered differences in the pattern of sales: women goat owners, for instance, sold fewer goats per household than men (a mean of 2.2 goats in 2010 whereas men sold a mean of 3.2 goats), and men tended to receive higher prices than women (at a mean of R733 per goat as opposed to a mean of R677 per goat sold by women). Of the cattle sold, just under a third (31%) belonged to women (including women heads of house) but (even with the exclusion of an outlier from the data³³) women were more likely than men to sell at formal stock sales (65% of the cattle women sold as opposed to 46% of the cattle men sold) than on informal markets. While this appears to be counter-intuitive to the visible racial and gendered structure of formal cattle auctions³⁴, it nevertheless suggests that women stockowners favour the more impersonal and mediated environment of the formal cattle market over the face-to-face negotiations of prices and extraction of payments from mainly male buyers in local informal markets, despite the

³³ The outlier refers to 26 cattle that were sold in 2010 and that, according to the survey, belonged to the female head of house, a widow. However, I subsequently stayed with the household and discovered that the cattle ownership was distributed between members of the family, and that the cattle sold in that year belonged both to the head of house and to her son, who was in the process of getting married. This is discussed further in Chapter 7, in the reference to the marriage of Sbu Msimanga.

³⁴ I attended a number of cattle auctions at the Bester's Farmer's Association stock yards where auctions were conducted by the private company, AAM. Not only were the auctions dominantly male affairs – in terms of buyers, sellers, auctioneers and workers – but the racial divisions were inscribed in the spaces occupied by white and black men, with white men tending to sit on the benches in the auction ring whereas black men gathered outside until their cattle were being sold. A black woman at a sale who had come to sell a cow admitted to me that she found the race-gender overlay extremely intimidating.

often better net prices secured in local markets. This was further confirmed in field observations where all transactions of sales of cattle from homes where I was staying involved only male heads of house in negotiations with the buyers.

The production, ownership and use of livestock at Besters is thus shaped by a number of factors: the type of livestock, the bio-characteristics of the land (discussed in detail in Chapter 7), the history of labour tenancy, and post-land reform production decisions made on each farm. Intertwined with all these factors are strongly gendered differences in ownership, production purpose and market participation. At the extremes, women tend to own chickens and men cattle; women tend to use their livestock for home consumption and men to sell for cash, and women tend to receive lower prices for their stock than do men. However, these extremes are not absolute and the variations and differences between them are significant. While cattle are often viewed as the property of men, nearly a quarter of the household herds at Besters are owned by women, not simply by virtue of their position as widowed household heads, but also individually as wives, sisters and daughters. Furthermore, the existence of regular cattle auctions provides women the opportunity to sell their cattle without having to engage male buyers in the personal transactions involved in local markets, which appear to discriminate against them when it comes to prices obtained for goats. While chickens are mainly produced for home consumption, there is some evidence of emerging concentration in the production of broilers for sale, an area of production that nevertheless continues to be dominated by women's ownership.

6.6. Livelihoods on the farms

Farming is one of a number of livelihood strategies that households and individuals engage in, with fewer people securing incomes from farming than from employment and social grants. Furthermore, farming income is obtained mainly from household farming, which is at odds with government's prioritization of large-scale commercial farming at CPA level as described above.

More than half of all adults on the farms receive an income from employment. The second most frequent income source is social grants, with less than a quarter of adults deriving an income from their own farming and a mere 5% deriving an income from either CPA dividends or employment. These findings are summarized in Table 29 below, which also confirms the decreasing significance of remittances to rural household income (Biyase, 2012).

Table 29: Income sources and unemployment rates at Besters (n = 84 households)

	Total household members	Mean members per household	As % of total adults (n=519)
Employment	282	3.4	54%
Social grants	198	2.4	38%
Remittances	72	0.9	14%
CPA wages and dividends	24	0.3	5%
Own farming	110	1.3	21%
Totals	686	5	132%*
Unemployed and looking for work	95	1.1	18%

*Some adults have more than one source of income.

The relatively low number of people deriving an income from farm production is not inconsistent with other studies on income sources amongst rural households (see Tshinsha Amakhaya, 2012: 38), although Dubb (2013: 123-4) found that among sugar cane growers on the KwaZulu-Natal north coast, social grants were a more frequent form of income than was formal employment. On the Besters farms, the rates of employment are also higher than for the municipal area as whole (54% as opposed to 30%), and the unemployment rates lower (18% as opposed to 30%). (IDP, 2012: 123). It is not clear

why this is the case, although jobs on neighbouring commercial farms and on CPAs provide permanent jobs to 12% of adults, which may partially account for it. Nevertheless, the important point is that employment and social grants are more frequent sources of income than is farming, and particularly farming at CPA level.

Wage employment represents a significant importation of cash into the economy of the farms, generating more income than farming and social grants combined. Table 30 below indicates this trend³⁵.

Table 30: Total household monthly income at Besters from different sources (n=84)

	Employment n= 60	Social grants n= 79	Own farming n= 65	Total
Sum	R210,592	R130,600	R67,311	R408,503
As % of total	52%	32%	16%	100%
Mean	R3,509	R1,653	R1,035	
Range	R400 - R16,200	R250-R6,250	R15-R7,833	
Top quartile income	54% of total	54% of total	71% of total	
Bottom quartile income	7.5% of total	6% of total	3% of total	

*Employment includes permanent, casual, contract and farm wage work on CPAs but excludes self-employment.

**Own farming includes income from sales of household cattle, goats and poultry and crops.

While the distribution of monthly income across households from the three primary sources (employment, social grants and own farming) is highly uneven, income from own farming is the most unevenly distributed. Table 30 above shows that a quarter of households earn more than half of the income generated from each of the various sources. This is even more extreme in the case of household farming, where a quarter of

³⁵ The actual income from wages reflected in the table is, however, substantially understated as I excluded the income of 38% of wage workers because the respondent did not know how much they earned.

households appropriate 71% of the total farm income. On the lower end, a quarter of households earn 6-8% of the total incomes for employment and social grants while in farming, they earn only 3% of the total income. This extreme difference is brought out sharply when one looks at this income in relation to the household size: in the top earning 10% of households, the farm income distributed across all household members amounts to R397 per person in a month, while in the lowest earning 10% of households, the farm income is a mere R4 per household member.

However, this data understates the distribution for the farm population as whole since it includes only those households actually earning an income from a particular source. The distributional differences between households are therefore even more pronounced when households that do not earn any income from a particular source are included in the analysis. For example, households in the lowest earning quartile received 2% of the total employment income, and an annual total of R275 from farming. This distribution is less extreme in the case of social grants since only five households had access to no grant at all.

In addition to the differential distribution of income across households, wage workers are further fragmented as a class along gendered and generational lines, in terms of who is employed, in what types of employment and in the remuneration received. Not only are men more likely to be employed than women, they are also more likely to be employed in secure, permanent jobs and to receive higher remuneration than women. Although 40% of women have some form of employment, their income range in all categories is lower than for men, and they are much more likely than men to be self-employed without employees, or to have temporary work in government work programmes. Despite the employment marginalization of women, men occupy all the jobs created by the CPAs. Table 31 below shows these differences.

Table 31: Distribution of wage work by gender at Besters (n= 518 adults)

Employment type	Women (n=269)			Men (n=249)			Total jobs
	Sum of jobs	As % of total	Income range p/m	Sum of jobs	As % of total	Income range p/m	
Permanent work	43	40%	R500- R3,000	64	60%	R700- R13,000	107
Temporary, contract, casual	23	36%	R300- R1,485	41	64%	R300- R5,000	64
CPA farm work	0	0%	0	9	100%	R550- R1,400	9
Self employed no employees	27	71%	R25- R1,700	11	29%	R150- R14,000	38
Government work programmes	8	89%	R42 – R470	1	11%	R67	9
Total	108	46%		126	54%		227

The possibility of acquiring wage work, and the type of wage work, is also fragmented by age, as shown in Table 32 below. People between the ages of 31 and 45, of whom 60% are employed, occupy most of the jobs (43%) across all types of work, except for casual, contract or temporary work. Over half of the next age group (46-60 years) is also employed but, since they are a smaller group in total, they occupy a smaller percentage (17%) of the jobs. The largest and worst off age group is younger adults (aged between 18 and 30 years) with only a third in any kind of employment, and with over half occupying the more marginal and less secure jobs. As would be expected, people 61 years and older have the lowest number of jobs, but nevertheless, nearly a quarter of this age category is employed.

Table 32: Distribution of wage work by age group at Besters (n = 518 adults)

Employment type	18-30 years (n= 247)		31-45 years (n=162)		46 – 60 years (n=68)		61 years or > (n= 41)		Adults (n=518)
	Sum of jobs	As % of total	Sum of jobs	As % of total	Sum of jobs	As % of total	Sum of jobs	As % of total	
Permanent work	40	37%	45	42%	19	18%	3	3%	107
Temporary, contract, casual	35	56%	24	36%	5	8%	0	0%	64
CPA farm work	0	0%	4	44%	4	44%	1	11%	9
Self employed no employees	7	18%	20	53%	8	21%	3	8%	38
Government work programmes	1	11%	4	44%	2	22%	2	22%	9
Total job distribution/age	83	37%	97	43%	38	17%	9	4%	227

Farm income shows a similarly gendered distribution. Although the mean individual monthly income from farming to men and women is similar, as shown in Table 33 below, the share of total monthly farm income that went to men as a group was nearly double what women as a group received, with men receiving a total of R44, 425 in a month while women received R22, 886.

Table 33: Distribution of farm income by gender at Besters (n= 518 adults)

Type of farm income	Women (n=269)				Men (n=249)				Total (518)
	Sum of earners	As % of total	Income range p/m	Mean income p/m	Sum of earners	As % of total	Income range p/m	Mean income p/m	Total earners
Cattle sales	14	22%	R150 – R7,833	R1,541	50	78%	R125 – R4,333	R872	64
Goat sales	4	19%	R50 – R200	R143	17	81%	R38 – R492	R156	21
Chicken sales	15	79%	R3 – R2,200	R230	4	21%	R3 – R125	R49	19
Crop sales	6	60%	R4 – R115	R37	4	40%	R3 – R1000	R354	10
Total	39	34%		R808.68	75	66%		R875.74	114

Although 114 incomes from the different farm products are recorded, only 79 individuals (51 men and 28 women) earned an income from farming because a number of them generated incomes from more than one farm product. Indeed, men who sold crops and goats in all instances except two also sold cattle. In the overall distribution of income, women initiated only 14% of sales of agricultural products as compared with men initiating 30% of sales; and, although there are more women than men in households, only a third (34%) of all of sellers of agricultural products are women.

Table 34: Ownership of, and income from livestock by age, at Besters (n = 518)

Type of livestock	18-30 years (n=247)		31-45 years (n=162)		46 – 60 years (n=68)		61 years or > (n=41)		Adults (n=518)	
	% of total owned	% of total income	% of total owned	% of total income	% of total owned	% of total income	% of total owned	% of total income	Total owned	Total income
Cattle	6%	4%	32%	29%	40%	39%	22%	28%	1810	R59,458
Goat	5%	2%	29%	22%	38%	62%	27%	15%	590	R3,021
Chicken	4%	0	36%	72%	34%	24%	26%	4%	1249	R3,547
Total	5%	4%	33%	31%	38%	39%	25%	26%	3649	R66,026

Note 1: percentages do not always equal 100 because of rounding.

Note 2: Total incomes do not correspond exactly to household income because the distribution of livestock across individuals in the household was not always known.

As Table 34 above shows, both the income from farming and the ownership of livestock is similarly unequally distributed across age groups, with younger adults owning significantly fewer livestock and earning less of the total share from sales of those stock. The age groups earning most of the farm income share are firstly, people aged 46 to 60 years, followed by the slightly younger group aged 31 to 45 years. Between them, these categories secure 70% of all farm income earned. However, it is also significant that pensioners over the age of 61 secure just over a quarter of the total income. Table 33 also shows that cattle ownership and income from sales is concentrated in the 31-60 year age groups.

The number of individuals in each of the age groups further skews this distributional pattern. Although young adults make up nearly half of the total adult population, they own a fraction of the stock and a very small share of farm income. On the other end of the scale, the oldest age group constitutes only 8% of the total population and yet it owns a quarter of the livestock and appropriates a quarter of the total share of farm income. Finally, in both younger age categories the share of livestock ownership is slightly less

than the share of income earned, while this is reversed in the older two age categories. This suggests that younger adults are more likely to conserve livestock than to sell it, whereas older age categories are more slightly more likely to sell their livestock.

The gender distribution of farm property and income illustrated in the tables above is reversed when it comes to social grants. Of the 193 grants individuals on the farms received, 71% were child or foster grants, of which 98% were distributed to women. Similarly, women received most of the old age state pensions (68%), and only disability grants were more evenly distributed between men and women (with 55% going to women).

While this description of livelihoods shows that the farmers at Besters are more likely to be earning an income from wage work than farming, there are also important distributional issues across all income sources. A small number of households in each income source appropriate most of the income share from each source, a distribution that is particularly uneven when it comes to farm income. Furthermore, age and gender shape key aspects of distribution in both farming and employment. Men in the age group ranging from 31 to 60 years are more likely than women and younger men and women to own and sell large numbers of cattle and goats; and they are also more likely to work in permanent employment and to earn higher incomes than women and young men and women. Not only is farming not the primary livelihood for most people at Besters, the category of 'farmer' is also highly differentiated in terms of livestock ownership and income generated, with distinct divisions along gender and generational lines.

6.7. Conclusion

A central argument in the neoclassical economists approach to agricultural development (Lipton, 1977: 72; Lipton and Lipton, 1994: 24; Eastwood *et al*, 2006), as described in Chapter 3, is that small farmers achieve both equity and efficiency outcomes because they use household labour more intensively on smaller areas of land. The argument rests on the erroneous assumption that small farmers are, in fundamental respects, homogeneous (Byers, 2004b: 36; Hall, 2010: 26; Dyer, 2004: 51). Similarly, the

arguments of the radical political economists (Wolpe, 1972; Legassick and Wolpe, 1976; Morris, 1976: 309) that the various contradictions in the relationship between labour and capital under capitalism will, in time, necessarily force small farmers off the land into wage work amounts to the equally erroneous thesis of “linear proletarianisation” with its assumed “mass of undifferentiated proletarians” (Levin and Neocosmos, 1987: 69).

Contrary to both the neoclassical and radical political economist views, the descriptions of small farm production and mixed livelihoods in this chapter have shown that there is no *a priori* or necessary logic at work. Far from being a homogeneous group, small farm producers are highly differentiated in terms of both livestock ownership and the income they receive from farming, and despite processes of proletarianisation, many households continue to rely on farming as a key component of their survival. Furthermore, notwithstanding the attribution of success associated with the commercial production on the farms under land reform (Binswanger et al, 2008), the actual income contribution to individual households from CPA production is negligible.

While the farming at Besters is a ‘mixed system’ in that it includes crops and livestock, cattle farming is the dominant form of production with most households owning and selling cattle, and in greater numbers than most research in rural South Africa generally indicates, and with some evidence that it is expanding in the district. Furthermore, crop and small livestock production is geared mainly at shoring up household consumption, while cattle production is geared mainly at generating cash, but also for ceremonial purposes. While this structure of production has features of continuity with labour tenancy, the differences in the distribution of livestock ownership and income from cattle sales between households, men and women, and age groups indicate powerful forces of differentiation at work.

When farming is compared with the two other significant livelihood strategies on the farms, namely, securing wage employment and social grants, it is shown to be the least successful strategy in generating income. Like household farm production, however, the incomes secured from employment and social grants are distributed very unevenly across households, men and women and old and young adults.

However, neither the empirical descriptions provided above, nor the accounts of the neoclassical and radical political economists, provide an adequate explanation for the social processes and mechanisms generating these differences. In particular, these descriptions beg the questions of whether and how the different livelihood strategies articulate with each other in influencing the emergence of social differences; and how this articulation manifests in land reform contexts where the primary focus of production is cattle, and not crops with their higher labour requirements. In Chapter 7, I begin to explain some of these underlying processes by examining the emergence of hybrid farm systems, in which CPA beef production and household cattle production for multiple purposes occur on the same farm, creating competition over common resources, particularly rangelands.



7. THE EMERGENCE OF HYBRID FARM SYSTEMS AT BESTERS

In Chapter 5 I suggested that the production architecture of the labour tenant farms in Besters, which involved managing both the large commercial herds of the landowner-capitalist and the many smaller mixed purpose herds of the labour tenant farmers, was duplicated during land reform implementation. However, the actual implementation of land reform on particular farms and the subsequent decisions taken by CPAs in relation to collective cattle production have resulted in wide variety of farm specific arrangements for managing cattle production. Despite the production system under labour tenancy being familiar to many land reform beneficiaries at Besters, government evaluations of farm production on the land reform farms have focused on the technical skills required to manage commercial beef herds. This chapter examines these assessments and the criteria used, and argues that what is neglected is an analysis of the social underpinnings of hybrid farm systems and how specific adaptations and farm trajectories reflect struggles and contestations over productive resources.

The chapter begins by examining what the members of the different CPAs received from land reform and what they have done with these resources. This section shows that while land reform on the Besters farms was characterized by distributional inequalities, these inequalities are an important but insufficient explanation of why and how production was reorganized on the farms after land transfer. This reorganization, which took different forms on each of the farms, is the outcome of struggles over the purposes of farming and the farm systems that support different production purposes. Although in some cases the farming system is geared heavily towards subsistence with some sales while in others it is primarily geared towards commercial production, in all cases the farming systems show evidence of hybridization. The chapter concludes by arguing that just as this hybridization is the outcome of struggle, so it creates the dynamic context in which processes of social differentiation take shape, and which are examined in subsequent chapters.

7.1. Changes in cattle and crop production at CPA level

The description of the Besters Land Reform Project as “successful” referred to in Chapters 1 and 5 ignores an important factor in the subsequent changes in production arrangements that took place on the farms, namely, the uneven distribution of land reform resources across farms. These included purchases of cattle and agricultural machinery and the distribution and suitability of land for crop and cattle production.

Only nine of the 13 CPAs to whom land was transferred received cattle as part of the agricultural development component of the land reform project, and the numbers of cattle purchased for each of these CPAs ranged from 31 to 181 head. Although the total number of cattle (922) purchased for the project amounts to a mean of 5.4 per household, the mean distribution range per household per farm is 23.7 cattle, as the 2007 data in Table 35 below show.



Table 35: Changes in household numbers and CPA cattle over time

CPA	No of households		No of CPA cattle		Mean CPA cattle /household	
	2007	2012	2007	2012	2007	2012
Babanani	7	7	-	-	-	-
Ingula - Kayishazwe	26	27	129	0	5	0
Inkuthu - Kayishazwe	3	3	71	15	23.7	5
Izimpofo	3	4	0	0	0	
Masikhane	19	26	105	0	5.5	0
Masibumbane	9	7	0	0	0	0
Mphuzanyoni	22	24	165	278	7.5	11.6
Nyakanyaka – yomshini	16	10/16	181	200	11.3	20
Phumzile	17	17	0	0	0	0
Shayamoya	14	12	151	0	10.8	0
Sokesibone	7	7	31	0	4.4	0
Sizisizwe	13	10	56	36	4.3	3.6
Zizamele	14	17	30	0	2.1	0
TOTALs	170	177	922	529	5.4	11.3

Sources: 2007 data: Binswanger et al, 2007; 2012 data: ADA, 2012a&b and own survey data.

By 2012 only four of the nine CPA cattle recipients still owned cattle collectively, namely Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Mphuzanyoni, Nkuthu Kayishazwe and Sizisizwe. One, Nyakanyaka Yomshini, had divided CPA members into two groups, with one group retaining its share of cattle as a collectively owned enterprise while the other group reallocated its share of CPA cattle to households, with each receiving 18 head. Another, Nkuthu Kayishazwe, had reallocated most of the cattle it owned to households, retaining a small herd to cover collective farm costs. The cattle of Sizisizwe CPA had declined

over the five years from the 56 head received from government to 36 cattle, and only Mphuzanyoni had retained and expanded the original grant herd. The total combined herd size of all CPA cattle was 529 animals in 2012; a mere 57% of the original number, but the mean per household on the participating farms had grown to 11.3 cattle, with household means of 20, 11.5, 5 and 3.6 per farm.

The allocation of tractors and other equipment to the CPAs purchased with LRAD grants was also uneven, and affected the extent to which different CPAs were able to undertake collective crop production, as Table 36 shows.

Table 36: Tractor and machinery distributions across the farms

CPAs*	No of beneficiary households	Number of tractors and other equipment purchased	
		Tractors	Other
Nkuthu Kayishazwe	3	1	3
Nyakanyaka	16	2	8
Mphuzanyoni	22	1	6
Ngula Kayishazwe	26	1	6
Zizimele	14	0	2
Sizisizwe	13	1	2
TOTAL	94	6	27

Note: Nyakanyaka CPA has also subsequently purchased a baler, plough and planter from profits.

Of the six CPAs in my study, four received one tractor each, one (Nyakanyaka Yomshini) received two tractors and another (Zizimele) no tractors. However, the Binswanger et al (2007: vi, 24) report states that most of the income earned within a year of project implementation was from the sale of maize and soybeans combined with income from land leased to commercial farmers. An appendix in the report (ibid, 59) shows a table

reflecting income earned by seven of the CPAs but this is two months after the first weaner sales and the table does not differentiate between sources of income. Nevertheless, given the amounts involved, it is likely that the incomes of at least three of the CPAs (Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Ngula Kayishazwe and Masakhane) are combinations of crop and weaner sales and income from leased land.

By 2010, however, crop production at CPA level had undergone a number of changes:

- Ngula Kayishazwe was no longer producing crops as a CPA, and the arable lands had been re-allocated as fields to households for their own production.
- At Nkuthu Kayishazwe, the arable fields had been allocated to individual households and were grazed by both household and CPA cattle after harvest.
- Mphuzanyoni, Zizamela and Sizisizwe had no CPA arable lands. However, Mphuzanyoni harvested *eragrostis curvula* as winter hay for CPA and household cattle.

Nyakanyaka Yomshini is thus the only CPA that has continued to produce crops as a CPA. It has produced maize and, from time to time, soybeans, sometimes in a self-initiated, voluntary partnership with the original farm owner and neighbour, Donovan Smythe, as well as hay for winter cattle feed. The maize harvest is distributed between households (with each household receiving 25 x 50 kg bags of white maize), cattle feed (with yellow maize an input into winter and summer cattle licks for both CPA and household cattle), and the sales of surplus. The CPA has invested profits from crop and cattle sales in agricultural equipment (a planer, plough and baler) thus expanding its crop and cattle production capacity. However, maize production dropped sharply in 2011 due to a combination of drought, rising input costs and the CPA's decision to reduce the area under cultivation. As a result, the CPA was unable either to sell maize or to meet fully annual household requirements. The details of this production decline are discussed in Chapter 9.

Both cattle and crop production on many of the farms have thus, over the relatively short period from 2007 to 2012, seen considerable reorganization. The main feature of this reorganization has been the transfer of cattle ownership and arable land use from the

CPAs to households. A key pressure around collective crop production has been the escalation in grain production input costs, which, when combined with drought, increases the risk of financial loss to the CPA. However, limited and uneven ownership of capital (planters, mechanical weeders) has also inhibited large-scale grain production on some of the farms. The combination of these pressures resulted in CPAs reducing the land allocated to maize production for sale (although Nyakanyaka Yomshini continued to produce small amounts for household consumption) and in the reallocation of CPA arable land to households. The social dynamics involved in the re-organisation of cattle production are analysed in the next three chapters. However, one set of explanations for the differences between the CPAs in terms of both crop and cattle production lies in the relationship between the technical “potential” of land and the type of production required. (See Behnke and Scoones, 1990, as discussed in Chapter 3).

An assessment of the farms transferred under land reform indicates that the amount of land and its quality in terms of technical production potential was uneven across the CPA owned farms. As can be seen in Table 37 below, the size of farms transferred to the six CPAs in 2005 varied widely with Nyakanyaka Yomshini receiving the biggest farm (over 2,000 hectares) and Sizisizwe the smallest (218 hectares). The mean distribution of land per household over the six farms is 76.5 ha (hectares). This is slightly higher than the mean distribution per household of 71.4 ha across the entire Besters Land Reform Project (ADA, 2012 a&b). However, the internal distribution on the six farms in this study ranges from 21.8 ha/household at Sizisizwe to 148.7 ha/household at Inkuthu Kayishazwe. The distribution of land per household is thus unequal across farms.

Table 37: Total extent per farm and mean land distribution per household

CPA Name	Number of households	Total Extent (ha)	Mean hectare /household
Ingula Kayishazwe	28	1,871	66.8
Mphuzanyoni	24	2,034	84.6
Zizamela	16	606	37.9
Nyakanyka Yomshini	16	2,243	140.2
Sizisizwe	10	218	21.8
Inkuthu Kayishazwe	3	446	148.7
	97	7,418	76.5

Source: (ADA a,b, 2012); Focus Group Interviews (September, 2010)

A second important determinant for successful commercial farm production is the agronomic potential of the farm. In terms of land quality, Bio-Resource Units (based on the classification of natural resources in KwaZulu-Natal undertaken by the Department of Agriculture) also indicate varying agricultural potential across the farms. Table 38 below indicates some of the differences in the bio-resource characteristics of the farms.

Table 38: Bio-resource characteristics of the different farms

	Ngula Kayishazwe	Mphuza - nyoni	Nyaka – nyaka	Sizisizwe	Zizamela	Nkuthu - kayishazwe
Rainfall mean (mm)	737-1039	725 - 779	799	737	976-9	1039
Frost	Severe 25 days	Severe 24 days	Severe 20 days	Severe 21 days	Severe 20 – 37 days	Severe 25 days
Erosion potential	Limited	High	High	Limited	High	Limited
Bio-Resource Unit Group	Moist transitional tall grassveld	Dry and tall moist grassveld	Moist tall grassland	Moist transitional tall grassveld	Mixed: moist transitional and highland sourveld	Moist transitional tall grassveld
Grazing capacity	1.9 -2 ha /LSU	2.5 – 3.4 ha/LSU	2.5 ha /LSU	2 ha/LSU	2.1 – 2.5 ha/LSU	1.9 ha/LSU

Source: (ADA, 2012 c,d,e,f,g,h)

While the farms are all in the same district, and do therefore not vary widely across these characteristics, there are nevertheless variations in rainfall, soils and frost severity, which impact on dry-land cropping potential, while rainfall, vegetation and grazing capacity indicate important differences in commercial beef production potential. Although the notion of grazing capacity and how this capacity is determined is, as argued in Chapter 3, closely linked to the production of cattle for beef rather than mixed purposes, it is nevertheless useful as a preliminary means of indicating differences between the farms in the context of a land reform programme that explicitly promotes the development of commercial beef farming.

The key differences in bioresource characteristics between the farms in relation to potential for crop production then is that the relatively lower rainfall on Mphuzanyoni, Nyakanyaka Yomshini and Sizisizwe suggests they have limited dry-land crop potential relative to the higher rainfall and greater crop potential of Ngula Kayishazwe, Nkuthu Kayishazwe and Zizamela. Zizamela, however, has high erosion potential, the result of topography, soil type and storms (Zacharias, 1999), and has severe winter frosts for extended periods, which potentially limits cropping. These assessments were partly confirmed and partly qualified by information from interviews and field observations. Firstly, Sizisizwe has no rivers running through it and the rivers at Mphuzanyoni dry up if the first summer rains are late. Secondly, Nyakanyaka Yomshini and Ngula Kayishazwe both have relatively large tracts of land with fertile Hutton soils, while the arable fields of Nkuthu Kayishazwe are limited in extent. Although Sizisizwe and Zizamela also have patches of observable Hutton soils, their aspects are mountainous and rocky.

In terms of animal production, particularly cattle production, the farms straddle the tall, dry grasslands and the moist highland sourveld bio-resource groups, with the most dominant type, the moist transitional tall grassveld lying between these two groups (Camp and Hardy, 1999). This transitional type of grassveld provides grazing for between nine and eleven months of the year. Although it does lose nutritional value and palatability as it matures, the extent of this is not as severe as in the highland sourveld, which only provides grazing for six to eight months of the year (Hardy, 1999). This grassland characteristic, combined with varied rainfall and the impact this has on forage quantities produced on particular farms, suggests that Zizamela is the most prejudiced farm in the relationship between bio-resource characteristics and commercial beef production, followed by Mphuzanyoni, Nyakanyaka Yomshini, and Sizisizwe. Ngula Kayishazwe and Nkuthu Kayishazwe have the best conditions for cattle production in terms of the mixed grasses of the moist tall transitional grassvelds, with their longer period of palatability, and a relatively high rainfall that produces more forage quantity than the other farms.

In summary, the bio-resource characteristics of the farms are, within a narrow band, varied, and these variations produce slightly different potentials in relation to expanded

crop and commercial beef production. Ngula Kayishazwe, Nyakanyaka Yomshini and Nkuthu Kayishazwe all have relatively better potential for a combination of commercial crop and cattle production. Mphuzanyoni and Sizisizwe, and notwithstanding its fertile soils, Nyakanyaka Yomshini are dry farms with limited crop production potential. However, the mixed grassland characteristics of Sizisizwe indicates a comparative advantage for cattle production over Mphuzaynoni, Nyakaynyaka Yomshini and Zizamela, with Zizamela's sourveld reducing the duration of grass palatability for cattle. When combined with the distribution of land per household, it is clear that the most land and best quality land for maximum benefits from combined commercial crop and cattle production is found at Nkuthu Kayishazwe. Table 39 below ranks the farms in terms of these characteristics by attributing estimated values from 1-6 (with 1 the lowest value and 6 the highest) for land/household distribution, crop production potential and cattle production potential.

Table 39: Ranking of farms in terms of bioresources and land distribution

CPA	Land/HH distribution	Crop	Cattle	Total
Nkuthu Kayishazwe	6	6	6	18
Ngula Kayishazwe	3	6	5	14
Nyakanyaka Yomshini	5	3	3	11
Sizisizwe	1	3	4	8
Zizamele	2	4	1	7
Mphuzanyoni	4	1	2	7

This ranking, however, does not overlap neatly with farms that have continued to produce cattle and crops as CPAs, suggesting that there are factors beyond the merely technical that account for this. Both the Nkuthu Kayishazwe and Ngula Kayishazwe, which have the highest total ranking of land distribution and land suitable for crop and cattle production, have re-allocated CPA cattle and arable land to households and have either stopped or limited production at CPA level. On the other hand, Mphuzanyoni, which is ranked the lowest in terms of crop production and second lowest in terms of cattle

production, has continued to produce weaners for beef as a CPA, as has one of the two groups at Nyakanyaka Yomshini, which also continues to produce maize and soyabean as commercial crops (albeit erratically).

Although this ranking is only indicative of the variations between the farms, it does show that there are important differences both in terms of distribution of land and the quality of the land in relation to its potential for commercial crop and cattle production. The key point here is that the distribution of land and land reform resources was not even across CPAs or households and yet these distributional differences have been neglected as possible explanations for why the CPAs followed such different trajectories after land reform. (Neither Binswanger *et al*, 2008 nor DRDLR officials nor beneficiaries themselves cite this as a reason for subsequent differences in farm developments.)

In the following six sections, I examine the structure and management of cattle production on each of the farms, highlighting differences between technical guidelines for commercial cattle management and the local adaptations and reasons for these on specific farms.

7.2. The Mphuzanyoni Communal Property Association

As part of land reform, the Mphuzanyoni CPA in 2006 received 165 cows and four bulls, a ratio of 41:1, which is nearly double the commercial beef herd standard of 25:1 (Niland, 2010: pers com). By October 2010, the herd consisted of 305 cattle, of which 199 were breeding cows, 21 were bulls of varying ages and 28 were replacement heifers (not yet ready to conceive). The heifer replacement rate was therefore 14%, as opposed to the commercial beef herd standard of 20% (Gertenbach, 2000: 7). However, 48 year-old heifers had been distributed to households as dividends in the previous December, which, had they been kept in the herd, would have produced a potential replacement rate of up to 38%. Cattle deaths in 2010 included five un-weaned calves and three cows, a herd mortality rate of just under 1%, compared with the accepted mortality rate of 2% in South African beef herds (Gertenbach, 2000: 2). Cattle theft also accounted for a herd reduction of just over ½%. Herd off-take through sales in the previous year had amounted to 25%

of the breeding cow stock, which is within the range of optimal commercial beef production standards (ADA, 2012a&b: 5). This includes a cull rate of 6%, which contrasts with the industry standard of 10% p/a. Of the sold animals, 30 were oxen, seven were heifers and 12 old or infertile cull cows. A new bull was also purchased. (The profitability of the enterprise and details on dividend payments to CPA members are discussed in Chapter 9.)

When I asked the farm manager at Mphuzanyoni, Shabalala, to explain the structure and logic of herd management on the farm, he showed me a beef cattle manual, which he paged through pointing out various sections. “This is the book that I follow,” he said, although he struggles to read English, as he never went to school. (Shabalala, 2011: pers com) The book was *Beef Production: The Basics* (Gertenbach, 2000), a manual used by the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs at the agricultural college, Cedara, to train beef farmers. In particular, Shabalala aimed to follow the veterinary regimen in the book, which listed when and with what medicines cattle should be vaccinated and dewormed. At the time of the interview, he was concerned about declining conception rates, and had bought Vitamin A to inject breeding cows before putting them to the bull, on the advice of a neighbouring farmer, Simon Tedder, who he said was having the same problem. Despite these problems, the herd structure and its management in 2010 conformed substantially to the industry indicators of a commercial beef herd. However, when it came to the sale of stock, herd fertility and the management of nutrition, the herd structure was subject to additional dynamics, particularly the demands from CPA members for dividends payable in cattle and cash, which are considered in detail in Chapter 9. Furthermore, range management also differed depending on whether the cattle were CPA or household owned.

The Mphuzanyoni CPA constitution limited the household herd size to 20 cattle per household, which, by 2010, had not been exceeded as a mean (14) although (as noted in Chapter 6) all households owned some cattle in a range of 2 to 51. The total number of household cattle owned by 18 of the 24 households (the sample I surveyed) in October 2010 was 311 bringing the total number of cattle on the farm to over 616. With a grazing capacity of 3.4 hectares/LSU (large stock unit) (ADA, 2012c: 6), the grazing camp area

needed to be about 2094 hectares to support these cattle for beef production. The total farm size was 2,200 hectares³⁶ but two grazing camps had been leased to a neighbouring farmer. While Shabalala spoke about grazing capacity and limits, and expressed concern that the combined household and CPA herd numbers were reaching the farm's grazing capacity limit of 600 LSU, the actual management of rangelands didn't strictly conform to commercial rangeland management principles, particularly camp rotation and resting.

The farm was fenced into 15 camps of varying sizes³⁷, including a large densely forested hill, which was used mainly by goat owners. Of these, six camps were allocated to household cattle, four relatively small camps were leased to the neighbouring farmer, Tedder, and the remaining five were used for CPA cattle. CPA bulls and breeding cows were each allocated two camps, and the fifth camp was allocated to weaned calves and rested after they were sold. Replacement heifers did not have their own camp but were put in with breeding cows at between 14 and 16 months because "we have too few camps on this farm" (Shabalala, 2011: pers com). The actual management of rotational grazing, however, was the outcome of pragmatic assessments of remaining fodder in relation to the condition of the cattle, combined with the management of burning. Shabalala said they moved the cattle from the particular camps they were in when they began to lose weight. This tended to overlap with two secondary rationales, the first of which was to keep the cattle in a particular grazing camp in the summer and autumn as a strategy to prevent neighbours from a densely settled area from "stealing our grazing during winter" (*ibid*), and secondly, to use a particular camp only in the winter because it was infested with the tick that carries the often deadly heartwater disease, a risk lowered during cooler temperatures.

Pragmatic though this decision-making about rotation was, it clearly conformed to indicators of good commercial veld and stock management. Government consultants stated: "At this time of the year, late winter/early spring, the cows were neither fat nor

³⁶ My information, from interviews and DRDLR records, differs from a recent ADA (2012c) report, Bester's Veld and Livestock Report: Walkershoek) which stated the farm size as 1650 ha, said it was occupied by 22 households and had a total of 731 household livestock, including horses, goats and cattle.

³⁷ This emerged during a process of mapping the farm with Sphamandla and Nombulelo Shabalala, adult children of the farm manager, and Mzwandile Mavimbela, the son of the CPA chairperson.

thin (thrifty) and typical of a well managed commercial herd of cattle” (ADA, 2012c: 7). The veld condition also received a high score, although the spread of invasive Acacias was likely to compromise this condition in the future if “... a strict grazing policy, including a whole summer’s rest for 25% of the farm annually and a controlled burning policy are not introduced” (*ibid*: 6). The management of the farm and cattle was “obviously very good” (*ibid*), which the report based on veld and livestock assessments, controlled breeding and the herd conformity to the Bonsmara breed, and the separation of weaned calves into a separate camp.

What does not appear in the report is that the household cattle were kept in camps close to the location of clusters of households because “owners like to see their cattle everyday” (Shabalala, *ibid*). These camps were not rotated, and calves were not separated from their mothers as “there are not enough camps” (*ibid*). The only decision about household cattle that was made collectively was when to change the CPA owned bulls, which households also used, while all other decisions were “made by the fathers” as individual owners (*ibid*). However, because the tasks of the three CPA employed farm workers included dipping, feeding and vaccinating household cattle³⁸, these cattle were treated in the same manner as CPA cattle when it came to veterinary regimens and feeding of supplementary winter and summer licks and hay. The CPA thus largely provided the labour for household cattle production except for daily monitoring of herd health.

In some important respects, the system of cattle and veld management and the labour to undertake it replicates the farm systems used under labour tenancy. Many respondents noted that in the past, their cattle had been kept in camps close to their houses while the “white man’s cattle used the rest of the farm” (N. Khoza, 2012: pers com). Grazing camp rotation therefore tended to apply to the landowner’s cattle. Landowners also often managed the veterinary regimens of their workers’ cattle, and in some cases, only allowed their own bulls on the farms, which were then also used by labour tenants. Even the CPA limits to household cattle herd size were familiar from labour tenancy days. The

³⁸ One household head opted not to include his cattle in this management regime. He also had his own grazing camp and undertook all his own veterinary interventions. He said he didn’t believe in co-operative farming and was holding out for government to purchase him his own farm. (Gamede, 2011: pers com.)

system of veld and cattle management at Mphuzanyoni thus had echoes in older farm systems adapted to manage the differential requirements of landowner and labour tenant cattle: at Mphuzanyoni today, the CPA cattle have taken the place of the landowner's cattle of the past.

7.3. The Nyakanyaka Yomshini Communal Property Association

As a result of the division of households at Nyakanyaka Yomshini into two groups, A and B, and the allocation of land and cattle to these groups, rangeland and cattle production management are more varied than the other farms, and accurate information difficult to obtain primarily because the number of hectares each group received was not available. Nevertheless, by 2012, Group A owned 170 cows, heifers and bulls, managed these cattle together with the cattle of the 10 households belonging to this group, employed wage labour drawn from group members and followed the herd production management regimen that their commercial farm neighbor and former land owner and employer, Donovan Smythe, follows. (Mpungose, 2012: pers com) Furthermore, the grazing capacity for their portion of the farm was 800 cattle. (Khumalo, 2012: pers com) Although Group B had divided their allocation of CPA cattle between the six households that made up this group, five of the households collaborated around grazing camps, burning and fence maintenance (N. Khoza, 2012: pers com).

It was not possible to get information on the herd structure of the CPA cattle in Group A because these cattle ran together in camps with household cattle. A CPA employed herdsman (M. Mpungose, 2012: pers com) listed the number of cattle in specific grazing camps as follows:

Camp 1: 52

Camp 2: 94

Camp 3: 31

Camp 4: 52

Camp 5: 37

Camp 6: 81

Camp 7: 57

Total: 404.

In addition to these seven camps, Group A also leased a grazing camp to Smythe.

I then asked the primary herdsman to show me the cattle in the camps and to help me identify which were CPA and which household cattle. In one of the camps for older breeding cows, we counted 11 CPA and 35 household cattle. In explaining the reason for the different numbers of cattle per camp, the chairperson (Khumalo, 2012: pers com) said: “Because all of us on this farm used to work for Donovan [Smythe] when he was the owner, we know how many cattle we can keep in particular grazing camps without over-grazing them, and we still follow that. Each camp has its allocated number of cattle, and like Donovan taught us, we don’t rotate camps. We leave the cattle in their camp.” However, like Mphuzanyoni, managing the incursions of neighbours’ cattle has resulted in a pragmatic adaptation of Smythe’s grazing regimen. “In April, we put a lot of cattle in the camp next to Paaikeni because those people there burn our camp in winter so we try to finish the grass before they burn it” (*ibid*). Finally, there is also one camp that is kept for weaned calves. This camp is rested for six months of the year so that it is “clean” when the new weaners are separated from their mothers. Furthermore, the CPA puts all the cattle into the maize fields after they’ve been harvested in winter and feeds them additional hay. But even here “[p]regnant heifers go to a different maize field from the other cows and only join those cows when they’re pregnant with their second calves. Heifers not yet pregnant are also kept separately” (Khumalo, 2012: pers com).

Although the bulls are kept in their own camp, the CPA owns a Brahmin bull, which jumps the fences and has been impossible to catch in order to be sold so is left to move around the farm at will. Although the chairperson and other employed CPA workers told me that the bulls were put in with the cows from October to November in order that

calving begin in August the following year, the free movement of the Brahmin bull means that cows are in fact impregnated all year round. Furthermore, the primary herdsman said he preferred this “because we now get calves all year round”, which can be sold to produce a more steady income stream (Mabizela, 2012: pers com).

The farm attempts to follow Smythe’s veterinary regimen, which was explained as involving: “We dip and inject against heartwater, de-worm calves and vaccinate all the cattle at set times of the year” (Khumalo, 2012: pers com). However, it isn’t always possible to do so. “Donovan injects his cattle with HiTet (an antibiotic) to prevent heartwater every five weeks from October. We should have done this already this year but we don’t have the strength (*amandla*) or funds to do it this year, so we do have heartwater deaths” (S. Mpungose, 2012: pers com). Furthermore, “Donovan has a vet to do pregnancy checks but we see by looking, which takes time” (*ibid*). There was some concern expressed, however that conception rates were declining and abortions increasing, a trend Smythe said he was also seeing on his own farm, which he attributed to sub-clinical redwater infections (Smythe, 2012: pers com). Finally, Group A also aims to follow Symthe’s nutritional regimen but doesn’t always manage to do this either. The farm produces its own maize as an input to the mineral supplements feed in summer and winter. However, “Donovan is now buying Rumevite and you can see the difference: his cows are ready to be mated but ours take longer before coming into heat. We can’t give ours Rumevite because we don’t have enough money in the CPA account” (*ibid*).

Despite these extremely self-critical views of their cattle production and veld management, agricultural consultants found that the farm had “a good veld condition score (4.2 – 5.7) and when related to the rainfall of 779mm ... an average grazing capacity of 3.5ha/LSU”; “[t]he veld had an exceptional vigour of the grass, very good plant density and good soil condition as well as the lack of invader species”, and, with a stocking rate of 5.1 ha/LSU was under-stocked resulting “in the cattle being in good condition” (ADA, 2012e: 6-7). Each household is allowed 40 cattle but only four houses have either reached or exceeded this limit.

Although the men on the farm said they were using bulls purchased or swapped with Smythe, the report was critical of the usage of the crossbred Brahmin bull, which

“detracts from the type of Smythe cattle they are producing which have good commercial value” (*ibid*).

Furthermore, the report seemed unaware of the different range and production management regimens on the split off portion of the farm, namely that used by Group B. One of the six households in this group kept their cattle separately from the others in a grazing camp that only he used and where he also lived. The information on how the remaining cattle were managed varied from respondent to respondent, with one respondent saying: “Our cattle are managed co-operatively ... If we need to inject, dip, buy lick, de-horn or castrate, we put money together and Ndizana and Ndaba draw it out to buy what we need. We then work together to do the tasks. Even I [as a woman] do this – I carry a whip on dip days. No one is employed and all of us tell each other if we see that any cattle are sick” (Ma’Mbense-Khoza, 2012: pers com). Other respondents in this group, however, said the owners of cattle were entirely responsible for their own cattle, although if a sick animal were noticed, this would be reported to its owner (N. Khoza, 2012: pers com; Makhubo, 2012: pers com). Furthermore, Makhubo, who has the least number of cattle on the farm, also said he struggles to manage the costs of his cattle and that people in Group A did not suffer to the same extent that he did. Nevertheless, the management of grazing camps is collaborative (with the exception of the one household), with the cattle of the five co-operating households being grouped together in particular camps, and a camp allocated to cows and their calves, one for heifers and another for bulls. Like Group A, this group follows Smythe’s non-rotational regimen. Once a year, the bulls are put in with the cows that are ready to breed.

7.4. The Sizisizwe Communal Property Association

The farm owned by the Sizisizwe CPA has a single outer boundary fence with no internal grazing camp fence and is thus is a single grazing camp that provides fodder to both CPA and household cattle, and household goats, horses and some sheep. (Sizisizwe Focus Group, 2010) While, as noted above, only 88% of households in 2010 owned cattle and had the smallest mean household herd size (14) and range in herd size (23), the mean herd size had increased to 16 cattle and a range of 43 by 2012 (ADA, 2012b: 54).

However, this change was not due to herd growth but to the resettlement of a single household from a commercial farm in the area to Sizisizwe (*ibid*). In addition, the CPA owned cattle had dropped from 56 to 36 between 2007 and 2012, although the CPA had not sold cattle at the Besters stock sales since at least mid 2009 (AAM, database, 2012).

Members of households complained that the farm was too small for their farming needs (Sizisizwe Focus Group, 2010) and, although not all households had yet relocated to the farm, it already had too many cattle on it. An ADA technical assessment of veld and livestock agreed with this assessment, stating that the farm was overstocked. The farm has a grazing capacity of 2.6 hectares per large stock unit (ha/LSU) but had 185 LSU on 218 hectares and was thus stocked at a rate of 1.2 ha/LSU; in other words, the farm was, using commercial farming standards, “overstocked” (ADA, 2012g: 6).

Despite this overstocking, the Nguni cross cattle were assessed as being “in excellent condition ... but many are almost overfat” (*ibid*), and the veld as being “vigorous and abundant ... with no sign of overgrazing” (*ibid*). Attempting to reconcile these inconsistencies, the report noted that the cattle were being fed a “P6 (phosphate) summer lick”, which “filled the troughs” (*ibid*). CPA members had told me in 2010 that sale of the CPA cattle paid for inputs of feed to supplement the shortage of fodder for all livestock on the farm but “[t]he sale earnings aren’t really enough to cover costs ... [and] we have to contribute from our own money to feed the cattle properly” (Sizisizwe Focus Group, 2010).

The ADA report also confirmed the concerns of household members that their cattle were not calving properly. The report noted the low number of calves at foot and suggested that venereal disease (such as contagious abortion) or a severe tick borne disease like redwater had infected the herd. A committee member said that in 2010 the 40 breeding cows had produced only nine calves the previous year (a 22% weaning rate) while eight cattle had died in the same period (Sibisi, E, 2010: pers com). However, at least two of the seven households had spent over R250 each in November 2011 on dip and antibiotic for tick diseases. Furthermore, although 8% of the total household herd died in 2010, and while this is higher than commercial herd standards, it was lower than the mean of 10% deaths across the other five farms.

The CPA had employed a herder for two years immediately after land reform, but by 2010 the herder was no longer paid because the CPA generated insufficient cash. Nevertheless, he continued to keep an eye on the cattle in a voluntary capacity. (Sizisizwe Focus Group, 2010) Unpaid household labour or collaboration of mainly the men from the households on farm provided the labour for routine cattle maintenance tasks (dehorning, castration, dipping, deworming and vaccinations). One respondent said he provided food and beer in return for assistance with his cattle (Sibisi, P, 2010: pers com), while another said he had paid R800 for two part-time labourers to undertake the work with cattle and weeding and harvesting crops in the previous year (Sibisi E, 2010: pers com).

As a result of a combination of features on the farm, namely, the cross Nguni breed, the small size of the farm, the failure to rest and burn grazing camps, and the non-separation of different aged stock, and not withstanding the livestock and veld assessments, the ADA report stated that the type of farm system at Sizisizwe is, and should continue to be, a “communal subsistence existence aimed at running cattle for their traditional needs with an expected annual livestock off-take of 7% with only 1% being sold off as commercial sales” (ADA, 2012e: 5). Despite evidence that the most obvious constraint on expansion of cattle production was the farm size relative to the number of resident households and the shortage of fence infrastructure, this production expectation also contradicts what households were actually doing with their cattle, which the report doesn’t consider. As Table 40 below shows, in 2010, 21% of the total household-owned herd was sold, and most of those at formal stock sales, while only 5% of the total household herd was slaughtered for ceremonial purposes.

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Table 40: Sizisizwe household cattle sales

Sales	N=10; n= 7
Homesteads that sold cattle	6
No of homestead cattle sold	21
% herd sold in past year	21%
No sold at stock sales	17
No sold to local or passer-bys	4

7.5. The Nkuthu Kayishazwe Communal Property Association

Nkuthu Kayishazwe has five fenced camps, one of which is summer cropping fields and only grazed after harvest. The CPA and household cattle are managed together. The CPA divided most of its cattle in 2011 in an attempt to resolve an intra-familial dispute that was spilling over into CPA production dynamics from one of the member households. In the process, each of the three member households received 22 head of cattle. However, the CPA continues to own 15 cows and bulls, and sells weaners to purchase supplementary mineral licks, fencing material, veterinary requirements (including professional time for annual pregnancy testing) and for tractor repairs. In 2012, sales from the CPA herd were estimated to have made a contribution of R15,000 to the collective kitty (M. Msimanga, 2012: pers com).

The grazing camps are used all year round, and are not rested because “we do not have enough land here to have more camps” (*ibid*). Heifers about to calve down for the first time are kept separately in one of the camps, breeding cows are kept in two of the other camps and one camp is kept for weaned calves. The numbers of cattle in each camp are counted most days and at the time of interview the numbers were 51, 48, 47 and 90 (*ibid*). The bulls are put in with the cows in late October and separated from the cows in mid March. The calves are weaned at the end of May. Only heifers about to be mated for the first time and bulls are fed supplementary hay in the winter. The cattle are all dipped twice a month mainly in summer based on an assessment of how heavy the tick

infestation is. Since it is both a red and heart-water area, the cattle are checked daily in the summer for signs of illness and households keep medication on hand for when symptoms of illness are present. Other veterinary interventions include vaccinating three times a year, and Vitamin A, deworming and “ultra-force” injections to improve fertility and general health, particularly of bulls and heifers. A vet does pregnancy tests of cows and heifers annually.

The ADA veld and livestock technical assessment put grazing capacity at 2.5ha/LSU. With an actual stocking rate of 2.7 ha/LSU, the report concluded that “this farm is correctly stocked and from the general appearance of the veld and stock it appears that the stocking rate and the grazing capacity are fairly well balanced” (ADA, 2012f: 6). Furthermore, the report noted that the cattle are “in good condition and many have calves at foot” and that the “three household leaders are all good stockmen with strong entrepreneurial spirits. This stands them in good stead to manage their natural assets properly and sell off additional stock when necessary” (*ibid*: 6-7). However, the report noted “there is a need to educate the stockmen in veld management emphasizing the need to rest 25% of the farm annually. This will entail further camps and additional fencing and “[m]entorship, monitoring and evaluation are vital to the future commercial success and viability of the farm” (*ibid*: 9).

Despite answering “yes” to a checklist of nine questions on whether or not the farm can support commercial production, the report classifies Nkuthu Kayishazwe as a class B farm, which means “[r]educed production due to both biological and possibly social restrictions resulting in a potential livestock off-take of 15% per annum” (*ibid*: 7). Like Sizisizwe, this assessment contrasts with what the households actually did with their cattle in 2010: 18% of the total household herd was sold, all at the Bester’s stock sale, with a mean number of nine cattle sold per household. Furthermore, at a stock sale for cattle from land reform farms in 2013, the state vet and cattle buyers also had different views about the production indicators. Commenting on the conception rates and concerns of the farmers from a number of land reform farms, Dr Lukubisa said Nkuthu Kayishazwe conception rates were 99%, as opposed to 92% at Mphuzanyoni and 75% at Nyakaynyaka Yomshini. (Lukubisa, 2012: pers com) At the same stock sale, I had an

informal conversation with one of the buyers. He said there were 12 buyers, mostly purchasing weaners for feedlots and the “quality of the cattle on offer was excellent in terms of the potential to grow out into a slaughter beef animal”. All three households at Nkuthu Kayishazwe had weaner oxen for sale.

Although the ADA report does not consider labour regimens on the farms, the way labour is mobilized and deployed at Nkuthu Kayishazwe is different from the wage labour model now dominant on commercial beef farms. The CPA previously had employed three wage-workers (the three “household leaders” described above) at the minimum wage but this stopped when the cattle were divided. After this, each household undertook its own labour, with cattle management and related work falling mainly to particular adult men and sometimes their young sons. However, I also observed collaboration between the main cattle owners in each of the households and the farmers on the neighbouring land reform farm around dipping, vaccination and loading of cattle to transport to sales. The brother of one of these men, who was a migrant worker but also owned some of the household cattle, explained the labour arrangements in his household as follows (X. Msimanga, 2013: pers com):

“Our family has never employed someone to do farm work, except when the CPA employed Mhle [my older brother] for a time. Before my father died, he and Gogo [my mother] and Mhle decided that Mhle should not go and find a job so that he could stay home to look after the cattle and goats. Sbu [my younger brother] and I give Mhle money to look after our cattle but this is not a wage; it’s just to thank him. It can take the form of money or an animal, and we both know that Mhle will always own most of the cattle in the herd because this is his only source of livelihood.”

7.6. The Ngula Kayishazwe Communal Property Association

Ngula Kayishazwe divided the 126 CPA owned cattle in 2008 amongst the 28 beneficiary households, each of which received four cattle and cash from the sales of the remaining cattle. Cattle production and the management of rangelands are therefore concerned with

household cattle. It was difficult to obtain clarity on how the grazing system on the farm worked because there were so many different perspectives on the question. The CPA chairperson (J. Makhuba, 2012: pers com) said there were rules and practices around grazing camps and the rotation of grazing. Six clusters of neighbouring households had each been allocated two to three grazing camps that were nearest them for their exclusive use. The households were expected to co-operate around rotational grazing and to move cattle when the camps had been adequately grazed.

However, this normative expectation was clearly not always adhered to in practice. One farmer described the grazing practice in much more opportunistic terms as follows:

“Our cattle graze wherever we want. If I need grazing and I can see grass on the other side of the railway line, I’ll take my cattle there. And those people who live that side also bring their cattle to this side. The only thing I do now is look and check if the grass is too short or whether it’s at risk of being burnt, and then I move my cattle” (J. Mazibuko, 2012: pers com).

However, he also said he would have preferred a more planned arrangement:

“There’s no plan here. I think we need to use the [former] white landowner’s methods – he used to allocate certain grazing camps at different times of the year and then they would rest at other times” (*ibid*).

To some extent, the chairperson acknowledges that the rules are not followed: “The CPA committee is supposed to oversee the whole farm ... [but] one can’t just talk to the users on their own – people get stubborn and refuse to listen” (J. Makhuba, 2012: pers com).

However, Makhuba is also part of an initiative to form a small co-operative of six households that is attempting to access a government programme to farm Nguni cattle, which would entail monopolizing some of the grazing lands. The concerns expressed by some of the other households over this initiative resonate with the actions of one of the members of the co-operative who owns the largest cattle herd on any of the six farms, with his stock standing at 157 head in 2010. This farmer has already managed to gain exclusive use of a grazing camp, and forcibly excludes other people’s cattle from a

second camp he uses for his weaned heifers. While his actions are visible (and talked about), they are not unique to the competitive dynamics surrounding the management of grazing. It is claimed that when grazing runs short, some cattle owners from other household clusters “push” their cattle onto grazing camps that were not allocated for their use. The chairperson, Makhuba, acknowledges this and says he has tried to resolve it by calling community meetings, but while “[s]ome do listen to the discussion about grazing rules others just do as they please” (*ibid*). He says it is important to resolve these disputes because “government does not want to see the land it bought for us being overgrazed”.

Despite these dynamics and concerns about what they imply for household farm production in the longer term on the farm, the ADA veld and livestock assessment report ranked Ngulakayishazwe as a Class A farm (ADA, 2012d: 8), namely, one on which the trajectory would be “[n]ormal commercial production which is equivalent to optimal production related to a livestock off-take of 25% to as high as 35% per annum” (*ibid*: 5).

It isn't entirely clear however what this assessment was based on. The veld assessment score was “relatively low” as a result of the invasion of undesirable grass species (particularly *eragrostis plana* and wiregrass) and soil capping on parts of the farm. When combined with rainfall, this rangeland assessment resulted in a grazing capacity of 4.4 ha/LSU despite the potential capacity for the BRU of 2 ha/LSU (*ibid*: 6). The farm is also found to be overstocked at 3 ha/LSU (with 500 LSU on 1529 hectares). Furthermore, the mixed breed cattle (Nguni, Brahman, Drakensbergers and Bonsmara) means that there “is obviously no breeding policy on this farm... [although] the cattle are in good condition for this time of the year” (*ibid*: 7). Despite this assessment, the report concludes that the “... farm also has good veld management and this potential could be improved through training and the provision of more fences ...” (*ibid*) but doesn't explain the criteria used to determine this. There is no reference to the division of CPA owned cattle and the only reference to farm management beyond the technical indicators is found in the comment that “[t]he farm is managed by the chairperson of the CPA but activities within the farm are performed by all members of the farm” (*ibid*: 1). As shown above, however, this is an extremely simplistic observation about what are in reality complex and evolving struggles around the monopolization of the rangelands by particular households and

groups of households.

7.7. The Zizamele Communal Property Association

The members of the Zizamele CPA, as noted in the previous chapter, chose not to own cattle collectively. The cattle and other livestock on the farm therefore belong to households and members of households. A widow and CPA committee member told me that cattle management and the tasks associated with cattle production are mainly the responsibility of heads of house, often assisted by the unpaid labour of their sons, who would ride out at weekends to the grazing areas to count the cattle and check on their health and condition (Shabalala, 2012: pers com). How this may have differed in households without sons and where adult men were working away from home is not known. However, when the Department of Agriculture began to supply veterinary medicines in 2012, cattle owners worked together to dip and vaccinate their cattle (Ndaba, 2012: pers com).

The ADA technical assessment gave the farm a Class C ranking, which meant that the type of production would, like Sizisizwe, be “[m]aintenance of a communal subsistence existence aimed at running cattle for their traditional needs with an expected annual livestock off-take of 7% with only 1% being sold off as commercial sales” (ADA, 2012g: 6). This was based on a relatively low veld assessment score indicated by the variable amounts *Hyperhennia hirta* (common thatch grass) and small amounts of *Themeda triandra* (red grass) on those parts of the very mountainous farm that were observable to the assessors. The report noted that burning of the veld was uncontrolled resulting in bare patches of soil surface with low organic matter. Although there were five camps with good fences and the involvement of “management in rotational grazing”, the veld was not rested in the growing season. Nevertheless, there is “no doubt the Highveld was used in summer and the low land, where the grass must be sweeter, was used in winter. [But] this could not be confirmed ...” (*ibid*: 7). Finally, the farm was overstocked at a stocking rate of 1.3 ha/LSU on a farm with an estimated grazing capacity of 3.6 ha/LSU, although

“[t]he cattle are ... are in very good condition” with no apparent explanation for the anomaly that “[t]he good condition of the cows does not reflect the poor condition of the veld nor the heavy stocking rate” (*ibid*).

7.8. Hybrid Farm Systems

Despite the scientific discourse of these “technical assessments”, perhaps the unresolved ambiguities can only be explained by the following observation, the basis of which is never explained:

“Subjective assessments were made for each farm because every farm was unique. In some cases it appeared that smaller farms had the possibility of reaching optimal production especially if there were only a few households and there was acceptable managerial ability and entrepreneurial spirit exhibited. Other farms were large but because of the very poor veld, erosion, many households and lack of enthusiasm for livestock management and commercialization they were classified as ‘B’ or even ‘C’ with little chance of them likely achieving much production even with training and support systems in place” (ADA, 2012g: 5).

In the discourse of commercial farm systems, it is necessary to ask what an indicator of “acceptable managerial ability” is if it is not an acceptable veld and livestock assessment score? Similarly, what is an “entrepreneurial spirit” if not the regular sale of cattle (particularly ox weaners) at a rate comparable with commercial beef herd off-takes, and the reinvestment of at least some of this income in production replacement? The alternative discourse, as Shackleton *et al* (2000b), Behnke and Scoones (1990) and Hall and Cousins (2013) all suggest, is that there are many farm systems geared at meeting different production requirements, and the productivity of any farm system should be assessed in its own terms.

Although there are similarities in how production is structured across the farms, there are also sharp differences centered around whether the CPA owns cattle collectively or not, whether the management of CPA cattle is different from the management of household cattle and in what ways, and, crucially, how farm rangelands are used and managed. In

addition to how the different farm groupings have organized themselves around these questions, two structural factors have shaped contexts in which decisions have been made. The first is the characteristics of particular farm, including the size of the land, the agro-biological features of the rangelands, and the existence of fenced camps. The second is the users of the rangelands, including the number of cattle owners, the presence of neighbours competing for rangeland resources, and the number of cattle being grazed. I describe these as contextual factors in so far as they were already given when I conducted this research; however, as Chapter 5 and section 1 above make clear, these were results of the land reform process and in that sense were not necessary outcomes. Nevertheless, it is against this background that the farm systems on particular farms have developed.

Although four farms in this study still owned cattle collectively as a CPA in 2010, both Nkuthu Kayishazwe and Nyakanyaka Yomshini had partially allocated cattle to households albeit in different ways. Nkuthu Kayishazwe had retained a small collective herd while Nyakanyaka Yomshini had divided into two groups, one of which retained a collective herd. Sizisizwe and Mphuzanyoni both retained their CPA herds but Sizisizwe's herd was in decline, possibly due to diseases affecting fecundity, while Mphuzanyoni's herd had expanded significantly. While neither Ngula Kayishazwe nor Zizimela owned cattle as CPAs in 2010, Ngula Kayishazwe had previously owned cattle and divided up the herd up and disbursed it to households while Zizimela had never owned cattle collectively.

Of the farms that had both CPA and household cattle, three – Nkuthu Kayishazwe, Nyakanyaka Yomshini Group A and Sizisizwe – managed all the cattle together but for different reasons. The cattle at Sizisizwe were managed together because the farm only had one fenced grazing camp, which therefore allowed neither grazing camp rotation and resting nor the separation of the cattle for controlled production purposes. All the cattle on other two farms were also pooled, but they were then divided according to commercial production technologies, which separated heifers, weaned calves, breeding cows and bulls. However, Nkuthu Kayishazwe did not practice rotational grazing and camp resting because they had insufficient fenced camps, while Nyakanyaka Yomshini did not practice rotational grazing because they followed a grazing regimen familiar to them from their

days as labour tenants living and working on the farm they now owned. Both groups, however, kept a camp for weaned calves, which was rested part of the year to reduce parasite loads. Furthermore, one of the reasons in commercial farm systems for keeping different parts of the herd in their own camps is to increase control over relationships between fodder provision, breeding and weaning, and veterinary routines. However, Nyakanyaka Yomshini's rogue Brahmin bull had undermined this rationale, and was the catalyst for adaptations that better met household needs for regular income from ox sales.

At Mphuzanyoni, CPA and household cattle were managed separately. The CPA's cattle followed similar management systems as those of Nkuthu Kayishazwe and Nyakanyaka Yomshini Group A in that different parts of the herd were kept in their own fenced off camps, with the bull introduced once a year and weaned calves put into rested camps. Again, like the other two farms, this separation allowed control of breeding, with set times for dehorning, weaning and castrating, and veterinary interventions timed in relation to pregnancy. The farming system of these three farms (until Nyakanyaka Yomshini's adaptations began) thus conformed substantially to commercial production systems, deviating mainly in not resting a quarter of the farm rangelands annually.

The household cattle at Mphuzanyoni, however, were managed in a manner more similar to the cattle at Nyakanyaka Yomshini Group B and Ngula Kayishazwe, which were also all household owned. Here, clusters of households living in proximity to one another nominally shared allocated grazing camps, in which their cattle were kept together. Individual owners managed their own cattle except at Mphuzanyoni, where the CPA's wage-workers dipped, vaccinated and fed household cattle. Zizimele is similar in that individual owners manage their own cattle but different in that grazing camps are not allocated for the use of particular households. The relationship between cattle and rangeland management is, amongst these groups, characterized by opportunistic grazing, and, in the case of Ngula Kayishazwe and one farmer at Nyakanyaka Group B, some large herd owners are beginning to assert exclusive rights to use part of the collectively owned rangelands. The management of herds is also distinctive, with bulls running with

cows and heifers³⁹, year round breeding, and calves weaned mechanically (using nose rings) rather than by separating them.

Despite the variations in both cattle and rangeland management, the ADA technical assessments of all the cattle were positive, with concern mainly about cross breeding and fertility. As shown in Chapter 6, household cattle production is geared to meeting multiple purposes, including contributions to the cash and food required for household survival and to reproducing social relations (partially) through ceremonial. This chapter has shown that CPA production is organized mainly along commercial lines, although, as Chapters 8 and 9 will show, the purpose is primarily to subsidize and expand household production and generate small cash dividends. However, these complex purposes are not at the expense of the logic of capitalist farming, where an all-important purpose is to produce cattle to sell in order to generate surplus for re-investment in replacing (and sometimes expanding) operational capital. The farm systems evident on the Besters farms are thus clearly hybridized: simultaneously “commercial” and “subsistence”, and geared at both exchange value and use value. Hybridisation is not, however, an inevitable outcome, but, as shown above and in the previous chapter, is shaped by struggle and contestation as differently positioned social groups struggle to assert their interests and claims over productive resources, and in doing so, bring about changes to the farm system that, in turn, structures new possibilities and contestations. The Besters hybridised farm systems are, in other words, unstable and subject to change.

7.9. Conclusion

This chapter has described the highly diverse farming systems on the Besters Land Reform Project farms. It has found that the extremely uneven distribution of productive resources (land, cattle and equipment) during land reform created a structural context in which struggles over farming systems took place. The result of these struggles has been the development of hybridized farm systems, partially geared at producing weaners annually for sale to generate profits for reinvestment, and partially towards producing

³⁹ Except at Mphuzanyoni where households may use the CPA bulls.

cattle and crops for subsistence and for use in cementing kinship relations. The dynamism in these hybrid farm systems partially accounts for the concrete conditions that give rise to the processes of social differentiation that are examined in the next three chapters. In Chapter 8, these processes are reflected in the inequalities embedded in the ceremonial uses of cattle, and how struggles within lineage play out in the politics of CPAs; Chapter 9 considers some of the contradictions in reproducing the conditions for CPA production, and Chapter 10 examines how these contradictions have shaped social differentiation and specific accumulation trajectories on the different farms.



8. SOCIAL REPRODUCTION: THE CULTURAL FUND, CPAS AND STRUGGLES OVER KINSHIP

8.1. Introduction

A central theme in Marx's writing (see, for instance Marx, 1933: 36) is that the processes and conditions of production must be constantly reproduced in order that production can continue. As noted in Chapter 2 (Bernstein, 2010: 18), this involves reproducing three components of production: the means of production; the current and future producers; and relations between producers, and producers and others. In capitalist societies, the social relation between capital and labour must be constantly reproduced in order to generate funds for capital replacement, consumption and cultural ceremony, as well as to appropriate surplus labour for reinvestment in expanded production. This chapter examines one aspect of this complex process of social reproduction on the Besters land reform farms, namely, the ceremonial fund and its role in the reproduction of kinship relationships. The next two chapters then consider further aspects of social reproduction: Chapter 9 analyses struggles over replacement funds in CPA production, and Chapter 10 how these struggles shape the contradiction in petty commodity production between social reproduction (funds of consumption and ceremony) and capital reproduction (funds to replace the means of production). This chapter illuminates a crucial dimension of this contradiction in that the ceremonial fund is lodged in, and reflects broader social inequalities, particularly in terms of the household's cattle and cash resources. The unequal distribution of these resources partially constructs the reproduction of kinship relations as sites of struggle and contestations, which help illuminate some of the social dynamics that structure the politics of CPAs.

The chapter begins with a discussion of terminology relating to family relationships, and emphasizes the dynamic nature of family structure. It then outlines the farm histories immediately preceding land transfer when CPAs, or farm "communities", were formed and identifies some early lines of the conflict that emerged after land reform. Although "communities" don't exist in a substantial sense, there are dense webs of relatedness on the farms, with evidence that dominant families or lineages strongly influence the

structure of CPAs. Finally, the chapter examines how kinship relations are reproduced through marriage and burial ceremonies, which involve cattle, and increasingly cash income, as an important components of the “ceremonial fund” (Wolf 1966, Bernstein, 2010: 21), but which also reflect and reproduce broader social inequalities.

8.2. Terminology for kin and households

It is not easy to translate into English the Zulu words for various familial relations and how they are used locally. There are four layers of important familial relations. The first is *umndeni*, which I heard used in reference to immediate family (a husband, wife, their children and children’s children) as well as to extended family on both sides of the conjugal unit⁴⁰. However, the emphasis does seem to be on the extended patrilineal family⁴¹, as reflected in the different words for male and female kin and centred, at least normatively, on the authority of the oldest male relative, and particularly in relation to claims on *umndeni* property, most visible in Besters around cattle. (See also Kuper, 1950: 100-101; Gluckman, 1950: 169-170.) The second layer is the nucleated sub-unit (a man, his wife or wives and their children) of the *umndeni*. However, there isn’t a word in Zulu that refers only to this sub-unit although there are words that describe the spatial arrangements that visually and socially differentiate this sub-unit’s residence within the homestead or *umuzi*, namely, *indlu*, or hut, and referred to as the home of a particular

⁴⁰ “I asked Gogo to ‘show me your *umndeni*’. She began by putting down a flexi-flan representing herself, and then went through each of her children, both resident and non-resident and married and not married, beginning with a daughter she had before she was married and a son who had died as an infant. She completed her daughter’s family, including her great grandchildren, before moving on to her next child. When she’d finished her children and their children, she said that was *umndeni wami* (my family). I then asked, one at a time, whether her mother and father, and their brothers and sisters, and her husband’s mother and father, and their brothers and sisters, were not *umndeni*, and she said yes, they are. When it emerged that her husband had been married before he married her to a woman who died, and had had four sons, I asked are they not *umndeni*? She answered: ‘yes, I suppose they must be because they come here to the home when ceremonies take place. However, they are not reliable and I cannot depend on them for anything at all.’” (Notebook, November 1, 2012)

⁴¹ I observed variations of these family structures at Besters. Although in interviews on their *umndeni* some respondents (particularly women) included relatives from the natal family (her parents and siblings), I did not see relatives from a women’s natal family living at a homestead at Besters, with the exception of one young woman who had “been called” to care for the children in the absence of any other adults. However, I did see unmarried sisters and their children, or their children born out of marriage, living at the homestead, as well as an older unmarried brother of a deceased head of house.

wife or son's wife (eg. *indlu kaMa'Ndaweni*, the house of the son's wife whose maiden name is Ndaweni, or more generally, *kaMakhoti*, the house of the wife). Linked to this are practices (sometimes normative rather than actual) that define the unit as separate, namely, that each wife (either in a polygynous context or the wives of different sons resident at the homestead) has her own kitchen, which may be physically separate from other living quarters. The third layer, *izihlobo*, refers to the extended group on both sides of the conjugal unit, including all relatives from the mother and father's sides, as well as families that share the same surname from both paternal and maternal descent lines.⁴² The fourth layer is constituted by those who are descended from people who share the same surname (*isibongo*), which is the basis of exogamy and thus who is excluded as a marriage partner. Finally, as suggested, the words *umuzi*, *indlu* and *ikhaya* all have specific spatial reference. *Umuzi* (homestead) refers to a physical space that is occupied by close members of the *umndeni*, while sub-units and age segments⁴³ occupy different *izindlu* (huts) within the *umuzi*. *Ikhaya* also refers to the home-space but has an emotional resonance and is linked to identity and the place around which ancestors or shades gather and are present. Married women, for instance, who move to live in their husband's natal homes, will make a distinction between *ekhaya kithi* (at my natal home) and *ekhaya kwami* (at my married home).

At Besters, these socio-spatial relations are further complicated by the historically imposed demands of farmers over the labour tenant households on their farms (McClendon, 1997), and more recently, by the local farm rules established as part of the

⁴² This was explained to me as follows: “*Izihlobo* goes beyond people sharing a surname or related through marriage. For example: My mother's maiden name is Ntetha and therefore I'm related to the Ntethas. My grandmother from my mother's side is Buthelezi and therefore I'm related to the Buthelezis. My grandmother from my father's side is Khanyile and likewise, I'm related to the Khanyiles. This means I can't have an affair with females from Ntetha, Buthelezi or Khanyile. However, my sister is married to the Mvelases, my brothers' wives maiden names are Zondi and Ndlela. We are now also related to the Mvelases, the Zondis and the Ndlelas. However, I am allowed to date and marry a woman from any one of these surnames, even get married to the sister of my sister's husband or my brother's wives. So the concept of *izihlobo* is very broad” (Ziqubu, 2014: pers com).

⁴³ Young men often live together in their own hut or *indlu* separately from other family members.

CPA constitutions, along with post 1994 legal and social pressures for gender equality.⁴⁴ Aspects of these are discussed further below.

I decided in this research to use the “household” as a loose linguistic reference to the cluster of people who live, or are entitled to live, within the homestead. I do not mean to infer a particular family structure through this designation, and where there are multiple sub-units, occupying different huts within the homestead, I follow (Cousins, 2013) in referring to these as compound household structures. The main reason for this loose designation is, as argued further in Chapter 10, that the assumption that the homestead is a consumption and production *unit* (Crehan, 1995: 90) is often unhelpful at Besters in that it obscures how cattle (and other property) are owned, managed and distributed within the *umndeni*, and how this distribution structures relations among household members. In other words, the very way the relations within and between households are structured requires investigation and explanation, and the terminological descriptions above are often complicated in actual cases. A detailed analysis of these relationships is, however, too big a task for this thesis. In this chapter, I sketch out some areas of intersection among cattle production, intra- and inter-household relations, and CPAs as the basis for understanding some of the mechanisms of social reproduction on the farms.

8.3. The history of the farm “communities”

The CPAs that own the land reform farms are made up of households that constitute farm “communities” in particular respects: firstly, they are legal entities with the rights and

⁴⁴ Rudwick and Shange (2009: 69-70) argue convincingly that the custom of *ukuhlonipha* (the restrained comportment, behavior and dress, and speech avoidance of young wives that demonstrates respect to her husband’s relatives) is at odds with legal equality in the way it compels deference and submissiveness. However, I also observed many women challenging the custom albeit in non-confrontational ways. One example will suffice. MaDlamini had curly and coloured hair extensions added to her hair at a salon in town in preparation for a wedding. Her husband saw her outside the hairdressers soon afterwards and told her to cover her hair with a scarf. She refused, and retorted in public that if he insisted, she would cut her hair short and “go around bare-headed”. When the other women in the salon asked her if he was joking, she was quite clear that he was not. “He is afraid Gogo [his mother who was at home] will think I am refusing to *hlonipha*.” She later partially covered her hair with a scarf, but when she left home to attend the wedding, she again removed it and told her husband’s sister, who was urging compliance, “I don’t care what he says”.

duties of landowners; secondly, as shown in Chapter 3, land and agriculture policy places pressures on CPAs to act as productive *units*; and thirdly, officials and members of the associations themselves refer, in certain contexts, to the groups of households associated with particular farms as a “community” (*umphakhati*). However, as a brief history of the six CPAs shows, how these households came to constitute particular associations, and thus farm communities, was often externally imposed.

At Mphuzanyoni, the 24 member households making up the CPA originated from five commercial farms in the district, in addition to the farm the CPA owns. This list of members was not the result of self-selection. “[An official from the Department of Land Affairs] came with a list and said what all the groups would be” (Mphuzanyoni, FG, 2010). Nor was process of constructing the group that would own the farm voluntary: “I was told I must come here to this farm. I had lived on Boshoff’s farm ... since 1968. He said I had to move because my son didn’t want to work on his farm anymore” (Hlatshwayo, 2012: pers com). Five of the households that came to make up the CPA association were already living and working on the farm before ownership was transferred. When this research began in 2010 there was evidence of newly built houses all over the farm although another five households had not yet relocated because of the costs involved. To complicate matters, in 2013, the CPA chairperson discovered unexpectedly that the official membership list is only 20, not 24 households. By early 2014, she had not yet informed the farm residents about this discrepancy because she feared the information might cause simmering discontent around the collectively owned CPA cattle enterprise (discussed further in Chapter 9) to escalate into calls for the non-listed households to be evicted (Mavimbela, 2014: pers com).

At Nyakanyaka Yomshini, 15 of the 16 association member households originated mainly from a cluster of farms owned by different generations of a single commercial farming family (the Smythes). Four households had been resident on the farm prior to land reform negotiations and were living on it when it was transferred to the CPA. The requirement that the other households relocate had been unexpected: officials and consultants had assured the claimant households that they would get the land they lived on, used and had claimed. However, “the land owners then insisted we be grouped ...

[and] said we had to join together to get a big farm” (Nyakanyaka FG, 2010). The claimants were initially deeply unhappy about these proposals but agreed to move when the farmers said new houses would be built for them at Nyakanyaka Yomshini.⁴⁵ All the households that were to become members of the CPA had relocated when I began research in 2010 although the promise of housing had proved to be an empty one. Furthermore, despite a degree of unity in the struggle over whether or not to relocate, this shared history has not prevented the emergence of subsequent divisions and disputes over farm resources and production models (as discussed in Chapters 7 and 9). As a result of these disputes, the CPA divided its cattle and the farm in 2008, and the members renamed themselves Group A and Group B. Despite this shattering of a nominal notion of “community”, the CPA continues to exist in law as a single entity, the farm remains a single property⁴⁶, and, as discussed below, relationships between households continue to be reproduced at least partly through ceremonies (or cultural fund, as Bernstein, 2010, refers to it).

At Sizisizwe, while a legal association of members exists, the notion of a farm “community” remains incomplete in multiple respects. The legal CPA consists of ten member households: one was resident on the farm at the time of transfer, six others have relocated since transfer, but three remain resident on the commercial farms where they work. The main reason given for these households not relocating is that Sizisizwe is a small farm and its grazing resources are already under pressure from the combination of resident household and CPA-owned cattle (Sizisizwe FG, 2010). The history leading to this outcome is similar to the other stories above. “People ... came to our houses to register us for labour tenancy, and said we’d get a piece of land where we are. Then they changed and said we’ll get a farm if we agree to move. But even after we agreed, we didn’t get the full area we were promised. We only got a section of the farm ...” (*ibid*). As a result of some households and their cattle not relocating, the struggles over farm

⁴⁵ Despite this promise, households from five farms refused to relocate, demanding settlement in situ. Their land claims remain unresolved (Mabaso, 2011: pers com).

⁴⁶ The farm division has not been surveyed and registered, and is, in this sense, therefore an informal division. Neither has the CPA formally been divided into two associations in that the division has not been registered with the Department of Rural Development and Land Affairs, although officials are aware of the divisions.

resource access and use has been deferred to an unspecified future, although the temporary nature of this deferment is expressed in the anxiety the resident households have over how the additional households and their cattle will be accommodated in the future. Nevertheless, land pressure has already begun to take the form of questioning who is a member and on what basis. “We found one household here who worked for the white. We didn’t want him but the whites said we are not allowed to evict him”⁴⁷ (*ibid*).

Unlike the farm histories above, the three households that make up the Nkuthu Kayishazwe CPA were all resident on the farm when they claimed the land in 1996. Two of the households, Hlongwane and Makhowane, have long histories on the farm: Makhowane was born there, as was Hlongwane’s father. The third family, the Msimanga, relocated prior to land reform in 1990. The three households had used the 600 hectare farm in its entirety, providing labour to the owner’s farm operations in the Free State and winter grazing for his sheep. When the farm was sold, the families entered a lengthy process of negotiation with the new owner, their neighbour, and as a result the farm was subdivided and 436 hectares transferred to the CPA. It was not a happy process for the families: “There was a big disagreement and a lot of noise ... they robbed us ... 164 hectares were taken from us.” (Nkuthu Kayishazwe FG, 2010) Like Nyakanyaka Yomshini, the unity that existed in the struggle against official and commercial farm landowner interests has not prevented subsequent conflict. In 2011, an intra-familial dispute over both household and CPA cattle spilled over into the CPA and resulted in the CPA cattle enterprise being partially disbanded and the cattle divided amongst the three member households. (The details of this dispute are discussed further below.)

Similarly, the Ngula Kayishazwe CPA consisted of 26 member households, who were all resident on the farm at the time title was transferred to the CPA, with some heads of house born on the farm. The previous farm owner’s primary residence was in the Free State, and he drew labour from the farm and used it for winter grazing. By 2010, however, there were 28 households after one had divided as a result of a polygynous marriage (Ngula Kayishazwe FG, 2010) and another as a result of intra-familial conflict

⁴⁷ The household (*umuzi*) is identified as the same as the surname of the household, which is represented or held by the head of house. In Zulu, the household can therefore be interchanged with the name of the head of house, in this case referred to as “he” or “his”.

(Mabaso, 2010: pers com). Like the other farms, the process of land reform was characterized by conflict with landowners and officials, beginning with the owner's attempt firstly, to reduce the households' cattle numbers, secondly, to evict the labour tenants and thirdly, to relocate them as a prelude to selling the farm. The (then) Department of Land Affairs intervened and the owner proposed subdividing the farm into plots for each household and pooling the cattle so that they could be farmed "as a business ... As I say, he was out to confuse and divide us" (Ngula Kayishazwe FG, 2010). The CPA eventually took transfer of the farm in 2003. Despite the history of collective opposition during the land reform process, the association has been plagued with conflict since the transfer, resulting in the disbursement of the CPA's cattle to individual households, some internal pressure to subdivide the land into household units and resistance to collective action around farm and community resource management.

The history of the Zizamele association is unique relative to the other histories above in that the 15 households that make up the CPA had, prior to transfer, rented the farm for R100 per family per month. The tenants had used the threat of eviction as a result of not paying rent to pressure the Department to transfer ownership to them (Luthuli, 2010: pers com), which occurred in 2005. Like Nkuthu Kayishazwe and Ngula Kayishazwe, the households at Zizimele had all been living on the farm prior to land reform, but unlike the other farms, they were not labour tenants or farm workers. Struggles between households on this farm were evident early in the land reform process. The households had been divided about whether to take up the option of CPA-owned cattle and opted instead to take money in lieu of cattle, which the CPA then used to purchase three head of cattle for each household. Furthermore, the rules and authority of the CPA have subsequently been challenged around practices relating to new household establishment. The CPA farm rules prohibit the establishment of new households without the consent of the committee. By 2010, however, one young man had moved out of his home following a dispute with his mother and had set up an independent homestead. He had requested permission from the committee to do this, but the committee argued that the request was illegitimate because it hadn't been in writing, and "tradition requires him to resolve his issues at

home without bringing in outsiders” (Shabalala, 2010: pers com). The result has been a decision-making paralysis.

Despite the five years that had passed between the transfer of farm ownership and my research, the dominant land reform ‘story’ told by beneficiaries is still one of conflict, grievance, confusion and betrayal by government and landowners. While this contrasts starkly with the project story of success presented by landowners and government, it nevertheless glosses over both the general and particular histories of conflict that have made it difficult to constitute and reproduce farm “communities” able to act in the interests of the collective. Various reports have described these conflicts as “institutional” (Binswanger *et al*, 2008; ADAa&b, 2011) and have argued that clearer constitutional rules, and training in awareness of the rules are required to address the conflicts. These histories, however, suggest that the farm “communities” existed nominally, and then only during attempts to oppose relocation or to struggle for better land reform outcomes. Since land transfer, these imposed farm communities have either fragmented, or are threatening to fragment, as the only partially successful land reform struggles coalesce around struggles over farm resources and who is entitled to them. The conflicts engendered by these struggles have been of sufficient severity to result in the dissolution of collective cattle production on three farms (Nkuthu Kayishazwe, Ngula Kayishazwe and Nyakanyaka Yomshini) and increasing tensions around collective production (Mphuzanyoni) and membership (Mphuzanyoni, Sizisizwe and Zizamele) on the others. Since these groupings of households on particular farms cannot be described in any substantial sense as “communities”, it is important to assess the dynamics that both hold them together and tear them apart.

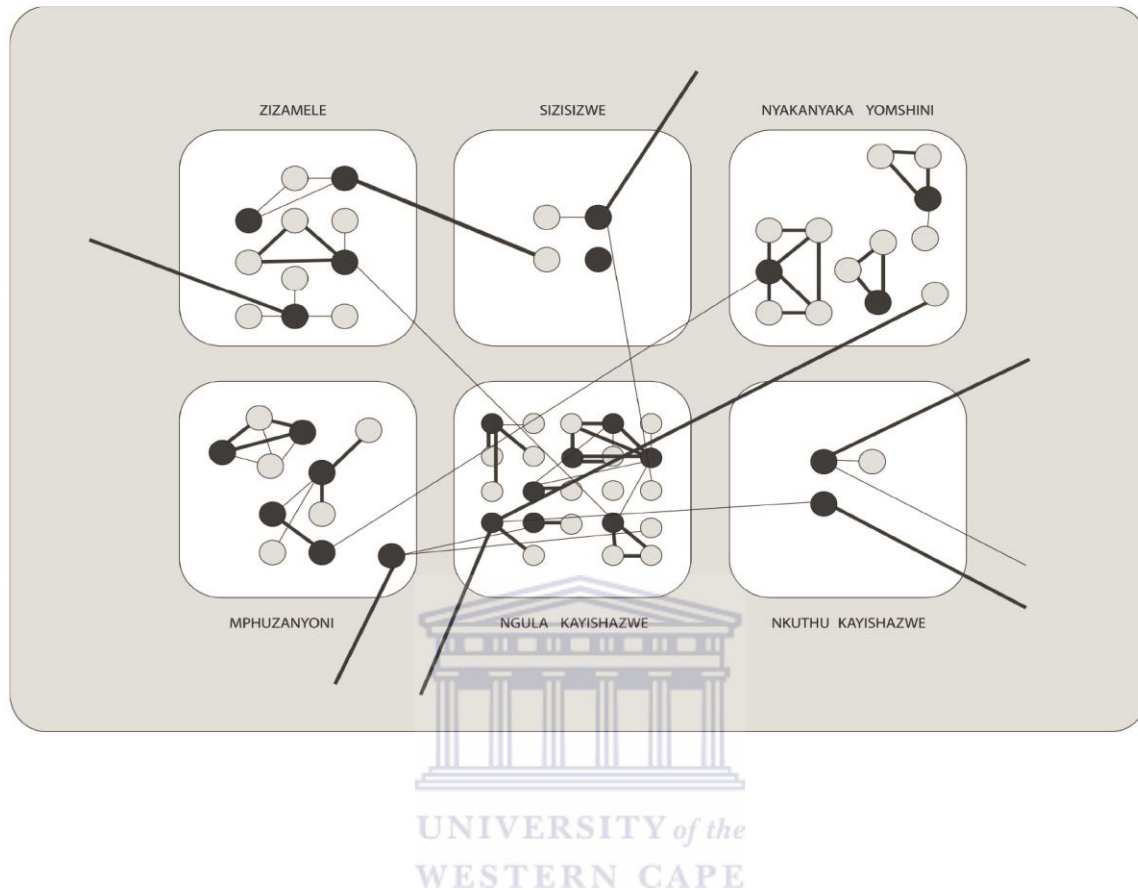
Although tensions on the farms have been, and are escalating, there are substantial interconnections between households on the farms constituting kinship networks. However, struggles over kinship relations also appear, to some extent, to shape both conflict and the composition of the CPAs. A key structure of interconnection and arena of conflict is thus kinship and struggles over its reproduction.

8.4. Kinship relations on farms

I now consider the kinship relations between households on particular farms and across the Besters land reform project: an aspect of the social relations that pre-existed, influenced and were influenced by, land reform and its processes. As suggested in Chapter 3, kinship relations and the customs that shape them can reflect how relations of exploitation within petty commodity producing households are structured. At Besters, an additional aspect of these relations is how they intersect with the composition of CPA committees.

In interviews with 25 household representatives across all six farms, it became clear that there are substantial linkages across families on particular farms. The black circles in the Figure 2 below are the 25 households interviewed while the grey circles are households to which they are related. The dark lines connecting households indicate relationships based on male kin (fathers, brothers, sons and fathers' brothers), whereas the grey lines indicate relationships through women (mothers, sisters, daughters, mothers' siblings). Lines that go out of the farm boundaries indicate relationships to households on other farms but that are nevertheless within the Besters Land Reform Project.

Figure 2: Relationships between households on the farms



As Figure 2 shows, despite the relocation of households on three farms (Mphuzanyoni, Sisisizwe and Nyakanyaka Yomshini), there is a dense web of relatedness on particular farms. As one person commented at Nyakanyaka Yomshini: “Everyone on this farm is related (*Bahlobene bonke la*)” (Khoza P, 2012: [pers com]). Although the thickest web of inter-relatedness depicted in the figure occurs on Ngula Kayishazwe, where households were already resident at the time of land reform, both Mphuzanyoni and Nyakanyaka Yomshini, which were farm communities externally imposed by land reform, also have thick relational webs. Nkuthu Kayishawe, on the other hand, where households were also already resident at the time of land reform, has a relatively thin web. While there are some relationships (both blood and marriage) across farms, these are not as frequent as the relationships on particular farms. This pattern of relatedness requires explanation, particularly if it is evident in other land reform contexts; however, a full explanation is beyond the scope of this study. Instead, I will attempt to point out some of the particular

ways in which the relatedness is structured and has changed with land reform, as a key to understanding the social relations on the farms.

The emphasis today amongst the Bester families on agnatic or patrilineal kin is consistent with their Swazi origins and Zulu influences (Kuper, 1963; 1950; Gluckman, 1950, Krige, 1936, Rudwich and Shange, 2009), as described in Chapter 5. Perhaps most striking in the figure above, despite the small sample interviewed, is the numerical domination in particular CPAs of clusters of agnatic kin and households in which their direct sisters and mothers reside. This is indicated as percentages of all households in the CPA in Table 41 below. (The relationships between households in the other two CPAs were through marriage.)

Table 41: Kinship related households as % of total CPA households (N= 97; n= 25)

CPA	Clusters of agnatic kin and direct female relations	No of related households	As % of HH in the CPA
Mphuzanyoni	Shabalala; Hlatswayo	7	25%
Ngula Kayishazwe	Twala; Nkosi; Shabalala; Mazibuko; Mabizela; Dube; Ndaba	24	86%
Nyakanyaka Yomshini	Khoza; Khumalo; Mpungose	11	69%
Zizamele	Shabalala; Madlala	7	44%

Furthermore, there appears to be an overlap in the dominance of particular patrilineal family clusters (*umndeni*) on the farms and the make up of the CPA committee. For example, at Mphuzanyoni, the CPA committee and its employees have tended to be dominated by two particular extended families, Shabalala (which includes Mavimbela) and Hlatshwayo (which includes Zikhalala and Khumalo). A secondary cluster is the Langa/Nhlabathi family and the Mlotshwe/Shange family. As the table below indicates, in the first period of the Mphuzanyoni CPA committee, the Shabalala, Hlatshwayo and Mlotshwe families together occupied six of the seven committee positions, including the

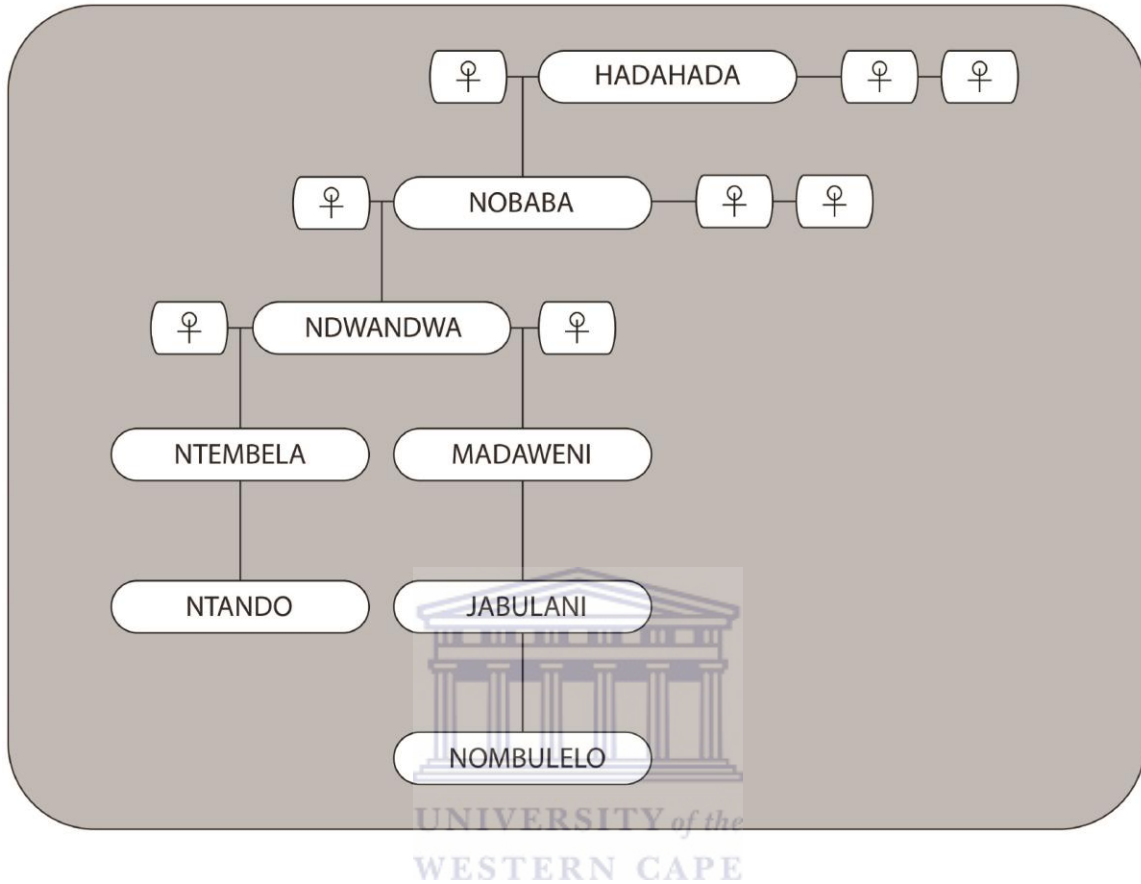
chair. In the second period, members of interlinked families occupied four of the five committee positions, including the chair. In the most recent elections, members of the interlinked families take up five of the seven positions. The Shabalala and Hlatswayo extended families also occupy most of the jobs provided by the CPA.

Table 42: Mphuzanyoni CPA

	2005-2010	2010-2014	2014
Chair	Hlatshwayo	Shabalala/Mavimbela	---
Secretary	Hlatshwayo	Shange	----
Treasurer	Hlatshwayo/Khumalo	Other	----
Committee	Shabalala Shabalala/Mavimbela Mlotshwe Other	Hlatshwayo/Zikhalala Langa	Shabalala Shabalala/Mavimbela Hlatshwayo/Khumalo Langa Nhlabathi Other x 2
CPA employees	Shabalala Other	Shabalala Hlatshwayo Other	Shabalala Hlatshwayo Hlatshwayo/Zikalala

In other words, there appears to be some overlap in the dominance of particular lineages on the farms and the way power at local level coalesces in the structure of the CPA committees and who is given employment. This is reinforced by the relationship the Shabalala patrilineal cluster headed on the farm by Jabulani, has to the current chief, *Inkosi* Ntando Shabalala, as depicted in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Shabalala line of descent from Inkosi Hadahada Shabalala



Jabulani Shabalala (2011) explained the nature of this relationship as follows: “My father was Mdaweni. His father was Ndwandwa, and his father was Nobaba. Nobaba’s father was *Inkosi* Hadahada, who fled from Swaziland when he fought with Dlamini. Hadahada had three wives, as did my great grandfather, Nobaba, and my grandfather had two wives. One of my grandfather’s wives was the mother of my father, Mdaweni, and the other was the mother of Ntando’s father, Ntembela. So, this is why Nombulelo [his daughter who often accompanied me on the farm] says ‘brother’ to Ntando.”

A similar overlap in dominant lineage and members of the CPA committee and CPA wage-workers occurs at Nyakanyaka Yomshini. The three dominant agnatically linked families are the Khumalo, Khoza and the Mpungose. As the table below shows, of the

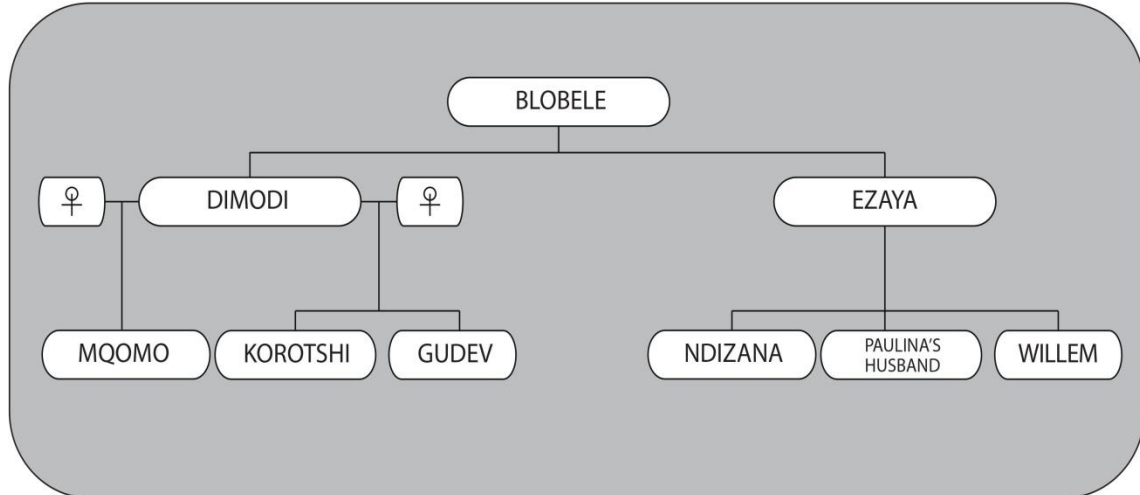
five CPA committee members in 2010, only one, Ngwenya, was not a male blood relative of one of these three families, and similarly with the employees of the CPA.

Table 43: Nyakanyaka Yomshini CPA Committee and Employees in 2010

CPA Committee Member	CPA Employee
Solomon Mpungose	Korotshi Khoza
Hendrik Khoza	Mpandlana Mpungose
Thembinkosi Khumalo	Vusimuzi Mpungose
Moses Ngwenya	Ndleleni Mabizela
Bonginkosi Khumalo (Chair)	

A further dimension to this overlap between kinship and CPA structures is seen in the way intra-familial disputes intersect with CPA matters. Gluckman (1950: 169) argues that lineage segments coincide with residential units to form a group, *umndeni*, that is distinct within, and against other clans, while Kuper (1950: 98) adds that “the tie between sons of the same father undoubtedly depends largely on the status of the wives, and it is over succession and inheritance that cleavages between half-brothers come out sharply and bitterly”. The intersection of these lineage cleavages and divisions within the CPA are most visible at Nyakanyaka Yomshini, where the leader of the CPA break-away group is Ndizana Khoza. The dispute here connects to an underlying grievance over inheritance, which continues to resonate in conflicts between the sons of brothers, who are now heads of their own houses. Figure 4 below shows the structure of the Khoza family and its descendants, who all reside at Nyakanyaka Yomshini.

Figure 4: The structure of the Khoza *umndeni*



Blobele, Dimodi and Ezaya are all deceased as are Mqomo and Paulina’s husband. According to Ndizana (2012: pers com), “my grandfather [Blobele] never said who should inherit, so the inheritance went to Dimodi, and then to Korotshi, because he was the son who had stayed two generations in that house. My grandfather had a lot of cattle. The inheritance should have gone to all the sons at home but this didn’t happen, and my grandfather did not leave an inheritance to my mother, who was widowed.” This intra-familial grievance overlaps with a line of division amongst the Nyakanyaka Yomshini CPA members: Ndizana, Paulina and Willem all form part of the break away Group B, along with Mqomo and two other households, whereas Korotshi is in Group A with his brother from the same mother, Gudev, along with eight other households.

Similarly, intra-familial conflict over inheritance in the Hlongwane household at Nkuthu Kayishazwe has spilt over into the CPA operations. The conflict here relates to claims made by members of the Hlongwane family on both the cattle of the household and the “benefits” accruing from the CPA cattle and farm ownership. The claim on family cattle arises in the context of an aging and sick widowed head of house who inherited cattle from her husband, and which her oldest son manages. The siblings of this son, who is also the chairperson of the CPA, demand that their father’s cattle are equally divided amongst all children and farmed on the farm to which they assert a claim. They base this

claim to CPA land and cattle on the use of their names in the application for the Land Redistribution and Agricultural Development (LRAD) grant. As a result of the multiple bases to the claims and the conflicts arising from them, the CPA distributed most of its cattle in 2011 to the three member households in order to insulate the CPA from the intra-familial dispute. This family dispute is analysed in more detail in Chapter 9 as a case in which the role of farming in individual reproduction clashes with farming as collective, commercial production.

These intersecting lines of division suggest that the contours of conflict within the CPAs are not immune to older lineage tensions and the way property and wealth are distributed and contested within them, and that these contestations may also be elicited, and transformed, by new dynamics brought about by CPAs. However, it would be difficult to assert on the basis of such limited data that lineage conflicts over inheritance are the determining cause of division within CPAs across the country. Clearly, as James (1988: 47-8) shows, the rules of inheritance can and do change, particularly where important livelihood resources are at stake. Extreme poverty, she argues, forces higher degrees of interdependence between household members and can result in deferred inheritance in order to allow household members extended access to the resource. At Besters, the head of the Msimanga household has allocated heifers from the cattle she inherited from her husband to each of her adult children, including two daughters (one who is married), arguing that “today this is required [by the Constitution]” and “otherwise those children who don’t get anything will watch the house and keep saying that you are using the father’s property wrongly” (Gogo Msimanga, 2012: pers com).

Finally, broader clan relationships (*izihlobo*), with their weaker but nevertheless important claims, are also apparent in the power plays at Besters, as evidenced in the case of N. Hlatswayo at Mphuzanyoni. Neliswe described how her family was related to two other families on the farm as “my mother’s brother” (*umalume*) and “my father’s brother” (*ubaba*). However, when later I did a genealogy with Nelisiwe’s mother, a woman who had never been formally married⁴⁸ and whose ‘husband’ was deceased, these

⁴⁸ The marriage was neither registered nor where the customary ceremonies, such as *ukugida* (dance) performed.

relationships did not emerge. She explained: “As I am alone in this world with my children, and we have the same *isibongo* (surname), I ask them for help when I need it ... such as when I must hold a ceremony (*umsebenzi*)” (Hlatshwayo, 2011: pers com). However, she never felt her residence on the farm to be secure, although it was difficult to establish exactly why this was the case beyond that she had moved from another farm during land reform.⁴⁹ She also claimed her life had been threatened at an association meeting but felt unable to approach the chairperson because “she’s related to the others”. Her household was also more generally vulnerable, as indicated by its high dependence on child grants, the derelict external appearance of the mud home and the scarce furnishings inside it. This combination of poverty, the age, gender and marital status of the household head, and the absence of strong kinship relations on the farm all appeared to combine to exclude her from the centres of power on the farm.

A household’s position within a lineage and the dominance of a particular lineage on farms can clearly intersect in important ways with how CPA’s are constituted. The importance of CPA committees in shaping how the collective resources (land, cattle and tractors) are used and benefits distributed across the membership is discussed further in Chapters 9 and 10. This section has nevertheless shown how important kinship relations are in how power coalesces in these CPA structures.

8.5. Cattle and the ceremonial in the reproduction of inequality

As argued in Chapter 2, ceremonies are important because they create and reproduce the culture and the social order of farming communities. In this respect, some of the products of labour must be allocated to a replacement fund for ongoing ceremonial use. In petty commodity producing households, the ceremonial fund, as a demand on the total funds for securing the conditions for future production, is thus caught in the contradiction between the reproduction of capital and of labour (Bernstein, 2010: 18-20). While ceremonials are important rituals in reproducing social order, this contradiction also means that they can be catalysts for disturbing the social order (Wolf, 1966: 97).

⁴⁹ When later some doubt was raised about households who were not on the official membership list, the chairperson and another person suggested it must be Nelisiwe’s family who was not on the list, inaccurately, as it turned out.

Furthermore, as suggested in Chapters 3 and 7, cattle farming is caught up in a discursive dualism in which the ceremonial uses of cattle are seen as economically irrational from the perspective of commercial production, and as part of a web of social entanglement (Ainslie, 2013) from the perspective of mixed farming systems. This section presents the use of cattle in three types of ceremonial at Besters, namely, marriage, burials, and Christmas festivities⁵⁰, and argues that while they play an important cementing role through the redistribution of meat, food and largesse, they also reproduce struggles over kinship that intersect in complex ways with broader relations of inequality.

At Besters, marriage involves a number of transactions and interfamily engagements, the main ones being *lobolo* (bridewealth) negotiations and cattle transfers, *umembeso* (the transfer of gifts from a man's family to his future wife's family) and *umabo* (the transfer of gifts from the wife's family to her husband's family), which occurs on the day of dancing (*ukugida*).⁵¹ In addition, aspects of European weddings have been incorporated into the final ceremony, which takes place over two days: the first day at the bride's natal home includes ring exchanges and a religious sermon; and the second day at the groom's home, when dancing occurs along with the invoking of lineage and ancestors to whom the new wife is introduced.

Similarly, ceremonies relating to the dead are extended affairs consisting of four parts, which are sometimes combined. The first is the *umnqcwabo* where the body of the deceased is buried in an area near the house allocated for family graves. The second involves purifying the living relatives from the contamination of death (*ugeza*). The third, which is sometimes combined with the second, is the raising of the spirits of the dead person to join the ancestral world (*umkhuphula*). And the fourth part involves the feeding

⁵⁰ Two additional uses of cattle reported in Besters are *umemulo*, when a girl reaches the age at which she can be courted, and *ukutwasa*, the completion of the process of becoming a *sangoma* or traditional doctor.

⁵¹ Because marriage is a process of formalizing relationships between families and their lineages, it does not require that the marrying couple is present at ceremonies. Indeed, children often arrange the marriages of their parents after their deaths. One respondent highlighted the stretched out nature of the marriage process: "I've had a "wife" for 24 years but I am still in the process of paying the lobola... My parents had not yet married when my father died, so we married them two years ago." (Mavimbela, 2011: pers com)

of the deceased (*umphakela ukudla*) when they demand it (which is known through the divination of dreams).

A number of people said ceremonies for the dead use four to five cattle (in addition to goats). “When a person dies, I must use two cattle and if I don’t have money for the other costs, then I must also sell one. After about six months, I must slaughter again to *geza* (cleanse) and *khuphula* (raise) the person. So in total, I would slaughter four to five cattle for a death in the family” (Mpungose, V, 2012: pers com). The ceremonies of marriage also involve a number of cattle and goats. Sbu Msimanga’s marriage to MaZimu, with the final dance ceremony in 2013, involved 15 *lobolo* cattle, the sale of five cattle, and the slaughter of three cattle and four goats (S. Msimanga, 2014: pers com).

In 2010, approximately 2.7% of the total cattle owned by households on the six farms were used in ceremonial slaughter by a third (30 or 35.7%) of the households interviewed.⁵² Of the households that used cattle for ceremonial purposes during the year, 53.3% slaughtered one animal, 36.6% slaughtered two cattle and the remaining 10% slaughtered either three or four cattle. The total value of these slaughtered cattle was approximately R244,000⁵³, with a range in cost to the households that held ceremonies of approximately R4,900 to R19,800. In addition to this, two farms, Mphuzanyoni and Nyakanyaka Yomshini, each slaughtered CPA-owned cattle each December to distribute as meat to its members for Christmas.

Data were not collected in the household survey for cattle used for bride price (*ilobolo*) and fines (*inhlawule*) for sons who impregnated unmarried women. However, an indication of these cattle uses emerged from life history interviews and the cattle register. In terms of the register: one of the ten households that completed the register transferred three *lobolo* cattle to the future bride’s family, and another paid one animal as a

⁵² The figures from the cattle registers, which were updated every second month in 2012, differ somewhat from these figures. However, on 10 registers were completed so the sample is very small and thus less reliable. Nevertheless, 1.5% of the cattle owned were used by two of the 10 households in ceremonial slaughter over the year.

⁵³ The value was calculated using the mean price received for cattle sold by black farmers at the Besters stock sales between 2009 and 2013 of R4,973.

pregnancy fine and received two cattle as pregnancy fines. Furthermore, since 32% of the adults are either married or have been married, and most respondents said their *lobolo* payments had been completed and that the *lobolo* was 11 cattle⁵⁴, a quantification of the value of *lobolo* cattle is possible. However, the saying: “the process of acquiring a wife is never completed” was often cited during less formal conversations to explain why *lobolo* was incomplete. It also became apparent that the *lobolo* agreements varied from as few as six cattle (Mrs Mavimbela, 2012: pers com) to 15 (Gogo Msimanga, 2014: pers com). While it is therefore difficult to read *lobolo* cattle transfers off marriage data, such data are suggestive of what the total value of the combined transferred cattle and remaining *lobolo* debts might be. The cattle involved in *lobolo* transfers and debts on the Besters farms are in the region of between 550 and 1400 cattle (adding all those women who have been married and estimating the *lobolo* as ranging between six and 15 cattle), with a total estimated value of between R2,7 and R7 million or R32,000 to R83,000 per household.⁵⁵

Bridewealth or *lobolo* as a component of the ceremonial fund is thus a fund of considerable value at Besters, and allocations to it can place pressure on the funds that must be allocated to the replacement (and expansion) of capital and labour. What, then, are the processes involved and how should they be understood?

Cattle are used in ceremonies on the farms both for slaughter and for sale to generate cash to cover the costs of goods purchased for ceremonies. At a *geza* and *ukukuphula* (cleansing and raising the spirits) ceremony I attended, there was, in addition to meat from the slaughter of two cows and a goat, bought chicken, brewed and purchased beer and other alcohol, cool drinks, vegetables, scones and biscuits and dessert. In this case, the costs had been covered through the family membership to three stockvels (collective saving schemes): one had purchased groceries, another alcohol and soft drinks, and a

⁵⁴ This response to the survey that marriages were completed (*lobolo* fully paid, marriages registered, the dance ceremony undertaken) was so consistent that very early in the survey I believed that the marriage process data were probably inaccurate. It not only contradicted other reports of declining marriage (Cousins 2011, Mhongo and Budlender, 2013), but was also contradicted by informal conversations and my subsequent observations.

⁵⁵ Based, as above, on the mean price received for cattle sold by black farmers at the Besters stock sales between 2009 and 2013 of R4,973.

third had paid out R3,000 in cash for additional costs. The cost burden of burials is so important that at Mphuzanyoni, rent from leasing CPA land to a neighbouring farmer was used to purchase burial insurance for its 24 members, and was the main argument for why many members wanted to continue the lease even though the expansion of CPA and household cattle herds also required the additional grazing land. (This is discussed in detail in Chapter 9.)

Cattle sales are crucial in generating the cash to cover the costs of purchasing marriage gift transfers and holding marital ceremonies. The costs incurred during Sbu Msimanga and MaZimu's marriage involved the following:

1. *Umembeso* (transfer of gifts from the groom to the bride's family): gifts to nine family members from both sides of MaZimu's parent's conjugal unit (including deceased relatives and her stepmother). The gifts included a big three legged pot, a large meat dish, an axe and knife for chopping meat, sugar, tea, a teapot and cups, blankets, scarves, shawls, sponge mattress (for MaZimu's mother); a jacket, hat, umbrella, walking stick and blankets for her father; blankets, scarves and pinafores for her female relatives and a scarf, bra, petticoat, socks and shoes for herself. In addition, the Msimanga's hired a taxi and two trucks to transport their neighbours and family to the event, and slaughtered a goat to feed all the gathering visitors. A goat was also slaughtered at MaZimu's natal home to report the event to the MaZimu's ancestors. Sbu used about R7,000 of his wages to cover the costs incurred by the Msimanga family.
2. *Umshado* (the two-day wedding): An outstanding *lobolo* cow was transported to the MaZimu's home to be slaughtered in order to "accept the groom" (*umvuma umkwenyana*) and to feed guests; two cows were slaughtered at the Msimangas to feed the MaZimu family, accept the bride and feed the guests. Costs included hiring two tents for the events at each home, provision of food, drinks and alcohol for guests and neighbours for two days, the fee for two priests, hiring three sets of bridal wear for the couple and their attendees to change into, bus and taxi hire to transport family and neighbours to both the couple's homes, payments for photography, videography, music, choir and dance. The total costs for the two

days were in the region of R35,000, excluding assistance provided at no cost by friends and family. In addition, the bride brought with her to her husband's home a wardrobe and coffin filled with her things. The Msimanga's assisted the Zimu's with their costs because they "didn't have the strength (*amandla*)" to cover their share. Sbu Msimanga and his mother each sold two cattle and his brother sold one animal to help cover the costs. The Zimu's sold 13 *lobolo* cattle for R39,000 to cover wedding costs.

3. *Umabo* (the transfer of gifts to the groom's family): gifts were given to 42 living and deceased Msimanga relatives on both sides of the groom's parent's conjugal unit, including the groom's father's first wife who died before he was born, and children and grandchildren. The gifts to the two "mothers" included clothes and sleeping wear, to the groom's deceased father, clothes, sleeping wear and an umbrella, and all the other relatives received mats, blankets and pillows. The groom also received a double bed with duvets, sheets and pillows, a drinking glass and a small mat for negotiating the *lobolo* of his future daughters. MaZimu, the bride, estimated that the gifts cost her R30,000 (MaZimu, 2014: pers com).

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In addition to the transfer of *lobolo* cattle then, this wedding cost in the region of R82,000, and required the sale of 13 *lobolo* cattle and five other cattle, and involved the slaughter of three cattle and four goats. Nor can the cattle used in slaughter be the discards of a herd: an ox is used when the ceremony involves a man, and a cow when the ceremony involves a woman, and the animals cannot be old because "an old cow produces undesirable meat" (M. Msimanga, 2013: pers com).⁵⁶

The cattle used in ceremonies thus constitute a significant reduction in herd size, and the smaller the herd to begin with the greater is the withdrawal from the breeding stock. "When my husband died, he had eight cattle. Today, I have only five left. This is because I had ceremonies for my deceased daughter in April and then my husband in August. I

⁵⁶ Some negotiation around the actual cattle used does, however, take place. The sex of the cattle can be "bought" during marriage ceremonies, and I observed some strategizing around the use of heifers that failed to get pregnant. Nevertheless, the smaller the herd, the less room there is for maneuvering around animal selection.

have slaughtered four cattle this year alone, two of them cows” (Ma’Khumalo, 2011: pers com).

The cattle used in ceremonial slaughter may form part of the house property (*izinkomo zaBaba*, the cattle of father) that a wife or son has inherited, and to which other family members continue to have claim. Gogo Msimanga described the claim family has on these cattle as being part of ‘Zulu law’. As Jabulani Shabalala (2010: pers com) put it:

“Father’s cattle are still with me even now. If I need to do something for him – such as marry him, or any of his sons or daughters - that would come from these cattle. When something like this needs to be done, I meet and agree with my brother and then we tell our sisters.”

The reference to ‘father’s cattle’, however, is not to actual animals but to the debts, or responsibilities a man holds on his father’s behalf as a result of having inherited the cattle. If the cattle he inherited from his father are no longer in the herd, the responsibilities to fulfill his father’s obligations nevertheless continue to exist. Ceremonies thus “drain money” (Mpungose, M, 2012: pers com) but the social-spiritual pressure to undertake them is nevertheless immense and ripples across the *umndeni*. “If I don’t have cattle, other relatives would have to do this for me because they would also have problems [with ancestors] if these ceremonies are not done” (*ibid*). However, these claims are not always smooth or easy to negotiate. As Gluckman (1950: 169) points out, members of *umndeni* “hold rights in each other’s herds ... and arbitrate in quarrels between [lineage segment] members”. Furthermore, at Besters, these claims and arbitrations reverberate at CPA level.

In the days following a cleansing and raising ceremony at Nyakanyaka Yomshini at which more than 50 neighbours and relatives had feasted on two slaughtered cattle, food and drink, I interviewed people from eleven households about dynamics on the farm. Conflicts that continue to tear the CPA apart emerged, often expressed with deep bitterness and resentment. All the same people interviewed had been at the ceremony, the men sitting together drinking beer and chopping meat and firewood, the younger women preparing and serving food and the older women singing, dancing and gossiping in one of

the huts. The ceremony had brought together people who were, in other spaces, pulled apart by conflict. It had also both expressed and soothed existing tensions: two women (both from particularly poor households) were chided for being drunkards and neglecting their children, and they had responded that the alcohol eased lives that were “full of stress.” When they left the event, they, like all the other women, went home with a packet of cow’s meat.

The ceremonies in Besters, then, bring together relatives and households on farms to share sorrow and celebration, and simultaneously they redistribute meat, food and drink in ways that ease some of the consumption pressures of the extremely poor. (See Ferguson, 2013: 173 on the distributive funeral economy). But, the ceremonies are also embedded in existing inequalities in the social body. Not everyone has the four or five cattle, the goats or the cash to produce mourning and marriage feasts like the ones described above, and this socio-economic difference is reflected in a new idiom for burial ceremonies. A “bus ceremony” is one where cattle are slaughtered, and is well attended by families and neighbours. Fewer people will attend a “taxi ceremony”, where only a goat is slaughtered. A reason given for this was: “Today people have small hearts. They jealously protect their possessions (*banamona*) and do not care about those who have little” (Mamane, 2012: pers com).

The displays of consumption have also moved away from ‘custom’, bringing new social pressures. “My father told me no cattle were slaughtered for eating at funerals when he was growing up. It was the neighbours and family who would bring the food ... but today, the ancestors require a cow to be slaughtered, and if you don’t, no one will help you to dig the grave” (M. Msimanga, 2012: pers com). The cash involved in the purchases of goods and services for the marriage ceremonies⁵⁷ and food for burials indicates that these processes are fully integrated into commodity circuits, which make visible both the growing inequalities and who is able to meet the moral imperatives of relationships between the living and the dead. Those with the cattle and cash required for

⁵⁷ The commodification of marriage has also stimulated the emergence of a small but vibrant retail and service sector in Ladysmith and its surrounds that includes the hiring of tents, tables and chairs, “traditional” and Western marriage clothes, the provision of music, photography and videography, choirs and dancing groups, along with purchases of gifts, food, and drink.

the full ceremonial feasts are not just rich and capable of largesse: their actions are also morally good in that they reflect good standing with one's ancestors. It is therefore not entirely surprising that there is an overlap between one's wealth, ceremonial performance, position amongst kin and social status on the one hand, and the election into positions of local power, such as CPA committees, on the other.

Smith's (2004: 569) analysis of Igbo funerals in southeastern Nigeria speaks to the same broader social processes in which these rituals are embedded in South Africa. He suggests that funerals "crystallize" the paradoxes associated with inequality in which the "tremendous expectations for conspicuous consumption and redistribution" express and exacerbate the "large-scale social transformations" associated with neo-liberalism. Families are encouraged to "show off their wealth" but are also "jealously begrudged for their achievements", and "[b]urials as rituals reflect these social structural contradictions, sometimes helping to resolve them but also serving to highlight and intensify them" (*ibid*, 571).

In this context, the CPA cattle slaughtered for meat at Christmas time has a particular resonance. I observed one such occurrence at Mphuzanyoni. The farm workers had selected for slaughter two older cows that were infertile. The slaughter and butchering took place on the same day a CPA annual general meeting was held, during which cash dividends were paid out and heifers distributed to each household. The division of labour between the men and women was similar to ceremonial slaughters: men undertook the slaughter and butchering, which occurred outside of the homestead's cattle kraal, while the women cleaned the stomach and entrails and cut up the meat into portions for each household. The men roasted some of the fresh meat on an open fire, which was consumed by all together with alcohol. While it was an occasion filled with laughter and celebration, it also elicited existing tensions and reflected some of the pressures on households within the farm community. One member of the CPA, who was unemployed at the time, objected to the slaughter, saying: "I don't need meat. I get plenty of that from all the ceremonies that take place here. What I need is money" (J. Hlatwayo, 2012: pers com). Another member disagreed, saying there were households who would not be able to afford meat at Christmas time and "they too should get something to make them

happy” (J. Shabalala, 2012: pers com). Thus, while the Christmas meat was evidence of CPA production success and its generosity, and was thus a moment in reproducing farm community, it also reflected and was embedded in the tensions that put farm community under pressure, particularly the broader social processes that reproduce inequality.

8.6. Conclusion

This chapter has described the history of establishing ‘communities’ on the Besters land reform farms, and the importance of kinship relations and dominant lineages in shaping how they are constituted. The purpose has been to contextualize and ground the process of social reproduction and the role of ceremonials in these as key to understanding the claims on the different replacement funds described in Chapter 9.

However, it is also clear that kin relations are themselves sites of struggle and contestation, embedded in and reflecting broader inequalities in the society. The integration of burial and wedding ceremonies with both cattle production and a cash economy means that not all households are able to meet the new requirements for conspicuous consumption, which affects their social position and their capacity to influence local farm politics. These struggles within kin relations thus inform the structure and composition of the CPAs both in terms of the committee appointments and in terms of who secures wage work on the farms, reproducing broader social inequalities and the ideologies and power dynamics they are embedded in at farm level. The burial, wedding and Christmas meat ceremonies are contradictory: on the one hand, the pressure for conspicuous displays helps to increase the distribution of meat, food and drink, easing consumption pressures in poor households. On the other hand, the ceremonies serve to bolster the social status and esteem of those able to provide a noteworthy display and thus place pressure on all households to meet the new standards. Furthermore, those households able to put on a conspicuous display increase their social standing and are thus in a better position to influence the local farm politics, while those unable to meet the demands of ceremony lose social standing and local power, slipping into an ever weakening position with ever increasing risks to overall social stability at farm level.

A core feature implicit in these dynamics is the different kinds of demands and claims on current farm production in terms of cattle and cash in order to create the conditions for future production, including ceremonials. In the next chapter, the different replacement funds for ongoing production at CPA level are examined in terms of the struggles around them and the consequences particular decisions have on production. Core to these decisions is how CPA committees are structured and their power grounded, which this chapter has located in the dominance of certain lineages on farms, and in ceremonials and who can undertake them.



9. CPA PRODUCTION: STRUGGLES OVER INCOME AND REPLACEMENT FUNDS

9.1. Introduction

This chapter builds on the descriptions of farm production in Chapters 6 and 7 and provides an explanation of the contradictory social dynamics that drive production outcomes at CPA level. Chapter 6 showed that the notion of the farmer as an individual who farms full-time with the sole purpose of producing commodities for sale does not match well with large, compound nature of households and the labour they provide, the mixed livelihood strategies of individuals and households and the uneven distribution of both cattle ownership and income from multiple sources across households. Chapter 7 develops this further showing that the way cattle and rangelands are managed on the land reform farms is not always consistent with the technical indicators of beef production, and even where cattle and rangelands are found to be “excellent”, assessments based on commercial production frequently neglect the different pushes and pulls on rangeland management in CPA contexts. The type of production occurring in these contexts is neither strictly commercial nor subsistent but rather hybridized to meet multiple purposes including commodity production. This chapter examines the social dynamics underlying these hybrid production systems and the contradictions they give rise to using Bernstein’s notion of “funds” that must be replaced from production in order to reproduce the conditions for production. The chapter finds that the competing demands on these replacement funds puts continued production at jeopardy (Bernstein, 2010a: 18-21, 103).

9.2. CPA conflicts and their origins

As early as 2008, Binswanger et al (2008: 25) noted the widespread nature of conflict on the Besters farms, and that they were of a sufficiently serious nature that they threatened the success of the land reform project. “[I]n even the most successful CPAs there have

been some social conflicts, and it has become apparent that an acceptable mechanism for conflict resolution is essential.” However, the underlying causes of conflict were not analysed, beyond “anecdotal evidence [that] points to the strength of the leadership and the cohesion within the CPA as having a key role in that success” (*ibid*). The proposed solution was more rules, with clear sanctions and the establishment of committees to deal with the infringements; in other words, conflict was amenable to local institutional resolutions.

When I began fieldwork in 2010, the conflicts described in Binswanger et al (*ibid*) were clearly escalating and, as noted in the previous chapter, CPAs had taken different decisions about how to resolve them. Of the five CPAs that had owned cattle collectively, Ngula Kayishazwe had already disbursed its CPA herd to its members, while Nyakanyaka Yomshini had divided its CPA herd into two with one sub-group (Group B) disbursing its allocated share of cattle to its members and the other sub-group (Group A) retaining ownership of the cattle as a collective. By the end of 2013 when I had completed my fieldwork, the Nkuthu Kayishazwe CPA had also disbursed most of its cattle to members, and the Sizisizwe herd had declined so substantially that the CPA was no longer selling CPA cattle at stock sales and could not fund a salary for a worker. Conflicts in the Nyakanyaka Yomshini Group A were escalating and some committee members had begun to talk about disbursing the herd to its members, as had conflicts within the Mphuzanyoni CPA. Although the conflicts appeared unique and particular to each CPA, a close analysis of the production contradictions indicate more systemic contradictions at work.

In this chapter, I begin by examining the pressures over time on cattle production at Mphuzanyoni, one of the ‘successful’ farms. I provide a detailed analysis of the emergence of conflict over the competing demands on how income should be distributed between the different replacement funds, namely wages, annual operational costs, investment in expansion and dividends to members, and how the Mphuzanyoni CPA members have struggled to resolve them. I then consider whether similar contradictions are occurring on two other farms, Nkuthu Kayishazwe and Nyakanyaka Yomshini, and conclude by arguing, against Binswanger et al (*ibid*) that a more comprehensive account

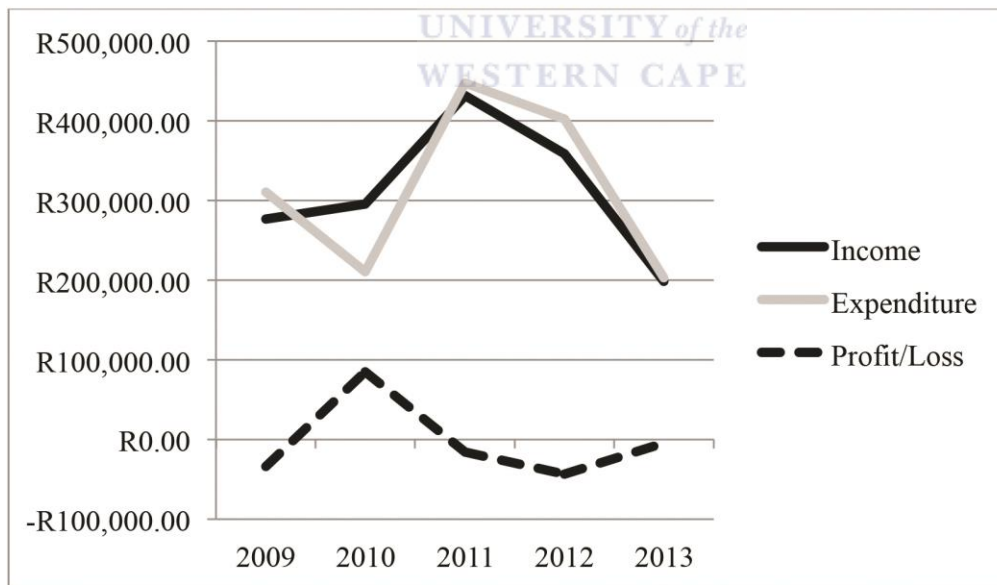
of the conflict lies in the irresolvable contradictions related to reproducing the conditions for production at CPA level.

9.3. Mphuzanyoni: conflicts over replacement funds

9.3.1. Mphuzanyoni's declining profitability

Table 44 below indicates the changes over a five-year period in Mphuzanyoni's total annual income and expenditure, with the resulting profit/loss outcomes. The CPA's annual income rose steadily from R277,000 to R432,000 between 2009 and 2011, but thereafter fell sharply to R198,000 in 2013. The annual expenditure line more or less follows the income line except in 2010 when expenditure drops to R211,000, and this is also the only year in which the CPA makes a profit, an amount of R85,000. The only year with an annual expenditure lower than 2010 is 2013, at R203,000, when a small annual loss of R4,600 is registered.

Table 44: Mphuzanyoni profit/loss between 2009 and 2013



Source: Information supplied from Mphuzanyoni bank statements

However, as illuminating as these trends are in terms of the profitability and general trajectory of the CPA's cattle enterprise, the graph begs the questions of what drives the

fluctuations and what accounts for the discrepancy between income and expenditure trends. Classical farm production economics calculates profits as the difference between income and expenditure. Fluctuations in either income or expenditure, and the factors contributing or causing such fluctuations are therefore key explanatory variables when assessing profitability. And yet the notion of ‘factors’ renders neutral and invisible the struggles over the specific conditions and the new contradictions that resolutions of struggle often give rise to.

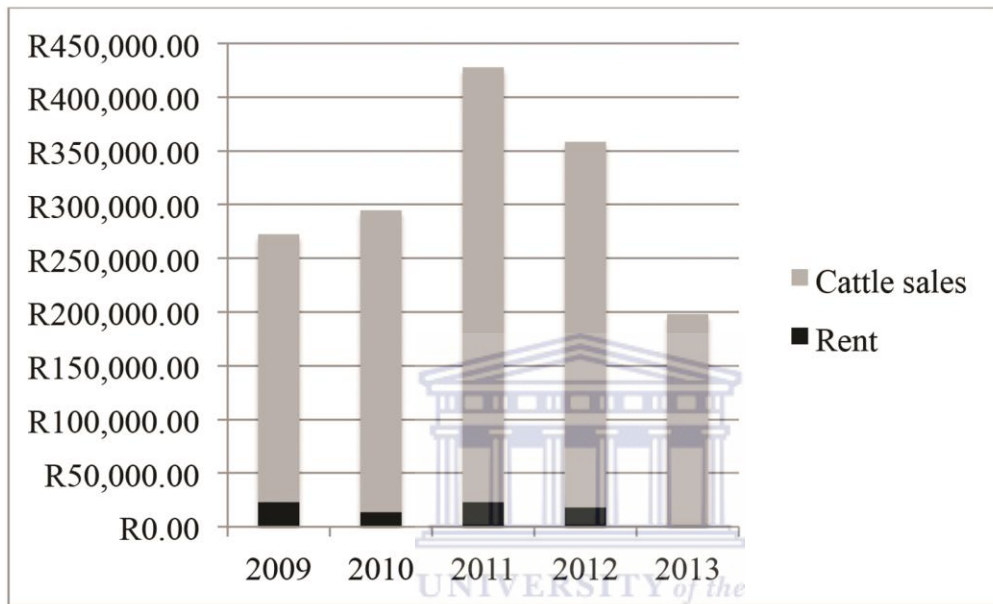
9.3.2. CPA income and the struggle over the lease

The income of the Mphuzanyoni CPA was from two sources: cattle sales and the rent from leasing a part of the farm to a neighbouring commercial farmer, Simon Tedder. The lease agreement with Tedder was terminated at the end of 2012 at a point when CPA income was declining rapidly. The year before, the CPA farm manager, Shabalala, had argued that it was time to terminate the lease in order to make available additional rangelands for the expanding farm herds. However, the CPA members had decided at an AGM to maintain the lease in order to pay for a burial insurance that benefitted all members, and Shabalala’s request was declined. A year later, Tedder terminated the lease as a result of his decision to leave the country. The committee remained undecided about whether to find a new leaseholder or to expand the CPA’s rangelands. At the end of the 2013, the AGM elected a new committee, and while it was still consolidating, the CPA’s cattle and cattle of households living near the leased lands were moved into the grazing camps. By early 2014, the continuing disagreements about the leased land had combined with Tedder’s decision to terminate the lease and the election of a new committee to tilt the balance in favour of expanded rangeland access for the CPA’s cattle. The battle for expanded production had been won by default at the cost of the burial insurance.

Nevertheless, it is clear from Table 45 below that the income from the lease was neither the CPA’s primary nor the most important source of income. Not only did cattle sale income far exceed rental income, the rent was also unreliable with Tedder frequently

failing to pay the rental due.⁵⁸ While the termination of the lease obviously contributed to the reduced CPA income in 2013, the primary cause of the rapid income decline from 2011 to 2013 was the reduced income from cattle sales and not the lease termination.

Table 45: Mphuzanyoni income from different sources between 2009 and 2013



Source: Information supplied from Mphuzanyoni bank statements

Cattle stock sales data (see Chapter 6 for details) indicate that Mphuzanyoni sale trends also occurred at a district level with number of cattle sold on district sales reaching a high in 2011 before decreasing in 2012 and 2013 (AAM stock sales data). Anecdotal evidence of a particularly dry period over the 2010-2011 summer months may explain both increased sales in 2011 and reduced sales in the subsequent years due to reduced conception and weaning rates. By May 2013, the total cattle on sale in the district were nearing the 2012 totals, indicating that sale stock figures had bounced back to previous levels. However, it took Mphuzanyoni another year to recover.

⁵⁸ In 2009 and 2011, Tedder paid ten month’s rent while in 2010 he paid rent for only six months and in 2012, for eight months. The committee was aware of these lapses but chose not to demand the rent because “Simon helps us in other ways that we appreciate Like in giving us a bull.... So we decided not to ask for the rent he owed us” (Mrs Mavimbela, 2014: pers com).

Although some recovery in Mphuzanyoni profits is evident in 2013, this is the outcome not of increased income from cattle sales but of decreased expenditure. Before examining the reasons for this, it is necessary first to consider the trends related to expenditure and the main expenditure categories since these are also instructive both in themselves and for what they are unable to illuminate.

9.3.3. *Expenditure and the struggle over wages*

I divided the expenditure reflected in bank statements into three categories, because of their distinctly different nature as funds that must be replaced annually from production in order to reproduce the conditions for production. These are wages; farm input costs (both operational and capital), and the payment of cash dividends. As Table 46 below shows, farm inputs constituted the largest category of expenditure, followed by the payment of dividends and then wages. However, farm input expenditure and dividends follow similar trends whereas wage expenditure gradually increases.

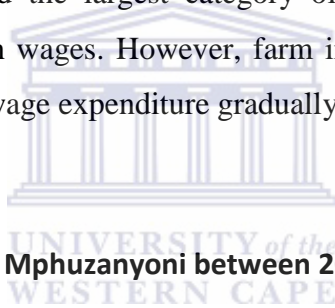
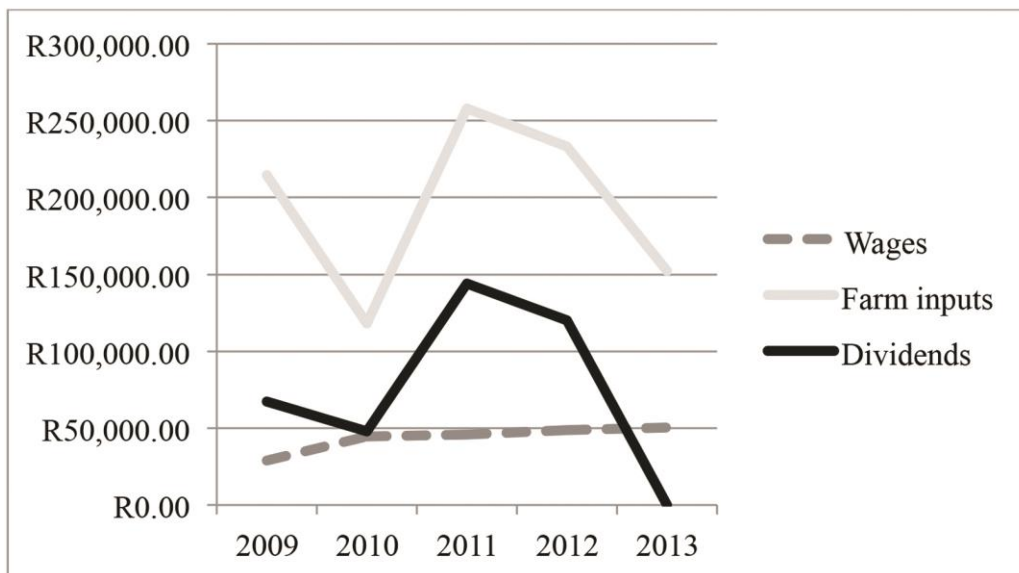


Table 46: Relative expenses at Mphuzanyoni between 2009 and 2013



Source: Adapted from Mphuzanyoni bank statements

The total wage bill rose between 2009 and 2010 as a result of the CPA's decision to employ an additional worker, in addition to two existing employees. The timing of this additional employment coincided with a rising CPA income trajectory, decreased total expenditure and the year in which the CPA made a profit. However, the reasons given for the additional employment were not simply production related. "That house [the Hlatswayo's] had nobody working after the father was killed, and we could see that there was work to be done on the farm, so the community agreed to employ Bennett [an unmarried adult son]" (Shabalala, 2012: pers com). What was not said was that the Hlatswayo's, as discussed in Chapter 8, also belong to a dominant family lineage on the farm and they were not the only household without any wage employees.⁵⁹ The primary rationale for the employment thus appeared to meet social imperatives dictated by the lineage struggles described in Chapter 8 and that were broader than just production constraints related to labour shortages.

Despite this responsiveness to a local social imperative, the total wage bill rose only slowly each year with erratic cost of living increases, from R1,200 a month (R55 a day) in 2009 to R1,400 a month (R64 a day) in April 2012. In 2010, the wages were R1,270 a month, just slightly lower than the mean wage of R1,310 earned on other farms in the district.⁶⁰ However, from 2011 onwards, the wages dropped below the legally prescribed minimum farm wage. This was as a result of the CPAs decision not to increase wages for nearly two years from 2010 to 2012; and not to adhere to the government's prescribed new minimum wage for farm workers in 2013 (an increase from R69 to R105 a day) following the 2012 farm worker strikes in the Western Cape. When I asked a farm employee how he felt about the lack of an increase, his response indicated a brooding grievance.

"We asked the committee for an increase but they said there is no money in the CPA purse."

⁵⁹ The household of Nomakismus Mthembu had no employed members and was dependent on child and foster grants. However, it was a household with only women resident on the farm. The Hlatswayo household, on the other hand, had an employed daughter.

⁶⁰ This figure is calculated from my survey data on 27 of 38 permanent farm workers whose wages were known.

“So what will you do then?”

“The committee said we must adjust our hours.”

“Will you manage the work if you do that?”

“No, that is not possible. The work will not be done.”

“But if you don’t do the work, what will the community say?”

“They will cry, but we will say nothing because this is not something we want”
(SJ, 2013: pers com).

This man, with whom I had spent many evenings talking to about farming cattle – his own, his father’s as a boy, his landowner-employer’s as a young adult, and now the CPA’s, and whose motivation to see the CPA succeed as a farm business could not be doubted, seemed to be defeated for the first time since the CPA employed him as a farm manager. The CPA’s decision not to increase wages brought to the fore the dual class positions of owner and worker that the CPA farm workers occupied, which also played into another arena of contestation: the declining expenditure on farm inputs.

Expenditure on farm inputs fluctuated widely over five years. It dropped from R311,000 to R211,000 between 2009 and 2010, and then more than doubled to R448,000 in 2011, before declining more slowly over the next two years to a low of R203,000 in 2013. High expenditure peaks consistently occurred in the Spring and Autumn, when summer and winter mineral supplements were purchased, and vets were contracted to do pregnancy testing. Thus, for instance, in March/April 2009, a cheque was issued for R49,000 to purchase winter mineral lick, fencing materials, and to pay for pregnancy testing. Similarly, in March/April 2011, a cheque of R67,000 was cashed in order to purchase 2 ½ tons of winter lick while an additional amount of nearly R11,000 was paid for pregnancy testing. The exception to this was April/May in 2012 when a tractor was purchased for R45,000 to replace the older tractor for which spares could not be obtained, and the arrears and annual fees of nearly R14,000 were paid for a private livestock security company, sparked by the theft of cattle from the farm. The Spring expenditures, which took place mainly between July and September each year, involved amounts

ranging from R25,000 to R49,000 in a single month mainly for summer mineral licks and tractor parts and repairs. A consistent but less expensive item of expenditure was diesel for the tractor and generator.⁶¹

In other words, the main expenditures were related to ongoing operational requirements - purchases of mineral supplements, tractor spares, diesel, fencing material and veterinary services - while the purchase of a tractor was a one-off capital expense. The escalating expenditure was thus the result primarily of increased prices in the operational inputs required to farm the CPA's cattle along commercial lines. These costs dropped off slightly in 2012 when the Department of Agriculture purchased a portion of the mineral licks required and fencing materials through the Recapitalisation Programme, although the savings thus generated were then reallocated to a tractor purchase and the payment of security service arrears. By 2013, however, the CPA committee was being forced to cut back on input purchases and to make difficult trade-offs between longer-term investments and short-term income as a result of declining income.

For Shabalala (2013: pers com), the decision to cut back on operational costs coincided with the committee's decision not to increase wages to the new minimal amounts, in ways that he found very demoralizing.

“We have some problems here and there. The committee tells me to do my work, but when I ask for the funds to buy things I need, they say there's no money. I don't know how I should I work if I can't buy diesel for the tractor, or licks for the cattle? As you can see, the fence needs to be fixed, and the road is not graded, but we do not have what we need.”

But a committee member disputes Shabalala's view.

“No, Shabalala does not talk the truth! The Department bought fencing material and left it at his house but he and the others don't want to work. They just sit and complain, and everyone can see this. The problem is that he doesn't want to

⁶¹ The tractor was used to grade the road in summer months and to transport feed to the grazing camps, while the generator pumped water from a borehole to camps that had no rivers. Households were also permitted to use the tractor to transport building materials.

listen; he wants to do the things he thinks are right, not what the committee says” (MS, 2014: pers com).

When the CPA’s funds were sufficient, it was possible for Shabalala to reconcile his interests as a farm manager with his interests as a member of the owning body. With declining income, the committee was forced to take a more active role in making decisions about expenditure, with the result that Shabalala’s plans for the farm were often thwarted. But if he could not farm the CPA’s cattle in the way he deemed necessary to produce weaners of a suitable grade, then his tasks as a worker seemed to undermine his interests in the co-ownership of the cattle. This contradictory class position, however, was lodged in deeper contradictions at other levels of the CPA, which are indicated by the declining calving rates on the one hand, and the rapid increase in the payments of cash and cattle dividends to members on the other.

9.3.4. *Declining calving rates and replacement of breeding stock*

In commercially run beef herds, some drop off in the number of calves produced annually is expected following the purchase of initial breeding stock. This, when there are no additional production issues, results from the gap between culling non-productive breeding stock and heifers reaching maturity. The commercial herd recommended targets is that 16% of breeding stock is culled annually in order to rid the herd of infertile cows, assisted calvers or cows whose calves fail to reach weaning age. Recommended commercial herd calving percentages are that 85% of breeding stock should conceive⁶², and 96% of calves should reach weaning age. In other words, if the Mphuzanyoni CPA had adopted commercial beef herd practices as from 2006, and they had had no extraneous or unexpected problems, then they could have expected to achieve the following recommended production targets from the initial breeding stock of 169 cows:

⁶² Calving or fertility rates are calculated by dividing the number of cows that successfully impregnated by the number of cows put to the bull. The rates vary across cattle breeds, the number of times the cow is presented to the bull and appear to depend on feeding regimens. (McDowell *et al*, 1976; Rennie *et al*, 1976). In commercial beef herds in South Africa, the recommended target to achieve profitability is 85%. (Gertenbach, 2000)

Table 47: Recommended commercial beef targets at Mphuzanyoni: 2006-2013

Year	Breeding cows	Weaned calves	Cull replacement	Output
2006	169	138	27	111
2007	142	115	22	93
2008	122	98	19	79
2009	130	105	20	85
2010	132	101	21	80
2011	130	101	20	81
2012	130	101	20	81
2013	131	101	20	81

As can be seen in Table 47 above, the output of weaned calves ready for sale drops over three to four years while the heifers that replace the culled cows grow out and begin to produce calves themselves. The calving rates of first time calvers also drop to about 60% in the second year of calving as heifers recover from the stress of pregnancy and raising calves, keeping total output slightly suppressed (Gertenbach, 2000; Meaker *et al*, 1980). As is also evident, if no additional heifers over the replacement figure are grown out to expand the breeding cow numbers, the breeding herd stabilizes at about 77% of the original herd size.

But these are theoretical production targets, and the real question is to what extent the Mphuzanyoni's herd varied from these targets and why. My attempt to reconstruct the herd changes over time was derived from interviews with the chairperson and farm manager and correlated with data from the AAM stock sales and the CPA's bank statements. However, it was difficult to get accurate annual herd structure data because the different data sources didn't always correlate, partly as a result of incomplete data or the timing of when information was obtained. For example, questions about how many cows were pregnant aimed at determining conception rates depended, at any given

moment, on knowing how many cows had already given birth given that the calving period straddles summer and autumn. The stock sale data also only refer to sales run by AAM whereas Vleissentraal ran two sales in 2009 and two sales in 2012 and 2013. Although the data are therefore only indicative of the production dynamics, the number of calves produced annually at Mphuzanyoni frequently exceeded these theoretical production targets.

Table 48: Mphuzanyoni calves born and sold

Year	Calves born	Weaners sold	Cows sold
2009	118	37	12
2010	128	46	3
2011	86	43	40
2012	105	42+	30?

Note: The data for the Vleissentraal-run sale in 2012 are not disaggregated into the lots of cattle sold, making it difficult to distinguish between weaner and cow sales.

Although the calves exceed the numbers expected from an initial herd of 169 cows for every year except 2011, other production targets were not being met. In the 2009/10 calving season, 144 calves were born of which 16 died, a weaning rate of 89%. Furthermore, 77 of the 206 cows had failed to get pregnant, a conception rate of 63%. Two year's later, in the 2011/2012 calving season, 180 cows produced 105 calves, a calving rate of 58%. Furthermore, both productive breeding stock was declining and weaners being sold each year were often below the calving numbers from the year before. The figures suggest that calves were not being used to replace non-productive cows but nor were they being sold. However, by 2013 this downward trend was reversing: the state vet had confirmed that 157 cows were pregnant, 31 of them heifers pregnant for the first time and 35 pregnant for the second time, and a conception rate of 94% had been

achieved. The breeding stock of 167 cows had also just about returned to the 2006 figure. What accounts for these apparently extremely erratic production indicators?

In 2011, the farm manager, Shabalala (pers com), told me that he had been struggling with poor conception rates. Other CPA farms and commercial farms in the district were also experiencing poor conception rates (Tedder, 2012: pers com; Smythe, 2012: pers com; Khumalo, 2012: pers com). Shabalala spoke to the neighbour, Simon Tedder, who was attempting to improve his conception rates by injecting his breeding cows with Vitamin A. Donovan Smythe, a large beef farmer in the district, also told me that his conception rates had dropped to 65%, making beef farming “unprofitable”, and a number of people at Nyakanyaka Yomshini also complained about low conception rates. The drop off in sales in 2012 (see Chapter 6) confirms the poor 2011 district-wide weaning rates, and that the likely explanation was drought related rather than a production management issue. However, the drought does not fully explain the erratic production indicators at Mphuzanyoni.

9.3.5. *The struggle over dividends*

A key issue at Mphuzanyoni was that the breeding stock was declining because heifers were not replacing old breeding stock at sufficient rates as a result of annual disbursements of heifers to CPA members. Both heifers and cash were being regularly disbursed to members as annual dividends, as shown in Table 49 below.

Table 49: Mphuzanyoni cattle and cash dividends to member households

Year	Cash to HH	Total cash disbursed	Heifers to HH	Total heifers disbursed
2007	R2000	R48,000	0	0
2008	0	0	1	24
2009	R2,800	R67,200	2	48
2010	R2,000	R48,000	2	48
2011	R6,000	R144,000	1 (or ox)	22 + 2 ox
2012	R5,000	R120,000	0	0
2013	0	0	0	0
Total	R17,800	R427,200	6	142 + 2 ox

It is figures such as these, combined with the regular sale of weaners at formal stock sales that are used to substantiate the idea that Mphuzanyoni is a successful land reform farm. Nearly half a million rand in turnover was paid out in cash to members as dividends along with 142 heifers over a seven period. A more hidden dividend or subsidy was that the CPA also funded the input costs of the household cattle herds, including the labour required to dip, feed, castrate, dehorn and inoculate them. Households were also entitled to use the CPA bulls, saving them the cost and management of keeping their own bulls, but thereby increasing the total number of bulls the CPA was required to keep in order to maintain fertility. Each of these dividends, however, came with different kinds of costs to the CPA enterprise and set up particular tensions and dynamics that had to be managed.

In 2010, the CPA spent R211,000 on operational costs and wages excluding cash dividends. Since the CPA's herd size was 305 cattle (excluding new calves) and the total household cattle came to approximately 400, the maintenance cost of all the cattle on the farm amounted to R300 per head. The annual cost to the CPA of maintaining household cattle was thus in the region of R120,000. From the perspective of the collective

commercial enterprise, this hidden subsidy to households raised the cost of CPA production. The 128 CPA calves had cost R1,648 each to produce, when the subsidy is factored in. Without this subsidization, the cost of production would have been closer to R760 per calf.

Furthermore, the subsidy was unevenly distributed across the households. With a mean household herd size of 17, this amounted to an additional mean subsidy of R5,100 p/a to each house. However, since household cattle ranged from two to 51, the value of the subsidy ranged from R600 per household to R15,300. Although I attempted to discuss the inequality associated with the subsidy with a number of respondents, I was told that subsidizing household cattle inputs was not a “benefit” and therefore the differential gain to households was not a problem for the CPA members. “The CPA wants to support the households but this is not a benefit because households have different capacities (*amandla*) for cattle farming” (Shabalala, 2011: per com). The subsidy’s differentiating effect is examined further in Chapter 10.

The cash dividends disbursed annually to members also placed huge demands on the CPAs finances: they came at the cost of the CPA’s profitability, the capital required to fund ongoing operational expenditure (visible in deteriorating infrastructure, particularly the dams and roads) and in meeting the costs of expanded production that was necessary, at minimum, to increase the herd to its original size. Shabalala’s son, Sphamandla, identified the CPA’s lack of cash as key to the different cattle production management regimes evident in household, CPA and commercial herds. Sphamandla worked for the neighbouring commercial farmer, Simon, and owned some of the Shabalala household cattle. As the son of the Mphuzanyoni farm manager, an employee of a commercial beef farmer and an owner of cattle in his own right, he was thus well situated to compare management systems, particularly since all three systems produced the same breed of cattle, Bonsmara, and farmed on land in the same geographical area. Sphamandla identified three key differences: firstly, nutritional inputs, secondly, diversification, and thirdly, the purpose of farming. “Simon has cattle in order to be commercial, to be a business. Mphuzanyoni I can say is also commercial but households are not commercial. As households we have cattle in order to live, to buy things, not as a business.”

(Sphamandla Shabalala, 2011: pers com). However, Simon manages his cattle production differently from the way the CPA does.

“Simon’s cattle are better than ours. They’re heavier and more fertile. This is because he gives them a lick that has a lot of nutrition in it ... And they all have a lot of it every day. His cows never get hungry because he leases grazing camps and moves his cattle around these regularly. The result is that Simon puts his bulls with his heifers earlier than we can, so his cows calve earlier. But we all sell at the same sale at the same time.”

The reason Simon can purchase the inputs that the CPA cannot, according to Sphamandla, is that he also derives income from crop production and through leasing his tractors and machinery to other farmers. The CPA, by contrast, not only has a single income source, it is also obliged to disburse its income to its members in the form of cash dividends. Despite this cost to the CPA, the cash disbursement from a household perspective is relatively insignificant, amounting approximately to R280 per person per annum, which intensified the members’ demands for improved benefits from the CPA.

Arguably, the most valuable dividend to members was the heifers. They not only contributed to establishing or expanding household breeding stock, but also improved the wealth of the household head who, as indicated in Chapter 7, most often owned the cattle. The value of these heifers was nearly R28,100⁶³ over the seven year period, and by 2011, many of the 2008 “dividend” heifers had produced their first calves. However, the decision to disburse heifers as a dividend seriously disrupted the productivity of the CPA’s breeding stock. In the years when two heifers were given to each household, the CPA’s replacement stock ran at deficits.

The households’ heifer dividends were, in other words, the CPA’s replacement breeding cows, which reduced the available breeding stock in the 2012 and 2013 years. When

⁶³ This was calculated using the mean price for CPA stock obtained at the district stock sales between February 2009 and June 2013. It is probably slightly over-stated in that CPAs also sold infertile breeding cows and non-productive bulls, which would have pushed up the mean price slightly.

conception rates also fell in 2011, the looming crisis became apparent and the committee was forced to persuade members at the AGM that it was necessary to reduce the heifer dividends to households. As the chairperson explained it:

“The cattle are doing well ... [although] there have been problems: some people ... are wanting us to get more benefits for each house, like more heifers and cash But in the end we talked and agreed that if we each take two cattle [again this year as we did last year] the breeding cows will be reduced. [T]his year only 86 cows had calves, and we don't have any replacement cows for the old ones and the ones that are no longer getting pregnant. They are decreasing and if we give all the heifers away we'll finish the herd” (Mavimbela, 2011: pers com).

However, this decision was fiercely contested and a number of members stormed out of the AGM muttering about mismanagement and the failure of the CPA to improve their lives. In an attempt to hold the CPA body together, the members, with the committees' reluctant agreement, resolved to increase the cash dividends to households in lieu of heifers.

The members' discontent and the attempt to resolve the immediate issue of dividends, however, intersected with another looming crisis. The daily management of the herd to meet the multiple contending demands on production resulted in Shabalala adopting a strategy that would be deemed unproductive from a commercial perspective. Despite the poor conception and weaning rates, the CPA frequently did not sell all its infertile or unproductive cows. Although Shabalala told me that he gave cows two chances to get pregnant after which they were sold, it was apparent that holding onto breeding cows, despite their problems with fertility, conception and weaning, sometimes paid off in greater calving numbers, particularly when rains were good and money available for nutritional supplements. However, the costs of production were rising at the same time that decreasing numbers of productive stock were manifesting in the drop-off of weaned oxen for sale. This brought together a cash flow and profitability crisis that resulted in further constraints on expenditure in 2012, including reduced input purchases and the

decision not to increase wages. With a demoralized labour force and constrained expenditure on inputs, prices for the CPA's oxen declined, as shown in Table 50 below. While the CPA prices were always lower than the mean district prices, the price differential had nearly disappeared in 2011 when the CPA's income peaked, before escalating to a whopping R1,420 per animal in 2013.

Table 50: Mphuzanyoni mean price compared to mean district price for weaned oxen

Year	Mean Mphuzanyoni weaner price	Mean district weaner price	Price difference
2010	R4,067	R4,487	R420
2011	R5,063	R5,186	R123
2012	R4,293	R5,256	R963
2013	R4,142	R5,562	R1,420

To some extent the increasing number of young cattle on sale that had been fattened in commercial feedlots explains this differential. However, the prices that Nyakanyaka Yomshini obtained did not collapse in the same way, and in 2012, Nyakanyaka Yomshini received a mean price of R4,600 compared to Mphuzanyoni's R4,293. The widening differential in 2013 prices between Mphuzanyoni and other sellers suggests other problems in the production of the CPA's stock for sale, and the most likely explanation is the reduction of purchased inputs as a result of income constraints and rising costs, which resulted in delayed pregnancy and younger weaned calves for sale.

With the fewer stock for sale, the committee began to exercise more disciplined expenditure, which in turn resulted in younger and poorer quality stock for sale. These disciplines, together with the committee's decision not to increase wages and the withdrawal of heifer and cash dividends to members, brought together a perfect storm of discontent that threatened to unravel the CPA and put the cattle enterprise at risk. The committee that had overseen the CPAs enterprise over the previous four years was the first casualty, when it was voted out and replaced with new younger members. Despite

the increased numbers of pregnant cows and heifers in 2013 and indications that the production challenges were gradually being resolved, it was unclear whether Mphuzanyoni would be able to ride the conflicts generated by contradictory imperatives of reproducing the conditions of CPA production on the one hand, and the social reproduction challenges embedded in the social body of the CPA on the other (and discussed in detail in Chapter 10). If the new committee fails to resolve these contradictions, then the CPAs farming enterprise is likely to collapse.

In summary, the contradictory requirement of reproducing the conditions for the CPA's cattle production at the same time as reproducing the social relations that hold the CPA members together generated a series of struggles over the use of the CPA's income and its rangelands as well as claims over the breeding stock replacement heifers. Specifically, this contradiction was apparent in:

1. Whether the CPA's income should be used to fund an additional job, increasing annual cash dividends to members and subsidies to household cattle production inputs or to replace deteriorating farm infrastructure, operational inputs into cattle production (mineral supplements, veterinary costs, diesel, fencing etc) or to increase farm wages in line with minimum sector determinations;
2. Whether the CPA's rangelands should be used to generate lease income to pay for a burial insurance for members or to provide additional grazing for the increasing numbers of total cattle on the farm;
3. Whether the heifers produced by the CPA's cows should be distributed as dividends to members' to build their own cattle herds, or to replace and expand the CPAs declining breeding cow stock, or be sold to generate additional cash income.

Different strategies were developed to resolve struggles over these contradictions at different times. Thus, for instance, the farm manager held back on selling non-productive breeding cows in an attempt to produce sufficient calves to meet the competing requirements of sales, herd replacement and dividends to members. The strategy failed when drought combined with reduced calving rates to generate a profitability and cash

flow crisis for the CPA. The CPA's committee, in the meanwhile, was able to respond positively to members' demands for increasing cash and heifer dividends, the continuation of the burial insurance, and to employ an additional wage worker to reduce potential grievances from a dominant family lineage, for as long as calving rates and weaner prices held up. However, the members' increasing demands for cash and heifers jeopardized the CPA's cattle enterprise by reducing the breeding stock replacement rates, cutting expenditure on ongoing farm operations and increasing the cost of production. This resulted in lowered prices, lower numbers of weaners and old cows for sale and reduced profits per weaner produced. This looming conflict came to a head when the dual class position of the CPA's workers was exposed by the committee's decision not to increase wages and thus exacerbated their competing interests as workers and as owners of the CPA's cattle, creating a demoralized work force.

While these struggles over the resources of the CPA seemed to delineate different members as workers, owners and managers of the cattle enterprise, it is also apparent that these class identities were not static. In addition to the dual class position occupied by Shabalala and his co-workers and the shifting class consciousness that accompanied this dual occupation, the committee, as suggested in Chapter 8 played a key role in consolidating the benefits of ownership within the dominant family lineages on the farm. An important strategy here was the uneven distribution of the input subsidies for household cattle, which I've described above as hidden because it elicited no objection and was justified in terms of the different "power" or "capacity" of individuals to farm.

9.4. The contradictions of reproduction in the other CPAs

This section looks more briefly at the two other CPAs that were also struggling to straddle the contradictions of farming cattle commercially while meeting member's demands for benefits. While similar contradictions to those described at Mphuzanyoni above are present at the other CPAs, they take specific forms, which shapes how they are managed on the particular farms. This section examines the different forms of struggle and conflict evident at Nyakanyaka Yomshini and Nkuthu Kayishazwe.

9.4.1. *Nyakanyaka Yomshini*

As described in Chapter 6, Nyakanyaka Yomshini received 145 cows and a bull in 2006 as part of the land reform grant process, in addition to various farm implements. Two years later, the 16 households split into two groups, Group A consisting of ten households and Group B consisting of the remainder, and divided the assets of the CPA between them. The cattle were divided between all households with each household receiving 18 each. Group A then pooled their 180 cattle and continued to farm them collectively as a CPA while Group B took the cattle as individual households. An additional 33 cattle were sold and each household given R2,000. The cash in the bank account was used to purchase various inputs (anti biotics, mineral licks, dip), which were divided between the two groups. The groups also each received a tractor, a water tank, a grass slasher and a two-wheeled trailer. The farm was divided into two, although not legally subdivided, and each group was allocated a portion for its own use. (The different ways the two groups managed their rangelands was described in Chapter 7.)

For the leader of the split away group, the conflict leading to the split had its origins early in land reform (Ndizana Khoza: 2012: pers com).

“The conflict began just when land reform had started. Donovan told me to come and live here on the farm to start working. I had noticed that people could make money from chain saws so I sold a cow and bought one. When a gum tree on the farm blew over in a storm, I chopped it up and sold it as firewood. This was the first incident that began the trouble. The second was related to thatching. We agreed that everyone must harvest his or her own thatch. I found six women from the settlement to come and cut thatch for me but others didn’t find helpers. When they saw what a big pile of thatch I had, it caused an uproar, and people said I was stealing the farm’s resources for my own enrichment... [A]fter that, it was difficult to get co-operation from the group again.”

Khoza is probably correct when he identifies his strategies of using the farm’s resources as his own private property as unleashing processes of differentiation objected to by other members. These issues are examined in further detail in Chapter 10. However, there were

other structural issues relating to the CPA's production and use of income that also underlay the conflicts and became more apparent some years after the split.

After the split, Group A had four sources of income: the main two sources were the sale of cattle (calves and unproductive cows) at stock sales and the sale of white maize (and less frequently soya beans). Additional income came from the rental of 260 hectares of grazing land to the neighbouring farmer and former owner of the land, Donovan Smythe, for R19,500 p/a in 2010. The old farmhouse on this portion of the farm was also rented out from time to time, generating sufficient rental income to cover the CPA's electricity purchases to drive the farm's water pumps.

As in Mphuzanyoni, the income Group A's received from cattle sales reached a peak in 2011 and then declined sharply thereafter.

Table 51: Nyakanyaka Yomshini Group A cattle sales

	Cattle sold	Income received
2009	12	R56,400
2010	12	R47,350
2011	31	R144,975
2012	18	R92,112
2013 to May	6	R9,200
Total	79	R 365,675

Source: Adapted from AAM⁶⁴

⁶⁴ The AAM data do not record four other Vleissentraal sales that took place in the district over this period. Two of these took place in 2009, one in 2012 and the third in 2013. Furthermore, the data from AAM only go up to May 2013 and therefore misrepresents the total sales that occurred in that year. Since I was not given access to bank statements, I was not able to triangulate the sales data, as I did with Mphuzanyoni. In Mphuzanyoni's case, the sale income from these other four sales accounted for 37% of their total income over these five years. Nevertheless, the distribution of income over the years was similar.

Furthermore, and again similar to Mphuzanyoni, Group A sold nine cows in 2009 from a herd of 159 breeding cows, an off-take of unproductive stock of just under 6% suggesting that they were also holding onto cows that were not optimally productive. This was confirmed when only 35 calves were born in 2011, a calving rate of 22% (Khumalo, 2012: pers com), and the concerns expressed by the primary herdsman that he was battling with low conception rates (Mabizela, 2012: pers com). However, unlike Mphuzanyoni, Group A did have 32 heifers in 2010 that would be coming into season, an addition of 20% to the breeding stock. This was as a result of deciding not to distribute heifers as dividends to members in the earlier years, a decision that the leader of Group B, Ndizana Khoza, blamed for the split. “Why did we not get this heifer benefit when I was part of the CPA? It seems now that I was the bad one here for asking and asking for benefits. But if this request for benefits had been respected, we wouldn’t have split” (Khoza, N, 2012: pers com).

Group A used the income from cattle sales between 2008 and 2010 to purchase agricultural equipment, namely, a baler, a combine harvester, a four-line planter and a disc plough in an attempt to boost maize production. However, in 2011 the maize yields from 21 hectares dropped dramatically resulting in no surplus for sale. “We had a drought and got only eight tons of red maize and four tons of white. We put our money in the river and it went with the water. It’s no good planting like this. We need a pivot here to irrigate if we want to carry on with maize” (Khumalo, 2012: pers com).

But drought was not the only cause of declining productivity. Group A had also reduced the amount of fertilizer and chemicals they had been using to control weeds and insects because of their high costs. As Khumalo, the chairperson, explained, the cost of continuing to plant 21 hectares of maize would, in 2012, amount to just over R69,000 (*ibid*), or 75% of that year’s income from cattle sales.

Table 52: Cost of producing maize in Besters in 2012

Input type	Quantity	Price/R's	Qty/ha	Cost/ha	11 ha	21 ha
Fertiliser	50 kg	260	6	1,560	17,160	32,760
Seed	25 kg	2,700	12 ½	1350	14,850	28,350
Weed killer	25 l	3,000	2,5	300	3,300	6,300
Insecticide	20 l	800	2	80	880	1,680
TOTAL				R3,290	R36,190	R69,090

Source: Calculated from interview with Khumalo, 2012.

As a result, Group A decided in 2012 to reduce the area planted to maize to 11 hectares. “Donovan suggested it and the fathers (heads of house) agreed” (Khumalo, 2012: pers com). These decisions were responses to competing demands on how to use the CPA’s declining income, which resulted in struggles, conflict and ultimately threats to the CPA’s enterprise and social cohesion.

Group A employed four full-time workers at R1,400 a month each in 2010, along with part-time, seasonal, mainly women, workers who were contracted in the autumn to harvest the maize dropped by the combine harvester. They were paid either R50 a day or in-kind with the retrieved maize. When the minimum wage for farm workers was increased in 2012, Group A made the same decision as Mphuzanyoni not to increase wages, with similar results. One worker, Mpandlana Mpungose, told me in November 2012 (pers com): “We still get paid R1,400 a month, and we are aggrieved about this. We can only hope we get an increase in the future.” In what seems to be more than a coincidence, the CPAs’ responses were not dissimilar from neighbouring commercial farmers. A number of the men who worked on neighbouring farms said farmers had responded to the new wage minimums with a combination of retrenchments and short-time strategies. Rasta Khoza (2013: pers com) from Nyakanyaka Yomshini complained about the difficult choice he was presented with. “Donovan said he would either retrench us or we must work fewer hours for the same wages. We wanted both the work and the increase.... We are very unhappy because we have no future in this situation.”

However, while workers' class identification on the farms of Donovan Smythe and other commercial farmers was unambiguous, for the men employed by the CPAs, the class identification shifted between their concerns as workers' about their wages and their concerns as owners about the effects of the new employment conditions on productivity. This contradictory class position is reflected in the two different views of Group A employees. MV (2012: pers com) was of the view that his co-workers lacked discipline.

“I really want the CPA to carry on so I keep trying but the others are not doing their work properly. I feel that I am working for the others and they get the benefit. I have reported to the committee that ... some people are coming late to work and others not coming at all. I think the solution is either to pay some people more, those who do their work, or to employ outsiders. At least with outsiders you can withhold their pay or even fire them if they don't work. In fact, even one person could do all the work on this farm and get the job done.”

Indeed, MV argued that these labour related concerns would put the CPA enterprise at risk. “I know people talk about me when I'm not around. They say I think I'm clever, but I tell you, these group projects don't work. They all break in the end” (*ibid*). And a core reason for both the “breaking” of group projects and the committee's decision not to increase wages was the struggle to maintain increasing dividends to the members, without which the group enterprise had no purpose, in the face of declining productivity and income.

Since the split in 2008, Group A had attempted to provide benefits to its members every year. Khumalo (2012: pers com), the chairperson, reflected on this struggle at committee level:

“Every year, each house gets a pregnant heifer but we keep the grade 1 heifers for the CPA so that the herd can keep expanding. We also used to give each house money every year but the maize planted in 2010 failed and we had no maize to sell, which means there's been no money to disburse to households. When we had enough maize, each household also got 25x 50 kgs bags of unground white maize

for their own use. We would use the yellow maize to mix into the winter lick for the cattle. But now we have to buy winter lick because there's little maize from the fields. And then, all the cattle belonging to the houses are managed with the CPA's cattle, so they are dipped, injected and fed in the same way as the CPA's cattle at the CPAs cost."

In Khumalo's view, the cost to the Group A of cultivating maize each year under far from optimum conditions was placing enormous pressure on the collective resources. "I think we should stop cultivating land as a CPA because it's wasteful. Each household should do their own..." However, "people don't want to see it that way. They want the CPA to continue doing it for them. If it were my decision, I would just do three hectares for the cattle lick supplements only." But then, Khumalo was the only member of Group A who owned his own tractor, and, as a result, was the only person who could profitably cultivate the fields allocated to his household. Furthermore, for Khumalo, the CPA's cattle were the asset that it was most important to safeguard, even if it meant ceasing cultivation of maize and reducing the household-owned cattle.

"At the end of the year we will have to end the lease to Donovan and take back the grazing camp he is using. We now have too many cattle for this farm, and we are going to have to begin reducing cattle. I think we will reduce the household cattle first. We can't begin with the CPA cattle because they are the ones that look after us, they are the ones we will depend on in future" (*ibid*).

When I asked him how other members in Group A would respond to a decision to reduce their cattle, he replied that they should agree because household cattle limits were written into the CPA's constitution.

However, a year later a newly elected committee member, MT (2013: per com) called me and asked me to visit to talk about the troubles of the CPA. Her grievances brought together the underlying contradictions of CPA production: workers' wages and the

struggles of families to survive, struggles over CPA dividends, and the long term risk of relying on the CPA's cattle enterprise against the short-term risks of expanding a household's own cattle production:

“I want to get my cows from the CPA and go it alone now. I want to get out. There's no money here and we don't know where the money goes. My husband is the herder and he gets very little money – that's where he is now, in this rain. Everyone else gets something on which their lives can depend but we don't because he earns so little that my children go hungry. I've got no mealie meal now because he's working for nothing looking after these cattle for all these others who have got food for their children.”

MT's views are not substantially different from the reasons Ndizana Khoza, leader of Group B, gave for the original split. In addition to the refusal of the committee at the time to disburse heifers as dividends, Khoza's grievances also related to his employment as a CPA farm worker. His decisions in this capacity relating to bull purchases, cow insemination and maize storage were all constantly questioned because CPA members thought he was securing preferential benefits for himself. “I began to see there were problems here ... [then] I asked Donovan Smythe about my wages and he said I'd continue to get the wages he paid me when I worked for him. But then at a CPA meeting they said I was earning too much and my money was reduced. I saw I was playing and would go backwards” (N. Khoza, 2012: pers come). It was only when he led the split from the CPA that he began to see the benefits of the CPA enterprise. “I could see I was getting nothing. It was like that until now, when I finally got my cows. Really, who does this farm belong to? I can't see whose it is.”

For MT and others on the farm, including Ndizana, the problem resides with the CPA's chairperson who is not financially accountable. “He does everything: he does all the writing and he even signs for the cheques on his own” (MT, 2013: pers com). The members of Group A, she says, including his wife who is Ndizana's cousin, have urged him to step down and allow re-elections, but he refuses to do so. Khumalo disputes this,

saying he is tired of serving the community, which is never satisfied, and has tried to hand over the accounts but others won't take them. MT herself agrees that this is the case. When I asked her if she would take on the position of chairperson, she responded: "No, never! I cannot go close to it. The people hate you when you are in that position." The farm politics, it would seem, are so fraught that leadership is torn apart by the struggles generated over the various contradictions relating to the management of production and the disbursement of benefits to members.

Despite this, Group B wants to re-unite with Group A to recreate the original CPA. Both Khoza and Khumalo phrase this decision in terms of government's wishes. "I asked government to whom the fertilizer that they brought belonged; and then when Group A bought the combine harvester and they didn't tell us, I asked again whether they can use CPA funds in this way. Government said 'Don't pull apart, work together'. So then we agreed and we all signed, but nothing has happened since then" (N. Khoza, 2012: pers com). Similarly, when Group A required government assistance with Group B members refusing to step down as bank signatories, Khumalo asked DLA to mediate. "DLA said we were wrong to divide up the land and cattle. And now the Department of Agriculture also wants us to recreate the CPA before they will help us further" (Khumalo, 2012: pers com). However, government's policy of supporting large-scale commercial farm enterprises faces some serious sticking points at Nyakanyaka Yomshini.

For Group A, it is not negotiable that Group B members can return only if they return the 18 CPA cattle they took during the split. For Group B members, not only do they dispute that it was 18 cattle, many no longer have 18 cattle or herds that could support such an off-take, nor do they have the money to repurchase the cattle. As it is, Group A is aggrieved that should Group B re-unite with them, they will get the benefit of investments in machinery to which they did not contribute. The problem seems so intractable and both Khoza and Khumalo would prefer not to be caught up in CPA dynamics any longer. Khoza believes "government should have cut this farm up right at the beginning. There is a skin that hides the body now because nobody can talk openly. We're like chickens – when one starts to cluck, they all start. If each individual farms on his own, we could have bought the land of those who are struggling. Not everyone can

live by farming” (Khoza, 2012: pers com). While Khumalo can see a future for himself working full-time to manage the collective cattle enterprise in combination with cultivating his own fields and farming his own cattle, he nevertheless responded positively when I arranged for some farmers to talk to the Department of Land Affairs about leasing land in their own right in order to expand their own farming. “I would prefer to farm on my own. I think I could progress then without these other problems that CPAs bring” (Khumalo, 2013: pers com).

Like Mphuzanyoni, it is not clear that Nyakanyaka Yomshini will be able to manage the struggles between the competing imperatives of production, wages and dividends on CPA income and resources. Furthermore, unlike Mphuzanyoni, the split into two groups has resulted in government threatening to withhold further support that could ease the severity of the conflicts by reducing the pressure on CPA income. And yet, the reunification of the CPA is itself a fraught process, unsupported by members of both groups, and increasingly there are now also members of Group A that wish to withdraw from the CPA. The outcome will probably, in the short term, depend on whether cattle production and income from sales can be increased by boosting conception rates, notwithstanding limits to grazing, and whether the strategy of working in partnership with the neighbor, Donovan Smythe, pays off in increased maize yields and CPA income. However, in the longer term, the pressures on the CPA to deliver increasing dividends to members, and to do this despite droughts and other production challenges, are likely to become increasingly fraught as households expand their own cattle herds and struggles over the CPA’s rangelands break into open conflict.

9.4.2. *Nkuthu Kayishazwe*

Government bought 74 cattle for Nkuthu Kayishazwe in 2005. The sale of weaned calves and unproductive cows was the sole source of CPA income since the farm had very limited arable land and no spare land to lease. By 2010, the CPA herd had been reduced to 57 due to the Department of Agriculture’s insistence that the farm was being overgrazed and, in 2012 the CPA divided most of the cattle amongst its three member households owing to severe unresolved conflict. It retained a small collective herd of 15

breeding cows to fund collective costs, such as fencing, dip infrastructure maintenance and tractor costs. While CPA employment and the uses of CPA cattle had generated contested opinions amongst members, the core conflict that resulted in the division of CPA cattle originated, and was most intensely struggled over, in a single household, the Hlongwane.

In 2010, I conducted separate interviews with members of two of the households. In the interview at the Hlongwane household, the CPA employee, who was also the chairperson and oldest, married son, Johannes, was not present. In the second interview at the Msimanga household, three brothers including the CPA employee, Mhle, and his mother, were all present. The information provided on CPA production differed between the two households. The Msimanga members said the CPA owned 55 breeding cows and two bulls, that 33 calves had been born in the previous year while the calves of the current year had not yet been counted because the calving season was incomplete, and that nine oxen and a bull had been sold to generate a total CPA income of R50,000 in the previous year. The income was used to purchase inputs of CPA and household cattle, to pay wages for two employees and to provide cash dividends to households of R1,000 each. The Hlongwane household members, by contrast, said there were 55 breeding cows plus another 20 heifers ready to breed, and that 20 calves had been born by October 2010. They agreed that the total income generated in the previous year was R50,000 but said it was from the sale of 13 oxen, as well as a bull and two cows, and importantly, had not been used to provide dividends to member households. While these differences are not substantial, they nevertheless indicate that for the members of the Hlongwane household, the CPA was producing and selling cattle that they received no benefit from. As a younger brother, HB (2010: pers com) put it:

“There is no transparency on this farm. When we ask about the sales and the money from them, they threaten us. We get no benefit from these CPA cattle. It would be better to end these cattle because we would rather increase our own cattle.”

He added further that when he and his sister had attempted to move their own cattle and goats into a particular grazing camp, the CPA employees (including his brother) had moved them onto the road. “They said government told them this farm is only for people who get their money from farming full-time and do not have jobs somewhere else.” However, their discontent had multiple aspects to it. Jobs, they said, were both insecure and the salaries low, and their longer-term futures relied on investments in livestock that would reduce their costs of living and insure them against loss of employment. In addition, their names had been used to secure the grants that were used to purchase the farm. “Because our identity numbers have been used here, we can’t get anything else from government. That means this is the place where we should benefit from government help.”

So acute were these intra-familial conflicts that Johannes was unwilling to be formally interviewed, although he was friendly and forthcoming when I saw him at sales and various ceremonies. Furthermore, Gogo Msimanga feared for his life, believing that he was at risk of being assaulted. The decision to divide up the cattle between households was primarily a strategy to insulate the CPA from the conflict within the Hlongwane household. The same conflicts did not occur at the Msimanga household (or compound). “Mhle never went to school because he held the [labour] contract for his father, so his father said he would inherit the cattle of this household because this is the only way he can live. The others went to school so they must go and find work elsewhere” (Gogo Msimanga, 2012: pers com).

The different decisions taken by households on how to manage their own cattle thus combined with the government policy expectation that land reform beneficiaries would be full-time farmers. However, the insecurities of employment off the farm combined with government’s policy of allocating Land Redistribution and Agricultural Development programme grants against individual names, created the environment in which pressures on individual reproduction potentially rubbed up against the conditions for the reproduction of the CPA’s cattle enterprise, generating conflicts over the CPA, its income and its assets (both land and cattle). The division of the cattle had, by late 2013, successfully insulated the CPA from the conflict in the Hlongwane household, although

the conflict within the Hlongwane household was not resolved. Indeed, Johannes' response has been to sell off the cattle his now senile mother inherited from his father as well as the cattle disbursed by the CPA in a strategy of short-term appropriation of benefits, which his siblings have attempted unsuccessfully to contest. The diminishing Hlongwane herds had, in turn, created space and opportunity for the Msimanga to expand their own herds onto the CPA land. Between 2005 and 2012, the total herd expanded from 70 cattle to 114 despite regular off-take through sales, ceremony and *lobolo*. What the long-term result to collective ownership of the land of that strategy would be was as yet not visible.

9.5. Conclusion

The CPAs as farm enterprises have to struggle constantly to balance three competing imperatives on what to do with income generated:

1. To keep farming from year to year, the CPAs need to spend money on ongoing operational and infrastructural inputs, particularly, wages, nutritional supplements, veterinary inputs, breeding stock replacement; infrastructure maintenance; farm implements, and for those CPAs that grow crops, seed, fertiliser and machinery.
2. In order to remain competitive and profitable, and to generate increased income, the CPAs should be responding to the rapid structural changes taking place in agricultural production by either expanding production, improving labour productivity, investing up or down the value chain, or in securing niche markets. However, these strategies require substantial capital investments.
3. To secure a stable social environment in which production can take place, the CPAs need to provide members with increasing dividends in the form of heifers, cash, subsidized inputs to household farming or other social investments such as burial insurance.

However, if the CPAs do not continue to invest income in operational expenditure, then farm production will eventually collapse, as began to happen when Mphuzanyoni was unable to invest in tractor repairs resulting in deteriorating farm roads and compromised feed regimens; and if they do not invest profits in expanded production, value chain integration or mechanisms to improve labour productivity, they will become less able to compete and income for reinvestment and dividends will decline over time. Finally, if they do not continue to provide members with substantial and increasing dividends, then members will begin to question the management of the farm and suspicions will become rife about whether the farm's income is being appropriated and by whom. Conflicts will escalate and members will begin to believe that the shorter-term division of the farm's assets is less risky than the longer-term risk of production collapse or appropriation of farm assets by some.

But these contradictions do not generate necessary or inevitable outcomes, as is evident in the very different ways they have played out on the different farms. Furthermore, resolution of one set of issues sets up new dynamics and contradictions that then frequently generate new struggles and arenas of struggle, with a new set of resolutions. Leadership, particularly in mediating the competing demands on farm income, is key to prevent these struggles from escalating into members fearing that they will lose out in the long term. However, it is not the quality of the leadership that is, in the first place, the cause of these conflicts, but rather systemic contradictions relating to the use of CPA income from commercial cattle production, as this chapter has demonstrated. An additional related set of causes for why the farms have followed such different trajectories, as Chapter 10 shows, is the struggles generated over CPA income as a result of household differentiation and the underlying processes that cause it.

10. SOCIAL REPRODUCTION AND THE DYNAMICS OF DIFFERENTIATION AT BESTERS

10.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I examined the contradictions relating to three “replacement funds” (Bernstein, 2010: 18-20) that must be regularly replenished if the conditions for CPA production are to be secured from year to year, and the struggles they have generated amongst members over how CPA income and profits should be used. In this chapter I now analyse the underlying processes of differentiation that have given rise to these struggles in the first place, and how these articulate with the different production dynamics and trajectories of the CPAs to produce complex processes of differentiation on the farms.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Bernstein (2009) argues that social reproduction takes place today in contexts where, on the one hand, wage labour is increasingly difficult to secure, and on the other, farming for own production is subject to squeezes from rising input costs and declining commodity prices. Scoones *et al* (2010: 226-229) give methodological effect to this observation by exploring the relationship between livelihoods and farming in Zimbabwe using a generic livelihood typology drawn from Dorwood (2009) and Dorwood *et al* (2009). Such an approach, they argue, emphasizes dynamic social changes and can be related (implicitly) to class based analyses. However, O’ Laughlin has suggested that the dynamics of differentiation are more complex than the somewhat mechanistic relationship between farming and livelihoods that the Scoones *et al* analysis implies. For instance, O’ Laughlin (2009: 205) argues that where, in the scenario of the classic agrarian question, employment was once the means to secure social reproduction against the vulnerabilities in farming unleashed by capitalism and processes of agricultural capital accumulation, now family farming is one strategy amongst others of insuring against the precariousness of employment. Indeed, for O’ Laughlin (1996: 7) rural class formation processes and the differentiation that accompanies them are constituted by the combination of two distinct social processes,

which may have different “rhythms”. The first is the ‘diversification of rural livelihoods’ as a fragmented and socially divided working class struggles to reproduce itself as a result of the reorganization of labour. The second is the “class stratification” that occurs as a result of the unequal ownership and control over land, agricultural means of production (tractors in particular), and cattle.

Rural class formation processes are today thus more complex, and the class identities associated with them more fluid than is suggested by Lenin’s idea of petty commodity producers subject to differentiating internal dynamics that generate a rural proletariat on one side, a group that undertakes production at a constant scale in the middle and a class of small capitalist farmers on the other. In the CPA contexts typical of much of South Africa’s land reform projects, the two production systems of multi-purpose household farming and commercialized CPA farming generate additional contradictions that further complicate the dynamics of differentiation and processes of class formation.

In this chapter, I examine the dynamics of differentiation and the trajectories of change on the farms at Besters. I do this, firstly, by adding to the description of the rural social structure presented in previous chapters by analyzing it in terms of wealth status (using assets as indicators or proxies of wealth) and farming success categories. I then consider the trajectories of change by analyzing livelihood and agricultural trajectories and examining the underlying processes and social dynamics that drive them. I find that CPA production and the distribution of benefits, including farm subsidies to member households is a key factor shaping how processes of differentiation occur on the farms. However, this adds an additional layer of analytical complexity to the already densely woven dynamics of differentiation: the “non-rhythmical” articulation of labour class fragmentation with petty commodity production stratification is further compounded by CPA production dynamics. In the concluding chapter, I consider the consequences of this for the politics it generates on the farms and the impact this has on the functionality of CPAs as local institutions.

10.2. The Rural Structure: livelihood diversification and farming stratification

In Chapter 6, I described the rural structure at Besters in terms of the range of livelihood activities, sources, strategies and pathways (including agriculture) that households on the farms deploy to reproduce themselves. In this section, I use an additional four typologies to assess further aspects of the rural social structure. These typologies are:

- Asset groups (asset ownership as an indicator of wealth status)
- Farming success groups (using local criteria as described in Chapter 2)
- Agricultural trajectories (using Scoones *et al* (2010) categories of ‘dropping out’ of agriculture; ‘hanging in’ with agriculture; ‘stepping out’ out of major reliance on agriculture; ‘stepping up’ or expanding agricultural activities)
- Livelihood trajectories (‘dropping out’ or becoming poorer; ‘hanging in’ or reproducing current wealth status; ‘stepping out’ or diversifying livelihoods; ‘stepping up’ or improving wealth status).

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Each of these typologies illuminates only some aspects of complex and diverse realities, but in combination they can be used to provide a more useful and rounded view of the current structure of social differentiation and the underlying dynamics of change that drive it. I thus avoid the class-analytic typologies as suggested, for example by Cousins (2010), because they do not sufficiently capture the complexity of multiple livelihood sources, and thus of fluid class identities, and because a class-analytic lens is more useful for understanding underlying tendencies within capitalist economies, such as class formation and differentiation, than for classifying rural households. Scoones *et al* (2010) and Scoones (2012), however, argue that livelihood trajectories can be related to class-analytic categories and understandings of the dynamics of differentiation to explain why and how a structure of socially differentiated livelihoods is coming into being. While this is useful, the approach is nevertheless rather mechanistic and uni-directional, as though the dual social processes of livelihood diversification and stratification through petty commodity production magically align with one another to provide predictable class

outcomes. Instead, I find that social differentiation on the Besters' farms is also the result of collisions, trade-offs and misalignments between these processes.

10.2.1. The relationship between household wealth and farming success

The analysis of the relationship between cattle ownership and multiple livelihoods appears initially to confirm a complementary and uni-directional relationship between wealth accumulation and farming success on the Bester's farms. I showed in Chapter 6 that both the income from cattle sales and the number of cattle owned were distributed unequally across households. Table 53 below shows further that the distribution of cattle bears a relationship to the number of assets a household owns.⁶⁵ Households that possess the highest number of assets also own the largest cattle herds; thus households in the richer asset group (AG 4), which own a mean of 24,3 assets, have a mean herd size of 44 cattle, compared with poorer households in AG 1 with a mean of 4.7 assets and mean herd sizes of 9.6 cattle. Furthermore, the households in AG 4 own 51% of all the household cattle on the Bester's farms, while households in AG 1 and 2 together own a mere 28% of all the household cattle. The data thus confirm that wealthier households are indeed those that are the more successful cattle farmers.

⁶⁵ The construction of the categories of asset groups and farming success groups is explained in detail in Chapter 4. Briefly, I divided the households hierarchically into four quartiles according to the total number of assets (domestic, agricultural, communication and transport) owned to determine the asset groups (where households in AG 4 have the highest mean number of assets), and used (with some adaption to account for agronomic differences between the farms) local criteria relating to the number of livestock (cattle and goats), size of arable land and the means of cultivation (hand tools, draught, hire or tractor) to determine the farming success groups (where households in FSG 4 control or own more means for farming than households in other success groups).

Table 53: Demographic, income and farming characteristics of asset groupings

Asset Groups (AG)	Mean no of assets	No of HH	Female HH as % of total AG	Mean no of income sources	Mean no of cattle	Total cattle
1	4.7	23	30%	3.9	9.6	221
2	9.3	20	40%	5.2	14.4	287
3	14.1	20	20%	5.2	19.1	382
4	24.3	21	19%	5.9	44	923
Total	12.9	84	27.4%	5	22	1813

Furthermore, Table 53 also suggests that there is a relationship between assets, cattle and income sources. The more assets a household has, the greater the number of cattle and the greater the number of income sources it is likely to have. Households in the poorest asset group thus have the lowest mean number of income sources, possibly indicating greater vulnerability, while households in the richest asset group have the highest mean number of income sources. There is some flattening out in the middle asset groups, which have the same mean number of income sources, but their mean cattle numbers vary. Table 53 also confirms the findings in Chapter 6 that the distribution of wealth and cattle ownership has gendered dimensions to it. Female-headed households are less likely to be found amongst the wealthier asset groups, which have larger cattle herds and a greater number of income sources. Although female-headed households tend to be larger households (again, as shown in Chapter 6), they nevertheless are more likely to be found in those asset groups with the lowest mean number of income sources. Indeed, the households whose assets exceed the population mean (AGs 3 and 4) also have a higher proportion of male-headed households (80% and 81%) than the proportion across all households (72.6%).

Finally, the relationship between asset groups and farming success groups (see footnote 1) also appears to confirm the relationship between rural wealth accumulation and agricultural petty commodity production. A Pearson's test indicated a correlation (0.547) between household cattle ownership and household asset ownership although the

statistical significance was weak at 0.01 (possibly due to the small sample size), and a Pearson’s correlation between farming success and the number of household assets gave a result of 0.69. This correlation is confirmed in the distribution in Table 54 below, which suggests a relationship exists at the extremes between farming success groups (FSGs) and asset groups. While the distributions in the middle are more blurred a relationship nevertheless possibly exists between assets and farming at the limits: a farmer in SG 2 is more likely to be found in the poorer AG 1 than in AG 4, whereas a farmer in FSG 3 is more likely to belong to AG 3 or 4 than to AG 1 or 2. However, the sample is small and these statistical connections are suggestive rather than evidence of relationships.

Table 54: Asset groups in relation to farming success groups

	FSG 1**	FSG 2	FSG 3	FSG 4	Total
AG 1*	11	6	5	1	23
AG 2	9	5	4	2	20
AG 3	5	5	6	4	20
AG 4	0	1	6	14	21
Total	25	17	21	21	84

*AG 1: households with the fewest number of assets.

**FSG 1: households that own the fewest number of livestock, do little or no cultivation and own few or no cultivation implements.

However, the distributions in the middle groups also suggest that the processes underlying the relationship between wealth and farming may be more dynamic and fluid. The nearly even distribution of farming success groups across AG 3 suggests that livelihood sources other than farming may account, at least partially, for wealth differences. Similarly, the nearly equal distribution of households in FSG 3 across the asset groups suggests that while wealth may contribute to it does not necessarily

determine farming success. Although the sample is too small to draw definite and generalizable conclusions, the analysis in Chapter 6 of multiple livelihoods and the uneven distribution of income generated from them does serve to bolster the conclusion that the relationship between wealth differences and farming success is not simply a linear one.

If the data above indicate that households richer in assets are also households richer in cattle and in cash from a range of sources, then the data on the gender of the household head add another dimension to this description, namely, households headed by women are more likely to be poor in assets, cash and cattle than are households headed by men. The structure of rural poverty thus reflects both livelihood diversification and differential farm production, and clearly has a gendered dimension to it. What these descriptive characteristics do not explain, however, is the direction of the causality, nor do they illuminate the underlying processes that have given rise to this particular rural structure. A key question is how do the different pathways of accumulation emerge and what accounts for the differences?

10.2.2. Wage work and household wealth

This section examines the extent to which social differentiation is the consequence of labour fragmentation by assessing the relationship between work and wealth. I showed in Chapter 6 that the distribution of jobs and job categories had generational and gendered aspects to it: younger adults and women were more likely than older men to be unemployed or employed in casual, temporary or part-time work, and generally earned less than older men when they did have permanent employment. However, in what would appear to be a puzzling contradiction in the data, the distribution of employment and types of employment does not have a significant relationship to household farming or asset wealth. A Pearson's test indicated no correlation (0.05) between the total number of jobs in a household and a household's farming success ranking or between jobs and assets (0.02).

In Table 55 below, the total distribution of jobs and types of jobs confirms the gendered and generational dimensions of working class fragmentation (see Lerche, 2010, who also

adds caste as a differentiating category): that is, women and young adults are less likely to have permanent jobs and are more likely to be unemployed or working in marginal and vulnerable employment categories. However, the distributional pattern of unemployment and types of employment across asset groups is erratic: youth unemployment is highest amongst asset rich households and the percentage of women in permanent jobs is highest in asset poor households. The data in this table suggest that whether one has wage employment, and the type of employment one has is more aligned to one's gender and age than to a family's wealth status, and households wealthier in assets are only slightly better off in terms of members who have permanent (22%) and more marginal (32%) jobs than are households poor in assets (15% of the permanent and 26% of more marginal jobs). In other words, the relationship between wage work employment and household wealth measured in assets is tenuous on the Besters' farms.

Table 55: Gender and generational employment characteristics of asset groupings

AG	Employment Category								
	Permanent jobs*			Contract/seasonal/part-time/survivalist**			Unemployed and looking for jobs***		
	Total	%W	%18-30	Total	%W	%18-30	Total	%W	%18-30
1	16	38%	33%	25	52%	48%	27	59%	59%
2	35	37%	31%	20	35%	10%	28	68%	64%
3	35	37%	46%	21	48%	62%	14	71%	64%
4	24	26%	29%	31	45%	42%	20	35%	70%
Total	110	35%	36%	97	45%	41%	89	58%	64%

* Permanent jobs include wage work on commercial and CPA owned farms.

** Includes all types of non-permanent work as well as own non-farm enterprises without employees.

*** Many people in survivalist or non-permanent work said they were unemployed and looking for work but they are excluded from the unemployed here.

There are at least two possible explanations for this non-alignment of work and wealth. The first is partly methodological: the assets of a household reflect its history of consumption and production, which, given the precariousness of wage employment, may no longer correspond accurately to the present employment status of household members.

Productive assets (particularly ox-drawn ploughs and other draught agricultural equipment) are, in the Bester's historical context of labour tenancy, a case in point. When I undertook the survey of assets, I counted all assets in working order, and only later discovered that while many of the agricultural assets were in working order, they are often no longer in use. The hire or use of CPA owned tractors has largely displaced ox-drawn equipment as the primary technology in arable production. In other words, the relationship between arable production and household agricultural assets probably better reflects past production processes based in labour tenancy than it does current production practices in a CPA context. In this current context, it is not as necessary for a household to invest cash income in purchases of productive agricultural assets as it was in the past.⁶⁶

Secondly, the notion that there is a relationship between work and household wealth is based on the assumption that households are consumption 'units'. However, as argued in Chapter 8, households are complex structures and relations between members are often fraught and subject to competition and conflict. An indication of this at Besters were the number of household heads who complained – often bitterly – that their adult, employed children no longer provided cash remittances or contributed to household functioning through in-kind purchases. This was reflected, on the one hand, in how respondents ranked their most important income sources, and on the other, in the individualized nature of both livestock ownership and income from cattle sales within households (as shown in Chapter 6).

⁶⁶ The pertinent research questions in this latter context would relate to understanding how the systems of access to the CPA's productive assets (particularly tractors and trailers) work and how this impacts on household arable production. I did not explore this in relation to arable production, which constitutes a gap in my research.

In only two households was remittance ranked as the most important income source, and in one of these, the remittance was from parents to a married son who had established an independent household. While approximately a third of households (30%) confirmed that their primary income source was indeed the employment of the head of house or an adult child, another third (30%) ranked multiple income sources generated by all household members (including social grants, employment and farming) as important, and the final third (33%) ranked the old age pension and child grants received by unemployed household members as the most important income source. When asked why this latter was so important, particularly where the incomes of employed members and from farm sales were higher than the total social grant income annually, a number of respondents (13%) observed that these were reliable and regular income sources, and could therefore be depended on.

These issues of intra-familial stresses also emerged during interviews and informal conversations. Makhowane (2013) stated it this way:

“If you’re struggling today, you have to ask government for help. Family doesn’t help; they laugh at you. It is only some people in some families that help. You whites do help each other in families; you bring something next to the person who is struggling so that he can use it, and you shield him from the effects of having nothing.”

Commenting on her daughter-in-law’s failure to contribute to the household’s general consumption fund, another pensioner complained:

“She brings nothing to this house. I know [my employed son] gives her enough money but when she gets this money, she just goes to town and comes back with clothes for herself and things for her mother’s house. She buys nothing for this house, not even a loaf of bread or a sack of meal, but this is where she eats with her child.”

While this rankling shouldn’t be overstated, particularly given the informality of some of these discussions, I nevertheless observed enough overt and covert conflict between members of households to question whether it is accurate to describe the sum of material

transactions as constituting a 'unit'. Households, as I suggested in Chapter 8, are more accurately characterized as loosely organized hubs of consumption in which farm production is only sometimes an important anchor, and in which relations stretch and contract according to the interests of different members. The notion of the household as a 'unit' that can make a claim on the incomes of its members for the purposes of collective social reproduction overstates the case for co-operation while understating the case for conflict between the social reproduction imperatives of individual members at the cost of the totality or unit.

To summarise then: the relationship that exists on the Besters' farms between household wealth and farming success appears to confirm the importance of stratification amongst petty commodity producers as a partial explanation for the rural structure and the processes of differentiation that underlie it. However, while rural labour has indeed fragmented into 'classes of labour', the social divisions characterizing this fragmentation are more distinctly gendered and generational rather than wealth related. Furthermore, work and types of work have little bearing on farming success, suggesting that where agrarian accumulation is taking place, it is not simply as a result of capital transfers from wage labour. Finally, I have suggested that these conclusions rest on the probably erroneous assumption that the household is a co-operative unit when it comes to social reproduction, which does not take into account that the social reproduction of members or sub-units may occur separately from or at the cost of the whole and the co-operation on which it rests.

10.2.3. The Dynamics of Differentiation: the articulation of farming and livelihood trajectories

In this section I interrogate further the processes underlying the social structure outlined above using typologies of farming and livelihood trajectories and examining whether and how these two processes articulate over time. Despite the questions raised above about the understanding of households as coherent production and consumption units, the data presented in this section are based on assumptions of household integrity. In each of these typologies, the trajectories were derived from an assessment of longitudinal data collected from life histories of household heads and multiple data collection moments

during my three years of fieldwork. It is often, however, difficult to place individual households in typologies, which by their nature suggest a rigidity that doesn't easily capture real and local complexity and rapid, dynamic shifts. Nevertheless, together with the synchronic typologies above based on asset and farming success groups, these additional diachronic typologies provide an impressionistic assessment of the underlying processes of change and the social dynamics that drive them.

The accumulation trajectories used here are an adaptation of Scoones et al's (2010: 228-9) descriptive categories of "dropping out", "hanging in", "stepping out" and "stepping up", with an additional category, "creeping back", usefully added by Dubb (2013: 202). "Dropping out" describes those households whose farming or livelihood activities are in decline and who have lost or are at risk of losing the capacity to generate income from the activity. "Hanging in" describes households whose farming or livelihood base is being maintained such that the production and wealth status is stable and neither declining nor improving. "Stepping out" describes the diversification of livelihoods and farm production, and specifically, for Scoones *et al* (*ibid*), livelihood diversification suggests moving away from total dependence on farming. "Stepping up" describes an overall improvement in livelihood and wealth status; in Scoones *et al*, such an improvement may be the result of investments in farming such that production expands and generates increased incomes. Finally, Dubb (2013: 202) uses "creeping back" to describe households that have dropped out of or greatly reduced their farm production but are gradually acquiring agricultural assets to begin farming again.

These descriptive categories are useful in that they are, as Scoones *et al* (*ibid*: 226) argue, conceptually linked to the class differentiating processes Bernstein (2010, 104) analyses as central to petty commodity production, namely that "dropping out" suggests petty commodity producers unable to reproduce themselves as both capital and as labour and who are thus forced into seeking wage employment, while "hanging in" suggests simple reproduction of both capital and labour on a constant scale, and "stepping up" suggests expanded production with the prospect of employing workers and becoming small capitalist farmers along with improved wealth. However, "stepping out" has a more ambiguous relationship to petty commodity production: where for Scoones *et al* (*ibid*) the

diversification of livelihoods implies social reproduction processes that are less dependent on farming, my research, as shown below, suggests more variability in the relationship between agricultural petty commodity production and the diversification of livelihoods. For this reason, I leave this category out of my typology of farming trajectories, and use it rather as a possible initial explanation of a particular trajectory.

10.2.4. Farming trajectories and livelihood diversification

In Table 56 below I examine the processes that underpin farming trajectories amongst the four farming success categories. These processes include identifying the key recent events and strategies that have impacted on household social reproduction. The strategies encompass decisions and opportunities in relation to both farming and generating cash income. The purpose is to extract from the complex maze of individual cases some patterns that describe the underlying processes that account, at least partially, for social differentiation on the Besters farms.

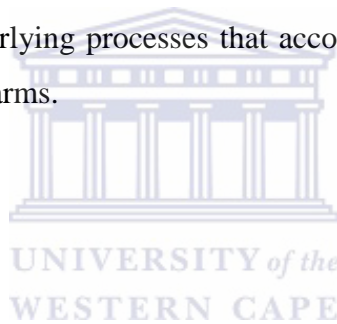


Table 56: Events and strategies contributing to social differentiation in petty commodity production

Farming trajectories	Processes	Farming Success Groups				
		FSG 1	FSG 2	FSG 3	FSG 4	Total
Dropping out	No of HH	3	1	2	1	7
	Events and strategies	HH head unemployment and cattle deaths Dependence on cattle sales, child grants and remittances	Death of HH head Dependence on cattle sales, social grants and contract work.	HH head unemployment, and cattle deaths and theft Dependence on cattle sales, child grants and own survivalist enterprise.	Death of HH head Dependence on cattle sales, irregular remittance	
Creeping back	No of HH	2	2	0	0	4
	Events and strategies	Retrenchment of HH head Dependence on child grants and casual work. Herd restocking through CPA disbursement and subsidies	Death of HH head Dependence on cattle sales, social grants, contract work Herd restocking through CPA disbursement and subsidies, and wage investments			

Farming trajectories	Processes	Farming Success Groups				
		FSG 1	FSG 2	FSG 3	FSG 4	Total
Hanging in	No of HH	4	4	2	1	11
	Events and strategies	<p>Ill health, death and retrenchment, incl of HH head</p> <p>Dependence on employment (including CPA), child grants, remittance and cattle sales.</p> <p>Herd replacement through CPA disbursements</p> <p>Tertiary education investment</p>	<p>Retrenchment and <i>lobolo</i></p> <p>Dependence on children's employment, old age pension, remittance and cattle sales</p> <p>Herd replacement through CPA disbursements</p>	<p>HH head unemployment and cattle death, infertility;</p> <p>Dependence on permanent farm work, social grants, cattle sales, tractor and plough hire.</p> <p>Herd replacement through CPA disbursements and cattle loans/care-taking;</p>	<p>No recent shocks</p> <p>Dependence on permanent farm work, social grants, cattle sales.</p> <p>Herd replacement through annual CPA disbursements</p>	
Stepping up	No of HH	2	1	3	8	14
	Events and strategies	<p>No recent shocks</p> <p>Dependence on wide range of income sources including multiple social grants, permanent and contract work, children's remittances.</p> <p>Expanding herds through cattle purchases, veterinary inputs, CPA disbursements and subsidies; and limited sales, delayed <i>lobolo</i>.</p>	<p>No recent shocks</p> <p>Dependence on wide range of income sources including multiple social grants, permanent and contract work (incl CPA), children's remittances, goat and cattle sales.</p> <p>Expanding and diversifying herds through livestock purchases, veterinary inputs, CPA disbursements and subsidies, delayed ceremonies.</p>	<p>No recent shocks</p> <p>Dependence on wide range of income sources including multiple social grants, permanent and contract work (incl CPA), children's remittances, goat and cattle sales and grazing rents, survivalist enterprises.</p> <p>Expanding herds through veterinary inputs, and CPA disbursements and subsidies, Diversifying into older oxen, broiler and goat production</p>	<p>No recent shocks</p> <p>Dependence on wide range of income sources including multiple social grants, permanent and contract work, remittances, livestock and crop sales, survivalist enterprises.</p> <p>Expanding herds through cattle purchases, veterinary inputs, CPA disbursements, privatization of CPA land, inheritance. Diversifying farm production</p>	
N =		11	8	7	10	36

The table shows that “shocks” to livelihoods in the form of recent events such as death, retrenchment or long term unemployment of important income earners (particularly household heads), characterize households experiencing sharp production declines. These declines are visible in rates of herd off-take through sales and ceremonial use of cattle that exceed rates of replacement (through calves, purchases, and bridewealth and other cattle transfers). However, where CPA’s have disbursed cattle and subsidized household farming (through inputs and labour), some households have been able to re-invest in cattle production and reverse their declining herd sizes or maintain their cattle herds at more or less constant numbers. Those households that have had no significant, recent shocks to livelihood portfolios and have received CPA cattle disbursement and farm subsidies, have been able to expand herds and diversify into other livestock and crop production or farm services (hiring out tractors and ploughs).

Although all 36 households examined here have multiple and diversified livelihoods, neither their farming trajectories nor the degree to which they have been successful as farming households is the same. In terms of the Scoones *et al* typology, all the households on the Besters’ farms appear to be “stepping out” of dependence solely on farming. However, a closer analysis indicates that it is not the diversification of livelihoods as such that shapes the farming trajectories, but rather how a number of factors combine. These factors include: the depth of income sources (in terms of range and number); household shocks, particularly the death, retrenchment or long term unemployment of a household head, as well as cattle deaths, fertility problems and theft; the original acquisition of cattle stock, particularly inheritance; and whether CPA production supports household farming and to what extent. Furthermore, farming success measured at one moment is not insurance against a declining farming trajectory, and neither does a low ranking in terms of farming success necessarily imply a declining farm production trajectory.

Despite livelihood diversification, households that are dropping out of farming all have cattle herds that are declining faster than they are being replaced. Social grants combine with cattle sales and, sometimes, work, survivalist enterprise or remittance to make up the range of livelihoods. However, the nature of livelihood diversification contrasts with farmers in the stepping up category, in that not only is there a narrower band of diversification but it also

thinner in each category of diversification (child grants dominate the social grant category, contract or temporary work the employment category and farm income is limited mainly to cattle sales). Two central features in the “dropping out” category are that the CPAs do not provide annual dividends in the form of heifers, subsidized farm inputs and labour (except in the case of one household), and the household has suffered a “shock” in the form of the death, long-term unemployment or retrenchment of the household head. It appears to be the combination of the shock, together with “thin” livelihood diversification and the absence of ongoing farm support that accounts for the declining trajectory.

The case of the Shabalala household illustrates this. In 2010, Siphso Shabalala was a 58 year-old security guard at a construction company on a site near Sizisizwe where his family had relocated in 2006 as a result of land reform. The household survived on his wages of R1,600 a month combined with two child grants, his wife’s sales of chips and the occasional sale of cattle. Siphso’s herd of three cattle had declined in 2009 when he sold one animal and another died, but it had also grown as a result of a birth and the payment of one *lobolo* animal. An important help with the cattle was the CPA’s purchases of mineral supplements and veterinary inputs for all the cattle on the farm. A year later, Siphso was retrenched and a heifer and young ox died as a result of drought and reduced CPA subsidization. He spent savings to buy feed, dip and medicine for his remaining cow and four goats, and then sold the cow a month later to purchase household food. When I visited him in March 2012, Siphso was waiting for July when he would begin to receive his old age pension from the state. His daughter, in the meanwhile, had walked 20 kilometres over the mountain to a relative’s house to ask for food to supplement the purchases made with the child grants. The narrow range of income sources and precarious productive capacity had received a serious shock with the loss of Siphso’s wages, the deaths of his cattle and reduction of CPA input subsidies when CPA production collapse. The livelihood and farming downward trajectories were mutually reinforcing, and with CPA production subject to similar downward pressures, nothing but an old age pension could stop the vicious cycle.

The exception in the “dropping out” category is the Gamede household in FSG 4, which lives at Mphuzanyoni and is therefore receiving annual heifer dividends. This household shares with the others a key shock, in this case the death of the household head, who had been in receipt of a

state old age pension. Although some adult children had wage employment, the pensioner's death had resulted in a rate of herd off-take through sales in order to support dependent household members that exceeded herd replacement.

Those households managing to “creep back” into farming, to rebuild their cattle herds, have very similar profiles to the dropping out category, sharing shocks and narrow and thin range of income sources. However, they are in all cases resident on farms where the CPAs have either disbursed significant numbers of cattle to members or are continuing to provide heifers in the form of annual dividends along with subsidized farm inputs, including labour.

Nomakismus Hlatshwayo, who lives at Mphuzanyoni, is slowly and incrementally building her farm production capacity. A waif-like, timid woman, who was orphaned as a child, had never married in civil or customary law and whose ‘spouse’ had died some years previously, she often found herself socially isolated. Her household had ten young children including her deceased son's two orphans, and, in 2010, survived on a combination of nine child and foster grants and a daughter's income as a part-time cleaner. However, since 2007, Nomakismus had received R17,800 in cash dividends from the CPA along with six heifers. By 2009, the first of her heifers had calved, and she kept this cow and its calves to supplement the stock the CPA provided, which she sold annually. In 2011, she sold one heifer and swapped another for a car, which she hoped her son would use in a business venture. Although she had neither the experience to manage cattle nor the cash to purchase the necessary inputs, the CPA provided labour and inputs and her cattle were included in the management regime applied to the CPA's cattle. Nomakismus' farming trajectory was extremely precarious and dependent on the fortunes of the CPA, but she had nevertheless begun to accumulate some breeding stock and had been able to supplement her household's income through cattle sales, diversifying a livelihood portfolio heavily dependent on child grants. In her case, a “creeping back” farm trajectory was gradually providing a new layer of robustness to a livelihood portfolio fragile in its narrowness.

Similarly, in the “hanging in” trajectory, a key feature that prevents the households from “dropping out” of production is the CPA's provision of heifer replacements, inputs and labour. Many of the households in this category have experienced shocks similar to the households in

the dropping out trajectory, but all have managed to maintain a steady foothold in cattle production. Not only have CPAs served the function of replacing breeding stock but in those households where the death of a household head meant the loss of skilled household labour for farming purposes, the CPAs provision of farm workers with a role in managing household cattle has meant that women-headed households or households with labour constraints have been able to continue farming cattle. The role of the CPAs, combined with a greater range and number of income sources (including contract and permanent work, remittances, a range of social grants and survivalist enterprises), is thus the key difference between households that are dropping out and those continuing to remain in production. In at least one household, cattle sales are funding children's tertiary education, a strategy intended to secure future social reproduction through improved wage employment. Nevertheless, this strategy, in the absence of the CPA, would have taken place at the cost of household production, as the life history of Winnie Shabalala shows.

Like Nomakismus, Winnie also lives on the Mphuzanyoni farm, receiving annual cash and heifer dividends, along with labour support and input subsidies. Her husband died many years ago, leaving her an inheritance of six cattle, and she now lives with four adult daughters and five grandchildren. Three of her daughters have contract farm work, and the fourth is at university, which Winnie funds through the annual sales of cattle. She has also used her cattle to augment the social standing of herself and her daughters by performing the full burial ceremonies for her husband and her own final marriage ceremonial, which took place after her husband had died. Despite these social reproduction demands on the cattle, her herd grew from six cattle in 2005 to 14 in 2010. The key strategies Winnie has used to grow the herd has been to boost her cow numbers with the CPA's annual heifer dividends, stretch out the undertaking of ceremonials and encourage her daughters to share their wage income and child grants along with her income from goat sales and the CPA, so that she has not had to sell productive cattle stock. The relationship of sister-in-law to the CPA farm manager has also assisted her in that her cattle stock are regularly dipped and fed, and her brother-in-law advises her on which animals to sell. In other words, Winnie's household is characterized by a trajectory of 'hanging in' with farming in order to diversify her income and to meet social/ceremonial requirements, combined with a livelihood trajectory of stepping out of reliance on farming through contract work and investments in children's tertiary education. Central to this combination of trajectories is the effective

synchronization of her household's livelihoods, in which CPA production and dividends has played a critical role.

On the “stepping up” end of the farm trajectories, there is an absence of severe recent shocks (particularly in relation to household heads, such as deaths, retrenchment and long term unemployment), a wider range of livelihoods (a range of social grants in addition to types of employment, livestock sales and enterprises), and herd increases through cattle inheritance, CPA once-off disbursements or ongoing dividends, all of which combine with particular household strategies to expand farm production. These expansion strategies include delaying ceremonies and *lobolo* payments, diversification of farming into goat, broiler chickens, maize and bean production, and the “borrowing” of cattle to supplement cash income through rent.⁶⁷

The household of Winnie's brother-in-law, Jabulani Shabalala, combines a ‘stepping up’ livelihood trajectory with a ‘stepping up’ farming trajectory. Jabulani has been able to use CPA dividends in heifers and input subsidies to boost his cattle numbers, which had already received a step up in the past when he inherited his father's cattle. His father also assisted his early investments in cattle stock by paying his *lobolo* and giving him two heifers in return for fulfilling his labour obligations to the labour tenant contract. In addition, in his current employment as farm manager of the CPA farm enterprise, Jabulani's duties include managing his own household's cattle along with the cattle of other households. This combination of strategies has made it possible for him to increase his cattle holdings from his first heifer in 1987 to 34 fertile cows and heifers in 2012, and to improve the sale value of weaned stock by using the CPA's Bonsmara beef-type bulls. As a result of the increasing numbers of weaned oxen he sells

⁶⁷ The strategy of “borrowing” or “loaning” cattle requires some comment. McClendon (1997) found that the institution of ‘*ukusisa*’ (the loaning of productive cattle to poorer relatives and as a way of spreading risk) was transformed during the colonial and apartheid eras by the diminishing access Africans had to land for their own farming purposes. This resulted in urban Africans requesting labour tenants, who still had access to land, to take as a “loan” the cattle stock they were attempting to accumulate for bridewealth. At Besters, the institution, which continues to be called “*ukusisa*”, has taken on yet more new meanings: Firstly, some households living on the land reform farms have brought the cattle of relatives who do not have land into their own herds but are charging the cattle owners a rental fee per head as a way of generating income. Secondly, some households have entered into agreements with a white commercial farmer to “loan” pregnant heifers in order to build their herds, and they repay the loan by ceding a percentage of weaned calves annually and replacing the original stock with pregnant heifers at the end of the agreed period.

annually, along with a regular wage and his wife and daughters' child grants, Jabulani has been able to invest in expanding goat production and pay the university fees of a son. The household's improved wealth is visible in the investments to building, while the future social status of all household members is being secured through Jabulani's recent commitment to complete the final ceremonies of his marriage. Although Jabulani has not been able to include the wages of his employed sons in his synchronization of the household's livelihoods, he has been able to exploit very effectively and iteratively the relationship between CPA farming and his own farming.

Finally, Mandla Mwelase's household also combines an expanding farm trajectory with an improved livelihood status. However, he has used strategies different from those of Shabalala to do this. Mandla's household consists of three adult children, his wife and his mother-in-law, but unlike most other households on the farms, nobody in this house receives a social grant, and the Ngula Kayishazwe CPA, which no longer owns cattle, provides no dividends in the form of cattle or cash, input subsidies or free wage labour to household farming. Furthermore, only one daughter works as a domestic worker, part-time in a non-permanent contract position. Despite this, Mandla owns a car along with agricultural equipment, which he uses with the CPA's tractor to plant a two-hectare field to crops of white and yellow maize and beans. The white maize and beans are for family consumption while the yellow maize (a harvest of half a ton in 2010) is used to supplement winter feed for his rapidly expanding cattle herd. In 2010, Mandla and his wife, Thokozane, owned 122 cattle, and in 2012, the herd had expanded to 157 head. In 2010, the household sold six older cattle for a total of R52,000, the family's main source of income. Two years' later in 2012, Mandla sold nine oxen and two infertile cows for R49,000, of which he used R10,750 to purchase dip, veterinary medicines and mineral supplements. A key strategy in Mandla's expanded production, which is based primarily on his own and his son's labour, has been to assert exclusive use to one of the farm's grazing camps. Mandla's rationale is that his weaned heifer stock needs a "clean" field in order to reach an optimum breeding weight as quickly as possible. For others on the farm, however, "he just puts our cattle out when we try to put them in that field, and eventually you just give up because you can see this will cause a fight" (Nkosi, 2012: pers com). Thus, while Mandla fulfills the government image of the emerging commercial farmer who farms full-time, is not dependent on social grants and uses farming to improve the wealth prospects of his family, this process of accumulation from below has

occurred through the exploitation of his son's labour and the appropriation of CPA property for his own exclusive use.

This analysis suggests that while farming and livelihood trajectories do, at times, reinforce one another, at other times the livelihood trajectory is improving as a result of heavy extractions from farming, which result in declining farm trajectories. Similarly, the ramping up of farm production sometimes takes place at the cost of improving livelihoods in the short-term. This finding is summarized in Table 57 below which shows that while farming and livelihood trajectories articulate at the extremes (households dropping out of farming are often also experiencing a deteriorating wealth status while households expanding production are often also improving their wealth status), this linear relationship affects only a third of households. The incipient class trajectories of the remaining population are the result of more complex articulations of the processes that underlie both trajectories: with cattle numbers declining as households attempt to hold onto or improve their wealth status; or overall wealth status declines as herd sizes grow; farm production remains stable but supports a diversification of livelihoods aimed at reducing dependency on farming and, in some cases, betting on improved long term wealth status through skilled wage employment (through investments in tertiary education).

Table 57: Farming trajectories by livelihood trajectories

Farming trajectories	Livelihood trajectories				Total
	Dropping out	Hanging in	Stepping out	Stepping up	
Dropping out	5	2	0	0	7
Creeping back	1	2	0	1	4
Hanging in	2	4	4	1	11
Stepping up	0	7	0	7	14
Total	8	15	4	9	36

The processes of livelihood diversification as a means of securing social reproduction are not, therefore, in a linear, mechanistic relationship to agricultural petty commodity production and

the class stratification processes involved. Furthermore, the absence of evidence on the Besters' farms linking wage employment to expanded farm production suggests that where there is a link between the processes of livelihood diversification and farming stratification, this is as much the result of livelihoods whose range includes social grants and own survival enterprises. When this relationship is mutually reinforcing, the depth of livelihoods in each category and their effective synchronization at household level is critical. Furthermore, even if the relationship between livelihood diversification and farming success is often a-rhythmical, it is clear that there is a relationship between the specific paths of agrarian accumulation and CPA production.

10.3. CPA production and the consequences for petty commodity accumulation

Although the actual income households receive from CPAs is negligible compared to the income from employment, social grants and own farming (as shown in Chapter 6), the analysis above nevertheless suggests that where CPA production supports and replenishes household farm production, households are often able to avoid falling out of production and to continue to use farming as part of a mixed livelihood strategy. This section assesses the differentiating effects of the relationship between household and CPA farm production in more depth.

Table 58: Household cattle quartiles compared across CPAs (N=84)

Cattle ownership quartiles	Mean household cattle no's in CPAs not providing inputs/dividends* (n=48)	Mean household cattle no's in CPA's providing inputs/dividends** (n=36)	Percentage change
1	2.1	6.5	210%
2	10.4	15.5	49%
3	19.1	23.8	25%
4	49	48.3	-1.4%
Total	20.1	23.5	17%

* The CPAs are Ngula Kayishazwe, Zizamele and Sizisizwe

** The CPAs are Mphuzanyoni, Nyakanyaka Yomshini and Nkuthu Kayishazwe

Table 58 above compares the mean number of cattle owned by quartile groups in different CPA contexts, and measures the percentage change in herd sizes using the data from CPAs not providing inputs and dividends as the starting point.⁶⁸ It shows that the herd sizes of households living on CPAs that have not been able to provide regular dividends and inputs to household farming are smaller than those of households living on CPAs that continue to support household farming. In some respects, this is self-evident: where CPAs provide households with cattle and farm inputs as dividends, households have more cattle, and indeed, this is supported by the fact that the herd size difference between CPA contexts in each of the first three quartiles is about four head of cattle.

Nevertheless, three observations are pertinent here.

- Firstly, although the herd increases in productive CPAs in the first three quartiles are relatively marginal, they are significant in that cattle owners in the fourth quartile own 57% of the total household stock and thus the benefits of CPA production appear to be directly targeting stock-poor households.
- Secondly, and related to this, the rapid percentage change in herd size across the first three quartiles also indicates the dramatic effect that both the increase and the off-take of low numbers of animals (through sales, ceremonies, death or theft) make to a small herd.
- Thirdly, while the nearly equal mean herd size in the fourth quartile suggests that CPA production makes little difference to expanded accumulation, the distribution and range of herd sizes between CPAs in this quartile tells a different story. The median herd size for those households in this quartile on unproductive CPAs is 32 cattle while it is 42 for households on productive CPAs providing support, and similarly the range in the former is 24 to 154 head while it is 34 to 94 in the latter. At the “stepping up” end of cattle

⁶⁸ Although this decision was fairly arbitrary in that the starting point could have been the other way around, I assumed that where CPAs are not providing inputs, the household farm production structure is probably more similar to household farming across the country, or at least to household farming prior to land reform. If this assumption is correct, then the benefits flowing from CPA production to household cattle farming should indicate the difference that ongoing support from other sources (the state in particular) can make to household farming, if any. The limits of this assumption are obviously that even in these CPAs, households received land and agricultural development benefit flows from the state during land reform and should therefore be in a better starting off position than farming households elsewhere.

farming, accumulation is dampened but more evenly distributed where CPAs continue to provide inputs.

The different strategies the two Nyakanyaka Yomshini groups pursued in relation to CPA production following their split in 2008 illustrate a similar outcome. As discussed in earlier chapters, Nyakanyaka Yomshini allocated 18 head of cattle to each of its 16 member households when the CPA split into two groups. Group A, consisting of ten households, recombined the allocated CPA cattle in order to continue to run the cattle farming as a collective enterprise. Group B, consisting of six households, disbanded collective production and the member households each kept their allocated cattle. All the households, except one (a member of Group B) prior to land reform had worked for the same commercial farming family, which had limited cattle numbers to 15 per household. The accumulation ceiling had thus been the same for all families prior to 2005. Then, despite the substantial allocation of cattle to Group B members in 2008, by 2010, the mean herd size for Group B was 19.8 compared with 24 for Group A, and the range in herd size in Group B was 0-34 compared with 5-44 in Group A. Although Group A members receive one or two heifers annually along with regular input subsidies and paid wage workers who manage veterinary, nutritional and rangeland regimens, the allocation of CPA heifers to these household had not yet equaled the once-off allocation of cattle to Group B members in 2007.

The households at Nyakanyaka Yomshini thus show a complex set of differentiation dynamics and accumulation trajectories. By 2013, the households in each of the two groups showed distinctive differences in patterns of differentiation and the accumulation processes underlying them. Of the six Group A households with whom life history and production interviews were conducted, five were expanding their cattle production and the sixth was reproducing on the same scale. By contrast, of the four Group B households interviewed, none were expanding: two were hanging in at the same level of production, one was dropping out and another had used the CPAs allocation of cattle to creep back into production but his herd was, overall, in decline. Furthermore, in Group A, all the households except one had stable livelihood trajectories suggesting that poverty was not deepening while the wealth trajectory of the sixth was improving. In Group B, by contrast, two households were suffering distinctive “reproductive

squeezes”, with declining cattle production combining with a narrow livelihood range to produce a downward poverty trajectory. One household was using cattle sales to maintain wealth status but overall production was declining as a result. Only one household had an upward wealth trajectory: he had sold some the CPA allocated cattle in order to purchase a tractor and chain saw so that he could diversify his income streams. Despite the significant once-off injection of cattle stock into the farming of Group B households, the farming trajectories had not been able to sustain improvements to wealth status, while the annual inputs from the CPA into the farming of Group A households supported upward farm trajectories, which had halted the downward cycles into poverty and reproductive crises.

Household farming at Ngula Kayishazwe, which also abandoned CPA production in 2008 and allocated each household four head of cattle, shares some of the features of differentiation present in Nyakanyaka Yomshini Group B. Of the five households indicated in Table 57 (Farming trajectories by livelihood trajectories) above whose declining farm production trajectories are accompanied by a declining livelihood status, four of these live at Ngula Kayishazwe. On the other hand, four of the seven households in the same table whose expanded farming trajectories combine with improved livelihood trajectories also live at Ngula Kayishazwe. It is thus a farm characterized by extreme outcomes in the processes of differentiation, where, on the one hand, a shock to the household can result in a rapid decline in farm production with little to halt the downward trajectory, and on the other, expanded farm production allows the household to insure itself against shocks through expenditure on farm inputs and investments in ceremony that other households are unable or struggle to fund. The latter, however, may come as a result of the appropriation of common property: as noted above, one household has privatized a grazing camp, while the CPA chairperson, whose household is also amongst this group, controls the CPA tractor and hires out his time to drive it when other members need it.

The Mphuzanyoni and Nkuthu Kayishazwe CPAs show differentiation patterns not dissimilar to Nyakanyaka Yomshini Group A. I combine these two CPAs here because they followed a similar direction with respect to CPA production in that they provided households with early cash dividends, free household cattle inputs and made CPA labour partially responsible for

household cattle production. Although Nkuthu Kayishazwe disbursed most of the CPA's cattle in 2012 to insulate the CPA from an intra-familial dispute, it maintained a small herd to cover collective cattle production costs, such as veterinary inputs and fencing. The 13 life history interviews on these two farms indicated that only one household had experienced a decline in wealth status. This was due primarily to the loss of an old age pension when the household head died but it was off a relatively large cattle base that CPA heifer transfers continued to top up. Furthermore, in only one household was farming in decline, the result of additional cattle sales and use of cattle for ceremonial burial purposes following the death of the household head and the loss of his wage income. The difference between these two households is that in the latter case the initial cattle stock was much smaller, and the CPA heifer dividends had thus not been able to prevent the decline in productive cattle. The farming of six households was characterized by simple reproduction (at a constant scale of production), which, together with other livelihood sources, supported a constant wealth status in three cases and improved wealth status in another three. Two households had been able to creep back into production, and one of these was using the diversification of livelihood sources to fund an improving wealth status while the wealth status of the other was remaining constant. Finally, the cattle herds of three households showed expansion, with improving wealth status in two and a constant wealth status in the third. In summary, both the livelihood and farming trajectories of most households on these farms, where CPA production had regularly supported household farming, indicated either improvements or an absence of decline since land reform in 2005.

Finally, both Sisisizwe and Zizamele have distinctive histories as described in detail in Chapter 7, but significant for these purposes is that in neither case was the CPA replenishing or subsidizing household cattle production. In this respect, the households on these CPAs were similar to households at Ngula Kayishazwe and Nyakanyaka Yomshini Group B. These farms had the highest number of households that no longer owned any cattle (12% at Zizamele and 19% at Sisisizwe) along with one or two households, particularly at Zizamele, with large and growing herds. The pattern of differentiation in farming is thus not unlike those on farms where CPA production has ceased. However, unlike Ngula Kayishazwe and Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Sisisizwe and Zizamele also have relatively unfavourable agro-ecological conditions for cattle farming combined with lower household to land hectare ratios (see Chapter 7). This suggests that

while CPA production can support the expansion of petty commodity production or continued simple reproduction at the same scale where other livelihood factors remain constant, the limit case is reached where the agro-ecology or size of land for the type production is inadequate. In these cases, both household and CPA production will be constrained with a greater probability of households dropping out of production.

In addition to land and its quality for the farming purpose and actual allocations of CPA heifers, an important difference between the CPAs appears to be the regularity of the veterinary, feed supplementation and skilled labour support to household farming and the impact this has on household herd size. Assessing cattle deaths between CPA contexts, differences are once again apparent: Where CPAs did not provide inputs for household cattle production in 2010, 17% of households each lost more than five cattle to death and disease as against 6% of households where the CPAs did provide inputs. Furthermore, where CPAs provided inputs, 30% of households had no cattle deaths compared with 23% where CPAs did not provide inputs.

The provisional conclusion to be drawn is thus that on farms where CPA production regularly subsidizes and replenishes household farming, social stratification is less extreme and the cattle poverty of poorer households not as dire as households on farms where CPAs no longer support household farming. Farming thus continues to be important to the range of livelihoods poor households use to reproduce themselves. However, this conclusion appears to contradict the data in Chapters 6 and 9 that the value of benefits accruing to households from CPA production are marginal relative to income from wage employment, social grants and own farming. Furthermore, it leaves unanswered the question of why marginal benefits would generate such acute and escalating conflicts.

10.3.1. Winners and losers in CPA production

For Bonginkosi Khumalo (2012: pers com), chairperson of the Nyakanyaka Yomshini CPA and head of a household that has combined social grants, wages and farm income to improve overall wealth status, it is "... those who are behind [poorer] who create the problems for the CPA. They have finished their own things and so now they cry for the CPA cattle. It is this that causes the conflict. When you have difficulties, your head doesn't work properly and you can't strategize

for the future.” Similarly, the chairperson of Ngula Kayishazwe, Jabulani Makhubo, blames the collapse of CPA production on the demands of poorer households. “It is those households who are battling that want cattle and money today. We try to persuade them to wait a few years so that we can grow the business and sell more in the future, but they cry that there is no work.... People have many views and this causes difficulties with CPA farming.”

While Jabulani Mazibuko, who also lives at Ngula Kayishazwe and received four head of cattle when the CPA disbanded, agrees that the poor may have more urgent demands in relation to CPA property, he explains the underlying dynamics differently. “We do not all have the same degree of difficulty. I often have to pinch money from my cattle and goats in order to educate and feed my children. So it ends up that sometimes the livestock dies because I cannot afford the costs for them when my children have needs. Those who are full do not see us who are still hungry; do not see how we struggle. This does make us have different views on things.” William Khoza, part of the break away group at Nyakanyaka Yomshini who received 18 head of cattle, is skeptical about whether land reform and farming have made any substantial improvements to his life. “There isn’t a lot of difference between how we used to live on the white’s farm and how we live now. We still sometimes do not have enough food to eat so I can’t say it’s a decent living yet. For real improvement, I’d need to have a job that pays well: my salary (of R2000) hardly covers the groceries and we’re always short.”

While these comments suggest that it is in the interests of poorer households to disband CPA production and that it is wealthier households that can hang in over longer periods with CPA production because their immediate social reproduction pressures are not as acute, this account doesn’t match up well with the assessment above of who the winners and losers are in the different outcomes. However, production at CPA level can provide regular support to household farming, and it is the regularity of this support that enables poorer households to hang in with farming. Where CPAs have disbanded production and disbursed cattle, the tendency of some poorer households to fall out of production re-emerges. However, in the immediacy of the struggle to reproduce themselves, households with few livelihood options may indeed demand that the CPA provide more, and more regular benefits, and that where these benefits or their regularity appear to be at risk, this demand may become compelling.

By contrast, the interests of wealthier households with respect to CPA production are more contradictory. On the one hand, where CPA production continues to support household farming, a greater number of wealthier households, who appropriate a greater share of input subsidy, are able to expand their cattle stock and to use that expansion to generate greater incomes. However, the expansion of household herds and rising total subsidy also brings household production into contradiction with CPA production in terms of pressure on the rangelands and the rising cost of production and CPA profitability. As these contradictions push both CPA and household production to its limits (of profitability and expansion), so the politics becomes unstable. When this politics combines with other potential livelihood pressures (low wages, retrenchment, death of household head), wealthier households may align themselves with poorer households to demand the disbandment of CPA production. However, once CPA production and co-operation around farming ceases, the more chaotic social space creates opportunities for some wealthier households to expand their farming through greater appropriation of the rangelands, through privatization, which exacerbates the processes of differentiation.

The evidence supporting this conclusion does suggest that on farms where CPA cattle production is no longer functional, the dynamics of differentiation are sharper than on farms with functional CPA cattle enterprises on them, and on the latter farms, the gap between the better off farmers and the farming poor is gradually becoming narrower. Accumulation patterns, where CPAs do not provide ongoing annual support, appear to be more extreme than the more evenly distributed accumulation pattern occurring on farms where CPAs provide support. However, the data presented here are not extensive and the history of labour tenancy and capital transfers through land reform are important contextual factors. These findings would thus need to be tested more widely and in a more varied set of CPA contexts for robust conclusions to be drawn.

10.4. Conclusion

This chapter has examined the relationship between livelihoods and farm production in class formation processes by drawing on two recent approaches and views, namely those of Scoones *et*

al (2010) and O' Laughlin (2009; 1996). Although I have drawn on the typology approach Scoones *et al* (*ibid*: 226) use, I find, with O' Laughlin, that the diversification of rural livelihood strategies that accompanies working class fragmentation is not always neatly aligned with the processes of stratification resulting from farm production dynamics. Rural livelihoods and investments in cattle no longer depend on flows of remittance income from older male migrant wage-workers. Instead, farming is now often an important insurance against the uncertainties of wage labour. Instead of processes of “linear proletarianisation”, a fragmented working class now combines farming and off-farm labour and “[o]ld linear sequences [of social transformation] are destabilized” (O' Laughlin, 2010: 199) as workers and families float between rural and urban areas, industry and small-scale farming. The class differentiation within rural communities is evident not just in wage income, housing and consumption capacity, but also in the size of cattle herds and control over land.

At Besters, there are three key factors that shape the dynamics of differentiation as they emerge from the articulation of livelihood diversification and farm stratification. The first is the effective synchronization of multiple livelihoods, including farming, and yet such synchronization is difficult for most households to achieve⁶⁹: investments to secure one livelihood source (eg. wage labour) may come at the cost of another (eg. farming). The second is that the processes by which individual household members (or sub-units) secure their social reproduction may come at the cost of reproducing the household as a unit of consumption and/or production. The third is that where CPAs provide regular labour, input subsidies and cattle transfers to household farming, differentiation is not as extreme as on farms where there is no ongoing farming support, and more households are able to expand farm production although at slower rates. These “accumulation from below” processes take a slightly different form where CPAs do not provide dividends and subsidies, where they appear to hinge on the opportunistic use and gradual privatization of the common property.

⁶⁹ Effective synchronization of livelihoods depends on the ability to orchestrate intra-household allocations of resources, and is thus deeply entangled in household power relations. Understanding how and why some households appear able to synchronise livelihoods effectively while others are unable to would require more in-depth research into household dynamics, history and structure.

These are undoubtedly complex processes of class formation, and they generate and are the result of an equally complex farm politics. In the concluding chapter, I draw together these findings before considering some policy implications.



11. CONCLUSION

11.1. Introduction

In this thesis I have attempted to explain the processes of social differentiation on the Besters Land Reform Project farms and the degree to which the “commercialization” of the cattle economy in this context accounts for these processes. I have done so by using a realist methodological framework and research design aimed at examining differences between farms, between households and between CPAs and households. The key concepts I have used are taken from the critical political economy approaches of Henry Bernstein (2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010b, 2011, 2012) and Bridget O’ Laughlin (1996, 2004, 2009, 2013) and include petty commodity production, social reproduction, social differentiation and accumulation. The research process has been guided by four overarching research questions directed at assessing the farming systems on the Besters farms, the forms of social differentiation present and how they articulate with class formation processes, and the extent to which the “commercialization” of farming accounts for the emerging differences.

In this concluding chapter, I summarise my findings through reference to:

- The explanatory power and the limits of my account of the dynamics of change underlying agrarian structure in post-apartheid South Africa.
- The research questions that shaped this thesis;
- My account of the changes taking place on the Besters land reform farms;
- How this account speaks to some of the theoretical and policy debates outlined in the first three chapters; and finally,
- A summary of the thesis conclusions

The central argument in the thesis is that processes of social differentiation on the Besters land reform farms are the outcome of the intersection of three analytically distinct social processes. The first two have been identified by O’ Laughlin (1996: 7) and Bernstein (2009) as key to understanding social differentiation in the contemporary countryside of developing countries.

These are: firstly, diversification of livelihoods in response to the growing crisis of social reproduction generated by the reorganization of work and the accompanying fragmentation of labour, and secondly, social stratification resulting from the internal dynamics of petty commodity production and manifest in differential ownership of cattle, agricultural machinery and control over land. These two social processes, as O' Laughlin (*ibid*) has noted, do not necessarily have the same “rhythms”. I have added a third process, using Bernstein’s notion of “replacement funds” (2010: 18-20) to account for the contradictory dynamics resulting from the commercialization of cattle production by CPAs, and how these impact on farming undertaken at household level.

These three processes help to explain how the contradiction central to agricultural petty commodity production (described in Chapter 2) between social reproduction and capital accumulation plays out on the Besters’ farms. This account, which aims to do justice to extremely complex and dynamic realities, does not easily support the neat or simple policy solutions evident in recent formulations of land and agrarian policy in South Africa. Rather, it suggests that South Africa’s emerging agrarian structure is the outcome of multiple local, national and global factors, which include agro-ecology, socio-economic dynamics causing changes to farm systems, the structure of markets in agricultural commodities, land and labour, the specific land reform processes in any locality, as well as the extent to which members of households are able to make strategic and collaborative (albeit constrained) decisions about social reproduction and accumulation.

11.2. Limits of the thesis

This thesis can, however offer only a partial explanation of some of the underlying processes that explain aspects of the particular agrarian structure evident in land reform contexts in South Africa.

The research design and identification of the particular case study of the Besters Land Reform Project limited this research to a defined geographical area and historical period, and thus limited the land and agrarian policies examined. In particular, two features of the case study circumscribe the research findings: firstly, the survival of labour tenancy is localized to northern

KwaZulu-Natal and small areas of other provinces, and yet this labour tenant history is key to understanding the deep cattle husbandry skills of the farmers at Besters, the ownership of relatively large cattle herds and the widespread claims to farm land. Secondly, land reform implementation using the Land Reform and Agricultural Development (LRAD) programme, with its individual grant mechanism, meant that the total grant amount was significantly higher than in the early land reform projects implemented using the Settlement Land Acquisition Grants. It also differs from the more recent policy directions that have moved away from transferring ownership of land to beneficiaries in favour of leaseholds (Agricultural Land Holding Policy 2013 and State Land Disposal and Lease Policy 2013). Furthermore, it differs from land reform that has been structured as joint ventures with agribusinesses and large commercial farmers. Despite these limits, it is the contention of this thesis that where there are collectively owned enterprises with multiple members making claims on them, these will be subject to the same pressures and contradictions in the current socio-economic context as those identified at Besters, although this would need to be tested empirically.

This thesis has also not looked at the structure of commodity markets and the terms of incorporation or exclusion of small farmers from output markets, or the way in which global monopolies controlling input commodities have impacted on small farm profitability. While I have shown that cattle and input prices impact on production at both household and CPA levels, the actual power relations that structure how small and large producers engage with and in markets is clearly an important factor in determining the long-term nature of the agrarian structure. Related to this, I also did not examine how petty commodity producers compete with large-scale capitalist farmers, what impact this competition has on small farm production, or how the farmers on the Besters land reform farms find spaces in which they are able to continue farming. I do suggest, however, that the possibility of competition lies in both the significant state investments in land and agrarian reform in the area, and in the relationship between CPA and household farm production. Nevertheless, a comprehensive investigation would require a better understanding of the dynamics involved in large capitalist agriculture in the area.

I also do not try to answer the question of why cattle, in particular, are the property mainly of men, nor do I consider in any detail other forms of livestock or crop production with differently gendered ownership structures. While such an investigation would be necessary to understand

more fully the ways in which social differentiation unfolds in cattle farming areas, it would also require in-depth anthropological and historical investigations, which were beyond the scope of this research.

Finally, class formation processes and the dynamics of social differentiation that underlie them are slow, long processes that unfold over centuries. The focus of this thesis on incipient class formation processes over a very short time span, even using life history interviews to augment it, can only deliver tentative observations about the processes at work and the trajectories that are taking shape. These, however, would require confirmation through longitudinal studies in order to be confirmed.

However, to the extent that the same production environments exist in other places, the account here may help to explain social differentiation more broadly but whether it does this or not would require further empirical investigation.

11.3. Key Research Findings

In this section, I summarise my research findings in terms of the four research questions posed, linking the answers to the research evidence provided in particular chapters.

11.3.1. What is the trajectory of the farming systems practised by land reform beneficiaries at Besters, and how “commercial” are these in character?

In Chapters 1 and 3 I outlined an agrarian policy context in which, despite ambivalence around questions of farm scale and viability, there has been a deepening convergence around the notion of the “emerging commercial farmer” as the means to bridge or reconfigure a dualistic agrarian structure. Chapter 5 showed how the aim of land reform at Besters was indeed to simply replicate the commercial cattle farming system practiced on most white owned commercial farms, within a market-led agrarian reform framework.

However, as Chapter 7 shows, the trajectories of commercial production amongst the CPAs were highly varied. One farm had never owned cattle collectively as a CPA; another had disbursed all the CPA cattle to households, an option also pursued by some (but not all) CPA members on a third farm. A fourth CPA had disbursed most of its cattle maintaining a small herd to generate

income to cover collective farm costs, a fifth was continuing to farm collectively as a CPA while a sixth had maintained a CPA herd but declining productivity meant it was no longer generating income from cattle sales. Despite these differences, official technical assessments focused on indicators of rangeland and cattle health to assess farm viability and production success, thus missing the key non-commercial purposes of CPA herds, namely, the cash and cattle dividends, input subsidies and provision of labour that support the social reproduction of households. Social reproduction, as Chapter 6 shows, depends on multiple livelihoods, including agricultural petty commodity production for a range of purposes, of which the most widespread is cattle sales to generate income for household consumption needs.

Farm production on the Besters farms, then, is geared to meeting multiple purposes. These include CPA transfers of capital and inputs to household farming, which contributes to the cash and food required for household survival, as well as the production of cattle for ceremonial purposes; but these are not completely at the expense of the commercial objectives of cattle farming, where the primary purpose is to produce cattle for sale, which occurs at rates of off-take comparable to commercial beef farms. In conclusion, the farm systems evident on the Besters farms are clearly hybridized: simultaneously “commercial” and “subsistence”, geared both at exchange value and use value.

11.3.2. Is the commercialisation of farming at Besters generating processes of social differentiation and class formation, and if so, by what mechanisms?

The arguments of neoclassical economists, reviewed in Chapter 2, suggest that the inverse relation between scale and production will, in free market economies that have not suffered historical distortions of economically irrational policies, produce both increased yields and socially equitable outcomes. In South Africa, land and agrarian reform that redistributes land and agricultural assets to counter historical policy distortions should, therefore, produce similar outcomes.

As Chapters 6, 8 and 10 have shown, different livelihood outcomes are apparent at Besters in terms of differential ownership of assets, livestock, and farm equipment, as well as differences in income earned from multiple livelihood sources, and are visible in the differential ability to undertake and complete ceremonial obligations. These are the result, I’ve suggested of processes

of social differentiation. However, social differentiation is the outcome of complex interactions between a variety of livelihood sources, the main ones being wage work, social grants, agricultural petty commodity production and CPA cattle production. While the loss of permanent wage work through death, retrenchment or long-term unemployment, particularly of the household head, is frequently accompanied by a rapid decline and sometimes collapse of farming, (resulting in “dropping out”) this downward cycle can be interrupted, or indeed reversed, by the payment of ongoing CPA dividends and subsidies to household farming, the presence of one or more old age pension and a household’s capacity to synchronize multiple livelihood sources – factors, in other words, that inhibit social differentiation. Equally, returns to investment in farming are not always re-invested in expanded production but are sometimes used to improving future possibilities of wage work through children’s tertiary education, sometimes at the cost of maintaining farm production on the same scale.

Furthermore, there are differences in the character of social differentiation processes between farms where CPAs continue to farm collectively and those that have abandoned CPA enterprises. Where CPAs have abandoned collective farming, households experiencing a shock (death, retrenchment, chronic unemployment) are more likely to drop out of farming and suffer extreme reproductive crises, while on farms where CPA enterprises generate dividends and farm subsidies, farm production might dip temporarily to deal with a shock but has a greater prospect of longer term recovery. Similarly, at the upper end of social differentiated strata, where CPAs have abandoned production, a small number of households have been able to appropriate rangelands and CPA assets and greatly expand their production and cattle herds, while on farms with ongoing transfers from CPA production, a greater number of households are expanding cattle herds but more slowly. In conclusion, the social differentiation and class formation processes at Besters cannot be explained outside of the context in which commercialization of farming is taking place, but the commercialization of farming on its own is not a sufficient explanation of the processes and mechanisms giving rise to social differentiation.

11.3.3. Are some land reform beneficiaries beginning to engage in agrarian accumulation, and if so, does this account for the emerging differences between them?

For Bernstein (2010: 104), agricultural petty commodity producers who are able to accumulate productive assets and reproduce themselves as capital on an expanded scale have the potential to become emergent capitalist farmers. Not all small farmers manage to engage in accumulation, however. Others engage in simple reproduction, in which they reproduce themselves as *capital* on the same scale of production, and themselves as *labour* on the same scale of consumption. Finally, there are those who are unable to reproduce themselves as capital and thus struggle to reproduce themselves as labour from their own production, and who consequently suffer what Bernstein calls “a simple reproductive squeeze” (*ibid*). Agrarian accumulation in petty commodity production is thus associated with emergent class formation processes.

As shown in Chapters 6 and 10, more than half the cattle stock on the Besters land reform farms is owned by a quarter of households. However, cattle are both productive agricultural *assets* (heifers, cows and bulls) and *outputs* generated by the productive process (weaners, oxen, old cows and bulls). The multiple purposes of cattle mean that for many households, decisions about herd composition are informed by the need for both productive assets and the use of livestock outputs as ceremonial stock, which in some cases may be either a cow (the productive asset) or an ox (the output). In the hybrid nature of the farm systems at Besters, accumulation can thus only take place when the range of funds (replacement of operational requirements, consumption and ceremony) has been met by the production. In this sense, the social reproduction/accumulation contradiction takes a specific form at Besters. Nevertheless, some farming households are expanding productive cattle stock, and are using this accumulation of assets to fund investments in tractors and small agricultural machinery in order to diversify their farm production, or to diversify into farm services.

However, the relationship between wealth measured in assets (as one indicator of consumption levels) and herd size is not a simple one. On the one hand, there is a measurable positive correlation between wealth and farming success. On the other, by far the greatest source of household cash income is wage employment (followed by social grants), and yet there is no statistical relation between the number of household members in employment and the numbers of cattle that households own. I have suggested that one explanation for this is that conceiving of the household as a tight, unified hub of production overstates the case for co-operation between family members and sub-familial units, who are themselves subject to competing pressures

between short-term reproduction needs and the need for longer term investment in production. Nevertheless, clearly some households, and some individuals within them, are using expanded cattle assets, along with social grants and some wages, to fund improvements in wealth status.

Furthermore, the pathways, or perhaps more accurately the patterns of accumulation, vary between households and farms. As Chapter 5 indicated, the history of labour tenancy and intra-familial strategies for managing the labour contract often involved heads of house providing their labouring sons with cattle for bridewealth (*lobolo*) and initial stock to begin their own herds, along with some sons inheriting their father's livestock. The different labour tenancy regimes on white-owned farms with their varying ceilings on household cattle stock, and the uneven distribution of land, cattle and equipment across the farms through land reform, had entrenched unequal cattle holdings before this study began. Nevertheless, the different decisions CPAs have made about their cattle enterprises, as shown in Chapters 7, 8 and 9, have structured different kinds of accumulation possibilities. Where CPAs have maintained their separate production enterprises, the subsidization of household farming (through labour, capital and operational inputs) clearly gives households with larger, expanding cattle herds a greater share of the CPA income than those with smaller herds. Where this subsidization is combined with cash dividends, as well as wages and social grant income, and the effective synchronization of the household's various livelihood sources to meet consumption needs, accumulation of productive cattle stock has become possible. However, where CPA's no longer have their own commercial enterprises, a small number of households acted quickly to privatize some of the CPA rangelands and productive assets (tractor in particular) and used these, together with household labour, to accumulate cattle as productive assets, squeezing other households off the rangelands and out of crop production in the process.

The key question that then arises, about how to account for the different production trajectories of the CPAs, was examined in Chapter 9 and is discussed in the section below. Suffice it here to say that the contradictions generated by the necessity of allocating CPA income to multiple funds, all of which must be replaced in order to reproduce the conditions for continued production, have played out in a complex farm politics: although the urgent needs of poorer households suggests that their interests would be best met by disbanding CPA production, evidence presented in Chapter 10 suggests that their farming is in fact best served by maintaining

CPA production, while only a few of the wealthier households are able to gain when CPA production is disbanded. However, the competition over funds, combined with contradictory dynamics within hybrid farm systems over collectively owned property, and rangelands in particular, renders long-term CPA production unstable. As this instability becomes increasingly apparent, CPA members may trade-off their long-term interest in expanded CPA production against their short-term interest in securing some benefits.

In conclusion, accumulation is evident amongst some of the households on the Besters' land reform farms. However, the processes by which these households have been able to accumulate productive assets and begin to engage in expanded reproduction have been varied and shaped by specific histories, and these histories are important in determining the extent to which accumulation accounts for social differentiation.

11.3.4. What other forms of social differentiation are there at Besters and how do these articulate with class formation processes?

This study identified three other sources of differentiation on the Besters land reform farms, namely, gender, age and kinship. In terms of gender and age, Chapter 5 shows that the explicit interests of women (in terms of divisions of labour) and young adults (in terms of productive asset ownership) were accommodated less successfully during land reform than those of older men; Chapter 6 shows that older men both own more cattle and earn more from them than women and younger adults, despite evidence of limited change lodged in recent discourses of legal equality and the wider context of unemployment; Chapter 6 also shows the gendered and generational dimensions of the fragmentation of labour, with older men more likely to secure permanent jobs while unemployment falls most heavily on young adults. However, this is reversed when it comes to social grants, particularly child support grants. Finally, Chapter 10 shows that households that have more assets, cattle and members with jobs are more likely to be headed by men than women. The thesis thus confirms the findings of others (such as Walker, 2003 and 2005) that the structure of rural poverty, notwithstanding land reform, has distinctly gendered and generational dimensions to it.

From this evidence, one can conclude that not only are women-headed households, and women and young adults within them, the most likely category to be suffering from a "simple

reproductive squeeze” in terms of agricultural petty commodity production, but also their relative inability to secure wage employment means that the social reproduction crisis in the society as a whole weighs most heavily on them. The women and young adults of Besters are, in other words, more likely than older men to join the ranks of the contemporary “precariat” (Standing, 2011). This snapshot of the structure of rural poverty and the processes that generate it, however, also suggests the social and political importance of the combination of child grants and CPA dividends and subsidies in easing the social reproduction crises of women of all ages. Although this is not explored in the thesis, the evidence suggests that in this context the burden of chronic rural poverty may be shifting to young men.

Kinship relations, as shown in Chapter 8, also shape who gets what on land reform farms at Besters and what they can do with it. Although land reform brought households together on different farms according to the combined logic of claimants, grants and farms available for sale, a thick web of household relatedness was evident on the farms. Clusters of patrilineal kin were well represented in CPA structures, while socially disconnected households were isolated from the centres of power on the farm. Grievances over cattle inheritance amongst brothers with different mothers overlapped with divisions in the CPA on one of the farms. Furthermore, the ceremonial use of cattle in marriage and burial continues to play a key role in reproducing kinship relations. However, the ceremonials are caught up in broader social inequalities in which ostentatious displays not only secure the social and moral status of the wealthier but also elicit rebukes and subtle challenges to the social order. Kinship relations and struggles within them were thus also evident in the contours of conflict on the farms.

It is these complex processes of social differentiation that underlie the argument made above and in Chapter 10 that it is necessary to review the notion of the household as a coherent entity, both conceptually and empirically. The rural household today cannot be associated in any neat or simple way with a class position. The complexity of inter- and intra-household relations indicate multiple lines of cleavage and fracturing, and gendered, generational and lineal lines of differentiation map in deeply complicated ways onto both the dual class positions of labour and capital definitive of petty commodity production and the diversification of livelihoods associated with the fragmentation of wage labour. Nevertheless, a weakness and limitation of this thesis has

been the absence of a gendered analytical framework able to provide a precise account of how these various forms of social differentiation articulate with class formation processes.

11.4. Explaining the dynamics of differentiation on the Besters Land Reform Farms

I have argued that the processes of social differentiation on the Besters farms can best be explained in terms of three analytically distinct processes that articulate in particular ways in particular localities with their distinct historical and agro-ecological contexts. These are, firstly, the contradictions that shape the commercialization of cattle production on CPA-owned farms; secondly, the diversification of livelihoods as a fragmented working class struggles to reproduce itself; and thirdly, the social stratification that results from the differential ownership of the means of small farm production, particularly cattle, control over land access, and productive technologies. While it remains difficult to explain how and why particular articulations occur in individual cases, these three processes, and in particular the internal pressures and contradictions that drive them, together explain both core features of the rural social structure evident on the Besters farms and the dynamics of differentiation that render it unstable. This is the world that confronts individuals and households as they struggle, on a daily basis, to reproduce themselves, a world that wrenches control from some while providing opportunities to others. As Marx wrote: “Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already...” (Marx, 1852: 1). The articulation of these three processes is a useful way of understanding the ‘already existing circumstances’ on the Besters farms, how they have arisen and what drives changes in them; circumstances to which individuals and households respond in different ways.

In the first of these processes, CPA cattle farming is best characterized as a capitalist enterprise that is subject to the same pressures of commodity production that all capitalist enterprises are subject to. The primary pressures are two-fold: competition with other producers, and the reproduction of the social relations that make it possible to produce profit. The terms under which CPA’s need to compete with other beef farmers has not been the focus of this thesis, beyond two very general observations. The first is that successful competition requires investments in expansion, integration or labour productivity, or combinations thereof; and the

second is that under current conditions of globalization, the share of the commodity price accruing to primary producers is often less than that accruing to retailers. The power relations that shape the governance of specific value chains and the terms on which primary producers are incorporated or excluded are undoubtedly an important determinant of whether or not CPA's can compete with other producers.

My research focused rather on the limits to expansion and labour productivity generated by the reproduction of the unique set of social relations that define CPA production contexts. These I analysed using the lens of “funds” that must be replenished from production in order to reproduce the conditions for continued production. In the CPAs at Besters, there are three such funds. The first is a *replacement fund* to purchase ongoing operational and capital inputs, such as breeding stock, machinery, veterinary medicines and services, and infrastructure and rangeland maintenance. The second is a *capital accumulation fund* necessary to secure the conditions for remaining competitive and profitable, such as expanding breeding stock, investing in upstream value chains (producing stock feed), investing in downstream value chains (feedlots), and diversifying income streams to insure against commodity price fluctuations (leases, crop production). The third is a fund to *secure the social conditions necessary for ongoing production*. This relates primarily to dividends and labour. Dividends (cash payments, heifer disbursements, maize, input subsidies to household farming, the use of CPA property and its infrastructure, and annual Christmas ‘ceremonials’ that provide meat) combine components of a social wage with capital transfers and ideological investments. Labour relates both to the terms and conditions of employment and to the allocation of jobs to members.

The core of the argument that I presented in Chapter 9 is that CPAs confront a number of contradictions in attempting to replace all three of these funds simultaneously:

- Members require regular dividends of cash, cattle and input subsidies in order to maintain their long-term interest in CPA production. Where CPAs fail to provide these dividends, members may act to insure their short-term interests by demanding the unbundling of CPA property and its total disbursement.
- CPAs that meet the requirements of regular dividends may do so at the cost of wage increases, breeding stock replacement, feed supplement or by increasing the unit costs of

production. These reduce the profitability of the CPA enterprise and thus its capacity to continue generating the surpluses required to sustain dividends.

- Where CPAs have more or less managed to continue replenishing funds for dividends and for ongoing operational costs, the constraint this places on CPA capital, combined with limited access to credit, means that CPAs have had limited success in expanding, diversifying or integrating their production. This has resulted in squeezes on profitability over time that become particularly acute when commodity prices drop or production is affected by drought.⁷⁰

These contradictions structure a local context in which historical differences intersect with the two other processes underlying social differentiation. What is clear is that on the Besters farms, cattle production at household level serves many purposes: a critical purpose is to sell cattle and earn income that supplements the consumption requirements of households, whose primary reproduction occurs through income from wage labour in combination with social grants.

Nevertheless, despite the general conditions that have supported cattle accumulation, which contrast with many other localities in the country, there are both differences between farms and households. Most significantly, a quarter of households have managed to accumulate more than 50% of the total cattle stock. A partial explanation for this stratification lies in the specific farm histories in relation to labour tenancy and land reform in so far as past landowner regimens in relation to cattle numbers and the specific agro-ecologies and household-hectare ratios of the farms transferred privileged some households over others. An additional explanation lies in the lineal position of households and whether they inherited cattle. However, neither of these two explanations is sufficient on its own to account for the rapid changes in household cattle stock that took place after land reform.

⁷⁰ Even where government has provided capital integration initiatives through its Recapitalisation Programme (eg. the feedlot infrastructure on two of the farms), it has remained unclear who has access to funds and who is supposed to benefit from the investments. Nyakanyaka Yomshini has tried to deal with this constraint by entering a partnership with a neighbouring commercial farmer to produce a soya bean crop for feed, but the crop had not yet been planted at the time of this research.

As argued above, a central explanation for this phenomenon is the diversification of livelihoods in articulation with the stratification involved in household commodity production in the different CPA production contexts. Unlike in other parts of Africa (as described, for example, in Scoones *et al.*, 2010 and Oya, 2004) farming at Besters is seldom the primary or sole source of livelihood, but is rather a component of a diverse range of livelihoods, with social grants acting as a central anchor in the strategies of nearly all households. Although the dynamics of social differentiation within these two processes are mutually reinforcing at the extremes – namely, the two evident nexuses of declining commodity production combined with increasing household poverty on the one hand, and expanding commodity production and increasing household wealth on the other - the rhythms are not always mutually supportive or linear. In some cases, the value accumulated through farm production is invested in livelihood diversification, particularly tertiary education or social status augmentation, resulting in declining or static farm production trajectories. In others, households have used income from social grants and wage work to invest in farming, with the consequences that livestock expansion is accompanied by a (temporarily) static or reduced wealth status. While the absence of an overall relationship between wage employment and farming success does indeed suggest that agricultural petty commodity production is sustained by processes of ‘accumulation from below’, it is also apparent that the mechanisms by which this occurs in particular cases are diverse and complex.

The manifestation of interests and demands that accompany the processes of differentiation are riven by multiple cleavages including, as shown in Chapter 8, the struggles between kin, and their reproduction at the level of the CPA. The politics of rising inequality, of who wins and who loses, sometimes appears initially as a more traditional politics of kinship and contestation within lineages. However, I argue that the politics of kinship overlaps and intersects with other social cleavages emerging on the farms, such that its “traditional” origins render the newer narratives of inequality familiar and expected, in forms that thus produce some stability alongside the conflicts on the farms.

11.5. What Besters implies for some key issues in agrarian theory and policy

The Besters Land Reform Project raises two key issues for theory and policy, which have been highlighted throughout this thesis and are summarized here. The first is whether or not the land and agrarian reform policies implemented at Besters have transformed the dualistic features of the agrarian structure through a more equitable ownership of productive agricultural assets and expected improvements in yields and rural employment. The second and related question is whether or not the conflicts on the farms should be understood as the consequence of inadequate common property institutions (at Besters, Communal Property Associations) and poor leadership, or whether they are symptomatic of and integral to other social processes of change on the farms and beyond.

This first question arises from the different theoretical approaches of neo-classical economists and critical political economists as summarized in the Chapter 2 review of the “GKI” (Griffin, Khan and Ickowitz) debate. In this debate, Griffin *et al* (2002) argue that the inverse relationship between land size and productivity or yield (ISPR) in agricultural production arises in contexts of fragmented land, labour and capital markets and suggests a two-way causality between land redistribution and overall economic growth. This view, which has active proponents in the World Bank, claims that reform that redistributes land to small-scale farmers will create the conditions for an equitable, efficient and labour-intensive growth path, which will reverse the effects of the dispossession-accumulation growth path of apartheid capitalism (Merle Lipton 1977, 1985, 1996, 2006; Deininger, 1999: 664-666; Binswanger and Deininger, 1992:87; Weideman, 2004: 223-224; Williams, 1996b: 139-140; Eastwood *et al*, 2005.) The claimed efficiencies and labour intensity of small scale farming thus provides a core justification for redistributive land and agrarian reform in South Africa, and regularly re-emerges in policy frameworks, with the most recent being the National Development Plan (NPC, 2011).

The assumptions underlying these views have been critiqued from a number of perspectives (see Chapter 2). I will focus here on three: that small farmers are a homogeneous social category, that they have a choice about whether to be farmers or wage workers and that the ISPR is universally true (Hall, 2010: 26; Dyer, 2004: 51; Byres, 2004b: 36).

The examination of land reform, wealth status and farm production on the Besters farms confirms the arguments of Byres (2004a: 13, 36; 2004b: 29), Neocosmos and Levin (1987), Sender and Johnstone (2004: 159) and Cousins (2013) that small farmers are a highly differentiated group. I have shown that the reasons for this differentiation are multi-faceted, including historically diverse labour tenancy regimes on the farms and the uneven distribution of land, cattle and agricultural equipment during land reform. Since land reform, these pre-existing differences have been sharpened or muted depending on firstly, the role of CPA's in supporting the reproduction of the capital and labour of agricultural petty commodity producers; and secondly, whether or not households have been able to secure and synchronize a range of livelihoods to meet production and consumption needs. The differences that emerge are lodged in intense struggles over CPA production that shape complex dynamics of differentiation, with an accompanying farm politics that is extraordinarily difficult to disentangle conceptually. This leads to the second issue of voluntarism.

The people living on the Besters land reform farms, far from manifesting the neo-populist assumption of sameness, are highly diverse in what they own, what they do, what they get and what they do with what they get (Bernstein, 2010: 22, 23), and the dynamics driving these processes of differentiation relate to the disciplines of reproducing oneself either through wage labour, in contexts of declining employment opportunities, or through petty commodity production (agricultural and other) in contexts of competition and cost-price squeezes. The choice, as Marx (1933: 19) so starkly put it, is, on the one hand, the freedom to sell one's labour power or the freedom to starve; and, on the other, where petty commodity production (agricultural and other) exists as a possibility, to compete through surplus appropriation based on the exploitation of own and family labour that can force households into minimal subsistence or to drop out of production altogether. Labour intensity is thus not, as Dyer (2004: 59) argues, necessarily an indication of efficient small farmers, but can also be an indicator of distress.

At Besters, the fallacy of choice is evident in the reality that although wages and social grants generate more income than farming, conflicts over farming – over who gets benefits, how often, how much and what kind of benefit is distributed - are widespread and directed at the production of both CPAs and households. The fierceness of the struggles to keep a foothold in farming not only raises serious doubts about the validity of the “linear proletarianisation” thesis underlying

the analyses of Wolpe (1972) and Morris (1976), but also puts paid to the idea that rural people choose whether or not to reproduce themselves through wage labour or farming. Farming is not a choice: it is insurance against the precariousness of securing wage work today, the fragility of survivalist enterprises and the gaps in who receives social grants, and without which an extreme social reproduction crisis looms. Both the notion of the farmer reproducing him (her) self, his family and his farming from his farming alone, and the notion of the free proletarian worker surviving and raising a family on wage work alone, is so rarely reflected in realities at Besters as to seem almost mythical. The everyday reality, the norm or mean, is one of individuals and families struggling to sustain themselves through multiple livelihoods, moving between class identities of worker and cattle owner, attempting to stabilize one in order to build the other, or just to “hang in” as one or both. In both cases, social grants are key to survival.

The final critique from critical political economists is that the neoclassical economists appear to assume that the inverse relation between size of land and agricultural productivity is *a priori* or universally true. A combination of evidence suggests, however, that it is not true on the Besters land reform farms. Firstly, land reform, as already indicated above and dealt with in depth in Chapters 5 and 7, delivered different qualities of land and hectares per beneficiary, as well different numbers of cattle per farm and per beneficiary. Perhaps not entirely surprisingly then, the farm with the greatest mean herd size per household was the farm ranked most highly in terms of both quality and quantity of land, and this is also the only farm on which all three households were categorized as agricultural accumulators. Finally, each of the households had only one person primarily involved in cattle farming, although household members did provide very part-time labour for subsistence crop production. In other words, when it comes to cattle farming, larger land sizes with the appropriate grasslands support bigger herds with their respectively larger ‘yields’ (weaned calves), and it does not require intensive labour regimes. The ISPR logic, in other words, needs to take into account what is being farmed and the suitability of local conditions for specific type of production.

Finally, not only does evidence from Besters not conform neatly to the ISPR hypothesis, the analysis provided in Chapters 9 and 10 also suggests that accumulation processes in agricultural petty commodity production are not simply the progressive “from below” paths, but rather involve a mix of accumulation paths “from below” and “above”, including accumulation in

hybrid livelihood structures, of which agriculture plays but one (sometimes small) part. The state's initial investment in Besters during land reform, as shown in Chapter 7, amounted to a mean of nearly R150,000 per beneficiary household. As Mather (2002) has suggested, substantial allocations of state resources through programmes like the Land Redistribution and Agricultural Development (LRAD) Programme are budgetary choices that amount to the racial transformation of agrarian capital without transformation of the rural structure and, in this sense, LRAD is an "agrarian accumulation from above" path. However, notwithstanding this significant capital input and its uneven distribution, the different CPA production trajectories resulted in two different patterns of accumulation "from below": one more widely spread across households but involving slower rates of expansion whereas the other has involved fewer households but at faster rates of expansion. Finally, in each of these situations, the households that are accumulating either began with an advantage in greater numbers of cattle (mainly through inheritance), or held back on meeting the social reproduction requirements of their households, or were able to synchronise a range of livelihoods to meet the requirements of both capital expansion and the daily and generational consumption needs of family members.

While Besters shows that the ISPR neglects the re-emergence of social differentiation through land and agrarian reform, it also shows that the processes of social differentiation and accumulation amongst petty commodity producers on farms where land and agrarian reform has supported the establishment of productive CPA enterprises are more complex than the views of some critical political economists, particularly Levin and Neocosmos (1987). The accumulation pathways visible at Besters are the outcome of the contradictions between social reproduction and accumulation in agricultural petty commodity production on the one hand, and the diversification of livelihoods in response to declining and changing conditions of employment on the other, and how these play into the contradictions involved in reproducing the conditions necessary for continued CPA production.

There is no magical policy bullet that can simply do away with the features of agrarian dualism. This is, partly, because the agrarian structure is not simply a product of history but also of the ongoing processes of differentiation that today are grounded in how agrarian and industrial production is structured and reproduced, how relationships between the countryside and town intersect and articulate, and how these processes differentially affect small farmers depending on

whether they are primarily engaged in producing food to top up wages or commodities to sell in order to accumulate capital. This complexity suggests that land and agrarian policy has a role to play in continuing to support farming as a key component of the mixed livelihoods necessary for both social reproduction and petty commodity production. What the analysis of land reform at Besters makes clear is that a livelihoods portfolio that combines diversity in income sources, multiple incomes from these sources and their effective synchronisation at household level provides better insurance against downward cycles into abject poverty. Furthermore, the redistribution of sufficient quantities of land appropriate both for intended production and in terms of access to markets, along with capital (equipment and livestock) and support in technological innovation (to remain competitive) are necessary to stimulate and support agricultural petty commodity production. However, sustained and widespread petty commodity production to meet the declining certainty of urban and rural employment requires regular capital inputs in the current context of pressures on agricultural commodity price squeezes up and down the supply chain. Without this, both simple and expanded reproduction is subject to severe constraints. This is where state investments in CPA production have proved valuable.

However, where state resources tend to focus on the establishment of CPAs, a local institutional focus also emphasized in the World Bank report on Besters (Binswanger *et al*, 2008), I have argued that the contradictory imperatives of CPA production, which do not align neatly with dynamics of differentiation (that create production and consumption inequalities between households and between individuals within households), generate an unstable and rapidly shifting politics at farm level. The difficulties this poses for local institutions and leadership on farms suggests that the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform's claim (2012) that CPAs "have failed" is not just inaccurate, it directs attention away from the state's role in this failure through its abrogation of its legal duties to CPAs. A core legal obligation, in addition to the establishment of CPAs as legal entities to take transfer of ownership of property, is support for the negotiation and mediation of members' rights to CPA land, capital and income. Furthermore, where CPAs as productive enterprises are successful, agricultural accumulators will emerge, and their growing requirements for the CPA's land and capital will come into competition with the agricultural production requirements of both the CPA and other households. This suggests that a land and agrarian policy framework that intends to develop emerging capitalist farmers should support expanding petty commodity producers to exit from CPAs and

to be prioritized for policies providing additional land and capital, such as the Recapitalisation and Development Programme (DRDLR, 2013) and the State Land Lease Disposal Policy (DRDLR, 2013).

Policy proposals always involve trade-offs in terms of who wins and who loses. It is beyond this thesis to assess all the trade-offs involved in providing adequate support to CPAs as social and productive entities. However, some of the trade-offs, which impact in different ways on rural poverty and thus on who is affected, would involve:

- The fiscal implications of greater numbers of local officials becoming involved in CPA rights adjudications may come at the cost of other agrarian reform priorities, such as the tenure rights and security of people living on commercial farms and in the former Bantustans.
- Additional support to expanding petty commodity producers would imply budgetary allocations that may limit the possibilities of a broad-based redistributive agrarian reform focus; a strategy amounting to the deracialisation of the agrarian structure rather than its substantial transformation.
- The expansion of both the staff and financial resources of the Department, which would help resolve the above trade-offs, may come at the cost of other government priorities, including those aimed at social wages (social development, health, education) that reduce squeezes on labour reproduction and thus the possibilities of capital accumulation, further investment and increased employment.

11.6. Conclusion

My research shows that the land and agrarian reform policy framework used in Besters is necessary but insufficient to create the conditions for widespread and sustained agricultural petty commodity production accumulation and expansion, or for “commercial farmers to emerge”. In addition to state reforms, households need to secure and synchronize a range of livelihood strategies, including own farming, CPA farming and off-farm wage employment. Those households able to do so can begin to expand their herds, and in time, employ wage labour and emerge as capitalist farmers. Those households unable to do so find their cattle herds depleted as they draw on them in order to survive, their agricultural production declines, and their capacity to generate a secure livelihood is put at risk. A critical local factor shaping a household’s particular trajectory is the influence it can exercise over CPA decisions about production. This places the CPA and its assets at the centre of a politics that not only draws on longterm competition between groups based on lineage but also has a dynamic impact on how power is wielded on the farms and on who wins and who loses as a result.

In summary, I conclude, firstly, that the problems of production on many land reform farms cannot be explained simply in terms of CPAs as troubled institutions or lacking effective leadership. Rather, the struggles over CPA production generate considerable conflict because they intertwine with broader social processes of differentiation that are both dynamic and unstable. This creates a fluid and extremely complex politics at the level of the farm that would challenge any institution and any leadership. However, and this is my second conclusion, where CPAs have been able to maintain production, the processes of social differentiation are dampened at the limits, and those households that struggle to effectively synchronize a range of livelihoods are constantly provided with opportunities to re-enter petty commodity production. On those farms where CPA production has collapsed, households with a narrow range of livelihoods, or livelihood strategies that compete with each other, struggle to reproduce themselves as labour and capital and can drop out of farming completely as a result. Nevertheless, and this is my third conclusion, even though productive CPAs generate more equitable social outcomes than those CPAs that dissolve their enterprises, the way that the contradictions that constitute CPA production as a site of struggle articulate with the broader

processes of social differentiation mean that CPAs will, in the long term, battle to sustain their enterprises under current land and agrarian policies. Policy priorities that take cognizance of this politics and support farm level adjudications of members' rights to land, capital and cash, and support agricultural capital accumulators to exit communal property arrangements could result in limited transformations of the agrarian structure.



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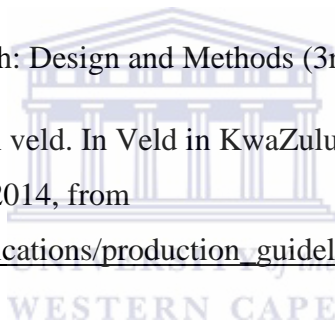
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12.2. Interviews

12.2.1. Focus group

Mphuzanyoni CPA (2010). History of land reform and production today. 14 September, at Mphuzanyoni.

Nkuthu Kayishazwe CPA (2010). History of land reform and production today. 15 September, at Nkuthu Kayishazwe.

Ngula Kayishazwe CPA. (2010). History of land reform and production today. 14 September, at Ngula Kayishazwe.

Nyakanyaka Yomshini CPA (2010). History of land reform and production today. 14 September, at Nyakanyaka Yomshini.

Sizisizwe CPA (2010). History of land reform and production today. 15 September, at Sizisizwe.

Zizamele CPA (2010). History of land reform and production today. 15 September, at Zizamele

12.2.2. Individual

Dlamini, R. (2012) ADA's role and plans on the Bester's land reform farms. Project Manager, Inland: focus on livestock. 20 March, at ADA offices, Pietermaritzburg.

Dr Lukubisa. (2012). The health indicators of cattle on the land reform farms. 15 November, at Vleissentraal cattle auction at Nyakanyaka Yomshini.

Dube, L. (2011). Kin relations and purposes of farming. 9 October at Ngula Kayishazwe.

Du Plessis, D. (2012). Cattle auctions on land reform farms in Besters. Vleissentraal KwaZulu-Natal Manager. 15 November, at Vleissentraal cattle auction at Nyakanyaka Yomshini.

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Guy, J. (2013). The persistence of labour tenancy at Besters. 24 August, at Yellowwood Café, Howick.

Gwamanda. Mr (2011). Farming systems on the land reform farms. Head of Extension Services, Department of Agriculture, Pieters. 7 August, at Besters Primary School.

Hadebe, K. (2012). The rationale behind government organized auctions. Department of Agriculture Veterinary Services. 15 November, at Vleissentraal cattle auction at Nyakanyaka Yomshini.

Henderson, R. (2010). Land reform at Besters, and drive around farms, 4 August, at his offices, Ladysmith.

Henderson, R. (2013). Decisions relating to allocation of Abrina funds. Telephonic interview, 4 February.

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Hlatswayo, N. (2011). Kin relations and purposes of farming. 11 October at Mphuzanyoni.

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Hlatswayo, N. (2011). Life history. 29 November. Mphuzanyoni, Besters.

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Hlongwane, Mr. (2012) CPA production dynamics and household cattle farming. 17 November, at Ngula Kayishazwe.

Hlongwane, Mr. (2011). Kin relations and purposes of farming. 9 October at Nkuthu Kayishazwe.

Khoza, P. (2011). Kin relations and purposes of farming. 9 October at Nyakanyaka Yomshini.

Khoza, N. (2010). Life history. 2 July, at Paulina Khoza's house, Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Besters.

Khoza, N. (2012). CPA production dynamics. 6 November, Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Besters.

Khoza, N. (2012). CPA production dynamics. 15 March, at Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Besters.

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Khoza, Mam'Bense. (2012). CPA production dynamics. 6 November, Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Besters.

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Khumalo, B. (2011). Kin relations and purposes of farming. 9 October at Nyakanyaka Yomshini.

Khumalo, B. (2010). Life history. Chairperson of CPA committee. 3 July, at Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Besters.

Khumalo, B. (2012). CPA production dynamics. Chairperson of CPA committee. 3 November, at Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Besters.

Khumalo, M. (2012). CPA production dynamics. 4 November, interviewed at Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Besters.

Khumalo, M. (2010). Life history. 15 October, interviewed at Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Besters.

Khumalo, T. (2010). Life history. 3 July, at Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Besters.

Khumalo, T. (2012). CPA production dynamics. 5 November, at Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Besters.

Letty, B. (2011). Cattle and goat herd ownership in Msinga. 14 May, telephonic interview.

Luthuli, J. (2010). The history of land reform at Besters and the role of Abrina. 17 October, at the Emnambithi Municipal Offices, Ladysmith.

Mabizela, T. (2011). Kin relations and purposes of farming. 9 October at Ngula Kayishazwe.

Mazibuko, J. (2011). Kin relations and purposes of farming. 9 October at Ngula Kayishazwe.

Mpungose, M. (2011). Kin relations and purposes of farming. 9 October at Nyakanyaka Yomshini.

Msimanga, G. (2011). Kin relations and purposes of farming. 9 October at Nkuthu Kayishazwe.

Mabaso, S. (2011). How land reform played out at Besters. 8 February, at the offices of Association for Rural Advancement, Pietermaritzburg.

Mabaso, S. (2013). Ownership history of the land reform farms. 12 September, telephonic interview.

Madlala, S. (2011). Kin relations and purposes of farming. 10 October at Zizimele.

Maloney, K. (2012). AAM Auctions and cattle farmers at Besters. 6 August, at AAM offices, Nottingham Road.

Mabizela, J. (2012). CPA production dynamics and household cattle farming. 17 November, at Ngula Kayishazwe.

Mabizela, T. (2013). Conflict around CPA production. 28 November, at Ngula Kayishazwe.

Mabizela, Mr. (2010). Life history. 4 July, interviewed at Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Besters.

Mabizela, Mr. (2012). CPA production dynamics. 5 November, interviewed at Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Besters.

Mabizela, Mr. (2012). CPA cattle farming systems. 7 November, interviewed at Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Besters.

Makhowane, Mr. (2012) Life history and CPA production dynamics. 7 November, at Nkuthu Kayishazwe.

Makhubo, J. (2012). CPA production dynamics and household cattle farming. 16 November, at Ngula Kayishazwe.

Makhubo, J. (2012). Life history. 4 November, Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Besters.

Mamane, J. (2012). Burial ceremonies. 10 November, Hilton.

Mavimbela, S. (2011). Life history. 1 December, at Mphuzanyoni, Besters.

Mavimbela, J. (2012) Life history and CPA production. 24 March 2012 at Mphuzanyoni, Besters.

Mavimbela, S. (2011). Interview on CPA dynamics with CPA chairperson, 25 November, at Mphuzanyoni, Besters.

Mavimbela, S. (2012). Selling Mphuzanyoni cattle at government organized auctions. 15 November, at Vleissentraal cattle auction at Nyakanyaka Yomshini.

Mavimbela, S. (2012). Interview on CPA dynamics with CPA chairperson, 2 August, at Mphuzanyoni, Besters.

Mavimbela, S. (2012). Interview on CPA dynamics with CPA chairperson, 15 March, at Shabalala's house, Mphuzanyoni, Besters.

Mazibuko, J. (2012). CPA production dynamics and household cattle farming. 16 November, at Ngula Kayishazwe.

Mpungose, M. (2010). Life history. 4 July, interviewed at Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Besters.

Mpungose, M. (2012). CPA production dynamics. 4 November, interviewed at Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Besters.

Mpungose, S. (2010). Life history. 5 July, interviewed at Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Besters.

Mpungose, S. (2010). CPA production dynamics. 4 November, interviewed at Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Besters.

Mpungose, V (2010). Life history. 2 July 2010; at Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Besters.

Mpungose, V (2012). CPA production dynamics. 4 November; at Nyakanyaka Yomshini, Besters.

Mthembu, S. (2011). Kin relations and purposes of farming. 11 October at Mphuzanyoni.

Mthembu, Mr.(2011) Life history. 24 November, Mphuzanyoni, Besters.

Mthembu, Mrs. (2011). Life history. 26 November. Mphuzanyoni , Besters.

Msimanga. (2012). Interview on lineage structure with Gogo, Mhle, Sbu, Ma'Ndaweni, Ma'Zimu and Ma'Dlamini. 1 November, at Nkuthu Kayishazwe, Besters.

Msimanga, Gogo and Sbu. (2012). Clarifying lineage relationships, 2 November, at Nkuthu Kayishazwe, Besters.

Msimanga, Gogo and Mhle. (2012). Life history and CPA production dynamics, 7 November, at Nkuthu Kayishazwe, Besters.

Msimanga, G. (2013). Interview on household relations, 25 August, at Nkuthu Kayishazwe, Besters.

Msimanga: (2013), with Gogo, Sbu and Ma'Zimu. The costs of marriage. 29 October, at Nkuthu Kayishazwe, Besters.

Ndaba, B. (2011). Kin relations and purposes of farming. 9 October at Ngula Kayishazwe.

Ndaba, B. (2012). Causes and nature of conflict at Ngula Kayishazwe. 5 March, at Ngula Kayishazwe.

Ndaba, T. (2011) . Kin relations and purposes of farming. 10 October at Zizimele.

Nhlabathi. (2011). Kin relations and purposes of farming. 11 October at Mphuzanyoni.

Niland, J. (2010). Interview on commercial beef farm indicators, with Janet, 8 September, Mount West Farm.

Nkosi, B.(2011). Kin relations and purposes of farming. 9 October at Ngula Kayishazwe.

Paterson, A. (2012)– Interview on Agribusiness Development Agency veld and livestock assessment reports. 11 April. Howick.

Roy, A. (2012). Feedlot buyer: assessing cattle for sale. 15 November, at Vleissentraal cattle auction at Nyakanyaka Yomshini.

Smythe, D. (2012). Land reform at Besters and commercial beef production indicators. 3 August, at his farm, Besters.

Teddar, S. (2012). Land reform at Besters and commercial beef production indicators. 3 August, at his farm, Besters.

Twala, A. (2011). Kin relations and purposes of farming. 9 October at Ngula Kayishazwe.

Twala-Shezi, C. (2011). Kin relations and purposes of farming. 9 October at Ngula Kayishazwe.

Shabalala, B. (2011) . Kin relations and purposes of farming. 10 October at Zizimele.

Shabalala, B. (2011). Kin relations and purposes of farming. 11 October at Mphuzanyoni.

Shabalala, B. (2012). Life history. 23 march, at Mphuzanyoni, Besters.

Shabalala, J. (2011). Kin relations and purposes of farming. 11 October at Mphuzanyoni.

Shabalala, J. (2011). Life history. 2 December. At his house at Mphuzanyoni , Besters.

Shabalala, J. (2012). Life history. 24 March. At his house at Mphuzanyoni , Besters.

Shabalala, K. (2011) . Kin relations and purposes of farming. 10 October at Zizimele.

Shabalala, L. (2011) Kin relations and purposes of farming. 11 October at Mphuzanyoni.

Shabalala, Mam’Kubhekha. (2011). Life history. 29 November Mphuzanyoni, Besters.

Shabalala, Ma’Nene. (2011). Life history. 24 November at Mphuzanyoni, Besters.

Shabalala, Ma’Ngwenya. 2011. Life history. 2 December, at Mphuzanyoni, Besters.

Shabalala, P. (2011). Kin relations and purposes of farming. 11 October at Mphuzanyoni.

Shabalala, S. (2011) . Kin relations and purposes of farming. 10 October at Sizisizwe.

Shabalala, S. (2011). Interview on different farming systems. 24 March, at Mphuzanyoni, Besters.

Shabalala, X. (2011). Kin relations and purposes of farming. 9 October at Ngula Kayishazwe.

Shongwe, S. (2011). Department of Agriculture’s plans at Besters. 8 June at DoA offices at Pieters.

Sbisis, M. (2011). Kin relations and purposes of farming. 10 October at Sizisizwe.

Zikalala, Z. (2011). Life history. Vice Chairperson of the CPA committee. 29 November. Mphuzanyoni, Besters.

Ziqubu, N. (2013). Zulu lineage relationships and the words that describe them. 30 May, at Pietermaritzburg.

12.3. CPA documents: other

Mphuzanyoni CPA bank statements. Dec/Jan 2010 – Dece/Jan 2013.

AAM cattle auction data base for Besters District. January 2010 – June 2013.

12.4. Meetings Attended

ADA (2010). Establishment of beef sector advisory forum for KZN ADA support programmes. 25 October, 2010.

ADA (2011). Social and agricultural development workshop. 10 December, at Besters Farmers' Association stock sale yards.

Department of Agriculture. (2011). How to support beef farming on the Besters land reform farms. 8 June at DoA offices at Pieters.

Department of Agriculture. 2011. Meeting with Livestock Farmers from Bester's Land Reform Project Farms. Besters Farmers Association Stock Sale Yards. 14 September, 2011.

Workshop (2011a). Participatory development of farming success indicators and preliminary report back on PhD research findings. 31 July, at Besters Primary School.

Workshop (2011b). Participatory development of farming success indicators and preliminary report back on PhD research findings. 7 August, at Besters Primary School.

13. Appendices

13.1. Appendix 1: Conversation with Mrs Hlatswayo - the ambiguities involved in women's ownership of cattle

(Source: Notebook, 2013)

'Mrs Hlatswayo was visiting Mam'Nene's house where I was staying. Mam'Nene likes her to visit because she is witty, particularly in how she and her elderly husband talk to one another, a man, who by many accounts, is an abusive, alcoholic husband. She explained to Mam'Nene the reasons why she had sold her heifer in a recent stock sale. "I once knew a married woman whose cattle bred well for her (*"zimvumile"*). All her cattle lived and they often gave birth to twins with the result that her herd expanded and expanded. One day, her husband took her cattle and used them to *lobola* for another wife. After that, this woman stopped keeping cattle. So that's why I sold my heifer and then I gave *umkhulu* (grandfather, the name by which she refers to her husband) R100. He wasn't happy but I was because now he couldn't sell my cow. Men are the devil: they take everything you have." Everyone laughed. The meaning and humour, and indeed the fabulous nature of the story, however, depended on understanding embedded social nuances and expectations, and as I stayed in Besters and grew to understand these better, my understanding of why Mrs Hlatswayo's story was funny also deepened.

I first thought Mrs Hlatswayo was worried that her husband might sell her cattle in order to pay bridewealth (*lobolo*) for another wife. However, this wouldn't serve adequately as an explanation for Mrs Hlatswayo's selling her cow because Mr Hlatswayo is very old and unlikely to take another wife, and anyway, one animal wouldn't suffice for the bridewealth. The logic, I realized later, was rather that cattle in a household fall formally under the name of the household head as family representative. They belong, in the first place to the lineage, past, present and future, which is patrilineal. An animal owned by a wife within this context is not her sole property; it is subject to other claims from members of the household, and in the contestation of these claims, the wife as owner may, under some conditions, lose out. Mrs Hlatswayo was talking to the shared recognition of the risk that women take in being cattle owners, a risk related not simply to their being women but also to their position as women

within families where lineage, and the multiplicity of claims arising from lineage or kin connections, is struggled over, sometimes through humour.

The humour depends on a double ambiguity. Firstly, men are visibly the repositories of cattle skill and knowledge but in Mrs Hlatswayo's story, the cattle respond to this wife's ownership and they breed for her. The word, "*ziyamvuma*" does not relate to her husbandry skills. It relates rather to an almost magical embracing of her ownership; they "allow" or "permit" her ownership through demonstrations of fertility and good health. Had she been a man, her social position would have grown as the herd expanded since a man's status, in some accounts, increases as his herd increases. In effect, this wife has displaced her husband's social position by having fertile cattle. The second layer of ambiguity is not that her husband takes the cattle; it is that he takes them to secure another wife, thus potentially threatening the social position of the existing wife and her children. While it is a fitting retaliation for her talents in relation to cattle, men's property, it is also socially outrageous: this woman must now, without consultation, be forced to share the wealth and status of her husband with another wife, whom she has *lobolo'd*.

To return then to Mrs Hlatswayo's explanation of her decision to sell her own animal: the story makes the suggestion that her elderly, drunken husband could take another wife, thus giving him his social position as man and husband in an agnatic structure, but also undermines this possibility by locating it in a fable. Instead, the listener is left knowing that she sold her heifer to prevent her husband from selling it himself and using her money to buy alcohol, and that the story constructs an elaborate fairy tale which makes her actions less illegitimate than they would otherwise be in a simple story of male dominated decision-making structures. The story also confirms the ongoing importance of cattle to men's social position despite a project of commercialisation, the possibility that women at Besters can and do own cattle and may always have done so, that ownership of cattle remains a risk for women because of the gendered dimensions of cattle ownership in how lineage claims and contestations are formulated, and that these issues are all so embedded in the social fabric of meaning that they are likely to be difficult to extinguish in any simple and uncomplicated way.