

Zimbabwe's Land Question in the Context of Large-Scale Land Based Investments

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The history of land in Zimbabwe is mired in complexity. The emergence of new large-scale forms of investments in Zimbabwe has to be understood within this complexity. Colonisation initiated a protracted land struggle in which race, gender, class, ethnicity and nationality have become important sites of contestation. This paper outlines the evolution of the land question in Zimbabwe, highlighting key junctures and events since colonisation. Such a historical analysis is important if we are to understand the emergence of large-scale land deals geared towards bio fuel production. Large-scale land deals reflect the latest point on the continuum of the land question, which has consumed Zimbabwe's political and social spheres since colonisation. What these deals mean in the long-term might not be clear at the moment but they represent another complex turn in an emotive issue that has led to many contestations.

Keywords: Land, Zimbabwe, large-scale land based investments, agriculture

INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe has a historical land question that started with colonisation in 1899. The evolution of this land question accords important insights into how land is governed and what it means for ordinary Zimbabweans. The central concern of this paper is to argue how large-scale land deals in Zimbabwe are part of historical and complex land question. It warns against looking at the deals as a unique, isolated or novel phenomenon divorced from large historical contestations over land. The paper, thus, provides a history around key land related events in Zimbabwe such as the period post 2000 when the Fast Track Land Reform was initiated to dismantle White dominated commercial agriculture in favour of Black smallholder farmers. It also focuses on questions around tenure, ownership and land governance in the context of large-scale land investments in Mwenezi and Chisumbanje because they are the two biggest biofuel projects in Zimbabwe. The paper questions how contestation around understanding of land as an economic, social and political asset is acted out at local and national levels.

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Large-scale land-based investments provide a new context in which Zimbabwean government's definition of land as a tool for indigenization is constantly being challenged. This challenge is in line with on-going fight by White farmers to gain compensation or return to the land. This also has to be understood in the context of the landmark 2015 High Court rulings through which some White commercial farmers regained access to land or have avoided acquisition of their farms by the state. There are two important features that can be discerned from land investments in the Zimbabwean context. Firstly, in Zimbabwe, the government and local elites are heavily involved in the investments and secondly, production is largely geared towards local consumption. To highlight the positive nature of the land-based investment the state typically noted how the project produced products meant for the local market and not for exports. ElHadary and Obeng-Odoom (2012) have shown how in Sudan and Ghana the process of land expropriation is linked to globalisation and capital accumulation within a context of actions and inactions of state and traditional authorities.

Within the context of this paper, it is then important to ask how the government of Zimbabwe envisages an agrarian future given the lack of policy direction. The lack of policy direction has been largely caused by a lack of clarity on the part of government in dealing with multiple questions such as how to compensate former White farmers who lost land during the Fast Track Land Reform Programme. Zimbabwe is in the process of framing an agrarian policy, but many questions remain on how large-scale land investments fit into this process. Land remains the most important asset/resource for the majority of the rural poor who have limited livelihood resources. On the other hand, government and policy analysts view large-scale investments in agriculture as an important step in promoting employment creation and economic growth (see Exner et al., 2015). The issue then for the present study is to analyze how these questions are evolving within agricultural planning processes in Zimbabwe and how they impact on rural communities. Policy questions around land have a direct impact on the livelihoods of poor and vulnerable groups especially women and children. The paper, thus, focuses on the gendered and generational dimensions to Zimbabwe's land question in the context of large-scale land deals and its potential future implications.

In Zimbabwe, most land is owned by the state and the dynamics of land ownership means that most communities have usufruct rights. This leaves smallholder households vulnerable to political and economic pressures on land. The Zimbabwean case illuminates the interplay of complex political and economic forces that intermix to relegate small-scale farmers at the expense of vast bio-fuel production. In such a context land becomes a contested socio-political and economic asset where political elites have power to control the livelihood outcomes of rural households. The presence of Chinese and Brazilian firms offers a new dynamic which reorients our understanding of 'neo colonial processes' where it is emerging economic powers and not traditional Western powers taking the lead in land deals in Zimbabwe

(Chiweshe and Mutopo, 2015). All these processes need to be understood as a continuation of the complex land question in Zimbabwe.

In conceptualizing what the land question entails in Africa, Moyo (2004) highlights how conflicts over land in the region are a result of the colonial legacy of capital accumulation based upon unequal landownership patterns and access to agricultural resources and infrastructure. The land question is thus about understanding the contestations and complexities around land ownership and governance. It is about locating the nexus between power and economic interests and how this affects various groups' access to land. Leiven (2012) also places a historical emphasis in understanding the land question especially in the context of land grabs. He argues that, 'There is some danger in the emerging scholarship and policy discourse on 'the global land grab' that the novel interest in them is mistaken for novelty of the phenomenon itself. The dispossession of land from peasants, of course, has a long history and an almost equally long history of thinking about it' (Leiven, 2012:935). It is this historicisation that forms the basis of this paper. Large scale land investments cannot be separated from the larger historical contestations over land. Chiweshe and Mutopo (2015) provide a class and race dimension to the land question in Zimbabwe noting how colonial processes of land dispossession still influence land governance in post-colonial context.

EVOLUTION OF THE ZIMBABWEAN LAND QUESTION

Before focusing on the large-scale land investments in Zimbabwe, it is important to outline the evolution of the land question. Such a historicity is necessary to place the land deals within a wider historical context in which land has remained a contested space. There is a methodological gap in the literature on land grabs in Africa that fails to provide a historicity and historical analysis to the land question. Historical analysis is important in understanding this recent phenomenon of land grabs, as Obeng-Odoom (2015, 350) argues: '...land grab research can benefit from historical and class based analyses that cascade down (local and national levels) and up (regional, international and global levels). Recent happenings in Africa's land economy ought to be linked more carefully to history...' The following historical outline provides a context in which we begin to understand the continued land conflicts across Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe's land question has a long historical trajectory that can be traced to the beginning of settler colonialism in 1890. This history involves complex interplay of racial, class, gender, ethnic and generation questions that still define the land debates in present day Zimbabwe. Notions of nationhood, citizenship and belonging are variously deployed through the creation and recreation of specific alliances over land that questions the nature of governance from colonial to post-colonial periods. Hammar and Rooftpolous (2003) for example, argue that, in Zimbabwe there is, 'historicized and racialised assertion of land res-

titution and justice' against "ahistorical, technocratic insistence on liberal notions of private property, 'development', and 'good governance'" (2003, 17). It is, thus, important to understand this history of the land question in order to discuss the continued complications over land administration years after the Fast Track Land Reform Programme in 2000. The current state of the land question in Zimbabwe is a culmination of these historical yet ever present processes and contestations.

The colonial government in Zimbabwe instituted various processes that led to widespread land dispossession of the Black majority. The Land Apportionment Act (1930) and related processes of land appropriation created a situation in which by 1980 4,500 White commercial farmers owned roughly 15.5 million hectares (39 percent of the total land in the country). More than a million Black farming households, on the other hand, had access to only about 16 million hectares. Undoubtedly, the most acute and difficult question confronting the first Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) at independence was land. This was because of the political, social and economic importance of land to both White and Black people. Palmer (1977, 246) adds:

The problem will not be an easy one to resolve. The continuing stranglehold of the land division of the 1890s, the fact ... that Rhodesia is part of the Southern African regional economic system, and the lessons to be drawn from the agricultural failures of neighbouring Zambia, will all impose constraints on future land and agricultural policies.

When the new Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) Government led by Robert Mugabe came to power in 1980, it made land redistribution a high priority. It set itself a target to acquire 8.3 million hectares from White commercial farmers to resettle 162,000 Black families during the period 1982–1985. This target was not achieved, as the government was only able to acquire about 2.1 million hectares, on which about 60,000 families were resettled (Masiwa, 2005).

The impasse on land in Zimbabwe evolved from the 1979 Lancaster House Agreement until the explosive land invasions of early 2000. Land reform during the first two decades of independence was virtually negligible and hopelessly inadequate, as it did not significantly address issues of poverty alleviation and historical redress. Phase I of Zimbabwe's Land Reform and Resettlement Programme (LRRP) from 1980 to 1996 was within the first ten years of independence during which the Lancaster House Agreement was in effect. Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) was then launched in October 1990. Both Lancaster House and ESAP entailed significant global pressure on the post-colonial state, which means that land reform in Zimbabwe has been in large part externally-driven (Mbaya, 2001). National reconciliation, together with the Lancaster Agreement created a land time bomb in that it protected existing racially unequal land ownership while groups that had participated in the war of liberation (ex-combatants and peasants) were expecting substantial social changes (Chiweshe, 2012). So it can be argued that the land invasions of 2000 were not a spontaneous event but were part of a longer

process punctuated by broken state promises, failing land reform policies and a White commercial farming sector reluctant to give up land.

Guided by the clauses contained in the Lancaster Agreement, the GoZ embarked on an ambitious land reform project after independence. Kinsey (2004, 1671) points out that 'the new government honoured its liberation war promises by swiftly launching a land resettlement programme based initially upon land abandoned during the war.' The constraint of the agreement meant that, for much of the 1980s, there was a limited programme of resettlement which involved moving families or cooperatives onto land acquired mainly through the willing buyer/willing seller model. The main objectives of the first phase of land reform were to: reduce conflict by transferring White-held land to Black people; provide opportunities for war veterans and landless people; relieve population pressure on communal lands; expand production and raise welfare; and maintain levels of agricultural production (De Villiers, 2003). The early resettlement programme failed dismally to meet its targets. The targets tended to be over ambitious given the lack of capacity and capability of the GoZ to implement such complex programmes. Even the President Robert Mugabe, noted 'we had wanted to resettle 162,000 families in three years. It just proved to be impossible, because it was beyond our management and our resources' (*The Herald*, 27 October 1989). At the same time the number of beneficiaries continued to increase making the initial target of resettling 162,000 rendered irrelevant by time. The Lancaster Agreement's stipulations of willing buyer/willing seller transactions were clearly responsible for hampering the possibility of extensive legal land acquisition in the 1980s (Andrew and Sadomba 2006).

In the 1990s the land question took another twist with the 1992 Land Apportionment Act and later structural adjustment programme. On April 18th 1990 the restrictions imposed by the Lancaster House Conference expired and the land issue rose to the fore again. This time however it became an electioneering ploy as an opposition under Edgar Tekere emerged (de Villiers 2003). Various scholars (de Villiers, 2003; Matondi, 2007, Marongwe, 2008: and Moyo, 2000) highlight that despite the drastic and controversial measures spelt out in the Land Acquisition Act, the whole process of resettlement remained frustratingly slow. De Villiers (2003, p. 18) notes that, 'by the government's own statistics, of the 162,000 families that needed to be resettled by 1995, only 60,000 had been resettled on 3.4 million hectares.' Reasons for the snail-paced nature of land reform are multiple and complex but include government's lack of will, funding, corruption and class biases that increasingly favoured Black business people rather than peasants (Makumbe, 1999). There was a clear weakening in government's commitment to the large-scale resettlement of the rural peasantry in the 1990s. This was partly in response to the reality of international macro-forces but largely it was conditioned by the shift in class interest and mentality of people in government (Goebel, 2005). The logic of the Rhodesian colonialists that had cast poor peasant farmers as backward and environmentally destructive increasingly made sense to political leaders; thus government's agrarian

policies in the 1990s differed little from those of the colonial state. The whole process of land reform in the 1990s was also plagued by controversy, as allegations of political abuse of the programme were widespread.

While the 1992 Land Acquisition Act seemingly marked a break from the market-based land reform programme, the structural adjustment programme implemented in Zimbabwe ensured the continuation of and further support for large-scale White commercial agriculture. Zimbabwe officially embarked on structural adjustment in October 2001. Since 1980, the World Bank has been Zimbabwe's largest donor and has thus been able to exert critical pressure on Government of Zimbabwe policies (Goebel, 2005). The process of adjustment (backed by the World Bank) meant the withdrawal of state interest in land redistribution issues as neo-liberal policies, which promoted commercial agriculture, took root (Gibbon, 1995). Zimbabwe's Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) was supposed to do the following: step-up economic growth from the prevailing rate of four per cent to five per cent by 1995; attract foreign investment through trade liberalization, privatization and currency devaluation; create employment; deregulate working conditions; and reduce government expenditure by reducing spending on all social services (Mushimbo, 2005). Land reform therefore soon became a 'hostage of measures intended to reduce budget and balance of payments deficits' (Tshuma, 1997, 58).

Intriguingly, land reform under ESAP involved the economic programme working against the spirit and clauses of the Land Acquisition Act of 1992. ESAP led to an 'increasingly market oriented conception of Zimbabwe's land question' (Moyo 2000,9). The economic reform programme became a major stumbling block to land reform leading to what Sachikonye (2003, 231) termed an "interlude" in resolving the land question. In the context of global pressures on the state (including ESAP), the Government of Zimbabwe seemed disengaged from land reform, as local 'political pressures ... were less intense than before... Opposition parties were fragmented and weak, and thus unable to mount a credible challenge to the incumbent party' (Helliker, 2006, 180). Until 1998, there was little organised pressure from peasants and the landless (Sachikonye, 2003, 231). The period from 1987 to 1996 entailed declining redistribution as Black commercial farming was increasingly promoted. Neo-liberal market realities and new Black bourgeoisie class interests overtook the historical redress thrust. In fact ESAP dovetailed neatly with the legitimating of agricultural accumulation amongst an aspiring Black landed class; hence 'accumulation from above' was promoted, despite the promulgation of a potentially more transformative land policy in 1990 involving the acquisition of five million hectares of land' (Helliker, 2006, 181).

Around the year 2000, a massive campaign comprising of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), the MDC and the White Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) led to the defeat of the draft constitution at the polls, with Mugabe immediately accepting the result. The draft constitution had provisions for compulsory land appropriation. But, within days, twelve war veterans occupied farms

in Masvingo Province, decrying that the White farmers had connived to defeat the constitution in the referendum. The Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWA) supported these occupations and called for further action as a way of demonstrating the need for land. When leaders of the war veterans association and the ruling party realised by the end of March that White farmers were actively campaigning for the opposition MDC, and encouraging farm workers to do the same, farm occupations became more violent and intertwined with the political campaign for the June parliamentary elections (Moyo, 2001). This descended into a period now known as *jambanja* (violent/chaotic) in which White owned Blacks occupied farms. The Fast Track Land Reform Programme followed *jambanja* as Chaumba et al. (2003, 545) add: 'The violent political demonstration element of the farm invasions during the time of *jambanja* of 2000 was to be replaced with the imposition of a particular type of order and planning, and a shift in register from the political to the technical.'

The Fast Track Land Reform Programme in Zimbabwe was one of the largest land redistribution exercises in the world. By the end of 2009 approximately 10,816,886 hectares had exchanged hands from 4500 White commercial farmers to approximately 162,161 Black households (Chiweshe, 2012). Land has thus remained an emotive and important part of Zimbabwe's history. It has shaped political and economic infrastructure of the country in multiple ways. What is clear in the context of this paper is how land contestations are not new or peculiar to the emergence of large-scale land deals. The next two sections of the paper outline the continued complexities with the Fast Track Land Reform Programme in Zimbabwe.

WHITE FARMER BACK ON LAND! IMPLICATIONS OF ONE COURT CASE

To add to the rather confusing land question is the continued court challenges by White farmers. When court judgments are made they offer precedence and become important in shaping future decisions. The judgement summarised below highlights how a High Court judge ruled that land could be taken away from Black farmers who got land under the land reform programme and are not using it. There are three critical questions emanating from this judgment that further illustrate the complexities involved in Zimbabwe's land question:

1. Black farmers have no tenure security as their stay on the farms depends largely on the whims of the Ministry of Lands. Land remains in the hands of the president that shows that land reform can be reversed with a change in government or a change in government policy. This highlights the complexities involved in understanding and defining tenure security (see Obeng-Odoom and Stilwell, 2013 for a detailed discussion on the different meanings of tenure).
2. It is possible through political machinations and access to certain political

figures for White farmers to get back part or all of their land. Such cases are increasing as shown by the case of Gerald Douglas (White farmer) who got an offer letter for Xekene Farm in Seke.

3. The judgment highlights the continued primacy of commercially based agro production within Zimbabwe. The need to use the land and ensure commercial production has been used to justify large-scale land deals. This argument remains an important component of agricultural planning in Zimbabwe.

These three points highlight the importance of analysing this case in the wider context of land contestations in Zimbabwe. This case will become instructive in future conflicts over land.

Box 1: Zimbabwe judge tells owners of former White farms to use land or risking losing it: *Fungai Chaeruika Vs. Heather Guild*

A judge in Zimbabwe has told President Robert Mugabe's supporters who were given White farmers' land that they should use it or facing losing it. Judge Nicholas Mathonsi made his remarks in the Harare High Court as he denied an appeal by a member of the ruling Zanu-PF party against an earlier decision to allow Heather Guild, an evicted farmer, back on to a small part of her land. The decision could mark a turning point in the long struggle by White farmers to be handed back their farms...In a seven-page judgment, Judge Mathonsi described failure to use land given out under the programme as "scandalous"... He said: "The policy on land reform is not recreational, neither is it designed to accord beneficiaries some pastime. It is meant to benefit those willing and able to utilise land. "One cannot be allowed to hold on to large tracts of land they are not using simply to baby-sit an inflated ego. "If a beneficiary is not using the land that is a breach of the conditions upon which that land is offered. It should therefore be withdrawn and given to more deserving candidates." In his ruling Judge Mathonsi said the lands ministry could now withdraw its offer of Ms Guild's farm to Fungai Chaeruika saying he had "breached" his contract by not using the land.

Source: The Telegraph 4 March 2014

Debate over the non-utilisation of land by new farmers reached an interesting point in 2015 when President Mugabe in his annual birthday interview intimated that it was a mistake to give large farms to Black farmers. In the interview he reasoned: 'I think the farms we gave to people are too large. They can't manage them... You find that most of them are just using one third of the land...'¹. These statements were followed by pronouncements by the Minister of Agriculture, Douglas Mombeshora, outlining the programme to reduce land sizes for the beneficiaries of Fast Track Land Reform Programme. The court case and statements by the minister

provide yet another layer in the already complex institutional arrangements of land governance in Zimbabwe.

OF GAMATOX, WRONG BASKETS, FACTIONALISM AND LAND IN ZIMBABWE

In December 2014, factional wars that have plagued ZANU PF came to a head leading to the expulsion of senior political figures including then vice president Joyce Mujuru. Another senior politician to be fired from the party was Didymus Mutasa popularly referred to as Gamatox, which is a chemical, used in storing maize and killing weevils. The fallout of these factional wars has shown the uncertainty of land rights on fast track farm. Without political power, some of the politicians who were expelled are finding it difficult to maintain their land interests. A report in the Herald of 4 May 2015 notes that:

Manicaland Governor Cde Mandiitawepi Chimene has taken over Mona Agro Farm on the outskirts of Rusape town, an investment project linked to former Zanu-PF secretary for administration Didymus Mutasa. Allegations are that during his tenure as Minister of State for National Security, Lands, Land Reform and Resettlement, Mutasa used his political clout to protect White commercial farmers in the province. Now Cde Chimene has taken over Mona Farm, an investment strongly linked to Mutasa who had settled his constituency officer, Mrs Christine Murembwe, to mind his interests².

This has seen what can be termed as a re-invasion or re-occupation movement in which former ruling party members who have fallen out favour lose their land. In Hurungwe, Themba, Mliswa had to get an order from the High Court to evict youths and war veterans that had occupied his farm. Land reform is thus in a state of flux but never fully resolved. This allows space for the emergence of capital led projects, which displace rural communities without compensation. The preceding discussion has shown how the land question in Zimbabwe remains unresolved. It is important to understand this context where politics and power play an indispensable part in deciding winners and losers. It is these same processes that shape large-scale land deals in Zimbabwe.

CONTEXTUAL DEBATES ON LARGE SCALE LAND DEALS

According to Cotula (2012) on-going research by the International Land Coalition (ILC) shows that commercial pressures on land are increasing in many parts of the world as a result of multiple forces beyond agriculture – including extractive industries, tourism and natural parks. This finding is important as it places rural land loss as a historical and multi-faceted process. The current trends of land investments described by media as ‘land grabs’ are, in fact, part of a historical expo-

priation of African resources.³ Rural populations due to large-scale land acquisition define Land grabbing as land loss by foreign business (be it by purchase, lease of other forms of control over land such as long-term contract farming) for industrial agricultural production (be it for food, agro fuels or other agricultural commodities).

The use of the term large-scale land deals within the context of this paper is based on the need to avoid the contested concept of land grabbing. Land grabbing is defined by Daniel and Mittal (2009, 1) as ‘the purchase or lease of vast tracts of land by wealthier, food-insecure nations and private investors from mostly poor, developing countries in order to produce crops for export. Approximately 180 instances of such land transactions have been reported since mid-2008, as nations attempt to extend their control over food-producing lands and investors attempt to turn a profit in bio fuels and soft commodities markets.’ In trying to conceptualise large-scale land deals, Cotula et al. (2009, 65) note: ‘In their basic form, land deals involve at least two parties. On the one hand, there is an acquirer. In the African context, this is generally a private or joint equity company, but it can also be a foreign government acquiring land directly. On the other side of the deal is a land provider, either a government or, much more rarely, a private land-owner.’ There is vast literature on land grabbing focusing on land expropriation across the global south (Borras, McMichael and Scoones, 2010; Smaller and Mann, 2009; Woodhouse and Ghano, 2011). Within this literature we can discern various types of land grabs that include:

Bio-fuel land grabs

These are land acquisitions geared towards biofuel production. Borras, McMichael and Scoones (2010, 575) have referred to this interplay of various state and non-state actors as the ‘bio fuel complex,’ as it leads to positive and negative outcomes to the various actors concerned, particularly the rural poor who cannot be part of the bio fuel treaty regulation. Bio fuels are seen as affecting the production of traditional food crops further making world food prices higher. Bio fuels operate within the realm of political approaches to global and national policy making. The politics surrounding the authoritative allocation of valued resources like land has an influence on how livelihoods are conceptualized and understood, particularly by smallholder farmers in Africa.

Food land grabs

Smaller and Mann (2009) argue that land deals are increasingly driven by the desire to secure rights to land and fresh water for the domestic food and energy needs of the investor. This has seen emergence of new countries interested in African land such as ‘predominantly oil-rich but food-insecure Gulf states like Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates and populous but capital strong countries in Asia like China, South Korea and India’ (Friis and Reenberg 2010, 6).

Speculative land grabs

With the bubble bursting in western money markets, land in places like Africa offers a new form of speculative behaviour as firms compete to buy up land belonging to local communities. Merian Research (2010) notes that among land grabbers are hedge funds, investing in publicly traded companies or agricultural commodities – such as the Deutsche Bank's Power Shares DB Agriculture Fund – over REIT's (Real Estate Investment Trusts) to private equity funds investing in non-listed companies, which directly buy or lease land.

Green land grabs

Green grabs, or the expropriation of land or resources for environmental purposes, comprise an important component of the current explosion of global land grabs, or 'large scale (trans) national commercial land transactions' that are associated with food price spikes and the biofuels boom, among other factors' (Corson and McDonald 2012, 263). Green grabbing defined as the rapidly growing appropriation of land and resources in the name of green biofuels, carbon-offsetting schemes and conservation efforts and eco-tourism initiatives is forcing people from their homelands and increasing poverty.

Water grabbing

Across the continent rural people are increasingly finding themselves at the mercy of international capital forces as land and water resources are being transferred to mega farming institutions providing bio fuels and food for consumption elsewhere. Woodhouse and Ghano (2011) note that with the exception of some of the large Sahelian projects, relatively little commentary on these investment deals has addressed the implications for water use. Mann and Smaller (cited in Woodhouse and Ghano, 2011, 10) who note that '...a critical motivation in the current trend towards large-scale land acquisitions is the water factor.'

LARGE-SCALE LAND DEALS IN ZIMBABWE

In Zimbabwe, large-scale land deals have, for now, concentrated on bio fuel production. The spread of commercial planting of biofuels crops, whether for export or for internal markets, has significant implications for land use and access in producer countries (Cotula et al., 2009). UN-Energy (2007) notes that the production of bio-fuels is the fastest growing sector on the world agriculture market. The growth of the sector is fuelled by global energy insecurity and demands, the need to reduce carbon emissions and the perceived opportunities for rural development in bio fuel producing countries, especially developing ones. Brazil and the United States are

leading the way as producers and promoters of agrofuel, responsible for about 95 percent of production, which rose 20 percent in 2007 alone (about 54 billion litres) (Montfort, 2007). This explains why Constantino (2016) cites the Land Matrix which shows the USA as the leading land grabber in Africa. Thompson (2008) argues that the amount of land targeted for agrofuel crop production in Africa is massive: over 2 million hectares in Mozambique, 1-2 million hectares in Ethiopia, and even 3 million hectares in tiny Benin. Constantino (2016) also estimates that between 56 percent of land acquired between 2000 and 2013 was in Africa. Mujere and Dombo (2011) note that in Zimbabwe investors in land projects have largely been rogue businessmen with close ties with the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) ruling elite and some multi-national companies who get into partnership with government companies or companies owned by some few elites. They note:

Governments usually identify what they call 'idle lands' which they then parcel out to private investors. For example in Zimbabwe one of the arguments in support of the Nuanetsi Bio fuels project has been that the area is arid and for a long time there has been little production on the Ranch. The land is therefore viewed as 'marginal' or underutilized in order to justify the displacement of people and biofuel production. The biofuel project is therefore projected to turn the hitherto arid area into a green belt thereby turning a formerly 'idle land' into productive land (Mujere and Dombo, 2011, 7).

This land, however, is neither marginal nor idle. There were households that had settled on Nuanetsi Range during the land occupations in 2000. Governments use the idea of idleness and marginality across Africa to justify annexing land to foreign investors. Exner et al. (2015, 652) conclude that:

...terms marginal and unused land serve as a manipulative terminology for the benefit of attempts to commercially valorise and commodify African landscapes, from biofuel to large-scale food production and tourism. However, they relate to different rationalities of domination. Unused land refers to a state-bureaucratic narrative, which excludes user groups deemed irrelevant for national development, while marginal land refers to a capitalist-economic narrative that excludes what is not profitable.

Such language is used to justify land dispossession and magnify the benefits of such deals. In Table 1 below, Makochekanwa (2012) provides a summary of the positive and negative impacts of large-scale land deals.

Table 1: Comparison on Nuanetsi and Chisumbanje

Nuanetsi Ranch	Chisumbanje
<p data-bbox="186 242 611 304">Positive impacts of Naunetsi bio-diesel project on local communities</p>	<p data-bbox="650 242 1081 304">Positive impacts on Chisumbanje communities</p>
<p data-bbox="186 316 611 347">i. Employment opportunities</p> <p data-bbox="186 347 611 537">The sub activities, done within the project area, besides bio fuels production include crocodile farming, cattle ranching, and game keeping. These activities have provided employment opportunities for some members of the local communities. For instance, in 2010, it was reported that the crocodile department alone had already created more than 2,000 jobs.</p> <p data-bbox="186 547 611 578">ii. Potential exports?</p> <p data-bbox="186 578 611 735">Preliminary estimates suggests that once fully operational, Nuanetsi ethanol plant will produce about 500 million litres per year, far more than what the Zimbabwean market is able to consume, making it another ideal export product for the country to benefit from.</p>	<p data-bbox="650 316 1081 347">i. In-kind compensation</p> <p data-bbox="650 347 1081 633">Whilst the local communities, especially farmers were not involved from the start, the company running the project at Chisumbanje have tried to involve and compensate the farmers meaningfully. For example, Macdom Investment Pvt Ltd did set aside portions of land for smallholder farmers to engage in horticulture projects to compensate for their losses. The company also provides the farmers with irrigation services and gives them logistical support. Furthermore, some farmers are also contracted by the company to grow sugar cane, which they sell to the company.</p>
<p data-bbox="186 746 611 809">Negative impacts of Naunetsi bio-diesel project on local communities</p>	<p data-bbox="650 746 1081 809">Negative impacts on Chisumbanje communities</p>
<p data-bbox="186 820 611 851">i. Eviction of farmers</p> <p data-bbox="186 851 611 1114">Although the project's activities which include dam building, sugar mills and irrigation are being discussed, all involving significant displacement of people - including perhaps up to 6000 households from Nuanetsi, what is currently known is that soldiers and police were (back in February 2009) given authority to evict a large number of farmers on Naunetsi ranch so that the project could take off. Some farmers however continued resisting their evictions.</p> <p data-bbox="186 1123 611 1155">ii. Boundary conflicts</p> <p data-bbox="186 1155 611 1387">The project has also caused serious boundary conflicts between the traditional leaders of the areas involved. It is believed that Chief Chitanga who is also Chivi/Mwenezi senator who supports the project, is campaigning for the removal of people under the jurisdiction of Chief Mpapa. This has caused serious resistance from Chief Mpapa and his people and this has caused a lot of violence as the farmers try to keep what they have.</p> <p data-bbox="186 1397 611 1428">iii. Destruction of livelihoods</p> <p data-bbox="186 1428 611 1556">The evictions of farmers surrounding the area have destroyed the livelihood of most local farmers who lost their fields from which they used to plant both cash crops and food crops for their income generating and subsistence consumption.</p>	<p data-bbox="650 820 1081 851">i. Loss of farming land</p> <p data-bbox="650 851 1081 1042">Some local farmers had been using the now taken land as fields for their annual cropping in which they planted a variety of crops including maize, millet, sorghum etc for their survival and livelihood. However, following the agreement between ARDA and the private company, the land was no longer available to these farmers. As such, they did lose their farming land.</p> <p data-bbox="650 1051 1081 1082">ii. Displacement of households</p> <p data-bbox="650 1082 1081 1221">A number of smaller holder farmers who had been using the land, especially on permanent basis had decided to settle permanently on some parts of the estate. Following the launch of the project, these local farmers were asked to leave and pave way for the ethanol project.</p> <p data-bbox="650 1230 1081 1262">iii. Increased poverty</p> <p data-bbox="650 1262 1081 1489">As reported by one newspaper, "Thousands of families are wallowing in abject poverty after their displacement from their communal lands to pave way for a bio-fuel project by the Agricultural and Rural Development Authority (ARDA) and Macdom Pvt Ltd outside the knowledge of local leadership". The displacement of local community households has pushed some of them into poverty as they lost their means of viable survival.</p>

Source: Makochekamwa (2012, 16)

LARGE-SCALE LAND DEALS AND SCHIZOPHRENIC NATURE OF LAND ADMINISTRATION

The literature on large-scale land deals in Zimbabwe (Mandihlare, 2013; Mutopo and Chiweshe, 2013; Chiweshe and Mutopo, 2015) focuses on two specific cases in Chisumbanje and Nuanetsi though Zimbabwe has a long history of large-scale agrarian operations some of which are still operational. These two deals signal a change from the nationalistic ideology of indigenization of land ownership towards a model of partnership between government and private capital (mainly White) as a means to attract foreign direct investors within the agricultural sector. Mandihlare (2013) shows how Green Fuel Company in Chisumbanje altered the local community in aspects of their lives ranging from loss of livelihood strategies, displacement and loss of social and economic status. She argues 'that investors in land projects have largely been rogue businessmen with close ties to politicians, elites and some multi-national companies who get into partnership with government companies or companies owned by some few elites' (Mandihlare 2013, 2). The sentiment is noted by other scholars (Mujere and Dombo, 2011; Mutopo and Chiweshe, 2013) who chronicle the centrality of Billy Rautenbach in the two major land deals in Zimbabwe. Billy Rautenbach is a controversial White businessman with close ties to the ruling ZANU-PF party and he has used these connections to circumvent indigenization programmes that promote Black ownership of natural resources.

In Chisumbanje, local communities are not sure about the companies trading in their communities. They do not know the exact nature of the companies or the agreements that they signed with ARDA, demonstrating that the land deals legally are not done in public, negating the principle of the initiation and application of corporate treaties and laws in good faith. Box 2 contains an excerpt of a letter to the editor of a local paper by a representative of Green Fuels to outline the nature of the companies operating in Chisumbanje. What is missing is exact outline of shareholding especially the role of Billy Rautenbach in the deals. There are thus continued questions around the local and international capital involved in the project beyond Rautenbach. Chiweshe and Mutopo (2015) have shown how Rautenbach is linked to multiple international financiers.

Box 2: Green Fuels letter to the editor - Facts on Green Fuel ethanol project

The Chisumbanje Ethanol and Sugarcane projects are made up of three separate companies namely Green Fuel (Private) Limited, Rating Investments (Private) Limited and Macdom Investments (Private) Limited. Rating (operating at Arda Middle Sabi Estate) and Macdom (operating at Arda Chisumbanje Estate) are agricultural companies growing sugarcane on Arda land accessed through two separate Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) agreements.

The BOT agreements have a 20-year lifespan. BOT agreements between Arda and the two agricultural companies, Rating and Macdom, were entered into in compliance with the Agricultural Rural Development Authority (Arda) Act (Chapter 18:01). They were approved by the Arda board and signed on the March 19, 2009 by the Arda General Manager in terms of section 17 of the said Act. There is correspondence between Arda and its parent ministry of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development indicating that the minister was kept abreast of all the negotiations and legal formalities leading to the finalisation of the BOT agreements. Finances were raised towards the projects on the strength and basis of the agreements, which have been verified as legally valid and binding by independent legal experts. Green Fuel is a standalone private company built on land leased directly from the Chipinge Rural District Council in order to facilitate easy access to the cane grown on the estates of Rating and Macdom. Green Fuel's core business is to buy cane from Rating and Macdom for processing into sugarcane-derived products. Green Fuel has not, nor has it ever had a contractual relationship with Arda. The three companies currently have shareholding currently held by Zimbabweans. Green Fuel welcomes Cabinet's decision to allow for the optional marketing of E20 and E85 as well as the permission to export excess ethanol without any hindrance. We hope that the ministry of Energy and Power Development will facilitate the relevant documentation to this effect. Further to this, Green Fuel, Rating and Macdom will continue to work within the statutes of the country with regards to indigenization and empowerment laws.

Lilian Muungani, (Green Fuel)

Source: Letter to the Editor, Daily News (Harare), Tuesday, 12 June 2012

The above excerpt clearly shows the complex nature of the legal arrangements that brought about the biofuel plant in Chisumbanje. The Green Fuels' representative in the letter presents three key issues, which are highly contested when it comes to understanding the nature of large-scale land deals:

1. The investment companies are fractured into different units, which appear unrelated on the surface yet they belong to same investors. This makes difficult to understand who owns what and how much money came from where. The critical question is how all the three companies are linked to Billy Rautenbach.
2. There are multiple agreements with government entities that seem unrelated but all facilitate the profit making agenda of foreign companies. Macdom and Rating have a separate agreement with Arda whilst Green Fuels has a lease with Chipinge Rural District Council for the land. Though they claim the deals were done according to the law there are many questions. The most pertinent issue

is that Green Fuels, which stands to make money from selling biofuel, is not part of the BOT thus there is no benefit to government or local communities in terms of profit sharing. The agreement notes that ARDA will receive 8 percent of annual proceeds. What is not clear is which proceeds exactly: Is it from the sale of sugarcane from Macdom to Green Fuels or from the sale of ethanol by Green Fuels?

3. The political interplay between the Ministry of Energy (then controlled by Morgan Tsvangirai's Movement for Democratic Change), Ministry of Agriculture (Controlled by ZANU PF) and Green Fuels over the controversy of marketing biofuels in Zimbabwe and the suspension of operations at the plant in 2012 is complex. This creates confusion in government policy as on hand the Ministry of Agriculture approves the project yet the Ministry of Energy blocks the mandatory sale of bio fuels citing the project as political.

In the agreement Macdom took over the 512 workers under ARDA and the machinery including tractors, acquired from Iran. Another serious issue is that the agreement has loopholes. One such loophole, noted by a parliamentary committee, was that Green Fuels can do as they like on the land in terms of productive activities. They could change land use and diversify into game ranging, tourism and crocodile farming. It is feasible that this would happen and government will lose out on a lot of revenue, as they do not have anyone to oversee operations on the estates.

In Mwenezi, the controversy of the biofuels project stems from the fact that the land belongs to DTZ, a trust started by the late vice president Joshua Nkomo yet it was occupied during the Fast Track Land Reform Programme. Mutopo (2012) describes the issues surrounding the settlement of people on the farm as a political hot potato mainly because of the political and ethnic optics surrounding ownership of the farm. The farm is located in Masvingo province yet owned by a trust controlled mainly by Ndebele politicians that poses serious questions especially since the land occupations had targeted White owned farms and not those owned by Black people. Nuanetsi then emerged as a hot spot during the land occupations and Fast Track Land Reform Programme. Scoones et al (2010) argues that DTZ had to give some of the land to 6500 A1 farmers and 120 A2 farmers. Other parts of the farm that were occupied, such as Chingwizi had, to be vacated and this was contested by farmers who viewed this as dispossession of land by a government that had, through its various structures, supported land occupation movements across the country. The question that emerged was whether the government was going back on its promise to provide land for indigenous communities. Families had settled and had created homes at Nuanetsi, but with large investments from companies related to Billy Rautenbach they were forced to vacate to make way for biofuel production and crocodile farming⁴. Mutopo and Chiweshe (2014) highlight how fences were erected to keep out communities around the ranch. This meant that access to firewood or wild fruits were curtailed for these communities. This also formed part of water grabbing, as communities were fenced out of accessing water resources within

the ranch. Chiweshe (2013, 69) summarises the impact of large-scale land deals in Zimbabwe by arguing that:

In Zimbabwe there remains no clear land policy to guide land administration. Large-scale land deals provide an example of ad hoc land administration. There is no clarity how these two large investments fit into the wider context of land reform that supports smallholder commercial agriculture. Are these two the beginning of a much wider speculative era of land acquisitions or are they anomalies, which have no bearing on the future land policy? It is difficult to understand how the promotion of foreign funded large-scale agriculture fits into the anti-colonization rhetoric of the 2000s. The deals signal a clear warning of how smallholder and communal farmers' claims to land remain fragile. The state retains ownership of land, having the deciding power to influence and affect people's claims to land.

BEYOND RACE AND CLASS: GENDER AND INTER-GENERATION IMPLICATIONS OF LARGE SCALE LAND DEALS

The fascination with race and class within the Zimbabwean land questions has led to the invisibility of gender and inter-generation implications of land management. So in this section, I outline the gender and inter-generational implications of large-scale land deals. The socially constructed norms of maleness and femaleness offer different land rights and opportunities thus men and women experience land deals differently. Gender is important when discussing land because a large volume of studies highlight that women play an important role in household food provision in rural households (Behrman, Meinzen-Dick and Quisumbing, 2011). To include women's stories and experiences is necessary because their stories are often forgotten and placed at the periphery (Tollin and Törnqvist, 2011). There is an increasing body of work that is questioning the obsession with race at the expense of other social diversity factors within the land debates in Zimbabwe (see: Chiweshe, Chakona and Helliker, 2014; Goebel, 2005; Bhatasara, 2011). The experiences within local communities of displacement and replacement from land are also influenced by social positionality of the individual. This means that the impacts of large scale land deals have to be understood as numerous, contested and complex. Chiweshe and Mutopo (2014, 93) argue that:

Ethanol production has had positive and negative benefits for the women farmers in Ndowoyo. In terms of systematisation of the benefits the negatives outweigh the positives; women have lost some of their prime land, reducing their valuable source of livelihood and affecting their food security.

Within the context of this paper the focus is on the intersection of gender and generation (see Crenshaw (1994) on the elaboration of the intersectionality approach). This highlights how young women face uncertainty in relationship to land

and livelihoods in rural spaces. As land becomes scarce, vulnerable people are the first to lose their claims and rights.

For younger people both male and female some spaces have been created by the large-scale investments especially in Chisumbanje. The increased population of workers in the biofuels plant has provided livelihood opportunities (legal, illegal and semi legal) for local communities to make money. Young women and men are increasingly involved in cross border trading to Mozambique and South Africa and bring goods such as clothes to sell. For young women, sex work has also provided an income stream at Checheche growth point near the plant. Green Fuels Company which operates the plant indicated that the company on average brings in \$US2 million a month into the local economy (Chiweshe and Mutopo 2014). A small number of young people have also been engaged as workers in the plant thereby introducing them to wage labour but they are mainly doing low paying menial jobs. With the advent of new communities of employees coming from outside there is an increase of a new base of clientele with disposable income. Many formal, informal, legal and illegal businesses are setting up to meet the needs of the growing work force. As traders increase, there are new demands on the existing infrastructure that was only meant to serve a few people. Checheche growth point that lies in the zone of the biofuel plant has seen tremendous improvement over the years. By the end of 2010 five commercial banks had moved into the area. The Chipinge Rural District Council noted an increase in demand for commercial land development at Checheche (Chiweshe and Mutopo, 2014). Over the past year the council experienced a rise in revenue from land rentals of buildings at the growth point. With more than 5000 jobs created and movement of new people in area, there is potential for all sorts of businesses (Chiweshe and Mutopo, 2014).

THE FUTURE OF ZIMBABWE'S LAND DEBATE

The emergence of large-scale land deals in Zimbabwe provides new challenges to an already complex and emotive land issue. Imagining the future of the land debate in Zimbabwe is riddled with uncertainty as decisions about land are highly political and are influenced by the politics of the day. In such a scenario it is difficult to understand how land issues will evolve in the future. What is clear however is how the land question will always bend towards those with political power. ZANU PF has successfully used threat of losing land to ensure votes of people on the fast track farms. Politics is also at the heart of land deals within the Zimbabwean context. State and non-state actors use various forms of power to gain access to land. Borras, McMichael and Scoones (2010, 575) have referred to this interplay of various state and non-state actors as the 'bio fuel complex', as it leads to positive and negative outcomes to the various actors concerned, particularly the rural poor. Networks of

capital include both local elites and rich foreigners hiding behind the label of 'investors' yet their activities bring little benefit to local communities.

The onus is on the Zimbabwean government to provide a clear land administration system, which protects rural population's claim to land. This can be done through a review and strengthening of the legal framework governing all aspects of land rights and land acquisitions. This includes ensuring that the country's legal framework protects the land and water rights of existing rural citizens and adequately protects vulnerable groups including the poor and women. Whilst large agro industrial investments are not necessarily bad, they need to ensure protection of local communities and social sustainability. The Zimbabwean case while different from other cases on the continent, shows the need for transparency in deals and effective communication with communities. The arrogance of investors and government officials is at the heart of communities' anger.

CONCLUSION

Large-scale land deals in Zimbabwe can only be understood fully within the historical context of the Zimbabwean land question. The investments in bio fuel production in Mwenezi and Chisumbanje provide a new arena for contestation in a long historical struggle over control and ownership of land. What is clear in the discussion is how political power determines control over land resources. Large-scale land deals provide a lens into understanding how state (political) and non-state actors (capital) create spaces that undermine rural people's access to land. In Zimbabwe these deals emerged in the aftermath of a revolutionary land reform process that dismantled large scale, White dominated commercial agriculture sector. Large-scale land deals in many ways go against the spirit of the land reform programme but they provide a new dimension to Zimbabwe's land question. The paper has shown the continued complexities around tenure in (security) around land in Zimbabwe and how this in turn influences the processes of land dispossession. It has also highlighted the need to go beyond race and class in analysing the land question. The paper emphasised the need for an intersectional approach that brings in gender and generational issues into the analysis of the land question in Zimbabwe.

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NOTES

1. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31663267>
2. <http://www.herald.co.zw/chimene-takes-mutasa-farm>
3. https://www.codesria.org/IMG/pdf/sam_moyo.pdf
4. <http://www.zimeye.com/exclusivebilly-rautenbach-zanu-pfs-secret-deals-revealed>

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