New Politics, New Livelihoods: Changes in the Zimbabwean Lowveld since the Farm Occupations of 2000

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RESEARCH PAPER 3

March 2003

IDS Institute of Development Studies Sussex
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RESEARCH PAPER SERIES

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Sustainable Livelihoods in Southern Africa: Institutions, Governance and Policy Processes

Through work in southern Africa this research programme has explored the challenges of institutional, organisational and policy reform around land, water and wild resources. The case study sites have been in Zambezia Province, Mozambique, the Eastern Cape Wild Coast in South Africa and the lowveld area of southeastern Zimbabwe. Three broad themes have been explored:

- How do poor people gain access to and control over land, water and wild resources and through what institutional mechanisms?
- How do emerging institutional arrangements in the context of decentralisation affect poor people's access to land, water and wild resources? What institutional overlaps, complementarities and conflicts enable or limit access? What new governance arrangements are required to encourage a livelihoods approach?
- How do the livelihood concerns and contexts of poor people get represented in policy processes concerning land, water and wild resources in local, national and international arenas? What are the challenges for participation in the policy process?

The Research Paper series is published by the Sustainable Livelihoods in Southern Africa Programme, Environment Group, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, United Kingdom.

The research is funded by the UK Department for International Development's Rural Livelihoods Department Policy Research Programme. The views expressed in this publication are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the funder or collaborating partners (Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex (UK), Overseas Development Institute (UK), Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies at the University of the Western Cape (South Africa), The World Conservation Union (UICN, Mozambique), and the University of Zimbabwe).

Cited as: Chaumba, J., Scoones, I. and Wolmer, W. (2003) 'New politics, New livelihoods: changes in the Zimbabwean lowveld since the farm occupations of 2000'. *Sustainable Livelihoods in Southern Africa Research Paper 3*, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton.

ISBN: 1 85864 437 2

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Summary

An ongoing radical land reform involving the seizure of largely white-owned commercial farmland has dramatically altered the physical landscape in Zimbabwe. Alongside this a new political terrain has rapidly unravelled with new actors and new institutions. This is a confusing and dynamic landscape populated by actors as diverse as entrepreneurial war veteran 'security guards'-cum-protection racketeers, militant ZANU(PF) youth brigades, and marauding elephants possessed by chiefly spirits. This paper, based on fieldwork in Chiredzi district in the southeast of the country, attempts to examine these and other actors, explore the emerging institutions, and investigate the impact of these changes on people's livelihoods. Tensions between authoritarian nationalism and ethnic politics, between a militarised modernist order and 'traditional' religion and authority have created a complex political mosaic, made up of multiple and overlapping identities and positions. Focusing on the political dynamics and livelihood implications of farm occupations and 'fast-track' land reform, the paper traces the new patterns of social differentiation, the emerging lines of political authority and the implications for institutions and livelihoods.

Introduction

Between the years 2000 and 2002, Zimbabwe has featured prominently in headlines around the world. An ongoing radical land reform involving the seizure of largely white-owned commercial farmland has dramatically altered the physical landscape. Alongside this, a new political terrain has rapidly unfolded with new actors and new institutions. This is a confusing and dynamic landscape populated by actors as diverse as entrepreneurial war veteran 'security guards'-cum-protection racketeers, militant ZANU(PF) youth brigades, and marauding elephants possessed by chiefly spirits. This paper attempts to examine these and other actors, explore emerging institutions, and investigate the impact of these changing circumstances on people's livelihoods. Focusing on the political dynamics and livelihood implications of farm occupations and 'fast-track' land reform around Sangwe communal area in Chiredzi District, southeastern Zimbabwe, it traces the new patterns of social differentiation, the emerging lines of political authority, and implications for the institutions and livelihoods.

Communal area politics and livelihoods in the 1980s and 1990s

The land occupations and fast-track resettlement from 2000 was superimposed upon a complex layering of politics, land and livelihoods in rural Zimbabwe, shaped both by colonial history and post-Independence interventions. With Independence in 1980, Zimbabwe inherited a highly skewed land distribution, with the majority black farming population being confined to the former 'reserves' (later Tribal Trust Lands), most of which located in the marginal agroecological zones.

These areas were renamed 'communal lands' in 1982, but beyond a shift in nomenclature nothing much changed. In the early 1980s various attempts at resettlement were encouraged by the new government, but the extent of these were constrained by constitutional limitations (under the Lancaster House agreement), bureaucratic delay and funding shortages. By the end of the 1980s, the government had resettled some 52,000 households and purchased 2.7 million hectares (around 16%, of commercial farmland). Settlers were moved to a range of different 'scheme' types under a series of technocratic models. These were seen as separate from the communal areas with resettlement farmers expected to develop independent full-time farming operations, often far from their original homes. In parallel with the formal resettlement schemes, informal resettlement occurred in the decade after Independence, on both under-populated communal areas and state land and commercial farms (Palmer 1990; Moyo 1995).

Despite these movements, the former reserves remained crowded with poor agricultural potential, and livelihoods continued to rely on mostly dryland farming, livestock keeping and, significantly, remittance incomes from circular migration to towns, farms and mines. Independence brought some infrastructural development (roads, irrigation and water schemes, etc.) and considerable investment in agricultural extension, basic health services and education. Changing access to markets also helped agriculturalists in the higher potential zones (Rukuni and Eicher 1994).

But in places like Chiredzi district, the basic pattern of 'reserve' life, established in the early part of the century, was maintained. Most people remained poor, although some were richer than others, particularly those with access to livestock and remittance income (Cousins et al. 1992). Patterns of differentiation in the 1980s and 1990s were very much determined by external factors, notably the major droughts of the early 1980s and 1990s, which devastated cattle populations, and the changing fortunes of the economy, particularly following the implementation of the structural adjustment programme from 1991 (Scoones et al. 1996). This saw a major downturn in economic fortunes for many, especially

those who relied upon remittance income from relatives living in town. With a small upturn in the late 1990s, the trend since then has been inexorably downwards, exacerbated by the economic and political crisis of recent years (Jenkins and Knight 2002; Alwang et al. 2001). Combined with these factors, HIV/AIDS has had a major impact on the demography and livelihoods of communal area populations, particularly from the mid-1990s. This has changed household structures, reducing key sections of the farming labour force, and resulting in an increasing number of female or child headed households (Kwaramba 1998).

By the late 1990s, then, a lack of employment opportunity, constraints on farm labour, a growing ill-health burden, smaller land areas (and evidence of effective landlessness), combined with a severe lack of capital and draft power, constrained and marginalised many people, particularly in the dryland areas of the country such as Chiredzi district. Of course this pattern was not universal, and some people had done well from the structural adjustment (ESAP) era, making money on new business ventures. Others had benefited from political patronage of various sorts, while others had relatively secure jobs outside the communal area. Still others had reinvested in the communal areas, restocked their herds, hired labour and were farming with some success. But, overall, there was a detectable trend of increasing differentiation, as well as increasing marginalisation of those at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale.

Independence also brought a new national political order. This in turn translated into new forms of governance at the local level. In the early 1980s, party cells, following the pattern established during the liberation war were established in the villages. With the Prime Ministerial decree of 1984, a new decentralised system was installed to parallel the party cell structure with village, ward and district committees, which were to form the basis for development planning and administration. These committees were superimposed on a system of 'traditional' authority, involving chiefs and headmen. This 'tradition' had been highly shaped by colonial intervention, and many such authorities had collaborated with the Rhodesian regime, making them illegitimate in the eyes of the new government and party officials.

Through much of the 1980s and 1990s, then, two parallel systems of authority existed side by side. In some places they worked well together, with former headmen becoming Village Development Committee (VIDCO) leaders or councillors. In other situations they were at loggerheads, with younger more politicised 'outsiders' (who were not part of chiefly lineage groupings) being in conflict with the chiefly authorities. Such conflicts were widespread and often incapacitated the new structures, which, despite the promises of government, never received much devolved power or resources, and failed in many instances to establish their legitimacy. In the late 1990s, the VIDCOs were effectively abandoned to be replaced by a hybrid form of administration that brought the 'traditional authorities' back in. The Traditional Leaders Act

was a significant move in confirming this direction and the recommendations of the Land Tenure Commission of 1994, put forward the idea of village assemblies, with significant roles of chiefs and headmen.

With the move to a developmentally-oriented form of administration in the mid 1980s and a shift back to reaffirming traditional authority in the 1990s, the role of the ruling party in rural affairs was in many ways diminished. Until the late 1990s, there was no significant opposition politics, and party officials remained unconcerned since they were guaranteed mass electoral support for ZANU(PF) and the President in the rural areas outside Matabeleland. While party organisation at the local level persisted, the effectiveness and reach of this waned significantly from the early 1980s onwards.

In the discourse of development and politics in Zimbabwe, then, the communal areas were seen as separate, in many ways as they had been in the colonial era. These were areas where the project of modernising development was being attempted through agricultural extension, grazing schemes, forestry projects, irrigation schemes, and so on. But these were also areas where welfare style support was regularly required, particularly in times of drought, with huge state investment in food for work projects, drought relief handouts and recovery input packages. Despite the 1988 Rural District Councils Act, which attempted to integrate the commercial farms, resettlement areas and communal lands in one unitary council, the communal areas were seen as distinct – geographically, economically, socially and politically. The real action was to be seen elsewhere – in the urban centres, on the commercial farms, and in the wildlife areas. As the socialist rhetoric of the early 1980s merged with the neoliberal discourse of the 1990s, the talk was of foreign exchange earning abilities, commercial viability, export earning capacity, etc. As long as President Mugabe maintained his compact with the public to prevent starvation and to provide free food in times of drought, then they would vote for him. Party and government officials could divert their attention elsewhere, and join the accumulation bandwagon, cashing in on land deals, and the fruits of the neoliberal economic order.

But by ignoring the poverty and marginalisation of the communal areas – by pursuing a strategy of often misconstrued and inadequate separate development (or welfare support) – a large proportion of the population missed out on any potential gains. Moreover, the structures of inequality and poverty were not being dealt with through land reform or other redistributive measures, and such demands were consistently ignored both by government and donors. The economic crunch of the late 1990s, combined with the other shocks and pressures discussed above, caused many communal area people to feel increasingly disgruntled. This gave rise to a series of increasingly politically-charged demands from the late 1990s by war veterans (most of whom had been simply communal area residents since demobilisation in the early 1980s), urban workers (now

effectively organised in unions), and, in some parts of the country, other communal area groups (under various banners ranging from the new churches to spirit mediums).

Thus by the beginning of 2000 a pattern of poverty, marginalisation and increasing differentiation could be seen in many communal areas. Additionally, as people faced greater hardship, they expressed a growing political concern about the lack of progress in developmental (and particularly redistributive) terms. The social, political and economic containment of the communal areas, with their 'separate' status was beginning to be undermined. Twenty years after Independence, the continuation of the colonially imposed pattern of separate development and gross inequality could not, many argued, be maintained. The fruits of an alternative development paradigm based on neoliberal economic dogma were not being realised, and the political elite seemed to no longer care. The powder keg that was Zimbabwe's inheritance from Britain and the Rhodesian regime was ready to go off.

Post-2000 shifts: farm occupations in Chiredzi

February 2000 heralded a dramatic change in the physical and political landscape in rural Zimbabwe as a large number of farm 'invasions' occurred across the country. This was not the first time these had occurred since Independence but this time they were far more large-scale and widespread.[1] In the vicinity of Sangwe communal area in Chiredzi District almost without exception all the large-scale commercial farms were occupied. These were principally cattle and game ranches and included properties in the well-known Save Valley Conservancy and the Malilangwe Conservation Trust. The large-scale poaching of wildlife accompanying these invasions gained widespread national and international media coverage (e.g. 'Wildlife die in African Crossfire', 'Zimbabwe's Killing Fields', 'Zimbabwe's Shame', 'A Holocaust Against Our Wildlife').[2] However, invasions were not confined to white-owned freehold farms and conservancies. The state-owned Nuanetsi Ranch and a portion of Gonarezhou National Park were also occupied, as was a smallholder irrigation scheme in Sangwe communal area itself. The Anglo-American and Tongaat-Hullet owned irrigated sugar estates at Hippo Valley and Triangle near Chiredzi were largely avoided.[3]

[1] See Wolmer (2001) and Chaumba et al. (2003) for an analysis of the reasons for the farm invasions.
[2] see, respectively, *The Observer* 12/11/2000; *Africa Environment and Wildlife* 02/2001; *Greenline*, No. 19; *Zimbabwe Standard* 1/10/2000.
[3] However some of their cattle and game sections were occupied and there was ongoing labour unrest during the farm occupation period. In November 2001 portions of Hippo Valley Estate were being pegged for 'A2' settlers (see below).

In this area, there were, as we shall see, a complex range of motivations for the farm occupations, ranging from the political to the sacred. However, a key role was played by the former fighters in the liberation war belonging to the Provincial War Veterans Association. The provincial and district chairmen of the association spearheaded a rolling sequence of land occupations beginning in February 2000 – to varying degrees articulating with local land claims and campaigns by local politicians. The fluid and complex nature of these occupations is revealed by looking at the sequence of events in two places: Fair Range Ranch and Gonarezhou National Park.

Fair Range Ranch, formerly a cattle and game ranch, is situated a short distance from Chiredzi town on the Mutare road, directly between Gonarezhou National Park and Save Valley Conservancy. Until 1957 the area was known as Matombwe and was inhabited by people under Chief Tsovani who were evicted to make way for the ranch. In February 2000 a group of war veterans visited the ranch owner and informed him that they would be resettling people on part of his ranch. He immediately contacted the police but was told that it was a political matter with which they could not get involved. A base camp was soon established by the war veterans on the edge of the ranch initially using tents provided by the army. This camp was occupied by a fluctuating but relatively small number of people (50-176) in the period leading up to the June 2000 parliamentary election.[4] The farm occupation, here as elsewhere, at this stage was regarded as much as a political demonstration and symbolic event (designed to draw attention to the need for land) as a permanent claim for that particular ranch. Yet these settlers went to great lengths to employ the criteria and techniques of formal land use planning in Zimbabwe to peg self-contained 50 hectare (ha) plots (Chaumba et al. 2003). After the election there was a drop in the number of occupiers followed by further fluctuations as the ranch owner attempted to negotiate with the war veterans' leaders and prospective settlers shuttled between different base camps in the area. But in August and September 2000 – following the formal announcement of the government's fast-track land reform programme – there was a massive influx of new settlers onto the property. This was accompanied by fire-setting, stock theft and mutilation, poaching, wire theft and the barricading of roads.

By October the provincial chairman of the war veterans association had overruled a directive from the District Administrator instructing people to move off the property and people were busy clearing land, destumping and building brushwood fencing, and bringing in draft animals in preparation for ploughing with the rains.[5] In January 2001 the ranch

[4] Data compiled from interviews with settlers and Commercial Farmers' Union (CFU) 'situation reports' (http://www.samara.co.zw/cfu/news/sitrep.htm).

[5] 'Fresh invasions hit Masvingo' *Daily News* 21/8/2000; 'Thousands in fresh farm invasions in Masvingo' *Daily News* 21/9/2000, and CFU situation reports.

owner – whose cattle were now interfering with the settlers' new fields – was ordered to move all his cattle off the property. In May 2001, land use planners from Agritex (the national agricultural extension service) came to peg the ranch formally as an A1 scheme.[6] Seven villages were established in Fair Range, each with 50-75 households. Each household received 25 ha, with 6 ha arable land, a homestead stand and communal grazing. Soon after the District Development Fund (DDF) had sunk three boreholes and was starting to provide tillage assistance to a few lucky farmers and the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) provided input packages on credit. By January 2002 a rudimentary primary school had been built alongside one of the boreholes with the labour and financial contributions of the settlers, four teachers had been recruited and 163 children enrolled.

In the run up to the March 2002 presidential election, Fair Range Ranch, like other occupied or formally fast-tracked farms was firmly ZANU(PF) territory and a no-go area for the opposition. The upcoming election cast a shadow of over the perceived tenure security amongst the settlers – many fearing that an opposition victory, or even a ZANU(PF) victory (once the grandstanding was over), would result in their eviction. This, coupled with the fact that the 2001-2002 harvest was a write-off countrywide due to drought, led many of the settlers to drift back into the communal areas or further afield in search of work and food. But they, in the main, were at pains to maintain their claim to their new plots – leaving family members behind. Mugabe's electoral victory, and renewed rhetorical support for radical land reform, has encouraged new settlers to apply for land in Fair Range and there is now a long waiting list of plot-seekers.

The occupation of Gonarezhou National Park is different from other land occupations in Chiredzi in one important respect – it is an 'invasion' of state-owned rather than privately-owned land. The contested portion of land is the ancestral home of the Chitsa people. It has twice been designated as a game reserve only to be deproclaimed to allow tsetse fly control operations involving the shooting out of large game, removal of large trees and eviction of the Chitsa people. In 1975 the land was designated as part of the national park and the Chitsa found themselves permanently unable to return when the new nationalist government in 1980 reaffirmed the status of the national parks rather than returning alienated land. During the 1980s and 1990s many continued to utilise this portion of the national park illicitly to poach wildlife and to drive their cattle in for valuable 'poach grazing'.

[6] Two broad models for resettlement were defined during this period. The A1 model is based on allocations of individual arable and usually communal grazing, with village settlements. The A2 model assumes a small-scale commercial production unit, with farm and business plans.

In May 2000, after a large number of commercial farms in the area had been occupied, the district war veterans' leadership, with the encouragement of a local councillor, turned their attention to the grievance of the Chitsa community. This community was now largely based in Wards 4 and 5 of Sangwe communal area bordering the park. There was no shortage of people willing to join the occupation and reclaim the ancestral land. The settlers claimed a 20 kilometre-deep strip running along the northwestern end of the park, separated from the rest of Gonarezhou by the Chilunja Hills. This proved to be a strategic choice. The land claimed was the former tsetse hunting zone or 'State Land' – clearly differentiated from the national park on older maps – and therefore the settlers were able to play up the ambiguity of the park boundary.

As on Fair Range, the occupation was initially conceived of as a symbolic demonstration. The settlers set up camp just inside the park boundary in tents provided by the army. They also went to the length of pegging out and allocating 10 ha plots, although these were not cultivated in 2000-2001. The numbers of settlers at this stage fluctuated from tens to hundreds. There was also a massive increase in poach-grazing as settlers and communal area dwellers took advantage of newly available grazing land – this despite an official ban on cattle entering the park because of the risk veterinary disease.

In late 2000 the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management (DNPWLM) was able to enforce the removal of the majority of the settlers – leaving a very small number (approximately 10) maintaining a symbolic presence in the base camp. Most of the settlers moved back to the communal area or to base camps on nearby ranches. At this stage the settlers leaders approached provincial and national ZANU(PF) bigwigs including Vice President Msika and the Provincial Governor. After visiting the area the governor then unilaterally gave the settlers the go ahead and ordered Agritex to start planning for formal fast-track resettlement – apparently without the knowledge of the Minister of Environment and Tourism, and raising strong objections from DNPWLM.[7] However, in contrast to most farms designated for resettlement there was no legal challenge and the landuse planning went ahead relatively fast. By May 2001, Agritex had planned 10 villages along a former tsetse fly control team track. They had allocated separate arable plots and a communal grazing area. In total, provisions were made for 750 settlers on 520 plots covering 11,000 ha.[8] There was an immediate

[7] In particular there was concern about impact of this on the Transfrontier Park scheme linking Gonarezhou with Kruger National Park in South Africa and Coutada 16 hunting reserve in Mozambique; and fears of a Foot and Mouth disease outbreak; see 'Invasions threaten peace park' *Mail and Guardian* 1/11/2001; 'No people were resettled in game park, says Nhema' *Daily News* 7/13/2001.

[8] See: 'Gonarezhou demarcated for resettlement' *Zimbabwe Independent* 11/5/2001; 'State approves resettlement of 600 families in the Gonarezhou' *Daily News* 8/9/2001.

massive increase in settlers, and fields were destumped and cleared in preparation for the 2001-2002 season. However, due to a combination of drought and elephant crop raiding, most settlers had drifted back to communal areas by June 2002.

The dynamics of these two case studies are not, of course, necessarily the same as elsewhere in Chiredzi district (see Marongwe 2001; Wolmer 2001), and there are certainly differences in the experience of the occupations in the southeast lowveld to elsewhere in the country. In particular occupations in the southeast lowveld tend to be of cattle and game operations, which employ relatively few farm workers on extensive, low value land. However the massive and relatively rapid transformation in the rural geography of Chiredzi District following the farm occupations and fast-track resettlement poses a range of important questions relevant to understanding the current situation in Zimbabwe generally: Who are these settlers? Where have they come from? Why have they come? And what alternative livelihoods do they draw on?

New communities and citizens

Whilst recognising that there has been a range of different dynamics at play in different areas, we want here to focus only on the two places we have introduced: the former Fair Range Ranch and the occupied portion of Gonarezhou National Park. The occupiers/settlers in these areas represent a broad spectrum of people of varying ages, ethnicities, and degrees of wealth. They include men and women, communal area farmers and urban employees, Christians and spirit mediums – all with contrasting motivations for being there. However, it is possible to identify certain trends. He we combine a broad-brush picture of these trends with selected vignettes illustrating particular people's experiences.

In both places the majority of the settlers are men aged between 25 and 40. Young men are less likely to own land in the communal areas (or, if they do own land, it is small and/or has poor, unproductive soils). In moving into the new resettlement areas, they often leave their families behind. Young men tend to want land *per se* rather than particular patches of land.

Elijah,[9] for example, is 28 years old and unemployed. His parents died during the liberation war and their land was shared between him and his brothers leaving him a very small amount. At the instigation of the local councillor and despite being admonished by opposition party supporters that it was merely an electoral ploy, he applied for land in Gonarezhou National Park. He registered his name with the councillor and paid 20

[9] Pseudonyms have been used for all named interviewees.

Zimbabwean dollars for a certificate, and received a 5 ha arable plot.[10] Like most of the settlers, he was very unsure about the security of land tenure in the national park – fearing that the army would sooner or later chase settlers away – and he held onto his small amount of land in Sangwe communal area as an insurance policy.

Very few young, unmarried women have settled in Fair Range or Gonarezhou. There was, however, a significant minority of female-headed households. In Fair Range there were approximately 7-9 in each village of 50-75 households. Many of these were widows and divorcees that lacked land in the communal area. Movement onto the new resettlement areas was an opportunity to escape the social sanction and stigmatisation found in communal areas. It is quite common for widows and divorcees to be accused of witchcraft and causing the death of husbands (particularly in AIDS cases) and are sometimes even chased away by their in-laws. Resettlement provides and opportunity to start anew and might provide new livelihoods opportunities.

Loveness, for example, is 20 years old and originally from Maronda communal area in Mwenezi District. Her husband was a long-term labour migrant in South Africa. Her in-laws chased her away form their home when she had a relationship with another man and got pregnant. She moved in with her sister in Chiredzi where she became an active member of the ZANU(PF) women's league and was amongst the first to settle on Fair Range. She admits to working as a prostitute in the resettlement area – raising money to purchase goods in South Africa for resale. As she puts it: 'I do not care [what other people think] as I now have my plot here and I am taking care of my children … I no longer bother my sister and I am now independent'. Similarly Florence, 24 years old and divorced, settled on Fair Range with her parents who spend most of their time working in Chiredzi. She sells sugar, beer, clothes and cooking oil in Fair Range and is training as a health assistant with a view to working as a village health worker in the resettlement area. As she puts it: 'sometimes you need that freedom. It's like starting a new life in Fair Range.'[11]

A small number of women have received plots in their own right because of their political connections. For example Grace received a plot in Village 10, Gonarezhou from her brother – a councillor. She already had 3 ha in the communal area but has not abandoned it as her primary homestead because there are not yet any shops, clinics or schools for her nine children in the resettlement area and access to water is limited. It is very hard maintaining the two homesteads because it is a four-hour walk

[10] The certificates state: 'This serves to certify that the above named has permission to occupy stand no __; under Gonarezhou Farm and is permitted to put up residential structures and carry our farming activities under Chiredzi RDC as per conditions set out the land fast track resettlement allocation form'.
[11] Interviews, Fair Range 24/6/2002.

to and from the new settlement – which leaves little time and energy for preparing and cultivating the new fields. She did however plant fruit trees and employ people to destump and clear the fields and planted 2 ha of cotton. Initially she was visiting the fields every three days to check for elephant damage but having encountered elephants on the path one day she has been too scared to return.[12]

Another key trend in terms of the composition of the settlers is that there is a markedly skewed wealth distribution: with a higher number of the relatively rich and the relatively poor. This skewed wealth distribution can be illustrated by using livestock ownership as a proxy for wealth. Village 1 in Fair Range, for example, has 59 households (332 people), of which only 7 households own cattle. Similarly in Village 5, only 4 out of 60 households have cattle.[13] Those that do own livestock in the resettlement area point to the shortage of adequate grazing land in the communal area as a major motivation for resettlement – owners of large herds in communal areas also often encounter problems when their cattle destroy neighbours crops. Ownership of draft animals (whether cattle or donkeys) is also a significant financial asset in Fair Range because, due to the relative shortage of draft animals, it provides plenty of opportunities for hiring out the animals to other settlers to plough with – in return for cash or work in kind (and hence establishing patron-client relationships). The relatively wealthy, livestock-owning settlers – particularly if they have more than one wife and large families – are able to manage at least two smallholdings simultaneously: continuing to cultivate their communal area plots while extensifying their arable fields on the new land. They are also able to establish patron-client relations by lending out livestock in long-term arrangements (*kufiyisa*) in return for labour.

A Base Commander on Fair Range who brought 15 head of cattle onto the farm was able to cultivate over 3 ha in the 2000-2001 season as well as hiring out his cattle for others to plough with. His relative affluence has also enabled him to invest in other entrepreneurial activities, such as operating a shabeen selling beer from his house on the resettled ranch. Another entrepreneur has lost no time in moving his grinding mill to Fair Range.

An additional indicator of wealth in rural Zimbabwe is having formal, full-time employment. Of the 59 households in Village 1, Fair Range, 16 have permanent employment, five describe themselves as 'part-time builders', and 38 depend on farming, and other informal diversified livelihood activities.[14] Many of these salaried settlers live in Chiredzi town

[12] Interview, Village 10, Gonarezhou 13/12/2001.
[13] Interview with settler, Village 5, Fair Range 10/12/2002. It is, of course, possible that some settlers have left cattle in the communal areas – and are not yet willing to bring them onto the resettlement area, because, despite the prevalence of grazing, they are afraid of predators and disease and the lack of watering points.
[14] Interview, Village 1, Fair Range 26/1/2002.

and visit their plots after work or at weekends. They keep their cattle on Fair Range in the care of herd boys or – if lacking cattle – are able to hire draft power and labour. Solomon, for example, runs a tailoring business in Chiredzi. He owns a house in the town, a pick-up truck and rents his business premises where he employs two people. He has a 6 ha plot in Fair Range with one permanent worker. He comes over on weekends to check on progress and to sell clothing (from his business) and essential commodities such as salt, sugar and cooking oil to settlers. He also provides various other services to settlers, ranging from transport to the Grain Marketing Board depot, to delivering newspapers, to the use of his cell phone. For Solomon, the primary rationale for acquiring new land in Fair Range was to gain unimpeded access to these market opportunities (war veterans and youth militia strictly police access to the area by non-plot holders).[15]

Money and livestock alone, however, are insufficient criteria to secure access to plots without political connections and a pro-ZANU(PF) reputation. War veterans and party members tend to have first choice of plots and its is commonly perceived that 'war vets are choosing places where there are black soils and giving mountainous places to ordinary people.'[16] One councillor, and member of the District Land Committee, who already had 12 ha of arable in the communal area has been able to accumulate a number of prime plots (of fertile soil) in Gonarezhou, as well as Essanby and Mkwasine ranches – some registered in his children's names.

Many of the poorer settlers who lack livestock tend to be the people who also lack adequate land in the communal area. They have little to lose and a lot to gain by moving into the new resettlements. The government's promise of support with inputs and tillage makes their draft power and capital constraints seem less daunting. There are also income-earning opportunities to be had working as part-time labourers for relatively wealthier fellow settlers, particularly in the process of destumping and clearing fields (in essence constituting a new class of informal 'farm workers'). There are also more illicit opportunities in the new resettlement areas. Most obviously, poaching game to sell meat locally is a very popular activity. In the climate of relatively lax law enforcement, there are also opportunities for theft and sale of other resources belonging to commercial farmers, including cattle (which are sold locally for meat or driven to Mozambique), sugar cane, fencing wire, and firewood.

Joseph, for example, is aged 68, with one wife and eight children. An 'outsider' having grown up in South Africa he had no land of his own and was renting just two acres in Sangwe communal area – his family

[15] Interview, Fair Range 24/6/2002.
[16] Interview, Village 10, Gonarezhou 13/12/2001.

having none to give him. Being very poor he usually had to plant late in the season because he first needed to work preparing other people's fields in order to earn money for seeds. He joined the farm occupations immediately and is one of very few people to uproot entirely from the communal area moving his family and all his belongings in a rented cart. During the 2000-2001 season he managed to grow only 1 acre of sorghum. He has received no tillage assistance from the DDF but received some maize seeds from GMB. Due to the drought-ravaged 2001-2002 season he now survives by gathering mopani worms in Fair Range for sale. He also moves around Fair Range and Sangwe communal area doing part-time work in return for maize.

The ethnic composition of the settlers is rather different in Gonarezhou and Fair Range. The large majority of the settlers in Gonarezhou are Shangaan, with a relatively small number of Ndau and Karanga/Zezuru. In Fair Range Shangaan-speakers are outnumbered by Shona-speaking Karanga/Zezuru and Ndau. The most straightforward explanation for this is that it simply reflects the ethnic composition of areas immediately bordering these settlements. Gonarezhou borders the Shangaan dominated Wards 4 and 5 of Sangwe communal area whilst Fair Range is close to the multi-ethnic town of Chiredzi. However this pattern also reflects the existence of particular land claims rooted in communities historical experience and social memories and throws into contrast two distinct ideological justifications for claiming land. There is, firstly, a nationalist argument about land as a resource for the people and, secondly, an argument akin to the South African concept of 'land restitution'.

The nationalist land discourse expounded by ZANU(PF) is one that emphasises land as a marker of sovereignty. Land reform is about returning land stolen by whites to 'the people'. This discourse enables any black Zimbabwean to claim land anywhere in Zimbabwe and is particularly useful to those claiming land in an area in which they have no specific historical claim.[17] The restitution discourse, by contrast, emphasises returning 'home' to particular pieces of land that are symbolically important to communities or individuals. These are often the sites at which ancestors are buried that are still landscapes of meaning and memory and are the location of traditional ceremonies such as rainmaking. In Gonarezhou, as we have seen, the (Shangaan) Chitsa people have a grievance about their alienation from a particular piece of land – and their subsequent removal from the protective sphere of their

[17] This nationalist land discourse is frequently invoked by President Mugabe. Typically, he writes, '[Land] remains a principal and loaded marker of frontiers of our being, both as individuals and as sovereign nations; a marker whose utility and symbolism runs the whole gamut, right down to the common man and woman in the village. For us life comes from, flourishes on and ultimately ends in land. Our loss of it through colonial conquest went deeper in meaning than the mere loss of a means of production. It amounted to the loss of our being' (http://www.zimbabwepeoplefirst.com).

ancestors and lost rights to hunt and farm. In Fair Range this restitution discourse has been less evident.

The restitution discourse throws up certain tensions – where is 'home' (*kumusha*)? In once sense returning to the space of one's ancestors is going home. But settlers in Gonarezhou, for example, still also refer to Sangwe communal area as their home: 'this weekend I'm going home'. They also have forefathers buried there as well. There is no one 'home' – and there need be no contradiction necessarily in referring to both the communal and resettlement area as home.

There is an age differential as well as an ethnic differential in the degree to which people subscribe to nationalist or restitution discourses on land reform. The young – who have no experience themselves of being evicted from ancestral land and less involvement in traditional ceremonies and beliefs – are more commonly motivated by the need for land as a resource rather than the need to exercise an historical claim. For these people it is gaining good agricultural land with secure of tenure that is the priority – irrespective of where that land is, although there is an obvious preference for land close to one's communal area 'home'.

Tapiwa, aged 30, is a good example of such a person. His parents died when he was young and he was brought up by his grandfather and then an older brother. In the early 1990s he worked at a flea market in Harare, then briefly in Mozambique and on a ranch in KweKwe. In 1996 he 'border-jumped' to work illegally for a construction company in Pretoria – and was arrested and deported in 1997. At this stage he came back to live with his grandmother in Sangwe and – having decided to make a go of farming – enrolled for a 'Master Farmer' training course. However he lacked land of his own (or any livestock) and was quick to join the farm occupations in 2000, seeing them as a long-awaited opportunity. At first he joined the settlers on Fair Range Ranch. However the occupation of Fair Range was not rapidly followed by officially planned resettlement, which would potentially involve more secure tenure, and he moved to Mkwasine Ranch in April 2000 where pegging had started. But at Mkwasine there were ethnic clashes between the ethnically Ndau Gudo community who neighboured Mkwasine and saw it as 'theirs' and the Shona and Shangaan-speaking settlers. Tapiwa also perceived that this occupation was more concerned with hunting than agriculture. Driven away he moved to the base camp on Malilangwe. However, after political representations were made at a high level, the settlers on Malilangwe – a well-endowed game ranch – were told to move out. So he ended up back on Fair Range Ranch. He was allocated 25 ha but the maize he grew in the 2000-2001 season was trampled by the former rancher's cattle. During the early 'demonstration' phase he had to work hard to establish his political credentials to the war veterans – contributing to rallies, drills and *pungwes* (night-time gatherings). In May 2001 Agritex came in and pegged the ranch and he was formally allocated a new plot.

Notwithstanding the relative lack of interest in the restitution discourse by some ethnic and age groups, local politicians in Chiredzi have recognised its power as a campaigning tool and a further strategic logic to justify farm occupations. To an extent this has partly blurred the distinctions between nationalist and restitution political discourses. At campaign rallies in the run up to parliamentary and presidential elections, politicians superimposed local grievances and land claims on a broader nationalist discourse (of suffering at the hands of whites in the liberation war for land, etc.). In particular these politicians have emphasised the particularly brutal liberation war history of the southeast lowveld: the forced relocation of the population into 'protected villages', and the way in which the guerrillas lived side-by-side with wild animals in the bush, protected by local ancestral spirits. As one young settler put it:

> *I came here because I wanted to avenge my parents' death because they were killed by whites during the liberation struggle – just because they had cooked for freedom fighters.*[18]

The use of local grievances and ancestral histories to bolster nationalist politics has a long history in Zimbabwe. In the southeast lowveld, the nationalist leader Joshua Nkomo, who was interned in Gonakudzingwa Restriction camp near Gonarezhou National Park, was able to make good use of these to bring the local population to the brink of revolt in the 1960s (Wright 1972; Wolmer 2001).

However the politicisation of local land claims is not always a boost to ZANU(PF) narratives. In the case of the Gonarezhou National Park occupation there is no white landowner to attack. Nor can colonial authorities be blamed when the current government has insisted on maintaining land as a national park. It is the Department of National Parks and the ministers and provincial leaders who have issued conflicting statements causing confusion who are, in large part, blamed for the situation. Indeed the government has received considerable criticism from war veterans for not solving the 'land question' earlier.

In Fair Range and Gonarezhou there are a range of different people settling for different reasons: new pioneers, weekend farmers, businessmen, poachers, politicians, widows accused of witchcraft amongst others. The following section explores the power relations between these actors and the new institutional and political dynamics of the resettlement areas and Chiredzi district more broadly.

[18] Interview with settler, Gonarezhou 20/11/2001.

New power relations, politics and institutions

The social relations of the new 'communities' of settlers are key to any new political dynamics. There are both continuities and changes with the social relations typically found in Zimbabwe's communal areas – both are significant. As we have described these new communities are constituted by people from a mix of ethnic groups, various areas of origin – both urban and rural and from different districts and provinces, and have a markedly skewed wealth distribution. Superficially the settlers are united only by politics. This new mix has implications for service delivery in the resettlement areas. As an agricultural extensionist complained: 'We have a new client who we don't know.'[19] Yet the experience of rapid resettlement has provided a variety of opportunities for new social relations to be formed in turn bringing about political and institutional reconfiguration. Here we explore this by examining four axes of power and authority: war veterans, committees; 'traditional' authority; and new elites.

War veterans and militarised space

A key feature of this new political dynamic is the role played by a rejuvenated movement of veterans from the guerrilla struggle for independence in the 1960s and 70s. Having languished in relative obscurity for 17 years since independence the war veterans movement suddenly came back to the fore in 1997. In 1980 approximately 20,000 of the 65,000 strong guerrilla armies (ZANLA and ZIPRA) were integrated into the national army whilst the remainder were demobilised on frugal pensions and encouraged to form cooperatives. In 1989 the Zimbabwe Liberation War Veterans Association was formed as a platform to lobby for compensation and increased pensions (Chitiyo 2000; Human Rights Watch 2002). In 1997 after mounting pressure from this association it became the government's most serious political threat. Mugabe capitulated and announced a generous package for veterans including a one off payment and a monthly pension for life. Now owing the government a favour, promised further disbursements, and riven by faction fighting, the veterans were successfully coopted by ZANU(PF) who desperately needed an ally (Chiteyo 2000). As a de facto military wing of the party they were used to great effect to campaign in the 2000 and 2002 elections. Irrespective of whether the war vets occupied farms spontaneously in 2000 or with government encouragement their involvement was essential to the process. They were also symbolically tremendously useful as they personify the rhetorical link between the farm occupations and the 'unfinished business' of the liberation war so important to ZANU(PF)'s renewed sense of militant nationalism and talk of a 'Third Chimurenga' (McGregor 2002; Raftopoulos 2001). The War Veterans Association and ZANU(PF) have deliberately echoed the

[19] Interview with Agritex officer, Masvingo 17/11/2001.

language and symbols of the liberation war, including: reviving the former enemies (Rhodesians and imperialist, mainly British, aggressors); slogans, *pungwes*, *mujibas* (youth auxiliaries), *chimbwibo* (women supporters/cooks), 'sell-outs', and the creation of a new cadre of youth brigades.[20] Even some of the guerrilla tactics, such as arson and stock theft and mutilation, were revived on the occupied farms. Much has been made of the distinction between 'genuine' and non-genuine ex-combatants but in a sense this is less relevant than the fact that, regardless of provenance, the veterans became key political players at the national, provincial, district and micro levels in Zimbabwe; and Chiredzi District is no exception.

In Chiredzi District, as we have seen, the provincial and district chairmen of the War Veterans Association spearheaded a rolling sequence of land occupations after February 2000. A number of properties were occupied in sequence leaving behind a core of 'demonstration' occupiers in a base camp on each who were instructed to report back to the district leadership.[21] The organisation of these base camps reveals a highly militarised organisational structure perhaps unsurprising given the experience of their leaders – the 'base commanders' (or in some cases even 'platoon commanders'). The base camps took on the semblance of a military camp (indeed tents were actually provided for the Fair Range and Gonarezhou camps by the army). The inhabitants were segregated by gender (men and women were not allowed to be seen together after seven pm); they deferred to the orders of the base commander; followed a strict timetable involving morning and evening roll-calls; attended numerous meetings, briefings and *pungwes*; were forbidden to talk to outsiders; and were deployed as sentries to guard against 'infiltrators'. Youths even received military-style drills. Only the state-owned newspaper was allowed in the camps – this was delivered to the base commander for free and translated into Shangaan by the village youth secretaries. As an Agritex official involved in pegging Fair Range saw it: 'there is tough administration there, base commanders act like kraalheads, there is a lot of discipline, tough leaders and kangaroo courts.[22] Some women from the Fair Range base camp caught sleeping with farm workers, for example, were beaten.[23]

Even after the demonstration phase of the farm occupiers gave way to formal, technically planned, fast-track resettlement (see Chaumba et al. 2003) there was still a militarised flavour to the settlement on Fair Range. Settlers were expected to come back from the fields to attend meetings at a moment's notice. Each household had to contribute to a travel

[20] One white farmer in Chiredzi, ingeniously but unsuccessfully, claimed war veterans status for himself because he had fed guerrillas on this farm. This he contended should prevent his farm from being resettled.
[21] Interview with District Chairman of War Veterans Association 29/10/2001.
[22] Interview with Senior Agricultural Extension Officer, Chiredzi 21/11/2001.
[23] Interview with Fair Range settlers, 3/12/2001.

allowance fund for the Base Commander to attend meetings higher up the chain of command at the district, provincial and national levels. The war veterans also got the first choice of land allocations during the pegging (20% of the land was officially reserved for them), followed by those who had shown their allegiance by being present in the demonstration phase.

The militarised nature of the farm settler communities was part of a broader pattern of militarisation of Zimbabwean society during 2000-2001. Another aspect of this was the training up of youth militias countrywide. This was the brainchild of the late Minister for Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation, Border Gezi. In the wake of the 2000 Parliamentary election there was a realisation in ZANU(PF) that most youth supported the opposition and were influencing their parents. The resulting youth brigades were intended to re-educate the 'lost' youth to 'instil unbiased history of Zimbabwe'[24] and also to be an aggressive campaigning body for the party and foot soldiers in the farm occupations. In Chiredzi North three training camps were established where young men between the ages of 15 and 30 (coerced or offered financial inducement to join) received instruction on 'the land issue in Zimbabwe: why imbalances must be corrected'[25] and were given intensive training in military drills and weapons handling. This was similar to the training some youth had already been receiving during on the occupied farms during the demonstration phase (above). The training was conducted by one of the war veteran base commanders from Fair Range. Youth militias subsequently manned roadblocks, forced people to produce ZANU(PF) cards, sourced meat and food from commercial farmers and campaigned vigorously and sometimes violently for ZANU(PF).

This is thus an intensely politicised arena. For a settler even to be seen talking to a known opposition activist would be enough for that person to have to flee from the area for their own safety.[26] Access to land in the new resettlement areas is also highly politicised: to participate in resettlement and gain land you have to be ostensibly ZANU-ised. Land is expressly not for opposition supporters.[27] Preferably you have to have a proven history of support for the party – those with a well-known MDC (Movement for Democratic Change opposition party) activist as a family member would be very unlikely to receive land. Indeed the political affiliation of a land applicant is a crucial aspect of their interview as one Base Commander explained:

[24] *The Herald* 28/1/2002.
[25] Youth Brigade Training Manual
[26] Interview with Base Commander, Fair Range 10/2/2002.
[27] Further evidence for this elsewhere in Zimbabwe is supplied by Human Rights Watch (2002).

> *People coming in to get land from other areas have to comply with the following. They approach the village chairman of the village they intend to settle. Then the village chairman accompanies them to the base commander for an interview. The base commander asks them the following questions: name, where from, which party they belong to, where have they been all along? [They must bring] a letter from their* sabuku *[village headman], chief and councillor from where they are from [saying] why they have decided to leave their place and why they want to settle here. If the base commander is satisfied he writes a supportive letter to the DA [District Administrator] and the Land Committee – and writes the potential plot number. Then will be issued with certificate of occupancy.*[28]

Discrimination in settler selection is aided by the fact that no records of deliberations of the reasons for selection or rejection are kept and there is no provision for appealing rejected applications (Human Rights Watch 2002).

New village authority structures

In its own way the sudden emergence, seemingly from nowhere, of an integrated top-down system of governance in the new resettlements is as striking as the dramatic physical transformation of the landscape. This new pattern of authority is characterised by a very hierarchical committee-based structure and has parallels with the decentralised party cell and district development committee structure of the 1980s (above). The crucial difference is that whereas previously the separate cells and committees were meant to separate politics from planning and administration there is now no such pretence. As well as reinvigorating cell and branch party structures ZANU(PF) has kept a firm controlling had on the new committees at provincial, district and village levels.

The most important of these new committees are the provincial and district land committees. These were established after an edict came down from the Minister for Local Government and Housing. These were to be chaired by the Provincial Administrator (PA) and District Administrators respectively – the logic being that PAs and DAs, as civil servants, are more likely to be ZANU-ised than some suspect council CEOs (Chief Executive Officers). However in practice, even this was not enough, and ZANU(PF) politicians and war veterans wield the power on these committees. The Masvingo Provincial Land Committee is effectively chaired by the governor or ZANU(PF) provincial chairman; and the Chiredzi District Land Committee by the district war veterans' leader. Despite the fact that the district land committee is physically located in Chiredzi RDC (Rural District Council) the council has very little input (see below). Alongside the DA and the District Chairman of the War Veterans Association its members include: traditional leaders,

[28] Interview with Base Commander, Fair Range 10/2/2002.

the CIO (Central Intelligence Organisation), police, army, and officials from the social welfare, health and veterinary departments.

A new committee structure has also rapidly been established on the fast track resettlement areas. In Fair Range, for example, a war veteran Base Commander is responsible for seven villages. He is supported by a 'Seven Member Committee' with members drawn from the villages to include women and youth league member and representatives of the traditional leadership. Each village has a committee with a Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Vice Secretary, Treasurer, 'Security' member (usually a war veteran responsible for guarding against 'infiltrators'), and an 'Ordinary' committee member. In Fair Range the Village Chairmen tend to be relatively young men appointed by the Base Commander. These are people who showed themselves to be energetic and loyal to the war veterans and the party during the demonstration phase. These committees in turn report to an 'Overall Committee' for the ranch, chaired by a Shangaan-speaking *sabuku* from Sangwe communal area related to Chief Tsovani.

This, then, is very far from anarchic or chaotic, as it has been portrayed in the media. It is a tightly disciplined, autocratic, hierarchical authority structure. But are these village committees the 'viable community organisations' needed – according to the UNDP – 'to ensure the sustainability of new settlements' (UNDP 2002: 24) or are they part of an 'infrastructure for rural violence and intimidation that subordinates development plans to political ends' (Human Rights Watch 2002: 4)?

New traditionalism

These newly bureaucratic (committee-based) and militaristic authority structures coexist and overlap with so called 'traditional' authority in interesting ways. This is partly a continuation of an ongoing conflict of authority in rural governance in Zimbabwe that has been cast in new ways. Since the 1999 Traditional Leaders Act ZANU(PF) has renewed attempts to coopt traditional authorities into the party having learnt from the experience of VIDCOs of the dangers in attempting to dismiss them. The Act provides for salaried chief and village headmen posts and could be argued to serve as part of the state's attempt to extend its hegemony deeper into rural areas at a time of political discontent.[29] Chiefs and headmen are back – but only on ZANU(PF)'s terms.

Traditional authority lends legitimacy to the government's ongoing anti-colonial rhetoric which posits 'African' culture and heritage in opposition

[29] Chiefs' and headmen's allowances were also substantially increased in the run up to the 2000 and 2002 elections and promises of vehicles and secretaries made. This parallels the colonial era tactics of conferring a territorial rather than an ancestral definition of authority on chiefs, and paid co-option by the state.

to the mental colonisation of Western Christian civilisation.[30] And, as we have seen, land claims rooted in the grievances of particular chieftaincies who were alienated from their ancestral land carry a particular salience. During the land occupations in Fair Range and Gonarezhou and other farms in Chiredzi, the settlers were at pains to consult the local chiefs, elders and traditional healers on the location of graves and sacred areas. Rainmaking ceremonies (*marombo*) were conducted and *chisi* (days of rest) observed. Traditional healers even provided medicines to scare away snakes and other dangers lurking in the bush. As one war veterans leader explained:

> *The chief is called whenever a place is invaded to appease ancestral spirits and to tell them that we have come back. The chief's appoints someone to do the cleansing.*[31]

This quote is revealing in one respect – the chief is only informed after the event of occupations. In this respect, to a certain extent it appears that the war vets have usurped chiefly authority. This war veteran also said:

> *Our aim as war veterans is to get land and allocate it to people. We called the chief to appoint a* sabuku *in the resettlement areas.*[32]

And even more explicitly:

> *We as war veterans, we work hand in hand with traditional leaders as long as they tow the party line…We want chiefs who support our programmes and party and we do not want those who work with the enemy.*[33]

Not all settlers agree with this approach. As one put it:

> *War veterans do not believe in the importance of culture and that's why they want to politicize the issue of chieftainship and can go to the extent of labeling chiefs as opposition supporters. They have actually tried to impose their own chiefs. They say they liberated the country and no one should question them when they do something wrong. Their argument is that they went to war, fought to liberate all the people from colonial rule and therefore they are their own masters.*[34]

The war veterans and not chiefs call the shots with regard to where and when the land is occupied and to whom it is allocated. Theoretically

[30] Promoters of 'traditional' Zimbabwean culture, such as the Heritage Foundation, have gained great exposure in the state-owned media.
[31] Interview with senior member of War Veterans Association, Chiredzi 29/10/2001.
[32] Interview with senior member of War Veterans Association, Chiredzi 29/10/2001.
[33] Interview with senior member of War Veterans Association, Chiredzi 24/6/2002.
[34] Interview, Village 1 Fair Range, 16/6/2002.

chiefs will appoint *sabukus* in new resettlement areas[35] – but in practice only when called upon by the war veterans. Similarly the chief, or chief's representative (often traditional healers) has been called upon to witness allocation of land and be present at ceremonies in the resettlement areas. One chief in Chiredzi attempted to go beyond merely witnessing land allocation to reintroduce traditional land categories in the new resettlement areas:

> *I was telling them [the war vets and councillors] a portion of the land in the new fast track schemes should be reserved for zunde remambo [chiefly collective field/granary] or else 2-3 families be moved into the new areas and their land taken by the chief for this concept.*[36]

But these plans have been resisted or ignored by the war veterans and land committees. There is thus a contradiction between a simultaneously reinvigorated and disempowered chieftaincy and, as we shall see, traditional authority and beliefs continue to be taken very seriously and cannot always be straightforwardly coopted by war veterans and ZANU(PF).

New elites and policy entrepreneurs

A further important grouping to have exerted power in and derived power and assets from the recent round of land reform in Chiredzi – to an extent overlapping with the war veterans, new committee members, and traditional leadership – are the a 'new elite'. These are big men (usually men) with assets (such as cash, tractors, pick-ups, or pensions), often educated, urban-based professionals. They are not necessarily 'local' but have good local political connections. These are a 'new' elite in the sense that they benefited from the economic liberalisation and the patronage politics of the 1990s. Their recent acquisition of land has, particularly on the larger (A2) plots in Mkwasine ranch and Hippo Valley estate, opened up new channels of patronage with patron-client relationships based on credit provision, tractor sharing, and hiring of labour. There are non-agricultural entrepreneurial opportunities too – as seen by the war veteran providing 'security' against poaching for the Save Valley conservancy, the openers of grinding mills and shabeens and the sellers of domestic commodities in Fair Range.

The activities of these people can of course easily become controversial. One Chiredzi businessman – who also happens to be a senior provincial figure in ZANU(PF) - used his political muscle to 'buy' nine plots in Mkwasine ranch already allocated to settlers and sent them eviction

[35] Section 29 of the Traditional Leaders Act provides that any area of resettlement land may be brought under the authority of a communal area chief (UNDP 2002).
[36] Interview with chief 9/12/2001.

letters. He has now run into problems with the War Vets Association as the settlers have resisted eviction.[37]

Many of these new players are war veterans themselves – relatively asset rich because of the payments and pension since 1997 and now, in some cases, in a position ripe for commercial advantage. The Base Commanders have been able to extract meat and money, game and fencing wire from commercial farmers whose land they have occupied. There have also been frequent negotiations between commercial farmers and Base Commanders over reparations to be paid when farmers' cattle have destroyed settlers' crops. And when, in November 2001 a settler was shot dead by a game guard on Fair Range the war veterans negotiated for compensation of head of cattle, Z$80,000 and funeral expenses to be paid.

Some have been able to exploit their position on the land committee to their own advantage – acting with assumed authority but taking advantage of the situation to pursue a personal agenda as was observed of one Chiredzi Land Committee member:

> *When you fast-track others get ahead. Other groups were faster than council. We delegated someone from the [council] Natural Resources committee but he did not report back. It was a blessing in disguise for himself.*[38]

> *[He is] on the land committee in his personal capacity. He has his own personal interests, he does not report back to council. Council is in the dark.*[39]

A lot of this new politics is in the form of 'back stage' deals and negotiations between commercial farmers, MPs, councillors and other actors. This is a complex web of deal doing with scope for enrichment and power for asset-rich opportunists with influence in the party and local connections.

Tensions between different power bases

These axes of authority have accommodated and tempered each other but there are also tensions and fractures evident in the way these power bases interact. War veterans, ZANU(PF) politicians, chiefs, businessmen, and District Administrators have all come into conflict with each other at various stages – as the political allegiances linking them have been strained and broken or refashioned.

[37] 'Zanu PF official defies order to surrender plots' *Daily News* 13/05/02.
[38] Interview, Councillor, Chiredzi District 20/11/2001
[39] Interview Chiredzi RDC 22/11/2001

The ongoing tension between the new political authority of the war veterans and the old political authority of the chiefs and ancestors outlined above is revealing in this regard. This tension has thrown up dilemmas that are yet to be resolved. A vivid illustration of this was in the Gonarezhou resettlement area the end of 2001. Not long after the ten villages had been established and people had begun to plough their fields five of the villages started to be regularly 'attacked' by an elephant which tore down thatching and mud and pole walls, destroying over 30 huts, and chasing people from their fields. As the District War Veterans Association leader admitted this was a deeply worrying development and it 'has prompted us to ask questions why this is happening – only one elephant is destroying, yet there are many elephants in Gonarezhou.'[40] The conclusion drawn was that the ancestral spirits of the area must be very angry because there was something about the occupation that was not done correctly – causing offence. The avenging elephant had been sent by the ancestral spirits. The war veterans via the chief called in an elder who had moved away to Mozambique to perform the appropriate cleansing ceremony, but it appeared to make no difference and the elephant persisted with its destructive intent.

The situation is further complicated by party political conflicts which implicate the chiefs.[41] As we have seen ZANU(PF) has been keen to get the chiefs on board and provided various inducements accordingly. On the other hand perceived support for the opposition MDC by the chiefs has been actively punished or resulted in their sidelining by government. The paramount chief in Sangwe is a case in point. He is accused of being an MDC supporter because his son is a well known MDC activist and he testified in a High Court Case brought by the MDC challenging the ZANU(PF) parliamentary election win in Chiredzi North. In March 2001 this led to him being thrown out of the District Land Committee by the Provincial Chairman of the War Veterans Association.[42] The paramount chief has been sidelined by MPs, Councillors and war veterans and has had to go to the length and indignity of calling in a councillor to witness his councils to combat rumours that he is campaigning for the MDC. Perhaps unsurprisingly he has not received or applied for any land in the land reform process.

This, in turn, overlies a power struggle between the paramount chief and a headman who claims the position for himself. The headman is a vocal ZANU(PF) supporter and thus has the support of the ZANU(PF) MPs, Councillors, and war veterans. Presented as a 'chief' by district war veteran leaders, he has been a key ally in negotiations with central government over the contested Gonarezhou resettlement. The war

[40] Interview with senior member of War Veterans Association, Chiredzi 29/10/2001.
[41] 'Chiefs have a role in land distribution' *Sunday Mail* 22/4/2001; 'Chief attacks land reforms' *Daily News* 24/10/2001.
[42] 'War vets besiege district administrator's office' *Daily News* 14/3/2001.

veterans argue that he should be granted paramountcy by the Ministry of Local Government because of his commitment 'to the interests of landless blacks'. As one war veterans' leader puts it:

> *He is that kind of a chief who stays in the communal areas unlike Chief Tsovani who has an 85-hectare plot in Chizvirizvi resettlement scheme. So Chief Chitsa has experienced the shortage of land in the communal areas unlike Chief Tsovani.*[43]

This dispute has been brought to a head by the physical expansion of chiefly constituencies resulting from the occupation and resettlement of new areas. The war veterans informed the headman that he could appoint *sabukus* in Gonarezhou. He appointed three but these were annulled after three weeks because of the intervention of the chief who claimed only he had the authority to make the appointments.

All this is layered on the fraught politics of ethnicity in Chiredzi district. There is a perception among some in the Shangaan community, that the land reform process is a land grab by the majority Karanga-Zezuru population, associated with an imposition of cultural dominance, which some politicians have not been averse to exploiting.[44] As Tapiwa puts it:

> *The problem now is that Fair Range has accommodated more foreigners because of its proximity to Chiredzi Town. These foreigners include top businessman in Chiredzi who have other plots in Buffalo Range, Hippo valley and Gonarezhou. They drive to all these areas urging pegging and bribe pegging officers. [We] the Shangaan people now feel cheated and disenfranchised. They are complaining that they have now been dotted all over now resettlement schemes in Chiredzi. They need to bind together, but the programme has to take their culture into account. They want to be resettled along tribal lines in order to them to keep on upholding their norms and values.*[45]

The fact that de facto these new authority patterns have put a lot of power into the hands of politically powerful big men who have sometimes been able to run personal quasi-fiefdoms independently of government has also led to tensions. These include the provincial governor going it alone over the Gonarezhou resettlement to the chagrin of the Ministry of Environment of Tourism;[46] the MP for Chiredzi South attracting the censure of the District Land Committee for sanctioning 'unofficial' farm occupations; [47] and a provincial ZANU(PF) official evicting settlers to acquire farms for himself (above).

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[43] Interview with senior member of War Veterans Association, Chiredzi 24/6/2002.
[44] 'Tribal clashes on farms' *Zimbabwe Independent* 14/9/2001.
[45] Interview, Village 1, Fair Range 16/6/2002.
[46] 'Zim's wildlife falls prey to politics' *Zimbabwe Independent* 3/11/2000.
[47] 'Baloyi at odds with land committee' *Daily News* 18/7/2001.

In the current context chiefs, politicians, war veterans, settlers, businessmen and others hold more than one subject position simultaneously. The blurring and uncertainty between these positions can be exploited by opportunists at all levels.

New arrangements with the state

Finally we ask how these new emergent local institutions and power relations are articulating with the changes in the national and local state? It should already be evident that war vets, chiefs, settlers, civil servants and the party, are bound up in complex interwoven relationships that are more complicated than simple co-option. In Chiredzi District a number of trends can be observed.

One is the rapid emergence of a new loop of governance that, to a large extent bypasses orthodox local government. To a remarkable extent, particularly in the early stages of the farm occupations, the war veterans association and party structures supplanted the Rural District Council as the loci of district authority. According to one councillor:

> *There was a period when war vets would do what they want. They were not controllable – they would report right from the District officers up to their patron [the President].*[48]

Even more explicitly the Vice-Chairman of the District War Veterans Association told us that:

> *We have tried to make sure that each line ministry lure someone with a party history. In fact we have recommended to the National body (War Vets) that we deploy some of our member in every government department and if possible rural district councils. We found this necessary because some of our efforts to get land were being thwarted by non-partisan government workers who defied orders from us. Some workers have been transferred for lacking patriotism.*[49]

In some parts of Zimbabwe the assault on the power of the RDCs was a very literal one as war veterans invaded and closed down councils – sacking officials for being 'MDC supporters'. In Masvingo Province this happened in Zaka, Chivi and Mwenezi Districts.[50] However Chiredzi RDC was spared closure by the war veterans. This might be accounted for by the fact that during most of this period Chiredzi RDC had no substantive CEO or DA. The Acting DA was also acting as an ex officio CEO. This meant that, in contrast to some districts, the RDC executive was perceived as relatively weak and not a threat to the power of the politically appointed (ie. ZANU(PF)) DAs. The party war veterans were able to exert considerable influence without 'sacking' the RDC. They did

[48] Interview with Sangwe communal area Councillor 14/12/2001.
[49] Interview with Vice-chair, District War Veterans Association, Chiredzi 28/06/2002.
[50] See McGregor (2002) for an analysis of this process in Matabeleland.

this through their de facto control of the District Land Committee which emerged as the most powerful institution in the district. The RDC had, in a sense, been collapsed into one committee and the DA, as nominal chairman, was under strict instruction to listen to the war veterans.

As we have seen certain politicians have been able to carve out a great deal of power. The Provincial Governor, in particular, has had massive degree of influence in the designation of farms for resettlement and in the selection of settlers. He was able, for instance, to 'instruct' Chief Chitsa to get his people to occupy Gonarezhou and Agritex to peg it.[51] However this power has backfired when he personally has been blamed by settlers for the delisting of properties and evictions – and labelled a sell-out.[52] ZANU(PF) MPs and councillors walk a similar tightrope. They currently have a close relationship with the war veterans, traditional leaders and local entrepreneurs but are very conscious of having not lived up to expectations and demands in the past.

Perhaps unsurprisingly these developments have left the technical and bureaucratic branches of the state largely marginalised. Although Agritex officials, for example, have been busier than ever pegging resettlement plots (Chaumba et al. 2003) they are confused: 'We need to know who is reporting to who. The authority structure is very unclear.'[53] Similarly an RDC official complained that:

> *We are losing revenue. Occupiers are refusing to pay tax. … As council we are not directly involved. The whole thing is being run by the DA's office, we gather information only through the grapevine.*[54]

Different sectors appear fragmented and confused with little co-ordination between, for example, Agritex, the Department of Veterinary Services and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management. This confusion is paralleled at the national level with mixed messages and repeated changes of policy issuing from different departments – as for example in pronouncements on land reform in the conservancies (Wolmer et al. 2003). In a state of heightened politicisation of the local state and suspicion of educated personnel in rural areas, most officials are wary of speaking out too openly.

A final point to make is on the role of civil society organisations in the new resettlement areas. The striking fact is that they are largely absent. These spaces fall outside of the realm of NGOs working in the communal areas. This is partly for political reasons: NGOs tend to be

[51] Interview with Sangwe Communal Area Councillor 21/11/2001.
[52] 'Invaders defy order' *Daily News* 9/10/2001. And see '30 000 occupy Nuanetsi Ranch' *Daily News* 19/6/2001; 'Govt denies plans to open Nuanetsi Ranch for resettlement' *The Mirror* 20/7/2001.
[53] Interview with Agritex officer, Harare 14/11/2001.
[54] Interview, Chiredzi RDC 22/11/2001.

identified by war veterans and ZANU(PF) supporters as 'opposition' who should keep out of resettlement areas (see Human Rights Watch 2002 – NGOs working with farm workers, for example, have been ejected from farms or threatened); and partly because – not withstanding the village committees – these new areas are yet to have a formally recognised administrative structure with which NGOs can engage.

Conclusion

The events surrounding the farm occupations in Zimbabwe's lowveld since 2000 have created new livelihood opportunities and new spaces of authority, recasting conventional understandings of the role of the 'state', 'civil society' and 'traditional' authority. The tensions we have highlighted between authoritarian nationalism and ethnic politics, between a militarised, modernist order and 'traditional' religion and authority have created a complex political mosaic, made up of multiple and overlapping identities and positions. In the resettlement areas this new politics has been made manifest in new institutions structured around a hierarchically organised series of committees, linked into a new loop of governance, often by-passing existing state structures. On top of this opportunities for a patrimonial politics have emerged, as certain actors have taken advantage of the fluidity, dynamism, and sometimes apparent chaos of recent times.

As we have seen, the resettlement areas are populated by a wide range of actors with different motivations, origins, identities and livelihoods. While there is continuity with the patterns of social and economic differentiation found in the neighbouring communal areas, there is also change. The resettlement areas are providing opportunities for the landless poor to engage in farming, for business people to expand their markets, for single women to escape abusive social strictures, and for others to find temporary work as agricultural labourers. In the case of the former Fair Range ranch the composition of this population is highly skewed in terms of access to resources – both material and political. This is creating a new pattern of livelihood opportunity, based on new political, social and economic ties that have the potential to recast Zimbabwe's dualistic legacy of racially divided communal and commercial spaces and actors. This, then, is a thoroughly politicised landscape in which settlers and non-settlers, whether they like it or not, have to negotiate relationships with new patrons and enter into new institutional arrangements if they are to sustain or improve their livelihoods.

What the livelihood opportunities in the resettlement areas will be in the future is, of course, unknown. The current situation is in flux, subject to the ongoing micro-politics of local negotiations and social networks, combined with the playing out of conflicts over party politics, ethnicity

and identity. However, what is certain is that this new political and institutional milieu will be very different to what went before. Understanding these new contexts and processes, as this paper has attempted to do for a limited area over a short space of time, is an essential task for any concerned with the future of rural livelihoods in Zimbabwe.

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