

Negotiating Knowledges for Development - DPRN Three

A Tribute to Saartjie Baartman

I've come to take you home -
home, remember the veld?
the lush green grass beneath the big oaks trees
the air is cool there and the sun does not burn.
I have made your bed at the foot of the hill,
your blankets are covered in buchu and mint,
the proteas stand in yellow and white
and the water in the stream chuckle sing-songs
as it hobbles alone over little stones.

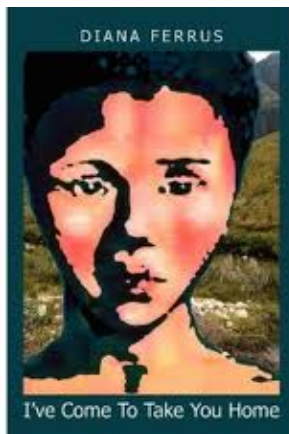
I have come to wrench you away -
away from the poking eyes
of the man-made monster
who lives in the dark
with his clutches of imperialism
who dissects your body bit by bit
who likens your soul to that of Satan
and declares himself the ultimate god!

I have come to soothe your heavy heart
I offer my bosom to your weary soul
I will cover your face with the palms of my hands
I will run my lips over lines in your neck
I will feast my eyes on the beauty of you
and I will sing for you
for I have come to bring you peace.

I have come to take you home
where the ancient mountains shout your name.
I have made your bed at the foot of the hill,
your blankets are covered in buchu and mint,

the proteas stand in yellow and white –
I have come to take you home
where I will sing for you
for you have brought me peace

Diana Ferrus



Diana Ferrus –
blacklooks.org

Saartjie Baartman

This poem, written by the South African *Diana Ferrus*, refers to the return of Saartjie Baartman to her home country. On Women's Day, 9 August 2002, the remains of Saartjie Baartman were finally laid to rest in the area of her birth, the Gamtoos River Valley in the Eastern Cape. Thus ended a long period of exile in life and in death of a young Khoikhoi woman, who was to become an icon in South Africa as a victim of the horrors of colonialism and racism.

Born in 1789 and orphaned in a commando raid, Saartjie Baartman became the servant of the Dutch farmer Johan Cezar near Cape Town. When his brother Henrik Cezar and his friend, the ship's doctor William Dunlop, visited Johan in 1810, they met with Baartman and convinced her that it would be to her advantage to accompany them to Europe. Each for his own reasons wanted to make the most out of her physical characteristics. From the 17th century onward, Europeans had been fascinated by the steatopygia, the broad hips and large buttocks, of Khoikhoi women. Furthermore, Khoikhoi women knew the custom of elongating the labia to conform to an ideal of beauty. The resulting *sinus pudoris*, or 'curtain of shame' equally was a source of fascination frequently mentioned in both popular and scientific literature.

In London Saartjie Baartman was exhibited as a 'freak' and 'scientific curiosity'. She was advertised in the paper as the 'Hottentot Venus'. For extra payment, the interested public was allowed to touch her buttocks. Later she was sold to an animal trainer and brought to Paris where she was forced to act in a circus. She was visited by the French anatomist Georges Cuvier and various French naturalists and was the subject of several scientific paintings. Saartjie Baartman died in 1815 of an inflammatory ailment, but this was not the end of her dreadful fate. An autopsy was conducted and a detailed description of her physical characteristics was published by Georges Cuvier. He made a plaster cast of her body. Her skeleton, brain and preserved genitals were put on display in the *Musée de l'Homme* until 1974. Then they were removed from public view but continued to be part of the museum collection.

It is difficult to find words to express the depth of dehumanization and degradation Baartman (and in extension all the Khoikhoi people of South Africa) was subjected to. The story is too poignant to treat with mere discursive reasoning. Maybe this is the reason why so many South African sculptors, painters and authors have incorporated it in their work, like *Diana Ferrus* in her poem. In 1994 president Nelson Mandela requested for the return of the remains of Saartjie Baartman to her home country. But it took the French government eight years to finally pass a bill to allow for this. In fact, it was the poem written by *Diana Ferrus* that made such an impression on a French senator that he proposed the change of law that made the return of the remains of Saartjie possible.

We retell this story to touch upon one single dimension of it, the role of science. As explained by Buikema (2004), William Dunlop's interest in Baartman was probably scientific in nature. In the early 18th century stories of voyagers about Africa entered scientific discourse. The indigenous population of Africa was described as subhuman and characterized as having a bestial sexuality. However, in science such categorisations had to be proven by detailed empirical descriptions. As Buikema points out, Dunlop probably thought to serve scientific interests by offering Baartman as study object to the world of medicine and natural history. The same frame of mind explains the actions of Cuvier.

This dimension of the story of Saartjie Baartman raises questions about science, not only about the moral dimensions of scientific practice and discourse, but

equally about scientific method and its position *vis-à-vis* other forms of knowledge. It also draws attention to the wider social and political context in which science developed. We take these questions as a starting point for our discussion on the role of knowledge in development.



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Knowledge and development

Development cooperation is often considered to have started with president Truman's famous 1949 Inaugural Address. In his speech Truman introduced the concept of 'underdevelopment' and announced 'a bold new programme for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas'. Ever since, the transfer of knowledge and capital have been central components of development cooperation and permanent factors beneath the ever-changing fashions in development approaches and jargon. In the words of Vandemoortele (2004: 2): *The partnership between rich and poor countries takes many forms, including foreign aid or official development assistance. In essence there are two major dimensions to that partnership: one is concerned with 'money changing hands'; the other with 'ideas changing minds'.*

Why do knowledge and capital play such a central role in development cooperation? The answer is surprisingly simple. It is because knowledge and capital accumulation are considered to be the formula through which the developed nations have become what they are.

As will be elaborated upon later in this paper, since the development of capitalism in the 17th and 18th century, the twin mechanisms of knowledge and capital accumulation have come to be seen as the motor behind progress and the spreading of modernity. It is, therefore, not surprising that the transfer of

knowledge and capital is seen as the solution for underdevelopment. Knowledge, in this context, is seen as an objective understanding of nature and society. It is seen as factual and neutral, a mere reflection of reality. The accumulation of such knowledge is to be seen as integral to the development process itself, and the transfer of such knowledge as integral to international development assistance.

Due to various historical and political processes, scientific knowledge became the kind of knowledge that dominates a wide array of fields of thought, including development thinking. As Smart (2002: 61) points out:

A predominant and taken-for-granted characteristic of modern civilization is the differentiation and associated ranking of forms of knowledge in accordance with elaborate criteria of scientificity. The corollary of this process of differentiation and ranking is the disqualification and subjugation of those forms of knowledge deemed to be illegitimate in terms of the particular criteria of scientificity employed.

This resulted in the inferior status attributed to other forms of knowledge and, likewise, in an unequal relationship between individuals possessing scientific knowledge and individuals having other types of knowledge. Transfer of knowledge through technical assistance provided by western experts is a case in point. As Crew and Harrison (1998: 92) have argued:

The division between indigenous and Western or scientific knowledge is based on ideas about people rather than on objective differences in knowledge or expertise. ... An 'expert' is not an equal. He or she is by definition better than non-experts in at least one respect, that is in having greater expertise. The prior definition of certain forms of knowledge as 'expertise' according to who has the knowledge, rather than because of the nature of what is known, effectively excludes a wide range of people from the central discourse.

Obviously, the transfer of knowledge is not neutral and may even have undesirable consequences. It is never a matter of transferring knowledge per se. Situations in which knowledge is exchanged always involve complex social interactions between individuals in possession of different assets and political and social capabilities. As we will elaborate in this paper, 'spaces' for negotiation between knowledges are never neutral.

Especially regarding development assistance, the transfer of knowledge occurs in contexts marked by diversity and complexity. Western conceptual frameworks

and the western model of development are transferred to – if not imposed on – local contexts. Indeed, within the field of development cooperation a lot of ‘development knowledge’ is mobilised that is completely blind to local particularities. It has the tendency to ignore or even sweep away existing local knowledges and perspectives (Utting 2006). Conceivably, valuable resources for development are disregarded in the process.

It is to a discussion of the role of knowledge in development, and of the nature and value of scientific knowledge in relation to other knowledges, that we now turn. This paper approaches the issue of knowledge for development both from a scholarly and a policy point of view. This means that we will analyse the role of knowledge in development and will reflect on the implications thereof for policy making. Thus we hope to contribute to a better understanding of the roles scientific and other knowledges do and can play in development.

In this paper we will look into the nature of scientific knowledge and will critically assess its claims to objectivity and universal validity. In doing so, we will touch upon the way knowledge is generated, from the perspective of both the sociology and the philosophy of knowledge. We will subsequently turn to ‘alternative forms of knowledge’ in relation to development issues. Next, we will look into theoretical accounts for the interaction of different knowledges. To illustrate how this works out in practice, we will describe and assess the South African policy on indigenous knowledge systems.*[Based on a brief case study carried out in June 2007 through interviews with officials working for the Department for Science and Technology, division for Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and the Department of Education, and interviews with scholars and officials of the National Research Foundation and various research institutes in Pretoria, Johannesburg and Durban.]* To conclude, we will address the question whether it is possible to bring in alternative forms of knowledge for development.

Scientific knowledge

Scientific knowledge has become the dominant type of knowledge worldwide, claiming to be objective and universally valid. In this section we will investigate how scientific knowledge is produced and how the acclaimed objectivity and universality have come about. We will concentrate on the main characteristics of scientific knowledge and indicate how these became the criteria for the ‘right type’ of knowledge. This means we need to look at science from a historical perspective, placing it in the wider context of the development of western society.

Scientific knowledge and its characteristics

'Scientific knowledge' does not merely refer to the content of knowledge, but first and foremost to the way it is generated; its method. Scientific knowledge is generated following the strict rules and methods of science. Purcell summarises that such knowledge '... carries the attributes of inconvertibility, ... objectivity, rationality, testability, and finally, the bedrock of positivist legitimacy, replicability or verifiability' (1998: 259). These last characteristics refer to the methods of producing knowledge. Knowledge production needs to be transparent. Furthermore, scientific knowledge needs to explain the relationship between cause and effect. By formulating hypotheses, integral part of the scientific procedure, explanations become testable. Results become objective when other scientists are able to test these results as hypotheses. This is how people came to think that knowledge produced following scientific procedures was verifiable independent of one's culture or belief system. It resulted in the idea of universality of knowledge. This method of generating knowledge can be applied anywhere and anytime; it crosses the boundaries of space and time.

Of course, the sociology and history of science have taught us that this is a very idealised picture of science. In practice, there is no such thing as a unified science or a universal scientific method. Rather there is a wide variety of scientific practices, experimental systems, methodologies and epistemologies, a much greater variety than presupposed by this image of a context-free unified science (Nowotny et al. 2001: 56, 57). Moreover, there is a variety of modalities of knowledge production. Knowledge is always produced in specific socio-cultural spaces which enable as well as constrain (Rip 2002: 110) and through which values unconsciously enter scientific discourse.

Thomas Kuhn (1962) is one of the best known critics of the scientific method. He demonstrated that scientists do not always work objectively and independently. Kuhn stressed that science is relational. During the process, scientists react on changes in their environment and are influenced by work carried out by other scientists. He therefore rejected the universal validity of scientifically produced knowledge.

The notion that scientific knowledge contains more 'truth' than local knowledge is vehemently challenged by sociologists and philosophers. They question the idea of an epistemology based on a logic of cause and effect that is not limited to a specific context. In addition, they reject the idea that all knowledge needs to be

validated externally or needs to be empirically testable. In their view, knowledge can be true knowledge even if it is relative. Empirical knowledge and theory are complementary (Purcell and Onjoro 2002: 173).

The sociology of knowledge teaches us that knowledge is a social construct. It is created and validated in a social context. Also, it reflects the values of those involved with the production of knowledge. This equally holds for scientific knowledge. Science is a social process of *producing* meaning and *claiming* authority.

Still, the idealised picture of objective science continues to strongly appeal to both the public at large and to large groups of scientists. The production of reliable knowledge continues to reflect a central epistemic value and quite a number of scientists, consciously or not, adhere to the ideal of producing universally valid knowledge. How, then, did these standards for scientific knowledge come about?

From meaning to observable facts

For this question to be answered, we need to go back to the origin of this 'modern knowledge'; the Renaissance and early Enlightenment. René Descartes is often considered to be one of the founding fathers of the scientific method. Central to his and later Enlightenment thinking became the distinction between body, mind and world by a form of rationality (Apffel-Marglin 1996: 3). Prior to the scientific revolution, people used to find truth and beauty in the world, which was perceived as both spiritual and material. The Enlightenment saw the birth of the idea that meaning and truth were not to be found in matter. By separating mind from body and world, the latter two became meaningless. Matter, both as world and body, no longer represented the beautiful. One had to turn to reason to achieve full self-realisation.

A distinction occurred between knowledge produced by logical deduction and knowledge gained through practical experience. The term *episteme* is used for the Cartesian method of acquiring knowledge; epistemic knowledge is knowledge based on logical deduction. Episteme is analytical, decomposing reality into components step by step (Marglin 1996: 229). Episteme is usually translated as theory. Marglin contrasts episteme with *techne*, which is knowledge generated through practice and by experience, an empirical kind of knowledge (1996: 230). As it involves the practice and experience of individuals, it cannot be impersonal.

Nor can it be universal, because it is attached to experience in a certain place and period of time. However, in contrast to what Marglin implies, early science saw the development of methods and technologies to turn such empirical knowledge into objectified information and to make the personal first-hand observation of phenomena into a stepping stone for generating universalised knowledge.

Scientific procedure developed by moving away from speculations about the essence and first causes of things and turning to precise and detailed observations and descriptions of phenomena. Francis Bacon, another founding father of the scientific method, whose name is associated with the early history (or rather prehistory) of the notion of objectivity (Lorraine 1994), advocated that measurements and experiments should be the basis for generalised insights.



Boerhaave - wikipedia

In the early 18th century, Herman Boerhaave, the most famous medical professor of his time, became one of the chief advocates for respecting descriptive facts rather than speculating on ultimate causes (Cook 2007: 383). Boerhaave revolutionised the treatment of diseases. As Cook describes, *He believed that particular symptoms pointed to particular physiological causes. The disease and its cause would consequently be the same in anyone found to be suffering from the same symptoms. Treatment ... would be similar in all suffering the same effects (ibid.: 393).*

Implicit in such thinking is Descartes' separation of body and mind. Differences between individual minds have no bearing on the illness or its treatment.

Renaissance thinking saw the birth of natural history as an independent discipline

from medicine and pharmacy. It took the form of developing a common language and method for describing and depicting *naturalia*. This allowed for the transfer of local knowledge. Cook describes how during the 17th and early 18th century *naturalia* from around the globe were observed, described, collected and exchanged, leading to an impressive accumulation of knowledge and of collections of dead and live specimens. Indigenous knowledge was studied with the purpose of extracting information to be transported and used in other contexts. Knowledge, developed by other peoples in other cultures, was appropriated. Thus, descriptive information was objectified and universalised, making it easy to exchange (ibid.: 225).

Jacobus Bontius, a physician working for the Dutch East India Company in Asia, extensively studied indigenous knowledge and converted local concepts into parcels of information that could be packaged in Dutch syntax. He discarded the contexts in which indigenous knowledge had meaning and focused on aspects of this knowledge that could be easily de-contextualised and transferred. As Cook (ibid.: 208) aptly puts it:

Bontius was boiling things down to their lowest common denominator, information units that could be circulated in just about any context. He (re)produced knowledge, accumulated it, and exchanged it, making information – if not theories – commensurable.

The process involved growing attention for certain aspects of nature and a disregard for others. Naturalists focused on the surface characteristics of *naturalia*, on morphology. Cook (ibid.: 345) cites Japanese sources commenting upon western science as ‘ingenious only in techniques that deal with appearances and utility, but ignorant about metaphysical matters’ and considering ‘the emphasis on appearances for their own sakes trivial and vulgar’. The growing emphasis on factual observations strengthened the idea of the separation of mind and worldly objects, therewith increasing the distance between the self and the other; it thus enhanced the sense of objectivity.

The community of credible witnesses

Another emerging characteristic was that only ‘trusted witnesses’ were allowed to conduct experiments and report on the outcome. Generating scientific knowledge about natural history went hand in hand with the growth of a community of practitioners. This community, tied together through travel, extensive

correspondence and the exchange of information, developed a disciplinary self-awareness (Ogilvie 2006: 53). It is within this community, and through sharing common methods, standards and technologies, that naturalists generated objective knowledge. The members defined themselves by participating in this community, thus excluding many local knowledge bearers that were not part of this tradition. Paradoxically, it was through such exclusion of other knowledge bearers that objectivity was constructed and knowledge was universalised.

With hindsight, it is easy to observe the social nature of scientific knowledge production already in the early manifestations of modern science. According to Campbell (1979), 'tribal norms' are involved in enforcing epistemological principles and in excluding those who are not part of the scientific community. Science is not possible without rules for describing and communicating observations. Intriguingly, the meaning of 'fact' as 'a datum' only emerged in the course of the 17th century and was derived from law. In legal terminology the word meant a 'deed', a true account of what had happened (Daston 1994: 45; Cook 2007: 16, 17).

Behind the alleged incontestability of facts, then, lies the authentic testimony of creditable witnesses. Shapin and Schaffer (1985: 23) have shown that at the heart of the early modern scientific method for establishing facts lies a *social process*. The birth of the experimental method in the natural sciences took the form of the emergence of literary and social conventions for the correct way of describing and discussing experiments and validating knowledge, again enhancing the notion of objectivity.

Concluding, the notion of what constitutes 'true knowledge' became conditioned by two emerging tendencies. First of all, it became increasingly important to be recognised as belonging to a community of practice in order to be accepted as 'credible witness'. Secondly, knowledge became captured in a particular language; describing naturalia and thus reducing social phenomena and contextual meanings to facts. Both tendencies excluded wide fields of knowledge and large groups of knowledge holders. Their knowledges was acknowledged an inferior status. The relation between the scientific community and other knowledge holders thus reflected the large scale subjugation and economic exploitation characteristic of the socio-political relations of that age. This raises questions about the perceived neutrality of knowledge.

The social roots of the scientific worldview

The separation of mind, body and world allowed for a detached study of the nature of reality, the autonomous human mind studying body and world. Indirectly it also gave rise to the idea that science itself is an autonomous field, the product of the freely speculating mind. There are good reasons, though, to think that the emergence of this worldview was not at all an autonomous process and was embedded in and influenced by a much wider process of social and economic change. There is an analogy between scientific and economic conceptual schemes that indicates a close relation, much closer than usually realized in the philosophy and history of science.

Seen within a wider social and historical context, the conceptual separation of mind, body and world reflects the dissociation of individual, commodity and value surfacing in the emerging economic order. The 16th and 17th century saw the rapid development and expansion of a new economic order; the breaking up of feudalism and the growth of merchant capitalism. One of the most dominant characteristics of this process was the evolving monetization of the economy and the birth of ever new monetary instruments. This profoundly influenced the way relations between goods and relations between men were perceived. Money projected a single quantitative standard of value on a wide variety of qualitatively different things. The notion of value was abstracted from concrete things and embedded in a single medium. This made even the most diverse qualities commensurable in terms of a single common denominator (Aglietta and Orléan 1982: 56).

The emergence and growth of global markets resulted in a gradual process of 'de-localization' or 'de-contextualization'. Formerly inalienable bonds between man and land or between man and material possessions were cut, resulting in commoditization, alienability and transferability. There is an intrinsic connection between the monetization of society on the one hand and the mathematization of Western worldview on the other hand (Molenaar 2006: 120-8). And there is a close analogy between emerging capitalist concepts and the rise of science. From an anthropological point of view, such a coherence between the pictures of the world and of society is not at all remarkable. A common frame of reference provides order and meaning to existence. But it does raise questions about the objectivity and acclaimed universal validity of scientific knowledge.

Cook (2007: 42) equally pointed out that despite the focus on objectivity and facts, the scientific worldview is thoroughly imbued with notions of the emerging merchant class. Exchange is based on the precise knowledge of things that comes from personal experience, but also on the ability to transform one value into another. This is what commerce and science have in common. Moreover, as in commerce, so also in science, credibility is a crucial precondition for success, a value shared by both domains.

This background explains how the scientific revolution often took the form of an exploitative kind of knowledge, a knowledge in which the observer stands aloof and every conceivable object is opened up for intellectual exploitation. To drive this point home, let us once more refer to Cook's excellent study of early modern science in the Dutch colonial context. He describes how a young and talented physician, Willem ten Rhijne, was sent to Japan by the East India Company to explain about western medicine. In 1673, on his way to Asia, Ten Rhijne made a stopover at the station at the Cape of Good Hope, taking the opportunity to investigate the local natural history. The account he made of his visit was published in Switzerland in 1686. Later it was published in English, possibly translated by John Locke. The most famous part of it, in Cook's words (2007: 376), 'was Ten Rhijne's early account of the genitalia of 'Hottentot' women, which would be cited for several generations' (sic!).

Objectivity unmasked

The birth of modern science can be seen as a shift from absolute belief based on divine revelation or ageless tradition to a search for scientific truth based on research and experiment. Since the Enlightenment, the history of science has witnessed yet another shift from the search for scientific truth to the more modest goal of obtaining reliable knowledge. Although notions of realism and positivism continue to live on in the scientific community at large, within circles of the philosophy and sociology of science it is nowadays widely agreed that reliable knowledge can only be reached through alignment and agreement within a community of peers. Scientific knowledge, therefore, is based on exclusion and authority as much as on agreement and alignment. Facts are socially constructed and rest upon mutual agreement among those who wield authority in the community of scientists. Facts are not given in nature, waiting to be discovered. They emerge together with the theories that make it possible for the facts to be identified and witnessed. This insight was won only slowly and gradually.

But although the social (hence historical) character of the construction of facts is now widely acknowledged in science studies, there seems to be a much greater reluctance to let go of the notion of objectivity. There is a tendency to hold on to objectivity as guarantee for superior knowledge, the quality of which is not contested among the knowledgeable. Yet, the early history of the notion of objectivity is tied up with the respect for facts that characterised early modern science: 'Seventeenth-century objectivity, insofar as one can use the word for this period without anachronism, was about facts and nothing but the facts' (Daston 1994: 38).

The study of facts, as Cook has shown, takes a form that resembles practices in the world of commerce. We would like to take his argument a step further by stating – paradoxical though it may seem – that the early concepts of 'objectivity' and 'matters of fact' reflect a logic that equally inheres in commercial thinking. These concepts resemble the reification, the objectification, of the market and the emergence of commodities against this background as if they were matters of fact.

The notion of objectivity has undergone various shifts and transformations in the course of the history of science. The modern concept of objectivity carries with a load of connotations acquired over the centuries. It is a multi-layered, polyvalent notion, comprising of moral, methodological, epistemological and pragmatic-instrumental strands (Nowotny et al. 2001: 169). A rather strong element is the connotation of *mechanical* objectivity, achieved by observing and registering reality through instruments rather than via unavoidably subjective human observers (Daston and Galison 1992). Yet another one is the notion of *aperspectival* objectivity, eradicating all that is personal, idiosyncratic or perspectival. In the present context, we do not have the possibility to follow and analyse these strands. Suffice it to say that there are strong indications that these strands are not merely autonomous developments within the world of scientific discourse but equally reflect wider societal factors. In short, objectivity is more relative than meets the eye. The very value of objectivity reflects a specific socio-historical context.

So much for the alleged objectivity and universal validity of scientific knowledge. When we study the development of science in its historical context, we see that even this kind of knowledge is particular for its historical context, social groups and culture. Just like economic transactions became de-contextualised from

earlier feudal bounds and took place within a reified global market, so knowledge became de-contextualised from local settings and was objectified by an international community of peers. And although our analysis refers to the early modern period only, we see no good reason to believe things have fundamentally changed.

Does this imply a loss of realism, an unavoidable withdrawal in the multiple worlds of relativism and pluralism? Not necessarily. Objectivity may not be as solid or universally valid as we may once have hoped it would be. But that does not mean that the concept loses all relevance. After all, capitalism and the logic of commoditisation and monetisation are very much alive. In fact, this explains the lure that the notion of objectivity continues to wield. It nowadays takes the shape of alignment and inter-subjectivity within a specialised and knowledgeable community.

But it does teach us that knowledge claims do not stretch beyond the context in which they can be demonstrated or verified. Strictly speaking they do not stretch beyond the community of peers that is authorised to validate knowledge claims, and practically not beyond the society that authorises this community of scientists to play this role. Scientific knowledge does not escape from history but is very much grounded in history and social practices and derives its validity from it.

It also makes us wonder how other forms of knowledge are grounded in history and social practices and how these could be relevant for development. Is the difference between local and global knowledge really that profound? More often than not, when scientific knowledge is brought to bear on development issues, local knowledge is disregarded and local communities are incapacitated or not allowed to decide about external modes of thinking on their own terms. Let us, therefore, look at the alternative and start with raising the question: what do we actually mean with knowledge that is not produced following scientific procedures?



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Local knowledge

Local knowledge as an alternative

The concept of local knowledge appeared in development discourses during the 1980s. By then modernisation theory had been under attack for quite a while. Transfer of capital and knowledge failed to result in sustained economic growth. Large-scale development programmes did not seem to work. Moreover, a vast body of literature criticized the negative consequences of the Green Revolution. Both scientists and development practitioners called for an 'alternative development from below'.

These trends inspired thinking about other types of knowledge. Local knowledge might countervail dominant western ideas of development, providing alternative perspectives from local contexts. As the potential of local knowledge was first recognised by critics of the Green Revolution, it is not surprising that the concept was mostly developed in the sphere of agriculture and agro-forestry. It was Robert Chambers who gave the debate an impulse with his 'Farmers First' and 'Putting the last first' approach. He awarded the farmer, his knowledge and expertise, a central role in the development process. Later the concept was equally explored in the contexts of health, culture and identity.

However, despite its attractive promise of opening up alternative development models, the notion of local (or indigenous/ traditional) knowledge is not without difficulties (Oosterom 2007). Both from an epistemological and a policy point of view, there are reasons to be wary and to avoid uncritically embracing local knowledge as the solution to development problems. Let us, therefore, turn to a critical examination of what this concept is all about and start with some definitions. Warren (1995) describes the notion as follows:

Indigenous knowledge (IK) is local knowledge that is unique to a given culture or

society. It is the information base for a society which facilitates communication and decision making. IK is the systematic body of knowledge acquired by local people through the accumulation of experiences, informal experiments, and intimate understanding of the environment in a given culture.

In this definition we clearly see the attribution of indigenous knowledge to a particular group and its relation to the direct environment in which people live. Paul Sillitoe (2002: 9) proposes a more elaborate working definition:

Indigenous knowledge in development contexts may relate to any knowledge held more or less collectively by a population, informing understanding of the world. It may pertain to any domain, particularly natural resource management in development currently. It is community based, embedded in and conditioned by local tradition. It is culturally informed understanding inculcated into individuals from birth onwards, structuring how they interface with their environments. It is also informed continually by outside intelligence. Its distribution is fragmentary. Although more widely shared locally on the whole than specialized scientific knowledge, no one person, authority or social group knows it all. (...) It is equally skill and conscious knowledge ... transmitted orally and through experience, and repetitive practice characterizes its learning between generations. It is the heritage of practical everyday life, with its functional demands, and is fluid and constantly changing, being dynamic and subject to ongoing local, regional and global negotiation between people and their environments.

Sillitoe's description is much wider and focuses the attention on the dynamic and fragmented character of indigenous knowledge. This already touches upon some of the problems inherent in the notion of local or indigenous knowledge.

Conceptual difficulties

One of the first problems relates to the adjective 'local' itself. One may wonder what the criteria are for anything to be local. Globalisation makes that geographical boundaries lose their meaning. Around the globe people face external influences in their daily lives and activities. Through migration, people export their knowledge to new localities. Does that mean this knowledge is no longer local? What is local can be distinguished in one sense only. Geographically vague though it may be, 'local' stands opposed to 'global'. For local knowledge holders, however, their knowledge captures the world as they perceive it to be. They may be aware that others have a different worldview, but they would never themselves characterise their knowledge as 'local'. This goes to show that 'local'

is an epithet applied by those who claim their own knowledge to be 'global', objectively verified and universally valid. Consequently, the very notion of 'local knowledge' seems to evoke the hierarchy of knowledges assumed by dominant scientific discourse. This connotation implies that 'local' stands for limited validity at best and hence for lesser quality. It cannot possibly challenge the dominant position of scientific knowledge.

The term 'indigenous knowledge' first appeared in the work of Robert Chambers in the late 1970s. It was actually called 'indigenous technical knowledge', to indicate the difference between scientific knowledge and local knowledge in the context of development (Purcell 1998: 268). 'Indigenous knowledge' echoes the term 'indigenous peoples', but does not have the same boundaries. Purcell (1998: 260) defines indigenous peoples as:

Existing descendants of non-Western peoples who, in general, continue to occupy their ancestral lands even after conquest by westerners, or who have been relocated forcibly in the process of colonization. Indigenous people maintain a cultural complex that sets them apart from the Western socio-cultural tradition.

The definition relates to history and western domination. Since Chambers c.s. were motivated to attain social equity, it is not surprising that they opted for this terminology. Currently, the term 'indigenous peoples' has a juridical and political status in international law, on the basis of which groups can claim particular civil, cultural and political rights. Some peoples manage to exploit the inherent possibilities, while others do not. In many developing countries this is a rather sensitive issue. It thus happens that indigenous peoples, who have all historical and cultural characteristics that follow from the definition, are not officially acknowledged as such. The term 'indigenous peoples' is thus limited by the criterion of having a certain 'ancestral territory', while indigenous knowledge is not. The main reason for seeing indigenous knowledge in a broader perspective is to include those people that are 'local', but that for one reason or another do not have the status of indigenous peoples.

This leads us to another problem of the concept, namely the connotation of the static, timeless, unchanging character of local knowledge. When it is referred to as 'traditional knowledge' as opposed to 'modern knowledge', the implication, possibly related to a romantic idea of traditional knowledge as manifested in some ecological and anthropological discourses (Bebbington 1993: 277; Briggs 2005: 19), is that this knowledge does not adapt over time. However, knowledge is

dynamic, changes and adapts as people adapt to changes in their environment (Sillitoe 2002: 109). The claim that traditional and modern are opposed in this sense, cannot be maintained, as illustrated by Bebbington (1993: 279). He describes changes in the lifestyles of Ecuadorian Indians, who enhance their agricultural production by incorporating modern technologies. Combining their 'old' knowledge with modern technologies, they are better able to preserve their ethnic identity. The Indian rights movement uses 'modern' democratic institutions to claim rights for indigenous peoples, which involves both recognition of cultural differences and the right to integrate in socio-economical development.

Local or indigenous knowledge is often depicted as unitary and homogeneous, as if all members of the community share the same views and have equal access to knowledge. This is, however, a fallacy. This belief overlooks individual agency and a range of factors that cause communities to be internally strongly diverse. Age, gender, level of education, position in the community and power are factors that determine an individual's access to and use of knowledge (Briggs 2005: 14; Purcell and Onjoro 2002: 172). Moreover, power determines whose knowledge counts as 'true' knowledge and whose knowledge influences decision-making. Especially in a context of development cooperation, the question of whose knowledge counts and whose voice is legitimate, needs to be addressed.

Quite a number of authors reflecting on the relevance of local knowledge for development focus on content. This empirical emphasis tends to overlook the political and socioeconomic contexts. Especially the literature that places the farmer's knowledge central to development, developed during the 1980s, 'tends to remove agents from structures and to replace determinism by voluntarism' (Bebbington 1993: 277). The approach neglects factors such as national politics, the structure of the state, the international system of nation states, and international markets. If such higher level factors influence poverty, surely stimulating local knowledge cannot be the sole solution.

At the same time, local knowledge is context specific. Scientific methods often abstract indigenous knowledge from its local situation and transfer it to different contexts. In this process of transforming local knowledge into 'bite-sized' pieces of information, it may lose meaning. This usually is not in the interest of the local knowledge bearers who are left behind in the process. Briggs therefore argues that local knowledge loses agency and efficacy if it becomes depersonalised and de-contextualised (2005: 21). Maybe it is better to say that it shifts to a new

context in which the original knowledge bearers are not entitled to have their say. Studying local knowledge is not at all the same as mobilising it for local development. In development interventions we need to relate to local situations and understand knowledge in its own social, political and economic context, however without ignoring higher level factors influencing development. This does not mean that this knowledge cannot be used in other settings. The question is *how* to use local knowledge in other settings. We will elaborate on this in the following section.

After reflecting on this list of factors that make it difficult to demarcate the content, owners and scope of local knowledge, we may want to challenge the wisdom of developing policies to ‘stimulate’ local knowledge. If we do not know exactly what it is, who the owners are and to what extent it can be used in development, then to what and whom should such policies be directed? Let us not too quickly and naively embrace local knowledge as an alternative road to development. But neither let us disregard it prematurely. After all, the fact remains that in development practice various knowledges meet and conceivably could articulate.



Photo: wikitravel.org

Negotiating knowledges

In development discourse, the importance of planning context-specific strategies is widely recognised. It facilitates the incorporation of local people’s perspectives on development in policies and NGO strategies. However, the perceived inferiority of local knowledge remains inherent in western scientific discourse and development practice. A community’s socio-economic deprivation tends to reinforce the inferior position of its knowledge. As a result, local communities themselves may view scientific knowledge as indicative of modernity and

necessary for development (Purcell and Onjoro 2002: 164). Efforts to integrate local knowledge in development programmes, therefore, meet with substantial obstacles.

The difference in status between western and local knowledge could conceivably be solved by an 'integration of knowledge systems'. Purcell and Onjoro state that literature on the integration of knowledge systems acknowledges that local knowledge is seen as inferior, but they argue that this inequality should be squarely addressed in development interventions. They find a solution in a model of 'planned discourse' [*Discourse is defined as 'a set of meanings embodied in metaphors, representations, images, narratives and statements that advance a particular version of 'the truth' about objects, persons, events and the relation between them' (Long 2002: 52). Institutions and actors may have 'their own' discourse and way of thinking about development, which may conflict with the discourse owned by others.*], which concentrates on a procedure of exchange and negotiation. The model calls for structured negotiation between representatives of local and outsider's knowledge at all stages of the intervention (ibid.: 163). For example, in the case of an NGO starting a development project in a village, representatives of both the NGO and the village meet to discuss, systematically, the aims, strategies and activities of the proposed project. Different views on the project and all its activities need to be exchanged. Parties involved have to agree upon the meaning of all concepts used by the NGO. In this way, local knowledge and views can gradually be integrated in the project (Jansen 2000; Briggs 2005).

This model emphasises equal participation of the local people in the planning and implementation of projects, assuming that they will bring in their knowledge. In focusing on participation, this approach steps into an established tradition in development discourse. Over the last twenty years a myriad of participatory methodologies have blossomed in the practice of project- and programme-based development cooperation. The emphasis on the transfer of technical knowledge by Western experts shifted to an emphasis on community participation in project implementation, using their own expertise (Jansen 2000). Empowerment, participation and grass-roots development grew to be central elements in development discourse. By incorporating local knowledge, one assumed to make a contribution to the empowerment of the poor.

Jansen (ibid.) argues that over-emphasising participation carries risks. One such risk is that participation as a process can come to dominate the content of

knowledge. Jansen gives the example of a programme in which farmers were encouraged to experiment with botanical pesticides, using local species instead of chemicals. This actually requires specialised, technical knowledge, which may or may not be an integral part of the local body of knowledge. In the case described by Jansen, this aspect was neglected in favour of participatory experiments, some of which resulted in the production of toxic, harmful pesticides. Participation, so we are warned, should not be confused with technology development. More fundamentally, participation is often used as a device by external interventionists to achieve their own objectives. Quite often participation is used rhetorically to legitimise development interventions. The target group is invited to participate *in a certain stage* of the programme, but is usually not engaged in the planning stage and is 'left out' from the evaluation. Stimulating use of local knowledge is not the same as empowerment and does not necessarily contribute to it.

An interface perspective

Norman Long developed a sociological approach to study the encounters between different knowledge systems. It helps us to understand that local knowledge and other forms of knowledge interact and together create new knowledge in a new context. Long's approach is called an *interface perspective* and emphasises the social process of interaction (1989; 1992). It concentrates on the situation where actors from different backgrounds meet and interact, and on networks that develop between individuals and parties. *Interaction* is a social process, in which information or ideas about certain issues are communicated. In some cases this implies a *sharing* of information, in other cases it involves a *negotiation* process. Over time, continued interaction creates expectations and standardised patterns of interaction; the interface may become structural. Regular 'partner consultations' organised by donor agents are an example of such interfaces.

Long's approach leaves room for the complexity of social processes and power. Focusing on situations where different opinions are confronted and social differences come to the surface, it places these situations in a wider institutional setting that influences the interaction:

A major task of interface analysis is to spell out the knowledge and power implications of this interplay and the blending and segregation of opposing discourses. Discursive practices and competencies develop primarily within the circumstances of everyday social life and become especially salient at critical points of discontinuity between actors' life worlds. It is through the lens of

interface that these processes can best be captured conceptually (Long 2001: 7).

The implementation of large-scale development projects involves actors from various contexts, each with their own perspectives. This situation provokes social processes in which power, ideas and social rules are produced and reproduced. The focus on interface helps to identify differences in world views, but also the conditions under which actors hold on to certain ideas. Knowledge is a key element of the interface perspective; ‘... knowledge emerges as product of interaction, dialogue, reflexivity, and contest of meaning, and involves aspects of control, authority, and power’(Long 1999: 3).

Like Purcell and Onjoro, Long points at the power differences that appear in situations in which people from different backgrounds meet. However, while Purcell and Onjoro advocate structured dialogue, Long offers a deeper understanding, focusing on the factors that shape such dialogue and on how patterns of interaction may evolve over time. His approach avoids an over-emphasis on participation as a goal in itself. It helps us to understand that participation is just a means to incorporate local perspectives and that social processes influence the result of the interaction between knowledges. Furthermore, it makes clear that such interaction creates a new context in which knowledge is embedded. Instead of alienating knowledge from context, as described by Bebbington (1993), the interaction between knowledges makes that local knowledge is re-contextualised. This is an important insight since development cooperation is all about interactions between donors, various change agents and development actors in multiple contexts.

But is it actually possible to create a space where local and scientific knowledge meet and enter into a dialogue? What would such a space look like and can different knowledges really meet there on equal terms? Can this possibly result in a development dynamics that takes the form of a locally owned endogenous process in which a selective use is made of scientific knowledge? If this can be done anywhere, surely it must be in post apartheid South Africa. More than anywhere else, in South Africa the struggle has resulted in a keen awareness of the exploitative nature of scientific knowledge and the authentic value of indigenous knowledge. It is to a study of the South African experience that we now turn. In doing so, we shift back again from reflecting on knowledge to reflecting on policy making.

Indigenous knowledge policy in South Africa

In 1994, the apartheid system in South Africa was abolished and a new democratic regime was put into place. After decennia or even centuries of domination by a white minority, all South Africans were now free to exercise their rights and to express their identities. The new government put effort into creating a new South African national identity, in order to ensure the necessary stability. At the same time, it had to look for ways to accommodate the cultural diversity of the country, assuring that no socio-cultural group would be disadvantaged on the basis of ethnic identity. This historical background has important consequences for the way the country deals with local knowledge. In South Africa, the term Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) is the most common term to address the issue of local knowledge. The value of IKS and its potential for development purposes is widely recognised at policy levels as well as in academic circles.

South Africa adopted a policy framework for indigenous knowledge systems in 2004 and is currently on its way to implement its different components. The IKS policy framework involves a range of departments, each of them undertaking activities in its own domain. To enhance coordination of the policy, an inter-departmental committee was established, chaired by the Department of Science and Technology (DST). The National Indigenous Knowledge Systems Office (NIKSO), which falls under DST, is responsible for the overall coordination of the implementation process. NIKSO's mission is to create an innovative society through indigenous knowledge development and management for sustainable development. The policy framework captures four domains of intervention and for each domain a particular government department was appointed to be in the lead of implementation (see Box).

Indigenous Knowledge Systems - Policy Framework

Affirmation of African cultural values in the face of globalisation

The policy document indicates the need for recognition and protection of indigenous knowledge. The new democracy and the new constitution provide for cultural, religious and linguistic rights. The value of indigenous knowledge needs to be acknowledged in order to establish an African identity and an African intellectual personality. Furthermore, the process of globalisation is identified as a potential threat to cultural diversity. Lead department to implement activities in this domain is the Department for Arts and Culture. Activities include the establishment of museums and libraries in each of the nine provinces, which will demonstrate the culture, folklore, artefacts and crafts that can be found in that particular province. Also, the department will work on copy rights and patents for indigenous crafts and music.

Development of services provided by traditional healers

Traditional healers play an important role in providing health services to the people in South-Africa. This role is recognised and efforts are made to somehow formalise their activities. The Department of Health (DoH) is in charge of this field, following the guidelines laid down in the Traditional Medicine Strategy of the World Health Organisation (WHO). The Department promulgated the Traditional Health Practitioners Act and established a Council of Traditional Health Practitioners. This council functions as a regulatory body and oversees the quality of the work of traditional healers by issuing certificates and setting quality standards. In addition, research in traditional medicines is stimulated and related to marketing. Research funding comes from both the DoH and the National Research Foundation (NRF, the national funding agency for scientific research).

Contribution of indigenous knowledge to the economy

In this domain, the policy framework indicates the potential of indigenous knowledge in the National System of Innovation, employment generation and poverty eradication (2004: 15). Lead department in this field is the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI), which has to create incentive mechanisms to use IKS for innovations. DTI is responsible for the design and implementation of regulations for intellectual property rights.

Interfacing with other Knowledge Systems

This domain considers IKS to be an important resource for developing innovative products and services. South Africa offers a rich resource of indigenous plants, which can create a competitive advantage in the development of its economy. In practice, this means that indigenous knowledge needs to be mediated through scientific research. DST is responsible for implementing policy in this domain. It has created the IKS Fund at the NRF. This fund is meant for research on medical plants and other aspects of IKS. The national office, NIKSO, tries to establish contacts with different universities, to stimulate them to carry out research on IKS. With this strategy NIKSO aims to produce tangible results that prove that IKS can contribute to development. Apart from this emphasis on research, it pays substantial attention to documenting IKS and creating frameworks that regulate agreements between researchers and local communities. DST created Information Transfer Agreements and Material Transfer Agreements, which have to be agreed upon by both researchers and local communities to distribute the benefits of eventual products.

In a separate chapter on the national education system, the IKS policy framework points out that the Department of Education (DoE) should play a role in integrating IKS into school curricula. The document mentions several White Papers in the field of education and science in which references are made to cultural values and to the 2001 Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy. However, in contrast with the four domains described above, no further strategies are proposed. The DoE does have a few programmes on IKS, but seems to have taken a position on its own.

All in all the South African policy on indigenous knowledge systems is quite ambitious and covers a lot of ground. It relates to identity and cultural self-awareness as well as to innovation and marketing and it even seems to touch upon the interfacing of various knowledge systems. How does this work out in practice? How effective is this approach and can it really succeed in overcoming the legacy of the apartheid era? Of course we have to keep in mind that the policy framework is fairly new. It requires much coordination of activities that are carried out by several departments. Both these implementing departments and the coordinating office suffer from limited resources. But some observations can nevertheless be made.

Due to historical reasons South African discourse is highly politicised on anything 'ethnic' or 'cultural'. All departments that have any dealings with the IKS policy framework acknowledge that indigenous knowledges are valuable to the country. Yet the concept represents a difficult and sensitive domain and this has effects on how the policy framework is perceived. For instance, different departments disagree on what to consider as indigenous knowledge and what not, or whom to include among the indigenous knowledge holders. Thus, while the political climate in general is in favour of stimulating diversity in culture and knowledge, one is very careful in what to stimulate and what not. This sensitivity probably explains the fact that the policy framework does not spell out a clear definition of

indigenous knowledge systems. The resulting ambivalence allows for diverse interpretations of what is at stake and diverse strategies for avoiding sensitive political debates.

The education system: Struggling with diversity

When it comes to cultural diversity, the main players are the Department of Arts and Culture, stressing the importance of African values, and the Department of Education. During the apartheid regime, the education system and the school curricula were important instruments through which the government legitimised and enforced the supremacy of the white population. Logically, it was one of the first things to be radically changed after the fall of the regime in 1994. The school curriculum was turned upside down and history books were rewritten. In addition, as a guiding principle the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy came out in 2001. It was compiled by a special Working Group on Values in Education, which took the values that were laid down in the new Constitution (1996) as a point of departure. The Manifesto sets out six values that the education system should promote; equity, tolerance, multilingualism, openness, accountability and social honour.

Since 1994 the national school curriculum has been amended several times and reference is made to the value of indigenous knowledge systems. This means that there should actually be attention for it in schools. In practice, however, such attention is very limited. Hardly any teaching material has been developed and the issue is not part of the teacher training curriculum. Teachers feel ill-equipped to deal with cultural diversity and to discuss the comparative value of cultures. Content-wise, it is not at all clear how indigenous knowledge systems relate to the school curriculum. Such attention as is being given is limited to certain aspects of indigenous culture, mainly of an artistic or folkloristic nature. Despite the tremendous progress that has been made in restructuring and modernising the educational sector, integration of indigenous knowledge in school curricula seems to be avoided. Focusing on relatively harmless folklore seems to be an effective way of side-stepping dangerous political grounds.

Research activities: Politics in the laboratory

An equally effective strategy, used by both researchers and policy makers, is to adopt a technical focus on the content of IKS for economic purposes. This approach is followed by many of the natural sciences and research institutes; but also in policy circles one may find IKS approached as a resource. In the IKS policy

framework we see this reflected in the attention for the contributions indigenous knowledge can make to the economy. Research into traditional medicines is predominantly directed at technical aspects, the identification of active elements that can be developed into regular medicines. This offers opportunities for the commercialisation of traditional medicines.



Research is carried out on the use of indigenous plants as ingredients for medicine, food and cosmetics. For example, the CSIR in Pretoria examines indigenous plants that were identified by traditional healers for their medicinal use. The CSIR isolates the different compounds of the plant to examine which elements are active, which could be toxic and which could be used for the development of medicines in mainstream science. In this way, indigenous knowledge is validated by scientific methods. A next step is to commercialise the active compounds.

But sensitive political dimensions are never far away. The question as to which plants are considered to be indigenous in the first place, carries a political load. At the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), indigenous plants are examined for their nutritious or toxic characteristics. One of the scientists prefers to look upon local flora in the sense of every plant that is presently growing in South Africa. But this is not a generally accepted point of view. One of the criteria used for considering a plant to be indigenous is that it should have its origins in South Africa. This means that some do not perceive the seeds and plants that came with the Indian immigrants starting from the late 19th century as indigenous. They refuse to examine such plants, even if they have clear nutritious value. The politics of history then dictate what is indigenous. 'But', as our scientist exclaimed, 'history cannot feed our people!'

Epistemological difficulties equally bedevil the implementation of the IKS policy. It is often felt that elements of indigenous knowledge should not be isolated, but must be seen as part of a culture or worldview that should not be broken down into composite components. In focusing on the active compounds of plants, the use of plants is subjected to a one-dimensional logic of cause and effect. This is not the way traditional healers experience their knowledge of herbal medicines. They have a much more holistic approach to diseases and the person who is ill. They do

not see the disease as separated from the individual, his body, his soul, his history, or his family and ancestors. In this approach, and in direct contradiction to Boerhaave, persons who have the same disease may receive completely different treatment by the traditional healer. Implicitly, this echoes the 17th century Japanese criticism of western science.

Interfacing knowledges

As a respondent from the National Research Foundation indicated, validating the medicinal value of traditional plants in laboratories does not contribute to a further clarification of the concept of Indigenous Knowledge Systems. It does not contribute to a debate, nor does it present arguments to policy makers on the basis of which a comprehensive policy can be designed. The emphasis on extracting the useful, marketable components from indigenous plants avoids entering into the debate about cultural differences, diverging expressions of cultural identity, different epistemologies and inequality between cultural groups.

This brings us to the issue of interfacing different knowledge systems. One would expect an interface to reflect a situation in which different actors and their discourses meet and negotiate (Oosterom 2007). In the IKS policy framework, however, the emphasis is put on the opportunities offered by IKS to develop new products and services, in particular the development of new medicines. This implies that interfacing bears the meaning of extracting those aspects of IKS that can be used in other contexts. This does not seem to be essentially different from the way western science dissected and appropriated local knowledge for its own purposes. Is this not the man made monster with the poking eyes dissecting the body of knowledge bit by bit?

In this context it is worth reflecting upon the fact that the national coordinating office NIKSO was placed under DST. Until recently, activities on IKS were implemented by the culture division of the large Department of Arts, Science and Culture. This department was split up into two separate departments, the Department for Arts and Culture and the Department for Science and Technology. The IKS unit was shifted from culture to science.

As it was explained to the authors, this shift was meant to raise the status of indigenous knowledge and to facilitate the valorisation of indigenous knowledge for economic purposes. But it is intriguing to ponder the deeper significance of this. Does not this shift to the science department reflect an attempt to bestow

some of the status of science (knowledge that is objectively verified and universally valid) on indigenous knowledge? And likewise, does not this shift away from the culture department reflect an attempt to free indigenous knowledge from the realm of cultural particularism? Moreover, is this not a political attempt to classify indigenous knowledge as 'global' rather than 'local', albeit without properly emancipating indigenous knowledge and clarifying its relation to other knowledges? And if so, does this not run counter to very ideal of valuing cultural diversity?

Drawing such conclusions too hastily would certainly be unwarranted. But such questions serve to draw the attention to both the political and epistemological intricacies of this policy. By and large it is difficult to avoid the impression that so far the South African policy on indigenous knowledge has failed to squarely address the question of articulating various knowledge systems. NIKSO hopes to quickly valorise indigenous knowledge from various sectors so as to prove the value of indigenous knowledge for development. But in doing so it may well unintentionally alienate such knowledge from its cultural context and unconsciously relegate this context as irrelevant.

Shying away from such questions, by either scientists or policy makers, is not the way forward. It is therefore very encouraging that we have also come across attempts where such intricacies are not side-stepped but addressed head-on. For example, the Durban School of Medicine has taken the initiative to create a space where research teams consisting of both medical doctors and traditional healers carry out research in traditional medicines. Traditional healers are given the opportunity to influence the research agenda. In case doctors and healers disagree, a solution is sought through dialogue. As one respondent put it: 'None of us should think we always know best. That is our first principle'.

This form of collaboration creates a space where different epistemologies can meet and articulate. In addition, the Durban Department of Health organised a Memorandum of Understanding between clinics and traditional healers. This is based on the perception that people will visit both institutions for counselling and that this is embedded in social and cultural contexts. The memorandum foresees in procedures that facilitate the communication between the clinics and the healers. Durban is now referred to as the 'Healing City', with all the multi-layered connotations such a designation unavoidably has in the South African context.

Such developments are breathtaking and it is encouraging to see that South Africa has the courage to create room for initiatives of this kind. One hopes that many more such initiatives will take shape. And one equally hopes that such initiatives themselves will become the very object of reflection and research. There would seem to be a role for the National Research Foundation to play. But this example amply illustrates that is not merely a research matter. For various knowledge systems to articulate and communicate, one needs a truly transdisciplinary endeavour in which researchers, policy makers and practitioners join hands and in which knowledge bearers from various backgrounds meet.

Conclusions

Local knowledge turns out to be rather complex, both conceptually and as a policy device. We have seen a number of factors complicating the identification of local knowledge, its development and its owners. We have also seen that articulating local and scientific knowledge does not come about automatically and requires a negotiation space. Yet, despite these difficulties, there is no escaping the conclusion that different forms of knowledge do exist, that they are valid and valuable in their own contexts, and that they matter for development.

The globalisation of western culture with its claims to the universal validity of its values and knowledge, tends to obscure the existence of other values and knowledges. Without discarding the value of scientific knowledge and its many accomplishments, we now recognise that in the end scientific knowledge, like any other knowledge, is a social construct. The generation of such knowledge is embedded in a specific socio-cultural tradition, influencing both its content and its social significance. The scientific method historically developed in Western Europe under the particular circumstances of emerging and rapidly expanding capitalism. As we have indicated, the very claims to objectivity and universal validity of scientific knowledge reflect the same logic that underlies commercial thinking. Moreover, this hegemonic character of scientific knowledge reflects the aggressive and expansive character of capitalism itself. The acclaimed superiority of scientific knowledge echoes the idea of a single superior model for development.

In short, the objectivity of scientific knowledge stands unmasked and the delusion of its universality is challenged. Such awareness makes us realise that we should not discard prematurely bodies of knowledge other than modern science. This can help us avoid repeating the mistake of naively assuming that western

development is the only type of development (Mehmet 1999). This again is a prerequisite for trying to unlock the potential of cultural diversity in the interest of charting alternative and varied development paths through mobilising and articulating multiple knowledges.

But we have seen that development discourse and practice are no exception to the rule of granting a dominant position to scientific knowledge. Policy makers and practitioners in development cooperation encounter different knowledges and perspectives on development. But they are not always able to acknowledge, let alone appreciate, alternative visions of reality. Chambers (1995) rightly asks the question 'Whose reality counts?' As Long (2001) explains, the recognition of different knowledges is complicated by social processes involving power and (mis)representation. Indeed, while terms like 'participation' and 'ownership' are celebrated by practitioners and policy-makers alike, one may question to what extent these ideals are truly employed in development practice.

Knowledge is not politically neutral, nor is its context. In the context of development various knowledges meet, but they do not meet on a level playing field. Differences of power and perception are such that dominant players may not even be aware that other knowledges exist. Moreover, groups and communities that have been marginalised in the process of global development, may have internalised dominant thinking up to the point where they are no longer even aware of being knowledge bearers in their own right. This poses a challenge to the design of adequate policy frameworks, aiming to incorporate various knowledges.

Issues for policy makers

The case of South Africa illustrates once more that the environment in which knowledge is developed, matters. The IKS strategy reveals two dimensions. First, the value of local or indigenous knowledge is emphasised for the sake of identity building in the post-apartheid era. However, as we have seen this remains a very sensitive issue and not all forms of local knowledge can easily be 'stimulated'. Like knowledge itself, policies targeted at knowledge development and the use of knowledge are not politically neutral. Secondly, local knowledge is seen as an instrument for economic development. However, this view is limited to research focusing on the extraction of local knowledge and its potential for commercial use. In the South African case, knowledge is de-contextualised. It loses meaning and significance in the process and one may doubt whether the benefits of new

products trickle down to the local level.

The government hardly contributes to a debate about how multiple knowledges negotiate or interact, or about the social dimension of such interaction. This is not surprising, as it would touch upon the status of different knowledge holders and upon relations of power and prestige. Nevertheless, the Department of Health seems to be active in searching for forms of integration of knowledges. It tries to find ways to formalise the work of traditional health practitioners, recognizing the importance of the position of traditional healers in society. All in all, this case demonstrates the complexity of the local knowledge issue with its many political, cultural, and economic aspects.

Creating a policy framework aimed at incorporating different knowledges on equal terms is not at all an easy thing to do. As we have stated, knowledge is dynamic and ever-changing. Different knowledges have always met and interacted. The question is how best to organise this, and on whose terms (and *in* whose terms) the potential of (indigenous) knowledge is to be unlocked? How to articulate various knowledges and how to avoid that in such a process indigenous knowledges are de-contextualised without being re-embedded in a new context where all stakeholders have a say? If not carefully dealt with, local knowledge loses value and significance.

Clearly, without proper preconditions different knowledges will not meet and communicate on equal terms. It is the role of policy makers to create such preconditions. It is the role of policy makers and development interventionists to create spaces for local voices to be heard and to be empowered to speak. Consequently, we call for the empowerment of the marginalised and for participatory approaches in the interest of mobilising local knowledge for development. As explained, this plea is not at all new within the discourse of development policy. But maybe our understanding of what is involved is somewhat less naïve. We realise that policy making on indigenous knowledge cannot avoid trespassing on the theory of knowledge. Certainly, more is at stake than a mere intervention methodology based on participatory planning and assessment.

As our analysis demonstrates, mobilising local knowledge for endogenous development is not to be confused with studying indigenous knowledge in terms of a scientific conceptual framework. Unlocking the potential of local knowledge

for development calls for the articulation of multiple knowledges and not just the analysis of one knowledge in terms of the other. This implies embarking upon the twisting road of intercultural dialogue. Such an endeavour requires more than applying a participatory intervention methodology or even the methodical relativism of social anthropology. Temporarily suspending modernistic value systems and thought categories may help to better understand cultures in their own terms; it is not sufficient to enter into true dialogue.

Intercultural dialogue requires the articulation, indeed the negotiation, of different epistemologies and the meeting of alternative visions on development. It implies a conscious effort to relate one's knowledge to different contexts and a willingness to experience that knowledge will change in the process. It requires a sensitivity to what knowledge may do when inserted in another context. In fact, it demands an attitude of respect for and active interest in other worldviews. As Nowotny et al. state:

There can no longer be universal objectivity – or only at a highly abstract, and practically meaningless, level. There can no longer be established canons of rules which must be followed in order to guarantee scientific reliability. Instead, scientific objectivity will have to be re-defined to become localized and contextualized; it will have to be shaped to anticipate the specific contexts where it will be challenged.

If this paper has made one thing clear, it is that articulating different knowledges is a thoroughly political endeavour. In mobilising local knowledge for development one enters the battlefield of the politics of knowledge. If we are really willing to stimulate negotiation between multiple knowledges, we need to recognise the notion of objectivity for what it is, a specific social and historical construct reflecting specific values and interests. We need to move beyond objectivity to negotiate knowledges for development.

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Land And Agrarian Reform In South Africa: Caught By Continuities - DPRN Six



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Introduction

Land and agrarian reform is often implemented with a view to breaking with the past, particularly by transforming ownership of land and its uneven distribution. The post 1994 land and agrarian reform in South Africa began with a similar agenda. In fact land reform was launched and implemented even before Apartheid was dissolved and the new ANC-led government took control. The Apartheid government under F.W. De Klerk initiated some kind of limited land reform during the period from 1990 to 1993.

In March 1991, De Klerk's government repealed the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts. In November of the same year it appointed an Advisory Committee on Land Allocation (later renamed as the Commission on Land Allocation). The Commission made recommendations on state land disposal and the restoration of land to those disposed of formal land rights. This happened first in Natal, where dispossessed communities in Richards Bay (van Leynseele and Hebinck, 2008), Roosboom, Charlestown and Alcockspruit got their land rights formally restored in the years 1992-93 through this process (Walker 2004). The strengths and weaknesses of the pre-1994 land reforms were replicated post-1994 in the form of a lack of 'coherent state procedures and institutional inadequacies' to manage the land reform process (Walker 2004; 2005).

This paper explores the institutional dynamics by pursuing the argument that contemporary land reform policy and practices are characterised by continuities, rather than by discontinuities. Given the radical policy discourse of Reconstruction and Development, political and economic transformation, one may expect more discontinuities to occur than continuities. The shift from the early emphasis on human rights to paternalism and 'productionism' (from LRAD to SLAG) is testimony of what we would brand as continuities. The assumption of our investigation is that during Apartheid land use on white-owned farms was production and market oriented. Discontinuities no doubt occur; towards the end of the paper we will provide a few examples that show that land once designated for white ownership and 'commercial agriculture' is now being redeveloped into land owned by black people who by and large use the land – quoting an informant one of us spoke to in November 2007 in the Eastern Cape – 'the African way'.**[i]**

The organising notion of continuity (and discontinuity) is useful for an analysis of changes over time. Continuity refers to the state of uninterrupted flow or coherence, or the property of a continuous and connected period of time (Oxford English Dictionary). Synonyms are persistence, enduringness, durability, lastingness, strength or permanence by virtue of the power to resist stress or force. The continuities that will be explored in this paper relate to the agricultural expert system that has gradually evolved in South Africa and which plays a prominent role in the design of land reform. The persistence of continuities would then indicate the extent to which dramatic transformations of the institutional infrastructure in agriculture have occurred. Historical analysis allows us to underline the continuity of prescriptions and modes of ordering in the past and present. Distinctions between the pre-apartheid, apartheid and post-apartheid periods belie the existence of important continuities.

The setting is the Eastern Cape Province, notably the regions formerly known as Ciskei and Transkei. The case material to underline the argument of continuity rather than discontinuity are entrenched in the prescriptive policies of the state with regard to land use as well as in the multiple responses of land users. Such policies are largely informed by agricultural expert opinions with regard to land use such that they have helped to create and order South Africa's agrarian landscapes. The Glen Grey Act of 1894 evolved into Betterment Planning practices dictating and attempting to change land use patterns. Current land reform policies aim to prescribe similarly land use by paternalistically fixing land reform subsidies to forms of land use that fit into the category of 'commercial

agriculture'. Like James (2007), we intend to pursue the provoking argument that the current Department of Land Affairs (DLA) and National and Provincial Departments of Agriculture are rather similar to their Apartheid era predecessors, the Department of Native Affairs and the Native Agricultural and Lands Branch.

Land reform experiences reveal contestations over such prescriptions because of generic solutions, sometimes casted in inflexible ways, incompatible and out of sync with the desires and needs of people. Emergent land use patterns on land reform farms vary enormously, ranging from betterment-like situations to land for settlement. Elements of betterment-like planning can be found in the proposals in the Chatha restitution settlement and Dwesa-Cwebe Development Plan for the 'rationalization' of land use in the communal areas outside Dwesa-Cwebe. The continuity lies in the normative role of development planners, agrarian scientists and the thinking in terms of man-land ratio (or perceived economic units).

Through examining past and present conflicts between the state and peasantry in South Africa, and the institutions and social actors that bridge this divide, the paper argues that the cores of such conflicts are knowledge contestations, particularly between the state's bureaucrats, the experts they hire and local people.

We warn, however, against the dangers of an analysis solely focused on experts (i.e. consultants, academics, policy makers); one should not ignore the roles of other social actors. Experts may attempt to direct and prescribe the course of events (and these often occur in situations that can be understood as intervention), but they certainly do not have the power to structure (or determine) the behaviour of a range of other social actors. Agency is not simply embedded in the expert system, but is situated as well among social actors such as farmers, land users, land reform beneficiaries and extension agents (Long 2001). A range of studies have demonstrated that they contest and rework such intervention programmes. Long (ibid.) explored these processes and pointed at the continuous adaptation, struggle and meshing of cultural elements and social practices (see also van Leynseele and Hebinck 2008). Technology development and transfer necessarily involves an interface between the world of designers and experts and that of the users (Hebinck 2001). Focusing on how farmers and other social actors redesign external prescriptions and thus how adaptations take place, may enable us to explain why certain modes of utilisation proposed by experts are often

contested by local people (Arce 2003; Van der Ploeg 2003; 2008; Mango and Hebinck 2004).

In a concluding note, ideas about alternative scenarios will be explored. It is imperative that such alternatives need to take into account the continuities in expert thinking within state institutions.

Agricultural expert systems and knowledge

Experts, expert knowledge and networks play a key role in contemporary agriculture. Likewise they are key to the implementation of land reform, certainly so in situations like South Africa where consultants have come to play an important role in the design of business plans for land reform project and their beneficiaries.

Giddens (1990: 27) defines an expert system as 'a system of technical accomplishment [and] professional expertise that organises large areas of the material and social environments in which we live today'. Besides size, more importantly perhaps is that the agricultural expert system represents a set of *practices* by which the development of the agricultural sector is directed: problems are identified and solutions forged, proposed and implemented. Knowledge (and thus the control over what constitutes knowledge) plays a key role in any expert system. Van der Ploeg (2003: 229) in his analysis of Dutch agriculture adds another specific characteristic to agricultural expert knowledge. It does not concern so much 'agriculture as it is now, let alone (recent) agricultural history. The expertise involves agriculture as it is expected to look in the future'. An expert system thus defines the trajectory and means to arrive at this future. This provides experts with the power to create 'the rules that define and authorise participants', and which distinguish them from those who are in their way. The expert system embodies the knowledge and expertise that imply and define agency: rules, participants and resources. Needless to say, such knowledge is neither neutral nor objective, but rather normative and regulatory; it has the power to identify (and label accordingly) winners and losers, and thus the power to order the agricultural sector in South Africa, now and in the future.

The agricultural expert system in South Africa consists of an extremely condensed set of networks linking together state structures at national, provincial and municipal level, various professional organisations and individuals. Most experts have in common that their past training has been in Faculties of Agriculture (notably of the Universities of Pretoria, Stellenbosch, Free State, KwaZulu-Natal

and Fort Hare), and that they gained experience in state-funded institutions such as the Agricultural Research Council. In addition, most experts have a background in either commercial, large scale agriculture or in so-called homeland agriculture.

To pursue a critical analysis of knowledge and experts, the analysis has to take into account two ingredients that are situational. One of analytical ingredients is the positioning of expert knowledge within the political project of the state and society. The second is the particular way in which agrarian science has evolved.

The development of an expert system cannot be separated from political and economic relations and broader questions of political economy. State interventions in agriculture in South Africa, for example, have often related to attempts to address scarcities of labour and land. A substantial body of literature has addressed this dimension of the agrarian question (of capital and labour) in South Africa (Bernstein 1998; 2007; Ntsebesa and Hall 2007; Atkins 2007; James 2007). This literature, however, does not really address the political economy of knowledge and has ignored the key role agricultural knowledge plays in development. A relatively recent body of STS literature (Science, Technology and Society studies) has engaged with the relationship between politics, knowledge and power. Scientists, because of their position as network builders, play a key role in the strategic positioning of science in society and politics. Latour's (1983) treatment of the production of knowledge by Pasteur and his group is interesting in that he shows that experts like Pasteur often succeed in deriving political positions and influence from their scientific breakthroughs. The Green Revolution would not have been there without the political and scientific prestige of Norman Borlaugh (Hebinck 2001). Nor would Agroforestry have been what it is now without Pablo Sanchez, the founding father of the World Centre for Agroforestry (ICRAF). Beinart (2003: 336) calls the development of the expert system in South Africa 'unilateral [state] interventions and centralised planning'. Beinart argues that, particularly during the early years of the 20th century and after that time, the agricultural expert system became associated in rhetoric and policy with attempts to forge a unified and modern white nation. Heinrich Sebastian Du Toit, a highly committed senior official in the Department of Agriculture, played a key role in the construction of an agricultural expert discourse and practice. Du Toit had travelled worldwide and his experiences convinced him that the advances of science should be incorporated in farming, which would both stimulate production and secure conditions for a proper reproduction and till the land in

difficult and marginal environments. These advances needed to spread not just to white farmers but specifically to the mass of white, Afrikaner landowners. Du Toit felt that many of them were bypassed by the current department's research and publicity (Beinart 2003: 237). Agricultural development, experts and expertise, Afrikaner nationalism and modernisation became intertwined. The frame of reference for most agricultural experts thus became the white settler farm whose social and cultural environment was familiar to them. Black farming or peasant agriculture was virtually absent or unknown to agricultural experts, despite the fact that in the early years of interventions some experts drew on peasant farming techniques.

The positioning of expert knowledge *vis-à-vis* the state has allowed experts, whether academics, retired academics acting as consultants or former officials of Departments of Agriculture to give directions to pre-apartheid, apartheid and post-apartheid agrarian policies and simultaneously shape the domain of agrarian sciences. The importance of this is that such knowledge generation and institutional culture has produced the current crop of experts but continues to train the next crop of experts, thereby reproducing expert practice and knowledge.

The South African expert system participates in this way in a political project that needs participants (in this case land reform beneficiaries and willing sellers) and supporters (political organisations, the broader public, key state apparatuses such as the Ministry of Finance) and which has as its main objective to connect the many different projects of the landless, the poor, the upcoming black entrepreneurs, corporate agribusiness groups, banks, merchants, consumers and last but not least the polity.

The second ingredient for a situational analysis of expert knowledge is that agrarian sciences and knowledge over time have moved from a local perspective and localised practice to a particular institutional practice. During the early years of agronomy, for instance, its practice was clearly embedded in the context of and in close relationship with the everyday practices of farming. However, it became more and more disconnected from that daily practice and gradually moved from the field to experimental farms, research stations and university farms and laboratories. Van der Ploeg (2003) understands such a transformation as the processes of '*scientification of agriculture*' which drives many of the current externalisation and commoditisation processes in agriculture. Latour (1983)

singles out an essential element of that process in Louis Pasteur's approach to find a medical solution to anthrax in France: *decontextualisation*. This signifies that solutions for problems such as animal diseases, pests, and low crop yields and so on are produced in environments that can be controlled for influencing factors. Beinart (2003) pointed at the networked nature of the development of South African science regarding farming, conservation, soils, plants, animals, etc. Networking – travelling abroad and inviting peers from the UK and USA to South Africa – has played a major role in separating expert knowledge from local environments, allowing the decontextualised importing of concepts and notions of farming that had developed in very different conditions.

Decontextualisation and scientification together have led to a scientific practice that is largely (perhaps totally in certain situations) alienated from the local cultural, social, economic and political situation. Van der Ploeg (2003), while pointing at the tight relationship between such sciences and policy environments, argues that empirical realities are reduced to virtual, non-existing realities, often expressed in aggregate terms such as averages.

Prescriptions and continuities: From the Glen Grey Act to land reform

Contemporary expert recommendations on African agriculture echo 19th century policies. The Glen Grey Act (Cape Act No. 25 of 1894) is generally known as a piece of legislation aimed at limiting the amount of land Africans could hold. It introduced the 'one man one plot' principle and most of its measures were extended to the former Ciskei and Transkei areas.**[ii]** The Act is one of the first examples of regulating land use by fixing size (about 3 *morgen* in the former Ciskei and about 5 and larger in the former Transkei). Limiting the size of plots ensured that landholders had to seek additional income off-farm and making the plots indivisible destined all but the eldest son of the landowner to find off-farm livelihoods (Yawitch 1982; Beinart 2003). Land surveyors and agricultural officers subdivided the land into three land use categories, each with specific tenure arrangements: 1) land allotted for crops, 2) land intended for residential purposes and 3) commonage. The first two categories were allocated in combination under a quitrent arrangement. Title deeds were issued and access was secured through annual payments.**[iii]** The remaining land was designated as 'commonage' for cattle to graze, for people to collect firewood and other services the environment provided. All this was specified on the title deeds. This neat, explicit and sometimes exclusionary distinction provided in the eyes of the colonial expert

system an opportunity for the viable cultivation of crops and livestock. The quitrent and payments served the purpose of securing notions of property as individually-owned, as well as drawing people into the monetary economy. Raising taxes also increased rural Africans' need for cash, further pressing them to seek paid employment (Lewis 1984; Bundy 1988; Switzer 1993). This pattern of land use and institutional arrangements contrasted starkly with peoples' previously existing patterns of settlement and use of the landscape (Bundy 1998, Schapera 1937). The aspect of individual land tenure in the Grey Act cannot be generalised, however.

Until the early 20th century, the state had only actively intervened to address access to land and labour. In the early decades of the 20th century, however, the state began to aggressively support white-dominated agriculture: 'Between 1910 and 1935, there were 87 Acts passed ... rendering permanent assistance to farmers' (Mbongwa et al. 1996: 48). These policies institutionalised a marketing policy aimed at raising agricultural prices well above competition level, assisted poorer whites in their attempt to rationalise their enterprises economically, and provided agricultural credit. As part of this support, the state began to develop an agricultural expert system through the establishment of a National Department of Agriculture in 1924 as well as a network of agricultural colleges and research stations in the country (Wilson 1975; Beinart 2003). Experimental farms and training colleges were established at Elsenburg (in 1917) in the Western Cape, Cedara in Natal, Fort Cox Agricultural College (early 1930s) in the Ciskei and Tsolo Agricultural College in the Transkei. The Tomlinson Report (1955: 74) narrated that the 'first Bantu agricultural school was only founded in 1905 (in the Transkei) and a special technical agricultural service in the Native Affairs department - the Native Agricultural and Lands Branch - was only brought into being in 1929'. Previously, the report mentions, various commissions had reported on destructive agricultural methods and their recommendations to teach the natives to use their land efficiently. The Faculty of Agriculture of University of Fort Hare played - and still does - a role in the implementation of these programmes by training students to advice people living in communal areas about modern farming (Morrow 2007).



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This expert system began to turn its eyes on the 'Native Areas' where land degradation in the form of soil erosion, denudation, and drying-up of springs began to receive governmental attention of the South African Government. The 1932 Native Economic Commission called for a development programme to *teach* Africans how to use their land more economically, and to halt resource degradation (Yawitch 1981). The 1936 Native Trust and Land Act No 18 provided the legal framework for the government interventions known as Betterment planning, involving the reclamation and rehabilitation of the 'Native Areas'. The ostensible key concern of early (1936 to 1950) betterment planning was to protect and rehabilitate the natural resource. Government introduced policies aimed at limiting and culling livestock numbers to address perceived denudation of the rangeland, and engaged in the construction of contour banks in an attempt to prevent soil erosion. Areas were designated as residential, arable and grazing land, and rural Africans were instructed (and often forced) to move into the designated residential areas. Implementation of the planning started in the late 1930s but was subject to much resistance, thus proceeding rather slowly (Switzer 1993; McAllister 1989; de Wet 1987; 1989; Beinart 2003; Hendricks 1989). While resistance was widespread, there are also examples of villages accommodating betterment ideas (i.e. rotational grazing) and embracing some other aspects (i.e. provision of schools, roads and other facilities).

While a certain variant of a Malthusian view may underlay the conception of betterment planning as a check on environmental degradation (Trollope 1985; Laker et al. 1975; Tomlinson Commission 1955), population dynamics (rather than population growth per se: Switzer 1993) were the context for environmental problems. Labour migration and land tenure had pushed rural people off the land rather than facilitating their continued presence on the land, which would allow them to care for the land and monitor degradation (see Hebinck and Monde 2007).

Experts like Trollope (1985) maintained that soil erosion is the outcome of the interplay between a series of factors such as tenure, population pressure, lack of education and skills, and a 'complete lack of sound scientific background'. Together these factors are seen to limit the understanding, acceptance and implementation of new and improved farming methods. The Laker Report (Laker et al. 1975) explains soil erosion repeatedly as incorrect land use and overstocking. Together with poor soils and inadequate moisture, yields are poor and can only be low. Stocking rates should be brought in line with prevailing veld conditions. **[iv]** Contestation of the restrictions placed on livestock numbers may be explained by contrasting views about carrying capacity and the significance of cattle. Limiting stock numbers and subsequent measures to cull were instigated by agricultural experts' view that overstocking ruined the land and weakened cattle. The widely used system of kraaling among both white and black farmers was seen as the prime example of ignorant farming causing overgrazing as well as selective grazing. These views emerged during the great drought at the beginning of the 20th century, which brought environmental concerns to the fore within state circles and the general public (Wilson 1975; Beinart 2003). Beinart (1984) situates the contradicting views of local people and experts in the often contradictory nature of the relations between the state and the peasantry. Beinart (1984: 53) also points at the confrontation of ideas, knowledge and practices leading to 'a preoccupation amongst officials with soil erosion, the necessity of combating it, and the preservation of natural resources. The welfare of the soil often emerges as the cutting edge of justification for intervention in peasant agriculture'.

Such views were also sustained by the idea that communal (that is, homeland or black) farming (in contrast to private farming) entailed an inadequate exploitation of cattle as an economic resource. For government officials and experts, the very nature of peasant agriculture seemed destined to trigger environmental or ecological collapse. These views came to dominate expert thinking and fed betterment planning some twenty to thirty years later. Culling contradicted a 'peasant' logic that focused on maintaining as many stock as possible. For black farmers sheep and wool stood for means to pay their taxes. Social science researchers have shown that the 'peasant' principle of cattle rearing is embedded in the multiple meanings of cattle. Cattle represents both consumptive (*lobola*, milk, meat, status) and productive (draught power, manure, savings) values (Cousins 1996; Lahiff 2000; Shackleton et al. 2005; Ainslie 2005).

In summary, from the Glen Grey Act to Betterment Planning period, emerged a trend of interface and collaboration between knowledge and power, between the experts and the political elite whilst on the contrary, traditions of opposition, contestation and resistance by communities for whom solutions were prescribed were on the ascendance.

Land reform and knowledge networks in South Africa: Continuity or change?

The critical question now is whether current land reform practices have managed to escape from the expert system that emerged from a white settler frame of reference, which has ideologically favoured farming by Afrikaner landholders and that departed from normative and institutionalised views about how, and in what direction, agricultural development should proceed. Can we indeed identify continuities, and if so, how do these look?

Continuities, as we set out to argue, are embedded in practices of state institutions with regard to planning, personnel, relationships and policy languages. Clear continuities can be identified if one examines the state bureaucracy involved in land and agrarian reforms. During the period 1994-1999 the institutions of the new democratic state were predominantly manned by Apartheid era policymakers and planners. This situation continued despite the enrolling of NGO staff and other anti-apartheid organisations in the state's institutions. Moreover, during this period a predominantly white consultancy industry[v] played a key role in the planning and implementation of agrarian reforms. Each land reform project (redistribution and restitution) was assigned to consultants (i.e. experts) who compiled feasibility studies and prepared management and business plans. The consultants assessed the economic feasibility of the 'project' and drafted a plan for knowledge transfer (implicitly assuming an absence of knowledge among the beneficiaries). In many instances, the sophistication of business plans is not synchronised to the needs and wishes of beneficiaries, hence the implementation of a business plan often does not correlate with the plan. A recent study done on behalf of the Department of Land Affairs by the Sustainable Development Consortium indicated that the work of consultants, especially in the development of business plans, does not always cohere with community practices and aspirations (SDC 2007). Expert knowledge played and still plays a role *par excellence* in the *ordering of the future* of agriculture, and is an embodiment of the continuities that shape land and agrarian reforms in South Africa.

Land reform, scale and experts

The experiences of current land reform projects can be grouped into two categories, each with their own specific but contrasting patterns of continuity. The first category deals with farms that have been handed over to new owners without changes made to the farm enterprise. Size and scale of operation, production and business plans, input and output relations have remained virtually unaltered. In many cases, notably in the Western Cape, farms that are undercapitalised because of neglect and lack of investment are turned over to new owners who lack capital. Most of these now called land reform projects, are at the verge of bankruptcy. Continuity in such cases is also facilitated by the so-called mentors (often the previous owners) whose experience is firmly grounded in large-scale, capital-intensive farming. Interviews held by one of us in November 2005 with some of these mentors made this awfully clear. In some cases, new owners have appointed a farm manager to oversee the continuity of their farm (see de Wet 1998). The farm that is transferred is typically a farm that has evolved from a settler farm into a highly mechanised and capitalised farm run by an owner (or a company), assisted by a manager responsible for the workforce and daily operations.

Current land reform experiences point to two closely related issues which have as much to do with the expert system as a continuing factor in the land reform process, as with the complex relationships between actor and structure alluded to earlier. First, the current expert system strongly believes in the received wisdom that the future is fixed by the past. This becomes manifest in two simultaneously operating discourses that are best described as 'Leave existing land use intact' and 'Do not subdivide the farm into numerous smaller farms'. It is only the driver who has to change but not the car (to paraphrase Van der Brink 2003), which is a good characterisation of what has happened so far. Current land use, in this view, has proven its use and efficiency (and is well embedded in local and global networks of power) while small farms by and large are perceived as inherently inefficient. This is in contrast to experiences elsewhere that are well documented in the literature. [vi] Lipton and Lipton (1993) translate these and other experiences to the South African context. A smallholder model is preferred because of the relative efficiency of resource use on small farms. The Department of Land Affairs seems to favour this form of agriculture (DLA 1996; van der Brink et. al 2007), but it is unclear whether this is done out of genuine involvement or only to speed up the land redistribution process and/or to hide the failures so far.

Only time will tell.

The pro-small farm argument has been heavily critiqued. Sender and Johnston (2004) – James (2007) as well as Bernstein (1998, 2007) support their views – are particularly critical of a smallholder model because of the lack of changes in the political economy (e.g. the nature of relations between production and consumption, between small scale producers and agribusiness and other market institutions). The counter critique of this position is not just an academic exercise but forms an essential element in our critique of the agricultural expert system in South Africa and the many received wisdoms and orthodoxies.

1. Sender and Johnston (2004) explore the state of agriculture as it currently is; their analysis ignores the opportunities and potential for change or alternative trajectories.
2. range of classic studies (referred to in footnote 6) point at past dynamics of African and small scale agriculture, both now and in the past (see Bundy 1988). It is extremely important to analyse the reason for its decline rather than to assume it is inherent to agriculture and a structural character of agricultural development.
3. The argument of inefficiency and problems of small-scale or other forms of production are associated with distorted and missing markets. This is also explored by Ellis (1993) and such reasoning ignores the possibility that the nature of market-induced relations may be part of the problem. That markets can be redesigned and/or that one could debate the issue of what constitutes 'good' markets, is not taken into account in their analysis.
4. Similar to the South African experts and policy makers, Sender and Johnston apparently simply assume that 'commercial' or entrepreneurial (and preferably Black Economic Empowerment (i.e. commercial)) forms of production are productive, profitable and create employment. This is assumed and hardly tested through empirical and comparative research. The South African example shows the opposite: commercial farms are expulping labour rather than creating rural employment (Atkinson 2007).

It is important to point out that Sender and Johnston c.s. and South African experts *assume* large-scale and extensive farming to be *profitable* compared to agriculture practiced intensively and on a smaller scale. South Africa's expert system basically has only experience with large-scale extensive agriculture. Thus, they are either ignoring or lacking the imagination to figure what small-scale

agriculture would look like in a different agrarian structure or denying the capacity of smallholders to redesign and resists existing market and technology structures. The attraction of land- and labour-intensive agriculture, as Boserup (1981), Lipton and Lipton (1993) and van der Ploeg (2000; 2008) have pointed out, is that it is intrinsically driven by *increasing the value added* to the farm or field and in this way using as well as increasing the use of labour on the farm and in the local agrarian economy. A similar argument has been explored by Hebinck and Van Averbeke (2007) and Moyo (2007).

Scale is not to be mixed up with size only but should include aspects of quantity and quality of labour (e.g. knowledge), the nature of the labour process and the positioning *vis-à-vis* markets and technology. An important orthodoxy within land reform projects and among experts largely concerns scale and the associated worker-land ratio. A recent study clearly bears the permutations and continuities. The study was outsourced by the Department of Agriculture in Pretoria to a group of consultants (Agri-Africa). The research was called a 'Minimum Viable Farm Size Study' and the report of the study was initially submitted in January 2007. The study was intended to provide the Department with guidelines so as to be able to decide what constitutes a minimum viable farm in South Africa, in order to inform government policy on agrarian reforms. The terms of reference clearly indicated government intentions, which included de-concentrating land ownership and encouraging (more) intensive utilisation of land as well as the freeing of underutilised portions of land in large-scale farming operations for redistribution purposes. Instead of exploring the labour process in relation to size and livelihoods, the research focused on how to reduce farm sizes for land reform beneficiaries in order to create small farms. Furthermore, size was considered as only related to agro-ecological conditions and not to the livelihood needs of the beneficiaries. The report proposes small-scale farms as a policy solution to meet the needs for land of potential black farmers/beneficiaries of land reform. The study is silent about large-scale farms owned by white commercial farmers.

The reasons for proposing small-scale farms as a solution are premised on (i) the failure of farming settlements made under the Settlement and Land acquisition Grants during the initial phase of land and agrarian reforms in South Africa, and (ii) the history of successful African small-scale farmers at the end of the 18th century, implicitly suggesting that these successes can be repeated in our time. As the experts put it, South African agricultural history has evidence that small-

scale farming has played a major role in the livelihood of the rural populace. History shows that small-scale farming played a significant role in the development of South African diamond and gold mining industries by supplying food to these industries during the latter part of the 19th century. Productivity and innovation displayed by these farmers is widely acclaimed (Agri-Africa: 11).

The problem with such a view is partly that by invoking the past and adjusting profit margins to present market dynamics, the reasoning is that South Africa will have addressed policy questions around what constitutes the minimum viable farm size. Given that the intention of government (which contracted experts to do the research), was to check whether existing farms, owned by white commercial farmers, were the viable minimum for farming, and if not, how much land in excess of the minimum can be expropriated for land reform purposes, via an intended policy on the land ceilings, the study seems to have gone off the tangent to focus on the size of farms for land reform beneficiaries.



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Policy language and classifications schemes

Other orthodoxies that embody continuity are the dichotomised classification schemes experts use to order South Africa's agricultural sector. [vii] Subsistence farming versus commercial farming with the 'emergent farmer' as the bridging notion between the two extremes are continuously used in policy documents, peer reviewed articles in journals such as *Agrekon* and *Development Southern Africa* and reading material for students. This set of virtual categories not only reflects the (way the expert sees the) future but are based on assumptions that are seldom empirically tested. Modernisation of agriculture is the trajectory according to which agriculture should unfold. [viii] Many experts (continue to) view agricultural development as best realised in entrepreneurial or commercial farming, highly commoditised forms of agriculture thus seen as superior to and more advanced than forms of production hinging on substantially lower degrees of commoditisation. Peasant farming is often (wrongly) equated with subsistence

farming and is marginally linked to markets and thus holds no future. Within current land reform practices in South Africa the received wisdom is that the market is uncontested and continues to be the ideal domain for access to key agricultural resources (knowledge, technology, land and labour).

Creative and imaginative ideas of small-scale agriculture and its dynamics in terms of use of endogenous resources and the creation of value added, employment and social security is virtually absent. Expert knowledge ignores in this way a history of relatively vibrant forms of peasant production in South Africa and elsewhere (Lewis 1984; Bundy 1988; van Onselen 1996). Such experiences are, however, seen as irrelevant and unable to provide a trajectory to the future. Of course we need to realise that it is difficult to generalise: historical and comparative studies have shown that in certain conditions and circumstance small-scale or peasant agriculture may flourish while in others it may not. It is imperative for any expert system to identify such conditions. However, there is also a need to realise that more productive or more efficient does not necessarily translate into wealth (as opposed to poverty) and equality (as opposed to differentiation). Rich and poor are characteristics of both entrepreneurial and peasant forms of production.

Land reform experiences: Betterment-like responses

Another category of continuities in land reform consists of farm operations and land use resembling betterment planning. For example, the land use on a former commercial and white-owned farm visited in February 2006 was an almost perfect copy of Betterment Planning land use designs of the 1950s. The previous large maize field was subdivided into smaller units and individually managed (similar to the arable land allocations) while the pastures were designated as common grazing land with some form of grazing rotation scheme applied. Most of the new land owners *cum* land beneficiaries live elsewhere in the country (James 2007) and continue to straddle as in the past farming with labour migration and/or remittances, pensions and social grants. There are numerous LRAD farms in the country that reflect rather similar betterment-like continuities in terms of land use and/or situations where the land reform beneficiaries are not living or working on their newly acquired farm. On these farms there is substantial evidence of land reform beneficiaries actively redesigning the previously large farm. Below two cases will be explored in some detail with the view to examine the role of experts. The cases underline that neither the expert system, nor the

responses by land beneficiaries are homogeneous.

Chatha, Keiskamahoek

The story of the Chatha community restitution claim is well documented and widely publicised. Chatha community was forcibly removed from land previously occupied by them or their ancestors through the implementation of the policy of betterment planning from the early 1960s onwards. The policy was implemented under the provisions of sections of the Native Administration Act 38 of 1927 and the Native Trust and Land Act 18 of 1936, and the various proclamations made under these statutes. The implementation of the betterment policy resulted in the community being dispossessed of their rights in land. The right to manage and allocate the land was taken over by the State and resulted in families being moved from one piece of land to another, reduction in sizes of residential sites and arable fields as well as demarcation of residential sites from arable fields. The community also lost the right of control of the communal rangelands (see for more details De Wet 1995).

The community lodged a claim for compensation which was approved and the agreement was signed in 2000 (Minkley and Westaway 2006; De Wet and Mgujulwa 2006). The resolution and settlement of the claim between the community and the State contained three interesting elements.

1. Monetary compensation for losses incurred as a result of the dispossession to the 344 claimant families (which is half the total payment of R31 697);
2. A development plan for the community (utilising the remaining portion of the monetary compensation);
3. Transfer of ownership and control of communal rangelands back to the community.

The development plan included an agricultural plan for both stock farming and crop production for domestic and commercial purposes, a forest plan and one for eco-tourism and a multi-purpose community centre. Consultants were hired and paid to develop the plan and a project steering committee which included municipality, the commission, beneficiaries and the project managing NGO, the Border Rural Committee (BRC), was set up. Most interestingly, the transfer of the rangeland to the community was not based on any new stipulations regarding usage. The plots of land presently utilised by families for residential and arable purposes were preserved as they were in the past. The forestry project is

underway despite problems with coordination and adherence to time lines among stakeholders. The community hall has been constructed out of the restitution development funds. The old irrigation scheme has since 2000 been revitalised and is now producing food. Roads are being upgraded. All in all development work triggered off by restitution in Chatha provided employment for some 60 people ranging between R 40 to R 60 per day. However, from the beginning of the restitution process, political cleavages emerged, threatening the political sustainability of developments after restitution. De Wet and Mgululwa (2006) argue that these political cleavages are linked to the headmanship being contested already since the 1880s. Furthermore, the role of the BRC was such that it virtually managed the restitution process. All that this demonstrates, is how the continuities with the past weigh like a nightmare as a burden of the present. When development is caught by such continuities, restitution produces ambiguities.

Dwesa-Cwebe

Dwesa-Cwebe provides another dimension of continuity which points more at the expert systems' role. Even in a document compiled through a long participatory process, biases associated with the agricultural expert system and reflecting the legacies of Glen Grey and betterment are evident. Our analysis here focuses on the August 2003 draft of the Dwesa-Cwebe development plan. **[ix]**

In the Executive Summary, the plan repeatedly affirms the value of expert knowledge against local practices: 'the environment is not managed properly', 'there is a need for proper settlement planning' and 'proper land use management' (DCDP: 2). There are 'proper' ways to manage land and the environment, which are seen as lacking in the Dwesa-Cwebe communities. Indeed, the discussion of agriculture reads like a catalogue of community deficiencies, implying that the communities are not sufficiently dependent on the market: 'lack of insect and disease control, lack of input capital, lack of traction equipment ... lands not fenced' (35). To this is added 'lack of knowledge' (35). The list of 'key issues' links this lack of knowledge to the absence of contact with agricultural experts: 'lack of agricultural education and training [;] lack of support from Agricultural Government Departments' (36). It then makes its assumptions explicit: 'Communal system does not provide opportunities for commercial agriculture' (36).

Likewise, the quantitative terms in which the plan evaluates local agriculture and

livestock-keeping practices do not take into account farmers' objectives. Their methodology was based on simply asking farmers how many bags they harvested, an approach which has been proven to be prone to severe underestimation in the rural Transkei (see McAllister 2000). The plan's authors conclude that maize yields 'a R500 income per hectare, which is not profitable for the producer' (38) – without explaining the input costs that lead to the characterization as 'not profitable'. This characterization also neglects to consider that even R500 would be more than five percent of the annual income of a pension-dependent household, or that most purchased maize is bought on credit, effectively doubling its price (Fay 2003: 287-9). **[x]** This yield might not satisfy a commercial farmer producing for the market, but for a cash-strapped rural household, it is an important way of setting aside money for other needs.

The report also reflects the biases of the agricultural expert system in its discussion of livestock. Based on a classification of local veld types and estimates of 'carrying capacity' from the Department of Agriculture, the plan concludes that the area can support 1.7 large stock units per household, adding the patronizing comment that 'it will benefit the farmers in the long term if they adhere to this recommendation' (27). While no mention is made of culling, other recommendations echo those proposed for the communal areas for decades: 'The Department of Agriculture will have to educate the farmers on the long-term benefits to reduce their stock. ... The excess stock and unproductive animals will have to be sold and a breeding programme to breed animals with higher economic value should be introduced' (28). Again, the (faulty) assumption is that local farmers aim to maximize the economic value of individual animals in order to sell them. Likewise, the 'communal system of grazing' (36) is blamed for creating an 'inability to adapt stock numbers to grazing capacity' (36). Local practices are seen as failing by comparison to commercial farming practices: 'rotational grazing cannot be practised as there are no camp fences' (36).

Finally, the plan takes up a favourite topic of agricultural experts, individual land titling, ignoring the many known adverse consequences of incomplete tenure reforms in Africa. The budget allocates R3.4 million – nearly a quarter of the total funds the communities are receiving in their land restitution claim – to land use planning and surveying. It calls for determination of property boundaries and registration of individual ownership, although the details of the procedures to be followed are not specified. Given that there are 2,270 homesteads in the Dwesa-

Cwebe communities, most of which have more than one discrete land parcel, this seems like a recipe for an incomplete tenure reform, likely to create ambiguity and conflict.

The current drama is that land reform beneficiaries are seldom aware of alternatives, nor do they have easy access to such knowledge. Not all land beneficiaries have experienced agriculture nor has knowledge been transferred from generation to generation. Secondly, current land reform farms are incompatible with the experience of most beneficiaries. Hence the attempts to apply Betterment-like solutions to recently acquired farms. Most of their experience is related to some kind of compound or homestead agriculture in the former homelands, driven by women and older people while men are absent, based on irregular cropping and produce for the local market (where market production exists), a form of agriculture supported by off-farm income (remittances, pensions). The *compound* or *homestead* fulfils the role of the central and coordinating social and spatial unit, rather than only the market and new technologies.



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Conclusions

This paper has drawn attention to dimensions of knowledge that embody key continuities. These continuities and the social relationships behind them may explain why less than 4.2% of the target 30% of land is redistributed, why land reform farms do not perform as planned, and why land reform farms have been transferred to new owners, not all of them land reform beneficiaries. This is evidence of expert knowledge not being applicable to the immediate land reform beneficiaries. Guided by orthodoxies rather than curiosity, there have been few attempts to redesign the size of the farm (e.g. by subdivision) and to go beyond

collectively owned farms. Land reform beneficiaries in their turn are not always aware of alternative scenarios, nor do they have easy access to information on alternatives. Experiences in South and Southern Africa and elsewhere (e.g. Europe) with the dynamics of relatively small family farms have been ignored (willingly or unwillingly). This has certainly limited the windows of opportunity for alternative scenarios. Farms that have been transferred have in most cases remained under the model of a settler farm, transformed into a highly mechanised and capitalised farm run by an owner (or a company) assisted by a manager responsible for the workforce and daily operations. In this sense, the expert system has evolved largely disconnected from the majority of African smallholders and potential land reform beneficiaries. As a result, current land reform farms are often incompatible with beneficiaries' experience, leading in some cases to attempts to apply betterment-like solutions to recently acquired farms.

The current expert system requires realignment to the variety of social and natural conditions in the country. This should include more attention to small scale agriculture, revisiting current curricula at schools, colleges and universities and redesigning agricultural research programs. More experience is required on the conditions which may have favoured small scale production in the past and their implications for the present and future. In the domain of conservation this requires more serious commitments to joint management of protected areas, a better understanding of the long-term human roles in shaping and managing ecosystems, a willingness to collaborate in practice as well as on paper and an acknowledgment of local rights, and attention to the potential for local biodiversity monitoring. Adopting and applying theoretical notions like co-evolution (or co-production) and non-equilibrium thinking opens new ways for exploring the complex interactions between the social and the natural. It may help agrarian sciences and scientists to go beyond some of the orthodoxies discussed in this paper.

Certain components in the expert system (such as the Sustainable Livelihood Division of the Agricultural Research Council) have found support in a livelihood approach to development to identify a new *modus operandi*. With substantial international support a process of institutional transformation is taking place, but has so far remained rather rigid, mechanistic and bureaucratic with old tendencies still in place (i.e. top down, and rather prescriptive and normative) despite the discourse of participation. Key to a livelihood approach would be to begin with a

focus on the skills and resources that rural people possess, and their existing activities, rather than a largely preconceived set of expert prescriptions about what they should be doing. A good application is Timmermans (2004). At Dwesa-Cwebe, for instance, Timmermans identified eight other locally-significant purposes for maize cultivation besides sales on the market (which would be considered important by experts): production of food for home consumption, income stretching, bartering, brewing of maize beer, supplementary animal feed, status building, reinforcing an entitlement to arable land (Timmermans 2004: 96) and the cultural imperative to 'build the homestead' (cf. McAllister 2001).

While arguing for a reconfigured expert system we should thus neither ignore the capacity of experts to revisit their approaches and practices, nor should we perceive land reform beneficiaries to be simply passive recipients of knowledge. Experts may attempt to direct and prescribe the course of events, but they certainly do not have the power to structure (or determine) the behaviour of a range of social actors in the agricultural and related sectors. The potential for action is situated in many locations in society, not merely embedded in the expert system, which is evident for example from the productivity and dynamism of agriculture in the coastal Transkei (McAllister 2001). Examining the agency of social actors irrespective of their level of operation ('micro', or 'macro'; local or global) we may be able to understand the gaps between expert and local knowledge(s) and practices. These aspects of land reform have slowly begun to be documented (e.g. James 2007; van Leynseele and Hebinck 2008); more work is required to better understand land reform and the potential for future change, as it provides a window for a processes of re-contextualisation (as opposed to de-contextualisation) for the expert system to be able to re-connect with rural actors. Perhaps then we can say that the transformation of the Department of 'Native Affairs' and the associated expert system has been achieved.

NOTES

* This is a reworked and elaborated version of Hebinck, P. and Fay, D. (2006) *Land reform in South Africa: Caught by continuities*, Paper presented at the Conference 'Land, Memory, Reconstruction and Justice: Perspectives on Land Restitution in South Africa, Houw Hoek, 13-15 September.

- i. Wolmer (2007) explored a similar entry point in the land reform debate in Zimbabwe.
- ii. Expanding private tenure 'fell away as a central administrative objective. Even

in those districts where [the Glen Grey Act] was introduced, the principles of primogeniture and the non-divisibility of plots were largely sacrificed to older practices. The original Act clearly stipulated that individual tenure would become operative in every district where the Glen Grey terms applied; but by 1903 its adoption became optional, and surveys for individual title were carried out in only a handful of Transkeian districts' (Beinart and Bundy 1987: 141).

iii. All title deeds are stored in the Deeds Registry at King Williams Town. In the Victoria East District, most land was allocated to individuals by the late 1890s (Hebinck and Lent 2007).

iv. Such views have led to policy interventions in the 'reserves' based on equilibrium think dominant at the time in ecology and biology. This paradigm is now challenged by a non-equilibrium interpretation of ecological change and environmental transformation (Scoones 1999; Baker 2000).

v. It appears that most consultants were former employees of the various Department of Agriculture. They resigned after 1994 and became private knowledge brokers. James (2007) points at similar continuities This is an aspect of the expert system that has not received sufficient critical attention; it is a key aspect of the knowledge continuities explored here.

vi. Feder (1973) summarised a range of studies of the Central and Latin American experiences. Classical studies by Hill (1963) about Nigeria's cacao farmers, by Boserup (1981) about the relationship between demographic growth and agricultural expansion, as well as Richards' (1985) account of small-scale farming as performance are prime examples of studies showing the dynamic nature of small-scale or peasant forms of agriculture. The smallholder experience in Kenya and Zimbabwe in particular is well documented.

vii. See van Averbeké and Mohammed (2006) for a critique and alternative analysis.

viii. During a Workshop '*Post Apartheid Agrarian Policies*' held in Wageningen in 1989, the modernisation perspective as the future for agriculture became extremely clear and particularly voiced by the 'exiles' among the participants. The 'non-exile' participants expressed more locally based views. In the Mandlazini land restitution case experts' advice from Cedara showed similar views (van Leynseele and Hebinck 2008).

ix. We have not been able to observe the effects (if any) of planning at Dwesa-Cwebe. The draft plan called for land use planning to be completed by 2005, but the Amatola District Council had only appointed a consultancy to oversee the plan's implementation in October 2005.

x. In 1998, when pensions were R490 / month, Fay estimated maize output in the Cwebe community of Hobeni based on stores on hand and concluded that an average household would save R733-R1466 / year (depending on their use of credit) by cultivating maize and beans, an amount comparable to two months' pension (R980) or the average monthly wage reported by homesteads who had members employed (R926).

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Donors and Governance in Southern Africa. The Case of Zambia, with Zimbabwe as a Counterpoint - DPRN Seven



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Introduction: On donors and governance [1]

A key change in development policy since the early 1990s has been donors' shift towards a principal concern with governance. Earlier, donors' policy and practice

had been mainly focused on filling gaps in knowledge, capital or foreign exchange. This implied that development was fundamentally a mechanical, technical undertaking. Gradually, however, development policy is being seen more and more as a political enterprise. Issues such as the division of power between the elite and society at large, basic freedoms and economic inclusiveness are at least as important for societal and economic development as technical considerations.^[2]

This concern with governance has given rise to a considerable body of literature that has a paradoxical tendency to de-politicise the debate. A reason for this is that politics traditionally does not fit into the non-political mandate of international organisations. Also, declaring a political interest seems to clash with the altruistic rhetoric of the development community. Nevertheless, recent evaluations and analyses have begun to explicitly address the political nature of both the environment in which donors intervene as well as the political influence donors have in processes of change. As an example the Swedish development agency (Sida) commissioned explicit political evaluations of conditional lending, program aid or ownership.^[3] The British Department for International Development (DfID) has had a series of studies carried out on 'Drivers of Change'^[4] and Netherlands embassies have undertaken Strategic Corruption and Governance Analyses that aim to look 'behind the façade' at what drives political and bureaucratic behaviour.^[5] These analyses see aid as an influence on local society that is, in turn, shaped by the local political process. This thus explicitly links aid effectiveness to the quality of governance.

One issue of confusion for policy makers is how to operationalize the realisation that aid effectiveness is linked to the quality of governance. Should governance be seen as a criterion for deciding whether a donor-recipient relationship should be initiated or ended? Should governance be a yardstick for determining the level of aid flowing to a country? Should attention to governance spark a series of discreet projects or comprehensive programmes of reforms? Or is a focus on governance something that is to be mainstreamed into any decision made by donors? In this paper we will not take such questions as a starting point. Rather, we will start by describing empirical cases of donor-government interaction, which in turn might allow us to draw conclusions that are relevant for shaping donor-behaviour.

A more fundamental controversy than donor preoccupations with operationalising

governance, arises from concerns about sovereignty: to what extent do recipient countries lose control over their own political process through donor concerns with governance questioning the legitimacy of incumbent governments? Thomas Carothers, a democratisation activist, wrote for example:

The very act of one society trying to engage itself in the political affairs of another society naturally provokes concerns: what is this really all about? In the past several years, I have encountered a qualitatively greater level of concern – in fact substantial amounts of bewilderment, suspicion and sometimes open hostility and anger – than ever before to this subject. The subject of democracy promotion has become intensely controversial. [6]

Carothers refers especially to the Middle East – the invasion of Iraq, the refusal to recognise Hamas as an electoral successful movement.

The concern with good governance and aid conditionality is also challenged as being ineffective. The arguments of Nicolas van de Walle about partial reform are particularly influential:

>Standing between their own societies and their donors, top state elites have sought to use the policy reform process to gain maximum autonomy from both ... With little knowledge of local politics, remarkably little institutional memory, and a bias towards optimism about the course of reform, donors are easily fooled. The big losers are of course to be found among the vast majority of Africans whose welfare continues to decline. [7]

A third line of thought argues that concerns with good governance are irrelevant. That is especially argued in writing about the rise of East and South-East Asia. David Kang [8] argued for example that corruption in South Korea led to the realisation of private and public goods while in the Philippines it led to the realisation of private goods to the detriment of public goods.

This paper will argue that to rake up the arguments surrounding ownership or sovereignty. Rather, we will start from the premise that donors have the ambition to influence political processes. This is a perfectly logical and legitimate concern: when a private individual wants a loan from a bank then conditions will also have to be met. Many concerns about good governance are also universal public goods; freedom of expression for example is valuable irrespective of a development context. We will address the question to what extent donors are able to exert influence. The question that remains is whether it is effective and/or whether it is relevant. To address this we will examine key experiences of donor-government

interaction in Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The major focus of this paper lies on Zambia, a country where recent history cannot be written without taking donor involvement into account. As a counterpoint we will take Zimbabwe, a classical example of confrontation between donors and a recipient government on governance issues. We will show that while there seems to be a confrontation between Zambian government and the donor community, a general convergence on governance issues can be witnessed that is missing in Zimbabwe. Raising governance issues in a development dialogue is therefore in the first place shaped by its salience in the local political culture. The relatively open and democratic nature of Zambian society gives the impression of endemic conflict between government, opposition and donors, but it is the relatively equal playing field that leads to outcomes that are profitable to all. In the Zimbabwean case, it may seem as if donor concerns are unimportant because the government has embarked on a ruthless confrontation with the opposition as well as with the donor community. Donor concerns lack influence because there is no viable opposition. The fundamental conflict between the Zimbabwean government and the donor community cannot be denied, but from the viewpoint of Zimbabwean society the donor concerns are material.

This paper is not meant primarily as a treatise in the social sciences. It has been written from our personal experiences as an academic and a civil servant dealing with governance issues in southern Africa. The aim of the paper is in the first place to open up a debate that is too often carried out in a stalemate: one side argues against intervening in sovereignty and the other side argues that all aid is wasteful as long as these governance issues are not sorted out. We want to arouse insight in the value of the place of governance on the development policy agenda by looking at the actual practice of policy making and implementation.

The emergence of governance as an issue in Zambia

Structural adjustment and macro-economic stability



Zambia was a frontrunner in the democratisation processes that affected many parts of post-cold war Africa in the early 1990s. Broad popular protest led to the abolition of the one-party state in Zambia and multi-party elections ended the rule of Kenneth Kaunda and the United National Independence Party in 1991. It has not been generally noted that this protest was also directed at state intervention in the economy. The Movement for Multi-party

Democracy (MMD) led by Frederick Chiluba was thus elected on a reformist platform. In the early days of the first MMD government macro-economic reform was pursued with vigour. In a short span of time Zambia had moved to a floating exchange rate and raised interest rates to levels above the inflation rate. In the early Chiluba years there was also a considerable amount of privatisation of industries and agricultural marketing and the trade in food were liberalised.

This reformist drive tied in well with the donor community's structural adjustment agenda driven by the World Bank and IMF. Donors therefore supported these reforms by providing technical assistance, by supporting relevant project units and by providing programme aid: balance of payments or budget support. As such they became deeply involved in financing recurrent expenditure of the Zambian government. In this situation of high confidence between government and donors in specific sectors, a change in aid-modalities took place. Whereas donors had previously mainly been involved in projects, they now moved towards various forms of basket financing and what was to become known as sector wide approaches. This new extent of involvement with government understandably gave donors a particular stake in government's behaviour.

In later years however, a new tenor appeared in donor discourse about Zambia. Whereas relatively simple reforms that did not directly challenge powerful interests had been rather swiftly implemented, the so-called second generation of reforms such as cutting government employment and privatisation of the copper mines were more problematic. Donors began to place the blame on government for blocking these reforms. Nevertheless, it can be maintained that over the period 1991-2001 there was a relatively harmonious relationship between the donor community and Zambia, regarding economic issues. Eventually, the mines were privatised in 2001 and what happened to government employment in Zambia was not very different from what happened elsewhere in Africa. One could conclude that with respect to macro-economic stabilization and structural adjustment there has been more cooperation than conflict between Zambia and

the donor community since 1991. Governance became an issue over the course of time, but this was especially pertinent and contested in political matters.[9]

The 1996 elections

The elections of 1991 were seen as exemplary for Africa: a peaceful transition and the re-establishment of a multi-party system. This was universally seen as progress. Relations between donors and the Zambian government had however strongly deteriorated in the run-up to the elections of 1996. The so-called Kaunda clause was crucial to this. The new constitution of 1991 contained an article stating that the president was not allowed to serve more than two five-year terms, consecutively. Therefore, the previous president, Kenneth Kaunda, argued that he was allowed to stand again in 1996 as presidential candidate. The MMD, then amended the constitution so that only people whose grandparents were born in what now was Zambia could qualify. Kenneth Kaunda's father originated from what would later become Malawi and went to work at Lubwa mission in Chinsali in Zambia's Northern Province. Chiluba defied protests from the donor community as well as from influential African friends of Kaunda. Mandela sent a prominent constitutional lawyer, Judge Goldsmith, who concluded that the elections of 1996 could only be postponed if a state of emergency would be declared. Chiluba argued that there was no reason for this as the country was in a peaceful state.

Kaunda called for a boycott, but this was followed up only by a minority of the staunchest supporters of his UNIP-party. Donors refused to send observers or to support the electoral process. However, Chiluba won a landslide victory and even if one assumed dirty tricks at play, this election result could not be ignored.

Donor pressure had thus proven to be irrelevant in the face of a verdict of the Zambian people. Ironically, it was at the time suggested in the fiercely independent *Post* newspaper, that Chiluba had not wanted to insert the Kaunda clause into the constitution. In fact, his own parentage was being challenged as it appeared that his origins lay in Zaire, while he attempted to trace a Zambian lineage. In any case, the 1996 election demonstrated the limits of donor intervention. The Zambian population voted in relatively large numbers despite disapproval about the electoral provisions by the donors. Attempted influence by donors had thus openly manifested itself in these elections, but certainly not as a determinant factor.[10]

The end of the Chiluba era

The third term debates

Towards the end of Chiluba's second term in office, the MMD had become so entrenched in the political centre of power that it seemed unavoidable that Zambia would remain a dominant party state. The MMD, however, needed to select a new candidate, as Chiluba was constitutionally limited to two terms. Chiluba forbade campaigning among aspirant candidates and wanted the successor to emerge in the way that Mbeki for example had emerged as a successor to Mandela. Nevertheless there were more and more stage-managed calls from within the party asking for a third term of Chiluba, who managed through a ruthless campaign to be selected as leader for the party in a third term. He then needed to be elected as presidential candidate. This would require the support of the MMD's parliamentary caucus to push the needed constitutional amendment.



In the meantime, there was a broad mass-movement protesting against a third term for Chiluba. Civil society organisations, to a significant extent operating on donor funds, coordinated a vocal campaign. Donors expressed their positions in no uncertain terms. Undoubtedly the impact of this lapse in confidence influenced donors' allocation decisions or certainly had the potential to do so. On the local political scene it became clear that a parliamentary candidate who supported Chiluba would have little chance of being elected. The MMD parliamentarians voted against the third term amendment. Chiluba thus had little choice but to select what he hoped would become a strawman, while trying to retain the reins on power as party president. Essentially, this episode characterises that donor support played a role, but in support of a widely based popular Zambian movement rather than in dialogue with the government. The third term issue is an example where donor support could have a beneficial impact, because it was aligned with a genuine, widely felt concern in Zambian society.

2001 elections

The third term issue had created disarray in the Zambian political scene. There had been a split from MMD and MMD had to select a presidential candidate. The latter was Levy Mwanawasa, a lawyer who had been prominent in MMD. He had stood against Chiluba in the leadership contest running up to the 1996 elections and lost bitterly. He had resigned from party posts and his health had suffered

badly from a car accident. Surprisingly, he was said to be handpicked by Chiluba as a 'safe' successor.

As the elections were delayed to allow the MMD to prepare to face a hostile political scene, a strong opposition party emerged. The United Party for National Development (UPND) was formed under the leadership of Anderson Mazoka. This resulted in a tight race for the leadership between Mwanawasa and Mazoka which was narrowly won by Mwanawasa. Donors were heavily involved in these elections and there were various international and local observer teams. The most prominent among them was the European Union election observation mission. This mission especially queried the election results and narrowly avoided issuing an outright accusation of fraud. This meshed in with the local political scene in which concern was aired about the closeness of the election results. Mazoka was convinced that he had been robbed of his victory and supported a long winding petition. At his inauguration, Mwanawasa accused donors in the audience of intervening in the elections. This prompted EU ambassadors, preceded by the Dutch ambassador to leave demonstratively. In short, the impotence of donors was demonstrated in the events surrounding the 2001 elections. They moved themselves into a position where the charge could be made that Zambian sovereignty was undermined.**[11]**

Dealing with the New Deal Government: Fighting the kleptocracy

The fight against corruption

After Levy Mwanawasa's New Deal government came to power in 2001 there was a strong call for a break with the past. During his election campaign, corruption did not feature as one of the priorities. In the background, there was concern about Chiluba being succeeded by a puppet of his making. Towards the end of Chiluba's rule, donors had funded a big accountants survey into the mining sector, which found massive disappearances of resources, particularly of cobalt. These concerns were also widely expressed in popular opinion and some MPs ventured to call Chiluba a thief. Chiluba brought a libel case to court, which he later came to regret bitterly. After the elections, one of the MPs involved used his parliamentary privilege to ask for the records of Zambia's bank accounts in London. This revealed massive theft of Zambian money and Mwanawasa, the new president, was approached with this information.

The independent *Post* newspaper vigorously gave publicity to this major corruption case involving the so-called ZAMTROP-account, an account of the

Zambian Security Intelligence Service in London, which was used by president Chiluba as a slush fund. This case, involving various members of the political elite, was also referred to as the *Zambian Money Matrix* and led to an outcry amongst civil society[12] and in the *Post's* editorials.[13] These revelations came in the wake of public denouncement of the fact that two tainted politicians from the previous administration were appointed to senior positions in the New Deal government.[14]

In this atmosphere, facing an opposition majority in parliament and in need of restoring donor confidence, which had been dashed by Chiluba's alleged kleptocracy, the third-term debate and the irregular 2001 elections, Mwanawasa declared zero tolerance on corruption. In July 2002 the president made a dramatic address before the National Assembly, exposing Chiluba's 'matrix of corruption' and calling for the removal of his immunity from prosecution, as was called for by civil society. Soon afterwards the Task Force on Corruption was established to investigate and prosecute cases of plunder under Chiluba's ten years in government.

This Task Force was put together from staff on secondment from the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), the Drug Enforcement Commission (DEC), the police, the Zambian Security Intelligence Service (ZSIS) and the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). It also outsourced much of its work. The Task force had its own private prosecutors, the Nchito brothers. Donors broadly offered their support under a joint memorandum of understanding signed by the UK, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Ireland. The Task Force subsequently set to work investigating cases, arresting various politicians and civil servants including ex-president Chiluba. [15]

Chiluba's London court case

Early in Mwanawasa's second term, Chiluba was yet to be convicted of the theft he is alleged to have perpetrated. Whereas millions of dollars were gradually recovered and various cases were started it took until October 2006 for the first successful conviction to be secured. Chiluba's trials barely inched ahead. One of the reasons for this was that he was flying up and down to South Africa because of health reasons. While the status quo persisted, so did claims that the case against Chiluba was merely a witch-hunt or alternatively that the pyramid of patronage prevented swift actual legal action. A lack of convictions also impeded the process of impounding stolen goods and money. A civil case was therefore opened at the London High Court by the Zambian government against Chiluba

and others on the charge of defrauding the Zambian government. It was opened specifically against the London-based legal representatives in order to have a respondent.[16] Chiluba refused to testify as it was in his view an infringement of Zambian sovereignty.

The London judgement[17] did not only lead to the order to repay huge amounts of money, but it also gave abundant information about the practices that the accused indulged in. The judgement was beamed directly to Zambia and was reported on elaborately. Therefore it in no small measure dented Chiluba's prospects and reputation in Zambia. The progress in registering the English verdict in Zambia and the advancement of the criminal trials remained slow. But Chiluba's denials lost credibility. It is questionable whether these arguments especially hurled by Chiluba himself managed to make much of an impression beyond his closest supporters. Chiluba considered the judgment racist and talked of imperialist plots by the donors funding the government, especially the former colonial power. It is true that this court case was funded by donors,[18] but it was brought on by the Zambian government. This case could thus be seen as an example of the possible efficacy of donors supporting and catalysing a process emanating from genuine Zambian concerns.

Show me the money

Donor involvement in the name of good governance does not only deal with spectacular cases such as the one mentioned above. Early 2007 the Zambian newspapers reflected a vibrant public debate dealing with the management of public resources. This was preceded by the publication of a book by the Zambian chapter of Transparency International (TIZ) called *Show Me the Money* which, following the report of the Auditor General, explored public spending and accounting. This book made such issues understandable for a broader public than merely those experts normally dealing with technical issues of public finance management. When launched, TIZ explicitly targeted parliamentarians with the book and sold over a hundred copies amongst the 158 members of Parliament[19].

Shortly thereafter the Auditor General published its annual report which was considered more critical and timelier than earlier reports. When the report was discussed in the Parliamentary Accounts Committee considerable controversy emerged, particularly over the audit of the Ministry of Health. The Auditor General complained over the lack of cooperation in the ministry and the

Permanent Secretary was sent away from the hearing for failing to give satisfactory answers to the committee. All three major newspapers in Zambia explicitly reported the event. [20] While the Permanent Secretary kept his position, the minister was soon replaced by a former minister, allegedly to resolve the situation.

Arguably the fall-out of these debates extends beyond this particular case. In the perspective of an official of the Office of Auditor General this episode enhanced the credibility of the Auditor General. Reportedly, after reading about this controversy one accounting officer refused to cooperate with the OAG as it could cause problems. Subsequently he was suspended. Conversely other departments and authorities became more forthcoming to the OAG and stricter towards contractors, so as to avoid problems. [21]

Donors, while being enthusiastic observers, do not seem to be central in such debates. They either lack the capacity to substantiate hard claims in these excessively complex cases or they are apprehensive of rocking the boat and damaging donor-government relations with unsubstantiated allegations. Equally they can be argued to duly observe the respect for government ownership that they profess in policy rhetoric. Nevertheless, donors do provide support to some of the protagonists in this arena. They support watch-dog organisations such as TIZ and the OAG. Under the Public Expenditure Management and Financial Accountability (PEMFA) reform programme donors such as Norway and the Netherlands have supported the OAG to expand its coverage and effectiveness, by allowing for the training of auditors, the procurement of vehicles and the building of provincial offices. Also under the same programme the Parliamentary Accounts Committee has been supported in its institutional strengthening. In short, supporting processes important to donors' governance concerns need not imply that donors actually take up visible roles on stage. Rather they can be indirectly instrumental in catalysing processes aimed at addressing legitimate Zambian concerns.

The Bulaya incident

Donor concerns can also go immediately against government interests. That was the case when George Kunda, the attorney general gave instruction to the Director of Public Prosecutions not to proceed in preparing a case against dr. Bulaya, the ex-permanent secretary of health. He had been accused of manipulating the tender procedure for the delivery of nutritional supplements in

favour of a certain Bulgarian company. He was found to have brought this case to a regular procurement meeting, which he chaired in august 2001 without supplying the proper documents. The nutritional supplements, which were controversially seen as part of aids treatment, were delivered to the government's medical stores. Subsequently, some of these drugs were delivered to a private clinic owned by Bulaya, from which it was sold. Other parts of this shipment were reportedly going to waste in government storage, as the drugs were not registered for use in Zambia. For services rendered, Bulaya was paid hefty a commission of roughly a billion Kwacha (€ 180,000) by the company that had delivered the nutritional supplements.^[22] The case had been prepared by Utembo Nchito, one of the prosecutors of the Task Force.



Photo: en.wikipedia.org

This led to a protest of the Law Association of Zambia. Firstly they were concerned about political interference. The decision to proceed with a case or not should be based on legal arguments. It was widely assumed that Mwanawasa himself had intervened. The constitutional position of the task force to enquire into the Chiluba cases was also problematic: what was their relation to the Director of Public Prosecutions?^[23] There was indignation in the press as well for the simple reason that somebody could get away with corrupt behaviour.

An additional complication was that the Finnish and Swedish ambassadors spoke on the issue: it was better for all parties involved if the case would go to court. This was no matter for an administrative or political decision. Mwanawasa was hurt and replied that these issues were within the sovereignty of the Zambian state. The ex-minister of foreign affairs considered this a matter for disciplinary action by the dean of the diplomatic corps, the Libyan ambassador. Zambia may be poor, but it had its dignity. This exchange was followed up by the French ambassador. He reminded the Zambian government that they had signed a treaty against corruption. Also, Zambia received large amounts of money from the

international community and donor governments were responsible to their taxpayers.[24]

In the course of this dispute it also became clear that there the dispute was not primarily one between the task force prosecutor and the ministry of legal affairs. It appeared that the then acting DPP, Mrs. Zulu-Sokoni, had refused to follow up the order from above. Subsequently the *nolle prosequi* was dropped, the law took its course again and Bulaya was sentenced. Bulaya was prosecuted and it resulted in a conviction to five years imprisonment with hard labour.[25] The Bulaya case shows donor pressure in alignment with the independent press and a professional organisation in support of good governance opposed to the government of the day.

Electoral and constitutional reform [26]

To the outside observer it may seem that issues of electoral and constitutional reform provide the first and foremost concern in Zambian politics. The donor community plays an obvious role in this. They support NGOs who are advocating constitutional reform, back up a government sponsored commission of enquiry into constitutional reform and above all they are expected to pay for the expensive process of a constitutional conference. There are two distinct narratives about the process of constitutional reform: one that is exemplified by a coalition of NGOs under the name of OASIS and one of the Mwanawasa government.

Constitutional reform has been on the governance agenda for a long time. The Constitutional Commission of Enquiry is the favourite instrument that Zambian governments have used in these matters. These reported after their hearings to the President, who thereafter formulated a bill that was submitted to parliament for approval and amendment. There is a recurrent pattern in that the green paper usually contains provisions to strengthen parliament and to weaken the powers of the president. These are rejected in the proposals to parliament with one exception. The proposal to limit the number of presidential terms to two was maintained. That achievement was however under attack when Chiluba wanted to push through an amendment which would have allowed him to stand for a third term. It is therefore not surprising that the issue of constitutional reform re-emerged after Chiluba's attempt was thwarted. A coalition of NGOs under the name of OASIS had been especially instrumental to stop Chiluba's third term and this name was adopted by a coalition of NGOs that wanted a constitutional revision.

Their main point of contention was that the usual constitutional procedures to amend the constitution can never lead to a curtailment of the powers of the executive. The previous procedures entailed a commission of enquiry into the desirability of constitutional reform that can only recommend to the President, after which the President has the freedom to choose which recommendations to pass on for approval to a parliament that is dominated by the ruling party. The president will in such a procedure not propose reforms that will limit his powers and neither will a parliament dominated by the ruling party do so. The only way out of this conundrum is through a Constitutional Assembly that is composed outside the power structure of the ruling party. As OASIS stressed tirelessly: they wanted a people-driven constitution.

Mwanawasa reacted to the demand for constitutional reform by installing another Commission of Enquiry into the desirability of such reform under the chairmanship of a highly respected lawyer: Willie Mung'omba. One could reasonably ask for a rationale for this as there had been a similar commission during the second term of Chiluba under the chairmanship of the veteran politician John Mwanakatwe. The OASIS network called for a boycott of the Mung'omba commission. On previous occasions there had also been calls for such boycotts, but the hearings of these commissions got a momentum that made them into a significant forum. These boycotts were then forgotten and the opposition testified as well. In the case of the Mung'omba commission testimonies went in the direction wished for by OASIS. Mung'omba reported therefore on the desirability of a Constitutional Assembly.

Mwanawasa accepted the idea of a Constitutional Assembly, but with many reservations. Mwanawasa's main argument against a Constitutional Assembly was from the beginning that it was too expensive. Money would be needed for selection of a Constitutional Assembly and for their meeting. But the need for money was wider than that and this was a result of the issues of constitutional law raised by a Constitutional Assembly. For the same reason of constitutional law, the government argued that changing the constitution by a special assembly was a long process. The reason is that it involves not merely a constitutional change but a change in the procedure to change the constitution.

In the Zambian independence constitution there was a clause calling for a referendum in case the procedure to change the constitution was to be changed. Kaunda organised in 1968 a referendum to allow parliament to remove that

clause from the constitution. This constitutionally opened the way for Kaunda to embark on the one party state and to ignore during the following years human rights provisions incorporated in the independence constitution. It is thus not surprising that the need for a referendum was inserted in the 1991 Zambian constitution that reintroduced multi-party democracy. Mwanawasa argued therefore that the establishment of a Constitutional Assembly involved a change in the procedure to change the constitution and therefore required a referendum. According to him a national census was needed in order to prepare for a genuine referendum. Voting cards should not only be distributed to registered voters but to all eligible citizens. Parliament should after the referendum pass a law establishing a Constitutional Assembly. Thereafter a constitutional Assembly could be elected and start its work. According to Mwanawasa, the obviously large expense and the length of time involved are necessary to stay within the law.

Mwanawasa restated his opposition to a Constitutional Assembly many times and the argument was developed more and more in legal terms. The idea of a Constitutional Assembly had already been raised in 1991. Then president Kaunda refused on the grounds that this was only necessary if the present government would lose legitimacy. Its historical roots are in post-revolutionary situations and that was not the case in Zambia. That was not explicitly stated in the recent conflicts, but the establishment of a Constitutional Assembly could be interpreted as a denial of the legitimacy of the present government. Essential in the argument is that the present selection of president and parliament is not legitimate. It could be a stepping stone to grab power. The selection of delegates to the Constitutional conference would be in the opposition's proposal in the hands of civil society and that in OASIS' interpretation was virtually synonymous with the NGO community.

It would be wrong, however, to present Mwanawasa's position as one that was only determined by reason, since he proved to be capable of authoritarian behaviour on this issue. At one point he threatened to arrest the people involved and denied the legitimacy of the registration of the NGOs involved. He argued that these were not NGOs but political parties and that this was especially objectionable as they accepted foreign funding. Therefore these were illegal organisations. The NGO community reacted swiftly by establishing a new coalition under the name of 'Citizen coalition'. Mwanawasa retracted quietly from his opposition to the NGOs. A big demonstration on the constitution that went ahead despite lack of police permission was however brutally disbanded by the police.

On the other hand, there seemed to be less popular support for the OASIS position than was claimed. The OASIS movement managed to organize one mass event at the opening of parliament in 2006. They carried on the name OASIS from the mass movement against a third term for Chiluba. OASIS however, failed to get appeal for the protest tactics that were used at the time: wearing armbands that signified opposition or hooting concerts of cars at assigned moments. UPND, the biggest opposition party, organised the demonstration that was violently broken up. The opposition political parties have been ambivalent on this score. The suggestion is that they object far more to the present constitution if their chances to gain power are slim. When UPND organized this demonstration, they were doing badly. The Patriotic Front and its leader Michael Sata became more and more hopeful during Mwanawasa's first term. He considered constitutional reform a non-issue in his campaign for the presidency.

In the background there was always the issue of donor involvement. Con. OASIS appealed for resources to participate in the elections of 2006. They did not want to field their own candidates, but they intended to 'decampaign' candidates who did not endorse their position on constitutional reform. This 'decampaigning' did not materialize. The reason was, according to OASIS, the lack of support from donors, but there was also little political mileage for the NGO community to be had from 'decampaigning'. Election research indicated that constitutional reform was not an issue in these elections:

Zambians are mostly concerned with agriculture. Slightly over a third of the electorate (33.6%) consider agriculture as an important issue of concern in this election year. This was followed by general living conditions (19.5%), education and unemployment (14.1%) and health (10%). The constitution is not of much concern to the electorate as only an insignificant 0.1% considered it an issue. While 6.5% of the electorate either did not know or expressed no opinion at all on this question.

It appeared that constitutional reform was only an issue for a minority of the population: mainly educated urban people. The NGO community appeared to have little roots in the community.

This narrative continues after the election, but the relevant points for our topic can be made from this truncated version. It is clear that one cannot locate unambiguously a cause of good governance among some authorities and movements and not among others. There are many contradictory processes in the

quest for good governance: a vocal civic community can express merely elite interests; a government that can react in an authoritarian way against proponents of constitutional reform may do that from a legally well argued position of defense of human rights. The donor community is a player in these fields to whom insights emerge in the political process as is the case with other actors. It is however obvious that the donor community was in these issues not in a position to dictate.

Zimbabwe as a counterpoint

In Zimbabwe, recent relations between international donors and government have gradually become characterised by a breach in trust. Initially, from the early 1980s onward, Zimbabwe was seen as a potential success story; an African country endowed with relatively well-developed infrastructure, a productive agricultural and commercial sector and a state that was capable of providing reasonable education to large parts of the population. Early events in post-colonial history, that would spark serious governance concerns such as the Matabeleland massacres, the elimination of ZAPU by repression and the cooptation and the centralisation of power by the establishment of an executive president, did not rupture the relations. Perhaps this was due to diplomatic/political correctness, ambivalence or cold-war interests. Gradually, however, donor-government relations began to deteriorate, in part in reaction to western public opinion.



Harare - Photo:
nl.wikipedia.org

In 1995 at the annual Harare Book Fair president Mugabe publicly held a tirade against homosexuals, proclaiming them to be 'worse than dogs and pigs'. This led to public outrage in much of Northern Europe. Then in 1998, while the economy was suffering from the effects of the economic crisis then prevalent in many parts of Africa, Zimbabwe embarked on a costly campaign into the Congo, in support of president Kabila senior. Relations with the international financial institutions

which had been strained over defaulting on loans and bad performance under structural adjustment programmes reached a low point. In 1999 the government severed ties with the IMF over claimed interference in domestic policies and complaints about Harare's Congo campaign.[27] While the IMF later that year offered a \$200 mln. standby loan[28] the terms were never met and to this day there is no regular working relationship between IMF and the Zimbabwean government.

As relations with the multilateral agencies became tense, bilateral donors were also losing confidence in the Zimbabwean government. As issues of good governance had become more prominent, concerns over governance were also beginning to influence donor's decisions. This is best illustrated by the decision of the Dutch government in 1999 to abandon its government to government development cooperation programme. While this was part of a broader reduction of the list of partner countries, in the case of Zimbabwe concerns of human rights and governance justified the decision to end cooperation.[29]

A serious factor in the rupture in confidence between donors and government emerged after a change in government in the UK in 1997. Since independence, the UK had been funding a land-reform programme based on the willing buyer, willing seller principle. According to the UK Foreign and Commonwealth office a total of £44 mln. has been spent on land reform.[30] The new Labour Government declared it would only continue to fund land reform if it were in line with a broader poverty reduction programme and adhered to certain good-governance principles.[31] The Mugabe government saw this as a British refusal of its historic responsibilities.

This issue became mixed up with internal political unrest stemming from disappointed war veterans in the guerrilla campaign that brought Zimbabwe independence. Initially, disaffected Zimbabweans, many claiming to be 'war vets', had spontaneously occupied parts of white-owned farms. This put pressure on the government to deal with the land issue.[32] After a 1998 land reform conference the government embarked on a phased land reform programme that initially aimed to resettle poor rural families to government land and subsequently would compensate white farmers for land confiscated. Various donors pledged support for the resettlement of these rural families, including the World Bank, which pledged \$ 5 million.[33] The pace and impact of this process, however, were not sufficient to satisfy the call for land redistribution. In June 2002, after controversial elections kept Mugabe in power, but with shattered popularity and

legitimacy, Zimbabwe embarked on a 'fast-track land reform programme'.^[34] In a violent campaign farms were appropriated without compensation. The rule of law was maintained less and less and Zimbabwe became more and more ruled by rogue vigilante groups. This led to the collapse of the white-dominated commercial farming sector, exacerbating the economic crisis.

Moreover, the major beneficiaries of this government-sanctioned land grabbing were the ZANU-PF: ministers and military officers^[35] rather than the intended rural poor.

Various factors stemming from Zimbabwe's political context can be identified as factors leading to the decision to undertake these land reforms. The economic downturn, combined with the negative socio-economic effects of structural adjustment had led to a new opposition movement. Trade union forces had aligned with parts of civil society and representatives of the white minority to form the MDC, the first credible opposition party since the demise of ZAPU.^[36] A campaign against a new constitution to replace the Lancaster House Constitution, led president Mugabe to experience a political defeat, something he had grown unused to. At the same time, the ZANU government felt pressure from former combatants, whose pensions had been cut due to structural adjustments and who felt they were yet to experience the economic dividend of independence. By employing nationalist rhetoric, unleashing war veterans and ignoring human rights abuses, the regime tried to maintain its base of power.

Then in the 2002 presidential elections president Mugabe barely survived the most serious challenge to his grasp of power in decades. Many international and civil society observers claimed widespread manipulation and violent intimidation of the opposition. And based on an extremely critical report from the EU Electoral Observation Mission the EU decided to implement 'targeted measures'. These banned members of the regime from travelling to the EU, froze their assets and put into place an arms embargo. Also, under article 96 of the Cotonou treaty, the European Commission and Member States mostly stopped its development cooperation with government. Instead support was sourced to international organisations and NGOs providing humanitarian relief and fighting HIV/Aids, as well as to various human rights and other civil society organisations. As many non-EU donors adopted similar policies, the government of Zimbabwe essentially became isolated from the international donor community.

The government of Zimbabwe and international donors have thus become locked

into uneasy trench-warfare in which rhetoric, propaganda and megaphone diplomacy are hurled from one side to the other. Whenever the discussion is taken to multi-lateral forums such as the UN Security Council, the human rights council or the Bretton Woods institutions, it risks being perverted into a battle between the 'West' and the 'non-aligned' movement. Depending on the division of power, voting and veto arrangements in the respective organisations this has differing effects. For UN institutions this has meant that, notwithstanding the humanitarian assistance flowing to Zimbabwe, problems in the country are extremely difficult to address. Human rights or security issues rarely make it to the table and credible UN action has never been mandated as it can be in various other socio-political crises.[37] Within IMF and the World Bank, conversely, de facto a similar line is followed as is pursued by most donor countries. As such Zimbabwe is isolated from institutional lending or any credible programmes aimed to support prudent macro-economic policy.

But the breach of confidence between the government and donors is also felt beyond macro-economic policy. Any dialogue on governance and human rights in Zimbabwe is impossible. Rather, donors provide support to the civil and political opposition in the context of their governance and human rights programmes. This certainly empowers the reform-minded elite to articulate a vision of a democratic, prosperous Zimbabwe and to denounce any step government might take that counters that vision. On the other hand, such support also fuels Mugabe's claims that his detractors are merely the lackeys of the West, part of a conspiracy scheming for regime change. Consequently, the goals of civil and political advocates for change are effectively de-legitimised and Mugabe's siege mentality and its associated repression are reinforced.[38] This arguably further entrenches the political impasse in the country.

The government of Zimbabwe blames the 'illegal sanctions' imposed by donors for the economic decline the country has faced in recent years. Gideon Gono, the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe points out that the fact that balance of payments support has been withheld from Zimbabwe since 1998 and that foreign investments have been discouraged by donors' stances.[39] As such donors are accused of deliberately sabotaging the Zimbabwean economy in their quest for regime change, in revenge for taking land away from white farmers. In short the West is starving poor Zimbabweans to induce revolt. Northern governments on the other hand largely attribute Zimbabwe's socio-

economic problems to bad policies and bad governance. Patronage spending is draining coffers already empty due to the costly adventure in the Congo. Money is printed to plug up budgetary debts and to pay off loyalists with jobs and seats. The commercial farming sector has been gutted as the result of the 'fast track land reform' policies of the government. Small-scale agriculture has suffered the collapse of the government's grain and input marketing system. These have been debilitated by excessive use or abuse for political goals, while government's ability to fund them is limited at best. Moreover, in its elusive quest to lower skyrocketing inflation rates the government has criminalised the most banal economic deeds, setting sale prices above cost price and buying produce in rural parts and selling them in town.

In our view, the truth of the matter combines both perspectives. It cannot be denied that the economic and social policies of the current government in Zimbabwe are in no way conducive to economic stability or the country's productive capacity. On the other hand a point may be made that sanctions have worsened the economic situation in Zimbabwe that is rooted in bad governance. A breach of confidence felt by donors expressed by means of targeted measure will certainly have a knock on effects on investor and lender confidence. Also, withholding aid, in the form of loans, balance of payment support or programme aid must have a debilitating effect on the public finance management or public service delivery. Despite the current impasse between donors and Mugabe's revolutionary government, no attempt at recovery of the situation in Zimbabwe is conceivable without considerable balance of payment support. Also foreign investment^[40] would be essential for turning around the current situation. Investor confidence would be boosted if donors re-declared their trust. So is there any merit in Mugabe's rants about the impact of 'illegal sanctions'? Equally, is it legitimate that donors do not put their money into a government in which they have no trust?

Meanwhile, the wait is on for the elusive day when the socio-economic situation has become so dire that the regime's power-base cracks, the masses (and the powerbrokers) revolt and a transition (to democracy?) arrives. Unfortunately however the humanitarian and economic cost of this process of *Verelendung* is tremendous further consuming Zimbabwe's assets. Equally, it is far from certain when, or even if, at the end of the day the new dawn associated with this implicit paradigm of revolutionary change will come to pass. Can the controversial elections of 2008 be seen as the masses' revolt and are the protracted

negotiations between government and the opposition part of a transition back to normality? Only time will tell.



On influence and effectiveness, relevance and legitimacy

Discussion and conclusions

We have presented narratives of the interaction between donors and recipient countries with the aim to get more insight in the effectiveness and legitimacy of donor concerns with governance. Below we enumerate the main

features of this interaction and our main conclusion is that in the case of Zambia donors are undoubtedly actors on the political scene, but that they are not necessarily influential or dominating actors. On the contrary, donor influence on governance issues is only effective if it fits into dominant local political processes. Donor involvement in the Zambian political scene can therefore not merely be seen as undermining sovereignty.

When looking at the Zambian case, the issue of relevance, effectiveness and legitimacy does not arise. Donors are a factor in the local political scene and are only effective and relevant if they connect to broad political movements or sentiments that are widely felt. Legitimacy is given or denied.

The interaction between donors and the Zambian government has often been characterised as full of conflicts. However, there is as much consensus as conflict to be found. There have been conflicts about economic conditionality, but with respect to macro economic stabilization and structural adjustment there has been much more cooperation than conflict between Zambia and the donor community since 1991.

The zeal with which Zambia confronts economic mismanagement and theft dating from the Chiluba time is exceptional among African countries. Donor financing is essential in this campaign. It automatically involves supporting one particular faction on the political scene, but this is the party in government and as such supporting legitimate government.

Donors do not always support the party in government. The opposition to Chiluba's campaign for a third term is the clearest example of donor support joining a broad popular opposition movement. The actual set of alliances is also often much more complicated than a mere categorisation in donor and opposition

or donor and government. Donor support for an NGO-initiative led to influence through parliament and the revival of the National Audit Office.

The democratic vibrancy of the Zambian political system militates against both the authoritarian government – as in the third term campaign – and against donors imposing their political preferences. That can be clearly seen in the 1996 elections when a landslide victory of Chiluba made a mockery of international concern about the elections.

The interactions surrounding constitutional reform bring to light how the donors are a factor but not a determining factor in Zambian political life. Mwanawasa sees donors here unambiguously as interfering in Zambian politics. The NGOs concerned are in his opinion political organisations financed from abroad. The NGOs themselves got a shock in the last election when their concerns appeared to be irrelevant to the general electorate. Yet, the government continues to negotiate with these NGOs and donors remain part of the political scene.

Whereas donors North of the Zambezi can be argued to have a catalysing influence on political and civil society processes through connecting to the democratic processes in society, the same cannot be said in Zimbabwe.

A major difference in donor-government interaction is that in Zimbabwe there is no agreement on macro-economic stabilisation and economic reform. The detrimental effect is felt in hyper-inflation that hits harder if one has less assets. The poor are thus hit hardest. Hyper-inflation leads to destabilization of economic life especially if parallel markets are suppressed. A simple comparison with a country where there is donor interaction to bring macro-economic stability shows the broad benefits of this.

Political life in Zimbabwe is stultified through government repression. All outside political influence is seen as an intrusion on national sovereignty. International human rights NGOs have no or little access.

In the case of Zimbabwe national sovereignty in economic as well as in political terms is absolutized. There is little benefit to be seen in this. On the contrary donor influence in African political and economic systems make these more vibrant. Allowing for donor influence will not logically lead to donor dominance; if there is a vibrant political and economic life, government cannot dominate in an absolute sense and neither can donors.

Notes

- 1 This paper reflects the personal views of the authors. It does not necessarily reflect the official position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- 2 For an overview of this development: Stephen Browne (2006) *Aid and Influence; do donors help or hinder?* London and Stirling VA: Earthscan, Chapter III: Evolving Development Fashions.
- 3 This resulted in a volume by Howard White and Geske Dijkstra (2003) *Programme Aid and Development: Beyond conditionality*, London: Routledge.
- 4 <http://www.gsdr.org/go/topic-guides/drivers-of-change>.
- 5 <http://www.minbuza.nl/binaries/pdf/dossiers/goed-bestuur/sgaca-framework-october-2007.pdf>.
- 6 Thomas Carothers, 'Does democracy promotion have a future' in Bernard Berendsen (ed.) *Democracy and development* Amsterdam: KIT publishers 2008.
- 7 Nicolas van de Walle, *African economies and the politics of permanent crisis, 1979-1999* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001 p. 62/3.
- 8 David C. Kang, *Crony capitalism: Corruption and development in South Korea and the Philippines* Cambridge: [Cambridge University Press](http://www.cambridge.org), 2002.
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- 11 Donge, J.K. van (2008) The EU observer mission to the Zambian Elections 2001: The politics of election monitoring as the construction of narratives,

Commonwealth & Comparative Politics, 46(3): 296-317. For an opposing view: Tordoff, W. and Young, R. (2005) Electoral politics in Africa: The experience of Zambia and Zimbabwe, Government and Opposition, 40(3): 403-23.

12 Including Transparency International Zambia

13 Some *Post* editorials that team up with protests in society: 'Chilujba and the Theft Money Matrix', *The Post*, 27 June 2008; 'Zambia: Web of deceit', *The Post*, 15 July 2002; 'Zambia: we salute you all', *The Post*, 17 July 2002.

14 V.J. Mwaanga, a political dinosaur who had been minister of Foreign Affairs and minister for Broadcasting and Services under President Chiluba, but who was later fired under donor pressure on account of drug-smuggling, had been appointed as Minister for Information Services. Katele Kalumba, former minister of Finance, who was implicated in corruption scandals, had been appointed minister of Foreign Affairs. IRIN, 8 January 2002: 'New President unveils cabinet team, policies'.

15 Donge, J.K. van (2008) The plundering of Zambian resources by Frederick Chiluba and his friends; A case study of the interaction between national politics and the international drive towards good governance, *African Affairs*, 107(429).

16 The lawyers Iqbal Meer and his partner Naynesh Desai were ordered to pay back US\$ 11 million in the London trial of Chiluba and his co-accused. On appeal, the court decided that they had been negligent.

17 Neutral Citation Number: [2007] EWHC 952 (Ch) Case No: HC04C03129 IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE CHANCERY DIVISION Royal Courts of Justice Strand, London, WC2A 2LL 04/05/2007 Before: MR JUSTICE PETER SMITH Between: Attorney General of Zambia for and on behalf of the Republic of Zambia Claimant - and - Meer Care & Desai (a firm) & Ors Defendants.

18 UK lawyers helped Zambia's ex-president launder GBP23 million', *The Guardian* [UK], 6 February 2008.

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20 *Post*, Auditor General, Dr Miti differ, 5 April 2007; *Times of Zambia*, PAC sends Health permsec away, 5 April 2007; *Daily Mail*, Health Ministry leads in audit queries, 5 April 2007.

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- 24 'Chiluba protests against French envoy', The Post (Lusaka), 12 December 2005.
- 25 'Zambian state urges High court to reject Bulaya's appeal', Times of Zambia, 18 June 2008.
- 26 This section compresses an elaborate debate and numerous references from the Zambian press can be made. Please go to the archive of <http://allAfrica.com> and search on reform of the constitution in The Post/Zambia and the Times of Zambia.
- 27 Associated Press, 2 April 1999.
- 28 Africa Confidential, 40(16), 6 August 1999.
- 29 BBC news website, 29 September 1999, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/460759.stm>, accessed on 30 September 2008.
- 30 UK High Commission in South Africa website, <http://ukinsouthafrica.fco.gov.uk/en/working-with-south-africa/uk-policy-zimbabwe/land-reform>, accessed on 4 October 2008.
- 31 Clare Short, 'One bad letter with long lasting consequences', New African, May 2007.
- 32 'Zimbabwean land reform: Mugabe's bid for land reform', The Economist, 13 November 1997, <http://www.economist.com/world/mideast-africa>.
- 33 Copson, R.W. (2001) Zimbabwe: Current issues, Washington: Congress Research Service.
- 34 Africa Confidential, 43(13), 28 June 2002.
- 35 Africa Confidential, 44(4), 21 February 2003.
- 36 Africa Confidential, 40(6), 19 March 1999.
- 37 With the possible exception of Anna Tibaijuka's mission following Operation Murambatvina, in which informal urban settlements harbouring opposition supporters were rigorously 'cleaned up'.
- 38 Paradoxically, by financing the civil and political opposition to Mugabe, donors are essentially funding the lobbying they themselves undergo. Civil and political activists regularly tour the world calling for further sanctions against government and tougher condemnations of the regime. This leads one to wonder who in fact is walking on whose leash.
- 39 Gono, G. (2007) 'Zimbabwe will not die', New African, September.
- 40 With the exception of the predatory buying up of productive assets.

About The Authors

Melle Leenstra studied rural development in Wageningen. Even while attaining a degree in development economics, he was driven by a strong interest in socio-political and institutional issues. Following an internship at the poverty reduction and institutional development division and a temporary contract at the NGO division of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he formally joined the Ministry in 2004. In combination with a posting as desk officer for Zambia and Zimbabwe, and now Uganda, Melle Leenstra has developed a PhD-project on the Zambian Health Sector, from a political science/public administration perspective. This research is being made possible by the IS-Academy partnership between the African Studies Centre of Leiden University and the Africa Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Currently, Melle Leenstra is seconded to the African Studies Centre under the PhD-facility of the Ministry, so as to allow him to finalize his dissertation.

Jan Kees van Donge taught for a total of twenty years at three African universities, the University of Zambia, the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and the University of Malawi. In the Netherlands he started as a teaching assistant at VU University Amsterdam, where he obtained his first degrees in political science. Since 1997 he has taught, with an interruption of three years as an independent consultant, at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, recently combined with teaching stints at the University of Namibia. Van Donge obtained his PhD in 1993 at Wageningen University on a sociological analysis of economic life in the Uluguru Mountains Tanzania. He has not only published on rural sociology, but also on African politics and public management type subjects.