

Agrarian South Network Research Bulletin

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EDITORIAL

Revisiting the Agrarian Question for Autonomous Development in the Global South

The editorial note of the first issue of the *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy* 1(1) discusses the Agrarian Question (AQ) in its historical form, positions it at the current juncture, and also visualizes how the AQ will evolve in the coming decades. At the core of this analysis is the framing of global development trajectories, and the posing of alternative development paths which can be pursued by the peripheries. Many commentators in the Global North have proclaimed that the AQ has fully been resolved. The inaugural editorial note of the *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy* argues that far from being resolved, the AQ persists in the periphery manifesting itself in questions of recapturing global agriculture from monopoly finance, land and natural resources from the logic of monopoly-finance capital while also emphasizing the importance of delinking as a *sine qua non* for egalitarianism, democracy and development in the peripheries.

With the global economy in its phase of financialised monopoly-capitalism which heightens center –periphery contradictions, addressing the AQ is pivotal for autonomous development to proceed in the South. Over the past four decades, the AQ has morphed into a question of national sovereignty, land question(s), gender and ecological sustainability which require urgent attention if sustainable development is to occur. As

highlighted by Max Ajl in the first piece, this not only calls for peoples of the South to take action, but also requires acts of *solidarity* from the Global North, by way of supporting the cause of national liberation or struggles for national sovereignty demanded by peoples of the South- of which access to land is key. All the pieces in this issue view land access as a critical aspect of development in the peripheries.

In this issue, edited by Freedom Mazwi, the three pieces from Africa, Asia and Latin America address various dimensions of the AQ. The first piece is an interview with Max Ajl by Henry Hakamaki, Brett O'Shay and Adnan Hussain on the *Liberation Struggles and the Agrarian Question*. With a specific focus on Tunisia and Algeria, the interview shows how liberation struggles against imperialist domination were largely driven by the logic of the agrarian question of liberation. We are shown how poor framing and articulation of the agrarian question of liberation by the Bourguiba-led fighters in Tunisia only led to partial independence, and a neocolonial post-colonial Tunisia thereby intensifying internal contradictions. Social forces under the leadership of the radical Salah Ben Youssef responded by demanding the full autonomy of Tunisia beginning the end of 1955 thus underscoring the centrality of land. The article by Justina Namukombo on *Pre- and Post-Reform Perceptions and Practices on Land Tenure Systems in Zambia*

and their Implication on Agrarian Policies systematically shows how externally driven neoliberal policies are creating room for international and domestic capital to maneuver on land, with possible consequences on peasant livelihoods, land use patterns and general food self-sufficiency. Moyo (2011) and Patnaik (2011) warn of such consequences in this phase of neoliberal capitalism. The debate on alternative forms of development which also

constitutes the Agrarian Question is taken up by María Mercedes Ferrero in an article titled “*Argentina: The Homeland that we owe to ourselves*”. The article argues that for Argentina to have sustainable development there is need to abandon economics premised on the neoliberal project and return to state planning which prioritizes rural development, the defense of the commons, national sovereignty and development as well as a decentralized and federal approach.

Max Ajl on Liberation Struggles and the Agrarian Question

This is the first half of an interview which aired on January 27 on the Guerrilla History [podcast](#). It has been edited for readability and to correct a few mistakes.

Henry Hakamaki: The topic for today is the agrarian question and its importance to national liberation struggles. We've talked about various national liberation struggles before, but we have not really touched on the agrarian question much in general or in regards to these national liberation struggles. Max, can you orient us as to what the agrarian question is?

Max Ajl: The agrarian question is a framing device that we use to bring into focus the many socio-political, economic, ecological, gender relations occurring in a non-urban spatial area – which is in one way or another in or linked to the countryside. There is no meta-thing that's beyond that. It's a lens to bring certain processes and relations into clear view, particularly as a correction to historical over-focus on urban struggles and the forms of politics that are taking place in cities and in the struggle for state power. And given that state organs, political organs are historically situated in cities, that fact of course, lends an urban bias to a broad range of social and political inquiry. So the agrarian question is not just a framing device, but a reframing device and its contours and its parameters change over time, depending on both what people wish to bring into focus and what they are capable of bringing into focus. So it actually expands in many ways over time as more struggles force different aspects of what's going on in the countryside into broader attention.

Brett O'Shay: So now that we have that basic idea, I'm wondering: why has the agrarian question been so important for revolutionary movements in particular and so central to the history of Marxist and national liberation struggles in particular.

Max Ajl: Even when the agrarian question was originally being framed by Engels in Western Europe, there was an urgent political question of how primarily or initially should urban based parties or intellectuals or political organizers or politicians orient to these large peasant populations. That was the original agrarian question. It was how to orient politically to the large masses of people who had not been effectively organized by the left. So in any country where you have a demographically significant portion of the population lives in the countryside, the agrarian question asserts itself or should assert itself almost organically and historically, simply by virtue of the fact that those are the people whose social and political demands, and needs and subjectivities need to be attended to in the process of attempting a socialist revolution or trying to consolidate a socialist revolution through either post-colonial or post-revolutionary state formation and economic development. Agrarian questions are also very central in the north, in ways that are less apparent, primarily because of population shifts from the countryside to the cities. And therefore, many people would assert that the North, the North Atlantic does not have an agrarian question, which actually blocks us from viewing central aspects of political struggle in the north. One of the questions is that of solidarity. People love this word solidarity, but the solidarity does not usually get asserted or get raised when it comes to how to orient to a southern agrarian question of national liberation. In fact, that implies a corollary political task in the north, on the one hand. On the other, the agrarian question in the north has only been so-called, settled or consolidated on the basis of interlinked processes of primitive accumulation and ongoing neo-

colonialism that in fact need to be transcended in order to have just resolutions of all kinds of social contradictions on a worldwide basis.

Adnan Hussain: Yeah, I noticed that you've done a lot of work on North Africa in particular. And so I thought this might be a good focus for seeing how the differing national liberation experiences, movements and struggles in North Africa dealt with the question of land and, you know, the agrarian question and peasant society. And I guess I'm thinking a little bit about Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*. And, you know, he talks very obviously when he's pitching it broader. But of course many of his examples are drawn from the experience of Algeria because of his participation in that national liberation struggle against French colonialism. But I recall even in the very first chapter, he says, the peasants, people in the countryside, their chief concern is land and bread. This is what the whole revolution is about. And politics has to address itself to that. And he makes a big point of distinguishing between these urban political orientations versus the broader struggle in the countryside, which we know, you know, the FLN was best organized actually for most of the struggle in the countryside. So I'm wondering if maybe you could talk about the Algerian case and how the agrarian question functioned in there. And perhaps if we have an opportunity, we can look at the differences in places like Tunisia and Morocco that had a very different path and different subsequent histories. But let's start with the Algerian case.

Max Ajl: In Algeria, you had an incredibly violent process of settler colonial land alienation, which first required the imposition of settler property relations and settler sovereignty – that is, the political capacity to impose the rule of Western capitalist property upon a foreign land. Throughout the 19th century, the French had a great deal of trouble imposing property relations. And this is why they leveled the country to the

ground. They eradicated half of the population of Algeria during the course of settler-capitalist colonization. And of course, the settler colonialism is always settler capitalist. But I use this terminology deliberately because in fact, conceptually speaking, there's been a successful evacuation of the materialist aspects from settler colonialism to the point that contemporary theorists don't consider Algeria as a former settler colonial case. We can bracket this question, but if we take the theory of the national liberation movements as normative, this would be a completely ludicrous position. But nevertheless one can find it in the literature. Now, thereafter, the French used Algeria in two ways. One: it became an outlet for resolving social tensions of France. So France was able to ship off large portions, not super large portions, but portions of its population, so as to provide them with what Fanon said the Algerian peasant wanted, which was land – land was in fact provided to the French lower classes through the process of settler capitalist land alienation through primitive accumulation, thus enabling the French were to farm in Algeria. They then produced a lot of products that were then shipped for a great profit. The French in Algeria were a major producer of wine, a small producer of olive oil, and a major producer of cereals. These commodities were produced on rather large farms using a quite large Algerian rural proletariat which had been chased from the land. There were other portions of the country where the Algerians had retained their own land, and so they were semi-proletarianized. That is, they would be working the land during some portion of the working year and in other portions of the year receiving their subsistence, basically their food, from subsistence plots.

The basic settler capitalist property framework which existed in Algeria meant that the corollary of the French primitive accumulation of the land towards both the relaxation of social tensions and the accumulation of surplus value within the white settler class was the systematic

immiseration, marginalization and proletarianization or semi-proletarianization, if not outright eradication of the Algerian population. These were interlinked processes that also went alongside value transfer from the Algerian territory to the territory of France. So this was these were the basic contours of the Algerian settler agrarian question as it presented itself when the revolution exploded in 1954. Now it's worth actually adding something. It's commonly thought that Fanon was writing about Algeria in *The Wretched of the Earth*. I think this is because people have never heard of a country called Tunisia. And it's understandable. And there are, of course, portions where he's clearly talking about treating Algerian prisoners in the psychiatric hospital. It goes without saying this is about Algeria. But when he's talking about the national bourgeoisie and national consciousness, if one has studied this period of Tunisian history, which I did because I wrote my dissertation on it, so I know about it, including reading probably half of the president of Tunisia Habib Bourguiba's speeches from the post-colonial period between from 1955 until 1970, you realize Fanon, was living in Tunisia, he was probably was reacting to Bourguiba. So one finds the same phrases the battle for liberation becomes the battle for underdevelopment. This was the phrase of the Neo-Destour, the Tunisian governing party. This was a Neo-Destour slogan, practically. Bourguiba would repeat this time and time again in his speeches. So Fanon was really ripping into Tunisia without mentioning Tunisia very much. Why? One, this was a function of the overall abstraction he was working with. Two, it was probably a function of having to maneuver as a partisan of the Algerian national liberation movement by having safe harbor in Tunisia as basically reluctant to rear base for the Algerian national liberation struggle. So you had you had these inter-mixed aspects.

But now to go back to Algeria, I mean, this systematic semi-proletarianization and immiseration of the Algerian people was exactly why Fanon put the issue very bluntly. He was saying the people want bread, the land – the people want land as a means of getting access to bread. And this is why Fanon is such a central figure and thinking about the agrarian question. And it also is something very odd in contemporary Fanon chatter -that Fanon's focus on land has actually basically been extirpated from the great majority of the theoretical corpus that works on Fanon. And I think people appreciate his abstractness and his deployment of Hegelian terminology and so forth, because they like someone who is hard to interpret to then make them say what they want. There's been comparatively little focus on something Fanon was telling us very simply. He said, yes, land, the people over there want that. And so it's understandable that this has been really suppressed in Fanon chatter because the actual central basis, the central material basis of white supremacy on a world scale is settler land relationships and their subsequent transmutation into neocolonial land relationships. We know this from the Patnaiks and we also know it from Walter Rodney, and Eric Williams that wealth from the land, if not direct ownership of the land, has been the central basis for accumulation on a world scale and retains an absolute centrality. So if you don't address or lift up this fundamental process of dispossession, then it becomes almost impossible to address theft and this fundamental and ongoing contradiction. It's understandable that some in the left don't want to address these things, or find it natural to not lift up these issues in the first place. This happens despite the fact that this phenomena is the absolute central social contradiction on a world scale, and also presents itself themselves as a central issue to every major revolutionary struggle going on in the world today.

Henry Hakamaki: Just to follow up a little bit more on the history of the Tunisian peasant revolts, because as you said, it seems like many people have not heard of Tunisia. And I know that you are more aware of it than just about anybody else that I can think of. Can you talk a little bit about the history of those peasant revolts within Tunisia? Because to my understanding, there was essentially two waves of peasant revolt in Tunisia, one of which was very heavily influenced by the agrarian question, just explicitly, and one was a bit more Nasserist in origin. Am I understanding this correctly?

Max Ajl: Let us say your understanding is better than 99.9% of people on the planet. But if I might make a few corrections just because it's the topic of my dissertation and my manuscript that I'm slowly inching away on. But actually, first of all, I see the Tunisian agrarian question as part of an organic and contiguous Arab agrarian question, a pan-Arab agrarian question that emerged against the threat of imperialism, settler capitalism and monopoly capital as well as intertwined, interlocking social, economic and political forces that were carrying out dispossession and exploitation on a world scale. So the initial burst of Tunisian armed activity which came from the Tunisian peasantry in eastern Tunisia and in the mid to late 1940s was very explosive.¹ For that reason the Tunisians from that region were hated by the French colonizers. And it's to the point that we don't actually have proper history. So this, again, becomes an issue of the political economy of knowledge construction actually which determines the epistemology to the extent that hasn't been written about properly. The fact that these were peasant revolts made it so fashionable not to write about, especially in the Tunisian academy under neocolonialism. Now what's interesting is that some of Zeramine *fellaga*, e I

believe were captured and killed when they were trying to go to Palestine. Tunisia had sent a huge, disproportionate number taking into account Tunisia is a small country. These fighters, first of all, were also part of an agrarian question. They were fighting against the political face of monopoly capital, Western trusts, Zionism, the settler capitalist process of land alienation. So this was actually part of the Arab agrarian question and you can say the Arab peasant war, which unfolded against the forces of Western colonialism and settler colonialism, backstopped by the West in the Arab region. Now, these fighters were the most effective contingent that actually entered the Palestine front. And the fighters who were training in Syria, including the officers who were training in the office corps went on to form the nodes, the nuclei, of the Tunisian national liberation struggle upon returning to Tunisia after demobilizing from the Syria front. And the history of what happened after, it's a bit murky. It seems that resistance forces started mobilizing in 1950 semi-independently. But although with a kind of a verbal spur coming from the future dictator Habib Bourguiba. They mobilized in the countryside where they made links with one another. They moved up and down the southeast of the country and the interior and were probably preparing arms caches. They were building up logistical networks to be able to launch a peasant war when the time came. When the time came in 1952 there was an insurgency, which we call the *fellaga* insurgency.² The word which was pejorative meant a cutter of wood, but was basically reclaimed in the aftermath of what is called the Tunisian revolution. From 1952 to 1954, an armed insurgency spread across all of Tunisia, for the most part, going slowly from South to North. And it systematically targeted collaborators who

¹ Another major rebellion occurred in the South: the Merazigue revolt.

² The contemporary Arabic press and some French archival documents picking up on their rhetoric used *mujahideen*, or *thuwwar* – revolutionaries.

were overwhelmingly people with land, or people with prestige.

So the collaborator class was also to an extent a social class. And the fighters also systematically targeted French settlements. I haven't been able to unearth enough of what they were fighting for. The overwhelming majority simply wanted the French to leave the country.³ If you want the French to leave because they're occupying your land, it doesn't matter how exactly you articulate this question. You're posing an agrarian question, a war of national liberation, that the central contradiction, who has sovereignty and property rights over the land, whether or not it's framed in such specific technical terms. That's actually what was occurring. There're other places where the theory of it was clearer. And the theory does matter. But the lack of such a theory shouldn't undermine the political process which unfolded in the Tunisian countryside. They were systematically targeting settlers. They mainly targeted the degree of mechanization and linked it to land alienation, semi-proletarianization and their inability to actually work on the land. There was a clear understanding, linked to some of the discourse of Farhat Harshad, who was the incredible organic intellectual of the Tunisian trade union who was assassinated by the French *contras* in 1952. With these processes going on until mid-1954, the French fully understood that the game was up, and that they would have to yield or cede some kind of political control, a cession which they hoped to minimize. They were very hopeful and optimistic that they could minimize the amount of political control they would hand over as well as minimizing or at least slowing down the amount of economic control they were to hand over. And this was an ongoing contestation from 1954, minimally, until 1964. But really, that period, and after is actually the

history of neocolonialism. It's an ongoing contestation until today.

I mean, there is Avenue de Paris, an Avenue de France. There's a French embassy sitting on the major boulevard with tanks in front of it. There is a French cultural center occupying a huge portion of downtown Tunis, which is treated as French sovereign territory. And the French ambassador has a house in the upscale suburbs that I'm not even quite sure how big it is, but it's quite huge. And surrounded by a five meter wall.

Now, the point is this: Bourguiba basically brokered the partial demobilization of this insurgency starting in November 1954 with the promise of internal autonomy.⁴ So he basically used it as a leverage point in order to pressure the French into yielding internal autonomy to Tunisians and then these forces partially demobilized. This was around November to December 1954. They handed over their weapons to a team of negotiators of sorts who were often linked to the UGTT, because the UGTT, the Tunisian nationalist trade union had nationalist credibility even more than the party. So they became credible brokers and asked for the handover of weapons in a way that the party, let alone the French, were not.

So they demobilized. Now, some of them went to Algeria immediately. They mobilized over to Algeria to join the struggle there. They didn't see a political distinction between the armed liberation struggle in Tunisia and the armed liberation struggle in Algeria. Other portions more or less either surrendered old weapons. And this is still unclear in the evidence uncovered thus far. My impression basically is, okay, yeah, sure, we're going to give up these weapons, but we're going to maintain our logistical networks and we're going to maintain portions of our

³ Many argue that there was an expectation that the post-colonial state would return confiscated land to the peasantry.

⁴ November 1 1954 was also the outbreak of the Algerian Revolution, adding further pressure on France.

organizational networks and we're going to start fighting again in 1955. So by early 1955, they were already preparing for another war of national liberation. So they effectively accepted to put down their weapons for six weeks, which basically means it's not really clear as to what degree they expected what they were doing to be any form of a farewell to the liberation cause at all.

Now around September 1955, Salah Ben Youssef, having been in Bandung and being more and more exposed to Nasserism, and also the cluster of pan-Arab, intellectuals and political organizations like Yousef Rouissi and others were more or less agitating for Tunisia to press on to full autonomy. This led to what became known as the Bourguiba-Ben Youssef split. And at this point, the Yousseffite insurgency was launched again in late 1955. And when Ben Youssef had to flee to Libya in early 1956, there were pitched battles primarily which also linked the French troops and French military hardware. They fought rebels across the South, who were put down and sometimes had their villages placed under curfews or just destroyed. And by June 1956, the great majority of it was over. However, the rebellion actually continued and kept reemerging from these kinds of embers. Unrest would flare up into fires: 1956, 1957, maybe 1958. Again, there was some territorial contiguity between western Tunisia and eastern Algeria. By then these were not hardened borders as people could just float over them. It was very easy for Algerians to cross over and start fighting French troops in Tunisia and this happened all the time. So this national liberation struggle was kind of ebbing and flowing until a French-Algerian accord was brokered. So, there was really this

ongoing struggle. Now ideologically speaking, we don't know enough. But, you know, they were fighting for dignity. They were fighting against the French alienation of their country, the French control of their country. They were fighting for freedom in their homeland against the Christian invader.

Ben Youssef was more of an activist than an intellectual producing written texts, but there were definitely many people who thought that there should be an organic fusion between all of the armed liberation movements in the Maghreb in North Africa, between Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, arguing that this would be the best way to contest French power in the region. And they thought that this was the best way to reassert sovereign control over the process of development. Ben Youssef had certainly by late 1955, started to ideologically internalize some of the thinking of Bandung around national development efforts and the full nationalization of the land and the economic control of the countries through, for example, the control of tariffs and so on. And there was a very strong feeling that this was the essence of the split between the Yousseffites the Bourguibists. The question was, are you going to throw the French out or not? That is, were the French going to be removed from their nesting on Tunisian land or not, which certainly is a central question – an agrarian question of national liberation. That is, which group of nationals would have the right to have dispensation over the central national productive forces – the land. And they weren't framing it precisely in these terms, but this is exactly what it comes down to, fundamentally speaking.

Title: Comparison of Pre- and Post-Reform Perceptions and Practices on Land Tenure Systems in Zambia and their Implication on Agrarian Policies

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Abstract

Zambia went through a prolonged land policy formulation process lasting over two (1993 to 2021) decades. In this paper we focus on the perceptions of land policy makers on land tenure systems and argue that since the adoption of neoliberal policies and the attendant socio-economic and political reforms, perceptions about land ownership, access and use have changed dramatically. Such changes have implication on agricultural production since land is no longer confined only to agriculture. Information in this article is part of the interviews conducted for a study on land policy formulation process in Zambia during the period January to April 2021. Qualitative methods were used to collect information on perceptions held by land policy actors on land tenure system. Interviews were conducted with traditional leaders, members of parliament and civil society organizations. The study found that the adoption of neoliberal policies and consequent socio-economic and political reforms, had a profound impact in shaping perceptions around land access, ownership and use. These findings are used to make assumptions on the implications for agrarian policies.

Key words: Land tenure, perception, neoliberal policies, reforms, Agrarian policies, Zambia

Introduction

Zambia's land reform which went through a prolonged process was characterized by lack of consensus among land policy actors. Major actors in the land policy formulation process were Ministry of Land, Environment and Natural Resources, members of parliament, traditional leaders and civil society organisations. With the adoption of neoliberal policies in the 1980s, perceptions on land tenure have been changing when compared to the way land tenure was conceived in the pre-reform era. For Africa land reform has taken two major opposing

approaches. These are land reforms aimed at economic development and those reforms intended at protecting customary land occupied by the rural majority. Owing to this, studies on land access, ownership and use have largely been dominated by two theoretical approaches. Dominant in literature is one linked to property rights theories which argue that freehold and open access to land can lead to overexploitation of natural resources and that the privatization of land often attracts investment and leading to economic development. The argument

further posit that land resources held under customary tenure are unproductive and a hindrance to economic development (Sjaastad and Bromley, 1997; Barrows and Roth, 1989; Williamson, 2004; Loxely, 1983; Denninger, 2016). An opposing strand of thought views land as fundamental to human life which should not be traded as it is critical for the very existence of human life (Polanyi, 1944; Gluckman, 1968; Mafeje, 1985; Merlet, 2007; Harvey, 2005).

Proponents of market led approaches to land resource management argue that customary land tenure system are communal and insecure (Sjaastad and Bromley, 1997; Roth et al, 1997). It is further argued that land holders under this tenure do not engage in real investment on their land thus ultimately hindering economic development. Under the influence of market type of approaches studies on land access and processes in Zambia have focused on implications of titling customary land on agriculture productivity and security of tenure (Honig and Mulenga, 2015; Nicholas et al, 2014; Jain et al, 2016), while others have analysed the effects of large scale acquisition of customary land on people's livelihoods (Chileshe, 2005; Chun et al, 2015). Further, in the wake of vested interests in customary land, some analysts have recommended the strengthening of governance structures in customary tenure land administration (Munshifwa, 2018).

In Zambia, though land tenure system is still largely guided by customary laws, there has been changes in the perceptions about land access and ownership since the adoption of neoliberal policies. Customary laws are

unwritten statutes which guide life practices of a particular community (Cotula, 2007; Cotula et al, 2004). In land alienation, access and ownership was guaranteed through residence in a particular community and would be passed from one generation to the other (Mafeje, 2003; 2005).

The aim of this piece is to illuminate on the changing nature of perceptions about land tenure since the adoption of neoliberal policies. Although the piece does not provide a comprehensive picture on the actual practices and related consequences, it does start a conversation on neo liberal policies impacts on people's perceptions on land resource management in Zambia. In the following section, we discuss the reasons why there has been increased interest in land resources generally in Africa and using the Zambian case to show the changing perceptions on land tenure system. The last section makes assumptions on the implications of these changes on agrarian policies.

Why the increased interest in land resources in Africa?

A number of reasons which explain the increased interest in land resources by policy analysts and policy makers. Firstly, land in Zambia just like in many African countries is becoming one of the most valuable resources which government is using as a vehicle to drive economic development through foreign investment. This realization has also been invoked by other global economic needs for renewable energy, water and anticipated future demands for food in developed countries. Three main drivers for large land acquisition are identified by Hall (2011),

represented by the term ‘triple –F crisis’: Food, Fuel and Finance. The global hike in food and oil prices from 2007 to 2009 triggered a chain of reaction from nations dependent on food imports to look elsewhere for their source. Africa was at this moment and continues to be seen as a centre for ‘global land grab’ and site of continued ‘primitive accumulation’ by neocolonial forces whose agenda is to extract key resources (Moyo, Yeros and Jha, 2012; Ndi, 2018; Batterbury and Ndi, 2018; Chasukwa, 2017, and Hall, 2011).

Secondly, changes in perspectives on land tenure systems is also linked to the adoption of neoliberal policies in the 1980s which advanced market approaches to the management of the economy as opposed to the state. Market approaches entailed establishment of legal system that would secure property rights (Williamson, 2004; Loxely, 1983). Secure property rights over land are recommended as a pre-condition for sustainable pro-poor economic growth (Denninger, 2016). This approach was in contrary to the Lagos Plan of Action which recommended increased government spending especially in the agriculture sector (OAU, 1980). The neoliberal prescriptions still remain significantly influential on the content of policy reforms in Africa and people’s perception.

The World Bank in its ‘Awakening Africa’s Sleeping Giant’ report sees such investment as a development opportunity for the continent. According to the report, only 6% of the 700 million hectares of the Guinea Savannah zone suitable for high potential agriculture is under cultivation (World Bank,

2009, p 24). It is envisaged that with full tapping in this potential, the continent will use this comparative advantage to bring about development. Large scale acquisition of land for various development projects including commercial farming has been a major occurrence. Some of these projects include White Zimbabwean farmers in Nigeria, Dutch and American ventures in Ghana, European investors in Kenya’s dry lands and Canadian Biofuel Company on its coast and South African Agribusiness in Tanzania’s southern growth corridor and Malawi’s Green belt. (Hall et al, 2018).

The Zambian government is also opening up land for foreign investors for agriculture and mining activities. Some of the examples of large scale land acquisition include the 302,749 ha in Mpika, 105,000 ha in Serenje and 3,003 ha in Choma districts (Chu et al, 2015; Chu, 2012). This paper argues that these broad policy prescriptions have impacted on local people’s perception on land tenure systems in Zambia.

Socio-economic and political arrangements before and after reforms - 1964 to early 1990s

After independence, socio-economic and political policies were determined by conditions that prevailed in pre-independent Zambia. Zambia’s economy that time (though to some extent even now) was heavily dependent on the mining sector (Saasa, 1987, Anderson et al, 2000). Traditional sectors like agriculture which were a source of livelihood for most Africans in general relied on was underdeveloped except for few white settler commercial farms located along the line rail. By 1965, the

mining sector's contribution to the country's GDP was about 41% while the agriculture sector only contributed 11.5% (Saasa, 1987).

The prevailing situation negatively impacted on the socio-economic development of the country. This meant that social services such as health, education and roads were either underdeveloped or non-existence at independence (Anderson et al 2000). To this effect, Dr Kaunda and the UNIP government adopted policies aimed at address inherited inequalities and injustices. Key policy instituted after independence included the Mulungushi Declaration where the government pronounced the desire to take at least 51% interest in the private enterprises Kaunda, 1968). The Matero reforms also enabled government to take over the ownership of the mining companies (Saasa, 1987). These broader reforms were intended at nationalizing privately owned companies and the establishment of parastatal companies to meet the objectives of industrialization and creation of employment for the local people (Saasa, 1996).

Zambia inherited a relatively stable economy with copper export earnings whose total revenue stood at 12.9 percent around 1975 but these went on to decline during the 1980s to about 5.3 percent. By early 1980s, Zambia was now reliant on external borrowing and had become one of the heavily indebted countries globally (Saasa, 1996). This resulted in budget deficits due to dwindling financial resources leading to government inability to provide social services and manage many government dependent parastatals. Borrowings from international financial institutions came with conditions

that did not match the expectations of Zambian people. For example, increase in food prices led to riots in 1986 which contributed to further distrust of the UNIP government by the people in terms of managing political and economic affairs of the country. By 1991, when there was change of government from one party state to multiparty political system, total revenue from copper export had dropped to 8.0 percentage (World Bank, 1992). This situation was partly due to the falling world oil prices in 1973 and the falling copper prices on the world market around 1975.

Due to the effects of falling copper prices and its impact on the economy, the then president Kaunda succumbed to calls by some sections of society (especially the labour movement) to introduce a multiparty system in 1990. In October 1991, Zambia embraced multiparty democratic political system and neo-liberal policies under the presidency of Fredrick Chiluba. This entailed the abandonment of protectionist measures and opening the economy to the outside world. Specifically, this also meant appreciating private ownership of properties as well as the introduction of private land markets, a principle that was absent before reforms. Due to the fact that the large majority of the population is based in rural areas, it has widely been argued that the introduced neoliberal policies are inadequate to guide egalitarian land policy reforms in contexts like Zambia (Moyo, 2004).

Land Tenure System and Perceptions before Reforms

Zambia has a dual land tenure system which recognizes both customary and statutory land

tenureship. Customary tenure is under the custodian of traditional leaders or chiefs and covers close to 96% of land while 4% is under state custodianship (Republic of Zambia, 2021). Customary tenure system is an indigenous form of land holding that is generally customary practices which are kingship and clan based. Under this tenure regime is passed on from one generation to the next. In Zambia, customary tenure governs the former trust and native reserves introduced by colonial authorities (land meant for indigenous people) while state or leasehold type of tenure is the former crown land. Crown land was land which the Queen of England acquired and mostly covered the

stretch along the line of rail from the southern to the northern part of the country. It was described as most arable land with easy access to markets for agriculture produce.

Before the transition to a market economy, land transactions in Zambia were illegal since the 1975 (Conversion and Tittles) Act abolished all land sales. In seeking to gauge perceptions on land tenure during this epoch, respondents were asked on principles which guided land legislations before introduction of socio-economic and political reforms. Some were of the view that before the transition, land legislations were viewed to be centering on people's interests.

“Before the 1990s, land administration and legislation inclined on the people while in the 1990s land has been commodified and the interest is on how to make money out of the land...before 1990s humanism guided land legislations, putting man at the centre (Ubuntu ideology) by Kenneth Kaunda”⁵.

A number of respondents opined that land had no financial value before reforms and appreciated president Kenneth Kaunda's 'go back to the land' concept which encouraged youths to own land on both state and customary tenure in Resettlement Schemes. It should be mentioned however that this did not imply that land did not have any value in a literal sense. People protected their land from invasions and any other illegal occupation from people external to their communities. What is clear is that land was not viewed as a resource that could be transacted.

Land Tenure Perceptions after reforms

With the coming in of the Movement for Multiparty Democracy regime, firstly there was amendment of the constitution, Cap 184 of the laws of Zambia. The amendment repealed the 1975 (Conversion and Tittles) Act, the 1985 Administrative Guidelines and other pre-independence land legislations. Important features related to land administration which were upheld by the constitution include the vesting of all land in the president as well as the continuation of leaseholds and statutory recognition of customary land. Secondly the 1995 Act specifically introduced land markets, a principle associated with neo-liberalism.

The outstanding outcomes of the socio-economic and political changes after reforms on land legislations on perceptions is that

⁵ Interview with chief Mumena of Solwezi district of North-Western Province on 25th January, 2021

there is general attachment of the value to land as some respondents put it. One key informant had this to say:

“Before land was owned communally, no ideas of selling but now also changes in population, land is being sold.”⁶

Others viewed the one party and socialist regime as an era of no ‘policy’ on land sales.

“In Kaunda time there was no policy about selling land...now people in my chiefdom are selling land to investors.”⁷

Some have viewed the changes as having enabled many people to have access to land.

“All Zambians now want to settle, there is realization that there is value in land especially women.”⁸

Members of parliament were asked if there was change in the perceptions and beliefs guiding debates and legislations on land. Out of those who completed the online survey, about 90% of the respondents think there has been some change compared to the pre-reform period of 1990s. They are of the view that before economic and political reforms, customary tenure ideas guided discussions on land policies.

Traditional leaders were also categorical in their stance.

‘The land policy is not our local idea, it’s a foreign idea.’⁹

Traditional leaders view land as a God given gift and source of their livelihoods and should have an upper hand over its management. They strongly believe that government through the land policy want to take away the powers they have over land alienation and management. Government on the other hand

view land as potential resource for development.

Respondents were also asked to make preference on the three types of land tenure system: customary, individualised and titled or both. More than 50% of the traditional leaders preferred customary land tenure system with none of them choosing the option of individualized and titled land while few (32%) of them chose the both option of tenure system. Majority of members of parliament prefer both individualised/titled and customary tenure system while few (less than 20%) preferred customary land. For civil society organisations, more than half of the interviewed preferred both individualised and customary land tenure system. With exception of traditional leaders, these findings is an indication that people’s perceptions on land access and ownership are changing. They are no longer more inclined to communal ownership and this has implications on agrarian policies as land use

⁶ Interview with chief Cooma of Choma district in Southern Province on 19th January, 2021

⁷ Interview with chief Shaibila of Mkushi District in Central Province on 25th January, 2021

⁸ Interview with chief Chamuka of Chisamba district in Central Province on 27th January, 2021

⁹ Interview with chief Macha on 19th January 2021

can be changed by new owners even in areas where agriculture is the key activity.

Implications for Agrarian Policies

From the above discussion on the changing perceptions of land tenure system, some of the implications include changes in land use. The realization on the value of land has resulted in people engaging in land transactions including on customary land. Transactions are taking various forms: short term rentals, sales, agreements to share produce, exchange in kind etc. What this implies especially where customary land is sold is that its use or purpose is likely to be transformed from that of agriculture to other types. For instance land may be used for activities that will not create rural employment and hence threatening food security. At the moment more than 50% of Zambia's population reside in rural areas and relies on agriculture production for their livelihood (LCMS, 2015).

The second related implication to the above outcome is the possibility of activating the problem of rural-urban migration. Rural people preferring to rent out or sale their land to urban elites do transactions at prices that are below market value of their parcels of

land. The outcome of these transactions are remunerations that cannot sustain them even up to the next farming season

Resultantly, this piece argues that it is important for government to come up with deliberate policy aimed at protecting areas meant for agriculture purposes. This requires performing land audit in order to know which land is being used and for what purposes. The policy should include a package of incentives to prevent rural people from transacting in land meant for agriculture purposes.

Conclusion

This article has shown that neoliberal policies have changed people's perceptions on land access, ownership and use. People now prefer individualised and titled land tenure system, a practice that was not common before the reforms. The implication of this change is that customary land which was not transacted before is now being transacted. This could have impact on food security and lead to rural-urban migration. Government need to carry out land audit and provide incentives for rural people to deter them from transacting in the land they depend for their livelihood.

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Argentina: the Homeland that we owe to ourselves!!!

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40 years after the return of democracy in Argentina, we still have to recover the strategic dimension to organize, inhabit and defend the territory of our Homeland. It is imperative to abandon short-termism and mere market logic, return to a path of state planning under organized communities that test and finds innovative and creative solutions to the most basic needs of our people: land, housing, work, **[Tierra, Techo y Trabajo]** and that at the same time strengthen the defense of the commons, sovereignty, and national development in a decentralized and federal approach.

Argentina is one of the countries with the largest territorial extension (7th in area) and least densely populated (32nd in number of population) in the world. Almost 93% of the population lives in urban centers, with more than 40% resident in cities which have more than one million inhabitants (Buenos Aires, Córdoba and Rosario). The evident but grossly unnoticed challenge is that the country's demographic and territorial structure is extremely unbalanced with

harmful effects that mortgage future of generations in Argentina. Overcrowding, precariousness, poverty and urban unhealthiness on the one hand; looting and plundering of the territory on the other hand are some of the pertinent challenges that must be addressed. The situation acquires deep strategic relevance in the current context of global civilizational, environmental, food, economic and political crises.

About half – a-century ago, the then President of the country Juan Domingo Perón reflected on the problems that an overpopulated and over-industrialized world presented for the future of humanity, and visualized a fundamental struggle for food reserves and raw materials although failing to state the struggle for water resources. Based on these reflections, he further noted that the "advantage" of America was that -due to its "lack of population" and presence of the largest natural resource reserves there was an evident and clear risk of imperialist dispossession and plunder. In his Message to the peoples and governments of the world (March 23, 1972) he warned:

“The time has come for all the peoples and governments of the world to become aware of the suicidal march that humanity has undertaken through the contamination of the environment and the biosphere, the squandering of natural resources, the unbridled growth

of the population and the overestimation of technology, and the need to immediately reverse the direction of that march, through joint international action (...).For our Third World countries: (1) We must protect our natural resources tooth and nail from the voracity of international monopolies who seek them to feed an absurd type of industrialization and development.(...) Each gram of raw material that Third World countries allow to be snatched away from them today is equivalent to kilos of food that they will stop producing tomorrow. (2) It is useless for us to avoid the exodus of our natural resources if we continue clinging to development methods, advocated by those same monopolies, which mean the denial of a rational use of them..."

From this call, the demand for new models of production, consumption, organization and technological development thus became imperatively clear. Alternative development models must prioritize providing satisfaction to the human essential needs, rationing the consumption of natural resources as well as reducing environmental pollution. A demographic policy - accompanied by an economic and social agenda that addresses the problems of overpopulation; was necessary for national defense and care of the territory.

Almost 50 years ago, the genocidal civil-military dictatorship (1976-1983) began one of the darkest moments in the national history of Argentina by inaugurating a new stage in the development of capitalism. Under neoliberalism, the political-economic program rolled out was certainly contrary to the banners of Political Sovereignty, Economic Independence and Social Justice. With regard to the territory, the programme did nothing more than deepen the demographic imbalance and placement of the territorial integrity at risk. It was a model based on looting and land concentration which expelled and displaced rural, peasant, and indigenous communities to pave way for

agribusiness encroachment, mega-mining and other methods of territorial plunder.

Decades of deployment of this "regressive - development" model have shown that the global integration strategy based on agriculture, mining and hydrocarbon exploitation has only aggravated the concentration of land and wealth, resulting in mass poverty and hunger and the destruction of the commons. Thus, 40 years after a return to democracy it is fundamental to rethink and redesign ways of inhabiting and caring for the territory.

Also critical will be to plan, design and develop alternatives to recover, democratize and care for the land; repopulate Argentina and create work; produce healthy food at a fair price; strengthen and organize the community and defend national sovereignty. At this juncture, there are different proposals and projects that have emerged from organizational experiences of popular movement and which point to this direction. One such example is the Comprehensive Human Development Plan of the Union of Workers of the Popular Economy-UTEP and other unions (<https://plandesarrollohumanointegral.com.ar>) or the La Marcha al Campo project (<http://lamarchaalcampo.com.ar>).

These proposals consider current experiences and have managed to provide effective responses to the most pressing needs of our people and their replication and re-scaling should be considered in other contexts. Progressive alternatives should initiate the necessary process of population redistribution for the present and future needs of Argentina. Such a campaign has been carried out in the province of Córdoba by a social organization known as Trabajadoras Unidas por la Tierra, which recovered an abandoned military barracks in the early 1990s to build the “Libertad Refuge” there (<https://refugio.libre.org.ar/>).

At the site of the former Artillery military Group 141, which used to be a clandestine detention and torture center operated by the previous dictatorship, and where repression reigned until 2018, rural workers have gathered to build the Rural Community Organized to transform a site that was at the service of death into a space of memory, truth, justice, land, roof and work for Integral Human Development. The organisation argues that for the process of population redistribution to happen, it is necessary to project and build a New Rurality: where rootedness, memory and defense of the means, and ways of life of rural communities

are combined and strengthened with rational and careful industrialization. Development of appropriate technology, deployment of connectivity and assurance of the necessary conditions in terms of access to health, education, culture, sports are seen as important aspects for rural areas to develop with dignity and integrity.

In rural communities which are recovered and made habitable for homeless rural workers and workers from urban centers, fiber optic is also installed to connect the families. These developments are predicated on the belief that in order to survive the ongoing crisis of civilization, an alliance between food sovereignty and technological sovereignty is necessary. This is also achieved through the practice of community agriculture which is focused on the production of healthy and accessible food for the popular sectors.

These experiences reflect strength and represent an alternative for humanity during this critical time. The State must listen and hear them and participate in their planning for development. This is the Argentina that must (re)built which is a homeland that we owe ourselves after 40 years of democracy.