

# SOUTH AFRICA'S SPATIAL ARRANGEMENTS AND LAND REFORM ISSUES TRAVERSED

S.M. Maake, M.G. Manamela and K.K. Meso  
University of Limpopo

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## ABSTRACT

This theoretical paper seeks to establish a significant contribution in the development perspective by arguing that land reform approach is static and inadequate for socio-economic transformation in South Africa. The slow pace of land reform has restricted and narrowed the opportunities for rural dwellers to yield the benefits of democracy. South Africa has a long history of suffering colonization, racial control and economic land deprivation. As a result, variety of livelihood activities by black people including land ownership has been and still is negatively affected. Consequently, practicing livelihood activities in rural setting remains a riddle which is impelled by the disabling spatial distribution including other socio-economic circumstances that impinge the indigent black society. Notwithstanding historical spatial arrangements, rural natives determinedly engage in a diverse portfolio of livelihood activities in an attempt to improve their quality of life and standard of living through both subsistent and commercial farming. The former is largely marked by indigent unskilled rural farmers who are excluded from the mainstream formal agricultural economy whereas the latter is pigeon-holed by rich farmers with a strong financial muscle to efficaciously utilise land and eventually control the agricultural market. However, it becomes questionable whether land reform as a policy is effective in South Africa to reverse the past injustices since the advent of democracy post 1994. Subsequently, the paper concludes that introduction of land reform in South Africa is inefficacious because of its inability to fulfil the promise of addressing central issues mainly; land restitution, tenure and redistribution in South Africa.

**Keywords:** Land Issues; Apartheid Regime; Livelihood Activities; South Africa.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of power relations over resources and biasness in South Africa has erstwhile structured by the colonial and apartheid epoch which were characterized by primitive accumulation and dispossession of the majority of people by the minority (Gumede, 2014). Suffering a long history of colonization, racial domination and land dispossession in South Africa, has resulted in the bulk of agricultural land being owned by white minority (Rugege, 2004; Marthin & Lorenzin, 2016). During apartheid regime, people were geographically segregated on the basis of their race in particular wherein the minority of whites has had a prerogative to occupy areas with economic potential and opulence (Ntsebeza, 2007; Sibanda, 2014). Consequently, the disparity between races has largely unprecedented with the biasness towards the white minority. Thus, the historical spatial arrangement has immensely created an elusive task to the current government in terms of formulating and implementing policies which aimed at restructuring the current spatial arrangements and inequalities as an endeavour towards obliterating poverty persistence in South Africa (Ntsebeza, 2007; Aliber & Cousins, 2012). Despite the extinction of colonization and apartheid policies in South Africa, dispensational implications should never be seen as a triviality to the contemporary livelihood activities carried out by rural dwellers.

Over two decades, developing countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia among others, have been arduously in pursuit of redistributive land reform programme which is believed to be the catalyst towards widening livelihood activities in rural areas (Gumede, 2014). Since its transition to democracy in 1994, South Africa has adopted a strongly pro-market approach to land reform, which is believed to be influenced exerted by conservative forces within the country and international backing

for market-assisted agrarian reform (Lahiff, 2007). In that context, the pace of land reform is undoubtedly deemed to be slow and there is near-consensus that land reform has been unsuccessful. On one hand, there is a startling lack of agreement as to its problem and what remedies should be administered (Aliber & Cousins, 2012). While on the other hand, there may be general acceptance that the South Africa land reform programme is not occurring fast enough, there is no agreement on the reasons (Ntsebeza, 2007).

By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, most of the country was reserved for the minority of the white settler population including the best agricultural land with the African majority confined to just 13% of the territory, the 'native reserves', which had later known as African Homelands or Bantustans. Lahiff (2007) have narrated that European settlement began around the Cape of Good Hope in the 1650s and progressed northwards and eastwards over a period of 300 years, which gives an explicit view that it could be a long project to ensure land reform in South Africa. Generally, the paper seeks to reveal on the discourse of literature the conundrum which South African citizens faced about the issues of land reform, predominantly in rural settings, as a consequent of historical spatial arrangement as well as the implications of an overpraised market-led agrarian reform. Generally, the paper sought to reveal the geographical scars left by colonial settlers and their implications towards the accomplishment of sustainable development as well as developmental state. The paper concludes that; despite the historical geographical arrangement, rural people obstinately construct diverse portfolio of livelihood activities concurrently to improve their living standard wherein agricultural practices take the centre stage thereof but that could be affected due to land reform disputes.

The rural poor in South Africa are now beginning to look to land and its productive use as a means of livelihood and food security (Jacobs & Makaudze, 2012; Akudugu, 2016). Apart from its value for agricultural production to realise commercial and subsistence farming for monetary exchange, land also provides basic household needs such as wood fuel, medicines, game meat and housing material. Given the high levels of unemployment and the limited opportunities for investment in the hinterland of the country, this is not only an option but an imperative. But for land and agrarian reform to resolve the issue of rural poverty, vast changes are needed (Toidepi, 2016). Rural people need access to land, tenure security, agricultural support and an environment

that is conducive to small-scale farming. National development initiatives depend, to a large extent, on the attainment of equitable land distribution and its sustainable utilisation. The success of our democracy depends on this.

## **2. THE HISTORICAL SPATIAL DESIGN**

The notorious dispossession of the indigenous population in South Africa by the Dutch and British settlers have been perceived to be one of the salient colonization in Africa and persisted for an exceptionally long time (Lahiff, 2007; 2014). During this period, people were geographically segregated and arranged on the basis of their race among other aspects wherein minority of whites were mysteriously given a prerogative opportune to occupy areas with economic potential and opportunities while other races especially black being confined to 'native reserves' also known as homelands. The history of White colonial land dispossession did not begin with the passing of the Native Land Act in 1913. Rather, it spans back to the expansion of Dutch colonial settlements in the Cape colony in 1850s (Ntsebeza, 2007; Lahiff, 2014). Therefore, the implications of historical spatial arrangement can never be based merely upon apartheid regime but taking into cognizance the deplorable role played by colonization in South Africa. According to Aliber & Cousins (2012), the dispossession of land as well as livestock has greatly intensified the feud between colonial settlers and indigenous population of 'Bantustans'. It has been identified through literature that initial part of land dispossession has actually began with annexation and division of territory, over time proclamations and laws were enacted by both the Afrikaners and the British to dislodge African people from their land while consolidating areas of White settlers (Ntsebeza, 2007; Aliber & Cousins, 2012; Gumede, 2014). Furthermore, it is undeniably clear that historical spatial arrangement has indeed started precisely in the arrival of colonizers within South Africa. The historical proponents have clearly avowed that by the time the Land Act of 1913 was enacted, South Africa was already moving in the direction of spatial segregation through land dispossession. One of the key legislations that laid down the foundation for a spatially divided South Africa was the Glen Grey Act passed in 1894 (Durrheim, 2005; Aliber & Cousins, 2012). The notorious 1913 Black Land Act divided land on a racial basis by setting aside 'scheduled areas' for exclusive occupation and acquisition by black people. As a result of the land shortage for black people, the 1936 Development Trust and Land Act

extended the operation of the 1913 Act by providing for the acquisition of 'released areas' for eventual occupation and acquisition by black people (Van Wyk, 2013).

Generally, the geographical division which was arduously accentuated by the colonial settlers has created an immense conundrum to the blacks in particular with regard to the practice of on-farming livelihood activities (Kepe and Tessaro, 2014). In consolidation of land dispossession, the apartheid regime has enacted Group Areas Act which was largely meant to segregate local people in the basis of their ethnic group. Ntsebeza, (2007) concurred that the act was mainly meant to create the gap in different homelands and widen the disparity between rural and urban areas within South Africa. Group Areas Act has led to non-Whites being forcibly removed for living in the "wrong" areas. The non-white majority were given much smaller areas to live in than the white minority who owned most of the country (Lahiff, 2007; Kepe, Ntsebeza & Pithers, 2001; Van Wyk, 2013). Generally, historical spatial development planning has intensively designed South Africa into a country characterized by spatial disparity which makes it intricate for rural dwellers in particular to practice livelihood diversification.

### **3. AGRARIAN LAND REFORM: IMPLICATIONS FOR RURAL POVERTY**

Land and agrarian reforms were the main promises of the ANC during its ascension to power. The objective was to redistribute 30% of the land within 5 years after the end of apartheid and, through this redistribution, restructure the agricultural sector. Since its transition to democracy, South Africa has implemented a multifaceted programme of land reform to address problems of historical dispossession and rural poverty basing the accentuation upon the concept of 'willing buyer, willing seller' (Lahiff, 2007; 2014). Importantly, land is deemed as a fundamental natural resource and a livelihood asset which is heavily convenient for agricultural activities in peculiar. Riggs (2006) asserted land as a natural resource that is safe, secure and affordable for livelihood practices. Land and Agrarian reform was initiated by the first democratic government in 1994. Land in post-apartheid South Africa retains a powerful political charge, given the continuing depth of rural poverty and the manner in which a long history of racialized land dispossession can be invoked as a potent symbol of historical injustice and oppression in general (O'Laughlin, Bernstein, Cousins and Peters, 2013).

Some rural development proponents have intensified land discourse through asserting that the ability to use even small plots of land for cultivation, for food provisioning and for sale has promise for rural residents (Altman, Hart & Jacobs, 2009; Gumede, 2014; Kepe & Tessaro, 2014). However, the literature depicts that some other interested researchers are still skeptical about the potential of land reform to support smallholder farming, intensify agricultural production, generate employment and reduce poverty (Sender & Johnston, 2004; Ntsebeza, 2007). Notwithstanding the disabling spatial design in South Africa, its importance towards widening livelihood activities, unfair distribution of assets like land has been realized to be predominant even after the end of apartheid (Jacobs, 2012). In contrast, most studies have depicted that redistributed and restored land tends to be underutilized by beneficiaries, in part because of low levels of post-settlement support services, inadequate access to capital and inappropriate planning by officials and consultants (Kepe *et al.*, 2001; Lahiff, 2007; Jacobs, 2012). Furthermore, in the former Bantustans, the area of arable land that is not cultivated appears to be increasing, in part because of lack of access to draught power, capital to purchase crop inputs and fencing to protect fields from livestock (O'Laughlin *et al.*, 2013). In spite of the fact that land reform could not be sufficient enough to address all the issues faced by the country, it has become a central and marginal asset to address crises of employment, livelihood and social reproduction among the others (O'Laughlin *et al.*, 2013). The agrarian land reform with its underlying components (restitution, tenure and redistribution) has been the order of the day during the 1990s as a remedy to restore land to the so called rightful owners and beneficiaries through 'willing buyer, willing seller'.

#### **3.1 Land Restitution**

Land restitution has been executed on the basis of the promulgation in the 'Restitution of Land Rights Act' (Act 22 of 1994) in order to enable people or communities which was dispossessed from their land after the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1913 which is date whereby the first Natives Land Act was enacted, to claim the restitution of their lands. In other words, land restitution is a component of agrarian land reform which is aimed at restoring the so called 'confiscated land' to the rightful beneficiaries (Ntsebeza, 2007; Gumede, 2014). In July 2014, the South African government has re-initiated what has been implemented in December 1998 for depositions of the claims of land. Subsequently, it is reflected on the news that mobile offices in a form of the motion

of transport are sent to rural areas to collect and help filling claim forms for people that were dispossessed from their own land during segregation of spatial arrangement prior democratic ascension of South African people, particularly black people. Therefore, it could be articulated that the validity of each claim and recommends are solution to the Land Claims Court for approval or adjudication in the event that a claim is contested (O'Laughlin *et al.*, 2013). Generally, one can argue that land reform is gradually put into execution provided the fact that agrarian land reform has been acknowledged to be slow in South Africa.

### 3.2 Land Tenure Reform

Land tenure reform has been deemed to be the intricate component of land reform process. This should enable to confer precisely defined and more equal rights to different land owners and occupants (Gumede, 2014). It aims to define and institutionalize every existing mode of land tenure. The program mainly concerns communal land, but it focuses also on other conflict situations. One example concerns farm workers working on their own account for several years on properties owned by others, mainly whites (Ntsebeza, 2007; Gumede, 2014). Another aim of this programme is the management of State-owned land hectares are covered by the former reserves and Bantustans; the rest is mainly rented out or informally occupied (Kepe & Tessaro, 2014; Marthin & Lorenzen, 2016).

### 3.3 Land Redistribution

The conceptual framework revealed that land redistribution could be seen as an aid towards the previously disadvantage people particularly those who cannot be under the umbrella of land restitution and land tenure reform. In that sentiment, land redistribution is actually about the purchase of land for previously disadvantaged populations who do not have access to the two mentioned programmes above (land tenure and land restitution). However, the agrarian land reform clearly accentuates that there are subsidies in order to buy land at a market price. Therefore, the kind of benefit in respect of subsidies will ensure the retaining of land from the unlawful or illegal possessor and that will ensure a positive livelihood practices in rural areas. In essence, Department of Land Affairs (1997) and Gumede (2014) highlighted that there are different forms of land redistribution that exist of witch need to be considered in the process of achieving the redistribution: individual or group resettlement, common age principle among others.

## 4. LAND REFORM IN A DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA

Since its transition to democracy in 1994, South Africa has adopted a strongly pro-market approach to land reform, influenced by conservative forces within the country and international backing for market-assisted agrarian reform. However, the literature depicted that land reform initiative has been undeniably slow and rural development proponents' points out various reason to the cause thereof. Ntsebeza (2007) has avowed that the slow pace of land reform is as a consequent of inability to implement related policies which include Large Scale Commercial Farming model. Furthermore, the literature has revealed that insufficient budget towards land reform could be seen as a consequent to the unsuccessfulness of land reform program (Anseeuw, 2005; Jacobs & Makaudze, 2012). Through land reform program, security of land rights for previously marginalized people has been central to post-apartheid policies seeking to reduce poverty and reverse past inequalities that were based on race. Studies have shown that when there is a lack of clarity, and indeed security, of land rights, development initiatives, including service provision by the state, are constrained (Kepe, 2001, 2012). Most rural households in South Africa have drawn on pursuing a range of livelihood strategies based on the assets (natural, financial, social, human and physical capital) as well to attain livelihood outcomes.

It is a South African government dream to ensure that rightful indigenous beneficiaries procure assets which primarily belongs them (Lahiff, 2007). Section 25 of the Constitution of South Africa addresses land reform, and it addresses existing property rights as well. As presented recently, through its three components (restitution, redistribution and tenure reform), land reform was aimed at reversing skewed land to the intended beneficiaries in solving spatial disparity brought by legacy of segregation and apartheid (Gumede, 2014). The major goal of the reform is to return land or offer alternative redress to people who unfairly lost their land, make land available for productive and residential purpose to the landless, and provide secure land tenure rights where they did not exist (Kepe and Tessaro, 2014). Land reform, however, has failed to meet key objectives embodied in the Constitution, because less than 10 percent of the land has been redistributed since 1994 (Umhlaba Wethu, 2011), and those who have regained land rights as part of the land claims or redistribution processes have not been able to translate these into meaningful livelihoods (Hall, 2007). Practicing

livelihoods especially agricultural ones has still been deemed intricate by rural dwellers due to the historical spatial arrangement and the failure of a democratic government to come up with swift rural development strategy to accelerate land reform program.

## **5. LAND EXPROPRIATION AND RURAL LIVELIHOODS**

The conceptual frameworks have clearly ascertained that rural livelihood strategies heavily depend upon land and thus, land becomes an indispensable natural resource for rural people. Recent studies have demonstrated that land and other natural resources play a significant role in the livelihoods of rural dwellers (Shackleton, Shackleton & Cousins, 2000; Kepe *et al.*, 2001; Jacobs, 2012). Land is perceived to be the core ingredient in the essential recipe for rural development, particularly to people who practice livelihood diversification largely because is also invariably framed in terms of small-holder production (Riggs, 2006). Concomitantly, problems derive when there is no understanding of rural people's land use plans and multiple livelihood strategies that are practiced on land (Kepe & Tessaro, 2014). To some extent, land issues are at the heart of rural people because are largely practicing vast livelihoods strategies. Livelihoods and land use are divergent manifestations of power relationships that are both productive in improving the standard of living for rural dwellers (McCusker & Carr, 2006). Numerous rural development strategies have similarly been unsuccessful, and some never even reaching the implementation stage due to the issues of land (Kepe, 2001; Ntshona, Kraai, Kepe & Saliwa, 2010). Development strategies involves livelihood, where it becomes a problem when the process of land reform are slow and not being given a "bird and worm eyes" view. However, rural livelihoods rely on land and if land is not accessible then the survival of rural dwellers is compromised.

## **6. RE-ORIENTATION AND FUTURE OF LAND AND AGRARIAN REFORM IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The democratic government has, paradoxically, contributed to the persistence and to the extension of subsistence farming activities practiced on lands still characterized by insecure land tenures, emblematic feature of the apartheid era since the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936. Thus, the route of the land and agrarian reform is still long for South Africa. If the consensual aspect of these reforms remains essential, the increasing importance of the social demand of

the landless and the most disadvantaged, the growing inequalities. In a nutshell, the paper perorates that rural households have arduously and obstinately able to practice livelihood diversification in spite of the elusiveness effectuated by the historical spatial arrangement designed by colonial settlers and exerted by apartheid regime policies. Therefore, one of the main policy challenges for post-apartheid government in South Africa is to operationalize land reform, while ensuring other constitutional obligations such as food security are not neglected (Kepe & Tessaro, 2014). However, ensuring re-orientation and reform of land provides own use of free resources that results in considerable reductions in cash expenditure and a crucial livelihood strategy for poorer households (Shackleton *et al.*, 2000). There is no surprise that development interventions tend to focus on the redistribution of rural resources and invigoration of agricultural production mainly because these two concepts complement each other (Riggs, 2006). The democratic government has set promises to be accomplished in relation to solving the inequalities brought by colonial settlers. These promises were meant to be achieved through land reform hence there is a near-consensus that the program has undeniably slow (Department of Agriculture, 1995). According to Anseeuw (2000), the spatial segregation measures have engendered extreme inequalities concerning land distribution. Furthermore, those measures, combined with the limitations of commercial farm activities for black populations, have also led to important inequalities between white and black farmers (Anseeuw, 2000).

It is therefore important for development programmes to be implemented in a form 'that land can be re-orientated in order to redress the injustices of forced deportations and denial of access to land' (Jacobs & Makaudze, 2012). After 1994, ANC mandate was to find a solution to the over population of certain rural areas of the former reserves and Bantustans, to promote access to residential and farmland, and to revitalize the non-white agricultural sector and rural areas. In addition, after three years in power of the ANC, Department of Land Affairs (1997) identified three main programmes that are included in the government's constitution regarding land and agricultural reforms: land restitution, land redistribution and land tenure reform. However, it is believed that if these three main programmes are achieved, therefore the re-orientation of land will be accomplished and therefore, rural people will be productive in the aspects of livelihood areas (Marthin & Lorenzen, 2016). Succinctly, it can be recommended

that the South African government has to come up with realistic approaches towards achieving land reform, focus on implementation of the policies rather than planning, provide sufficient budget in order to facilitate the reform (Gumedde, 2014; Marthin & Lorenzin, 2016).

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Even after 20 years into democracy, the South African government has been exposed for its salient inability to activate the long overdue land reform programme (Gumedde, 2014). Therefore, there should be a prodigious call for radical approach to land redistribution as a speed of transformation towards granting landless people opportunity without compromising potentials of agricultural production and food security while realising the significance of rural economies. In addition, the expropriation of land should be given scant attention (Gumedde, 2014). The paucity and late arrival of post-settlement support has been major problem in land reform programmes around South Africa due to lack of coordination between departments. In addition, the process of implementing this programme has been a conundrum towards ruling government and South Africa due to vague implementation strategy thereof. Conspicuously, an area-specific land reform which has potential to grant municipality's authentication towards participation in development programmes in other spheres of government which entail provincial and national government. Accomplishing local developmental state encapsulate the process of affirming and granting local people in particular the authority and power to manage their own development. In the same sentiment, rural development as an ideological dimension should be in a more bottom-up approach to development (Hart, 2007).

From one-point view, education and skills training are believed to be catalytic in bringing about transformation in to lives of the people particularly previously deprived communities (Senadza, 2014). Accordingly, agro-studies require the design of area specific curriculums for prospective farmers in rural setups. Furthermore, lack of physical resources has also been viewed to be a major compounding factor in the failure of land reform (Riggs, 2006). Clearly, it can be recommended that democratic government should consider holistic application of state-led green revolution in an attempt to provide catalytic technological, financial and non-financial support to emerging farmers as a consequent of re-oriented land reform (Marthin & Lorenzen, 2016).

Originally, green revolution has been viewed with scepticism for manifold reasons which include its instinctive character of being de-lux and expensive hence favouring affluent farmers while ignoring the emerging poor farmers. It is therefore suggested that rural development should ensure that green revolution is led by the government hence providing those who cannot afford with necessary agricultural equipment. It is further recommended that there should be a redress in the imbalances of the past as well as to ensure that there is equity in application of spatial development planning and land use management systems (Marthin & Lorenzen, 2016).

## 8. CONCLUSION

It is undoubtedly clear that the historical spatial arrangement has immensely effectuated the conundrum faced by rural dwellers when practicing livelihood diversification. The paper has conspicuously depicted deplorable efforts by colonial settlers and reiteration of apartheid policies which were aimed at widening the gap between the whites and non-whites. However, the paper base the rational and argument that despite the historical spatial arrangements have left rural setting with a dependency syndrome from urban areas, rural dwellers have the potential to practice livelihood diversification which encapsulate on-farm and off-farm activities in order to improve their standard of living. In addition, redistributive land reform has been identified through literature that is widely considered to be unsuccessful in spite of the fact that has been praised within two decades as potential strategy to restore dignity into the indigenous population. Moreover, the literature further reveals that there is lack of agreement on the cause and what remedies should be administered wherein other researcher have intermingled assertions on because which entails lack of proper implementation of policies and perpetual unfair distribution of resources which include land in peculiar as well as the insufficient budget allocated to the land reform.

There is a near-consensus that South African land reform has been a conspicuous failure and this has led to other researchers to extrapolate that human capital (education) should be the focal point in the democratic dispensation in conjunction with land reform. Experience from land reform programs elsewhere in the developing world has unambiguously demonstrated the importance of this type of advice. The paper affirms that the land reform program in its current arrangement looks unlikely to have a significant effect on poverty reduction. While

reforming South Africa's land market is clearly an important political objective, the more substantive point that the paper avow for poverty reduction is that investments that develop poor people's human capital, thereby improving their ability to access the labour market as well as making the social security system more inclusive, are likely to bring about larger and faster reductions in poverty than land based interventions in areas. The implemented policy instruments emanating from a liberal approach only contribute little to eradicate the existing land and agricultural inequalities; for about 20 years after the first democratic elections of 1994, only about 4.1% of the land has been redistributed and most of these projects have been unsuccessful, leaving most of the intended beneficiaries in poverty. Land reform program should never have been considered as a triviality for improving the standard of living in South Africa taking into consideration the fair and equitable distribution of resources for sustainable development.

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