

Land Reform, Small Scale Farming and Poverty Eradication

Lessons from Africa

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The importance of agriculture to development in Africa is underlined by the dependence of over 70% of the population's livelihood mainly from farming and related activities, or through self employment on small farms; while only 20% of the farmers operate large holdings which employ large workforces. However, African agricultural performance has been weak, contributing less than 20% of GDP, with the world share of agricultural exports falling from 8% to 2% over four decades, and falling from being a net food exporter to being a net food importer, in spite of food price increases. Yet agricultural production has remained predominantly export oriented, with food exports growing to 13%, while food imports grew to around 20% over the last two decades. The growing importance of tourism also means that about 30% of the land (especially in southern and eastern Africa) is reserved for nature conservancies and woodlands. These patterns limit the expansion of home markets and the integration of agriculture within other industries.

Africa continues to face a food production and consumption 'crisis' and dependence on food aid. The consumption deficit reflects escalating food prices and food shortages, which particularly limits access by the poor. Declining agricultural productivity and increased production costs determine the escalating food prices, with food accounting for 60–70% of total consumption expenditure of Africa's growing low-income groups. Malnourishment – a basic indicator of the social reproduction crisis – is endemic, with over 200 million people in 2001 compared to 133 million in 1980 affected.

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Introduction

This food crisis is an extension of the accumulating contradictions of the world food system embedded in the current oil and financial 'crisis,' as well as Africa's mal-integration into world agricultural markets, which debilitate African agricultural production structures. Imperial trade protectionism and food production and trade subsidies (particularly in the USA, Europe and Australia), along with the food aid system, have deepened the monopolistic hold of the global agro-industrial complex (centred on hybrid seed and inputs control), leading to an accumulation crisis of world agriculture.

Increased use of grains for bio-fuel production, an inadequate rate of food (grain) production growth in Africa, China and Asia, and weather-induced global crop failures have undermined world grain stocks and markets. The recent increases in the costs of petroleum-derived inputs (agro-chemicals and fertiliser, transport fuel), as well as the compression of demand in the global south due to the income deflationary policies of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs),¹ underlie the food crisis. Africa's food security problem is thus mainly related to inappropriate agricultural production patterns (especially low food outputs) and mal-integration into the world agro-industrial production and trade system.

Land Reform, Social Differentiation and Accumulation

Africa's land questions are a critical factor in defining contemporary social transformation and in shaping its development trajectory. Restricted access to land and farming inputs by the continent's millions of small producers are the main source of the persistent food insecurity and rural poverty, which characterise its distorted accumulation patterns and underdevelopment. Increasing conflicts over land reflect a development model which is incapable of employing and feeding its growing populations through industrialising and diversified economies.

The unresolved land question in Africa highlights the failure of neoliberal reforms to address historical social injustice and contemporary inequality issues.^{2,3} Land property relations are increasingly distorted by growing land concentration and the expansion of private landed property, which both serve to deepen extroverted capitalist relations of agrarian production.

Under colonialism, 'indirect rule' modified the organisation of peasant societies through

contrived customary rule and land tenure processes, and the direction of peasant production through generalised petty commodity production under externally controlled finance and markets.⁴ While migrant labour processes emerged almost everywhere in Africa, in settler Africa they accompanied extensive and institutionalised land expropriations that led to the proletarianisation of large segments of peasant labour, generating large-scale landlessness and land shortages alongside semi-proletarianisation. Under indirect rule, customary systems of authority adapted land tenure processes to suit the colonial state's political and economic goals, including the allocation of land to specific production schemes or classes, as well as allowing lineage leaders to control tracts of larger land.⁵

Increasingly in some non-settler regions of some African countries, location-specific forms of land concentration are growing as a result of both accumulation from 'below' (through internal social differentiation) and from 'above' (through excision of lands to the elite using state land administration structures and emerging land markets). Although the African neo-colonial state has actively promoted such agrarian capitalist change, and land concentration and the marginalisation of peasants and workers are evident, neither large-scale land alienation nor landlessness and total proletarianisation of rural labour has occurred.

Colonial and current land policies (including executive fiat) have led to increased differentiation in the control of, and access to, land based on emerging class differentiations.⁶ These land policies have tended to partition national economies into ethno-regional enclaves of unequal growth and marginalisation (for example, the San/Bushmen in Botswana and the Herero in Namibia), such that land conflicts at times take the shape of 'ethnic' struggles. Partitioning of pastoralist and sedentary societies shaped new struggles over the control of grazing lands and water supplies, especially during periods of drought.⁷ Unequal land distribution has also arisen from the growing tendency to concede and sell land to foreign 'investors,' emphasising the importance of the external dimension of the land question.

Land distribution inequalities in Africa vary depending on the degree of colonial history, foreign ownership and internal class and ethno-regional differentiations. Settler land expropriation was most extensive in Kenya, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia, and occurred to a lesser extent in Mozambique, Swaziland, Botswana, Tanzania and Zambia. Racially based differentiation of economic power and wealth are thus

associated with the degree of land control, including in some non-settler African countries, where small foreign immigrant populations, such as the Asians in East Africa, held large freehold and leasehold landholdings.

Rural differentiation processes, which heightened from the 1970s with the maturation of the post-independence African petit bourgeoisie, saw landholding concentrations increase among retired public servants, professionals, indigenous business people and other urban elites. Some of these social forces had led nationalist movements, some emerged from traditional elite structures, and others comprised newer middle-class elements. Differentiation included the growth of poor rural peasantries and semi-proletarian populations that straddled the rural and urban divide. Evidence from Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia suggests that rural land inequality intensified during SAPs.

Land reform is a necessary but not sufficient condition for national development.⁸ From the 1980s, state-led interventionist land reform was removed from the development agenda and replaced by market-based land reforms which pursued the privatisation and commercialisation of land, and focused land transfers on market principles.⁹ This neo-liberal policy framework also underemphasised the national integration of agriculture and industry, rather promoting their integration into global markets.

This aggravated economic and social insecurities, intensified migration to urban areas and created a deepening pattern of mal-development.¹⁰ After the end of the Cold War and white rule in southern Africa, and the deepening development crisis in Africa, the emergence of various land crises (for example, in Zimbabwe and Côte d'Ivoire) have seen land reform returned to the political and poverty agenda. However, land reform policies continue to pursue market principles, while the purpose of land reform in relation to national development is not yet coherently articulated, as is reflected in current ideological and political differences manifested in various forms of conflicts over land.

For land reform is a fundamental dimension of the agrarian question, while the agrarian question is a fundamental dimension of the national question. The classic agrarian question was concerned with the transition from feudal and/or agrarian society to capitalist/industrial society. This agrarian transition, which provides meaning to development, has not occurred in Africa. While capitalist relations of production have displaced pre-capitalist relations on the continent, few countries have

experienced industrialisation. Instead, increased popular dependence on land for social reproduction, based upon unrealised agrarian productivity potentials, is the order everywhere. This failure to resolve the agrarian and national questions means that struggles for national self-determination have failed to deliver the primary demands for development, such that the national question (and sovereignty) has been submerged by international capital through economic liberalisation since the 1980s.¹¹

Privatised national capital has increasingly been absorbed by international capital, and national economies have become much more dependent on international food, inputs and energy markets. The current trade system (under the World Trade Organisation, WTO) has deepened liberalisation and subordinated more African states to mercantilist trading partners of the 'west,' while emerging Chinese capital in African oil and minerals slightly diversifies this pattern. While regionalism has been progressively renewed through the African Union (AU), in practice it has been undermined by mal-integration and the neglect of the African home market.

Clearly an alternative national development strategy, largely dependent on agrarian reform to serve national industrialisation, is required in contrast to the African land debates which underplay the potential of agrarian reform in national development.¹²

Agrarian Reforms and Rural Development in Africa

The material foundation of the African state rests largely on the extraction and export of primary resources in agriculture, oil, mining and other natural resources (forestry, wildlife, biodiversity exploitation). With a few exceptions of countries that have experienced capital-intensive industrial growth, such as South Africa, the control of land and natural resources and their product markets defines mainstream processes of capital accumulation, social reproduction and the revenue base of most African states. Power structures and politics are heavily influenced by the control of land, natural resources and mineral rents.

When SAPs were introduced in the 1980s, Africa's agrarian problem was defined as the failure by markets to be resolved by getting (agricultural) 'prices right,' and a reversing of allegedly inappropriate state interventions in favour of the liberalisation of trade and deregulation of domestic markets.¹³ However, this and the attendant

fiscal and monetary measure which is deemed critical, led to income deflation due to the relative reduction in government expenditure (particularly in rural areas) and the raising of commodity prices relative to wages.¹⁴ This reduced the purchasing power of the poor and restricted multipliers, such as employment and incomes.

Trade liberalisation and competing imports destroyed various productive activities (industrial and agricultural), and was further exacerbated by speculative capital flows and exchange rate (volatility) distortions. Increased production and imports of elite consumer goods at the expense of locally produced 'traditional' goods further entrenched 'de-industrialisation,' and net unemployment.¹⁵ Income deflation also arose from a secular shift in terms of trade against petty producers of primary commodities (especially of peasants), through monopoly capitals' pricing shifts in relation to the concentration of marketing of the agricultural commodities by a few transnational corporations (TNCs). Yet, African farmers were exposed to competition from heavily subsidised farmers from the north, and their exports were subjected to punitive non-tariff barriers. This reinforced the importation of cheap agricultural commodities, leading to the collapse of local farm prices, sometimes below local costs of production.¹⁶

This trend was accompanied by the expansion of new agricultural exports (for example flowers, wildlife, land uses, etc.), which has led to the further loss of local livelihoods (pastoralism and peasant cropping systems) and reduced the production of food grains. Liberalised land use policies have allowed the conversion of arable lands to exclusively wildlife and tourism-based land uses, and the consolidation of large-scale farms into even larger scale 'conservancies,' especially in east and southern Africa. This, added to the previous exclusion of peasantries from substantial lands in the name of attracting national and foreign capital to invest in tourism, forestry and biotechnology, created a new land alienation frontier in Africa.¹⁷ The persistence of land under-utilisation among large farmers, alongside low land and labour productivity among small producers that accompany this orientation of production, further forestalled agricultural transformation.

Recent discourses on African agricultural and rural development identify the decline of gross and per capita public investment in the agricultural sector (estimated at 5% of national budgets) as fundamental to Africa's poor agricultural performance,¹⁸ and call for at least 10% of national budgets to be allocated to agriculture. They understate the effects of the compelled retreat of

the state from financing agriculture (for example, credit, marketing infrastructure, inputs and other subsidies, including the support of technology generation), and weakness of the markets in explaining the agrarian problem.

This retreat, including away from financing other non-agricultural aspects (such as rural development, various social welfare and other consumption transfers to the poor, and wage repression), led to income deflation and agricultural demand compression.¹⁹ In turn, these processes led to the decline of public revenues. Systemic agrarian de-accumulation and diminished state capacity in the face of monopolistic agrarian capital and unequal trade relations (buttressed by food aid dependency) undermined African agricultural transformation.

The monopoly control of agricultural resources and finance (through five transnational corporations), including the full gamut of agricultural technologies (seed, fertilisers, agro-chemicals, machinery and equipment) and their value-chains (commodity marketing, agro-processing, wholesale and retail, etc.), is fundamental to the failure of the currently dominant model of agrarian reform. It yields a technological path dependence, and the excessive extraction of surpluses from small farm producers (through middlemen, capital and state taxation) enables the externalisation of investible 'surpluses,' limits investments by African farmers into technologies, and places limits on the domestic financing of agricultural endeavours.

Transformation through small producers or larger farmers

Africa's agrarian reform strategies tend to be framed narrowly around the relative efficacy of the small or 'subsistence' farmer *vis-à-vis* the large, 'commercial' and 'modernised' farmer, in the leadership of agricultural transformation.²⁰ Large farms tend to be defined (albeit wrongly) in terms of land size and output volumes per 'farmer,' rather than the productivity of labour and land, compared to the small scale farm producers, whose differentiation is often not recognised. Moreover, agrarian transformation has largely meant significantly increasing agricultural export production rather than the intensification of land utilisation (especially among the many small producers) through technologies and practices which could increase their yields.

Most agricultural and rural development initiatives in Africa tend to focus on 'modernising' the large and medium farms through increased

land allocations, new inputs markets and private credit, although large farms (in area) remain relatively few (except in former settler colonies). This preference for larger farmers neglects the relative and/or opportunity (forex) costs of investments in imported conventional farm technologies (for example, machinery, equipment, seeds, fertilisers and agro-chemical products). Moreover, this underplays the relatively lower financial (forex) costs of enhancing self-employed small farm labour, and the social synergies derived from local auto-consumption among small producers, which is critical to broad-based rural development.

Ironically, it has also been argued that indigenous large farms have failed to deliver increased production for sustainably long periods because they became 'uncompetitive', given the negative terms of trade and their allegedly poor managerial skills. Such farmers are said to deploy their farming surpluses into non-farm 'investments' (for example, trade and conspicuous consumption) and 'social investments' (on relatives) in order to enhance their personal standing as members of 'corporate' lineage or kinship groups. Thus, when global agricultural prices crashed, or commodity markets were lost, they tended to pull out of farming. Rather than place these problems on the exploitative nature of extroverted agricultural production, the behaviour of larger African capitalist farmers was seen to be the problem. Interestingly, it has been the 'middle' peasants who have contributed most to marketed agricultural production in Africa, while poor peasants were resilient in maintaining food production under the SAPs and world commodity crises. However, their production has been inadequate relative to the increased per capita consumption requirements.

Small and middle farmers mobilise family and kinship labour as well as other local resources, and save (mostly for social reproduction and risk insurance) and invest, although this is inadequate for capital formation. Through this process some small producers adopt new crops and technologies (including cheaper and locally adapted technologies) and maintain some agricultural production, in spite of the reversal of state support to farming and social welfare, and unfavourable terms of trade. Their alleged technological 'backwardness' is driven by the disproportionate costs of inputs relative to commodity prices and incomes, and the absence of subsidised finance in a situation where the extractive but relatively more benign state marketing structures (boards) were replaced by usurious trading middlemen.

Had state financing and subsidised domestic markets been more tailored to the needs of these

small farmers and enhanced their participation in the economy, it is likely that the so-called food crisis could have been averted. Instead, the prospect for transforming agriculture through small producers has been subverted.

The land tenure problem constraint to investment in rural development

Moreover, African land tenure systems, wrongly characterised as 'communal,' insecure and 'unbankable,' are allegedly an underlying obstacle to agricultural development or investment into technologies which intensify productivity. Allegedly, the tenure systems undermine 'individual' incentives to invest and restrict the mobilisation of agricultural finance. Reforms have attempted to address this issue through programmes to formalise and individuate land tenures (land titling) or create land markets, establishing larger scale (commercial) farmers, and through initiatives to restructure and decentralise the 'governance' of land. Although local problems of tenure insecurity abound, the land tenure-investment thesis never found empirical grounding. In practice, land registration has generated more problems than investment (including the increased commercialisation and expropriation of land), and set in motion more conflicts and increased land pressure.²¹

The local governance and legal channels introduced to redress such concerns are inadequate because the land bodies are unrepresentative.^{22,23} Chiefs, as partners of the state in expropriating farm land, are treated as the legitimate representatives of the people, and as such their mediation over land conflicts amounts to transmitting government orders to the rural people and ensuring compliance with policies.²⁴ Moreover, land tenure reforms are increasingly a source of mobilising power through electoral politics, leading to even greater conflicts rather than agricultural transformation.

It turns out that the underlying argument is that customary practices putatively restrict capital accumulation and development. This is because African households hold land and mobilise their own labour relatively autonomously (of ruling lineages and capital), mainly for their own consumption and secondarily the markets. Amin²⁵ has, however, argued that these African social formations had some exploitative elements of tributary social relations of production, while Illife notes that agrarian accumulation has been in motion despite these tenures. What distinguishes the African land question, namely the absence of rural social relations of production such as serfdom, land renting and bonded labour, and landlordism (excluding settler and estate farming areas), is thus blamed for undermining rural development

through the market. Yet, colonialism extended the extroversion of production and surplus value extraction through the control of markets and extra-economic forces; a tendency which has continued. Since the advent of SAPs, this land tenure system has been under threat from market driven reforms in the name of promoting rural development.

Technological change

Perceptions of the backwardness of African agricultural practices, and the actual limited spread of productivity enhancing technologies, have been reified to represent 'technological stagnation,' which has limited the agrarian transition. However, since technological change is socially constructed, it is the failed models of agrarian reform which explain the limited growth of productivity.

African agriculture experienced major transformations during the 20th century through the introduction of new crops and diversified farming systems, despite its ecological constraints.²⁶ Nearly half of Africa's farmland suffers from erosion and nutrient depletion, yet sub-Saharan Africa adds less than 10 kilograms of fertiliser per hectare of land, whereas Asia deploys 144 kilograms. With 70% of the known HIV/AIDS cases concentrated in Africa, there is significant loss of agricultural labour and capital. Limited investment into the production and utilisation of key agricultural inputs (fertilisers and higher yielding crop varieties and livestock breeds, as well as agricultural machinery and equipment, indeed underlies the low rate of agricultural production growth (per capita). Fertiliser application rates had grown slightly between 1960 and 1980, only to decline from then.²⁷ Expenditure on agricultural research by 2000 had declined to 1.5% per annum of budgets, compared to 3.2% from 1996 to 1997. Furthermore, on average below 2% of the cropped area in sub-Saharan Africa is irrigated. This system of low agricultural productivity based on extensive farming practices reflects the self exploitation of household labour, particularly of women farmers. Low agricultural productivity in African agriculture is consistent with broader patterns of weak economic growth, food insecurity and the high incidence of poverty.

Africa was relatively by-passed by the first Green Revolution, largely due to the effects of the reversal of agricultural and wider interventionist policies under structural adjustment, and the 'fiscal crises' they suffered.²⁸ This trajectory did not arise from an intrinsic technological 'backwardness,' voluntary neglect or other uniquely physical constraints (particularly soils,

landlockedness, transportation, etc.). Nor was it the inappropriateness and undesirability of the available productivity enhancing technologies. It was the anti-developmental stance of neo-liberal policies which undermined the capacity of the small producers and the state to deepen technological transformation.

The currently proposed Green Revolution (AGRA 2007) offers to correct this technological gap by focusing on 'smallholders.' It cannot be expected that capitalism (or the interests of finance capital, as opposed to 'national interest') would spontaneously or automatically enhance the technological requirements of small producers unless capital is compelled to do so by state intervention and popular pressures. The philanthropic push by AGRA is too embedded in capital (and technological monopolies) to ensure the consistent generation of relevant technologies at fair cost for the poorer producers.

Land and agrarian reform, and rural to urban migration

Structural adjustment was accompanied by intensified migration, with Africa having the fastest rate of urbanisation in the world (3.5% annually). Almost 40% of the population is now urbanised. Migration does not necessarily mean full proletarianisation or permanent urbanisation, but the spreading of risk in highly adverse circumstances. This urbanisation has not been accompanied by industrialisation and job formation. The reality has been urbanisation alongside de-industrialisation and retrenchments. Urbanisation takes the predominant form of illegal and unplanned settlement. Moreover, migration is not merely one-way, as workers retrenched from mines and farms are also known to seek peasantisation, or as urbanites enter the land reform process.

The prevalence of semi-proletarianisation – worker peasants – alongside the retention of large peasantries or of small cultivators²⁹ means that in general, African rural societies retain households with independent landholdings, albeit at a diminishing scale and on increasingly marginalised lands.³⁰ Critically, their agricultural production, land use activities and relations of production are restricted by the quality and scale of land available and by the absence of state support as well as markets, which extract significant surplus value from them. African land and agrarian reforms, therefore, need to redress these land inequities and direct land use towards internally beneficial and articulated rural development in order to

transform the peasantry and to regulate migration and jobless urbanisation.

Under capitalism, the peasantry remains in a state of flux within the centre-periphery structure spawned by colonialism, as proletarianisation co-exists with peasantisation and semi-proletarianisation.^{31,32} The form and scale of the existing peasantry in Africa has to be understood from the composition of household income by source, including non-exchangeable sources of sustenance; and from an analysis of household residential patterns between town and country.³³ It has been argued that under structural adjustment peasants have become 'problematic,' as they are "multi-occupational, straddling urban and rural residences, and flooding labour markets,"³⁴ though the African peasantry has evolved in this way for much of the 20th century.

The rise of a richer class of peasants alongside a majority who became semi-proletarianised or landless means that full proletarianisation has been generally forestalled, not least by state action as well as by rural households that hold onto a plot of land and maintain the dual income strategy of petty-commodity production and wage labour. Rural non-farm activities and markets have proliferated, such that between 30–40% of household incomes are now derived from off-farm sources. The transition to capitalism in the periphery has thus taken place under disarticulated accumulation and in subordination to the accumulation needs of the centre. As a result, the transition has not been characterised by a broad-based accumulation of petty-commodity producers 'from below.'

Where the neo-liberal social agenda failed spectacularly in Zimbabwe, large-scale re-peasantisation has taken place outside the control of the World Bank, hence the penalties imposed from the north, but a new pattern of accumulation from below has not yet emerged.³⁵ Such trends are now 'normal' processes of agrarian change in the African periphery under neo-liberalism, where rural populations have been subjected to unfettered market forces, fought for re-peasantisation – among other political and economic ends – and have, in effect, struggled to reproduce functional dualism largely on their own with variable success and different and contingent levels of support from state and non-state agencies.

Land Redistribution, Empowerment and Poverty Reduction

Redistributive land reforms in Africa should involve restoring lands that are physically controlled

by large landholders through the resettlement of displaced peasants and alienated semi-proletarians, and the enlargement of peasant land areas using repossessed contiguous lands. Securing the land rights of the poor by reinforcing their rights to independently hold land and/or upgrade their land tenure conditions is critical to the empowerment of Africa and poverty reduction. Where land rentals and sharecropping have emerged, especially in West Africa, effective regulations which equitably share access to incomes from land are required. Redistributive land reforms are critical in large parts of southern, eastern and northern Africa, where highly unequal landholdings have produced landlessness and land shortages.

However, limited redistributive land reforms had been attempted in Africa since the 1970s, while since the 1980s gradualistic market-based land reforms have been initiated in various parts of southern Africa. Land reform was only 'radicalised' from 2000 in Zimbabwe, and although this has raised pressures for redistributive reforms in Namibia, South Africa and elsewhere (for example, Kenya, Malawi, etc.), very little redistribution has occurred. The need for redistributive land reforms would also be expected in other African countries where localised and regional enclaves of land concentration have emerged through gradual and piecemeal expropriation by the colonial and post-independence state and private actors.

In southern Africa for example, there has been a divide between radical nationalist/socialist redistributive land reforms and liberal approaches.³⁶ Where national liberation was decisively concluded, as in Mozambique and Angola, the land distribution question appeared to have been fully resolved, although new sites of localised land concentration and accumulation have emerged. Where liberation was only partially concluded, as in the settler territories of Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa, negotiated settlements left both the national question and the land question relatively unresolved, particularly the racial dimensions of wealth inequalities. In contrast, more liberal strategies of land reform were adopted in the colonial 'protectorates,' which mostly experienced indirect colonial rule accompanied by minor degrees of white settlerism alongside cheap migrant labour systems (Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland). Altogether, however, relatively little progress has been achieved in the implementation of redistributive land reform in Africa.

Land tenure reforms in Africa which intend to pursue poverty reduction and empowerment would have to focus on defending the rights of the poor against potential land losses, as well as

accommodate the needs of those who are excluded (women, minorities, settlers) from increasingly scarce arable lands. Tenure reforms would also aim to prevent and resolve conflicts over competing claims to land rights, and ensure the fair administration of land rights and land use regulations. Whether the land tenure reforms required should include the ability to transact (rent and sell) and mortgage peasant lands, especially in the absence of measures to prevent land alienation and concentration, have been politically contentious as its feasibility is questionable.

Instead, African land tenure reforms have not led to equitable access to, and control of, land since they have promoted increased land concentration. Existing African legal and administrative frameworks on land allocation, land use regulation and dispute resolution tend to protect the interests of those with disproportionately larger land rights, including property rights derived from past expropriation, rather than the interests of the victims of these inequities.

Because of the centrality of access to land in the livelihoods of the majority of Africans, social demand for land reforms, expressed in different forms depending on the nature of social forces which articulate them, have been growing. Mainstream intellectual discourses on land conflicts in Africa have tended to underestimate the political significance of the land question in political mobilisation. The numerous civil society groupings associated with the current proliferation of peasant organisations, and which are predominantly middle-class aid-led organs, have tended to neglect redistributive and non-market land reforms. They reproduce grassroots peasant organisations as appendages of their neo-liberal development, and whose struggles for democratisation fall short of promoting substantial change to their rural livelihoods. Formal farmers' organisations tend to be widely differentiated, with leaderships dominated by the elite farmers whose demands for larger portions of freehold land dominate the discourses.³⁷ Their counterpart community-based organisations, which are formed mainly under the social control of lineage hierarchies, far from represent the majority peasant demand for redistributive land reforms. Instead, the majoritarian land interests are more often reflected in informal movements representing a variety of social forces, including those that pursue land occupations, resource poaching and other forms of 'sabotage.'

Indigenisation or affirmative action lobbies seeking the construction of a broader agrarian capitalist class, some with ethno-regional and gender foci, have on the other hand, re-focused the land

reform agenda towards the de-racialisation of the ownership base of commercial farmland in settler Africa, while retaining the bi-modal large-small farmer agrarian structure. In Botswana, some civil society land reform advocacy tends to be mobilised within a social and human rights framework of defending the land rights of 'indigenous' ethnic and marginalised minority groups, particularly the Basarwa. The San in South Africa, Namibia and Botswana demand restoration of their land, and a transnational land and social rights movement of San ethnic formations has emerged, although it depends again on Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). Similar pastoralist movements advocating for land rights have emerged in east and west Africa. However, land redistribution and progressive land tenure reforms are still not high on the agenda of African poverty reduction strategies.

Current approaches to poverty reduction (including their espoused commitment to Millennium Development Goals, and regional programmes such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme or the New Partnership for Africa's Development) which claim to promote agricultural transformation eschew the development logic of 'accumulation from below.' Their prescriptions cannot stimulate demand among the rural poor due to their focus on narrow and selective social protection schemes (food aid, cash transfers, etc.), which limit the multipliers that could arise from increased investment in agriculture, non-farm incomes growth and rural development.

Conclusion

The African state has neither promoted equitable access to land through redistributive reforms nor progressive land tenure reforms. Instead, land concentration has increased. This is because existing legal frameworks and institutions for managing land reform tend to protect the interests of those with disproportionately larger land rights, including property rights derived from colonial expropriation, rather than expanding the productive capacities of the poor. African customary law and customary land rights have been manipulated to advance land concentration throughout the continent, including in those countries where large portions of the land were alienated under private property tenure regimes. Emerging African land movements have yet to realise the potential to influence land reform towards greater redistribution and tenure security, let alone towards addressing the agrarian question.

Most agricultural development initiatives in the last three decades have been atomistic, incoherent and misplaced. They have tended to focus on single potential magic bullets rather than systemic approaches to agricultural and rural development. Rather than promoting accumulation from below, through approaches which enhance the participation of the majority of small African producers, the opposite has been the case. Poor peasants (including the landless), whose own labour resources have been critical to a relatively sustained agricultural production, have tended to be neglected, while their productivity has been constrained by the extroverted model of agrarian change and market development.

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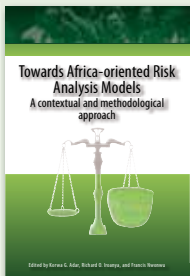
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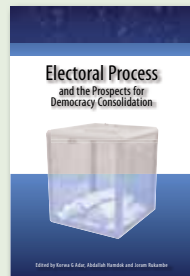
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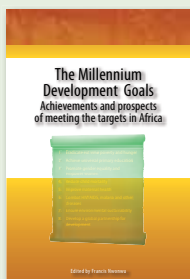
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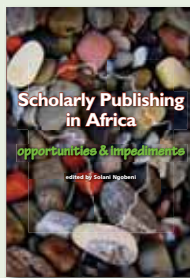
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