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Abstract

The paper explores the reconfiguration of rural relations and social structures after the fast track land reform programme (FTLRP) in Zimbabwe focusing on the youth. It shows that in rural Zimbabwe after the FTLRP, there can now be found young persons who are increasingly demanding a greater share of social and economic benefits which they feel entitled to by virtue of their citizenship. Focusing on three farms and two communal areas, this paper shows that one of the outcomes of the FTLRP has been the reconfiguration of the socio-economic structure and this has had an unprecedented impact which is only becoming visible now that the FTLRP has been concluded. It argues that the rural landscape which now characterises the farming areas is a result of authoritarian populism which was deployed to push forward the FTLRP process. This process created rural authority structures which have continued to have a stranglehold over the rural areas and they are now causing disaffection with the younger generation. With this background in mind, the paper looks at the realities of the youth, their aspirations, their attitudes towards the local authorities as well as their relations with the local communities. It also explores the strategies which they have developed and use to ensure that they derive maximum benefits from their citizenship, there is a reduction in inequalities, there is participation, there is equitable redistribution of resources and there is social cohesion which in sum characterises the new politics of the countryside in rural Zimbabwe.

Key Words: authoritarian populism, land reform, local authority, traditional leaders, youth, Zimbabwe

Introduction

In July 2000, Zimbabwe officially embarked on an unprecedented fast track land reform programme (FTLRP) which in just over a decade saw 180 000 families being resettled on 13 million hectares of land (Scoones, Marongwe, Mavedzenge, Murambinda, Mahenene and Sukume 2011, 2015; Moyo 2013). The major objective of the programme was to reverse a racially skewed land tenure system which the country had inherited at independence in 1980. At independence, Zimbabwe had a land tenure system comprising of 6 000 white large scale commercial farmers owning 15.5 million hectares of land and 700 000 African households on 16.4 million hectares of land (Moyo 1995). In terms of land acquisition and resettlement, the FTLRP was a vast improvement compared to the post independence land reform programme which had seen only 70 000 families being resettled on 3.4 million hectares of land. This fell far short of the target of 162 000 families (Moyo 2013:32).

Due to the nature and extent of the FTLRP much scholarly interest has been drawn to the programme and there is a lot of literature which interrogates it. This literature is based on divergent ideological and epistemological approaches which have been used by scholars to try and understand the origins, processes and outcomes of the FTLRP. Due to the different methods and approaches, academia has been polarized over the FTLRP which has become a subject of much polemical debate¹. If one looks at the literature which has been produced over the past years one can discern the use by scholars of either the neo-patrimonial approach, the livelihoods approach, the political economy approach and the rights based approach. All of these approaches have brought with them unique and interesting perspectives in the study of the FTLRP. This paper does not interrogate the debates on the FTLRP which is quite extensive with criticisms and counter narratives dominating the discussion, but it will make reference to some of the issues raised in the debates as they are an integral part of any discussion on the FTLRP in Zimbabwe. In the past few years there has been witnessed a shift in the debates on the FTLRP with a progressive focus on the outcomes of the programme. This shift in debates has resulted in a range of empirical studies at different study sites in Zimbabwe which report on the outcomes of the FTLRP. This is aptly captured by Cliff, Alexander, Cousins and Gaidzanwa (2011:907) who say that there is seen:

The emergence of a range of studies into what has transpired over a lengthy period provides a ‘reality check’ and an opportunity to extend debates beyond policy prescriptions and their initial implementation to an assessment of what has actually been happening on the ground as a result of the land redistribution that occurred in the early 2000’s.

Scoones *et al* (2011) makes a plea for scholars to move beyond the divisive debate of the FTLRP which has created opposites. They quote Raftopolous (2009) to say the debate had created a ‘dangerous rupture’ in academia. They argue that what is important for now is to reframe the debate on land reform and how the land as source of livelihood has impacted on communities and the potential of Zimbabwe’s land reform. Some of the studies undertaken at different study sites in Zimbabwe include work by Moyo *et al* (2009), Scoones *et al* (2010), Dekker and Kinsey (2011), Mkodzongi (2013), Matondi (2012), James (2015), Murisa (2009), Mutopo (2011) among others which have brought new and exciting evidence on the outcomes of the FTLRP. It is hoped that this case study will also contribute to contemporary debates on the FTLRP which moves beyond the debates with focus being on the outcomes of the programme.

This paper using the concept of authoritarian populism explores the outcomes of the FTLRP focusing on young people (the youth²) in the farming areas created by the FTLRP. It argues that when we look

¹ The debate has been on the contribution of the FTLRP to: food insecurity, economic collapse and industrial decline; cronyism, patronage and capture of the programme by the ruling elite. The programme has also been accused of being an epicentre of human rights abuses which caused the death of 40 people. It also stands accused for being a catalyst for environmental degradation, as undermining property rights among other issues (see Alexander 2003, Campbell 2008, Scannerchia 2006, Smith 2010, Richardson 2005, Hammer *et al* 2003, Worby 2003).

² In Zimbabwe, the youth are defined as people between the ages of 15-35 according to the Zimbabwe National Youth Policy

at the processes of the FTLRP, the former President of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe and his ruling ZANU (PF) party conveniently used the programme to boost their waning political fortunes and to use genuine grievances on land reform to consolidate their grip to power which was severely under threat for the first time in 20 years (see Sachikonye 2003, Rutherford 2007, Raftopolous 2003, Mujere, Sagiya and Fontein 2017, Hammar and Raftopolous 2003). In the run- up to and during the FTLRP, Mugabe and ZANU (PF) using the media as well as state institutions and local authority structures to push for an ideology centering on pan-Africanism, anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism nationalism and the *chimurenga* rhetoric to stir up national feeling (Mujere *et al* 2017, Nyawo 2012). This was convenient stirring up of national feeling could be seen allowing ZANU (PF) to be active in reclaiming the land from the ‘outsiders’ and return it to the ‘insiders’ (the indigenous people), thus the party received a lot of credit for this. Mugabe also used his charismatic personality, circumvented and reconfigured state institutions, crushed dissent (using violence) and used an alliance between traditional leaders, war veterans and the state machinery to forcefully push forward an unplanned land acquisition programme despite national and international outcry (see Hammar *et al* 2003; Raftopolous and Phimster 2004; Moore 2001, 2003 and Alexander 2003).

During this period, there was seen what Ranger (2004) and Primorac (2005), (cited in Mujere *et al* 2017) see as the emergence of a new and narrow nationalist historiography labelled ‘patriotic history’. Through this historiography and ‘master fiction’, ZANU (PF) was seen reviving the anti-colonialist ideology in which the party used its liberation war credentials and identified itself with the masses through the use of the ‘languages of the suffering’ (Mujere *ibid*). There was seen the emergence of populist politics in all spheres of Zimbabwean life (exemplified by music celebrating the *third chimurenga*³ and music galas which were state sponsored). This was meant to stir up national sentiment and endear ZANU (PF) to the electorate as a champion of the people. Thus, in the 2000’s ZANU (PF) managed to dominate the political space and to marginalize the political opposition. On this Kriger (2006 cited in Mujere *et al* 2017) argues that ‘...the ruling party propagated a context distorted version of the nationalist struggle to legitimate its violent confiscation of land’. It also managed to enforce the political exclusion of its opponents who included the ‘...so called born frees (the youth), urban electorates, farm workers and other perceived adversaries’ (Mujere *et al* 2017:87). During the FTLRP process, Zimbabwe witnessed a new kind of politics that was reminiscent of the early independence days which centered around citizenship and nationalistic feeling, the redistribution of natural resources, attempts to reduce inequality and attempts towards social cohesion between the races (which had limited success).

Using three farms in Goromonzi District in the Mashonaland East Province (Zimbabwe) and two communal areas as a case study, this paper explores how the reconfigured rural authority structures and polity in rural Zimbabwe are impacting on the youth. This is in a context where different studies have shown that the FTLRP process transformed the rural authority structure and polity in areas created by the FTLRP (see Moyo and Yeros 2005, Mkodzongi 2013). This paper adds to this body of knowledge and it unearths new trajectories on rural relations with focus being on the youth who are a new generation in the farming areas who are slowly replacing the generation of 2000 who spearheaded the FTLRP and benefitted from it. This paper builds on other studies that have been undertaken to understand the rural political dynamics in Zimbabwe post FTLRP. The work by Mujere (2011), Chiweshe (2013), Sadomba (2008), Murisa (2009), Mkodzongi (2013), James (2015), Moyo and Yeros (2015), Scoones *et al* (2010) provides valuable insights on the rural political dynamics of the countryside in Zimbabwe. They focus on rural authority and look at the role of customary authorities in the farming areas, social organization after land reform as well as the role of war veterans during and after the FTLRP. Mkodzongi (2015) builds on this to explore how Chiefs deploy ancestral autochthony to contest state hegemony over the countryside ultimately controlling resources and exercising authority in the rural areas created by the FTLRP.

(2013).

³ This is the name that has been given to the FTLRP. It follows the *second chimurenga* or Rhodesian Bush War was a war which was fought from July 1964 to 1979 by the Zimbabwe African National Union and Zimbabwe African Peoples Union against white minority rule in Rhodesia now Zimbabwe as well as the *first chimurenga* of 1896-1897 against colonialism.

This paper focuses on the youth in Goromonzi in a context where there can be found a unique local authority and polity structure created by the FTLRP. Not much has been done which focuses on the new generation in the farming areas and questions are arising what is happening to the young generation post land reform and whether they too will demand a share of the land. Scoones (2017a) and Rwodzi (2017) have touched in the issue of the youth and their livelihoods opportunities and the prospects of them taking over of plots in the farming areas at the demise of their parents and grandparents who benefited from the FTLRP. They also look at the families of former worker families in three farming districts at Wonedzo Extension in Masvingo Province, Mvurwi in Mashonaland Central Province and Chikombedzi in Manicaland Province and their analysis is premised on governance issues. Scoones (2017b) has also looked at the imagined futures of rural school children found in the farming areas focusing on the aspirations of the new generation of children who are resident there. These studies are the beginning of what I believe is an important trajectory in studying the FTLRP in which scholars will focus on the new generation in the farming areas created by the FTLRP.

Young men and women found in Goromonzi who are not the direct beneficiaries of the programme but who derive their livelihoods from these areas are looked at in this paper. It explores the aspirations of these young people and how they are surviving in a dispensation created by the FTLRP which has seen the emergence of new social structures, institutions and relationships. It looks at the strategies which these young people are employing to push for change and have their voices heard. It looks at how the young people are deriving material benefits from the 'new order' and how they are maneuvering around the 'insider' and 'outsider' tag which has been conveniently adopted and appropriated by those who spearheaded the FTLRP. The article is premised on the following questions:

1. What has been the nature of social relationships and the social structure in communities created by the FTLRP and how has it been influenced by authoritarian populism?
2. What are strategies used by the youth in having their voices heard in the farming communities to make it more inclusive and what livelihood options are available to them?
3. What if any is the nature of authoritarian populism that is evident in the farming communities and how have the youth embraced this new dispensation?

The Study Site and Methodology

Goromonzi District Profile and Land Tenure

The study was undertaken on three farms namely Dunstan, Xanadu and Glen Avon farms which are located in the southern part of Goromonzi District, Mashonaland East Province of Zimbabwe. For comparative purposes, the study was extended to the neighbouring communal lands of Rusike and Seke. Goromonzi district is one of the best agricultural districts in the country and it falls into Natural Region II. The district receives high annual rainfall of between 1000-1200mm annually. It has different soil types which are suitable for different crops and these include deep sandy soils, sandy loamy soils and red soils (Jawah 2009, Marimira 2010). As a leader of agricultural production in Zimbabwe, the district produces major crops which include maize, wheat, dry beans, groundnuts, sunflower, paprika, cotton, tobacco, horticultural crops and small grains which include sorghum, millet and *rapoko*. In addition to crop production, there is also livestock production of cattle, pigs, goats, poultry, rabbits and other animals (Chakona 2011, Njaya 2015).

Before the FTLRP, the land tenure structure in the district comprised of communal areas (guided by the Communal Lands Act with the land being owned by the state and residents having usufruct rights over the land). These communal areas took up 90 437 hectares or 34 percent of the total land area. There were the large scale commercial farms and agro-estates. These took up 155 437 hectares or 58 percent of the land area. They possessed title deeds as evidence of land ownership. The last category was state land which was being leased out, used for various other purposes or was left lying idle. This state land was on 5 812 hectares and in addition there was land reserved for the national parks and this took up 1 500 hectares.

After the FTLRP, there can be seen to have emerged an agrarian structure which closely replicates the tri-modal agrarian structure which Moyo (2011) and Binswanger-Mkhize and Moyo (2012) argue has emerged as one of the major outcomes of the FTLRP. They argued that there was a transformation from a bi-modal to a tri-modal agrarian structure. In line with this tri-modal agrarian structure, in Goromonzi there can now be found the differentiated peasantry comprising of the A1⁴ and communal farmers. There are also the small to medium capitalist farmers who are the A2⁵ farmers as well as the old small-scale farmers of the colonial native purchase areas. According to the Lands Officer of Goromonzi (interview held on 12/10/15) and the Sam Moyo African Institute of Agrarian Studies Household Survey 2013-2014 (SMAIAS), in Goromonzi there can now be found 2 822 A1 beneficiaries on 32 628 hectares of land. Which was formerly owned by 71 large scale commercial farmers. There can be found 846 A2 beneficiaries on 84 455.75 hectares on land which was previously owned by 51 large scale commercial farmers. The FTLRP has enlarged the number of farm households in the district from 20 253 to 20 733. There were 19 976 households in the communal areas and 89 small scale farms. With the FTLRP the number has increased from to 20 733. In addition, there can also be found 16 large agro-estates. The farms in the A1 sector own an average of 19.39 hectares which include arable and grazing land and this contrasts with the 3.72 hectares which was given to the old peasantry in the communal areas. The small to medium capitalist farmers own an average of 493.8 hectares while the agro-estates have more than 1 400 hectares of land.

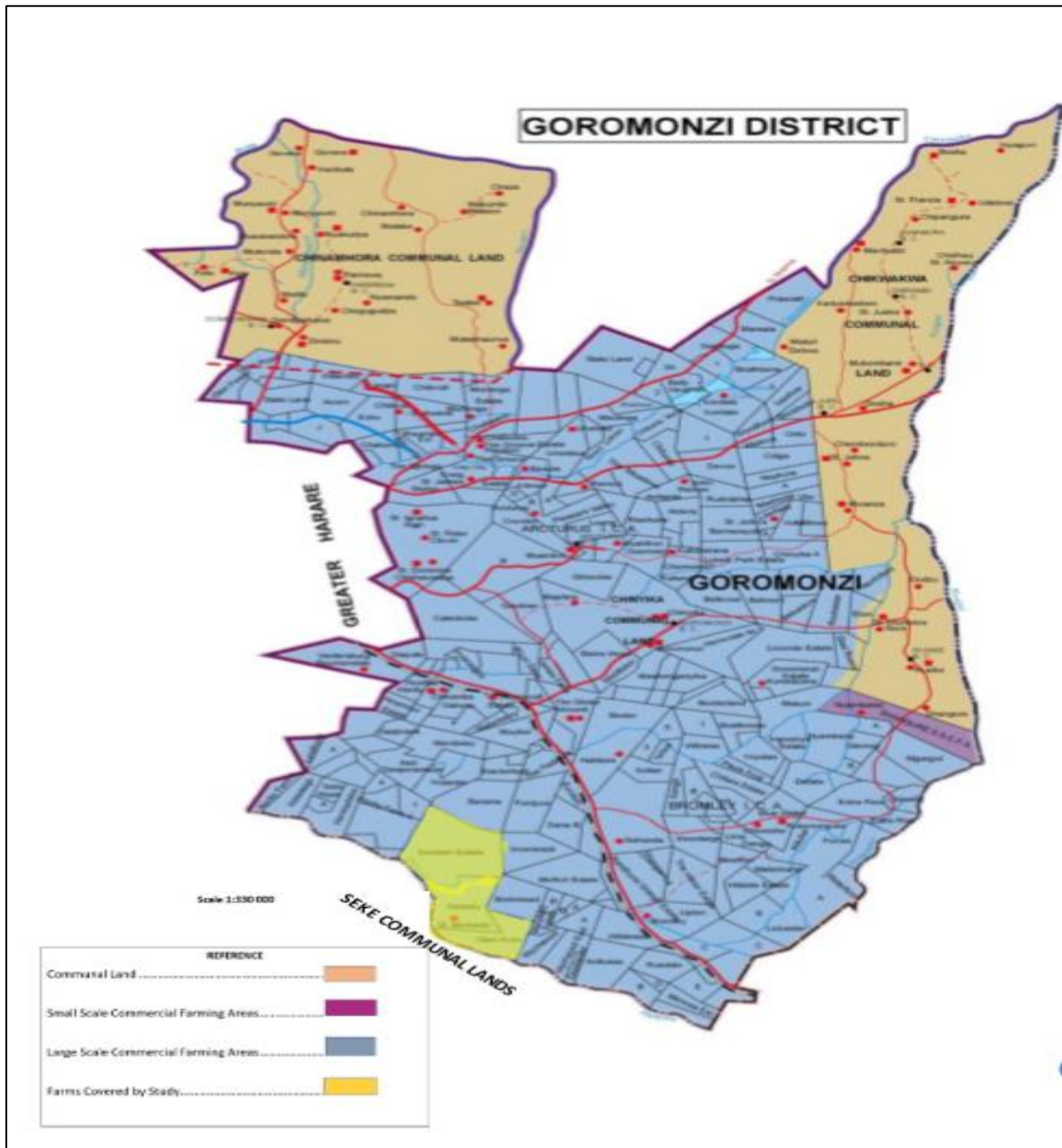
As has been indicated earlier, the study was undertaken in Goromonzi South in the Bromley Intensive Conservation Area at three farms namely Dunstan, Glen Avon and Xanadu farms. These three farms were acquired for resettlement around the year 2000 and were allocated to A1 farmers. In addition, the study covered the communal areas of Seke and Rusike. The areas in which the study was undertaken is shown in the maps below:

Map 1: Map of Goromonzi District and its location in Zimbabwe



⁴ The A1 model created by the FTLRP comprises of either a villagised settlement scheme in which the household is allocated 5-6 hectares of land. This type of settlement has a common grazing area just like villages in the communal areas. Alternatively, the A1 model is of a self-contained variant in which farmers are allocated pieces of land and they decide on where to place the homestead and which area will be for grazing and for agriculture.

⁵ The A2 model was designed to be more commercially oriented and is much larger than the A1 model. It ranges between 20ha to 500ha in the drier parts of the country with an average of 70ha.

Map 2: Areas covered by the study

Methodology

The study employed an interpretive paradigm and a qualitative research approach. An interpretive paradigm is a paradigm in research methodology which Neuman (2004) notes is important and useful in understanding human beliefs, motivations and thought processes. It is very useful in understanding people and how they make sense of the world. Neuman (ibid) further notes that an interpretive paradigm is useful in understanding social beliefs, preference and attachment to meanings of social phenomenon. This is corroborated by Lindlof (1995) who argues that the interpretive paradigm has its strengths as reality is understood through the interpretation of people's culture and customs. This is unlike positivist researchers who perform tests of prediction and control. Due to the nature of issues under study, it was seen that an interpretive paradigm was best suited for the research unlike the positive paradigm which is based on the scientific method and premised on the key principles of

theory development, hypothesis formulation and research to test the hypothesis (Coolican 2004, cited in Mukherji and Albon 2010). The study employed a qualitative approach and multiple data gathering instruments which included in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), observations and secondary data. Five focus group discussions were held at Dunstan farm, Xanadu farm, Glen Avon farm, Rusike communal lands and Seke communal lands with a total of 55 participants (11 in each FGD with 29 males and 26 females). 17 in-depth interviews were held with the youth, traditional leaders, initial farm occupiers, Committee of Seven (Co7) members and government officials.

Contextualising Authoritarian Populism in the FTLRP

Before looking at the results of the study it is important that I give a brief contextualisation of authoritarian populism in Zimbabwe's land reform programme as a foundation to understanding the background of the rural landscape that we now find in areas created by the FTLRP. Scoones *et al* (2017:2-3) see authoritarian populism depicting politics as a:

Struggle between “the people” and some combination of malevolent, racialized and/or unfairly advantaged “others” at home abroad or both. It justifies interventions in the name of taking back control in favour of “the people”, returning the nation to “greatness” after a real or imagined degeneration attributed to those “others” ... charismatic leaders, personality cults and nepotistic, familial or kleptocratic rule combined with impunity are common, though not essential features of authoritarian populism.

Based on this depiction of authoritarian populism, it can be argued that the FTLRP in Zimbabwe was to a large extent characterised by it. I have touched on this in the introductory section but I believe it is important that it be re-emphasised and looked at in a context where it was used to reconfigure the social and local authority structure in rural Zimbabwe in the smallholder farming areas created by the FTLRP. When we look at the processes leading up to and during the FTLRP, Mugabe and his ZANU (PF) party can be seen as deploying authoritarian populism to consolidate their grip to power and to push forward the land reform agenda. While Moyo (2000:3) has argued that the FTLRP was a ‘bottom up’ initiative which marked the climax of a longer, less public and dispersed struggle over land shortages and land demand in the post-independence period. It has been shown that Mugabe and ZANU (PF) took advantage of these grievances and concerns to ‘hijack’ the programme. While there is contestation over what stimulated the FTLRP, what is clear is that they managed to successfully take advantage of the situation and Mugabe's actions and behaviour at the time was not surprising to some scholars at a time when he openly encouraged violence and human rights abuses⁶.

Mugabe and ZANU (PF) were able to resurrect the ‘nationalist project’ and to create a new and narrow nationalist historiography labelled ‘patriotic history’ which I have highlighted in the introductory section (see Ranger 2004). According to Shaw (2003), the ruling party made sure that the populace was exposed (through the state media) to their argument that the white settlers had stolen the land from the indigenous Africans and the land invasions were justifiable and part of an overdue crusade to regain lost ancestral land. This was in a process spearheaded by the ruling and revolutionary ZANU (PF) government as it concluded the unfinished business of the liberation struggle. Race was placed at the center of the rhetoric on the land. Whenever Mugabe had the opportunity, he insisted that their actions were justifiable and there was a need to dislodge the white farmers from the land as they were a symbol of colonialism (see Hammar and Raftopolous 2003). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) has argued that with the FTLRP, there was the unfolding of a particular form of nationalism and citing Raftopolous (2007), he argues that the same white settlers who had been

⁶ Robert Mugabe's behaviour was not surprising to some scholars as he was seen as being politically produced by colonialism. Colonialism had never been a terrain for democracy, human rights and freedom. It had been a terrain of conquest, violence, police rule, militarism and authoritarianism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009). It was therefore not surprising for Mugabe to resort to these in order to retain power and to push forward the land reform programme.

embraced as citizens in 1980 under the policy of reconciliation became labelled as ‘aliens’ and ‘others’ who were considered to be enemies of the state. The farmers became the number one enemies of the *third chimurenga* discourse and nativism⁷ was deployed with the farmers being targeted by the war veterans.

In the country during the FTLRP process there was witnessed what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) calls a cultural renewal (some of these observations were also noted by Ranger 2004). This cultural renewal was aimed at creating ‘patriotic citizens’ and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009:115) saw it as consisting of the:

Bashing of colonial history, nationalist valorisation of liberation war history, promulgation of annual galas, commemorating departed nationalist heroes... reconfiguration of the nation and citizenship...the bundling of the youth into the National Youth Service Training Centres were they were taught by war veterans to be patriotic...the introduction of new courses like National Strategic Studies into colleges and school curriculum...popularisation of ‘patriotic history’ via radio, television and print media like *The Herald* and *Sunday Mail*.

In addition, Mugabe was seen as deploying the concept of ‘sacred space’ in which the white farmers were labelled as ‘outsiders’ who had violated the sacred space of the indigenous people (Chitando 2005). Mugabe argued that when God had created the world, he had put Africans in Zimbabwe and this was not by accident. Other races had been given spaces of their own and whites belonged to Europe. He said that it was therefore the sacred duty of the indigenous people to protect their land rights and whites were supposed to be domiciled to Europe (Chitando 2005, Mlambo and Chitando 2015). Mugabe and ZANU (PF) then went all out to convince the war veterans, the peasants, some urbanites and some of the youth that it was their patriotic duty to reclaim their ancestral land. Memories of the cruelty of the colonialists, the pain of the liberation struggle, land dispossession and marginalisation of the indigenes were amplified and kept alive through myths and songs which added urgency to the demands for land reform. The violence that occurred on the farms is well documented and Sadomba (2008) is able to provide insights on the role of war veterans, peasants and the youth in the FTLRP which unfortunately resulted in deaths and destruction of property which I argue is a consequence of populist rhetoric which was successfully manipulated by Mugabe and ZANU (PF).

Mugabe, as one of the most charismatic African leaders in recent history was very eloquent and he used his charismatic personality and eloquent speeches to sway the masses to his side and to convince them to participate in his populist policies. The way in which he managed to sway the masses and use populist rhetoric aptly fits into Worsely (1969) and Laclau (1977) conceptualisation of populism which they see as the construction of the political through the articulation of various people’s longings, demands and claims. Worsely (ibid) argues further that populism is better regarded as a dimension of political culture in general and not simply as a kind of overall ideological system or type of organisation. The deployment of authoritarian populism has had its impact on Zimbabwe’s countryside some of which will be touched in this paper. The mass mobilisation of the rural populace and war veterans as well as some urbanites which culminated in the FTLRP transformed the countryside in rural Zimbabwe and some of these transformations are only becoming evident now that the programme has ended.

Youth Realities in the Farming and Communal Areas

As young people we do what land, but not at the moment. It is not a priority as we do not have the financial means to work on it. If you give me a piece of land today what will I do with it, nothing. I would rather we get jobs now and be able to look after our families. If we do get jobs

⁷ Nativism according to Achille Mbembe (2002) is a discourse of rehabilitation and a form of the defence of the humanity of Africans which is predicated on the claim that their race, traditions and customs confer to them a peculiar self-irreducible to that of the human group. It is preoccupied with identity and authenticity with emphasis on the difference and uniqueness of African traditions and culture.

and be able to take care of ourselves and our families it will be good then we can get the land
(FGD Participant at Dunstan Farm, 23/01/18)

The sentiments expressed above by a young person who participated in a FGD at Dunstan farm, highlights one of the many similar comments expressed by the youth in both the farming and communal areas. The generation of young people in the farming areas appeared to have a very different and unique perspective on the FTLRP which is quite different from the narrative on the FTLRP which we find in mainstream literature. In an attempt to address one of the research objectives of the study, which was to find out the socio-economic realities of the youth on the farms and the surrounding communal areas, the perceptions of young people towards the land reform programme, their interactions with those in authority positions and their strategies to have their voices heard, the study conducted FDG's and interviews with young people at Dunstan farm, Glen Avon farm, Xanadu farm and the communal areas of Rusike and Seke. The findings of the study are interesting and present a new dimension on the realities of the youth on the farms and the surrounding communal areas focusing on the economy and the rural polity. In the sections below I will look at the youth and the land reform programme, their interactions with local authority structures, livelihoods and land access.

The Youth and the Land Reform Programme: Emerging Issues

From the FGD's and interviews conducted, it appears as if there is consensus among the youth that the FTLRP was an important and irreversible programme that needed to be undertaken. There was also a minority position by some of the respondents who felt that for now, the issue of land ownership should not be a priority as there are other pressing issues that need to be looked at. Some of them see the FTLRP as having contributed to the suffering of the rural poor. While there was an appreciation of the land being central to the rural economy most of the discussions and interviews ended up focusing on the issue of unemployment which the youth felt needs to be urgently addressed as it is a negatively affecting them. Before reporting on some of the issues raised by the youth, it is important to note that with economic decline witnessed in Zimbabwe for the past two decades has seen unemployment in both the rural and urban areas becoming one of the most prominent issues affecting the Zimbabwean population. Estimates on the country's levels of unemployment are of much contestation. The Zimbabwe National Statistical Agency (ZIMSTAT) put the unemployment rate in the country in 2011 at 10.7%, 11.1% in 2012 and 11.3% in 2014 (ZIMSTAT [O]). This contrasts with an assertion by Morgan Tsvangirai (leader of the opposition MDC-T) who said that in 2014, the country's unemployment rate stood at 85% (Chiumia 2014). Japhet Moyo the Secretary General of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) was also cited by Chiumia (*ibid*), putting the unemployment rate between 80-90%. In its election manifesto in 2013, ZANU (PF) put the unemployment figure at 60% while the National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations in 2011 put the unemployment rate at 95%. The Zimbabwe Labour Force and Child Labour (ZLFCLS) indicated that the average unemployment rate in the country for those aged 15-34 years stands at 15% while 87% of the employed youth are in the informal sector (ZIMSTAT 2011). ZIMSTAT (2011) also indicated that in 2011, 5.4 million (84%) Zimbabweans worked in the informal sector while 606 000 (11%) worked in the formal sector. These figures paint different pictures of unemployment levels in the country but they show that a significant number of people are either unemployed or work in the informal sector. This is the situation which the youth now find themselves in, a situation of high unemployment and available employment opportunities now mostly being found in the informal sector.

When asked on the FTLRP design and implementation processes, most of the youth had their opinions (although some were still very young or had not yet been born at the time when it was undertaken). The young people at Dunstan farm, in an FGD indicated that they felt that the FTLRP had been poorly planned and undertaken hence it had destroyed the rural economy. It was because of this that they felt that they were now feeling the negative impacts as they were failing to secure employment. The same sentiments were also echoed at Glen Avon farm where the youths who participated in an FGD indicated that while they appreciated the motivation and justification of the FTLRP, the way the whole

programme was handled had flaws and unfortunately now it was the youth who were bearing the brunt of these shortcomings. They said that the government had given land to individuals who did not have the capacity fully engage in productive activities and a consequence of this was that the rural economy had collapsed with no meaningful production activities occurring or jobs being created (this was emphasised). The sentiments raised by youths in the FGD's were expressed by Tashinga of Dunstan farm (Interview on 22/01/18) who said:

The problem which the youth are facing today is because of the way the farms were taken and the *jambanja*⁸ of the time. The farms were violently taken and no-one thought of the future. Land was given not on merit or ability to produce but on one's participation in the farm invasions. The farmers lack training and experience to engage in agriculture productively. Some of the farmers here should just have been given land for residential stands and not for farming with the serious farmers with capital being given farmland. This is the mistake which the government made and today we are suffering economically because of it. Things are falling apart here look at that barn there (tobacco barn captured in picture 1 below). It is an example of the decay that is on the farms. The farm infrastructure which we should have been using to do productive activities is now derelict and the youth are bearing the brunt of it all.



Picture 1: A derelict Tobacco barn at Dunstan Farm which Tashinga (quoted above) referred to which is now being partly used to store implements and for residency.

The youth in Seke communal lands under *Sabhuku* Munautsi⁹ just like their counterparts on the farms had their reservations about the way in which the programme had been undertaken and the way it seemed to have side-lined the youth from any meaningful participation in the rural economy. They said the FTLRP had created too many small farms in their area which could not compare with the production levels and financial muscle of the former large scale commercial farmers (LSCF). One of the respondents who was interviewed Melissa (interview held on 19/01/18) said '*kuno kwaSeke*

⁸ This is a period in the FTLRP process which is seen as having been violent and chaotic in mainstream literature.

⁹ A *Sabhuku* is the head of a village community. They form part of the traditional leadership hierarchy and report to the *Sadunhu* (Headman) who in turn reports to the Chief. They are the custodians of the village register or book.

nekumhiri uko kumapurazi takangofanana tose, ayo maruzevhawo ayo. Ivo vekumapurazi vanotoponera kuno ndokwavanowana chikafu, makiriniki, magrocer nezvimwe zvakadaro kuno' (Here in the Seke communal lands and across there in the new farming areas we are more or less just the same it is just like in the communal areas [on the farms]. In fact, they survive by accessing food, clinics and other social amenities here). An FGD (on 23/01/18) held with the youth in the area brought out many issues with consensus being that lack of capital was hampering the farmers productive activities and this was having a ripple effect on their (the youth) livelihoods with employment and entrepreneurship opportunities being negatively affected. When compared with the former LSCF and the few LSCF that remain, the resettled farmers were seen as struggling financially and failing to offer any employment. They said that the youth in the area get employment opportunities from two LSCF in the area which are Protea farm and *kwaButler*. At these farms which they said are white owned, workers are hired at frequent intervals to cultivate flowers, strawberry's and maize as well as the rearing of livestock. This is in contrast on the resettled farmers whom they said cultivate small portions and are mostly reliant on family labour or cheap labour from the families of the former farmworkers. On whether there are employment opportunities for the youth on the farms, one respondent in an FGD in the Rusike Communal Area (held on 15/01/18) said:

These resettled farmers do not have the finance to engage in serious agriculture. They are only good at running bars, selling beer and having snooker tables which keep us the youth occupied but they do not employ people¹⁰.

The picture below taken at Dunstan farm gives credence to the observation by the participant quoted above but it does not in any way prove that her observation is empirically correct or justifiable.



Picture 2: Some of the young people playing snooker and drinking beer at a bar at Dunstan farm at 12 pm on a Tuesday (Note: the picture was deliberately taken at a distance to protect their identities and they were seven in number)

¹⁰ This observation by the respondent appears to be exaggerated. While there are many small bars on the farms it is not every farmer who has these but they are mostly found at centres that have been converted into shops on the farm. The shop and bar owners have trading licences and authority from the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Irrigation Development. It should also be remembered that some of the former LSCF did have bars on their farms and the same is true for communal areas where there can be found council and private run bars.

The issue of youth unemployment on the farms is not only worrying to the youth but also to some of the farmers who benefitted from the FTLRP. Chirandu of Glen Avon farm who was allocated land in 2000 as a youth and was part of the initial land occupiers provided some insights on the situation of young people in the farming areas whom he saw as being frustrated by the prevailing socio-economic situation. His insights can be seen as being in tandem with the views of the youth in the communal and farming areas. He said:

We are sitting on a bombshell if this issue of youth unemployment is not addressed. The jobs are not there be it here on the farms or nationally. With the meltdown of the economy, there is a serious challenge of unemployment and the youth are becoming restless. We cannot employ all of them on these small farms. We give them part time jobs here and there and we try to keep them occupied through sports but the bottom-line is that they need work. The pressure is there now for the government to do something about it and it has to be borne in mind that this is a political issue as the youth are now an important constituency. The Mugabe administration knew this and in the last days they felt the pressure from the youth and their demands for economic participation. It was because of this reason that there were those disastrous Interface rallies which were meant to appease the youth. They (the youth) are vicious, energetic, quarrelsome and can make the right political noises hence the need to address this issue of youth unemployment urgently (Interview held on 24/01/18).

Chirandu indicated that he had only been 29 years of age when he had managed to acquire land having been one of the first occupiers at Glen Avon farm. Over the years he had managed to acquire several assets from his farming activities and to build for himself a home where he currently resides with his family. He said that he had managed to make a decent life for himself and his life had been transformed by acquiring land and felt that the same should be done for the youth. If they were allocated land now or if measures were put in place to make them economically active, he was sure that they would succeed in the future. The pictures below show Chirandu's homestead and the assets which he has acquired through farming:



Picture 3: Chirandu's newly built house at Glen Avon farm



Picture 4: Chirandu's tractor and truck which he acquired through proceeds from farming



Picture 5: Some of Chirandu's herd of cattle

As a result of the socio-economic challenges facing the youth, most of the youth who participated in the study are no longer appreciative of the FTLRP arguing that they have not benefitted much from it. Some of the youth who participated in an FGD at Dunstan farm said that land reform had not really benefitted them and it was the only the older generation who had benefitted. They indicated that if one looked at the assets accumulated by the youths compared to those acquired by the older generation one is able to see just how much the older generation has benefitted economically. They also said that there was a big difference between the youths themselves with the youth whose parents had managed to acquire land being well off compared to the youth whose parents had failed to acquire land. In addition, they seemed to have a promising future compared to their counterparts as they have access to a productive resource-the land. They argued that their generation had been pauperised with the only

job which was availed to them (although not always) being the *maricho/mugwazo*¹¹ or piecework which is paid at between US\$4 or US\$5 per task. They indicated that with the prevailing weather patterns and lack of investment in irrigation facilities, the situation was worse for them as *maricho* became even scarcer. At Dunstan farm for example, the youth said that the infrastructure for irrigation was in place but the farmers did not have the engines or the financial capacity to use it. The situation was the same at Xanadu farm with the youth pointing out to the wilting maize crop that was suffering from moisture stress during in 2017-2018 agricultural season at the time of the fieldwork. They pointed out that without irrigation equipment and overreliance on rainfed agriculture was limiting the farmers productive activities thus fuelling hunger as well as limiting employment opportunities for the youth.



Picture 6: Some of the maize suffering from moisture stress at Xanadu farm due to lack of irrigation and reliance only on rain fed agriculture.

Respondents from the Seke and Rusike communal areas were even more emphatic in saying that most of the young people found in their areas had not benefitted anything from the land reform programme. They indicated that the only thing which they were benefitting from it which could be called a benefit was sand which they illegally poach from the farms as well as illegally cutting firewood. This however was said to be a but risky activity that has been criminalised. Some of the participants in the Seke FGD had even gone further to suggest that it would be better if some of the displaced white farmers were allowed to return so that they would work as equals with the local people. They felt that if such an arrangement was made it would at least give rise to some economic opportunities which they felt was seriously lacking in the farming areas.

¹¹ *Mugwazo/maricho* is a term which is degrading and it is used to describe daily wage work. It is normally associated with the poorest segments of the rural society who participate in it for their survival.

While some youth were bemoaning the situation on the farms, during the study it was noted that there are some youths who are doing relatively well and have not been too seriously affected by the prevailing socio-economic situation on the farms. There is an emergent youthful group of farmers like Cleopas aged 32 (interview held on 18/01/18) of Xanadu farm who inherited the farm from his deceased parents who passed away in 2012 and 2015 respectively. While he lives with his siblings, Cleopas is the eldest and is now the head of the family. For Cleopas, the FTLRP has been positive as it had benefitted his parents and now it was benefitting him and his family. On the farm, he has been cultivating horticultural crops and tobacco as well as rearing cattle. He said on an annual basis he realises a profit of anything between US\$5 000-US\$10 000 and through this amount he had built his own house, separate from the one built by his parents and bought a vehicle as well as farm implements. So, for the youth like Cleopas, the FTLRP was very positive and from the interview conducted with him he was optimistic about the future of agriculture in Zimbabwe. He was critical of some of his counterparts (the youth) whom he accused of being lazy and not wanting to work when opportunities are available for them. He accused his counterparts of wanting to hang around beer halls and only working so that they can raise money for the next beer drink. He said that even if one does not have land they can approach the local *sabhuku* who can arrange for one to have access to agricultural land or gardens near water sources. He also indicated that one can approach the *sabhuku* and be given an anthill and a branch from a tree to use to mould bricks. The number of farmers needing extra help according to him in the rainy season was high hence instead of the youth complaining about opportunities that are not available, they can make do with what is available at present and hopefully in the future things will improve and the youth can derive the benefits which they dream of in the farming areas. This view by Cleopas presents a contrary perception by other youth who appeared to be a minority in the farming areas.

Traditional Leadership on the Farms: Unearthing New Local Politics of Governance

Another main objective of the study was to find out how the FTLRP has reconfigured local authority structures and the impact which the authoritarian populism of the FTLRP process has had a lasting impact on local governance on the farms. As has been indicated earlier, studies elsewhere showed that the FTLRP resulted in the reconfiguration and transformation of rural authority, polity and social structure (see Moyo and Yeros 2005, Moyo *et al* 2009, Mkodzongi 2013, Mujere 2011). Traditional leaders were seen as playing a prominent role on the A1 farms. With this in mind, this study sought to undertake a micro analysis of the rural authority structure in relevance to the traditional authorities and the Committee of Seven (Co7) and how these relate to the youth.

At Dunstan, Xanadu and Glen Avon farm as well as the communal areas of Seke and Rusike, five village heads who are locally referred to as *sabhuku* were interviewed in order to get insights on the local authority structure and politics of the countryside. Information from the five *sabhuku*'s collaborated the findings in literature that the FTLRP has reconfigured the local authority structure with traditional leaders now playing an important governance role collaboratively with the District Administrators Office and the local Rural District Council. *Sabhuku* Choto and *Sabhuku* Mugwagwa of Dunstan B and Xanadu A villages are an example of the new crop of traditional leaders found in Goromonzi South created by the FTLRP on acquired farms. *Sabhuku* Mugwagwa indicated that the A1 farms in Goromonzi South lie under the jurisdiction of Chief Rusike although in pre-colonial times they fell under Chief Seke and Chief Chinhamora. Traditional autochthonous claims to the land by these Chiefs have resulted in boundary disputes which *Sabhuku* Mugwagwa claimed was slowing down their recognition as the legitimate *sabhuku*'s. According to *Sabhuku* Choto, Chief Rusike had personally appointed the *Sabhuku*'s and they are each in charge of a village. Their responsibilities on the farms according to the two *sabhuku*'s include enforcing provisions of the Traditional Leaders Act (Chapter 20:17) in areas under their jurisdiction, presiding over cases of petty criminality and deviance, ensuring the enforcement of local traditional laws and being custodians of natural resources (particularly ensuring the protection of trees, preventing veld fires and ensuring that fishing in the local rivers Manyame and Muswiti are not done using nets).

The *sabhuku*'s have their courts where they preside over different cases and they have the powers to fine offenders but they cannot exceed a fine of two goats. The institution of traditional leadership on the A1 farms is very much similar in many respects to that which is found in the communal areas. *Sabhuku* Munautsi of the Seke communal lands just like his counterparts in the farming areas indicated that he is responsible for ensuring adherence to customary laws and traditions, presiding over cases of criminality, arbitrating disputes and being a custodian of natural resources particularly the land, trees, sand and stones. In both the communal and the farming areas, there can now be found a hierarchical reporting structure in which the *sabhuku* reports to the headman (*sadunhu*) who in turn reports to the Chief. The headman's court has greater powers than the *sabhuku*'s court with the Chiefs court having the greatest powers. The Chief can fine up to a beast for those found guilty. Interviews and FGD's undertaken in Goromonzi show that the institution of traditional leadership has become central to the politics of the countryside as well as local governance. In an attempt to maintain control of the farming areas, the government of Zimbabwe allowed for the Chiefs to appoint the *sabhuku*'s in the farming areas. This is an issue which has generated some controversy as the Traditional Leaders Act and the Constitution of Zimbabwe only give traditional leaders jurisdiction over the communal areas and not agricultural land on which the farms are located. Traditional leaders on the farms as shall be shown in sections below are central figures in the rural polity (this is despite provisions in the Act and the Constitution which state that they should be apolitical). In all governance and developmental institutions that are operating on the farms they are either members or the institutions report to them.

Unlike their counterparts in the communal areas, the *sabhuku*'s in the farming areas do not have an ancestral claim to the office of the *sabhuku*. They were appointed by the Chief's and most of them are not sure of the reasons why they were appointed to this office. With the old guard of *sabhuku*'s in the farming areas becoming aged, there is emerging a new crop of *sabhuku*'s who are now taking over. They are exemplified by *Sabhuku* Matinetsa Choto of Dunstan farm who became a *sabhuku* in 2017 following the death of his father. This new group of leaders mark the beginning of a new group of traditional leaders who are now also claiming traditional autochthony to inherit the office of the *sabhuku* just like their counterparts in the communal areas. Across in the Seke communal lands, *Sabhuku* Munautsi is not a first generation *sabhuku* in his family but he inherited the office after the death of his brother and they have had it for generations. While the *sabhuku*'s in both areas appear to be the same, there are a number of differences. *Sabhuku* Choto summarised one of the major differences. He said:

As you look at me now, you can see that I do not have a pin (badge) unlike our counterparts in the communal areas. The government has been slow in officially recognising us by giving us pins. It has also not given us payment for the many services that we render in our areas of jurisdiction. Some of our subjects do not respect us and some even question our authority and even ask us why we bother when we are not being paid. While the *sabhuku*'s in the communal areas are paid we are not and this is despite us performing the same duties and we even attend meetings with the District Administrator and the Chief where we receive training on how to discharge our duties but the pin and salary have not come despite the promises.

While the *sabhuku*'s in the farming areas bemoaned not being paid, their counterparts in Rusike and Seke were complaining that the US\$25 a month which they were being paid was not enough and they say they want an increment that is commensurate with their status as well as their workload.

The Committee of Seven

In addition to the reconfiguration of traditional leadership and its introduction to the farming areas, the FTLRP process saw the resuscitation of the war time era Committees of Seven (Co7) (see Murisa 2009, Sadomba 2008). The Co7 can be seen as now existing on all A1 farms and it comprises (usually) of seven members and it is responsible for the day to day living and administration on the farms in collaboration with the *sabhuku*. Just like the institution of traditional leadership, the Co7 has become central in local governance on the farms and politics on the farms. The Co7's were put in place at the

height of farm invasions as an institution that co-ordinated activities on the occupied farms and were usually (though not exclusively) composed of war veterans. Over the years, they are now composed of the farmers on the farm but still comprise of the war veteran element which makes them both feared and respected. This is in a context where war veterans played a pivotal role in the FTLRP process ending up by respected and loathed by different quarters (see Sadomba 2008, 2010). It can be argued to some extent that the Co7's are a product of authoritarian populism created at the time and they were meant to defend the farming areas against external infiltration, they acted as unofficial gatekeepers of the farms and were the 'eyes and ears' of the ruling party and government. At Xanadu and Dunstan farm, the Co7 was also referred to as the VIDCO (Village Development Committee). According to an informant at Glen Avon farm, Masema (interview held on 24/01/18), it is the responsibility of the Co7 to deal with developmental issues on the farms, it addresses challenges faced by the community of farmers, it protects natural resources, co-ordinates the construction of fireguards, ensures that farm infrastructure is maintained and used equitably by all (this usually refers to farm infrastructure which was left by the former white farmers and includes irrigation infrastructure, dams and tobacco barns etc). The Co7 also works with government ministries of health and education in the construction and the maintenance of clinics and satellite schools (usually these would be converted buildings from structures built by the white commercial farmers for example the farmhouses).

The Co7 has become one of the most recognised, powerful and important farm level institution. The Lands Officer in Goromonzi as well as the Secretary of the Co7 at Glen Avon farm (interviews on 14/01/18 and 17/01/18) indicated that the Co7 is recognised by the local District Administrator who keeps a record of the Committee from all farms in the district. The local Chief under whose jurisdiction the farm falls presides over the elections of committee members¹² of the Co7 which is usually done after three years and the District Administrator attends. In addition, the District Lands Committee recognises the Co7 and they usually work together on issues to do with disputes over boundaries in which case the Co7 is usually the first port of call. In maintaining and regulating infrastructure on the farms which was left by the former commercial farmers, the Co7 works with the District Lands Office as all the infrastructure on farms is now owned by the government under the purview of the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Irrigation Development. The Co7 in development projects works with the Goromonzi Rural District Council, on issues to do with natural resources it works with the Environment Management Agency (EMA) and on production issues concerning the farming community it works with AGRITEX officers from the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Irrigation Development. From the interactions which the Co7 has with the different organisations mentioned above, it can be seen that the Co7 is quite pivotal in rural relations. Politically, it was noted that on all three farms, the Co7 has very strong relations with the ruling ZANU (PF) party with most of the members whom I interacted with indicating that they were either members of the party at cell, branch, district or provincial levels with the authority of the Co7 being backed up by the war veteran element among its members as well as membership to the ruling party.

The combination of the traditional leadership and Co7 has created a new political dispensation in rural Zimbabwe in the farming areas. This combination has a political stranglehold on the farms as it is backed up by war veterans as well as ZANU (PF). Their influence is not only political but it is also economic and social. Takawira of Dunstan farm (interview held on 23/01/18) indicated that the traditional leadership and the Co7 promote ZANU (PF) politics as they control projects, the flow of inputs and their distribution as well as access to these areas by outsiders and effectively shutting out opposition politicians and non-governmental organisations from these areas. Takawira also indicated that these two institutions are at the centre of the ZANU (PF) cells and have contributed to ZANU (PF) dominance on the farms. The traditional leaders at the three farms were not shy to indicate the

¹² The Co7 has committee members who are elected by members of the farming community. This however is not always the case for example at Dunstan B1 village, *Sabhuku* Choto said there was no need to choose another Committee as the one that he has is performing well. So, the systems differ from place to place and area to area. The Co7 usually has seven committee members who are the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Security Officer, Youth Representative and Women's Representative. The *sabhuku* is also a member at times appointed by the Chief but in the case of Dunstan the Co7 Reports to *Sabhuku* Choto through its Chairperson on a weekly basis.

party which they belong to and their political party affiliation. This is not surprising at all as they believe that they owe their farms and positions to ZANU (PF). They believe they owe the party their allegiance as it is their patriotic duty and in addition they fear that if a new political dispensation was to come in the country, they would stand a risk of losing their land hence their support. This is in addition to the multi-institutional affiliation of most of these traditional leaders which make them strongly adhere to the principles and ideals of ZANU (PF). The multiple institutional affiliation of the members of farm level governance institutions in the study was exemplified by *Sabhuku* Mugwagwa of Xanadu farm. He indicated he was a *sabhuku* having been appointed to the position in 2009 after serving as the chairperson of the Co7 since 2000. *Sabhuku* Mugwagwa is also a war veteran and an active member of ZANU (PF) and the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA). This multiple institutional affiliation by the traditional leadership is not unique to the farming areas but it has become an important dimension of the rural polity even in the communal areas. In the Seke communal lands, *Sabhuku* Munautsi indicated that he was a member of ZANU (PF). At the time when I interviewed him on 23 January 2018, he was in the process of preparing to attend a ZANU (PF) meeting, where they intended to revamp the local cell of the party. *Sabhuku* Munautsi's aides were responsible for sounding the village gong that announced the meeting and as we drove around the village he was constantly meeting his subjects and instructing them to proceed to the meeting place. I remember jokingly telling him that he seemed to be acting like a political commissar for the party to which he responded that he actually was an active member who mobilised villagers to attend the meetings of the party and they were important for developmental purposes and information dissemination. The traditional leaders on the farms just like their counterparts in the communal areas have become central figures who play active political roles. The political landscape of the three farms and two communal areas studied has shown that the traditional leadership and ZANU PF are at the core of rural politics and seem comfortable in maintaining the status quo as it has political advantages for the ruling party.

The Youth and their Relationship with Local Authority Structures

Having established some of the main concerns and issues affecting the youth in the farming and communal areas, the study sought to understand how the youth relate to local authority structures, how their voices are heard and whether they participate in local politics or decision making. Understanding the interaction of the youth with the previously mentioned alliance of the state, traditional authorities, the party (ZANU PF) and war veterans was considered critical in understanding the situation of the youth and whether they have embraced or are resisting the current dispensation which was created by authoritarian populism. It should be noted that this is quite a wide area which requires more nuanced empirical study and analysis which is beyond the scope of this paper. But as it is a critical issue, I will briefly look at how the youth relate to the political and traditional leadership and the strategies which they are currently employing to have their voices heard.

In the communal areas of Seke, the youth who participated in the FGD's were asked how they relate and interact with the local political leadership and the traditional leaders in their area. For the youth under *Sabhuku* Munautsi in ward 1, the issues which they raised were quite revealing and showed that there is a gap between the youth and the local leadership. In relation to their relationship with their representative at local government level, the Councillor, the youth alleged that they did not know him and he had never come to meet them as the youth to hear about their issues¹³. They said that the only times when he met with them was when there was a ZANU (PF) meeting and during these times he was meeting with the main wing members hence the issues of the youth were rarely discussed. At the time of the fieldwork there was a ZANU (PF) meeting that was being held that day and the youth pointed out that this was the only time when they saw their local government representative. Some of the participants indicated that they were considering not re-electing their representative as he had failed to represent them well. This was in a context where they said their local councillor as their

¹³ The Councillor in question was unfortunately unavailable at the time of the fieldwork and could not respond to the allegations levelled against him by the youth.

representative in the Rural District Council had the powers to influence the employment of local youth in council run public works programme which include road rehabilitation, drainage clearance, fixing bridges among other tasks but he was not doing so. One of the participants in the FDG went on to say that:

Hatina munhu akatimiririra isu. Takamira pa position ino tega isu. Asi this time tinoda kumubhutsura. Haasati ambouya kuzonzwa zvichemo zvedu, maCouncillor iwaya vanenge vari busy kusimbisa homwe dzavo. Akambotipa mbeu ye soya beans, imba imwe neimwe, hameno aiti inoshandiswei muno muruzevha. Apa svondo rakapera imba imwe neimwe yakapihwa cup imwechete ye rice yakauya nevanhu vake handizivi kuti anofunga kuti inokwana here. (We do not have anyone representing us. We are on our own. But this time around we want to remove him. He has never come to hear our grievances, he and the other councillors are there just to fatten their pockets. He once gave us soya bean seed and we really do not know what he expected us to do with it in this communal area. Just last week he sent his people to give us a cup of rice per household and we do not know whether he thinks that is enough.

The sentiments expressed above were also similar to the sentiments expressed by the youth at Dunstan B1 Village. They pointed out that they have no interaction whatsoever with their local Councillor as well as their local Member of Parliament whom they said they only see on television. Tsomondo a youth who was interviewed (on 23/01/18) had this to say about the local politicians:

We have no relationship with the local politicians. They only want to be close to us in the run up to the elections where they need us to assist them mobilise the people so that they get the support. After they are elected we do not even see them and now we do not even know them or have their phone numbers.

When it comes to traditional leadership, the views of the youth seemed to differ from each farm to farm. At Xanadu farm for example, the youth seemed to be in agreement that their local traditional leader *Sabhuku* Mugwagwa was an active and hands-on traditional leader who despite having limited resources was seen as going out of his way to interact with the youth, assist them if possible and to take their grievances to higher authorities. An informant Felix (interview held on 18/01/18) gave an example of how he (*Sabhuku* Mugwagwa) was mobilising the youth to form Groups of 10 were they were being promised engines and livestock to start projects. At the time of the fieldwork, there were some young people at his homestead who had formed a Group of 10 who were preparing to start a pig rearing project where they had been promised five pigs as a start.

What was witnessed at Xanadu farm cannot be said at Glen Avon and Dunstan farm. The youth there in FGD's said that there is not much interaction between them and the traditional leaders and they indicated that the traditional leaders seem to want to work more with the farmers than the community. Just like their counterparts at Xanadu, they also spoke of the Group of 10 initiative but said their *sabhuku's* were not active in it with government officials said to be spearheading the programme. At Dunstan, there was a group that was promised two water pumps to start a gardening project that was irrigated all year round but they had not started as they had only received one engine. An informant at Glen Avon farm Reuben (interview 24/01/18) said:

Hatina zvakawanda zvekuita nana nasabhuku. Kutongosana nekuonana nekupfuudzana mumabhawa (We do not have much interaction we the village heads. We only meet and rub shoulders in the beerhall).

In the Rusike communal lands, the youth there said the only time when they interact with the traditional leaders was when their labour was needed for community development projects (for free), when they were political gatherings, when donations were being received (which oftentimes they did not receive), at funerals or when they had committed petty crimes or were witnesses or complainants at the traditional leader's courts.

Across all the sites, the interaction between the youth and government officials was also said by the youth to be low. The only exceptions were said to be the Youth Officers from the Ministry of Women and Youth Affairs who were said to be in constant contact with the young people. In the farming areas, the local Agricultural Extension Officer, (interview held on 24/01/18) said as extension workers they work with the youth although their core responsibilities are the resettled farmers in the new resettlement areas. Increasingly they are now also dealing with youthful farmers who have inherited land from the older generation and they also assist youths who are into gardening as well as those who managed to get secondary access to land.

In addition to understanding the relations that exist between the youth and the traditional leaders and government officials, the study sought to find out the interaction between the youths and the Co7 which is arguably one of the most powerful institution on the farms. At all the three farms, respondents indicated that in the Co7, there is a representative for the youth. In FGD's held, participants said that the youth representative meets them and they express their grievances and views on issues for onward transmission to the Co7. After the Co7 has deliberated on issues, the youth said that the youth representative gives them feedback and the responses of the Co7 specifically on the issues which they raise. While this was the general response from the respondents, further probing revealed some interesting issues. Firstly, the respondents did not remember when they had last met with their youth representative or when they had last presented issues to him/her. Some did not even know whom their representative was. Secondly, they could not recall even one instance in which they had articulated issues to the Co7 and received feedback. Thirdly, they were not aware of how their youth representative was chosen (placing doubt on whether he was truly representative of their interests). At Dunstan B1 village, *Sabhuku* Choto indicated that their youth representative is 42 years old (meaning his is no longer a youth). The *Sabhuku* defended having a person who is no longer a youth to be representing the interests of the youth in the Co7 by saying:

As the leadership, we do not have a problem having a representative for the youth who is older and mature. His age is in-between the old and young generation, so he is able to balance out interests. If he was younger, I doubt the Co7 would take his input seriously no matter how good it may be. They will be looking at the age of the person talking, I think you know these things. So, the representative we have has been doing well, so why change. The fact that he has remained in this post for long just shows you how good he is.

Strategies for Survival and Relevance by the Youth

In addition of exploring the interaction between the youth and the government authorities, the study sought to establish how the youth strategise to make a living (to survive) and also to have their voices heard. This is in a context as has been highlighted above where the youth have expressed discontent with the socio-economic situation currently prevailing in the farming as well as communal areas. The youth appear as being discontented and not realising the full value of their citizenship. For them inequalities (both economic and political still exist), their views are not being fully acknowledged and the redistributive nature of the FTLRP is slow in cascading to their generation. It is also in a context where the aspirations of the youth and the general set up in rural Zimbabwe is now based on a neo-liberal dispensation with everything being driven by market forces and profit making. The smallholder farms despite being family oriented are increasingly attempting to find space in the market and studies elsewhere by Mkodzongi (2013), Moyo *et al* (2009), the SMAIAS Household Survey 2013/2014 and Scoones *et al* 2010 have shown that there is 'accumulation from below' with the emergence of many formal and informal market chains. This neo-liberal motivation has shaped socio-economic and political realities in rural Zimbabwe as people seek profits and look for a comfortable life and the youth have not been left out as they seek to better themselves.

From the discussions made with the youth in the farming and communal areas the following key issues were noted:

- The youth in both the communal and farming areas have a challenge in the manner in which they socially organise themselves to express their issues and to mediate on their behalf with local authority structures. Patronage networks, nepotism, corruption and rent seeking behaviours by those in authority persons has further exacerbated the situation with a few youths benefitting economically. This is best exemplified by the youth of the Seke communal lands, Xanadu and Dunstan farm who gave an example of how some Rural District Council jobs (mainly contract work) is advertised and despite applying it is only the same people who are recruited every time with allegations that they are usually closely related to prominent persons. They also gave an example of an ongoing rural electrification project under the Rural Electrification Agency in the area in which they complained that they only heard about the recruitment which was being done by the agency after those who had been recruited had returned from the contract. They felt that all the youth should be availed equal opportunities to get employment. The issue of patronage was also unconsciously revealed by the traditional leaders who said that when it comes to projects and contracts, they work closely with the Youth League of the party and they jointly compile lists of the youth to be shortlisted for selection in is from this lists that youths are employed.
- While there are attempts to incorporate the youth in local governance structures, their participation appears to be theoretical as there is no evidence of much serious engagement. The traditional leaders treat the youth as ‘our children’ and *Sabhuku* Munautsi said that it is not necessary for him to consult them or incorporate them in decision making as they are *vana vemusha* (children of the village).
- Many youth groups and pressure groups appear to be urban based with no discernible roots in the farming and communal areas. None of the youths who participated in the study were aware of any group or institution representing their interests with their only focal person on Youth issues being the local Youth Officer from the Ministry of Women and Youth Affairs. The lack of visibility of youth and pressure groups is perhaps a strategic decision to keep the youth in check without external ‘outside’ influence by those in authority. This is an area that needs a more nuanced empirical study to ascertain the reality on the ground. A consequence of this is the domination by the older generation in the local authority structures and the rural polity.

The issues highlighted above raise critical issues in the rural polity. The currently prevailing situation does not allow the young people to derive the full benefits (from land and natural resources) due to them as citizens with the older generation ‘playing politics’ which are beneficial to them. Inter-generational inequalities exist and if not addressed it is plausible that they will continue existing for a long time. The redistributive nature of the FTLRP has not been fully realised and its impact is still to be felt by the youth although a few are now benefitting. Current attitudes and actions by some of the youth are worrisome and in the future, can act as a threat to social cohesion. Thus, there is need for a new kind of politics in rural Zimbabwe which addresses issues of benefits due to citizenship, reduction of inequalities, equity in resource distribution and access as well as participation. It should also be grounded in an ethos of nation building.

Despite these challenges there are several things that the youth in the study area are doing in order to survive economically and to have their voices heard. They have no choice but to engage in diverse income generating activities as some now have families of their own. It was noted that some of the economic activities which the youth are engaging in are illegal and this can be interpreted as a form of resistance against the local authority structure which has tended to discriminate against them economically and politically. This will be discussed in sections below but for the youth the major income generating activities which they engage in include the *maricho/mugwazo*, rearing livestock and growing crops (in gardens, their own fields or in fields where they have secondary access to land). The youth are also into brick moulding, fishing (in the Muswiti and Manyame rivers as well as dams in the area), selling river and pit sand, petty commodity trading, herding cattle, trading in firewood and thatching, gathering and selling honey, vending along the major highways, contract employment mainly with the Council and government owned parastatals among other activities. These activities are not unique to the study site as studies elsewhere for example in Mhondoro Ngezi by Mkodzongi (2013, 2015), Masvingo Province by Scoones *et al* (2010, 2015), Mwenezi by Mutopo 2011, in six

districts¹⁴ by Moyo *et al* 2009 among other studies. Residents of the farming areas can be seen engaging in a range of formal and informal economic activities.

As there is no longer any agricultural land available (for formal allocations under the FTLRP), the youth indicated that secondary access to land is becoming important for them as they have no alternative. This secondary access is achieved through being allocated a piece of agricultural land on the 6 hectare A1 plots by relatives, friends or strangers. Some of the youth rent out pieces of land and the arrangement differs depending on negotiations. According to the youth at Dunstan farm, the agreement can be sharing of the produce, *gejo kwako-gejo kwangu* (the amount of land that you plough for yourself will be equivalent to the land which you plough for the landowner) or it can be roughly US\$200. The youth indicated that this practice although it provides temporary relief is unsustainable as the owners of the land can after harvesting decide not to renew the contract for the next season. They also said there were petty jealousies that arose if a person renting the land was managing to successfully cultivate the land more than the plot owner. In addition, the practice was illegal and one engaged in it at their own risk.

From interactions with the youth, it appeared as if illegal sand poaching, illegal brock moulding and tree cutting and firewood selling has become not only a means of livelihood but also a means through which they are expressing their frustrations with lack of economic opportunities. It should be noted that the youth do not view this in such a manner but when one looks at the responses which they give it appears to be one of the strategies which they employ in order to sustain themselves and their families (it should be noted that most of these youths have spouses and children of their own and some have dependents) as well as having a share (forcibly) of the abundant natural resources found on the farms. Sand poaching and firewood stealing are quite rampant with all the traditional leaders saying that it was a serious problem. The Security Officer (Co7) at Glen Avon farm (interview 24/01/18) said the youth from the communal areas were the ones who usually came to cut trees and steal firewood at the farms. He pointed out that at times it is dangerous for individual farmers to confront them as they would be armed and they undertook these activities at night. The firewood and sand was sold to households in the surrounding Chitungwiza and Epworth urban areas and even in Harare and Marondera. Some farmers without woodlots or access to coal who grow tobacco were also said to be customers for the firewood. Participants at the FGD's confirmed this and said that at times (and not often) they 'help themselves' to the natural resources found on the farms especially sand and firewood. Their traditional leader, *Sabhuku* Munautsi confirmed this and said in his area sand poaching had been very rampant, usually undertaken in the cover of darkness hence it is difficult to detect. It was only with the opening up of the farming areas that the problem has decreased with the sand poachers now targeting these areas due their abundant natural resources and lax security. Such a situation which never existed during the time of the LSCF as the farmers strictly protected their territory. The youth indicated that even though they sometimes engage in these criminal activities, they are constantly pursued by the Environmental Management Agency (EMA), the police and local authorities who arrest them if they do not have the requisite licences. They also said brick moulding which they do illegally sometimes results in them being arrested as the EMA regulations require that they should have a licence to undertake the activity. This is in order to protect the environment. Picture 7 below show some of the forests between Xanadu and Glen Avon farms which have trees that are being targeted by people including the youth to cut and sell firewood for tobacco curing and household fuel. The forests also have abundant grass which is sought after by the residents from the communal areas for thatching.

¹⁴ These were Goromonzi, Zvimba, Chiredzi, Chipinge, Kwekwe and Mangwe in Zimbabwe



Picture 7: Part of the forests between Xanadu and Glen Avon farm

Realising that there are few opportunities for them to have farms, the youth in their individual capacities are also putting pressure on local authorities so that they have access to some agricultural land. This has seen some youth being allocated some 2 hectares of land for agricultural purposes by their *sabhuku's*. At Dunstan farm, *Sabhuku Choto* indicated that he had given some youths land along the Muswiti river bank for agricultural purposes, but such an action was condemned by the Lands Officer and Agricultural Extension Officer who said that the practice was not only illegal but threatened the natural environment. They also indicated that traditional authorities have no powers to allocate land and they may be doing this as a result of pressure from the landless youths who pester them in their individual capacities for agricultural land mainly to establish gardens where they produce vegetables to sell. In addition, as a strategy to access land, the youth who are fortunate enough to have parents, grandparents or other close relatives who acquired land during the FTLRP can be seen as having pieces of land on the farms being allocated to them. These young people can be seen building their own houses on the farms. In addition, they are also being allocated land for agricultural purposes. It is therefore not surprising that at some of the A1 farms, there can now be found multiple homesteads. This is a new and interesting development which is in its infancy but which in the future requires a deeper and more nuanced empirical analysis as there is a replication of what has occurred for decades in the communal lands. It also confirms the observation by Mafeje (2003) that in African societies, the concept of individual ownership of land is alien. The land belongs to the clan, the lineage, the family/household as a production unit and not the individual. By virtue of being a member of the kinship group, one has access to land. This is slowly evolving on the new farms in which I observed that even though the A1 farm is usually individually or jointly owned between spouses (in whose names permits are issued), by virtue of being a household member the children or grandchildren of the original owners are now being given a piece of land to build and practice their agriculture on. The very same principles which Mafeje (*ibid*) observed are discernible on the A1 farms albeit differently but the underlying principles remain the same.

An example of children being allocated portions of land on the A1 farms is shown by Mbuya Kamuzangaza of Dunstan farm (interview held on 23/04/18) who has allocated portions of her A1 plot

to her two children and they are in the process of building houses there. She has also allocated them land to undertake their agricultural activities as they have failed to access land in their own right. The pictures 8, 9 and 10 below show the two houses at Mbuya Kamuzangaza's homestead being built by her two children as well as a chicken run where chickens are being kept for sale by her children.



Picture 8: A house being built at Mbuya Kamuzanga's farm by her son



Picture 9: A house built at Mbuya Kamuzanga's farm by her daughter and son-in-law



Picture 10: A chicken run built on Mbuya Kamuzangaza's farm by her children.

The Way forward for the Youth in Rural Zimbabwe

The issues discussed in sections above have touched on multiple contemporary issues that are impacting on the lives of young people in rural Zimbabwe. The youth themselves and some original farm occupiers (the generation of 2000 who spearheaded the *jambanja*) have several recommendations which they believe need to be looked at and addressed so that there is a positive transformation in their lives. Below is a summary of what they believe needs to be done be it by local authorities, the government or by the youth themselves. These are:

- The youth in all areas covered by the study expressed the desire to own a piece of land be it for residential or agricultural purposes (on this they expressed the desire that they should have access to finance if they are to make a difference). The youth indicated that the talk on the land audit is overdue and urgent action needs to be taken to downsize the very large land allocations in the A2 sector with excess land being given to the youth. They said there are some landowners (particularly influential figures in government) who own land in excess of the stipulated land sizes whose landholdings range from anything between 3000-10000 hectares. These farm sizes need to be rationalised and equitably redistributed. In the same vein, the youth argued that there is need to effectively deal with multiple farm ownership as it contradicts the principles of the FTLRP with few individuals owning multiple farms.
- Some of the youth felt that it was important that they also participate in political processes in their own right and not at the behest of older politicians who they felt were using and discarding them after winning electoral processes.
- The youth indicated that the agricultural models need to be revisited with a view of seeing how they can accommodate the younger generation. While land area in the country is not expanding, the number of young people keeps increasing and there is always a generational cycle of the youth at any given time. They indicated that it is important that models be developed looking at other countries and also to develop agriculture simultaneously with other economic activities which can also absorb the high number of unemployed youths.

- The youth in all the areas indicated that it is important that they keep pressure on the government to avail land and economic opportunities to the youth. They were hopeful that if they kept the pressure on the government for example by flooding the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Irrigation Development with applications for land the government would respond positively. They felt that the new Zimbabwe government led by President ED Mnangagwa would be positively responsive to their needs.
- Some of the youths felt the idea of setting up projects for the youths was now a tried, tested and failed attempt as only a few has benefited and many of the projects had not been successful. They felt that it was important that other alternatives be sought which benefited more young people and was sustainable. If projects are there they recommend that there be stricter supervision and monitoring as a lack of these was contributing to their failure and politics needed to be separated from economics.
- The youths felt that licences to acquire and trade in natural resources should be available without too much hassle and be affordable. They said this would not only decrease incidents of them illegally exploiting those natural resources but it would allow them to use them in a sustainable manner and allow more people to benefit from them. They said as the situation stands today, it is only a few that are benefiting from the natural resources and in most instances, it is those who benefitted from the FTLRP and those holding positions of power and influence.
- Some initial farm occupiers like Mbuya Kamuzangaza (Dunstan farm) and Chirandu (Glen Avon farm) and Chihota (Xanadu farm) feel that the youth need to be better organised and decisive in demanding a claim to the land as it is also their right to own land. They felt that distractions, listening to negative comments and at times the urge to migrate made it difficult for the youth in the area to fully appreciate the FTLRP and to devise ways of drawing benefits from the FTLRP. They also indicated that the youth want to derive quick benefits without investing time and effort and gave an example of how they indiscriminately cut down trees to sell firewood and poach sand for quick money. They said such practises and attitudes were not progressive to their development and put into question their qualities as future custodians of the land acquired under the FTLRP. They also indicated that the indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources by the youth was self-defeating as these resources were meant to benefit them in the future.

Conclusion

This case study has attempted to consolidate the findings of the research undertaken in Goromonzi South. Different issues have been looked at in the farming areas and communal areas to see how the FTLRP process which I argue was characterised by authoritarian populism has shaped contemporary social life and the politics of the countryside. Preliminary findings of the study show that the youth in the areas studied feel alienated from the socio-economic and developmental processes in the areas where they reside. High levels of unemployment and exclusionary politics and practices have fuelled their frustrations which at the moment have only been expressed at individual level and not as a collective by the youth. The study has also shown that the set-up of local governance in the study area is arguably authoritarian and is built on five institutional pillars comprising of the traditional leadership, the Co7, the state, the war veterans and the party. The aim of this set up is to maintain control of the farming areas and communal areas with populist rhetoric and practices (including food and input handouts and promises of projects which in most instances never materialise) being used politically for control, support and keeping those in charge relevant. Members of institutions of control have been shown as having multiple institutional affiliations and they use this to control and regulate everyday life in the rural areas. The important contribution of the case study is that it has shown that the youth in Zimbabwe show a heightened sense of political and economic awareness which is quite different from the narrative which we have always heard that they are passive residents of the rural areas without agency who are just there to be used and discarded by the politicians. The situation on the ground is very much different and it would be interesting for a further in-depth and

nuanced empirical study covering multiple sites just aimed at understanding the youth as it is in their hands that the future of rural Zimbabwe and agriculture lies. With the resignation of President Robert Mugabe, it remains to be seen whether the rural landscape in Zimbabwe will change or whether the institutions created by authoritarian populism will continue to maintain a stranglehold on the A1 farms as they were heavily reliant on his personality, encouragement, charisma and policies in the farming areas in which he took every opportunity to call on these institutions to protect the legacy of the FTLRP and to guard against the infiltration of 'outsiders'. While the youth have voiced resistance to the status quo they have not yet organised themselves or come up with concrete strategies of resistance and only time will tell on how they will take control and establish their own legacy just like the generation of 2000 which spearheaded the FTLRP.

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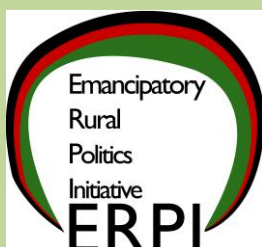
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