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Women's Work and Land Reform in Zimbabwe A Feminist Political Economy of Social Reproduction¹

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ABSTRACT

While the future of work in Africa is increasingly becoming an important area of research, a feminist political economy of social reproduction holds potential to illuminate the gendered and geographical nature of women's work in a context of radical land reform. Time-use surveys data was gathered across three study areas, two land reform and one non-land reform sites. This was complemented with in-depth and focus group discussions in the land reform sites with participants drawn from participating female and male-headed households. While literature on women's work is accumulating, this has not been extended to integrate a feminist social reproductive lens on African rural women's work in a context of land reform. The none or malrecognition of social reproduction by the State makes the latter an agent of depletion – a gendered form of structural and everyday violence on women. While liberating, radical land reforms, of their own, do not necessarily improve the care burden of women. This is compounded by the debt crisis crippling many countries of the global South.

KEYWORDS: women's work, land reform, depletion, social reproduction, Zimbabwe

ABSZTRAKT

Női munka és földreform Zimbabweban. A társadalmi reprodukció feminista politikai gazdaságtana

Miközben egyre fontosabb kutatási kérdés Afrikában a munka jövője, a társadalmi reprodukció feminista politikai gazdaságtana lehetőséget kínál arra, hogy rávilágítson a nők munkájának nemek szerinti és földrajzi jellegét tekintve is radikálisnak mondható földreform összefüggéseire. A tanulmányban szereplő időmérés-felmérés adatait három vizsgálati területen gyűjtötték össze, két földreform által érintett, valamint egy nem érintett helyszínen. Ezeket a vizsgálatokat kiegészítették a földreform helyszínein folytatott mély- és fókuszcsoporthoz tartozó interjúkkal, amelyeken nők és férfiak háztartásvezetők is részt vettek. Bár egyre több szakirodalom foglalkozik a nők

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munkaerőpiaci helyzetével, kevés terjed ki a feminista társadalmi reprodukciós szemlélet integrálására az afrikai vidéki nők munkájával kapcsolatban a földreform kontextusában. A társadalmi reprodukció állam általi el nem ismerése vagy félreismerése a társadalmi reprodukciót a megfosztás egyik eszközévé teszi - a nőkkel szembeni strukturális és mindennapi erőszak nemi alapú formájává. A radikális földreformok, bár felszabadítóak, önmagukban nem feltétlenül javítják a nők ellátási terheit. Ezt súlyosbítja a globális Dél számos országát sújtó adósságválság.

KULCSSZAVAK: női munka, földreform, kizsákmányolás, társadalmi reprodukció, Zimbabwe

Introduction

Zimbabwe recently implemented a radical land redistribution exercise that brought back land reform on the development agenda and attracting wide scholarly attention including from geographers (see Fraser 2008, McCusker – Fraser 2008). Zimbabwe's land reform represents a radical outlier as it represents leftist state-led land redistribution executed a neoliberal context where market-led agrarian reforms are the norm (McCusker – Fraser 2008, Wolford 2007: 550, Fraser 2008: 310). Suggesting its significance to geographical inquiry, Fraser (2008: 310) asserted that 'no other place better exemplifies the deserved centrality of the land question and land reform to debates regarding development than Zimbabwe.' While the radical land reform programme in Zimbabwe was borne out of geohistorical struggles for addressing material inequality and rectifying historical social and economic injustices, geographical studies of land reform are yet to engage adequately with subject formation and the politics of difference, especially those relating to women's work as the politics of land reform are also politics of difference (Fraser 2008: 317, Blaut – Haring – Keefe – Wisner 1977: 127, Weiner – Levin 1991: 113). The study of women's work in Africa constitutes a research niche that is receiving greater attention in recent times following dramatic changes that have accompanied the continent's involvement in contemporary neoliberal global restructuring (Donahoe 2004). These transformations, despite opening up new spaces for women to engage economically, continue to deepen constraints on women's income earning opportunities. Although farming in Africa was historically as much a women's as a men's activity, recent growth in the non-traditional sectors, particularly export agriculture, has been heralded as opening new spaces for women as farmhands – opportunities argued not necessarily as ideal (Fonjong – Gyapong 2021: 2).

While the above remains important, feminist scholarship and activism in the Global North beginning the 1970s highlighted the centrality of social reproduction which presently is being acknowledged as a fundamental issue in the perpetuation of capitalist production and gender inequality at global and local levels (Arslan 2021: 2, Blaut et al. 1977: 127, Ferguson 2019). Parallel conversations have been underway in the global South, particularly from a feminist geography perspective.



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Despite the broadness of social reproduction, geographers have sought to highlight its specificities by locality and for different subject identities. While Katz (2002) highlighted the shifting conditions of social reproduction under globalisation, and the need to build transnational and international solidarity to counter the imperative of the latter, highlighting its peculiarity Bhagat (2023) explored social reproduction of migrant queer refugees in Nairobi, Kenya, Cape Town, South Africa and in Paris, France. Closer home, Ansell (2008) explored the role of schools in social reproduction in a context where families have been devastated by the HIV and AIDS pandemic in Lesotho. Focusing on Zimbabwe but framed within social corporate responsibility, Gregoratti and Tornhill (2023) advocate for a business case for unpaid care and domestic work (UCDW), particularly the role of corporate companies in transforming gender unequal responsibilities in Zimbabwe and Philippines.

In addition to the above, an emerging and interesting subject discussion relates to depletion social reproduction (DSR) (Rai et al. 2014). Depletion social reproduction, defined as the highly gendered and resource draining effect of doing social reproduction labour, is caused by the gap between inputs to social reproduction and social reproductive labour and the outflows from humans, typically women, through their bodies via the effort required to provide house and care work (Rai et al 2014: 89). This paper adds to the above on-going conversations with a particular focus on rural women's work in a less discussed, localised and distinct context of land reform. This aligns with African feminist approaches which had stressed the inclusion of oppressions experienced by poor rural African women, often not considered (Tamale 2020: 3). The above is accomplished through a comparative analysis of the performance of the Phase One land reform and resettlement in Zimbabwe (1980-1998) and Phase Two land reform and resettlement (2000's onwards) in terms of State support towards social reproduction in resettlement areas.

Specifically, highlighting women's work in fast-track land reform sites in Chiredzi district of Zimbabwe, the following constitutes the paper's main hypothesis. By not providing the basic infrastructure for social reproduction to what extent is the Zimbabwean State itself an agent of depletion? This hypothesis is tested using the following research questions.

- How can insights from a Marxist and feminist political economy perspectives on social reproduction illuminate analyses of rural women's work in Zimbabwe fast-track areas?
- What is the appropriate role of the State in shaping rural women's experiences of the 'everyday' in contexts of radical land reforms?
- What are the implications of unsupported social reproduction on depletion, particularly for rural women in Zimbabwe fast track areas?

The paper seek to make a contribution firstly to the gender and land literature in Africa and more specifically bringing a depletion social reproduction perspective to



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the study of the fast-track land reform programme in Zimbabwe. I argue that the none or malrecognition of social reproductive work by the State exemplified by unsupported social reproduction in fast-track land reform sites does not only intensify depletion but represents a form of gendered structural and everyday violence on women due to its bodily impact and on their everyday lives.

The rest of the paper is organised as follows. The next section provides the methodology used to gather the materials used in the paper. This is followed by a theoretical contextualization of the study within the literature including a research background that provides a comparative review of Phase One and Two of the Zimbabwean land redistribution and resettlement programme. The conclusion is preceded by discussion section divided into two segments evaluating the Zimbabwean State either as an agent against or for depletion. The first segment presents results from the literature based on secondary data, whereas the second draws from fieldwork data.

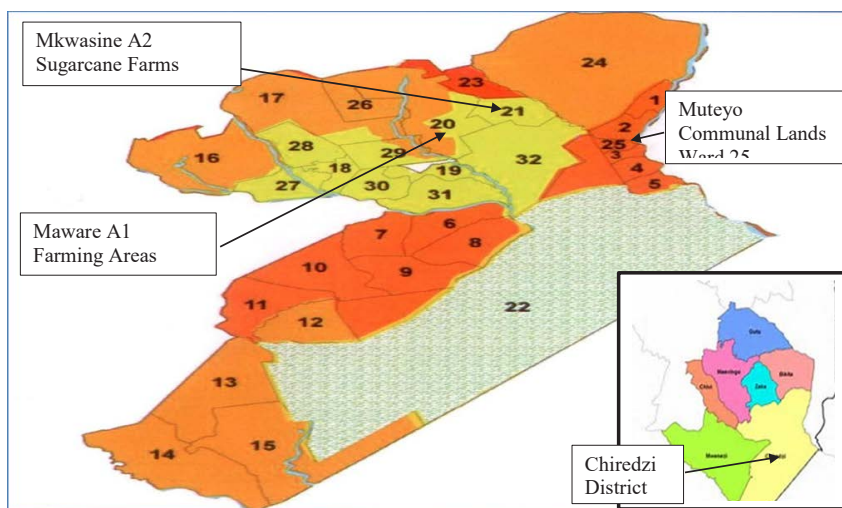
Methodology

Sources of data presented in the paper included both secondary and primary data covering Phase One (1980-1998) and Phase Two (2000 onwards) of the land reform and resettlement programmes in Zimbabwe. Secondary data were drawn from government documents on the Zimbabwean Phase One land redistribution and resettlement programme on infrastructure and service provision within resettlement areas. Two sources of secondary data provided a perfect fit with the research questions that guided this research. The first source of secondary data was the Government of Zimbabwe (1980) policy document, *Intensive Resettlement: Policies and Procedure, Government of Zimbabwe 1980*. The policy document provides a policy prescription and planning criteria guiding infrastructure and service provision within the country's land redistribution and resettlement programme from the time of independence to date. On the social reproduction side, the policy sets out water supply provisions, provision of social services including education and health, provision of rural business service centres, access to roads and other amenities including telecommunications by population size. On the production side, the policy document specific tillage services and inputs provision per resettled family in addition to provision of extension services (crop and livestock production). With the first document providing a benchmark to assess the performance of the programme in relation to infrastructure and service provision, the second policy document, *Government of Zimbabwe Policy Paper on Land Redistribution and Resettlement, 1996*, provides a performance assessment of Phase One Land Redistribution and Resettlement with regard to service provision. On the social reproduction front, infrastructure components assessed germane to the study included the provision of

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boreholes, schools, clinics, toilets and roads whilst production assessments covered staff houses, administration blocks, dips, fencing, inputs provision and land preparation. The target numbers, actual accomplishment and percentage achievement per infrastructure component provided a perfect fit with the study's research questions.

Complementing the above is fieldwork data conducted in Chiredzi district, located 342 kilometres from the capital Harare to the southeast in Masvingo province, Map 1. Fieldwork was conducted in 3 study sites. Site 1 Maware A1 resettlement area is a former extensive wildlife ranch that was largely uninhabited with the exception of a few houses dotted along the Manjirenji-Mkwasine canal. In the 2000s, communities from the surrounding communal areas occupied this wildlife ranch that was subsequently sub-divided into self-contained A1 small-scale fast track family farms.



Map 1. Geographical Location of Chiredzi District and the Research Study Sites
Source: Chiredzi District Agriculture and Extension Office.

Site 2, formerly Mkwasine Sugar Estate and its white-owned out grower sections, was wholly acquired by the government during the fast-track period and allocated to land reform beneficiary households as sugarcane plots. The sugarcane plots allocated to female-headed as well as male-headed and reform beneficiary households averaged 20 ha in size, with beneficiary families accommodated in former estate managers' houses while others occupied former farm workers' compounds. Apparently, the pre-existing socio-material conditions for social reproduction and their implications for rural working women's work between the two study sites are



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incomparable. Site 3, used as a counterfactual, is a communal site within Chiredzi district representative of surrounding communal areas within and outside the district (Masvingo province) where the majority of the land reform beneficiaries, particularly the small-scale A1 land reform beneficiaries originated from.

Study participants were randomly drawn from Ward Agricultural Extension registers which lists all households in a given ward. A random numbers table was used to select 40 participating households from each study site equally divided by gender of household head. Attrition led to the reduction of the sample size from the initial 120 to 105 households. Designed with a social reproductive lens the instrument gathered data pertaining to public provision of basic infrastructure and service including a primary school, creche/childcare centre within a radius of 3 km; a secondary school, health centre/clinic, a shopping/grocery centre, grinding mill, bus stop, telecommunication services within a 5 km radius. This was in addition to provision of safe and protected sources of drinking water, sanitation/toilet and laundry/washing facilities within 500m.

A household time-use survey (TUSs) – a geographical tool that measure and analyse time spent by women and men on different activities over a specified period (Statistics South Africa 2013: 3) – was integrated into the instrument. TUSs represents one of the methodologies in feminist political economy analysis, which, when applied in an agrarian context illuminates how women and girls in peasant households allocate their time on different activities each day (Rai et al. 2010: 11). Within a depletion social reproduction framework, TUSs measure the effects of unsupported social reproduction on the time devoted by women and girls to unpaid care work – insights into some aspects of development not yet fully explored” (Chen – Vanek – Lund – Heintz 2005). The tool gathered data on women’s daily time allocation (time spent in hours) on productive work, that is, average daily time spent on the farm or in the fields; average daily time spent on household chores, that is, combined time spent cooking, washing dishes, bathing children, fetching water, firewood and other household social reproductive work. An accompanying question sought to whether participants felt time short to do other things apart from farm (productive) and household work (reproductive) such as taking personal care, rest and leisure. Delving deeper into depletion social reproduction, the instrument gathered the following data, distance to the nearest source of safe drinking water; the amount of water used daily in each participating household; the mode of transport used to transport household water; the frequency (trips) per day to the source to collect water; time taken for a round trip to and from the water source including the seasonality of the water source. The same data was collected on the type and source of fuel used for heating and cooking by each participating household. This was in addition to household gender relations for married couples particularly spousal sharing of household chores covering male participation in household water and



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wood collection, cooking, dish washing, bathing children, taking care of sick children, taking children to school among others.

The quantitative data was complemented by 30 purposively selected in-depth interviews with female respondents drawn from participating female and male-headed households in addition to two focus group discussions held separately with each gender. The qualitative study sought to capture rural working women's daily experiences, opinions and feeling about the 'everyday'. Field access was facilitated by the Sam Moyo African Institute of Agrarian Studies (SMAIAS) with Chiredzi being one of the districts the institute has been conducting longitudinal studies since the 2000s. Sharing the same language and culture with the study participants entailed being simultaneously an insider and outsider. However, coming from a 'middle-class' and 'educated' background had potential to create unequal power relations with the research participants, majority of whom were rural farmers. More so being a male researcher, with a commonly held assumption that "feminist research should be 'by, for and about women'; its best women conduct research with other women and that men cannot effectively study women (Manohar et al. 2019: 1604). My male gender required constant reflexivity on my relationship with the meaning, interpretation, representation, knowledge and power dynamics involved in the whole research process.

The State, Rural Women's Work and Experiences of the 'Everyday'

The rhetoric on gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa only begins to bear meaning and content when African states and governments acknowledge and take upon themselves to underwrite the social reproduction costs within capitalist modes of production (Naidu – Ossome 2016: 58). A Marxian social reproduction school conceptualises social reproduction (SR) to refer to the "daily reproduction of households through the acquisition and provision of basic needs as food, shelter, clothing, health and education among others" (Naidu – Ossome 2016: 52). Broadly it would "include the biological reproduction, everyday survival, accumulation of education and skills critical in participating in the capitalist economy (Bhattacharya 2013: 1)" and inculcating the necessary value systems referred to as 'labour power' (Ferguson – McNally 2015) or human capacities (Braunstein 2015). Arslan (2021: 2) defined the term social reproductive work to refer to women's unpaid reproductive work (that is, housework and care work), mostly undertaken in the family. Marxist social reproduction feminists underline the importance of women in the production and reproduction of the working classes conceptualising "labour power as a produced means of production" (Bhattacharya 2013:1, Braunstein 2015: 3). Thus, within contemporary capitalist economies social reproduction hinges on three institutions – households/families/communities; markets and the State (Naidu –



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Ossome 2016: 50, Braunstein 2015: 1). From a Marxist feminist perspective, the socialization of labour power reveals the gendered and oppressive relations mediating social reproduction within the family/household, a non-capitalist social formation, historically the largest sphere of social reproduction and remains so to date (Naidu – Ossome 2016: 61, Braunstein 2015: 3, 10). Within the regeneration, maintenance, and reproduction of current and future classes of workers, women's involvement in these processes, particularly their capacity to bear children, had resulted in the disproportionate burden of social reproduction falling on their shoulders – a root cause of female oppression and gender inequities both in the public and private spheres (Bhattacharya 2013: 1, Braunstein 2015: 3, see also Ferguson 2019).

The labour force is reproduced both in the long run through the preparation of the next generation of workers to enter the labour force and in the short the run, in terms of the daily care activities given to workers to enable them to resume their productive work (Folbre 1994). All the direct and indirect care services that support unpaid (care) work in the home or community becomes critical (Braunstein 2015). From Marxist social reproductive perspective, the invisibility and exclusion of reproductive work from national accounts underlies the exploitation of non-wage labourers with the latter considered a personal service outside capital (Dalla Costa – James 1971 cited in Arslan 2021: 5, see also Ferguson 2019: 130). Wage work and those who perform it, mostly males, have been privileged over unwaged work and those who often performs it, mostly women (Arslan 2021: 5). While the feminist struggle for the recognition of the 'production of life' as 'work' continues, States still have the obligation to provide services critical for providing care, particularly in developing contexts where infrastructure and public services can be so limited (Braunstein 2015). Everyday practices ought to be the focus for any comprehensive feminist political analysis of social reproduction as the latter is about 'the caring and provisioning of the everyday' (Bakker – Silvey 2008 cited in Arslan 2021: 5). A co-constitutive relationship exists between social reproduction and the 'everyday' as the two tend to mutually shape each other alongside patriarchal capitalist relations that tend to permeate all aspects of women's everyday lives (Elias – Rai 2019: 206). Two important points are important to highlight in this discussion. First, is the concomitant shift of social reproduction responsibilities from the State to families, specifically to women that accompanied liberalisation in the Global South and elsewhere alongside the direct influence of the latter on State policies and programmes (Ewig 2008). Second, is the need to consider gender inequalities and social reproduction in the Global South considering colonialism particularly in analyses of State programmes implemented to redress legacies of the latter (Arslan 2021: 5). Land reform, social reproduction support infrastructure and rural women's work being a particular case in point. The latter makes rural women's experiences of the 'everyday' an acute and integral part of the ongoing African feminist political



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struggle for self-determination, women's appropriate roles and contributions to their national economies (Elias – Roberts 2016: 795).

While the mutual interaction between the productive and the reproductive spheres in capitalist relations of production have been highlighted, the role the State in shaping the relations of social reproduction cannot be further emphasised. The State, as an agent in shaping labour relations and processes both in the market and family, can 'intervene to offset or offload the high costs of social reproduction onto or away from the family at different moments in different locales' (Naidu – Ossome 2016: 58). Context-specific studies of the State involvement in production and social reproduction and the implication thereof are vital as they reveal the geographical situatedness of everyday life (Cookson 2016: 1188, Elias – Roberts 2016). I sought to highlight the later with particular focus on land reform and resettlement programme in Zimbabwe.

Land Reform and Resettlement in Zimbabwe: An Overview

While the objectives of implementing land reform can be social, political, and economic, a productivist perspective had eclipsed other objectives, particularly issues of women and gender (Gonese – Marongwe – Mukora – Kinsey 2005: 3, Wolford 2008: 559, Fraser 2008). Feminist and gender scholars writing on land reform and resettlement and more broadly on the land question have deployed various theoretical perspectives to voice issues of concern to women. Intersecting patriarchy, women and land several feminist scholars highlighted the extent to which women were marginalised in both Phase I and Phase II of the land reform and resettlement programme, though to a lesser degree in the latter ((Jacobs 1983: 34, Goebel 2005: 44, Chingarande 2008, Manjengwa – Mazhawidza 2011, Bhatasara 2011, Gaidzanwa 2011: 9). As patriarchal state policy specified only men as holders of farming rights, women were illegible for allocation of resettlement land with their access mediated through a male relative (Gaidzanwa 1981, Mutopo 2011, Chenaux-Repond 1993). Highlighting the 'indifference of hegemonic masculinities,' the involvement of the State in land allocation and registration has a concomitant effect leading to the creation of new rights through the State for men to the detriment of women (Bhatasara 2011: 316). Additionally, patriarchal institutions such as marriage and inheritance laws continued to disadvantage women in terms of access to land (see Cheater 1981, Gaidzanwa 1981, Jacobs 1983). A few scholars applying a feminist Marxist perspective to analyse relations of production and gendered divisions of labour within resettlement sites (Chingarande 2008, Manjengwa – Mazhawidza 2011, Bhatasara 2011, Goebel 2005). Though not applying TUSs this scholarship highlighted the lack of basic service in fast-track areas. The focus of this paper concurs with gender and feminist activists' longstanding question on the



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commitment of the Zimbabwean State to women's issues and gender equality including in land, which according to their perspective, has always been ambivalent (Essof 2013: 36, Ranchod-Nilsson 2006: 49). The above feeds into a large body of existing literature on women and land in Africa, particularly the gendered implications of tenure reforms of customary land (Amanor 2012, Tsikata 2016). Recent scholarly interest focused on the gendered effects of large-scale land acquisitions on the continent (Fonjong – Gyapong 2021).

Using a Marxist and feminist political economy approach infused with depletion social reproduction perspective, this paper adds onto the above conversations to juxtapose land reform policy planning documents vis-à-vis implementation outcomes on the ground. Depletion social reproduction, an emerging subject defined as the highly gendered and resource draining effect of doing social reproduction labour, is caused by the gap between inputs to social reproduction and social reproductive labour and the outflows from humans, typically women, through their bodies via the effort required to provide house and care work (Rai et al 2014: 89). The concept describes a situation when human resources outflows exceed resource inflows because of carrying out social reproductive work over a threshold of sustainability, making it harmful for those engaged in it, particularly women (Rai et al. 2014 cited in Lingham – Johnson 2024). Germane to this study, DSR extends to measure the resources available in any given context (inflows) vis-à-vis time spent doing social reproductive (outflows) (Lingham – Johnson 2024). This has been a subject of inquiry for feminist geographers in varying in geographical contexts.

Discussion of Results

PRODUCTION AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION LINKAGES: PHASE ONE LAND REDISTRIBUTION AND RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME

Apart from addressing historical and colonial injustices, one of the objective of the land reform and redistribution programme, as stated in the policy document, *Intensive Resettlement: Policies and Procedures (Government of Zimbabwe 1980)*, was to provide, at the lower end of the scale, economic opportunities (work) for people, including women who had no land and without employment and therefore classified as destitute. The *Intensive Resettlement: Policies and Procedures* policy document took cognisance of the inter-relationship between productive and reproductive realms as it emphasised the expansion and improvement of infrastructure and services that were needed to promote the growth of people and economic production (Government of Zimbabwe 1980: 2). Physical infrastructure critical for social reproduction was provided at a rate of 1 borehole (with a hand pump) per village of up to 25 families. Social services such as primary schools were publicly funded at a rate of 1 classroom per 20 families with the Ministry of Education responsible for staffing.



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Similarly, clinics were funded at a rate of 1 per 300 to 500 families with the Ministry of Health responsible for staffing. Through roads, village access roads and their maintenance were the responsibility of the Ministry of Roads. On the production side, government provided tillage funded at a rate of 0.5 hectares per family for initial establishment. Agricultural and livestock health advice was funded at a rate of 1 extension worker per 200 and 500 families, respectively. This was in addition to provision of staff quarters within the resettlement areas. Rural service centre layout and were also done by the government (see Planning Criteria for Providing Physical Infrastructure, Social and Support Services (1980-98). The above highlights the central role of the State in terms of policy provisions, in facilitating women's participation in economic production within resettlement areas. The State took upon itself the obligation for the provision of infrastructure and services critical in reconciling the productive and reproductive work thus shaping women's experiences of the 'everyday'. Table 1 below provides gendered performance assessment of Phase One land redistribution and resettlement programme in Zimbabwe from a feminist political economy perspective. At 75.6 per cent overall performance rate it can safely be argued that considerable achievements were evidently registered in the physical development of services in the resettled lands (Rukuni 1994, GOZ 1996). By 1996 out of a target of 3, 238 boreholes the percentage achievement was pegged at 91.0 per cent. Similarly, the programme's performance regarding the provision of health and education services were pegged at 83.0 per cent and 86.0 per cent, respectively.

Table 1. Performance Assessment Phase One Land Reform Programme

| Infrastructure Component | Unit | Target Number | Actual Accomplishment as of September 1996 | % Achievement |
|---------------------------------|------|---------------|--|---------------|
| Boreholes | No. | 3 238 | 2 940 | 91 |
| Fencing | Km | 19 718 | 6 510 | 33 |
| Schools | No. | 358 | 309 | 86 |
| Clinics | No. | 130 | 108 | 83 |
| Staff houses | No. | 1 035 | 971 | 94 |
| Administration blocks | No. | 89 | 71 | 80 |
| Dips | No. | 603 | 544 | 90 |
| Land Preparation | Ha. | 35 000 | 29 000 | 83 |
| Toilets | No. | 66 850 | 23 024 | 34 |
| Roads | Km. | 9 496 | 7 752 | 82 |
| % Overall Programme Performance | | | | 75.6 |

Source: GOZ (1996: 10)



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Only two infrastructure components recorded a performance score below 50 per cent namely, provision of fencing and toilets (sanitation) which recorded a performance rate of 33.0 per cent and 34.0 per cent respectively. As a result, Phase One Resettlement Programme had been applauded by many as having attained evidently considerable achievements in making available the necessary social services to resettled communities (Rukuni 1994). The researcher's personal visit to one Phase One land reform and resettlement scheme juxtaposing one of the research sites, Nyangambe Old Resettlement Scheme, showed electrified and piped water resettlement villages with a well-built and furnished primary and secondary school, and a health facility close to a business centre where grinding mills, shops and bars were located. The statistics highlight the importance of the State involvement in both production and social reproduction, and an agent against depletion. Apart from enhancing general living standards within rural communities, from a social reproductive perspective, such government efforts contributed to lessening the social reproductive burden on women, positively shaping women's experiences of the 'everyday' thus facilitating the participation of women in productive work on their newly acquired farms.

Phase Two Land Redistribution and Resettlement Programme

Phase Two land reform and redistribution covers the period 2000-2004 in the Zimbabwe land reform programme. Contrastingly, unlike Phase One, which provided basic support services before or as soon as settlers occupy redistributed land (Moyo 1995, Zimbabwe Farmers Union (ZFU) 1995), as argued by Gonese and Mukora (2003: 30), Phase Two commonly referred to as the 'fast track' ultimately focused more on the allocation or redistribution of the land resource and a retrospective approach to infrastructure and supportive framework that could facilitate or complement effective agricultural productivity and consolidate community development. Table 2 presents access to basic services within the study sites.



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Table 2. Percentage Access to Basic Services Within Reasonable Distance

| | Small-scale A1 Areas | Medium-scale A2 Areas | Communal Counterfactual | Performance Phase One |
|---|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Access safe drinking water | 2.9 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 91.0 |
| Primary school | 0.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 86.0 |
| Creche/childcare centre | 0.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | – |
| Clinic/health care centre | 0.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 83.0 |
| Shopping/grocery centre | 0.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | – |
| Grinding mill | 43.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | – |
| Bus stop | 0.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 82 |
| Telecommunication | 0.0 | 100.0 | 0.0 | – |
| Sanitation/toilet | 42.4 | 100.0 | 57.5 | 34 |
| Washing facilities | 2.9 | 53.1 | 57.5 | – |
| % Service Coverage 9.0 95.3 81.5 | | | | 75.6 |

Source: Own Fieldwork (2016)

While the fast-track policy prescriptions de-emphasised infrastructure and service provision ahead of land acquisition, allocations and beneficiary emplacement, the socio-material conditions for social reproduction within fast track vary considerably within local contexts. Despite being a fast-track area, the Mkwesine A2 sugarcane farming area is well serviced with regard to basic services and infrastructure critical for social reproduction. Similarly, the counterfactual communal area scored as high as the Medium-scale A2 sugarcane farming areas and Phase One land reform areas with coverage for service provision reaching 81.5 percent, 95.3 percent and 75.6 percent, respectively. The conspicuous absence of the State in shaping relations of production and reproduction within fast track areas is reflected within A1 small-scale farming areas where coverage for service provision is dismally below 10.0 percent. Virtually most of the basic service critical for community development are absent from access to safe sources of drinking water, child care, primary and secondary schools, healthcare centres and washing facilities. Individual households that reported access to any of the above services are private rather than publicly provided. Table 3 below presents time allocations by women across the three study sites and available time for leisure.



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Table 3. Time-use Surveys and Rural Working Women's Experiences of the 'Everyday'

| Women's 'Everyday' Average Time Spent (Hrs) | Small-scale A1 Areas | Medium-Scale A2 Areas | Counterfactual Communal Area |
|---|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| % House and caring work > 6hrs | 54 | 28 | 15 |
| Field productive work > 6hrs | 48.5 | 18.8 | 65.0 |
| % Women reporting working day > 12hrs | 100.0 | 46.9 | 80.0 |
| % Women Reporting Time Poverty | 78.8 | 59.4 | 70.0 |
| % Use of wood fuel for heating and cooking | 100.0 | 18.8 | 100.0 |
| % Average household size (members) | 9.4 | 7.9 | 7.8 |
| % Spousal sharing house and caring work (married couples) | 47.6 | 43.8 | 52.6 |

Source: Own Fieldwork (2016).

Household-based time-use surveys revealed acute implications of the State's absence in shaping relations of production and reproduction and rural working women's experiences of the 'everyday.' Due to lack of basic infrastructure and services critical for social reproduction 54 percent of participating working women in A1 small-scale farming areas reported house and caring work as consuming more than 6 hours of their day time. Several factors explains this, including large family sizes averaging 9.4 persons per household, strong patriarchal norms manifesting in low spousal sharing of housework reported at 50 percent, use of wood fuel by all participating households with women as the main collectors. The geographical difference in the impact of the State policy to de-emphasise service provision during the fast track becomes more visible when compared to the other two study sites. Women in the A2 sugarcane farming areas allocated only half whilst those in the communal counterfactual site slightly above a quarter of the time allocated by women in the A1 small-scale farming area to social reproductive work. A combined assessment of the daily time allocated to productive and reproductive work gives a better appreciation of women's time allocation in fast-track sites. All participating women in the small-scale A1 area reported a working day greater that 12 hours, cumulatively combining house and farm work. The figure declines sharply to less than 50 percent for participating A2 medium-scale women farmers, although it remains relatively higher for women in the counterfactual communal site. The high use of electricity (81.2 percent), use of hired labour on farms and paid helps within the household explains the reduced total working day for working women in the A2 sugarcane



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farming areas. Highlighting the level of depletion, 78.8 percent of participating A1 women reported time poverty relative to 59.4 per cent of women in the A2 sugarcane farming areas. Contextualising the above time use data are excerpts from in-depth interviews with participating women from the A1 small-scale study site:

As a woman I work both in the household and on the farm. We do not have a maid to assist with household chores. I am expected to work both in the field and in the home. As a result, I may fail to find time for my own personal activities (In-depth Interview Married A1 Land Beneficiary 14 May 2016)

All these tasks wait for me from collecting household water, firewood and other tasks including farm work. We obtain water from the canal which is unprotected. Sources of safe and clean drinking water are too far, and we actually do not go there (In-depth Interview A1 Land Beneficiary 08 May 2016).

We obtain water from the canal, there are no wells. Most people obtain their drinking water from the canal. During periods when they clean the canal and there is not water flowing, we obtain water from more than 10 kilometres away. Firewood is also a challenge. This increases the burden on us as women (In-depth Interview Married A1 Land Beneficiary 14 May 2016)

Household reproductive roles are for women. When we come from the field, he (husband) will sit, and I must do the cleaning, washing, cooking, collecting water and firewood and all other household tasks. So, there is always plenty of work for me. We do not have a maid... Firewood is also becoming scarce, I need at least two hours to fetch for firewood. I ferries the firewood by head. My husband may assist in cutting (In-depth Interview Married A1 Land Beneficiary 11 May 2016).

The accounts explicitly provides a fuller picture of the nature of rural women's work within Zimbabwe land reform areas highlighting the interrelationship between productive and social reproductive work for these rural working women. Their experiences of the 'everyday' has been made more acute due to the State absence in shaping relations of production and reproduction within resettlement areas. Putting it in a nutshell and expressing the ever ending heavy burden, one small-scale A1 female respondent summed it all in the words; "...there is always plenty of work for me". This explicitly highlight the gendered implications of the fast-track policy decision to de-emphasise service provision and give precedence to the acquisition and allocation in the process of speeding up the land reform and resettlement programme. As argued by Gonesse and Mukora (2003) the socio-economic background and condition of the targeted beneficiaries warranted that infrastructure and other support services be provided primarily from state resources, partly as a



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public responsibility and partly an expression of national priorities in sectoral development and resource allocation. While policies guiding service provision remained applicable, close to two and half decades post-fast track, the retrospective approach to social service provision is yet to materialise. Many resettled households exist in areas deficient of basic services critical for their social reproduction deepening gender inequalities the same land reform programme sought to transform.

A Marxist-feminist approach to social reproduction coupled with a feminist political economy of the 'everyday' reveals that the absence of basic infrastructure under fast-track not only deprives the resettled communities of access to essential infrastructure and social services, but also pose as a serious threat to depletion. While this is attributed to several economic and political factors, the none or malrecognition of social reproductive work in fast-track areas is explained by the indifference of hegemonic masculinities prevalent in the State and its machinery (Bhatasara 2011: 316). This ultimately counters the stated objectives of the land reform exercise in addition to deepening gender inequalities in the affected areas. Feminist scholars have cautioned against simplistic assumptions of the direct correlation between land reform and the liberation of women as land reform does not automatically guarantee that women will be better off (Jackson and Pearson 1998 cited in Bhatasara 2011: 317). What became evident is that production and reproduction are intertwined in women's experiences of the 'everyday' with the State becoming an agent for depletion in fast-track resettlement areas. This underlines the need to analyse rural women's work and their experience of production and reproduction from an integrated and relational approach as the latter are not separated but mutually linked leading to localised and geographically distinct forms of exploitation and subordination of women. Such an analysis reasserts gender inequity in work as the contemporary and unresolved agrarian question in many agrarian transitions and the importance of instituting land and agrarian reforms at levels sufficient for social reproduction for gender equality (Naidu – Ossome 2016: 50, 53).

The implementation of the fast-track land reform programme highlight the extent to which gender blindness and androcentrism provides conduits for patriarchy to continue shape State policies, even left ones. Issue of women and gender are commonly subsumed and get lost under the broader national struggles, including radicalised land reforms shedding light on the intractable nature of patriarchy within the state and state policies but with long-term impacts that disproportionately affect women. Prevailing gender regime remains of particular importance. As argued by Essof (2013: 34), the first decade post-independence was a period of more gender progressive legal reforms that favoured women in many spheres of life. As witnessed in Phase One land reform, the period was more accommodative to issues of women and gender. However, this drastically changed when the state became more radicalised in the late 1990s and the 2000s resulting in reversals of the many gains women had made since independence as witnessed in the lack of



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consideration of women's issues in the fast-track land reform programme. Gender equality do not have a formative impact on policy formulation, choices and priorities including in the allocation of resources. The same State that had previously promoted positive conditions for rural working women during Phase One of the Land Reform Programme, became itself a key agent of depletion (Lingham – Johnson 2024).

Conclusion

While the geography of land reform is beginning to accumulate, this has not been integrated to issues of social reproduction with the two conversations developing parallel to each other. In this paper I sought to extent the discussion with a particular focus on the future of rural African women's work in a context of land reform where most women within these contexts have taken farming as an economic occupation of choice. In thinking about the future of work for women a Marxist feminist analysis of social reproduction illuminates the interface of the latter with women's experience of the 'everyday'. This is in addition to the critical role of the State as an agent in shaping the relations between production and reproduction and working women's experience of the 'everyday'. We illustrate this argument by reference to the Zimbabwe two phase land reform and resettlement programme. Two government policy documents on the country's land reform programme, namely the *Intensive Resettlement: Policies and Procedure, Government of Zimbabwe 1980* and the *Government of Zimbabwe Policy Paper on Land Redistribution and Resettlement, 1996* were the key sources of secondary data used in the study. The first policy document provides policy prescriptions and planning criteria guiding infrastructure and service provision within the country's land redistribution and resettlement programme. The second source provided a performance assessment of Phase One Land Redistribution and Resettlement with regard to service provision. The target numbers, actual accomplishment and percentage achievement per infrastructure component provided a perfect fit with the study's research questions. Primary data focused mainly on Phase Two of the country's land redistribution and resettlement programme. Time-use surveys, designed with a social reproduction lens, gathered data regarding rural working women's time allocations for unpaid reproductive work, leisure and paid productive work within a context of land reform. This was complemented with in-depth and focus group discussions with women participants drawn from participating land reform beneficiaries. Key findings from the study indicates the commendable performance of Phase One Land Redistribution and Resettlement Programme and the prominent role played by the Sate in shaping relations of production and reproduction and working women's experiences of the 'everyday'. This contrasted markedly with Phase Two Land Redistribution and Resettlement in which Sate policies ignored issues of reproduction particularly so women as they de-emphasised



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infrastructure and service provision by giving precedence to production factors. The implications of this neoliberal policy shift on rural women's work is reflected in the State's absence in shaping rural women experiences of the 'everyday'. The socio-material conditions for social reproduction and rural women's experience of the 'everyday' within Phase Two resettlement areas became largely dependent on pre-existing social service provision prior to settler emplacement. These experiences are unbearable for resettled families allocated land on newly opened and previously uninhabited land where women find themselves in areas with no access to safe drinking water sources but to drink from open canals with negative implications on women's work. Such gender analysis of government programmes has implications for policy and practice. The need for Zimbabwean government to urgently attend to its retrospective approach infrastructure and service provision in fast-track areas remains an important focus area to track and for future research. The findings have policy implications for countries yet to implement extensive land redistribution programmes, particularly South Africa where land reform remains a pressing case. Beyond, the paper's findings call for a feminist orientation in national policy making processes to allow for gender equality to have a formative impact on policy choices and priorities including the allocation of resources. Such political moves require having gender and feminist lens applied to every policy issue, including the design and implementation of radical land reforms to ensure that every aspect that affect women's quality of life is accorded equal political consideration. It remains imperative to continue organising, mobilising, and advocating for transformative social change and the liberation of women, as the Zimbabwean case illustrates State ambivalence and the potential of patriarchy to continue shaping State policies, even left ones with implications for the future of rural women's work in Africa.

Chapter Summary

The paper uses a political economy of social reproduction to understand issues of women's work in the global South within a context of land reform. Since independence in 1980 Zimbabwe has been implementing land and agrarian reform to correct past racial injustices backing date to the beginning of the 20th century. This programme that began in 1980 and concluded by a recent controversial restructuring of the land ownership can be divided into two phases. Phase One when the government had financial resources to finance the programme and Phase two which took place around 2000 when the state lacked the financial resources but forced to proceed with the reform exercise. Using a mixed methods approach and drawing from both primary and secondary data, the paper analyses how the government fared in terms of provision of infrastructure necessary for social reproduction and the impact of state capacity women's work within resettlement areas, particularly from a social



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reproductive perspective. Phase one fared successfully well as the government managed to provide the basic infrastructure necessary for social reproduction. Time-use surveys conducted in Phase Two resettlement areas revealed that, while access to land improved the productive capacities of women and enhancing the welfare of their households relative to their male counterpart, this came with increased social reproductive burden due to the absence of social reproductive infrastructure in the new resettlement areas close to two and half decades post-land reform. Linking to current debt crisis in which most global South countries found themselves, including Zimbabwe and the extent to which the latter continues to constrict resources available for development, the paper highlights the interconnectedness of macro-economic conditions and localised gendered patterns of women's work. While it remains important to continue organising, mobilising, and advocating for transformative social changes, macro-economic conditions continue to have a retarding effect with negative policy implications for the future of rural women's work in Africa.

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