

MASTER THESIS REVIEW

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An analysis of the evolution of land reform programme in Limpopo province, South Africa: Successes and failures

The thesis focuses on land reform in South Africa. It consists of six chapters. The overall structure is fragmented into many sections (the author uses four levels of numbering). For example, the Introduction is divided into eleven separate sections, including its own “conclusion”. My overall impression is that the thesis is not clearly arranged – the chapters and sections are not well linked to each other, information is repeated throughout the thesis and also not clearly linked. The thesis is not based on a careful work with literature, evidence of which is presented below.

The author does not keep a proper system of referencing:

- A large number of sources referred to in the text of the thesis are not in Bibliography. Examples: Land Claims Commission, 2003; Hall, 2008; Ntseba & Hall, 2008; Derman, 2006; Doner, 1972; Buthelezi, 2008; Chambo, 2009; Pinto, 2009; Kalabamu, 2000; Besley and Burgess, 2000; Banerjee et al., 2001; Rukuni, 2006; Tshuma, 1980; Scott, 1985; Scoones et al., 2010; Mendelsohn, 2000; Ron, 1991; Nkondo, 2010; Tapscott, 1995; Nauta, 2001; Chandra Bahadur, 2009; Bundy, 1985; Bradstock, 2005; Vin and Kirsten (2003); African Development Bank Group, 2010; Goldstein, 2011; Wegerif, 2004; Dixon, 2010; MacLeod et al. (2008); Lyne and Darroch (1997). For all these references, the reader cannot check whether a particular reference is proper and whether the source even exists.
- A large number of sources in Bibliography (pp. 99–106) are not referred to in the text. For example, out of 16 references on the first page of Bibliography, only 6 are quoted in the text.
- The number of missing references (in the text and in Bibliography) is so large that it cannot be just an oversight by the author.

Use of some references is dubious:

- “Adams, Cousins & Manona (2002:7; Kepe & Cousins, 2002:2) argues that for the government to reach its 30% target by 2015 it will have to improve its land transfer system by seven fold” (p. 25). While this may have been an up-to-date argument at the beginning of this Millennium, it is no longer a good source to evaluate the program in 2016.
- “In the mid-1980s the GoZ upon realizing that the LRRP is not achieving its intended objectives it then came up with a strategy that is more inclusive and representative to all stakeholders namely; Government, NGOs and civil society (Tshuma, 1980:78).” (p. 18) Tshuma could hardly write in 1980 about what happened in mid-1980s.
- The last two paragraphs on land reform in Zimbabwe (p. 20) discuss Lancaster House Agreement of 1979 and the implications of the land reform policy by the beginning of 1980s (based on Scott, 1985), followed by a sentence: “One may conclude that the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) had negative effects on all sectors of the economy.” But FTLRP was initiated in 2000, so the evidence from before mid-1980s cannot serve for the assessment of this program.
- In these three cases the references are not in Bibliography, so the reader can only find out that such references are inappropriate or illogical in the context, but cannot check the original sources.
- On page 2 the author lists six points of the Freedom Charter. I am not sure whether the founders of the Charter would repeat the same point twice (ii and vi, but also ii and iii). Also, I have not been able to find Green paper on land reform from 2010 from which it is arguably adapted (the paper from 2011 does not contain it).

Some passages of the thesis are copied from a source without using a reference:

- “labor tenants are entitled to secure their long-term tenure rights by purchasing the land they use and are eligible for redistribution grants to make this possible. However, the reliance on fixed grants effectively places a limit on the amount of land a labour tenant can acquire, thereby undermining the rights-based nature of the LTA. Where labour tenants have acquired land, the main challenges have been the lack of support for resolving disputes and clarifying the allocation and management of rights within groups; securing investments by municipalities in infrastructure and services; and production support from provincial departments of agriculture. Overall, securing labour tenants’ rights has proved to be more complex, costly and time-consuming than originally anticipated.” (p. 27)

This passage was copied from a paper by Hall, Jacobs and Lahiff (2003, pp. 12–13); <http://www.plaas.org.za/sites/default/files/publications-pdf/ELARSA%2010.pdf>.

- “The key policy instrument available to provide land for settlement remains the Settlement/Land Acquisition Grant, which provides funds for land reform beneficiaries to buy or improve land. ... SLAG has technically remained a grant option within the land reform process, but is no longer actively promoted by DLA. Since 1994 SLAG has been the only tool at DLA’s disposal for facilitating rural settlement, but it was designed to deal with redistribution of land in general rather than being specifically directed towards settlement.” (p. 35)

The passage was copied from the same source (Hall, Jacobs and Lahiff, p. 17). The difference with the original is that the author reversed the order of the last two sentences.

- “Despite the economic arguments, recurrent social demands and empirical evidence for redistributive land reforms, these reforms have faced great obstacles in practice. Land reform programmes have not always led convincingly to sustainable reductions in poverty, and past successes are now widely regarded as difficult to replicate in today’s circumstances. The principle issues to be considered include:
 - i. The fact that major distributional land reforms have generally been part of wider social, economic and historical transformations, whereby outmoded productive and political systems have been replaced by new ones which are both more democratic and more efficient. Attempts to transform property relations outside of these wider processes of change generally meet with strenuous political opposition and risk provoking conflict and instability
 - ii. Where the law requires full compensation for the value of land expropriated by the state, broad scale land reforms may be simply unaffordable. Moreover significant additional investments beyond land transfers are required to support sustainable livelihood opportunities for new small farmers
 - iii. There are growing trends towards globalization and the de-agrarianization of society, whereby agriculture is making a diminishing contribution to economic growth in many countries, large commercial opportunities have major advantages in meeting globalizing demand for farm commodities, and there are limited economic opportunities in land ownership for the poor and for new small scale farmers As a result of these difficulties in effecting major redistributive land reforms there has been a general shift of emphasis in development policy towards wider questions of land access and more diversified strategies for land access for the poor, as opposed to an emphasis on major distributive reforms. Although it may be difficult to achieve more equitable and higher overall levels of growth through comprehensive land reforms it still remains possible to reduce poverty by improving the opportunities and arrangements for land access for specific groups.” (pp. 32–33)

The whole text was copied from a paper by Quan (2006, p. 6); <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.378.1896&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.

- Part 2.9 (pp. 33–34) was partly copied from a master thesis by Sekgota (2012, pp. 19–20); <http://www.repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/24958/dissertation.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>).

Chapter 4 is called *Perspective of land reform in Limpopo province* and should be a chapter on land reform in Limpopo province. However, the chapter does not focus on Limpopo province, but on land reform in South Africa generally, with two sentences on Limpopo province. The author goes as far as to use exactly the same text from chapter 2 (compare pp. 26–27, 61–62):

“a. Extension of Security of Tenure Act (ESTA):

The Extension of Security of Tenure Act seeks to protect the rights of farm dwellers to continue to live on and use the land they occupy, and creates opportunities for farm dwellers to become owners of land or to secure their tenancy. ‘Occupiers’ affected by this law are people resident on agricultural land with the consent of the owner or a person in charge. The ‘developmental’ aspect of ESTA, through which farm dwellers can acquire stronger rights to land, has not been widely used. By late 2003 DLA records showed that, since its inception, 32 projects have been approved to provide long-term tenure rights for ESTA occupiers either on farms where they stayed, or elsewhere.

b. The Land Tenants Act (LTA):

The Land Reform (Labour Tenants) Act was established primarily to secure the right of labor tenants who are residing on farms and have access to land in return for their labor. This practice is widespread in KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and to a lesser extent in Limpopo. DLA noted again by late mid-2003 that the number of labor tenant applications is not clear from official statistics, due to internal inconsistency arising from problems with data quality and management. Whilst labor tenants are entitled to secure their long-term tenure rights by purchasing the land they use and are eligible for redistribution grants to make this possible. However, the reliance on fixed grants effectively places a limit on the amount of land a labor tenant can acquire, thereby undermining the rights-based nature of the LTA. Where labor tenants have acquired land, the main challenges have been the lack of support for resolving disputes and clarifying the allocation and management of rights within groups; securing investments by municipalities in infrastructure and services; and production support from provincial departments of agriculture. Overall, securing labor tenants’ rights has proved to be more complex, costly and time-consuming than originally anticipated.

c. Communal Property Association Act (CPA):

Communal Property Association (CPA) can be described as a body through which claimants of the land that are previously disadvantaged collectively establish, acquire and manage property that is guided by the written constitution (Matukani, 2011:72). Such an association is regulated by the Communal Property Association Act, no 28 of 1996.”

The last paragraph on Communal Property Association is arguably so universal that it is used not just twice, but three times in the thesis. Matukane (author’s incorrect spelling is Matukani) is supposed to describe the CPA on page 26 *and* 72 of his dissertation (<http://ul.netd.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10386/491/dissertation%20matukane%20t%20e.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>). Interestingly, there is nothing about CPA on *either* of the pages.

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- “Communal Property Association (CPA) can be described as a body through which claimants of the land that are previously disadvantaged collectively establish, acquire and manage property that is guided by the written constitution (Matukani, 2011:26). Such an association is regulated by the Communal Property Association Act, no 28 of 1996.” (p. 34)
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guided by the written constitution (Matukani, 2011:72). Such an association is regulated by the Communal Property Association Act, no 28 of 1996.” (p. 62)

The deeper question is why is such a descriptive passage at three places in the thesis? In all three places the paragraph is simply just there – without discussion, analysis etc.

Chapter 5 is called *Findings of case studies*. The author first make a summary of six selected case studies using a Table (p. 65–66) based on a dissertation by Fraser (https://etd.ohiolink.edu/rws_etd/document/get/osu1148498881/inline) and then describes each of them. While I have not fully read the 187 page-long dissertation, I could find only one (Levubu) of the six cases studies referred to by the author. When the author refers to a specific page of Fraser’s dissertation (p. 89 quoted on p. 76 of the thesis) on finance issues, I cannot find such a discussion on that page.

Summary and recommendation

I think that thesis should start with a clear research question, be logically structured and based on a careful work with literature. The submitted thesis does not meet these requirements and involves plagiarism.

For these reasons I do not recommend the thesis for defense and propose grade F.

Olomouc, 17. 1. 2017

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