A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF INTERMEDIARY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND LAND REFORM IN CONTEMPORARY ZIMBABWE

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

of

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by

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The thesis offers an original sociological understanding of intermediary Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the modern world. This is pursued through a study of NGOs and land reform in contemporary Zimbabwe.

The prevailing literature on NGOs is marked by a sociological behaviourism that analyses NGOs in terms of external relations and the object-subject dualism. This behaviourism has both ‘structuralist’ and ‘empiricist’ trends that lead to instrumentalist and functionalist forms of argumentation.

The thesis details an alternative conceptual corpus that draws upon the epistemological and theoretical insights of Marx and Weber. The epistemological reasoning of Marx involves processes of deconstruction and reconstruction. This entails conceptualizing NGOs as social forms that embody contradictory relations and, for analytical purposes, the thesis privileges the contradiction between ‘the global’ and ‘the local’. In this regard, it speaks about processes of ‘glocalization’ and ‘glocal modernities’ in which NGOs become immersed.

The social field of NGOs is marked by ambiguities and tensions, and NGOs seek to ‘negotiate’ and manoeuvre their way through this field by a variety of organizational practices. Understanding these practices necessitates studying NGOs ‘from within’ and
drawing specifically on Weber’s notion of ‘meaning’. These practices often entail activities that stabilize and simplify the world and work of NGOs, and this involves NGOs in prioritizing their own organizational sustainability. In handling the tension between ‘the global’ and ‘the local’, NGOs also tend to privilege global trajectories over local initiatives.

The thesis illustrates these points in relation to the work of intermediary NGOs in Zimbabwe over the past ten years. Since the year 2000, a radical restructuring of agrarian relations has occurred, and this has been based upon the massive redistribution of land. In this respect, local empowering initiatives have dramatically asserted themselves against globalizing trajectories. These changes have posed serious challenges to ‘land’ NGOs, that is, NGOs involved in land reform either as advocates for reform or as rural development NGOs. The thesis shows how a range of diverse ‘land’ NGOs has ‘handled’ the heightened contradictions in their social field in ways that maintain their organizational coherence and integrity.
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Preface

From July 1999 to August 2006, I worked as an Administrator on a training farm for an international NGO in the Shamva District of Mashonaland Central Province in northeastern Zimbabwe. In the early months of 2000, people throughout the country started moving onto and occupying White-owned commercial farms and other rural lands in a quest for social equity. At the time, I lived on a White commercial farm and travelled daily to my place of employment twenty-five kilometres away. By the end of 2000, I was forced to move from the commercial farm to the NGO farm.

The movement of people onto the lands eventually led to massive land distribution and resettlement in Zimbabwe, including within the Shamva District. The process though was marked by tension, turbulence and turmoil. No doubt, all rural inhabitants have their own personal story to tell, as well as their own version of the grander story that unfolded. On numerous occasions, I have recounted my own personal journey over the past few years, and I have felt a sense of emotional relief in doing so. But, for me, personal relief was never enough.

The events since the year 2000 impacted not only on my personal world but also on the world of my NGO. By the year 2004, I felt the urge if not the responsibility to make sense of the events that daily swirled around the NGO. This would mean returning to the discipline of sociology that I had left nearly twenty years previously. After obtaining my Masters degree in Canada in 1983, I lectured in the Department of Sociology at Rhodes University in South Africa. I became heavily involved in the struggle against apartheid, and this led to my forced removal from the country by the apartheid government in June 1987. This seriously disrupted my academic career. For much of the past nineteen years I have lived and worked in Zimbabwe, and in a non-academic environment.
In the light of the significant rural restructuring in Zimbabwe over the past few years and its impact on the world of NGOs, I firmly believed that my strong background in sociology plus my years of experience within the NGO ‘sector’ would be invaluable in furthering an intellectual understanding of NGOs. My experience also taught me that much of the story about NGOs involves ‘the inside story’ and, in particular, the ways in which NGOs make sense of their world. This seemed to point in the direction of Weber and his notion of meaning. Yet, my intellectual history in large part revolved around the works of Marx.

In late 2004, I decided to enrol as a PhD candidate at Rhodes University. My first contact was with Professor Peter Vale, Head of the Department of Political and International Studies. I thank him for encouraging me to proceed with the enrolment, despite my initial reservations about being ready for the challenge. In fact, I soon realized that doing a PhD when based on a farm in present-day Zimbabwe was not going to be easy. Besides the lack of intellectual stimulation, there were regular electricity power cuts, communication bottlenecks and ongoing fuel shortages.

During the course of my research for the PhD I was able to establish contact with the African Institute of Agrarian Studies in Harare led by Professor Sam Moyo. Professor Moyo is the foremost specialist on land issues in Zimbabwe, and regular informal conversations with him have been most rewarding. I have also been privileged to join a research group at the Institute consisting of a number of locally based scholars and practitioners who are trying to understand land reform in the context of civil society. I am grateful to Professor Moyo for inviting me to join this group, and for the hard work of his assistants Tendai Murisa and Eddah Jowah.

I am also grateful to the various resource centres in Zimbabwe that allowed me access to their primary documents. In particular, I think of SAPES Trust, SARDC, ZERO, ZWRCN, NANGO, ZIDS and MWENGO. As well, I thank the many NGOs that assisted me in various ways in my research, despite the politically tense environment in which they operate.
A special thank you goes to my NGO employer for financing my tuition fees at Rhodes University and for giving extended leave to me for three months to finish writing up the thesis.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Fred Hendricks, for encouraging me to pursue my PhD despite my many years in sociological hibernation.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to Abigail Guvava.
### List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADP</td>
<td>Agricultural Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress</td>
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<td>ATS</td>
<td>Agricultural Training Scheme</td>
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<td>CA</td>
<td>Complementary Approaches</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAMPFIRE</td>
<td>Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources</td>
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<td>CBNRM</td>
<td>Community Based Natural Resource Management</td>
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<td>CC</td>
<td>Communal to Commercial</td>
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<td>CFU</td>
<td>Commercial Farmers Union</td>
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<td>CIDA</td>
<td>Canadian International Development Agency</td>
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<td>CREATE</td>
<td>Community Based Resettlement Approaches and Technologies</td>
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<td>DAPP-Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Development Aid from People to People-Zimbabwe</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELF-NGO</td>
<td>Environmental Liaison Forum-Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>ESAP</td>
<td>Economic Structural Adjustment Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>FCTZ</td>
<td>Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe</td>
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<td>FES</td>
<td>Friedrick-Ebert-Stiftung</td>
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<td>FOST</td>
<td>Farm Orphan Support Trust</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAPWUZ</td>
<td>General Agricultural and Plantation Workers Union of Zimbabwe</td>
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<td>GoZ</td>
<td>Government of Zimbabwe</td>
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<td>HUMANA</td>
<td>International HUMANA People to People Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFAD</td>
<td>International Fund for Agricultural Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>IP</td>
<td>Inception Phase</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRDP</td>
<td>Integrated Rural Development Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITDG</td>
<td>International Technology Development Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>KWA</td>
<td>Kunzwana Women’s Association</td>
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<td>LDS</td>
<td>Lutheran Development Service</td>
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<td>LRNSA</td>
<td>Land Rights Network of Southern Africa</td>
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<td>LRRP</td>
<td>Land Reform and Resettlement Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDC</td>
<td>Movement for Democratic Change</td>
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<td>MWENGO</td>
<td>Mwelekeo wa NGO</td>
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<td>NANGA</td>
<td>National Association of Non-Governmental Organizations</td>
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<td>NCA</td>
<td>National Constitutional Assembly</td>
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<td>NCO</td>
<td>National Coordinating Office</td>
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<td>NDR</td>
<td>National Democratic Revolution</td>
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<td>NEPAD</td>
<td>New Partnership for Africa’s Development</td>
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<td>NGDO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Development Organization</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>NLC</td>
<td>National Land Committee</td>
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<td>NOVIB</td>
<td>Netherlands Organization for International Development Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>ORAP</td>
<td>Organization of Rural Associations for Progress</td>
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<tr>
<td>RDC</td>
<td>Rural District Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>SANL</td>
<td>Southern African Network on Land</td>
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<td>SAP</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAPES Trust</td>
<td>Southern African Political Economies Series Trust</td>
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<td>SARDC</td>
<td>Southern African Research and Documentation Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIDA</td>
<td>Swedish International Development Agency</td>
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<td>SOS</td>
<td>SOS Children’s Villages Zimbabwe</td>
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<td>SOS-KDI</td>
<td>SOS-Kinderdorf International</td>
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<tr>
<td>STC-UK</td>
<td>Save the Children-UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>VOICE</td>
<td>Voluntary Organizations in Community Enterprise</td>
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<tr>
<td>VTPC</td>
<td>Vocational Training and Production Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>WAG</td>
<td>Women’s Action Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>WLLG</td>
<td>Women and Land Lobby Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>WLZ</td>
<td>Women and Land in Zimbabwe</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZANU-PF</td>
<td>Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZERO</td>
<td>ZERO Regional Environmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZFU</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Farmers Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZIDS</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Institute of Development Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZIMCODD</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Coalition on Development and Debt</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZWB</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Women’s Bureau</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZWRCN</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Women’s Resource Centre and Network</td>
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Chapter 1

Introduction and Methodology

The aim of this thesis is to contribute to rigorous sociological theorizing about Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). This endeavour is pursued with specific reference to NGOs and land reform in contemporary Zimbabwe.

In the realm of Zimbabwean social studies, there is a significant volume of literature about NGOs on the one hand and about land reform on the other. In large part, though, these objects of study have been tackled as separate and disjointed areas of inquiry. At least two focused attempts have been made to pursue a combined and systematic study of NGOs and land reform, notably in terms of policy advocacy. But these studies never got off the ground because of the ongoing political sensitivities of land reform in post-colonial Zimbabwe, and the serious challenges this poses for academic research and researchers (Sibanda 1994, Kanji et al. 2002). Sibanda (1994) indicates that key informants for his proposed study on NGOs and land reform, soon after the promulgation in Zimbabwe of the controversial Land Acquisition Act of 1992, were ‘reluctant to share information with me’ (Sibanda 1994:p.4). Kanji et al. (2002), in the face of the turbulent accelerated land resettlement programme in the country dating from the year 2000, speak about the ‘deterioration of the political situation’ (Kanji et al. 2002:p.2) as preventing the incorporation of Zimbabwe into their important comparative study involving Mozambique and Kenya.

Without doubt, these diverging avenues of investigation within Zimbabwean studies – land and NGOs – have generated considerable theoretical and empirical insights. Significantly, however, the Zimbabwean literature has failed to address, and to come to grips with, key conceptual concerns found traditionally within the discipline of sociology. This theoretical weakness is also prominent within the broader academic literature on
NGOs. Indeed, running through much of the prevailing NGO literature are functionalist and instrumentalist threads that fail to adequately capture the complexities and ambivalences of the social world and work of NGOs.

The thesis seeks to fill this lacuna by developing a unique perspective on NGOs in the modern world that is firmly rooted in the sociological project. In doing so, a rich array of sociological literature is drawn upon to theoretically inform (but not determine) an empirical investigation of NGOs in relation to land reform in Zimbabwe. Simultaneously, land reform in Zimbabwe from the mid-1990s onwards becomes the empirical setting within which grounded theorizing about NGOs is pursued. The constant and controlled interplay between ‘the abstract’ and ‘the concrete’ defines the methodology that directs this inquiry of NGOs.

1.1 Intermediary NGOs: Epistemological Reflections

The term ‘NGO’ is an inherently negative, residual and nebulous term that seems to distract rather than contribute to meaningful theoretical discussions. In the literature, NGOs are sometimes considered as comprising all non-state bodies, yet at other times they are located within a more specific ‘part’ of society such as the third sector, civil society or the not-for-profit private sector. Definitions, taxonomies and typologies abound within the almost infinite NGO literature (Uphoff 1993, 1996; Vakil 1997). Of particular significance in the contemporary Zimbabwean context is the controversial notion of civil society.

Often, overbroad and sweeping claims are made about NGOs specifically or civil society more generally, so it is necessary to demarcate and delimit the NGO focus of this thesis. In his seminal study of rural NGOs in Latin America, Carroll (1992) distinguishes between grassroots organizations (for example, local peasant bodies) and (non-membership) grassroots support or intermediary NGOs that forge links ‘between the beneficiaries [of their work] and the often remote levels of government, donor, and
financial institutions’ (Carroll 1992:p.11). Membership-based intermediary bodies such as regional peasant bodies or sector-wide trade unions would be excluded from this. This metaphorical use of ‘levels’, which is always problematic within the social sciences, nevertheless highlights an important point about the in-between social field or location of non-membership ‘intermediary’ NGOs. Intermediary NGOs have been provocatively labelled as ‘problematic organizations’ in that they ‘must live and work in situations of necessary ambiguity’ (Edwards and Hulme 1996:p.260). As a specific kind of social form with particular organizational histories and trajectories, they occupy an ambiguous – and constantly negotiated and reconfigured – social space and are structurally located in a complicated ‘web’ of social relations as part victim and part maker.

Intermediary NGOs are deeply embedded in contradictory processes of globalization and are implicated in them. But whether in practice they act as ‘intermediaries’ (rather than say as ‘agents’, ‘representatives’ or even ‘instruments’ of others) is a contingent question requiring thorough historical investigation. In fact, part of the ‘finely-balanced ambivalence’ of intermediary NGOs, to borrow a phrase from Morris-Suzuki (2000:p.84), is this tension – never resolved but rather managed in different ways – between their work as agents and their work as intermediaries. Hence, the tensions and ambiguities that riddle the world of intermediary NGOs play themselves out in organizational practices that are historically specific and variable. There is considerable diversity within the NGO ‘sector’ in terms of political and ideological dispositions. Nevertheless, this thesis argues that – generally speaking – intermediary NGOs tend to valorize global processes of a capitalist modernizing kind. These globalizing processes at times enact closure, albeit unsuccessfully, on more localized and potentially empowering organizational and political initiatives. This general trajectory of NGO practices is not structurally pre-determined but is the outcome of contingent social processes.

The theorization of NGOs contained in the thesis is an alternative to a functionalist analysis in which NGOs exist in order to provide conditions for the reproduction of global capital. It also does not entail an instrumentalist claim, in the sense that NGOs are mere agents or instruments of capitalism working at the behest of (or even on behalf of)
capitalist organizations as part of a coordinated and cohesive ‘conscious conspiracy’ (Manji and O’Coill 2002:p.579). NGOs in this regard are said to have ‘a hidden agenda’ (Monga 1996:p.156), or at least to be part of a global ‘hidden hand’. As Crewe and Harrison (1998:p.89) note: ‘Donors [and their NGO “creations”] are sometimes portrayed as strategically wielding the control they have over recipients for their own ends in a coordinated way to uphold the present capitalist system’. Past debates within, for instance, Marxist state theory (notably the works of Miliband and Poulantzas) bring out the un-sociological and simplistic quality of these types of approaches (Miliband 1969, Poulantzas 1973). Yet, the NGO story may still be a simple one, based on the common view, as often propounded by development practitioners themselves, that the sheer ‘institutional survival [of NGOs] depends upon the status quo’ (Eade 2003:p.xi). Indeed, the thesis highlights that NGOs, in ‘handling’ the tension between ‘the global’ and ‘the local’, seek to sustain themselves as viable organizational forms.

Further, the argument that NGOs reproduce a global form of domination does not rest on conflating impact with intention. In other words, even if NGOs deliberately sought to reproduce the conditions for capitalism, intention and cause cannot be read from (and thus reduced to) effect and impact in a kind of teleological depiction of social development and political change. Thus, as Urry (2000:p.208) says, ‘we cannot know in advance what will happen to any individual action or what its consequence will be’. The development ‘industry’, as it is often labelled, can be seen (without reverting to methodological individualism) as an ongoing product of ‘countless iterative actions’ by NGOs and others, and it seems almost ‘recursively self-producing’ as a set of global social relations and organizations (Urry 2000:p.206). These iterative actions, simultaneously both ‘agency’ and ‘structure’, do not necessarily reproduce, reconfigure or reform ‘stable’ social structures but have the capacity to undermine, destabilize and transform them.

Proper sociological probing of intermediary NGOs has to be shaped by different methods of analysis. In this study, two overlapping methods of investigation are deployed, namely, deconstruction and reconstruction. Deconstruction is absolutely critical to any
sociological analysis. The development ‘system’, for example, has to be deconstructed in order to lay bare the social relations that give rise to this system and sustain it. In doing so, the system is conceptualized as an abstract totality. But deconstruction alone is insufficient. Thus, it often results in unsophisticated instrumentalist (sometimes conspiratorial) arguments based on questionable dichotomies of essentialized categories such as ‘the developers’ and the ‘undeveloped’. The developers are depicted as subjects and the engine behind development, and their power is over-privileged and reified, while the undeveloped are treated as mere recipients (or objects) of development (or underdevelopment).

Order, coherence and direction are also valorized in these analyses, just as donors and NGOs likewise do in their (at least official) representations of development policy and practice, and for quite conscious reasons of their own. For instance, official NGO documents (as public relations) normally focus on seemingly simple development success stories because ‘donors will not fund complexity, process, and ambiguity’ (Power et al. 2003:p.98). These representations, whether part of forward project planning or reflections of past practice, should not be conflated though with ‘actually existing’ development processes.

The crucial epistemological point is that it is necessary to move beyond deconstruction analyses by reconstructing the concrete world of NGOs. Although providing illuminating insights, deconstruction is ultimately one-sided and tends to reduce concrete totalities to abstract totalities. Besides deconstruction, it is critical to reconstruct the development ‘system’ as a concrete social totality (or development ‘industry’) as immersed in real historical processes. Ignoring deconstruction altogether is also inadequate, as to leads to under-theorized studies of NGO concrete realities. By combining deconstruction and reconstruction, the thesis is guided by the method of analysis set out by Marx (1973) in *Grundrisse*. This epistemology underpins the thesis, but it is not followed slavishly. Nevertheless, the thesis is able to transcend what Mamdani (1996:p.11) in relation to a different object of study refers to as abstract universalisms and intimate particularisms. This refined methodology contributes significantly to filling the theoretical gaps in the
academic literature on NGOs. Thus, the argument in the thesis that intermediary NGOs in the modern world are immersed in processes of global domination is based on a sociological method of investigation that is more intricate and convoluted than those regularly found in the prevailing literature on NGOs.

1.2 Research Methodology

Undertaking social research in contemporary Zimbabwe is exceedingly difficult because of the intense political conflict. This is true for research on both land reform and NGOs, although for slightly different reasons. The ruling ZANU-PF party claims in no uncertain terms that the internal opposition to its rule is financially backed and supported by external imperialist forces, notably the British government. Any group that in any way liaises with the internal opposition is painted with a similar ideological brush. In this regard, a number of urban-based civic NGOs were directly involved in the late 1990s in the events leading up to the formation of the main opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). ZANU-PF has subsequently claimed that the entire NGO ‘sector’ is guilty of furthering the aims of capitalist imperialism. Thus, a leading ideologue of the ruling party recently referred to NGOs in Zimbabwe as the ‘softer interventions’\(^1\) of imperialism compared to the harder military interventions. This antagonism on the part of the Zimbabwean government came to the fore in the year 2004 in the form of a controversial NGO Bill that sought to undermine the global funding of NGOs operating in the country. This Bill was hotly debated in the Zimbabwean parliament, and President Mugabe opted not to sign and ratify it as law. Further, the government has recently investigated a number of NGOs for what it considers to be dubious handling of foreign funds. In this context, NGOs in Zimbabwe are very sensitive to releasing information pertaining to their policies and practices.

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This is further complicated by the focus of the thesis on land reform. Since the year 2000, farm occupations and land redistribution throughout most of rural Zimbabwe have led to significant agrarian restructuring. This process has been labelled colloquially as the Third Chimurenga and, more officially, as the accelerated land programme, and it has involved significant levels of violence with the seeming support of the government. The internal opposition claims that the farm occupations were propagated by ZANU-PF as a tactical means for consolidating its rural support base, and that the upper echelons of the ruling party have enriched themselves through land redistribution. Although the dust raised by the Third Chimurenga has in large part settled, the accelerated programme in Zimbabwe continues to be highly controversial. As a result, research undertaken on land reform is problematic and subject to constraint. Further, the land programme impacted significantly on the work of numerous NGOs in Zimbabwe, particularly those involved in rural development or advocacy on land reform. These intermediary NGOs form the empirical basis of the thesis. Generally speaking, they prefer to keep any unofficial stance on land reform internal to the organization. But, they have not adopted a principled closed-door policy on research emanating from outside.

The academic literature on intermediary NGOs distinguishes broadly between ‘advocacy’ work and ‘development’ work. Normally, any particular NGO specializes in either advocacy or development. This is evident with regard to the intermediary NGOs in Zimbabwe studied in the thesis, and thus the conceptual distinction is upheld. The available literature also adopts a restricted notion of NGO involvement in land reform by focusing exclusively on NGOs engaged in advocacy on land policy formation and implementation either individually or more usually through NGO networks and coalitions. These are self-proclaimed ‘land-centric’ NGOs (rather than ‘rural development’ NGOs) but they do not fully embrace the range of NGOs involved in land reform. Based on this restricted notion, it is often mistakenly assumed (and more often asserted) that the sheer number of NGOs in Zimbabwe involved in land reform is almost negligible. Admittedly, rural development NGOs conceptualize themselves as

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2 Chimurenga is a Shona term meaning ‘war of liberation’. The First Chimurenga refers to the struggles against land dispossession by indigenous people in the early years of colonialism, and the Second Chimurenga relates to the guerrilla war leading to independence in the year 1980.
development-centric rather than land-centric organizational forms. Yet, their targeted interventions impact on agrarian processes in pronounced ways, if only unintentionally. For this reason, the thesis also incorporates development NGOs under the broad label of ‘land’ NGOs. The other main distinction found within the academic literature is between international and indigenous NGOs, and both types of NGOs are included in this study.

The thesis looks at ‘land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe from the mid-1990s onwards. No attempt is made to draw and delimit a statistically representative sample of a defined universe, because the epistemology underpinning and guiding the analysis does not derive from hypothetic-deductive assumptions. As well, in the light of the restraints on research on NGOs and land reform, obtaining the cooperation of a grouping of ‘representative’ NGOs – as understood in a positivist sense – is highly problematic and improbable. The epistemological approach used for this study is based on ontological claims about social reality that go beyond positivism. In particular, these claims highlight the contradictory and antagonistic qualities of social relations and how these relations become embodied in social and organizational forms. The theoretical purpose of the thesis is to analytically ‘capture’ the contradictory social relations as they become embedded in intermediary NGOs as specific organizational forms. The empirical information is not designed to ‘prove’ the existence of these antagonistic relations, nor could any kind or amount of data do so. Instead, the data is meant to be highly suggestive of these relations, and serves to illustrate how these relations are expressed in (and as) intermediary NGOs. Insofar as the research data ‘captures’ these relations it can be said to be ‘representative’ (Keat and Urry 1975).

At the same time, the current restraints on research in Zimbabwe did impact on the extensiveness and intensiveness of the data. Some NGOs were particularly receptive to the research, while others expressed serious reservations. In the case of depth, the empirical data collected is somewhat uneven. All NGOs provided at least public documents and, in addition, some NGOs released internal documents and granted interviews. Any weaknesses in this regard have been overcome by in-depth case studies of two NGOs. In terms of extensiveness, the data is from a wide cross-section of ‘land’
NGOs in contemporary Zimbabwe. Compiling an accurate and up-to-date listing of NGOs in Zimbabwe is notoriously difficult, because many NGOs are fleeting in existence and others prefer to operate on an unregistered basis. The most reliable listing currently available is a *NGO Directory* published by the Poverty Reduction Forum in the year 2004 (PRF 2004). The intermediary ‘land’ NGOs studied were selected from this directory as well as from supplementary sources. These NGOs operate in all land tenure regimes throughout most of Zimbabwe, including communal areas, ‘old’ resettlement schemes, freehold commercial farms as well as ‘new’ settlement schemes arising from accelerated land reform. They include a mix of advocacy and development NGOs on the one hand, and international and indigenous NGOs on the other.

Three main research techniques were used during the course of the research. First of all, NGO documents were collected from source or from small resource centres based at NGO offices. Secondly, semi-structured interviews were conducted with NGO personnel. Thirdly, as an observing participant, the information for one of the two NGO case studies is based on my work experiences within the NGO over a number of years.

### 1.3 Thesis Outline

The main body of the thesis begins with a discussion in Chapter Three of the dual challenges to sociology (and its traditional representations of social reality) in the form of globalization and postmodernism. It is shown that these challenges can be addressed through a re-conceptualization of ‘modernity’ that sees the universal and the particular, and less abstractly the global and the local, as internally constitutive of each other but in an antagonistic tension. This leads to the admittedly awkward yet important sociological notion of ‘glocal modernities’ that is sensitive to both the spatial and temporal modes of being. In this context, the discourses and practices of NGOs are discussed in Chapters Four and Five. This entails an extensive review of the academic literature on NGOs in relation to the three key nodal points on which the prevailing NGO discourse hangs: civil society, development and democracy. It is shown that intermediary NGOs function
within an ambivalent social field bounded by multiple kinds of accountability involving global donors, nation-states, and urban and rural communities. In terms of understanding the organizational practices of NGOs, ‘form’ precedes ‘function’ and impacts on it. Hence, ‘function’ is not a historical and pre-determined. Rather, it is the contingent outcome and effect of ‘negotiated’ practices within and along the porous borders of the social space of NGOs.

In Chapters Six through to Nine, I shift the focus of the thesis away from general sociological theory to historical and comparative analyses of land reform (and agrarian reform more broadly). In Chapters Six and Seven, I explore land reform from a global perspective. A conceptual overview of ‘agrarian’ and ‘land’ reform is offered, including important distinctions between these two kinds of reform. This is necessary in order to more clearly understand what the involvement of intermediary NGOs in land processes actually (or potentially) entails. I also discuss the contradictory impact of current worldwide agrarian restructuring on the social reconstitution of rural underclasses and how this underpins the social reproduction strategies engaged in by these classes, including ‘uncivil’ action such as land re-occupations. This rural politics, and how it interrelates to the more ‘civil’ forms of social practice engaged in by NGOs, is critical to conceptualizing NGOs and land reform.

In Chapters Eight and Nine, I consider reform in Zimbabwe. The main emphasis is on the current ‘period’ from 1995, although Chapter Eight looks at the earlier post-colonial years. Policy makers in Zimbabwe have in large part articulated and addressed reform in the narrow sense of land reform and, notably, in relation to land redistribution and resettlement. Much less overt attention has been paid to land tenure changes and land restitution, and to agrarian change more broadly. As Chapter Nine shows, land reform from 1995 onwards must be understood in the context of a deepening social crisis that led to heightened opposition to the ruling ZANU-PF party and to the realignment of political forces. This set the stage for the land re-occupation movement (the Third Chimurenga) that emerged in the early months of 2000 and that resulted in massive land redistribution.
The following four chapters focus on ‘land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe. In Chapter Ten, I provide a comparative and historical setting for examining ‘land’ NGOs in the current ‘period’. The comparative perspective entails reviewing literature on the role of advocacy NGOs in land reform throughout the South and East, and the historical perspective looks at development NGOs in Zimbabwe from 1980 to the mid-1990s. Chapter Eleven is concerned with advocacy NGOs in Zimbabwe from 1995 onwards. In the late 1990s, there was (relatively speaking) an enabling environment conducive to NGO involvement in the land policy formation process and many NGOs took advantage of the space available though they were largely marginal to the process. The emergence of accelerated land reform in the year 2000 caught these NGOs by surprise and put them in disarray. Policy formation on land became a ‘presidential preserve’ and NGOs distanced themselves from land reform.

In Chapter Twelve, I look at development-centric NGOs during the same period, but with particular emphasis on accelerated reform. The land redistribution process has fundamentally altered the agrarian terrain within which these NGOs pursue their development work. I focus on NGOs that traditionally operated in communal lands and ‘old’ resettlement areas, as well as those that operated on White-owned commercial farms. It will be highlighted that development NGOs in large part have adopted, or have been forced to adopt, a hands-off approach to the ‘new’ resettlement areas. The reasons for this will be explored, including looking at organizational dispositions in the face of deepening social and political complexities. This extensive overview of ‘land’ NGOs is followed in Chapter Thirteen by a more intensive focus based on two case studies of NGOs.

The thesis ends with a theoretical exploration of NGOs. The original theoretical perspective on NGOs that is presented in Chapter Fourteen arises from the epistemology based on deconstruction and reconstruction. In this regard, the concluding chapter also highlights the ongoing significance to sociology of methodological claims made by Marx and Weber (Burawoy 2003).
Chapter 2
Glocal Modernities, Land Reform and Intermediary NGOs in Zimbabwe

This chapter offers a general overview of the thesis. In so doing, it assists the reader in discerning the trajectory and coherence of the analysis of intermediary NGOs as it unfolds and develops in the thesis. It also seeks to weave together the different threads of argumentation that are found in the thesis, and to highlight the linkages between the epistemological foundations, the theoretical claims and the empirical findings. As well, the chapter emphasizes the important contributions of the thesis to sociological theory.

The thesis provides a unique sociological understanding of intermediary NGOs in the modern world. It does so by means of a conceptual corpus that is based upon diverse epistemological and theoretical strands found within the sociological tradition, particularly in the works of Marx and Weber. On the one hand, I return to the epistemological reasoning of Marx based on reconstruction and deconstruction. Marx argues that understanding a ‘social form’ involves ‘deconstructing’ it in order to reveal the contradictory social relations that give rise to it and that set its conditions of existence and possibilities of action. In the thesis, an intermediary NGO is understood as a specific kind of social form. The contradictory relation between ‘the global’ and ‘the local’, in particular, is abstracted and singled out as a way of analyzing and making sense of the ‘NGO form’. After this, and again following clues from Marx, the ‘actually-existing’ concrete world of NGOs is ‘reconstructed’ as a rich totality of ‘determinations’, and as immersed in real socio-historical processes. Deconstruction provides an ‘analytic history’ of NGOs as social forms, and reconstruction offers an ‘empirical history’ (Bologh 1979:p.139).
However, properly ‘reconstructing’ the ambivalent world of NGOs simultaneously involves moving beyond Marx by drawing upon the rich theoretical insights of Weber. As a first step, ‘reconstruction’ requires engaging with the considerable academic literature on NGOs, along with the dominant discourses through which these organizations are addressed conceptually. The thesis identifies the three ‘nodal’ points of the prevailing discourses. NGOs are part of ‘civil society’ and they aim to build democracy and facilitate development. I offer a comprehensive analysis of these nodal points and, in a sociological manner, elucidate their complex interconnections.

On this basis, it is shown that NGOs (in the South and East) occupy a tension-filled social field that is bounded by their ongoing relationships with global donors, local nation-states and rural communities. The thesis emphasizes that NGOs ‘negotiate’ and manoeuvre their way in and through this social field. This ‘negotiation’ necessitates organizational processes and practices within NGOs that are heavily laden with ‘meaning’, as elucidated by Weber. Fully understanding NGOs means studying them ‘from within’, and this necessitates a heightened sensitivity to the ways in which NGOs make sense of their world. In this regard, the conceptual corpus of the thesis incorporates Weber’s notion of ‘the social’ as understood in terms of ‘meaningful social action’.

In linking Marx and Weber together in this unusual manner, the thesis offers a fresh but rigorous sociological understanding of intermediary NGOs that ‘captures’ the many ambiguities and complexities of their world. But the thesis goes even further, by providing a detailed empirical investigation of NGOs. However, the sociological significance of the thesis does not rest on the formulation of ‘theoretical laws’. Thus, the empirical enquiry is not designed to ‘prove theory’ based on a hypothetic-deductive epistemology. Rather, the empirical investigation is meant to illustrate the sociological value of the epistemological and theoretical corpus that I develop in the thesis.

The empirical entry point is NGOs and land reform in contemporary Zimbabwe. The thesis examines global trajectories with regard to land reform, but highlights the unique specificities of Zimbabwe. In particular, since the year 2000, there has been a radical
restructuring of agrarian relations in Zimbabwe that has involved massive land redistribution throughout the countryside. This has involved the dramatic assertion of local initiatives against global messages and agendas. This rural transformation has brought about significant challenges to the many intermediary NGOs involved in development work in the rural areas or in advocating for land reform. These are referred to as ‘land’ NGOs. The thesis discusses these NGOs from the mid-1990s onwards, and highlights continuities and changes since the year 2000. The period from the year 2000 is officially known as the accelerated land reform period and, more colloquially, as the Third Chimurenga (or war of liberation). The thesis examines how, during a period of sharpening contradictions between global and local processes, NGOs ‘negotiated’ and ‘manoeuvred’ their way through their world by way of meaningful organizational practices.

2.1 Deconstruction

In providing a sociological understanding of NGOs as social forms, I delineate and delimit a problematic conception of NGOs that is very pervasive within the existing literature (Edwards and Hulme eds. 1996, Fowler 2000). I label this as the ‘dominant conception’ and expose its serious limitations. The dominant conception is a kind of sociological behaviourism that is in large part insensitive to the combined concerns raised by Marx and Weber. On the one hand, unlike Marx, NGOs are not treated as social forms built upon contradictory ‘internal relations’ but are depicted in terms of the subject-object dualism. This depiction is based on the notion of ‘external relations’ that portrays NGOs as constituted independently of other social ‘entities’, and as simultaneously interacting with other entities as subjects or objects. On the other hand, unlike Weber, the dominant conception fails to grasp the ‘constructed’ and meaning-soaked quality of the relationships between NGOs and the broader social world.

Deconstruction is the first step in countering this sociological behaviourism. This pursuit entails going back to the epistemological reasoning contained in the works of Marx. In
so doing, the thesis understands NGOs as social forms, or as an organizational form that expresses contradictory social relations (Elson 1979). In other words, NGOs are not simply ‘texts’ within a ‘context’. Rather, the contradictory relations that exist ‘outside’ NGOs become infused within them. This understanding arises from the analytical process of deconstruction that means going **inside the form** and laying bare the antagonistic internal relations that give social life to the organizational form (Holloway and Picciotto 1978, Corrigan *et al.* 1978). In the specific case of intermediary NGOs, I highlight the contradictory relationship between ‘the global’ and ‘the local’. In terms of concrete reality, this may not be the most important contradiction. However, giving it analytical primacy provides a strong basis for theorizing about NGOs.

The thesis seeks to theorize about NGOs in a refined sociological manner. Because of this, I highlight and confront two key contemporary challenges to the sociological project in the form of ‘globalization’ and ‘postmodernism’. These terms have ‘empirical’ and ‘theoretical’ connotations, and it is important not to conflate these connotations. The challenge to sociology of ‘globalization’ and ‘postmodernism’ revolves around the dominant representation within sociology of ‘the social’ as ‘society’, and in particular as **bounded** and **sutured** totalities in terms of the nation-state-society nexus (Urry 2000).

In the case of ‘globalization’, the bounded status of ‘society’ is subject to questioning. On the one hand, there are claims about a de-centring of ‘the social’ away from seemingly bounded totalities in the form of nation-states to a more fragmented, amorphous and dispersed ‘social’. On the other hand, there are claims about heterogeneity as exemplified by the defence by nation-states of the bounded status of their societies. In the thesis, I argue that these diverging claims ‘capture’ the unevenness of ‘actually existing’ processes of globalization and that they highlight the contradiction between global and local processes as understood in terms of internal relations. ‘Postmodernism’ raises doubts about the sutured quality of ‘the social’. It argues that ‘the social’ is not at present (nor was in the past) a unitary totality, and that sociology has enacted methodological closure on a set of social relations called ‘society’ that is inherently incomplete and indeterminate. Hence, any ‘resolution’ of social contradictions
is invariably open-ended and is never marked by finality in the sense of the ‘end of history’. The thesis accepts the significance of this particular claim. However, postmodernism is not a coherent body of theory, and hence accepting this claim does not necessitate a more general commitment to ‘postmodernist theory’. The claim is consistent with the epistemology of the thesis. It thus highlights that the global-local contradictions in which NGOs are embedded are played out in ambiguous and contingent ways.

Quite noticeably, recent re-visualizing of the ‘social totality’ has been particularly prevalent within Marxist discourse (Mouffe ed. 1992, Callari and Ruccio 1996). The thesis contributes to the building of a sociological perspective on NGOs that draws upon elements contained within Marx’s epistemology. In doing so, it rejects trends within Marxism (for example, world systems theory) that over-privilege the global moment in globalization processes and that fail to grasp, contrary to Marx’s epistemology, the contradictory aspects of globalization. The thesis also valorizes the particular historical tradition within Marxism that, in line with Marx’s epistemology, shows a marked sensitivity to ‘contingent totalities’ rather than ‘deterministic totalities’, and that has the methodological propensity and capacity to incorporate Weber’s insights into its flexible framework. As a result, the thesis seeks to embed the notion of ‘the social’ not just in ‘society’ (or the nation-state-society nexus) but also in terms of Weber’s understanding of ‘the social’ as ‘meaning’ and specifically meaning-laden action.

Weber developed an interpretive sociology that demonstrated a pronounced awareness of subjective and intersubjective ‘meaning’. This however did not entail ‘the social’ being ‘removed into the sphere of ideas’ (Albrow 1990:p.257) as a response to Marx’s materialist notion of ‘the social’. Rather, ‘meanings’ become deeply embedded within social action and, hence, Weber speaks of meaningful social action. On this basis, he offers an interpretive understanding (or Verstehen) of social action. Weber also seeks to integrate ‘meaning’ into a causal explanation of action, but recognizing the significance of ‘meaning’ does not invariably demand a commitment to (positivist) causality on the part of the sociologist. For the purposes of the thesis, ‘meaning’ is highlighted because
making sense of the organizational practices of NGOs involves ‘capturing’ and bringing to the fore the meanings that NGOs give to their ambivalent and contradictory world. Thus, incorporating ‘subjectivism’ or the ‘problematic of the subject’ into the ‘stage’ of reconstruction provides an important countermeasure against a Marxist structuralism that might creep into an analysis of NGOs (Turner 1996).

Theorizing about ‘the global’ and ‘the local’ raises questions about ‘modernity’ as a social condition. Understanding modernity cannot be accomplished by a universalistic modernism that over-privileges globalizing trajectories or a particularistic postmodernism that over-privileges localizing trajectories. Rather, the thesis argues that embodied in modernity are global and local moments that infuse and constitute processes of glocalization. This notion of glocalization simply stresses that global processes invariably have a ‘local component’. ‘Local’ social processes comprise initiatives and trajectories that emanate from within the confines of nation-states in the South and East. As a result, modernity is socio-spatially grounded but simultaneously engages with global processes and interests. Further, the specific relation between ‘the global’ and ‘the local’ is not fixed, as the form this relation takes is historically and socially contingent. A contingent form can be referred to as a ‘glocal modernity’. This notion implies the existence of alternative modernities, revolving around different articulations between global and local moments. Hence, globalization may stimulate localizing initiatives and strategies, and it thereby reinforces particulars in what seems like an increasingly heterogeneous world order. At the same time, though, universalizing processes may globalize and ‘domesticate’ the local (to de-localize it) and therefore make it over in ‘their’ image. Because of diverse localization processes dispersed throughout the modern world, there is a range of glocal modernities that may enter into conflict. Particularly prevalent are nationalist assertions, such as in Zimbabwe, which defend their ‘road to modernity’ against American imperialism.

The thesis shows how intermediary NGOs become immersed in these glocal modernities. As a specific kind of organization, they are a manifestation of glocalized relations because the tensions between global and local moments are expressed in their social
form. Simultaneously, by their actions, NGOs are invariably involved in reinforcing or reshaping glocalization processes in a particular direction. Unintentionally, NGOs manage and balance the tension between global and local moments through specific organizational practices. In this regard, NGOs occupy an ambivalent social field that is regularly marked by opposing trajectories, and they seek to ‘negotiate’ and manoeuvre their way in and through this field.

2.2 Reconstruction

Epistemologically, a fuller understanding of the NGO world of necessary ambivalence entails the process of reconstruction. In other words, after understanding intermediary NGOs as the organizational embodiment of glocal modernities on the basis of deconstruction, the ‘actually existing’ concrete world of NGOs must be reconstructed as a complex totality of many ‘determinations’. Doing so involves forcefully engaging with the voluminous literature on NGOs, along with the dominant discourses through which these organizations are located conceptually.

The thesis argues that there are two discernable ‘behaviourist’ trends within the literature. First of all, there is a ‘structuralist’ trend that incorporates a broad range of postmodernist discourse analysts and Left-leaning social theorists, and that begins and ends with (different forms of) methodologies of deconstruction. This trend conceives NGOs as (un-reconstructed) abstract structural totalities and un-problematically asserts that they reproduce global forms of domination. These theorists argue for a radical overhaul of the social system in which NGOs operate. Secondly, there is an ‘empiricist’ trend that blindly bypasses deconstruction altogether. This trend presents NGOs as (un-deconstructed) concrete empirical totalities, and argues for targeted reform within the NGO ‘sector’.

Despite the seeming disparities between these two trends, in their methodological treatment of NGOs they are both awash with behaviourist assumptions revolving around
external relations and the subject-object dichotomy. As shown below, this leads to instrumentalist and functionalist forms of argumentation. On the other hand, conceptualizing intermediary NGOs as a contingent form of contradictory social relations sidesteps these problematic arguments, because NGO ‘function’ is not posited \textit{a priori} or concluded on a teleological basis, but is understood as mediated by NGO ‘form’. Contingent social forms that are riddled with contradictions can ‘move’ in any direction, depending on how the contradictions play themselves out under specific historical conditions. In the case of NGOs, the global-local contradiction that is privileged for analytical purposes merely sets limits within which NGOs work.

Generally speaking, the NGO literature locates intermediary NGOs within the parameters of a discourse that has three main ‘nodal points’, that is, civil society, democracy and development. NGOs are part of ‘civil society’, but their involvement in building democracy and facilitating development in the South and East is the subject of significant controversy. Dissecting this discourse is very revealing with regard to the analytical weaknesses of the ‘structuralist’ and ‘empiricist’ trends, and reaffirms the importance of the epistemological foundations of this thesis.

In recent years there has been an academic fixation with the notion of \textit{civil society}. This has occurred at a time when there have been significant global challenges to state functions under the influence of neo-liberal thinking on the centrality of the market to economic growth and stability. In making sense of ‘civil society’, considerable attention has been given to classical renditions of the concept, notably those by Hegel and Marx. However, contemporary theorizations wander significantly from Marx. For Marx, civil society was a social form that entailed both class rule and class conflict, and was not a ‘third sector’ lodged between the state and economy. Rather, it included the economy and involved class relations. As a result, the notion ‘civil society’ carries with it claims about both ‘contradiction’ and ‘domination’. Unlike this, the structuralist and empiricist tendencies treat civil society as an instrument based on the subject-object dualism.
The empiricist trend offers a sanitized version of civil society by depicting it primarily as the Subject or universalizing logic inherent in capitalist societies that builds democracy by challenging (and strenuously acting against) the particularistic interests of the nation-state and the communitarian character of ‘tradition’ in the South and East. This democratic mission of NGOs is by far the predominant understanding within the NGO ‘sector’ itself, but scholars associated with ‘anti-politics’ in Eastern Europe and Latin America and with post-Marxism in the West also propagate it in some form. There is no sense of domination, and contradiction is in large part ‘externalized’ (or displaced) in that it becomes lodged between the subject (civil society) and the object (state and tradition) rather than embedded within civil society. The structuralist tendency portrays civil society as the passive Object of others, as instruments of global capital in the international development system. There is a keen awareness of domination (of ‘the global’ over ‘the local’), but the contradictory quality of these moments is not captured.

Similar conceptual problems pertain to renditions of intermediary NGOs in the context of the notion of development. In the empiricist trend, a ‘transportational paradigm’ predominates in which rural development entails the systematic transfer of various ‘things’ from the ‘centre’ to the ‘periphery’ in the form of finances, technology, knowledge, social skills or even political strength. NGOs (as both subjects and objects) are part of this mechanistic transfer system by receiving inputs and dispensing outputs. This liberal modernization paradigm is popular amongst NGOs themselves when representing, making sense of and justifying their world of development. Simultaneously, though, the empiricist approach calls for development reform because NGOs are subservient to the dictates of sincere but patronizing external donors. ‘Participation’ by rural communities in the development process, although difficult to implement, is a civic value and duty. It is portrayed instrumentally as the ‘civil society’ solution to development deficits in the rural ‘periphery’ and to state weaknesses in terms of service delivery.

The structuralist trend includes a mix of Marxist world-systems theorists and postmodernist discourse analysts. Ironically, it reaches similar conclusions vis-à-vis the
empiricist trend in conceptualizing the relationship between ‘the global’ and ‘the local’. Thus, as the thesis highlights, both trends privilege the notion of ‘domination’ (or at least benevolent ‘control’ in the case of empiricists) in analyzing capitalist development on a global scale. Despite the varied forms of deconstruction on offer by Marxist and postmodernist theorists, both groups of analysts structurally dichotomize the development process into ‘the global core’ (or subject) and ‘the local periphery’ (or object). Intermediary NGOs are slotted into the development industry as carriers of global messages and implementers of global agendas, and are invariably involved in the reproduction of global capitalism. Rural communities become unwilling victims of global impositions foisted upon them by ‘middle-class’ NGOs. Participation becomes a means of incorporating agrarian lower classes into modes of social domination.

In this context, it is not surprising that a ‘development impasse’ has stalked social and political theory for a number of years, including with specific reference to conceptualizing intermediary NGOs. From a sociological perspective, the impasse arose because the prevailing modernization and Marxist approaches were involved in a form of explanatory overkill that reduced the complexities of development processes to grand meta-theories. In doing so, these approaches neglected the specifically human component of development, that is, ‘the social’ as understood in terms of the Weberian notion of meaning. Modernization and Marxist theories, as foremost examples of the ‘empiricist’ and ‘structuralist’ trends respectively, regularly dish up instrumentalist and functionalist accounts of development NGOs. A corresponding ‘impasse’ is also vividly clear in theorizations of NGOs in the context of civil society.

Transcending these theoretical impasses entails reconstructing the social life of NGOs in a way that incorporates Weberian insights about meaning-soaked organizational practices. Through this, it is possible to ‘capture’ conceptually the intricate world of ambivalence of NGOs and the concrete ways in which, organizationally, NGOs express and contain contradictory processes of glocalization. Intermediary NGOs occupy a tension-filled structural field that is bounded by social interfaces that involve complex forms of accountability with global capital, local nation-states and heterogeneous rural
communities. NGOs ‘handle’ or ‘manage’ social tensions in numerous different ways. Yet, in large part, tensions are managed (‘externally’) along the porous and fluid interfaces that delimit the social space of NGOs, and by means of (‘internal’) organizational practices. As social forms, NGOs are not static ‘entities’, and thus the organizational means by which they ‘negotiate’ tensions has a feedback effect on their organizational structure.

The Weberian notion of ‘meaning’ goes beyond mechanistic, functionalist and instrumentalist conceptions of NGO interfaces. The thesis demonstrates that NGOs give meaning to these interfaces and act accordingly. While these interfaces exist independently of ‘meaning’, privileging the notion of ‘meaning’ in the analysis of NGOs highlights the ‘negotiated’ and ‘constructed’ quality of interfaces. Thus, for instance, if development NGOs are ‘in the pocket’ of global capital, then this historical trajectory is not simply imposed on ‘objects’ by ‘subjects’ but is a ‘negotiated’ organizational outcome. In other words, if NGOs become ‘objects’ of others, then they do so for reasons of their own. Or, if rural communities do ‘buy into’ development programmes or projects, they do so in terms of the meaning they attach to such outside interventions and how they may benefit. In general, then, the meaning that NGOs give to their interfaces vary considerably from the meanings that global donors, nation-states and rural communities give to these same interfaces.

This brings us to a central theoretical point. The thesis argues convincingly that any analysis of intermediary NGOs should involve ‘capturing’ and making sense of organizational processes and practices within NGOs. Any such ‘thick descriptions’ of NGO practices must by necessity entail a re-centring of the sociological investigation in such a way that the world of NGOs is seen from ‘inside the walls’. Sociological behaviourism in either the structuralist or empiricist form assumes that NGO organizational practices can be understood independently of the meanings that NGOs give to their world, or that these meanings can be deduced or read from ‘outside’. The thesis argues to the contrary, and shows that meanings must be read from ‘within’. The ‘context’ (or ‘outside’ world) structures and sets limits to the ‘text’ (the NGO). But
NGOs act upon ‘the outside’ through organizational practices laden with their own meanings.

In this way, the thesis shows that NGOs ‘handle’ the tensions between the global and the local in numerous ways. In particular, I argue that NGOs tend to bring simplicity, order and closure to their world of ambivalence. These ‘stabilizing’ activities become embodied within ‘actually existing’ organizational practices. A predominant (though not inevitable) trajectory of these ‘stabilization’ practices pushes intermediary NGOs in the direction of privileging ‘the global’ and problematizing ‘the local’. This means that NGO practices have the organizational effect of reproducing global forms of domination against the current of more local empowering initiatives. I label this predominant trajectory as a ‘Glocal modernity’ rather than as a ‘gLocal modernity’ because of its globalizing effects. This trajectory is not simply imposed upon NGOs, as it is a ‘negotiated’ outcome. More specifically, NGOs are disposed to this global trajectory because it allows them to prioritize their own organizational sustainability. Hence, in the end, this Glocal modernity is their modernity.

2.3 Glocalization and Land Reform

The thesis looks specifically at NGOs in the context of land reform in Zimbabwe. It does this by first discussing agrarian and land reform globally and also in particular reference to Zimbabwe. I highlight the complex interplays and social tensions that exist between the global and local moments in these reform processes. As a result, I refer to these convoluted and contradictory processes, in which intermediary NGOs are immersed, as ‘agrarian glocalization’ processes. On the one hand, there are pronounced homogenizing tendencies because of the globalization of agriculture and land reform. On the other hand, agrarian glocalization entails the existence of ‘local’ differentiating effects, or complex historical variations of common global themes. One such complex variation is the case of land reform in Zimbabwe.
The homogenizing tendency is embodied in the global shift away from state-centred land reform to society-centred land reform over the past few decades. This arose in the broader context of a crisis of profitability in world capitalism during the 1970s that derailed ‘developmentalism’ as a statist mode of social engineering. Subsequent global restructuring has had a pronounced neo-liberal thrust, although in recent years even global capital has called for a reinvigorated state. Nevertheless, nation-states throughout the ‘periphery’ became subject to the imperatives of managing the global crisis through economic liberalization and deregulation, as exemplified by structural adjustment programmes. Increasingly, agriculture in the South and East has been subordinated to the demands of a market-driven global capitalism. Thus, agro-industrial transnational corporations dominate agricultural commodity chains in terms of both production and distribution. As well, market-led land reform, involving the commodification and privatization of tenure regimes, has significantly altered agrarian relations of production in the South and East.

The breadth and depth of these global intrusions into ‘the local’ have led to re-theorizing about the agrarian question. Considering the existence of capitalism as an all-pervasive world system, it has been suggested that the classic agrarian question about the transition to industrial capitalism has been resolved globally, and that the agrarian question needs to be re-conceptualized in terms of the impact that this global system has on the reproduction of rural livelihoods in the peripheries (Bernstein 2003). The argument about a universal resolution to the classic agrarian question is highly problematic because it goes contrary to the notion of ‘glocal modernities’ and posits a ‘final’ resolution to complex social processes. Nevertheless, this re-theorization brings to the fore certain agrarian processes that are particularly relevant to the thesis. More specifically, a serious (and pervasive) crisis of rural livelihoods exists, and rural communities constantly engage in ever more dispersed combinations of agricultural and non-agricultural survival strategies. The indeterminate, disparate and fragmented activities of production and reproduction pose ongoing problems in properly conceptualizing the ‘rural underclasses’ in terms of the traditional notions of peasant and proletariat.
Yet, the globalization of agriculture has led to similar experiences and understandings of agrarian processes by the lower classes throughout the periphery. Simultaneously, this has involved a revival, if not a resurgence (Petras 1998, Moyo and Yeros eds. 2005) of autonomous and organized action by the ‘semi-proletariat’. The current political practice of the under-classes is diverse and multifaceted, but there is a marked ‘uncivil’ aspect to it. ‘Uncivil’ in this context denotes action that is deemed illegitimate in terms of the constitution and laws of the nation-state, although it may be morally contested within broader society. The most dramatic form of uncivil action has been the land occupations taking place in some parts of Latin America and Asia, most notably Brazil. Theorists that are in large part supportive of this action argue (in an instrumentalist vein) that rural ‘uncivilities’ provide an important counter-measure to the reactionary donor-driven civilities of NGOs, and that they contribute to social change by advancing the (stalled) national democratic revolution in the South and East.

Certainly, at one level, globalization homogenizes the agrarian world as manifested in such processes as agricultural commodity chains, crises of rural livelihoods, social reproduction strategies and rural opposition. Yet, globalization is a contradictory, discontinuous and uneven project and involves highly localized agrarian processes. In particular, there have been numerous assertions of ‘the local’ against the ‘civilizing mission’ of capitalist agricultural globalization. These include resistance by nation-states and governments to the anti-statist thrust of land reform as pursued by the World Bank and global capital; the defence of ‘traditional’ customary tenure by agrarian communities in the face of the formal privatization of land tenure; and ‘uncivil disobedience’. As a result, glocalization processes pertaining to agrarian restructuring and land reform have a socially indeterminate and contingent texture. At the level of the nation-state, these processes invariably take on historically specific forms. This further means that ‘resolutions’ to the agrarian question are historically unique and tentative.

Events in Zimbabwe clearly demonstrate the relevance of the notion of ‘agrarian glocalization’. The agrarian landscape in Zimbabwe cannot be ‘read from’ global homogenizing tendencies. In varying degrees and ways, this is apparent in the earlier
independence years from 1980 to 1996 that fell under the Phase I land programme, as well as (under Phase II) in the years immediately preceding accelerated land reform (1997 to 1999) and the accelerated reform ‘period’ from 2000 onwards. Both phases are marked by a significant global moment. But, without wanting to overly dichotomize the two phases, the first Phase appears to fall in line with global trajectories and the second Phase is a reaction against such trajectories.

During Phase I, the Lancaster House Agreement and the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme resulted in persistent global pressure on the post-colonial state and placed serious brakes on land redistribution and land tenure changes. The prevailing thrust under market-led reform was capitalist modernization, including the indigenization of agricultural capital, and the respect for capitalist civilities and property rights. This led to problems brewing within the rural areas, most notably a deepening crisis of rural livelihoods under unchanged tenure conditions in customary areas but also the unmet land needs of ex-commercial farm workers in the face of (albeit limited) land distribution. Throughout this Phase, and under conditions of nation building, the state sought to ‘civilize’ society. Yet, there were also regular acts of land self-provisioning by rural dwellers.

Land events in Zimbabwe during Phase I are well documented in the academic literature. In going beyond the scope of this literature, this thesis revisits these events and highlights their significance in relation to Phase II developments. In so doing, it singles out key trajectories pertaining to ‘contradiction’ and ‘domination’ as reoccurring themes of the thesis. First of all, and despite the dominant thrust of Phase I, the thesis argues that the programme was characterized by considerable ambiguities revolving around the seemingly contradictory goals of agricultural productivity and historical justice. Contradictory tendencies became ingrained in the Phase II programme and continue to be played out, under different historical conditions, in the accelerated programme. Secondly, although in large part in line with global trajectories, the thesis shows that Phase I did not merely represent a form of global imposition and domination. Rather, the main trajectory of Phase I was consistent with, for instance, the demands of white and
black agrarian capital in Zimbabwe, and Phase I was in many ways pursued on those grounds. This ‘local’ moment of Phase I is privileged in the thesis, as it brings to the fore an important thread of continuity between the two phases.

Phase II emerged in the face of increasing tension and conflict within both Zimbabwean state and society. Initially, in the late 1990s, this Phase was marked by significant land policy dialogue and consultation but with a halting implementation process that, as in earlier years, failed to address the needs of the landless and land-short ‘peasantry’. Simultaneously, radical nationalist assertions on land reform continually raised the spectre of more far-reaching initiatives. These contradictory messages from the ruling party and government occurred alongside, if not because of, serious structural problems in the national economy, massive political opposition emanating from ‘urban civil society’, and a growing rift between the Zimbabwean state on the one hand and the International Monetary Fund and the former colonial power of Britain on the other. This set the historical and social backdrop for the accelerated reform period.

The accelerated period derived from a combination of three tendencies. First of all, there was the historical legacy in Zimbabwe of racially based landed property that remained unresolved twenty years after independence. Secondly, ‘agrarian glocalization’, including global agricultural restructuring and policy failures by the Zimbabwean state, was impacting on agrarian livelihoods and the deepening struggle for social survival. Thirdly, a radical pan-African nationalism arose as a result of a combination of imperialist aggression, disinterest and withdrawal vis-à-vis Zimbabwe. Of course, these conditions neither made the movement inevitable nor determined its historical specificities. But they do show that global trajectories and local conjunctural events were significant in the emergence of the Third Chimurenga.

An acrimonious debate exists amongst Left scholars within Zimbabwean social studies about state formation and political change in the accelerated period (Moyo and Yeros eds. 2005; Raftopoulos and Phimister 2004; Helliker 2004, 2005). The debate revolves around different conceptualizations of the social crisis in Zimbabwe. One side in the
controversy focuses on the global (imperialist) determinants of the crisis and the other side stresses the local (nation-state) determinants. Engaging with the debate provides a heuristic entry point into the ambivalences and complexities of agrarian change in the accelerated period. It raises specific questions about, amongst other things, the social composition of the land movement, the class basis (and bias) of agrarian change and land redistribution, the dynamics of local governance and agricultural production in the ‘new’ resettlement areas, and the authoritarian restructuring of the state. In their own way, these (and other) aspects of accelerated reform became intertwined with the discourses and practices of intermediary ‘land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe. A common thread running through the debate about accelerated reform has been the ‘uncivil’ trajectory. This uncivil character relates to the dramatic disrespect for existing agrarian property relations. This is particularly significant because it contrasts with the supposed ‘civility’ of ‘land’ NGOs. Indeed, on the whole, NGOs in Zimbabwe operate within the confines of the prevailing legal regime. Yet, the Third Chimurenga brought to the fore questions about what is ‘civil’ in the face of unjust (and racial) agrarian relations of production.

2.4 ‘Land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe

Accelerated reform brought about significant changes to the political and agrarian landscape in Zimbabwe. These changes involved a dramatic assertion of ‘the local’ and a forceful restructuring of the ‘agrarian glocalization’ process. As a result, they impacted immeasurably on the social field of advocacy and development ‘land’ NGOs by sharpening existing contradictions and bringing to the fore latent ones. NGOs ‘handled’ this turbulent twist of events through a range of coping strategies and practices that served to ‘stabilize’ these organizational formations. More broadly, this thesis shows how, from the mid-1990s onwards, intermediary NGOs in Zimbabwe negotiated and manoeuvred their way through the unfolding contradictions between global and local moments pertaining to land reform.
In this regard, I provide a brief comparative investigation of advocacy NGOs. This comparison reveals that there is considerable diversity across the South and East, and at times NGOs have directly (and indirectly) supported peasant movements. But, on the whole, the evidence suggests a significant degree of hesitancy and tentativeness amongst NGOs when it comes to advocating for land reform. In the mid-1990s, NGOs in Zimbabwe recognized this reluctance amongst themselves. With a broad brushstroke, some theorists claim that this emanates from the ideological disposition of ‘middle-class’ NGOs. But the thesis shows that land reform is a high risk, contentious and complex policy terrain around which powerful interests coalesce, and there may be ‘organizational dispositions’ that lead NGOs to ‘manage’ this terrain by distancing themselves from advocacy. A similar disengagement from land reform is found amongst development NGOs. The fact that these NGOs conceptualize themselves as development-centric rather than as agrarian-centric NGOs is highly significant in this regard. As a result, as seen in the history of NGOs in Zimbabwe from 1980 to 1995 outlined in the thesis, they often slot themselves into existing agrarian structures of domination without seriously questioning or challenging these structures. Again, the existence of ‘organizational dispositions’ that involve ‘stabilizing practices’ goes some way towards understanding these NGO inhibitions.

Advocacy ‘land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe in the years immediately preceding the accelerated programme engaged with government in a, relatively speaking, inclusive land policy environment. For instance, they arranged and participated in land conferences, and they provided inputs into the Phase II policy formation process. Yet, they were in large part ineffective as land advocates and often blamed ongoing state centrum for their marginalization. But the thesis demonstrates that these NGOs also had their own serious weaknesses. These weaknesses were not simply (‘external’) incapacities revolving around the practicalities of participating in lobbying processes. There were also fundamental questions about (‘internal’) systems and procedures that could sustain these NGOs as organizational formations over the necessary long haul without experiencing ‘fatigue’. Further, as part of urban civil society and the push for democratic change in Zimbabwe, ‘land’ NGOs became immersed in party politics. They were involved in the
formation of the official political opposition in 1999 and received the anti-imperialist wrath of the central state for doing so.

Eventually, accelerated reform brought the world of advocacy NGOs crashing down. Land policy formation became dominated by the central state and thus ‘land’ NGOs have been largely excluded. However, the thesis makes it clear that the accelerated period made explicit that which was already implicit in the social field of NGOs. During the 1990s, global donors (including the British state) and the Zimbabwean government had jointly spun a web of intrigue in which NGOs became entrapped. The NGOs distanced themselves from both, and thus they were not in either (or any) camp. They were, in a sense, seeking to bring their accountabilities into equilibrium, and thereby they became ‘caught in the crossfire’. Their world of advocacy was ‘stuck’ in the tension between ‘the global’ and ‘the local’, and in many ways this immobilized them. However, the balancing act they performed was made simpler by the existence of a far greater social distance. This was the distance they had forged, if only unintentionally, between themselves and the rural under-classes. Urban-based advocacy NGOs did not directly incorporate rural inhabitants into their land advocacy practices, and hence these NGOs were not burdened by the great uncertainties and complexities that arise from a fully inclusive and participatory process. As the thesis highlights, this had the effect of simplifying and stabilizing the world of ‘land’ advocacy NGOs.

The thesis shows how the land ‘occupations’ during the accelerated period also had a dramatic impact on the world and work of rural development NGOs. Initially, these NGOs stood back at a bemused distance from the ‘invasions’ or questioned the ‘uncivility’ of these movements. Certainly, they never sought to engage with them in any meaningful manner. In general, the activities of NGOs working under all land tenure systems were heavily disrupted by the happenings set in motion by the occupations. The land occupations made it extremely difficult for NGO personnel in the rural areas to move about and to hold meetings, and relationships with (in the past, benign) local state structures became politicized and marked by suspicion. Relations with central government became even more problematic, as NGOs were accused of supporting the
political opposition in the rural areas. As well, the deepening economic crisis, including hyperinflation, had detrimental effects on operational costs and staff security. Major donors also refrained from funding any programmes that might legitimize the land invasions.

Many development programmes in the ‘old’ resettlement areas (from the 1980s) and the customary areas were suspended or put on hold particularly during the early years of the accelerated period, and the emphasis in practice became short-term humanitarian relief rather than long-term sustainable development. As the economic crisis deepened, even seemingly ‘developmental’ interventions focused increasingly on coping and survival methods for the rural lower classes. In the face of major disruptions in their development work, these NGOs also engaged in various forms of organizational reflection, learning and strategizing. The thesis clearly highlights that shifts toward humanitarian work and ‘internal’ work have both served to maintain these NGOs as viable organizational forms. Problems for NGOs working on White commercial farms have been even more trying. These NGOs have seen many years of hard work ‘go up in smoke’ in a matter of months, and they have been faced with major dilemmas pertaining to involvement in the ‘new’ resettlement areas. On the whole, NGOs have tended to distance themselves from these areas, but not necessarily because of ‘ideological dispositions’. Rather, matters of complexity have come to the fore, such as ambiguous and turbulent forms of local governance in these areas. The thesis shows that a ‘gung ho’ intervention in these areas may have put considerable strain on the organizational coherence and continuity of these NGOs.

An investigation of advocacy and development ‘land’ NGOs in present-day Zimbabwe demonstrates that, in many ways, the organizational practices of NGOs and the outcomes of these practices are not simply forced upon NGOs ‘from outside’ and that they cannot be fruitfully analyzed in this way. For example, limitations on space for manoeuvring, and weaknesses in impact, may be self-imposed and self-inflicted. Indeed, these ‘problems’ may contribute to the sustainability of intermediary ‘land’ NGOs as organizational forms. Understanding this entails focusing on meaning-laden action
through which NGOs ‘mediate’ and ‘handle’ their tension-riddled world, and this ‘inside’ action cannot be directly read ‘from outside’. As the thesis stresses, it is thus necessary once again to go inside the form, but now as part of the methodological process of ‘historical’ reconstruction (rather than the earlier ‘logical’ deconstruction).

Case studies of two ‘land’ NGOs, namely, Farm Orphan Support Trust (FOST) and SOS Children’s Villages (SOS), vividly highlight the theoretical significance of ‘the inside story’ and the Weberian notion of meaning. FOST is an indigenous NGO that has close links with the (White) Commercial Farmers Union. Traditionally, it has worked amongst farm labourers on White commercial farms. The disabling environment arising from the accelerated programme saw FOST channelling its activities in a direction (i.e. relief) that does not readily maximize the achievement of its original vision and mission. Yet, given the propensity of global donors for emergency relief work, FOST has been able to sustain itself organizationally while also remaining relevant to the needs of its ‘targeted’ group. In the face of accelerated reform, FOST has been able to ‘balance’ its development practice through ‘sensitive negotiations’ with both global donors and local power structures. As a result, it has been able to ‘weather the storm’, and to manoeuvre its way through a restructured and volatile agrarian landscape in a manner that has not seriously jeopardized its organizational integrity.

SOS is an international NGO that operates two farms. One farm is commercially run and the other farm is a training centre for young people that go through the SOS system. Neither farm was ‘invaded’ but accelerated reform has fundamentally altered the surrounding agrarian terrain. There are serious tensions within the organization, both between ideals and practices and within organizational practices themselves. White farm management is not NGO-driven and remains insensitive to the organization’s vision. Management practices seem designed to ensure the sustainability of the organizational form as a site of employment rather than a site for development. In maintaining the NGO projects through the accelerated period, managers were not seeking to maintain the interests of SOS as a NGO but rather the interests of an organization per se and their positions of immense privilege within it. Management has been insulated from the
insecurities that arise from ‘chasing donors’ and has not sought to embed the NGOs in ‘the altered local’. The serious organizational dysfunctions at the farms exist not so much because of tension between ‘the global’ and ‘the local’, but because of the ‘unhealthy’ absence of tension.

2.5 Theorizing about NGOs

The empirical conclusions of the thesis highlight, amongst other things, that ‘land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe are perennially in a state of disengagement vis-à-vis land reform. For instance, in the late 1990s, NGOs kept a safe distance away from the realm of land advocacy. They refrained from sustained lobbying despite a comparably conducive policy environment for doing so. Under accelerated reform, there has been a marked distance at the operational level, as evidenced by the hesitancy on the part of development NGOs in becoming embroiled in the ‘new’ resettlement areas. In broadening this observation, it is clear that ‘land’ NGOs did not contribute to bringing about progressive agrarian change in Zimbabwe, and that they have mainly ‘gone with the ebb and flow’ of global initiatives. As a result, their organizational practices were orientated towards reproducing a Glocal modernity that was insensitive to the assertion of a dramatic ‘local’ restructuring initiative.

This important empirical finding of the thesis about ‘land’ NGOs and Glocalization does not seem to be significantly different from the kind of conclusions arrived at by ‘structuralist’ and ‘empiricist’ scholars about intermediary NGOs and global domination more generally. However, it is important not to conflate ‘empirical conclusion’ and ‘theoretical perspective’. Thus, the same empirical conclusion is consistent with different theoretical perspectives. And, more fundamentally, the latter derive from specific epistemological and ontological claims.

This study of ‘land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe is particularly unique and significant because it is based on a convoluted methodology involving deconstruction and reconstruction that
clearly avoids instrumentalism and functionalism, and that is particularly sensitive to the sociologically rich notion of ‘meaning’. In an important articulation of the thoughts of Marx and Weber, this thesis develops a methodology that seems able to capture the complexities and ambivalences of the world and work of NGOs. It then goes on to show the sociological significance of this methodology by illustrating it with reference to ‘land’ NGOs in contemporary Zimbabwe. In large part, the thesis is a discursive endeavour and thus I do not claim that – in the study of Zimbabwe – a complete ‘reconstruction’ of the ‘actually existing’ world of intermediary NGOs is provided. Yet the thesis offers important pointers in the right direction. The development and application of a methodology for understanding intermediary NGOs expresses the originality of the thesis in furthering the advancement of sociological thought.

In this regard, the thesis shows how NGOs as social forms are immersed in contradictory processes of ‘negotiated’ glocalization that regularly entail ‘stabilizing’ practices that privilege organizational sustainability. It also notes though that the outcome of these processes is historically contingent and specific. For this reason, and unlike much of sociological behaviourism, the theoretical perspective informing this study does not rule out a priori the possibilities of intermediary NGOs, under specific historical conditions, pursuing a more gLocal modernity that undermines ‘the global’. Thus, and this is the critical point, the theoretical approach has the methodological capacity to account for NGO diversity.
Chapter 3
Challenges to Sociology: Globalization, Postmodernism and Glocal Modernities

The contemporary world is marked by significant but uncertain social change, encapsulated in notions like ‘Empire’, the ‘New World Order’ and systemic transition (Hardt and Negri 2000, Wallerstein 2002, Balakrishnan ed. 2003). These far-reaching economic and political changes have occurred alongside significant re-theorizing – and in fact have stimulated the production of this theoretical work – as social scientists grapple with the meaning and causes of these ongoing ambiguous changes. As a discursive formation, sociology has historically been deeply interested in questions of social continuity and social change, and its broad and porous boundaries have invited (and enabled it to incorporate) a diverse range of methodological and theoretical positions (Urry 2000). But there are two issues, namely globalization and postmodernism, which directly challenge the foundational tenets of sociology and thereby its current quest for a deeper understanding of the variable human condition. These contemporary conditions and their theoretical representations, which at times are conflated in the sociological literature, seem to pull in opposing directions with the potential to tear sociology asunder. The issue of globalization will be discussed first.

3.1 Globalization: Bounded Totalities and Thinking Big

An international perspective, or a heightened sensitivity to global trajectories, is increasingly important in order to make sense of and explain more localized or particular phenomena, such as land processes in present-day Zimbabwe. This might seem like an obvious and bland point. After all, for many years intermediary NGOs have formed part of an all-embracing international development network, and global entities as diverse as
the World Bank and the World Social Forum have articulated international discourses on land reform. Further, the so-called founders of sociology – Durkheim, Marx and Weber – offered analyses with a distinctively international-cum-comparative perspective, and influential contemporary sociologists such as John Urry and Anthony Giddens have done likewise. But, social theorists often portray the contemporary ‘globalized condition’ of humanity as involving something radically different than long-standing international processes and necessitating more than standard historical-comparative commentaries. For instance, it is argued: ‘In the contemporary world economy, capital reaches the outer limits of the earth’s remotest islands and mountain villages; but it also colonizes the inner spaces of the lived world – leisure, nature, soma.’ (Morris-Suzuki 2000:p.74) The outward and inward expansion defining the globalized condition is said to involve a marked discontinuity with the past, a ‘qualitatively new stage’ (Amin 1997:p.49), and hence requires an epistemological and theoretical revamping of sociology.

The sociological project is the product of industrial capitalism, and is well known for propagating in different forms the distinction between tradition and modernity (or pre-industrial and industrial), such as Durkheim’s comparison between organic and mechanical forms of the division of labour. Sociology arose and developed after the fall of feudal systems and absolutist states, and thus within the confines of the modern nation-state in Europe and its worldwide establishment and dominance as a political system through imperialism and colonialism. Despite the historicity of the nation-state, the modern state per se – rather than merely a specific nation-state – through meta-narratives and hegemonic ideas takes on a naturalized and fixed form such that its ‘dissolution or disappearance becomes unimaginable’ (Migdal 2001:p.150). Yet, as Pierson’s work vividly shows: ‘For all its universality in our own times, the [modern] state is a contingent (and comparatively recent) historical development. Its predominance may also prove to be quite transitory.’ (Pierson 1996:p.35, his emphasis) In large measure sociologists have studied human societies as modern (territory-based) nation-states and have understood the prevailing international social system as a simple world-system of competing but unequal nation-states. Thus, their central and distinctive concept, namely ‘the social’, has (and in large part rightly so) revolved around and been reduced to
‘society’ as embedded within the nation-state. In other words, a nation-state-society nexus has been privileged and even reified in sociological studies as a foundational premise.

Urry argues, however, that processes of globalization ‘problematicise the powers of society’ (Urry 2000:p.2) – transforming but not undermining them – and he argues for a post-societal sociology that focuses on the ‘social as mobility’ rather than the ‘social as society’. Human society is no longer simply internationalized but is increasingly globally integrated and compressed and, therefore, global communities, networks, flows and mobilities are now constitutive of social relations and human subjectivities and ‘should be at the heart of a reconstituted sociology’ (Urry 2000:p.210). As Urry expands, ‘social life, once organised within national societies, is now moving to virtual communities that transcend each society and their characteristic communities, solidarities and identities.’ (Urry 2000:p.73) Admittedly, there is a wide diversity of views amongst sociologists about globalization and its forms, processes and impacts on contemporary state and society. And, as discussed later, Urry clearly overemphasizes the extent of compression when it comes to the reach of global flows in the South and East. Yet, as Featherstone and Lash rightly note: ‘A central implication of the concept of globalization is that we must now embark on the project of understanding social life without the comforting term “society”.’ Like Urry, they stress the need to make ‘an important step towards a trans-societal perspective’ (Featherstone and Lash 1995:p.2). However, discarding the term ‘society’ would overstate the significance of contemporary social restructuring. The main lesson is the need to offer a more sensitive rendering of the term in the light of global changes.

This sociological reformulation would also entail re-considering state-centric approaches to international processes (Biersteker and Weber eds. 1996). This would mean recognizing more fully the likelihood and reality of alternative locations of authority such as transnational capital circuits and emergent global civil societies, and thereby theorizing about the pluralization of organizational forms beyond and above the nation-state. Luke for instance speaks of the ‘sovereignty-free “neo-world orders”’ that are emerging trans-
nationally, and he argues that the nation-state is no longer reigning ‘with impunity even in realist time and space’ (Luke 1995:p.105). De Rivero (2001:p.40) argues that international corporations are a new (non-state) transnational aristocracy; that world power is increasingly geo-economic rather than geo-political; and that nation-states have become a kind of administrative ‘surrogate’ for global capital. As well, Bauman (1995:p.152) shows how the nation-state is presently being ‘simultaneously skimmed from above and sapped from below’ and that it is no longer the centre that holds together social relations or ‘the social’ in any bounded and systemic sense, if ever it was (particularly in the South). Finally, Amin argues that national economies have become ‘segments of a globalized productive system’ with national capitalism thereby eroding. Though ‘national coherence is regressing’ this has not been replaced by a ‘worldwide coherence’, at least in terms of an international political form that regulates and manages the global economy (Amin 1997:pp.57, 33). Rather, an international power vacuum exists, without a national or international body willing and able to take control.

From these arguments, it would appear that global capital does not merely control events directly through comprador nation-states but also operates beyond the control of national politics and regulation in a more dispersed and uncontrolled manner. Marcuse however qualifies this by arguing: ‘If states do not control the movement of capital or of goods, it is not because they cannot but because they will not – it is an abdication of state power, not a lack of that power.’ (Marcuse 2000:p.3 his emphasis) Clearly it is important not to overplay the powerlessness of the nation-state, yet Marcuse’s argument takes it to the other extreme. The key point is that traditional notions like state-led imperialism and neo-colonialism emanating from a defined global centre are problematic portraits of emerging global forms of domination.

For sociology, it is critical to capture the uneven processes of globalization. On the one hand, globalization involves a de-centring of the ‘social’ away from seemingly bounded social totalities in the form of nation-states to a more fragmented, amorphous and dispersed understanding of the ‘social’. On the other hand, globalization entails nation-states defending the bounded status of their societies, and thus the modern world is
marked by the assertion of local initiatives against globalizing trajectories. Indeed, the nation-state has an ongoing relevance as a critical arena of conflict between global and local forces. These contradictory moments in globalization are critical for making sense of the world of NGOs. Also, globalization urges sociologists to ‘think big’ both ontologically and epistemologically. The second issue, namely postmodernism, seems to point dramatically in the opposite direction.

3.2 Postmodernism: Sutured Totalities and Thinking Small

This point entails the postmodernist thrust that foundational epistemologies, grand narratives, the search for absolutes and mega-theorizing are inconsistent with the contemporary social condition. The postmodern condition, it is claimed, is marked by emancipation from material constraint as well as by heterogeneity, diversity and contingency including the fragmentation of Subjectivity and Identity into subjectivities and identities. Robertson notes, with regard to the apparent displacement of the universal by the particular from the perspective of postmodernists: ‘As the sense of temporal unidirectionality [in the form of grand narratives] has faded, on the other hand, has the sense of “representational” space within which all kinds of narratives may be inserted expanded.’ (Robertson 1995:p.32) Postmodernists argue that the fractured and unsutured post-modern condition cannot be understood and analyzed by employing traditional Enlightenment (or modernist) narratives about a rational order of things and using notions like the transcendental Subject. Ferrara notes: ‘The decentered or centerless subject … is the banner under which the advocates of breaking away from modernity rally. According to their view, it is not just the execution but the project of modernity as such that is misguided. For it takes at face value foundational discourses which are at best rationalizations of historically contingent constellations of meaning endowed with the social power to shape our representations.’ (Ferrara 1998:pp.148-149, his emphasis)
In this sense, the history of sociological thought is not simply the history of understanding ‘the social’ as ‘society’, as mentioned above. It has been, more specifically, about understanding the processes of modernity or the ongoing formation of ‘modern societies’. Yet, postmodernists claim that modern society is not and never has been a structured and unitary sutured totality, and thus the nation-state-society should not be understood in any realist sense. In other words, modernist sociologists have enacted theoretical closure on a set of structured social relations called ‘society’ that are inherently unclosed, incomplete and indeterminate. Considering the increasingly porous societal boundaries emanating from globalized flows, this problematizing of ‘society’ by postmodernists means that it is extremely difficult to see what holds societies together and orders them, as well as to identify their margins. For postmodernists, there is both a de-centring and a de-totalizing of societies.

Postmodernism has had a profound impact on mega-theory in the field of development, particularly given the major historical influence of Parsonian-type modernization theories and Marxist-based theories (such as underdevelopment, unequal exchange and dependency) in this field of inquiry. Many of these traditional approaches have been revamped or discarded in whole or in part, and this has led to what has now become widely known – but not fully accepted – as the ‘impasse’ or even crisis in development studies (Schuurman ed. 1993). Yet, it is shown later that postmodernism entails mega-theoretical commitments of its own.

Clearly, postmodernism distrusts any notion of an all-embracing organizing principle for human society. Along with its pluralism and de-centring, this seems like a far cry from modernism both ontologically and epistemologically, resulting in a sociological agenda which retreats from grand theory and ‘thinks small’. Postmodernism is not a unified theoretical perspective, and the particular postmodernist claim that social totalities are not sutured can be accepted without embracing postmodernist ‘theory’. This particular claim is invaluable for this thesis because it highlights the indeterminate and contingent manner in which contradictory social processes unfold.
3.3 Postmodernism and Challenges to Marxism

The impact of postmodernist thought within sociology has affected all traditional theoretical perspectives, but the thesis is particularly concerned with the acrimony prevalent within Marxism. This acrimony has played itself out notably in terms of the status of ‘class’ vis-à-vis what has become known as the politics of identity or the ‘politics of difference’ such as race, gender and ethnicity (Wilmsen and McAllister eds. 1996). Three general positions are discernable. First of all, there are unreformed modernists and socialists such as Amin, who show a deep sensitivity to conditions in the East and South, and who argue that postmodernism is ‘an intellectual non-starter, in the sense that beyond its hype it offers no conceptual instruments capable of transcending the capitalist framework’ (Amin 1997:p.136). In this regard, postmodernism misrepresents the modern condition, and it is simply another category of bourgeois thought that needs to be dismissed outright.

These hardened Marxists claim that the popular dichotomy made between liberal and authoritarian regimes obscures and distracts from the more important (and more fundamental) differences between capitalism and socialism. Liberal and authoritarian regimes both function within the parameters of capitalism, and an anti-neo-liberal agenda is not by necessity an anti-capitalist agenda. These modernist theorists still believe in the grand narrative of human emancipation, and they find it ‘odd to hear the “left” say that the traditional political orientation of socialism is obsolete’ (Ehrenberg 1998:p.7) and that class politics is dead. This is particularly perplexing considering the existence and strategies of – according to Ehrenberg – a well-organized and conscious dominant class pursuing global agendas. This bourgeois class project is what Marcuse (2000:p.2) refers to as ‘really existing globalization’, as opposed to alternative, anti-capitalist, globalization processes.

A second position involves the actual champions of the postmodernist cause, often called post-Marxists or Radical Democrats. The postmodernist critique of Marxism entails the
following points which are also relevant in many ways to other sociological traditions: preordained historical trajectories, fixed economic laws of development, grand class narratives, functionalism, reductionism, determinism, essentialism, scientism, structuralism and teleological explanations. For instance, Mouffe talks about ‘the crisis of class politics’ in Marxist thought, and argues that social agents are not unitary subjects but manifest an ensemble of subject positions (Mouffe 1992b:p.225). She argues for the valorization of pluralism in which differing forms of identity (as social relations and subject positions) are discursively constructed and are invariably unstable, ambiguous and contingent. For Radical Democrats, this entails the creation of a ‘chain of equivalence among democratic struggles’ (Mouffe 1992b:p.225) in which no particular form of struggle (notably, class struggle) has a privileged status. This further entails ‘a common political identity among democratic subjects’ (Mouffe 1992b:p.225) which is based on a radical democratic notion of citizenship that transcends the neo-liberal separation of social and political rights.

This republican-type participatory citizenship would be founded in civil society including the ‘new’ social movements, and it is to become ‘the point of convergence for the current endeavour of rethinking the politics of the Left’ (Mouffe 1992a:p.4). Citizenship is not the dominant identity, replacing class so to speak, but ‘is an articulating principle that affects the different subject positions of the social agent’ (Mouffe 1992b:p.235). It also does not imply the pursuance of the same purpose or even promoting a common interest. Instead it is based on an ethical-political bond, which means subscribing to a ‘language’ and ‘rules’ of civil intercourse, and these include norms of conduct and civility (Mouffe 1992b:p.233). There are always competing ethical and political principles, so that any hegemonic language or rules are forged through struggle and are necessarily provisional. This idea of citizenship, of course, presumes a bounded undisputed nation-state-society nexus that globalization questions. And some African scholars have argued that the very notion of citizenship as applied to the South and East is but a fancy and distant slogan for the urban and rural poor struggling against basic scarcities and authoritarian regimes (Monga 1996:p.88).
In arguing against classical theory, post-Marxists speak of the construction of a hegemonic conception of citizenship based on democratic equivalence because ‘common grounds for political action cannot be assumed’ as is done in structural Marxist analyses (Morris-Suzuki 2000:p.73). In the construction of this citizenship, no particular identity becomes dominant but all are reconfigured in shaping a new (unspecified form of) society. Radical democracy extends and deepens the foundations of bourgeois democracy but without determinacy and final closure on political agency, as this would mean the very negation of democracy. This Radical Democratic position is not unlike the centrist Third Way fancied by social democrats once in power, such as the Labour Party in Britain. This is a kind of middle road between capitalism and socialism that blends market and planned economies and entails ‘liberal communitarianism’ (McCracken 2003:p.5). Universal meta-narratives and dogmatic philosophies are discarded, and are replaced in the policy process by contingent pragmatism as part of post-ideological politics. Thus, ‘large-scale redemptive politics of any kind are ruled impossible and it would seem “big” ideology is dead’ (McCracken 2003:p29). This is a point made also by neo-liberal theorists.

The Marxist substance of the Radical Democrats remains unclear, and Holloway suggests that post-Marxism is a symbol of profound disillusionment within Western Marxism over the past twenty or so years, as reflected for instance in Euro-communism. He argues that this disillusionment ‘seeps into the core of the way we think, into the categories we use, the theories we espouse’, and that the ‘bitterness of history teaches us that it is now ridiculous to maintain the grand narrative of human emancipation …. The best we can do is think in terms of particular narratives, the struggle of particular identities for better conditions’ (Holloway 2002:p.154) within the confines of a seemingly irreversible and unstoppable global capitalism. In the next chapter, the transference of Radical Democratic discourses to the South and East in relation to ‘civil society’, and the likeness of these discourses to neo-liberal thought, will be discussed.

The third position is less conciliatory than the post-Marxists to postmodernism but, unlike the committed modernists, is willing to engage seriously with postmodernist
thought. For instance, Callari and Ruccio argue: ‘[W]e detect in postmodernism certain
trends that highlight the multidimensionality and openness of the social space
characteristic of a reformulated Marxism and …we identify in it certain concepts and
discursive strategies, such as the notion of a surplus of identities and the strategic
imperative of deconstruction, quite compatible with the Marxist project of criticizing the
unidimensionality of the bourgeois economic order …and exposing it as a condition of
class exploitation.’ (Callari and Ruccio 1996:p.3) Callari and Ruccio argue that Marxism
is in transition and not in crisis, and they label their reconfigured Marxist position as
‘post-modern materialism’. Postmodernists, they claim, have a one-sided view of
Marxist thought and fail to fully recognize its ambiguous history. On the one hand, there
is the ‘modernist systematicity’ (Callari and Ruccio 1996:p.23) that entails a
deterministic ontology based on order and structure, and that enacts closure on social
spaces. This (normally dominant) trend is what postmodernists dwell on, but Marxism
cannot be reduced to it. There is also the anti-systemic trend that stresses conjuncture,
openness, formation and disorder, and this is also part of the history of Marxist thought.
In that sense, the human condition is one of ambivalence caught in the antagonistic
tension between what is systemic and what is contingent. These two trends do not
represent distinct traditions within Marxist thought, yet the work of specific theorists
tends to emphasize either the ‘contingent’ or ‘structured’ social totality.

Hegemonic discourses in society often mask or portray contingent ordering as structured
ordering, and Marxists have at times been guilty of replicating this in their theoretical
paradigm. The historical tensions internal to Marxism are seen for example in the
radically different treatment of ‘class’ by Poulantzas with his abstract a-historical notion
of class structure contrasted to E. P. Thompson and his historically-rich idea of class
formation in which experience, subjectivity and consciousness are part of the very being
of class (Poulantzas 1975, Thompson 1968). Further, the idea of a phenomenological
Marxism that incorporates many of the ‘constructionist’ concerns of postmodernism has a
long history in intellectual thought. This brand of Marxism seeks in non-reductionist
fashion to provide an analysis of the material world (of existence) and the non-material
world (of meaning) as one integrated world. Postmodernists regular fail to offer such analyses because of their over-privileging of the latter.

Callari and Ruccio believe that the Althusserian notion of ‘aleatory materialism’ captures the anti-systemic tendency within Marxism. They largely accept the position formulated by Mouffe, including the heterogeneous (and thus de-centred) spaces of capitalism, the constructed nature of social identities and the lack of a single suturing of capitalist reality. Yet they still recognize class exploitation and hold to a class politics (Callari and Ruccio 1996:p.40), but one that entails (following Gramsci) the autonomy of political struggles vis-à-vis the economy and that ‘negotiates’ with – rather than absorbs – non-class identities and struggles in open-ended processes. Their highlighting of the anti-systemic trend in Marxism justifies the claim by Schuurman (1993b:p.190) that the postmodernist critique of the (supposed) representation crisis in modernist thought, and thus postmodernism itself, in fact arises from ‘a critical tradition within modernism’.

More generally, and despite pronounced positivist and realist histories to the contrary, sociology has a long tradition of sensitivity to a number of postmodernist concerns, as found not only in the work of George Herbert Mead and Peter Berger but dating back to Weber. Most sociologists for instance have long accepted the hermeneutic position that it is difficult to speak of an un-interpreted or extra-discursive social reality, and thus generalizing universalisms of the modernizing kind cannot be seen as anchored in some kind of unproblematic and unmediated social reality. Indeed, the construction of social reality implies not only a linking of identity and practice, but a plurality of social realities. Certainly, the emphasis by postmodernists on deconstruction is important, and other epistemological issues raised by them are pertinent to any sociological project. These include a disdain for ordering social phenomena a priori and desisting from teleological, essentialist and functionalist explanations.

The epistemological orientation of this thesis displays a marked awareness of these postmodernist concerns and explicitly so. Yet, it can be convincingly argued that grand theory is not only still feasible but that it remains necessary as a fundamental building
block for sociological thought (Holloway 2003). Indeed, it is incumbent upon sociologists to account simultaneously for ‘sameness’ and ‘difference’ in a unitary theory. In the case of a sociology that is cognizant of Marx’s epistemology, this would entail going beyond the modernist systematicity that Callari and Ruccio speak about, and thereby analyzing the (re-constructed) contingent totalities that exist as the expression of contradictory social relations. Theorizing about NGOs in this thesis involves ‘capturing’ the contradictory relations in which NGOs are embedded, and showing how this approach can account for the significant diversity that exists within the NGO ‘sector’.

3.4 Postmodernism: Some Modernist Commitments

Clearly, various tenets of postmodernism are highly questionable. I have already argued that its depiction of modernist thought, notably Marxist theory, is problematic. But the same could be said about its portrayal of modernist practice. For instance, postmodernism downplays the sheer irrationality of modern enlightenment and ‘the dark side of modernity’, including colonialism and fascism (Pieterse 1995:p.47). In general, it seems fair and safe to say that the ‘retreat’ from modernism has gone overboard, and that many postmodernist representations of contemporary social reality are moving ahead of that reality or beyond it. In this regard, much of postmodernist thought is Euro-centric such that the purported emancipated post-material condition exists, if at all, in the North and not in the South (Schuurman 1993a).

Thus, many postmodernist characterizations of globalization processes, such as the existence of unceasing voluntary mobilities of travel and tourism (Urry 2000), tend to universalize the particular (of the North) and seem distant from Southern realities (and likely from the realities of marginalized communities in the North). Thus, Baker contrasts social movements in Latin America with Western movements particularly given the conditions of authoritarianism and scarcity in Latin America: ‘In the West, societal self-organisation has centred on post-industrial or post-material [or postmodernist] issues of consumption, lifestyle and identity, such as relations between the sexes and ecology.
For the bulk of Latin American social movements, however – particularly the base communities and neighbourhood associations – self-organisation also constituted a response to pressing material needs.’ (Baker 2002:p.77)

It is certainly the case that, under conditions of cultural globalization, knowledge technologies and symbolic flows, there has been a certain ‘dematerialization’ of the economy and that the ‘new’ social movements in the West zealously preached about by post-Marxists aptly reflect this shift in their struggles over meaning and identity. Following Giddens, this is what Morris-Suzuki refers to as the change from emancipatory politics (or life chances) that focuses on material conditions and physical security to life politics or ‘epistemological’ politics involving questions of identity and life-style (Morris-Suzuki 2000:pp.66-67). While such movements exist in the South, including the identity politics of aboriginal and ethnic groups, ‘[t]he very idea of “life politics” … becomes problematic when crossing this geo-economic divide’ from North to South (Morris-Suzuki 2000:p.69) because identity groups in the South struggle within the pre-emancipated material realm. This argument against postmodernism overplays the differences between an ‘emancipated’ North and an ‘enslaved’ South. Yet, even in the most advanced capitalist nation, post-materialism (as a world of satisfied needs and self-actualization) does not prevail as implied by postmodernists.

In celebrating pluralism and the particular, it remains unclear how postmodernism can condemn modernism. If anything, it should be willing to respect, if not celebrate, modernism as a particular worldview. Further, singular perspectives (including postmodernism) tend to take on universalizing and totalizing modes when engaging with other perspectives. And, although spatial in its depiction of the social world, the historical roots of postmodernism are embedded in modernism. It also continues to employ modernist suturing categories such as economy and democracy, and sometimes uncritically. If these are used unreflectively in a bourgeois modernist fashion, as Amin (1997) implies happens all too often, then a continuing Marxist presence of deconstruction – after all, that is what Marx did in analyzing the logic of capitalism – is necessary for postmodernism to maintain a critical biting edge (Featherstone and Lash
Lastly, postmodernism seems to involve a grand historical narrative of its own, moving from the traditional to the modern and ending with – and valorizing – the postmodern.

3.5 Spatial and Temporal Moments of the Modern Globalized Condition

The relationship between the social conditions of modernism (or modernity), postmodernism (or postmodernity) and globalization is understood in numerous ways by sociologists. Sometimes globalization is seen as the logical culmination of modernity, either causing it or being a necessary condition for its emergence; sometimes globalization loosely defined is said to predate modernity; sometimes modernity is associated with the glory days of the nation-state; and sometimes globalization is seen as equivalent to postmodernity as both conditions seemingly entail processes of heterogeneity.

Particularly intriguing is modernism, postmodernism and globalization as regards their theoretical connotations. Thus, in terms of ‘theory’, modernism tends to privilege a temporal ontology while globalization theory and postmodernism privilege a spatial ontology. Thus, postmodernism valorizes particularistic social spaces and identities in the continual present and thus it ‘depends crucially on the denial of history’ (McCracken 2003:p.28). This dichotomy of ‘the temporal’ and ‘the spatial’ though should not be overemphasized. For instance, modernism has always focused on universal processes and spatial distinctions, if only in an ethnocentric manner. Nevertheless, Featherstone and Lash speak about the current ‘spatialization of social theory’ which involves giving priority to ‘the spatial over the temporal mode of analysis’ (Featherstone and Lash 1995: p.1). The temporal mode is said to have dominated Western modernist social theory in the past. Likewise, King says that ‘the criterial attributes of “modern” … are primarily temporal, not spatial. Its meaning is defined not just in relation to “history” but to someone’s very specific history. The question of space, of the place, location, society, country, nation-state, or life-space to which “the present or recent” refers, is taken for
granted and unproblematized, though it is evident … that that space is Western, if not European, and at least titularly Christian.’ (King 1995:p.109)

Clearly, this has implications for the understanding of modernity or the ‘modern condition’. Globalization theory in its spatiality enunciates what modernism always kept ‘hidden’ in its temporal analyses, namely, its spatial Western-centric model of the world-system. As a result, modernity never designated the continual present, as this would entail constant updating and revising. Rather, it referred to a particular historical epoch marked by Enlightenment and Rationality. Thus, modernity as understood solely in a temporal sense obscures the spatial privileging of modernity in Westernity. Once deconstructed, modernity is revealed as a spatially restricted and historically specific modernity.

In terms of theories of development, King shows that ‘modernization’ theory as a form of modernism has both temporal and spatial dimensions in the sense that ‘the modern is measured not only diachronically, in relation to the past of one’s own (always Western, Northern) society, but synchronically, in relation to the present of someone else’s (always Eastern, Southern) society’ (King 1995:p.115). Understood broadly, this theory in its various guises (both non-Marxist and Marxist) regularly addressed spatial issues quite explicitly, although invariably in an ethnocentric manner. King goes on to argue that postmodernism with its emphasis on fragmentation and plurality is simply a theoretical recognition of the spatial dimension of modernity. The temporal and spatial dimensions of the modern human condition will now be related to the distinction between the universal and the particular, or less abstractly, the global and the local.

3.6 Modernity: Absolutism and Relativism

The debates between modernists and postmodernists within social theory revolve around, amongst other things, the very notion of modernity. Modernity has an existence independent of social discourse. Yet, in a fundamental sense, modernity is socially
constructed, constituted and contested. As a result, it is embedded in and manifests power relations. Further, it has always been the subject, if only implicitly, of political debates and conflicts. A key consideration is whether modernity should be understood in universal or particular terms, or even as some sort of ‘hybrid’ notion involving ‘the global’ and ‘the local’. The last possibility raises the prospect that the difference between an ‘enforced particularism’ and an ‘abstract universalism’ involves a ‘fake choice’ and thus no choice at all (Hountondjt, as quoted in Mafeje 1992:p.9).

Underpinning many theories of development and democracy is the teleological assumption that there is some kind of universal or absolute definition of ‘modernity’, such that modernity (from a neo-liberal perspective) is simply ‘interpreted as a simile for capitalism’ (Amin 1997:p.135). The present condition in Africa is hence seen as an aborted or failed modernity project, whether understood in terms of un-development or underdevelopment. Sometimes, it is labelled as a transitional phase or as a state and stage of becoming modern. For example, the ‘migrant labourer’ as worker-peasant is lodged in a kind of conceptual halfway house prior to becoming a fully-fledged modern worker (Yeros 2001, 2002b). Absolutist notions of modernity, including Marxist ones, have pronounced normative connotations which imply a preferred kind of social formation, and they de-historicize processes of social change. Also, the distinct concepts of ‘modernity’ and ‘modernization’, as embodied in many universalizing paradigms, are often conflated. Processes of Western modernization are equated with processes of modernity per se. For example, globalization as a capitalist strategy for social and economic development has its theoretical expression in neo-liberalism as widely propagated at times by the World Bank. Multilateral financial institutions and transnational corporations are perceived as ‘the embodiment of prosperity and modernity’ (de Rivero 2001:p.47), and they articulate a globalization discourse that entails some sort of post-Parsonian modernization theory.

This modernist discourse is very much a grand narrative based on universalizing notions and, like all discursive strategies, it seeks to enact closure on alternative foundations of modernity. Global processes in this discourse take on the (real) appearance of a (almost
natural) universal but, in effect, they are the assertion of a totalizing (capitalist) particular. In this regard, globalization as a process seems to have ‘an existence independent of the will of human beings’ (Marcuse 2000:p.1). Its proponents seek to ‘imprison’ the debate about globalization within the ‘narrow limits of the globalization vs nation-state binary’ (Sader 2002:p.97) rather than contemplate alternative forms of globalization. Globalization, from a neo-liberal perspective, is thus portrayed as not only inevitable but also as favourable to the human condition. In effect, this implies that all (temporal-spatial) particulars are simply expressions of the free-floating universal and that the universal exists independently of these particulars and indeed transcends them all. Thus, each and every particular can be assessed on the basis of the universal in terms of a ‘generalizing model of universalism’ (Ferrara 1998:p.11).

A contrasting formulation would be a radical postmodernist argument based on an extreme pluralistic conception of modernity (a post-modern particularism). This conception would recognize particularistic (singular and incommensurable) modernity projects and processes, such as ‘American’ and ‘African’ modernity, although clearly these projects are highly differentiated internally. Intriguingly, this can be exemplified by political developments in Africa during the height of modernism. African leaders of different political persuasions at independence declared that ‘democracy’ (as understood in the formal liberal democratic sense) was a foreign concept and ideology contrary to the African condition, and that the African spirit was founded on communalistic (and democratic) modes of social and political organization in pre-colonial societies. Western-style competitive multi-party politics were rejected in favour of African socialism and one-party states as the basis for social and economic progress: ‘These early modernisers of Africa, unwittingly denied Africa’s contribution to, and her embeddedness in the project of modernity, by denying her contribution to capitalist civilization. For them, their continent was still immersed in the pre-modern.’ (Zack-Williams 2001:p.216) Monga notes this glorifying of the past under post-colonial conditions, as if Africans could ‘turn to their ancestors in order to explore other avenues of access to modernity’. He argues that this romanticism was designed by political leaders to ‘articulate the hegemonic discourse of domination’ (Monga 1996:pp.86, 80).
This is also a totalizing grand narrative, although a more regional or local one. Thus, Mafeje (1992:p.10) labels it as the ‘universalisation of African values and cultural traits’. Potentially, though, it smacks of a dead-end relativism that ultimately is self-refuting. This narrative also involves essentialist claims about the uniqueness and ‘exotic’ condition of Africa while sidelining social inequalities and class divisions much like statist developmentalist ideologies did in the early decades of post-colonial Africa. Monga speaks about how Africa has become ‘the El Dorado of wild thought, the best place for daring intellectual safaris’, and how this has led to an ‘intellectual exoticism’ with regard to Africa amongst certain scholars (Monga 1996:p.39). Such relativist positions, involving in their extreme version an infinite multitude of unique particulars, privilege the particular (existing in and by itself) at the expense of the universal and present each particular as unmediated by the universal. This ignores the deepening reality of the globalized condition of humanity, as well as the reconfiguration of the particular (in this case, the African condition) throughout colonial and post-colonial history. Nevertheless, the privileging of local ontologies has a certain resonance to it and will be brought to the fore throughout this thesis.

3.7 Internal Relations and Negotiated Modernity

These two positions of absolutism and relativism valorize either one of the two (seemingly opposite) ‘poles’ of the universal-particular dichotomy and downplay the other ‘pole’, as if the relationship between universality and particularity was external and entailed ‘simple relations of mutual exclusion’ (Laclau 1996:p.46). As Urry points out: ‘Neither the global nor the local can exist without the other. They develop in a symbiotic, irreversible and unstable set of relationships’ (Urry 2000:p.210). Thus, there is an internal relation of antagonistic tension and ‘negotiation’ between these two moments, or between elements in a largely un-sutured social process. This in no way implies an ‘end of history’ thesis. In other words, ‘we must reject the notion of a dialectic which reconciles everything in the end’ (Holloway 2002:p.159), and rather see the working out
of the ‘dialectic’ (or contradictory processes) as contingent, ambivalent and ongoing. This social tension between universal and particular moments is often manifested in a conceptual tension found in academic writings on Africa, as analysts seek to ‘synthesize’ or ‘amalgamate’ these moments.

Hence, Monga vigorously questions the ‘exceptionality paradigm’ about Africa but simultaneously disputes the ‘geographic and temporal validity of the models used in the social sciences’. He tries to provide a conception of democratization in Africa that captures ‘not only the specificity but … its original and “universal” substance’ (Monga 1996:pp.183, 19). Kaviraj and Khilnani label the universal/particular distinction as a ‘strange paradox’ and argue: ‘Political institutions taken from the West are introduced into societies which have embedded forms of sociability that are very different from the common individualistic forms of the modern West.’ Universal concepts (for example, bureaucracy, civil society and democracy) that are derived from understandings of modern Western nations are used to study African societies, but ‘it is common knowledge that these words do not denote objects which behave in the same way as in the West’ (Kaviraj and Khilnani 2001:pp.4, 5). The problem though is not simply a spatial problem but is also a temporal one, in the sense that African societies today are probably more akin to the early industrializing West than to the contemporary West. Thus, making sense of the contemporary ‘African condition’ entails both temporal and spatial analyses.

The particular-universal tension is found in the work of Chabal (1994), who strives to provide universal concepts for theorizing about contemporary Africa, as ‘politics in Africa must be conceived in universal rather than parochial terms’ (Chabal 1994:p.9). In a later collaborative work (Chabal and Daloz 1999), he argues for a more endogenous and particularistic paradigm called ‘the political instrumentalization of disorder’ as a basis for capturing the specificities of social ordering and political functioning in Africa, yet in doing so he draws on universal concepts. The emphasis is not on studying an exotic African modernity – or African modernity in and of itself – but rather modernity as it manifests itself in Africa. This means that ‘modernity’ does not have a common
universal content or a unique particular content, but is invariably the historical expression of complex combinations of global and local processes.

Hence, this thesis argues that the universal and the particular mutually constitute each other and that modernity must be understood in this light. Ruling classes and parties, in their renditions of modernity, seek to privilege either the universal or the particular, or the global or the local. Ruling class domination within particular nation-states does not simply reproduce global domination but rather reconfigures it and, in doing so, a specific form of modernity is projected and asserted. Sociologists must appreciate then that modernity, whether in Africa or elsewhere, is a socially and historically negotiated process tied or linked to a locality or region and its fluid power relations. Modernity is thus invariably socio-spatially grounded but simultaneously it articulates and engages with more global processes and interests. In this sense, globalization is not just a macro-process but is also a micro-process. It must be understood in the weak sense of heterogeneity (implying resistance to global processes) rather than in the strong sense of homogeneity (or capitulation to global processes) (Friedman 1995:p.78). Certainly, at times, the articulation of global and local spaces bypasses the nation-state altogether and even ‘shrinks’ national civil societies. Loyalties are broadly displaced and widely dispersed, and a singular and exclusive sense of the nation as embodied in the state becomes untenable. Equating societies with nations and with nation-states is therefore increasingly called into question, with both a proliferation of sub-national and transnational identities.

Urry captures this internal tension between the global and the local in referring to the proliferation of de-territorialized universal rights: ‘Overall, there is an increasing contradiction between rights, which are universal, uniform and globally defined, and social identities, which are particularistic and territorially specified.’ (Urry 2000:p.166) The local and the global play themselves out in historically contingent and variable ways, but the tension between the universal and the particular is most dramatically focused at the nation-state. After all, the nation-state as a particular appears to be increasingly challenged by the universal and thus asserts its particularity against the universal by
reconfiguring its own universality vis-à-vis sub-national particulars. Luke thus notes that the ‘writs of sovereignty … de-emphasize the local [or sub-national] and demonize the global [or transnational] in order to legitimze their own national-statist construction of economic, political and social action.’ (Luke 1995:p.94) The continuing importance of theorizing about the post-colonial state cannot be underestimated within political sociology.

3.8 Glocal Modernities and Assertions of the Particular

It would seem then that the notion of ‘glocalized modernities’ is particularly apt. Robertson discusses the notion of ‘glocalization’ and argues that ‘[m]uch of the talk about globalization has tended to assume that it is a process which overrides locality’. This talk ‘neglects the extent to which what is called local is in large degree constructed on a trans- or super-local basis’ (Robertson 1995:p.26). The term ‘glocalization’ emphasizes that processes of globalization invariably have a local content. The local is not a text within the context of the global, because the local and the global are internally and intimately related. Globalization often stimulates localizing strategies and thus reinforces particulars in what seems like an increasingly heterogeneous world order. Simultaneously, though, universalizing processes seek to globalize and ‘domesticate’ the local (to de-localize it) and therefore make it over in their image. Crewe and Harrison (1998) argue that the local is not an objectively provable physical entity. ‘The local’ involves (although is not reduced to) social constructions and embodies social relations and meanings.

In this context, it is worth quoting Gould at length based on his study of rural Zambia: ‘Locality is commonly defined via a distinction with the nation…. [W]hat is important…. is the way that physical and social space interact in its definition. … [T]he social constructedness of locality requires that it be seen in terms of a matrix of relationships that extend “outward” in both physical and temporal space. People’s sense of locality encompasses “a consciousness of links with the outer world” … Actors invest powerful
interests in the production and maintenance of ... “localized subjectivities” which ... are integral moments in the production of the subject-citizens of a modern nation State... The production [of] locality is ... a “recursive” process, simultaneously the reproduction and the transformation of social relations, subjectivities and interests.’ (Gould 1997:pp.17, 18, 19 emphasis removed) The construction of ‘the local’ highlights its immersion in social processes. The relation between the global and the local is not fixed, as the form this relation takes is historically and socially contingent and entails negotiation and compromise. Although structural imperatives underpin the relation between the global and the local, this relation is not a simple structural one.

The notion of ‘glocalized modernities’ undermines the idea of a single history to modernity. This has been expressed in different ways. Thus, Gould (1997) talks of ‘situated modernities’, Comaroff (1996) speaks of ‘alternative modernities’, and Therborn (1995) refers to a ‘plurality of routes to and through modernity’. Chatterjee (1997), in an insightful article, argues that universalized (read ‘English’) notions of modernity made the colonized nations mere consumers and objects of a destructive modernity rather than producers and subjects of ‘our modernity’. She goes on to claim ‘true modernity consists in determining the particular forms of modernity that are suitable in particular circumstances; that is, applying the methods of reason to identify or invent the specific technologies of modernity that are appropriate for our purposes.’ (Chatterjee 1997:pp. 8-9)

Modernity, as described earlier, is regularly understood in a temporal sense but is identified specifically with the so-called Age of Enlightenment. Normally, this era is pictured as embracing a universal and impartial field for unhindered civility and reasoning. Yet Chatterjee (1997) rightly argues that, in practice, this impartiality is superficial and it has entailed unequal access to discourses and the use of knowledge in the exercise of authority. In this regard, Urry claims that the global constantly asserts itself in processes of social development and that there is a ‘privileging of the global ontology of detachment over the local ontology of engagement – it is to celebrate technology, intervention, expert management and the relative disempowerment of the
local people.’ (Urry 2000:p.46) Thus, there is a ‘close complicity between modern knowledges and modern regimes of power’ (Chatterjee 1997:p.14).

Although the relation between the global and the local is not invariably antagonistic, it is also true that modernity is not simply imposed but is the site and subject of social conflict. King (1995:p.114 his emphasis) therefore says ‘[t]he question … is not only whose version of modernity we are operating with, but when and where that version comes to be fixed as a dominant global [or even national] paradigm.’ Colonized people were under foreign rule in part because they were considered un-modern, but they also employed modernist and enlightenment elements, such as the burden of reason and the desire for emancipation, to fight against colonial modernity (Chatterjee 1997, Mamdani 1996). In a sense, then, they were not necessarily resisting the imposition of a Western modernity but were trying to gain access to it on their own terms. This process could be labelled as re-interpreting or even re-inventing modernity.

In the postcolonial world under conditions of globalization, the world is witnessing ongoing instances of particular modernist struggles waged against the universal, or against particulars masquerading as universals. Amin argues that ‘far from expressing a rejection of modernity’, these movements are ‘in fact the consequence of the shattering of the promise of real modernization’ (Amin 1997:p.145). Neville Alexander (2003:pp.8, 1), in discussing the formation of regional economic and political blocs in the South and East, conceptualizes these as a ‘defensive strategy’. He discusses in particular ‘the hegemonic project of neo-liberal conservatives’ in the form of NEPAD that is portrayed by its proponents as an African Renaissance. Through NEPAD, Africa seeks to engage with and become more fully integrated into international capitalism to ensure continent-wide progress and development but Alexander argues that this project is tied to the hegemonic ambitions of South African capitalism. Nation-states such as the Zimbabwean state are also defending what they consider to be their bounded social totality and, in so doing, are ‘negotiating their sovereignty’ (Biersteker and Weber 1996:p.11). The ruling party in Zimbabwe labels neo-liberalism as a bogus universalism or a discursive imperialism that is insensitive to the modern peculiarities of the African
continent. Instead, it offers to the world and to its citizens a pan-African and anti-imperialist discourse encapsulated in the 2005 parliamentary slogan ‘the anti-Blair vote’.

These ongoing developments, throughout the South, involve reconfigurations of the nation as a relational totality through simultaneous inclusionary and exclusionary practices of citizenship. The external sovereignty that nation-states project and protect thus provides them with ‘a license to purify their domain of opposition, silence alternative voices, and eliminate dissent.’ (Inayatullah 1996:p.50) This invariably ‘reduces the space for critical resistance’ (Pieterse 1995:p.58 his emphasis). National identities are inherently unstable and never a finished product, but national discourses function to fix the meanings of the nation so that they appear timeless and inevitable in what Doty (1996:p.143) labels as ‘conceptual double-time’: ‘[T]he inside/outside boundary is a function of a state’s discursive authority, that is, its ability, in the face of ambiguity and uncertainty, to impose fixed and stable meanings about who belongs and who does not belong to the nation, and thereby to distinguish a specific political community – the inside – from all others – the outside.’ (Doty 1996:p.122)

Fixing (or ‘defining’) meanings is intended to universalize that particular set of meanings, but it is invariably contested locally in a variety of forms. Thus the modernist narrative of the Zimbabwean state is a nationalism of exclusion that seeks to sideline and undercut particular sub-national counter-narratives that involve a ‘multiplicity of collective memories’ (Monga 1996:p.66). Certain sub-national groups, such as urban civic groups, are portrayed by the Zimbabwean state as local expressions, creations or puppets of global entities notably British imperialism. These sub-national groups are thereby divested of all locality – and thereby legitimacy - and are effectively externalized and globalized. The external sovereignty of a nation-state allows it to engage in international processes and to construct its own projects of statecraft ‘according to the resonance of their own meanings’ (Inayatullah 1996:p.50). Yet the internal sovereignty of the state may be at the same time contested.
Even social movements that entail authoritarian nationalisms and retrogressive ethnicities and that draw on idealized and essentialist notions of the past may comprise modernist responses to the globalizing present. They entail the dominance of centrifugal forces at a time of global crisis notably in the fragile ‘peripheries’ of the world system (Amin 1997:p.60), and thus lead to anti-democratic, regressive and negative nationalisms. As Chatterjee argues: ‘[W]hereas Kant, speaking at the founding moment of Western modernity, looks at the present as the site of one’s escape from the past, for us it is precisely the present from which we feel we must escape. This makes the very modality of our coping with modernity radically different from the historically evolved modes of Western modernity.’ (Chatterjee 1997:p.20) Thus, premmodernity, modernity and postmodernity are not necessarily temporal distinctions, because they can co-exist in spatial-cum-temporal alternative modernities. Glocal modernities, in whatever form, often imply a de-centring of the world system and they may counter the unfettered consolidation of global hegemonies. But, they are also asserted as particulars within a particular nation-state, and this implies that the universal and the particular are relative terms.

Often, local particulars involve competing constructions of the nation, such as the ethno-nationalisms in Eastern Europe and Africa (Wilmsen and McAllister eds. 1996). These ‘postmodern nationalisms’, as labelled by Featherstone and Lash (1995:p.12), are ‘constituted in the name of the particular against the empty and unhappy shell of an old [exhausted] universal [state]’, whereas these now seemingly exhausted nation-state nationalisms were originally made ‘in the name of the universal against the particular’. But, to reiterate, situated particulars do not simply react to the universal as a text within a context. Rather, the global and the local mutually reconstruct each other and thus localization becomes a necessary moment in globalization (Robertson 1995). Hence, the global can never be free-floating and independent of the local, as if the global exists outside and beyond all localities and has systemic properties independent of the particular.
The notion of ‘glocal modernities’ ably captures the dynamics of this contradictory process. As a result, it recognizes the spatial unevenness of globalization processes throughout the South and East. But it also accepts the existence of global imperialist trajectories and global inequalities that characterize the modern world. Thus, it does not emphasize ‘contradiction’ to the exclusion of ‘domination’. It gives conceptual space to ‘the local’, and has the capacity to make sense of the assertion of local particulars in the face of domineering global trends.

3. 9 NGOs: The Global and the Local

Glocal modernities are the expression of contradictory relations between the global and the local. These are internal relations in that the global and the local constitute each other as moments in a tension-riddled social process. Intermediary NGOs are invariably immersed in this process. On the one hand, as a specific kind of organizational form in the modern world, they are a manifestation of glocalized relations. On the other hand, their organizational practices impact on the re-constitution of glocal modernities. Hence, as simultaneously both ‘object’ (and victim) and ‘subject’ (and maker), they have a ‘stake’ in situated modernities. Handling the tension between the global and the local (and, more abstractly, the universal and the particular) is inherent in NGO organizational practices, but this is rarely a conscious and deliberate process on the part of intermediary NGOs. Yet the world and work of NGOs is saturated with meaning and intent, as they negotiate and manoeuvre their way in and through their ambivalent social field. This ‘negotiation’ occurs along the porous social boundaries and interfaces that mark and delimit their social world, and by way of organizational action. The main interfaces involve global donors, nation-states and heterogeneous rural communities.

In the academic literature, the predominant conceptual framework underpinning the analysis of NGOs rests or hangs on specific ‘nodal points’, namely, civil society, development and democracy (Tvedt 1998, Zaidi 1999). NGOs are generally understood as part of ‘civil society’ and they aim to build democracy and facilitate development in
the South and East. In seeking to ‘reconstruct’ the ambivalent world of NGOs as embedded in ‘actually existing’ historical processes, I offer a detailed analysis of these nodal points and elucidate their complex interconnections. This entails a critical commentary on the prevailing literature, and with particular reference to the dominant ‘paradigm’ of sociological behaviourism. I provide this commentary in the following two chapters.
Chapter 4

Civil Society, Democracy and the Nation-State

In the academic literature and amongst NGOs themselves, civil society in Africa is discussed primarily in relation to democracy rather than development, and particularly rural development. This is consistent with arguments made about the incipient or stunted character of rural civil societies, as propounded by social theorists such as by Mamdani (1996). He argues that post-colonial societies in Africa have been deracialized and that this has opened up space for civil associations in urban areas. But democratization in the rural areas has lagged far behind because of ongoing despotic forms of authority in the countryside. ‘Development’ is at times linked to civil society and democratic processes when it comes to matters such as policy advocacy on rural poverty and ‘good governance’ conditionalities attached to development aid (NGLS 1996). In this chapter, however, civil society is discussed mainly with regard to democracy and national politics.

4.1 The Current Fixation with Civil Society

Like many concepts found within political and social theory, ‘civil society’ is particularly ‘slippery’ (Edwards 1998:p.1). The concept has descriptive, analytical and normative connotations. It is also used in a multitude of ways by a diverse range of schools of thought, and often ambiguously. In fact, it has been argued that civil society is ‘an ideological rendezvous for erstwhile antagonists’ (Khilnani 2001:p.11). For instance, Ehrenberg (1998:p.6) claims, with reference to the United States, that ‘[a] conservative political climate has stimulated the recent interest in “civil society”‘. Elsewhere, the term has been taken up with much gusto by radical scholars. The historical roots of the concept show that it is linked to processes of Western modernity and, indeed, it is seen as ‘constitutive of modern democratic politics’ (Mouffe 1992b:p.227). Strident proponents
of the concept claim that civil norms and politics have displaced a more communitarian type of sociability prevailing in the pre-modern, pre-colonial or pre-capitalist world.

The current fixation with the notion of ‘civil society’, and the positioning of NGOs within it, arose within the context of an anti-statist moment globally along with the push towards capitalist neo-liberalism. Prior to this, the term ‘civil society’ was largely moribund, and interventionist nation-states in the decades immediately after the Second World War were accepted if not celebrated. This anti-statism soon achieved ‘near-canonical status’ (Ehrenberg 1998:p.1). It resulted from successful struggles against communist rule in central-eastern Europe, from the downsizing and restructuring of the Keynesian welfare state in liberal capitalist nations of the West, and from sustained opposition to authoritarian and military states throughout the South and East. Arguments in support of a minimalist state, and for civil society as a builder of democracy and development, emerged from ‘[t]he Reagan-Thatcher popularization of free market, anti-state policies, the serious debt crisis in Latin America, the fiscal and administrative crises of underdeveloped countries, the overall retreat of the state, and the end of the Cold War’ (Zaidi 1999:p.205).

In this historical context, civil society was designed to recover for society a range of powers and activities that nation-states had usurped in the previous decades. Clearly, then, there is a certain historicity to the usage of ‘civil society’ by NGOs in Africa and elsewhere. As Kaviraj and Khilnani (2001) argue, ‘political theorizing happens under the pressure of historically specific predicaments’. This may even entail some degree of ‘intellectual desperation… It is not surprising, therefore, that once the idea of civil society gains a certain currency, it would be pressed into service by authors [and NGO practitioners] desperately seeking solutions to their specific historical problems in Third World contexts.’ (Kaviraj and Khilnani 2001:pp.3-4) In this way, civil society may not necessarily arise organically, but may in a significant sense be reconfigured if not implanted from outside with the ‘connivance’ of insiders. It will be argued, ironically, that despite the revival of civil society under anti-statist conditions, the concept is regularly understood in statist terms or in a state-centred manner. This is based on the
civil society-state couplet that, in turn, hinges on the subject-object dichotomy. As noted below, this thesis conceptualizes civil society – like NGOs more specifically – as embodying and expressing contradictory social relations.

### 4.2 Civil Society in Classical Theory

The idea of civil society has deep historical roots in European political philosophy and theory. It is sometimes contrasted to a state of nature (for example, Hobbes), more often to community (for example, Tonnies) and, most often, to the nation-state (for example, Locke, Hegel and Marx). The last contrast is particular relevant to the thesis.

Hegel was the first philosopher to distinguish explicitly between civil society and the state. In general, he argued that the egotisms and inequalities of an unbridled civil society under modern (individualistic) competitive capitalist conditions were productively managed by the *universal* nation-state ruling over and pacifying ‘uncivil’ society, thereby making it more ‘civil’ (Baker 2002). At times, though, Hegel conceptualized this universality as already inherent in civil society and it was simply ‘made explicit’ and ‘recognized in the state’ (Khilnani 2001: p.24). Hegel saw the cleavage between the universal and the particular as being resolved within the confines of the bourgeois order.

In Marx’s view, any such notion of universality was a mere pretence or ‘a false universal’ (Ehrenberg 1998:p.2), and the nation-state merely served the particularistic interests of the bourgeoisie with its economic dominance firmly rooted *within* civil society. In fact, in Marx’s words, ‘this slavery of civil society is the natural foundation on which the modern state rests’ (quoted in Femia 2001:p.136). Therefore, the separation between state and civil society mystified class domination. Simultaneously, the state was an institutional expression of relations of domination within civil society. ‘Bourgeois’ civil society, with its particularistic class-based bickering, could only be overcome by the
universalizing and emancipating role of the proletariat, as ‘the living negation of civil society’ (Ehrenberg 1998:p.3), in overthrowing the capitalist nation-state.

More recently, Gramsci, in rejecting economic determinism, characterized civil society as the associational realm (relatively autonomous from the economy) and the social space that the state seeks to penetrate, and therein perpetuate its hegemony by manufacturing consent. Walzer (1992:p.102) concurs: ‘The production and reproduction of loyalty, civility, political competence and trust in authority are never the work of the state alone’. In this regard, the nation-state is unable to reproduce the conditions of its existence if distanced and alienated from civil society. Gramsci conceived civil society in an agency-centred way relative to earlier structuralist accounts (like that of Marx). He thus claimed that civil society had the potential, as a theatre of struggle, to be a liberating zone of counter-hegemonic resistance to state power by the popular classes (Baker 2002). His account though is largely functionalist, in that he saw strong civil societies as existing to reproduce liberal capitalist democracies without exploring their historical origin (Burawoy 2003). However, contemporary usages of the concept of civil society show a marked deviation from the more classical approaches.

4.3 Civil Society as Radical Anti-Politics

In Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary in the years immediately preceding the end of communist rule, radical scholars and movements viewed civil society (at least initially) as counter-hegemonic, but not in terms of impacting directly on the state whether in a reformist or revolutionary manner (Baker 2002). Rather, in the face of totalitarian rule, civil society was an end in itself, or a form of autonomous social democracy involving pluralist and not monist self-organization and self-management, including economic democracy. This social organizing was completely divorced from any totalizing politics from above, and was encapsulated in the notions of ‘the self-limiting revolution’ and ‘anti-politics’. Any democratizing of the state through civil society was understood simply as a by-product in what was essentially a society-centric notion of civil society.
(disinterested in seizing state power) rather than a state-centric notion. The relationship between this notion of civil society, liberal democratic institutions and socialist democracy was however never properly articulated.

A Latin American Left-leaning discourse on civil society arose during the 1970s and 1980s, and it also entailed a positive notion of civil society as ‘anti-politics’. Years of military rule in countries such as Uruguay and Chile highlighted the need for the defence of civil and political liberties, and the re-discovery of civil society by the Left arose from both tactics and theory. Civil society was seen as popular resistance and counter-hegemonic, but – in a post-Marxist vein – much of the class content of Gramsci’s formulations was ignored or downplayed. For instance, the authoritarian state was seen as simply dominating society by constituting and structuring it, rather than civil society also dominating the state through a specific form of class rule. The struggle was perceived as between democracy and authoritarianism, and without any notion of revolutionary subjects waging war against capitalism. Seeking state power was seen as problematic because of military coups, so a gradualist construction of popular hegemony within civil society as a sort of anti-politics became the only option. Civil society could open or maintain a political space outside state control for popular initiatives instead of necessarily placing demands on the nation-state.

In the case of both communist Europe and authoritarian Latin America, Baker claims that Marx was turned on his head: ‘[C]ivil society came ... to represent the realm of freedom which the very annexation of civil society by the state, and the subsequent “totalisation” of power, had precluded. The Marxian defence of the oppressed of civil society through the state had become the defence of the state-oppressed through civil society.’ (Baker 2002:p.32) Yet, the society-centred nature of this formulation was more radical than the domesticated liberal version of civil society that arose or was re-popularized later, including throughout much of Africa. The radical version of civil society involved a distinctive social movement approach to civil society (which was also taken up by post-Marxists in Western Europe) but some writers have argued that it is potentially destructive of civility (Femia 2001:pp.145-146). Nevertheless, this approach stressed
self-organization and a concern with popular hegemony; it rejected state politics and emphasized autonomy from not just the state but also from corporatist institutions and political parties; and it advocated internal democracy involving the re-socialization of power as part of an ongoing and revolutionary anti-politics.

In a sense, this radical politics privileged civil society at the expense of the state, rather than propagating a notion of civil society against or simply orientated toward the state. According to anti-politics, ‘the accepted wisdom of the ruling party ideologies of modernity that the state is sovereign undermines the politics of everyday life… Thus it was from this normative position, and not just out of pragmatism, that flowed the rejection of traditional state-directed oppositional strategies, whether revolutionary or reformist. What was sought after was nothing less than the democracy of civil society.’ (Baker 2002:p.89) More recently, the Zapatismo movement in southern Mexico epitomized this view of civil society. But it has rarely been articulated in academic discourse since the early 1990s. However, Holloway’s intriguing theory about changing the world through social revolution but without taking state power entails a society-centric notion of revolution. And it draws heavily on the non-instrumentalist notion of civil society as radical anti-politics (Holloway 2003).

4.4 Domesticating Civil Society: Liberalism and Post-Marxism

Over the past few decades, the notion and usage of ‘civil society’ has been in large part domesticated by liberalism. The liberal concept has achieved hegemonic status within the global development ‘industry’, and intermediary NGOs throughout the South and East wax eloquently about it. It is based on an instrumentalist or thing view of civil society as a formidable weapon for democratizing the nation-state, rather than viewing civil society as an end-in-itself. Building counter-hegemony or at least civil opposition is deemed appropriate under authoritarian conditions for promoting the transition to liberal capitalist democracy. However, in the process of consolidating democracy during the post-transition period, civil society is considered less worthy of mobilization and
must be constrained so as not to disturb a ‘peaceful transition’. Civil society must simply prod the reformed state so that it lives up to its democratic mandate, and ensure that the liberal status quo and the market economy are preserved against authoritarian counter-moves. Thus Bratton (1994:p.13) notes how the ‘conclusion of a political transition can have demobilizing consequences for civil society’. The social processes and linkages between civil society and democracy, however, remain elusive or are unspecified in the liberal civil society literature. As well, well-researched comparative studies of transitions from authoritarian rule to democratic government indicate that transitions to – and consolidations of – democracy are much more complicated and contingent than this literature seems to suggest (Casper and Taylor 1996).

This civil society approach sees democracy per se as almost external to civil society and lodged rather (in a statist fashion) in political parties and government. Further, civil society and its organizations have no legitimacy independent of their democratization role, and their strengths and weaknesses are defined purely in terms of this role vis-à-vis the state (Baker 2002). Indeed, the liberal capitalist state, and intriguingly the capitalist market, are not made problematic but are treated as historical givens, and are considered as the very foundations of a strong and vibrant civil society. The post-Marxist position that seeks to build democracy from within the capitalist system is not considerably different in this regard. Thus, Walzer (a Radical Democrat) argues for a more ‘critical associationalism’ involving an independent rather than a deferential civil society, and he claims that the state ‘frames civil society… It fixes the boundary conditions and the basic rules of all associational activity… Only a democratic state can create a democratic civil society; only a democratic civil society can sustain a democratic state.’ (Walzer 1992:pp.103, 104, 105)

In contemporary thinking, in both liberal and post-Marxist perspectives, civil society is ‘by definition, participatory’ (Bratton 1994:p.3) and it therefore has pronounced voluntarist and moral connotations. In liberal democratic and pluralist theory, democracy proper is seen as enacted by the state, but civil society has a regulatory role and is critical for ensuring that the state implements its democratic programmes. ‘Civil society’ was
initially revived amongst radical thinkers in the capitalist West in the late 1960s as they became disaffected with Marxism and the old Communist parties in Western Europe, and turned to the new social movements for political inspiration. The Radical Democrats though have abandoned Marx’s concerns with the bourgeois and class nature of civil society, and they speak about the particularistic pluralisms of ‘post-modern’ civil society largely devoid of economic relations. Civil society becomes ‘the realm of consent’ where citizenship is actively expressed (Bratton 1994:p.4). Or, as Walzer puts it, civil society is ‘the space of uncoerced human association and also the set of relationship networks – formed for the sake of family, faith, interest and ideology – that fill this space.’ (Walzer 1992:p.89; Edwards 1998)

Unlike in the case of Marx, civil society is not the problem for Radical Democrats but is rather the solution, because it deepens and consolidates the democratic basis of the bourgeois liberal state through a more popular sovereignty. Thus, the ‘expression of civic interests does not extend to efforts to gain and exercise control over state power’ (Bratton 1994:p.4) but simply to influence it from the outside in a sort of revisionist politics. In both the liberal and Radical Democrat versions, power is reified and is located in (and reallocated between) the state and civil society in a sort of zero sum power equation. Civil society is clearly viewed in instrumentalist terms in building democracy. In specific relation to NGOs as part of civil society, this would mean that they ‘either insert themselves … within the liberal critique of the state’s actions, or else limit their activity to the sphere of civil society – which, defined in opposition to the state, also ends at the boundaries of liberal politics.’ (Sader 2002:p.93)

This approach ‘turns the civil society “solution” away from problems posed to society arising from “below” (i.e. untrammelled individualism) and exclusively towards threats from “above” [the state]’ (Baker 2002:p.8). But it also involves turning Hegel on his head. Whereas Hegel saw the state as moderating and reconciling the particulars of civil society, this domesticated approach sees civil society as the ‘incarnation of reason’ (Nyimande and Sikhosana 1995:p.31) and the universalizing mode of social organization and guarantor of democracy, much like ‘free’ marketers depict the capitalist market. This
is what Baker (2002:p.159) calls a ‘de-economised version of civil society’. This version
demonizes the modern state but obscures its bourgeois form, as did the radical civil
society perspective in Eastern Europe and Latin America. Capitalist society becomes
compartmentalized, fragmented and partitioned out according to the tripartite realms of
the economy, the state and civil society, and thus its totalizing logic, even if not
understood as fully sutured, is not analyzed or engaged with in political theory and
practice. Civil society, as Marx understood it, is thereby sanitized and cleansed because
the concept now ‘masks the class nature of its components’ (Sader 2002:p.93) and it
manifests ‘a preference for reform over revolution’ (Bratton 1994:p.1).

As Nyimande and Sikhosana put it (1995:p.28) from a classical Marxist position, ‘the
state and “civil society” cannot simply be seen as [externally related] opposites but a
complex articulation of the rule of the bourgeoisie under modern conditions’. In other
words, in a position consistent with the argument of this thesis that NGOs are the
embodiment in organizational form of specific sets of contradictory social relations,
classical Marxism conceptualizes civil society (and the state) as a form of social relations
and thereby transcends the object-subject dichotomy inherent in the dominant civil
society discourse (Corrigan et al. 1978). In terms of this discourse, fragmentation and
discontinuities prevail within civil society, and ‘no single agent of human liberation can
even be theorized’ (Ehrenberg 1998:p.6) about in a renewed grand narrative or
constructed through a reinvigorated practice.

Thus, the dominant – liberal and post-Marxist – view depicts civil society as the
universalizing logic inherent in liberal capitalist societies that opposes the particularistic
interests of the state, and thus it becomes the driving force behind processes of
democratic modernity. This conceptualization of civil society is based on a sociological
behaviourism that treats ‘the state’ and ‘civil society’ as externally related and interacting
as subjects and objects. It fails to deconstruct ‘civil society’ under capitalism, and
underplays the moment of social domination contained within it. Contradictions internal
to civil society become displaced and take the form of tensions between civil society and
the state. This approach offers an un-deconstructed ‘empiricist’ account of civil society.
In contrast, as suggested above, I claim that civil society invariably embodies antagonistic social relations, and is marked by both ‘contradiction’ and ‘domination’. It stands within, rather than outside, capitalist social relations and the inequalities these entail.

4.5 Civil Society in the South and East – Against the State and Tradition

Considerable debate exists amongst social scientists about the applicability of the concept of ‘civil society’ to nations of the South and East, and about the pervasiveness and strength of civil societies in these regions. For instance, liberal modernization theories regularly imply that the unavailability of civic forms of sociability and civil norms prevented indigenous peoples from responding in a modern rational way to the civilizing mission of colonialism, and that this explains in part the uncivil and violent forms of resistance to colonial rule. Mamdani’s influential work (1996) on citizens and subjects insinuates that, under colonialism, civil society in Africa was spatially restricted to the urban centres amongst colonizers and the indigenous petty-bourgeois class. If civil society is understood as involving modern associational life based on ‘un-coerced human action’ (Edwards 1998:p.3) and on notions of equality, contract and autonomy, then indigenous civil society during colonialism probably was the ‘domain of the elite’ (Chatterjee 2001:p.174) seeking to replicate Western modernity in its own lives but on its own terms.

Many social historians and anthropologists claim though that such civility was also common in pre-colonial societies in India and China. Yet, even this claim takes as a given the Eurocentric definition of civil society that remains hegemonic within Western academic and NGO circles (Hann and Dunn eds. 1996). Goody notes that ‘there is a kind of moral evaluation attached to the very concepts of civility [and civil society], rationality, and enlightenment, qualities that are seen as contributing to the so-called European miracle and that are necessarily unique to the West.’ (Goody 2001:p.153) In other words, like modernity itself, civility and civil society are socially contested notions
that often reveal more about the (ethnocentric) designator than the (uncivil) designated. Certainly, the concept of civility is open to alternative renditions of modernity, such that some writers argue for the existence of ‘indigenous traditions of “civility” if not “civil society”’ (Kaviraj 2001:p.322).

For post-colonial Africa, the space for indigenous urban civil society has opened up, yet the rural population has remained relegated to ‘the fringes of civil society’ because democratization has been a largely urban phenomenon (Sachikonye 1995:p.6). However, anti-colonial nationalist movements, both in their pre- and post-independence guise, have played a critical role in restricting and confining civil society in Africa. This is the case not only with reference to customary power in rural society, as Mamdani (1996) has convincingly shown in the case of sub-Saharan Africa, but even amongst the urban population. Friedman, for instance, highlights the antagonistic relation between civil society and anti-colonialism in his analysis of the emergence of the concept within the anti-apartheid movement in the late 1980s. He argues that it breaks ‘with a powerful strain in resistance rhetoric’ (Friedman 1992:p.83) that had sought to submerge pluralistic interests in the name of ‘the struggle’, although he doubts the sincerity of its usage by anti-apartheid activists. Nevertheless, theorists like Kaviraj claim that ‘[t]he secret of the immense power of the [post-colonial] nation-states was not the inheritance from colonialism but from their national mobilization. Through the national movements, these elites laid claim to a right to mobilize all sections of society, and extended the state’s influence over all spheres of social life. This is one significant paradox of post-colonial “civil society” or rather its absence… Thus the historical circumstances in which colonial nationalism laid hold of the state and became the state of the nation … were not propitious for the continued growth of a “civil society” after independence.’ (Kaviraj 2001:p.314)

The post-colonial developmental ideology, as a universalizing clarion call for nation-building and national reconstruction, was used as a key basis for demobilizing and controlling civil society as part of a centripetal social engineering process. A robust civil society was unnecessary because the dominant political party claimed to constitute and
embody the nation, and thus an alternative form of universality (namely civil society) was redundant for purposes of social transformation. Even non-civil communal sociability in agrarian areas was harnessed and controlled by the post-colonial state, very much like it was under colonial times (Mamdani 1996). The post-colonial state in Africa has sought to subordinate any legitimacy found in local institutions to its own ends, and this has involved reconfiguring traditional sociabilities (or re-inventing tradition) and co-opting the civility of modern associabilities into its nation-building agendas. Yet, as Bratton shows, a range of voluntary and autonomous civic organizations arose in post-colonial Africa, including trading networks, women’s groups and farmer organizations in the rural areas. But he argues that civic norms like reciprocity ‘are difficult to construct under conditions of mass economic privation and great social inequalities’ (Bratton 1994:p.9) and that civic-type groups tend to incorporate neo-patrimonial relations within their internal structures.

In discussions of civil society in Africa, the concept is not only contrasted to the state. It is also compared, in typical modernist and modernization language, to communitarian forms of social organization (‘the community’) that predominated in pre-colonial Africa and that continue to structure (in particular) rural social realities. This is the import of the notion, as found in African studies, of ‘patrimonial’ (patron-client) relations as a kind of restructured communitarian relation (Chabal and Daloz 1999). The existence of ‘patrimonial’ relations in contemporary Africa, in contrast to what supposedly exists in ‘developed’ nations, is highly questionable. Often, this ‘patrimonial’ designation is employed in a Eurocentric manner in propagating the claim that Africa is mired in traditional practices that result in local democratic deficits. Thus, the dominant perspective on civil society perceives these traditional loyalties, which are called ‘identitarian solidarities of a sub-national character’ (Khilnani 2001:p.28), as retrogressive particulars that work against civil society formation. They can undermine the ‘unequivocally progressive’ (Kaviraj 2001:p.297) and universalizing content of civil society and its democratic endeavours vis-à-vis the nation-state.
At times, ‘the communal’ falls outside the very boundaries of ‘the social’ (and is therefore unsocial or even antisocial) and is part of the ‘pre-history’ of Africa. Thus the tripartite division of modern societies into the economic, the political and the social involves a definition of ‘the social’ by civil society ideologues as autonomous and contractual modern sociability rather than as imposed and totalizing solidarities as found (it is argued) in pre-modern ‘un-sociability’. As Kaviraj (2001:p.305) notes: ‘It has been argued that the proper working of a modern constitutional state requires a distinction not merely between state and other [civil] organizations in society, but the sphere of non-state organizations being governed by Gesellschaft-like [civil] principles.’

The nation-state in Africa is seen as an instigator or at least an accomplice in reproducing Gemeinschaft-like or communal identities in agrarian areas through reinvented forms of tradition. This means that civil society is up against not only modern authoritarianism but also pre-modern communalism, both of which entail totalizing compulsions and commitments contrary to contractual civility. Civil society also becomes a mechanism for transforming rural un-civilities into more modern civil forms of sociability. This point is particularly relevant to rural development in contemporary Africa. The development industry sees participatory development as, amongst other things, a basis for encouraging modern forms of social organization in rural Africa. Yet, traditional associations – reified as ‘culture’ by the development industry – undermine this modernist endeavour. Often, the causes of the development crisis in Africa become wholly internal to Africa and are thus de-globalized. They are reduced to the weaknesses of national civil societies or, in other words, to civil societies that have not fully universalized themselves (spatially) within the confines of a particular nation-state. This goes contrary to the thrust of this thesis, which seeks to embed an understanding of ‘land’ developments in the tensions between ‘the local’ and ‘the global’.
4.6 Civil Society, NGOs and the Nation-State in Africa

Discussions of NGOs, civil society and the state in contemporary Africa are prominent within the ‘empiricist’ trend of sociological behaviourism. In the ‘empiricist’ literature, it is commonly argued that a wave of democratization has swept across the African continent in recent years, notably with the rise of multi-party states during the 1990s (AACC and MWENGO eds. 1993). The literature on Africa is replete with references to the role of civil society in general and NGOs in particular (as instruments) in this process of political democratization. Thus, there is talk about a ‘revitalised’ civil society ‘flexing its muscles’ (Zack-Williams 2001:pp.217, 218); about a ‘rich network of civil society structures’ in southern Africa growing ‘in strength and experience’ (Molutsi 1999:p.188); about civil societies being at ‘the cutting edge’ of the democratization process in Kenya and Uganda and how NGOs have been central in ‘pluralising and strengthening civil society’ (Okuku 2002:pp.81, 82); and about the ‘rebirth of civil society’ analyzed as a ‘political anthropology of anger’ to capture ‘the emotional dimension of the protest movements’ (Monga 1996:pp.10, 11, 147). At times, NGO analysts have spoken in very glowing if not glorifying terms, such as Nyang’oro who claims that it is ‘now taken for granted that NGOs are probably the leading agents in the democratization process.’ (Nyang’oro, 1999:p.3) Others like Ndegwa (1996), who discusses ‘the two faces of civil society’ in Kenya, are much more cautious in their assessment of NGOs and democratization, and they are sensitive to considerable variation in the historical experiences of intermediary NGOs. This thesis is particularly cognizant of the existence of significant historical diversity in the experiences of NGOs, and it seeks to develop a perspective that is able to account for this diversity.

Much of the literature focuses on the relation between state and society, and it uses the term ‘civil society’ instrumentally in a state-centric fashion as a (potential) force in democratizing the authoritarian state under African conditions. There is a symbiotic relationship between a strong civil society and a strong state, and thus a ‘weak’ state is not in the interests of NGOs and civil society in the push for democracy. There is,
however, conceptual confusion around the notions of ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ states. Questions arise as to whether, despite its heavy-handed interventions within the realm of civil societies, the African state is currently weak or strong. In general, theorists on state and society in Africa claim that the state is weak. Therefore, van de Walle speaks of the state as ‘small and underdeveloped’ and ‘relatively weak and vulnerable’ (van de Walle 2002:p.76), and Mandaza says that it is ‘so weak and dependent that it develops anti-democratic tendencies’ (Mandaza 1994:p.269). In specific relation to the agricultural sector, the state is marked by ‘institutional incapacity, bureaucratic inertia … and the inability of state institutions to initiate or implement policies’ (Puplampu and Tettey 2000:p.251).

MWENGO (2000b:p.47), as a regional NGO body in southern and east Africa, agrees wholeheartedly. It thus claims that NGOs in Africa perceive the state ‘as inefficient, ineffective and unable to make any meaningful contribution to their development initiatives.’ In this regard, it is important to distinguish between the scope of state activities, which may be broad, and the power of the state, which may simultaneously be quite limited (Fukuyama 2004). The weaknesses of the African state are sometimes seen as rooted in its particularistic (and uncivil) neo-patrimonial qualities, in which the spoils of the state are subject to the whims and wishes of elite groupings or ‘big men’ in African society (Chabal and Daloz 1999). The role of civil society in the context of a weak (and authoritarian) nation-state is to build a ‘strong’ (and more modern) democratic state. In terms of the dominant perspective, civil society thereby challenges the authoritarian leanings of the state in Africa and seeks to change it, normally through influencing electoral politics as for instance during the twilight years of the Kuanda regime in Zambia.

In the post-transition period of democratic consolidation, civil society recognizes the need to work alongside the state: ‘[T]he strength of civil society, and of NGOs in particular, lies not in opposing the state but co-operating with it’ (Ikiara 1999:p.68). In stressing the synergy between a strong state and a strong civil society in forging democracy and development, there are ‘real dangers … in nurturing a strong civil society
while ignoring the weakness of an ineffective state’, and thus it becomes important, when possible, to deepen the organizational capacity of the state both nationally and sub-nationally (Whaites 1998:p.344). As Robinson puts it, ‘if state capacity is weakened by cutbacks in administration and by fostering greater market penetration in areas traditionally under its mandate, there is a distinct possibility that NGO efforts to exert more influence over public policy and the allocation of public resources will be undermined.’ Hence, the needs exists ‘to preserve the capacity of the state to determine the policy agenda and to formulate policy while being flexible and involving NGOs and interest groups in policy implementation and policy dialogue.’ (Robinson 1994:pp.42-43) International NGOs – with considerable bilateral donor support – often seek to build institutions of state governance and administration as part of their development initiatives.

The claim that civil society in Africa invariably challenges the authoritarian state and builds democratic institutions tends to conflate the normative and descriptive connotations of the civil society notion. In other words, civil society is romanticized. Concrete developments in Africa indicate that the specific relation between the state on the one hand and civil society and NGOs on the other is contingent on national, political and historical dynamics. The range and intensity of political relations that exist or have existed between the nation-state and NGOs in Africa is almost unlimited. States collaborate with, co-opt, regulate and repress NGOs; and NGOs co-operate with, support, mobilize against and oppose states (Hadenius and Uggla 1996). Even when NGO-state relations are cordial there will likely be only limited formal consultation on national development plans. Yet normally there are ongoing informal arrangements between NGOs and certain line ministries based on goodwill and trust established over the years.

NGOs (as part of civil society) increasingly recognize the need for forms of synergy and connectivity amongst themselves and they see the symbiosis, at least in principle, between development and rights. For example, in Kenya, developmental NGOs realize that ‘almost all development provisioning programmes tend to spawn some problems that require the assertion of certain rights. … Similarly, rights advancement groups have
discovered that one cannot enforce rights in conditions of poverty.’ (Gnunyi 1999:pp.133-134) The latter point means that rights activists often need to directly address the material conditions of the working classes in order to ‘embed’ themselves amongst these classes. NGOs that may co-operate and strategize on certain matters often disagree on approaches to the state. This for instance is evidenced on the question of state legislation and registration of their organizations, issues that are very much alive in most countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

Some NGOs propose almost complete independence from the state for fear of loss of their identity and autonomy and because of political restrictions on and conditioning of their space, while others argue for a minimalist state and enlightened policy and legislation that provide a strong enabling environment for NGOs. Also, some NGOs, such as development agencies and those building peace at times of heightened ethnic conflict, see little option but to engage with the state on an almost ‘partnership’ basis. Their ‘non-governmental’ status thus becomes highly dubious. Simultaneously, other NGOs such as those that monitor human rights abuses or state corruption may find themselves in an almost perpetual position of disengagement from the state. Thus, NGOs (like civil society groups more generally) seem to sometimes straddle the options known as ‘voice’ and ‘exit’, depending on the conjuncture.

Nevertheless, in most of southern and eastern Africa, governments in recent years have claimed that NGOs are violating the conditions of their registration and are seeking to occupy political space that is best left to political parties. On the other hand, NGOs claim that governments continue not simply to co-ordinate or regulate their activities in a minimalist manner but rather in a sinister way try to co-opt and if necessary repress them. NGO practitioners and activists argue that states should think otherwise, and that ‘the contribution of civic organisations to social development should be explicitly recognised by government, and their legitimacy enshrined in the constitution of each country’ (Yaansah and Simon 1997:p.131). In this way, states should recognize NGOs as full partners in the development process and consequently accord them democratic and legal space. NGOs argue that they will flourish in an enabling policy and legal framework
enacted by the state, and thus ‘sound laws and regulations can play a crucial role in
empowering the NGO sector, and in continuing to enhance its ability to respond in an
accountable and professional manner to the needs of society.’ (Stuurman 1997:p.9)
Without a benevolent legal regime for registration and incorporation, NGOs are subject
to arbitrary actions by the central state and are not given the legal space and the right to
pursue their goals of social equity and justice.

Civil society itself is sometimes romanticized by NGOs as inherently democratic and
progressive in form and content. It was critical to the dislodging of colonial regimes in
Africa and elsewhere and it is now seen as a necessary condition for the advancement of
modern pluralism and democracy. Thus Stewart notes ‘civil society is eulogised as the
ultimate medicinal compound, capable of curing ills from ethnic conflict to authoritarian
regimes.’ (Stewart 1997:p.16) In this regard the struggle for justice and emancipation is
conceived as a simple dichotomy between an undemocratic state and a democratic civil
society. Yet, Okuku (2002:pp.82, 83) argues that ‘African civil society may be capable
of no more than modest, tentative and often reversible contributions to democratisation’
and ‘civil society may be a significant reservoir of authoritarianism and anti-democratic
values’. Potentially, a strong civil society may be anything but democratic and
progressive. As this thesis argues with specific reference to intermediary NGOs, civil
society in its formal organized sense is a diverse and contradictory social realm that is
riddled with internal tensions and conflicts revolving around sectional and particularistic
interests. While altruistic, equalizing and democratic values may not be intrinsic to civil
society, the mandate of NGOs as intermediary organizations is to bring about and embed
these qualities within broader civil society.

The robustness and strength of civil society is open to historical and national variations
and derive not from the sheer number and size of civic groupings but from their
pluralistic, competitive and interlinking nature along with their capacity to define, defend
and assert their space vis-à-vis the state. The critical qualities of civil society necessary
for the development of political democracy include, according to Hadenius and Ugglal
(1996:p.1623), ‘organizational plurality and autonomy, a democratic structure, [and] a
broad popular base’. In this regard, whether they are developmental or advocacy groups, NGOs are supposed to empower grassroots communities, pluralize the civil society environment and thereby capacitate it: ‘The ultimate aim of the work of NGOs must be to strengthen civil society and not competition with the state or among themselves for the delivery of charity.’ (AACC and MWENGO eds. 1993:p.84)

However, NGOs sometimes seem to have contrary trends and results. Dzimbiri speaks of ‘deep rooted and endemic problems in the NGO community in Malawi. The result of this is a loss of commitment and support by members and consequent fragmentation of the NGO community and weakening position of this important sector of civil society.’ (Dzimbiri 1999:p.157) A more general critique is offered by Jaffer as secretary of the NGO Coalition for Eastern Africa: ‘In an African context, the space for small community-based initiatives to promote voluntary action for local change is drowned out by the cacophony of large, policy-oriented, advocacy-pushing, service provision NGOs whose budgets may well outstrip those of government departments.’ (Jaffer 1997:p.66) There continues to be a strong need for building alliances and coalitions within the NGO sector, for synergy and connectivity, and for a more inclusive, responsive and responsible approach to civil society more generally.

The portrayal of civil society and NGOs in the ‘empiricist’ literature on Africa highlights many of the general claims made in this thesis about the liberal and Radical Democratic conception of civil society. African ‘civil societies’ are in large part conceptualized instrumentally, and are seen as critical players in advancing democracy initiatives against the retrogressive particularisms of the nation-state and rural un-civilities. Although tensions within civil society are recognized, the contradictions between civil society and these particularisms are invariably brought to the fore. Ultimately, civil societies are the universalizing logic that can rectify serious state weaknesses and bring modernity to the rural areas throughout the African continent. The thrust of this thesis clearly debunks this perspective, as I seek to highlight the contradictory quality of the world and work of intermediary NGOs and their ‘retrogressive’ tendencies.
4.7 Civil Society, NGOs and the Global Development System

A similar instrumentalist argument about civil society also exists in relation to the worldwide development system, particularly as advanced by the ‘structuralist’ trend within sociological behaviourism. Global capital has for many years sought to restructure the political economies of nations in the South and East. This has been seen in the SAPs (Structural Adjustment Programmes) of the 1980s, in the New Policy Agenda of the 1990s (Clayton ed. 1994) and in more recent ‘good governance’ policies (Federico 2004) designed ‘to create conditions for international capital accumulation across the world economy’ (Zack-Williams 2001:p.213). The notion of ‘good’ governance, based on liberal democratic premises, is a universalizing notion and implies that certain policies are valid without spatial and temporal restrictions (Arrighi 2002:p.18). This entails, at least in part, bypassing the nation-state and thus sidestepping its sovereignty in order to expand the benefits of sovereignty to the sub-state level (Inayatullah 1996). However, the most recent approach of the multilateral bodies sees a revitalized and reactivated role for the state as part of a process of state and institutional reform in enhancing liberal democratic structures and the value and effectiveness of development aid (Stern 2002, Coady et al. 2004).

Yet the development industry, led by multilateral financial institutions such as the World Bank – ‘the bank of the North’ according to Amin (1997:p.54) – is also seeking to reconfigure postcolonial societies through a ‘process of social re-engineering’ (Jenkins 2001:p.251). The preferred weapon of mass reconstruction is civil society, including civic NGOs with good governance programmes on human rights, constitutionalism, anti-corruption and transparency. This is what Kaviraj calls a ‘robust, businesslike constructivist argument’ made by external forces involving ‘institutional graft’, and he argues that this ‘theory of forcible conversion of peoples into unknowing users of Western political theory is unrealistic’ (Kaviraj 2001:p.312). Edwards speaks of the possibility of similar dangers in this form of engineering, particularly if the external agenda not only entails establishing enabling conditions conducive to the development of
civil society but also involves forcibly shaping the form and content of civil societies. He says that this might ‘corrupt the authenticity of civic action’ and claims that ‘[i]nstrumentalising civil society erodes its potential to be a motor for change, since – as the prisoners of someone else’s agenda – civic groups are less likely to take risks, innovate, and challenge’ (Edwards 1998:pp.7, 11). And, quite possibly, civic groups will be seen by the nation-state as ‘agents of foreign interests’ (Bratton 1994: p.9), especially considering their dependence on foreign funding.

The instrumentalist argument about donors using civil society for their own agenda is a common one and not restricted to Africa. For instance, in relation to Latin America, Sader speaks of ‘the use of NGOs as agents for neoliberalism within civil society’ (Sader 2002:p.92). With regard to Africa (particularly South Africa, Ghana and Uganda), Hearn claims, in true instrumentalist fashion, that ‘donors have been successful in influencing the current version of civil society ... so that a vocal, well-funded section of it, which intervenes on key issues of national development strategy, acts not as a force for challenging the status quo, but for building societal consensus for maintaining it.’ (Hearn 2001:p.44) From this perspective, then, the aid community has adopted an instrumentalist conception of civil society and the ‘structuralist’ trend has simply bought into this conception.

Therefore, global capital has played a key role in fashioning civil society ‘to suit its own unique culture and purposes’ (Jenkins 2001:p.251) in bringing about desired economic and political adjustments in Africa. To quote Jenkins (2001) in detail: ‘Foreign-aid programmes of advanced capitalist “northern” countries have identified civil society as the key ingredient in promoting “democratic development” in the economically less-developed states of the “south”. The logic runs roughly as follows. Development requires sound policies and impartial implementation. These can only be delivered by governments that are held accountable for their actions. Accountability, in turn, depends upon the existence of “autonomous centres of social and economic power” that can act as watchdogs over the activities of politicians and government officials.... [A]id to the “democracy and governance sector” , as it has increasingly come to be known within the
profession, must be earmarked to support ... individual associations [civil society]’ (Jenkins 2001:p.252). The ‘structuralist’ trend reproduces this ‘logic’ in theoretical garb, without detailing the mechanisms and processes by which it unfolds.

Recent World Bank publications clearly show that democratic governance means initiating and supporting neo-liberal economic policy reforms. The World Bank has abandoned its minimalist view of the state in the South and East, and calls for a more ‘activist’ state in implementing reforms (World Bank 1998, 2002). It seeks to build the organizational capacity of nation-states and thereby enhance their regulatory and supportive functions vis-à-vis the reforming national economies. Yet, this puts ‘greater responsibility on the shoulders of African elites and governments … for the failure of their economies to recover’ (Arrighi 2002:p.4). In this regard, civil society can be a disciplining tool like the clock in early industrial capitalism, and like colonialism, this external agenda seems far from civil and liberating. This analysis of global capital and civil society by the ‘structuralist’ trend in sociological behaviourism deconstructs the international development system and neatly reveals the structures of global domination, but it does not move beyond this. It reifies the power of ‘the donors’ and over-privileges instrumentalism. Contradictions between ‘the global’ and ‘the local’ are ignored.

4.8 ‘Uncivil’ Society and Democratic Change

Finally, it is necessary to consider whether democratic change in Africa is necessarily linked to civil society and NGOs. Are other forms of sociability, even if mostly uncivil from the perspective of the prevailing legal and constitutional norms, not worthy of consideration in promoting progressive social change? Monga argues that there has been an urban bias in theories of democracy and that ‘[p]olitical scientists are all too ready to view the democratic process as an exclusively urban phenomenon’. There is what he calls the ‘rural passivity argument’ that assumes political inertia amongst the rural population (Monga 1996:pp.27, 29). This takes us back to the notion of glocal modernities. As noted earlier, untarnished communal forms of social organization and
action do not exist in contemporary Africa. Yet forms of sociability that do not rigidly conform to the principles of modern civil society and that involve therefore ‘uncivil’ forms of mediation between state and society should nevertheless be seen as ‘ways of coping with the modern’ (Chatterjee 2001:pp.172-173) and as forces for modern change.

This is the import of Gould’s excellent study of rural Zambia. For example, he notes how under colonialism, rural Zambians were involved in ‘an extended and intensive engagement with colonial power’. In this context, he argues that many rural people ‘entered into an intense and prolonged struggle to capture the essence of colonial modernity, and to make it over in African likeness. If resistance to the penetration of modern ideals and practices often reflected … a simple desire of African societies to protect their autonomy, it is equally so that some … strove to co-opt these very images and institutions to enhance their personal or corporate powers of negotiation.’ (Gould 1997:p.5 his emphasis) Clearly, the engagement by pre-modern societies with modern processes was an ambivalent form of struggle. Just as tradition has been constantly re-invented, so has modernity been reconfigured and restructured in a multitude of ways. The point is that these alternative modernities may not only be fundamentally different from ‘the well-structured, principled and constitutionally sanctioned relations’ between state and civil society (Chatterjee 2001:p.178), but they might involve outright violations of the law such as land invasions and destruction of property.

Rural inhabitants, for instance, may engage in actions ranging from ‘political mendicancy to spontaneous violence’ (Kaviraj 2001:p.317), and these may not only lie outside the niceties of associational civility but they may undermine and resist it. According to Bratton (1994:p.5), associational life of a civic kind ‘will be stunted in a context of political violence, in the absence of the rule of law’. As Edwards (1998:p.6) neatly puts it, ‘[i]t is difficult to be civil if you are starving’. These uncivil actions should not be romanticized as heroic forms of peasant struggle, particularly if they manifest violent and undemocratic tendencies. But it is not uncommon to find all un-civic forms of action degraded and even condemned outright by ‘civilized’ groups in a seemingly knee-jerk fashion. This point will come to the fore in the discussion of intermediary NGOs in
contemporary Zimbabwe in the context of the uncivil Third Chimurenga. The work of ‘land’ NGOs was almost torn asunder by this land movement, and NGOs had to handle the ambivalences of their world in an increasingly turbulent social field.

4.9 Civil Society and NGOs: Beyond Instrumentalism and Functionalism

In the academic literature on NGOs, civil society is generally conceived in largely instrumentalist terms. The ‘structuralist’ trend (Amin 1997, Hearn 2001, Sader 2002) sees civil society as an ‘instrument’ of others in reproducing the interests of global forces and in so doing it over-privileges ‘domination’ in the relationship between global capital and civil society. The ‘empiricist’ trend (AACC and MWENGO eds. 1993, Stuurman and de Villiers eds. 1997, Nyang’oro ed. 1999) conceives civil society as an ‘instrument’ for democratization vis-à-vis the state and pre-modern sociabilities and, as a result, over-privileges ‘contradiction’ in the relationship between civil society and the nation-state. Both trends engage in a form of sociological behaviourism based on external relations and the subject-object dichotomy.

In the case of the ‘empiricist’ trend, this involves a methodology limited to examining un-deconstructed concrete totalities. Civil society is a weapon to be forged and used against authoritarian states and for building liberal capitalist democracies. The functionality of civil society is constantly reiterated. Indeed, overall, the ‘empiricist’ trend appears to be more interested in evaluating and assessing the effectiveness of civil society – and NGOs more specifically – than in offering an understanding and explanation of NGO practices. Thus, civil society may be weak, it may be divided and, at times, it may be retrogressive and anything but civil. Yet, ultimately, it serves one purpose and one purpose only – the building of democratic nation-states. If it fails to serve this purpose, then it must be recalled, subjected to maintenance and honed. This instrumentalist-cum-functionalist conceptualization of civil society is also prominent within the ‘structuralist’ trend when it examines civil society as wholly subservient to the
international development system. This is based on a methodology that restricts analysis to un-reconstructed abstract totalities.

Neither trend within sociological behaviourism is particularly useful in understanding the complex world and work of NGOs. Intermediary NGOs are a specific form of contradictory social relations and they are embedded in a social field of ambivalence. Depicting in an ‘instrumentalist’ fashion the social interfaces that delimit the world of NGOs fails to properly ‘capture’ the ways in which NGOs seek to manoeuvre their way in and through their ambivalent world through organizational practices richly endowed with meaning. As a result, a sociological analysis of NGOs must go beyond a functionalist framework that identifies the effectiveness of civil society in furthering foreign interests or in establishing liberal democracy. Failure to do this leads on a regular basis to teleological accounts of NGO practices. It is thus imperative that sociology understands the genesis of organizational effects, and this involves ‘going inside’ the world of NGOs and offering ‘thick descriptions’ of their organizational practices. Such an analysis highlights the fact that ‘organizational effects’ are the outcome of contingent and ‘negotiated’ processes in which NGOs are actively involved.
Chapter 5

Development, Agrarian Communities and Global Donors

NGOs, particularly rural NGOs, are said to ‘do’ development or at least to intervene or engage in development. In fact, NGOs that work in rural areas have been designated as Non-Governmental Development Organizations or NGDOs (Fowler 2000). They are defined in the NGO literature – and by themselves – in a development-centric manner rather than in an agrarian-centric manner. The ‘empiricist’ trend within the literature bypasses the deconstruction ‘stage’ in its investigations and offers a (‘un-deconstructed’) positivist portrait of concrete NGO realities. In doing so, it rightly highlights the dependence of NGDOs on external funding and agendas. Simultaneously, though, it does not integrate this into a broader critical analysis of the international capitalist development system. The social interface between NGOs and agrarian communities is articulated in terms of the notion of ‘participation’, and development deficits within these communities are highlighted. This trend argues for development reform to maximize the effectiveness of intermediary NGOs.

On the other hand, the ‘structuralist’ critique of NGOs, which involves the intellectual work of Marxists and postmodernist discourse analysts, relies heavily on ‘deconstruction’. This deconstruction is necessary for probing the fundamentals of development, for locating ‘the global’ and ‘the local’ as a starting point for analysis, and for locating NGOs in capitalist modes of glocal modernities. From the perspective of this thesis, deconstruction points in the right direction and is highly suggestive of dominant trajectories within the development industry. Yet, deconstruction alone over-privileges functional instrumentalism and the unfettered domination of global interests. Regrettably, these theorists remain trapped within ‘deconstruction’ and fail to ‘reconstruct’ development processes. Like the ‘empiricist’ trend, they are not in a strong
position to highlight the negotiated and ‘constructed’ quality of these contradictory processes and the complex meaning-laden social interfaces they entail.

5.1 Marxist Deconstruction: World-Systems Theory

World-systems theory is a form of Marxist deconstruction that analyses capitalist development on a global scale. Quite rightly, this theory claims that an understanding of the African political economy must be located in the ‘structural and conjunctural processes of the global economy’ (Arrighi 2002:p.19). World-systems theorists trace the development tragedy in contemporary Africa back to the crises of profitability and legitimacy of worldwide capitalism that arose in the 1970s. Sub-Saharan Africa in particular has become increasingly marginalized in terms of the trajectories in productive investment of the international economy, and the ‘likelihood that the region is going to be developed by capitalism seems smaller than ever.’ (Saul and Leys 1999:p.1) This has led to a cycle of dependence. Africa’s continued dependence on primary exports as a source of trade and foreign currency is seen as a kind of ‘archaic integration’ into the world economy (de Rivero 2001:p.126). Under the neo-liberal trajectory of world capitalism, nation-states in Africa (and elsewhere in the South and East) are now almost completely subordinated to the universalizing logic of the capitalist market. Hence, African economies are incorporated into the global economy but in a subservient manner. This means that African nations as part of the world periphery are not auto-centred and are ‘integrated in the global system in a passive way (they “adjust” to the system, without playing any significant role in shaping it)’ (Amin 2002:p.42).

Amin argues that development is not ‘a goal of capital’s strategies... These strategies involve adapting to, profiting by … the growth or stagnation of peripheries, and since there are no attractive investments in this situation, dominant capital finds its profit in managing the Third World debt. Finding a solution to the problem is not on the agenda, simply because this is not in capital’s interest.’ (Amin 1997:p.34) This is why de Rivero (2001) speaks about the crisis of development, and about quasi-nation states notably in
Africa ‘that cannot develop’, that are in a ‘stabilised stage of non-viability’ and for whom development is simply a ‘distant myth’ (de Rivero 2001:pp.24, 121, 18). This world-systems analysis over-privileges the significance of global forces vis-à-vis national and local dynamics. Yet, it rightly makes problematic the prospects for development in Africa and thereby the significance of NGOs in that development. In other words, despite their strident claims to the contrary, NGOs are not in a position to facilitate sustainable development if development in Africa is ‘not on the cards’ because of an ongoing global cycle of dependence.

5.2 Postmodernist Deconstruction and Discourse Analysis

Similar to world-systems theory, postmodernist deconstruction seriously questions the prospects for development under conditions of global capitalism and, by implication, the facilitating role of NGOs in processes of development. In this regard, the basic distinction that Crewe and Harrison (1998) make between development as a notion and development as an ‘industry’ is important. The development industry includes the institutions, policies, practices, methods and tools of development. It is not unusual for particular development agencies to use a diverse range or even a ‘smorgasbord’ (Eade 2003:p.x) of methods and tools, particularly if they conceive them as value-free. Development as a notion refers to the fact that development is seen as a value or as inherently good without though necessarily specifying or giving any particular content to it, such as ‘democratic’, ‘gender-equitable’ or ‘sustainable’ development (Meszaros 2001).

In fact, the term ‘development’ appears as a morally innocent and totally innocuous term: after all, who would not want to see something ‘develop’? Thus, the term ‘development’ as used in the sociology of development implies a normative change (or a progression) from an undesirable social condition to a more desirable social condition. There seems no disagreement on this point, either from bourgeois or socialist theorists. Thus, a senior economist with the World Bank argues, ‘the very definition of development entails a
value judgment about things that are worth promoting’ (Essama-Nssah 2004:p.509). Or, as the socialist Amin puts it, the concept of development is ‘by nature ideological’: ‘It enables one to judge results according to criteria that have been drawn up a priori’ (Amin 1997:p.14).

Of course, the divergences emerge when specifying those development ‘criteria’ or giving the value of development a specific content. Development as an ideal is often the subject of deconstruction by postmodernists engaged in discourse analysis. This may entail deconstructing the notion independent of any particular content or deconstructing a particular version of development (invariably ‘neo-liberal development’ as propagated by various organizations). Often the distinction between development per se and a particular version of it is not clearly made, and development takes on a monolithic and unitary form. The two are conflated, and a critical deconstruction of ‘neo-liberal development’ leads to sweeping arguments against any form of development. Discourse analysts also sometimes fail to distinguish between development as an ideal and development as ‘industry’, and the former is reduced to the latter. Criticisms of the industry lead to overall critical appraisals of development.

An analysis by Collins and Dutton (n.d.) provides an example of discourse analysis. They look at the notion of ‘human development’ as used by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and argue that it is a modern form of disciplinary power based not on external coercion but on self-governance by subjects. The ‘developing subject’ as embodied in the UNDP discourse occupies the central location in the development process and is a free subject able to exercise choices to maximize the goals of human development. The subject experiences differences and crises in its lived world as deprivations that can only be overcome if it avails itself ‘to a process whereby its condition can be improved and its inferior position rectified’ (Collins and Dutton n.d.:p.11). This process of development is synonymous with progress; and the ‘temporal and spatial positioning’ of the subject is ‘framed as linear and advancing’ (Collins and Dutton n.d.:p.12). Development as freedom is often restricted by state and tradition, and thus the active and participatory subject must overcome these obstacles. As subjects with
human rights (and thus seemingly as citizens), development subjects also have duties and this entails ‘a degree of accountability, culpability and responsibility’ (Collins and Dutton n.d.:p.13). In a sort of ‘blaming the victim’ ideological twist, any continuing development deficits ultimately rest with the development subjects themselves.3

Sociologically, deconstruction by discourse analysis is very much part of the well-known debunking motif. Deconstruction highlights the ‘constructedness and interactive character’ of development processes (Booth 1993:p.57) and the linkages between multiple forms of language, knowledge and power. It serves to demystify and destabilize specific development ideas and practices as it seeks ‘for the hidden metaphors in some central concepts within the Enlightenment discourse’ (Schuurman 1993a:p.26). It also shows that the development processes within which intermediary NGOs are immersed tend to privilege a global ontology at the expense of a local ontology. Yet, the problems inherent in deconstruction should not be underestimated, including a-historical analyses that reify the power of the ‘developers’ and that unproblematically read development realities from (de-constructed) development discourses. In other words, postmodernist deconstruction alone fails to provide investigations and insights into the concrete social world of development. It remains wholly in the realm of discourse where ‘the global’ dominates ‘the local’ without hindrance. All forms of deconstruction, including both discourse analysis and Marxism, conceptualize NGOs as largely passive and reactive instruments of global interests.

5.3 The Un-Sociology of Development

Based on a form of sociological deconstruction that is consistent with the epistemological premises of this thesis, Kaplan (1999, 2003) provides a fascinating account of building organizational capacity in development. In doing so, he argues that NGOs enter into development processes that are already firmly established. In other words, development has no beginning and no end. Further, development does not have a necessary fixed

3 See Pithouse (2003) for a deconstruction of World Bank poverty discourse.
route (or trajectory) with a pre-defined endpoint. To speak then of an undeveloped social state or a (fully-developed) developed state is simply un-sociological. The term ‘underdevelopment’ as employed by Marxists seems even more nonsensical. Imposing upon ‘the social’, as the special subject matter of sociology, a condition and trajectory of development is more an ideological exercise than a sociological endeavour.

Although Kaplan does not pursue this line of thought fully, the indirect implication of his argument is that social change does not invariably entail the ‘development’ of social relations, if ‘development’ means ‘progression’, ‘growth’ or ‘evolution’. Kaplan (1999) thus depicts relations between ‘actors’ within the realm of development as entailing phases marked by dependence and independence prior to interdependence. The ‘development’ of social relations involves contradictory processes that are more cyclical than linear in their trajectory. Sociologically, social relations do not develop in a value-laden sense from a state of un-development or even underdevelopment to a state of development. There is no such thing as ‘good’ social relations and ‘bad’ social relations. The main point is that the term ‘development’ tends to distract from the sociological quest to understand (rather than moralize about) the trajectory of social relations.

The notion of ‘development’ (like ‘growth’ and ‘evolution’) as employed in sociology has been appropriated from the natural sciences, as the works of classical sociologists like Comte and Spencer show (Perroux 1983). As an organic metaphor, it has limitations in terms of making sense of the complexities of social reality. For instance, it implies that social change is like processes of natural history, and this has led to deterministic conceptions of social change. Thus, ‘development’ as a metaphor conceals more than it illuminates or, as Sinaceur puts it more generally, ‘there are some metaphors which mask and obstruct thought; others are more heuristic’ (Sinaceur 1983:p.8). He rightly argues that development is ‘a line of thought that has compromised research in the social sciences by giving dominating powers the pretext of civilizing intentions’ such that its appropriation into sociology has ideological connotations (Sinaceur 1983:p.5). This is as applicable to Marxist theories, as manifested by Soviet imperialism, as it is to liberal
modernization theories. Indeed, the master dichotomy between ‘the modern’ and the ‘pre-modern’ underpins the classical sociology of Marx, Weber and Durkheim.

Given the predominance of liberal theories of development, the ideological impact largely entails universalizing Western notions of modernity. This of course is vividly evident in Parsonian modernization theory, based on the distinction between undeveloped and developed nations (with the latter invariably being Western nations). The contemporary neo-liberal theory of development, as a revised (mostly un-sociological) version of Parsonian theory, simply conflates capitalism with development and sees them as co-terminus processes in which development becomes subservient to capitalist expansion and is a logical outcome of it. At times, policy changes and institutional adjustments are required to ‘plane down’ the ‘rough edges’ of capitalism (Amin 1997:p.142) and thereby ensure a more balanced and equitable development.

5.4 Development: Universalizing Project and Social Engineering

‘Development’ is also embedded within grand universalizing projects involving the core and the periphery. The core is over-privileged as the unquestioned engine of world history to which the periphery can only respond. This weakness is evident in the (Marxist) world-systems analysis outlined above. But it is also vividly expressed in neo-liberal conceptions. Development thus emanates from the core and the universalizing project is not made problematic but is accepted as a de-historicized – almost inevitable if not natural – given. In the case of liberal modernization theory, any social, economic and political differences in the periphery (compared to the West) are understood independently of the contradictory processes of worldwide capitalism. The differences are depicted as ‘shortfalls’ in development and democracy in the peripheries. They become localized deficits (and are thus de-universalized) and are the causes of underdevelopment. Only the centre can reduce or rectify them, and it does so as part of its zealous modernist mission of universality.
Both modernization and Marxist theories have been subject to this kind of ‘unilinear social science’ in constructing binary opposites that essentialize and dichotomize the development process into ‘us’ the developers (or subjects) and ‘them’ the undeveloped or the to-be-developed (the objects). These polarizing distinctions include core/periphery, modern/traditional and capitalist/pre-capitalist, and the lead term (i.e. core, modern and capitalist) is given both ‘analytical value’ and a ‘universal status’. The other terms are ‘residual’ if not ‘deviant’ and ‘pathological’ and can only be understood in terms of what they are not (Mamdani 1996:p.9). The power and knowledge of the developers are reified and objectified as if attached to and stored in their political and economic positions. Thus, particular histories and development processes (in the peripheries) are explained as (incomplete) expressions of an overarching universal that is said to be developed and complete, and this universal is almost the very embodiment of what it means to be human (or fully human) in the contemporary world. It is not surprising then that there are pan-African sociological analyses with pronounced radical nationalist inclinations that essentialize the African past and that seek to make Africa a centre of reference (and of world history) and the engine behind its own development through endogenous rather than exogenous processes (Chivaura and Mararike eds. 1998).

As a form of social engineering, development entails a clearly identifiable route (development as process) moving inextricably toward a pre-defined end-situation (development as product). The product is considered to be already latently present in the structures of the undeveloped state, and it is the purpose of development policy and practice to enliven these hidden potentialities, to make them manifest and then bring them to the fore in all their glory. Therefore, development is ‘the interpretation of a literal process: something develops in the sense of unfurling, becoming visible piece by piece. That which slowly becomes visible is, however, already embedded in the structure (the “genes”). The result of the “development process” is thus fixed – it is merely a matter of speed.’ (Schuurman 1993a:pp.26-27) Thus, once the genes are known and once development as end product (or value) is established, it is simply a matter of directing development along the fixed (evolutionary) path through a range of (value-free) development interventions.
This means that development no matter how ‘radically’ defined (for example, development as empowerment) cannot entail anti-systemic change because the process of becoming simply reveals latent systemic properties and is not a process of social transformation involving a fundamental shift in social and power relations (Tandon 1995). This seems to be the case, unless one holds to a very narrow conception of the parameters of social systems or to an unproblematic and romanticized transition of gradualism as posited by Radical Democrats. In the context of critically appraising modernization and growth theories as well as Marxist theories of underdevelopment and dependency, Aina proposes a ‘paradigm of development as empowerment and participation.’ (Aina 1993:p.23) Yet participation and empowerment are now defining components of the dominant, system-maintaining, development paradigm of neoliberalism. The term ‘development’ hides, obscures, undercuts and displaces more anti-systemic notions such as ‘transformation’ and ‘revolution’. This is shown in post-colonial Africa when, at political independence, radical nationalist and socialist states overnight became developmental states and, in so doing, articulated social and economic development as a benign process requiring social consensus and demobilization of ‘the masses’ and of whatever civil and uncivil organization existed. Even a de-radicalized version of civil society would have been viewed as anti-development and retrogressive in this context.

5.5 Un-Deconstructed Development and the Empiricist Trend

Development reformers (whose work is found within the ‘empiricist’ literature) focus specifically on the industry – including its strengths and weaknesses – but they rarely question the need for development. They bypass the deconstruction stage. The Enlightenment assumptions underlying development are taken by these analysts as givens, ‘in which rationality, the search for objective truth, and a belief in a movement towards modernity are paramount’ (Crewe and Harrison 1998:p.15). Often, then, the linkages and the discontinuities (and even chasms) between development as a value and
development as an industry are not properly investigated. This empiricist trend entails low-order theory that does not articulate a grand narrative or meta-theory and, because of this, it tends to de-politicize the development process. In many ways, this reflects the position of NGOs themselves, as they seem unable to theorize about their own development practices but rather rely on more descriptive accounts.

The empiricist NGO literature involves either case studies or broad comparative approaches that seek to analyse the accountability, performance, effectiveness and impact of NGOs (Potter ed. 1996, Tvedt 1998 and Fowler 2000). A functionalist orientation predominates, particularly revolving around the notion of the ‘comparative advantage’ of NGOs vis-à-vis the state in bringing about social and economic development (Riddell and Robinson 1995). For instance, the functionality of NGOs in poverty alleviation, in the provision of social services and in facilitating rural change is normally assessed. The pros and cons of NGOs are hotly debated, on which basis recommendations for development reform arise. Such reforms, in employing a phrase from Fowler (2000), involve ‘changing the rules of the game’ rather than changing the game altogether. NGOs are portrayed as instruments of donors, and the latter are depicted as the pied piper to whom NGOs are (almost) fully accountable despite any wishes and intentions to the contrary. The relations between development NGOs on the one hand and rural communities and global donors on the other are normally understood in causal, positivist and instrumentalist terms.

Thus, the mechanistic and positivist ontology of ‘things’ seems to predominate within the empiricist trend. Development entails the systematic transfer of various ‘things’ called resources from the ‘haves’ to the ‘have-nots’, be they in the form of finances, technology, social skills or even political strength. Development is brought in or engineered from outside – and by outsiders – through specific targeted interventions: without such interventions, no development occurs. NGOs (as both subjects and objects) are seen as part of this mechanistic transfer system, occupying an intermediary (but not necessarily a mediating) position. They receive inputs and produce outputs, and they thereby become a critical part of an extended casual chain of social development. This has been labelled
as the ‘transportational paradigm’ of development (Long and Villarreal 1993:p.145). It is a paradigm popular amongst NGOs themselves when representing, making sense of and justifying their world of development.

Notions of participatory development add complexity to the resource transfer system and change passive beneficiaries into (at least ideally) active subjects, but in the final analysis participation is largely seen as another means or instrument for making the system more efficient and functional. Kaplan (1999) as a development consultant has sought to widen the terms of the traditional empiricist NGO literature by going beyond the ‘thing’ ontology. In doing so, he shows a deep sensitivity to processes, flows and motions as marking the ontology of ‘the social’. He outlines the essence of a development intervention, namely, ‘the facilitation of growing awareness and consciousness such that people are able to take control of their own lives… This inevitably implies also an activist stance: that is, assistance with confronting the manifestations and dynamics of power, however they may manifest. If a development intervention does not succeed in this, then it can hardly be said to have been developmental.’ (Kaplan 1999:p.12) Development, then, is not about the delivery of resources in an instrumentalist sense but is rather about facilitating resourcefulness or ‘about enabling people to become more conscious, to understand themselves and their context such that they are better able to take control of their own future’ (Kaplan 1999:p.22).

The radical activist conclusions that Kaplan arrives at are in many ways similar to other writers, like Biggs and Neame (1996) and Fowler (1993), who offer less holistic analyses of NGOs in the realm of social and economic development. These writers provide tantalizing insights into development and NGOs, such as the view of Biggs and Neame that development involves ‘the articulation of a series of local struggles and processes’ that NGOs must ‘tap into’ (Biggs and Neame 1996:p.43). In this regard, NGOs are conceptualized as involving themselves not only in service delivery but also as confronting the structural causes of poverty and focusing on matters of social justice and change. NGOs, it is said, should focus less on shifting funds and other resources from one part of the world to another and more on reshaping social relationships and
institutions. This is clear from Fowler’s intriguingly labelled ‘onion-skin approach’ that entails ‘an outer layer of welfare-orientated activity that protects inner layers of material service delivery that act as nuclei for a core strategy dedicated to transformation.’ (Fowler 1993:pp.334-335) In the end, though, NGOs in Africa pursue rural development without seriously questioning social and political structures and they normally adopt a hands-off approach to questions of land reform. In fact, it is argued that NGOs are essentially social service providers, and that they should leave advocacy to membership-based civil society bodies that are more accountable to and representative of the grassroots (Edwards 1998).

The ‘empiricist’ literature though literally abounds with references to social justice, democracy, equity and the like, and even to empowerment and transformation. Whether largely supportive of NGOs or more critical of their developmental role, questions about democracy and good governance are often central to ‘empiricist’ discussions of NGOs. In fact, the New Policy Agenda of the bilateral and multilateral agencies – including the World Bank – involving aid conditionality set by donors also entails human-rights based, ‘bottom-up’ participatory approaches to development. At least at the level of rhetoric and policy formation, it is unlikely that these agencies would find much fault with Kaplan’s far-reaching analysis and his conclusions. Indeed, Edward’s (1999) analysis of NGO performance in South Asia, written whilst working for the World Bank in Washington, testifies to this point. In general, then, the empiricist NGO literature works within the confines of a development reform agenda.

This reform agenda also involves intermediary NGOs (and civil society more broadly) in developing the capacity of the nation-state. For instance, the work of Save the Children-UK is based ‘on a model which aims to make maximum use of the potential synergy between “technical support” to [state] line ministries ... or … “working with government from above” … and grassroots pressure allied to indigenous NGOs and movements … or … “working with government from below”... Both elements in the model are essential if government capacity is to be strengthened effectively and responsibly’ (Edwards 1994:p.71). International NGOs are in a relatively strong position to provide material
and technical assistance to line ministries without jeopardizing their autonomy, but they lack the legitimacy to represent local grassroots groups on a genuine basis. Capacity building that entails working alongside other civil society groups is best led by but not alone by indigenous NGOs. Nevertheless, working from above without working from below may strengthen state capacity but may not necessarily promote democratic development. And working from below without working from above may strengthen the state by making it more accountable but will not maximize its technical efficacy. According to the empiricist literature, both kinds of work are required in an integrated, complementary and coordinated fashion. Multilateral financial institutions, particularly the World Bank, are increasingly calling for ‘working from above’ partnerships between (donor-financed) intermediary development NGOs and the state in the formation and implementation of development policies conducive to tackling poverty.

5.6 Development Impasse

The discussion in this chapter has highlighted the theoretical inadequacies of the dominant trends in the literature on NGOs. On the one hand, there is an ‘empiricist’ literature that is under-theorized and that investigates development NGOs within the confines of an un-deconstructed concrete totality. Yet, implicit in this literature are familiar epistemological assumptions about the trajectory of development and progress that underlie liberal modernization theories. On the other hand, there are deconstruction approaches that offer important sociological insights, but which ultimately ‘fit’ NGOs into an understanding of ‘development’ as an un-reconstructed abstract totality. In this regard, it is notable that, for decades, meta-theories in the form of liberal modernization theories and Marxist paradigms dominated analyses of social and economic development. Munck speaks of the ‘political overdetermination of development theory’ because these theoretical approaches were constantly used in the service of political agendas whether imperialist or revolutionary. He also suggests that their failures were ‘due less to their conceptual inconsistencies than to their collapse as political strategies’ (Munck
This has led to what has become called the development crisis or impasse in development theory.

Modernization theory arose after the Second World War and was significantly influenced by Parson’s general theory of social action and value-orientation. But Parson’s interpretation of Weber (on whom he based much of his work) did not adequately focus on the sociological question of ‘meaning’ as in a strictly Weberian understanding of social action, and in the end his modernization theory is more grounded in positivism.

Parson’s distinction between irrational and rational modes of social action led to a normative and teleological foundation for development studies in which pre-modern forms of sociability and association were seen as un-genuine and antithetical to the modern development process. Weber linked instrumental rationality and civil-type social relations – rather than communal relations – to modernity. But Parsonian modernization sociology, unlike Weber, had an uncritical faith in the ‘emancipatory telos of modernity’ (Gould 1997:p.11) and like Rostow’s economic growth theory it idealized American society as the seeming end of history. Sinaceur (1983:p.6) speaks of this type of development theory as an example of the theory of poverty (in the ‘undeveloped’ world) masking the poverty of the theory.

Marxist development studies arose in the 1960s, particularly amongst scholars like Andre Gunder Frank who studied Latin America. There is a diversity of approaches within Marxism, including dependency, modes of production and world systems theories, and the crisis in development theory largely affected this school of thought (Schuurman ed. 1993). Unlike classical Marxism, neo-Marxists did not argue that capitalism and imperialism had a historically progressive role in terms of worldwide development. Rather, much to their credit, they highlighted the contradictory structure of international capitalism that led to the underdevelopment and dependency of nations in the periphery despite endogenous and auto-centric import substitution strategies. Many of the debates within Marxist development theory have revolved around the causes of ‘underdevelopment’, firstly, in terms of the primacy of production vis-à-vis circulation and, secondly, with regard to the primary of class relations vis-à-vis core-periphery
relations. Neo-Marxists have been criticized for many of the points raised earlier when
discussing postmodernism, notably essentialism, determinism, economism and an almost
full-fledged structuralism in which ‘structure has absorbed the subject’ (Slater 1993:p.101).

5.7 Significance of Neo-Liberal Development Thinking

The impasse in development theory emerged in the context of the wane of socialism and
the rise of postmodernism. During the 1980s there arose almost a vacuum in
development theory, and neo-liberal thought ‘turned the crisis to its advantage’
(Schuurman 1993a:p.11). There seems little doubt that neo-liberal development thinking
has impacted significantly on development discourses and practices, although its
assumptions are highly contested within the academic literature (Amin 1997, de Rivero
2001). Despite the pronounced ‘post-modern shift in social theory’, modernization as
found in neo-liberalism is still ‘the predominant descriptor of the directionality of social
processes’ (Gould 1997:p.19 his emphasis). Neo-liberal modernization theory is very
much rooted in modernism, and it carries with it the ‘untenable metaphysical starting
points’ (Schuurman 1993a:p.22) of Parsonian social theory. Development thus continues
to be conceptualized as a linear evolutionary pattern with an intrinsic telos and fixed end,
despite increasing recognition amongst social and political theorists of the contingencies
and uncertainties of the trajectory of the contemporary world system (Wallerstein and
Editors 2002). Neo-liberal modernization theory was initially unsympathetic to the
nation-state, notably in the 1980s. This is evident from the SAPs that reduced state
intervention in the national economies of the South and East and, unintentionally, also
reduced state capacity and effectiveness. But, with much gusto, neo-liberalism (in its
revised form) now calls for a symbiotic synergy between state, market and civil society.
The dominant civil society quasi-paradigm, as discussed in the previous chapter, does
likewise, at least implicitly. The revised paradigm emphasizes the capacity of state
functions rather than simply the scope of these functions.
Fukuyama, a leading neo-liberal theorist, argues that in the South, particularly in Africa, there has been insufficient local demand for political and economic reform. In a highly Eurocentric manner, he asserts (rather than demonstrates) that ‘[w]ell-meaning developed countries have tried a variety of strategies for stimulating such local demand, from loan conditionality to outright military occupation.’ (Fukuyama 2004:p.30) The World Bank argues that SAPs and loan conditionalities failed in the past because nation-states, with their corrupt and patrimonial inclinations, refused to reform despite commitments to the contrary. Development aid is now given only to nation-states with solid institutional structures and ‘good governance’, and that are firmly on the road to reform. With respect to incapacitated nation states, notably those in sub-Saharan Africa, multilateral financial institutions like the World Bank transfer capacity-building knowledge and support state-building initiatives rather than provide direct development aid that will be misappropriated or have limited impact (Stern 2002, Coady et al. 2004). Stimulating civil society is seen as critical to promoting and sustaining state reform.

As Gould (1997) notes: ‘Societies which don’t respond to the prescribed kick-start of market liberalization … are no longer dealt with by “the international community” in terms of “modernization”. Such countries are targeted for investments in improving “governance” and, if this fails to improve their debt-servicing behavior, they may be eligible for humanitarian assistance if and when their endemic crises flare up in an outburst of ethnic or ecological catastrophe. … For the time being, development – i.e., “becoming more like us” – is beyond reach.’ (Gould 1997:p.20) Yet, development, modernization and progress as intertwined processes are still taken as givens within neo-liberal thought. Hence, what is made problematic by neo-liberals is not the development process itself but obstacles to its implementation in the form of ‘bad governance’. This falsely implies that the problems blocking development are primarily (if not solely) rooted in the periphery (and are thus ‘de-globalized’), that ‘the developers’ understand most fully the problems besetting the periphery and that these outsiders have readily identified the solution to the development deficits. To the contrary, world systems theory correctly highlights the significance of the global moment in bringing about ‘underdevelopment’ in the South and East. Thus, World Bank propagation of civil
society-induced reforms may only serve to entrench global forms of domination (Amin 1997, Petras 1997).

5.8 Transcending the Impasse: Neo-Weberian Insights and Development Interfaces

Marxist theorists continue to offer critical appraisals of modernization theory, now in its current neo-liberal version. In the context of studies of globalization, they also continue to provide the most powerful grand theoretical narratives for understanding world capitalism. And these narratives continue to have a certain resonance for and within development studies. Yet, to remain transfixed within the confines of the debate between neo-liberals and neo-Marxists would involve being caught in a ‘realist’ trap that simply reproduces and intensifies the development impasse. In this regard, the very existence of an ‘impasse’, or the form it assumes, may be contested within the development literature. From the particular sociological perspective contained within this thesis, the impasse arose because development theory failed to integrate ‘the social’ into its analyses. More specifically, development theory was insensitive to a Weberian notion of ‘the social’ in the sense of meaning-laden social action. As Gould notes, over the past two decades ‘sociological interests have re-emerged within mainstream Development Studies’ (Gould 1997:p.xi). This re-orientation involves a sustained focus on the critical sociological notion of ‘meaning’. The development thoughts of modernization and Marxist theory, with their grand realist meta-theories involving an unhealthy concoction of empiricist and structuralist ingredients, have always involved a form of explanatory overkill. In doing so, these theories have tended to ‘neglect or even deny much of what is specifically human about human societies: action and interaction, history, culture and the “social construction of reality”’ (Booth 1993:p.50).

Neo-Weberian notions are critical in the reconstruction ‘stage’ of development studies, particularly in overcoming instrumentalist and functionalist analyses that conceptualize development (and the development industry) as some sort of rigid linear hierarchy and (mechanistic) conveyor-belt process. Meaningful social action is important for making
sense of the social interfaces that mark (actually existing) processes of development and democratic change, and it elucidates how NGOs interface through ‘negotiation’ with global donors, agrarian communities and nation-states. To talk about for instance the ‘puppetization’ of NGOs by donors (Zaidi 1999:p.211) may be an appealing metaphor but it is not a compelling argument. It reduces the NGO and donor interface to unadulterated relations of domination, manipulation and imposition. It leaves us at the ‘level’ of (un-reconstructed) abstract totalities in the case of Marxists and (un-deconstructed) concrete totalities in the case of the empiricist NGO literature.

Development interfaces should not be seen as watertight boundaries between fixed groupings and involving one-way flows of development aid resources (for example, technology, information and power) between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Development practice entails socially constructed and negotiated processes rather than the simple execution or mechanical imposition of already-specified plans of action employing fixed methods and with expected outcomes. The boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’ are fluid and porous. Further, they are reconstituted and reconfigured on a continual basis. They thus entail two-way (and not one-way) processes of meaning and knowledge construction, and involve a nexus of negotiated exchanges that give participants potential space to manoeuvre. As Long and Villarreal argue with specific reference to the development interface in the rural areas, interfaces ‘are characterised by discontinuities [and not always linkages] in interests, values and power, and their dynamic entails negotiation, accommodation and the struggle over definitions and boundaries.’ (Long and Villarreal 1993:p.143)

By studying such interfaces, it is possible to see ‘the processes by which policy is transformed, how “empowerment” and room for manoeuvre is created by both intervenors and “clients”, and how persons are enrolled in the “projects” of others through the use of metaphors and images of development.’ (Long and Villarreal 1993:p.143) Development interfaces involve reconfigurations of (relations of) power, knowledge and meaning along and across the interface, and interfaces are marked by flux and ambiguities. Studying interfaces involves a process of de-centring, based on the
recognition that interfaces entail ‘two way processes’ or ‘exchanges’. Admittedly, these NGO interfaces are not ‘equal’ exchanges because they invariably entail power relations. Yet, power relations are not unbridled forms of domination devoid of ‘meaning’. Power at NGO interfaces is expressed in and through meanings that are ‘carried’ to these interfaces. As a result, and irrespective of the NGO interface being considered, one particular ‘side’ of the interface should not be over-privileged analytically. Traditionally, the more powerful ‘side’ has been given ‘causal primacy’. De-centring does not imply that the analysis should be re-centred elsewhere. Nevertheless, this thesis highlights the importance of valorizing the perspective of NGOs themselves in order to ‘capture’ the meanings that they bring to their social interfaces.

The world of NGO interfaces cannot be ‘read’ from ‘structural’ analyses of relations of domination in an unmediated fashion independent of NGO organizational practices. And, unlike the ‘empiricist’ trend, these NGO practices cannot be ‘read’ as forms of action unmediated by the meanings embodied in these practices. It is important then to move constantly between the deconstruction and reconstruction ‘stages’ as this allows the sociologist to seriously consider the meaning-laden NGO world ‘from within’. In a similar vein, Booth argues (1993:p.61) that it is critical to bridge the yawning gap between ‘local action studies and macro-structural analysis’ and, in doing so, to analyze even the micro-foundations of macro-structures. Hence, in terms of the structure-agency dichotomy and debate within the social sciences, the question is not simply the relative autonomy of action vis-à-vis structures but also how meaningful action is involved in the constitution and reconstitution of structures.

It may appear that NGOs are ‘puppets’ of donors and that donors are in complete control of the development wheel, but this ‘impression’ is skin-deep and fails to unravel ‘hidden’ processes of negotiated meaning. Indeed, from the perspective of NGOs and the meanings they give to their world, it may be that they are in control. By not resisting donor conditionalities (including development methods and forms of accountability and reporting), they are ‘working the system’. They are sustaining their organizations if not necessarily providing sustainable development in rural communities. Crewe and Harrison
(1998:p.157) suggest that compliance (when it occurs) by rural under-classes to development initiatives from outside may be understood in a similar light, and that compliance lies somewhere between conscious manipulation of the poor by NGOs and the internalization of external (de-localized) values by these classes. These recipients of NGO practices may give the impression that NGOs are in full control. While NGO practitioners may be stressing capacity building and self-reliance of rural communities, these communities may be considering ‘development’ as just another means of socially (and physically) reproducing themselves. In this sense, rural under-classes are actively engaged in strategizing and they seek to localize development projects – including ‘modern’ and ‘rational’ technologies – by adopting, internalizing, appropriating, reconfiguring and inserting them into their own worlds based on their own sets of malleable values and interests (Gould 1997). Of course, at times, development practice is an imposition on rural communities and thus they may have limited or no room to negotiate, manoeuvre and strategize.

In this context, the treatment of the global donor and agrarian community interfaces by the ‘empiricist’ NGO literature is explored below. This literature fails in large part to address the negotiated quality of these two interfaces, and it represents actually existing development as a ‘transmission-belt methodology of knowledge-based development assistance’ (Ellerman 2003:p.27). These NGO interfaces are increasingly referred to in the development industry as ‘partnerships’. This notion entails a re-conceptualization of the development industry. The foundation of the industry is now said to be vertical divisions marked by equity, rather than horizontal divisions defined by power differentials. In this regard, partnerships are understood within the industry as a technical means for maximizing management efficiency and enhancing downward accountability instead of a political question directly addressing relations of power (Crewe and Harrison 1998:p.90). Again, this clearly treats interfaces instrumentally, as ‘partnership’ becomes another means for making the industry more effective. Like other notions used by NGOs, the term ‘partnership’ involves a simplifying dichotomy between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and seeks to suture and manage the relationship in a conceptually uncomplicated, organizationally efficient and risk-free manner. This ‘partnership’ representation of
NGO interfaces thus privileges simplicity, ordering and coherence. Yet, in terms of actual development practice, the notion of ‘partnership’ raises the prospect that NGO interfaces involve intense processes of negotiation no matter the outcome.

5.9 Global Donors-NGO Interface

At first sight it might appear that the relationship between donors and NGOs is marked by mutual dependency. On the one hand, NGOs need ongoing donor funds to sustain themselves. Simultaneously, donors need NGOs so that funds can be readily disbursed and hence visible progress in the field made and reported on. However, the ‘empiricist’ literature repeatedly stresses the imbalances built into the aid system and how, without external funding from donors, the vast majority of NGOs in the East and South would be functional non-entities. It is thus argued that NGOs are ‘a creation of funding agencies’ (Zaidi 1999:p.204) and that they are instruments of donor agendas. Foreign aid agencies are said to control both the form and content of the aid system in which NGOs are immersed. Yet, it would seem that NGOs work the system by being led ‘by what will attract funding, rather than by what most needs to be done’ (Rowlands 2003:p.9).

This NGO practice is recognized within the NGO literature, but it is presented as an almost forced capitulation of NGOs to domineering donor interests rather than as a negotiated outcome beneficial to both parties. Thus, donor dependence is described in the literature as the Achilles heel of NGOs. The negative implications of this donor dependency is at times vividly shown when foreign donors decide to bypass NGOs and fund grassroots groups (or even the nation-state) directly; when donors withdraw their funding completely in protest against an authoritarian regime; or when political reforms demonstrate that outside financial assistance on notably political governance and human rights is no longer warranted.

External aid to NGOs in the South and East comes in varied and often complex forms. Official aid, which for NGOs has increased in importance in recent years, comes from the
Northern tax-base and is disbursed through bilateral and multilateral agencies. Private aid from voluntary donations and investment income is channelled through various non-governmental bodies including charities, foundations and northern NGOs. Grants from bilateral donors are often tied to the national interests of the nation-state they represent. Thus, any regional policy shifts by northern nation-states, for example from regime change to regime stabilization, may undermine NGOs and the democratic project of civil societies in the effected region. Many northern NGOs also receive official aid but are no longer field operational in Africa. Rather, they disburse aid to southern or indigenous NGOs, particularly those involved in rural development. An adviser to northern NGOs argues that these bodies, with few exceptions, are ‘under important pressures to behave in new ways’. This compromises their autonomy and independence: ‘These are pressures coming from the new policy agenda, and it is my feeling that they do not allow … [northern NGOs]… to behave in ways that contribute to improving social capital [or social energy] in regions such as southern Africa.’ (Sogge 1997:p.48)

Other non-governmental donors focus on the democracy and governance NGO sector. The agenda of these donors is often uncritically upheld by local NGOs and this may hinder organic change. For instance, in the case of Kenya and gender issues, ‘“globalised” notions of rights’ have been applied ‘uncritically especially on issues that relate to the empowerment of rural women’ (Ngunyi 1999:p.130). Some NGOs at times receive grants or subsidies from central government but current budgetary realities and the debt crisis severely inhibit this in Africa at least. NGOs are also contracted by government to provide certain social services. They frequently receive limited contributions from the corporate sector and other donations in cash or kind. As well, they may engage in their own trading and income-generating projects. However, in much of south and east Africa, the regulatory, fiscal and tax regimes are not conducive to these alternative forms of funding. This compromises the financial sustainability of NGOs, as ‘the building of an indigenous funding base is essential to sustaining the capacity of NGOs.’ (Yaansah and Simon 1997:p.138)
The ‘empiricist’ literature highlights a range of donor practices that seriously inhibit good performance amongst NGOs. Project financing and the focus on tangible outcomes by donors push development NGOs to work with more accessible clients who already have a degree of capacity, thereby likely excluding the poorer and more marginalized segments of agrarian communities. Often the same output criteria used for NGDOs, namely short-term tangibles, are applied uncritically and un-problematically in assessing and judging human rights and advocacy NGOs. Donors need to focus more on organizational outcomes and to reinforce the institutional capacity of NGOs. This involves not just increased funding but important procedural matters pertaining to timing, strategic planning and continuity. This would contribute to easing the withdrawal pains of a NGO as it winds down one project and turns to another. This does not undermine or negate the project concept, but it means ‘more flexible arrangements in which any one project can become part of a program or a development sequence. Donors could also make institutional support dependent on more active client rotation and organizational outreach.’ (Carroll 1992:p.164) Many donors are reluctant to continue financing any specific NGO or project for an extended period of time in order to discourage dependency and complacency. But longer-term programme financing is seen as critical and would entail continual dialogue about objectives and strategies and not just a specification of outputs and targets. In the case of Zambia, ‘[t]he short donor cycles… result in local NGOs having to settle for short planning horizons, no security for employees, and thereby not being able to attract the necessary local expertise.’ (Mudenda 1999:p.170)

Donors sometimes view NGOs as strictly temporary until more ‘genuine’ membership-based organizations can take over. Yet NGOs continue to complement and reinforce membership organizations in areas where they are vulnerable or weak. Carroll argues: ‘Projects should be designed with specific reporting requirements based on criteria for building beneficiary capacity. Longer-term commitments, moral or contractual, will not impair donor supervision or grantee accountability if the arrangement is well phased and provides for periodic reviews and adjustment. What is important is to maximize the capability of the “worthy” … [intermediary NGOs]… to develop their full potential in an
atmosphere of greater security and in which ... [NGO]... leaders are less preoccupied by fund-raising and routine reporting.’ (Carroll 1992:p.165) Donors should strengthen the institutional capacity of NGOs and also give them the organizational, financial and technical skills to effectively assist in local grassroots organizational development. If not, then indigenous NGOs become and remain as ‘local managers of foreign aid money, not managers of local African development processes’ (Nyang’oro 1993:p.47).

The quality of aid therefore is of particular concern in the empiricist literature, including the growing significance of official – rather than private – aid to NGOs. Quality is defined as ‘the product of ideas, conditions and modalities of development finance when set against the requirements of good practice in development work.’ (Fowler 2000:p.39) Good donor practice may vary across development goals and activities, but quality is expressed as ‘an ability to tailor assistance to the specific requirements of different good practices in different situations.’ (Fowler 2000:p.39 emphasis removed) The common short-term nature of project-based funding rather than core funding undermines sustainable social change and separates the impact of development from the whole system that provides it. This makes it difficult to assess the quality of aid.

Impediments to improving aid quality currently are, amongst other things, the struggle over defining an overhead; the cleavage between investments in capacity building for project delivery on the one hand and for strengthening NGOs as civic groups in good governance on the other; and the mendicant stance of many NGOs. Also, donors often provide funding in terms of sectors and, as a result, major investments in NGOs correspond to the divisional structures of donors (or example, water or education). This leads to a homogenized development monoculture and inhibits the multi-dimensional integrated area approaches of NGDOs that may show their comparative advantages as agents of social development. Yet, donors themselves in the face of falling aid levels in real terms also are concerned about aid quality, and the sharpened emphasis on this rather than volume has lead to greater donor concern with ‘monitoring, reporting and accounting procedures, and to an increased channelling of resources into strengthening capacity and training people’ in NGOs (Archer 1994:p.31).
The effectiveness and credibility of aid is being reduced for various reasons and there may be diminishing grounds for justifying its continuation, at least in its current form. For example, there is pressure to disburse aid so that the volume of funding is not reduced or cut altogether, and thus the donor culture values approval of disbursement over development impact. Further, sometimes aid is allocated not for poverty alleviation purposes but to penetrate potential markets for domestic business. Also, a sense of powerlessness in dealing with donors drives governments to treat aid in a fungible manner. A key to reform is ‘to create a system that ensures and enforces authentic negotiation of truly shared agendas and objectives within mutually agreed parameters’; and the system must have ‘objectives and commitments that are jointly and fairly shared, owned in and by the South and East and transparently governed.’ (Fowler 2000:pp.43, 44 emphasis removed)

This means creating a space between the (national) interests of northern donors and the funds they disburse so that negotiations can take place on a more level playing field where the ultimate objectives of poverty alleviation and social equity are prioritized and guarded by shared governance. This might entail development funds positioned at an equal distance from the institutions that provide, use and are affected by them. There is also need for reform involving negotiation of more equitable relations in terms of mutual and balancing rights and obligations of each party (or ‘partner’) in an open and transparent manner (Fowler 2000). The ultimate aim then is to somehow shift the balance of power and to ensure that all stakeholders in the international aid system, including donors, NGOs and the rural under-classes, become full and equal partners.

This ‘empiricist’ analysis of NGOs and donors rarely questions in any significant manner the ideal of development, even as understood in a neo-liberal sense. While certain problems between donors and NGOs do exist, these are not seen as structural or systemic problems but can be properly tackled through reform (fine-tuning) or ‘changing the rules’ of the aid system. It is thus unlikely that development reformers would agree with the conclusion of de Rivero (2001:p.114) that ‘[i]nternational aid, the daughter of the myth of
development, is paradoxically the clearest testimony of non-development’. In an instrumentalist fashion, donors are perceived by the ‘empiricist’ trend as all-powerful. But, at the same time, they are largely depicted as benevolent in seeking to bring about social and economic development in the South and East.

5.10 Agrarian Communities-NGO Interface

As a result, donors (that is, ‘the global’) are not labelled as problematic from the perspective of NGOs. This designation is rather reserved for the rural under-classes or agrarian communities in the South and East (that is, ‘the local’). There exists the ongoing clarion call amongst donors and NGOs for ‘participation’ and even ‘empowerment’ of rural communities in development programmes. The ‘local’ is often presented by global donors as not fitting properly into the global development paradigm or system, or as not acting like a modern entity, and thus it requires fixing. In other words, the instrument of development is missing its mark because the ‘mark’ (‘the poor’) is not cooperating. Development – to be effective – has to be de-localized or globalized. As Crewe and Harrison note, ‘[a]ccounting for failure and improving practices usually entail looking to the recipients, the supposed beneficiaries who are not behaving as expected’ (Crewe and Harrison 1998: p.15).

This rural deficiency takes on many forms and is expressed in different ways. It is regularly argued that the social capital of rural communities needs to be strengthened through capacity building (by experts), or that rural social and organizational forms need to take on more modern or civil forms, or that communities need to participate more fully in the development process. Quite often, the deficiency is linked to the notion of culture. Developers view culture as a timeless (anti-development) pre-modern entity that continues to structure rural community life. It is used as a simplifying notion to make sense of development problems, particularly those problems that seem to have no easily understood or ‘modern’ cause, and thus culture becomes a residual analytical category (Crewe and Harrison 1998). Culture is seen as rooted in communal forms of social
organization and it severely inhibits modern economic rational self-interest based on individualism. It is also invariably equated with the use of outmoded and unscientific (indigenous) technologies and knowledge-systems, and it often blocks the introduction of modern (value-free) technologies into rural economies and households. Developers – donors and NGOs – propagate utility-maximizing rationality and sophisticated technology as symbols of an impartial and unquestioned universal modernity. As a result, ‘general solutions manufactured from the outside are offered to problems which are highly localised’ (Edwards 1993:p.78).

In this regard, it may appear that ‘tradition’ (or culture) is defined in temporal terms as ‘pre-modern’ sociability as part of some evolutionary schema. But, in effect, ‘tradition’ has spatial connotations in that modernity is located outside ‘the local’ and has to be brought into the rural community, or at least the developers have to nurture the genes of modernity (for example, individualism) latent within the community. For instance, ‘the value of knowledge is predetermined by the source of knowledge’ (who holds it) not ‘according to its utility for users when put into practice’ (Crewe and Harrison 1998: p.96). Even if a particular modern technology is not accepted by and within ‘the local’, the technology itself – based on modern (outside) expertise – is never questioned. Culture, as pre-modernity, is respected and even celebrated by developers. For example, it is said that indigenous knowledge-systems are sensitive to environmental sustainability and can be incorporated into development programmes, and that outside technologies must be appropriate to local socio-cultural systems. This approach, though, continues to reify and essentialize ‘culture’ as a pre-modern survivor (or hang over) in a modern age, and it views ‘culture’ instrumentally as a way of making development more effective and amenable to local acceptance. The current emphasis on participation and empowerment must be seen in the same light.

Participation has now become a defining value of neo-liberal development, and is conceived as critical to democratic and equitable development. Participation, as a civic value and duty, seems to be the volition-based ‘civil society’ solution to rural development deficiencies, much like civil society is the answer to national democratic
deficits. In the empiricist NGO literature, participation is traditionally seen as a key comparative advantage of NGOs vis-à-vis the centralized top-down development strategies of the nation-state. NGOs have been idealized as having an almost inherent capacity to activate and mobilize local communities in ongoing development processes.

Participation is viewed in a multiplicity of ways, but normally it is seen as a goal in itself, as an associated goal or as the enhancer of other goals (Carroll 1992). As a basis (or means) for the success of a specific development programme, it entails (ideally) the active involvement of community members in initial decisions, implementation and resource mobilization. As a goal, participation entails building the institutional capacity of community groups in an ongoing manner, but (in the end) this is just another means for promoting (in this case, sustainable) development. Further, intermediary NGOs involved in rural development are often criticized for their non-accountability vis-à-vis the rural under-classes, and thus participation is also linked to maximizing downward accountability and enhancing NGO legitimacy by more directly serving if not representing the agrarian poor (Ebrahim 2003).

In all these ways, participation is viewed instrumentally and is seen to overcome problems existing in rural communities. In other words, the primary agenda of NGOs is to “adjust” the poor to fit in (and thus benefit from)’ standardized NGO programmes (Power et al. 2003:p.91) or what Ellerman calls ‘universal best practices’ (Ellerman 2003:p.32). NGOs also seek ways of building their capacity and sometimes adjusting themselves to ‘fit’ the poor. This implies that the problems located along the interface between NGOs and the rural under-classes are simply localized problems marked by skewed incapacities and maladjustments. Rectifying this entails a process of internal reflection and evaluation within NGOs as well as the introduction of more refined participatory methodologies and tools, including organizational development theory (Plowman 2003), appreciative inquiry frameworks (Postma 2003), bottom-up organizational learning (Power et al. 2003) and participatory rural appraisals (Chambers 1994, Johnson and Wilson 2000, Aune 2003, Leurs 2003).
It is recognized, though, that rural communities are not homogeneous and consensual entities but are heterogeneous and often arenas of social conflict. As a result, participation if not pursued properly may simply reproduce existing agrarian power relations. In this context, participatory methodologies have been aptly described as ‘double-edged swords’ (Ngunjiri 2003:p.227). This has important implications for any development intervention, as the development aid system may simply be intervening in and escalating struggles within the community. Cornwall notes with regard to gender divisions: ‘The question of who participates and who benefits raises awkward questions for participatory development. The very projects that appear so transformative can turn out to be supportive of a status quo that is highly inequitable for women… [T]he marginalization or exclusion of women from participatory projects remains an issue… Women’s involvement is often limited to implementation’ (Cornwall 2003:pp.1328-1329, her emphasis) (Razavi and Miller 1995). At times, then, NGOs have been guilty of deepening social stratification in a community, of consolidating the position of rural power-holders and of creating political conflict. Thus, development projects can ‘lead to a myopia which may foster negative forces of exclusion, oppression and structural violence’ as happened in Rwanda (Thomas-Slater and Sodikoff 2003:p.144).

An active rather than a passive role by NGOs as facilitators in the form of sensitive guidance is said to be critical for overcoming these potential problems. It is therefore incorrect to see NGOs as possessing all the scientific and social knowledge needed for development but it is equally mistaken to see rural communities as the repository of all the wisdom that they need. Rather, ‘the secret of effective external assistance is not only permanent consultation and two-way information flows but also a process that empowers the members of a local organization to analyze their own situation, figure out what the problems are, what options are available to resolve them, and how to choose workable options.’ (Carroll 1992:p.115) NGOs may threaten the autonomy and genuineness of local groups while they wean rural groups from dependence on the services they provide; and they may enable these groups to deal autonomously and effectively with external power holders in society. In other words, a hands-off, non-interfering stance is not an antidote to possible dependency or manipulation by outsiders: ‘Given Latin American
social history, the fear of domination, paternalism, and co-optation is real, but sympathetic alliances, stimuli, teaching, protection, and prodding must not be downgraded. They are essential elements in the organizational flowering process.’ (Carroll 1992:p.156) As Kaplan (1999) argues, moving artfully along the complicated road to symmetrical interdependence between intermediary NGOs and grassroots bodies in rural communities is the critical issue, rather than encouraging dependence or independence.

There is also considerable debate in the literature about which rural groups normally exhibit more promising participatory forms of local organization, either informal or more formally constituted groups. Some argue that ‘building new institutions without taking existing social structures in account tends to be difficult; the main effect may be to bring confusion and social unrest to a community’ (Hadenius and Uggla 1996:p.1625). At the same time, working with ‘traditional’ networks particularly those based on kinship structures may reinforce and exacerbate existing social cleavages. Irrespective of the groups ‘targeted’, capacity building of groups is the crucial bridge between social service and social change roles: service provision is downward action toward the agrarian poor while social change involving mobilization and advocacy is the flow of energy from the grassroots upward. Service provision can only be a sustainable and cumulative process if community-based institutions can effectively manage and control their resources. And effectiveness in social change depends on a core of tangible benefits around which community mobilization and organization can take place.

This is particularly noteworthy in present-day southern Africa ravaged by economic dislocation and the AIDS pandemic, and when the agrarian poor are preoccupied with bread and butter issues and the struggles of daily living. NGOs, particularly those involved in governance, rights, research and information activities, need to demonstrate a clear functional utility by fulfilling basic human needs in order to legitimize their continued relevance and to enhance grassroots participation in their operations. Indeed, there is a discernable trend as NGOs that advocate and mobilize increasingly recognize the need to provide tangible services in response to demands of the agrarian poor.
Simultaneously, development NGOs that provide tangible products increasingly see the importance of capacity building and social change. In this sense, at times there appears to be a convergence between advocacy and development NGOs. Despite this, most skills training in NGOs continue to focus on financial, administrative and technical subjects and much less on micro-organizational institution building within rural communities. Such incremental capacity building is only possible when donor-supported projects or programmes sequentially contribute to ongoing capacity development, but this rarely takes place.

5.11 Beyond Participation?

Participation has moved beyond the restricted notion of local participation by agrarian communities to broader questions about citizenship and rights. As a first step, this has involved a shift away from a paternalistic mode of participation in which the rural underclasses are passive objects to stakeholder participation in which these classes are active subjects. This is designed to maximize project efficiency or enhance grassroots responsiveness in development programmes. In turn, this has led to a conception of far-reaching radical participation where agrarian residents are treated as citizens that develop their political consciousness and capabilities, and articulate and demand their rights (Cornwall 2003). This would entail conceptualizing participation as what Fowler (2000) calls a ‘non-discretionary civic right’ or what has been referred to by another NGO activist from Africa as ‘a prenegotiated social contract with the community where the issues of democratic practice, accountability to that community and transparency of action of NGO personnel and its policy have first been resolved.’ (Jaffer 1997:p.74)

Considering the asymmetrical power relations prevailing within the NGO and development networks, such a right may be difficult to assert and defend. After all, the entire international aid system revolves around a series of conditions set by donors, whether at project or programme level or in terms of the broader economic and political conditions in the form of SAPs and good governance agendas. Yet, ‘people’s
conditionalities’ as a basis for participation in development interventions have been proposed and even adopted at NGO conferences. Dias, for example, argues that ‘there seems little reason why “project-affected peoples” cannot demand a set of “people’s conditionalities” invoking existing obligations under international human rights law, to protect themselves from being treated as an expendable resource in the development process.’ (Dias 1994:p.55) What resources people have for projecting and implementing their own views of conditionality remain unclear. Yet, this focus on developmental ‘rights’ for the agrarian poor seems to entail the formation of fully-fledged rural civil societies.

In this regard, many intermediary NGOs are focusing increasingly on facilitating grassroots participation in local-cum-national policy formation processes involving lobbying, advocacy and mobilizing practices. As well, while development interventions may seem largely technical in form and content, they invariably entail political matters that need to be addressed. The progress of any development intervention may depend significantly on tackling these matters in a proactive and strategic manner. Thus, ‘the development work of NGOs is by its very nature political… NGOs do recognise that their work is necessarily political’, but without (at least overtly) being partisan in party political terms (Mbogori 1999:p.v). In a weak sense, this means that engaging in any area of rural development (for example, access to water) invariably raises questions about government policies in that area. In a strong sense, it involves the recognition that relationships in agrarian communities are relationships of power. Participation is often perceived by development NGOs as a basis for empowering rural communities vis-à-vis national power holders. MWENGO (2000b), as a resource body for NGOs in southern and East Africa, outlines various strategies for influencing state policy, and these include the media, legislation and litigation but also more broad-based civic alliances and mass action. Urban-based advocacy and rights NGOs conceptualize the articulating of development rights and demands by rural under-classes in terms of the logic of the prevailing hegemonic civil society ‘paradigm’ discussed earlier.
What, though, about ‘empowerment’? NGOs often speak about empowerment, although this is propagated in very nebulous, ill defined and broad terms such that doing anything with or for rural communities seems – almost mechanistically and automatically – to empower them. Yet organizations like the World Bank are theorizing about the term. For instance Essama-Nssah as a senior economist with the Bank says that empowerment is now ‘the organising concept underpinning development thought, policies and programmes’ and that empowerment, much like participation, grants people ‘the right and the ability to act within a specified domain’ (Essama-Nssah 2004:p.509). Again, like the notion of participation, this locates the blockages hindering development within ‘the local’. Poverty is seen as a ‘capability deprivation’ or ‘capability failure’ amongst the poor, and development is designed to address this problem though ‘local ownership’ of development involving poor people as ‘full partners in the development process’ (Essama-Nssah 2004:pp.512, 515, 527).

Empowerment in development, no matter how understood, objectifies power as a commodity that can be inserted from outside – or made manifest from within – by knowledgeable and benevolent outsiders. Power is understood in the limited sense of the ‘capacity’ (to use the language of the World Bank) to make decisions and act within the confines of existing relations of power, or what Lukes (1974) refers to as the ‘power to’. This empowerment does not challenge hidden and more fundamental forms of power (such as the ‘power over’) on which the global development system rests (Crewe and Harrison 1998).

5.12 NGOs: Re-Constructing and Re-Centring Their World

Intermediary NGOs are not cognizant analytically of the tension between the universal and the particular, or the global and the local. But, because of their ‘intermediary’ position in the development system and industry, they acutely sense and experience this tension. This tension in the world of NGOs does not simply entail discontinuities between intent and practice, that is, between on the one hand the idealism embodied in
the visions and missions of NGOs seeking a just and equitable world and, on the other, the pragmatism of engaging in organizational practices (sometimes implying just getting ‘the job’ done and on schedule) that tend to uphold an unjust and inequitable world system. Rather, the tension also leads to ambivalences, inconsistencies and contradictions internal to organizational practice, as NGOs are pulled (and pull themselves) in opposing directions based on conflicting loyalties and accountabilities arising from their ambivalent social field. The existence of multiple social accountabilities revolves around nation-states, global donors and agrarian communities. This makes the ‘actually existing’ practices of NGOs, both in the offices and in the field, messy and muddy or at least marked by ambiguity and confusion.

NGOs ‘handle’ or ‘manage’ these tensions in numerous different ways, and how and why they do so is always historically specific. Yet, in large part, they are managed (‘externally’) along the porous boundaries of their social space and by means of (‘internal’) organizational practices. In going beyond de-construction and seeking to re-construct the world of NGOs as concrete organizational forms immersed in contradictory social processes, this thesis has brought to the fore the Weberian notion of ‘meaning’. The notion of ‘meaning’ goes beyond mechanistic, functionalist and instrumentalist conceptions of the interfaces that delimit the world of NGOs. It thus highlights the ‘negotiated’ quality of the NGO interfaces with the nation-state, global donors and agrarian communities.

A sociological understanding of these complex interactions entails transcending the treatment of intermediary NGOs in terms of the object-subject dichotomy, in which inputs enter NGOs (as objects) and outputs are produced by NGOs (as subjects) in terms of effects. At worst this might involve treating NGOs as ‘black boxes’ in which the internal mechanisms that translate inputs into outputs are left uninvestigated. At best, it means failing to conceptualize how the ‘input-output’ process (as part of the ‘negotiated’ process) is involved in the very makeup and constitution of NGOs as organizational forms. Ultimately, it is critical that any analysis of intermediary NGOs involves ‘capturing’ and making sense of organizational processes within NGOs.
Any such ‘thick descriptions’ of NGO practices must by necessity entail a re-centring of the sociological investigation in such a way that the world of NGOs is seen from the perspective of NGOs themselves. In other words, it is crucial that sociologists understand the meanings that NGOs give to themselves, to their world and to their ‘partners’ in contradictory processes of ‘democratic development’. These meanings cannot be deduced or asserted from ‘outside’ but must be read ‘from within’ in the form of, so to speak, an insider’s perspective. Social interfaces are soaked with conflicting definitions and meanings. The meanings that global donors, agrarian communities and nation-states give to their interfaces with NGOs may be considerably different than the meanings that NGOs themselves carry with them.

Thus, associated with ‘development’ is a range of different meanings and potentials, and these include contradictory conceptions of development ‘effect’ and ‘impact’. For example, in the case of the NGO-agrarian community interface, the rural ‘poor’ may choose to (or not to) be ‘integrated’ into a development process facilitated from ‘outside’ on any number of different ‘rationale’ grounds. Byrescon for instance notes: ‘Farmers may view projects without lasting results … as beneficial to progress if some community members’ life chances are improved.’ (Byrescon 2000c:p.321) And Carroll argues that active participation by communities ‘represents a cost to individuals, which is not likely to be incurred unless there is a perceived benefit.’ (Carroll 1992:p.92) How NGOs and the rural under-classes view ‘participation’ may differ considerably. From the perspective of NGOs, participation as an ideal is seen as adding value by contributing to sustainable and equitable development. Yet, simultaneously, it adds complexity to their work such that, in practice, it is often downgraded in importance. Hence Carroll adds: ‘Service delivery can be reasonably effective without much active involvement by the beneficiaries.’ (Carroll 1992:p.93)

It will be argued later that NGOs seek to handle the tensions between the global and the local that they experience by trying to bring simplicity, order and closure to their world of ambivalence. These ‘stabilizing’ activities become embodied within ‘actually existing’
organizational practices. Acts of stabilization are not simply found or reflected in the official representations of NGO work that regularly wax eloquently about simple development successes. Rather, they are ingrained within the everyday work of NGOs. The predominant trajectory of these ‘stabilization’ practices push intermediary NGOs in the direction of privileging ‘the global’ and making problematic ‘the local’. This was brought out in my discussions about the discursive practices of NGOs that focus on civil society, democracy and development. I have labelled this trajectory as a Glocal modernity rather than a gLocal modernity. This trajectory needs to be conceptualized as a negotiated outcome rather than as an imposition. In the end, then, this Glocal modernity is ‘owned’ by NGOs: it is their modernity.

The discussion so far provides the epistemological and theoretical backdrop for the balance of the thesis. The remaining chapters provide a rich array of historical and comparative material that is designed to illustrate rather than prove the sociological argument about NGOs that is developed in the thesis. The main empirical focus of the thesis is land reform and NGOs in contemporary Zimbabwe. The next four chapters (Chapter Six through to Chapter Nine) look at land reform in the modern world in relation to both global and local (Zimbabwean) developments. They provide the agrarian context within which intermediary ‘land’ NGOs can be understood and ‘measured’. The next four chapters (Chapters Ten to Thirteen) detail the world of ‘land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe from the mid-1990s onwards. There is an extensive discussion of both advocacy and development NGOs in processes of social change, along with two case studies that offer ‘thick descriptions’ of the work of ‘land’ NGOs in the face of the accelerated land reform programme.
Chapter 6

Global Land Reform Policies

In the next two chapters I explore land reform from a contemporary global perspective. Chapter Six deals with questions of global land *policies*, and Chapter Seven concerns global land *struggles*. In this chapter, a conceptual overview of ‘agrarian’ and ‘land’ reform is offered, including important distinctions between these two kinds of reform. This is necessary in order to more clearly understand what the involvement of intermediary NGOs in land reform actually (or potentially) entails. The chapter discusses a neo-liberal trajectory of reform that has become prevalent in the East and South, although its impact has been highly uneven. The historical roots of this reform trajectory will be outlined, along with current debates about market-led reform and agricultural performance.

6.1 Agrarian and Land Reform

There are four main conceptual points about land and agrarian reform that need to be highlighted for purposes of this thesis. First of all, it is crucial not to conflate these two kinds of reform and, especially, not to reduce (broader) agrarian reform to (narrower) land reform. Although these reforms are significantly intertwined as part of complex rural-cum-national social processes, they are not synonymous. A considerable portion of the academic literature about land reform, including on Zimbabwe, regrettably fails (at least explicitly) to make this conceptual distinction, and thus the terms ‘agrarian’ and ‘land’ are often used interchangeably. Because of this, claims in the sparse literature on the role of NGOs in agrarian and land reform are sometimes obscure. This will be highlighted in Chapter Ten.
Two recent works, to which I intermittently refer later in the chapter, are very suggestive of the distinction and its relevance. First of all, in their broad overview of contemporary rural restructuring in the South and East, Moyo and Yeros note that land and agrarian matters are often ‘treated synonymously’ by scholars (Moyo and Yeros 2005a:p.24), particularly with regard to regions where large-scale farming and landlordism predominate such as in much of Latin America and in southern Africa. In these regions, where land-short peasants exist in significant numbers, it may be easily (but erroneously) concluded that wide-sweeping land reform (for example, land redistribution) is of such critical importance that such reform largely resolves social inequalities and productivity constraints within the agrarian political economy. Yet, the implementation of land reform programmes regularly takes place within the confines of non-egalitarian agrarian systems. Historical events in Latin America, Asia and Africa clearly demonstrate that land reforms ‘may disturb the relations of production only marginally, if at all. Redistribution of land may take place, but the differentiations within the agricultural community survive and may indeed be perpetuated.’ (Sobhan 1993:p.19)

A second important work is by Mafeje (2003) with specific respect to Africa. He distinguishes between agrarian and land reform by arguing that, in non-settler societies, significant alienation of land did not occur during the colonial integration of peasant economies into the world economy. Thus, in West Africa, where there was considerable foreign investment but a limited settler presence, out-grower and contractual schemes – involving for instance cocoa – thrived based on an ‘autonomous’ peasantry with ready access to land. As a result, a land problem does not exist in post-colonial West Africa but a gnawing agrarian question does, although other writers dispute this. Nevertheless, as suggested above, tackling the land question in former settler societies (like South Africa and Zimbabwe) does not resolve the broader agrarian question. Kepe and Cousins thus argue that, in the case of post-apartheid South Africa, land reform ‘[a]lthough necessary … will only be effective if embedded within a broader programme to restructure the agrarian economy.’ (Kepe and Cousins 2002:p.2)

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4 For instance, Moyo (2004) has noted increasing land concentration and alienation in post-colonial Africa outside of former settler capitalist societies, and this has thereby led to a marked land question in these societies.
Land reform, such as set out explicitly in the current constitution of South Africa, normally involves three components, namely, land redistribution, land restitution and land tenure changes. However, the particular mix of these components is open to significant historical variation and is a product of social struggle. Subsequent to the recent turbulent events in Zimbabwe, a regional group of land specialists has argued that land tenure reform in southern Africa is ‘a less immediate issue’ than land redistribution (TT 2003:p.2). Yet, the form that land tenure takes within resettlement areas is of critical significance in structuring access to (and possession of) land and the social organization of production. Sometimes these different aspects of land reform pull in opposing directions as, for example, when (under market-led reform) privatized land tenure is promoted at the expense of pursuing a more re-distributive thrust; or when re-distribution occurs on a significant scale but questions of land tenure rights in existing customary lands (as in southern Africa) are not addressed.

Agrarian reform, on the other hand, deals with the broader political economy in the countryside. It relates to ‘the transition to capitalist production in the rural areas’ and the extent to which ‘capitalism penetrated and transformed agriculture and proletarianised the rural population’ (Hendricks 2000:p.41). On a global scale, this ‘transformation’ has been remarkably variable and uneven. And, within particular localities, it has led to highly differentiating effects on rural communities and to complex kinds of class formation. Generally speaking, questions about class formation revolve around the notions of ‘peasantry’ and ‘proletariat’.

For those rural inhabitants still involved in peasant-based production, the agrarian question involves confronting such day-to-day problems as ‘extractive state policies, lack of infrastructure, lack of proper market facilities, exploitation by middlemen and unscrupulous traders, all of which militate against [peasant-led] accumulation from below’ (Mafeje 2003:p.23). For members of the rural proletariat, the question involves

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5 Moyo (2004:p.16) points out that a pronounced emphasis on land tenure reform in contemporary West Africa has led to land dispossession and the growth of an agrarian capitalist class at the expense of increasingly land-short peasants and landless proletarians.
their engagement on a casual or permanent basis as ‘farm workers’ with capitalist agricultural enterprises. Yet, most rural families wear more than one hat, as they are simultaneously involved in a diverse range of (urban and rural) production and work activities that defy easy class categorization. Nevertheless, it is clear that agrarian reform entails ‘economic’ issues pertaining to forms of production and accumulation in the rural areas. These issues also articulate with ‘political’ issues involving class relations and alliances between the peasantry and the (urban and rural) proletariat (Hendricks 2000, Bernstein 2003).

From a classical Marxist position, ‘the resolution of the agrarian question is tied up with industrial transformation’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005a:p.24). In this regard, Moyo asserts that it is ‘generally agreed’ by scholars that the African continent as a whole has a significant agrarian question marked by ‘an aborted agrarian transition’ (Moyo 2004: p.14), the ‘narrow spread of agrarian capitalism’ (Moyo 2004:p.67) and the ‘widespread growth of technological backward agricultural petty commodity production’ (Moyo 2004:p.67). The transition to capitalism in the ‘peripheries’ has without doubt entailed the ‘logic of the extension and intensification of commodity production’ (Bernstein 2003: p.206 emphasis removed) within the parameters set by expansive global capital relations. But, at the same time, this transition has been characterized by the incompleteness of primitive accumulation and industrial development. As a result, the process of ‘de-agrarianization’ (Bryceson 2000a:p.3) has been inhibited and this has led to the ‘truncated nature’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005a:p.8) of proletarianization and the reproduction of socio-economic conditions sustaining the rural ‘semi-proletariat’.

Historically, the agrarian question was concerned with the transition from feudalism to capitalism, with the focus initially on Europe and later on colonized nations under the impact of imperialism. Bernstein (2003) labels this as the ‘agrarian question of capital’ (and specifically of industrial capital). In an intriguing analysis, he claims that this transition has occurred globally and that the agrarian problem has been resolved at this level. However, stalled capitalist industrialization in the ‘peripheries’ has left the classic question unresolved in these regions but now largely redundant given the existence of
capitalism as an all-pervasive world-system. Regrettably, Bernstein’s analysis assumes an a historical conception of the agrarian question based on de-localized globalization processes, and is insensitive to how the question invariably has a local content and ‘resolution’ based on the notion of ‘glocalization’. 

Clearly, arguments about ‘stalled transitions’ do not imply that agrarian petty commodity production in the South and East somehow lies outside (or beyond) the system of capitalist production and reproduction. Rather, they highlight the failure of industrial take-off (particularly in Africa) and, as argued later, the unlikelihood of this occurring in the foreseeable future considering the prevailing development crisis throughout much of the South and East. In this sense, the debates about the agrarian question have recognized the heterogeneity of global processes, and are ‘an antidote to the grandiose claims that globalization has brought about a “dramatic transformation” in world society’ (Hendricks 1995:p.46). Accordingly, ‘[a]ttending to agrarian questions in the global South may … aid in the project of displacing a settled sense of universal history’ (Moore 2005:p.70) and thereby lead to alternative renditions of the trajectory of actually existing agrarian processes.

6.2 Land Reform: Labour, Contingency and Struggle 

Bernstein (2003) further claims that the agrarian question needs to be significantly re-conceptualized and he speaks about an ‘agrarian question of labour’ in the light of the subordinated integration of the South and East in international commodity chains and markets under the neo-liberal trajectory. Given that ‘capital’ and ‘labour’ are internally related and constituted, seeking to separate them as Bernstein does is highly problematic. Nevertheless, his revised analysis brings to the fore the ‘fragmentation (or fracturing) of labour’ (Bernstein 2003:p.211) in the ‘peripheries’, with ‘ever more disparate combinations of wage- and self-employment (agricultural and non-agricultural petty commodity production)’ (Bernstein 2003:p.217) as reproduction strategies. In some localities, this entails declining involvement by rural under-classes in increasingly
unreliable and unproductive agricultural activities. These strategies of social reproduction are often embedded in diverse forms of political conflict within and beyond agrarian settings. Interestingly, many years earlier Barraclough (1990) labelled this ‘fragmentation’ of labour as the ‘peasant question’ (at least from the perspective of the peasantry), because it involved ongoing (and desperate) modes of survival, and thereby ‘maintaining and possibly improving inadequate and precarious livelihoods’ (Barraclough 1990:p.3). The highly differentiated forms of social reproduction in rural areas seriously complicate class analysis, particularly in relation to the ‘peasantry’ (Hendricks 1995).

In terms of Bernstein’s argument, contemporary agrarian reform may need to be significantly (but not wholly) de-linked conceptually from the classic concern with spurring on industrialization, because primary accumulation for capitalist industrialization ‘could not possibly come from the depressed African agricultural economies’ (Mafeje 2003:p.30). Certainly, there are serious structural constraints inhibiting industrialization on the basis of surplus extraction from the rural under-classes (involving value transfers to urban industry). Nevertheless, addressing the ‘agrarian question of labour’ (like the classic question) involves contending with existing modes of domination (‘political’) and relations of production (‘economic’) in the rural areas in a manner (and to an extent) that land reform alone cannot accomplish.

The second point about agrarian and land reform is that this reform (even conceptually) is rooted in political struggle, and thus it is subject to discursive argumentation and contested meanings. For instance, it is common in the literature on land reform to find broad distinctions between (and evaluations of) state-led reform, market-led reform and popular-led reform, or between top-down and bottom-up reform. These reform strategies arise from (and become infused in) protracted historical struggles in the South and East as moments in class conflicts ranging from national struggles for hegemony to localized struggles for survival. ‘Reform’ hence takes on specific, contingent and alternative discursive meanings. For example, Hall (2004) notes in relation to present-day South Africa that land reform is prone to different discursive representations such that,
simultaneously, it is ‘about the deracialisation of capital, the promotion of smallholder agriculture, direct poverty reduction by transferring assets to the poor, human security and secure tenure, and historical justice’ (Hall 2004:p.214). Therefore, land is invariably (and variably) ‘coded’ and takes on social and political significance in this way. This is not to suggest (or to justify) the necessity for some kind of postmodernist relativist conception of land reform. Instead, consistent with my earlier arguments about the negotiated and contested quality of ‘development’ (or ‘agrarian’) interfaces, I seek to highlight how discursive constructions (including those articulated by NGOs) are materialized in struggles over agrarian and land reform or displace those struggles.

My third point stresses the importance of identifying global trajectories in land reform in the contemporary world as part of a modernist sociological project. In this regard, Bernstein – in a study of agrarian reform in contemporary Africa – aptly speaks of ‘general themes from which specific histories create complex variations’ (Bernstein 2005:p.82). While it is possible to outline specific agrarian paths (or ‘variations’) based on particular socio-historical-national contexts (such as present-day Zimbabwe), this does not distract from the existence of general agrarian ‘themes’ or processes (regionally and globally) that structure and effect specific trajectories. This is particularly evident in relation to the African continent (as a ‘region’) in the context of the current phase of globalisation. According to a workshop on land tenure held in Addis Ababa in January 2000, the various land programmes initiated by African nation-states during the 1990s were ‘directed at remarkably similar issues and problems’ as were ‘the preliminary prescriptions emerging from specific country-level processes.’ 6

Lastly, it is critical to emphasize that, in terms of social change, there are no ‘final solutions’ (Palmer 2000:p.286) (or resolutions) to agrarian and land questions based on teleological assumptions about the end-of-history. ‘Resolutions’, if they exist at all, are historically conjunctural, tentative and variable, and the questions are never fully and finally laid to political rest. Only ruling classes and political regimes propagate this myth

of closure on land reform. Thus, any ‘resolution’ is inherently ongoing, open-ended and subject to non-linear (and even cyclical) changes in the face of political struggle. During the course of the following discussion, the socially indeterminate texture of land reform will be brought increasingly to the fore.

6.3 State-Centred Land Reform

It is not my intention to offer a historical ‘periodization’ of land and agrarian reform on a global scale, nor is it necessary for purposes of the thesis. However, it seems clear that over the past half-century there has been a global shift from a state-centred reform process to a society-centred process, and that this change is ongoing. This shift involves a move from ‘developmentalism’ to ‘neo-liberalism’, in which the nation-state functions to promote market-led restructuring of society. At first sight the transition seems linear, steady, unrelenting and purposeful but, ultimately, it involves diverse, fragmented, contingent and uncertain struggles occurring locally, regionally and internationally. The product of this process – a neo-liberal trajectory – also seems coherent and wholly dominant. But it is bedevilled by numerous contradictions and inconsistencies, and is the ‘object’ of strident forms of rural opposition. Further, even the proponents of neo-liberalism (notably, global capital) have been recently rethinking neo-liberalism. This global ‘transition’ should not be overstated. But highlighting it provides a broader context for discussing land and agrarian changes globally.

In the early 1990s, Sobhan (1993) argued that after two decades in which agrarian and land reform was a global non-event, ‘[v]otaries [or enthusiasts] of agrarian reform’ had been reduced to ‘a fringe group of romantic throwbacks left over from the 1950s and 60s’ (Sobhan 1993:p.3). The two decades after World War II, when a state-centric model of social order and change dominated the global scene, witnessed a range of land reforms throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America, with a particular emphasis on land redistribution. These reforms sometimes occurred during (and because of) insurgent peasant rebellions or they were initiated by post-colonial nationalist elites, reform-
minded military juntas or the lower ranks of landed classes. Often, reforms were meant to ‘pre-empt future peasant militancy’ (Sobhan 1993:p.36), notably in Latin America, and these initiatives were normally backed by metropolitan capitalist states (the United States especially) in the face of Soviet imperialism. In fact, during this time it was ‘quite rare’ for extensive land reforms to be carried out ‘under a system of democratic institutions’ (Dorner 1999:p.4). In general, land redistribution during the 1950s and 1960s impacted insignificantly on the prevailing agrarian modes of domination and relations of production in the South and East.

There was, nevertheless, a pronounced global recognition and acceptance of land reform (at least of land redistribution) as a critical element in the prevailing state-led (and -dominated) developmentalist project. Further, as Bryceson (2000b) notes, this was a ‘period’ of ‘peasant agricultural “modernization”’ in that ‘peasant agriculture became the key growth sector during the 1960s’, at least in Africa. But ‘[d]espite improved world market prices for peasant commodities’, the ‘agricultural modernization effort had to be subsidized. The African state, in conjunction with foreign donor contributions, took the lead. State intervention expanded exponentially in the 1960s and early 1970s,’ and this included the formation of a range of parastatal marketing agencies for rural commodities and services: ‘Modernizing peasant agriculture meant subsidizing it in the form of lowered input taxes, pan-territorial producer pricing, and lower consumer goods prices.’ (Bryceson 2000b:pp.48, 49) A policy focus on peasant agriculture throughout the South and East was to continue beyond the 1960s, but this post-War ‘moment of developmentalism incorporated – or at least coincided with – the last significant examples of redistributive land reform in the modern period’ (Bernstein 2003:p.208).

The post-war emphasis on land reform had dissipated by the early 1970s because, amongst other causes, it ‘fell out of favour with donors’ (Adams 1995:p.1). This reason is of particular importance, since international funding agencies have consistently and significantly influenced the ebbs and flows of land reform in the ‘peripheries’. Toulmin and Quan thus note that donors, in relation to Africa, have often ‘short-circuited debate’ on national land programmes through ‘a combination of conditionality (strings attached
to loans and aid) or manipulation of the policy process’ (Toulmin and Quan 2000:p.4). Or, as Quan put it with specific regard to land tenure reform, ‘the World Bank and other Western donors have tended to dominate debate … particularly in sub-Saharan Africa’ (Quan 2000:p.36). This was particularly telling in the context of the shift away from state-centric regulatory regimes to ‘free-market’ SAPs.

Land reform was in large part displaced during the 1970s and 1980s (a second ‘period’) by a more exclusive fixation with social development as propagated by international capital. The World Bank played a significant intellectual and policy-formation role in this regard, and it propagated the idea that poverty ‘was to be alleviated by the vertical downward extension of “modernisation”’ (Gibbon 1992:p.194). Gibbon et al. (1993) refer to this as ‘(capitalist) modernisation from above’ which, in relation to agrarian reform policy, effectively ‘equated development with medium and large-scale producers increasing output’ (Gibbon et al. 1993:p.3) despite the overt emphasis by the World Bank on enhancing the ‘untapped’ productivity of small-scale farmers. By means of SAPs implemented in the South and East, ‘policies and relations’ between nation-states and their peasant populations became increasingly ‘mediated by international capital’ (Bryceson 2000b:p.53).

These policy efforts to promote ‘modern’ (capitalist) farming have been called ‘productionist interventions’ in the rural political economy as opposed to more ‘distributional measures’ (Bernstein 2003:p.206). During the 1970s and 1980s, as neoliberalism seemed to gain global ground on statism, these distributional strategies included ‘policy palliatives and resource commitments targeted at delivering resources to the poor. These programmes range from Food for Work Programmes to various nutritional improvement, skill-enhancing and service-delivery programmes targeted at the poorest sections of the rural population. Such programmes may be incorporated into a wider Integrated Rural Development Programme.’ (Sobhan 1993:p.113) Thus there existed (and there still exists) the implementation (often by NGOs and other civic bodies) of targeted and integrated anti-poverty development strategies designed to uplift peasant agriculture.
These agrarian measures were enacted without any serious commitment to land reform. Therefore, in a foreword to a recent publication on civil society and land reform, the leaders of two international agencies noted that ‘the “redistributive” land reform agenda was largely forgotten until very recently’ (Ghimire ed. 2001:p.vii). For instance, ‘[a] critical issue in Uganda agriculture addressed by neither of its [structural] adjustment packages’ during the 1980s was ‘that of the land question’ (Gibbon et al. 1993:p.74). In other words, during this critical phase in the (ambivalent) global move away from a state-centred model of social regulation, ‘development’ was not clearly articulated and pursued within the context of a fully comprehensive agrarian and land agenda. With regard specifically to land reform, any noticeable emphasis was placed on land tenure changes (based on unsophisticated privatization models) rather than on land redistribution.

6.4 Society-Centred Land Reform

Yet, since the early 1990s, reform has experienced a deliberate global return (a third ‘period’) and it has once again been incorporated (much like the 1950s and 1960s) into a broad development strategy. As Bruce Moore (2001) argues, there has been ‘a re-focusing of national and international agendas on the revival of agrarian reform and resource tenure for agricultural communities as well as for fisher folk and coastal communities, forest dwellers, pastoralists and other traditional resource users.’ (Moore 2001:p.5) Land reform is also taking centre stage, notably tenure changes. The agrarian and land reform strategy though is now more society-centred. There is a particular stress on the market-civil society nexus in the context of a neo-liberal trajectory that effectively has spelt the end of developmentalism. The reform strategy is also taking place in the face of the crisis of livelihoods encapsulated in the notion of the ‘agrarian question of labour’.

7 The two leaders are the president of the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the director of the United Nations Institute for Social Development.
Much of the agrarian reform (or ‘development’) agenda entails a community-based defensive ‘sustainable rural livelihoods approach’ (Bryceson 2000c:p.315) that seeks to help rural under-classes to reduce vulnerability (and maximize sustainability) by risk management through for example the diversification of income-generating activities and food-security measures. As discussed earlier in the thesis, this entails a focus on forging ‘civil society’ (or building ‘social capital’) in the countryside based on anti-statist, participatory and holistic methodologies, and with the active involvement of development NGOs. Yet, the ‘[e]mphasis on building “social capital” may be counter-productive, representing donors’ attempts at making do with declining physical resource transfers [or aid], rather than reflective of the actual needs of rural dwellers. The build-up of human capital rather than social capital [civil society] is the fundamental issue in view of the labour redundancy currently experienced by the world’s peasannies.’ (Bryceson 2000c: p.317) The livelihoods strategy is a less all-embracing and pro-active agrarian development strategy compared to the programme in the immediate post-War era. It is largely a short-term localized coping strategy that fails to vigorously address the long-term globalized marginalization of the rural under-classes under the neo-liberal trajectory through robust national development programmes in the South and East.

Clearly, donor capital is once again playing a crucial role in instigating this land reform package. Hence, in the case of southern Africa, ‘recipient governments have become suspicious that donors, by insisting on a range of conditions – a “pro-poor” focus, the willing buyer, willing seller principle, maintaining economic stability – are using support to land reform as a neo-colonialist “Trojan Horse”, which in some cases is also perpetuating racial imbalances in land ownership.’ (TT 2003:p.12) This neo-liberal ‘pro-poor’ strategy though is not based on an unbridled free market approach as during the earlier SAP period. There emerged during the 1990s ‘mounting evidence of the pitfalls of this approach’ (Toulmin and Quan 2000:p.2). This led to re-evaluations on the part of international donors and nation-states that resulted in a renewed emphasis on (for instance) the facilitating role of a reconfigured state in social and economic development. Toulmin and Quan, in the specific context of Africa, hence speak about a new ‘paradigm’ on agrarian and land reform that is more human-centred and is based on good governance.
ideals of pluralism and de-centralization. The de-centralization of African nation-states was propagated and implemented during the second ‘period’, but successful subsidiarity never materialized (Toulmin 2000, Wunsch and Olowu 1995). Accordingly, the available literature (on land reform in Africa) constantly highlights ‘the singular lack of community participation in the decision making process’ and how ‘policy and institutional arrangements have been driven from the top’ (Mutefpa et al. 1998:pp.7, 8).

This ‘new’ approach stresses the significance of variable local (and not flattening global) solutions to securing access to land and natural resources, such that (as discussed below) ‘the last few years have witnessed a reassessment of conventional wisdom regarding [customary] land tenure’ (Toulmin and Quan 2000:p.5). However, Quan goes on to note, in the case of the World Bank, that this ‘new’ paradigm is ‘not always or necessarily reflected in practice by its operational divisions’ (Quan 2000:p.36). Nevertheless, as suggested above, marked tension between donors and nation-states in sub-Saharan Africa has been recently noticeable. This is due in large measure to the insistence by donors on civil society participation in land policy reform exercises and the general reluctance on the part of politicians and bureaucrats to relax their grip on the centralized (and regularly authoritarian) reigns of power (Palmer 2000). As a result, ‘donors have found it increasingly difficult to justify the allocation of aid resources to land reform in the region [of southern Africa]. This reluctance is due to the lack of viable policies and programmes and is also a response in policy trends – in practice if not in rhetorical terms – away from the pro-poor agenda [by nation-states] that donors feel should be the focus of land reform policies. Land grabbing by elite groups is evident across the region’ (TT 2003:p.3).

However, this ‘new paradigm’ – even on paper – does not entail a paradigmatic shift beyond the neo-liberal trajectory that emerged during the context of social crisis in the early 1970s. It is best described as a revised neo-liberal ‘paradigm’, and thus it continues to make ‘development’ equivalent to market capitalism. ‘Development’ in Africa under the neo-liberal trajectory and its links to the current global processes of agrarian and land reform are discussed in the next two sections of this chapter.
Bryceson makes the telling observation that peasants are ‘the losing partners’ in their relationship with international capital. Domination over the peasantries under neo-liberalism may be ‘more distanced’ because it is based on international financial institutions and global markets which act through national governments, but it entails – relative to the earlier state-centred period with centralized post-colonial states – ‘more sophisticated and insidious power’ (Bryceson 2000c:pp.323, 300). The globalization of agriculture and agrarian restructuring under ‘neo-liberalism’ has not led to the dissolution of the peasantry but certainly this under-class has been increasingly dispossessed, marginalized and left for dead. Later discussions though indicate that the peasantry is not taking things lying down, and thus their ‘domination’ by global capital is a hegemonic domination that is infused with counter-hegemonic struggles in an array of forms.

6.5 Global Capitalism: Emergence and Management of Crisis

The thesis looks specifically at NGOs and land reform during the third ‘period’ marked by a revised or restructured neo-liberalism. Accordingly, this chapter highlights key issues pertaining to agrarian and land reform during this ‘period’, with particular reference to the African continent. The contemporary phase of capitalist globalization was discussed in Chapter Three from a largely theoretical perspective. This section of the chapter schematically addresses (from a world-systems viewpoint) the historical development of the African political economy in the context of neo-liberal globalization, and how this has impacted on agrarian and land reform.

The prevailing condition in sub-Saharan Africa has been described as a development crisis of epic proportions or as a disaster or tragedy. Over the past few decades, Africa has been integrated into the global system in a way that effectively reduces its significance to the world economy at least in terms of productive investment and world trade. It is important to consider the external determinants of this crisis in order to make sense of the ‘true collapse’ (Arrighi 2002:p.8) of Africa and of what ‘development’ really means (or does not mean) for the ‘non-viable national economies’ (de Rivero 2001:p.9)
and the under-classes of sub-Saharan Africa. These nations exercise only negative sovereignty because they cannot achieve the basic well-being or physical reproduction of their populations. Internalist and state-minimalist analyses of the African crisis, as propagated by the strident ideologues of the neo-liberal development persuasion, speak about state reform involving good governance, institutional adjustments and liberal democracy as a basis for the ‘re-launching of development’ (Amin 1997:p.98).

But it has been argued that ‘[d]evelopment no longer depends on democratic national efforts and decisions’ (de Rivero 2001:p.7). An internal focus fails to lodge the crisis firmly in an analysis of the global economy. Yet, simultaneously, Africa’s present-day agricultural crisis and its ongoing agrarian and land questions – even if understood in a world-systems context – cannot be ‘attributed exclusively to a (malign) exterior’ (Bernstein 2005:p.87). Hence, a sensitive understanding of agrarian processes in Africa cannot be reduced to either external (for example, neo-liberalism) or internal (for example, nationalism) determinants or a combination thereof based on a positivist notion of ‘external’ relations and interaction, because the global and the local are (as discussed in Chapter Three) ‘internally’ fused as part of the same process of ‘glocalization’.

The strong expansion of world capitalism after the Second World War and on into the early 1970s enabled many nation-states in Africa to pursue, under the influence of United States hegemony and as a bulwark against communism in the face of militant anti-colonial struggles, a modernizing and industrializing bourgeois-nationalist catch-up strategy that became widely known as developmentalism. This modernist strategy of state-led development, according to Amin (2002), was imposed upon the dominant imperialist forces of world capitalism by a range of international anti-hegemonic struggles, and it was subsequently implemented by the emerging nation-states in the South and East. This strategy involved significant state intervention (or state-centrism), and it sought to construct auto-centred national development economies with a strong manufacturing sector. Albeit based initially on surpluses from the agricultural sector (along the lines of primitive accumulation) and involving a subservient incorporation into the global economy as exporters of raw materials like agricultural products and minerals,
it led to an emphasis on import-substitution driven industrialization. Yet, industrialization never took off and much of the sub-Saharan region remains a prisoner of this international ‘outmoded division of labour’ (Amin 1997:p.148). Hence, the chances that capitalism, as currently structured, will develop the region are increasingly improbable.

The world system, and not just Africa, entered into a ‘structural crisis’ in the early 1970s (Wallerstein 2002), and this swiftly derailed developmentalism, although it is unlikely that significant industrialization would have taken place despite the crisis (Amin 1997). This social crisis is normally labelled as ‘a crisis of profitability and of legitimacy’ (Arrighi 2002:p.9). The crisis, Amin stresses (1997), is not however a crisis of capitalism. Crises are endemic to capitalism, and capitalist crises emerge only if and when strong anti-systemic forces arise and coalesce. The 1950s and 1960s, as a ‘period of prosperity’ that drove developmentalism in Africa, witnessed a great worldwide expansion of trade and production (and thus intensified international competition) under the influence of state-led Keynesian economic policies and institutions at national levels.

In this context, Amin speaks of the crisis that emerged during the 1970s as manifesting itself ‘in the fact that the profits derived from production do not find sufficient outlets in the form of lucrative investments capable of further developing productive capacity.’ (Amin 1997:p.x) There was a decline in the level of productive investment and a growth of excess financial capital. Simultaneously, Keynesian national programmes were increasingly questioned as counterproductive economically, and neo-liberal and anti-state policies arose over time to manage (and not solve) the crisis by, for instance, ‘finding other outlets for this excess of floating [short-term and idle] capital (Amin 1997:p.x). Global capital was able to maximize speculative financial profits by such processes as liberalization of international capital flows, floating exchange rates, privatization and deregulation, and American balance-of-payment deficits.

During the 1980s there was also ‘a major reversal in the direction of global capital flows’ as the United States government ‘started to compete aggressively for capital worldwide,
to finance a growing trade and current account deficit’. This ‘reflated both effective demand and investment in North America, while deflating it in the rest of the world. At the same time, this redirection enabled the United States to run large deficits in its balance of trade that created an expanding demand for imports of those goods that North American businesses no longer found profitable to produce.’ (Arrighi 2002:pp.12, 13) In large part, these imported goods tended to be industrial and not agricultural products. Despite this, Africa was unable to satisfy the import demands of North America in an increasingly competitive environment amongst nations of the South and East. Also, African nations could not compete with the United States in the world financial markets and for foreign capital investment, yet they were particularly dependent on foreign productive investment compared to Asia and Latin America. Meanwhile, the maximization of speculative financing also occurred through (excessive) borrowing by the South and East, and this led to significant indebtedness. Initially, this seemed advantageous to African states, as the excess liquidity was recycled as loan capital on favourable conditions at a time of reasonable economic growth under developmentalism (Arrighi 2002).

With regard to the 1970s, Gibbon notes: ‘Within the general context of increased lending, the concern with poverty [based on a modernization paradigm] reflected an opportunity to disburse additional funds, while in the process securing the political stability of LDC [Less Developed Countries] governments committed to modernisation.’ (Gibbon 1992: p.197) The loans also assisted African governments in paying for the rising costs of imports. The banks collected their interest on these loans through refinancing schemes based on stringent (structural) adjustments imposed and supervised by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (de Rivero 2001). Yet, these loans soon became ‘crippling burdens’ (Saul and Leys 1999:p.6) with the emergence of high interest rates, particularly in conjunction with the deteriorating terms of trade for primary products and the weakening of world demand for Africa’s export commodities.

The Washington Consensus, involving the Bretton Wood institutions notably the World Bank and IMF, was primarily designed to manage this crisis and to dictate to the South
and East its role in the containment: ‘The development-friendly regime of the preceding thirty years was officially liquidated and Third World countries were invited to play by the rules of an altogether different game – that is, to open up their national economies to the cold winds of intensifying world-market competition’ (Arrighi 2002:p.13). Governments had little option but to comply, as rejection would ensure the international credit unworthiness of the nation. The IMF and World Bank ‘were converted into strict supervisors of an adjustment designed to oblige the debtor countries to reorganise their economies and to pay their creditors’ (de Rivero 2001:p.55). These multilateral institutions were ‘instruments’ (Amin 1997:p.97) of global capital in ensuring that the economies of the South and East were subordinated ‘to the constraint of servicing the high external debt’ (Amin 2002:p.48) and thereby paid their international creditors (both banks and governments). At the same time, the nations in the ‘periphery’ became subject to the imperatives of managing the global crisis through economic liberalization and deregulation: ‘The restructuring programmes imposed in this context are not at all what their name, structural adjustment, would suggest. The idea behind them is not to change structures in a way that might allow a new general boom and market expansion, but only to make conjunctural adjustments that obey the short-term logic of assuring the financial profitability of the surplus capital.’ (Amin 1997:p.x)

SAPs emerged as a basis for adapting or adjusting national economies of the South and East to the new conditions of worldwide accumulation. In the agricultural sector this included, amongst other actions, the dismantling of marketing parastatals through the privatization and commercialization of distribution and trading activities (including with reference to peasant commodity marketing), and the abolition or downsizing of peasant producer subsidies provided by the state. Such actions were designed to assert Africa’s cash crops more vigorously into the global economic division of labour by increasing ‘export-crop producer prices and so exports’, and thereby ‘improving debt-service capacity’ (Raikes 2000:p.75). But, in so doing, SAPs ‘more fully exposed peasants to international market forces’ (Bryceson 2000a:p.27) and led in part to their decline but also to their reconstitution: ‘SAPs and economic liberalization policies represented the
convergence of the worldwide forces of de-agrarianization and national policies promoting de-peasantization.’ (Bryceson 2000c:p.305)

SAPs brought about ‘a regression in the possibilities for development’ (Amin 1997:p.20), notably in Africa. The comprehensive work by Gibbon et al. (1993) examines the impact of SAPs on agriculture and the rural under-classes in sub-Saharan Africa during the 1980s and, in doing so, they note ‘a general weakening of the state’s capacity to deliver’ goods and services to its urban and rural populace (Gibbon et al. 1993:p.18 emphasis removed) In this respect, international capital effectively turned the heat on the state institutions that they had spent so many years building up and left the rural under-classes exposed (Raikes 2000). Further, as suggested earlier, Gibbon et al. (1993) pinpoint an important (unstated) intention underlying the SAPs by arguing that ‘the stated objectives of a smallholder focus and poverty eradication was qualified in certain basic respects. Firstly, priority to smallholders did not imply that only they should be given attention. The role of large private farms in providing a major share of marketed output … was clearly recognised. Any strategy also had to include these “highly productive enclaves”… Another important qualification was related to the strategic position of larger farmers within the promotion of smallholder agriculture. In production-oriented strategies larger farmers could be used to “spearhead the introduction of new methods”. … It is not entirely cynical to read the strategy design [of the World Bank] as one that gives priority to commercial medium- and larger-scale farmers, who will introduce new methods and whose achievements will trickle down to the less prosperous smallholders.’ (Gibbon et al. 1993:pp.104-105) Regrettably, during the course of SAPs, consistent trickling dissipated into irregular drips.

Thus, Gibbon et al. provide a wealth of empirical data to show that, beyond any doubt, SAPs had a devastating impact on African agriculture and the social reproduction of small-scale farmers. Ironically, with regard to such countries as Zambia, food production and security improved but this ‘reflected slippage or lack of implementation’ of SAPs (Gibbon et al. 2003:p.100). SAPs were also designed to improve agricultural exports in order to pay off the burdensome international debts. Yet, under SAPs, there was an
underperformance of traditional export crops, while agrarian capital increasingly branched into lucrative non-traditional export commodities like horticulture (and continues to do so). SAPs are generally recognized as having reinforced Africa’s continued dependence on primary exports. The external debt became increasingly unsustainable and continues to burden the development initiatives of nation-states in Africa (Saul and Leys 1999).

6.6 Global Capital, World Agriculture and Land Reform

As a result of its uneven development, global capitalism during the 1990s further ‘subordinated agriculture to its logic worldwide, but without creating, by necessity, home markets capable of sustaining industrialization’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005a:p.14) in the South and East, thus forestalling capitalist development in these regions. A corollary to this is the subservient integration of the ‘periphery’ into the global but ‘centrally based corporate agro-industrial complex’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005a:p.17) in terms of production and marketing systems (Puplampu and Tetty 2000). This has been called the ‘globalisation of agriculture’ involving an ‘increasingly unequal global playing field’ (Fortin 2005:pp.3, 14). World agriculture has become increasingly corporate and industrial (thus the notion of agro-industrial corporations), and the peasantries are not incorporated and absorbed into this but are rather marginalized and displaced. This current process entails a ‘shift in power from the national to the global, with increasing vertical regulation of global agricultural commodity chains, and the setting of increasingly rigorous and demanding rules and parameters of the international trade regime by countries in the North’ (Fortin 2005:p.5).

Hence, market forces continue to be unleashed almost randomly and state support for peasants (in terms of both production and reproduction) continues to be chipped away at, thus reproducing semi-proletarianization and poverty in ways seemingly functional to global capital. In this sense, agrarian political economies in the South and East are ‘globalised but marginalised’ (Moyo 2002:p.10). The current market-led agrarian reform
package, as with earlier state-led models under Cold War conditions, is a manifestation of geo-political and localized class conflicts. Yet the systemic crisis in African agriculture has been clearly experienced unevenly, and it has involved deepening differentiation within the underclasses, further land concentration and alienation, and the greater involvement of petty bourgeois elements in expanded agricultural accumulation.

While agricultural policy throughout Africa often speaks about ‘modernizing’ the peasantry, land tenure systems in which the peasantry live and work remain ‘largely unchanged’ (Bernstein 2005:p.78) and there is the ‘growing exclusion of smallholders involved in export crops’ (Fortin 2005:p.5). Indeed, as Raikes argues, neo-liberal restructuring ‘removes the conditions for modernization policies [vis-à-vis the peasantry], while positing itself as a vehicle for modernizing peasant agriculture.’ (Raikes 2000:p.64) In fact, current agrarian and land reform throughout Africa unashamedly seems more in line with creating the conditions for the expansion of a class of petty capitalist farmers. Agrarian restructuring in a pro-capitalist fashion, which has also been evident during earlier periods of agricultural modernization globally, is also a threat to the rural underclasses and may lead to de-peasantization. Most recently, it has been noted, to some degree, in post-apartheid South Africa (Hall 2004).

In this regard, a ‘policy cycle’ or a ‘cyclical pattern of land reform’ in southern Africa has been noted. This involves initially a firm political commitment by the central state to (for example) land redistribution on equity grounds of reducing poverty, and then a pronounced switch to emphasizing economic goals of agricultural productivity in which agrarian capital interests ‘obtain ascendancy over the medium to longer term’ (TT 2003: p.5). Often, this involves ‘a form of accumulation from above which is bureaucratic and compradorial in character’ (Neocosmos 1993:p.62). It is manifested even with regard to the renewed emphasis by, for instance, the World Bank on land redistribution. In this ‘market assisted approach to land reform’ based on grants to nation-states (Moyo 2004: p.101), the World Bank sets certain preconditions for acceptable land redistribution,

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including respect for the rule of law, participation of civil society, reducing poverty and decentralization. Yet, land redistribution is not motivated by equity concerns, but it ‘appears to be promoted by the Bank as a mechanism for increasing productivity’ (Fortin 2005:p.13). Thus, insofar as it does not achieve this objective, the World Bank would seemingly scuttle land redistribution.

According to Amin, the prevailing dominant development paradigm, of which agrarian and land reform forms a part, makes development ‘synonymous with market expansion’ (Amin 1997:p.xii). Yet, as noted above, Africa has only a limited base for industrial growth and expansion, with small domestic markets for internal consumption and the inability to compete against industrial imports and through exports. Saul and Leys claim though that the aim of global capital is ‘not to develop countries but to exploit profitable opportunities’ (Saul and Leys 1999:pp.3-4) and the quest is not for production per se but conditions of production that maximize profit (Amin 2002). Global capital is searching for secure opportunities with high rates of return (under ‘good governance’) but without necessitating massive investment in infrastructure and without entailing broad-based capital accumulation processes. Increasingly, Africa is not the investment destination. In this regard, development of Africa seems like a pipedream.

According to world systems theory, the global crisis along with the pronounced neo-liberal trajectory meant that nation-states of the South and East now had to be subordinated to the universalizing logic of the market. Economic and social ‘development’ would be more exocentric but at the same time (ironically) involve increasing exclusion from the global economy. This process entails the ‘erosion of the autocentered nation-state’ and its ‘recompradorization’ (Amin 1997:pp.3, 23). Furthermore, it involves a crisis for nation-states because their social and political reproduction is increasingly de-linked from their national economies (or national spaces), and this reproduction becomes more and more intertwined with the logic of increasingly global economic management and accumulation processes (or globalized economic space). Despite the fact that the imports and exports of African nations amount to an insignificant proportion of world trade, these nations are not marginalized but rather are
deeply integrated into the global economy if for instance the ratio of extra-regional trade to Gross Domestic Product for Africa is considered.

The depiction of global processes outlined is in large part from a world systems perspective. This perspective is important because it identifies and highlights key homogenizing tendencies in capitalist globalization, including agrarian and land processes particularly relevant to this thesis. Yet, the grand narrative is problematic, because it remains insensitive to local initiatives and how particular nation-states in the South and East assert themselves against globalizing tendencies. In other words, ‘the global’ does not simply smother and muzzle ‘the local’. This will become clearer in Chapters Eight and Nine when discussing land reform in Zimbabwe.

6.7. Market-Led Reform, Land Tenure and ‘Customary’ Security

As mentioned earlier, agrarian and land processes have (interrelated) economic and political elements embedded within them. The academic literature is currently obsessed with analyzing and evaluating neo-liberal (or market-led) land reform from an ‘economic’ perspective involving questions about efficiency, rationality and performance, or (more generally) about agricultural productivity (Meliczek 1996). These debates have taken place despite the global historical record showing that ‘decisions on whether to proceed with land reform are essentially political’ (Adams 1995:p.2). One of the productivity controversies is about farm size and economies of scale, and hence about the differences in agricultural performance – for purposes ranging from food security to foreign exchange earnings – between primarily large-scale commercial enterprises and smallholdings farmed by semi-proletarians. Moyo, who is a radical proponent of land reform, labels claims about the inefficiencies of small-scale peasant production as ‘socially constructed’ (Moyo 2004:p.78) rather than based solidly on economic findings.

This particular controversy revolves around the matter of land redistribution as one component of land reform. In doing so, it raises questions about the suitability of ‘the
market’ as a re-distributive mechanism and how land markets relate to land tenure changes. A further debate has occurred around land tenure more specifically, and this raises sensitive issues in the South and East about global imperatives and the external imposition of land programmes. In particular, this debate focuses on the pros and cons of privatized freehold land rights as a basis for agricultural growth. In the case of Africa, it revolves around a range of contested assumptions about customary land tenure, private land tenure and land markets (Fortin 2005).

Historically, peasants have been largely excluded from engaging in land markets. Rather, under the dominion of customary tenure systems, they have been deeply incorporated into labour and commodity markets. Customary tenure under colonialism (and on into post-colonial societies) became a ‘statist land tenure system’ (Shivji 2000:p.46) in that radical title was vested in the nation-state based on the notion of eminent domain. Also, at political independence, many African states nationalized land ‘to assert the power of the state over traditional chiefs and allow the appropriation of land for development’ (Quan 2000:p.33). In post-colonial Africa, this appropriation has often taken place because of demands emanating from lucrative (wildlife-based) eco-tourism. At least de jure, then, access to ‘customary’ land in many African nations is at the discretion of the President or state, and such land can be (and has been) expropriated by the state for various public (and private) purposes. Thus, occupants of customary land have only ‘a secondary right of access and use’ (Cousins 2000:p.155). For this reason, Shivji argues: ‘It is curious how the feudal notion of the identity between sovereignty and property [or between governance and ownership] in the absolute monarch reappears in the bureaucratic or authoritarian state.’ (Shivji 2000:p.48) This is related to Mamdani’s (1996) argument about ‘fused authority’ in the African countryside.

Customary tenure is denigrated by ‘free-marketers’ for leading to the unsustainable use of land and also for inhibiting agricultural efficiencies. On the other hand, private tenure is said to entail tenure security, which results in agricultural investment and enhanced productivity. This position is consistent with (if not drawing on) strongly entrenched views in the post-World War II ‘peasant studies’ literature about the inherent weaknesses
of agricultural production as embodied in peasant labour and accumulation processes (Bryceson 2000a). Such assumptions about peasant productivity are now being widely criticized in the academic literature. Indeed, production systems under customary tenure are being lauded despite the negative implications of fused authority (Cousins 2000, Lund 2000, Platteau 2000, and Mafeje 2003). In this regard, redistribution of land may even lead to tenure uncertainties for resettled farmers (with mere *de facto* leasehold rights on state land) who previously lived under (relatively speaking) *secure* customary tenure. This depiction of customary tenure will be critically appraised.

Lund (2000) speaks about the existence of ‘multiple tenures’ in customary regimes in Africa, in that ‘several users may have access to different resources on the land’ (Lund 2000:p.16). This entails ‘shifting, recombining and constantly-negotiated practices’ (Lund 2000:p.1) within rural communities. Rights to land and natural resources are relative, shared, inclusive and diverse, including short-term use rights and longer-term rights of transfer for individuals, families and larger groups. Hence, ‘[b]y conceptualising land rights in terms of degrees of use and control, it is possible to see privatisation as a process rather than a situation’ (Lund 2000:p.6) in which privatization either does exist or does not (Barracough 1990). In fact, there is considerable evidence to suggest that, at least in Africa, (autonomous) informal privatization has for an extended period been embedded in customary systems of tenure and has occurred independently of formal titling initiatives. At times, this has led to a form of land market, including rental agreements like land-borrowing, land pooling and land exchanges (Quan 2000).

On the other hand, state-directed land titling (based on a market reform agenda) entails a process of more pronounced exclusion, as groups and individuals without secure title (for example, women and pastoralists) have their secondary- or use-rights over land and natural resources on the (now) titled land (at least formally) extinguished (Hilhorst 2000). Yet, according to Platteau (2000), these ‘basic use rights seem to be sufficient to induce landholders to invest’ under customary tenure (Platteau 2000:p.57). The causal argument that links private tenure, almost by definition, to investment and productivity may be
spurious. Further, agrarian dynamics other than tenure often impact more significantly on investment choices and agricultural efficiencies. Lund concludes by arguing that ‘it is not being “private” which makes a land holding certain’ (Lund 2000:p.18) as other forms of property relations and of tenure (i.e. customary tenure) have greater legitimacy and acceptance amongst rural under-classes. In this regard, (actually-existing) security of tenure is ‘in practice secured not through law and administration, but maintained through open-ended, on-going processes of negotiation, adjudication and political manoeuvre.’ (Cousins 2000:p.166)

Likewise, Mafeje (2003) argues that customary tenure based on ‘the African mode of social organization’ (Mafeje 2003:p.19) – revolving around kinship relations – provides ‘inclusive and variegated’ (Mafeje 2003:p.3) usufruct rights that continue to ensure widespread access to land for petty commodity producers. In his study of sub-Saharan Africa, he argues that much of the scholarly work on land tenure is Euro-centric in that (collective) customary land tenure is seen as a ‘major barrier to agricultural development’ (Mafeje 2003:p.1) because it does not entail exclusive individual (ownership of property) rights with title deeds derived from bourgeois individualism. This Euro-centrism is based on the (now much maligned) ‘tragedy of the commons’ thesis that customary land tenure regimes are ‘communal’ in the broad sense of involving open access to land and natural resources in an unbridled and destructive manner.

On the contrary, it is claimed that ‘common property resources’ in Africa (or pool resources outside the boundaries of ‘private’ land holdings in customary areas) normally involve shared rights that are properly defined, recognized and regulated. These resources include fuel, edible plants and medicinal products, and they ‘make a vital contribution to the livelihoods of many rural households’ (particularly the land-short) and ‘help rural people manage risk, reduce vulnerability and enhance security’ (Cousins 2000:pp.151, 161). This dependence of rural under-classes on ‘natural capital’, including the commodification (or marketing) of the African commons, is particularly relevant as a source of off-farm goods and income in the context of the crisis of agricultural
livelihoods. Full privatization of customary lands – if based on the Western notion of an all-embracing singular right to property – would, by necessity, undermine the existence of such pool resources. Therefore, properly maintaining and managing common property must be part of any serious tenure reform programme. In general, then, the customary property regime is largely ‘inclusive’, thereby ‘comprising bundles of individual, family, sub-group and larger group rights and duties in relation to a variety of natural resources’ and it is ‘nested’ at these different levels of social organization (Cousins and Claasens 2004:p.139).

These arguments in favour of customary tenure are often linked to claims about the efficiencies of small-scale farming. They need to be seriously qualified, as they border on romanticizing traditional tenure regimes, understood almost ahistorically. Under pre-colonial regimes, these regimes may have been productive and just. Yet, in southern Africa, colonialism spatially confined these regimes, reorganized them internally, and linked them to the labour demands of capital. This resulted in major distortions and inefficiencies. For example, use rights in customary areas in South Africa are often under regulated, ill defined and insecure, and have not led to significant productive investment or commercialization. Further, certain categories of customary residents, notably women and youth, are regularly land-short or landless. This has implications for land distribution and resettlement, because resettlement schemes based on insecure permit systems may over time lead to similar problems. This is evident in the case of resettlement areas from the 1980s in Zimbabwe, where there is increasing pressure on grazing land for crop purposes.

Mafeje also maintains that state-directed individualization of land propagated to boost agricultural production is subject to resistance by smallholders in defence of their customary tenure, or otherwise individual titling becomes subservient to customary social organization and tenure. In addition, land titles are sometimes simply used by petty capitalists to ‘secure loans to finance business ventures outside agriculture’ (Mafeje

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9 Rural entrepreneurs are also engaging in the commodification of natural resources as a basis of capital accumulation.
and titling does not necessarily enhance agricultural production. Further, privatization of tenure undermines the radical title of the state over land as well as the authority of traditional authorities (or other local power-holders), and thus state bodies may resist it.

The case of post-colonial Kenya is often noted in the academic literature as demonstrating the inadequacies of formal titling. In Kenya, an ‘ambitious attempt to replace the indigenous tenure system with Western-style property rights [that are exclusive and absolute] has failed. Community-based patterns of allocation and inheritance have persisted even where all land is nominally under individual freehold.’ (Cousins 2002:p.2) In a similar vein, Gibbon et al. argue that in Kenya ‘the main outcome of titling was the [formal] exclusion of certain categories of customary tenants from occupation rights’ but that ‘most holders of customary rights retained recognisable claims to land in practice’ (Gibbon et al. 1993:p.19 their emphasis). Hence, formal titling has increased landlessness and inequalities in agricultural income, and has led to de-peasantization but not de-agrarianization. For Cousins, who tends to romanticize small-scale farming, ‘communal tenure does not constrain productivity’ (Cousins 2002: p.2).

The ‘free market’ conception of customary land tenure was particularly prevalent during the SAP period but, subsequently, the ‘new’ agrarian and land ‘paradigm’ that Toulmin and Quan identify is more sensitive to customary tenure systems, at least on paper. In offering a critique of the ‘evolutionary theory of land rights’ that (in the end) recommends the formal titling of customary land that has been informally individualized and privatized through the impulses of land scarcity and market forces, Platteau (2000) argues that customary tenure must in some form be institutionally recognized. In other words, without ‘falling into the snare of romanticism’ about the equity of customary social systems (Platteau 2000:p.72), these systems need to be respected and built upon to enhance justice and security within rural communities, and to avoid the imposition of titling upon communities by the exclusionary practices of the state. Currently, the World Bank accepts that under certain circumstances customary tenure provides secure land
rights. However, this acceptance is not based on social considerations of equity and fair play (on social value) but on economic efficiency grounds and cost/benefit analyses (on economic value). Further, the World Bank still conceptualizes individualistic land rights as representing the most modern form of landholding (Fortin 2005). Hence, the ‘new’ paradigm of reform – at least in terms of land tenure – seems not to have moved significantly beyond the formulation stage.

Customary tenure in southern Africa cannot be dismissed outright as based on a traditional mind-set. Its modern form has been significantly structured by the colonial period. It may be that re-localizing this form of tenure under modern democratic conditions might have some resonance in the face of the global imposition of market-led tenure reform. In the meantime, though, it is critical to emphasize that the prevailing social system in which customary land in Africa is nested has deep historical roots and is based on agrarian regimes of political domination and social inequality. Despite the social levelling that may thrive, customary systems nevertheless entail significant forms of class, gender and generational inequalities. Therefore, land tenure reform in southern Africa ‘threatens powerful vested interests’ (Adams et al. 2000:p.137), including traditional leadership structures that are patriarchal in their implications for women and access to land. As a result, land tenure is ‘not simply a legal relation of access to land, but it reflects important class relations within rural areas as well as relations between the state and the people. Land tenure therefore cannot be altered as a simple act of will by the state, but only through struggle.’ (Neocosmos 1993:p.67) In this context, it is important now to consider the question of class differentiation within the rural under-classes and the global struggles that are emerging around land reform.
Chapter 7
Global Land Reform Struggles

This chapter considers struggles pertaining to global land reform. I pinpoint the contradictory effects of worldwide agrarian restructuring on the social reconstitution of the rural under-classes and how this underpins a multiplicity of social reproduction strategies and struggles engaged in by these classes, including ‘uncivil’ action such as land re-occupations. This rural politics, and how it interrelates to the more ‘civil’ forms of organizational practice engaged in by NGOs, is critical to conceptualizing NGOs and land reform in relation to contemporary Zimbabwe.

7.1 The ‘Peasantry’ and Class Reformation

Deborah Bryceson (2000a), after discussing the post-World War II academic literature on the peasantry, suggested that ‘[p]easant theory is on the retreat’ (Bryceson 2000a:p.29); that it was critical to bring peasants ‘back into theoretical and policy debates’ (Bryceson 2000a:p.30); and that the ongoing reproduction of the peasantry in Latin America, Asia and Africa through contradictory processes of formation and dissolution seemed to give them an ‘enduring presence’ (Bryceson 2000a:p.6). She concluded her extensive literature review by speaking about the multifaceted survival strategies of the peasantry under conditions of global neo-liberalism that make the peasantry – conceptually – ‘more elusive than before’ (Bryceson 2000a:p.30). This elusiveness, deriving in large part from the indeterminate, disparate and fragmented activities of production and reproduction of localized peasantries, has been employed as a springboard for postmodernist conceptions of the peasantry as a host of multiple and divergent identities that defy class analysis.
Indeed, the literature on agrarian societies uses a range of (often nebulous) concepts to identify the agrarian under-classes. And many of these terms clearly distract from properly integrating class analysis into an understanding of the agrarian political economy. These include terms such as ‘the rural poor’, ‘small-scale farmers’ and ‘smallholders’ as used by many academics, donor agencies and NGOs. For instance, the term ‘smallholder’ as propagated by the World Bank is ‘an incoherently broad concept’ (Gibbon et al. 1993:p.147) and a ‘huge residual category’ that masks the fact that it comprises ‘a highly heterogeneous group … engaging in a series of quite distinct, but overlapping, production forms’ (Gibbon et al. 1993:p.132). Other writers have sought to capture Bryceson’s ‘elusiveness’ by offering a class portrait of a structurally differentiated peasantry that is also deeply sensitive to contradictory and unstable social processes that underlay class reconstitution. This heterogeneous character of the peasant ‘class’ has been noted for some time, including with reference to Zimbabwean society (ZIDS ed. 1983). The significance of ‘looking inside’ the peasantry and identifying forms of social stratification is particularly important epistemologically. As Llambi (2000) highlights, ‘[t]o speak of “peasants” or “the peasantry” in general runs the risk of reification, giving agency to an abstract category’ (Llambi 2000:p.181).

This thesis does not provide a definitive analysis of class formation in the countryside, including with regard to ‘the peasantry’. This is not to reject class analysis as important for making sense of agrarian and land reform. Rather, in the thesis, I have deliberately chosen to prioritize analytically the relation between ‘the global’ and the ‘the local’. Clearly, ‘the global’ and ‘the local’ are internally differentiated, including along class lines. Any analysis of social class must, like my conceptualization of ‘the global’ and ‘the local’, understand class in relationship terms and classes as mutually constitutive of each other. In this regard, Hendricks (2003) argues that ‘classes are social relations’ that become expressed in ‘many interconnected social realities’, and that ‘[t]he lived experience of people in a class and the structural relation of classes are very different’ (Hendricks 2003:p.4). Capturing rural under-classes conceptually is exceedingly difficult, and the theories outlined below simply provide conceptual leads.
Mafeje (2003) says that ‘African peasants, unlike the classical peasantry, are not “land-rooted”. They are highly mobile as petty commodity producers, migrant workers and petty traders in agricultural commodities, in a continuing struggle for survival.’ (Mafeje 2003:p.12) In branching into non-agricultural activities, the peasantries – almost by necessity – have to compete with the landless proletariat by way of casual labour and self-employed activities. The diversity and fluidity of their livelihood strategies make it very difficult to spatially delimit the boundaries of the lives of peasants. Thus, NGO ‘projectization’ based on the notion of a fixed locality often fails to capture the impermanency and mobility of peasant existence. In this respect, Moyo and Yeros (2005a) prefer the term ‘semi-proletariat’ to ‘fix’ the in-between, ambiguous and fluctuating socio-economic position of the peasantry. They claim that this group of small-scale agriculturalists operating in an integrated system of subsistence and commodity production embedded firmly within capitalism ‘does not constitute a class ... but inherent in it are the antagonistic tendencies of proletarian and proprietor’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005a:p.25). The subsistence moment of peasant production involving access to community-land and family-labour gives ‘peasants’ a degree of autonomy (a fall-back position), yet the commodity moment makes them vulnerable to external national and global forces, including market fluctuations (Bryceson 2000c:p.300).

According to Neocosmos (1993), the peasantry in sub-Saharan Africa is differentiated between the – seemingly arbitrary distinctions – of rich, middle and poor, with only the middle peasantry embodying pure petty commodity production as neither hirers nor sellers of labour-power. The reproduction of the class strata of the peasantry through accumulation and survival strategies is uneven and unstable, involving contradictory processes involving the formation and the dissolution of the peasantry (Bryceson 2000b). Semi-proletarians, involving the functional dualism of the peasant-worker grouping, engage in a mixture of farm-based petty commodity production and (urban or rural) wage labour. However, this is not a transitional state (on the road to ‘the modern’) but continues to be a pervasive socio-economic condition in the South and East (Yeros 2002b, Moyo and Yeros 2005a). Thus, Neocosmos (1993) argues against the theory of linear proletarianization based on some notion of a universal and pre-determined
trajectory of modernization. Rather, he speaks about the ‘relatively stable combination of “worker-peasants”. This combination must not be seen as just a temporary stage on the ineluctable road to full proletarian status, but as a necessary product of current social relations which could thereby “dissolve” in either direction’ (Neocosmos 1993:p.56).

Global restructuring always has uneven and contradictory effects on the agrarian political economy and peasant class formations. For instance, SAPs intensified landlessness (and thus proletarianization) but also increased the demand for land and land-based natural resources because of the diminished prospects for off-farm sources of income. In this regard, SAPs simultaneously likely contributed to re-peasantization. During the past two decades, the crisis of livelihoods has greatly intensified in the rural areas of the South and East, with social reproduction of the peasantry dependent on dwindling contributions from both agriculture and off-farm employment/self-employment. The processes of agrarian capital formation discussed earlier, including the conversion of land uses to high earning non-traditional uses (for example, wildlife) and exports (for example, horticulture), has served only to further marginalize the peasantry. In this regard, in seeking (even tenuous) access to land, the rural under-classes are often inclined to ‘reproduce functional dualism on their own’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005a:p.32 emphasis removed), and to maintain their subordinate class position, as a desperate – but rational – survival option. The negative notion of the peasantry as ‘not a class’ is not particularly helpful when it comes to (static) analyses of class structure (or class as social relations), yet at work here are (ambivalent) processes of class reformation and the reconstitution of the under-classes under neo-liberalism. These processes of class formation and differentiation are regularly not overtly expressed but are manifested in generational, gender, regional and ethnic conflicts (Bernstein 2005).

7.2 Peasant Struggles

In 1993 Soblan argued that ‘[t]he political mobilization needed to realize radical reforms in the contemporary developing world remains elusive’ (Sobhan 1993:p.133). Nearly ten
years later, in an analysis of potential anti-systemic movements internationally, the well-known world-systems analyst Wallerstein (2002) failed to make any reference to the peasantry and its forms of political organization. This may be in part because many rural movements appear ‘predatory’ (for example, in Chad and Liberia) rather than ‘principled’ like during anti-colonial struggles in Mozambique and Angola, and thus their participants seek to gain access to economic resources rather than to state power. Other scholars are cognizant of intensifying rural conflicts but fail to offer a peasant-focused analysis. Hence, ‘the early 1990s have witnessed the revival of ethnic interpretations of rural land conflict’, and this has been particularly notable with regard to Africa. Rural strife is seen in terms of ‘ethnic chauvinism or individual pecuniary gain’ (Buijtenhuijs 2000:pp.119, 120).

Yet analysts with a probing sensitivity to agrarian social processes are increasingly speaking about a rural resurgence, or even rural movements, across the South and East (Moyo and Yeros eds. 2005). Petras, in specific relation to Latin America, has consistently and exuberantly spoken about ‘the rising influence of peasant movements’ (Petras 1998:p.1) that operate autonomously from political parties, that have a national socio-political (and not just rural) agenda and that seek to forge alliances with urban trade unions in the struggle against neo-liberal regimes. He suggests that these peasant-led movements are ‘challenging the traditional belief that the urban working class leaders are the designated vanguard of historical change’ (Petras 1998:p.8). Similarly Moyo (2002), in surveying the African scene, argues that peasant organizations are ‘re-emerging on the continent ... as a potential force in a possible endogenous movement for alternative forms of development’ (Moyo 2002:p.1). And in their important contribution to the politics of agrarian reform in the ‘peripheries’, Moyo and Yeros (2005a) refer to the peasantry (or semi-proletariat) as ‘the leading forces of opposition to neoliberalism and the neocolonial state’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005a:p.9). These claims, however, over-privilege peasant movements as forces for change in the modern world and incorrectly assume that peasants are necessarily progressive in their politics.
The current politics of peasant underclasses is highly contingent, diverse and multifaceted, often involving both farm and workplace experiences and grievances (in both rural and urban settings), and thus adding considerable complexity to matters of political consciousness that a range of organizational forms – like ‘progressive’ trade unions and political parties – have failed to (or chosen not to) grasp and articulate. Even membership-based farmer associations have ‘generally fallen hostage to bourgeois elements within them, which have eschewed advocacy of land issues and development policies aimed at smallholder accumulation’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005a:p.42). Therefore, it has been argued that lower class peasants in Africa are ‘subject to exploitation by local rich peasant/business elites, usually with political connections, who intermittently or permanently gain control of “peasant” institutions like primary cooperatives and use them for their personal or network enrichment.’ (Gibbon et al. 1993:p.139)

In this respect, autonomous peasant mobilization is difficult and scarce, and formal peasant organizations (for example, farmers’ unions) often become no more than ‘appendages of middle class driven development and democratisation agendas’ (Moyo 2004:p.115), including those managed by NGOs. Raikes claims that the ‘benefits from development projects … are usually captured by the wealthy and political influential’ amongst the rural classes, ‘even when they are advertised as “small-farmer” or “poverty-oriented”.’ (Raikes 2000:p.67) While there is a degree of empirical truth to these claims, such ‘anti-NGO’ arguments tend to depict the role of NGOs instrumentally in imposing global agendas on the rural under-classes.

Members of the peasantry are highly differentiated in terms of their specific positions in the spheres of exchange, circulation and reproduction and – in these spheres – relationships are highly atomistic, individualized and competitive. As a result, class solidarity amongst the peasantry is difficult to develop, and ‘prospects for the emergence of popular democratic organisation, as opposed to manipulable forms of populist response’ like those noted above ‘are slim.’ (Gibbon et al. 1993: p. 140) There has been a pronounced political vacuum in the countryside and, in many parts of the South and East, peasants and rural proletarians have jointly filled this lacuna through autonomous
action either on a spontaneous or more organized *uncivil* basis. Although this political practice arises from localized historical sedimentation that is rich in traditional and cultural longings, it is not retrogressive and ‘backward looking’. Rather, it revolves around ‘modernist demands for access to land and productive resources, democracy and social justice’ (Moyo 2002:p.5).

When action by peasant groups has taken on nationwide political significance, as it has notably in Latin America recently (predominantly Brazil), this has sometimes involved a pronounced anti-statist position. Hence, there has been an avowed rejection of either working with the nation-state or more dramatically of capturing state power. Rather, emphasis has been placed on independent and democratic self-mobilization within rural civil society as epitomized by the Zapatista uprising in Mexico. Theorists such as Moyo and Yeros claim that this anti-politics position is problematic for various reasons. First of all, and quite crudely, they argue that civil society is generally co-opted as a ‘tool of neoliberalism’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005a:p.43). Further, and quite correctly, they claim that the nation-state continues to be a critical nexus of power in processes of social transformation and that the internal contradictions of the state have been productively exploited by rural movements as seen for instance in the Philippines.

Rural opposition has transcended the confines of the nation-state and has taken on a more global dimension. The militant international peasant federation, *Via Campesina*, has recently made its presence felt at international gatherings of global capital. Such international movements have been made possible by the globalization of agriculture under the neo-liberal trajectory (referred to above), as this leads to similar experiences and understandings of agrarian processes by the peasantry throughout the South and East. *Via Campesina* has developed its own global agricultural policy based on the notion of ‘food sovereignty’. This point is not meant to overestimate the ‘homogenizing trends’ of globalization and to downplay its local ‘differentiating effects’ on rural realities and the peasantry (Llambi 2000:p.176). Rather, it highlights the glocalization of contemporary agrarian restructurings and struggles. In other words, agrarian globalization invariably has a local content and local processes of ‘agrarian glocalization’ take on diverse forms.
The importance of rural peasant action in contemporary social change, such as in the ‘wind’ of democratization that swept through much of Africa during the 1990s, has undoubtedly been underestimated by those analysts\(^{10}\) who have a pronounced urban civil society bias (Moyo 2002). Yet, simultaneously, it is important not to overestimate the existence or significance of this political action. The crisis of rural livelihoods may (or may not) lead to intensified political struggles by the rural under-classes or, if it does, these struggles may be survivalist and inward looking rather than expansive (and offensive) forms of class struggle directed at the nation-state or at transforming society. Therefore, Bernstein is ‘more cautious’ (than Petras, Moyo and Yeros for instance) about the existence of ‘a global tidal wave of land struggles’ (Bernstein 2003:p.217). He argues that ‘there is little experience in modern African history of popular rural political organization on a broader scale centred on agrarian and land issues’ (Bernstein 2005:p.88 his emphasis) compared to Latin America and Asia. For Bernstein, the most common confrontations are localized defensive actions against land dispossession arising from, for example, infra-structural or development projects but without any clear ideology and political programme, with the recent case of Zimbabwe being an exception.

By independence in Africa, generalized commodity production was established throughout the sub-Saharan region in the sense that the ‘basic social relations and compulsions of capitalism were internalized in “peasant” production.’ (Bernstein 2005:p.75) This conceptualization is of significance if it implies that ‘the peasantry’ does not stand outside capitalism, and it takes us back to the discussion in Chapter Three about the social reach of capitalism. Seth (2003) like Bernstein argues that capitalism has encompassed the globe such that any opposition to capital exists in the ‘interstices of capital’ (Seth 2003:p.48). Thus, opposition is not external to capitalism but is subsumed within it. The social groupings (for example, the peasantry) forming the basis of anti-systemic organizations (such as the rural movements) do not exist in a state of expulsion from capitalism but operate within the hegemonic confines of capitalism. This goes contrary to the argument of Moyo and Yeros, who claim that rural semi-proletarians and

\(^{10}\) The work by Nyang’oro ed. (1999) is particularly relevant in this regard.
proletarians are the most significant force for change in the contemporary globalized world ‘not by virtue of being exploited by capital, but by being expelled from it’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005a:p.55) through contemporary agrarian restructuring. This is a fascinating theoretical point that regrettably is left undeveloped. Yet, if ‘capital’ is understood as a set of contradictory social relations, their argument falsely depicts semi-proletarians as being in some form romantically ‘outside’ (expelled from) capital and thus not subject to the beat of its imperatives (Holloway 2003).

7.3 Uncivil and Civil Action

The global history of agrarian and land reform shows that reform of any significance is unlikely to take place in the face of largely demobilized rural under-classes. Presently, this demobilized condition of rural civil society is particularly noticeable in Africa. Even in the case of post-apartheid South Africa, where a seemingly active land movement once existed, it has been argued that the ‘absence of a clear cost to the state of not pursuing a radical programme of restructuring in rural areas’ (Hall 2004:p.225 her emphasis) explains the negligible land reform since the end of apartheid over ten years ago. Such a cost would include the cost of instability enacted by the pervasiveness of rural mobilization of an unci

This uncivil action is often seen in stark contrast to the civil action of NGOs (Kaldor 2002). Efforts by development NGOs ‘to improve environmental security, alleviate poverty, and improve land and labour productivity tend to focus on small-scale “in-situ” palliatives in marginalised peasant lands.’ (Moyo 2004: p.112 my emphasis) And land-centric NGOs involved in land advocacy tend to ‘pursue clinical land reforms under neoliberal structures and policies’ and, in doing so, they conform to ‘the “proper” [civil] procedure and content of “oppositional” politics in accordance with the liberal formula’ (Moyo 2004:p.11). In other words, it is strongly suggested that NGO action is often inconsistent with, and even in contradiction to, more radical uncivil initiatives by peasant-led bodies. However, the relationship between land reform, peasant activism and
NGO practice is a highly complex one and is open to considerable historical and spatial variations. Thus, the claim that NGOs (as instruments of ‘others’) have almost invariably ‘bought into’ neo-liberalism ‘hook, line and sinker’ will be subjected to scrutiny later in the thesis.

Rural opposition entails a range of uncivil strategies and actions, including the land occupation tactic. Under neo-liberalism there has been a ‘shrinking of “civilized” political space’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005a:p.39) as defined by global capital. Previously, civil politics embodied property-friendly politics but now it also includes market-friendly politics. The use of land occupations falls squarely within the ‘uncivil’, even in terms of the former notion of the civil. This is a significant point that Yeros (2002b) develops extensively in his doctoral thesis, where he examines historically the globalization of civil society, or what he calls ‘civilization’. He argues that uncivil rural political practice has led to social revolutions and extensive agrarian reforms since World War II. It has been the ‘uncivil’ agency of ‘the landless and land-short’ (rural proletarians and peasants) that ‘has been the basic source of agrarian reform historically’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005a:p.53), and therefore - on a global basis - popular-led agrarian reform has driven state-led and market-led agrarian reforms. This is a stance that is repeatedly substantiated in an edited volume (Ghimire ed. 2001) that looks at civil society and land reform in the South and East. Recent studies in a number of African countries have also shown the form and extent of uncivil rural action. A brief overview of three studies is now provided, as uncivil action has been a defining mark of the contemporary land movement in Zimbabwe.

Amanor argues that land in Ghana is effectively owned not by the state but by chiefly authorities that, as ‘customary custodians’ (Amanor 2005:p.105), officially represent the rights of peasantry in land, and this inhibits the formation of independent peasant associations. The peasantry is ‘weakly organized’ (Amanor 2005:p.116) and formal efforts to legally defend their land interests are repulsed by the state. Thus, peasant struggles to enhance their livelihood options are often more spontaneous and uncivil. The establishment of forest reserves and modern agribusinesses for export-orientated
activities has increasingly commoditised land and led to land expropriation and, as their ‘moral right’ (Amanor 2005:p.114), peasants have sought to repossess or access this land for agricultural and natural resource usages. This has included the destruction of timber saplings and informal timber marketing activities, the cutting of plantation seedlings and illegal harvesting of fruits at night, as well as ‘squatting’ or occupations on portions of expropriated land. Amanor argues that peasants have found themselves pitted against a broad alliance of chiefs, the state and corporate interests.

In a study of Malawi, Kanyongolo focuses specifically on (largely unorganized and uncoordinated) land occupations. Customary land tenure systems have been constantly devalued as a productive form of land investment, and land reform has favoured large-scale commercial farming based on freehold title that has further entrenched dominant class interests. An in-cohesive and demobilized civil society, notably urban-based NGOs that espouse liberal rhetoric and trade unions with weak rural structures, has failed to offer progressive support for rural ‘counter-systemic actions’ (Kanyongolo 2005:p.126) that have been often censored by the state. Employing notions emanating from critical legal theory, Kanyongolo shows how occupations go contrary to market-driven land reforms and are effectively de-legitimized by the legal and judiciary regimes, rather than being considered as a ‘legitimate democratic strategy for redressing injustice’ (Kanyongolo 2005:p.118). The spatial distribution and social composition of land occupations in Malawi shows considerable diversity, such that ‘land occupiers have not always been poor peasants’ (Kanyongolo 2005:p.129) but at times have included traditional power elites as participants or supporters. The land movement in its internal organization also tends to reproduce the patriarchal structures of rural society and occupations adjacent to the industrial centres raise the prospect of alliances with the urban proletariat.

Sihlongonyane’s work on South Africa looks at the land occupation tactic in the context of the neo-liberal policies of the ANC that stress production rather than equity and that seem ‘antithetical to the alteration of agrarian power relations’ (Sihlongonyane 2005:p.148) or even to more limited land redistribution. This tactic, along with a range
of informal market activities, is in many ways a survival strategy employed by the landless and unemployed in both peri-urban and rural areas, and is particularly beneficial to women as it enhances their access to land and natural resources. Civil society since the end of apartheid has been in large part demobilized and has subsequently failed to significantly push for land reform from below. Yet a loosely organized but fragmented constellation of community-based organizations and progressive NGOs is emerging and this includes the militant (but now largely defunct) Landless People’s Movement. This struggle though is ‘largely defensive in nature’ and ‘is not underwritten by a coherent political programme for social change’ (Sihlongonyane 2005:p.157). Sihlongonyane argues that land seizures as a form of grassroots pressure for agrarian change should not be conceptualized as a ‘blanket strategy’ (Sinlongonyane 2005:p.159) but should be employed selectively alongside other tactics including negotiation.

The argument about the significance of uncivil action relates back to the discussion in Chapter Four about uncivil society and democratic change. It is thus consistent with well-argued claims made by theorists based in the South and East about indigenous forms of ‘civility’ and alternative roads to modernity (Kaviraj 2001). Indeed, Chatterjee argues that the ‘squalor, ugliness and violence of popular life’ cannot be imprisoned ‘within the sanitized fortress of civil society’ and that there might be some ‘strategic use of illegality and violence’ (Chatterjee 2002:pp.70, 71). As well, Yeros in his thesis raises serious doubts about the prospects of ‘civil solutions to neo-colonialism’ (Yeros 2002b:p.161). Similar to points in the previous section, he argues for example that in Africa the main trade union federations and the (often petty-bourgeois dominated) peasant farmers’ associations capitulated to civilization or became civilized, such that the ‘rural grievances of the semi-proletariat ... remained in uncivil terrain’ (Yeros 2002b:p.213). Further to this, the ‘civil domain, by definition, cannot be broadened by civil society. The onus lies on progressive uncivil politics in the periphery’ (Yeros 2002b:p.249). Likewise, Petras is particularly dismissive of NGOs (and urban civic bodies generally), and quite simplistically labels them as ‘instruments of neoliberalism’ (Petras 1997:p.7) that undermine the anti-system struggles of radical rural movements. He rejects the anti-statism of civil society formations and highlights ‘the conflict between classes over state
power at the national level’ (Petras 1997:p.15).

7.4 The National Democratic Revolution?

Many radical theorists analyze land reform, rural struggles and state power in terms of the notion of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR). In doing so, they conceptually link the agrarian question to the national question, both of which are said to be unresolved in the South and East. Neocosmos has labelled these questions as the ‘two fundamental democratic questions in Africa today’ (Neocosmos 1993:p.9 my emphasis). He highlights the ‘internal’ side to the democratic equation by focusing on the subservient position of the peasantry vis-à-vis the authoritarian nation-state in sub-Saharan Africa. With apartheid South Africa foremost in mind, he argues that ‘[t]he land question can only be resolved adequately through a democratic resolution to the agrarian question. While in most countries of the region, a thoroughly democratic land reform (including land redistribution) is necessary, such a reform needs to address the issue of the democratisation of state power in the absence of which the land question itself (let alone the agrarian question) cannot be thoroughly resolved’ (Neocosmos 1993:pp.65-66).

Regimes of domination in rural southern Africa, including in post-apartheid South Africa, normally entail an awkward mix of local authorities particularly in customary areas. On the one hand, there is ‘traditional’ despotic ‘fused power’ (Mamdani 2000:p.103) (involving legislative, executive, judicial and administrative authority) based on re-configured institutions of chieftaincy. On the other hand, there are ‘modern’ forms of agrarian rule such as democratically elected local government administrations and ruling political party structures. Feudal landed property and political formations based on serfdom never existed in Africa, and thus the peasantry, generally speaking, ‘did not confront an immediate overlord in the form of a landlord’ (Neocosmos 1993:p.24). Mamdani highlights in post-colonial African society the need for ‘an agenda of [democratic] reform of the customary power subjugating the peasantry, the power that is the core institutional legacy of the indirect rule state. The initiative to reform customary
power … remains in the grasp of a re-articulated, reborn, state nationalism’ (Mamdani 2000:p.106) such as the National Resistance Movement that took state power in Uganda. In this context, it is clear that land reform has pronounced national democratic ramifications in that it is ‘concerned with direct oppressive relations between the state and the peasantry’ (Neocosmos 1993:p.24) that initially arose under colonialism. But the ‘democratic resolution’ of land reform and the NDR more generally, is also said to have a pronounced ‘external’ dimension.

Therefore, Moyo and Yeros stress that the failed transition to ‘mature’ capitalism in the ‘periphery’, despite decades of post-colonialism, has been marked by unfulfilled national sovereignty and self-determination entailing the incompleteness of the NDR. Full-scale NDRs have not occurred because of the subordinated placement of the ‘peripheries’ in relation to the imperialist centre, as shown by the pronounced inability of these nation-states to fulfil ‘even the minimum of modern social demands, namely the guarantee of the costs of social reproduction’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005a:p.38) and by their ongoing economic crises, political instabilities and repressive tendencies. However, the authoritarian form of nation-states in the South and East has been used by global capital (and its intellectual representatives) ‘to vindicate the debunking of the nationalist project’ (Shivji 2004:p.7).

An exclusive state nationalism is thus contrasted to an all-embracing and expansive civil society, and the latter is conceptually linked to a (supposed) universal, apolitical human rights discourse on constitutionalism and democracy. Simultaneously, nationalism (and the national question) is de-linked and torn asunder from meaningful democratic change, and is thereby conceptualized as ‘the problem’. Shivji (2004) seeks to re-establish the connection: ‘There is no doubt that democracy is the central question of the African Revolution today but the question is how is this related to, or configured with, the National … Question.’ (Shivji 2004:p.9) In so arguing, Shivji re-centres the analysis on the ‘external’ (and from his perspective the most critical) determinant of the democratic deficiency in the South and East, that is, imperialism.
For many radical nationalists, it would appear that full national self-determination (and ultimately the NDR), along with a democratic and just resolution of the agrarian and national questions, are by definition ruled out in the South and East by the very existence of capitalist imperialism, and this is based on some version of a one stage theory of (prolonged) social revolution. Hence, Shivji argues that the ‘quintessence’ (Shivji 2004: p.2) of nationalism is anti-imperialism, that ‘anti-imperialism is what defines nationalism’ and the ‘national question’ in Africa ‘remains unresolved so long as there is imperialist domination’ (Shivji 2004:p.3). In this regard, land reform and the anti-hegemonic rural struggles this entails become part and parcel of the ongoing nationalist struggle against imperialist globalization. However, sometimes implicit in such analyses is a somewhat a-historical and idealized (and possibly romanticized) notion of a fulfilled NDR as a necessary and eventual end product of social struggle, instead of an understanding of ‘actually existing’ NDRs embodied in historically-variable social formations. This teleological depiction of history, entailing forward movement that will ultimately progress along a particular pre-determined trajectory, is epitomized for instance by Moyo and Yeros’ (2005b) sub-title to their recent work on Zimbabwe, ‘towards the National Democratic Revolution’.

The concomitant argument by radical nationalists that the next phase of the NDR under neo-liberalism requires a programmatic alliance between progressive urban and rural underclasses (Petras 1997, 1998) seems to be their answer to the historical Leninist (strategy and tactics) question of ‘what is to be done?’, and it is consistent with their (almost) deterministic notion of the social totality. This classic prescriptive politics clearly goes contrary to what they would likely consider to be ‘postmodernist’ renditions of the dilemmas currently facing the Left internationally. For instance, Hardt and Negri (2000) identify a nebulous multitude as the agency of emancipation in the contemporary world, and they speak of an amorphous global authority (Empire) and simultaneously downplay the significance of the nation-state as a centralized authority. As a result, they are bitterly criticized because ‘strategic guidance’ is not forthcoming (Callinicos 2003:p.136). Likewise, Holloway fails – in fact refuses – to chart the strategic way forward. He claims that ‘the knowing of the revolutionaries of the last century has been
defeated’ (Holloway 2003:p.89), and that the old certainties of the Left are no longer tenable. In other words, changing the world is an open-ended and indeterminate process. In that sense, the Leninist question may be the wrong question altogether. More importantly, seeking to slot agrarian reform and rural politics into a pre-conceptualized trajectory of social revolution is epistemologically problematic.

7.5 ‘Land’ NGOs: For Modernism and Against Modernist Systematicity

Chapter Six and Seven have analyzed the current international state of affairs with regard to agrarian and land reform. They traced the historical emergence and trajectory of a neo-liberal ‘model’ of development generally and land reform more specifically. The term ‘trajectory’ has been regularly employed in these two chapters so that the existence of neo-liberalism globally is not overplayed and seen as omnipresent. Further, this global restructuring has entailed significant forms of local restructuring throughout the South and East in terms of agrarian relations, class reformation and rural livelihoods. Thus, ‘the global’ has not simply been imposed as a free-floating process on ‘the local’ from ‘outside’. Rather, an uneven and contradictory process of glocalization has been occurring in the ‘periphery’. In particular, there have been numerous assertions of ‘the local’ against the ‘civilizing mission’ of capitalist agrarian globalization. These include resistance by nation-states and ruling parties to the anti-statist thrust of land reform as propagated by the World Bank and other global donors, and to imperialism more broadly; the defence of ‘traditional’ customary tenure by agrarian communities in the face of the formal privatization of land tenure; and spontaneous and organized forms of rural opposition by the increasingly marginalized rural under-classes, including dramatic land movements. As a result, ‘agrarian glocalization’ is invariably an open-ended social process that has no fixed or common trajectory and end-point. The form and route it takes is open to remarkable historical and spatial variation.

Intermediary NGOs and land reform must be understood in this context. On the one hand, because of the existence of ‘complex variations’, there are ‘common themes’ internationally in the form of the globalization of agriculture, the restructuring of agrarian
relations and land reform trajectories. These commonalities arise from the contemporary form of the globalization of capitalism. Thus, likely more than ever before, there is a role for modernist ‘grand theory’ within the sociological project. There is every reason for developing a theory of NGOs that has the epistemological and conceptual capacity to ‘capture’ the common themes while also addressing the complex variations. On the other hand, if glocalization is uneven and discontinuous in the case of agrarian and land reform, then any sociological conceptualization and understanding of intermediary ‘land’ NGOs must surely reflect this. If ‘land’ NGOs are ‘caught up’ in glocalization, then the work of these NGOs is invariably marked by contradiction and ambiguity. Hence, to argue that glocalization is characterized by ‘tensions’ between ‘the global’ and ‘the local’, and then to claim that ‘land’ NGOs are simply instruments of a hegemonic neoliberalism, is to impose a ‘modernist systematicity’ on the world of NGOs and to bypass an opportunity to offer a sensitive reading of their world of ambivalence. This thesis seeks to render such a reading. In order to fully accomplish this, I need to detail land reform in Zimbabwe.
Chapter 8
Post-Colonial Zimbabwe: Land Policies and Struggles

The next two chapters look at land reform in Zimbabwe. Since the year 2000 large-scale land redistribution and resettlement have underpinned land events in Zimbabwe, and these processes have involved ‘the first radical shift in agrarian property rights in the post-Cold War world’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005a:p.3). This chapter outlines the historical emergence and development of this ‘radical shift’ by tracing the trajectories of agrarian and land reform in post-independence Zimbabwe from 1980 to the mid-1990s. The following chapter considers the years immediately preceding the ‘radical shift’ and the years that mark this shift. This historical and social context is necessary in order to understand the involvement of NGOs in land reform in present-day Zimbabwe.

Land reform was exceedingly limited during the first two decades of independence, and it was largely insignificant as a strategy for poverty alleviation and historical redress. The period from 1980 to 1996 falls under what is known retrospectively as the Zimbabwean state’s Land Reform and Resettlement Programme (LRRP) Phase I. This phase included the first ten years of independence during which the Lancaster House Agreement was in effect, and the more recent timeframe of ESAP that was launched in October 1990. The fact that both Lancaster House and ESAP entailed significant global pressure on the post-colonial state highlights the fact that land reform in Zimbabwe has been in large part externally driven (Mbaya 2001). LRRP Phase II was introduced in 1997 and continues to this day albeit in a revised accelerated form.

For the first fifteen years of independence, the ruling political party deliberately sought to demobilize its social base as part of a modernizing developmentalist project. As a result, by the mid-1990s both urban and rural organizations ‘had been well civilized to the requirements of neocolonial capitalism’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005b:p.181; Yeros 2002b).
Yet, this was a highly ambiguous process, because during the early 1990s “national unity” around a broad developmentalist agenda began to unravel’ (Raftopoulos and Phimister 2004:p.358). The contradictions embedded in Zimbabwean society during this period were manifested vividly in the agrarian and land reform strategy. This reform strategy, including the contentious topic of land redistribution, was neither designed nor implemented in a linear and coherent fashion. Rather, the process was halting and inconsistent, and subject to a multitude of political and economic pressures. The Zimbabwean nation-state never articulated (let alone pursued) a unified and holistic agrarian programme, and its actions in many ways reproduced the colonial-based ‘dualistic’ character of land-holdings in the rural areas. Existing agrarian modes of accumulation, relations of production, labour processes and property relations were left untouched.

Land events in Zimbabwe during Phase I are well documented in the academic literature. This thesis goes beyond the scope of this existing literature by highlighting the significance of Phase I events to Phase II developments. It singles out two trajectories pertaining to ‘contradiction’ and ‘domination’ as reoccurring themes of the thesis. First of all, and despite the dominant thrust of Phase I, the programme was characterized by considerable ambiguities revolving around the seemingly contradictory goals of agricultural growth and historical equity. These contradictory tendencies became embedded in the Phase II programme and continue to be played out, under different historical conditions, in the accelerated programme. Secondly, although in large part in line with global trajectories, Phase I did not simply represent a form of global imposition and domination. Rather, the main trajectory of Phase I was consistent with, for instance, the demands of white and black agrarian capital in Zimbabwe, and Phase I was in many ways pursued on this basis. This ‘local’ moment of Phase I is privileged analytically in the discussion of Phase I (Lancaster House and ESAP) as it brings to the fore an important thread of continuity between the two phases.
8.1 Lancaster House: Resettlement Progress and Agricultural Performance

Writing in 1990, land-specialist Robin Palmer argued that ‘a curious silence’ fell over land reform in Zimbabwe ‘for much of the 1980s’ but that it appeared poised to bounce ‘back into the limelight’ (Palmer 1990:p.163) with the expiry of the Lancaster House Agreement in 1990 and, consequently, the formal lifting of legal and procedural constraints on land acquisition. The compromise agreement reached in 1979 between the British Government and the Zimbabwean liberation movement at the Lancaster House conference meant that, on the one hand, land could not be unilaterally expropriated by the post-colonial state during the first decade of independence. In this regard, from the outset ‘the issue of land was intricately linked with the whole question of sovereignty. The Constitution effectively insulated private property rights in land from government interference and, therefore, the exercise of sovereignty. The issue of land acquisition and redistribution was insulated by the Constitution from democratic politics and the exercise of state power.’ (Tshuma 1997:p.44)

The constitution relegated land reform to market-based contractual methods and the state’s actions were subservient to this. For its part, the former colonial authority promised to underwrite half of the costs of resettlement on land purchased on a willing buyer-willing seller basis, and these costs would include the market value of land plus infra-structural developments on the resettled farms. Relatively speaking, significant resettlement activity occurred from 1980 to 1986. This took place at a time when land-hungry peasants with high expectations began occupying both private and public land as ‘squatters’, and when commercial farms abandoned during the war of liberation were readily available on the land market. By 1985, 40,000 households had been resettled on 2.2 million hectares of (often arid and marginal) land and by the mid-1990s this had increased to 71,000 households on 3.5 million hectares, all of which were well below government targets. For instance, the Transitional National Development Plan of 1982 set a target of resettling 162,000 families between 1982 and 1985 (Tshuma 1997:p.70).
For resettlement purposes, the government devised two main schemes. Model ‘A’ schemes gave individual households 5-6 hectares of arable land plus common grazing areas. An accelerated version of this scheme – involving minimal pre-settlement infrastructural provisions – existed in the early 1980s to meet the challenges posed by the squatter ‘movement’. Model ‘B’ schemes involved co-operative farming arrangements originally consistent with the state’s early post-independence socialist rhetoric but most of these schemes were eventually discontinued because of various inefficiencies (Masuko 1995). By 1996, 93% of all schemes were Model ‘A’ schemes. These schemes were never properly integrated into traditional authority structures but, otherwise, they seemed similar to customary areas. The schemes fell on land now owned by the state, and access to land involved an insecure permit system rather than a well-documented leasehold arrangement. Hence, it would seem that resettlement involved the communalization of land in Zimbabwe. By the early 1990s, and because of financial constraints, the state had adopted the ‘least cost’ approach (GoZ 1998a) to infra-structural development in resettlement areas, providing initially only land demarcation services and a few water points. In 1998, the resettlement process during Phase I was described by the government as ‘essentially rehabilitative’ (GoZ 1998a) because it involved the placement of squatters, the destitute and displaced persons. This is a surprising description, for reasons that will become clearer later.

The agricultural rationality and performance of the resettlement schemes, as part of the redistribution exercise more generally, were questioned from their very inception. For instance, during the 1980s, White commercial farmers (through the Commercial Farmers Union or CFU) constantly queried the merits of any drastic or radical land redistribution programme, and hence they were involved in ‘slowing down the whole process of resettlement’ by arguing that ‘too rapid land reform would undermine white confidence, … threaten vital export earnings of strategic crops and result in significant job losses.’ (Palmer 1990:pp.170, 171) This entailed not only direct lobbying of the Zimbabwean state on agricultural and land policy, but also contributing more generally to ‘an atmosphere of risk-aversion by stressing the importance of commercial agriculture’ (Herbst 1990:p.56) relative to peasant holdings (Sachikonye 2003).
This ‘big farm’ ideology comes across in von Blanckenburg’s (1994) important empirical study of White commercial farmers in Zimbabwe during the early 1990s and, indeed, the author goes to great length to dress this ideology in theoretical garb. He thus concludes that resettlement in Zimbabwe is ‘a negative rather than a positive experience’ (von Blanckenburg 1994:p.12), that the export performance of large farms is of ‘strategic importance’ (von Blanckenburg 1994:p.27), and that the agricultural performance in resettled areas is ‘weak’ (von Blanckenburg 1994:p.32). Simultaneously, however, other scholars more sympathetic to land redistribution and small-farm productivity have argued that the acquisition of over three million hectares of commercial farmland during the 1980s did not lead to ‘production losses’ within the commercial sector and that in fact the exact opposite took place (Moyo 2000a:p.16). Reform proponents considered most large farms owned by Whites as under-utilized, and there were ongoing proposals to subdivide many of these farms and apportion the subdivided units amongst aspiring Black commercial farmers as a way of balancing equity and growth concerns.

The rationale of the state’s agrarian policies vis-à-vis resettlement areas has been subjected to scrutiny. It has been argued for instance that resettlement has been largely ‘a political and welfare strategy’ rather than a serious ‘economic programme for agricultural development’ (Karumbidza 2004:p.18). Thus, like the ‘communal’ areas, the state fused sovereignty and property on resettled farms, as settlers (normally males) were granted obscure permits with (at least de jure) tenuous access to land. Yet the creation of new forms of property rights and entitlements in resettled areas was not constrained by the 1980 constitution (Tshuma 1997:p.51), and thus the government of Zimbabwe could have instituted longer-term and more secure leasehold agreements to possibly enhance investment by the resettled farmers. The state sought rather to ‘uplift’ the agriculture of peasant ‘settlers’ through modern ‘technocratic means’ (Tshuma 1997:p.74) that asserted the un-productivity of ‘traditional’ agricultural ways. In this way, resettlement areas were envisaged by the Zimbabwean government to be sites of rational planning and sound land husbandry, although this rarely occurred in practice. Further, it was not long before significant class differentiations became pronounced on resettled farms,
particularly from the late 1980s when equity concerns became less significant and the intended beneficiaries of resettlement increasingly switched from the ‘communal poor’ to capable and experienced ‘master’ farmers.

The constraints imposed upon the government by the Lancaster House Agreement during the 1980s do not fully explain the nature of the land reform programme, including its truncated character. Of course, serious financial bottlenecks associated with market-based land acquisition did arise, and indeed by the mid-1980s the government had already implemented some austerity measures and sought IMF support. Therefore, land acquisition soon became ‘a hostage of measures intended to reduce budget and balance of payments deficits’ (Tshuma 1997:p.58). Yet, in line with the arguments of the CFU, the state (or at least significant ministries and politicians within it) ‘demonstrated hesitancy in transforming or restructuring the LSCF [large scale commercial farming] sector which was viewed as “the goose laying the golden egg”’ (Karumbidza 2004:p.12). As well, the post-colonial state was engrossed with statist methodologies of ruling, and this distanced and insulated the state from rumblings within rural civil society about the inadequacies of land reform. Further, the immediate post-independence boom in peasant agriculture (in customary areas), including marketed maize, misled government into thinking that agricultural productivity would be significantly enhanced without ongoing re-distributive measures (Palmer 1990). In fact, the ‘boom’ when not disaggregated obscured significant class and spatial disparities in production amongst the peasantry (Karumbidza 2004).

8.2 SAP: Declining Redistribution and Capitalist Modernization

The macro-economic strategy pursued by the Zimbabwean government during the 1980s was a tightrope of ‘growth with equity’. It has been convincingly argued that, already by the mid-1980s, the ‘centre-piece of agrarian reform’ (Tshuma 1997: p. 56) for the government had shifted from land redistribution to increasing agricultural productivity, and thus growth took precedence over equity concerns. This agrarian trajectory
continued beyond the 1980s in the hard face of the neo-liberal structural adjustment programme (ESAP) introduced by the Zimbabwean government in late 1990. This programme led to an ‘increasingly market-oriented conception of Zimbabwe’s land question’ (Moyo 2000a:p.11) and it was ‘the major constraint’ on land redistribution from 1990 onwards (Moyo 2000a:p.9). Hence, during much of the 1990s, there was an ‘interlude’ in resolving the land question (Sachikonye 2003:p. 231).

The central state also seemed disengaged from land reform, as ‘political pressures ... were less intense than before…. Opposition parties were fragmented and weak, and thus unable to mount a credible challenge to the incumbent party. Until 1998, there was little organised pressure from peasants and the landless’ (Sachikonye 2003:p.231). In this regard, Moyo (2000e) describes the period from 1987 to 1996 as entailing declining redistribution and intensive policy reformulation. He notes, amongst other things, that numerous land policy and legislative reforms were pronounced, that laws to enhance compulsory acquisition were developed and tested (without success), that the limited land purchased was financed by the central state’s own (inadequate) budgeted allocations, and that Black commercial farming was increasingly promoted.

Therefore, if redistribution did re-appear in the limelight during the 1990s, it did so in a particular guise and with a distinctive productivity (and not a historical re-dress) thrust. Simultaneously, tenure changes continued to take a backseat although this matter was the main focus of the 1994 Rukuni Commission into appropriate agricultural land tenure systems. In terms of the recommendations of the Commission, the state accepted (but never implemented) the introduction of leasehold rights with the option of freehold title (for productive farmers only) in resettlement areas in order to, in the words of the Minister of Lands (K. Kangai) ‘encourage capital investment’ (WKshop 1996:p.4). But Kangai argued, contrary to the Rukuni Commission, that existing tenure in communal areas ‘should be maintained and strengthened’ (WKshop 1996:p.5) and thus that the state should not relinquish its de jure ownership of land. The government did not have a coherent land programme that integrated reorganized land tenure regimes into the
resettlement process in either the place of origin or destination of resettlement, that is, the customary and resettlement areas respectively.

On the other hand, the overall productivity approach of the state was in line with the CFU’s ongoing emphasis on productivity considerations in resettlement. As well, ESAP neatly served to justify or legitimize agricultural accumulation amongst an aspiring Black landed class. This ‘accumulation from above’ occurred despite the emergence of a new (and potentially more trans-formative) Land Policy from 1990 involving the acquisition of 5 million hectares of land, and as reflected for example in changes to the constitution and in the 1992 Land Acquisition Act. Much to the dismay of White commercial farmers, this policy allowed for the block designation of farms for resettlement and for compulsory acquisition of farms in all natural regions (including prime land with good climatic and soil conditions) and not just underutilized land. The 1992 Act was meant to speed up the land redistribution programme, but legal standards of fairness and transparency still had to be adhered to and this bogged down the process. Further, all land obtained – by whatever means – still required some form of payment by the state, but now this would only be ‘fair’ compensation. One possible implication of this became dramatically clear under the accelerated programme in the year 2000, as far-reaching land redistribution seemed to ‘cry out for’ the suspension of the rule of law.

Under ESAP, export-dependent accumulation strategies were stressed and this was to the marked advantage of large-scale White commercial farmers with their near monopoly of the agricultural export market. Indeed, soon after independence, (predominantly White) agrarian capital branched into non-traditional high-earning export crops like horticulture plus wildlife eco-tourism as part of extroverted economic liberalization processes (Moyo 2000c). Meanwhile, during ESAP, the peasant under-classes in the customary areas were largely left to fend for themselves, as the state effectively became a ‘facilitator’ rather than a ‘guarantor’ of smallholder agricultural development (Chipika et al. 1998:p.71). During the 1980s, the state had sought to modernize communal lands through irrigation schemes, forestry projects, grazing schemes and other development interventions. It also tried to implement a highly regulated agrarian regime and it gave targeted assistance to
smallholder agriculture (to ‘modernize’ them) through the provision of credit, research and extension, and marketing infrastructure.

This engagement was based on diverse state practices. For example, while the state held in part to a ‘big farm’ path to modernization, it also entertained the view that small-scale farming was potentially productive. Thus, the peasantry was portrayed as rational producers who would respond favourably to incentives. From the viewpoint of the government, any support from outside required interventions that would ‘modernize’ peasant agriculture beyond typically subsistence levels. This ‘modernization’ (with the assistance of multilateral and bilateral agencies) had the effect though of ‘controlling the peasant production processes by locking them into state capitalist enterprises’ (Tshuma 1997:p.113). The peasant ‘boom’ (or ‘miracle’) mentioned above has often been attributed to this interventionist regime, but the ‘institutional support regime was at best minimal’ (Karumbidza 2004:p.1) and at worst incoherent. Those ‘progressive’ (or ‘miracle’) farmers located in the communal lands during the 1980s, and whose further accumulation strategies were seemingly being blocked by the dysfunctions of customary tenure, became eligible for resettlement in terms of the emphasis on productivity.

8.3 Customary Areas: Peasant Farmers and ‘Traditional’ Leadership

This statist regime, although weak on the ground, was further eroded by ESAP’s restructuring of the agrarian economy. ESAP was highly typical of SAPs found throughout Africa, including public service reforms, tightening of monetary policy, enhancing the export incentive system and promoting foreign investment (Thorpe and Vehris eds. 1995). This macro-economic package though was unevenly implemented. The sector reforms specifically within agriculture involved the commercialization and privatization of commodity marketing boards (for instance, cotton and maize), the deregulation of prices of key crop inputs, and the downsizing of agricultural extension services. In general, ‘smallholders’ were severely disadvantaged by these reform measures because, for example, credit from the state agricultural financial corporation
dried up and prices of inputs such as fertilizer skyrocketed. But ESAP had a differential impact within agrarian communities and it led to a ‘worsening’ of social inequalities (Chipika et al. 1998:p.33). While richer farmers in ‘communal’ lands further ventured into cash crops like cotton and tobacco, critical production constraints inhibited poorer farmers. The latter responded, by amongst other measures, hiring out their labour to richer farmers, extending their lands under cultivation in a desperate measure to maintain output, and relying increasingly on natural resources as sources of food. They also ‘leased’ out their de facto private land (i.e. arable plots) and, in so doing, commodified their land-use entitlements (Tshuma 1997:p.97).

Land rehabilitation-cum-reorganization of the ‘communal’ (or customary) areas was never vigorously pursued in a quest for productivity or equity within the countryside (Mbiba 1999). Yet, the first Five Year Development Plan (1986-1990) highlighted the need for the restructuring of communal area agrarian systems. This implementation failure also runs counter to constant claims of intent by the state, including by the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture in 1992 that ‘resettlement alone can never fully solve all the problems of the communal areas… The implementation of the programme has to be carried out in tandem with the programme of communal area reorganization’ (quoted in von Blanckenburg 1994:p.37). Therefore, throughout the period from 1980 to 1996, the peasants in the communal lands remained ‘captured’ under a (colonial-style) fused authority revolving around an awkward ‘institutional mélange’ (Tshuma 1997:p.90) that included elected Rural District Councils (RDCs), traditional chieftainships and local ruling party cell structures. Rural councils represented the devolved authority of the central state at district level, and village and ward development committees operated under them as the most basic units of decentralization.

This decentralization was meant to incorporate peasants into the modernizing process in a participatory mode. But in practice beneficiary participation was ‘seriously curtailed’ and development committees ‘have proved to be incapable of producing development plans’ (Makumbe 1996:p.47). RDCs themselves had limited financial autonomy in relation to the central state, and they were ‘basically incapacitated and weak agents of the
centre’ (Makumbe 1996:p.85). Thus, paradoxically, decentralization was a highly politicized process that strengthened the state at the expense of rural civil society, and this ‘facilitated’ central government ‘penetration of the periphery for purposes of control and manipulation of the local people’ (Makumbe 1998:p.53).

The 1988 Rural District Councils Act sought to provide overarching district authorities incorporating commercial, communal and resettlement areas. This was implemented in various parts of the country during the 1990s but was not particularly successful in ensuring a functional integrated rural authority structure. Nevertheless, councils and their development committees had formal authority over land allocation and disputes. Rural local authorities were never properly integrated into resettlement schemes and the dominant on-ground ‘authority’ was resettlement officers, who were generally labelled as being ineffective in their duties. Hence, the Secretary of the Rukuni Commission, V. Vudzijena, noted in 1995 that the ‘planning and administration of resettlement schemes is over centralised’ and the RDCs had been reduced to simply issuing trading licenses (Wkshop 1995:p.12).

The central state had an ambivalent approach to chieftainship structures. Despite the significant contribution of many chieftainships to the war of liberation, the government of Zimbabwe initially sought to marginalize these structures only to then upgrade their judicial authority from 1990. Rural councils and traditional bodies represented ‘two parallel systems of authority’ (Chaumba et al. 2003a:p.587), although many chiefs were directly involved in the affairs of the RDCs and their development sub-committees. Ruling party structures continued to play a role in administration and development activities in communal lands, but this was uneven and ad hoc. Traditional authorities regularly involved themselves in land administration and for this and other reasons they were often at ‘loggerheads’ with elected councils (Chaumba et al. 2003a:p.587). For instance, ‘outsiders’ were being given land in grazing areas at a price by chiefs or the kraal head but without approval from the land authority (the council). This at times caused conflict between long-established communal residents and these ‘illegal settlers’ (Zishiri 1998).
By the mid-1990s, and consistent with the recommendations of the 1994 Rukuni Report, the state was considering abolishing the village development committees of the RDCs and further enhancing the administrative power of the traditional authorities including over land matters. For the RDCs, this was nothing short of sacrilege. Thus S. Chikate of the Association of RDCs argued in 1995 that ‘our traditional leaders are not known for accountability’ and that the chieftainship represents ‘a system that goes back even beyond the dark ages’ and should not be promoted in ‘our modern day Local administration’ (Wkshop 1995:p.43).

8.4 The Indigenization of Agricultural Capital

Meanwhile, the Zimbabwean state’s resettlement efforts continued to show significant commitment to commercial farming, particularly in light of the drive for indigenization. By the late 1990s, there were about 8,000 Black small-scale commercial farmers on over 1.2 million hectares outside the communal and resettlement areas (Moyo 1999a:p.19). These Black petty bourgeois farmers were represented by the ruling party-aligned Zimbabwe Farmers Union (ZFU). At a workshop in 1995, the president of the ZFU stressed the importance of individualized land tenure and its supposed linkages to enhanced investment and productivity. He thus argued that ‘the rights to land utilization within the smallholder farming areas’ are an ‘outstanding issue in the agrarian reform in Zimbabwe’, and that a ‘secure tenure system’ in both communal and resettlement areas would ‘increase the competitiveness of these sectors’. He further argued that communal farmers were a ‘heterogeneous mix of productive and unproductive farmers’ and, as a result, the ZFU in its workshop deliberations had ‘recommended a selective titling process in favour of productive farmers’ (Wkshop 1995:pp.1, 7).

By the mid-1990s, about 500 Blacks had acquired medium and large farms (some by dubious means) through leasehold (of state land), lease-to-buy schemes and mortgage loans from the agricultural financial corporation. These farms averaged over 1,000
hectares each. This meant that nearly 10% of commercial farms were Black-owned. A few years earlier, Palmer had noted that ‘[f]or some members of government … land redistribution might now signify taking land for themselves, rather than giving it to peasants’ (Palmer 1990:p.175). There is indeed evidence to suggest that the resettlement policy at times furthered the economic ambitions of the indigenous elite, including those lodged within the state (Moyo 1999a). Black economic nationalism was facilitating agricultural accumulation strategies in the name of indigenization, and this process took advantage of the 1990 Land Policy’s marked silence on social and equity concerns. Although this was never government policy, there have been concerted ‘attempts to use the state to promote the formation of a black agrarian bourgeoisie’ (Tshuma 1997:p.9).

It appears then that Phase I of the LRRP was characterized by a shifting but ‘narrow racial and class monopoly over land’ in Zimbabwe (Moyo 2000a:p.6), and that acquisition and redistribution during the 1990s were shaped by the class interests of the Black landed class (Tshuma 1997) which was emerging during the 1980s. However, because of the still limited entry of Blacks into capitalist agriculture, ‘the racial aspect of the land question continues to dominate over the class aspect’ (Tshuma 1997:p.134). In other words, land dispossessed under colonialism was still in large part in the hands of Whites. In this way emergent Black agrarian capitalists could claim they were acting to redress the long-brewing land grievances of Blacks. This embourgeoisement of land reform was clearly to the detriment of significant sections of the peasantry, but it was acceptable to the central state insofar as it promoted (or at least did not jeopardize) the post-colonial nation-building project. It would seem, then, that land reform was never intended to transform social relations but has been propagated and implemented by the state intermittently to defuse rural opposition and to stabilize the countryside (Tshuma 1997). In the early 1990s it could be rightfully claimed that the ongoing land inequalities in Zimbabwe had, to date, not ‘affected substantially’ the socio-political stability of the nation (von Blanckenburg 1994:p.127). By the late 1990s, this no longer appeared to be the case, as a land ‘movement’ had emerged in rural Zimbabwe in the context of an ‘organic’ crisis (Moore 2003).
8.5 Brewing Problems: Farm Labourers and Land Short Squatters

Two issues in particular need to be highlighted as problems brewing with respect to the resettlement programme, namely, the position of farm workers and land short squatters. Throughout much of the period under discussion, land reform discourses ignored agricultural labourers. Moyo et al. (2000b:p.189) argue that agricultural workers ‘fell between the cracks’ of the ‘dual economy thinking’ that informed state policy and practice under colonialism and on into independent Zimbabwe. This thinking focused on the articulations between the urban economy and the communal (or ‘reserve’) economy as epitomized by the migrant labour system, and it in large part conceptually bypassed the commercial farm sector. Failure to give sufficient attention to a ‘third’ economy has often been replicated in scholarly analytical works. This includes Mamdani’s (1996) study of despotic forms of rule in post-colonial Africa, as he excludes commercial agriculture from his notion of the uncivil rural realm. Serious analysis of Zimbabwean farm workers has appeared in recent years, most notably by Rutherford (2001) who argues that these workers lived and toiled under an oppressive ‘domestic government’ system in which they (almost literally) ‘belonged to the farmer’. Akin to Mamdani’s notion of fused authority in customary areas, Black agricultural labour was subjected to a despotic authority involving White property and White sovereignty.

Thus, the Zimbabwean state rarely intervened in the affairs of domestic government and much of state policy was devoid of any explicit reference to this large category of rural proletarians. In fact, at times these agricultural labourers were deliberately marginalized from policy regimes, including with regard to resettlement. The 70,000 families who had benefited from the resettlement programme by the mid-1990s included (disproportionately) only 3,000 farm worker households. In the late 1990s, 2 million people lived in commercial farm compounds, and this amounted to nearly one-third of the population – 6.5 million – in customary areas (Moyo et al. 2000b:pp.182, 183). The Zimbabwean government often labelled agricultural labourers as foreigners without totems, and thus they were not true sons and daughters of Zimbabwean soil and this
disqualified them from the land programme. Further, especially in light of the productivity thrust, these workers were derided as unproductive, and seemingly incapable of being ‘modernized’, because they were wholly dependent on a boss and they lacked the necessary development ethos and initiative for resettlement purposes (Moyo et al. 2000b).

In the case of communal land shortages, it has been argued that ‘the land cause had never been abandoned’ by the semi-proletariat or peasantry (Moyo and Yeros 2005b:p.182) and that the landless constantly pressurized the state for reform through, amongst other tactics, ‘uncivil’ land occupations. This is despite the fact that ‘[n]o independent peasant organisation’ vis-à-vis the ruling party ‘survived or emerged’ after independence (Sachikonye 1995:p.132). Initially (from 1980 to 1985) there was low profile but high intensity occupations (Moyo 2001) that received at times substantial support from the central or local state elite. The government tolerated occupation of abandoned and (officially) acquired farms but disapproved of occupations on utilized commercial land. On occasion, though, the government was forced to acquire some prime land as ‘squatters’ refused to move. But as independence progressed, and as the initial equity thrust of land distribution tapered off because of the increasing embourgeoisement of the ruling political party and the fiscal crisis of the state, a rift began to grow between ZANU-PF and its rural (peasant) base.

Low intensity occupations (Moyo 2001) from 1985 to 1996 continued on into the ESAP period, but the response of the state was to treat the occupants as squatters and to have them vigorously removed. ZANU-PF lost its patience and severely sanctioned peasants who sought ‘to gain access to land outside procedures established by the state’ (Tshuma 1997:p.67). The land occupations during the 1990s reached a climax in 1998 with high profile and high intensity community-led occupations. Moyo argues that controversies about the spontaneity or contrived character of land occupations in Zimbabwe represent a ‘facile debate’, as ‘[r]arely in the past twenty years have occupations been spontaneous, since they were mostly planned through the liberation movement, local MPs or political party functionaries.’ (Moyo 2001:p.321) The land occupations from 1980 to 1999
involved loosely organized and fragmented forms of un-civility, and differed significantly from the recent land movement or Third Chimurenga occupations in this regard.
Chapter 9
Land Reform in Contemporary Zimbabwe

The social crisis that developed in Zimbabwe during the late 1990s set the backdrop for the accelerated land programme. This programme explicitly addresses land reform of a re-distributive kind but it has raised a host of other issues pertaining to land and agrarian reform. Recent reform will be conceptualized with reference to the significant restructuring of state and society in contemporary Zimbabwe. By mid-2005, or just five years after the beginning of the Third Chimurenga, the government of Zimbabwe was confidently and stridently claiming that the ‘the people now had the land’ and that the land question had finally been resolved. This was the ‘permanent panacea to the land issue’ that the government had been seeking, as articulated by the Minister of Lands in January 1997.  

9.1 The Acrimonious Zimbabwean Debate

Moyo and Yeros (2005b) argue that the land occupation movement in present-day Zimbabwe is ‘the most notable of rural movements in the world today’; that it has obtained ‘the first major land reform since the end of the Cold War’; that it has been ‘the most important challenge to the neocolonial state in Africa’ under neo-liberalism (Moyo and Yeros 2005b:p.165); and — seemingly more controversially — that it has a ‘fundamentally progressive nature’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005b:p.188). Their depiction of the Third Chimurenga, both in their earlier individual work and later in their more comprehensive collaborative project, has been the subject of an important but acrimonious debate amongst Zimbabwean Left scholars about state formation and

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political change (Moyo 2001; Yeros 2002a; Raftopoulos and Phimister 2004; Moore 2004; Raftopoulos 2005).

Critics of Moyo and Yeros claim that their statements about the Third Chimurenga entail – almost perverse – value judgments made by ‘patriotic agrarianists’ (Moore 2004:p.409) or ‘left-nationalists’ (Bond and Manyanya 2003:p.78) who fail to conceptualize analytically or even highlight empirically the increasingly repressive character of state nationalism in contemporary Zimbabwe, designated as an ‘exclusionary’ nationalism (Hammar et al. eds. 2003), an ‘exhausted’ nationalism (Bond and Manyanya 2003) or an ‘authoritarian populist anti-imperialism’ (Moore 2003:p.8). Raftopoulos and Phimister argue that this authoritarianism involves an ‘internal reconfiguration of Zimbabwean state politics’ (Raftopoulos and Phimister 2004:p.377) and now amounts to ‘domestic tyranny’ (Raftopoulos and Phimister 2004:p.356), and they speak about a ‘number of African intellectuals on the Left’ (including Moyo and Yeros, but also Ibbo Mandaza) who have ‘leapt to the defence of ZANU PF’ (Raftopoulos and Phimister 2004:p.376) and its re-distributive economic policies. For their part, Moyo and Yeros claim that their critics (who they call neo-liberal apologists for imperialism or ‘civic/post-nationalists’) demote the significance of national self-determination and the agrarian question in Zimbabwe as expressed in the recent land movement by focusing on the movement’s excessive violence and eventual co-option by the ruling party and state. They therefore argue that it is essential to conceptualize the land occupations in the context of a re-radicalized (and revitalized) state nationalism and the ongoing movement of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) under post-colonial conditions.

This debate amongst the Left, which has been the explicit subject of a number of recent papers, has pronounced political overtones, and is indeed linked at times by the protagonists to the current tensions (almost chasm) within the national politics of Zimbabwe. This conflict involves ‘competing narratives of Zimbabwe’s national liberation history’ (Hammar and Raftopoulos 2003:p.17) such that, currently, ‘history is at the centre of politics in Zimbabwe’ (Ranger 2004:p.234). It also involves fundamentally different conceptions of the current crisis. On the one hand, there is a
nationalist discourse that speaks of a land crisis and that stresses national sovereignty and re-distributive policies. In terms of this discourse, Raftopoulos (2005) says that land ‘became the sole central signifier of national redress, constructed through a series of discursive exclusions’ (Raftopoulos 2005:pp.9-10). This process of exclusion entails sidelining and undercutting sub-national counter-narratives found in what the state would label as the more ‘marginal’ spaces of Zimbabwean society, including rural Matabeleland and the urban trade union movement (Alexander et al. 2000; Raftopoulos 2001). On the other hand, there is a more liberal discourse that refers to a governance crisis and that emphasizes human rights and political democratization (Hammar et al. eds. 2003; Sachikonye 2002), and that involves a ‘managerial, modernising nationalism’ (Rutherford 2002:p.1).

The first discourse focuses on the external (imperialist) determinants of the crisis and the latter on its internal (nation-state) determinants (Freeman 2005). Yet both discourses have roots in the notion of the NDR, with the former prioritizing the ‘national’ (in struggling against imperialism) and the latter the ‘democratic’ (in struggling against an authoritarian state) (Moore 2004). For example, Mandaza (who has links with the ruling party) says that during the late 1990s post-nationalist forces in alliance with foreign elements were engaged in a subterranean ‘social crisis strategy’ that sought to make Zimbabwe ungovernable, and that the (supposedly radical) intellectual representatives of these forces sought to prioritize issues of governance and democracy ‘at the expense of addressing the National Question’. Thus, the civic nationalism of these theorists (such as Raftopoulos) is portrayed as civil society warring against the state, and as seeking to undermine economic (re-distributive) nationalism rightly propagated (according to Mandaza) by a beleaguered nation-state under the onslaught of imperialism in the periphery.

Labelling each other as either left-nationalists or neo-liberals amounts at one level to intellectual misrepresentation and character assassination. But it is also suggestive of

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12 The ‘Scrutator’ in The Zimbabwe Mirror, 28 April to 4 May 2000. All quotations from Mandaza in this chapter are from this column
important theoretical differences within the Left. For example, Raftopoulos has been influenced by a Leftist ‘culturalist’ tradition including the works of Stuart Hall and E. P. Thompson and he might consider himself a Radical Democrat, whereas the joint work by Moyo and Yeros is more inclined towards a modernist class perspective. I argue that the debate brings to the fore the many tensions, contradictions and ambivalences embodied in the socio-political processes characterizing present-day Zimbabwe, and raises fundamental questions for social scientists about how to conceptualize the ‘social totality’. For instance, Raftopoulos fails to offer rigorous class analyses (Helliker 2004) yet Moyo and Yeros have an overly structured conception of the totality (Helliker 2005). In this regard, the debate on Zimbabwe offers a false dichotomy of contemporary developments. With particular relevance to the thesis, both ‘the local’ and ‘the global’ (or ‘the internal’ and ‘the external’) are critical for ‘capturing’ the heightened contradictions and deepening crises that mark contemporary Zimbabwe.

9.2 The ‘Zimbabwean Crisis’ and the Agrarian Question of Capital

All scholars on Zimbabwe seem to concur that the nation is currently experiencing a social crisis of unprecedented and epic proportions. This is considered to be almost axiomatic and a foregone conclusion, and hence ‘by any measure’ Zimbabwe is said to be in crisis (Hammar and Raftopoulos 2003:p.3). A voluminous ‘crisis’ literature on Zimbabwean society has arisen in the past few years, and this is despite the nebulous and obscure connotations of the term ‘crisis’ as often employed by socio-political theorists. Most accounts of ‘the’ crisis have been in the main descriptive, yet there are also more serious efforts to theorize about the crisis. The crisis has been given a range of shorthand labels, including ‘organic crisis’ (Moore 2003) following Gramsci’s conceptual framework, and even ‘the Zimbabwean Crisis’ (Raftopoulos and Phimister 2004). As well, its historical and causal roots have been differentially traced in the academic literature (Bond and Manyanya 2003; Raftopoulos 2003) with the epicentre lodged somewhere in the early, mid or late 1990s.
It often remains unclear though ‘what’ or ‘who’ is in crisis, but most usually the crisis is reduced to a crisis for the political regime. Thus the common account is that, by the late 1990s, there emerged crises on both the economic and political fronts. On the one hand, there arose an ESAP-related macro-economic crisis that resulted in a contraction of the economy and rampant inflation. On the other hand, a broad-based political opposition in the urban areas (trade unions, civics, the NCA and the MDC) was questioning and challenging the hegemony of the ruling ZANU-PF party and its particular rendition of ‘the nation’. Hence, in the face of crises of profitability and legitimacy, the ruling party found itself ‘in a corner’. Yet, the state was now ‘unencumbered by the conditionalities’ of ESAP and it became increasingly authoritarian (Raftopoulos 2002:p.418).

The crisis reverberated within the ruling party, government and state. This was spurred on by the openly political demands for financial compensation by the ruling party aligned (but largely marginalized) war veterans\(^\text{13}\) in 1997, to which the government of Zimbabwe generously ceded. This unbudgeted fiscal expense along with the financially draining intervention in the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo made it exceedingly difficult for the government to meet stringent donor conditions to reduce the budget deficit. The government failed to honour its external debt load, and this resulted in global capital (the IMF) withholding any further balance-of-payments support. In other words, in 1999, the government defaulted on its loan repayments and the IMF suspended any further aid (Dansereau 2003). By March 2002, arrears to the Bretton Woods institutions exceeded an astronomical 1.3 billion U.S. dollars.

The political regime sought to solidify and if necessary restructure its support base and, in so doing, to forge new political alliances in a desperate effort to stay afloat. The loss of the constitutional referendum in February 2000 however was ‘the straw that started to break the ZANU-PF camel’s back’ and was the direct catalyst for the Third Chimurenga (Moore 2001:p.255), although the incessant demands for land reform from an ‘aroused’ peasantry may not have been far from the minds of the political elite (Moyo and Yeros\(^\text{13}\) ‘War veterans’ were veterans of the war of liberation against the Rhodesian government in the 1970s, or the Second Chimurenga.

\(^{13}\)
Hence, by the year 2000, in the face of imperialist aggression or at least disengagement, the ‘balance of class forces within the ruling party was tipped in favour of radical nationalist solutions’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005b:p.188) to agrarian and land reform. Within the state there was a ‘political hardening of the radical nationalist social forces and an escalation of demands to resolve land reforms as a matter of sovereign right, pride and reparation, rather than as a mere matter of poverty alleviation’ (Moyo 2000e:p.5) or even, for that matter, agricultural productivity. Therefore, besides the strident local opposition to the ruling party in the late 1990s with which the state sought to contend, there was a significant global moment that influenced the manner in which the government sought to handle the deepening crisis.

When the land movement emerged in the year 2000, the supporters of illegal land seizures in the ‘command structure’ of ZANU-PF and the state were able to dominate (but not without resistance) over those favouring more legalistic compulsory acquisitions (Moyo 2001:p.328). The ruling party’s election slogans for the year 2000 and beyond – ‘the anti-Blair vote’ and ‘the land is the economy’ – encapsulated the moments of the social crisis, as these moments involved an attempt by ZANU-PF to ‘rebuild a fading hegemonic project’ (Moore 2003:p.8) and to solidify its external and internal sovereignty. The latter slogan implied that the state’s rural restructuring would revive the imploding economy and stimulate primitive accumulation, although most critics dispute such causal links (Moore 2001). State nationalism had been re-radicalized (or ‘hardened’), but this involved a degree of ‘continuity’ (Yeros 2002b:p.243) with the nationalism of the post-independence period as well as a significant narrowing of the notion of citizenship. Of particular interest to this thesis is how this crisis articulates with the ‘agrarian question’.

Moore (2001, 2003) argues that Zimbabwe has historically faced a three-fold impasse, namely, a stalled primitive accumulation process, the dilemma of incomplete nation-state formation and truncated democratization. This three-fold impasse over the longue durée set the broad structural pre-conditions for the current crisis in Zimbabwe but did not invariably give rise to crisis. More medium-term (and historically-specific) trajectories such as ESAP, subsequent macro-economic policies from 1996 to 1999, the rise of
political opposition in the 1990s as well as unique conjunctural events were also necessary. Often, economic renderings of the crisis label ESAP as the final cause of the crisis, and thus blame is apportioned out according to whether ESAP is conceptualized as a globally imposed SAP or a home-grown programme or a combination of both.

ESAP ‘signified a clear break with the protectionist and interventionist approach to economic development’ (van der Walt 1998:p.96), but by the late 1980s Zimbabwe had not reached a condition of economic crisis to the same depth as many other African nations so as to necessarily warrant a SAP. As a result, it is sometimes suggested that ESAP was ‘engineered’ by ‘a domestic political coalition’ including the private sector bourgeoisie and ‘influential elements of the bureaucratic and State-linked bourgeoisie’ (van der Walt 1998:p.97). Nevertheless, Moore (2001:p.260) argues that ‘the absence of ESAP in and of itself would not have erased Zimbabwe’s post-independence conundrum, although a strong state – which ESAP helped destroy – is necessary to surmount its “transitional” problems. ESAP has aggravated these tensions, but it did not cause them. In contributing to deindustrialisation, ESAP has worsened the problem of primitive accumulation’ and thereby inhibited the resolution of the classic agrarian question (of capital). Even prior to ESAP, the Zimbabwean state was not effectively tackling the impasse. For instance, all-embracing primitive accumulation never occurred in Rhodesia because settler colonialism ‘deferred’ it, but more importantly the post-colonial Zimbabwean state has ‘continued that suspension’ from the moment of independence (Moore 2001:p.259).

In Zimbabwe, as in other settler societies in southern Africa, processes of primitive accumulation are marked by the interrelated moments of ‘race and the agrarian question’ (my emphasis). Thus, ‘[c]apitalist agriculture has been dominated by white settlers who carried out their process of primitive accumulation by forcibly taking “native” land and denying African farmers not merely commercial opportunities, but also a chance to become capitalist land owners.’ (Moore 2003:p.2) However, the truncated character of primitive accumulation, in the sense of the lack of an all-pervasive transition to capitalist agriculture as a strong basis for ‘industrial take-off’, has not been inconsistent with the
Black embourgeoisement of agricultural capital in post-colonial Zimbabwe. Indeed, the explicit economic ambitions linked to the indigenization lobby groups of the 1990s have now come to directly ‘dominate the state’s political imperatives’ (Raftopoulos and Phimister 2004:p.362).

This ongoing process of the embourgeoisement of the state is linked historically to the petty-bourgeois character of the nationalist liberation movement in the decades preceding independence. After independence, the Black petty-bourgeoisie was in large part ‘shut out of the white private sector’ and thus it began immediately to ‘redirect its accumulation strategies through the state’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005b:p.172) by using state power and resources to gain a foothold in the economy while also touting economic indigenization within the financial and agricultural sectors (Mandaza 1994). During the 1990s ‘the aspiring black business class emerged as a vocal lobbying group’ (including the Affirmative Action Group and the Indigenous Business Development Centre) and it used the neo-liberal thrust of ESAP as ‘a springboard’ for its accumulation and political strategies (Raftopoulos 2000b:pp.23, 25). The Third Chimurenga has further enhanced opportunities for accumulation by Black agrarian capital and, as a result, primitive accumulation has increasingly revolved around de-racialized class formation.

The accelerated land reform programme (since the year 2000) seems to be increasingly sensitive to the economic demands of the Black agrarian bourgeoisie and to the need for political stability to facilitate agricultural productivity. This has overridden the initial ‘equity’ thrust of the programme. All parties to the debate on Zimbabwe agree to this. But, ‘agrarian nationalists’ such as Moyo (Moyo 2001, Moyo and Yeros 2005b) claim that, initially, the new agrarian structure in the Zimbabwean countryside, particularly in light of the expansion of peasant holdings arising from land redistribution, had the potential to broaden the home market as a basis for a more articulated pattern of accumulation involving an introverted agro-industrial production system, and thereby contributing to the resolution of both agrarian and national questions. Other writers supportive of land reform express less optimism about this (Bernstein 2005:p.91). Yet there is a degree of agreement and recognition that the reform process deracialized forms
of domination in the countryside (i.e. ‘domestic government’) and may have given (some) peasants a further livelihood strategy for social reproduction purposes.

Critics of ‘agrarian nationalists’ argue that agrarian issues, in the sense of supportive mechanisms for peasant productivity (in both customary and resettlement areas), still need ‘to be defined and addressed’ despite (if not because of) accelerated redistribution (Sachikonye 2003:p.238; Mbaya 2001). In fact, they argue that the accelerated programme has led to further de-industrialization and has not stimulated primitive accumulation. In this context, Raftopoulos argues that a key aspect of the current economic crisis ‘relates to the problems created by the land occupations, and the massive financial, infrastructural and extension support required by the new settlers to transform the settlements into sustainable productive resources.’ (Raftopoulos 2002:p.426 my emphasis) Moore (2001, 2003) claims that accelerated reform was never located within a broad macro-economic strategy because it was driven by political imperatives. Further, and contrary to the ruling party’s sloganeering about ‘the land is the economy’, the economic crisis in the late 1990s was not even rooted in the unresolved land question. Like Neocosmos’ argument in the previous chapter, these theorists emphasize the importance of democratization in kick-starting primitive accumulation, nation-state formation and the resolution of agrarian questions.

This discussion highlights the tensions and contradictions embodied in the land reform process between a quest for historical justice and a pursuit of agricultural growth. This tension has existed throughout the post-colonial period, and has been played out in a variety of forms depending on the prevailing historical conditions. How the nation-state has ‘handled’ the contradictory tendencies has impacted significantly on the ‘resolution’ of agrarian questions, whether understood in terms of the ‘agrarian question of capital’ or the ‘agrarian question of labour’. Indeed, in the context of contemporary Zimbabwe, both questions remain ‘unresolved’.
9.3 Pre-Accelerated Reform: Compulsory Acquisition and Policy Formation

Numerous workshops (Wkshop 1995, Wkshop 1996) were held in 1995 and 1996 that focused on the 1994 Report of the Rukuni Commission on land tenure systems in Zimbabwe, and the presentations and discussions at these workshops give important insights into the state of play of agrarian and land reform in the concluding months of the period from 1980 to 1996, particularly from the perspective of the state executive. One workshop will be noted here. This was held in April 1996 for high-ranking officials of various state ministries, particularly those ministries involved in land (and related) affairs. The Secretary of the Ministry for Lands and Water Resources admitted that the land question – specifically land redistribution – was ‘largely unresolved’, and he noted the many ‘futile attempts’ that had made to resolve it, even in terms of the more forceful approach as contained in both the 1990 Land Policy and the 1992 Land Act. According to him, though, his Ministry had now embarked ‘on a programme to develop a comprehensive land reform and management strategy to ensure a lasting panacea’ (Wkshop 1996: p.2).

This vigorous process of policy development was particularly prevalent during the 1997 to 1999 period although it did not amount to much on the ground. At the same workshop, the Minister for Lands, K. Kangai, reiterated that the 1990 Policy had shifted the emphasis from ‘social considerations’ (or equity) to ‘efficient agricultural utilisation of land’, and that the government was determined to ‘promote emergent black large scale commercial farmers in order to ensure continuity in production’ (Wkshop 1996:p.3). Further, the state functionaries attending the workshop concluded that ‘commercial considerations must take precedence over social and political issues’ (Wkshop 1996: p.36) particularly when it came to the selection of resettlement beneficiaries.

The years from 1997 to 1999 were marked by significant ambiguities in state policy and practice on land reform. On the one hand, there was extensive land policy formation action within the state, as well as intensive ‘policy dialogue activities’ and intermittent
‘high profile negotiation[s]’ (Moyo 2000c:pp.2, 3) on land reform taking place between government and various non-state bodies including the CFU. This was part of a broader ‘politics of broadly-based policy dialogue and negotiation’ (Moyo et al. 2000b:p.186) that the ruling party had tentatively adopted in the late 1990s. For many commentators on Zimbabwe, this high-profile stance was a fraudulent veneer because there was a ‘complete democratic breakdown in the late 1990s’ (Andreason 2003:p.385) in Zimbabwe and hence ‘a decreased likelihood of obtaining an inclusive policy environment’ (Andreason 2003:pp.395-396).

The specific ‘land’ dialogue led initially to the LRRP Phase II Policy Framework and Project Document dated September 1998 (GoZ 1998a). On the other hand, in October 1997, the government made the shock announcement that 1,471 commercial farms (on prime land) would be acquired on a compulsory and urgent basis. This reflected the high level of frustration within the state with purely market-based reforms, particularly given the non-support of the international donor community. At the same time, this ‘adoption of a centralised method of compulsory land acquisition’ was ‘instigated’ by ‘the war veterans’ (Moyo 2001:p.314) and ZANU-PF was also under pressure from its own radical nationalist wing to adopt this route. In this regard, it appeared that the state was determined to ‘go it alone’ (Moyo 2000b:p.2) without seeking confirmation or support from key stakeholders.

This ambivalence and inconsistency embedded in land reform policy was an outward expression of the dilemmas facing the government in responding to the underlying social crisis. As Moyo notes: ‘Throughout the mid-1997 to 1998 period of compulsory land acquisition, the government publicly appeared not to be providing room for negotiation, when in fact negotiations and trade-offs with stakeholders had long been underway.’ (Moyo 2000a:p.28) In fact, the proposed acquisitions never materialized as many farms were de-listed and others were challenged legally. However, the gazetting of the 1,471 farms effectively marked the beginning of Phase II and the government’s intent to retreat from the neo-liberal market-based approach of Phase I.
9.4 Land Policy and the Inception Plan

In his opening comments to the provisional Phase II documentation of September 1998 (GoZ 1998a:p.v), President Mugabe emphasized that the land question remained a ‘vexing issue’.\(^{14}\) According to the *Policy Framework* and *Project Document*, a ‘participatory approach’ had been employed to produce the documents, and likewise all future ‘detailed planning of programme activities will be participatory’: ‘The GoZ is committed to more effective communication with the public on the LRRP. This includes broader civic participation in policy development on land issues, as well as programme implementation.’ These (working) documents would be subject to revision through ‘broad-based consultations’ with a range of stakeholders, including during the September 1998 Donors’ Conference.

The government of Zimbabwe had arranged the conference to marshal financial support for a reinvigorated land redistribution process, and in attendance were both foreign government representatives and bilateral donors. For the government, the conference was a ‘major milestone’ and it was expected to ‘galvanize donor support’, particularly support from the ex-colonial power of Britain. At the time, few donor agencies were directly involved in financing land reform (particularly land acquisition) although many were ‘engaged directly in development assistance activities related to the main support service activities’ of the resettlement schemes. The documents acknowledged that the productivity thrust of recent years ‘meant the virtual neglect of the land needs of the land majority in the Communal Areas’, and that currently there was ‘growing public agitation for land’. Yet, the government insisted that land redistribution would retain ‘a core of efficient large-scale producers’ without though specifying the racial make-up of these landed capitalists.

\(^{14}\) All quotations in this and the next two paragraphs are from these documents (GoZ 1998a).
The documents were at pains to highlight that the government ‘values the legal process, fairness and justice’, and that this respect for due process seriously inhibited the compulsory acquisition process from 1990. Further, commercial farmers under Phase II would be given ‘timely notification ... to minimise disruption of on-going production activities’. Five million hectares of land would be acquired and resettled over a five-year period, involving 91,000 families at a total cost of $ 1.9 billion (U.S.) of which government would provide one-third. This would be done without adversely impacting on productivity within the large-scale commercial sector because of ‘considerable underutilisation’ and it would entail in the main compulsory acquisition methods rather than the willing seller principle. ‘A1’ schemes (80% of the total) would be mixed farming and village-based schemes, and settlers would include communal peasants, farm workers and ex-combatants (or war veterans). ‘A2’ schemes would be small-scale self-contained (commercial) farm units for productive farmers. The provision of infrastructure in resettlement areas would be phased ‘to facilitate accelerated settlement’, with non-critical assets being constructed beyond the five year period. Simultaneously, communal areas were to be ‘reorganized’ through a process labelled by the President as ‘villagisation’ along the lines of ‘A1’ schemes. Readers of the documents were assured that the ‘second phase is poised for greater success than the first’ because, amongst other reasons, there were now in place innovative financial arrangements, enhanced organizational capacities and speedier acquisition methods.

International donors were being strenuously lobbied to formally support the new LRRP prior to the International Land Donors’ Conference to be held in Harare on 11th September 1998. At this conference, and much to the distaste of the Zimbabwean authorities, the British Government emphasized that funding would be forthcoming only if the land programme was guided by good governance, was focused on poverty reduction, and did not entail the non-transparent allocation of large tracts of land to the ruling party faithful. Because of this (and other reasons), a fragile compromise was reached. A communiqué (Statement of Agreed Principles) arising from the conference stated that land reform would be implemented ‘in a transparent, fair and sustainable manner, with regard to respect for the law, and broadened stakeholder as well as
beneficiary participation. It should also be affordable, cost effective, and consistent with economic and financial management reforms.‘ (Comm. 1998) A report a year later by the British bilateral aid agency the DFID (and the European Union) reiterated that any future funding for land reform would be contingent on such an approach.

Based on the conference, the Phase II working documents were considered and reviewed, and this led to the conceptualization of an initial two-year Inception Phase of resettlement prior to a longer-term Expanded Phase beginning in 2001. This revision was approved by the Cabinet Committee on Resettlement and Development, consisting of government Ministers. Resettlement would involve a shifting combination of existing (and improved) state approaches to resettlement as well as a range of non-state organizations involved in ‘an “alternative” or complementary approach which would focus on trying out new market based, community led and stakeholder driven implementation processes.’ (Moyo 2000c:p.3) It will be shown later that the policy formation initiatives of the late 1990s were largely undermined by the events of the year 2000 and, hence, this discussion is not meant to imply that policy implementation can be read from policy initiatives. However, the policy environment of the late 1990s is important because it had ramifications for the work of ‘land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe.

The Inception Phase Plan document (GoZ 1998b) spoke enthusiastically about the impending land reform.15 The Inception Phase (IP) would widen stakeholder involvement and promote more flexible approaches to implementing land acquisition and resettlement. It would ‘accelerate land delivery’ by maximizing the supply of land from multiple sources and through various forms of acquisition, and would ‘broaden the overall national capacity (public and private)’ of all relevant organizations. It was noted for example that ‘inadequate capacity of government departments’ is a constraint at both the policy and implementation level and, because of this, ‘[t]he “accelerated planning” process’ as propagated by the massive compulsory acquisition announcement in 1997 is ‘not the most appropriate’. As well, in highlighting the gap between policy positions and policy implementation, it noted that ‘bureaucratic delays, rivalry when

15 All quotations in this and the next paragraph are from this document (GoZ 1998b).
duties/responsibilities are duplicated and under-capacity result in untimely implementation of policy’.

The IP would employ both the Complementary Approaches and the Existing and Improved Government Approaches as set out in the Phase II documentation. There would be an improvement to existing government approaches ‘mainly by promoting beneficiary and stakeholder participation in planning and improving the design of government resettlement models’. There would be a degree of flexibility in the implementation of specific resettlement schemes, so that ‘planning will no longer be standardised and mechanistic’. The complementary approaches would provide ‘an enabling environment’ for non-state organizations to test and establish new ways of mobilizing resources, acquiring land, and implementing resettlement schemes.

The Complementary Approaches reflected a compromise on the part of the government, as these approaches had the potential to undermine the ‘command mindset’\(^{16}\) that was still hegemonic within state ministries. Further, the Inception Phase, though highly technical in its conceptualization, was also a tactical-cum-political intervention to slow down the process of acquisition (as the first one million hectares would be now settled over two years) and to put a break on any further radicalization of land reform. Yet, as Moyo (2001) notes, the ‘temporary reprieve from the radical demand for massive land transfers, which had arisen from the Donors’ Conference in 1998, calling for a gradualist approach, entitled “Inception Phase Framework Plan”, was shaky, as it had no guarantees.’ (Moyo 2001:p.318) If anything, it was a ‘gentlemen’s agreement’ and, in fact, the main contending parties had failed to follow through on their conference commitments with any degree of seriousness and without seeming remorse. Thus, ‘[i]n the year that followed the Conference, the donor partners, dissatisfied with Zimbabwe’s fulfillment of the agreed conditionalities, did not fulfill their pledges.’ (Mbaya 2001:p.5)

This reflected a further hardening of donor’s positions on land reform in Zimbabwe, particularly in the light of questionable government actions and inactions in recent years, including numerous economic reform policy slippages, the massive compulsory acquisition announcement and the sustained intervention in the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo. As a result, ‘land reform became marginal in the donor agenda’ (Moyo 2000e:p.5), at least in terms of the prevailing conditions. The Zimbabwean state continued to take policy initiatives, including notably the promulgation of the 1999 Land Policy that, amongst many other things, focused policy attention on the position of agricultural labourers in the resettlement process. This policy action took place in the context of heightened politics in the countryside, including ongoing illegal land self-provisioning by the peasantry and the unprecedented nationwide strike by farm workers in October 1997 over wages and benefits. The strike by farm workers has been described as ‘the greatest disruption to the large-scale commercial farming sector since Independence’ (van der Walt 1998:p.88). It took on a noticeably ‘uncivil’ form, including public demonstrations that included the stoning of vehicles. However, Phase II (as then constituted) was soon to be overtaken by the turbulent events of 2000 and the emergence of the Third Chimurenga.

As will be discussed more fully later in the thesis, the formation of the Phase II approach likely represents the high waters of NGO engagement with the state on land reform in the post-colonial era, before this engagement crashed on the beaches of the Third Chimurenga. In the early stages of Phase II, there was tremendous optimism that this phase was heralding the revitalization of land reform in Zimbabwe. Certainly, there was an air of excitement within the NGO sector that finally its time had come. Moyo, who was directly involved in the Phase II policy formation process (including the Inception Phase documentation), suggested (just prior to the disruptions in 2000) that the new programme had a pronounced anti-statist thrust with the ‘guiding principles’ of equity, accountability, transparency and participation, and that it would ‘facilitate stakeholders’ full consultation and involvement at all levels’ (Moyo 2000d:p.4). Of particular importance, he claimed that (historically) the landless and land short ‘have not been fully integrated into the dialogue on land policy formulation’ (Moyo 2000d:p.14 emphasis
removed) and that the LRRP Phase II would provide the necessary remedial action to this. It seems though that the peasantry had other thoughts on the matter. Their involvement in the ‘uncivil’ action from the year 2000 onwards had a significant bearing on the LRRP, such that it was completely revised in 2001 to accommodate this on-the-ground action. The LRRP Phase II in its original form was never implemented.

9.5 Accelerated Reform and the Agrarian Question of Labour

All this was taking place at a time of significant illegal occupations of land by the peasant under-classes, such that in 1997 and 1998 there were at least fifteen major land invasions including during the donors’ conference (Moyo 2001). This land self-provisioning seemed to express a growing rift between the state and the peasantry. Ruling party politicians initially condemned the invasions. Thus, John Nkomo argued: ‘If we allowed this kind of behaviour it will spread like veldt fire. The law will take its course if irregular settlers refuse to move back to their villages. Policy cannot be compromised.’ (Sithole et al. 2003:p.4) Measures taken against the squatters often failed and squatters would even return to their site of eviction. As well, squatters were often encouraged, supported and protected by local party leaders and other ‘big men’ who became ‘rural “landlords”’ (Zishiri 1998:p.13). At times, national ZANU-PF figures expressed qualified support of the squatters, arguing though that the peasantry was expressing its longstanding grievance against racially based land distribution and not any dissatisfaction with the pace of land reform set by the government. Clearly, squatting in the late 1990s was ‘a macro challenge at National level’ (Zishiri 1998:p.v). Zishiri’s study found squatters along main rivers (often gold panners), in national parks, resettlement areas, near growth points, and on state land and private farms. He claimed that in Mashonaland West Province alone there were an estimated 205,537 squatters or nearly 20% of the population.

Many agrarian specialists on Zimbabwe (Moyo 2001; Moyo and Yeros 2005b; Sachikonye 2002, 2003; Marongwe 2003a) highlight significant differences in character
between the current round of land occupations and earlier ones, including the sustained intervention of the state in managing the ‘accelerated’ land movement. In general, earlier occupations are seen as more spontaneous and peasant-based. Much of my discussion of accelerated reform will entail critically engaging with the arguments of Moyo and Yeros, because their conceptual (and ultimately political) framework is regularly used as a sounding board in scholarly works on the Third Chimurenga. Moyo and Yeros claim that the ‘essence’ of land occupations in post-independence Zimbabwe has ‘remained the same’ (Moyo 2001:p.321). Indeed, they weave together a story of unbroken rural action by the semi-proletariat that portrays the recent occupations as a ‘climax’ of constant and consistent struggles over land (Moyo 2001:p.314) and as dramatically addressing the national question and advancing the NDR.

Their argument at times seems very close to romanticizing the peasantry (the Subject of history?) and insinuating that, against all adversity and despite negligence on the part of other social classes, the land-short peasantry forever sought to advance land reform and the NDR or, in other words, they ‘never abandoned the revolution’. This is what Moore refers to as the ‘peasants have taken charge of history’ narrative (Moore 2001:p.257). This narrative seems consistent with the ‘old left trap of turning some group amongst the marginalised or exploited into the fetishised vessel of ... [the analyst’s] ... personal hopes by projecting some sort of dehumanising ontological purity... on to the chosen group’ (Pithouse 2003:p.127). Without wanting to romanticize the land movement in Zimbabwe, Bernstein (2003) in line with Moyo and Yeros nevertheless claims that it represented an ‘objectively progressive’ (Bernstein 2003:p.220) expression of the new agrarian question of labour, because land occupations as a (last gasp) reproductive strategy of the peasantry addressed the unfinished business of the NDR.

In this regard, a conspiratorial theory of the accelerated occupations based on the argument that the state stage-managed the occupations and manipulated the peasantry in a process of top-down mobilization becomes problematic. This theory reproduces a ‘history from above’ while the ZANU-PF narrative is a ‘history from below’. Thus, Sachikonye erroneously claims that the recent occupations differed from the ones in the
late 1990s in that the latter were ‘spontaneous, and thus not orchestrated or directed by state institutions’ (Sachikonye 2003:p.234). Likewise, Bond distinguishes between the ‘organic land invasions’ of the late 1990s and the ‘war-veteran induced’ movement of the years 2000 and 2001 (Bond 2002:p.37).

9.6 Social Composition and Local Governance

Yet, in the case of accelerated reform, there are clear signs of voluntarism and spontaneity in the pattern of physical movements between the communal lands and occupied farms, involving a rich diversity of individuals, motivations and interests that cannot be reduced to some ill-defined state-cum-party political manipulation. For example, in the case of the occupations in Chiredzi district, Chaumba et al. (2003a) note their ‘fluid and complex nature’ (Chaumba et al. 2003a:pp.588-589), the ‘broad spectrum of people’ involved and their ‘constraining motivations’ (Chaumba et al. 2003a:p.591). Many individuals with legitimate concerns and aspirations occupied farms, including young men who had difficulty accessing land elsewhere, and widows or divorcees who were escaping restrictive social strictures in customary areas. Wealthy livestock owning rich peasants and urban-based weekend farmers also seized the opportunity and often ended up employing ‘a new class of informal “farm-workers”’ (Chaumba et al. 2003a:p.593) on their resettlement plots.

The ‘settlers’ also included war veterans; nevertheless, the extent of their involvement was open to considerable regional variation. It is incorrect though to conceptualize war veterans as mere storm troopers of the state and to objectify them in this way. Kriger’s extensive research shows that war veterans were never passive instruments of others, and that they had their ‘own agendas, distinct from the [ruling] party’s’ (Kriger 2003b:p.2) although overlapping. Yet, at the same time, ‘[f]or the ruling party, ZANU(PF), war veterans had symbolic value. Through their links to the liberation struggle for political independence, veterans were supposed to legitimate the ruling party’s new war for economic independence, signaled by the land invasions’ (Kriger 2003a:p.323).
The overriding social base of the land movement was clearly the rural-based semi-proletariat but it expanded to include the urban proletariat and petty bourgeois elements, and this involved bridging the urban-rural divide in a ‘tense but resolute cross-class nationalist alliance on land’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005b:p.189). At first, the movement had a working class thrust, in opposition to a ‘post-national’ alliance of civil society – a mixed political bag including urban-based trade unions and White commercial farmers – that made no significant demands for redistribution of resources and had no agrarian reform programme. War veterans, with links in both the semi-proletariat and state bureaucracy, were able to effectively organize, mobilize and lead the movement. Yet they never sought to establish democratic peasant-worker organizational structures during the course of the occupations (Moyo and Yeros 2005b). Indeed, structures of authority in the resettled areas, at least initially, seemed rather disorganized, confused and chaotic.

Chaumba et al. (2003a:p.601) identify four overlapping axes of authority in resettled areas, namely, war veterans, settler committees, traditional authorities and new elites each vying for power. At times, these authorities ‘have accommodated and tempered each other, but there are also tensions and fractures evident in the way these power bases interact’. Particularly important are the committee structures that emerged from the base camps set up by the war veterans. These structures have been formalized and they entail ‘an integrated top-down system of governance’ (Chaumba et al. 2003a:p.598) under the watchful eye of ZANU-PF-dominated provincial and district land committees. Rural district councils were in large part bypassed and thereby marginalized from this institutional setup, as were sometimes the technical departments of the central state. In this sense, there arose a ‘new loop of governance’ (Chaumba et al. 2003a:p.603) at local state level in which there is no clear separation between politics and planning. In other words, the local state has become highly politicized. Yet it is also argued that this state restructuring involves a pronounced authoritarian thrust, something which ‘agrarian nationalists’ seemingly underplay.
Thus, Jocelyn Alexander (2003) argues that scholars such as Moyo and Bernstein have a restricted notion of the NDR, such that ‘to focus narrowly on the occupations alone misses the point that what they marked was not just an unprecedented assault on the unequal distribution of land [Bernstein’s progressive content as noted above] but also an extraordinary transformation of the state and political sphere’ (Alexander 2003:p.104) in an undemocratic direction. This restructuring has been noted by a number of authors (Hammar et al. eds. 2003, Raftopolous and Phimister 2004). For example, the 1999 Traditional Leaders Act has enhanced the authority of traditional leaders, and this represents an attempt by ZANU-PF to ‘extend its hegemony deeper into rural areas at a time of political discontent’ (Chaumba et al. 2003a:p.599). As yet, though, traditional authorities have not been fully integrated into resettlement areas. Further, representative district councils (even within customary areas) continue to be weak, and their ward and village development committees have in many areas become dysfunctional as planning units. Un-elected traditional bodies are increasingly becoming involved at local level in development decisions (Mombeshora and Wolmer 2000).

9.7 State Authoritarianism, Uncivil Action and Political Morality

Moyo and Yeros downplay the re-formation of the state in an authoritarian manner (Hammar and Raftopolous 2003). Rather, they emphasize the functionality of the state in legitimizing and strengthening the land movement in the direction of the NDR. They privilege the ‘national’ moment of the movement in deracializing agrarian structures and downplay the ‘undemocratic’ moment. Simultaneously, they are outright dismissive of alternative renditions of ‘the nation’, notably a civic nationalism, that at least de jure have a more inclusive notion of citizenship based on liberal democratic principles. This rejection is based on what is seen as the imperialist-driven character of these renditions. Interestingly, prior to the ‘wave’ of democratization throughout Africa during the 1990s, Shivji (1989) theorized about the NDR and human rights, and argued (unlike Moyo and Yeros today) that the furtherance of the NDR necessitated a distinctive anti-authoritarian (and thus democratic) thrust that privileged the right of the popular classes to organize
independent of the repressive nation-state. In this respect, Neocosmos (1993) repeatedly emphasizes the critical link between ‘democratisation from below’ (Neocosmos 1993:p.8) and agrarian reform, and he argues that democratic struggles are ‘the primary issue’ (Neocosmos 1993:p.15) in ensuring progressive reform. At times, Moyo and Yeros seem to de-link land reform and democratic change.

Analysts such as Moyo and Yeros clearly celebrate the specific character of uncivil action embodied in the land movement, and they argue that land redistribution under the accelerated programme has undone racial property rights in rural areas and has redressed historical injustices by giving a significant number of peasants land. This has involved what Mandaza approvingly calls the ‘abrogation of that principle that governs capitalism per se: the inviolability of the right of private property’.17 In analyzing agrarian reform in Zimbabwe in the mid-1990s, Tshuma argued in a similar vein that landed property should not be conceptualized solely as a ‘civil right’ or human right (as is done in liberal legal theory) but as ‘a complex amalgam of political, economic, legal and cultural relationships’. As a result, compulsory acquisition (including presumably through self-provisioning) is not in itself a human rights violation if the property acquired has in the past failed to serve ‘a social function’ (based on equity criteria) and if the acquisition process is subject to ‘transparent and democratic constitutional and legal norms’ (Tshuma 1997:p.149). In other words, Tshuma’s concern is the means of acquisition rather than the end result.

ZANU-PF’s moral justification for the land movement is implicitly based on a historically orientated entitlement theory of justice in which the taking of White commercial farms is not so much a process of violating private property as a way of restoring property to those who are morally entitled to it (Shaw 2003). As long as the initial acquisition was unjust (as it was under brutal colonial expansion), any subsequent legal transfers become irrelevant and must be rectified through expropriation and repossession. The Abuja Agreement brokered by the Commonwealth in 2001 sought to resolve the dispute between the Zimbabwean and British governments but it had no clear

timetable for implementation. However, the agreement did link land reform to respect for the rule of law and, intriguingly, the Zimbabwean government ‘manipulated the looseness of the proposals’ by claiming that it had abided by this (moral) requirement by pushing through the Supreme Court a ruling that legitimized (legally) its land programme (Raftopoulos 2002:p.416). Quite explicitly, the government depicted the land movement as the third war of liberation, and thus as a revolutionary moment in which the civilities of peacetime are to be suspended. The morality of this position, even in the light of colonial ‘land theft’, is open to debate. For this thesis, a key point is that the movement represented a dramatic local assertion against the global trajectory on the sanctity of private property and ‘free’ market exchanges.

In the eyes of critics of accelerated reform, the mode of land acquisition has no moral significance to or for the state, and the implications of redistribution in terms of costs and benefits (for example, the livelihoods of farm workers) are in large part inconsequential or at most secondary. Current land reform involves restricted pre-settlement infrastructural development and downplays tenure reform, such that the ‘land resettlement programme continues to issue insecure, permit-based rights to its beneficiaries’ without offering an all-encompassing agrarian reform package for the settlers (Mbaya 2001:p.15). The failure on the part of the government to seriously address the complex terrain of land tenure represents a thread of continuity throughout the post-colonial era. In this regard, it is also argued that ‘the capacity of agriculture to generate growth, foreign exchange earnings and self-sufficient food security in the short- and medium term appears to have been placed in jeopardy.’ (Sachikonye 2003:pp.227-228) Indeed, Chaumba et al. (2003b) claim that, despite the seeming chaos in the resettlement areas, colonial-style ‘technical tools and discourses of land-use planning’ (Chaumba et al. 2003b:p.533) are very much in evidence (as in the 1980s) and that this may lead to more coercive and authoritarian land-use regulations and patterns in the near future that are at odds with livelihood strategies and with confronting the ‘agrarian question of labour’. There may be ‘no emancipatory release’ from the ‘technical parameters of disciplining development’ for the newly settled farmers (Chaumba et al. 2003b:p.550).
Because the re-distributive narrative of the ruling party under accelerated reform employs land as a signifier of sovereignty, the programme has also failed to address localized grievances through land restitution. The government has articulated the struggle for land as a grand narrative about ‘land theft’ divorced from particular historical incidents that remain lodged in the bitter memories of particular Zimbabweans. Yet, the alienation of ancestral lands continues to be ‘bitterly resented’ (Mombeshora and Wolmer 2000:p.20) such as amongst the peasantry near Gonarezhou National Park along the Mozambican and South African borders. Other narratives, including those focusing on ‘communal’ area reorganization, have also been marginalized. Hence, ‘[p]opulist narratives concerning peasant agriculture and CBNRM in Zimbabwe have been thrown into stark contrast’. In the light of accelerated reform, peasant-based agriculture emphasises the need for the ‘re-appropriation of principally white-owned land’, whilst CBNRM focuses on “‘doing more with less” within existing land and natural resource complements.’ (Mombeshora and Wolmer 2000:p.27) However, according to Sachikonye (2003), fully addressing the matter of congested communal lands, which even the Third Chimurenga has not done, remains ‘the crux of Zimbabwe’s agrarian question’ (Sachikonye 2003:p.231).

It is quite clear though that the ruling party has the high moral ground on land reform and that it ‘has been able to set the framework of debate, with opponents reduced to caviling about the extra legal methods used, about the chaotic and under-financed character of redistribution, or about cronyism in the process.’ (Shaw 2003:p.77) The high moral ground was in part possible because the discourse of human rights (propagated by for example the MDC) formed part of the neo-liberal discourse that stressed property rights as a ‘civilized’ human right (Bernstein 2003). For instance, there was moralizing about the depravity of the Third Chimurenga in the context of the wholesale invasion of private conservatories such as the 3387 square kilometre Save Valley Conservancy because of what was seen as the massive and indiscriminate poaching (or slaughtering) of wildlife. The critics of Moyo and Yeros roundly denounce their underestimation (or underplaying) of land occupation violence.
Moyo (2001:pp.325-330) for instance argues that the short-term pain of authoritarian and violent practices during the occupations must be weighed against the longer-term benefits for democratization in advancing the NDR. Mandaza likewise argues that it is a ‘politically reactionary position ... to deny the principle of land redistribution simply because the methods being employed are said to be bad’.\(^{18}\) For Raftopoulos and Phimister, this means that ‘democratic questions will be dealt with at a later stage, once the economic kingdom has been conquered’ (Raftopoulos and Phimister 2004:p.376; Moore 2003). They further argue that violence is part of the state’s strategy ‘to drive the opposition out of the rural areas and to re-assert proprietary political claims over these spaces’ (Raftopoulos and Phimister 2004:p.366). Violence therefore becomes part of the reorganization of the state (including the judiciary and local government) in the state’s ‘bid to reconfigure its hold on power’ (Raftopoulos and Phimister 2004:p.368).

### 9.8 Class Bias and Social Change

The land movement ‘did not have a single hierarchical structure to organise it’. Rather, ‘each isolated group’ on occupied territory proceeded ‘with its own set [of] rules, vision and command structure and only occasionally communicating [with] others in times of need’. The occupations were thus ‘highly localised’ such that ‘it is a big fault to reduce the whole movement into a state or ZANU-PF act’ (Sadoma 2006:pp.44, 45). As well, besides the pronounced racial element, the land movement expressed a diverse range of grievances and aspirations revolving around class, gender, generation, culture and religion. War veterans, peasants, urban working people, agricultural workers and petty bourgeois elements all took part in the occupations (Marongwe 2003a). Further, there was significant tension within the ruling party regarding the land movement, resulting in contradictory pronouncements by leading members.

Yet, during the course of the year 2000, the district and provincial war veteran associations became increasingly involved in coordinating the land movement. And, on into the year 2001, these associations became subordinated to local, provincial and national ruling party structures. As a result, the land movement took on a more formalized, demobilized and subdued form. In this context, state bureaucrats, ruling party leaders and aspiring Black capitalists were able to significantly influence the direction and content of the movement, and at times they claimed ‘ownership’ over the land revolution based on their liberation, nationalist and indigenization credentials.

In this regard, Moyo and Yeros (2005b) argue that ‘the black elite employed the state apparatus to retain its power and prepare the ground for its reassertion in national politics’, and this entailed undermining ‘any source of working-class organization outside elite ruling-party control, in both town and country’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005b:pp.192, 193). They further argue that the balance of class forces within the nationalist land alliance shifted against the peasants, farm labourers and urban working people as the black elite soon dominated the policy making process and steered land reform in a direction that favour bourgeois interests, an outcome which is very common in reform processes globally (Sobhan 1993).

Re-peasantization has been a dominant aspect of the land redistribution process through new petty commodity producer establishments under the ‘A1’ resettlement scheme, as discussed in the revised LRRP Phase II document (GoZ 2001). Yet, middle and large Black capitalists (based on the ‘A2’ commercial resettlement model) are ‘in political alliance under the banner of “indigenization”, seeking to appropriate the remaining land and also to tailor the agricultural policy framework to their needs’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005b:p.199). The (initial) anti-imperialist potential of the land occupations has thus been subverted, and there is the danger of a ‘full reversal’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005b:p.194) of the agrarian reform process because of the comprador aspirations of the Black bourgeoisie. This argument by Moyo and Yeros borders on instrumentalism and reductionism, in that it conceptualizes the land reform process as a coherent class project. It should be recognized that the racialized form of the movement continues to offer
considerable room for the assertion of a diverse range of localized ‘projects’, and that the
government remains sensitive to the needs of small-scale farmers in both resettlement and
customary areas. Moyo and Yeros downplay the ongoing contradictions embedded in the
land reform process. Yet their argument does point to the re-emergence of a class bias to
the reform process that is consistent with the post-colonial state’s handling of reform
prior to the Third Chimurenga.

It is critical that the movement is not conceptualized in a manner that over-privileges
order and direction. Regrettably this is what Moyo and Yeros do in arguing that the land
movement has undermined the racial manifestation of the class struggle in Zimbabwe and
thereby laid the basis for the next – and presumably more class-based – phase of the
NDR. Mandaza argues likewise: on the one hand, the emergent African bourgeoisie is
bound to benefit most from the land reform process, yet this will simultaneously open up
the struggle ‘tomorrow between the black bourgeoisie and the underclass of society’.19
This is largely a teleological depiction of Zimbabwean society and history, and it offers a
highly essentialized conception of class and class struggle. Race and class continue to be
experienced and articulated in diverse ways in contemporary Zimbabwe, including in
relation to land reform.

Moyo and Yeros assert that the strategy of state-led land reform ‘did not go far enough
within the ruling party and the state to safeguard the peasant-worker character of the
movement, or to prepare the semi-proletariat organizationally against the reassertion of
the black bourgeoisie’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005b:p.193 their emphasis). This claim is very
provocative (and worth exploring) in terms of theorizing about the nation-state and
political change, yet regrettably it is not clearly formulated let alone substantiated if only
because Moyo and Yeros – according to Moore – have ‘no theory of the state’ (Moore
2004:p.415). It might in fact be argued that the opposite is the case, and that the agrarian
change strategy went too far within the state and was thereby captured by what
Raftopoulos labels as the state ‘commandism’ of ZANU-PF (Raftopoulos 2005:p.5). The

argument by Moyo and Yeros though is part of their more general state-centred theory of change, and is explicitly a reaction to society-centred theories that sometimes romantically depict independent civil society expressions (anti-politics or independence from political society) as the critical nexus for social transformation.

In the context of Zimbabwe, it has been argued that ‘[d]espite neoliberal shrinkage of the state in the semi-periphery of world capitalism, control of the state remains crucial for overall power politics, for social reproduction, and for capital accumulation.’ (Bond 2002:p.38) In this regard, Raftopoulos (2005:p.5) claims ‘left oriented intellectuals in Zimbabwe’ have been marked by ‘their emphasis on the role of the state as the central fact of development and transformation’. Moyo and Yeros reproduce this state-centric perspective, and indeed statism is part and parcel of the state commandism of the ruling party. This perspective is important because it recognizes that the tension between ‘the global’ and ‘the local’ is often played out within the social field of the state. But, in the end, their argument about the class betrayal of the land movement implies an instrumentalist conception of the state in that the state is ‘captured’ by indigenous bourgeois forces and wielded accordingly.

For Moyo and Yeros, ‘breaking with the state’ is not ‘a sufficient condition for autonomous self-expression’ as both state and society are expected to be civil to the needs of capital. Hence, they argue that ‘breaking with the civility of capital’ – including subverting entrenched property rights in land – is the ‘requirement’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005b:p.179 their emphasis) for independent progressive movements. On this basis, they thus stress that the land movement involved a challenge to the specifically neo-colonial (and comprador) character of the Zimbabwean nation-state. Regrettably, in de-emphasizing (or in refusing to acknowledge) how this same movement reinforced (and reconfigured) the authoritarian form of the state, the antagonistic moments in this movement are not properly captured by the authors. Nevertheless, according to Moyo and Yeros, it was during this last period of popular land reform, from the year 2000 onwards, that un-civility ‘obtained radical land reform through the state and against
imperialism’ (Moyo and Yeros 2005b:p.179 their emphasis). This un-civility posed a serious challenge to ‘land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe.

9.9 The Changing Agrarian Landscape and ‘Land’ NGOs

Chapters Eight and Nine have discussed agrarian and land reform in post-colonial Zimbabwe. Certain historical trajectories prior to the mid-1990s were identified, including the truncated character of the land programme focusing on land redistribution, the embourgeoisement of agrarian reform, the deepening crisis of rural livelihoods under unchanged tenure conditions in customary areas, and the regular acts of land self-provisioning or land occupations of commercial farms and state land. The land reform programme during this period (Phase I) was marked by considerable ambiguity, and this revolved around the seemingly contradictory goals of growth and equity, or agricultural productivity and historical justice. In the context though of market-led reform, and despite intermittent and tentative efforts at compulsory acquisition, the prevailing thrust was capitalist modernization and the respect for capitalist civilities and property rights.

Phase II of the LRRP emerged in the context of increasing tension and conflict within both Zimbabwean state and society. Initially, this phase was marked by significant land policy dialogue and consultation, although radical nationalist assertions on land reform continually raised the spectre of more far-reaching reform. Indeed, these contradictory messages from the ruling party and government prefigured the reconfiguration of state nationalism that was emerging in the context of social crisis. In large part, intermediary land NGOs were exuberant during the late 1990s, as there seemed to be considerable space in which they could pursue their advocacy and development work. Accelerated land reform, however, brought a sudden halt to that exuberance.

The land movement derived from a combination of three tendencies. First of all, there is the ‘historical legacy’ in Zimbabwe of racialized landed property that remained unresolved twenty years after independence (Bernstein 2003:p.220). And, secondly, ‘the
contemporary “fragmentation” of labour as a feature of “globalisation” impacted on rural livelihoods and the desperate struggle for social reproduction’ (Bernstein 2003:p.220). Thirdly, there was the radical pan-African nationalism that arose in the face of a combination of imperialist aggression, disinterest and withdrawal vis-à-vis Zimbabwe. Of course, these conditions neither made the movement inevitable nor determined its historical specificities. But they do show that global trajectories and conjunctural moments were significant in the emergence of the Third Chimurenga.

In many ways, agrarian and land reform in Zimbabwe since independence has been externally driven, but not necessarily in line with global trajectories. Certainly, the first phase of the LRRP fitted into the demands of Lancaster House and ESAP, although this phase had its own unique trends and fluctuations based on the articulation of local interests. Phase II, on the other hand, was a reaction against imperialist trajectories and demands (notably since 2000) and it has formed a central component of a state-led authoritarian populist project. In the case of accelerated reform, the tension between ‘the global’ and ‘the local’ has been particularly stark and dramatic, and glocalization processes in Zimbabwe have been mired in conflict.

The discussion of land reform in Zimbabwe since the mid-1990s brings to the fore the many obstacles and challenges that ‘land’ NGOs likely faced both before and during the Third Chimurenga. Accelerated reform though, with its uncivil quality and its affront to the sanctity of private property, has fundamentally altered the agrarian landscape in Zimbabwe, including relations of production and modes of rural governance. It has thus posed a new series of problems for organizational forms (such as intermediary NGOs) that are generally considered to be located at the most respectable (and the most civil) end of civil society (Kaldor 2002). Since the year 2000, ‘land’ NGOs have had to chart unexplored and turbulent waters and this has severely complicated their organizational practices. Chapters Eleven to Thirteen explore the world and work of these NGOs in terms of ‘advocacy for change’ and ‘development and change’, and they highlight the continuities and changes between the ‘periods’ just prior and during accelerated reform. Before looking at these ‘periods’, it is first necessary (in Chapter Ten) to provide a
comparative and historical perspective for refining our analysis of ‘land’ NGOs in present-day Zimbabwe.
Chapter 10

‘Land’ NGOs: Comparative and Historical Perspectives

From Chapter Nine, it is clearly evident that a large volume of literature on agrarian and land reform within Zimbabwean social studies exists. Likewise, the academic literature on NGOs in Zimbabwe is quite considerable. This latter literature arose during the early 1990s alongside existing (and ongoing) donor-led ‘in-house project evaluations’ that tended to evaluate the NGO phenomenon in post-independence Zimbabwe in a ‘fragmented’ rather than a comprehensive manner (Jirira 1989:p.1). Early studies of NGOs in Zimbabwe were also a means, in the words of the UNDP Resident Representative in Harare, ‘to get a dialogue going’ between international funding agencies and NGOs as ‘partners in development’ (Kerkhoven 1992:p.4). Many of the academic studies during the 1990s were also in some way donor-linked or NGO-based (Moyo 1992, Dekker 1994, Riddell and Robinson 1995). This is not to suggest an intellectual bias on their part, but it does highlight the action-orientation of this work. It was not until twenty years after independence that more serious efforts to theorize about NGOs under Zimbabwean conditions emerged, as exemplified in particular by the work of Moyo et al. (2000a) and Rich Dorman (2001).

This literature, however, fails to capture the interrelations between NGO action and land reform in any meaningful manner. In large part, then, the foci of NGOs and land have been tackled as separate and disjointed areas of inquiry within Zimbabwean studies, although Sam Moyo recognizes this chasm and has sporadically sought to address it (Moyo 2001). Further, with regard to my definition of ‘land’ NGOs, the almost exclusive focus within the prevailing literature is on development NGOs. In the light of this slant in the literature, I discuss in this chapter rural development-centric NGOs in Zimbabwe.

20 However, there continues to be action-orientated studies of Zimbabwean NGOs by scholars. See for instance the Masters of Policy Studies dissertation by Bohwasi (1999) on the role of NGOs in building the capacity of community-based organizations in Zimbabwe.
from independence to the mid-1990s. However, the empirical focus of this thesis is not only rural NGDOs but is also intermediary advocacy NGOs engaged in land reform. In order to transcend this limitation of the Zimbabwean NGO literature and thereby offer a comparative framework for studying advocacy NGOs in contemporary Zimbabwe, it is necessary to look beyond Zimbabwe. I thus provide a brief overview of advocacy NGOs and land reform in the South and East based on a mix of secondary and primary literature. This literature, at least in relation to Africa, adopts a very restricted notion of NGO involvement in agrarian and land reform by focusing exclusively on advocacy NGOs (or land-centric NGOs) engaged in land policy formation and implementation. Thus, this chapter provides a comparative and historical background to the empirical focus of ‘land’ NGOs in present-day Zimbabwe discussed in Chapters Eleven, Twelve and Thirteen.

10.1 Two Comparative Studies of Land-Centric NGOs

The literature on advocacy NGOs and land is relatively sparse and dispersed, and it is rare to find a comprehensive study of land advocacy by NGOs or a collection of works dealing with it. There are however two informative studies that deal with NGOs-cum-civil society and land reform that are worth highlighting. First of all, there is the excellent collection of essays edited by Ghimire (Ghimire ed. 2001) that provides a sweeping international perspective with chapters on Latin America, Asia and Africa. And, secondly, there is the short but thought-provoking analysis on Africa provided by Kanji et al. (2002) that brings to the fore some key conceptual points as well.21

The collection edited by Ghimire raises an important methodological issue regarding land reform and NGOs, namely, that ‘how civil society organizations operate in concrete contexts and what makes them effective [or ineffective] in their actions are difficult

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21 The NGOs referred to in the works by Kanji et al. and Ghimire include not only intermediary NGOs but also grassroots organizations. This is also true of other available literature, and thus it is necessary to be circumspect with regard to making comparative comments about NGOs and land reform advocacy, whether in Africa or elsewhere. Often, the available literature does not clearly distinguish between civil society and NGOs. Any comments I make on this issue in this chapter need to be seen in this light.
questions’ to unpack (Ghimire 2001:p.26). Seeking to ‘measure’ land policy engagement and impact by NGOs (as with other social groups and organizations) is notoriously difficult. In relation to Zimbabwe, Moyo has noted for instance: ‘There is indeed a yawning empirical gap in our understanding of how policy making is configured by state relations and linkages to key organs of civil society’ (Moyo 1999a:p.11). However, the general conclusion arising from the Ghimire volume is that the ‘buoyant perspectives’ of NGOs prior to engaging in land reform soon ‘prove utopian’ (Ghimire 2001:p.26) and that, concomitantly, NGOs have played only a minor role in reform processes globally. Unconditional successes in influencing nation-state land reform agendas have been rare indeed; yet engaging in this advocacy process is ‘relatively easier’ (Mannan 2001:p.89) compared to involvement in the implementation of land policy. For example, it has been noted with respect to South America that, relative to policy formation, ‘getting good [land] laws enforced effectively and honestly is usually much more difficult’ (Barraclough and Egucen 2001:p.230). At the same time, there are significant regional variations, with the involvement of NGOs in land reform (including supporting peasant organizations) being ‘considerable’ in Latin America (Mozder and Ghimire 2001:p.206), being less so in Asia (except perhaps in the Philippines) where there is ‘no independent vibrant NGO sector … calling for sweeping land reform measures’ (Mannan 2001:p.95), and much less so throughout the African continent.

There are many reasons for the failure by NGOs to make more important and sustained contributions to agrarian and land reform. Of particular importance to this thesis are choices on their part not to participate in reform efforts and to rather pursue mainstream (but not necessarily less complex and demanding) development work. Hence, ‘[t]he position of NGOs concerning land reform is complicated’, particularly as it regularly involves challenging entrenched rural and national power configurations (Mannan 2001:p.89 my emphasis). In fact, authoritarian nation-states sometimes deliberately close the space available for NGO involvement in reform. In Thailand, NGOs ‘opted to work for environmental protection, appropriate technology, alternative agriculture and so forth, thereby avoiding the thorny issue of agrarian reforms and peasant mobilizations’ (Ghimire 2001:p.36 my emphasis). This ‘thorniness’ (in a ‘high risk’ area for NGOs, in
the words of Mannan 2001:p.97) arises in part because of resistance from dominant agrarian groups and, as a result, NGOs ‘tend to avoid being implicated [directly] in actual land reform programmes since this requires confrontation with local power structures’ (Ghimire 2001:p.28).

Another drawback for NGOs, it is argued, is their perpetual dependence on the agendas and priorities of donors. In South Asia, the majority of NGOs shifted recently from land reform to ‘non-land issues, as they become concerned with their … financial sustainability’ given that donors ‘are reluctant to support NGOs which call for widespread changes in property relations’ (Mannan 2001:p.97). Simultaneously, donors at times are also reluctant to fund land reform. For instance, in the case of southern Africa: ‘Donors in Southern Africa increasingly see assistance in land reform as politically sensitive and complex, likely to result in negative consequences whatever the moral foundation, and therefore best avoided… Unlike other sectors (e.g. education, health, water supply), official development assistance to land reform presents particular problems arising from its volatile, cyclical and politically sensitive nature.’ (TT 2003:p.12) A further problem is the lack of ‘appropriate management and organizational skills’ possessed by NGOs and the lack of ‘accountability in their work’ with rural communities (Bravo 2001:p.74).

Based on a study specifically of Mozambique and Kenya, Kanji et al. suggest that NGOs ‘have had significant impacts on land policy processes’ (Kanji et al. 2002:p.vi). In arguing so, they employ four criteria for measuring or assessing the impact of NGO advocacy work. These criteria are concerned with NGOs undertaking the following: strengthening civil society groupings, bringing about pro-poor changes in land policy, deepening government accountability to civil society interests, and providing direct ‘material’ benefits to the rural poor (for instance, intervening to resolve local land conflicts or to block land expropriations). In this sense, both the process of policy formation (for example, mechanisms of transparency and accountability) and the product (for example, the content of land legislation) become important matters for NGO lobbying. Kanji et al. make the critical point that ‘there may be trade-offs between
NGOs trying to influence [a particular] policy change and trying to strengthen community groups’ as part of a longer-term capacity-building process (Kanji et al. 2002: p.23). This notion of a trade-off is often noted in the available literature, such that ‘the emergence of new policy lobbying organisations (agrarian lobbies)’ such as NGOs has sometimes involved ‘the weakening of the growth of peasant organisation’ (HIVOS 1989:p.3).

The insightful analysis of Kanji et al. is based on a non-linear model of policy formation in which policy implementation cannot be ‘read’ from (or reduced to) official policy or government legislation. Policy is also developed (or at least re-worked if not transformed) during the very process of implementation and this occurs in the context of variable local politics, including forms of resistance within the state and by landed classes (Palmer 2000). In the case of land reform in southern Africa, ‘it is difficult to detect a linear relationship (or any kind of systematic relationship) between the analysis of a problem or opportunity and the assessment of the evidence, the formulation of recommendations and the announcement of the policy change.’ (TT 2003:p.16) This yawning gap between policy formulation and implementation of land reform has important implications for NGOs. Because of the ‘policy gap’, Kanji et al. argue that it becomes crucial for NGOs to monitor policy implementation processes and also to build the autonomous capacity of peasant groups to push implementation in a pro-poor direction. As Barraclough has noted, unless the rural under-classes ‘can participate in and influence policy implementation, even well intentioned [agrarian] policies designed to alleviate their poverty will most likely be deformed during execution to benefit others.’ (Barraclough 1990:p.16) Given that NGOs in themselves do not embody significant forms of social power, they can most likely maximize their ‘legitimacy and policy clout’ by aligning themselves with grassroots organizations that ‘can cause social disruption’ (Kanji et al. 2002:p.31).
10.2 Advocacy ‘Land’ NGOs: Thematic Issues

Self-proclaimed ‘land-centric’ NGOs seek to link issues of land reform to social justice and poverty alleviation and, in the case of southern and east Africa, this has involved, besides direct advocacy work, ‘awareness raising on policy issues, the provision of legal advice and services and mobilization of communities to benefit from new policies and legislation.’ (Makombe ed. 2001:p.9) In Zambia, for example, NGOs have trained rural communities to undertake independent advocacy on land issues; in Mozambique they have aided communities in registering their land in a manner consistent with ambiguous state regulations, and in South Africa they have promoted awareness amongst affected communities about impending land legislation. The advocacy work by NGOs pertains to a range of land-related matters, including insecure land tenure, land markets, democratizing land management and customary land-use institutions (Saruchera and Odhiambo 2004). Often this advocacy arises in the context of land commissions or constitutional review commissions (ZLA 2004), and during the formulation of national land policy (ZLA 2002) or the drafting of policy-based land bills. Women’s groups have been particularly active, seeking to ensure gender-sensitive land policies given the prevalence of patriarchal land systems.

Yet, in the case of southern Africa: ‘While NGOs in the region have been very effective in bringing these [gender] issues to the attention of the public and to politicians, they have been less than successful in obtaining concrete action in the legislatures or advancing concrete policy proposals.’ (TT 2003:p.10) In general, lobbying work in Africa has been highly uneven in its impact, and Odhiambo (2002:p.5) argues that ‘the governance structure in each country determines the level of NGO involvement’ with land issues and ‘the impact of such involvement’. In the case of Kenya, the Kenyan African Nation Union government ‘never got to accept that NGOs had a legitimate role in policy processes’ (Odhiambo 2004:p.133) on land, and land advocacy by individual

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22 On advocacy around an impending land law, see MNCS (2002). For an account of the Uganda Land Bill, see Paul (1998).
NGOs during the late 1990s was ‘sporadic’, ‘did not last long’ and ‘had little impact on actual policy formulation’. On the other hand, the Uganda Land Alliance as an ‘umbrella’ body for NGOs had a cordial relationship with the government of the National Resistance Movement, and it became ‘a major player on land issues’ and ‘sits in major policy formulation and implementation committees’ (Odhiambo 2002:pp.11, 12).

The available literature emphasizes the importance of national land networks that now exist throughout much of Africa. These civil society formations tend however to be generally weak, at least compared to Latin America (Ghimire ed. 2001). This is exemplified by the ‘fragmented nature … of civil society interventions’ on land in east and southern Africa (LRNSA 2000:p.17). After attending a NGO land conference in Dar es Salaam in 1997, Robin Palmer from Oxfam reflected that (even compared to Zimbabwe) ‘Tanzanian NGOs were far weaker, less well organised and less coordinated than I had expected’ (Hakiardhi 1997:p.5). Thus, the National Land Forum in Tanzania, consisting of gender, pastoral and media NGOs, was ‘divided in terms of agenda and priority’ (Kibamba and Johnson 2003:p.27) and was unable to have its views integrated into land legislation. At a National Land Committee workshop on gender and land policy in South Africa in April 2000, a ‘major obstacle’ identified was ‘the disarray in the NGO sector, which is not engaging in coordinated way’ (SANL 2000:p.7).

Likewise, Greenberg speaks of the ‘weakness of independent progressive civil society’ in southern Africa as a major reason for the persistent failings of land reform in the region, and he refers specifically to the NGO ‘sector’ in South Africa during the 1990s as ‘toothless’ (Greenberg 2004:pp.113, 118) in lobbying government for changes in land policy. He argues that the relationship between NGOs and rural land activists in South Africa was at that time ‘driven by the assumptions and interests of the NGOs’. And NGOs themselves were, according to Greenberg, driven in large part by the neo-liberal development paradigm and were ‘most interested in short-term funding than in establishing a durable and independent movement of rural people.’ (Greenberg 2004:pp. 118, 119) Donor funding of NGOs involved in land advocacy seems to raise the standard pitfalls, including (unpredictable) short-term funding and the unwillingness by donors to
fund core costs. Related to this, NGOs are concerned about how some donors view advocacy work, as it is sometimes ‘treated in the same way as service delivery programmes which can show quantifiable results’ (Kanji et al. 2002:p.19). This donor-dependence also inhibits NGOs from gaining credibility ‘as implementers of home-grown agendas on land’ (MWENGO 2000b:p.27). Greenberg’s analysis though raises the likelihood that in supporting donor-driven land programmes, NGOs are not necessarily pursuing an ideological agenda but are rather tactically engaged in accessing funds to maintain some form of organizational sustainability.

National land networks in southern Africa were by the year 2000 in ‘different stages of development’, ranging from ‘well developed’ to ‘non-existent’ (LRNSA 2000:p.34). These networks are sometimes dominated by urban-based NGOs and they do not have strong (or organic) links with rural communities. Often, national land networks of NGOs, such as the Working Committee on Land Reform in Namibia, do not have any national NGOs working exclusively on land issues, and ‘[l]and reform is not the primary focus of most members … and in some cases it is at the bottom of the list when priorities in terms of allocation of resources are made’ (MWENGO 1999:p.16). In other cases, NGOs join such networks not because of any specific interest in land reform but rather to ‘access donor funds’ (Bazaara 2003:p.4). To bolster these national networks, more extensive networks at regional and continental levels have been formed in Africa since the year 2000. These include the Africa-wide bodies of Pan-African Programme on Land and Resource Rights and LandNet Africa. Sub-regional chapters of LandNet Africa were also formed, including The Land Rights Network of Southern Africa (LRNSA). Included on its Interim Steering Committee was the Zimbabwean-based NGO called ZERO that during the late 1990s played a significant information, research and advocacy role on land and natural resources in Zimbabwe. At the southern Africa network’s meeting in Harare in October 2000, the importance of moving beyond ‘the prevailing parallelism’ in the programmes of the NGOs making up the network and developing a more ‘coordinated process’ was stressed (LRNSA 2000:p.7). 23

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23 Simultaneously, the Southern Africa Network on Land (SANL) existed. ZERO was also on the steering committee of SANL as was the National Land Committee (NLC) from South Africa. NLC, although also
Funding for these networks is a perennial problem, although the DFID and Oxfam-GB have been heavily involved. Yet, ‘as no organization exists solely for purposes of networking’ (Odhiambo 2002:p.14), NGOs consider their involvement in networks as creating additional responsibilities that invariably take second place to their own programmatic processes if only due to ‘work pressure’ (LRNSA 2000:p.28). Donors too are wary of networks. Few donors will fund networking as a distinct activity, as ‘it is not considered an end in itself.’ (Odhiambo 2002:p.14) Questions arise amongst NGOs about the real intention of bilateral donors such as DFID, and whether they may have hidden (neo-liberal) agendas that ‘may not necessarily be consistent with the local interest’ (Odhiambo 2002:p.16). Nevertheless, the formation of land networks and coalitions is meant to overcome a serious weakness in land lobbying, namely, that it is largely ‘reactive’ (Makombe ed. 2001:p.35). In the case of Malawi, a civil society conference revealed that in the ‘area of gender and land’ there are ‘no groups that were proactive in offering possible solutions.’ (MNCS 2002:p.3)

It is argued that ‘NGOs generally tend to start working together on land issues when it is already too late’ (Hakiardhi 1997:p.5), for example after a land commission has submitted its report, or after a national land policy has been established, or even after a land bill has been enacted and awaits implementation. Yet even pro-active lobbying alone is considered problematic and the National Land Alliance of Zambia speaks about NGO ‘action beyond advocacy’. Despite the emphasis on advocacy by Zambian NGOs, the Alliance notes that ‘the [flawed] Land Act 1995 is still in place, women’s right to land is still far from reality and the traditional land tenure system is still under threat.’ (MWENGO 2000b:p.13) Hence, regarding NGOs and land in southern and east Africa, ‘[i]t is not uncommon for years of advocacy to result in little or no desired change’. 

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24 In 1999 the DFID commissioned studies to consider the possibilities of sub-regional networking on land issues in Africa. In the year 2000, LRNSA was solely funded by DFID.
10.3 Peasant Movements, Class Interests and ‘Land’ Advocacy NGOs

In Chapters Six and Seven, the importance of robust peasant-led movements in explaining significant agrarian and land action by nation-states was highlighted. Peasant militancy, or the threat of such militancy, often leads to reform initiatives. However, it is sometimes argued that the work of NGOs may undermine these movements and thus forestall land reform. At a NGO workshop on land held in Windhoek in November 1999 (organized by MWENGO), the keynote speaker (from Zimbabwe) argued that ‘NGOs in Southern Africa are a reactionary force regarding land reform. I do not mean every one of them but most of them. … I mean reactionary in the sense of being not pro-change although they are so-called change agents. They are also reactionary in the sense that they are not playing a leadership role in bringing change. This is a very serious problem, I am convinced that NGOs are behind [or less proactive than] the state in the issue of land reform.’ 26 (Moyo 1999b:p.2) On the other hand, the few progressive NGOs supporting land reform are ‘timid’ and ‘peripheral’, such that they ‘sit back when communities organise themselves to try and get land rather than considering how they can build on this momentum to come up with something constructive.’ (Moyo 1999b:p.3)

At another MWENGO land workshop a year later, the NGO delegation from Malawi exclaimed that ‘NGOs have not come out in defence of land-hungry people who encroach on private land and are moved off by law enforcers.’ (MWENGO 2000b:p.19) In this regard, NGO professionals should not be seen as classless ‘free floating “activists”’ (Shivji 2004:p.8). At times, it is argued that the petty bourgeois class interests and ideology of NGO professionals lead to a neo-liberal pre-occupation with defending freehold land title (or converting customary title into freehold title) rather than to championing land redistribution and peasant-based movements. For example, in

26 Sam Moyo, in his paper developed to this workshop, included not only self-proclaimed advocacy NGOs but also rural development NGOs within his conception of reactionary land NGOs. In what seems to be an earlier draft of the same paper (p.7), Moyo says these development NGOs ‘limit their activities in land reform to projects in which they promote the control or regulation of the use of land and natural resources in “customary land tenure areas” rather than demanding the expansion of land accessible to peasants.’ In a sense, then, peasants have to be taught how to farm efficiently and effectively prior to be given access to further land.
discussing the prospects for agrarian transformation in southern Africa, it was noted at a NGO workshop in Zimbabwe in November 1989 that the ‘class interests of the people that man the NGOs are in contradiction to those of the people they purport to serve’ (HIVOS 1989:p.9), particularly when land advocacy NGOs based in urban areas operate autonomously from peasant bodies. As Moyo puts in relation to NGOs in Africa, ‘the predominantly urban-led civil society has not formally embraced extensive redistributive land reform, given the class interests of especially the NGO leaderships.’ (Moyo 2004:p.120) In this regard, NGO involvement in land reform is understood as more donor-driven than community-rooted. In other words, NGOs (for class reasons) tend to align themselves with market-based development agendas rather than with progressive peasant movements. This donor dependency inhibits the radicalizing of NGOs and they thus ‘fail to promote autonomous rural development thinking and strategies’ (Mozder and Ghimire 2001:p.207).

Petras argues that NGOs in Latin America act as a ‘social cushion’ (Petras 1997:p.1) between the major social classes: ‘There is a direct relation between the growth of [rural] social movements challenging the neoliberal model and the effort [by donors] to subvert them by creating alternative forms of social action through the NGOs.’ (Petras 1997:p.2) Hence, peasant bodies are ‘largely neglected’ by foreign donors as they prefer to fund ‘rural agricultural and income generating projects’ implemented by compliant intermediary development NGOs (Ghimire 2001:p.52). Mannan argues in some detail: ‘South Asian NGOs have now acquired experience in working with the rural poor in wider poverty alleviation programmes. They have gained significant experience in providing training to peasants together with new ideas and skills necessary for agricultural production. At times, they are able to mediate conflicts between the administration and peasants. … They are seeking to improve education and educational facilities in rural areas. They may help to inject credit and technical inputs in local production systems. What this actually means is that the NGOs’ work could actually help to stop growing rural radicalism associated with land redistribution or other organized demands for changes in power structure and resource sharing.’ (Mannan 2001: pp.94-95) In this sense, then, NGOs become ‘rival organizations’ to militant peasant
organizations as they ‘encourage groups to think in terms of “projects” not agrarian reform’ (Petras 1998:p.4). Thus, ‘the appearance of solidarity and social action’ by NGOs vis-à-vis peasant communities simply ‘cloaks a conservative conformity’ (Petras 1997:p.6 his emphasis).

Quite probably, international capital does have a keen interest in land reform in the South and East, and seeks to address and fulfil it in a market-led manner that suits its globalizing agenda. Also, at times, it may be possible to speak of (and even identify) the ‘objective class interests’ of intermediary NGOs, their neo-liberal modes of development thinking and their effects in inhibiting the emergence of radical peasant movements. But these are simply historical trajectories and possibilities, and should not be conflated with some asserted ‘essential condition’ of intermediary ‘land’ NGOs marked by a ‘conservative conformity’. In fact, the literature review in this section is very suggestive of diverse positions and practices adopted by ‘land’ NGOs. Epistemologically, the functionalist argument that NGOs have a dragging or breaking effect on land reform and peasant mobilization fails to offer an understanding of the organizational practices of advocacy NGOs. Likewise, the claim that these NGOs are tools of global ‘outsiders’ is equally problematic in ‘capturing’ the genesis of NGO practices as embodied in organizational processes.

The case of land reform is highly illustrative of the ambivalent social field within which all intermediary NGOs are located, and the many interfaces (for example, global donors, peasant groups) that mark the boundaries of their social space and impinge on it (and hence reconstitute it) in a conflictual manner. Intermediary ‘land’ NGOs ‘balance’ and ‘manage’ their contradictory social relations in complex ways that are historically specific, and thus the ‘effects’ cannot be read from global imperatives or as global impositions. The historical possibility exists that a ‘land’ NGO might align itself unreservedly with an uncivil peasant movement, and for reasons other than ‘committing class suicide’. The theory of NGOs contained in this thesis allows for this real possibility and has the (potential) explanatory power to account for it.
Indeed, the existing literature implies that intermediary NGOs engage in land reform on an advocacy basis for numerous reasons, and these reasons entail a rich array of long-term ‘values’ and short-term ‘interests’ ranging from a deep commitment to agrarian justice and democratic reform to a desperate need for funding to sustain the organization temporarily. This involves ‘negotiated processes’ on the part of NGOs that cannot be reduced to class politics, or to ‘class’ or ‘politics’. Many NGOs also refrain from engaging in land advocacy work or are hesitant about engaging in it, and the literature highlights the complicated political character of advocacy interventions by intermediary NGOs that inhibit such interventions. Later in this thesis I will argue that this complexity in large part revolves around ‘internal’ organizational imperatives rather than ‘external’ political-cum-ideological imperatives.

10.4 Early Years in Zimbabwe: Nation-Building and Developmentalism

The year 1995, or more generally the mid-1990s, seems to be a defining moment in Zimbabwean history and society: ‘The period in Zimbabwean history beginning in 1996 and culminating in the current conjuncture will loom large as a decisive phase in Zimbabwe’s political economy. During these years, the political and economic terrain was substantively restructured, setting out the contours of the current crisis in Zimbabwe.’ (Raftopoulos and Phimister 2004:p.355) This was brought out in the discussion in Chapter Nine of the social crisis in contemporary Zimbabwe. NGOs and land reform in present-day Zimbabwe (from 1995 onwards) will be examined in Chapters Eleven and Twelve in relation to both the years immediately before accelerated reform (1995 to 1999) and the accelerated period (2000 onwards). First, though, I provide a brief (and necessarily schematic) historical account of the activities of intermediary NGDOs in Zimbabwe from 1980 to 1995.27

27 The notion of ‘NGO’ as used in the literature quoted or cited below varies considerably, and generally is more all embracing than my notion of non-membership intermediary organizations that is used throughout the thesis.
Dekker (1994) argues that with independence in 1980 there was a ‘marked change’ (primarily involving an expansion) in the NGO sector ‘triggered by the availability of international funds, the urgent need and the high expectations in the country’ (Dekker 1994:p.1). This expansion took place in the context of the state-centric developmentalism of the post-colonial regime and its ‘highly partisan’ (Saul and Saunders 2005:p.5) nation-building project. As the State President, Canaan Banana, said in reflection fifteen years after independence: ‘Many NGOs in particular accepted our prescriptions – should I say, joined us. In fact our prescriptions and perceptions were basically theirs in the first place. We became partners in development.’ (Thorpe and Vekris eds. 1995:p.4) Thus, in conjunction with the nation-state and working closely alongside relevant line ministries and local government structures, international and indigenous NGOs engaged in post-war rehabilitation focusing on the reconstruction of rural infrastructure and extending social services to neglected communities.

As the 1980s moved on, NGOs became involved in a fluctuating combination of drought relief and development work, notably in the communal areas but also in the emerging resettlement areas. Riddell and Robinson (1995) provide a broad overview of the development activities of NGOs in rural Zimbabwe, and they give a mixed review of these efforts. For instance, in terms of poverty alleviation strategies, they argue that the ‘poorest households’ in the communal areas tend to be ‘excluded’ from NGO interventions (Riddell and Robinson 1995:p.242). Simultaneously, they speak about the willingness on the part of NGOs to ‘experiment and innovate’ (Riddell and Robinson 1995:p.278), including their involvement in community resource management schemes such as CAMPFIRE. In so doing, NGOs were able to ‘make good use of’ WADCOs and VIDCOs (Makumbe 1998:p.33), that is, the development sub-committees of Rural Councils.

This NGO development work was based on principles and ideals of participation and sustainability. Indeed, Makumbe (1996) claims: ‘That NGOs in Zimbabwe facilitate

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28 Moyo et al. (2000a) provide a four-phase periodization of NGO activity in Zimbabwe from 1980 through to 1995.
beneficiary participation in development cannot be disputed.’ (Makumbe 1996:p.79) Others have argued that most rural NGOs in Zimbabwe appeared ‘to think for their intended beneficiaries.’ (Kerkhoven 1992:p.13 my emphasis) Indeed, an official of the Forestry Commission (a well-established state regulatory agency) claimed that NGOs working in agro-forestry often created a ‘dependence syndrome’ rather than economic self-reliance in rural communities (quoted in Wellard and Mema eds. 1991:p.29). During the early 1990s these development practices occurred under conditions of neo-liberal structural adjustment (ESAP) and this effectively increased the demand and need for NGO social service provisioning and gap filling (Thorpe and Vekris eds. 1995). For instance, ESAP led to serious financial constraints on the part of the central state, and this was – from the perspective of the Ministry of Lands – ‘an important factor’ behind the Ministry’s ‘increasing openness towards other agencies [like NGOs] operating in agriculture’ (quoted in Wellard and Mema eds. 1991:p.11). In general, NGOs simply sought to alleviate the effects of ESAP on hard-hit communities, and they did not question ESAP ‘in any extensive way’ and hence ‘paid relatively little attention to the policy-level of government’ (Rich Dorman 2001:p.168). In reference to the entire period from 1980 to 1995, Moyo and Makumbe (2000:p.7) conclude that development NGOs in Zimbabwe ‘tended to be responsive by nature’ rather than more proactive.

Throughout this period, the Zimbabwean government had no formal policy on NGOs and the NGO ‘sector’ had an ambivalent, contradictory and fluid relation with the central state. A Ministry of Lands official said in 1991 that ‘[t]he attitude of the government to NGOs in Zimbabwe has, over the past decade ranged from: indifference, hostility, reticence and wait-and-see to direct involvement, supervision and welcoming of NGO activities’ (quoted in Wellard and Mema eds. 1991:p.10). On the one hand, there was some ‘suspicion of the agenda of NGOs’ by government (Dekker 1994:p.16), particularly of international NGOs. On the other hand, ‘NGOs seem[ed] to enjoy the freedom and latitude of operation in the country’ (Sibanda 1994:p.10), at least compared to other countries in Africa (Riddell and Robinson 1995:pp.238-239). Indigenous NGOs in

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29 NGOs were omitted from the following development plans: Growth with Equity (1981), Transitional National Development Plan (1982-85) and the First Five Year Development Plan (1986-1990).
30 Hostility was particularly marked during the Matabeleland conflict during the 1980s (Rich Dorman 2001: pp.136-138).
particular had a ‘weak and uncertain financial base’ (SW 1992:p.17) and this led to significant staff turnover.

NGOs were a mixed bag with ‘a conglomeration of heterogeneous organisations’ including both ‘black-dominated’ and ‘white-dominated’ NGOs, with a wide range of ‘objectives and goals, as well as plans and operational strategies’ (Jirira 1989:p.26). Thus, in 1997, one NGO practitioner claimed that NGOs were characterized by a ‘high capacity of uncooperativeness which manifests itself when they do not support each other, they cannot share resources, personnel’ (quoted in Madzima 1997:p.29). Indeed, ‘the national NGO movement in Zimbabwe’ was ‘divided’ and this entailed serious ‘distrust’ even between NGOs (Kerkhoven 1992:p.17). This seemingly uncoordinated diversity led to isolated pockets of development activity (or ‘patchwork’ development) in communal areas managed by different NGOs, such that the Minister of Local Government spoke of NGOs as ‘unguided missiles’ (quoted in Makumbe 1996:p.75). This diversity amongst NGOs also led to varying relations between NGOs and the state, and hindered their advocacy efforts as well (Madzima 1997).

10.5 Politics of Inclusion and NGO Advocacy

Overall, overt advocacy by NGOs with the intent to influence state policy formation was limited during this period. In the early 1990s, there were ‘very few NGOs that specialise[d] in advocacy’ (Moyo 1992:p.3). NGOs constantly complained about the centralist thrust of state policy (or state-centred development) and ‘about the inaccessibility of policy decisions’ (Kerkhoven 1992:p.22). This meant that cooperation between the state and NGOs was ‘uncoordinated at the national level’ (Kerkhoven 1992:p.24). Lobbying by NGOs was largely ‘ad hoc’, ‘silent’ or ‘restricted to the level of implementation’ (Dekker 1994:p.34), and hence effectively occurred informally as NGO practitioners worked alongside technical line ministry staff or with district and provincial officials.31 Yet, in the face of a crisis of livelihoods emerging from ESAP and with

31 This relates to what Moyo (1992:pp.8-9) refers to as the ‘complementary model’ of advocacy.
autonomous opposition to the ruling party emerging in the early 1990s, NGOs in Zimbabwe were ‘increasingly demanding involvement’ in the policy formation process beyond provincial level to ensure ‘policies that are appropriate for sustainable development’ (Sibanda 1994:p.3). However, at a NGO workshop in 1995, it was argued that ‘NGOs are now reacting to the effects of ESAP and evolving programmes to alleviate its adverse effects. .. [T]hey should have been involved and visible in the debate prior to its finalisation and implementation.’ (Thorpe and Vekris eds. 1995:p.30 emphasis in original)

Indigenous NGOs concerned with human rights (for example, ZimRights),32 women’s rights (such as Women’s Action Group)33 and environmental sustainability (for instance, ZERO) had emerged and were actively involved in various forms of lobbying.34 Yet, in the case of the 1995 Private Voluntary Organisations Act that was designed specifically to regulate and control the NGO ‘sector’, NGOs appeared tentative and limited in their lobbying because they were ‘reluctant to challenge the regime’ (Rich Dorman 2003:p.847). In fact, in the middle 1990s it was argued that ‘little is being done’ by NGO umbrella bodies like VOICE ‘to influence development policy in Zimbabwe. Sometimes these NGOs come on the policy scene far too late to make any difference.’ (Makumbe 1996:p.118) A major NGO convention held in April 1997 was designed to chart the way forward, specifically in seeking to build a more effective national organization (Madzima 1997).

At independence, the post-colonial state had adopted an authoritarian state-centric corporatism along the lines discussed by Mandaza, who argues that ‘the principle of the sole and authentic liberation movement [ZANU] provided the rationale, and indeed the licence, whereby the party in post-independence period can ride rough-shod – in the interests of the masses! – over the interests of the very people it purports to serve.’ (Mandaza 1994:p.257) Thus, while it may be true that civil society was ‘extensively

34 Sibanda (1994) offers a detailed account of two advocacy efforts during this period, by the Zimbabwe Federation of the Disabled and by the National Association for Non-Governmental Organizations.
developed’ in Zimbabwe (Kerkhoven 1992:p.8), it is equally the case that during the 1980s many civil society groups such as trade unions, women’s groups, the co-operative movement and small-scale farmer organizations became almost subservient wings of the ruling party. In this sense, the state constituted civil society, or at least it sought to ‘flood the space’ available to civil society by ‘building out from the party and state and into society itself’ (Saul and Saunders 2005:p.5). This has been referred to as the ‘statisation of civil society’ (Shivji 2004:p.8) or as ‘the destruction of civil society’ (Neocosmos 1993: pp. 5-6).

Yet by the turn of the decade, there had emerged a more ‘societal corporatist model of governance’ that enabled the state ‘to retain state power while allowing for greater NGO participation’ (Moyo 2000b:p.60). Both forms of corporatism fall under what Rich Dorman (2001) calls the ‘politics of inclusion’ during the 1980 to 1997 period, which was based on a blend of ‘societal quiescence and demobilization’ (Rich Dorman 2001:p.41) along with forms of coercion when necessary. By the mid-1990s, this mode of domination began to unravel as the economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe deepened. Hence, ‘in conditions of increasing poverty under the structural adjustment programme’, NGOs became ‘more willing to make a more frontal political assault on the state over the issue of democratisation.’ (Moyo et al. 2000a:p.xi) This heightened civic activism will be noted in discussing the contemporary period (1995 onwards) in Chapters Eleven and Twelve.

10.6 Agrarian Change and NGDOs in Zimbabwe

During the earlier period (before 1995), the NGO ‘community’ in Zimbabwe was in large part marked by a ‘strategic pragmatism’ in which NGOs ‘fram[ed] what few challenges they make to the political order in a depoliticising discourse in order to make themselves acceptable to their colleagues and the state.’ (Rich, quoted in Raftopoulos 2000a:p.23) This incorporation into dominant societal discourses and practices, which was based in part on consensus and in part on compliance, was not simply imposed upon NGOs.
Rather, it was the outcome of ‘negotiated’ processes as NGOs sought to ‘balance’ their action in a manner that would allow for organizational sustainability. It is instructive that at the end of a NGDO workshop in Harare on ESAP in March 1995, the rural development participants concluded: ‘NGOs have in the past avoided participation in debates involving issues of National Development. Examples were cited of debates concerning the land issue which is a central issue and one of the main problems affecting the various constituencies of the NGOs in Zimbabwe’ (Thorpe and Vekris eds. 1995:p. 31 my emphasis). Repeated acknowledgements of this kind, and the simultaneous (and ongoing) failure to act on the acknowledged weakness, vividly highlight ‘the great leap forward’ needed to engage proactively in land reform advocacy. The failure on the part of NGOs to meaningfully engage with the nation-state in advocating on land policy cannot be reduced to state centrism, as this weakness amongst Zimbabwean NGOs was in many ways self-defined and self-inflicted.

Likewise, the failure by NGDOs to directly tackle agrarian change in their development activities during this period is also abundantly clear. In fact, Jirira (1989:p.28 my emphasis), in summing up her argument about development NGOs in post-independence Zimbabwe, claims that they ‘do not assist in the creation of an environment of non-exploitative relations but just support communities to adjust to the given environment’. Many other writers on Zimbabwean NGOs, including Riddell and Robinson (1995:p.244), would concur in some way with this perspective. In other words, NGOs involved in rural development in Zimbabwe have simply reproduced the prevailing agrarian structures of domination rather than facilitating their transformation. Again, this takes us back to the claim that, if anything, NGOs simply inhibit progressive rural change. Thus, in looking at NGOs and prospects for rural transformation in Zimbabwe, Nyathi argues that “I deny that any meaningful transformation has taken place in rural Zimbabwe’ and that this requires the ‘rural poor’ to ‘have the political clout to determine the agenda for their own development’ (Nyathi 1991:p.25).

In this regard, and in the contest of a discussion of the agrarian question, Neocosmos (1993) argues that ‘[t]he objective economic effect of development aid programmes’ by
NGOs in southern Africa (including Zimbabwe) ‘has been precisely the reproduction of PCP [petty commodity production] and the restriction of the proletarianisation process.’ (Neocosmos 1993:p.61) He continues: ‘Indeed, the main effect of rural development programmes is arguably to reproduce state power in rural areas. … Democratisation is not a question of transferring the powers of state agencies to supposedly more neutral NGOs … It is about providing the conditions in which the oppressed majority in the rural areas can build their own economic and political organisations as independently as possible from state regulation.’ (Neocosmos 1993:p.66) In this sense, NGDOs have not contributed to resolving the ‘agrarian question of capital’ or have simply delayed its resolution. Simultaneously, they have ‘assisted’ rural communities in coping with the crisis of livelihoods (or the ‘agrarian question of labour’) that has arisen from global restructuring, and have thereby softened (and, again, not resolved) the social reproduction squeeze. While these arguments may have a degree of empirical validity, assessing the functionality of NGOs in itself does not provide an understanding of the emergence of these organizational effects.

In the literature on NGDOs in Zimbabwe, there is functionalist obsession with ‘effect’ and ‘impact’. The ‘empiricist’ literature (for example, Riddell and Robinson 1995) focuses primarily on project or programme ‘effect’ as a measurement of development ‘success’, while ‘structuralist’ theorists (for instance, Jirira 1989) are more apt to reflect upon society-wide effects or the restructuring of rural societies. However, the claim that intermediary ‘land’ NGOs involved in rural development in Zimbabwe reproduced state power or relations of exploitation in the countryside is a mute point. After all, social transformation in the Zimbabwean countryside also did not occur because of the actions of independent peasant organizations and rural trade unions.

Of course, NGDOs invariably impact on rural communities, although not always in the ways intended because of the open-endedness of the development process. It may be that NGO development ‘effects’ are often consistent with the global imperatives of capitalism as set out in neo-liberal development discourses. But the prioritizing of ‘the other’ (invariably, the ‘global other’) in explaining NGO development practices leads to
functionalist and instrumentalist explanations, and fails to account for the remarkable NGO diversity that is highlighted even in the literature on Zimbabwe. Furthermore, it detracts from offering a ‘thick description’ of the world and work of NGOs, including the organizational processes that constitute NGOs as social forms. ‘Capturing’ these organizational practices enables the analyst to understand ‘from within’ the genesis and trajectory of organizational ‘effects’.

In this context, I now examine NGOs and land reform in contemporary Zimbabwe from 1995 onwards. The empirical material in Chapters Eleven and Twelve provides an overview of ‘land’ NGO work during this period, and the empirical discussion in Chapter Thirteen deepens the analysis through two case studies that are rich in organizational detail. These extensive and intensive foci are not meant to be fully comprehensive and exhaustive. Rather, they seek to identify important trends and issues in a way that contributes to the reworking and refinement of sociological theory on NGOs. They are illustrative of the sociological perspective on NGOs that has been developed in this thesis, rather than proving it. I analyze NGOs and land reform during the few years before accelerated reform (1995–2000) and the accelerated period from 2000 onwards. Important continuities and changes between these two ‘periods’ are highlighted. The conceptual distinction made between ‘advocating for change’ and ‘development and change’, as two moments in the work of social change by ‘land’ NGOs, forms the basis for the following two chapters.
Chapter 11
‘Land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe: Advocating For Change

Since the early 1990s NGOs in Zimbabwe have generally speaking adopted a more pronounced advocacy stance. Raftopoulos, in looking back over the 1990s, hence argues: ‘The economic marginalisation of the majority of Zimbabweans that has accompanied the adjustment programme [ESAP], created an environment for advocacy on poverty issues. In addition the growing authoritarianism of the Zimbabwean state provided a platform for groups to mobilise around the question of governance. … This transition is characteristic of many NGOs, which began as providers of welfare services for the poor, and evolve into organisations that questioned the basis of poverty in society.’ (Raftopoulos 2000b:p.6)

The significance of NGO advocacy work also became manifest within the realm of land reform but on a more limited basis. Indeed, advocacy by NGOs on governance-cum-democratic reform, as part of a broader civic nationalist movement against the ZANU-PF government, appeared to have the marked effect of crowding out and displacing land reform advocacy. Nevertheless, NGOs ‘began to recognize the primacy of land in the mid 1990s and began formulating strategies for intervention as well as contributing to policy formulation.’ (CREATE 2002:p.9) In 1998 an environmental research and advocacy NGO, ZERO, spoke about land as ‘a core issue in power relations’ and as ‘at the centre of the societal, political and economic relations’ in the country. Accordingly, ‘land’ NGOs were expected to be ‘in the forefront in any meaningful debate on sustainable development’ in relation to the agrarian political economy (Matowanyika and Marongwe 1998:pp.5, 8). Yet, up until that time (and beyond) NGOs in Zimbabwe had by and large ‘neglected’ land reform (Moyo 1999a:p.5).
11.1 State Centrism and NGO Marginalization

ZERO unashamedly admitted that NGOs (and civil society more broadly) were ‘largely ineffective and too weak’ to push the government to meet its agrarian reform obligations. Further, ‘[c]ivil society has … not been able to demand its right to information on the land reform process as well as their [sic] right to participate in land policy formulation… This all goes against effective people driven land reforms and policies.’ (Matowanyika and Marongwe 1998:pp.20, 21) This ongoing exclusion from national policy processes, or the fact that NGOs had ‘generally remained marginalised’ in this regard (Marongwe 2003b:p.14), has often been explained by NGOs as arising from the centralized top-down thrust of the nation-state in post-colonial Zimbabwe. Hence, they claim that their basic participatory ‘right’ (as part of civil society) has been consistently violated. A NGO Consultative Conference on land in 1997 (see below) spoke about ‘a complete lack of transparency, corruption and self-interest on the part of the elite at both national and local levels’ (Mutepfa et al. 1998a:p.16). This was particularly the case in relation to land allocation in the resettlement process. The centralized thrust of reform processes, according to ZERO, has also ‘nurtured’ the development of land-based conflicts (Marongwe 2002:p.16).

The top-heavy implementation of land reforms in Zimbabwe, along with (at times) an almost patronizing ‘modernist’ development discourse emanating from the nation-state, has been regularly highlighted in the academic literature. This statist thrust is said to dramatically underestimate the capacity and willingness of the rural under-classes to actively engage in meaningful agrarian change (Robins 1998, Moyo 1999a). Moyo, who for many years has awkwardly straddled the academic and NGO worlds, further argues that the outright exclusion of NGOs by the state in the land process represents a ‘lost opportunity’ because the hands-on experience of development NGOs that have been ‘working with the people’ over extended periods of time has not been tapped and incorporated into land policy (Moyo 2000a). In this context, during the late 1990s ‘land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe regularly highlighted the significance of their countervailing
influence (against state commandism), and their (supposed) well-known effectiveness in enhancing the organizational capacity and policy reach of rural communities in both customary and resettlement areas.

During the early years of the LRRP Phase II (from 1997 to 1999), a number of NGOs seemed to be involved in a flurry of research and lobbying activities around land reform. This advocacy work can be traced back to the appointment in November 1993 of the Rukuni Land Commission\(^{35}\) on land tenure, before which many NGOs gave evidence. Its three-volume report was submitted to the government in October 1994 and was finally released to the public in August 1995. The controversial report and the government’s response to it, as well as the likelihood of new land legislation on this basis, set off a round of concerted advocacy efforts by NGOs. Thus, the Women and Land Lobby Group (WLLG), as a network of local gender NGOs, argued that the appointment of the Rukuni Commission ‘heralded the development of more coordinated efforts toward NGO consensus building and response to the concerns of women on the land question’ (Makombe ed. 2001:p.18).

Numerous seminars, workshops and conferences were held in which intermediary NGOs (supported by various donors) played a significant part. For instance, a group of NGOs, including prominent gender organizations such as Women’s Action Group and Zimbabwe Women’s Bureau (but also ZimRights), arranged a Women Farmers’ Conference in November 1995 that was funded by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), a German donor agency. This conference was designed to make heard the views of ‘smallholder’ women farmers (seventy-four attended) on the glaring gender-weaknesses (or biases) contained in the Rukuni Report (Chenaux-Repond 1996).\(^{36}\) Women NGOs also formed a Task Force to lobby government officials to ensure a gender-sensitive land bill but ‘little significant progress was made due to the lack of a structure to coordinate


\(^{36}\) Two other workshops/conferences focusing on the Rukuni Report and funded by FES also took place around this time, in November 1995 (involving the small-scale Black farmer body the Zimbabwe Farmers Union) and in April 1996 (involving State ministries under the auspices of the Ministry of Lands and Water Resources).
the diversity of interests, a lack of capacity by individual NGOs and general fatigue arising from the lengthy nature of the process. … The increasingly proactive role of NGOs on land however, had the effect of increasing the government’s willingness to involve them in the process.’ (Makombe ed. 2001:p.18) It is of significance to note that the problems identified in this appraisal were organizational weaknesses rather than government intransigence.

11.2 1997 NGO Consultative Conference

In this context, a wide range of NGOs, including human rights, women and environmental organizations, held what was a milestone NGO Consultative Land Conference in May 1997 to chart the way forward. It was hoped that this conference would set the basis for ongoing advocacy activities and for a ‘genuine partnership between civil society and Government’ (Mutepfa et al. 1998a:p.22) on land reform, as well as to ensure through policy initiatives that marginalized groups had access to quality and viable land for different livelihood activities. It was also highlighted at the conference that the nation’s vision on land was not clearly articulated or shared, and that this significant lacuna hindered the more active engagement of NGOs in land reform. In the late 1990s, various networks of NGOs interested in land reform were being formed, such as the ELF-NGO Land Working Group, the Women and Land Lobby Group and later CREATE, the latter being funded by international donors through IFAD.37 In a sense, then, the real possibilities for inclusive land engagement as contained within the state’s LRRP Phase II ‘had the effect of reenergizing NGO efforts toward coalition building’ on land reform (Makombe ed. 2001:p.19). For example, in early 1998 the ELF-NGO Group emerged in order to provide a formal basis for unified input by NGOs into Phase II (then under intensive formulation), and the NGOs involved developed a series of important position papers in order to lobby government (Mutepfa and Cohen eds. 2000).

37 CREATE included over thirty groups, including international NGOs such as Care International and ITDG, and local NGOs such as Manicaland Development Association and Silveira House.
Preparations for the 1997 Conference give us some insight into NGO thinking and strategizing on land reform. Various workshops on activism were held by NGOs during 1996, including one financed by Norwegian People’s Aid in June and another by MWENGO in September. ZimRights seemed to be particularly prominent in organizing these workshops, and later expressed concern that it was being sidelined during the months immediately prior to the conference. Four main areas of activism were identified at the 1996 meetings, namely, the Private Voluntary Organizations Act, the constitution, macro-economic policies and land reform. Land seemed a particularly urgent issue given impending land legislation arising from the Rukuni Report. Thus, out of the workshops arose recommendations for NGO activism on land reform, as ‘the land question represents a major challenge to civil society in Zimbabwe’. This activism would entail ‘getting those NGOs involved in environmental, civic education and gender-land related programmes as representatives of grassroots communities to provide input into Land Reform policies’. The representative function of these NGOs and their accountability to ‘grassroots communities’ was however highly questionable.

Yet, several NGOs soon formed a steering committee, and this committee included key indigenous NGOs such as ZERO, ZWRCN, ZimRights and Zimbabwe Women Lawyers’ Association. The committee sought ‘to promote a framework and opportunity for the widest possible dialogue’ on land, particularly given that there had been only limited public debate by civil society on the Rukuni Report. At some length, the committee debated the need ‘to petition government to postpone the tabling of any new [land] legislation to allow for consultation with stakeholders’ but this action was eventually considered as ‘counterproductive’ and was not pursued. Rather, a conference was agreed upon to facilitate dialogue, and this would be a ‘unique’ opportunity for NGOs

38 A Consultative Land Conference Statement by Working Group (draft), sent by fax from ZWRCN to ZERO on 23rd May 1997. ZERO LAND FILES.
40 Letter dated 7th May 1997 from Director of ZERO on behalf of steering committee to possible participants of NGO conference. ZERO LAND FILES.
41 Document dated 11th March 1997 on NGO land conference, submitted by ZERO in collaboration with members of the NGO Steering Committee. ZERO LAND FILES.
42 Ibid.
to engage with government and to make concrete and constructive policy recommendations on land reform. Indeed, the Minister of Lands, K. Kangai, in his opening speech to the conference, referred to it as a ‘historic workshop’ that would mark ‘the beginning of a meaningful engagement between our ministry and civil society’. The conference was also expected to help build the capacity of NGOs to vigorously analyze land related issues. There was extensive communication between the organizers of the conference as to whether donors should be invited, as many ‘felt having donors there might influence discussion. Also it contradicted the image of self-funded workshop which was not being donor-driven.’ Further, if donors were present, ‘the government might perceive the conference to be influenced by donors’. As it turned out, NGOs had the opportunity to engage with donors over a year later and in a different setting.

11.3 Donors’ Conference and the Inception Phase

The September 1998 donors’ conference has been described (as late as the year 2002) as ‘the high point for NGO involvement in the land reform programme’, although even at that time (in 1998) NGOs ‘lacked a clear strategy’ for any coordinated involvement in agrarian change (CREATE 2002:p.9). The compromise Agreement reached at the conference formed the basis of the two-year Inception Phase of the LRRP Phase II. From November 1998 to March 1999, the Technical Committee of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Resettlement and Rural Development worked out the finer details of the Inception Phase. Sam Moyo, who was at the time chairperson of ZERO, headed this government committee (GoZ 1998b). In April 1999, the Zimbabwean Cabinet formally approved this plan of action. Various NGOs are acknowledged by the technical committee as having provided significant input into the drafting of the Inception Phase framework, including WLLG, ZERO, ITDG and Care International. Generally speaking, then, a range of NGOs was involved in state-civil society policy dialogues in the late 1990s, including before, during and after the historic donors’ conference. Hence, the

43 K. Kangai, Speech to be delivered to 1997 Consultative Conference. ZERO LAND FILES.
44 Minutes of NGO Working Group on Land meeting held on 16 May 1997 at ZimRights offices. ZERO LAND FILES.
land policy formation process during this period was ‘fairly participatory’ compared to previous years, but any significant input was ‘only made by the “organised civil society”, mainly NGOs’ (Marongwe 2003b:p.16).

The 1998 Phase II Policy Framework and Project Document, as presented to the donors’ conference, emphasized that government would ‘mobilise the existing capacities of various NGOs’⁴⁵ to contribute to the land programme, and that this would include encouraging development NGOs to become involved in support activities at resettlement scheme level. These activities would entail extension and training services as well as credit and marketing facilities for resettled farmers, possibly provided on a sub-contractual basis. NGOs would also be ‘encouraged to facilitate locally based initiatives and capacity building in the beneficiary communities’ and to ‘select components of the land reform programme they wish to sponsor’. In the Phase II documentation, NGOs were explicitly conceptualized as partners (with government) in land reform, and hence their ‘accumulated experience’ in working in (and with) rural communities would be put to maximum use. In other words, NGOs were seen as ‘vital … stakeholders in the land reform programme because of their vested interests in economic and development activities’. Phase II categorized NGOs in terms of their main focus of activity, and the documents noted how NGOs concerned with poverty eradication and environmental conservation would be particularly drawn to the land programme. Intriguingly, it even spoke glowingly about ‘democracy NGOs’, and about how these NGOs ‘may be attracted by the transparency in the implementation of the land reform programme’.

The LRRP Phase II (on paper at least) appeared to give NGOs considerable space for direct involvement in land reform through what came to be known as non-state Complementary Approaches (CAs). ‘Land’ NGOs (including NGDOs), according to CREATE, ‘were expected to try out new approaches in resettlement’ and to ‘facilitate a demand-driven process as opposed to the supply-driven one that was being championed by the government’ (CREATE 2001:p.9). These approaches, involving research,

⁴⁵ All quotations in this paragraph are from GoZ (1998a).
experimentation and innovation on matters such as agricultural productivity, poverty alleviation and environmental stability were intended (from the viewpoint of the government of Zimbabwe) to create ‘an enabling environment’ (GoZ 1999) for the inclusion of NGOs as facilitators in the land reform and resettlement process. This appeared to be an open and unrestricted invitation to NGOs to have at least an indirect impact on land policy formation and implementation. In fact, according to the Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe (FCTZ), an NGO involved on commercial farms, the state’s policy represented a major shift away from a largely exclusionary approach marked by state centrism and ‘a culture of secrecy’ that had also included a ‘few’, ‘privileged’ local NGOs aligned to the state (Mutepfa and Cohen eds. 2000:p.17).

Potentially, it thus entailed ‘a change in operational parameters of the government to include issues of transparency, accountability and democratic participation’ in land reform (Moyo 2000d:p.9). Yet, as A. Dengu of ITDG noted, this more inclusive mode of operation simultaneously increased the complexity of the process, because ‘the levels of uncertainty’ deepen ‘as the number of players in the land reform process increase’ (Mutepfa and Cohen eds. 2000:p.7). As highlighted in the previous chapter, this idea about complexity is a constant refrain when it comes to NGO involvement in land reform. Despite this seeming complexity, NGOs were seen (admittedly often by themselves) as being in a particularly privileged position – based on their ‘comparative advantages’ – to ensure that the rural under-classes who had historically been excluded from the land policy process would finally have their voices heard and acted upon.

Project proposals by NGOs under the initial IP of the Programme were expected to focus on, amongst other groups, the landless poor, displaced farm workers and congested communal area residents, and these beneficiaries were ‘expected to gain control or be empowered through management of resettlement schemes.’ (GoZ 1999) Intense lobbying by NGOs (and by the national agricultural workers’ union GAPWUZ) in the late 1990s, including numerous workshops and seminars, is said to be significant in the belated incorporation by the Zimbabwean government of farm workers into Phase II reform as a distinct category of settler (Moyo et al. 2000b). NGO performance during
the Inception Phase would be monitored and evaluated with regard to effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, or in tangible terms of ‘converting inputs into outputs, outcomes into impacts (i.e. results)’ (GoZ 1999).

In addition to NGO involvement in the CAs, the launching of the National Economic Consultative Forum’s Land Reform Task Force in 1998 gave NGOs the opportunity to provide inputs into land policy on an ongoing consultative and advisory basis. A further initiative to advance the advocacy cause of ‘land’ NGOs was the formation in the late 1990s by Sam Moyo (at SAPES Trust) of the Zimbabwe Land Reform Research Network. Its purpose was to develop ‘policy-oriented research on land’ and to ‘promote the development of a broadly based capacity in Zimbabwe to formulate, analyse, and create advocates of land reform policy’ (Moyo 2000d:pp.1, 5). In so doing, the intention was (in the short-term) to provide important policy inputs into key state land institutions during the implementation of the IP. 46

11.4 NGO Exuberance and Civic Activism

Generally speaking, at this juncture there seemed to be an optimistic mood amongst intermediary NGOs, intermittently marked by sobriety and realism, about their role as land advocates and about, more specifically, their potential incorporation into the Phase II land programme in relation to both policy and practice. Thus, the director of the Farm Orphan Support Trust (FOST) speaks positively about the policy environment in the years preceding the accelerated programme, and notes for instance how FOST and other NGOs played an important part in ensuring that farm workers were given the right to vote in local government elections.47 This optimism is also exemplified in the case of the WLLG. In a moment of exuberant reflection, this NGO argued that its efforts ‘have seen the redrafting of the LRRP Resettlement Policy framework and Programme Documents

46 See also Annex 3 in LRNSA (2000).

47 Interview conducted with L. Walker, Director, FOST, 3rd November 2005.
to accept women’s individual rights to land and the inclusion of the principle of affirmative action to promote women’s participation. Gender issues have also been included in the draft Land Policy Framework while the issues of women’s land rights formed a part of the discussions and inputs into the draft Constitution development process. There is a greater visibility of women and women’s issues in the current land reform programme and an acceptance of the role of the WLLG as a key stakeholder.’ (Makombe ed. 2001:p.19)

Any substantive attempt to evaluate such a claim is invariably marked with difficulties because, as noted earlier, policy formation is a highly complex and convoluted process. Yet no doubt there is a ring of empirical truth to its claim. Certainly, subsequent to its formation in March 1998, the WLLG is widely acknowledged as having been a critical ‘land’ NGO network in Zimbabwe, notably at the donors’ conference. Like other land NGOs it sought to move beyond advocacy to venture into operational activities, including training, extension services and revolving loan funds for women farmers. However, it soon had to establish a secretariat, and this led to its programme becoming ‘more institutionalized’ with ‘less participation from [NGO] members’ (Makombe ed. 2001:p.19). Clearly, despite the Inception Phase-related exuberance, difficult challenges lay ahead for NGOs working on land reform in Zimbabwe and seeking the way forward. For instance, ITDG reiterates that ‘[t]o effectively take up the space and challenges’ of land reform implementation during the Inception Phase, ‘the wide array of civil society groups need to coordinate their efforts’ (Mutepfa and Cohen eds. 2000:p.13).

As well, NGOs raised very serious questions about institutional and procedural matters underlying the Phase II Programme. In particular, as evidenced in the position papers of the ELF-NGO Group, a major concern was with the (seemingly still centralized) state institutional setup designed to translate Phase II policy into practice. Hence, in line with the NGO mantra on participatory development, the Working Group emphasized the need to further decentralize the implementation authority of the Programme in order to maximize the involvement of marginalized rural communities. This ongoing fixation with institutions and systems on the part of NGOs brings to the fore the ‘proceduralist
thrust’ of NGO advocacy action (Moyo 2004:p.122) on land reform during this period. This emphasis on procedural and governance issues was often at the expense of (or at least took priority over) a broader concern with redistributive and equity issues.

As a result, NGOs offered regular criticisms of the state-centrist land acquisition approach (announced in 1997) without raising such fervent doubts about the prevailing market-led reform of the first fifteen years of independence. As Moyo asserts (rather than demonstrates), soon after the emergence of land occupations in the year 2000, this meant that NGOs in Zimbabwe ‘never prioritised the land reform agenda’ accept as advocates of market-based reforms and, in this regard, international aid linkages ‘militated against’ the propagation of ‘radical land reform’ by NGOs (Moyo 2001:p. 313). If this was indeed the case, then such linkages need to be clearly spelt out, as this would assist in ‘capturing’ the genesis of NGO practices on land reform. In fact, to the contrary, the private inter-organizational correspondence leading up to the 1997 Conference support the argument that indigenous NGOs sought a degree of autonomy from donor agendas, if only for tactical reasons.

By the beginning of 2000 over twenty NGOs had been accredited by the Zimbabwean state for various forms and levels of involvement in resettlement projects in terms of the Inception Phase. For instance, ZERO was accredited to undertake research on land-based resources. However, external funding and agricultural land for the CAs were not forthcoming, and the IP never got off the ground. Moyo offers a broad explanation for the eventual collapse of the entire Inception Phase of LRRP Phase II in the year 2000, and this focuses on a range of misguided actions by key stakeholders. Notably, he argues that NGOs and donors misread the prevailing political dynamics, and ‘believed wrongly’ that the land occupation movement ‘was merely a political and partisan ploy’ by the government to maintain its grip on power ‘rather than a socially grounded demand’ that ZANU-PF ‘was responding to (albeit also for its political benefit).’ The ‘expectation’ of NGOs ‘was that the individual political survival of Mugabe and of Zanu-PF at the elections would obviate pressures for land reform. This detracted attention [of NGOs] from land reform to the electoral contests of [June] 2000. …The few NGOs that had
been interested in land reform [before 2000] … became directly entangled in the broader political struggles for constitutional reform and elections, as a means of eventually addressing land reform, rather than engage on actual land redistribution project development and financing.’ (Moyo 2000e:pp.4, 5) Particularly in the face of only minimal funding forthcoming from donors in the late 1990s (despite donors’ conference commitments to the contrary), ‘land’ NGOs did not involve themselves in any meaningful land projects under the Phase II Programme.

Rather, as part of the broader civic movement then emerging, many (notably urban) advocacy NGOs pursued an anti-authoritarian civic nationalism and focused more on human rights and governance than on redistributive agrarian reform. In so doing, they consciously aligned themselves with the processes leading to the formation of the opposition party, the MDC. This included a number of NGOs, such as ZimRights and ZWRCN, which had been particularly active in the previous rounds of advocacy work on land reform, and which had thereby sought to engage critically with the state rather than to directly confront it. For instance, even a cursory analysis of the ZWRCN’s magazine *Woman Plus* during the years 1999 and 2000 almost leads to the conclusion that it became just another mouthpiece for civic nationalism and the MDC (ZWRCN 1999, 2000). This civic activism was viewed by the central state as unpatriotic and it led to angry suspicion and mistrust of the broader NGO ‘sector’.

At a Civil Society Reflection meeting held in December 2004, some participants suggested that during the late 1990s NGOs were ‘confrontational’ and that perhaps the state was justifiably ‘paranoid’ about NGOs given their role in the formation of the NCA and MDC. Yet, many radical analysts (for example Hammar et al. eds. 2003) conceptualize the activism of urban civil society during the late 1990s as epitomizing the emergence of a stronger, more autonomous and increasingly vibrant civil society, and as undermining the domination of civic formations by the nation-state. Indeed, it is likely for this reason that the state sought to rein in the urban civic movement.

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48 Notes from *End of Year Civil Society Reflection*, MWENGO, Jamieson Hotel, Harare, 16th December 2004.
11.5 Accelerated Reform and NGO Responses

The land re-occupation movement (the Third Chimurenga) that arose in early 2000 dramatically altered the political and agrarian terrain in Zimbabwe and this led to a pronounced disabling environment for those NGOs seeking to lobby government on land reform. Simultaneously, the land movement caught NGOs totally unaware and off-guard, and they were grossly ill prepared for its devastating implications and impact. They literally found themselves in ‘disarray’ (ZERO 2000:p.22). Even those ‘land’ NGOs that just a year before (in early 1999) had shown an exuberance and robustness were now less sanguine. Thus, the WLLG argued that the accelerated programme had made the issue of women’s land rights a ‘marginal issue’ (Makombe ed. 2001:p.19).

For all intents and purposes, it seemed that once again NGOs found themselves totally peripheral to land policy formation and implementation. In fact, especially during the early stages of the accelerated reform initiative, NGOs painted the occupations as vigorously driven by an authoritarian state. Undoubtedly, this portrait was designed to draw attention to the undemocratic, violent and non-transparent procedural threads running through the programme. Further, the failure to provide proper pre-settlement infrastructure and marketing and support services on the resettled farms also risked Zimbabwe ‘turning itself into a nation of peasants’ (CREATE 2002:p.14). Also, international donors rejected squarely the accelerated land programme, and thus considerable volumes of both multilateral and bilateral aid were withheld or withdrawn from Zimbabwe because of the land occupations and the suspension of the rule of law.

Initially, a group of concerned NGOs made a desperate appeal, and urged the government to resettle people in a planned and orderly procedure, and without losing sight of the broader considerations as stated in the Inception Phase and its CAs. In August 2000, NGOs and civic groups presented a proposal entitled Practical Action to End the Impasse, and this was to be based on twelve highly visible pilot resettlement projects in three provinces to be funded by government, the CFU, bilateral donors and NGOs. These
projects were to include farm workers and communal villagers, to have sufficient pre-settlement infra-structural development, and to ensure a structured coordinating role for established local state administrations rather than for ad hoc militarized bodies emerging on the occupied farms. However, the projects never materialized, and the policy space for NGO involvement in land reform had effectively collapsed. As CREATE noted: ‘The NGO community in the country … [was] … caught in between as donors withheld funding for the land reform exercise while government narrowed the space for NGO involvement in land reform.’ (CREATE 2002:pp.2-3, my emphasis) Indeed, the land movement had undermined the Land Programme Phase II as then formulated and constituted, and it was later revised in 2001 and then implemented in a pronounced state-centric manner.

Subsequent diplomatic efforts, but particularly the signing of the Abuja Agreement in September 2001 by the British and Zimbabwean governments, seemed to have the potential to break the impasse and to once again allow for the possibilities of CAs. The Agreement stressed that the land reform programme should be implemented within the laws and constitution of Zimbabwe and it made provision for 300,000 hectares specifically for NGO involvement in land redistribution. Various NGOs along with the national NGO association, NANGO, held a consensus-building workshop in November 2001 to see how they could ‘exploit opportunities’ opened up by the Abuja Agreement, to ‘once again re-engage the government in the whole land reform process’, and thereby to contribute to the implementation of the Agreement (CREATE 2001:pp.6, 10).

At the time, CREATE suggested various forms of NGO involvement in land reform, including encouraging donor funding, providing emergency and relief infrastructure on settled farms, strengthening the organizational capacities of Rural District Councils (RDCs) and resettled communities, and engaging in proactive land and tenure research. CREATE reiterated that NGOs ‘possess’ capacities and resources that are ‘value adding’ to processes of rural change (CREATE 2002:p.3). This involvement would however be conditional on the provision of an enabling environment by government and once again recognizing NGOs as partners in the agrarian reform process. The NGO workshop also
sought to rectify a serious weakness within the NGO community by developing a NGO position paper on the land question so that a common stance, always lacking in the past, could be presented in its lobbying efforts internationally and locally.

However, the Abuja Agreement was never implemented. At the 2001 workshop, CREATE had indicated that if the Zimbabwean government did not adhere to the Agreement, then CREATE ‘will be unable to make any significant further contributions to land reform in Zimbabwe’ (CREATE 2001:p.12). The ITDG, a research and development NGO, noted that because of the failure to implement the Agreement, ‘[a]t the moment there is no alignment’ between state and civil society on the matter of land reform, and NGOs needed to find ways and means of collaborating more fruitfully with the state (CREATE 2001:p.15). Also, given the centrality of land reform in sustainable development, in August 2002 the Zimbabwean Coalition on Debt and Development as part of the alternative globalization movement called for an All-Stakeholder Land Commission ‘to ensure that there is no future inequality based on land ownership’ (ZIMCODD 2002; Manyanya 2003:p.102). At that time, however, NGOs continued to be ‘on the fringes’ of land reform in Zimbabwe because (in part) they did not have ‘a clear strategy on how they could effectively participate’ in the reform process (CREATE 2002:p.1). Yet, by then, ‘land’ NGOs had been left with little choice but to accept what ZERO describes as the ‘irreversibility’ of the accelerated resettlement programme despite its initial illegalities and glaring procedural weaknesses. Thus, according to ZERO, any meaningful engagement by NGOs on land reform must be done largely on the state’s terms and must recognize that the failure of the current land programme ‘will not benefit anyone’ (Marongwe 2002:p.90).

11.6 Beyond Advocacy?

Research-orientated ‘land’ NGOs such as ZERO, ZWRCN and Women and Land in Zimbabwe (formerly WLLG) have a central function in advocacy on land reform and that is probably what they do best. But, increasingly, they have come to realize that the
esoteric quality of research information often makes it difficult for land advocacy NGOs to bridge the social gap between themselves and the rural underclasses that they purport to represent. Thus, in October 2003, the director of ZWRCN noted that ‘information is power but it is also intellectual’, and that NGOs ‘involved in the dissemination of information are having a hard time because people are overwhelmed by poverty’. Despite noble intentions, they have limited prospects and resources for engaging rural communities in tangible projects. But certainly there is a deep appreciation of the need to link short-term gain to long-term participatory change, as evidenced by the ongoing propagation of CBNRM systems in the case of ZERO. In this regard, Kanji et al. (2002) note that the ‘land’ NGOs they studied all stressed the ‘need to engage directly with communities and with their immediate concerns and needs if they are to gain legitimacy for advocacy’ (Kanji et al. 2002:p.13).

Urban ‘governance’ NGOs, including ZimRights, have at times starkly criticized this position. These NGOs have argued that stressing short-term bread-and-butter needs at the (seeming) expense of broader democratic questions only serves to de-politicize and sidetrack matters. For instance, a few years ago mass action by the NCA such as stay-away calls and public demonstrations received only limited public support. But the NCA disputed what it calls ‘false analysts’ who said that Zimbabweans ‘in the face of biting economic hardships such as food shortages and an unaffordably high costs [sic] of living, are only concerned about “how to survive” and have no time for issues of governance.’ (NCA 2003:p.3) As will be noted in the next chapter, rural NGDOs have shifted a considerable portion of their programmatic work from development to short-term relief in the context of a crisis of rural livelihoods.

The point is that both short-term material needs and longer-term democratic change (including agrarian reform) could be (potentially) simultaneously addressed in line with Fowler’s (1993) onionskin depiction of NGO work, but the specific emphasis and combination is open to historical variation. In discussing anti-systemic organizations in the modern world, though, Wallerstein (2002) seeks to highlight the strategy and tactics

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49 Interview conducted with Director of ZWRCN, Harare, 15th October 2003.
of what he calls ‘short-term defensive action’: ‘The world’s populations live in the present, and their immediate needs have to be addressed. Any movement that neglects them is bound to lose the widespread passive support that is essential for its long-term success. But the motive and justification for defensive action should not be that of remedying a failing system but rather of preventing its negative effects from getting worse in the short run. This is quite different psychologically and politically.’ (Wallerstein 2002:p.35)

11.7 Advocacy NGOs: Tensions and Complexities

This chapter has highlighted the many tensions and complexities that characterized the efforts by advocacy NGOs to engage in land policy formation in Zimbabwe from 1995 onwards. The late 1990s showed signs of an inclusive policy approach developing. Yet, the government was sending out contradictory signals, and there was significant tension and animosity between the Zimbabwean government and global financiers of land reform. Accelerated reform however put a sudden halt to this process of incorporation. Further, constant demands by NGOs for inclusion were offset by concerns about the deepening ‘uncertainty’ that arises from participatory and hence more complicated modes of operation. This concern relates in part to the many organizational weaknesses that the NGOs at that time already displayed.

These weaknesses though were not simply (‘external’) incapacities revolving around the ‘dos and don’ts’ of advocacy and the practicalities of engaging in lobbying processes. There were also more fundamental questions about (‘internal’) systems and procedures that would sustain these NGOs as organizational forms over the necessary long haul without experiencing ‘fatigue’. At most times, these advocacy NGOs were small indigenous NGOs with tremendous dedication and zeal but with limited organizational history and capacity. They relied on a small core of permanent staff, and often (as during the preparation for the 1997 Consultative Conference) personality quirks and organizational turf got in the way of more sustained inter-NGO cooperation. The fact
that they were able to hold this conference is testimony to their commitment and perseverance.

Eventually, accelerated reform dramatically brought out what was already in many ways implicit in the social field of these NGOs, namely, that they were caught in a web of intrigue that had been jointly woven by global donors and the Zimbabwean government over a number of years. The NGOs distanced themselves from both, and thus they were not in either (or any) camp. They were, in a sense, seeking to balance their accountabilities and thereby became ‘caught in the crossfire’. Their world of advocacy was embedded in this tension between ‘the global’ and ‘the local’, and their work was a vivid expression of it. Yet, ultimately, the balancing act they performed was made simpler by the existence of a greater distance that was forged if only unintentionally. This was the distance between the intermediary NGOs and the rural under-classes. Their organizational practices did not necessitate the great uncertainties that would arise from trying to incorporate these under-classes into the land advocacy process. This had the effect of simplifying and stabilizing the world of ‘land’ advocacy NGOs.
Chapter 12

‘Land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe: Development and Change

Zimbabwe has always had a large number of NGDOs that could be counted as land NGOs. In 1991, twenty-five NGOs were said to be ‘involved in agricultural activities’, including international NGOs like World Vision and Plan International and indigenous NGOs such as Silveria House (Wellard and Mema eds. 1991). Moyo (2000b:p.55) also noted for the mid-1990s ‘a high concentration [nearly one-third] of NGO activity in the areas of agricultural and rural development’, including income-generating projects, dam construction and provision of agricultural inputs. During the latter half of the 1990s (and hence before accelerated reform) rural development NGOs (both international and indigenous) continued to ply their trade – so to speak – in the main tenure regimes in rural Zimbabwe, namely, communal lands, ‘old’ resettlement areas and White-owned commercial farms. Whether such interventions were functional to the reproduction of global capitalism is not the subject of this inquiry. Rather, this thesis aims to conceptualize and understand ‘land’ NGOs as organizational forms that are subject to tension and ambivalence. In highlighting themes relevant to this aim, the chapter focuses on ‘land’ NGOs involved in rural development in the turbulent transition from the pre-accelerated reform period to the accelerated period.

12.1 Pre-Accelerated Reform Continuities

Much of the operational practices of NGDOs in the late 1990s were a clear continuation of what they had done almost habitually in previous years (Chapter Ten), although now in the context of a deepening political and economic crisis, and in many cases with more tenuous donor funding. There was also a (relatively speaking) heightening role in land
policy formation processes in the years immediately preceding the accelerated period, but this was still secondary and intermittent. As in the past, NGOs were far more active at the operational end of agrarian reform, where many NGO theorists and practitioners would argue they rightly belong. By necessity, their organizational and development practices continued to entail *obtrusive interventions* in intricate agrarian processes throughout rural Zimbabwean society. Further, the rural practices of NGDOs were largely responsive in their character. In rural field settings, NGOs haphazardly filled development gaps left by an increasingly emasculated nation-state or simply complemented meagre government services. CREATE thus waxes eloquently with reference to the (‘old’) resettlement areas established in the 1980s: ‘NGOs have … proved to be extremely versatile and innovative in service delivery. Their ability to interface [sic] directly with communities places them at a distinct advantage over the centralized structures under which the government operates.’ (CREATE 2002:pp.10-11)

This argument suggests that it might be organizationally prudent for NGOs to focus pure and simple on what they do best, namely, to meet the basic needs of the rural under-classes by for example providing education, health and water facilities. ITDG also sees this kind of basic intervention as tactically astute because ‘government was less suspicious when NGOs work in such areas’ compared for example to advocacy-cum-political work (CREATE 2001:p.16). These claims (by NGOs themselves) are highly suggestive, because in different ways they indicate that NGOs ought to refrain from forcefully engaging in the bumpy terrain of land advocacy and reform that was addressed in Chapter Eleven. As discussed below, this terrain also seems to be found operationally within the ‘new’ (accelerated reform) resettlement areas.

These development (or operational) NGOs, although involved in ad hoc networking, largely worked independently of each other in different rural areas and they employed diverse and sometimes conflicting development strategies. For instance, a long-established indigenous NGO called the Zimbabwe Women’s Bureau employed (during the late 1990s) what it considers to be an innovative integrated rural strategy called the Homestead Development Programme that seeks in particular to empower women in
participatory planning processes, capacity building schemes and household livelihood strategies (ZWB n.d.). And ORAP, working with a membership base in the rural areas of Matabeleland and Midlands provinces, adopted what it claims to be a unique participatory and decentralized ‘village movement’ development programme (Jamela 1990, Sibanda 2002). No matter though what form their development strategies and programmes took, all NGOs prioritized community participation as the crux of sustainable rural development. To a large extent, the Zimbabwean government perceived these NGOs as performing an important complementary function in the countryside, reaching marginal rural communities that state agencies might otherwise not reach but also providing at times incremental learning models that the state could possibly replicate on a larger rural scale. Also, despite ongoing tensions with the central state, all NGDOs had established close relationships with state functionaries at both provincial and district levels. However, all this changed with the emergence of the land movement.

12.2 Accelerated Reform and Organizational Disruptions

The land movement (starting in the year 2000) had a ‘quite dramatic’ impact on the world and work of rural development NGOs. Most of these NGOs speak of their activities under all land tenure systems as being heavily disrupted by the happenings set in motion by the ‘occupations’. In this regard, Palmer argued in 2002 that ‘[m]ost NGOs had been slow to respond strategically’ to the events of 2000 and beyond, and they ‘were having to spend all their time trying to catch up.’ (Palmer 2002:p.6) Many development projects were suspended or put on hold particularly during the first three years of the Third Chimurenga, and the emphasis in practice became humanitarian relief rather than sustainable development. Particularly problematic has been the work of those NGOs operating on White-owned commercial farms, one of which (FOST) is discussed in the next chapter as a case study. Thus, the Kunzwana Women’s Association (KWA), which was formed in 1995, speaks about having to ‘remobilize’ its programme after the sheer havoc caused by accelerated land reform. This NGO continues to seek access to its

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50 Interview with Walker, FOST.
traditional ‘target’ group (i.e. farm workers) who now reside on resettled A1 or A2 farms (or on the fringes of these farms) despite the practical difficulties this entails, as ‘we cannot just abandon them’. But accelerated reform has also engendered serious rethinking and strategizing on the part of other NGOs.

Plan International, for instance, works in communal lands and seeks through its formal rural strategic plan ‘to strengthen the long-term capability of all community members to manage matters that affect the well-being of children.’ It is engaged in food security and poverty alleviation activities involving crop and livestock production as well as primary health care. In so doing, it makes use of local management committees comprised of ‘beneficiaries’. However, the uncertain political and economic environment, notably the radical land reform programme, has made it ‘not possible’ to plan agricultural interventions ‘in precise terms’. Hence, ‘focus has shifted to meet immediate food needs’ (Plan 2002:p.10). In recent years, Save the Children (Norway) has also engaged in considerable internal reflection and evaluation as it seeks to establish a strategic management approach to maintain its rural relevance. While it speaks of ‘capacity building of local structures and organisations’ as a ‘strategic methodology’, it has now ‘prioritised the need for flexible plans and relevant responses to the emergency, without necessarily sidelining the development plans that have lasting impact on children’s lives.’ (STC 2002:pp.3, 8)

In fact, there has been an array of international NGOs such as World Vision and Christian Care that became part of the UN World Food Programme effort in Zimbabwe and hence they were heavily involved in the distribution of emergency food aid. This often involved sub-contracting to indigenous NGOs. The humanitarian crisis in the country, in no small proportion blamed by NGOs on accelerated reform, thus moved NGOs into emergency gear with a pronounced welfare and relief element in their post-1999 operations (PRF 2002). The mammoth size of the relief exercise severely taxed the organizational capacity and technical expertise of NGOs, notably the indigenous NGOs.

51 Interviews conducted with Mrs. Mutara, Kunzwana Women’s Association, 29th July and 10th November 2005.
12.3 Communal Lands and ‘Old’ Resettlement Areas

Despite the adverse economic and political climate, NGOs continue to undertake rural development work. Detailing the activities of World Vision, the Lutheran Development Service and ITDG enable us to identify certain themes and problems. World Vision operates in all provinces in Zimbabwe, mainly in communal lands but at times in ‘old’ resettlement areas. Its mission statement refers to the importance of ‘transformational development’ and the ‘promotion of justice’. It is involved in large-scale, but not necessarily fully integrated, rural development programmes designed to benefit marginalized communities with a specific focus on children. Its Area Development Programmes (ADPs) include water and sanitation, dam construction and irrigation, housing, health, agricultural production, education and HIV/AIDS. To enhance food security it is implementing an agricultural recovery programme to benefit over 130,000 communal farmers, and it also has an agricultural input credit scheme and a micro-financing facility for marginalized rural entrepreneurs.

It seeks to build the organizational capacity of rural communities and speaks about how its ADPs make ‘remarkable achievements in terms of empowering communities’ (World Vision 2002a:p.5). In fact, the communities with which it works are said to be the ‘partners’ of World Vision in sustainable development. It also provides skills training on such matters as borehole maintenance, agro-forestry and livestock disease control and, where appropriate, communities provide labour inputs into specific projects. Beneficiaries, at least at the individual level, ‘are selected according to their degree of marginalisation’ (World Vision 2000a:p.4). World Vision works very closely with line ministries and with other NGOs that may offer more specialized technical services. After normally a two-year preparatory phase, an ADP functions for a period of up to fifteen years and is then handed over to local management structures that are meant to become development associations. As its director says: ‘Drilling of boreholes and developing the community’s knowledge on better cropping methods remain sound interventions but more critical is working with communities to find ways of continuing to enjoy those
services long after the non-governmental organisation has moved out of their community.’ (World Vision 2000b:p.2)

World Vision has a well-established research and evaluation unit engaged in feasibility studies and baseline surveys, and this includes participatory rural appraisals and appreciative inquiry processes designed to identify community needs and aspirations. The unit also does programme proposals to secure additional funding as well as programme designs, plans and evaluations. It is claimed that ‘representatives of the community and other stakeholders in the community’ play ‘a critical role in the development of the design documents.’ (World Vision 2001:p.8) This unit does mid-term evaluations of ADPs and end-of-programme assessments to determine the potential for sustainability. In the four evaluations conducted during the year 2002 it was concluded that ‘significant achievements’ were made, despite the lack though of reliable baseline details for the communities concerned (World Vision 2002a:p.10). World Vision has identified what it calls ‘transformation development indicators’ to show effects and impacts, and these include such matters as child nutrition, community participation and household resilience.

Like other rural development NGOs, World Vision has come under scrutiny and suspicion by the central state for supposed involvement in rural politics during parliamentary and presidential election periods. In December 2001, the manager of Hurungwe ADP in the far north of the country spoke about his organization’s operational transparency and declared: ‘World Vision is a Christian development organisation. We have no other agenda but to work with the communities.’ (World Vision 2002b:p.10) The funding of World Vision is largely from child sponsorships emanating from outside the country plus multilateral donor organizations. Yet, it also has an active local resource mobilization unit that secures donations in cash and kind as well as partners from the corporate sector within the country. In 2002, only three percent of total funding was from Zimbabwe but there has been ‘an encouraging response from the local business sector’ (World Vision 2002c:p.7).
The Lutheran Development Service (LDS) operates in drought prone and marginal areas in southern districts of the country, as four of its programmes elsewhere were suddenly terminated in 1998. It works amongst the very poor in terms of national wealth ranking criteria, and it uses a number of characteristics such as lack of economic activities and perennial food shortages to identify such rural communities. It currently operates within the confines of a five-year country strategy plan that ends in 2006 and that is based on an external evaluation conducted in 2001. This external evaluation had no community involvement. The main programme of LDS is the inter-disciplinary Integrated Rural Development Project (IRDP) revolving around a lofty vision that includes ‘equity and social justice in the community through empowerment’. Thus, ‘[c]ommunity participation is the central principle for LDS involvement in development. We believed that communities had the capacity to develop themselves and outside intervention should only come to assist the communities in achieving their desired objectives. The organization saw itself only as a catalyst to the development process of an area with the community fully involved.’ (LDS 2002:p.6)

LDS works in specific rural districts for extended periods of time and will only move to new wards when existing IRDP communities are assessed as being ‘sustainably empowered’ (LDS 2001:p.2). Community awareness and motivation workshops and meetings, often with line ministry involvement, are conducted as part of development education and to ensure long-term community ownership of projects. The IRDPs hence focus on sustainable development entailing ‘a participatory approach that is environmentally aware, gender sensitive, culturally sensitive and technologically appropriate.’ (LDS 2001:p.18) Currently, this involves rural water supplies such as dams, boreholes, irrigation and brick water tanks; food security such as drought tolerant crops and granaries; income-generating projects and, on a significant level, savings and credit schemes. Income-generating activities currently pose a serious problem because of the economic climate, notably the unavailability and cost of basic inputs. Likewise, its seed programme has faced difficulties because of the scarcity of maize and sorghum seed. Further, LDS is also extensively involved in environmental rehabilitation focusing on overgrazing and tree cutting and this normally involves food-for-work projects. Local
community labour is also used in, for instance, dam construction but community turn out has been recently ‘affected by the drought with people concentrating on looking for food’ (LDS 2002:p.13). Like most other NGOs in rural Zimbabwe, it is mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into its field operations. The external evaluation noted that cost-benefit analyses of projects and needs assessments are not properly implemented if done at all.

Overall, though, the external evaluation says the LDS programme has been ‘implemented well and has had positive contributions to marginalized people’s lives’ (LDS 2001:p.15). As well, LDS itself speaks of ‘satisfactory results’ in 2002 (LDS 2002:p.4). Most funding comes from outside the country, largely from church organizations. LDS appreciates though the importance of elaborating a comprehensive funding strategy, including a local bias, but notes that high quality reporting would be a critical tool for this. Because of the hyperinflationary environment, budget control and monitoring have become exceedingly difficult. The political impasse in the country, with pronounced community polarization, is seen as a ‘serious threat to LDS’ as it becomes ‘much more difficult to organize meetings among communities and to make villagers participate in developmental activities.’ (LDS 2001:p.6) Hence, ‘[f]ear for political repression keep people from actively taking part in public discussions and activities’ (LDS 2001:p.10). LDS highlights the general disregard for the rule of law in the context of accelerated land reform, and the country strategy plan stresses the importance of advocacy on human rights and on development policy directly pertinent to its ‘targeted’ communities.

ITDG is a clear example of a development NGO that combines research and lobbying with on-hands practical development initiatives. It receives extensive external funding from a wide variety of multilateral and bilateral donors including the European Commission and German Agro Action. This means that its financial and accounting systems have to be designed to ‘meet the needs of different audiences’ (ITDF n.d.:p.5). It speaks though about donor fatigue and the downsizing and relocation of some major traditional funding agencies to other countries within the southern African region. Besides donors, ITDG has recently formed a development consultancy unit that generates revenue but in 2002 this formed less than ten per cent of income. Its vision speaks about
a world free of poverty and injustice and it claims that ‘technology is key to reducing/eradicating poverty’ in rural communities and that successful development interventions need to be scaled up and implemented elsewhere in the countryside through ‘user friendly knowledge sharing platforms’ (ITDG n.d.:pp.1, 7). Its operational activities in rural Zimbabwe are very diverse and include the rehabilitation of rural water points, dairy groups, water harvesting and conservation, bee keeping and honey marketing, and mushroom and guar bean production.

ITDG argues that ‘people living in poverty drive their own development’, and it seeks to build ‘on local skills and knowledge’ and to fully incorporate local communities in the various strategic planning stages of a project in order to generate appropriate rural livelihood strategies and solutions. Thus, it works with rural communities ‘to strengthen their institutional and technological capacities using demand driven participatory approaches’ (ITDG 2002:pp.3, 10). It emphasizes community-based management of projects and trains village community workers to ensure a sustainable technological and administrative maintenance programme once the project is complete. Links with service-providers, area committees and skills associations with long-term mandates in the rural area are also forged to enhance sustainability. In its annual reports, ITDG stresses the visible impacts of its projects that become the envy of surrounding communities, as well as how local communities have come to own the development intervention. At times, though, it has been difficult to work with local communities because of personal interests overriding group interests. ITDG also worries about the ‘worsening diplomatic relations’ within the country and this involves a ‘growing stakeholder concern in the development arena including our key partners’ (ITDG 2003). It notes as well that in the face of famine there has been ‘the prioritisation of food distribution over mainstream development activities’ by donors (ITDG 2002:p.22).
12.4 Ex-Commercial Farms and ‘New’ Resettlement Schemes

Beyond the ‘old’ resettlement and communal areas, NGOs are also active on ex-large-scale commercial farms. These include KWA, FOST, DAPP-Zimbabwe and the Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe (FCTZ). FCTZ took over the programmes of Save the Children (UK) and is involved in numerous community development projects on commercial farms. These projects include health, Blair latrines, education, HIV/AIDS and well sinking. FCTZ relies heavily on external donors including Save the Children and NOVIB. According to FCTZ, its interventions are designed to empower farm worker communities and, for this purpose, it has an Empowerment of Farm Workers project and has helped to establish (under the auspices of RDCs) village and ward development committees on numerous farms. However, because of the Third Chimurenga disturbances, many of these structures have fallen away. In general, according to its board chairperson, the recent insecurity and uncertainty on the farms due to farm invasions and national elections ‘made it difficult for us to continue with normal field operations… As a result we had to scale down certain activities… [I]t became difficult and perhaps unrealistic to discuss and convince farm owners on the need for investment in social developments on their properties. As an organisation we are concerned that the hard won gains achieved … may be compromised as a result of what has gone on.’ (FCTZ 2001a:p.6) These factors, as well as the general economic hardships, have altered the terrain of FCTZ’s operations in that, at least temporarily, the organization has shelved certain planned and budgeted activities.

FCTZ sees a change in the needs of commercial farm workers, mainly from long-term development to short-term relief needs such as food and shelter. In a limited study of farm workers in early 2001, FCTZ expressed concern about the plight of ex-farm workers and their families. As indicated by the study, ‘no examples were found of farm workers being able to compensate in any substantial way for lost earnings from agricultural work… The burden of coping with lost income, therefore, falls on expenditure.’ (FCTZ 2001b:pp.19-20) According to FCTZ, this necessitates flexibility and creativity on its
part in order to remain relevant. For instance, during 2002 the FCTZ made efforts to ‘develop a humanitarian response programme, particularly around the provision of food and other material support to vulnerable children and adults in former commercial farming areas.’ (FCTZ 2002:p.3) There is now considerable input into a child supplementary feeding programme, a food aid programme and emergency work amongst farm families in informal settlements. As well, the deteriorating economic climate made it difficult for FCTZ to retain staff. Despite the turbulent times, FCTZ has been able to maintain relatively cordial relations with provincial officials and extension officers in line ministries and continues to work closely with RDCs. Recently, in part because of the downswing in field operations, a significant amount of time has been spent on staff development, including on participatory rural appraisal methodology, team building, and monitoring and evaluation.

In reviewing the work of NGOs involved on commercial farms, Moyo et al. (2000b) argued in the year 2000 that these NGOs ‘lacked pro-active and holistic strategies to resolve the problems facing farm workers, focussing instead on narrowly defined social welfare approaches, which seek to “band-aid” problems rather than promote structural change.’ (Moyo et al. 2000b:p.188) Considering that welfare provision is ‘an important lever in the power relations’ (Moyo et al. 2000b:p.193) on commercial farms, it could be argued that the interventions of NGOs simply reproduced an oppressive form of ‘domestic government’ (Rutherford 2001). By and large, NGOs took for granted the sanctity of private farm property and they never lobbied for radical changes such as land expropriation.

These NGOs however have become increasingly involved in advocating for the land (and political) rights of agricultural workers. During the land occupations, countless farm workers lost their source of livelihood and their place of abode, yet they were not properly incorporated into the land redistribution exercise. For instance, FCTZ argued that accelerated reform ‘does not adequately cater for the interest of farm workers’ with less than two per cent of programme beneficiaries being farm worker families (FCTZ 2001a:p.15). NGOs active on commercial farms, in part because of the history and
personnel of these bodies, have sometimes been seen in official circles as protecting (if 
only by default) the interests of White commercial farmers. Save the Children Fund-UK 
was a catalyst for intensified NGO involvement on commercial farms in the late 1990s, 
and in 2000 it published From Bus Stop to Farm Village that details the history of its 
farm programme. The wife of a MDC Member of Parliament authored this public 
document and, as a result, further production has ceased. For these and other reasons, 
government has often seen such NGOs as part of an anti-land lobby (Moyo et al. 2000b).

DAPP-Zimbabwe is an indigenous NGO that is linked to HUMANA People to People 
internationally. It operates primarily in the Shamva District of Mashonaland Central 
province. Prior to accelerated reform, it owned five commercial farms in the district. In 
the mid-1990s it initiated a Communal to Commercial (CC) Farmer Programme in which 
communal peasant farmers would be taught modern commercial farming methods. The 
CC programme was done with the full acknowledgement and support of the Ministry of 
Agriculture. It involved selecting a limited number of seemingly capable communal 
farmers and allocating them land on DAPP commercial farms. These farmers would live, 
work and be trained at these farms over a three-year period and would then qualify as 
(government-recognized) ‘master farmers’, after which they could apply for resettlement 
as part of the government programme or jointly purchase a commercial farm with DAPP 
assistance. The CC programme started at one of the farms in 1997 and the first intake of 
farmer-students began to graduate just prior to the emergence of the land movement.

The government designated three of the five farms owned by DAPP, including one large 
600 hectare farm that was purchased by DAPP in 1999 and at which the NGO had major 
plans to expand the CC programme. It is left with two smaller farms, one that houses 
HUMANA’s international offices and one that offers internal training for HUMANA 
employees who work throughout southern Africa. HUMANA senior staff members are 
all White expatriates, and they have a pronounced altruistic drive that emanates from 
many decades of involvement in NGO work. Their development ideas and methods have 
a paternalistic thrust, as encapsulated in the notion that peasants need to be ‘made

52 Discussion with T. Ncube, Information Officer, Save the Children-UK, 29th July 2005.
modern’. Yet, in the light of land reform, they argue that Zimbabweans have the right to decide their own development destiny. As a result, and unlike other NGDOs, they have not distanced themselves from the accelerated programme. Thus, soon after their farms were taken, they approached the Ministry of Lands and asked what kind of NGO work would be appropriate under the altered political and rural landscape. It was suggested to them that the CC programme could now be implemented ‘on site’, that is, in the ‘new’ resettlement areas. For the past few years, and in conjunction with government agricultural extension officers, they have been doing this on a significant scale in the Shamva District. Hence, they are trying to instil within ‘new farmers’ on A1 schemes the modern commercial mode of agricultural work and life.

12. 5 From Development to Relief

Whether at the policy formation level or at the operational level, ‘land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe have operated in a fluctuating and difficult political and economic environment during the LRRP Phase II in Zimbabwe. To some degree, NGOs have found themselves simply overwhelmed by the sheer immensity of the problems and challenges facing themselves and the communities that they serve, particularly since the year 2000. Yet they have shown much tenacity and commitment despite the adversities and pressures. In the face of disruptions in their development work, they have sought to engage in various forms of organizational reflection, learning and strategizing, and have done so in a reasonably proactive manner. In this respect, the representative of an international NGO in Zimbabwe that facilitates capacity building amongst local NGOs recently described this conceptual work as the ‘software’ of NGO practice and the work of execution as the ‘hardware’. He employs the metaphor of a hammer and a nail, and claims that unless the hammer (or organization) is properly maintained and effectively wielded then no development work in the agrarian field can be accomplished.53 In this regard, and throughout the accelerated ‘period’, ‘land’ NGOs have tried to stand back and

53 Interview conducted with S. Schwersensky, Resident Representative, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1st March 2005.
strategically plan and implement development projects in an organizationally sound manner. Yet many of their current programmes have had to be significantly revised or put on hold because of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the rural areas of the country.

The rural crisis has a desperate human face and, despite the progressive language about justice and democracy in the mission statements of NGOs, this crisis of livelihoods is ignored by NGOs likely at their own organizational peril. The crisis is manifested in, amongst other things, the reduced agricultural yields and food shortages emanating from both natural (for example, recurring droughts) and political (for instance, accelerated reform) causes, as well as in the HIV/AIDS pandemic that continues to cause untold suffering particularly as the burden of caring for AIDS victims lies squarely on the already-weakened shoulders of the rural underclasses. Because of this, rural NGOs have had little option but to mainstream AIDS awareness and prevention into their programmes, along with integrating important forms of relief and emergency work into their development agendas and activities. In doing so, they have shown significant levels of technical and administrative capacity. They have focused on this short-term emergency work for many reasons, including their altruistic commitment to the ‘rural poor’ as found in organizational visions but also because of hard financial facts such as the preference of donors for relief interventions during times of humanitarian crisis. Further, operational NGOs withdrew from their sustainable development goals (at least temporarily) during the first few (turbulent) years of accelerated reform because this longer-term work had reached such levels of complexity that it significantly compromised the structural integrity and sustainability of these NGOs as organizational forms.

The short-term focus also seems to make sense for NGOs in terms of maintaining their organizational relevance as agents of development in the eyes of rural communities. Continuing to focus exclusively on participatory development at times of grinding rural poverty, when making ends meet becomes a daily challenge for the rural underclasses, may be intellectually pleasing but may only serve to alienate development NGOs from their targeted communities. This is something that the ruling ZANU-PF party knows all
too well, such that during the early years of accelerated reform it used emergency relief as a critical form of patronage and as a means of consolidating its power in the rural areas. During and after specific food aid programmes in the countryside, government officials publicly declared that development NGOs exaggerated their role in the relief effort and that the state played the more fundamental part. As well, the central state insisted that all relief be channelled through its local structures so that the rural under-classes, in case they felt otherwise, would see a direct and tangible link between state benevolence and food relief.

At times, the government has claimed that it could source and distribute sufficient basic foodstuffs to the rural population, and thus for long periods it has effectively suspended all NGO involvement in the humanitarian food effort. Meanwhile, as indicated in July 2005 by the Humanitarian Programme Coordinator for OXFAM-GB, NGOs sought to maintain or even build up their relief capacity in the eventuality that the government would rethink its position. Combining relief work with development work in times of social stress seeks to maintain a form of grassroots relevance. This is part of a broader picture of operational synergy that also includes combining – as noted in Chapter Eleven – development work with research or policy work. ITDG is an example of this development and research synergy that is intended to enhance both aspects of its work.

From a long-term perspective, however, ‘land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe perceive social development in agrarian economies as premised on building strong and effective rural organizations and communities. Hence, ZERO has ‘the conviction that community participation is the answer to many developmental shortcomings.’ (ZERO 1999:p.1) This was also noted in relation to accelerated reform and NGO advocacy (Chapter Eleven), with NGOs insisting on greater transparency and heightened community involvement in matters such as acquisition of farms, selection of beneficiaries and resettlement models. However, despite the emphasis by NGDOs in Zimbabwe on participatory development and grassroots capacity building, these concepts are often formulated nebulously and

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implemented broadly such that they become devoid of any significant meaning and value. At times, it would even appear that nearly anything and everything that transcends short-term relief aid (for example, handing out wheelbarrows) is seen as building capacity and empowering communities. Without doubt, though, there have been serious participatory initiatives by NGDOs, including the ‘handing over’ of projects to communities by World Vision and LDS, and these have entailed significant capacity-building efforts. But, these remain in large part NGO-driven and their sustainability is still questionable. As a result, external evaluations on record do not take the form of all-embracing social audits with grassroots input but are more restricted and inhibiting, and these evaluations are mainly initiated and shaped by donors and their social conceptions.

12.6 Organizational Space and Agrarian Change

NGOs in Zimbabwe tend to conceptualize land reform in terms of obscure notions of social and economic development instead of models of agrarian change or rural transformation. For example, in a ZERO publication, it is said that ‘[l]and related issues continue to be one of the major challenges toward sustainable development’ (Mutepfa et al. 1998b:p.8). Or, as ORAP put it many years ago, but it remains equally relevant today, ‘the enormous challenge of sustainable development ... must be characterised as the single most important challenge to the whole phenomenon of NGO enterprise’ (Jamela 1990:p.23). In fact, the pursuance of sustainable development is seen as the critical issue for ‘land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe.

Operational NGOs, in terms of their self-definitions, are development-centric rather than agrarian-centric organizational forms. In this respect, NGOs ‘do not emphasize egalitarian land redistribution as a key aspect of rural or agricultural development’ (Moyo 1999a:p.21). Despite the breath-taking language of emancipation that is normally found in the visions of intermediary NGOs in Zimbabwe, it would seem that these NGOs operate – due to a mixture of choices and constraints – within a social space that is defined and delineated by nebulous paradigms of development. Yet, ironically, the
accelerated period in Zimbabwe has seen the most significant and far-reaching processes of rural restructuring since independence, a process that caught these NGOs largely unaware and ill prepared for any meaningful response and engagement.

This raises the question of ‘space’ for ‘land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe, including both advocacy and development organizations. Normally, ‘land’ NGOs conceive themselves as organizations with noble intentions that seek by all means to open and widen space for democratic development for the benefit of society at large. On the other hand, the state is said to be overbearing and it is labelled almost as a sordid villain that tries to restrict and close space for NGOs unless it is forced to do otherwise. Thus, ITDG speaks of the need for a ‘strong and empowered civil society to monitor … [the state]… and ensure that local government structures do not become corrupt and rent seeking.’ (ITDG 2001:p.25) In this sense, a crude dichotomy between state and civil society is often asserted. For instance, in the case of land reform, there is said to be a centralizing and authoritarian state that imposes its will on rural inhabitants, and a progressive and democratic civil society – including ‘land’ NGOs – that seeks an egalitarian solution to land reform based on the rule of law.

Yet Moyo rightly argues, at least for the years leading up to 2000: ‘A strong central state has been able to limit and guide the democratic space of both partisan and policy lobby interest, in a manner intended to contain radical policy demands or political mobilisation for the comprehensive redistribution of land and related resources’ (Moyo 1999a:p.21 my emphasis). Elsewhere, as noted earlier in a different context, Moyo claims that the Zimbabwean state during the latter half of the 1990s sought ‘a societal corporatist model of governance, which enables it to retain state power while allowing for greater NGO participation.’ (Moyo 2000b:p.60 my emphasis) Of course, these arguments are meant to identify state strategies that are designed to maintain and consolidate social power. But they also insinuate that the nation-state at times promotes space for NGOs, albeit simultaneously seeking to structure and contain this space as part of a corporatist strategy. As well, despite its centralizing thrust and repeated acts of repression against land ‘squatters’ historically, the Zimbabwean government is more firmly embedded than
intermediary ‘land’ NGOs in agrarian communities. Further, the state yielded immediately (if not decisively) to the rural mobilization of the war veterans and the peasant under-classes during the year 2000, if only for reasons of political expediency.

‘Land’ NGOs stood at an almost bemused distance, as seemingly passive commentators and spectators. Hence, it might be apt to argue that many limitations on democratic, operational and policy space for ‘land’ NGOs have arisen from miscalculated action or blatant inaction on the part of these organizations themselves. Indeed, in blaming the state for closure of space, NGOs are externalizing their problems. They are also manifesting their own incapacitated condition, because they are expressing their inability to take responsibility for their own dilemmas. In this regard, NGOs often represent the historical trajectory of land reform in Zimbabwe as being dominated by the intransigence of the nation-state. They argue that international donors were prepared to make available almost unlimited funds for land acquisition on a willing-buyer/willing-seller basis and that donors continually offered policy guidance to the state, such as the taxing of underutilized commercial land to fund acquisitions. However, the state was ‘not interested’ in land reform until the late 1990s and then only to ‘maintain or expand patronage’ in the context of demands by war veterans and rural inhabitants.55

During most of the independence period, NGOs in Zimbabwe failed to occupy the gap in land policy formation resulting from the under-representation of the rural under-classes in formal lobbying structures and processes (Moyo 1999a). And when they were more active in land advocacy, such as during the 1996 to 1999 period, these lobbying efforts involved a significant trade off in that their efforts were at the expense of seeking to embed themselves in rural communities and of building the organizational capacity of these communities. In large part, NGOs have chosen to focus narrowly on an exclusive and patchwork ‘participatory’ development strategy while leaving land reform in large part un-addressed. Thus, restrictions on space are sometimes self-defined, self-imposed and self-inflicted.

55 Interview with Schwersensky, FES.
At times ‘land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe failed to exploit or to maximize on opportunities because of acts of commission based on strategic miscalculations, including such errors as misguided involvement in the messy terrain of party politics. At other times, land NGOs have failed to identify and create opportunities for themselves because of acts of omission. In part, this is because they appear trapped in development paradigms that fail to come to terms with the ambivalent political processes that characterize contemporary Zimbabwean society. In this regard, the dominant response of NGOs to the accelerated land acquisition process has been disengagement, and this has occurred for a range of political, ideological and organizational reasons. As noted below, this disengagement is highly problematic. Yet, accepting accelerated land resettlement as a given or as an accomplished fact, and working in terms of it and alongside it may in fact enact closure on analyzing its fluctuating social and class bases. In doing so, NGOs may also fail to highlight trajectories within the process that amount to new forms of political co-optation, control and compliance that leave land reform in Zimbabwe largely unresolved.

Either course of action (whether principled disengagement or blind acceptance) inhibit NGOs from identifying the shifting, uneven and fragmented spaces that are riddled with cracks and crevices and that open up opportunities for organizational practices that enhance agrarian change. In this respect, Kanji et al. (2002) make the critical point that regular and systematic reflection enables an NGO ‘to identify entry points and strategies to promote longer term changes in [agrarian] social relations’ (Kanji et al. 2002:p.30).

A key point that arises from the discussion in this and the previous chapter is that understanding the relationship between NGOs and land reform involves looking at the decisions and strategies of NGOs themselves. NGOs are not merely manipulated and marginalized as ‘objects’ by ‘others’, although they may at times represent their action in this manner. Intermediary ‘land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe do not simply articulate – in discourse or in practice – ‘global’ agendas on land, and nor are they simply sidelined on land reform by a ‘local’ authoritarian state. Rather, within the constraints of their social field, NGOs are active ‘subjects’ that make choices about forms (and degrees) of engagement that have organizational effects on land and agrarian processes. The two
case studies in Chapter Thirteen demonstrate the ways in which intermediary ‘land’ NGOs in contemporary Zimbabwe handle the tensions between ‘the global’ and ‘the local’.

12.7 Politics, Ideology and Organizational Dispositions of ‘Land’ NGOs

At a civil society consultative workshop held by the Commonwealth Foundation in Harare in the year 2002, one participant depicted NGOs in Zimbabwe as ‘dancing around the same spot’ (NANGO 2002: p.13). Potentially, this portrait has a triple meaning. First of all, it may mean that the spot never changes, and thus NGOs have all their wheels in the rut. In this regard, it implies that NGOs are not learning organizations, that they function without strategic forethought and that they are inherently conservative (if not politically then organizationally). Secondly, the portrait may mean that NGOs prefer (or are constrained) to remain on an unchanging spot while all spots around them are constantly shifting. Third of all, the phrase might mean that all NGOs dance to the same tune, although at times the tune (or spot) might change. In other words, NGOs have some sort of herding instinct or have the same shepherd, and hence they are invariably found pursuing common development and democracy-building policies and practices. All three shades of meaning likely have some element of truth. But none, on its own, serves as an accurate barometer of intermediary ‘land’ NGOs in Zimbabwean society since the mid-1990s. And, combined, the three meanings crudely ‘fix’ NGOs as a static and a historical social entity devoid of all fluidity and diversity. It has been the very purpose of this thesis to transcend such ‘static’ treatments of intermediary NGOs, as encapsulated in the subject-object dichotomy that conceptualizes a common object (all NGOs) ‘in the pocket’ of for instance a ‘globalizing other’.

‘Land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe are complex social phenomena that are constantly in motion and they are marked by considerable diversity. Although (as a ‘sector’) they have not been particularly proactive in ‘handling’ accelerated land reform, specific NGOs have shown significant adaptive capacity. Further, responses to land reform have been
incredibly diverse, ranging from the ‘hands off’ approach of SOS to the ‘testing the water’ position of FOST to the ‘gung ho’ approach of DAPP (see Chapter Thirteen). To pin an all-embracing (catch-all) label (of any kind) on intermediary NGOs is highly problematic not only empirically but also theoretically. For instance, such labels fail to come to grips with the ambivalences and contradictions that invariably mark the world and work of NGOs. Generally speaking, NGOs seek to ‘manage’ and ‘negotiate’ their social world through a multitude of organizational strategies that often pull in opposing directions. The organizational practices of NGOs are not necessarily one-dimensional or unidirectional, and they are subject to significant levels of ambiguity, fluidity and even confusion. Therefore, if NGOs are dancing, then they are more than likely ‘dancing on many spots’, and on uneven, unstable and shifting ground.

NGOs often ‘manage’ the ambivalences in their world by avoiding or simplifying complexities through specific organizational practices. In doing so, they try to stabilize their world. The outcome of this ‘managed’ process is open to considerable historical variation. In the case of contemporary Zimbabwe, it has resulted in NGOs – as a general trajectory – creating ‘distance’ between themselves and land reform, both before and during accelerated reform. Prior to the year 2000, the distance was particularly telling at the level of advocacy. NGOs refrained from concerted lobbying despite a reasonably conducive environment for doing so. On the other hand, under accelerated reform, there is a marked distance at the operational level, as development NGOs seem disengaged from the ‘new’ resettlement areas. Politics and ideology, and the conflicts they inspire, clearly contribute to the sheer complexity of engaging in land reform either at the policy or implementation level, and hence this distance exists. After all, land reform and the struggles it entails invariably reflect ‘issues of power and social relations, bringing governance and state-society relations sharply into focus’ (Kanji et al. 2002:p.2).

In Zimbabwe today, politics and ideology seem to rule the roost. Thus, with few exceptions, there is outright suspicion if not hostility between NGOs and government. For instance, many NGOs consider their internal affairs as strictly private affairs because
the ‘the environment is too sensitive to release information’. And, recently, the
Resident Representative of a German-based NGO that has extensively funded land
research in Zimbabwe described land reform as a ‘presidential preserve’. For this reason,
his organization (for example, Masiiwa ed. 2004) were of ‘no use’ as an advocacy tool. Those ‘land’ NGOs
that continue to lobby government on land, notably Women and Land in Zimbabwe, are
particularly aware of the politics of land reform, and they criticize the more
‘confrontational’ approach to government that has been adopted by urban civics in recent
years.

Simultaneously, the initial knee-jerk (rather than reflective) response by NGOs to the
land repossessions was largely negative and the resettlement programme was strongly
criticized as an ill-planned, chaotic and counterproductive state intervention. This
portrayal of accelerated reform speaks volumes about the political and ideological
dependencies of many ‘land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe. More sensitive theoretical (and
organizational) reflections may have highlighted the many progressive threads weaving
their way through the land movement, and this may have provided the basis for tactical
‘entry points’ by NGOs into the land reform process. Such a stance may also have
contributed to developing a degree of rural accountability and legitimacy for ‘land’
NGOs that otherwise seem to operate without an unequivocal rural mandate. The failure
to reflect regularly and meaningfully on organizational practices is considered to be one
of the ‘biggest weaknesses’ of NGOs in Zimbabwe because ‘we are operational all the
time’. This means that when NGOs do come together to reflect collectively, ‘we give off
a lot of heat but not a lot of light’.

56 Interview conducted with F. McManus, Acting Programme/Country Director, GOAL Zimbabwe, 29th
July 2005.
57 Interview with Schwersensky, FES.
58 Interview conducted with A. Mgugu, Women and Land in Zimbabwe, 16th March 2004.
59 Notes from End of Year Civil Society Reflection, MWENGO, Jamieson Hotel, Harare, 16th December
2004.
Donors also contribute to the politics of land. USAID does not lobby the government on land because ‘the situation is not conducive to this’ and CIDA refers to influencing policy formation on land subsequent to accelerated reform in Zimbabwe as a ‘non-starter’. The fact that major bilateral donors such as USAID, DFID and SIDA refuse to fund programmes or projects in the ‘new’ resettlement schemes (again on political grounds) is of significance in hindering NGO involvement. USAID no longer provides aid for development work in part because the macro economic and fiscal policies of the central state are ‘anti-development’. The Development Programme Specialist for USAID in Zimbabwe noted that his agency is continuing to undertake forms of humanitarian assistance in the country but only within communal areas and amongst former farm workers who have been internally displaced. He added that working within the ‘new’ resettlement areas ‘might be frowned upon as it involves legitimating the land reform programme’. This is particularly the case with agricultural projects on ‘A1’ settlement schemes involving small-scale farming. Some NGOs seek to go around this by receiving donor support for what they consider to be welfare (and not agricultural) work on farms.

Undoubtedly, intermediary ‘land’ NGOs are dependent on the donor community in some form. Smaller indigenous NGOs especially are at the ‘mercy’ of external donors who have a disdain for high administrative or core NGO costs. As a result, these NGOs find it exceedingly difficult to retain qualified and committed professional staff that at times can only be offered short-term contract employment. This also makes it ‘difficult to plan because funding may become unavailable’ at relatively short notice. ZERO, in its 1999 Annual Report, highlights the need for financial independence from global donors, and it undertakes contract research for other organizations and also provides technical project assistance in seeking what it calls ‘partial financial sustainability’. In pursuing this, ZERO recognizes that it must be highly competitive and productive in a market sense. In the year 2000, over forty percent of its income was from fees for services rendered. But

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60 Interview conducted with M. Manda, Development Programme Specialist, USAID, 1st March 2005
61 Interview conducted with S. Landon, Head of Aid, CIDA, 22nd February 2005.
62 Interview with Manda, USAID.
63 Interview with Manda, USAID.
64 Interview with Director, ZWRCN.
it stresses that it could never ‘be fully independent of philanthropic subsidies’ and it
wonders ‘[h]ow does an organisation remain loyal to its values/purpose whilst chasing
the donor or otherwise derived dollar.’ (ZERO 1999:p.26)

The executive director of World Vision in Zimbabwe made a similar point at a
Transparency International workshop in 2001. She frankly admitted: ‘NGOs approach
donors with proposals meant to benefit the society but most of these do not meet the
society’s needs and many NGOs tailor their proposals as they know what the donor’s
interests are. The intended beneficiaries do not [have] any say in the proposals and they
therefore cannot make the NGO accountable…. It is essential ... to empower the
beneficiaries; this will give them the right to question any decision made by the NGO
supposedly on their behalf.’ (Transparency International 2001:p.4) Rural communities in
Zimbabwe are rarely if ever empowered during this process. They remain in large part
beneficiaries of externally driven interventions of ‘land’ NGOs and are certainly not rural
citizens with non-discretionary rights empowered to determine their own development
destiny. This is true despite the fact that donors in Zimbabwe freely speak about NGOs
and targeted communities as ‘partners’ and that they are contemplating a rights-based
approach to development in line with global paradigms on the subject.65 But an even
more telling point that arises from the quotation is the negotiated quality of the
relationship between donors and NGOs. Donors do not simply impose themselves on
NGOs, and in a sense NGOs tactically ‘negotiate’ their dependence on (if not domination
by) donors. In this regard, ‘land’ NGOs that distance themselves from the ‘new’
settlements are not in a strong position to place blame solely on the politics and agendas
of global donors, as the case of FOST (in the next chapter) shows.

Since 2003, a more structured and regularized land reform process has emerged
subsequent to the highly volatile first few years of accelerated reform. Of particular
relevance is the ongoing failure on the part of development NGOs to actively (and
proactively) involve themselves in the ‘new farmer’ resettlement schemes, in contrast to
the older and more-established schemes dating back to the 1980s. This is intriguing

65 Interview conducted with V. Chipunza, Programme Manager, Norwegian People’s Aid, 16th March 2005.
considering the keen anticipation by NGOs of their potential participation in the Inception Phase of the LRRP Phase II in the late 1990s. Hence, Chaumba et al. (2003a) highlight the fact that civil society organizations, including NGOs, have been ‘largely absent’ from the new schemes. According to them, ‘[t]hese spaces [or schemes] fall outside of the realm of NGOs working in the communal areas. This is partly for political reasons: NGOs tend to be identified by war veterans and ZANU(PF) supporters as “opposition” who should keep out of resettlement areas...; and partly because – notwithstanding the village committees – these new areas are yet to have a formally recognised administrative structure with which NGOs can engage.’ (Chaumba et al. 2003a:p.604) The latter reason is especially revealing because it raises the question of complexity when it comes to NGO organizational practice. Thus, NGOs may be willing to work in new resettled areas, but the complexities of so doing may place considerable strain and stress on them and undermine their viability as sustainable organizational forms.

Moyo notes in a more general context that ‘[s]ome NGOs have argued that it is complicated to be involved in land reform, given the state interest in it and its politics.’ (Moyo 2001:p.319 my emphasis) He continues: ‘However, at an ideological level, many local NGOs seem to be against land reform. The few truly Zimbabwean NGO proposals for land reform merely sought to train the resettled but hardly any sought to lead the demand for greater land transfers.’ (Moyo 2001:p.319) The point is that seriously engaging with a controversial and volatile land reform process is a highly complex, turbulent and demanding venture that NGOs prefer to refrain from, but not necessarily for ideological-cum-political reasons. In other words, the ‘complications’ that Moyo speaks about cannot be reduced to ‘politics’, although politics clearly complicates the world of land NGOs. Further, the disengagement does not simply arise because NGOs are ‘against land reform’, no matter how empirically factual this may be.

Beyond politics and ideology, the complexities and complications spring from the ambivalences that necessarily marks the work of NGOs. There are apolitical organizational dispositions and interests that lead NGOs to ‘manage’ this complexity by
disengaging from accelerated reform generally and from the new resettlement schemes in particular. Political reasons such as the centralizing thrust of central-state land policy formation or an ideological disdain for the content and procedures of accelerated reform do not sufficiently explain why ‘land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe are generally distanced and disengaged. The point about organizational dispositions is developed more fully in the concluding chapter of this thesis.
This chapter discusses two case studies of ‘land’ NGOs, namely, the Farm Orphan Support Trust and SOS Children’s Villages Zimbabwe. These in-depth studies are particularly important in offering ‘thick descriptions’ that detail the internal processes and tensions of intermediary NGOs as organizational forms. An important argument of this thesis is that any sociological analysis of intermediary NGOs needs to re-construct the work of ‘actually-existing’ NGOs from the meaning-laden perspective of NGOs themselves. In other words, the practices intermediary NGOs engage in, and why they do what they do, cannot be directly ‘read from’ outside. Conflicting pressures and demands that impinge upon the ambivalent social field of NGOs are ‘handled’ through organizational practices that help NGOs to ‘negotiate’ their way through their tension-filled world. These practices have the effect of bringing a degree of order and stability to world that is otherwise not sutured. The case studies that follow are meant to illustrate this.

13.1 Farm Orphan Support Trust: Its Formation

Farm Orphan Support Trust (FOST) was formed in 1996 in large part as an initiative of the White-dominated Commercial Farmers Union (CFU), and hence it arose from ‘the philanthropic ethos of the farmers and their wives’ (REPSSI 2002:p.5). Exploratory studies of the orphan situation amongst agricultural worker families on commercial farms, notably in Mashonaland East province, led to a seminar in August 1995 attended by commercial farmers, NGOs, the Department of Social Welfare and donors. At this seminar, a steering committee was established to oversee the formation of a NGO (FOST) specifically designed to facilitate and implement foster care on commercial
farms. This steering committee included individuals from the CFU, SAfAIDS (an AIDS network), GAPWUZ, and Save the Children-UK (FOST 1996). Further studies were conducted in 1996 in Mashonaland Central province, and FOST in that year began to action a commercial farm orphan care model in the province as part of the Department of Welfare’s national orphan care programme in Zimbabwe. (FOST 1998) From the beginning, FOST has always worked closely with both White farmers and relevant government ministries.

Since its inception, the overarching aim of FOST has been to develop sustainable community-based foster care schemes for orphaned children on commercial farms, particularly in the light of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Thus, FOST says its programmes ‘are aimed at proactively increasing the capacity of communities on commercial farms in Zimbabwe to respond to the orphan crisis.’ (FOST 2002b:p.5) This is particularly challenging because, relatively speaking, farm worker communities are said by FOST to lack social cohesion and support networks comparable to agrarian communities in communal areas. By the year 2000, FOST was operating in rural districts in Mashonaland Central and Midlands provinces.

13.2 Accelerated Reform Troubles

Like other NGOs involved in land-related issues, an optimistic mood prevailed at FOST in the late 1990s despite intermittent moments of sober realism. The director of FOST looks back positively on the policy environment that existed in the years immediately before accelerated reform. She remarks for instance on how FOST (and other NGOs) supposedly played an important part in ensuring that farm workers were given the right to vote in local government elections.66 The land movement however (starting in the year 2000) had a ‘quite dramatic’67 and negative impact on the world and work of FOST. In effect, the advances made by FOST in terms of the provision of social services and

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66 Interview with Walker, FOST.
67 Interview with Walker, FOST.
amenities in farming communities ‘have been reversed’ (REPSSI 2002:p.11). The heightened uncertainty on commercial farms because of accelerated reform as well as the deteriorating economic conditions in the country soon undermined the capacity-building efforts of FOST and, indeed, the ability of farm communities to support orphaned children.

Hence, ‘[m]ost households currently struggle to support themselves and have neither the time nor emotional energy to consider the needs of non-family members’ (FOST 2003b: p.1). In a study conducted in 2004 by FOST, it came as no surprise that commercial farm worker communities and former farm worker families ranked inadequate food as their most pressing daily problem. Coping strategies for food insecurity included reducing the number of meals per day and cutting back on the quantity of food eaten by each member of the household. The study further noted that ‘the current prevailing situation in farms is one of: NO WORK – NO HOUSE’, and that the new ‘owners’ of the farms are seemingly unaware of the plight of orphaned and vulnerable children, or the problems encountered by these children are not a priority for the ‘owners’ (FOST 2004b:p.26).

This emergency situation has forced FOST to adopt more short-term goals in the form of relief, and this includes child supplementary feeding schemes and the provision of non-food items such as clothing and blankets. This has now become a perennial problem, as reiterated most recently in the 2005 Annual Report (FOST 2005). FOST realizes that these short-term interventions bring with them ‘the fear of creating dependency’ amongst farm communities, but it claims that its relief efforts have always been linked to the longer term aims of developing sustainable solutions rooted in the community (FOST 2003a:p.17). In this regard, FOST continues to provide educational assistance and emotional support to child-headed households, orphans and vulnerable children. Under more stable political conditions, it would opt for longer-range development goals, including non-agricultural income generating projects based on micro financing. Clearly, accelerated reform has significantly altered the programmatic approach of FOST. Originally, it intended to be a facilitator of foster care on farms by bringing together
farmers, agricultural workers, local governments and line ministries. Now, it has increasingly become an almost reluctant deliverer of goods and services.

Presently, FOST is unable to plan realistically for future interventions because of the ‘current period of transition in commercial farming areas’ in the light of land reform. Indeed, it argued in the year 2002 that ‘the gains and successes of the past five years have been lost’ because of the fragmentation and dislocation of farm worker communities (FOST 2002a:p.13). Three years later the dust of accelerated reform had begun to settle, yet the ‘continuing mobility of farm communities as the ownership of farms changes and new management and leadership structures are put in place’ still makes it extremely difficult ‘to maintain continuity of support’ (FOST 2005:p.31). In general, land reform has involved a restructuring of power relations on the resettled farms, and FOST has been unable to work with the new governance structures because ‘the situation on farms is yet to cool down’ (REPSSI 2002:p.16).

Further, moving and operating on commercial farms and ex-commercial farms have at times posed serious risks for FOST staff and fieldworkers, because of government suspicion of NGO activities and also intrusive legislation that has circumscribed the holding of training and community awareness meetings and workshops. FOST, like most NGOs, has formally adopted a non-partisan political party stance but its historical links with the CFU has over the past few years raised doubts in the minds of government officials about the existence of hidden anti-land reform agendas. In fact, its national office continues to be located at the head office of the CFU in Harare. Thus, the tight-knit relationship with the CFU ‘worked well for FOST until the changes brought about by the land reform exercise. In the current political climate this works against the organisation heavily. There have been incidents where the staff of the organisation has, along with other NGOs working in the field, been accused of being part of the opposition politics.’ (REPSSI 2002:p.30) Because of the many operational problems in the field, FOST has spent considerable effort over the past few years in building its own internal capacity, which it understands as a combination of administrative-procedural and adaptive-strategic capacities.
13.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

FOST highlights the importance of broad-based participatory evaluation of its NGO practices, incorporating in particular its targeted farm communities as crucial evaluators. But it currently lacks the human capacity and resource base for undertaking such evaluations. Instead, in May 2003, an external donor-led evaluation of FOST was undertaken. The evaluation noted that there are ‘no indications that FOST holds [even] externally facilitated self-initiated annual evaluations of its work on a regular basis.’ (REPSSI 2002:p.24) In this regard, the evaluation brought to the fore many important organizational issues pertinent to FOST as a NGO.

For example, the evaluation highlighted that it was extremely difficult to assess the impact of the work of FOST for two main reasons. First of all, the objectives of FOST as a NGO are ‘not subject to quantification’ because there are no defined and thought-out empirical indicators of effect and impact. Secondly, even if such indices existed, there is ‘no baseline from which they [the objectives] can be judged’ or measured over a period of time (REPSSI 2002:p.10). Although FOST does undertake some form of internal monitoring and evaluation, the basis on which this is done is highly questionable. Even in its project proposals, there is ‘a general weakness in planning’ for monitoring and evaluation (REPSSI 2002:p.23). Within FOST, there is a ‘need for a system that will enable tracking of progress in the desired direction according to activity and objectives and finally the mission of the organisation’ (REPSSI 2002:p.24).

The external evaluation of FOST also stressed the importance of reinforcing forms of strategic management and planning in the face of a fluctuating and turbulent external environment, and it noted that this would invariably entail a comprehensive review of the NGO’s mission and vision as well as of its organizational policies and practices. At the same time, the evaluation argued that FOST ‘needs to remain where it is at the moment, buying time, so that it can then take stock of itself once the current impasse is over.’ (REPSSI 2002:p.3) Yet, as noted earlier, FOST has chosen to shift (at least temporarily)
its programmatic focus in response to chronic and pressing material needs found within farm communities. FOST also recognizes that the impasse, once ‘over’, will reveal a fundamentally different social and political landscape in rural Zimbabwe that will significantly alter its operational parameters. Many aspects of this changing landscape were revealed during the discussion of the accelerated land reform programme in Chapter Nine. Their work, for instance, may entail a shift towards the families of internally displaced ex-agricultural labourers or the families of newly settled small-scale farmers on ex-commercial farms.

13.4 Donor Dilemmas

An added problem for FOST has been the hyperinflationary economy in Zimbabwe and the fact that FOST salaries ‘are generally in the lower levels of local NGO salary scales’. This makes work ‘highly stressful’ such that the organization ‘may not be able to retain existing staff’ despite high levels of commitment and loyalty throughout the organization (FOST 2003b:p.2). In fact, at times FOST staff – both in the offices and fields – has been bordering on a condition of overload and burnout. As well, staff members ‘have issues that they cannot raise at the staff monthly meetings without fear of victimisation. Staff harbour several issues of discontent on working conditions.’ (REPSSI 2002:p.24) Throughout most of the history of FOST, there has been no workers’ committee to which staff could bring their grievances. Staff insecurity has arisen in large part because of the uncertain and transitory funding base of FOST as an indigenous NGO. Recently, some donors have reduced their funding of FOST while at least one (the Royal Danish Embassy) has withdrawn completely from Zimbabwe. In early 2002, it was noted that ‘financially, the organisation is not on a sound footing/stand point’, that most of the current funding expires in 2002, and that there is ‘no firm fundraising strategy or plan’ which forms part of organizational processes within FOST (REPSSI 2002:p.22).

Yet, since then, FOST has been able to significantly broaden its funding base. In this regard, it does not see international donor fatigue or withdrawal as a particularly acute
dilemma in relation to Zimbabwe. From the year 2002, FOST has considerably expanded its staff component and has opened two new provincial offices. Yet, in its 2004 Annual Report, FOST reflected that it was unable to scale up its activities beyond certain districts in its operational provinces of Mashonaland Central and Manicaland because of limited financial resources (FOST 2004a). The widening funding base has also created its own set of problems, which is particularly noticeable amongst smaller NGOs like FOST. For instance, given that different programmes are funded by different funding partners, FOST has been ‘striving to avoid fragmentation and compartmentalization of our activities’ and thereby maintain some degree of organizational cohesiveness (FOST 2005:p.7). A further problem concerns the question of donor accountability. As FOST argues: ‘The demands created by having a range of funders with many different requirements and reporting formats and, occasionally, inflexible systems, has created a massive workload for a small administrative team.’ (FOST 2003a:p.18) FOST wants to negotiate with donors for the ‘basket-funding of administrative costs’ so that more funds can be released for programmatic activities, as well as for ‘an umbrella reporting system’ that would satisfy the reporting demands of all donors (FOST 2005:p.34).

Simultaneously, the director of FOST claims that donors do not simply impose their will on the NGO, but that there is significant room to manoeuvre in terms of programmatic focus and activity. If FOST is dependent on donors for its existence, this dependence is not an unbridled imposition. In the words of the director, many donors are ‘prepared to bend and negotiate’.68 Currently, and on political grounds, the major bilateral donors such as USAID and DFID refuse to fund programmes or projects in the ‘new’ resettlement areas, particularly the small-scale A1 schemes. FOST does not support this position, and it has hence sought to circumvent the prohibition by seeking donor assistance for what it considers to be welfare (and not agricultural) work on farms, and in this sense it tries to ‘depoliticize’ its work.69 FOST is currently undertaking pilot projects on resettled farms on HIV/AIDS under the auspices of the Department of Welfare. Donors that are not official bilateral agencies give more leeway to FOST in this regard.

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68 Interview with Walker.
69 Interview with Walker.
The FOST director expresses a keen interest in working with the ‘new’ farmers and settlers, but notes that it ‘would be much the same as it was when starting on the commercial farms initially’. This would entail ‘great effort’ and would mean ‘getting accepted’ likely in the face of ‘resistance’.\(^{70}\)

**13.5 Political Relations**

Along with other NGOs involved with agricultural labourers on commercial farms, FOST has argued consistently that the Zimbabwean government has made no comprehensive and sustained effort to involve these labourers in the accelerated reform process and thus ‘relatively few farm worker households’ have been allocated land (FOST 2003a:p.15). FOST claims that land reform needs to be significantly de-politicized so that farm worker advocates are not seen as part of an anti-reform movement. In this light, the ongoing fixation by FOST with the sheer number of agricultural workers being displaced (or potentially displaced) by land acquisitions has sometimes been interpreted by the government of Zimbabwe to imply that the NGO is part of an ‘anti-land’ lobby. In response to this conception, FOST have pursued a strategy of constructive engagement with the state, and this involves ongoing lobbying work amongst local and central state officials for the integration of the agricultural workforce into accelerated reform. More generally, it also entails mainstreaming farm worker issues into national economic development plans. As well, FOST continues to advocate for the rights of orphaned children at both provincial and district levels as part of their overall child protection policy. Generally, though, according to the major external evaluation conducted in 2002, FOST has tended to focus its practices around the question of needs rather than the question of rights: ‘There is therefore a need to move away from a *needs based* to *rights based programming*’ (REPSSI 2002:p.18 emphasis in original).

More often than not, FOST has found it possible to work with local technocrats in line ministries who are not as antagonistic to its work as central state ideologues might be.

\(^{70}\) Interview with Walker.
FOST finds it ‘more difficult to work with government as you go up the hierarchy as, in doing so, the issues become more politically charged.’71 But even with line ministries and local government structures there is now considerably ‘more tension and suspicion’ in Zimbabwe compared to previous years, such that NGO personnel ‘have to be politicians’ in ‘negotiating sensitive power structures’.72 As late as early 2005, in some of the districts within which FOST operated, there was ‘[u]ncertainty and suspicion of the activities of NGOs by district and ward structures’ (FOST 2005:p.33). In general, then, FOST has noticed that the ‘policy receptiveness’ of government has ‘decreased significantly’ since 2000.73

13.6 Altered Landscape and Organizational Challenges

There is no doubt that accelerated reform has had a significant impact on the practices of FOST as an NGO. A pronounced disabling environment has emerged and this has forced FOST to channel its activities in a direction that does not readily maximize the achievement of its original vision and mission. The lofty ideals that FOST originally set up have in a sense been sacrificed in part or put on hold. In the meantime, the NGO seeks to sustain itself as a viable organizational form while also in some way remaining relevant to the needs of its targeted communities. Relief and emergency work does not equate to providing long-term foster care schemes or to promoting the rights of farm workers. But it does offer a basis for the continued existence of the NGO, and this is particularly so considering the significant donor backing that normally comes with such work. Indeed, it is likely through its relief interventions that FOST has been able to expand its operations over the past three or four years.

The social and organizational complexities on the ground in the ‘new’ settlement areas are recognized by FOST as requiring careful and considered study before engaging with them. These complexities have severely inhibited FOST from seeking to embed its foster

71 Interview with Walker.
72 Interview with Walker.
73 Interview with Walker.
care programmes within the restructured agrarian landscapes. Vigorously seeking to penetrate these areas may have severely compromised the structural integrity of the organization during the current turbulent period. As it were, staff members at FOST were already stretched to the limit, and any further organizational demands may have simply demoralized them. Thus, in the face of accelerated reform, FOST has sought to ‘balance’ its development practice through ‘sensitive negotiations’ with both global donors and local power structures. As a result, it has been able to ‘weather the storm’, and to manoeuvre its way through a restructured and volatile agrarian landscape in a manner that has not seriously jeopardized its organizational integrity and sustainability.

13.7 SOS Children’s Villages: The Village Concept

SOS Children’s Villages International (called SOS-KDI for short) was formed in Austria in the immediate post-World War II period in response to the orphan crisis in Europe arising from the war. Over the past fifty years it has expanded around the globe in an effort to care for the needs of orphaned, abandoned and abused children. It operates in all countries in southern Africa. Its organizational structure in Zimbabwe is in many ways representative of its operations globally. SOS Zimbabwe is registered as a welfare organization in Zimbabwe, and has been in the country since the late 1980s. It functions on the basis of the Village concept that has been the trademark of SOS-KDI since its inception. The Villages are located within urban communities but exist as self-enclosed, separate fenced-off entities. Normally, SOS owns the property on which the Villages are located, and this is said by SOS to express its commitment to remaining within any particular country no matter what political changes ensue. In Zimbabwe, there are three Villages: in Bindura, Harare and Bulawayo.

Each Village consists of about ten houses that are run by a Mother and assistant Mother, both of whom are full-time employees of SOS. Each house has about twelve children, of both sexes and of many ages. The children are wards of the state, and are referred to SOS by the Department of Welfare in the Ministry of Labour. SOS is thus legally responsible
for the upbringing of the children, and the children are meant to leave the SOS system in their early twenties after completing some form of post-secondary education. With start-up capital, they are expected to find employment or become self-employed. A male Director (until recently referred to as the Village Father) heads each Village. Each Director falls under the National Director at the National Coordinating Office (NCO) in Harare. All Village Directors and staff are Black.

The Village concept is an institutionalized form of childcare. Over the years, SOS-KDI has spoken glowingly about this concept as a form of childcare that replicates as closely as possible an ideal family setting. The implication of this claim is that SOS ‘produces’ children and youth who become almost model citizens integrated into the broader community once they depart from the Villages. In the case of Zimbabwe, this claim is problematic because there is no clear evidence supporting and justifying it. SOS-KDI has a Tracking Footprints programme that is designed to monitor and evaluate the livelihood status of SOS youth who have left the SOS system, but this has never been implemented in Zimbabwe in any systematic fashion if at all. Simultaneously, though, considerable rethinking and strategizing has taken place recently within the organization internationally and experimental changes are occurring with regard to childcare (SOS 2002). For instance, in South Africa, a more community-integrated approach is being implemented in which individual SOS houses are intermingled within the community.

Formally, the Department of Welfare in Zimbabwe frowns upon institutionalized care. Thus, its recent policy paper on Children Living in Difficult Circumstances outlines various childcare options for orphaned, abandoned and abused children, and it recommends community-based care as an alternative to forms of institutionalization (SPP 2001). SOS Zimbabwe has sought to cater for this, though as part of a wider global initiative in the light of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It has thus opened up Social Centres near its Villages that care for (non-SOS) orphaned children in the community on-site. The Villages and Social Centres depend almost entirely on foreign funding for their operations.
On completion of their secondary schooling, SOS children have the option of pursuing further education and training. The academically gifted go to university, and others go to various types of technical colleges. However, those children (now youth) who fail to pass their ‘O’ level examinations normally end up at what are called the SOS Vocational Training and Production Centres (VTPC) located on two farms fifteen kilometres from Bindura in the Shamva District of Mashonaland Central province. At present, there are about fifty youths at the VTPC being trained in agriculture and engineering.

13.8 Vocational Training and Production Centres

There are three NGO projects (called facilities) at the two farms: SOS Agricultural Training Scheme, SOS Maizelands Farm and SOS Engineering. Each facility has a Manager and an Administrator. SOS Maizelands farm is a commercially run farm that was purchased in 1989 and currently it grows maize, soybean, wheat and bananas. It is expected by the NCO to turn over a profit (which it normally does) and thus generally it does not receive grants or subsidies from SOS Zimbabwe. Simultaneously, SOS Zimbabwe discourages it from seeking bank loans for the purchase of capital equipment as this goes contrary to proper NGO practice. In large measure, capital equipment has been purchased from profits. The farm itself was purchased for a mixture of reasons: to offer a commercial environment in which to train SOS youth in agriculture; to provide a temporary farmer settler scheme through which SOS youth would pass after graduating from the training scheme; and to provide staple food for the Villages. Effectively, the farm operates like any other private commercial farm in rural Zimbabwe. To any outside observer, and even to most of the junior farm employees, the formal NGO status of the farm has always been unclear. The Manager and Administrator are White and are husband and wife. The NCO now recognizes this working relationship as contrary to good NGO practices of accountability but it has decided to let it continue. The farm Manager receives an annual commission based on farm revenue and profit.
The Manager and Administrator do not consider themselves bound to the SOS *Conditions of Service* in terms of the salary scale in force, and they pay their permanent staff (about 100 staff members) considerably less than the SOS scale. About half (or 40%) of their staff have SOS contracts of employment but receive salaries amounting to 50% less than the official scale. The other permanent staff (guards and irrigation ‘boys’) are contracted directly to the farm, and are paid according to National Employment Council (Agriculture) rates, which amount to about $7 U.S. per month. The farm has always justified this type of arrangement on the grounds that paying their workers SOS rates (a minimum $60 U.S. per month presently) would create problems amongst their neighbouring farmers and would make the farm unproductive. SOS Zimbabwe has over the years accepted this rationale. Besides the permanent staff (nearly all male), the farm employs numerous weekly or seasonal contractors (nearly all female), many of whom reside on the farm as family members or relatives of permanent staff.

At SOS Glen Avilin Farm there are two vocational facilities for SOS youth: an agricultural training scheme (ATS) and an engineering training scheme (SOS Engineering). Both projects have a Manager and an Administrator, and all are White except for the Administrator at ATS. The long-standing Manager of SOS Engineering has always hired Whites as his Administrator because he believes that Blacks cannot be trusted. At times he has thought of employing his wife as the Administrator. He once informally raised this with the previous National Director (who retired in March 2005), but it was rejected on grounds of NGO transparency. The wife of the ATS Manager is the sister of the SOS Maizelands Manager, and there is considerable overlap (and indeed confusion) between professional and private lives at the two farms. This situation has also led to the blurring of distinctions between public NGO goods and private employee goods. For instance, the wife of the Maizelands Manager operates a farm store at Maizelands (and profits from it), and the wife of the ATS Manager regularly uses her husband’s NGO-owned vehicle for private trips. At times, these practices border on the privatization of public goods.
SOS Engineering has a large, well-equipped engineering workshop and it is supposed to run as a commercially viable venture. In the past it did significant volumes of work for White commercial farmers in the area, including the building of fixed assets such as farm sheds and repairs to moveable assets such as tractors and ploughs. Currently, though, it mainly relies on furniture orders from SOS-KDI for villages under construction throughout southern Africa. Over the past few years, because of reasons of political instability, SOS-KDI has put on hold any further Village construction in Zimbabwe itself.

ATS has a much more limited commercial side to its operations, primarily in the form of a grinding mill. The VTPC Managers have constantly questioned the status of their facilities with NCO. The ATS Manager has downplayed the (unprofitable) ‘commercial’ aspect of his facility so that NCO will continue to subsidize his vocational facility. The Engineering Manager failed to do this, and now he is under intense pressure from NCO to commercially ‘break even’ in terms of operational costs. All major building construction and the purchase of fixed assets at these facilities have involved grants from SOS-KDI.

Both facilities offer a three-year training programme, and each has two training officers. ATS has about thirty-five trainees and SOS Engineering has about fifteen trainees. Most of these youths come from the three Villages but included are also fifteen non-SOS (‘scholarship’) youths at the facilities drawn from other children’s homes in Zimbabwe. Presently, on behalf of the Villages, SOS Zimbabwe pays the training facilities an amount of $4,500 U.S. per year per trainee. These facilities also receive the same amount for each ‘scholarship’ youth. The training fees are meant to cover trainee-related costs incurred by the facilities. The youth, who are all Black and mainly male, stay at hostels on SOS Glen Avilin Farm.

Once the agricultural trainees finish their three-year programme, they move to the Avilin Tenant Scheme that is located on Glen Avilin Farm. Initially, this was meant to be a transitional phase for the SOS youth venturing into agriculture on a full-time basis after leaving the SOS system. However, SOS has never had a strategy or plan for integrating their youth into surrounding agricultural communities in Shamva. At the Scheme, the tenants are given one or two hectares of land for cropping mainly maize, soybean and
cotton. Over a three-year period as a tenant, they are expected to become financially self-sufficient although they also receive considerable support from Maizelands farm (for a cost) in the form of, amongst other things, tractor ploughing and agricultural inputs. In the end, they are expected to learn what it takes to be a farmer in the real (post-SOS) world. Recently though, and quite controversially, this temporary scheme has been turned into a permanent scheme.

SOS Maizelands farm and SOS Glen Avilin Farm are located in a prime agricultural area. Up until the year 2000, the Shamva District had about forty White commercial farmers. Only five are left. As well, communal areas are within a thirty-minute drive from the SOS farms, and two ‘old’ resettlement farms (originally settled in the 1980s) border them. HUMANA People to People, as noted in Chapter Twelve, once owned five commercial farms in the district.

13.9 The Years Preceding the Accelerated Reform Programme

By the time accelerated reform emerged in the year 2000, SOS Zimbabwe had been operating in the Shamva district for over ten years. Yet, it had formed few if any structured linkages with the surrounding rural communities. Rather, these linkages were in large part ad hoc and personal. For instance, the White Managers and Administrators developed close personal ties with a number of White commercial farmers, and socialized with them outside working hours including at the Shamva Golf and Country Club. Indeed, prior to taking up his position at SOS Maizelands, the farm Manager was employed as a Manager by the White commercial farmer at nearby Nyamwanga Farm. These personal ties, and the positions adopted by the White SOS senior staff, came back to haunt SOS during the land reform programme. Also, as noted earlier, SOS Engineering relied almost exclusively on White commercial farmers for productive work for its workshop. As well, Maizelands Farm drew female labour (for example, to grade maize seed) from the communal areas on a seasonal basis, and would daily truck them in on its lorry. There was rarely any contact with the ‘old’ settlers, except when their cattle
strayed on to SOS property and feasted on its crops or when SOS farm workers illegally cut down trees in the resettlement areas. Lastly, many rural people in the surrounding area would travel to the ATS grinding mill to have their maize ground.

SOS Zimbabwe, and local management on the two farms, never saw any reason to meaningfully engage with the multi-faceted rural communities in Shamva in any conscious, direct or comprehensive manner. Such an approach never formed part of its organizational strategy, particularly given that its core business (and the centre of the organization) was the Villages. SOS Zimbabwe, and in fact SOS-KDI, exist solely because of the Villages. The VTPC were designed to serve that child-centred purpose, and to offer some kind of future to their youth who (without ‘O’ levels) would likely have no opportunities to further their education. In this sense, the VTPC had an inward-looking policy and approach, and never felt the need to embed themselves within the broader agrarian communities.

13.10 The Accelerated Reform Programme

In September 1999, the opposition party the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was formed in Zimbabwe. Its leader, Morgan Tsvangarai, soon came to the provincial capital of Bindura to hold meetings and to drum up financial support. He held a meeting at Insingisi Farm, just outside Bindura, and White farmers thronged to hear him. Many farmers publicly declared their support for the MDC and even became local representatives for the party in the area. The referendum on the draft constitution, which included clauses on land acquisition and the executive presidency, was to take place in February 2000, and the MDC was campaigning for a ‘no’ vote. In the months preceding the referendum, farm workers in Shamva were loaded and squeezed onto the back of lorry trucks by commercial farmers and sent to MDC rallies in Bindura.

Most White commercial farms in the Shamva District were occupied soon after the holding of the referendum, although this was an uneven process. At times, specific
occupations arose as a direct result of ZANU-PF rallies in the town of Shamva. Base camps, normally headed by war veterans, were set up on the occupied farms. Initially, there were constant negotiations between ‘settlers’, farmers and the district war veteran office in Shamva (located at the DRC offices) about the status of the ‘settlers’ on the farm. The ‘settlers’ made their presence felt on the farms by positioning their camps near the entrance of the homestead of the White farmer, by placing demands on the farmer for food and transport, and by at times forcefully preventing the farmer from ploughing or harvesting his fields. The occupied farms were later designated for resettlement, and a few farmers were still leaving their properties as late as the year 2005. The remaining White farmers have been able (for now) to secure their continued presence in the district.

The two farms owned by SOS were never occupied, and it appears that there was an unwritten directive from government that they not be occupied. Certainly, the local ZANU-PF Member of Parliament, Nicholas Goche, intimated this to the author in May 2000. Yet, this did not leave the SOS farms untouched by land reform. For instance, some supporters of ZANU-PF set up a base camp on Maizelands farm called the Border Gezi Base Camp, named after the (now deceased) ZANU-PF provincial governor for Mashonaland Central. On special occasions, this camp would issue (officially stamped) hand-written notes to SOS facility Managers, requesting contributions of various kinds (invariably transport and meat) for national celebrations such as Heroes Day. Demands of this kind also led Maizelands farm to contribute furniture (built by SOS Engineering) at no cost to a new secondary school in the immediate vicinity.

ZANU-PF activism on the SOS farms also increased dramatically during the years 2000 and 2001, and there were regular marches as well as meetings at which all farm workers were expected to attend. The SOS farms were rumoured to be sympathetic to the opposition. This was based on a claim by local ruling party activists that most of the ballots found in the boxes at the farm election points after the 2000 parliamentary and 2002 presidential elections were for the MDC. Numerous SOS workers were labelled as MDC supporters and at times were subjected to intimidation. Also, staff dismissed from work at the SOS farms on legitimate grounds (for example, theft) used Third Chimurenga
threats to intimidate their superiors. Thus, one dismissed employee at ATS organized a
banner march on SOS Glen Avilin farm against the Administrator, and a former
employee at SOS Engineering arranged for the new ZANU-PF-backed trade union
federation (the Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions) to pay the National Director an
impromptu visit at his offices in Harare.

Further, the Maizelands farm Manager allowed a prominent commercial farmer aligned
to the MDC to stay at the SOS farm house when he was experiencing extremely difficult
times at his farms. The Manager also permitted farm equipment from occupied farms
(notably from Nyamwanga Farm) to be moved onto the SOS farms for safekeeping, as
this was designed to prevent the equipment from being taken by the new farmers. In
time, settlers from Nyamwanga Farm came to SOS Glen Avilin Farm (along with the
police and a camera crew) and removed what they claimed was Nyamwanga (and thus
their) property. In the process, and despite being shown documentation on SOS assets by
the chief Security Officer at the SOS farms, they took assets (for example, irrigation
pipes) that rightfully belonged to SOS.

As well, in 2001 the Government designated SOS Glen Avilin Farm for resettlement
purposes. In response to a local appeal by SOS, the Provincial Governor wrote to SOS
and promised that the farm would not be resettled. The designation however was never
repealed, although its period of enforcement has since lapsed. More recently, in
December 2005, the Government listed SOS Maizelands Farm for land redistribution in
terms of a recent amendment to the Constitution. The farm is now state land and there is
no basis for appeal. SOS NCO has written to the relevant state authority about the listing
but no response has been received. SOS though has the option of asking for a 99-year
lease on the property. In the meantime, a prominent Black farmer in the area who is also
a high-ranking military official has assured the Maizelands farm Manager that SOS can
continue as normal in its farm operations.

In the context of accelerated reform, the SOS farms continued to operate in an inward-
looking fashion. They have been largely reactive in their stance, responding to specific
pressures and demands as they emanate. No attempt has been made to understand the radical agrarian change that has taken place in the district, and certainly no linkages whatsoever have been established with the newly resettled farmers. If anything, VTPC management bemoans the loss of the White commercial farmers as a source of both business and friendship.

13.11 Organizational Dynamics

SOS Zimbabwe has its national office in Harare. Its long-serving ex-National Director held the reigns of power from the year 1990 to March 2005. He is a former White commercial farmer. Although not a founder member of the NGO, over the years he without doubt stamped his authority and style of management on the organization. This had direct implications for the VTPC in Shamva. All three White Managers at the VTPC are also long-serving staff members and over the years they developed close personal relations with the National Director to whom they reported.

In effect, the Director considered the VTPC as his sole responsibility and he did not allow any other member of the NCO to interfere in the VTPC operations. For instance, SOS Zimbabwe for many years has had the position of Financial Controller located at NCO. The financial affairs of the Villages have always fallen directly under the ambit of the Financial Controller, and Village Administrators have reported to the Controller. In the case of the VTPC, the Administrators have reported only to their facility Manager and they did not have any structured relationship with NCO. The current Financial Controller at NCO speaks about being ‘sidelined’ by the former National Director when it came to the VTPC. The (White) assistant National Director at the time (now the National Director since April 2005) was also marginalized and his area of responsibility was strictly the Black-run Villages. He at times described the VTPC Managers as ‘the three musketeers’. Further, the position of Human Resources Officer at NCO was created in 1996 and a Black woman was appointed. Despite her protests, she was denied access to the VTPC and subsequently resigned. The position was then abolished. For many years
at NCO there has been an Education Coordinator responsible for, amongst other things, the (post-secondary school) academic and vocational needs of the SOS youth. Again, for reasons that remain unclear to the current occupant of this position, the VTPC have always fallen outside the parameters of this position.

This hands-off approach has led to the three NGO projects (or facilities) at the farms in Shamva being in large part privatized by the White Managers. Hence, these Managers have been given the leeway to conduct themselves and administer their projects in a manner that may not necessarily be in the best interests of the NGO as a whole, or that may at least be inconsistent with the vision of SOS. Intriguingly, the most junior of staff at the farms have noted this process of privatization. Thus, in the eyes of many workshop staff at SOS Engineering, the Manager is seen to ‘own the company’. And, after discussing the issue privately for many years, the irrigation workers have recently written to the Maizelands Manager to ask if they are employed by SOS, Maizelands farm or by the Manager himself. This privatization of public (NGO) goods arose and developed with the tacit support if not the active encouragement of the ex-National Director.

The Heads of Department at NCO, including the Financial Controller and the Education Coordinator, never directly challenged the Director on this score. And nor did the staff employed on the two Shamva farms openly question the facility Managers. In large part, staff felt powerlessness and feared risking their employment or the special benefits they received. The ATS Manager in particular has used his position to give perks to his key staff as part of some kind of patrimonial patron-client relationship. This has ensured their compliance to the system if not their loyalty to him. In this regard, many of the relationships at the VTPC have been personalized. This privatized and personalized system has meant that the VTPC operate as almost autonomous facilities (or fiefdoms) within SOS Zimbabwe.

Even more striking, there remains no clear indication that the VTPC in any way contribute to the overall vision and mission of SOS Zimbabwe. In this respect, there is no record of any form of either external or internal evaluation of the three farm facilities
throughout their entire period of existence. This is a highly unusual state of affairs for an international NGO. It is also particularly problematic and perplexing given that the VTPC as projects within SOS-KDI are quite unique to Zimbabwe and thus constant monitoring and evaluation would presumably be critical to their overall forward direction. However, unlike the Villages, processes of evaluation have never been integrated into the organizational systems at the VTPC. Further, there is no monitoring and evaluation department at NCO to ensure that this gaping lacuna at the VTPC is rectified. In this context, it would appear that the VTPC have been deliberately shielded and protected from any outside investigation and interference. It is also highly unlikely that the VTPC Managers would welcome any monitoring and evaluation as it may uncover the many organizational dysfunctions that seem to exist at the VTPC.

13.12 Organizational Dysfunctions

The three farm facilities are NGO projects but, as noted above, they have been privatized and commercialized. They are not consciously and intentionally run as NGO facilities, and there is no systematic attempt to develop a NGO organizational culture amongst the staff. The ex-National Director gave the three White Managers extraordinary perks (compared to the Black Village Directors) yet they do not have a basic understanding of NGO theory and practice. In fact, two of the Managers have no formal qualifications in any field and the third has a certificate in tobacco farming. On the other hand, the Village Director closest to the farms (in Bindura) has recently obtained a Masters degree in business administration. The White Managers have never sought to develop their managerial or NGO skills, and they normally avoid attending the managerial workshops organized by the Education Coordinator for all senior SOS Zimbabwe staff. In a sense, the ex-National Director granted them ‘protected’ or ‘sheltered’ employment, and they are now entrenched in their positions. Despite the tremendous changes taking place over the past six years in rural Zimbabwe, they have stuck it out. This is not because of some deep altruistic commitment on their part to the vision of SOS Zimbabwe. Rather, it
emanates from their unlikely ability to obtain comparable employment and benefits elsewhere in the country. In a sense, they have nowhere else to go.

This state of affairs has led to serious dysfunctions at the VTPC. I have already noted the failure on the part of NCO to properly evaluate the farm projects and the seeming disregard by the Managers for developing their managerial capacities. Beyond this, there are considerable financial irregularities and asset mismanagement at the VTPC. For instance, one Manager in the past has (along with his wife) purchased numerous personal items (including alcohol and cigarettes) with SOS funds and has had these items hidden in trainee canteen expense accounts. He has also disposed of SOS assets on an unauthorized basis, often to his own staff. As well, he had a major stake in the building company that up to recently did most of the construction on the farms.

Prior to his departure, the ex-National Director warned the VTPC Managers of impending changes likely to take place after he left. He highlighted in particular that the new National Director (at the time his assistant) might place the Financial Controller more directly over the farm facilities. One VTPC Manager raised deep concerns about this, and hoped that the Controller would merely implement an accounting function and not an audit function. In a similar vein, when a Human Resources Office was opened at the VTPC in late 2004, the VTPC Managers insisted that the job description of the Human Resources Officer specify that the Officer report not to NCO but directly to them. For over a year, the Officer refused to accept this clause.

Probably the most serious dysfunction concerns the major stakeholders of SOS, that is, the youth. The VTPC do not have to formally account to NCO for the expenditure of training fees they receive, nor for the conditions under which the youth live and train. The Managers at ATS and SOS Engineering wholly control the expenditure of the fees, without any input from the Training Officers. In so doing, the VTPC make a significant gross profit on their training departments (if training expenses are subtracted from training fees). Fees meant for the training department are used for other purposes in an uncontrolled fashion, such that the training facilities are severely under-resourced and
compromised. For example, at the SOS farms there are more than ten computers but only one has been assigned to the training department. This is found in the office of a Training Officer, and thus the students have no access to a computer. There is also no library and recreational facilities are negligible. Recently, the long-standing canteen for trainees was converted into a number of offices, and for over a year the trainees were served their food from the back of a trailer drawn by a tractor.

On a regular basis, the Training Officers have raised serious concerns about these issues to the ATS and SOS Engineering Managers, but no discernable changes have been forthcoming. The officers, despite their strategic position within the VTPC, feel largely excluded from the decision-making process within SOS and they would like to see the involvement of the national Education Coordinator in the farm facilities. The youth themselves, as the ‘target group’ of the NGO, are given few if any opportunities to formally raise complaints with VTPC management. In fact, they are in large part treated by management as ‘objects’ of development. A participatory mode of facilitating ‘target group’ involvement does not exist. But, through their (largely defunct) Student Representative Council, the youth have recently lodged a series of complaints and they regularly express their displeasure in everyday forms of resistance.

The Village Directors have also requested that they have an input into the management of the VTPC, considering that their youths are being trained there. They cite for example the case of the tenant settler scheme referred to above. In recent years, this scheme has been changed into a permanent scheme so as to become the *kumusha* (permanent rural home) of agricultural training graduates. The ex-National Director put this change into effect, and he spoke glowingly about it at his retirement gathering at the farm in March 2005. Senior Black staff members at the farms refer to this as ‘a white man’s dream’. Indeed, the change goes contrary to the SOS policy that all SOS children be re-integrated into the broader community. From an original eight tenants in the late 1990s there are now about forty tenants occupying small houses. The land given to each tenant has decreased from three hectares to less than one hectare. For this and other reasons, the
Bindura Village Director recently declared that his Village would no longer be sending any youth to the VTPC.

13.13 Agrarian Change and Organizational Standstill

At SOS Zimbabwe, there seems to be a serious discontinuity (if not gap) between the vision and mission of the organization on the one hand, and organizational practice on the other. There is also considerable tension within organizational practices. SOS-KDI, and consequently SOS Zimbabwe, rests the legitimacy of its childcare interventions on its unique Village concept. This approach to childcare may have been path breaking and respectable decades ago, but in the context of current thinking (even Zimbabwean government thinking), institutional care is increasingly criticized for not being good value for money. In other words, institutional care is financially draining and does not contribute to healthy personal development. Despite this, SOS continues to rest on its laurels so to speak by promoting the Village model, although at times (as noted earlier) in slightly modified form as in South Africa. The sustainability of SOS as a NGO rests fundamentally on upholding this model. However, despite its Tracking Footprints programme, SOS has yet to systematically evaluate its childcare work in Zimbabwe.

Presently, there is no basis on which the organization can stridently claim that it is contributing in any significant manner to sustainable livelihoods amongst its ex-youth as its most critical group of ‘stakeholders’. In this regard, the practices of the organization may be contributing more than anything else to the sustainability of the organizational form as a site of employment for its staff (as another body of ‘stakeholders’). Thus, the organization may be more staff-driven than beneficiary-driven. If ‘sustainable livelihoods’ is used as a crude proxy for sustainable development, then there appears to be a marked tension within SOS organizational processes between promoting sustainable development for the youth and promoting a sustainable organization for the staff. This is particularly noticeable at the Village level. Despite (if not because of) the fact that the Village Directors and other senior staff are clearly committed to the vision of the
organization and they show a keen interest in their children and youth, the tension exists. They continue to sustain an organizational form that may in the end be counter-productive to the achievement of the mission of the NGO.

On the other hand, the tension at the VTPC is more between organizational vision and organizational practice than within practice itself. Unlike their counterparts at the Villages, the VTPC Managers are in no sense driven by the SOS mission and vision. In this respect, there is a near chasm between a publicly declared NGO mission and privately held motivations and agendas. The vision and the practices seem to be pulling in opposing directions. This has arisen for reasons outlined above, namely, because of the relationship that developed over a number of years between the NCO and the VTPC, particularly between the ex-National Director and the VTPC Managers. This relationship, involving significant autonomy for the VTPC, was never conducive to the formation of solid NGO values and practices at the VTPC. What is problematic at the VTPC is not simply the product of their work but also the very organizational processes through which this product is to be generated. In sustaining the VTPC through the land reform period in the face of considerable adversity, the Managers were not seeking to maintain the interests of SOS as a NGO but rather the interests of an organization per se and their positions of privilege within it.

The VTPC Managers have in large measure been insulated from the insecurities that arise from ‘chasing donors’. In fact, the NCO has ensured that there is a regular flow of funds to sustain the projects, either in the form of grants or subsidies. In a sense, then, NCO has shielded the VTPC from the effects of ‘the global’. At the same time, the business and personal links that the Managers established with the surrounding agrarian communities have focused exclusively on White commercial farmers. These, of course, have been significantly disrupted because of land reform. Subsequent to this, the Managers have not sought to establish any organizational links with farmers in the new settlement schemes. This organizational inclination not to become embedded in ‘the local’ has served, at first sight, to stabilize the world of the VTPC. Effectively, the VTPC inhabit their own secluded world, and almost seem detached from the glocalization
processes occurring within the broader agrarian economy. They seem to be at a standstill organizationally despite the winds of agrarian change. The current dysfunctions within the VTPC exist not so much because of tension between ‘the global’ and ‘the local’, but because of the absence of tension. The global tensions that inhabit the world of intermediary NGOs are ‘healthy’ tensions if ‘balanced’ and ‘handled’ in a manner that leads to organizational sustainability. In their absence, there is always the chance that a NGO (such as the VTPC at SOS) will turn inward and almost implode upon itself.

13.4 NGO Values, Policies and Practices

The discussion in this chapter raises questions about the relationship between organizational values, policies and practices. In relation to land reform, it was highlighted earlier that policy formation and implementation processes should not be understood in terms of a linear or instrumentalist model. This means that the ‘success’ or ‘failure’ of policy (and the effectiveness of state ‘land’ actions) cannot simply be read from the differences between policy intention and policy implementation.

Likewise, the ‘effectiveness’ of NGOs cannot necessarily be read from the extent or form of deviation of organizational practices from NGO missions and visions, and NGO practices cannot be judged solely (if at all) in those terms. In this regard, I raised the argument that NGOs are often more involved in sustaining their own organizations than in facilitating sustainable development as enunciated in NGO mission statements. Further, the failure of NGOs to deliver on their development promises does not invariably undermine their continued existence. In fact, if NGO practices were actually assessed in terms of NGO values and policies, then it is highly unlikely that the NGO phenomenon would survive considering the wide chasm between NGO values and NGO practices.

This is the import of the work of Mosse (2004), who raises intriguing questions about the international development system: ‘[W]hat if development practice is not driven by policy? … What if the practices of development are in fact concealed rather than
produced by policy? What, if instead of policy producing practice, practices produce policy...?’ (Mosse 2004:p.2) Clearly, Mosse seriously doubts the causal link between policy and practice. Unlike postmodernist discourse analysts, he is not claiming that policy arises to rationalize and mystify sinister ulterior purposes that in the end inform existing practices. Rather, policy emerges from the world and work of development as practitioners articulate and frame coherent representations of development practices, and thus ‘success in development depends upon the stabilisation of a particular interpretation, a policy model’. Thus, ‘development projects are “successful” not because they turn design into reality, but because they sustain policy models offering a significant interpretation of events.’ (Mosse 2004:pp.8, 20) Policy exists primarily to legitimize rather than to guide practices and, indeed, the latter sustains the former. This public representation is a negotiated outcome between all groups (‘developers’ and ‘un-developed’) engaged in a particular development programme and it serves their varied interests. In this regard, the ‘the gap between policy and practice is constantly negotiated away’ (Mosse 2004:p.27).

In terms of Mosse’s argument, NGO policies do not serve as mere ‘standard-bearers’ and ‘beacons’. They also serve to make sense of the world of NGOs by weaving together a stabilized interpretation of the organizational practices of NGOs in facilitating development and building democracy. This story acts as a form of representation, and depicts the work of NGOs as marked by order, coherence and direction. It thus animates the world of NGOs and justifies it. Hence, as long as the groups involved sustain and validate the dominant representation, major discontinuities between ‘policy’ and ‘practice’ are not necessarily dysfunctional to the sustainability of NGOs as organizational forms. This was shown clearly in the case of the VTPC at SOS Zimbabwe. This thesis goes further by arguing that stabilization is not simply a discursive practice that is socially constructed through development processes and practices. NGOs also seek to stabilize their organizational practices by bringing simplicity and order to their world. This will be brought to the fore in the concluding chapter to the thesis.
Chapter 14
Understanding Intermediary NGOs

This thesis has provided an original understanding of intermediary NGOs in the modern world. In doing so, it has drawn upon a diverse range of existing methodological and theoretical claims, and has woven these into a coherent perspective. This unique understanding of NGOs has been developed and illustrated with reference to ‘land’ NGOs in contemporary Zimbabwe, most notably with respect to the radical restructuring of agrarian relations that emerged from accelerated land reform. The shifting agrarian landscape in Zimbabwe offered a solid empirical basis for theorizing about intermediary NGOs.

14.1 The ‘Inside Story’

The thesis has argued that intermediary NGOs tend to reproduce a Glocal modernity, that is, they pursue strategies and practices that reproduce global forms of social domination. This trajectory is abundantly clear from the discussion of contemporary Zimbabwe, where ‘land’ NGOs failed to significantly challenge unjust agrarian relations either through advocacy or development practices. In many ways, this conclusion about NGOs and the reproduction of global trajectories is commonly found in the academic literature, although it is expressed in different ways and is arrived at through a multiplicity of routes (Zaidi 1999, Sader 2002, Manji and O’Coill 2002).

My theoretical perspective on intermediary NGOs is particularly significant because it decisively moves beyond the main perspective of sociological behaviourism that prevails in the academic literature on NGOs. Sociological behaviourism leads to functionalist and
The empiricist trend bypasses analytical deconstruction and treats intermediary NGOs as un-deconstructed concrete totalities. In doing so, it underplays the structures of global domination that significantly mark the social world of NGOs, and it over-privileges contradictions in the interaction between NGOs and nation-states in the South and East. In terms of policy recommendations, it merely calls for selected reforms to the development industry (or changing the rules of the game).

On the other hand, the structuralist trend deconstructs the development system and aptly highlights global forms of domination. However, it does not move beyond deconstruction and fails to reconstruct the contradictory world of NGOs as immersed in real historical processes. It hence depicts NGOs as un-reconstructed abstract totalities. Further, it argues for radical restructuring of the development industry (or changing the game altogether) in order to address global domination. Neither trend within sociological behaviourism ably captures simultaneously both ‘contradiction’ and ‘domination’ as essential ingredients of NGO social realities in the modern world.

Despite their conceptual and moral differences, both trends are problematic in two key analytical senses. First of all, they treat NGOs in terms of a subject-object dichotomy. For instance, structuralists conceptualize NGOs in the South and East as objects that function to reproduce global capitalism. And empiricists envisage NGOs as subjects that function to advance democracy and development in the ‘peripheries’ and, in the process, NGOs regularly confront authoritarian states. Such arguments revolve around the ontological notion of NGOs as ‘things’. Admittedly, NGOs do have an objective existence, yet the subject-object dichotomy in large part disembodies NGOs of contradictory social relations and also distracts from a sustained analysis of processes and practices internal to NGOs as organizational forms.
The second problem concerns the pronounced realist account of the relationship between NGOs and their external world. NGOs do things to others or have things done to them by others, but all this is seemingly unmediated by ‘meaning’. In other words, sociological behaviourism does not examine the many ways in which NGOs meaningfully construct their world through ongoing engagement and negotiation with their ‘significant others’. For example, structuralists portray global capital as simply imposing international agendas on subservient and compliant NGOs. They appear oblivious to the possibility that the relationship between global capital and NGOs may entail active and forceful initiatives on the part of NGOs, and that the ‘subservient’ outcome may be what NGOs seek. As well, empiricists are insensitive to the likelihood that, in interacting meaningfully with rural communities, NGOs may be more interested in sustaining their own organizational forms than in facilitating sustainable development. In general, then, the realism of sociological behaviourism ‘reads’ NGO realities independent of the meanings that NGOs give to their ambivalent world.

This thesis has overcome the methodological problems pertaining to realism and the subject-object dualism by returning to the thoughts of Marx and Weber. Marx’s epistemology suggests the fruitfulness of conceptualizing NGOs as contingent organizational forms, and as embodying and expressing contradictory relationships. For analytical purposes, throughout the thesis I highlighted the contradictions between ‘the global’ and ‘the local’, and I argued that NGOs are immersed in uneven processes of glocalization. Understanding NGOs as a social ‘form’ deals with the first problem discussed above, namely, the subject-object dichotomy.

Form analysis overcomes functionalist and instrumentalist renditions of the NGO world. NGO ‘function’ is mediated by NGO ‘form’ and is not posited a priori. The contradictions embedded in the ‘form’ imply that NGOs, within boundaries set by these contradictions, can ‘move’ in any direction, depending on how the contradictions work themselves out under real historical processes. Specific NGOs may – or may not – reproduce global forms of domination. Hence, deriving from Marx’s epistemology, this particular insight allows my perspective to account for both ‘domination’ and
‘contradiction’, as well as for the considerable diversity that exists between NGOs operating throughout the South and East.

The Weberian notion of ‘meaning’ transcends the second problem noted above, that is, the realist accounts of NGOs that predominate within the literature. It highlights the fact that NGOs interface with their ‘external’ world in a meaning-soaked manner, and that NGOs ‘handle’ the contradictions within their social field through meaning-laden organizational practices. The contingent interfaces that delimit the world of NGOs, namely, the interfaces with global donors, nation-states and rural communities, are ‘constructed’ and ‘negotiated’ interfaces. NGOs give specific (historically contingent) meanings to these interfaces and act accordingly.

From a ‘meaning’ point of view, the world of NGOs must be seen ‘from inside’ through ‘thick descriptions’ of organizational processes and practices. If for instance intermediary NGOs are seemingly ‘in the pocket’ of global capital (or if they reproduce a Glocal modernity), then this historical tendency is not simply imposed upon them in an unmediated fashion independent of meaning. It is a negotiated organizational outcome of NGOs that is pursued on a basis (or for reasons) that cannot be properly read ‘from outside’.

The unique perspective on intermediary NGOs identified and developed in this thesis revolves around a double ‘inside story’. On the one hand, as part of deconstruction, Marx’s epistemology leads us to go inside the NGO ‘form’ and to unmask the contradictory social relations that make up the form. This enables my perspective to go significantly beyond instrumentalist and functionalist accounts of NGOs. Form analysis demonstrates that the world of NGOs is turbulent rather than static, and that it is invariably characterized by ambiguity and ambivalence. As a result, NGOs may ‘travel’ in numerous directions and ‘position themselves’ in different spots, depending on the specific historical circumstances. In addition, this allows my perspective to incorporate and explain the considerable diversity that exists within the NGO ‘sector’ globally.
On the other hand, Weber’s ontological claim about the relevance of ‘meaning’ (and meaningful practices) again requires us to go inside the form, but now as part of historically reconstructing the world of NGOs. This claim brings to the fore the notion that the world of NGOs is not simply forced upon them ‘from outside’. Rather, NGOs actively negotiate their way through this (their) world, and they ‘handle’ and ‘manage’ the contradictions and tensions that come their way through meaningful social action. Although by no means exclusively so, it is absolutely critical that NGOs be understood from ‘the inside’. This would entail a detailed analysis of organizational systems, practices and conflicts in order to grasp the origin, formation and development of NGO action. This action, as it impinges on the outside world, cannot be reduced to NGO ‘functions’. Rather, this action involves contingent NGO ‘outcomes’ and ‘effects’.

In drawing on specific claims made by Marx and Weber, this double ‘inside story’ marks the original and unique significance of the theoretical perspective on NGOs contained in this thesis. The perspective is not ‘positional’ in the sense of being hamstrung by a particular sociological tradition, whether Marxist or Weberian. Indeed, it offers a sensitive and nuanced rendering of the complex and intricate world of NGOs without ‘slotting’ NGOs into a fixed and necessary social or political trajectory. In this sense, NGOs themselves are also not depicted as ‘positional’, that is, as invariably following a particular path or agenda.

Ultimately, this thesis is a discursive work, or an analytical work of deconstruction. That is the singular strength of the thesis. The empirical discussions on land reform and NGOs have been designed primarily to illustrate, and hopefully tantalizingly, the original theoretical framework developed in the thesis. I make no claim to the effect that the empirical material provides a comprehensive reconstruction of the world of NGOs under specific historical conditions. In other words, the historical reconstruction in this thesis is in large part exploratory. It seeks to be suggestive of the importance of the theoretical perspective and to offer fruitful leads for further research. In this regard, the thesis opens up the prospects of a new research agenda on NGOs, deriving from the uniqueness of the ‘double inside story’.
14.2 Intermediary ‘Land’ NGOs in Zimbabwe

In theorizing about intermediary NGOs, the thesis consistently brings to the fore the ongoing contradictions between ‘the global’ and ‘the local’ in the modern world. It argues that ‘the global’ and ‘the local’ are internally related and constituted, and that these moments are manifested in processes of ‘glocalization’. These contradictory moments are expressed in and through the world and work of NGOs.

This is shown empirically through an investigation of intermediary ‘land’ NGOs in contemporary Zimbabwe. A conceptual distinction is made between ‘advocating for change’ and ‘development and change’, and ‘land’ NGOs are discussed on this basis. In general terms, the thesis shows the ways in which development and advocacy NGOs – from the mid-1990s onwards – constantly manoeuvred and negotiated their way through the unfolding tensions between the global and local moments of agrarian and land reform, or processes of agrarian glocalization.

On the one hand, agrarian glocalization has marked homogenizing tendencies in terms of both policies and struggles. In the case of policies, it is shown that global agrarian commodity chains dominate the world market and that market-led land reforms are found throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America. The historical development of these processes of global levelling is highlighted with respect to a shift, albeit tentatively, from a state-centred to a society-centred land reform programme internationally. Generalized struggles over land also exist because of the common crises of rural livelihoods and social reproduction strategies in the ‘peripheries’. Of particular significance are uncivil forms of struggle engaged in by the peasantries, including land occupations or land self-provisioning. The thesis links these global changes to contemporary thinking on the agrarian question.

At the same time, there are significant regional and local variations to agrarian glocalization. In this regard, the ‘local’ Zimbabwean agrarian landscape cannot be read
from ‘global’ trajectories. Although reform in Zimbabwe during the Phase I land programme (from 1980 to 1996) was consistent with global trends and indeed was shaped by them, land initiatives – including halting land reform – were also structured by local forces and interests within both the White and Black populations. This phase left unaddressed livelihood problems with reference to farm labourers on White commercial farms and to small-scale farmers in customary areas.

Throughout Phase II of the programme (from 1997 to current), the localized moment of agrarian change in Zimbabwe was dramatically highlighted by nationalist assertions on land, significantly during the Third Chimurenga. This uncivil action led to an acrimonious debate within Zimbabwean social studies, which the thesis thoroughly addresses. But this action also raised serious challenges for the civil NGO ‘sector’ in Zimbabwe. During Phase II in particular, ‘land’ NGOs (whether engaged in advocacy or development endeavours) found themselves ‘caught in the crossfire’, but not in the firing line of deepening conflicts over land. They did not die a sudden and brutal death, but managed to dodge the bullets and agonizingly maintain their NGO operations in an altered but still viable form.

‘Advocacy’ NGOs were, relatively speaking, particularly active during the late 1990s when there was public dialogue on land reform and intense land policy formulation. However, with the emergence of the accelerated reform programme in the year 2000, the advocacy door was firmly closed. Over the past decade, advocacy ‘land’ NGOs became entrapped in a sticky web of intrigue between global donors and the Zimbabwean government that had been spun continuously throughout the post-colonial period. They eventually became almost ‘immobilized’ in this web and, in a sort of organizational balancing act, ‘distanced’ themselves from the main antagonists to the land conflicts and from strenuous advocacy work.

This distancing act cannot be reduced to political and ideological dispositions on the part of advocacy NGOs, although undoubtedly such dispositions played a part in the outright rejection by many NGOs of the accelerated land reform programme. Nor can the overt
pressure placed upon these NGOs by global donors provide a sufficient explanation. Instead, it is critical to go beyond politics and to enter the ‘inside world’ of these NGOs. This entails identifying the ‘internal’ dispositions and interests that shape NGO organizational practices. Notably, seeking to engage in full-blown advocacy work on the highly complex and contentious terrain of land reform in contemporary Zimbabwe would have placed considerable strain on these NGOs as organizational forms, and this may have jeopardized their continued functioning.

In a similar vein, ‘development’ NGOs in Zimbabwe – in the face of the on-the-ground complications and tensions of accelerated land reform – hesitantly stepped back from their long-term development programmes in the ‘old’ resettlement areas and customary lands. Instead, they increasingly engaged in short-term humanitarian aid and agricultural recovery work. At the same, they stood at an almost bemused distance from the turbulent ‘new’ resettlement areas. It is tempting to argue that ‘development’ NGOs were forced to do this under the sheer weight of political circumstances. Yet, like advocacy NGOs, it is possible to discern organizational dispositions through the political clouds. Development NGOs, at a time of donor intransigence with the Zimbabwean government, were able to maintain their financial (and organizational) lifelines because of their humanitarian work and their distancing from accelerated reform.

Hence, it is highly problematic to assume that these acts of immobilization and distancing on the part of ‘land’ NGOs represent signs of NGO incapacities and weaknesses. The case studies of FOST and SOS point to organizational actions (and inactions) which appear at first sight to indicate blatant NGO failure, such as the retreat from long-term development initiatives on commercial farms and the inability to become embedded within changing agrarian communities. Yet, such a conclusion may entail confusing organizational problems with organizational solutions. In other words, these organizational practices turned out to be the NGO way or solution to weathering the storm of accelerated land reform in Zimbabwe, and to remaining as viable organizational forms under politically volatile conditions.
It is also tempting to interpret immobilization and distancing in terms of the (middle) class bias of intermediary NGOs, or at least in terms of their (apparently conservative) political and ideological dispositions. Again however this in large part involves a conceptual confusion and, in this case, between political dispositions and organizational dispositions. NGOs are disposed to minimize the complexities of their world through organizational practices, albeit unintentionally. And, as this thesis consistently demonstrates, land reform is a particularly turbulent and complicated terrain for intermediary NGOs, in relation to both advocacy and development work. The existence of organizational dispositions that stabilize their world indicates that NGOs are not invariably against radical land reform or that, if they are, this stance is not to be interpreted in purely political terms. If ‘land’ NGOs do operate contrary to local empowering initiatives and thereby reproduce global trajectories (as in the case of contemporary Zimbabwe), they do so primarily because of their own organizational interests.

14.3 Stabilizing Practices and Complementary Interests

This thesis seeks to understand why intermediary NGOs do what they do in a manner which is sensitive to the ‘inside story’. In this regard, it is inadequate to claim that intermediary NGOs work on behalf of global forces or at their behest, although there may be some empirical truth to suggestions that they do. For instance, even a cursory reading of recent documents produced by USAID leads to the instrumentalist conclusion that American foreign policy seeks to consciously and deliberately slot NGOs into its global hegemonic designs (USAID 2002). It may also be asserted, with some justification, that ‘existing power relations’ within the development industry ‘distort and divert the best-intentioned [value] approach’ of NGOs (Rowlands 2003:p.6) and therefore NGOs – by some structural necessity – are subservient to global relations of domination.

Yet, in reproducing processes of Glocal modernity, NGOs do not directly capitulate to powerful interests or structural demands in some unmediated fashion. Rather, the
historically forged and contingent interests of NGOs tend to be consistent with the contemporary interests of capitalist modernist globalization, and hence these NGO interests could be labelled as ‘complementary’ interests. These interests are not abstract structural interests but arise as NGOs seek to stabilize their inherently ambivalent and ambiguous world. Thus, these interests do not entail brute material rationalizations, but are subjective interests heavily laden with meaning.

In pursuing this argument, it is important to recognize that NGOs have space to manoeuvre. Indeed, it may be argued that they have considerable room to manoeuvre and negotiate because they have multiple sources of accountability as located along their major social interfaces, including with global donors, the rural under-classes and nation-states in the South and East. This multiple accountability gives them, at least potentially, ‘relative autonomy’ from any particular interface or ‘significant other’. However, NGOs tend to manoeuvre ‘towards’ donors and the state rather than the rural under-classes. They do so not by wilfully responding to (and complying by) the whims and wishes of donors and the state, but rather by simplifying their relationship with the rural under-classes as the least privileged interface.

Eade (2003:p.249 my emphasis) argues that ‘development agencies, albeit unintentionally, depoliticise development. This may be to accommodate a particular worldview or policy agenda, or to allow them to tap into donor funding. All bureaucracies tend to perpetuate themselves, and aid agency staff is no different from other workers in being disinclined to court their own unemployment.’ This quotation reiterates the notion of complementary interests of NGOs, and expresses how these interests are mediated (and indeed modified) by social meanings and contingent negotiations.

Intermediary NGOs negotiate their way in and through their social world, and this involves ambivalent, uncertain and (often) frustrating relations with donors, rural communities and the state. NGOs, although without conscious intent, resolve the tensions and ambivalences in their world by ‘fixing’ or ‘stabilizing’ their own
organizations even if this goes contrary to sustainable development (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith 1992). This explains in part why the development industry continues unabated, as a recursively self-reproducing set of global relations, although there is only limited if any sustainable development taking place because of it.

NGOs structure, stabilize and enact closure on their world; in other words, as an organizational disposition, NGO suture their world and bring a simple coherence and logic to it. Edwards (1993) argues that NGOs have ‘their own agendas’, and in a general sense this is undoubtedly true. Yet, it is important not to over-privilege qualities of intent and purpose in speaking about NGO agendas as these qualities invoke conspiratorial connotations. He goes on to claim though that NGOs are ‘often protective, defensive and resistant to criticism’ (Edwards 1993:p.81) such that they have been known to engage in ‘turf struggles’ (Thomas-Slater and Sodikoff 2003:p.156) as a means to control and order their world.

Other NGO writers have provided isolated yet intriguing comments about NGOs and how they seek to stabilize their world of ambivalence. For example, NGOs are said to consider their standard development methods as defining ‘who we are’ and ‘what we are’ (Kaplan 2003:p.65); they ‘exercise a significant amount of self-censorship to avoid confrontations’ (Okuku 2002:p.94); they often ‘fall back into narrow self-justification’ (Morris-Suzuki 2000:p.84); they are in a ‘rage to conclude’ and a ‘rush to closure’ in their development practice (Ellerman 2003:pp.31, 32); and they engage in utilitarian thinking and practice by conceptualizing what is useful as true and what works as good (Power et al. 2003:p.91). All these comments imply that NGOs give structured meaning to their (otherwise) unstructured world and they do this by way of stabilizing practices. This may entail all sorts of simplifying assumptions and practices that undermine sustainable development and serve only to reproduce the *status quo*, including homogenizing the needs of the rural under-classes or restricting their participation (and empowerment) to the bare minimum (Crewe and Harrison 1998:pp.190-194).
In undertaking their development and democracy work, NGOs tend to prioritize ‘the global’ and problematize ‘the local’. But, in the end, they over-privilege their own organizational stability and sustainability. Although they work within the confines of global forms of domination, NGOs re-centre the world of development in a way that gives primacy to their organizations. As Power et al. (2003:p.87) put it, NGOs ‘set up internal but largely unrecognised barriers to their own values-driven goals’ so that the latter – along with needs of the rural underclasses – are often, unconsciously, sacrificed on the altar of NGO self-preservation.

This is how NGOs walk the tightrope of tension between the universal and the particular, and between the global and the local. They do not seek to reproduce global domination, nor are they manipulated to do so, but in pursuing order and stability along the social interfaces of their world, they by implication preserve the existing relations of domination. This, though, is not an inevitable consequence of the development system. Rather, it is the product of the existing balance of forces within the development industry that allows NGOs to make problematic but not privilege the rural underclasses while simultaneously remaining ‘in business’ as organizational forms.

14.4 Towards a Theoretical Perspective

In this thesis I deliberately refrain from developing and presenting a ‘theory’ of intermediary NGOs, and particularly a ‘grand theory’. This is not necessarily because it is beyond the scope of the thesis. Rather, the very notion of ‘theory’ has far too definitive a connotation for a subject matter – intermediary NGOs – that still remains under-theorized. To advance a ‘theory’ of NGOs would entail (overly) strident and bold claims about a field of social life for which much further analytical and empirical work still has to be done.

I prefer the usage of ‘theoretical perspective’ to designate what the thesis seeks to develop and refine. I have sought to develop an approach or framework for making sense
of the world and work of NGOs. This perspective, by necessity, entails specific epistemological and ontological commitments. Yet, my perspective does not fit easily and neatly into any particular theoretical tradition found within the history of sociology. Certainly, I emphasize key claims made by both Marx and Weber that I see as critical to a sensitive rendering of the social realities of NGOs. But I would label my theoretical perspective on NGOs as neither Marxist nor Weberian. Certainly, this thesis is indebted to the works of these two foremost classical sociologists. Indeed, the strength of the thesis in large part lies in returning to Marx and Weber, although not in the sense of paying homage to them.

I have intentionally refrained from boxing NGOs into a corner, or from pigeon-holing the world of NGOs into a grand theory or grand theoretical perspective. Nevertheless, I have forcefully argued that ‘going inside the form’ – not once, but twice – are critical moments in the processes of deconstructing and reconstructing the social world of intermediary NGOs in the modern world. As the case of ‘land’ NGOs in contemporary Zimbabwe shows, this ‘inside story’ provides a strong basis for further social research of intermediary NGOs.
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