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1 *The planned destruction of 'black' agriculture*

Hubert Cochet

For those familiar with agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa, travelling in the former homelands of South Africa elicits surprise. How is it that this densely populated countryside, dotted with rural settlements created by the forced removal policy under apartheid, is left uncultivated, largely abandoned to bush and underused? The landscape is characterised by very few livestock, evidence of erosion despite extensive woody vegetation and occasional signs of farming. Following on from 1994, when researchers, academics and the development community began reflecting on the future of these lands and how to revive 'black' agriculture, there is now a need to understand the historic and contemporary factors that have led to the massive abandonment of agricultural activities (Cochet 1998). How did the formerly vibrant production systems that once covered these lands die off, to the point that the landscape is now dominated by marginally used lands, even though rural population density is higher than ever? Reconstituting the steps and processes underlying this planned destruction is a prerequisite to any attempt at reconstruction.

Overview of previous production systems

In his book *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*, Colin Bundy reconstructs the agrarian systems of the late 19th century in the future homeland of Ciskei, part of what was then the vast Cape Province (Bundy 1979). Many black farmers had already adopted animal traction and were using ploughs and carts. New crops, like winter wheat, had appeared in farmers' rotations. Sheep farming was widespread, thanks to the growing international wool trade.¹

Market-based peasant farming was reinforced by a growing market for agricultural products and livestock, and higher prices brought on by the diamond boom in Kimberley and the Witwatersrand gold rush. Together with the adoption of animal traction for tillage and transportation which enhanced labour productivity, this led to larger marketed surpluses (beyond what was needed for the obligatory hut tax) and the development of sheep pens and irrigation systems. The result was a thriving and dynamic form of black agriculture (Bundy 1979).

This process of agricultural development also occurred on lands which had been newly controlled by white people or on Crown lands, where squatter-peasants and tenants would settle in the absence of the white owners (Bundy 1979).

Bundy's book gives the impression that there was no significant difference in labour productivity between white and black agriculture in the late 1800s, at least in this region of South Africa. Although this hypothesis would need to be tested by further

historical research, it is clear that the enormous differences in productivity observed today are primarily the result of relatively recent differentiation processes, and are largely due to the massive appropriation of resources by the white minority in the 20th century.

White farmers had thus to face both foreign competition and domestic competition from the black peasantry, whose productivity was equal to theirs. Despite limited access to land, black farmers were more cost-efficient and tended to have more intensive techniques, and thus better returns. As a result, black farmers continued to produce marketable surplus, even after white people no longer managed to do so (Bundy 1979).

Peasants had for long been a target for the anger and resentment of white farmers. These farmers had two main complaints. Firstly, they were unable to compete successfully with African peasants, whose production costs were kept relatively low through their access to family labour. Secondly, the existence of an African peasantry and the resilience of the African subsistence economy seriously impeded the flow of labour to white farms. (Maylam 1986: 89)

The 'reproduction threshold' of African farms was lower than that of farmers of European origin, owing to a less expensive lifestyle, particularly with regard to imports. This allowed them to stay above the reproduction threshold longer when prices were low, and to generate a surplus even when white people could not. And yet, the vibrancy and resilience of black agriculture would bring about its downfall. As labour competition grew between black and white agriculture, it became clear that the development of the latter – along with the mining sector – would require the methodical destruction of the first.

First signs of distress

Several decades before the 1913 Land Act sounded its death knell, black agriculture had started to weaken. Border wars, forced removals and long distances from markets undermined black agriculture in the Cape Colony, and particularly in the Ciskei. The rinderpest outbreaks in the 1890s dealt a heavy blow to the peasant economy in the country, as well as in many parts of eastern and southern Africa. In Transkei, for example, 80–90 per cent of cattle were decimated (Bundy 1979: 120; see also Wilson & Thompson 1971), brutally decapitalising farms (as cattle were the main form of capital accumulation) and reducing animal traction.

In addition, taxes were increased. From 1880–1890, the poll tax and hut tax were introduced on the reserves, as well as a tax on ox carts, known as the wheel tax (Fauvelle-Aymar 2006). In the Cape Colony, the Location Acts of 1876 and 1884 turned black sharecroppers, tenants and farmers into 'squatters' whose land could be expropriated as necessary (Fauvelle-Aymar 2006).²

The development of domestic markets encouraged landowners to modify production processes and rely more on salaried labourers, leading them to evict tenant farmers (Fauvelle-Aymar 2006). Wages were much lower than the production share that previously remained with sharecroppers, the value of which increased as markets grew. Thus began the proletarianisation of rural populations.

Moreover, as transportation infrastructure expanded and improved in areas occupied by white people (railways and roads linking major cities), black people were pushed deeper into their reserves, further penalising their market access.

With an increasing number of farmers becoming wage labourers, socio-economic differences among black farmers deepened, separating those with access to animal traction (thanks to having replenished their herds after the rinderpest epidemics, often because they had the largest herds before) from the impoverished majority. In Transkei, the 19th century saw massive migration toward the Colony of Natal and its sugar cane plantations, while food production collapsed and grain imports skyrocketed (Bundy 1979).

The development of mining and industry required a large influx of cheap labour, which aggravated the labour shortage felt by white farmers. It became obvious to white mine owners and farmers that they needed to radically increase labour availability without increasing its cost. This gold and maize alliance (Bundy 1979) in many ways fuelled the policy of massive proletarianisation of black populations that dominated the 20th century.

Finally, the turn of the 20th century also witnessed one of the first massive aid programmes to white agriculture, providing support for fences, construction of the first dam, irrigation development, credit, housing construction, outreach services and preferential rail rates (Bundy 1979; Fauvelle-Aymar 2006).

Land grabbing and the further weakening of black agriculture

The Land Acts of 1913 and 1936, leading to the delimitation of the 'native reserves' (the first one identifying 8 per cent, the second one 13 per cent, of the country's land surface), were the culmination, and more particularly the institutionalisation, of a land-grabbing process already well under way. Because black agriculture was concentrated in a small portion of the territory, it was brutally affected by high population densities. During the decades following the Land Acts, the lands in the reserves degenerated and a process of rapid underdevelopment took hold. 'Not only did the peasant communities cease to export grain: they ceased to grow sufficient to feed themselves' (Wilson & Thompson 1971: 58).

In addition, the cash and labour tenants who rented plots in white areas were ejected (Bundy 1979). Black people in white zones were only recognised as servants (wage labourers), labour tenants and squatters (Bundy 1979). Initially spared from expulsion, labour tenants were in time removed from the white areas so that the only black people left were wage labourers. According to Bundy (1979: 235), of the

1 million labour tenants living with their families on white farms in 1936, only 163 000 remained in 1964 and 16 000 in 1973, mostly in Natal where the system lasted longer. However, the process of widespread impoverishment varied regionally, as suggested by work done during this research.

Ciskei and Transkei

In the Ciskei, the constant displacement of populations caused firstly by multiple border wars and then by the racial gerrymandering that accompanied the establishment of the bantustan of Ciskei, led to an earlier and more severe crisis than elsewhere, which was further aggravated by soil and climatic conditions that impeded biomass production.

In the district of Victoria East (typical of the Ciskei), the population grew from 6 900 inhabitants in 1875 to 15 800 in 1925, while agricultural surplus fell from 19 000 to 10 000 pounds (wool, hides and grains). At the same time, food purchases tripled while costs of clothing and blankets dropped threefold and tools and supplies by half (Bundy 1979, according to Henderson 1927; see also Wilson & Thompson 1971). In the period 1949–1951, even during the good years, food production covered only half the nutritional needs of the district of Keiskammahoek (Wilson & Thompson 1971) and 60 per cent of household income was spent on food. The same was true in the Transkei, where household survival depended largely on migration. Production fell between 1910 and 1940, and 30 per cent of households had no livestock. The concentration of the black population on small swathes of land increased resource pressure. 'In most areas fuel was so scarce that the dung and herbage required for compost was burnt on cooking fires' (Wilson & Thompson 1971: 56).

Despite more than half a century of continuous plunder and crises, a significant portion of rural households were still working in agriculture by the mid-20th century. In the 1950s and 1960s, mixed crop–livestock production systems were still 'alive'. Interviews conducted in 1998 with elderly persons from the village of Twecu on the site of their former homeland, before being forcibly removed under the 'betterment plan' (see below), implicitly revealed elements of this production system: animal traction coupled with intensive crop rotations, double annual harvests on the best plots' crops, with animal manure carried by cart to the fields. Gardens situated near the houses were enclosed by hedges and/or ditches and stone walls, and a large number of vegetables were grown (Cochet 1998).

The remains of this agrarian system are now barely visible in the landscape. In some of the older hamlets, one can still make out land boundaries and identify talus embankments and enclosures surrounding houses, or animal traction equipment, neglected and riddled with rust.³

KwaZulu

In the Colony of Natal, the settlement of English migrants during the second half of the 19th century and the free transfer of land by the British Crown paved the way for the rapid development of large sugar plantations that supplied sugar to the Cape Colony and metropolitan areas. Missions run by Protestant missionaries were established in the 1870s, representing land where Zulu people had to settle.

To increase cane production and optimise the first sugar mills set up at the turn of the century, black populations from the reserves were 'encouraged' to plant sugar cane on the lands left to them, in order to pay the per capita tax. As the allocation of a quota was related to land ownership, having a land title was already at this time practically a prerequisite. For example, the inhabitants of the Ifafa mission (near the Sezela plantation) felt constrained to buy their own piece of land from the state in instalments over twenty-five years, which further contributed to their impoverishment (Chapter 7). This *modus operandi* foreshadowed the contractual relationships that the Sezela plantation currently offers to 'historically disadvantaged' growers: all sugar cane farming operations (ploughing, furrowing and planting) are done at the mill where the cane is delivered, not only because growers have no capital, but also because the men have gone to work on white farms, plantations or in the mines. The reduction of pasture that has resulted from planting cane has worsened the problem of overgrazing, leading to epidemics, the further reduction of livestock farming and decapitalisation of families (Bièque & Kippeurt 2012) (see Chapter 7).

Crocodile River Valley (Brits)

The construction of the Hartbeespoort Dam and irrigation systems in 1924 made it possible to effectively implement the 1913 Land Act and expel black populations from the region of Brits (Rémy & Clerc 2011). Indeed, the area's history, marked by the construction of the irrigation system, led to the expansion of white agriculture and the dispossession of black communities, who were pushed outside the irrigated area into territories that would later, in 1977, be promoted as the 'independent' bantustan of Bophuthatswana (Chapter 9).

Lowlands of the northern and eastern regions of the former Transvaal

At the turn of the 20th century, these regions were still relatively inhospitable, mainly owing to malaria. As a result, few white families settled there and the Land Act of 1913 had no real impact until malaria was eradicated and irrigation systems developed. It was not until the late 1940s and early 1950s that white farmers settled in these regions, after being given plots of rezoned lands that had been previously attributed but were yet to be developed.⁴

Because white settlement came somewhat later, black agriculture was able to prosper on the margins of the land grabbing and resource monopolisation going

on elsewhere in the country. Take, for example, the mixed farming–animal traction system described in Anjuère and Boche (2009). Found on the banks of the Nwanedzi River (Limpopo), this system allowed a good portion of families settled in the bantustan of Gazankulu to live with dignity. The main crops were maize, beans, squash, groundnuts, earth peas, *matimba* (from the sugar cane family), various types of vine crops and melons. In addition to these subsistence crops, farmers grew wheat and sorghum, which they processed to sell as traditional beer. They also planted manioc and mango trees on the residential plots. Each household had access to collective rangelands and grazing rights to surrounding farmlands, allowing them to raise cows and oxen. Cattle were kept by younger members of the family, who took them to graze during the day and brought them back in the evening to the family kraal. The most modest families rented oxen from the more well off to prepare their plots. In addition to cattle, households often had goats and pigs, fed with a mixture of corn bran and water as well as household waste (Anjuère & Boche 2009) (see Chapter 4).

'Agricultural development' planning for black people

Betterment plan and normative agricultural planning

History provides countless examples of normative development programmes designed to 'modernise' African agriculture, and which have been imposed on local populations in a more or less authoritarian fashion. First, there were the major land-planning operations that, from one end of the continent to the other, have tried to wipe the slate clean. With the help of bulldozers, they have carved into the landscape large structures reflecting modernity, simply because they are mechanised. These projects were first initiated in the late colonial period and continued post-independence: the great groundnut projects in Casamance and British Tanganyika; the large irrigation systems of the CFDT (French Textile Company) where shea and locust bean forests were razed; the *paysannat* system in the Belgian Congo and Rwanda–Burundi borders; the state-run farms in Guinea and the Ethiopian Rift, and so on.⁵ Across the continent, 'agricultural development' was based on the same simple principle: African agricultural and pastoral practices were archaic and the cause of erosion and deforestation. They needed to be done away with as quickly as possible and replaced by 'rational' practices. This vision of African agriculture was based on an almost complete ignorance of existing production systems, the historic and ongoing changes to these systems and their potential for development (Cochet 2005).

The forceful reorganisation of land under betterment planning was an extreme variant of this type of 'development', only comparable – in design, not results – to authoritarian villagisation attempts in the 1970s and 1980s in countries like Tanzania and Ethiopia.

After African people were displaced to the reserves – a process that culminated with the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936 – authorities set out to plan ‘agricultural development’ reserved for black people. Betterment planning dictated that cropland, pasture, woodlands and residential areas be grouped together and follow a standard land-use scheme. This ‘agricultural development’ policy, both particularly authoritarian and fundamentally racist with its concept of ‘separate’ development, had far-reaching consequences given that nearly the entire population had been displaced to lands that covered 8 per cent, and later 13 per cent, of the territory. It is no surprise, then, that when white experts assessed native agriculture they would point out its weaknesses: low yields, erosion, overgrazing. The Bantu people were invariably blamed when in fact these weaknesses were merely the result of a widespread and extensive process of land grabbing.⁶

From this point on, the issue of overgrazing started to appear in South African literature. Overgrazing was repeatedly used to explain erosion and degradation in the homelands, and to justify drastic measures to limit the number of livestock raised by black families (Alvord 1949). Proclamation No. 31 of 1939, Control of and Improvement of Livestock in Native Areas, aimed to crack down on the ‘demon of overgrazing’ (De Wet 1995: 42). Staff of the Department of Native Affairs were tasked with eliminating ‘redundant’ livestock, after determining the load factor ad hoc and an acceptable number of head for each community. This interpretation ignored the fact that keeping livestock in a restricted area would necessarily increase the pressure on the land and subsequently lead to pushing people off their reserves. It was a ‘tragedy of the commons’, staged from the outset and just in time to justify operations that would lead to additional decapitalisation. This interpretation also overlooked the fact that cattle represented the only remaining form of capital accumulation for black families, as all other forms had been closed off to them. Finally, it did not account for the fact that manure was the only way to fertilise cultivated areas given the lack of access to synthetic fertilisers.

This imposed land-use policy was unevenly applied before World War II, but was intensified under the Smuts government starting in 1945. Emphasis was on building ‘viable’ production units in the homelands, although not once was the fight against overgrazing called into question. Because there was not enough land for black-run farms to reach sufficient size, it was decreed that only a small number of ‘viable’ farms would be promoted in each community. Large numbers of families were encouraged to cease agricultural and pastoral activities and move to rural villages. It was the end of the one-man-one-plot era. The population on each reserve was divided into two groups: full-time peasant farmers and full-time wage labourers (De Wet 1995). The model precluded any form of pluri-activity. Proclamation No. 116 of 1949 gave full powers to local officials, called Native Commissioners, to enforce zoning under the betterment plan and sanction recalcitrant farmers (De Wet 1995). It thereby ushered in an era of agrarian despotism in the homelands and future ‘autonomous’ or so-called ‘independent’ bantustans once the Commissioners’ role was delegated to black intermediaries following the Bantu Authorities Act (No. 68 of 1951).

In 1954, the government entrusted the Tomlinson Commission with a vast feasibility study of the homelands. The Commission toed the government line, reaffirming the need to create viable production units in the homelands and move surplus populations to rural villages to create a pool of workers for industry and the mines. But the objective of creating 'viable agricultural holdings' in the homelands was not prioritised. Just as before the war, priority was given to fighting erosion and overgrazing, to forced villagisation and to the authoritarian zoning of lands into grazing areas, arable areas and residential areas.

The National Party's agenda had shifted. It no longer sought to reinforce an admittedly ineffective and normative model of black agriculture. Rather, the goal was to turn the homelands into labour pools, controlled by sheer distance (isolated in the countryside) and used to benefit white farms, industries, mines and other sectors.

Women, children and the elderly took care of what remained of farming operations, while men migrated to work in the mines or on white farms to make ends meet. Farms looked increasingly like *minifundios* (one man, one plot) planned by the authorities, comparable to those in Latin America, or the small plots of land given to workers of Soviet *kolkhoz* (collective farm) that were so critical to improving their meagre remuneration.

But the liquidation of black agriculture went even further in South Africa. The agriculture sector in the homelands was almost entirely destroyed and what remained was not enough to sustain the whole labour force, resulting in lower labour costs to employers. It was state pensions given to the elderly, starting in 1965 (see below), that sustained households. The case of the South African homelands is thus a special case insofar as nearly the entire rural population was turned into wage labourers. Today, this nearly complete proletarianisation weighs heavily in attempts to revitalise black agriculture.

The results of the velleity for agricultural development in the 'reserves', and in particular the villagisation and 'improvement' projects, had largely no positive impacts, at least not for the targeted populations. In all the bantustans, maize production stagnated between 1947/48 and 1967/68 (down from 3.8 to 3.7 million bags), while the population increased. At the same time, maize production on white farms increased from 30 to 105 million bags (Bundy 1979: 229).⁷ The trend was even more pronounced for sorghum production: down from 1.2 to 0.7 million bags in the bantustans, and up from 1.8 to 9.5 million bags on white farms (Bundy 1979: 229).

The impact of these projects varied depending on whether villagisation brought families of similar origin together or simply superimposed families from different regions onto local groups. Impact also depended on the geography, the proportion of land zoned as 'pastoral', and whether the betterment planning included small-scale irrigation projects. Variations notwithstanding, the assessment of Chris de Wet (1995) and the examples below confirm that the policy clearly contributed to the destruction of black agriculture: smaller plots per family, rigid crop rotations,

phasing out of animal traction, distancing and disruption of the flow of biomass within production units, the slaughter of 'surplus' animals, decapitalisation and lower yields.⁸ It also had detrimental effects on social cohesion within communities. The following examples illustrate how, in the different regions studied in detail in this book, this deadly process flourished.

Nwanedzi Valley (Limpopo)

The case of the Nwanedzi Valley (Limpopo) illustrates the destruction caused by betterment planning. The belated arrival of white settlement in the region meant that black agriculture was able to develop until the 1950s and 1960s. Betterment planning was not actually implemented until the 1970s by the authorities of the Gazankulu bantustan, some twenty years after the Tomlinson Commission's recommendations. Maud Anjuère and Mathieu Boche (2009; Chapter 4) explain how families living in the area were forced to leave their homes and land and to settle on residential plots of the regulatory size of 2 000 m². The villages of Mandlakhazi and Nwadjaheni were thus created. Despite this process of forced villagisation, nearly all the families continued for two or three years to farm their old plots, particularly those with water access. However, the plots were unfenced owing to lack of financial resources and harvests were almost always destroyed by the villagers' cattle. Only a few households, where the head was a well-paid wage labourer (compared to the low standards of the time), had the means to fence their land and continue farming these plots. The so-called 'arable' lands were, in turn, reserved for a state plantation (sisal and mango). The vast majority of families in the area had no choice but to adapt their production systems to the meagre plots of land allocated to them. The objective of betterment planning was fully achieved here: villagisation forced most men and women to seek work on the neighbouring white farms, or to migrate to Johannesburg or Pretoria.

New Forest village

The case of New Forest village (studied by Hélène Regourd) in the former bantustan of KaNgwane (Mpumalanga) illustrates the process and consequences of setting up a small irrigated area as part of betterment planning.⁹ The New Forest irrigation scheme, built in 1965 – 720 hectares (ha) and 535 families living in five villages – was a gravity-based furrow irrigation system. To be eligible for an irrigated plot, families had to be full-time farmers and have fewer than five head of livestock.¹⁰ Agricultural production was managed, organised and supervised by the state and by the Agricultural Rural Development Corporation. Technical and infrastructure support was provided until farming operations were fully autonomous. Tractors with drivers were made available to farmers, along with crop management plans (planting and harvesting calendar), pesticides, chemical fertilisers and dosage instructions. The state managed the scheme and water distribution, as well as the marketing of any surplus (Regourd 2012; Chapter 5).

Some years later, in the 1970s, new government measures imposed a new state-controlled system of food and vegetable crops, fully mechanised and fertilised, to allow for two growing seasons per year: summer food crops (maize, groundnuts, squash) and winter cash crops (cabbage, tomatoes, onions, etc.). Greatly limiting any pastoral farming, the new standards put an end to the mixed crop–livestock systems that previously prevailed, creating systems that relied exclusively on synthetic fertilisers (Regourd 2012).

Black farmers cultivating the slopes of the Sabie Valley (Hazyview), situated outside this small irrigation scheme, were ordered to cease their activities immediately because 'they pumped too much water from the river and would run it dry', even while large-scale irrigation schemes were widely developed for white farmers. Those who did not comply were arrested. According to a witness of these events, 'this is when blacks started to go hungry in the valley, because they depended solely on rain' (Regourd 2012: 53). Here too, draught animals were abandoned because farmers were no longer allowed to cultivate beyond small gardens, often less than 200 m² in area (Chapter 5).

Promoting a small black farming elite in the bantustans

The idea of establishing 'viable' farms entrusted to a small black elite in the bantustans – promoted for a time in the 1940s and recommended by the Tomlinson Commission but quickly abandoned in favour of the planned *minifundios* – resurfaced in the 1970s. It was decided that the number of smallholdings should be reduced from 500 000 to 50 000 (Bundy 1979: 228).

This new policy prefigured what was to come in the context of post-apartheid agrarian reform with emerging farmers. The concept of promoting a small number of black farmers was based on a model copied from 'modern' agriculture and implemented on white farms: large monoculture production units based on productive specialisation and strict separation of crops and livestock, partial mechanisation, massive use of synthetic inputs (fertilisers and pesticides), wage labour and heavily subsidised.

The result of this new 'development' policy was irrevocable. The government subsidies channelled through the bantustans' puppet governments simply accelerated the process of proletarianisation. The farming models promoted were such a failure that they deserve a brief analysis.

Bantustan of Bophuthatswana

In the bantustan of Bophuthatswana, the relatively fertile soil to the south of the present town of Bethanie, which was not incorporated into the neighbouring irrigation scheme, had long been cultivated by members of the Bakwena ba Mogopa community using draught animals. In 1977, the bantustan's authorities decided to promote an agricultural development project. Candidates were selected based on

'required skills'. In this case, thirty-three people were each awarded a plot of 100 ha of rain-fed land with good agronomic potential (Rémy & Clerc 2011). Some already possessed a tractor and tillage tools, acquired in the early 1960s (probably families that were already well off at the time, and close to the bantustan authorities). The unilateral, discriminatory nature of the model led to the eviction of families with smaller plots. Commercialisation could only be achieved through Agricor, a cooperative established at the time to market the produce of black farmers (Rémy & Clerc 2011). As will be seen in Chapter 9, the current model promoted in Bethanie looks identical. It is as if the project implemented at the time of the bantustans foreshadowed the design and implementation of the current model used today to promote emerging farmers.

Alluvial terraces of the Kat River (Eastern Cape)

In order to make Ciskei racially homogeneous, the government launched a 'consolidation' operation in 1980 which led to new population displacements: expropriation of white farmers residing within the boundaries of the future entity and expulsion of black families settled on 'black spots', now attributed to white people. Under this forced restructuring, part of the middle and high Kat River Valley – alluvial terraces, citrus plantations, etc. – were inserted into the bantustan of Ciskei. This process of transferring 'white' farms to black beneficiaries also foreshadows the land reform processes in place today (Chapter 6).

To do this, white farms in the north of the valley were purchased by the South African government and surrendered to Ciskei authorities, who entrusted their management, including the citrus groves, to the parastatal structure Ulimicor (also known as the Ciskei Agricultural Corporation) until the late 1980s. Ulimicor modernised most of the citrus farms, implementing microjet irrigation systems, purchasing new equipment (tractors and sprayers) and planting new orange orchards (Quinquet de Monjour & Busnel 2012). In the late 1980s, the government of Ciskei decided to privatise the former white citrus farms and install black farmers there. Twenty people were selected. Among the lucky winners were many agricultural technicians who worked for Ulimicor and relatives of members of the government of Ciskei, despite their lack of interest in agriculture. The alluvial terraces of the former white farms were then divided into economically 'viable' units of 17–32 ha each. They were rented out for five years, with an option to buy. Ulimicor would assist each farmer for five years, lending out equipment and providing advances for chemical inputs at the beginning of the crop year as well as technical support (Quinquet de Monjour & Busnel 2012).

Bantustan of Gazankulu

Projects implemented in the bantustan of Gazankulu were similar. In the area studied by Anjuère and Boche (2009), only a few villagers from Mandlakhazi and Nwadjaheni (those close to tribal authorities and government officials of Gazankulu)

were allocated plots of 8–13 ha of 'arable' land. On the advice of the government's technical services, they set up mango plantations with 10–15 m between rows in order to cultivate maize, groundnuts, earth peas and squash during the rainy season. All the other families residing in these villages who had so far weathered the steamroller of 'separate development' were brutally decapitalised because of a lack of access to production means (land, water, capital and labour) and six consecutive years of drought. Lack of forage owing to drought and overgrazing, and the inability to sell animals before they wasted away completely, devastated herds and further impoverished inhabitants (Anjuère & Boche 2009; Chapter 4).

Emergence of sugar cane smallholdings in the black spots of KwaZulu

The development initiatives promoted in the sugar regions of KwaZulu were a little different. As noted, planting sugar cane was practically mandatory in the missions in the early 20th century. In the 1970s, sugar cane processors once again needed more sugar cane than white farmers could supply, in order to optimise their processing facilities whose capacity had grown.

The Financial Aid Fund (FAF) was set up in 1973 to 'help' farmers from the reserves by providing financial services.¹¹ Sugar companies served as intermediaries between the FAF and small-scale growers. The planter would have an account with the sugar company, which was credited with a loan from the FAF for planting cane. The sugar company that owned the Sezela plantation would prepare the land and plant with its own equipment and workforce. The raw product delivered for the first three seasons would be divided up: one part would go to reimburse the FAF loan and the other to the sugar company operations. During the first three years, the planter neither spent nor earned any money (Bièque & Kippeurt 2012).

In the years that followed, the sugar company continued to carry out all farming operations and to ensure farmers had enough funds to apply post-harvest fertilisers and herbicides by retaining a portion of the harvest upon delivery. The money available in this fund, calculated on the cost of sugar cane production, was used to purchase inputs and to pay the service provider, that is, the sugar company itself. The balance was given to the planter in March of the following year.

This system, under which smallholders had no control over the production process, again foreshadowed the situation of most black farmers today, be they heirs of these 1970s smallholdings or emerging farmers (see Chapter 7).

Cutting off access to the national agrofood system

Parallel to their gradual proletarianisation, rural Africans were entirely pushed out of agricultural and agrofood markets. As their productive autonomy dwindled, laws and regulations multiplied to ban the sale of their products on the market. In 1949, for example, a law was passed to limit the number of street vendors, mostly Indians, in the city of Durban. The law required sellers to have a licence, a storeroom for

fruits and vegetables, and a vehicle deemed 'valid' by the licensing agent (cited by Bièque & Kippeurt 2012). In his law firm based in Johannesburg in the early 1950s, Nelson Mandela received each week old women who made and sold African beer to complement their meagre incomes, but who found themselves threatened with prison or fines (Mandela 1994).

Rural markets were closed in favour of large-scale retailers. Six supermarkets today have 93.8 per cent of retail market share (Louw et al. 2008). This process led to the establishment of a national food system following Western standards and consumption models. The system is based on a small number of central purchasing entities with centralised platforms, requiring white farmers to be organised into cooperatives to deliver large, standardised volumes. As a result, it is very difficult for a black farmer who is not integrated into these channels to sell his or her produce.

There is very little local trade left between producers and consumers living in the same region. In the region of Brits, for example, recipients of restitution programmes have managed to build medium-sized vegetable farms (10–20 ha) and sell spinach, tomatoes and sweet potatoes to intermediaries that directly supply the surrounding community (see Chapter 9). Around Hazyview, roadside hawkers are able to sell their products, as this form of marketing is no longer illegal (see Chapter 5).

Some animal products also still benefit from dynamic local markets, like goat meat, a staple among populations in the former homelands. In contrast, maize and maize flour, another staple in rural markets, seem totally controlled by the agrofood industry. It is indeed remarkable that, unlike in other rural areas in Africa, small maize farmers do not have a mill at home or in their village to process their production. They must sell all of their production and buy maize flour at the supermarket.

Conclusion: An alarming state of disrepair

In areas of the country where African populations were grouped according to the segregation laws, labour productivity declined significantly from the days when farmers had animal traction equipment and much of the land was cultivated. The consolidation of white power and the implementation of 'separate development' policies – lack of access to land and water; forced decapitalisation through livestock 'destocking' campaigns; and no independent market access, whether to supply chain inputs, production means, commercialisation or processing channels – definitively destroyed the accumulation potential of African farms.

As a result, South African peasant agriculture is in an alarming state of disrepair. The contrast with vibrant peasant production systems elsewhere in Africa is salient. In many places, peasant agriculture continues to generate value addition, revenues (albeit modest), employment, social ties and sometimes quite remarkable landscapes. Take for example the *Faidherbia albida* plantations that dominate many parts of the Sahelo-Sudanian zone; the shea and locust bean parks in the more humid areas of

the Sudanian zone; the impressive terraces of the Mandara Mountains in northern Cameroon; the swamp rice fields extending towards the sea from the Casamance down to the coast of Guinea; the highlands of Burundi, Rwanda, Bamileke country or enset plantations in Ethiopia, to mention a few of the most spectacular examples. None of this can be observed in South Africa, where the rural landscapes of the former homelands are among the most depressing on the continent.

Moreover, the roughly 1 million agricultural jobs created by the 60 000 white farms during apartheid (Simbi & Aliber 2000) – a large number due to the low wages – pale in comparison to what could have been created by family farms benefiting from government support and good market channels. Underemployment in rural South Africa is higher than ever before and is one of the highest in the world.

Elsewhere in the world where land grabbing has occurred at the expense of the majority, we have seen the gradual establishment of a dual agricultural sector, with large mechanised factory farms on the one hand, and *minifundios* on the other. Yet the latter are often home to very intensive production processes in terms of labour, the only production means available, and contribute significantly to domestic market supply and even export crops. We can cite numerous examples worldwide, including in the former Soviet Union, where the plots of former *kolkhoz* workers and their descendants contribute more than ever to food production for the domestic market. In some countries, like Brazil, the dual nature of these production systems has been officially recognised with the implementation of public policies that acknowledge the highly productive nature of small and very small farms, and their multiple functions in terms of job creation and poverty alleviation. In South Africa, the agricultural sector has been fully and exclusively reserved for white people. In this sense, although conceptually necessary (as used in this book), it is sometimes difficult to consider South African agriculture as dualistic, as black populations have been completely stripped of production means and entirely proletarianised. This unique situation makes the revitalisation of small family farms extremely difficult and complex, yet absolutely indispensable, as will be seen.

Notes

- 1 A similar expansion of black agriculture in the colony of Natal is described by Maylam (1986).
- 2 In many districts, however, white farmers were slow to throw these occupants off their lands; the rent they paid in labour was valuable (Bundy 1979).
- 3 See reconstructions done by De Wet (1995) for the villages of Chatha and Rabula in the former Ciskei. See also Lasbenne (1998) and Saqalli (1998).
- 4 Around Hazyview and Bushbuckridge (Mpumalanga), black populations were first displaced by force in the late 19th century, not by white farmers but by President Paul Kruger, in order to create the first game reserve (Regourd 2012).
- 5 *Paysannat* is the name given by the Belgian colonial administration in Congo and Rwanda–Burundi to the centrally planned rural development schemes, which designed

- the development of plots alongside the road and the attribution of a set of parcels to each 'beneficiary' farmer with the obligation to respect a crop rotation system dictated by the agricultural extension services.
- 6 An article by Alvord (1949), director of the Department of Native Agriculture, Southern Rhodesia, provides 'scientific' legitimacy to this perspective.
 - 7 In the Transkei, the 'government' introduced a tax on large and small livestock. In 1974, maize production reached 1.25 million bags, with 2.8 million bags imported (Bundy 1979: 229). Even during a good year, only 30 per cent of households could produce enough food to subsist (Bundy 1979).
 - 8 A drop by one-third in maize yields, main food crop in the village of Chatha, studied in detail by De Wet (1995). Also see Lasbenne (1998) and Saqalli (1998) for the village of Twecu in the former Ciskei.
 - 9 The construction of gravity-based furrow irrigation schemes and allocation of 1.0 to 1.5 ha plots to the selected families were part of the recommendations of the Tomlinson Commission.
 - 10 Cases described by De Wet (1995) in the former Ciskei confirm these criteria.
 - 11 Around 1970, the government asked residents from the Ifafa mission to bring back their property titles under the pretext that there were errors in the land register. In fact, the titles were never returned to the residents. It is now the Permission to Occupy system that governs land tenure.

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