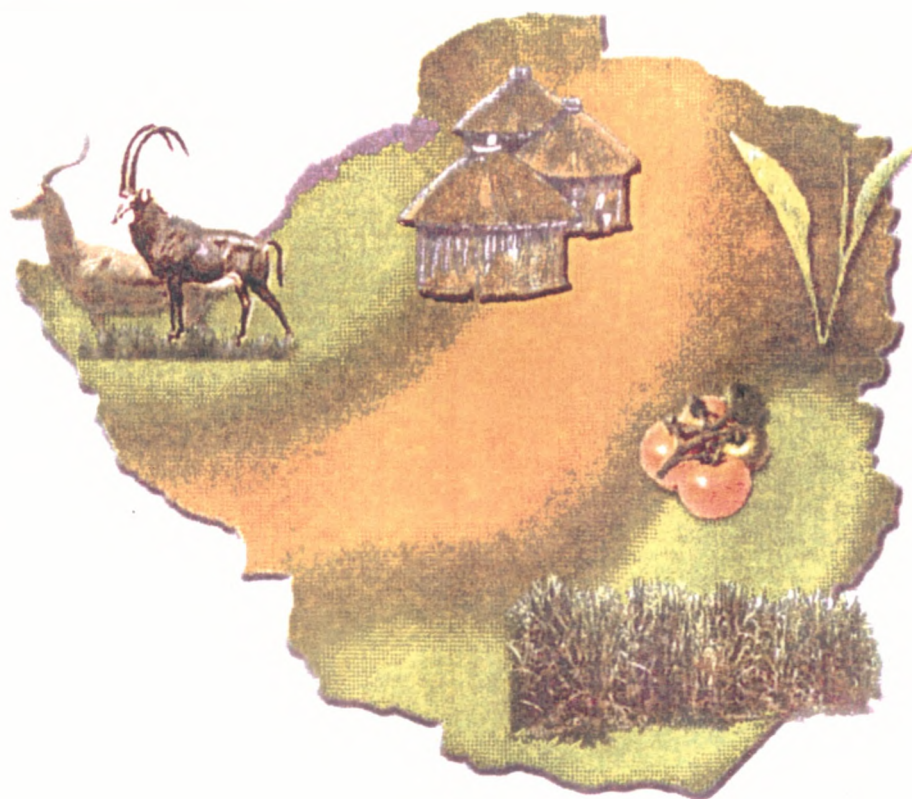


# **New Agrarian Contracts in Zimbabwe**

## **Innovations in Production and Leisure**

Proceedings of Workshop Hosted by the  
Department of Economic History, University of Zimbabwe  
Harare, 13 September 2002



The workshop and research have been sponsored by  
USAID, in collaboration with the Land Tenure Center (University of Wisconsin, USA)  
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## Preface

Zimbabwe's longstanding partition between commercial land, communal land, and natural areas is fast collapsing. As a consequence new forms of agrarian production and trade are emerging: chiefly, out-grower schemes, share-cropping, community-based tourism, and small-scale game conservancies. This volume explores the social dimensions of these arrangements and, in particular, the ways in which they represent contracts between stronger and weaker parties. To what extent do those contracts exploit weaker parties, such as, out-growers? To what extent do they confer economic security on those same parties? Finally, how do these contracts – in the midst of economic crisis – reshape development, conservation, and land-use writ-large in rural Zimbabwe? This volume includes all the papers presented at the workshop, as well as an one additional piece each by Joseph Mtisi and David McDermott Hughes.

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“Tame Game, not Wildest Africa”:  
Small-Scale Game Ranching in the Context of Land Reform in  
Zimbabwe

by

Eira Kramer

Department of Economic History  
University of Zimbabwe

Hurrah for the life of a farmer! ...  
Our boundaries cause rage and indignation,  
We're rigid when it comes to Right of Way!  
And our feeling quite intense is  
On the subject of our fences  
And when other peoples cattle eat our vlel!

By 'T' (Hylida Richards 1950/3)<sup>1</sup>

### **INTRODUCTION.**

This paper will examine land use patterns in the Mashonaland districts in the postcolonial era focusing on the emergence of small game parks. It will look at the ways in which land in this region has been re-zoned since the attainment of Independence and assess the viability of such land use policies. In this era a number of private land owners converted what had been arable pastoral farms to private game parks, or combined with their neighbours to create small conservancies, modelled broadly on their larger lowveld counterparts. One legacy of the colonial era was that the highveld area was best suited to intensive arable production, at times mixed intensive pastoralism. Partly, this was the logical conclusion given that this area was primarily natural regions 2 and 3, which receive optimum rainfall per annum.<sup>2</sup> Wolmer holds that regions 2 and 3 were perceived as best for arable farming and 4 were best suited to mixed cattle and arable. Regions 4 and 5 were suited to extensive cattle or wildlife ranching. The practice of small-scale conservancies challenges these assumptions, and reveals that regions 2 and 3 can be managed in different ways and that, contrary to accepted opinion, wildlife can be zoned with cattle and

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<sup>1</sup> Hylida M Richards, "T", Hurrah for the Life of a Farmer, (Cape Town, Howard Timmins Press, 1953) p45.

<sup>2</sup> W. Wolmer, "Lowveld Landscapes: Conservation, Development and the Wilderness Vision in Southern Eastern Zimbabwe," (PhD Thesis, University of Sussex, 2001), p86.

At the beginning of the 20th century, most early settler farmers in colonial Zimbabwe preferred to set up farming operations on the fertile highveld of the country. It was more than 50 years later that an interest in the lowveld was displayed, when farmers decided that this area would be suitable for large-scale cattle ranching. Most farming on the Highveld was intensive and focused largely, although not entirely, on crop production. Although more farmers started to farm cattle in other parts of the country, for most of the colonial period large cattle ranches were mainly found in the lowveld areas of the country.

In a recently completed PhD thesis, W. Wolmer examines the different 'ways of seeing', of perceiving the landscape in the lowveld of Zimbabwe.<sup>3</sup> On the highveld too, ways of seeing have undergone drastic changes in the last few decades. This paper will look at some of the ways that the highveld landscape has been seen and utilised, particularly in the past decade.

Once settlers started farming at the start of the 20th century, there developed new ways of perceiving the land, and landscapes, of the colony. The rugged, romantic, frontier existence that had attracted many early settlers gave way to a yearning for a more settled type of life. Consequently new visions superseded those of the early settlers. One visitor to the Mashonaland area of Mvurwi (known as Umvukwes in the colonial period) in the 1940's, was full of admiration for the achievements of the 'gallant farmers' who had conquered the environment, "And, in ten years, hard work and intelligent use of the land have made what was a *lion - and leopard - haunted area* of some 4,500 acres a *centre of civilisation*." (My emphasis)<sup>4</sup> At this time, civilisation was defined as an area in which man had exerted an element of control. In this context the 'wilderness' had been successfully converted into farming lands complete with fences, roads, electricity, running water and other signs of man's dominance. Consequent on the desire to grow crops more profitably, throughout much of the colonial era such wildlife as remained on the highveld was rapidly destroyed, or re-located, to prevent its interference with, what were then considered to be, successful agricultural practices.

Ironically ten years after Independence, moves were made to attract wildlife back to the Highveld. Hence more than 60 years later, another farmer in the same area, was full of equal conviction about the victory scored by his re-introduction of wildlife to an area that had been denuded of game for more than half a century. He declared emphatically that, "there was absolutely no wildlife on the farm," when he bought it nearly 50 years ago. The farmer now devotes his energies primarily to cattle and game. Game farming was started in 1982; "because of the potential we believed it held for conservation, preservation and also as an industry. (Live animal sales, tourism, hunting, photographic and meat sales)."<sup>5</sup> This changing perception also took place (largely) in a bid to keep agriculture as the profitable enterprise it once had been. As profits to be made from beef and tobacco products plummeted, farmers began to cast about for an alternative form of wealth to be gleaned from the land. Wildlife provided the answer. During the course of just over one hundred years the vision of the most appropriate way of managing the landscape has resulted in changes in land use patterns. These have been undertaken, partly in the name of progress, but mostly with economic goals in mind. In the past two years, the way land

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<sup>3</sup> W. Wolmer, "Lowveld Landscapes: Conservation, Development and the Wilderness Vision in South Eastern Zimbabwe".

<sup>4</sup> M. Alston, Sunbirds and Jacarandas, A Birdlover in Rhodesia, Cape town, Juta and Co. Ltd. 1951, p64

<sup>5</sup> Interview, Game Park owner, Mvurwi, 20 May 2002.

and the environment has been perceived has undergone yet another change, this time in the name of politics.

Conservancies had been a feature of the lowveld landscape since the late 1970's, when vast acreages of land were turned over to wildlife after mass removals of cattle, and ranchers joined forces, formed conservancies, and removed internal boundaries. But in the highveld districts in the Mashonaland province a slightly different pattern emerged. Instead of land being re-zoned entirely for game, as had been the case in the Lowveld, a unique situation occurred. In the highveld some, but not all, farms went in for mixed zoning, and game farming took place alongside arable and, sometimes, also pastoral farming. It is the intention of this paper to examine this phenomenon, to trace its origins, obstacles in the way of its success and the way forward in the light of recent events on the land.

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

By and large, wildlife was not high on the colonial state's list of priorities but, in the early days of its rule, the colonial state set up National Parks (1928) for the preservation of the wildlife that was already being depleted by uncontrolled hunting - either for sport, or by white settlers who were trying to keep wildlife away from their newly cultivated and planted lands. As more and more land was alienated and settled by white farmers, and as more and more Africans were pushed into reserves, the natural habitats of wild animals receded.

Once settler agriculture expanded and staple crops increased in cultivation the situation accelerated. More reserves were created to house the indigenous people who, as the decades passed, were herded into these areas to make way for the ever expanding settler agriculture. In much the same way, wildlife was herded into National Game Parks. Huge acres of land were planted to maize, tobacco, and later plantation crops like tea, coffee and sugar. Many farmers went in for cattle ranching and hundreds of thousands of acres of land were alienated for this purpose in the dry lowveld region. This land was fenced off and wild animals were expelled from their natural habitats to make way for more cattle, and in other areas of the country, for more crops. Buffalo especially, was systematically removed from cattle country because it was believed that foot and mouth disease would be spread in this manner.<sup>6</sup>

By the end of the colonial period these sentiments had reversed themselves and, with the passage of the 1975 Parks and Wildlife Act, the state gave control over wildlife to the private individual. Under this Act the landowner, and not the state, was defined as the appropriate authority for managing wildlife.<sup>7</sup> The landowners were deemed to be "the best custodians" of their own natural resources. It was believed that "...the landowners are better placed than anyone else to conserve their wildlife...."<sup>8</sup> Such landowners, under this Act, were also given the right to dispose of any wildlife on their lands and this led to the expectation that such leeway would lead to

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<sup>6</sup> K. Muir-Leresche & Robert H Nelson, "Private Property Rights to Wildlife: The Southern African Experiment", University of Zimbabwe & University of Maryland & ICER April 2000, p4

<sup>7</sup> R. Duffy, Killing for Conservation: Wildlife Policy in Zimbabwe, (Oxford, James Curry Press, 2000,) p16.

<sup>8</sup> K Muir-Leresche, "Private Property Rights," p6. Quoting G. Child, 1988, p179/80.

wildlife exploitation and denudation on private land. Contrary to expectation, quite the opposite occurred; wildlife flourished under these conditions, and more and more farmers, particularly cattle ranchers in the lowveld, began to show an interest in becoming involved in wildlife related ventures on their land.

Initially, farmers experimented with different uses to which wildlife could be put. Wildlife farming for game meat was not to prove a viable option, and safari hunting soon superseded this early form of activity. Consequently, with the success of the latter, more private individuals became involved in game farming, initially, in the lowveld regions of the country. Duffy draws comparisons between the campfire programme in communal areas and the setting up of wildlife conservation areas on private land. Prior to 2000, such efforts by private landowners were "...perceived as a real and workable alternative to state responsibility for wildlife."<sup>9</sup>The Parks Department mostly hailed these endeavours as being successful.

In 1985, the Wildlife Producers Association (WPA) was formed in order to encourage and facilitate the expansion of private game farming. In 2002, the then Chairman wistfully reflected back on the (largely unrealised) visions of,

...A producer association that was all encompassing of the environment and where there was money to be made from safaris, lodges and wildlife translocations. There was even talk about large buses and aircraft that would ferry hundreds of tourists around commercial farms in air-conditioned comfort all being controlled by radio. (Chairman's address WPA AGM 13 June 2002.)

This vision began to be attained in the first two decades of independence when, encouraged by the state, the tourism industry began to expand rapidly. Wildlife was partly the magnet luring these increasing numbers of tourists into Zimbabwe.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, by 1994, approximately 75% of all private ranches derived some of their income from wildlife related ventures. It has been argued that the 1975 Act, in effect, turned wildlife into a resource and, as a result, in the 1990's wildlife outstripped cattle and crops in many areas of Zimbabwe. Wildlife rapidly became more economically viable than farming, generating profits through its uses as a tourist attraction, hunting, meat, skin and hides, horn and ivory.<sup>11</sup> This was to prove more lucrative than meat production; consequently, wildlife numbers, particularly those of plains animals, escalated on private commercial ranch lands. Until the 1990's this was largely confined to the large ranches in the lowveld areas of the country. The Chairman of the WPA went on to say:

People went ahead and built luxury safari camps, dotted around the country and now they are mostly in mothballs. Professional Hunter's licences were sought, tour operator's licences obtained and everyone with a 4x4 vehicle, a fox terrier and a rifle was hunting. Wildlife and tourism on commercial farms was on the move. National Parks had created an enabling environment for the production of wildlife, allowing captures and translocation and even exports.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p74.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p7.

<sup>11</sup> R. Duffy, Killing for Conservation, p74.



The number of conservancies throughout the country swelled in the 1990's, partly owing to economies of scale, which caused private farmers to join together in large conservancies, "...for the collective wildlife management of their lands." Muir contends that it is unlikely that African National Park lands would increase in the future and that any further increase in land devoted to wildlife conservation would take place on private or communal land. Naturally, for this to occur there needed to be some kind of incentive to land owners and or users: earnings from eco-tourism represent one such incentive.<sup>12</sup>

Duffy maintains that the state actually relied on the tourist industry as the "...promoter and guardian" of wildlife conservation. A question that comes to mind is what is the impact on conservation efforts of the massive drop off in foreign tourists since the commencement of the land invasions in 2000?

### **EXPANSION OF SMALL SCALE GAME RANCHING**

Most studies to date have been conducted on large-scale conservancies in the lowveld areas of the country (DuToit, Suzuki,) and little attention has been spared for examination of their small-scale counterparts in the Mashonaland area. Indeed, game park owners in this area complain of under-representation, and of how the Zimbabwe Tourism Association (ZTA) has tended to publicise the better known tourist resorts like Victoria Falls, Hwange, Nyanga and Kariba.<sup>13</sup> Indeed some small-scale game farmer's feel that they are being under represented by their own organisation the WPA, in favour of Large-scale producers.

By the 1990's, increasing numbers of small-scale farmers in Mashonaland and the Midlands of the country were becoming involved in ecotourism and wildlife conservation. A number of factors account for this. The most obvious explanation lies in the fact that wildlife gained in economic value and relatively large sums of money can be made from wildlife ventures, and in particular more foreign currency. Duffy states that in 1990 the WTO (World Tourism Organisation) estimated that tourism for developing countries was worth US\$62,5B; consequently, many nations took advantage of this and in this period eco-tourism became the fastest growing tourism sector.<sup>14</sup> It is not surprising then, that so many small-scale farmers in Zimbabwe became involved in wildlife related schemes in this decade. This, Duffy argues, leads to development as revenue is generated from activities associated with wildlife such as hunting and wildlife based tourism. A further factor stimulating farmers to become involved in wildlife was that tourism had risen in popularity to become the second largest earner in Zimbabwe after the 1995 drought, when it overtook agriculture; the mining sector remained in first place.<sup>15</sup>

The profits to be made from cattle or tobacco declined from the 1960's onwards, while those made from wildlife ventures became relatively more profitable. Tobacco received negative publicity, coupled with this was the declining demand for beef products in the West during this period. Additionally, wildlife farming was believed to be less damaging to the environment than

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<sup>12</sup> K. Muir-Leresche, "Private Property Rights," Executive Summary, iii.

<sup>13</sup> Interview Private Game Park Owner, Harare, 16 May 2002.

<sup>14</sup> R. Duffy, *Killing for Conservation*, p23.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p26. "non re-introduced species" refer to those species that were still on the land when the farmer acquired it in 1956.

commercial cattle ranching.<sup>16</sup> Thus, in the post independence era when Zimbabwe began to rise in popularity as a tourist destination, farmers started to look to game farming as a way of making a profit.

Somewhat ironically, the idea of the transnational super-park occurred at more or less the same time as the escalating popularity ratings of the small-scale conservancy, and small-scale private game parks. Perhaps even more ironic is the idea of the super-park set against the new vision in Zimbabwe (post 2002) of small-scale agriculture with landholdings varying in size from 2HA on some resettlement schemes, to 250 HA (minimum) to 2000 HA (Maximum) land sizes for commercial farmers. Where, one wonders, does wildlife conservation fit into such conceptions? The National Parks Department is keen not to become further involved in wildlife management. An alternative solution needs to be sought.

Existing small game parks located principally on the highveld vary in size from approximately 600 to 30,000 HA, the former being run by individual farmers and the latter by groups of adjacent farmers who join forces to form a conservancy. Both of these acreage's are minute when compared to the large conservancies in the lowveld which can be hundreds of thousands of hectares in size. But nevertheless, these acreages are still far in excess of those recommended for this region, and if these areas are to be subdivided as a consequence of land reform, then there will be little hope for the future of existing game on these farms.

Due to efforts to introduce game on private farms, numbers of species to be found on private land had begun to increase by the end of the 20th century. Gradually even tssesebe numbers began to increase thanks to the conservation endeavours undertaken by private landowners. Tssesebe were almost becoming extinct when one game park owner in Mvurwi (Mashonaland District) bought 10 from a ranch in Shabani, where the last few were to be found but, he claimed, "Now they are all over the country. They love wetlands." He added that when he purchased his farm in 1956, "There was absolutely no wildlife on the farm[s], it had all been destroyed by chrome miners working in the dyke." He employed conservation practices on his land and this encouraged the proliferation of a number of species, including "non re-introduced species such as oribi, steenbok, duiker and reedbuck."<sup>17</sup>

Ranger, quoted in Wolmer, writes of 'scenery for sale'.<sup>18</sup> Small-scale game farmers are doing just this in their conservation exercises, and their efforts to create a picturesque landscape that would entice foreign tourists. Concern for natural resources, particularly in the highveld, culminated in the passage of the Natural Resources Act of 1942, which ushered in an era of conservation consciousness. But this vision differed from the current conservation mania, and at its core was the white settler farmer taming a landscape that included removing indigenous people and wildlife, to plant crops or raise new scientifically advanced herds of cattle. The "contour ridge" was the new gospel, superseding "the gospel of the plow" preached

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<sup>16</sup> R Duffy, *Killing for Conservation*, p75.

<sup>17</sup> Interview, Game Park Owner Mvurwi 20 May 2002.

<sup>18</sup> W. Wolmer, "Lowveld Landscapes". P166.

in the first decades of the 20th century. Fences demarcated boundaries and kept animals out, now by contrast, they keep them in, and the gospel of the contour ridge has now been replaced by "the gospel of wildest Africa", a vision that included reintroducing wildlife and other indigenous flora and fauna, thus restoring and recreating the African landscape that they imagine tourists want to see.

The number of visitors to Zimbabwe between 1991 and 1994 increased from 696,659 - 971,539, with a peak of 1m in 1995. This witnessed a corresponding increase in expenditure on travel, tours and accommodation, the most popular area being game safaris.<sup>19</sup> Small scale game farmers could capitalise on such increases in ecotourism by offering wildlife safaris on their lands; some were also able to take advantage of increased demands on other sectors like accommodation, transport and the provision of tourist items like curios. Such game parks also offer "...a variety of bird-life, reptiles, trees, wild flowers, insects and large game animals, buffalo, sable and giraffe."<sup>20</sup>

At a time when the tourist industry was flourishing, one game park owner in the mid 1990's laid out a large sum of money in an effort to set up a viable game operation: some US\$50,000 was spent in building a house cum lodge for prospective tourists. The idea was to build further lodges and create an "ideal environment for bow hunting and photographic safaris." It was intended that a marketing exercise be launched in an endeavour to attract clients, but these plans have not come to fruition. Instead, (in June 2002) he stated, understandably bitter "...we now face eviction in approximately six weeks... and have been unable to obtain permission to capture game despite numerous applications to National Parks." He went on, "The vision is finished, and it has now been pegged for resettlement and subdivision into 2 hectare plots." The current landowners believed that there was no place for game on an A1 resettlement scheme.<sup>21</sup> Unless an alternative land management scheme can be devised, they are correct in assuming that this will be the case. The era of the small-scale game park has been short-lived and efforts in this direction have been severely hindered by events taking place on the land since 2000.

### **FEATURES OF SMALL SCALE GAME FARMS IN MASHONALAND.**

A number of constraints face small scale game farmers in Mashonaland but these are more than offset by the advantages to be had from engaging in this kind of enterprise. Duffy contends that developing nations such as Zimbabwe have an advantage in that there are still 'unspoiled' natural environments in the country, (Duffy 71) "Zimbabwe has been attracted by the notion of ecotourism as a means of developing without jeopardising environmental conservation."<sup>22</sup> The extent of involvement of the small-scale game farmer in the attainment of such goals begs further investigation.

The constraints facing small game farmers operate at two main levels: that of the commodity, game, and that of the land itself, the latter coming relatively more into focus in recent years. At

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p72.

<sup>20</sup> Interview, Game Park Owner, Bindura, 2002.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Game park Owner Mvurwi 20 May 2002.

<sup>22</sup> R. Duffy, Killing for Conservation, p71.

the level of land, generally speaking, it has proven difficult, to turn land over completely to wildlife. A number of small-scale game farmers and conservancy owners were interviewed, and it transpired that only a few of these were able to devote their energies entirely to game, and these were the exception rather than the rule. Unlike the large conservancies in the lowveld, most game farmers in the Mashonaland area of Zimbabwe, tended to practise mixed farming, combining game farming and intensive agriculture; or game farming and cattle (where there were no buffalo.)

This has not been without problems as plains game are difficult to keep out of croplands where these were adjacent to game lands. Farmers complained of small game getting into arable land and sometimes wreaking havoc, consequently every precaution was taken to ensure that adequate fencing was erected. And although most farm fences were not capable of preventing small game entering the crop lands efforts have been made to keep game out of cultivated areas.<sup>23</sup> This is an area where small-scale differs from large-scale game ranching. Large-scale operators took down internal fences when they joined their lands together to form conservancies, whereas small-scale operators tend to put up boundary and internal fencing after changing over to game farming. On one conservancy visited in the Chinhoyi district, members stated that, unlike their large scale counterparts, even though they were now a conservancy, they had not removed internal boundaries and their individual farms were thus still demarcated and fences remained. Generally speaking, they maintained, small plains game were able to jump over, or scramble under fences and so these did not present an obstacle, and the fences were adequate to keep cattle, horses, or other stock in their respective areas. Because small-scale game farms often combine the farming of stock with either cattle and/or intensive agriculture these have, of necessity, to fence their lands in order to keep the game and cattle separated.

There are a number of reasons why small-scale game park owners practised mixed farming, combining game farming with either arable or pastoral farming or both. Unlike the large-scale conservancies, which are often supported by donor funding, small-scale game parks have generally been unable to attract such aid. As a consequence all efforts at wildlife conservation have been at the farmers own expense. One farmer interviewed stated that once he had made the decision to farm game, stock was acquired from Game Auctions and Game Capture Units. "The initial eland herd came from Mushandike. There was no donor funding behind this enterprise ... its establishment and growth has been entirely at our expense." This has also meant that cropping has had to take place alongside game farming in order to subsidise the initial setting up of the enterprise. This farmer continued to carry out intensive agriculture alongside his wildlife activities. Originally he had grown tobacco, soya beans, wheat and maize in addition to cattle and game. After the 2000 land invasions it was no longer feasible to grow crops and his focus shifted to cattle and game alone.

The highveld is an environment that has been intensively utilised since the beginning of the colonial period and small-scale game parks are endeavouring to restore the environment where it has been damaged by intensive agriculture and other activities. Cindi Katz discusses A. Wilson's contention that ecological restoration is, "an explicit alternative to preservation. Wilson calls for greater intervention and 'care.'" Restoration ecology advocates for a "working landscape," and,

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<sup>23</sup> Interview Conservancy Member, Chinhoyi, 9 may 2002.

Katz adds, "Rather than enshrining nature, restoration works it."<sup>24</sup> On small-scale game farms the environment is 'worked', it is important that conservation exercises go hand in hand with keeping of livestock in order to maximise the carrying capacity of the land.

A Mvurwi farmer devoted a large part of his time and energy to experiments with pasture management and restoration. Experimenting with different grass species, he determined which species were suitable for what soil types, and which to grow in what combinations. He introduced legumes to his grass mixes in order to restore fertility to the soil. The legumes cut down the amount of nitrogen needed, but the land still required potash and phosphate. Pasture improvement facilitated the expansion of game on this property. Game was allowed to graze the winter months (May - August) on pasture planted to a mixture of grasses and legumes, which is more successful than allowing them to graze on unimproved pasture. The wildlife's grazing land was rotated by the use of fencing, while burning was the alternative where such fencing did not exist. Intensive game farming was made possible as a result of such rotation and careful pasture management, which meant that the land could carry one beast to 2HA as opposed to 20 HA. All of this has taken a lifetime to perfect, and much of it is ongoing and unfortunately undocumented.<sup>25</sup>

Because of the importance of game in the continued success of this sector, most small-scale ranchers become involved in long term conservation schemes, as it is in the best interest of the game farmer to conserve wildlife and the environment itself to ensure the continued survival of their enterprises.<sup>26</sup> On the smaller acreages involved in small private game parks, it is even necessary to embark on conservation practices to ensure the maximum carrying capacity on land, even though this lends a domesticated feel to the idea of a "pristine wilderness landscape".<sup>27</sup>

Muir, quoting G. Child (one time manager of National Parks) contends that conservationists in the late 20th century were becoming aware of the ecological degradation caused by cattle ranching.<sup>28</sup> The solution, Muir holds, "...would be to arrest the cycle of environmental deterioration by the introduction of a more profitable form of private land use, wildlife ranching with a safari and tourism orientation."<sup>29</sup> Highveld farmers adhered to this philosophy. One Private Game Park owner revealed that the introduction of game to land once used for intensive agriculture, coupled with pasture restoration and improvement, enabled the land to return to former fertility levels. Indeed, in some instances fertility was actually enhanced by intervention and the deliberate cultivation of certain combinations of grasses and legumes.<sup>30</sup> In this manner, land was 'productive' as well as 'natural' thus recreating the wilderness vision. Wolmer holds in the lowveld, "The binary wilderness vision of separate productive and natural spaces has

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<sup>24</sup> C. Katz, "Whose Nature, Whose Culture, Private productions of space and the preservation of nature", in Bruce Braun and Noel Castree, Eds. Remaking Reality, Nature at the Millennium, (London and New York, Routledge, 1988,) p56.

<sup>25</sup> Interview Game Park Owner Mvurwi 20 May 2002.

<sup>26</sup> R Duffy, Killing for Conservation, p72/77.

<sup>27</sup> W. Wolmer, "Lowveld Landscapes",

<sup>28</sup> K. Muir-Leresche, "Private Property Rights," P7. Quoting, G. Child, 1988 p167.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p8.

<sup>30</sup> Interview, Private Game Park Owner, Mvurwi, 20 May 2002.

some extent been conflated by the emergence of a game ranching industry and a discourse on sustainable utilisation of wildlife that holds that the lowveld can be simultaneously natural and productive."<sup>31</sup> He further contends that in recent years economic and scientific goals have changed, and there has been:

A shift in the conservationist agenda... from viewing protected areas as inviolate sanctuaries to looking at them as potential sources of revenue (and a consequent blurring of the boundaries between 'natural' and 'productive' spaces). This has been accompanied by a shift in emphasis from romantic narratives to a scientific and managerial approach.<sup>32</sup>

On a much smaller scale this is the vision that small game parks have aspired towards. In fact, it can be argued that they have taken this vision one step further, their uniqueness lying in the simultaneous co-existence of intensive, scientifically based, agriculture and wildlife, while trying to create the illusion of natural space to satisfy the expected vision of the foreign tourist.

At the commodity level, there were a number of obstacles facing small game farmers who embarked on such mixed enterprises. These ventures required intensive management of the environment. During the time of research, in the first half of 2002, one game farmer was contemplating a wildebeest project, with the idea of farming wildebeest intensively as he believed them to be more viable than the exotic cattle that are currently the focus of the cattle industry. Other plains game such as eland were not considered suitable being slow maturing animals. By contrast, wildebeest are capable of breeding prolifically and are not particular eaters, being able to eat rough grass, unlike tsessebe, more particular eaters, which prefer wetland vegetation.

Wildebeest and cattle are not usually compatible as all wildebeest carry a disease called 'snot-sick', a malignant catarrh for which there is no cure, and have been almost wiped out in the cattle areas as a result. They can only transmit this virus to cattle during stress periods, 3-4 months a year during the period they calve; hence the animals are separated on this game farm during this time. At all other times they run together and there are no problems on the open pastures. Combining cattle and game means that game farming under these conditions has, of necessity, to be a controlled and intensive operation. Wolmer writes of veterinary science that "was employed to arrange the landscape into disease free fenced zones buffered from the unhealthy, disease-ridden wilderness area."<sup>33</sup> But the experience of the above mentioned game farmer has shown that cattle and game are not mutually exclusive. The colonial vision that, "Game should be eliminated to protect animal husbandry",<sup>34</sup> was inverted by lowveld game ranchers, and both have subsequently proven to be untrue by projects such as the above mentioned mixed enterprise on small game parks in which cattle, game and crops have sometimes been zoned together.

[See Annex A: Photo showing wildlife and cattle co-existing in one pasture, in the background huge hay bales may be seen, testimony to a further enterprise that this farmer embarks upon.]

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<sup>31</sup> W. Wolmer, "Lowveld Landscapes," p1/2.

<sup>32</sup> W. Wolmer, "Lowveld Landscapes", p 143.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p120

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p154

This vision represents a new way of seeing and has its own aesthetic appeal, implying, as it does a 'wilderness vision' that does not totally write man out of the picture. The only drawback, and a major constraint in the eyes of interviewees, is the fact that potential tourists might not find the combination of cattle and livestock aesthetically appealing, but given the different priorities of small-scale game parks the two need not be mutually exclusive. The success of this enterprise clearly reveals that wildlife can be zoned with cattle and crops, even in rotation. This contradicts the main tenets of the large conservancies and campfire, which holds that wildlife areas should as far as possible, be people free.

There are two main aspects to wildlife farming; firstly, the tourism industry both sport hunting and photo-tourism and secondly, wildlife ranching. Surplus wild life produced on game parks may be sold to other ranchers or even campfire areas. To a lesser extent game may be used as a meat supply. Small-scale game park owners often begin their enterprises by focusing on the farming of game meat, primarily plains game, for sale while they slowly built up their resources to lay an infrastructure that would permit them to build lodges and other tourist facilities. One such game park even had sophisticated abattoir facilities.<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, the value of game meat is far lower than its trophy value and the difference in value between the two has increased in the last few years.

Until recently, photo tourism has been more favoured than sport hunting by small-scale game farmers. According to Duffy gradually, and with the support of the WPA (Wildlife Producers Association) and the CFU, non-consumptive tourism overtook sport hunting in popularity ratings. It is believed that in the long run this type of tourism is more profitable, and assisted by publicity from wildlife conservation activists, the increased interest in this type of tourism bears testimony to this. The WPA formed the Zimbabwe Safari Farms Co-op Ltd and the main function of this organisation was, "to promote and market tourism on farms and ranches that can offer tailor-made safaris in unique tracts of bush and luxury accommodation."<sup>36</sup>

Zimbabwe has become the victim of hyperinflation since the middle of 2001, and with the emergence of a bustling black market, in polite circles called the "parallel market"; the above contention has come under fire. Before the rapid drop in the value of the Zimbabwe dollar in 2001, the money to be earned from photo safaris compared favourably with hunting but this was no longer the case and the dawning awareness of this fact led small game farmers to realise that they needed to get the trophy value for their game in order to earn the much sought after foreign currency. This led them to seek alternative forms of wildlife ventures on their land. One of the major constraints facing small-scale game park owners is the fact that they cannot offer sport hunting facilities on their land; consequently the appeal of bow hunting began to grow in popularity as an alternate to rifle hunting. More than one small-scale game farmer talked of setting up bow hunting facilities. The small-scale game farmer is thus struggling to make his enterprise pay for itself.

Duffy believes that the official tourism policy in Zimbabwe is that of "high cost and low impact ecotourism development." This type of tourism, "...maximises the economic gain from tourism

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<sup>35</sup> Interview Game Park owner, Mvurwi, 20 May 2002.

<sup>36</sup> R. Duffy, Killing for Conservation, p77.

with the minimum negative effect on the environment." To this end the state, "...encourages a smaller number of visitors who are willing to pay higher sums for a high quality personalised service ... the opposite of mass tourism."<sup>37</sup> This is the type of tourism that has encouraged the mushrooming of small game parks, and which the owners favour, as they tend not to have extensive facilities at their disposal. It also enabled small game park farmers to allow small game to work for them, and instead of hunting, they would offer a different type of tourist attraction. Accommodation would be provided. One such farmer built up market facilities on his small game park. First a double lodge was built, which had 2 double bedrooms, a toilet, lounge and a kitchen at the back. It catered for 4. Thereafter he constructed another 2 single lodges comprising a double bedroom, shower, and toilet. These overlook a natural swimming pool carved out of granite rock. This brought the accommodation up to 8 people. A lounge cum bar was added and finally an 'A' frame lodge capable of accommodating two to four guests. He is now able to cater for 10 guests. Over the years the operation expanded. During the 1990's he achieved a 35-40% bed occupancy but by 2000/2001 this had fallen to 2-3%. The accommodation offered is simple and is largely self-catering; people bring their own food and drink and cook for themselves.

The small game park provides activities, other than sport hunting, which are paid for by clients. Wildlife on such private land is valued as something to be viewed, for example by photo-tourism enthusiasts, bird watching safaris, horse safaris, botany or foot safaris, game drives, fishing and walks. Clients are not permitted to drive on their own in the game park; guides must accompany them. These are of particular importance to small-scale game parks in the Mashonaland area of Zimbabwe. But, as mentioned, sport hunting has become increasingly important in recent years due to its ability to attract foreign currency, and small game parks are seeking ways of meeting this demand, primarily to increase their forex earning capacity. Nevertheless, it would appear that a degree of friction exists between safari operators and farm owners. The safari operator/hunter pays the farmer for the use of his facilities, but makes his own arrangements with foreign clients. Often the safari operator is reluctant to pay the prices that the farmer wishes to charge for accommodation, because high accommodation prices would mean smaller profits to the hunter who generally charge foreign clients an overall package. But the farmer also seeks to make a profit, and if possible earn some foreign currency in return for providing accommodation facilities, and the game itself. On large-scale conservancies the owners are often also safari operators. They have much more power and influence than their small-scale counterparts and are sometimes referred to as "The Godfathers".

Safari operators require training to host foreign clients, and must be professional hunters. Generally farmers do not begrudge the hunter as he brings clients, and has to "go and find them" i.e. a trip abroad; something the farmer himself does not have time to do. Generally speaking, most farmers employ the services of a safari operator as few could afford the time to leave their farms and seek clients in overseas countries, organise their trips, including meeting them at the airport and escorting them to their destination.<sup>38</sup> However, many of them do own accommodation facilities on their lands that they make available for hunting parties. The owner of a small game park in Bindura, lamented that,

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<sup>37</sup> R. Duffy, *Killing for Conservation*, p70.

<sup>38</sup> Interview, Private Game Park Owner, Harare, 16 May 2002.



We have the hunters in the area but they don't have the clients. The 'nitty-gritty' here is to get the clients particularly those who come and who are familiar with your operation. What I've got is just tame game, not wildest Africa like in the valley. You can't compare that with what I've got. Those people if they can't get a zebra in the valley then they like to come up to me to get one - or a tsessebe or a wildebeest.

With the devolvement of the rights to wildlife to private individuals, they became responsible for determining "...the timing, place and extent of hunting, viewing or culling of wild game."<sup>39</sup> Farm owners would work closely with safari operators at the outset of the hunting season in order to ascertain which animals required culling and could therefore be hunted by foreign hunters escorted, protected and guided by a qualified hunter.<sup>40</sup> Most game park owners would agree with the opinion of one game park owner, who stated emphatically that "Your biggest conservationists are hunters."<sup>41</sup> Some farm owners are also trained hunters - a long arduous training program is involved in this, one involving a two-year study programme with both practical and written examinations.

Despite the lack of appeal for the hunting of plains game with rifles in small game parks, this did sometimes take place, despite its being likened to "hunting in a zoo" by a game park owner, who stated that he permitted the hunting of plains' game on his land, but that the demand for this usually only arose when a hunting expedition to the large conservancies in the lowveld had failed to yield any trophies. Overseas tourists were then keen to spend a few days on his game park "on the way back to Harare and the Airport," in order to shoot game more easily. In this way the tourist did not have to return home empty handed, especially having laid out a lot of capital, sometimes a life times savings, to embark on a hunting trip.<sup>42</sup>

It is necessary to redefine 'wilderness', and current notions of 'wildest Africa'. Wolmer shows that the 'wilderness vision' is a colonial vision, on the one hand something "barren and fearful to be battled and tamed," and on the other something "pristine and glorious... (to) be preserved or rehabilitated."<sup>43</sup> As revealed above, small game farmers have a mental image of 'the valley' as something comprising both these features. Perhaps what is needed, certainly in Mashonaland, is a redefinition of wilderness, a new definition that works humans back into the vision of landscape (because, ironically, these areas were not always people free) and combines both aspects alluded to by Wolmer. Small game farmers have shown that conservation and development are not separate. They do have something to offer and ought not to feel compelled to make comparisons with 'the valley', or to apologise that they are not able to provide this vision.

Generally, however, small-scale game farms, unlike their larger counterparts, do not offer hunting facilities, only resorting to these in desperation because, "Photo safaris are dead!" as one

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<sup>39</sup> K. Muir-Leresche, "Private Property Rights," p1.

<sup>40</sup> Interview, Conservancy Member, Chinhoyi, 9 May 2002

<sup>41</sup> Interview Game Park Owner, Mvurwi 20 May 2002.

<sup>42</sup> Interview Game Park owner, Harare, 16 May 2002.

<sup>43</sup> W. Wolmer, "Lowveld Landscapes", p1

small scale game farmer lamented at the 2002 WPA AGM. These two factors put small-scale game farmers in a rather difficult position, one that necessitated the search for other money spinning activities. Bow hunting was one such solution. Most small-scale private game parks are too small to offer hunting using rifles, hence plans were laid to introduce bow hunting - a sport gaining in popularity in countries like the USA, and one more suited to the smaller land sizes of such game parks.<sup>44</sup> The small scale game park's are too small, and the game too tame, to hunt with rifles, which is why the farmers are keen to promote bow hunting that involves a degree of skill: you have to get very close with a bow to kill an animal.

Although bow hunting has a growing appeal internationally, there is no getting away from the fact that this is indeed akin to "hunting in a zoo". It is an environment that has been constructed. The land is interspersed with fences, crops and hay bales. Domesticated livestock and wildlife graze, sometimes, side by side; pastures are rotated, some animals are put in bomas at night for their own safety, and breeding patterns are carefully monitored, and sometimes interfered with. This does result in a 'domesticated' feel to the landscape. Furthermore small-scale game farms are not able to offer "the Big Five". Their landholdings are generally not big enough to accommodate these animals. Although a number of them do keep tame elephant that are used as a tourist attraction and are ridden on game rides. Consequently most of these establishments focus primarily on plains game. Again this should not cause small game farmers to feel that what they have is inferior or 'not real Africa'. This kind of mixed zoning simply represents a different way of utilising and perceiving landscape.

A further disadvantage facing small game parks in Mashonaland is that they are very vulnerable to poaching because they are small and the game is used to the proximity of humans and so fairly tame. Furthermore these parks usually consist of small areas, making poaching easier. On one such game park the farmer has not had any poaching on the game park itself, but all around the perimeter the game is being decimated. There are settlers all around the game park with packs of dogs. This land was previously commercial farmland, but has now been occupied/re-settled. The farmer complained that, "We've heard shots just about every night. But National Parks do nothing."

The farm is boundary fenced but this is not elaborate, nor does it boast electric fencing. Animals recognise the fence but "...you do get certain animals going in and out." There are no settlers in this game park, but they came onto the boundary to a farm where they legally resettled. However, the farmer complained that this exercise had not been done properly, and the settlers had built huts all along his boundary. Birds have tended to go into settler's lands so settlers take dogs and chase them. "It has got worse since the land invasions, after which the situation deteriorated." There is little water in the resettlement area and so the farmer gives them drinking water and allows them access to water for their needs. He takes a hard line as regards the settlers dogs' coming onto his game farm and interfering with his game. He quoted his words to the settlers: "If my baboons went and ate your maize I'd allow you shoot them, if your dogs come and eat my game you must allow me to shoot your dogs."<sup>45</sup> Generally, however, the farmer and settlers respect each other's wishes.

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with small-scale game Park owners, Harare 16 May 2002, Mvurwi 20 May 2002.

<sup>45</sup> Interview, Game Park Owner, Bindura.

Despite the clear disadvantages enumerated above, the manner in which small scale game parks have developed over the past decade has created a set of unique conditions with distinct potential for economic collaboration between commercial farmers, communal land farmers and new settlers. There is perhaps room in the future for the development of new agrarian contracts that combine the activities of both farmers and new settlers: a variation of cultural tourism. The fact that most operations are intensive means that their requirements for labour are far greater than their lowveld counterparts and their encouragement will thus offer opportunities for employment creation.

### **THE ERA OF THE LAND OCCUPATIONS**

Wolmer indicates that the current land invasions represent different "Starkly contrasting ways of seeing the landscape that often conflict with the wilderness vision."<sup>46</sup> Not all farmers have fallen victim of the land occupations that have occurred over the last three years, but Nelson Marongwe believes that the wildlife industry was one that the land occupations impacted most negatively upon. He points out that this has led to insecurity and, "cancellations of farm tourists, game auctions and hunting expeditions while poaching and snaring of animals reportedly increased." Some small game farms and conservancies have been occupied and farmers had to leave their game parks once the 10 August deadline struck. Others have had lands pegged, but no active occupation by settlers, and as of August 10 are still waiting to, "see what happens next." Some game park owners have been unaffected by the whole land issue and for them it is business as normal, apart from the fact that the tourist industry has been seriously eroded and they are now unable to make a living from what, a few years ago, had promised to be a profitable enterprise.

As with most such ventures, the initial goal was to cater for foreigners, (and to earn "hard currency") but for the last 2 years tourism in the country has reached its lowest ebb. Dombarew Game Park in Bindura, has had only 3 foreign guests in the last 2 years. Before this time, clients were found through the embassies, and by word of mouth; advertising being too expensive, a young man was employed whose job it was to go around embassies and curry business. Now most clients are local, mostly self-catering. More and more black Zimbabweans are making use of the facilities for local holidays. Tobacco companies also use the facilities. (ZLT - Zimbabwe Leaf Tobacco) Again this is a marked departure from the more sophisticated advertising carried out by their large-scale counterparts.<sup>48</sup>

Land occupations, where they have taken place, have not been uniform. Some areas have been carefully demarcated and other haphazardly claimed. One area was pegged for a resettlement village where there existed apparently fertile arable land, and water, which the settlers planned to get from the nearby reservoir; "But," the farmer commented wryly, "how does the water get to the reservoir when there won't be any electricity and there is no water here for miles around; this is where they want a village, on this soil that can't grow anything." (There is too much

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<sup>46</sup> W. Wolmer, "Lowveld Landscapes", p2.

<sup>47</sup> Nelson Marongwe, Fast Track Resettlement and the Lands Rights Discourse in Zimbabwe, Paper presented at the International Biennial Conference of IASCP, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, June 2002, p2.

<sup>48</sup> Interview, Game Park owner, Bindura.

magnesium in the soil.) He continued, "Look at these pegs, they now want to make farms out of this; this is old tobacco land that we made hay out of." The land, as is the case with most lands that have been planted to tobacco, was not suitable for cropping. The settlers were attracted to it, because at first glance, it appeared to be cleared of trees and highly cultivable. Intensive, careful and ongoing conservation was necessary in order to make the small game parks productive.

As previously stated, although most small scale game farmers mainly farm game, some combine this with cattle, while some maintain that "...tobacco is where the money is." For many small-scale game farmers, this is an important consideration, because this money was necessary, in part, to supplement their ongoing game enterprises until they become self-perpetuating. This year, however, tobacco, maize and wheat lands were all lying idle with the farmers being unable to cultivate any of it. The only crops anywhere in sight were the small patches of maize planted by the settler farmers, most of which had failed due to a combination of the current drought and the unsuitability of the soil selected for the cultivation of maize.

On one mixed enterprise there were over 500 acres of arable land all commanded by irrigation from a big dam, but all this is sitting idle now. The farmer stated,

Normally I would be growing 40HA of winter wheat followed by soya beans, nothing. Nothing! They won't even let me graze cattle here.... I could feed those cows you saw for about a month. There's about half an acre of vegetable garden on the wetland on the river bank and because of that I'm not allowed to use this for grazing, the grass was still green we've taken the hay off... That should be wheat... they are now giving permission for people to grow wheat; but it's too late. We've applied to grow now, we've got a week: after a week its too late you'd be wasting money to grow wheat.<sup>49</sup>

With careful management, however, this could yet be a viable enterprise, one incorporating wetland cultivation, large scale irrigated monoculture and careful pasture management for game and cattle.

Settlers occupied portions of two of the game farms visited and everywhere one looks, one sees small dwellings sprouting up in various stages of completion. Houses have been erected with little thought to the suitability of the location. Although some settlers do appear to have made a conscious choice of spot, erecting huts in areas that have disrupted the ongoing activities on the farm, like in the middle of the farmers feed pens, because these had water points close by and appeared to be on fertile land. "They don't think that as soon as I leave here there'll be no ZESA, there'll be no water." Each little paddock had its own settler hut, and their presence meant that the farmer could not use the pens for the feeding of nearly 1000 head of cattle.

Some of these settlers were youths who were employed on nearby farms, but who knew little about the technicalities of intensive land management use. The timber with which they built their houses came from the next farm. "They are wandering around the farm, they're poaching; doing what they like.... the police are told not to interfere if it's political." The trees were hacked away indiscriminately to build houses and the farmer was powerless to do anything to prevent

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<sup>49</sup> Interview, Game Park Owner, Mvurwi.

wholesale destruction. Should tourists be able to visit this area in the next few years the view that will greet them will not be that which they had anticipated. Instead they will return home with the memory of a scarred landscape such as I witnessed, with twisted, jagged trees, and small patches of mealies in various locations once inhabited by game. As one interviewee stressed, potential tourists do not want to part with hard earned money only to be shown a "...few varieties of plains game surrounded by patches of maize and a few desecrated trees."<sup>50</sup> It will soon be too late to reverse this damage.

One farmer pointed out a picturesque landscape comprising a small rocky outcrop shaded by huge old indigenous trees. Recent settlers had hacked away at the trees, ripping off branches to meet practical demands such as for firewood and hut building, no thought being given to the aesthetics of the area, as seen by the game park owner and potential tourists to the area. Marongwe stated that as firewood was the chief source of energy for the rural population, and wood was the chief building material, resulting deforestation was a major cause of environmental degradation in the resettlement areas.<sup>51</sup> This being the case, there is clearly no possibility of a meeting of meaning here, and the environment continues to symbolise entirely different things to the different players in the game. The aim now should be to bring the different players together in a way that will bring peace and progress to original farmers and new settlers alike. Much of the wanton destruction on this game farm has been perpetrated, not by bone fide settlers but by self professed 'war veterans', people who were (primarily) urban based, who had long ago lost their rural roots and were now called "born-locations". These were not true settlers who desired to make a living off the land.

I was shown some maize, monkey-nuts and burley tobacco grown by bone-fide settlers - some successful but mostly a failure and no lands totalled more than about 1/2 to 1 acre in size. "This character tried very hard to grow a crop. He fertilised." A little further away the farmer pointed out some more cultivated land: "This is a block of arable tobacco land. What they've done here on this farm - they've grown it in patches all over the farm so that you cannot use any of it."<sup>52</sup> There were burley drying sheds erected by settlers, but nothing that amounted to anything more than production to meet their own requirements. In fairness to bone fide settlers, ironically they are plagued by the same fears that haunted reserve agriculturists in the colonial period, viz. the fear that if they invested time and money in the land, there was no guarantee that efforts would be rewarded and that the land would not be taken from them. There is definitely room for development here and if new settlers are to make a living from this land - however they choose to do it - this will not happen without some kind of land use plan.

In much of the area that has been turned over to game parks in Mashonaland and the Midlands, the soils are not suitable for cropping, being too mountainous or too full of magnesium, in particular, and other minerals, in general, so that crops cannot be produced economically. Some areas are too far from water sources to permit easily accessible irrigated cultivation. Consequently, it would not be economically viable to convert such land to small-scale agriculture.

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<sup>50</sup> Interview Private Game Park Owner Harare, 16 May 2002

<sup>51</sup> N, Marongwe, "Fast Track Resettlement," p7.

<sup>52</sup> Interview Game Park Owner, Mvurwi.

At the University in Bindura, a project is being conducted on the promotion of tourism in Mashonaland Central. Currently no marketing promotes this area. ZTA promotes the lowveld, and other tourist areas, but have tended to neglect the small farmers who actually have a lot to offer the foreign tourist. Game farmers in the area are confident that Mashonaland Central could be developed with walking trails, horse trails, mountain biking, birding and limited game viewing.

As these farms go, as these areas go, so all your potential for environmental eco-tourism goes as well, because you've got no habitat. Instead of beautiful big trees and lovely scenery you have tree stumps all over the place with a bit of lousy maize in between. That doesn't attract people.<sup>53</sup>

One or two enlightened game farmers have made working arrangements with campfire projects in adjacent communal areas. This is one positive and possibly workable solution to the impasse such small game farmers seem to be in.

For example a small game park lying adjacent to a communal area has adopted this solution. Together with a neighbour, who is a large-scale game operator (and whose father had been one of the original game farmers in the area) the owner has joined a campfire project: the Mazowe District Rural Council Campfire Project. At the top end of the Chiweshe Communal Area just across the river from the game-park, a campfire project has recently started; lodges were currently under construction. It has been called the Banje CFF project,

We have joined with campfire. We sit with Chief Magomo, Head of that area. He said that he needed my game park and would make sure that I keep it. He was going to bring people from Banje to view game on this property; and we would take clients from the game park Banje to go and see culture.<sup>54</sup>

The game farmer commended the communal area, saying that it contained Granite kopjies and beautiful mountainous country. He advocated what is now popularly known as cultural tourism. Such arrangements between game parks and adjacent communal areas create the potential for the development of such cultural tourism ventures, something now viewed as a new direction in the hospitality industry in Southern Africa. Such collaboration has the potential for creating rural livelihoods, not only for new settlers on designated farms, but for communal area farmers who have been neglected in the ongoing land crisis in the country. Wolmer emphasises the importance of human agency in refashioning the 'natural landscape', where (for example) roads and crop patterns become an accepted part of this.<sup>55</sup> Katz calls this "reconnecting nature and culture."<sup>56</sup>

Unfortunately, however, as with many other land related issues, in the last few years wildlife conservation has come to be seen as "racially charged", and has been re-interpreted into a black-white issue by many Zimbabweans. The Government in the mid 1990's saw the moves towards

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<sup>53</sup> Interview Game Park owner, Bindura.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> W. Wolmer, "Lowveld Landscapes", p2.

<sup>56</sup> C. Katz, "Whose Nature Whose Culture." p56

commercialisation and privatisation as a means of empowering the white community again, because most conservancies were white owned with very few blacks being involved in them.<sup>57</sup> One way white game park owners devised to escape designation in the last two years have been to enter into partnerships with indigenous businessmen. As more blacks become alert to the fact that there is money to be made from tourism, so they were keen to become involved in such enterprises. Most prefer to be 'sleeping partners' to white landowners, but the farmers believed that they provide the necessary clout to protect them from the worst effects of the land seizure. Indeed a number of farmers have deliberately sought out politically powerful individuals as business partners in the hope of averting disaster.<sup>58</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The legacy of the current land invasions is that definitions of landscape have changed yet again only now the definition is wholly political. Many small game farms have fallen victim to the current fast track resettlement programme. For those that have escaped this fate, and indeed for some that have succumbed to it, the idea of mixed zoning is a possible way forward. Wolmer, quoting Raymond Williams, states that it is important to avoid a crude contrast between 'nature and 'production', and to seek an idea which should supersede both, "The idea of livelihood: the culture of nature."<sup>59</sup> In many ways the mixed zoning enterprises currently practised on many small game parks are where nature and production truly meet.

It is not possible to turn back the hands of time: humans have altered the natural balance of nature, and well managed, consumptive utilisation of the environment is needed in order to protect and develop the ecosystem and permit bio diversity. New Agrarian contracts between old and new farmers, with a mixed zoning system at the centre are a possible way of achieving this goal.

Small game farmers have challenged the accepted idea of the highveld as a fixed landscape, and of inherited, accepted ideas as to how this should be zoned. They have re-invented the traditional land use patterns where game co-existed with humans, crops and livestock. Historically, humans, animals and crops co-existed on the land in Zimbabwe. This way of life was overtaken by the colonial interlude, creating a new landscape suited to colonial agricultural aspirations, but what the precolonial farmers were doing, predated the colonial era and is more original, and more 'natural'. The mixed zoning endeavours in Mashonaland have (perhaps inadvertently) aspired towards that precolonial perception of landscape, but have interacted more actively and objectively with this environment. This has been necessary given greater population density, and land that is no longer necessarily virgin and fertile. The landscape has had to be restored and then actively and intensively managed thereafter.

Katz asks who has the right to determine the 'appropriate use of preserved land'?<sup>60</sup> Between the pre colonial period and the present these 'appropriate uses' have been revised a number of times and mixed zoning may well be an appropriate new way forward. Katz also asks, "To which

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<sup>57</sup> R. Duffy, Killing for Conservation, P33.

<sup>58</sup> Informal Interview, Safari Operator, Chinhoyi, May 9, 2002.

<sup>59</sup> W. Wolmer, "Lowveld Landscapes", p193, quoting R Williams, Between Town and City.

<sup>60</sup> C. Katz, "Whose Nature, Whose Culture," p49.

period is the political ecology to be restored?" And what defines a "good Landscape"?<sup>61</sup> Given that restoration is not entirely possible or, indeed, desirable, and implies a static conception of the landscape, one would be tempted to advocate a more dynamic vision, one that in many ways is a synthesis of past patterns of land use, and one where humans, crops and animals are able to co-exist. This way of seeing the landscape has been in practice for more than a decade on some small game parks. There is room to modify this vision to incorporate new players in the game - the new settlers.





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