



Agricultural Policy Research in Africa



AGRICULTURAL COMMERCIALISATION IN NORTHERN ZIMBABWE: CRISES, CONJUNCTURES AND CONTINGENCIES, 1890-2020

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ACRONYMS

BAT	British American Tobacco
BSAC	British South Africa Company
CFU	Commercial Farmers' Union
CSO	Central Statistics Office
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
EU	European Union
GNU	Government of National Unity
ICA	Intensive Conservation Area
NCs	Native Commissioners
NDVI	Normalised difference vegetation index
PVs	Protected villages
R&D	Research and development
RTA	Rhodesian Tobacco Association
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZIMSTATS	Zimbabwe Statistical Office

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the intersecting factors that have shifted pathways of commercialisation, mostly of tobacco and maize, in Mvurwi area in northern Mazowe district, Zimbabwe, since 1890. The paper looks at five periods, starting with early colonisation by white settlers, then examines the consolidation of 'European agriculture' following World War II, before investigating the liberation war era from the mid-1970s. The period after Independence is then reflected upon, before concluding with the period since 2000 and the major land reform programme that transferred significant amounts of land to resettlement schemes for new farmers. Through these periods, the paper explores the political economy of state-farmer alliances; the pattern of state investment and subsidy in agriculture; changes in agricultural labour regimes; the dynamics of markets; rural-urban migration and the role of technology and environmental change, asking how each affects what type of commercial agriculture emerges, and where. A central concern is who gains and who loses in this process. The paper is based on research carried out across communal areas, resettlement schemes and large-scale estates in Mvurwi area, involving biographical interviews, focus group discussions, tracking surveys and longitudinal analysis of satellite imagery, combined with extensive archival research. The paper concludes with a reflection on how pathways of commercialisation have emerged through crises, conjunctures and contingencies. This is not a linear evolution, only driven by economic incentives, but a political process, heavily influenced by state intervention. Particular moments influence what paths are taken, by whom, and who becomes a 'commercial farmer'.

Keywords: Zimbabwe, agriculture, commercialisation, land reform, political economy, tobacco, maize, Landsat.

Measures: In this paper, depending on the period and the use at the time, both hectares and acres are used (1 ha = 2.47 acres), as well as both kilogrammes (kg) and Imperial pounds (lbs) (1 kg = 2.2 lbs).

INTRODUCTION

The agrarian history of Mvurwi (Umvukwes) farming area in Zimbabwe is primarily a history of maize, tobacco and cattle. But this history is far from straightforward. Unlike simplistic economic explanations, focusing on shifting factors of production or deterministic historical materialist accounts, this history is not predictable and is characterised by features of crisis, conjuncture and contingency. If we are to understand why commercial farming took off or then disappeared, we must focus on a wide range of factors, and their interactions – ranging from politics to commodity prices to labour migration, market relations, technology and environmental change. The interactions among drivers are, we find, non-linear and the outcomes are uncertain; but certain moments are key, defining major shifts in how agriculture is practised, by whom and where within the study area.

This paper focuses on the Mvurwi area in Mazowe district,¹ around 100km north of Zimbabwe's capital, Harare. The paper offers a necessarily schematic overview of changes in Mvurwi's agricultural economy since the 1890s to the present, looking at five periods over 130 years: early colonisation by white settlers; the consolidation of 'European agriculture' following World War II; the liberation war era from the mid-1970s; the period after Independence and the period since 1997, including the major land reform of 2000. We show how each of these periods is characterised by key moments – 'crises' that reconfigure political, social and economic relations, 'conjunctures' that bring together particular drivers of change to effect rapid transformations and 'contingencies', where chance factors combine, resulting in important shifts.

Our focus on key moments and the non-linear, uncertain dynamics of change contrasts with more conventional approaches. Dominant in the recent literature on agricultural change are the perspectives from economics that highlight the importance of relative factor prices and the incentives arising to intensify, extensify or change production systems. Prices of land, crop outputs, chemical inputs and labour dominate the analysis (MacMillan and Headey 2014; Binswanger-Mkhize, McCalla and Patel 2010; Johnston 1970). Politics is seen to be exogenous,

affecting production factors through policies, such as subsidies and regulations. An evolutionary perspective is offered by this paper, which predicts shifts from low-input peasant farming to intensified commercial agriculture, with labour being shed and being absorbed by growing industrialisation.

The classic dual model of Arthur Lewis (1955) of course represents the best-known example, linking to evolutionary assumptions of 'progress' and 'modernisation' in development, from Walter Rostow (1960) onwards. The contemporary equivalents, largely promulgated by agricultural economists, and adopting many similar assumptions, centre on debates about 'structural transformation' in agriculture, especially in Africa (Barrett, Christian and Shiferaw 2017; MacMillan and Headey 2014). Predictive models are suggested, driven primarily by a combination of demography and economics, with 'market imperfections' potentially impeding the expected pattern.

A similar predictive determinism is suggested by arguments about transformation derived from orthodox Marxist thinking on agrarian change. Here, the dialectical relationship between capital and labour in emerging capitalism predicts a transformation from pre-capitalist peasantry to forms of capitalist farming, which in turn can generate accumulation and create surplus from the extraction of value from labour and the land, ultimately allowing a transformation to urbanisation and industrialisation (Akram-Lodhi 1998). Political struggle in this case is much more central to the analysis of historical-material transformation, but, according to some, the outcomes are predictable, resulting in different 'paths' of agrarian change under capitalism (Byres 1991).

Based on our analysis of changing patterns of commercial agriculture in Mvurwi, this paper argues that both of these approaches are inadequate. They both fail to engage with the complexities and uncertainties of change. As Sara Berry (1993) argues, 'no condition is permanent', and it is social, economic political, technological and environmental relations that combine to effect change. Such change cannot be predicted and through social and political relations,

changes are actively negotiated. Tania Li (2014) in a similar vein argues that a conjunctural approach requires a combination of historical and ethnographic methods working across scales, but above all requires a commitment to complex bricolage and puzzle solving, that zooms in and out on complex relations, making use of local perspectives, but also taking the wider, historical view.

This does not mean, however, that change is chaotic and random. Our analytical attention must instead focus on the moments of change, when pathways shift, rather than expecting a slow, predictable, evolutionary unfolding. Such moments can lead to the concentration of capital, and an intensification of commodification, with the shedding of labour, migration and urbanisation and the extension to wider markets. Or indeed such moments may provoke the opposite, with a resurgence of small-scale agriculture and local, informal markets, as conditions change elsewhere (O’Laughlin 2016). A narrow focus on agriculture is of course inadequate, as such shifts may be precipitated by wider changes in urban areas or across global value chains, making a focus on political economy across scales essential.

Following a short section on our methodological approach, the paper follows the chronology of five periods introduced earlier, before identifying five themes that emerge across these periods. The conclusion returns to the importance of rejecting a linear, evolutionary framing, and explores the implications of an alternative view, centred on crisis, conjuncture and contingency.

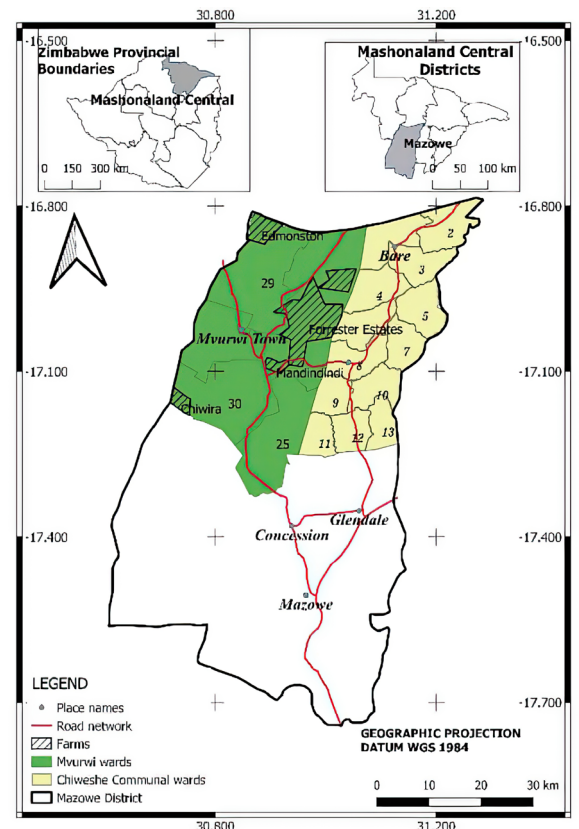
EXPLORING LONGITUDINAL CHANGE: STUDY AREA AND METHODS

The Mvurwi study area (Figure 1) encompasses a number of different land-uses. To the east is the former ‘European’ farming area, previously occupied by large-scale white commercial farming, but is now, following the land reform of 2000, made up of a mix of resettlement areas, both smallholder (A1) and medium-scale farms (A2). To the north-east is the large Forrester Estate, established in 1933, which is still in operation, while to the west is Chiweshe communal area, established as a labour reserve during the colonial era. To get a picture of the changes over 130 years, we drew on a wide range of sources. Exploring the more distant histories of the area, we made use of archival material, including the annual reports of the Native Commissioners (NCs) charged with ‘native areas’, reports from the Intensive Conservation Area (ICA) committees of white commercial farmers, travellers’ accounts and locally-written novels and biographies, combined with historical interviews with elderly key informants. Compilations of time series data on rainfall, crop production, livestock holdings, agricultural prices and mechanisation, for example, were attempted, based on information from the National Archives and Central Statistics Office (CSO, now Zimstats), and were combined with reports from farmers’ unions and agricultural extension services.

For the more recent periods, local interview recollections were important: from long-term residents of the area to new settlers in land reform areas, and current or displaced commercial farmers. Key informants included local traditional leaders, alongside government officials who had worked in the area over the years. In Chiweshe communal area, we undertook a tracking study looking at changes since the late 1980s for selected households, comparing data from 1989-91 with a recent survey, combined with in-depth household interviews. Environmental changes were explored using Landsat satellite imagery,² combined with focus group discussions, interviews and field observations.

As in any historical enquiry, the sources were partial, incomplete and often influenced by the positionality of whoever was relaying the story. Triangulating between multiple sources was essential, combining primary and

Figure 1: Map of the study area



Source: APRA Zimbabwe project

Note: The Mvurwi commercial farm wards combine A1, A2 resettlement areas and remaining commercial farms, while the communal wards refer to Chiweshe communal area.

secondary, quantitative and qualitative information. The result is a fascinating but complex tale.

EARLY COLONIAL SETTLEMENT: THE DOMINANCE OF AFRICAN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, 1890–1945

Our story starts in the late 1890s, with the arrival of the first European settlers, searching for the mineral wealth of a Second Rand.³ While a number of important mining sites were found along the Great Dyke, including for gold, chrome and other metals, the riches of South Africa were elusive.⁴ Instead, settlers had to farm. Although some planted tobacco and maize, most initially established cattle ranches in the area (Townsend 1965). Land demarcations were not fixed, and local African populations lived mostly in the hilly areas to the north and west, farming a combination of small grains, rice and some maize in the wetter valley bottoms.⁵ Indigenous Mashona cattle and smallstock were kept too, although at this stage only in small numbers given the devastation of the rinderpest epidemic of 1896–1998 (Mutowo 2001). There is evidence of pre-colonial cultivation of tobacco but this was not extensive among African populations at this point (Kosmin 1977; Palmer 1977).

In this period, African farmers provided food, livestock-based transport and other goods to the small European population. Support to early European settlers from the colonial government, established in 1923 after taking over authority from the British South African Company, was initially limited, although the European agricultural policy was adopted in 1908 and the Land Bank was established in 1912, providing subsidised credit for farm establishment. The Native Reserves Commission of 1914–1915 reported that 75% of natives were living within the boundaries of ‘reserves’, and in 1925 the Mazoe NC reported that ‘there is no vacant Crown Land in Mazoe district and the Native Reserves are surrounded by occupied farms’ (Palmer 1977: 122, 262). By the mid-1920s, and following World War I, which seriously disrupted colonial state support to new farmers, interest among white settler farmers in growing tobacco had increased substantially, such that by the 1930s the crop had become the main agricultural export commodity (Townsend 1965), and ranching declined in the area (Rubert 1998).⁶ This followed an influx of growers, which was witnessed in 1925–1926 after the 1923 bumper harvest in the Umvukwes (Townsend 1965).

The novelist and playwright, Gertrude Page, who lived in Mvurwi in the mid-1920s captured the period well

(Walton 1997; Townsend 1965: note 10; Page 1921). The conditions were perfect for commercial tobacco production, with heavy clay loam soils and good rainfall, with the newly established European farms concentrating in the flatter areas to the east. However, it was only with the Land Apportionment Act passed in 1930, based on the recommendations of the Land Commission of 1925, when the colonial state began to force segregation. In our study area, this centred on the native reserve of Chiweshe⁷ – although in practice settlement in designated areas was gradual and African and European populations continued to live together across the area, with Africans now often paying Europeans rent, or simply resisting to relocate (Townsend 1965: note 10).

As NCs frequently commented in their reports, the African population was increasingly engaged in market exchange of crops, livestock and the rental of oxen for transport. In the early years of the twentieth century, European settlers frequently struggled with diseases, limited capital, lack of labour and inadequate skills, and were heavily reliant on their African neighbours. There were frequent complaints, even after the Land Apportionment Act, of the unwillingness of indigenous African populations to provide labour, although the government’s Labour Bureau had started to encourage migrant labour to compensate. In 1920, the NC reported that 7,500 were employed in the district, 83% of whom were foreign:

The labour supply throughout the year was very satisfactory; foreign natives were showing a tendency to remain in the country for longer periods than formerly; very few farmers in the district were dependent on the Labour Bureau, voluntary labour being plentiful. The indigenous Native continued generally to work for a few months only, mainly to obtain money to pay his tax, or to fulfil his obligations under the Private Locations Ordinance.⁸

At the Umvukwes Farmers’ and Tobacco Growers’ Association in 1925, the chairman spoke of the opening of labour recruitment centres by the Rhodesia Native Labour Bureau at Mount Darwin and in Mrehwa district

(Townsend 1965: 82, note 10) owing to increased tobacco production in the Umvukwes and other districts. In 1929, the NC commented on conditions on some farms, explaining why some preferred not to join the labour market: 'These persons are themselves to blame, for their treatment of their labour was such that one could only be surprised that they obtain any labour whatsoever'.⁹ By the mid-1930s, there was increasing recruitment of foreign labour, and in 1935, the NC reported that 'The labour requirements of the District were almost entirely supplied by alien labour which employers considered more satisfactory in every way'.¹⁰ By the end of the 1930s, white farmers began to invest in accommodation and services for workers, with the NC reporting in 1938 that 'if good work was to be expected, good food and housing must be provided. Many employers too established clinics and hospital huts... a distinct step in the right direction... Shelters...for native immigrants were erected and much appreciated'.¹¹

The newly-established white commercial farmers frequently complained about the state of local infrastructure. One farmer commented:

In the early 20s the only road to the railhead was through O'Meath and down the Satsi Hill to Concession. This track, for that is all it was, wandered in and out, taking the least resistance encountered by the plodding oxen; here avoiding an anthep, there circling round some wet ground a few trees or an ant bear hole.

(Townsend 1965: 82, note 10)

A letter to the *Rhodesia Herald* commented on the delays in constructing the Concession to Umvukwes road.

I have to travel up to the Umvukwes fairly frequently, and if anything, the road is worse than ours (that is, the main trunk road). Evidently, the Umvukwes men are "living in hope," or are all so wealthy that a few extra bills for broken wagons and cars do not worry them?¹²

To facilitate the construction of the 65km road, a Road Council was formed by the Umvukwes Farmers' and Tobacco Growers' in 1925 upon the Minister of Mines and Works' recommendation. As settlers became established – and in the Umvukwes increasingly wealthy – and the colonial state asserted its power, the impacts of racialised land policies, combined with sustained support for European agricultural settlement,

were felt. The Tobacco Control Board was established in 1930 through the Tobacco Sale and Export Control Act, requiring all growers to be registered, while in 1933 the Tobacco Levy Act aimed to finance the Board, and the Research Board established in 1935. In 1936 this was replaced by the encompassing 1935 Tobacco Marketing Act, requiring sales to designated auction floors (Rubert 1998: 9).¹³ With the Maize Control Acts of 1931 and 1934 regulating the sale of African-produced maize (Palmer 1977: 211), crop markets for European producers expanded and stabilised. It was not until after World War II that Umvukwes farmers resolved to create a village, having bought 50 acres of Dawson farm, later to be renamed Umvukwes town in 1951, which included the construction of the Country Club on 350 acres of Pembi Falls farm in 1946 (Townsend 1965: 82, note 10). In this period, the Umvukwes town grew on the back of European agricultural commercialisation, with a population of over 80 settler farmers and their families (Townsend 1965: 86, note 10).

However, at least early in this period, it was still the African population that remained the dominant commercial farmers of food crops. In 1927, the NC described an attempt to link maize producers in the reserve with tobacco farmers in the rest of the district, and initially 500 bags (of the 60,000 bags produced) were sold in this way¹⁴. However, it was local traders, based in the reserves, who took on most of the grain (maize and small grains) sales, linking these to credit for sale of new equipment such as ploughs, now nearly universally used across the Chiweshe reserve.¹⁵ Grain sales from the district's reserves increased from 15,000 bags in 1927 to over 30,000 bags in 1930 and more than 50,000 bags by 1938.¹⁶ In 1936, the NC commented: 'The natives of this district grow maize in large quantities principally for sale.... they do a very considerable amount of transport for European farmers living in the vicinity of the reserves'.¹⁷ Commercialisation though was focused on crops – increasingly maize – while livestock were kept for ploughing and transport. The NC in 1940 commented rather desperately, 'Despite the overstocking and the continual exhortation to sell surplus stock very few native cattle were sold'; in fact only 219 were recorded, and the attempts at improving breeds had largely failed.¹⁸

The extension of colonial power was affected during the 1930s by the global depression and from 1939 by the outbreak of World War II. Resources for the colonial state of Southern Rhodesia declined during the 1930s, as the economy in Britain was squeezed, and the colonies were expected to provide surpluses, through an increasingly extractive regime (Phimister 1988; Moseley 1983). During World War II, the colonies

mobilised funds and supplied both human and material resources for the war effort (Mutimbanyoka 2018).¹⁹ In this period, then, a focus on commercialisation for export – including tobacco, maize and beef – was the emphasis, and newly-established European farms were expected to deliver, while African populations were heavily taxed and forced to provide labour (Palmer 1977).

In this period, therefore, it was the arrival of the settlers and the establishment of the colonial state that significantly affected patterns of agricultural commercialisation in the area. White commercial farming often struggled to take off, and many new farmers were reliant on external financing and contracting arrangements for growing.²⁰ The success of commercial farming in turn was shaped by the global economic depression and World War II. While a new, modern, commercial agriculture was expected of the new settlers, there were frequent complaints about deforestation and soil erosion, as settler farmers established their farms (Phimister 1986). While there were similar complaints about African farmers – most notably in the Natural Resources Commission Enquiry report of 1939²¹ – and attempts to encourage ‘modern’ farming through state-financed extension advice,²² it was African farming in this period – scattered across the landscape and involving a variety of crops – that was the mainstay of commercial food production in the area, while at the same time tobacco farming on the white commercial farms expanded significantly, linked to a fast-changing labour economy.

THE CONSOLIDATION OF WHITE COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE, 1945–1965

In the period after World War II, there was a renewed effort to facilitate European colonisation. Veterans of the war were offered packages to settle, and the so-called European farming areas in Mvurwi soon became much more occupied. A post-war investment push focused on boosting European commercial farming, with a range of incentives and subsidies.²³ For tobacco, the 1947 post-war dollar shortage resulted in the ‘London Agreement’, and combined with Commonwealth preferential trade policies, allowed Rhodesian farmers to sell to the UK as a guaranteed market at good prices (Dunlop 1971: 45).

In Mazoe district, the area under tobacco went from 20,175 acres (yielding 10 million lbs) in 1950–1951 to 17,976 acres (yielding 14 million lbs) in 1956–1957, while that of the maize cropped area increased from 56,419 acres (yielding 255,339 bags) to 67,936 acres (yielding 897,517 bags). At the same time, additional crops such as groundnuts were being added to the mix.²⁴ This growth in production was reflected nationally (Table 1; Dunlop 1971: 61–3).

This was the period when the classic white-owned large-scale commercial farm sector was consolidated. Fields were expanded as more tobacco and maize was planted, cattle populations grew,²⁵ while homesteads were built and labour compounds established. Labour shortages were often felt, however. In the mid-1940s, the Mazoe NC reported:

Whenever and wherever two or three farmers were gathered together, the talk was of

labour – the diminution of the supply and the deterioration of the quality. There is nothing like the number of gangs passing through the District that there used to be.... The supply throughout the year was inadequate.... Many farmers were looking on the government as a recruiting agent... Hundreds of native juveniles were employed in the District, especially on tobacco farms in the grading season....²⁶

Crop production in this period was supported by heavy investment in technology by the colonial state (Weinmann 1975). The famous hybrid maize variety, SR52, became available, and quickly revolutionised production with yields reaching up to 10 t/ha.²⁷ After the US, Zimbabwe was the second country in the world to introduce a hybrid seed maize variety after 28 years of local research (Hanlon, Manjengwa, and Smart 2012). By 1955–1956, 85% of European maize produced was hybrid, and yield levels nearly doubled between 1945 and 1965 (Dunlop 1971: 48). Equally, tobacco farmers shifted from low-input Burley tobacco production to Virginia flue-cured tobacco (Cole and Cole 2006; Kanduza 1983; Stinson 1956), requiring the building of barns and the use of substantial amounts of fuelwood, initially from clearing fields. Nationally, the number of registered flue-cured tobacco producers increased from 796 to 2,927 between 1945 and 1965, and yields increased significantly (Dunlop 1971: 70). State-supported extension efforts increased, with the establishment of the Department of Conservation and Extension in 1948 and the Commercial Farmers’ Union (CFU),²⁸ alongside voluntary farmer-led initiatives

Table 1: Changes in European farming, 1945–1965

	1945	1965
Number of European farms	3,699	6,266
Area of European farms (acres)	22.5 million acres	33.7 million acres
Cropped area (acres)	545,000 acres	1,107,000 acres
Gross value of tobacco (£ million)	4.3 (46.7 m lb produced)	32.6 (232.8 m lb produced)
Gross value of maize (£ million)	1.2 (1.5 m x 200 lb bags)	7.9 (5.2 m x 200 lb bags)
Workers employed (male)	130,636	216,155
Tobacco barns	7,355	39,190
Tractors	1,155 (1947)	14,585

Source: Dunlop 1971

under the Intensive Conservation Areas (ICAs), formed following the Natural Resources Act of 1941 (Maravanyika 2014).²⁹

Impressive state support for European agriculture via research and technological development was combined with other forms of infrastructure, including the building of roads and an impressive number of ponds, tanks and dams were constructed with state subsidies. This allowed for the expansion of irrigation, and diversification into citrus and horticulture in particular.³⁰ During this post-war period, state support also targeted white ex-servicemen under the 'Soldier Resettlement Scheme'.³¹ Commercial farmers also invested in tractors, with there being a total of 265 in the Umvukwes ICA alone by 1956.³²

As European farming commercialised, the demand for labour grew. By this stage, much stricter residence requirements were imposed, enforced under a slew of discriminatory colonial legislation.³³ The 'reserves' were densely populated, as more and more people were crammed in. Between 1919 and 1927, the population of employees in Chiweshe reserve grew from 7,500 to 21,000 people (both indigenous and non-indigenous).³⁴ The population fluctuated in the 1930s until it reached 9,400 in 1935.³⁵ Land-use planning, notably following the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1952, meant that the earlier flexible forms of settlement were no longer permitted, and Africans were settled into village 'lines', with grazing and arable areas demarcated (Bessant 2014; Drinkwater 1986; Pendered and von Memerty 1955). In attempts to encourage 'modern' farming techniques and reduce soil erosion, extension officers insisted on the building of contour ridges and the protection of wetlands and river banks (Scoones 1997; Phimister 1993). Stock numbers were also regulated, with the imposition of destocking policies if 'carrying capacities' were assumed to be exceeded (Ranger 1985). NC reports from the 1950s emphasised the attempts at 'improvement', including compulsory dipping of cattle, the construction of soil conservation works and education of the natives by demonstrators. In 1951, the NC complained that such efforts only reached an 'educated and enlightened few in a mass of backward people'.³⁶

By this time, the vibrant African commercial agriculture of previous decades had ended – in 1951 only 6,000 bags of maize were marketed from Chiweshe reserve³⁷ – and, as result, many were now forced to migrate to earn sufficient resources to make a living (Arrighi 1970). Circular migration occurred to growing towns, now with industrial sectors emerging, as well as to the mines and large-scale farms, both within Rhodesia,

but also further afield. Extensive male migration shifted the gender and age composition of resident populations in the labour reserves such as Chiweshe. Farming nevertheless continued, on increasingly small plots, with a mix of maize, small grains, groundnuts and other food crops, with Burley tobacco grown by a few.³⁸ One farmer recalled the period, noting the range of restrictions on African farming imposed by the colonial state:

I grew up in a farming family in Chiweshe communal area. During the colonial period we used to grow maize and Burley tobacco among other small grain crops. Even though my family wanted to venture into flue-cured tobacco farming, this was prohibited by the settler government. Even though we were being told that this was to enable control over the supply of quality flue-cured tobacco, my own suspicion is that this was part of the comprehensive plan to curtail African farmers' prospects, given that such tobacco pays handsomely, and was favoured by the whites.³⁹

Nevertheless, some farmers in the 'reserves' were able to accumulate, even under such restrictive conditions. These '*hurudza*' were the 'big men' of the reserves, often with many wives, large herds of cattle and big fields (Ranger 1985). Making use of traditional positions as headmen, for example, meant that they could gain access to land and resources, while others relied on farming on small plots combined with off-farm work. Patterns of differentiation in the reserves in this period were increasingly stark, with important gender and age dimensions (Weinrich 1973, 1968). Apart from some 'big men', Chiweshe was increasingly a place for older people, retired from jobs elsewhere, and women and children, maintaining homes and farms, while husbands migrated. The gender implications of dispossession were significant. With limited farm assets, and many restrictions imposed by the state, the conditions for production and accumulation were poor, with a significant squeeze on basic capacities for social reproduction and multiple burdens taken on by women.

Although many adult men, and some women too, migrated to white-owned farms to sell labour, this was insufficient to meet the growing demand. Recruitment of labour from nearby countries increased during this period, especially after the establishment of the Rhodesian Federation in 1953, linking Southern Rhodesia to Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi). The total commercial farm labour

force grew from 130,636 in 1945 to 206,781 in 1966, with 95,740 being 'foreigners' (Dunlop 197:18).⁴⁰ Those from elsewhere were accommodated in newly established farm compounds and in specially built 'townships'. Flue-cured tobacco production, in particular, is an incredibly labour-intensive and skilled production and processing system, and the control of labour by white commercial farmers was crucial. This involved the establishment of forms of 'domestic government' (Rutherford 2001), whereby labour lived on the farm under the strict, sometimes violently draconian, control of the owner. At this time, there were no labour unions and no regulation of terms and conditions; workers were at the mercy of farm owners, who were largely left to their own devices, resulting in often appalling conditions (Loewenson 1992).

This pattern of commercialisation boomed on the back of surplus accumulation emerging from the often-extreme exploitation of labour, and with state support and access to plentiful land and water.⁴¹ Family-run farms, often inherited across generations, became the mainstay of the white commercial farming sector in this period to the exclusion of African farming systems, which, with a few exceptions, were driven towards subsistence survival, complemented by off-farm work.

CHALLENGES TO WHITE COMMERCIAL FARMING: THE UNILATERAL DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND THE LIBERATION WAR, 1965–80

In 1965, Ian Smith, the leader of the Rhodesian Front and Prime Minister proclaimed the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), severing ties with Britain and aiming to enshrine white rule. Sanctions were imposed on the rogue state and a siege economy resulted. While there were many routes to breaking sanctions, including the export of tobacco, Southern Rhodesia invested in a massive programme of import substitution, creating its own industries, meanwhile farming was redirected towards domestic consumption. In 1970, for example, the Umvukwes ICA Newsletter reported that ‘tobacco acreage has decreased by 29% while the maize acreage has risen by 360%’ since 1964.⁴²

Politically, white farming became tied in with the Rhodesian Front’s ‘independence’ project, and technological development was largely undertaken independently using national resources. Despite sanctions, and with continued access to markets in apartheid South Africa, commercial farming continued to expand. Maize production in Mvurwi area was 108,800 200 lb bags in 1965,⁴³ while national tobacco production was 250 million lbs, secured through the support of the Tobacco Corporation formed on 23 December 1965 (Mbanga 1991).⁴⁴ The UDI period was therefore a difficult era for white commercial agriculture and not all white farmers were able to survive. While there were 2,500 tobacco farmers in 1965, the number had dropped by two-thirds by 1970 (Mbanga 1991). However, some farms were doing well as this period also saw a period of consolidation. In the Mvurwi area, several large estates were formed, often through joining multiple farms. The scale advantages allowed for significant new investment in commercial production, including pivot irrigation of tobacco and maize, and the establishment of major citrus plantations. These new more corporate farms – such as Whaddon Chase, then owned by the Micklem family and Forrester Estate, named after Lord Forrester, who took ownership after 1933 and was more recently acquired by the von Pezold family in 1988 – had close ties with the Rhodesian state, and the farm owners were highly influential in the CFU.⁴⁵ The history of involvement of the British aristocracy⁴⁶ in the commercial farming sector of Rhodesia has its roots in Cecil John Rhodes’ attempt to obtain the

Royal Charter from the British Crown; accounts have been given of how Rhodes enlisted the assistance of some British aristocrats in his quest for royal ascent for the Charter to occupy Rhodesia.⁴⁷ Some of these ties to the aristocracy may have played an advantageous role for some farmers, unforeseen at the time, when Rhodesia was later to declare UDI in 1965, drawing sanction from the Crown and the wider international community. For some farmers, being well-connected in Britain meant sanctions-busting was easier for such players, compared to smaller, less influential family farmers (Tracey 2009).

In this period, the Umvukwes town grew substantially. No longer a small trading post, it was by now an established service centre, with accommodation built for labourers, especially for those recruited from outside the country. As a long-time resident, who came to the town as young adult the early 1970s, recalled:

This whole area was white farms. Then some of the whites came with small firms to service the white farming community. Two of the big firms I remember were AgricMec (later called Farmec) as well as Farmers’ Co-op (later called Farm and City Centre). AgriMec were specialising in tractor spares and servicing while Farmers’ Co-op was a key supplier of agricultural inputs and other auxiliary farming hardware. Other notable businesses were into servicing and repair of motor vehicles, again owned by the white community. Two were Bruno’s and KR Motors. The building occupied by KR Motors is probably the oldest building having been converted from a tobacco grading shed... When I arrived, there was already a post office and a police station in the town as well as a bank, Standard Chartered.... The hospital was also there, servicing both the white farming community and their black farm workers.⁴⁸

The increased urbanisation to accommodate workers resulted in new patterns of local trade and marketing. Road connections were improving too. As our informant recalled, ‘When I arrived, the tarred road linking

Mazowe and Centenary (and passing through Mvurwi) had already been constructed. I even remember that the Mvurwi-Guruve road was also constructed in the 1970s and the company contracted to do so was Gullivers'.⁴⁹ With depots for maize, tobacco and other small grains established in the Umvukwes town from 1976,⁵⁰ farmers in the area were able to market their produce more intensively, linking increasingly to national and international markets. Global, national and local prices dictated what was grown, and farmers became increasingly reliant on a highly commercialised, marketised system, with multiple players, from financiers, banks, loan companies, transporters, brokers, dealers, input suppliers, and many others.

Meanwhile, support for the European tobacco industry continued, with the establishment of the Tobacco Training Institute (now Blackfordby College of Agriculture) in 1974 near Harare (and moved to near Concession in 1995), originally offering a 12-month course for tobacco farmers and managers. As C.G. Tracey, a former commercial farmer, observed in his biography:

Blackfordby was run financially as a practical school, but benefitted from grants from the Rhodesian Tobacco Association (RTA) and the private sector... After a year at Blackfordby, the students were highly sought after in the agricultural industry.
(Tracey, 2009:77)⁵¹

All was to change in the Mvurwi area with the start of the Zimbabwe liberation war from the early 1970s. The first 'contact' was at Altena farm north of Chiweshe in December 1972⁵² Following a period of small-scale insurgency, a major front opened up by the mid-1970s. White farms were obvious targets for guerilla attacks, and white farmers armed themselves and, through radio contact, provided back-up support to their counterparts across the area, becoming enlisted as reservists in the Rhodesian forces. Farming continued, but often under very challenging, securitised circumstances (Kenrick 2016). Labour was withdrawn, as local Africans retreated to their homes in what were now named 'Tribal Trust Lands',⁵³ where support to the liberation fighters was provided.

Noting the intensification of attacks, and the role of African populations in supporting the fight for liberation, the state imposed draconian measures on the Chiweshe population. A series of 'protected villages' (PVs) were established from 1974, and in Chiweshe over 100,000 people were incarcerated in guarded settlements, only allowed out for periods to

cultivate.⁵⁴ Not surprisingly, this resulted in massive resentment, and ways of continuing to support the insurgent comrades were often found (Ranger 1985). Cultivation was for subsistence, and many livestock were slaughtered or lost.⁵⁵ While young men, and some women, left for Mozambique to join the struggle, the situation in the PVs was grim. African agriculture collapsed and hunger was the order of the day.

By the time of the ceasefire in 1979 and the beginning of the Lancaster House talks in Britain, agriculture in Mvurwi area had come to a standstill. White commercial farming had contracted, often to only smaller, more protected plots, while in the so-called Tribal Trust Lands, the limited production around the PVs was barely enough to keep people alive.

INDEPENDENCE, AID AND ECONOMIC LIBERALISATION, 1980–1997

The arrival of Independence on 18 April 1980, with Robert Mugabe installed as Prime Minister, was hailed by nearly everyone. Peace meant production could start again, and the reconciliatory tone struck by the new independent government was encouraging to white farmers. The new Minister of Agriculture was Denis Norman, the former head of the white CFU, who promised support for commercial agriculture, as well as the promotion of agriculture in the (soon to be renamed) communal areas (Norman 2018; Cliffe 1988). Land reform was mooted, but initially this focused on the resettlement of de-mobbed soldiers from the liberation war (Cliffe 1986; Kinsey 1983). The Lancaster House Agreement confirmed a 'willing seller, willing buyer' arrangement for land reform land acquisitions, and despite the big targets, after an initial flurry, the pace was slow (Moyo 2011; Gunning *et al.* 2000)⁵⁶, and white farming did not feel under any threat. Indeed, the opposite: markets boomed, as sanctions stopped, and commercial farmers were celebrated as contributors to a new nation.

International good-will towards newly-independent Zimbabwe, now the key front-line state neighbouring apartheid South Africa, was plentiful, and aid flowed following the historical ZIMCORD (Zimbabwe Conference on Reconstruction and Development) conference held in Salisbury in March 1981. This aimed to rebuild the nation after years of isolation and war, and invest in a new multi-racial economy. Agriculture was to be central, and given the historical injustices suffered, the emphasis was on the African communal areas. Soon after the cessation of hostilities, people re-established themselves in their former villages and restarted farming. The good rainfall seasons following Independence, combined with a major state-led and donor-supported effort to provide improved seed, fertiliser and cheap credit, resulted in a temporary boom in production, dubbed Zimbabwe's 'green revolution' (Rukuni *et al.* 2006; Eicher 1995). In the period between 1979–1980 and 1984–1985, small-holder maize production increased from 66,571t to 772,000t (Weiner 1988: 69).

This boost in production was short-lived, however. A series of droughts through the 1980s struck hard, and then in 1991, as a result of conditions imposed by the

International Monetary Fund, Zimbabwe adopted a drastic economic structural adjustment programme (ESAP), as a condition of securing loan funds. This required the cutting back of state support, including research, extension and the multiple subsidies supporting agriculture. This contraction of state support hit smallholder farming hard and production contracted, with more people relying on off-farm income sources and a growing flow of remittances from work abroad, especially South Africa after liberation in 1994.

According to a major survey conducted between 1989 and 1991, the major crops grown in Chiweshe were maize and groundnuts⁵⁷. For instance, the percentage of land under each crop was 63% and 11.5%, averaging 1.4ha and 0.7ha and resulting in yields of 1324 kg/ha and 280 kg/ha respectively. Households had an average of 5.2–6.3 head of cattle per household by 1990–1991,⁵⁸ and (after ESAP) earlier post-Independence mechanisation programmes supporting the distribution of tractors to farming groups fell apart (Rusike 1988). With no state funds to purchase land from commercial farmers selling up, land reform dropped to a trickle after 1990, and only 3 million ha or 16% of formerly white-owned land had been allocated previously between 1980 and 1990, and none anywhere near Mvurwi area (Moyo 2011, 2000; Alexander 2006; Palmer 1990).

As communal area agriculture faltered, white commercial farming grew spectacularly. This was the 'golden age' of commercial farming, with the liberalisation of the economy and the opening of trade opportunities, often supported by aid programmes, as white farmers and corporate agribusiness companies benefited from Zimbabwe's 'developing country' status. Mvurwi town became a major source of labour with the 'high-density locations' being divided up for different categories of workers. One elderly resident who arrived in the town as a school-girl in 1969 recalled:

A lot of residents of the town used to go and work on the surrounding farms. I remember very well that the white farmers used to come to the town with huge lorries to ferry people to work in the farms and then bring them back at the end of the day.⁵⁹

In this period, there was an on-going consolidation and corporatisation of large-scale commercial farming, with an increasing number of companies taking over several farms, shifting the pattern of investment and land control. For example, the von Pezold family – of German origin but with agribusiness interests across Africa – took over the nine farm units of the 23,000ha Forrester Estate in 1988, and in 1995 the estate was incorporated into a bi-lateral investment treaty between Germany and Zimbabwe.

In the large-scale commercial farming sector, production increased significantly, with maize production increasing from 0.89 million tonnes in 1978 to 5.1 million tonnes by 1998.⁶⁰ This was combined with a continued investment in technology, and an expansion of mechanised and irrigated agriculture. Maize and tobacco were still important, but farmers in Mvurwi diversified in this period, especially following economic liberalisation, capturing new export markets. This sometimes meant contracting cultivated areas, and concentrating on greenhouse-based horti/floriculture production for export and year-round irrigation on smaller plots, with high-tech pivot irrigation systems.

Although state-led research and development (R&D) investments shifted towards small-scale African agriculture in this period, the large-scale commercial farmers, including via the CFU, invested in independent, privately-funded research stations and training centres. As the post-Independence Minister of Agriculture, Denis Norman, comments in his biography:

...tobacco was the key product. Most of its support services, although controlled by government legislation, were to a large extent financed by the industry members themselves, the industry being the growers and the buyers, with the former making the major contribution.
(Norman, 2018: 105–106)

Although the independent government introduced labour laws protecting workers' rights and setting minimum wages, successful commercial farmers were easily able to accommodate such requirements (Hartnack 2016). For some, increasingly engaging in just-in-time fresh produce exports, compliance with international regulations on workers' conditions, environmental protection and health and safety procedures was essential. For example, export mangetout pea production took off at Forrester, and resulted in the establishment of a packing house in Mvurwi.⁶¹ A significant number of citrus plantations

under drip irrigation set up during this period were utilising the packing house, and producing for the export market.⁶²

Compared to the extensive maize and tobacco farms of the past, making use of large amounts of fuelwood for flue-curing, and centred on the paternalistic 'domestic government' of family-run farms (Rutherford 2001), the new style corporate commercial agriculture of the 1990s looked very different. It was more labour-friendly, less environmentally-damaging and much more profitable. In Mvurwi, several farms emerged as top-performers nationally, with international investments and top-of-the-range technologies driving efficient production.⁶³ This was however not universally the case, and there was increasing differentiation among the white commercial farming community, leading to tensions within the CFU, and in contacts with government.

As major foreign exchange earners, the new corporate commercial farmers were feted by the government, and they continued to benefit from tax-breaks and other forms of indirect support, and were not touched by land reform. They invested profits across the economy, reinforcing the hold of white capital, even while employing black managers and company executives. As a CFU official recalled:

The 1990s was really a boom period for most commercial farmers. With the liberalisation that happened under ESAP came with it fresh access to credit, markets and the capacity to re-tool. Because there was now access to foreign markets, mainly in the European Union (EU), there was a sudden increase in the demand for horticulture and floriculture produce; so there was really an upsurge in the number of farmers producing flowers and vegetables for the export market.⁶⁴

Not everyone experienced this boom period, however. The poorer, struggling white family farmers often had to sell up, unable to make ends meet, allowing greater consolidation of farm holdings, as land was too expensive in the more productive agroecological regions for the state to buy for resettlement (Moyo 2001, 1995). Others continued, but diversified into other businesses, both on- and off-farm, resulting in widespread under-utilisation of farm properties, including the adoption of low maintenance livestock or wildlife farming rather than the intensive cropping systems of the past.

These changing land use patterns are reflected in land cover satellite analysis from 1984 to 2018

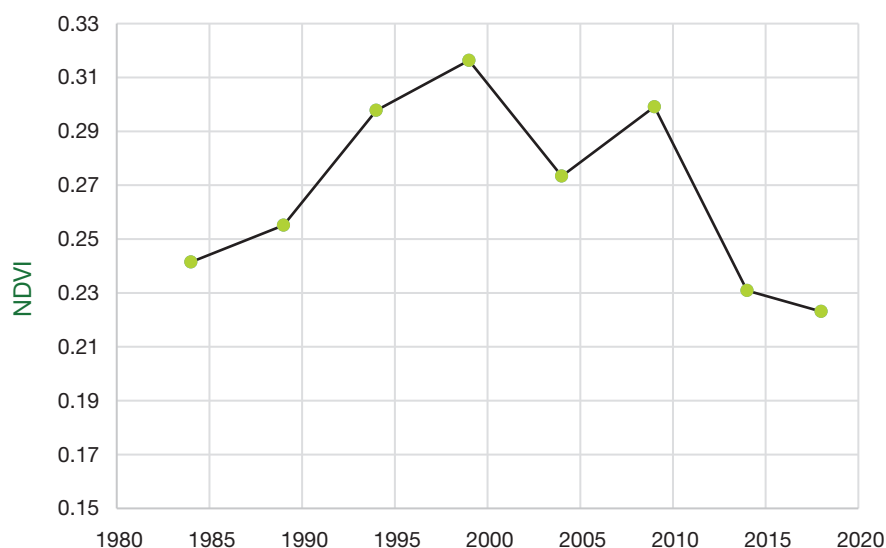
(Maguranyanga, Shonhe and Scoones forthcoming). From 1984–1989 wards dominated by large-scale commercial farms (Wards 26, 27, 29, 30) and some communal wards, specifically wards 4 and 6, had significant increases in normalised difference vegetation index (NDVI)⁶⁵ values, suggesting recovery of tree cover from the severe drought of 1982–1984 (Kinsey *et al.* 1998). Although in some wards, also dominated by white commercial farming, specifically ward 26 (a large-scale commercial farming area) and communal Ward 8, the rate of increase in forest cover was slow as fields continued to expand, being re-established after the liberation war.

After 1990 the macro-economic situation changed with structural adjustment resulting in a contraction of extensive farming practices (tobacco and maize). The majority of commercial farmers in Mvurwi reduced the area under operation and concentrated on more high-value production for export and a switch to other land uses resulting in further increase in woody cover. This included the resort to eco-tourism involving game on agro-estates (Moyo 2011) and the establishment of citrus tree plantations. High interest rates, removal of subsidies on agricultural inputs and reduction in government spending during the structural adjustment period had a negative impact on production in the communal and small-scale farming areas since they relied on government subsidies for farm inputs (Rippenburg 1996). The cost of inputs became unaffordable to many communal farmers. Specifically, the price of fertilisers went up by 300% in the period 1990 to 1995 leading to a reduction in acreage under cultivation (Ismi 2004), consequently growth of forest

area and a switch to other land-uses, resulted in further increase of woody cover. The study of temporal and spatial changes in the mean NDVI over the years for Mvurwi, as shown in Figure 2, support this narrative.

Despite the assumption that farming districts such as Mazowe were massively productive, led by efficient commercial farming, the picture was more varied. There were some highly productive farms for sure, but there were many that were not (Scoones 2017). In 1965, 42% of the nation's farm area was concentrated in just 246 farms (Dunlop 1971), with much of it underutilised. This pattern persisted and by 1976 Riddell (1978) claimed that only 15% of total arable area in large-scale commercial farm areas was being used. A study in the early 1980s (Weiner *et al.* 1985) showed how 10.2% of the large-scale farm area in Mashonaland was cultivated, or 23% of arable land. A decade on, the World Bank (Roth 1991) argued that 65% of large-scale commercial land was underutilised. By 1997, Moyo (1997, 2000) had identified a total of 1,471 properties nationally, including a number in Mazowe district, that could potentially be resettled if the compulsory acquisition legislation, available since the Land Acquisition Act of 1992, was deployed.⁶⁶ With a changing political environment, and for the first time in over 15 years, land reform was back on the agenda.

Figure 2: Temporal changes in mean NDVI



Source: Authors' own.

LAND REFORM, OPPOSITION POLITICS AND ECONOMIC ISOLATION, 1997–2020

Much changed from 1997. The strictures of the structural adjustment programme were dropped with massive unbudgeted pay-outs to increasingly restive war veterans.⁶⁷ Already fragile, given global economic conditions, this caused the economy to nose-dive. Increasing demands for substantial land reform resulted in a major land conference the following year, when an attempt was made to broker a new deal between the CFU, the government and donors. Intransigence on all sides meant that a stale-mate remained, and sporadic land invasions continued to occur. Following mobilisation of urban, industrial workers, and a series of major strikes, the Movement for Democratic Change formed in 1999, under the leadership of Morgan Tsvangirai. White farmers, and large sections of wider white capital, backed them, provoking fury in the ruling party, and particularly from President Mugabe, who had relied on an informal compact with white capital for the past 20 years that assured protection and support if whites did not get involved in opposition politics (Sadomba 2011). The political settlement that protected white-owned farming was to be challenged radically by the war veterans led by Chenjerai Hunzvi (Sadomba 2011). The political tipping point was the referendum on the Constitution in 2000, when the government lost. There followed a rapid acceleration of land invasions that spread throughout the country, supported by the state (Raftopoulos and Mlambo 2008; Raftopoulos 2003).

In Mvurwi area land invasions started at Mick Marffy's Ealing Farm, spread to the Forrester Estates and then to the rest of the farms during the Easter holidays of 2000 (Sadomba 2011; Selby 2006). Some farms were targeted first, as the owners were known to be notoriously bad to their workers. One of the farms in Mvurwi became celebrated nationally, even resulting in a solidarity visit from Colonel Muammar Gadhafi of Libya during 2001 (BBC, 2001). The huge Forrester Estate was notionally protected by an investment treaty with Germany, but this was ignored as several sections were invaded and settled.⁶⁸ A few other farms were initially protected by the state from invasions, given their crucial infrastructure, but these did not survive later invasions as people were mobilised from nearby communal areas and from worker compounds on

farms. The newly revitalised war veterans' movement (through the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association) often led and organised the invasions, but the exact pattern of invasions and the composition of settlers varied from farm to farm. Women, long disenfranchised by colonial land policies, often joined the invasions, although independently held land by women remained small overall (Matondi 2012). Sometimes the land invasions were spontaneous, even led by farmworkers; sometimes they were organised from outside; sometimes they had no support from the state; sometimes the army and other services were involved. Across Mvurwi, as in other areas of the country, it was hugely varied (Sadomba 2011; Willems 2004; Selby 2006).

In Mvurwi, a number of farms were reserved for the settlement of so-called A2 farmers, while invasions focused elsewhere. Farms that were invaded later became A1 smallholder resettlement areas under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme, which was established *post hoc* to provide a semblance of order (Matondi 2012; Scoones *et al.* 2010). In Mazowe district as a whole, 4,590 A1 farms were initially allocated across 70,686ha, on 107 former large-scale farms.⁶⁹ Most A1 beneficiaries were from adjacent Chiweshe communal areas and were often associated with ancestral ties that were deployed in reclaiming land. Others were residents of Mvurwi town, previously involved in farm labour. Since the initial settlement, there has been a growth in illegal settlement and land rentals in Mvurwi area, mostly involving former farmworkers and urbanites seeking fortunes in tobacco farming.⁷⁰

The A2 farms were larger in size and were aimed at creating a new form of medium-sized commercial farming, while politically accommodating middle class professionals and elites in the land reform (Moyo and Chambati 2013). A process was established to apply for A2 farms, requiring the demonstration of commercial potential and farming skill. In many cases, ways were found round these bureaucratic requirements and patronage relations allowed access (Marongwe 2011). In the end, 52 former large-scale farms were allocated as A2 farming areas, making up 891 farms over 108,452ha in the Mvurwi area.⁷¹ The A2

farmers included a mix of people, with many different backgrounds, from top politicians and security service top brass to a mix of teachers, agricultural extension workers and local business people, mostly establishing farms from 2001–2002 (Shonhe, Scoones and Murimbarimba under revision). Today, there is one indigenous large-scale commercial farm and one agro-estate remaining.⁷²

With the agricultural landscape of Mvurwi massively transformed, following the land reform, commercial agriculture took on a different form. The white-owned, large-scale commercial farming of previous decades had largely disappeared, and with this the well-developed commercial production systems and marketing chains. The national agricultural economy took a big hit as a result. Overall, production across all crops declined, and the industries associated with the former commercial sector; from processing to transporters, input supply and equipment manufacturers (Moyo 2011). With the agrarian economy reconfigured, new markets and investments emerged (Sukume *et al.* 2015). Profits from tobacco production by smallholders, for example, were reinvested in urban property development and new businesses. In 2009, Mvurwi was given ‘town’ status due to its size, estimated to have a population of 10,942 by the 2012 census. With many new businesses – from transport to restaurants and market stalls – and a growing population, Mvurwi was no longer a sleepy white farmer service centre, but a buzzing commercial hub, linked to the new resettlement farms that surrounded it.⁷³ Following the establishment of tobacco floors by contract companies, the tobacco marketing season attracts all forms of trading. Farm inputs traders and maize buyers also set up shops in Mvurwi town to service the farming community.

The loss of land by white farmers, however, sometimes through force and with violence⁷⁴, caused international uproar, led by Britain. Sanctions followed, notionally only targeted at particular individuals in the party-state and military, but in effect they had an impact across the whole economy as aid was focused away from ‘contested areas’ and credit lines were withdrawn. International investors took flight, and the economy plunged into a free-fall. By 2008 hyperinflation had taken hold, and the formal economy had effectively collapsed. Opposition to the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF)-led government grew, and the elections of 2008 became highly contested, with the state meting out brutal violence on opposition supporters. Despite almost certainly losing, President Mugabe claimed victory in the presidential run-offs (Masunungure 2009).

It was an untenable situation, economically and politically. The abandonment of the local currency and the adoption of a multi-currency regime (centred on the US dollar) during 2009 stabilised the economy somewhat, also helped by the establishment of a Government of National Unity (GNU), involving the opposition. The GNU lasted until 2013 and saw a period of relative stability and investment, even if western investors often shied away. This was the period when commercial tobacco production was revived. Starting in the early 2000s, the Chinese, via the state-owned company Tian Ze, began a major programme of investment in tobacco contract farming, combined with rehabilitating R&D facilities (Mukwereza 2015). Initially working with larger A2 farms, the growth in contract farming, where inputs and farm machinery were supplied and markets assured, was massive and opportune.

With the (partial) stabilisation of the economy, and the ability to earn US dollars, other companies began to expand the scope of contract farming to smallholders in the A1 areas, especially. The growth of tobacco production in this period was spectacular, and unexpected, as many doubted that land reform farmers could produce the volume and quality to meet market demand. Only 491 growers produced 1,704,783kg of tobacco in 2007 in Mvurwi, amounting to US\$3,383,690 in value. By 2017, 7,583 growers produced 16,441,784kg valued at US\$48,914,886, driven in particular by contract farming support, now from multiple companies, both local and international (TIMB 2007, 2017).

Two key agricultural corporates trace their emergence to the Mvurwi area – Northern Tobacco and Northern Farming – both subsidiaries of Rift Valley Corporation. According to the Rift Valley Corporation website, the holding company in its present shape ‘...was formally established in 2012 when the Höegh and von Pezold families merged their families’ agricultural interests in Sub-Saharan Africa with a view to capitalizing on the increased scale and financial prowess of an integrated group’.⁷⁵ Northern Tobacco was initially financed by von Pezold’s Forrester Estate business and, after the withdrawal of British American Tobacco (BAT, operating as Export Leaf Tobacco) following land reform, they emerged as a major source of contracting financing, with international support.⁷⁶

The state also offered support in the post-land reform period to bolster production and political support. A series of schemes from the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe offered tractors, equipment and other inputs. Later, the notorious Command Agriculture programme, backed

by the military, was initially aimed at increasing irrigated maize production among larger farmers, but evolved into a wider scheme of patronage. Those able to benefit did well, and were able to boost commercialisation, but such schemes fuelled differentiation within the farming population, with only some able to ‘accumulate from above’ (Mazwi *et al.* 2019).

Meanwhile, in Chiweshe communal area, little had changed since the turn of the millennium. With the collapse of the formal economy for much of this period, reliance on local migration was replaced by remittances from abroad, notably South Africa, but also the UK, as younger people migrated. Our tracking study in Chiweshe identified 55 households who had been part of the government-led study in 1989–1991 mentioned earlier, exploring changes in particular households in the nearly 30 years since. Very few had benefited from the land reform directly, although a few sons had gained land in nearby resettlements, including in the

still-contested invaded parts of Forrester Estate. With a few exceptions (usually as a result of remittance income), few had stepped up to a more commercialised form of agriculture, and nearly everyone (both the original households and their descendants) was simply surviving, often with highly diversified livelihoods.⁷⁷ This included a growing reliance on artisanal mining, which took off in a big way as the economy declined through the 2000s, and again after 2017.⁷⁸ Economic collapse also precipitated a drop in remittances from within Zimbabwe,⁷⁹ and with many losing jobs the direction of migration shifted from urban to rural. As those returning to rural homes sought land there has been a rise in vernacular land sales and land rentals acting to re-congest Chiweshe communal areas after land reform.⁸⁰

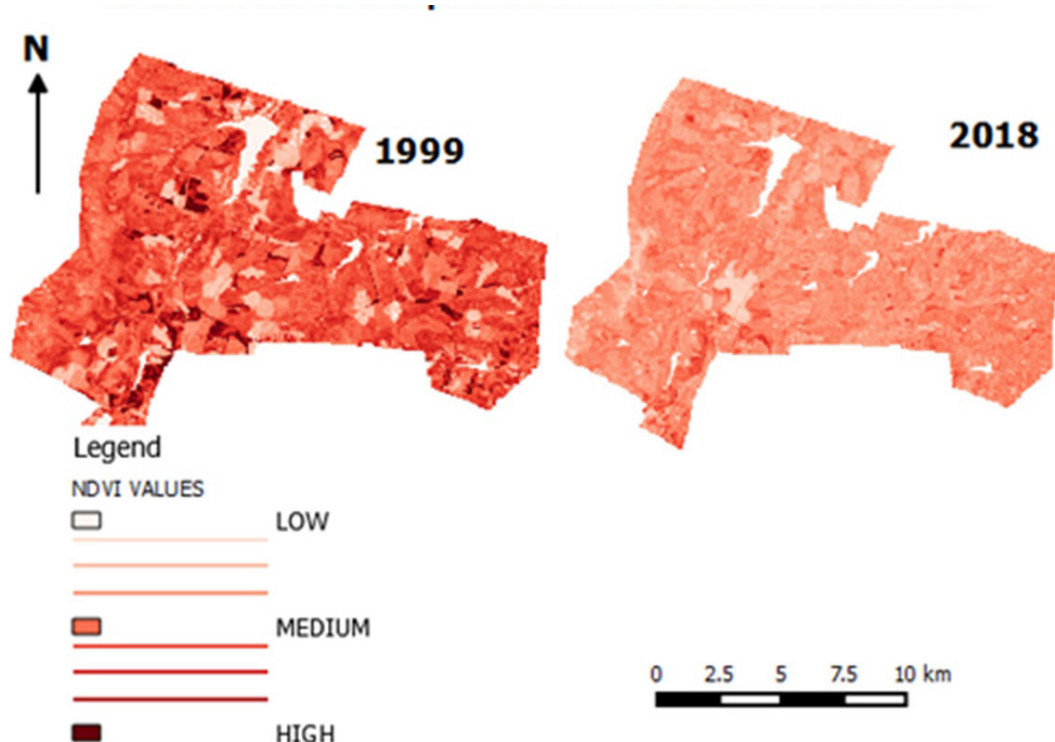
These post-2000 economic and political changes were once again reflected in changing land-use patterns as shown in satellite images of, for example, 1999 and 2018

Table 2. Percentage change in area occupied by each land class in ward 26.

Land class	1999 (ha)	2018 (ha)	% change
Field	4345	6154	41.6
Forest	4119	2306	-44.0
Grass	9520	9514	-0.1
Water	495	518	4.6

Source: APRA study

Figure 3: Difference between NDVI values in 1999 and 2018 in Ward 26.



Source: APRA field study; United States Geological Survey (USGS) (2018).

(Maguranyanga, Shonhe and Scoones forthcoming). Land reform, not surprisingly, resulted in a decrease in tree cover, as fields were cleared by new settlers. The land was now supporting many more people, and the increase in tobacco production following 2000 resulted in widespread clearance of woodland. The pattern reversed, however, in the hyperinflation period of the mid-2000s when production declined, and many A2 farms contracted operations dramatically. In the period from 2009, another change across many wards in the district is visible, especially the land reform areas, when agriculture once again picked up.

As our land-use analysis since the 1980s shows, the environment is not static; it is very much shaped by political-economic conditions, with cyclical shifts in woody cover depending on the intensity and extent of commercial production, particularly that of tobacco which tends to use firewood for curing purposes. Table 2 and Figure 3 illustrate this in detail from a granular study carried out in Ward 26. This reveals a decrease in forest cover from 4,119ha in 1999 to 2,306ha in 2018, a decline of 44%, whilst fields increased by 41.6% (4,345ha to 6,154ha), grass decreased insignificantly by 0.1% and water bodies increased by 4.6%.

New trends emerged following the 2013 elections, which once again returned ZANU-PF to power. However, gross economic mismanagement and expanding corruption by the ruling elite once again incapacitated the economy, and the short period of relative economic stability came to an end. Continued sanctions by Western nations restricted investment flows, and the hope that the Chinese would bail out Zimbabwe were dashed. The opposition movement had been compromised by its involvement in the GNU and ZANU-PF tightened its grip, even while it fractured politically. Rising tensions within the party precipitated a coup in late 2017, which toppled President Mugabe and installed President Emmerson Mnangagwa with military backing, although in practice this resulted in more continuity than change.

In the period from 2016 to today, as the economic and political situation declined, the economy has been in crisis, with currency shortages, rising inflation and lack of investment. There was no respite with the 'new dispensation', confirmed with the elections in 2018, despite the rhetoric of 'austerity' measures and new economic discipline. For commercial agriculture, particularly that which requires credit and finance, this has been a disaster. After a short period from 2009–2013 of limited potential, which saw a number of the A2 farms capitalise and start functioning for the first time, it was back to square one for many, unless an

external source of income could be secured or via patronage connections state support was captured (Shonhe, Scoones and Murimbarimba under revision). Alternatively, joint ventures involving former white commercial farmers, some Chinese, black business persons and A2 farmers have also been relied upon. While smallholders with limited capital or credit needs were able to continue to function, they did so at a lower ebb, assisted for tobacco production with continued contract farming support. Future satellite imagery will no doubt pick up new trends in reforestation in these areas as farms and fields lie fallow again.

WHO ARE ZIMBABWE'S COMMERCIAL FARMERS?

Taking account of this 130-year sweep of history, the answer to the question of who are the commercial farmers is not obvious. The stereotypical image of a commercial farmer is a white man in shorts, with long socks and *veldskoën* shoes, looking sun-tanned and rugged. But this is a crude stereotype: over time there have been many different types of commercial farmer in Mvurwi area.⁸¹ What then is a commercial farm? Put simply, it is one that regularly produces surplus for market, and one where these profits provide for expanded reproduction and accumulation, resulting in on- and off-farm investment (Poulton 2017); as we have seen, there have been many of these too.

At least into the 1930s – and before the implementation of the Land Apportionment Act in earnest – it was Africans who were the commercial farmers. They sold crops and livestock products extensively to the white settler population, as well as local Africans. This may have been in part through exchange, but a money-based commercial economy soon emerged. In addition to selling farm produce, a service economy developed, as they provided transport and sometimes tillage services to newly-settled white farmers. They were at the centre of trading networks stretching to other districts and emerging towns. Of course it was not everyone who was engaged in this way and the ‘big men’ (*hurudzwa*) dominated.

African-led agricultural commercialisation declined dramatically once the ‘reserves’ were created and populations were segregated. The capacity to produce surpluses was seriously curtailed and it was – as was the intention of the colonial government – the white settlers who took over the mantle of ‘commercial farmers’, producing increasing amounts of tobacco and maize. It was in this period that the stereotype described above emerged. These were mostly family farms, established very much in the settler spirit, carved out of the bush through hard work (of course alongside considerable government support), with surpluses providing for the war effort and the colonial enterprise.

Following World War II, and the arrival of war veteran settlers, these white-owned commercial farms really took off; again substantially supported by the colonial state,

and a booming tobacco and maize industry. Despite sanctions from 1965–1979, farming was still profitable, as sanctions-busting was shockingly efficient (Tracey 2009); although in places like Mvurwi the liberation war took its toll, as the area became highly insecure. Meanwhile, African production declined as the reserves became over-populated, and government interventions regulated land-use. Many took up migrant labouring to survive. Indeed, by the late-1950s, there were very few African commercial farmers (such as ‘big men’ or *hurudzwa*) outside the Native Purchase Areas.⁸² This remained the case for much of the following decades, well into Independence, despite a few Africans purchasing large-scale commercial farms after the 1980s. While the image of the white commercial farmer persisted, white-owned, large-scale commercial farming became much more diverse from the 1970s. Consolidation of farms and the emergence of company-owned large estates meant there was increasing differentiation. This pattern accelerated after Independence and especially after structural adjustment, when white agriculture became corporatised and financialised with international agribusiness investment. No longer were commercial farmers always the rugged white family farmer of the past, but were as likely to be in suits sitting around boardroom tables devising complex financial strategies, with businesses stretching across the continent, and not just in agriculture. Following Independence, a few black faces appeared as managers, but the basic operations were almost universally white-owned, and increasingly with international capital.

Following land reform in 2000, things changed. Now mostly without land, the white commercial farmers who remained in the country and in the agricultural sector switched business focus, many now focusing on contract farming, transport businesses, input supply and marketing, moving up the value chain. For some this has proved profitable, although they are no longer ‘farmers’. Others have sought joint ventures or sub-letting arrangements with the new land holders, often on very fragile terms, and have continued to farm, while others have left the sector or have migrated elsewhere.

After land reform, the racial composition of commercial farmers has changed, and it is now Africans, many

on small plots in the A1 schemes, who are the new commercial farmers. In Mvurwi the focus on tobacco has been important in generating surpluses, and links to agribusiness contracting has been essential (Scoones *et al.* 2018b). But there are other crops too: maize of course, but also horticulture crops are important in supplying markets, especially Harare. While the A2 farms have struggled due to a lack of finance, some have graduated to medium-scale commercial farmers, producing surpluses and reinvesting in their farms and other businesses, often benefiting from patronage links with the state. This was especially so in the period of relative economic stability in the years from 2009, and some have done well out of state subsidised support for maize production through 'command agriculture'. The new commercial farmers do not look like the stereotypical image of the past: not only are they black, but they often operate farms in a very different way, with greater diversification, more off-farm activity and, in the case of new medium-scale farmers, sometimes with jobs and homes in town. While men continue to dominate, there are more independent female commercial farmers today, especially if they have inherited land from their husbands. In Chiweshe area, livelihoods have changed a great deal. In the past, remittances from urban centres were high, supporting a peasant-style agriculture, but de-industrialisation after 2000 led to retrenchments and urban to rural migration, shifting livelihoods to informal trading and artisanal mining and beyond farming. Even though maize remains the dominant crop for most households, contract farming of tobacco increased through the 2000s.

There have therefore been many different types of commercial farmer over the last 130 years, and mythical stereotypes have often coloured our interpretations. For example, the new post-land reform (black) commercial farmers (both men and women) have frequently been dismissed as not matching up to their white predecessors. But this narrative plays into many myths about who is and can be a commercial farmer, and indeed dodges the complex history of white commercial farming, which has not always been the paragon of success often assumed, despite massive state subsidy. Commercial agriculture in Zimbabwe therefore has a complex history, with different phases, involving different actors, with different relationships with the land, the state and financing. What do we make of this, and what implications does this have for thinking about pathways to commercialisation in agriculture? These are the questions to which we now turn.

TOWARDS A NON-LINEAR UNDERSTANDING OF AGRICULTURAL CHANGE: FIVE EMERGING THEMES

What can we learn from this reflection on the changes in commercial farming over 130 years? What have been the important drivers across time that have influenced how commercial farming emerges and is sustained? What have been the key moments – recalling our focus on crises, conjunctures and contingencies – that have influenced the pathways of change, as different styles of commercial agriculture, involving different actors, appear and disappear?

Reflecting back on the discussion of different frameworks for understanding agricultural transformation that this paper opened with, the telling of the Mvurwi story from 1890 confirms that a simple, predictable, linear evolution has not occurred. There has not been a predictable form of 'structural transformation', driven either by changing factor prices or shifting incentives nor have changes emerged through a historical dialectic between capital and labour, inevitably resulting in a commercial agriculture centred on capitalist accumulation through surplus extraction. Yes, of course, factor prices have been important – for example, when the costs of labour increase above demand – and the exploitation of labour in commercial agriculture as a route to generating surplus was clearly a feature of the emergence of white commercial agriculture, as we have discussed. But there was much else going on besides.

Without rejecting completely either the neo-classical and institutional economics models of evolutionary change or Marxist perspectives on the struggle between capital and labour, a more nuanced, historically-embedded perspective is required. Here, we turn to a focus on crises, conjunctures and contingencies as defining the unfolding of complex histories. And we highlight how internal and external factors combine, often unpredictably, to result in non-linear, uncertain transformations that belie a simple understanding of progress and modernisation in one, singular direction. Thinking back across the 130 period, and the data we have discussed for Mvurwi, we can identify five major themes that particularly help explain how commercial agriculture has changed.

State investment and subsidy in agriculture

The role of the state has been a recurrent theme, whereby shifting state-farmer alliances have framed the form and level of support offered. Thus, in the early period of colonisation, support to early settlers was crucial as they became established, often under harsh conditions. As the colonial state emerged, the alliance with the commercial farming lobby – and especially the CFU – was central to understanding state politics (Herbst 1990). Major subsidies to white farming continued to flow, resulting in the creation of a highly powerful group, economically and politically. This alliance continued through the liberation war, and gained a military-security dimension as farmers were recruited as reservists. After Independence, political support to white commercial farming continued with the tacit agreement that white farmers did not interfere in national politics. State subsidies declined, but the benefits of 'developing country' status flowed to commercial farming through preferential trade deals and aid programmes. Meanwhile, in this period, the state directed financial and other support to poor, black farmers in the communal areas, cementing the political base that ZANU-PF required to win elections. After 2000, and the break of the tacit political compact with white farmers, the alliance broke down and land reform removed white farmers from the land, if not from heavy involvement in the sector. A new alliance was struck with the party-state: with new land beneficiaries and the military-business-political elite who particularly benefited from the allocation of medium-scale farms. Focused subsidy programmes, loan schemes and contract arrangements such as command agriculture showed the state's support and reinforced the alliance. Thus, the state-farmer alliances – and so subsidies and other support – have shifted from alliances with early settlers, to the core commercial (often corporate) leaders of the CFU, to poorer black communal area farmers, to land reform beneficiaries, both smallholders and elites. The form and focus of these often highly contingent alliances has, as we have seen, made a huge difference to the pathways of commercial agricultural change seen over time.

The politics of markets

Over the last 130 years, farmers have rarely operated under 'free' markets, as frequently assumed by economic models. In all periods, markets have been influenced by state policy, the operation of monopolies, trade links and preferential agreements and the influence of aid and donor policies of different sorts. Bound to the British state through the colonial government until 1965, markets were heavily influenced by colonial policy and the conditions of the colonial power. Whether it was the effects of the depression in the 1930s, the first and second World Wars or policies aimed towards particular export crops, the British economy and its politics loomed large, influencing markets in Rhodesia. The formation of the Rhodesian Federation in the decade from 1953 in turn reconfigured labour markets, resulting in a flow of cheap labour from nearby countries, while war in neighbouring Mozambique in the 1980s resulted in a further flow of labour into agriculture. Labour migration was of course heavily influenced by what was happening south of the Limpopo and the fortunes of mines and farms in South Africa, as affected by sanctions against the apartheid regime, or liberation after 1994. Domestic interventions were also important in influencing prices, and shifting demand and supplies. The Land Apportionment Act implemented from the 1930s meant that labour reserves were created, increasing labour supply to elsewhere in the economy, while destocking and land reorganisation from the early 1950s constrained peasant production, having the same effect. The whole range of subsidies, projects, aid programmes and so on all have had an effect on market functioning, and so choice of crops, the level of inputs supplied and the form of mechanisation adopted. And, of course, land reform since 2000 has had a massive impact, totally reconfiguring the agricultural economy. The sanction regimes imposed by Western countries against Smith's rebel regime from 1965 and the Mugabe/Mnangagwa regimes since 2000 have also hugely affected markets, and the new alliances struck with China in recent years have changed the political economy of market functioning, notably in crops like tobacco. The point, as discussed in the previous theme, is that politics affects markets and *vice versa*, and so we must look to a wider political economy to understand commercialisation, not just the micro-economic features of demand and supply.

Rural-urban connections

Too often when thinking about agricultural commercialisation and agrarian transformation, the focus is narrowly on agriculture and rural change.

As the discussions in this paper have vividly shown, this is a mistake. Links between rural spaces and towns, both near and far, are crucial in affecting flows of labour through migration, the vibrancy of markets and the nature of the service economy that off-farm work links to. The early emergence of Mvurwi as a trading post was important for the establishment of white commercial agriculture, and its consolidation as a service and business centre was linked to the rise of white commercial farming and the growth of labour compounds. The establishment of an industrial sector, and the growth of mines and other farms in other parts of country, resulted in a demand for labour, and the emergence of the labour economy based on circular migration. This had a regional dimension with flows of labour to and from South Africa (and beyond); and these remittances are crucial to commercialisation to this day. The growth of government, with jobs in small centres such as Mvurwi, was important too, as civil service jobs became part of people's livelihood portfolios. Movement between rural and urban sites is crucial and the expansion of the road infrastructure, as we have discussed, was an important facilitator of migration, as has been more recently the ability to easily transfer money electronically between distant sites. Flows of migration and the nature of urban engagement also has an age and gender dimension, affecting household demographic cycles and gender relations, and so investment patterns in agriculture. But the flow of migration is not obvious. A wave of de-industrialisation after 2000, as well as Operation Murambatsvina targeting the informal sector in 2005, resulted in urban to rural migration, as was evident in Chiweshe and some A1 farms,⁸³ with agriculture and artisanal mining becoming essential for livelihoods. Thus, a non-linear path embedded in crises, conjunctures and contingencies is observed. Urban and infrastructure policy, along with policies that help or hinder migration, can therefore be vitally important in fashioning pathways to commercialisation in agriculture, and so need to be part of the analysis, often linked to particular moments – the opening of a new road, the establishment of a new industry or the change in labour demand as political-economic conditions shift.

Agricultural technologies

Technology has been centrally important in shaping commercialisation pathways, again often associated with key moments. Whether this was the release of new crop varieties (the most iconic being SR52 hybrid maize), the development of locally-manufactured tobacco curing barns (notably the rocket barn that reduced fuelwood consumption), the arrival of motorised

transport and later the importation of small one-tonne trucks from China, or the widespread availability of functioning mobile phones for communication and money exchange, all such technological innovations and their dissemination have shifted the terms of agricultural commercialisation. They have increased efficiencies and reduced costs and allowed those previously excluded to become involved. They may have started out in a limited way – only a few white farmers benefited initially from SR52, for example – but soon the adaptation and spread of technologies, embedding in social, economic and political contexts have resulted in major changes. The new production or marketing dynamics may in turn shift social relations, with younger people, women or different racial groups being able to make use of technologies. Technologies are far from neutral therefore and they do not diffuse in a predictable way, but they can result in quite sudden shifts in production or marketing, with major consequences for agricultural commercialisation, and the social and political relations that underpin them.

Environmental change

For commercial agriculture in Mvurwi, environmental conditions are clearly vital, whether in relation to soil fertility, water availability or the harvesting of wood for tobacco curing. As our satellite imagery analysis from 1984 to 2018 shows, environmental conditions, as reflected in land cover patterns and the density of tree and bush cover, have varied, together with economic and political conditions, seeing periods of increasing woody cover and then declines as extensive crop production of maize and tobacco waxes and wanes. Key events have defined shifts in patterns of agricultural production and marketing. Droughts – whether that of 1947, 1967, 1982–1984, 1987, 1991–1992 or the sustained periods in recent years – have had major impacts on the agricultural economy, with farmers shifting crops, intensifying through investing in irrigation and so on. A major drought event can be the financial ruin of a commercial farmer if assets are wiped out and no income is realised. Environmental disasters usually combine with other conditions, thus heightening impact. The recent droughts have been so hard-felt, not because the rainfall is any less than in previous years, but because the wider economy is in such a dire state which means that people are more vulnerable to shocks. While climate modelling suggests that extreme weather events are likely to increase in frequency and rainfall is likely to become more variable, what exactly will happen remains uncertain. This means that pathways of commercialisation will be uncertain, contingent and the result of conjunctures of events.

These five themes have been important throughout the last 130 years in influencing the form and direction of agricultural commercialisation. As discussion of each has shown, it is often interactions between drivers that are important; and when these combine in particular moments, influenced by politics, economy, technology and environment in varying configurations, then changes happen. Such changes may emerge either from major moments of dramatic change – the imposition of external sanctions, the breaking out of war, land invasions or a major drought, for example – or they may result from the contingent conjuncture of lesser effects – a low rainfall year combined with poor market conditions and restrictions of migration, for example. These combinations of factors may affect only certain people (those able to purchase a new technology or form of transport, and may be highly age and gender specific) and places (those areas that have the capacity to irrigate or are targeted by state intervention), so impacts may be patchy. Such crises, conjunctures and contingencies may emerge from wider political-economic influences through the state or wider geopolitics, through private initiatives and innovation processes, or through uncertain environmental conditions, or they may be influenced by particular individuals and initiatives and be quite localised (someone with a new approach to water management, for example).

In other words, when thinking about pathways of commercialisation we must link political, economic, social, technological and environmental analysis with a focus on time (and so moments of crisis and contingent, conjunctures of events), space (connecting sites, between the 'reserves' and white farming areas and rural and urban locations), the developed and the periphery and scale (from the international to the very local, along global commodity circuits; from geopolitics to micro-politics) and farmers' agency within the input and output markets; and all this situated within an appreciation of changing political economies and social relations. Simple, reductive analyses that attempt to predict change according to linear models are simply inadequate, and a much richer analysis is required. Such insights from history point to some important implications for thinking about agricultural commercialisation.

CONCLUSION

Agricultural intensification has been neither inevitable nor continuous in African farming systems. In some areas, intensification was halted or reversed by changing environmental or political and economic conditions; in others, it has occurred not as an adaptive response to population growth or commercialization, but in the face of growing labour shortages and declining commercial activity. Such cases underscore the importance of studying farming as a dynamic social process. As farmers contend with social as well as environmental conditions, changes occur not only in what is produced and how much, but also in when work is done and by whom. (Berry 1993:189)

What Berry describes in *No Condition is Permanent* for African farming as a whole, is certainly true for the Mvurwi farming area over the past 130 years. There has been no linear transformation towards a particular vision of progress. There have been many types of commercial farming and indeed commercial farmer. There have been periods of change in one direction, involving a particular configuration of actors and social-economic-political conditions, then a reversal. It is indeed 'a dynamic social process', as Berry explains.

While long-term drivers, such as demographic shifts, changes in rural labour availability or environmental change have certainly been important, as we have discussed, change can be best explained in relation to social and political processes, which can be quite uncertain and contingent. As we have shown, sometimes factors combine in a moment of crisis, radically reconfiguring the agrarian political economy; sometimes changes happens less dramatically, as different factors converge, but nevertheless new pathways of change are generated.

A focus on uncertain, unpredictable, contingent dynamics can be quite unsettling for those who expect a neat theory, and a predictable pattern of transformation that can be influenced by policy or can be assumed to unfold through the well-understood laws of history. The flurry of recent literature on the structural

transformation of African agriculture sometimes often suggests that getting prices and institutions right will result in the expansion of intensified commercial agriculture, with the predictable disappearance of inefficient peasant production systems. This may more be wishful thinking based on an ideological commitment to simplistic models than proper attention to the empirical complexities of real histories on the ground.

Historical reflections, such as the one attempted in this paper, suggest that things are much more complex. An embracing of non-linearity, uncertainty and contingency can go some way to explain dynamic change; accepting this as central, not a diversion from a predicted pattern. From our study, what does emerge is the multiplicity of forms and styles of commercial agriculture in Zimbabwe, and how these emerge or disappear very much in relation to social dynamics and political-economic-environmental shifts. There is no one 'ideal type' or singular trajectory; instead conditions – some controllable through policy, although many not – affect what form of commercialisation emerges.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Formerly spelt, Mazoe. This paper uses both spellings depending on the period.
- 2 Landsat 5 (Thematic Mapper), Landsat 8 (Operational Land Imager), both with a spatial resolution of 30m, and Landsat 5 (Multi Spectral Scanner), with a spatial resolution of 60m. Landsat satellites' resolution characteristics (temporal, spatial and spectral) and other technical specifications make it suitable for Land use land cover detection for larger areas (Mensah, Wapaburda, and Hammond 2017). The following imagery at five-year intervals was used for the study: 1984, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2018. All imagery used had a cloud cover of less than 5%. Landsat data was used because of its uniqueness in temporal land cover coverage. It is also the longest running, uninterrupted Earth observation programme (Wulder *et al.* 2016)
- 3 The First Rand was in the Witwatersrand area around Johannesburg in South Africa, where huge gold deposits were discovered. Cecil Rhodes and the British South Africa Company hoped for a Second Rand further north.
- 4 Colonial legislation continued to emphasise mining over agriculture, resulting in a number of claims in what became European farm land throughout Mvurwi. While not as extensive as in nearby areas such as Mazowe, Shamva, Guruve, Raffingora and Mutorashanga, the Mvurwi area's deposits of chromite and gold in particular are much valued. See, <http://www.mines.gov.zw/provincial-offices/mashonaland-central> and <https://www.mindat.org/feature-884798.html>, for a list of mines in the region.
- 5 The traveller Karl Mauch documented life in this area in the 1870s, commenting also on the mineral riches of the region (Mauch 1969).
- 6 See, Umvukwes I.C.A. Minutes of the first meeting of the Umvukwe Ranchers and Farmers Association (National archives, 1922, (NAZ, GEN/TOW-P); also S 481/156: Concession Umvukwes Road. A Letter By The Umvukwe Farmers And Tobacco Growers' Association, 28 June 1927, which reports on the huge volume of tobacco being produced and transported on the road leading to 27 farms.
- 7 The boundaries of Chiweshe changed over the years, first combined with Negomo reserve, and then extended to 286,335 acres as other areas, such as Chiwardiza reserve, which were surrounded European areas, were abolished. The European area within Mazoe district was nearly 1.5 million acres (Palmer 1977: 262, 182).
- 8 S 2076: Annual Reports, 1920 - Annual Report of NC, Mazoe For The Year Ended 31st December 1920. Labour hiring continued to increase, with 21,500 reported employed during 1927 (a bumper cropping year), only 4,000 of whom were 'indigenous' (S 235/505).
- 9 S235/507: Annual Reports, District NC, 1929. See Johnson (1992) for a discussion of coerced African labour in this period.
- 10 S 235/514 Vol 1 - Mazoe District: Report B of The Native Commissioner For The Year Ended 31st December 1935.
- 11 S 1563, Chief Native Commissioner, 1938 Vol 1, Report Of The Native Commissioner For The Mazoe District: Year Ended The 31st December 1938
- 12 *The Rhodesia Herald*, 18 June 1926.
- 13 Renamed the Tobacco Industry Marketing Board in 1997, see: <https://www.timb.co.zw/about-us/history>
- 14 Each bag weighed 200 lbs, equivalent to 90.72 kg.
- 15 S 235/505 – District Annual Reports, Report of The Native Commissioner, Mazoe For the year 1927. See also Bessant and Muringai (1993).
- 16 The Maize Control Acts aimed at protecting European producers, however severely restricted the flexibility of sales from the reserves. As the Mazoe NC reported in 1934, direct sales to white farmers in the district and to missionaries (notably the Howard Institute) was possible, and the NC facilitated this through his office. The Act, he reports, was 'cordially detested' by the Natives (S 1563 - Report Of The Native Commissioner For The Mazoe District For The Year Ended 31st December 1934). In 1940 it was amended to

- restrict sales further, giving a monopoly to traders, and eliminating options of purchase through the Native Department. This has the result of halving prices paid, and there was much discontent as maize production continued to rise (with 150,000 bags of grain produced in Chiweshe reserve alone, despite it being a poor season due to excessive rain) S 1563 - Mazowe District: Report Of The Native Commissioner, Mazowe District, For The Year Ended 31st December, 1940.
- 17 S235/515, Vol 1 Report of The Native Commissioner, Mazoe District For The Year Ended 31st December 1936.
 - 18 S 1563: Report of The Native Commissioner, Mazowe District, For The Year Ended 31st December, 1940.
 - 19 For further reading on the impact of the Second World War on African economies in Zimbabwe, see: Mutimbanyoka (2018); Tembo (2015); Munhande (2005); Samasuwo (2003); Johnson (2000); Killingray and Rathbone (1986).
 - 20 Interview, farm manager, Forrester Estate, January 2020.
 - 21 S-432 912/9 Natural Resources Commission Report, 1939.
 - 22 The missionary extensionist E.D. Alvord started work in 1926, preaching the 'Gospel of the plow' (Kramer 1997; Alvord 1950) and was employed by the government to provide demonstration to native farmers. In 1927, the NC of Mazoe noted that two demonstrators were sent from Domboshawa. One quickly left, while the other appeared to get on with the 'natives', but was withdrawn in 1929. The NC commented though that the interest was not high in soil improvement and rotation, as the natives produced large amounts with very little input on extensive areas. In 1929 the NC noted that 'despite considerable pressure', only a few were manuring. There were 12 grade bulls in the native reserves of Mazoe by 1927 although three died that year. The NC commented that some interest was shown, but it was indigenous cattle that continued to expand in numbers. In 1944, the NC complained about the 'mania for maize' being shown, as natives produced large amounts continuously: 'An effort was being made to make them rotate their crops for the better of the soil but it was very difficult to persuade them to do so. They were so anxious to get a surplus crop of maize to sell, that the necessity of growing other crops in rotation in order to preserve the productivity of the soil was lost on them'. (S-1563).
 - 23 For example, skewed pricing support in maize, preferential access to loans on three-year repayment moratorium, exclusionary support in tobacco production in the 1930s, infrastructural support and subsidised land preparation and farming inputs (Hanlon, Manjengwa, and Smart 2012).
 - 24 Data from Annual Reports on European agricultural production (CSO, various dates).
 - 25 European owned cattle in Mazoe district were relatively stable, averaging 54,569 between 1946 and 1951; although into the 1960s numbers declined as cropping was increased (CSO reports, various dates).
 - 26 S 1563: Native Commissioner's Annual Reports, 1944 Report Of The Native Commissioner Mazoe District For The Year Ending 31st December 1944.
 - 27 SR52 (Southern Rhodesia 1952) resulted in major increases in productivity of the 'maize belt', including Mazowe/Mvurwi. By 1964–1965, in the Umvukwes ICA, all 75 farms were growing hybrid maize, with a yield of 21.3 bags (of 200lbs) per hectare (and 7.5 bags/acre for non-hybrids), up from 11.4 bags per hectare in 1955–1956 and 7.4 bags per hectare in 1951–1952 (and 6.8 for non-hybrid maize), among 94 growers in a then larger Umvukwes ICA area (ICA reports, CSO, various dates).
 - 28 The Matabeleland Farmers Union, the Rhodesia Agricultural Union and the Rhodesian Tobacco Association, were amalgamated to form the Rhodesian National Farmers Union in 1942. The RNFU was renamed the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) in 1979 (Selby 2006).
 - 29 ICAs were an important vehicle for the transformation of white farms in settler farming districts (Maravanika 2014). The Tobacco Research Board, with three research stations established after 1950, was created following the Tobacco Research Acts of 1936 and 1938, and was nearly two-thirds paid for by a levy on tobacco sales by the RTA (Cole and Cole 2006). The Tobacco Marketing Board was founded in 1936 through the Tobacco Marketing and Levy Act, with revenues raised through sales on the auction floors.
 - 30 By 1951, there were 259 dams built in the Umvukwes ICA area for example. Good rainfall meant year-round irrigation was limited, amounting to only 220 acres by 1965, 0.8% of cropped area (CSO ICA reports, 1951, 1965).
 - 31 Prime Minister Huggins resolved to exclude black ex-servicemen in the resettlement scheme initiated in 1943 (Hanlon, Manjengwa and Smart 2012).
 - 32 ICA report, CSO (1956).
 - 33 Under the Master and Servants Act 1901 and the Private Location Ordinance 1908, natives were heavily taxed for living on 'private' land. As early as 1927, the NC of Mazoe was complaining about the over-pop-

- ulation of the reserves, and the need to restrict land sizes, especially of those richer farmers wanting to extend their land areas (S 235/505 – District Annual Reports Report of the Native Commissioner, Mazoe for the year 1927).
- 34 S 235/505: District Annual Reports: report of the Native Commissioner, Mazoe for the year 1927.
- 35 S 1563: Chief Native Commissioner, 1934-1936.
- 36 S1618: Quarterly Report of the Native Commissioner, Mazoe, For The Quarter Ended 30th September, 1951.
- 37 *Op. cit.*
- 38 S 481/156: Concession Umvukwes Road: a letter by the Umvukwe Farmers and Tobacco Growers' Association, 28 June 1927.
- 39 Interview with A1 farmer, JP, 17 July 2019, Mvurwi.
- 40 In the Umvukwes by 1952, 196 European men, 2,321 local African males and 4,631 foreigners were employed on European farms, while in 1956 222 European males and 7,669 African were employed (CSO 1952, 1956).
- 41 The post-World War II period from 1945 experienced a boost in farming and growth in agrarian capital leading heightened land dispossession of blacks (FGD, Chiweshe, February, 2020). See also *Fifth Report on the Agricultural and Pastoral Production of European Farmers, 1950-1*. Salisbury: Central Statistics Office
- 42 NAZ S/NA 955 U 6: Umvukwes I.C.A. Newsletter No. 6 of 1970 Report on a Survey of the Farming Situation In The Umvukwes I.C.A. covering the period 1964 to 1970 inclusive.
- 43 CSO Annual statistical reports Area production per province and crop, 1966.
- 44 The Tobacco Industry Board was converted into a sanction-busting Tobacco Corporation responsible for ensuring its continued production and selling during the sanctions period. Overall, production fell from 100,000ha to 50,000ha and export earnings fell from US\$75 million to between US\$25 and US\$35 million per year, from 1965 to 1980 (Mbangwa, 1991: 135-158).
- 45 The CFU assumed significant influence over government policy, including during the Lancaster House conference in 1979 (Norman 2018; Selby 2006)
- 46 Before the farm was acquired by Lord Forrester in 1933, it had previously been the property of Lord Verulam after an initial purchase of 30,000 acres from Meikel and Salter in 1926. Early acquisitions from the British South Africa Company (BSAC) were often speculative, with limited production.
- 47 According to an informant at Forrester Estate, some of the British aristocracy were later to acquire concessionary business opportunities in return for tacit support they had offered in the granting of the Royal Charter to Rhodes.
- 48 Interview with elderly key informant currently working for Agritex, January 2020.
- 49 Interview with elderly key informant currently working for Agritex, January 2020.
- 50 The GMB depot in Mvurwi started operating in 1976.
- 51 <http://www.blackfordby.co.zw/>
- 52 Led by Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) forces and Rex Nhongo (Solomon Mujuru), the Altena farm attack signalled the beginning of the war proper, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attack_on_Altena_Farm.
- 53 Tribal Trust Lands are the former reserves created following the enactment of the Land Apportionment Act of 1930.
- 54 The first PV was established in 1974 at Bare in northern Chiweshe, https://www.thepatriot.co.zw/old_posts/protected-villages-where-it-all-began/m.
- 55 With the villagers confined in PVs, some of their cattle was confiscated for slaughter to feed Rhodesian soldiers from 1974 onwards, FGD, 15 February 2020.
- 56 By 1990, 162,000 households were resettled in 3 million ha being distributed.
- 57 The Farm Management Research Section of the Economics and Markets Branch of the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement produced farm management data for communal area farm units over three years, including in Chiweshe; see MLARR (1991).
- 58 The Annual Report of Farm Management Data for Communal Farm Units 1990-91 farming seasons.
- 59 Elderly resident, Mvurwi, interview January 2020.
- 60 LSCF surveys, CSO Annual statistical reports Area production per province and crop, 1978 and 1998.
- 61 Interview, farmer, Forrester Estate, 10 February 2017 (Mangetout pea production).
- 62 Interview, farmer, Forrester Estate, 10 February 2017.

- 63 These included the Forrester and Whaddon Chase estates, for example.
- 64 Senior official, CFU, interview, Harare, January 2020.
- 65 A vegetation index is a quantitative measure of vegetative vigor (Tucker, 1979). The NDVI, provides a standardised method of comparing vegetation greenness between satellite images (Justice *et al.* 1985). NDVI values can range from -1.0 to 1.0 (Tucker, 1979) in which the values less than zero during the growing season indicate no vegetation cover, such as bare earth, desert, cloud, water body, and snow; while values more than zero in the growing season describe available vegetation cover (Choubin *et al.* 2019).
- 66 As land was so concentrated, and widely underutilised, Moyo (1998) pointed out that the government could acquire 60% of the proposed 5 million ha from less than 300 owners, or 3 million ha from only 10 companies and 100 farmers.
- 67 Since 1991, the government had to comply with strict IMF requirements on government spending. The pay-outs to liberation war veterans who had been agitating for compensation, as they were suffering the consequences of economic reform with the rest of the population, ran against the agreed conditions for loan payments.
- 68 There is on-going court action over the contested areas (Leary 2017).
- 69 Mazowe land distribution data from the Ministry of Lands database, 2017.
- 70 A1 APRA survey, FGDs and in-depth follow up interviews, 2018–2020.
- 71 Mazowe land distribution, Ministry of Lands, 2017.
- 72 The indigenous farm was bought just before the land reform by black business mogul while the estate was protected under the Bilateral Investment and Protection Agreement, signed between German and Zimbabwe, even though a section of the farm was still repossessed.
- 73 See Scoones (2016a) and Chigumira (2018) and interview with the Mvurwi town clerk and interviews with resettled farms, January 2020.
- 74 In Mvurwi, interviews FGD at Hariana farm, February 2020
- 75 See, <http://www.riftvalley.com/>.
- 76 Some allege that BAT remained involved, but due to sanctions their business links remained covert. As C.G. Tracey (2009) outlines in his biography, these arrangements built on long-standing business networks, whereby before and after 1980, the white farming community formed large agricultural corporates with an intricate web of subsidiaries stretching across almost the entire value chain for tobacco production.
- 77 Personal interview with KM, Chiweshe communal area from APRA Zimbabwe Tracking Study, April 2018.
- 78 Farmers from Chiweshe and many of the A1 areas joined artisanal miners from further afield as alluvial gold was panned or abandoned mines were exploited. State authorities tried to clamp down, resulting in conflict and extensive arrests (Razemba 2020).
- 79 Due to land reform, the white farms were no longer a source of employment, local mines closed also, along with many urban businesses (IRIN News 2005).
- 80 Increasing population pressure has also resulted in deforestation and settling in mountains in Chiweshe communal areas, FGD, February 2020.
- 81 See Kenrick (2016), Tagwirei and Kock (2016), McDermott-Hughes (2010) and Hodder-Williams (1983) for discussions of ‘white’ farming and identity.
- 82 Established following the Land Apportionment Act, these areas aimed to create a black yeoman class of farmer. However, many struggled due to inheritance disputes and lack of investment (Scoones *et al.* 2018a). There were no purchase areas in Mazowe district, however.
- 83 Tracker study, personal interview in Chiweshe, Ward 3, March 2019.

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