PREPARING TO NEGOTIATE THE LAND QUESTION

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The 'land question', which has long occupied the minds of South Africans and their supporters or critics, has returned to prominence among the issues central to the transformation of South African society. Diverse reasons account for this renewed interest in the land question: undoubtedly the most significant is the apparent prospect of the end of apartheid. At last, it has seemed, the possibility of apartheid coming to an end invites creative thought on the shaping of a new South African society, in which some redistribution, reform or nationalisation of land is often assumed to be likely. But other reasons for the current fascination with land reform exist too. Zimbabwe's independence and programmes of agrarian-cum-land reform provide intriguing food for thought, coming as they do in a society perhaps more similar to South Africa than any other. The supposed 'independence' of four bantustans, and the existence of extensive bureaucracies in the others, has encouraged a great deal of debate concerning land tenure and land reform inside South Africa. As Essy Letsoalo (1987) points out, where that debate is purely concerned with 'land reform' inside the bantustans, it cannot address the real issues involved in the South African land question. But more broadly, the search for strategy against apartheid has also encouraged some rural organising activity, with an inevitable overspill into consideration of future possibilities.

Inside South Africa, the reform rhetoric and to some extent actions of the Nationalist Party government have also encouraged discussion of land reform in the sense of removing existing discriminatory legislation affecting land. Just as the Botha government suspended significant parts of the legislation (as opposed to the material constraints) affecting control of movement, so some hope that it will also be persuaded to remove the Land Acts. Thus even the Johannesburg *Sunday Times* carries articles calling for their repeal (cf Brian Pottinger, 'At last - can black agriculture put the wasted, barren years behind it?', *Sunday Times*, 18.05.86). Meanwhile the Urban Foundation's role as 'consultants' to the Private Sector Council on Urbanisation includes consideration, and no doubt lobbying, given to the repeal of the 1913 Land Act (cf. De Klerk, 1985/6). Like so much other rhetoric, the focus of these diverse pillars of the South African establishment tends to fall on the statutory aspects of the land question. Other supports of the existing,

oppressive agrarian system tend to escape their attention.

South African land reform discussion hinges on apartheid for at least two reasons. One, racist state allocation of land use and ownership, and similarly state contributions to accumulation, have been central to the construction and maintenance of apartheid; two, the notion of 'post-apartheid' society usually involves a sense of reconstruction without the limits imposed by apartheid. Unfortunately this focus on apartheid proceeds without much attention falling on just what it would mean to end apartheid in rural South Africa. If organisations of the oppressed are to contribute significantly not only to the ending of apartheid's effects on the land question but to overcoming them, the specific necessities and the implications of apartheid's demise need more creative investigation. Among the intentions of this paper is an attempt to indicate that future land reform will require analysis of far more complex questions than those suggested by some of the literature to date. In particular, those questions include the role of various kinds of organisations in shaping political strategies and agrarian policies, now and in the future. The present climate of negotiation politics only heightens the urgency of examining such complex issues.

In the flush of enthusiasm over the apparent prospect of the end of apartheid which characterised the period in which the currently dominant interpretations of the land reform question were written - 1986 being the central date - most authors assumed implicitly that the end of apartheid would mean the ascendancy of a radically different regime. That regime would possess the freedom to determine the lines of its policy in every area, land reform in particular, and policy proposals were thus articulated for this dominant scenario.

More recently, the altered political environment at home and abroad has brought about a different emphasis in policy thinking, implicitly based on the prognosis that the ending of apartheid seems unlikely to parallel decolonisation. Rather than an abrupt disjuncture, a negotiated end to apartheid appears possible if not probable; a stage reasonably likely to be followed by at least some extended period in which post-apartheid governments will grapple with policy issues including the land question without the freedom to inscribe an entirely new book.

In this environment various think-tanks in South Africa have begun a relatively intensive process of preparation, not so much of abstract policy proposals for post-apartheid government, but rather of positions for lobbying and, indeed, negotiation. In much current public debate over negotiation, the assumption appears to rule that constitutional issues will form not merely the primary but the sole set of concerns subjected to negotiation. No doubt, implicitly, from this assumption it follows that policy issues are to be

left to whatever the post- negotiation state or policy formation process makes of them. But, for several reasons, such an assumption may prove misleading and even dangerous for would-be participants in the shaping of policy in post-apartheid South Africa.

In the first place, the pressures which surround the constitutional future of the country have a great deal to do with establishing a new and more legitimate process of deciding how resources are to be allocated. No negotiations over such processes could conceivably take place in abstraction from concrete considerations of what the resources of the country are, what they could be under different scenarios both internal and international, and how their distribution affects political activity. But ill-prepared participants in negotiations can witness results - even agreements - which may contradict their intentions. The Lancaster House limitations on uncompensated expropriation of land in Zimbabwe provide a good (or bad) example of the results of such elements in negotiation.

Secondly, some evidence exists that powerful big business actors not only envisage a less state-centred process of policy formation in post-apartheid circumstances, but have actively engaged in seeking to promote such a model. In the papers edited by Berger and Godsell (1988) which report the 'South Africa beyond apartheid'[1] project, one detects a certain optimism that 'incrementalists' will succeed not only in contributing to the ending of apartheid through successful 'competition in a marketplace of ideas and strategies' but that they will continue to shape state policy through similar processes long after the apartheid system as such is replaced. The very creation of a well-funded institution such as the Centre for Policy Studies attached to the Business School at the University of the Witwatersrand indicates that some corporate bodies see 'policy' as something not necessarily right or wrong but rather as 'more- or-less acceptable' to various interests at specific points in time'; something 'over which compromise is not only inevitable, but desirable' (Lee, 1988: 2, 10). In such a view, the present state has become more amenable to a variety of external policy pressures, and it would be 'desirable' that - whatever the specific form of the constitution - the future state should be so too. Negotiation, therefore, can be construed as a process which will not only continue well beyond constitutional issues, but will - perhaps already does - involve more material concerns from the very beginning.

Thus for oppositional forces to focus solely on constitutional concerns as matters for negotiation would be short sighted, just as to ignore the spaces created in the present 'climate of negotiation' would be foolish (Phillips and Coleman, 1989). This conclusion implies that oppositional forces need to concern themselves actively with policy studies in a great variety of material

areas. The content of those policy studies needs to extend from the present, and not to be restricted to a 'post- apartheid future', not least because other powerful actors are already engaging in such strategies. The environment in which oppositional forces enter into policy studies is already well- populated by government- and private business sector-sponsored policy studies activity, some of which directly concerns the land question.

From the point of view of non-government, non-big business organisations, it may be suggested that policy studies do need to produce idealised versions of post-apartheid policies, for the organising value such visionary proposals hold (Buch and De Beer, 1989). But it may be suggested that they should not be limited to that terrain, for they can have at least three other purposes:

- to organise information and ideas for immediate use in the formulation of negotiating positions and pressuring tactics both locally and nationally;
- to undertake research which can help organisations prepare for the more open policy formation process which may follow the negotiated end of major features of the current system, and which may indeed in some respects already be developing; and
- to provide the well-grounded base for participation in negotiation on constitutional issues in such a way that the fundamental questions of creation and distribution of wealth are constantly related to political proposals and counter-proposals in as detailed a fashion as possible.

Issues surrounding ownership of, control over and access to land both for residential and rural-productive purposes have not yet been placed in the context sketched above, at least by oppositional forces. Other forces may, however, be moving in that direction. Numbers of institutions now exist to conduct policy studies which could readily include land-related issues, such as UCT's Institute for Policy Research and the Centre for Policy Studies at Wits. Among those institutions which view the land question as a matter of some importance might be mentioned the research effort of the Urban Foundation (especially on behalf of the so-called Private Sector Council on Urbanisation), and the policy and rural units of the Development Bank. While initial efforts in many of these institutions look very much like 'proposals for future policy' (cf Private Sector Council, 1988), increasingly their focus has turned in the direction of preparation for the period of negotiation which, most assume, is now on the point of commencement (cf Schlemmer et al, 1989).

From that perspective, the period of pre-negotiation is drawing to a close (cf Giliomee in *Sunday Times*, 08.10.89), to be succeeded by a phase of developing flexible positions for negotiation. Schlemmer (Director of the CPS) and Giliomee (closely associated with several think-tanks) state that view forcefully by placing their recent book titled *From Apartheid to Nation*

Building 'in the context of negotiations' (Giliomee and Schlemmer, 1989: ix). Research on (ie, preparation for) negotiation is explicitly said to be the 'more important' activity of, say, the Centre for Policy Studies (cf preface to Schlemmer and Giliomee (eds) 1989).

So far, and with the exception of Private Sector Council on Urbanisation, such think tanks have had little to say on the land question *per se*. But others have noted that it is an issue which can (should?) come under the scrutiny of establishment policy studies (Schlemmer et al, 1989: 168-9). At present some of the agencies referred to above, and possibly others, are continuing to develop their research and thinking with respect to the forthcoming period of negotiation. In particular, it bears repetition that the Development Bank now has an expanding and able staff of agricultural economists who in large part concern themselves with policy questions for the short and long term future; and the Urban Foundation continues, albeit at a lower level than a few years ago, activity in the same area.

Against this background, it seems reasonably urgent for likely parties to negotiations on South Africa's political and economic future to prepare in depth not only their preferred visions of land reform, but the information, background, and analysis required to understand, to support, and to criticise a variety of alternatives. The present short paper does not pretend to accomplish this task, but it will have succeeded in its intention if it contributes, however marginally, to the preparedness of opposition movements (especially those representing rural people) in the negotiation of the land question.

To that end, the paper proceeds in sections which:

- review the positions on land reform which have been adopted by various parties in the late eighties.
- consider, on the basis of limited research, what oppositional organisations of various kinds do and do not know and think about land issues.
- examine a variety of areas in which research and analytical thinking seem to be prerequisites for successful participation in negotiation.

Interestingly, many commentators on the future of South Africa have simply assumed that land reform involving a measure of actual redistribution (possibly including nationalisation) both will be required and will occur in a future South Africa. For example, and at an opposite pole ideologically from the Urban Foundation, Colin Stoneman and John Suckling (1987: 537) suggest one component of 'rural redistribution' as 'the movement of displaced non-whites to white rural South Africa with all the implications for land ownership and the form it should take, compensation (if any) ... etc'. Writing surely from a different perspective, Heribert Adam puts forward the idea that a new government after apartheid will be faced with a few basic

necessities ... one of which will be redistribution of land (UCT seminar paper, May 1987). Hindson (1987: 598) believes that while increasing 'agricultural productivity within the bantustans is likely to reduce ... the scope for local employment', in 'contrast there may be considerable scope for reabsorption of African cultivators in agricultural areas presently owned by whites'. Of course the Freedom Charter of 1955 called for the redivision of the land 'among those who work it'. The meaning of the phrase might include both Hindson's notion of resettlement (perhaps necessitated by forced resettlement from 'areas presently owned by whites' over the past three decades) and the more obvious division of the land among all South Africans, black and white. By contrast, while Krikler argues that the redivision of the land *literally* into the hands of a new small holding class would be a political obstacle to socialism in a future South Africa, he does not explicitly recognise any economic problems with the approach.

A useful review of academic debates on the land question appears in a recent thesis by Saunders (1989). We may summarise some of the main dimensions of debate as follows.

Traditional or freehold tenure?

The portion of the debate on which most printing ink has been expended is the clash between proponents of freehold tenure as the answer to the low agricultural production of the reserves, low fulltime employment in agriculture, underuse of land, etc, and the adherents of various other positions - especially the supporters of 'traditional tenure'. This debate has been thoroughly aired in the recent collection edited by Cross and Haines (1988). It tends to restrict discussion of the land question to the bantustans, which ignores the fact that the bulk of agricultural work by black South Africans takes place outside those areas. In various ways authors such as Cross and Letsoalo argue that African tenure systems, freed of the strictures of bantustan politics, can contribute to overcoming problems in rural areas which freehold tenure would tend to exacerbate. Such authors note that the simple removal of the land acts under present circumstances would facilitate the undermining of traditional tenure.

Ownership or tenancy?

Outside the bantustans, the removal of the land acts would open the countryside to occupation by black people. The question at issue becomes one of the tenurial relations under which rural residents would occupy and use the land. In the absence of substantial state subsidies or nationalisation, most people would be forced to enter into tenancy relations with owners - and given the high prices of land, rent would be most likely to be paid in

labour rather than money. Indeed, the Private Sector Council advocates a widespread return to labour tenancy. While there has not been much academic debate on this topic, perhaps in part because of the Private Sector Council's (Urban Foundation's) secrecy policies, the issue immediately opened by such proposals has to do with the amount of land purchase and/or nationalisation which the state might undertake or afford.

It should be noted that 'reform' has already tended in some ways in the direction of the removal of the land acts and other statutory, racially discriminatory, aspects of access to land in South Africa. Tricameralism, for example, requires that some incentives be offered to participants, and state acquiesence in (and sometimes pursuit of) land purchases by members and acolytes of the houses of representatives and delegates have already transferred some land out of direct white control. The mechanism here is mainly one of permitting purchase and occupation of land against the Group Areas Act's control. In undeclared areas (ie, controlled areas = most of rural non-bantustan South Africa) land can only be bought or occupied by members of the same 'group' as previously owned or occupied it. Additionally, the repeal of Chapter IV of the 1936 Land Act, which provided for the removal of labour tenants, has to some degree facilitated the resurgence of that oppressive form of access to land (see below). None of these cases suggests, of course, a challenge to private property in land: the only way in which that system could accommodate really large numbers of black South Africans as owners of land would be by state subsidisation of purchases.

Large or small scale agriculture?

Closely related to these debates is the question of the most productive size of plots or farms. Interestingly, there are those both on the left and on the right who are convinced of the superiority of small-scale agriculture. In any event, there is general agreement that many large white-owned farms are heavily subsidised by the state and that in the absence of those subsidies the economics of farm size would change considerably. There is substantial disagreement over the issue of the most productive size of farms in other dispensations, a question which relates closely to the issue of how any government can try to ensure adequate and affordable supplies of food especially for city dwellers. Some hold that subdivision of the land in the heartland of white agriculture would threaten the volume of production and hence greatly raise food prices in urban areas; others believe the opposite.

Which land could be redistributed?

The same point recurs in discussions of which land could or should be redistributed to land hungry rural (and perhaps urban) people. The cheapest

way to satisfy such land hunger would obviously be by the redistribution of outlying and probably less productive land. The problems of further entrenching poverty which might result, lead others to propose the subdivision of more productive land. But, as mentioned above, that only raises the question of whether or not such policies would be viable in terms of agricultural production. These areas of debate more or less disappear from the agenda of those who deny altogether the desirability of or demand for redistribution of land, arguing instead that the best and most productive policies will follow from concentration of the population in urban areas and activities.

The urban-rural bias question

Much of the academic debate has taken place in ways rather removed from the lives of rural South Africans. Perhaps the most immutable unknown in relation to the land question is the double question of how the constraints on land need and use will change, and how people will react to different changes in those constraints. Some - possibly many - people in the semi-rural places of the bantustans *at present* are little interested in returning to farm life, not only on white-owned farms, but of any kind. The reasons for this response include the feeling that time is more productively and less arduously spent in labour performed in non-farm pursuits. But the ways in which conditions and options alter will determine directions of movement (towards more rural or more urban places, say) more certainly than attitudes expressed under the highly constrained circumstances of today. Those who have experienced forced removal, such as eviction from farms, have frequently tried - communally or individually, or both - to find agricultural land on which to settle. There is still a strong tendency to abandon the search and to accept the security available in resettlement areas or on residential sites allocated through tribal authorities. As one informant [living in a densely populated reserve area in the north-eastern Transvaal with little land and few cattle] put it, 'after innumerable attempts to find alternatives in the years immediately after eviction so we lost hope and came back here ... as a last resort'.[2]

But there is abundant evidence that in some areas, labour and rent-paying tenancy are reappearing. Examples are evident in the Lydenburg district, ironically the scene of the first major push by the state against these forms of land occupancy in the late thirties. Rural struggles referred to by Claassens (1989) emphasise that many rural people do seek to maintain and extend the land available for agricultural activities.

There are, of course, those who believe that the best option for people in South Africa's rural areas is to move to town, and that future land policy

should encourage them to do so. The best-known arguments along these lines have been widely published by Cobbett (eg, 1987). As participants at the Agrarian Workshop in Johannesburg in May 1987 pointed out, Cobbett's position uses the results of centuries of wrong to support his argument that there is no land hunger, nor will there be: semi-proletarianisation has gone so far it cannot be reversed, and the condition of the people cannot be improved by reversing it anyway. A fundamental problem with Cobbett's argument is that it completely ignores the significance which huge numbers of people living (for whatever period) in the urban areas attach to the retention (and expansion) of rural bases; it ignores the persistence of circular patterns of migration which are common throughout the poorer regions of the world, and takes urban bias in development policy proposals to new extremes.

Cobbett, however, enjoys plenty of company in his ignorance of the dynamics of migration and their effects (real and potential) on agrarian questions. So little is known, in any event, that it could hardly be otherwise. Thus Planact has found that many workers oppose employer home ownership schemes primarily because they usually require investment in houses close to urban worksites. Workers would frequently prefer to invest in 'rural' locations; recognising the general ignorance of the dynamics involved leads that service organisation to undertake substantial research into 'migrancy', noting that such research will go 'to the heart of the political economy' (Planact, 1989). The persistence of circular migration has very wide implications for debate on the land question.

Organisational responses

Many conventional wisdoms deserve renewed scrutiny for the making of the land question in South Africa to be revealed in sufficient detail to allow assessment of its complexities. While the members of mass organisations such as the unions are those who know the realities of migration in contemporary South Africa, this knowledge is not necessarily available even to those organisations in a systematic form. Furthermore, in relation both to these complexities of society and thus to their own political activities, the question forms: to what extent have oppositional organisations actually considered *the land question*?

In an endeavour to find out how much organisations and individuals know about current issues concerning land and what policies they may have on those issues, as well as what they would like to see happening in a post apartheid society in terms of land allocation, resettlement patterns and so on, we undertook a short project. The project was very far from comprehensive, but does help to indicate how little prepared organisations are to

contribute to detailed discussion, let alone negotiation, of land questions.

The 15 organisations responding so far range from church-based organisations, to rural based organisations, to politically inclined organisations, trade unions and service organisations. In this report we use quotations from interviews without attributing them to specific organisations, for most of the time they represent the considered views of officials rather than official positions of organisations. Almost all the responses indicated that the organisations had no formal position or policy with regard to land issues. Sometimes this was because they felt the subject did not directly concern them and cannot be included in their daily programme at work. An overwhelming sense was expressed that 'land is still controlled by the state in such a way that it is very difficult, almost impossible to even do anything towards Land Reform.'

We were painfully aware of the uninvited role which we played in raising land questions with the responding organisations, and have obviously tried to avoid the negative and antidemocratic consequences of placing items on the agenda of those organisations in such a way that their approach to the land question in the future is shaped by our manner of raising it.

Our respondents definitely felt that land issues needed to be placed more firmly on the general agenda of opposition movements. Several reasons emerged. While most of the responding organisations had no formal policy on land issues, some officials did have strong views on the importance of the land question in broad terms. Some talked of land as 'the source of all biological life. It is important in the whole ecological chain, food production, distribution and price.' Secondly, they recognised that whoever owns the land determines these things. The connection between land and the underlying mineral resources - which 'constitute the land in its bowels' - was also made. Also, the vital connection between control of land and settlement patterns for both rural and urban places was recognised, albeit schematically. These are the three reasons which emerged from organisations as to why it is important particularly in South Africa to talk about land.

Some organisations stressed the importance of developing a historical understanding of land questions. 'Apartheid has its basis from the colonial system. Therefore one has to look at land problems from before 1948. If we look at the colonial system, especially at the reasons why people from Europe and Asia came to South Africa, it was because of the economic system which allowed them to own land, own mines thus being able to determine settlement patterns for themselves and their workers.' 'One other reason which makes it difficult to talk about land is that we are looking at an entrenched system which is hundreds of years old. Land problems refer to the development of the land, agricultural services, health services and social services. We cannot

work on presumptions when it comes to distribution of the land. What has happened in history ... we know it may happen again especially as we do not know what the post apartheid government is going to be like.'

To indicate to organisations the kinds of issues in which we were interested, we sent them a questionnaire prior to visiting them. We hoped that sending the questionnaire would encourage discussion so that members or officials present at the actual interview were well informed on organisational and individual views. The interviews themselves were open ended (they did not by any means follow the questionnaire) and took place between Makhosazane Gcabashe and one or two members of the organisations.

Organisations responding generally recognised the possibility that post apartheid society could take different forms and that policies could vary greatly. But certain issues emerged very clearly as fundamental concerns:

● *Meeting needs*

People should be able to occupy land 'in respect of who they are, in terms of their needs since this has not been the case.'

● *Equity*

'We hope to have an equitable distribution of land.'

● *Training and education in relation to land issues*

There is a general feeling that the post apartheid government will be under pressure to redistribute land and also to handle rural reconstruction. 'In order to avoid a scramble or conflict on how the demand for land is met, the civic organisations should educate or give information to people on how to make their demands.' 'There will be a period of time when the status quo has to be sustained so that the economy does not go into recession. To achieve this we have to, first, educate the people.' 'Education in relation to land issues would be necessary to channel the pressures.'

● *Land question must not be viewed in isolation*

In organisations which might be described as having embarked on a process of rural reconstruction, it is considered important to 'improve the quality of life of the people spiritually, physically, materially and/or economically' through such reconstruction.

● *Access to skills*

For some rurally-based organisations, the critical issues are not to be defined in terms of redistribution of land but in the accessibility of skills. 'As an agriculturalist, I do not foresee any change in land availability. As a christian I believe we will handle the land problem as one nation. The only change which can be expected is in the allocation of resources, availability of skills and expertise; help people by improving their agricultural skills. It does not matter to whom the land belongs. There must be information available and resources to manage land properly; extension services must not

be restricted; qualified people in the country must be available to everybody; (bantustan) boundaries have to be broken ...'

● *A large role for the churches*

To set examples now: 'The church's own method of rural construction is through the redistribution of resources and the transformation of the institutions and power relations which are at the root of poverty. The church should set an example of such redistribution and transformation. There are three ways of achieving this and they are as follows: (a) Make people become creative and responsible communities. (b) Make them enjoy security of tenure. (c) Transform their social and economic situations. (d) Collaborate with other organisations for political representation.'

Encourage tenants to struggle for rights: 'On church land, the church is going to be involved with developing its land and come up with a new land tenure agreement for its tenants. But the land is registered under white people and the tenants are black people. How are leases going to be released to black people? This is still being researched. The tenants have formed themselves into residence associations which have been encouraged by the church to fight for their rights. Not only are people becoming organised on church land, even in other places of the country . They are even starting to look at proposed options for land reform.'

● *Necessity for fundamental change*

'But first what needs to be done is to have a change of government and fundamental changes. By fundamental changes we mean, a change in the economic system, social and legal systems. The basic crisis is caused by the economic and the political systems derived from the superstructure. Secondly put the options to the people and get rid of the Land Acts.'

● *Nationalisation of land*

There is a strong general sense in favour of nationalising at least some land: the owners usually mentioned include mining houses and multinational corporations.

● *But some expect a continuing role for markets*

Some organisations responding do conceive of a market in land in the post-apartheid future. 'People who have got money will be able to acquire more land. Today, land is acquired that way and this will still hold in the future.'

● *Some have concerns over the effects of nationalisation*

'Nationalisation in a post apartheid society would mean nationalising everything with no compensation. With this type of reform the government will have to guard against capital leaving the country. Look at what happened in Mocambique and Angola. Land was nationalised skills and capital left the country.'

● *And there are fears that control over rural people will continue into the future*
There are those who fear government redistribution of the land under any system, but suggest that it should be left to 'the people' as 'it belongs to the people'.

● *Concern that redistribution should enhance production*
There is a strong body of thought that a future government should only be pressured to redistribute land and resources as long as 'good management principles are adhered to in using the land productively.'

● *Divergent views on the future role of chiefs*
There are extremely divergent views on the future appropriate role of chiefs in allocation of land. 'There are those people who feel that chiefs have been part and parcel of the oppression system, therefore we do not think that there are still any legitimate chiefs left. But if there are any left, then they will continue with the function.' If the tribal system were abolished 'there would be some resistance, because the tribal authority is still in control of the lives of rural people and they do not want interference from the outside.'

● *Organisations and leaders have creative ideas on other options*
For example, 'Transfer of ownership to tenants especially in farm areas is another option. This may happen in the Northern Transvaal because of absentee farmers. But the government is doing its best to resettle white people on those abandoned farms. This may be for security reasons but we do not know if it will work. This is an area which needs to be researched.'

We have not yet succeeded in distilling any very systematic views on the land question from oppositional organisations which might arguably be expected to have some interest in the area. Continuing this research requires more resources. But we have found that most oppositional organisations are not well prepared for an era in which negotiation over control of resources is likely to accelerate, especially with respect to that most basic of resources: land. The results of research and policy studies need to reach organisations in a useful form if the latter are to play a powerful role in determining the future of the land question.

To conclude this paper, we suggest some areas of research which seem to be needed if oppositional organisations are to participate successfully in a political era in which land questions may become vital to negotiations.

First, there are certain historical issues which would bear considerable examination. Accounts of the division of land among South Africa's people usually concentrate on the allocation of land to reserves, even though the account given is incomplete. For example, the Surplus People Project book, *The Surplus People*, (which in its own right is perhaps the most significant and useful single volume on apartheid ever published) contains an excellent summary of many steps along the road to creating today's divided land

pattern. But at the same time it focusses on the creation and demarcation of reserves (and the concomitant destruction of 'black spots' [ie land owned or sometimes controlled or exclusively occupied by Africans outside reserves]) almost to the exclusion of the processes which deprived Africans of legal, technical and effective control over the land on which they lived.

It is obviously correct that state action was responsible for much of the dispossession which occurred, and some excellent illustrations are provided in *The Surplus People*. On the other hand, the position espoused in this paper is that the establishment of *private property in land* was, to put it mildly, at least as important as direct state action in depriving persons of control over land. Of course, that establishment required for its enforcement a variety of state actions. But those actions in themselves were not necessarily designed to transfer control into the hands of whites as such. Those actions were at once part of the 'scaffolding' (a term borrowed from Mamphela Ramphela and Francis Wilson, 1988) which surrounded the construction of an apartheid edifice, and more general than that: they are not in essence different from actions designed to establish private property elsewhere in the world. The silence in the South African land question literature on the complexity of property relations follows from its exclusive concern with white state efforts to constrain Africans' land access; the results include misunderstanding of that process as part of a failure to pose the land question in anything approaching its full complexity. As one of our respondents pointed out to us, we cannot hope to avoid mistakes around the institutions of private property in the future if we do not learn the lessons of the past.

Present and past ownership, control, use and occupation patterns thus may usefully be subjected to detailed scrutiny. In making such examinations, several conventional distinctions between rural sectors will come under the microscope, and some will have to be reformulated. One example has to do with reserve/non-reserve distinction: one not to be treated lightly, for reason of the protection which 'traditional tenure', however corrupted, has had within bantustans and trust areas.

Charles Simkins has pointed out the value of Merle Lipton questioning the conventional thesis that 'there are two quite distinct agricultures in South Africa: the efficient white capital intensive sector and the underdeveloped black sector ...' (in Simkins, 1984:22). Simkins suggested that three sectors could usefully be distinguished, from the point of view of African rural incomes; but he maintained the distinction between reserves and white areas in so doing. Nevertheless, reason exists for arguing that part of the problem in conceptualising the land question has to do with the forced insistence on the maintenance of that invidious division (reserves and other) in the literature. Several points indicate not only that the distinction is dubious but

also that so little is known about real life in the South African countryside as to render the assumption of the reserve/other division a dangerous imposition on research and discussion.

For example, Bethuel Setai noted in 1979 'It is striking that despite the large number of rural Africans, very little is known or written about them ...' (1979:128). One little-known aspect of rural life *outside* the reserves is the fact that for decades many white farms 'exported' not only permanent migrants to the towns and to the bantustans, but also temporary migrant labour. This point was recognised by Jill Nattrass (1980:105-9) but has remained grossly undeveloped. According to Nattrass's estimates about 400 000 temporary labour migrants were engaged in urban work in 1970, a figure which compares with similar numbers from the bantustans, and from Lesotho, Mocambique and the rest of southern Africa. It is not clear what the statistical history of this labour supply was (Simkins showed that many Africans resident in white rural areas were not in farm employment), let alone how it arose or affected those involved. But it is abundantly clear from recent interview-based research that the nature of life on white farms and in the reserves has differed far less significantly, for a very substantial number of households, than usually supposed (or than apartheid tried to achieve). Greater differentiation almost certainly existed (and still does) among rural households on either side of bantustan boundaries than between the two sets. That general differentiation among rural households is increasing, as suggested by Levin and Neocosmos (1989) and Levin and Weiner (1989), and as several local-level studies confirm (eg, Vaughan, 1990).

Bantustan or reserve boundaries are, after all, rather odd lines. They do not clearly separate, as the migrant labour point shows, discrete populations from one another. Nor do they demarcate readily distinguished patterns of ownership, tenure, land use or control, though some broad categories (scheduled areas, white ownership) may more or less coincide with them. Inside the bantustans, together with considerable class differentiation, a great complexity of ownership forms prevails. Letsoalo has shown this for Lebowa; Jeppe demonstrates that well over half of the land in the Transvaal parts of Bophuthatswana is privately owned, not state or trust controlled; in some districts the proportion reaches 100%. The reserves cannot be characterised as 'communal areas'. And indeed, what patterns of control, occupation and use exist on land within the reserves is often not very different from what happens on some land in white areas - including some land not at all adjacent to reserve areas.

The pattern which exists is partly due to the fact that the bantustans have in considerable part been created on the basis of the scheduled areas of the 1913 Land Act - thus the boundaries of these artificial statelets are, as

Davenport says, really a result of an official fit of absence of mind. There is precious little relation even between released areas under the 1936 Land Act and the bantustans: for example, in the Delareyville district of the western Transvaal, the boundary of the Ditsobotla area of Bophuthatswana has released area farms on both its sides.

The enormous differences in access to and security in land which exist in South Africa's rural areas conceal the still greater social variation. While this paper has not concentrated attention on the latter point, it is obvious that different but little understood interest groups form in rural society. To understand the processes of class formation at work is vital. Obviously, different groupings are likely to make and to articulate different demands, and to seek different alliances.

With these points in mind, the need to initiate substantial research into the great variety of categories of rural land, of rural activity and indeed of rural households becomes obvious. There are not simply two, three, four or even five broad categories of land for which policies can readily be evolved: there are myriad communities, great varieties of household types (with tremendously varied patterns of linkage to urban and other rural areas), complex variations of ownership, control and access; in combination these categories speak of the need for a subtle and nuanced understanding of political and policy implications. The differing problems, needs, opportunities and constraints within these categories must be understood. Research into such questions must

- be of the highest possible quality;
- not only take into account the various potentials for production of different areas, as the Development Bank is doing, but
- develop categories in consultation with and useful to organisations with interests in land questions and which may find themselves engaged in negotiations; and
- be made available to organisations in forms which they can use both to inform themselves of issues and options, and to provide the basis of developing negotiating positions.

In preparing to negotiate the land question, education, research and training will prove essential elements along with organisation and mobilisation.

Notes

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2. See Mabin, 1989, for an argument which places such remarks in the context of contemporary urbanisation processes in South Africa.

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