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# Land Reform in South Africa: The Conversation That Never Took Place

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## Land Reform in South Africa: The Conversation That Never Took Place

### Abstract

After independence, South Africa embarked on a land reform programme that is meant to redress the highly inequitable land ownership which resulted from Apartheid. The programme comprises land redistribution, land restitution and land tenure. On restitution projects, the maintenance of production has been highly problematic. Loss of production means there is very little or no livelihoods impacts from restitution. The beneficiaries of restitution projects usually have neither farming experience nor capital to continue or restart the farm operations. As a result, most restitution projects are either non-functional or are functioning at a meager fraction of previous levels. Most studies on restitution have been carried out by studying the beneficiaries but not previous owners. I use the social constructivist paradigm to explore personal experience through engagement using the interview as a data collection tool. I explore the perspectives of a previous land owner who provides insights into how the restitution programme could be made more successful by letting a conversation occur between the previous owners and beneficiaries. I posit that it is essential to include the previous owners to reduce the trauma from loss of their lifestyle while also reducing beneficiaries' trauma caused by lack of benefits from restitution.

### Keywords

South Africa, Land Reform, Failure, Trauma, Conversation, Social Constructivism, Experience, Engagement

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## Land Reform in South Africa: The Conversation That Never Took Place

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*After independence, South Africa embarked on a land reform programme that is meant to redress the highly inequitable land ownership which resulted from Apartheid. The programme comprises land redistribution, land restitution and land tenure. On restitution projects, the maintenance of production has been highly problematic. Loss of production means there is very little or no livelihoods impacts from restitution. The beneficiaries of restitution projects usually have neither farming experience nor capital to continue or restart the farm operations. As a result, most restitution projects are either non-functional or are functioning at a meager fraction of previous levels. Most studies on restitution have been carried out by studying the beneficiaries but not previous owners. I use the social constructivist paradigm to explore personal experience through engagement using the interview as a data collection tool. I explore the perspectives of a previous land owner who provides insights into how the restitution programme could be made more successful by letting a conversation occur between the previous owners and beneficiaries. I posit that it is essential to include the previous owners to reduce the trauma from loss of their lifestyle while also reducing beneficiaries' trauma caused by lack of benefits from restitution. Keywords: South Africa, Land Reform, Failure, Trauma, Conversation, Social Constructivism, Experience, Engagement*

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### Introduction

Between 1948 and 1991 South Africa was under Apartheid. Apartheid was a cruel regime which institutionalized separate development between the races. It sought to make the black population second class citizens by systematically limiting access to resources responsible for upward social mobility. Table 1 shows how effective the discriminatory policies were. In 1994, at independence, in South Africa, 95 percent of industry was under the control of whites (Bromley, 1995). As shown in table 1, this was characteristic of nearly the whole economy. One can conclude that the Apartheid South African economy was created for the very few white people (Bromley).

The discriminatory laws by the Apartheid government in 1913 (The Native Land Act) and in 1936 (The Native Land and Trust Act No. 18) resulted in a situation where by 1980 only 50,000 white farmers owned 90 percent of agricultural land (Bradstock, 2005; Fraser, 2008). In fact, as a result of these two statutory instruments, whites owned 87 percent of the land and the majority blacks only 13 percent (Davis, 2011; Obeng-Odoom, 2012). Most of the land owned by blacks was largely located in the former homelands, where 75 percent of the black population was forcibly placed (Obeng-Odoom). Besides the fact that the homelands have been dismantled, the pattern of land ownership has not changed much (Logan, Tengbeh, & Petja, 2012).

Table 1. The social impacts of the Apartheid discriminatory policies by 1978

Characteristic	Race	
	Black	White
Population (million)	19	4.5
Land allocation (% of total)	13	87
Share of national income (%)	<20	75
Ratio of average earnings	1	14
Minimum taxable income (rands)	360	750
Population per doctor	44,000	400
Infant mortality rate (%)	Urban: 20 Rural: 40	2.7
Annual expenditure on education per pupil (\$)	45	696
Pupils per teacher	60	22

Stanford University Students (2017)

Although there are some researchers, like Pringle (2013) who analyse the situation quite differently and therefore reach a different conclusion, there is little disagreement among development experts that the highly skewed land distribution in South Africa needs to be addressed (Davis, 2011; Mendola & Simtowe, 2015). This agreement is not only among experts. Cousins (2013) writes that most South Africans probably agree that there is need to resolve the land question one way or another. Logan et al. (2012) argue that there is concurrence that land reform is crucial to the development of, not only South Africa, but sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

Mendola and Simtowe, (2015) emphasize the fact that the purpose of land reform is to increase land access to poor rural households so as to reduce inequality and poverty because, as they argue, for many developing countries, land is a critical component of wealth and its creation. It is this supposed link between asset ownership (land) and wealth building that has been of interest to economists (Sikor & Müller, 2009). A brief survey of literature shows that this interest has led to different types of land reforms all over the world. In Scotland, the 1999 creation of the Scottish Parliament ignited interest in land reform (Sikor & Müller, 2009). Bromley (1995), Bobrow-Strain (2004), Sikor and Müller (2009), Lestrelin (2011), Skalos, Molnárová and Kottová (2012), Kemper (2015) and Mendola and Simtowe (2015) provide an overview of land reforms in Europe, South America, China, Soviet Union, South Asia and Africa. Logan et al. (2012) analyze land reform in SSA. Obeng-Odoom (2012) discusses the theory, practice and outcomes of land reform based on the cases of Ghana, Uganda and Egypt. Berge, Kambewa, Munthali and Wiig (2014) report on the impacts of lineage on land reform in Malawi, while Kudo (2015) describes land reform in Tanzania. Some land reform programmes were fully supported by the World Bank, such as in Egypt, Iran and Tanzania and some were only partially supported (and then not supported at all), such as Zimbabwe and yet some espoused to be market assisted, such as in South Africa before the declaration of expropriation.

Historically the state has led land reforms which normally involve redistribution of land from large land owners to landless and smallholders. Although there is a recent paradigmatic shift in land reform from state-led to community led land reform (Mendola & Simtowe, 2015; Sikor & Müller, 2009), the state still remains a main actor. The way the state acts is therefore paramount to the success or failure of land reform. In South Africa, even though some

programmes of land reform like restitution have components of community involvement, the reform process is mainly state-led as outlined in the White Paper on South African Land Policy (Government of South Africa, 1997).

There are many reasons for the interest and justification of land reforms. For instance, land reform was justified in Scotland because 50 percent of the land was owned by just over 600 trusts, companies or individuals and in Ireland the motivations for land reform were similar. In Scotland, “The juxtaposition of a hedonistic gentry, with a peasantry facing poverty and hardship, did however; create economic, social and cultural tensions which led to the development of a land reform movement” (Macmillan, 2000, p. 50). Such juxtapositioning could not be clearer than was the case in 1980 and 1994 when Zimbabwe and South Africa, became independent, respectively, hence the need for the land reforms. Whereas the land reform programme for Zimbabwe took a different path, whose sustainability has been questioned, the South African land reform programme has been market assisted and guided by the willing-seller, willing-buyer principle, whose effectiveness in addressing the land reform objectives, especially rural development and poverty alleviation, is also currently being questioned (Logan et al., 2012). Land reformers have a tendency to distrust the free market system, accusing it of creating or assisting the creation of imbalances in the first place, leading some land reformers in Scotland to even advocate for nationalization (Macmillan, 2000).

Thus, land reform programmes aim to correct inequalities caused by different political systems all over the world, correcting colonial resource misdistribution, social equity, reducing and controlling environmental degradation in marginal areas and, in most of SSA, land is viewed as liberation from the colonialists (Government of South Africa, 1997; Logan et al., 2012; Macmillan, 2000). Even though the primary goal of land reform is to change the pattern of land ownership (Macmillan, 2000), the ultimate goal is to improve the livelihoods of poor and or disadvantaged groups (Mendola & Simtowe, 2015). Sikor and Müller (2009, p. 1038) argue that “...land reform was expected to alleviate rural poverty, increase agricultural productivity, and strengthen the new nation state.” It is this conviction that has led the World Bank to support land reforms at different levels in different parts of the world. Land reform is also associated with rural development and employment creation as the economic justifications (Macmillan, 2000). In South Africa the objectives of land reform are fourfold, namely; redressing Apartheid injustices, fostering national reconciliation and stability, underpinning economic growth, and alleviating poverty by improving household welfare (Government of South Africa, 1997; Hart, 2012).

According to Government of South Africa (1997), Hart (2012) and Aliber and Cousins (2013), in order to achieve these objectives, the South African land reform programme is made up of three principal components, namely;

- a. Land restitution: Aims to return land lost since 1913.
- b. Land redistribution: Makes it possible for previously disadvantaged people to purchase land using the grant system.
- c. Land tenure reform: Aims to reform the tenure of land occupants to put them under a valid system of landholding.

The performance of the land reform programme in terms of the political objectives of transferring land to previously disadvantaged groups has been poor. However, some land has been transferred. The programme responsible for the transfer of land to those disadvantaged by the discriminatory statutory laws is the restitution programme.

The urgency of the land reform programme in South Africa is exacerbated by the fact that by 1994 white farmers owned 82 million ha of agricultural land and therefore the South African land reform programme (after several target revisions) aimed to redistribute 30 percent

or 24.5 million ha of this to blacks by 2014 (Binswanger-Mkhize, 2014). Anseeuw and Mathebula (2008) give an idea of the pace of land reform, reporting that between 1995 and 1999, 41 restitution claims were settled, affecting 3,508 households on 112,919 ha at a total cost of ZAR12,601million. Between 1999 and 2004, 56,679 claims were settled affecting 151,829 households on 697,373 ha at a cost of ZAR4,065,950. These figures show the slow pace at which restitution is taking place, compared to the target. By 2012 only 7.95 million ha or 32 percent of target, had been acquired. There have been several shifts in land reform policy, implementation and targets since 1997 when the White Paper on South African Land Policy was published (Cousins, 2013). With the shifts taken into consideration, the figures show that although some land has been transferred to blacks, the land reform programme has performed poorly. This means that even though the homelands have been dismantled, the highly skewed pattern of land ownership has persisted.

Bradstock (2005) Aliber and Cousins (2013) and Binswanger-Mkhize (2014) agree that the transfer is slow and Obeng-Odoom (2012) argues that land reform has not been as effective as promised. Binswanger-Mkhize (2014) wonders why the pace of land reform is slow since South Africa has a constitutional and policy framework that is amenable to the successful and rapid implementation of land reform. The rapid transfer of land to blacks is necessary because most of South Africa's population lives in rural areas where 72 percent are classified as poor, thus land transfer to rural poor has high potential as a pathway out of poverty (Bradstock, 2005).

Even though the objectives of land reform may be multiple and varied, including addressing inequalities in land ownership, the ultimate goal of land reform is that it seeks the improvement of the livelihoods of the disadvantaged (Sikor & Müller, 2009). It is in this regard that the South African land reform program has failed dismally. Pringle (2013) points out that 90 percent of the land reform projects have failed. Land restitution has been regarded as successful in urban areas where claimants have opted for cash in cases where land restitution was not feasible. However, the livelihoods impact of this success has not been documented. Where land restitution was feasible the process has been fraught with problems leading to little success, if at all (Logan et al., 2012). Commenting on the performance of the land reform program Binswanger-Mkhize (2014) makes reference to islands of success in a sea of partial or complete failure. This is particularly true for restitution projects.

Logan et al. (2012) ask why land reform in Southern Africa is so problematic. Cousins (2013) notes that it is common knowledge that reform in post-Apartheid South Africa is in disarray and research shows that most of the projects have had little or no improvement in the livelihoods of the beneficiaries, largely due to poor planning and lack of effective support.

The conundrum presented by this situation is that while there seems to be agreement that, for the most part, the South African land reform program is failing, there is also agreement that it has to be done. Thus, clearly, ways have to be sought to improve the programme's performance. This is particularly true for the restitution programme because it is the one which tends to attempt to address poverty in communal areas and rural development in general. As Aliber and Cousins (2013) point out, land redistribution systematically neglects rural people who tend to benefit from restitution. This makes the restitution component a key element of South Africa's land reform programme (Fraser, 2008).

So, what needs to change? Some blame the slow pace of land reform on the willing-seller, willing-buyer principle. Fraser (2008) argues that the willing buyer-willing seller principle has restricted the pace of land reform, particularly restitution. It is because of this principle, argues Fraser (2008) that the pace of land reform is dependent on white farmers. Even if their land is part of a valid claim, some white farmers have refused to sell. By limiting the scale of the land reform programme, the willing-seller, willing-buyer principle directly contradicted the observation made by Mendola and Simtowe (2015) that in order to have

significant impact, land reform programmes need to be done at scale. This bottleneck has now been removed by the ANC government's declaration that land will be expropriated without payment.

Others, like Aliber and Cousins (2013) and Binswanger-Mkhize (2014) argue that shifting to a smallholder model is a necessary condition for the success of the agrarian land reform programme in South Africa. Aliber and Cousins argue that farm subdivision could better serve the aspirations of beneficiaries and lead to better livelihoods impacts. However, they do admit that in most restitution projects, because of the numbers of project beneficiaries involved, subdivision is, usually, not a feasible option. Some point at the skills of both the implementers and the beneficiaries. Cousins (2013) argues that the land reform programme is expected to succeed even though neither the implementers, who make critical decisions, like designating landholdings, nor the beneficiaries, have farming experience. Binswanger-Mkhize (2014) argues that the government agencies responsible for land reform lack the requisite experience while the departments lack capacity and therefore this reduces the pace of land reform.

### **Objective**

Many land reform studies in South Africa mostly analyse the circumstances of the beneficiaries after land restitution or redistribution. Very few studies have included previous owners and little, if any, attention has been paid to their perceptions of the land reform programme. The rare occurrence of the inclusion of previous land owners in a study of South Africa's land reform programme is Aliber and Cousins (2013). This, therefore, is an exploratory study that is meant to start addressing this identifiable gap in the literature. The objective of this study is to start addressing this gap by exploring the previous land owners' perceptions of the land reform process for a case where previous land owners have been involved in post-settlement activities on the restitution farms and to provide insights into whether, if properly managed, such previous owner involvement could assist in the long-term success of the South African land restitution programme. Experts agree that the processes and models used in restitution have led to the failure of the projects, so I ask whether it is not time to take a critical look and rethink some of the parameters of this important South African programme. The study aims to analyse the perceptions of the previous farmers and contextualize them within the current performance of the South African land reform programme.

My interest in land reform stems from the fact that I hold a PhD in Agricultural Economics. From the period 2013 to 2016 I was employed as an associate professor at a university where, among other classes, I taught a class titled "Agriculture and Rural Development." Because of its importance, in this class I included a review of the theory and practice of the South African land reform programme. The review of practice revealed that many of the land reform projects were failing. I, therefore, got interested in exploring the causes of the failure of land reform projects in South Africa.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design, Sample Selection and Sample Size**

From the onset, it was very clear to me that studying land reform from the farmers' perspective is sensitive. It is sensitive to the farmers because usually their lifestyle completely changes. It is also sensitive from the government side because the government is keen to

achieve both political and economic objectives. No wonder there isn't any literature on this subject. This study is, therefore, exploratory.

Since qualitative research tends to be exploratory (Cypress, 2017) and based on the notion that reality is a social construction (Packer, 2011), a notion which has been comprehensively explored by Guba and Lincoln (Dube et al., 2014, Makombe, 2017), I use the social constructivist paradigm to explore personal experiences through engagement using the interview as a data collection tool. Sakellariou, Boniface and Brown (2013) argue that interviews allow for the exploration of experiences and Donalek (2005) notes that a successful interview is a connection with another individual at a profound level. Packer (2011, p. 2) points out that qualitative research "...is often defined as the objective study of personal experience..." Even though this definition has shortcomings, it demonstrates the importance of personal experience in qualitative research for both the subject/s and the researcher. Based on Donalek (2005) I used open ended semi-structured questions and made the questions brief and unambiguous, yet sensitive to the feelings of the interviewee. I used a reliable high-quality recorder. I conducted the interview at the Maitjene office where it is quiet, and the farmer was comfortable. I held two practice interviews before conducting the final one. I explained the interview process to the farmer including the written consent which explained that the farmer was free to refuse to answer any questions, could stop the interview at any time and or could withdraw from the study without consequence. Given the sensitive nature of the subject, I reinforced participant's power by informing the farmer that the choice of exploring painful experiences was solely his. I used laddering by starting with the least stressful questions when I introduced a new topic. I constantly assessed the verbal and non-verbal cues from the farmer and observed body language to assess the farmer's comfort level and this indicated for me the pace at which I could advance to more complex and more sensitive questioning (Donalek, 2005).

Since I was interested in the potential role of previous farm owners in the restitution programmes I purposively selected the Maitjene Trust, which has 20 farms that were processed under the restitution programme. The basis of selection was that the previous owners are still involved in the project. Bearing in mind that sample selection affects validity (Trotter, 2012), at first I wanted to interview all nine farmers. However, after several preliminary visits and discussions with the Portfolio Manager of Maitjene, considering the sensitive nature of the subject, he advised that it is better to discuss with the farmer who is viewed as the representative of the farmers and who acted as the representative of the farmers during the discussions with the beneficiaries. I therefore interviewed the one farmer who was accepted as the representative of the other farmers.

## **Data Analysis**

In the social constructivist paradigm both the researcher's and participant's voice are considered alongside each other (Dube et al., 2014). After the verbatim transcription of the interviews, I paired the transcriptions with my notes. I used NVIVO to analyse the data. Before the NVIVO analysis I made notes in the margins of initial meanings and identified common themes. These themes largely coincided with the themes identified in the NVIVO thematic analysis. I also employed reflexivity. Since I am an agricultural economist, I have my own personal subjectivity on land reform. Reflexivity refers to the degree of influence a researcher exerts intentionally or unintentionally on the findings. The researcher continuously reflects on his/her values, preconceptions, presence and behavior. Due to the short period of time of interview I could only prompt, probe and encourage the farmer while I tried to put aside my preconceived ideas about land reform. This created space for the farmer to share his experiences. Even though the interview lasted about two and half hours, I tried to put into



practice the process of bracketing in order to add rigor to the data collection process (Jootun, McGhee, & Marland, 2009). As stated by Cypress (2017) even though I brought my knowledge and past experience of land reform, I also learned to set aside my predispositions and my strongly held preconceptions, opinions and perceptions. I really listened to the farmer in order to learn his story, experience, and meaning of land reform and the question I was pursuing. Jootun et al. (2009) argue that a researcher can be an outsider (without knowledge of the research area), a hybrid (a researcher in the area) or an insider (a practitioner in the area). In this spectrum, I was a hybrid. This allowed me to understand when the farmer said: “You know what I mean by that” especially when mentioning sensitive issues related to the government. Being a hybrid assisted me in understanding his experience.

For interview data, “Analysis should focus on how an interviewee crafts a way of saying to invite a way of seeing” (Packer, 2011, p. 9). Our understanding of what we hear in an interview is a function of factors that are intersubjective. For instance, as Packer (2011) argues, language being an intersubjective phenomenon, the researcher’s level of language understanding is important in the conduct and analysis of an interview. The interview is based on shared, public linguistic rules and practices. I conducted the interview in English because this is the language that the farmer and I both understood. The farmer is fluent in English, although Afrikaans is his native language.

Thematic analysis (TA) was selected because according to Clark and Braun (2017) and Cassol et al. (2018) TA is used to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns of meaning in qualitative data. I used TA to provide the framework for me to organize and report my analytic observations and to interrogate patterns with personal and social meaning for the farmer around land reform in South Africa. I chose TA because it is flexible and accessible. Its flexibility means it is applicable to both inductive (data-driven) and deductive (theory-driven) analyses, and it can capture both manifest (explicit) and latent (underlying) meaning. I used TA largely for inductive analysis

In preparation for analysis I read the transcript three times to familiarize myself with the content. Using NVIVO and following the method similar to that described by Cassol et al. (2018), I used open coding to generate initial codes. The codes were grouped into categories based on similarity and the categories were organized into themes. My presentation of results from the TA follows the format used by Shorten and Ruppel (2017) in their narrative study in which they used TA. They provide a summary of a concept within a theme and immediately after that they provide a supporting excerpt.

### **Ensuring Rigor and Trustworthiness**

Cypress (2017) contends that, since rigor is concerned with being exact or precise, the term qualitative rigor is an oxymoron. Rigor in qualitative research is therefore concerned with the strength of the research design and its appropriateness to address the question/s. Lincoln and Guba replaced the concepts of reliability and validity with the concept of trustworthiness. It is the framework of trustworthiness that is also used to address rigor. Trustworthiness relates to the degree of trust and confidence which readers have in the results. It is equated to the concepts of objectivity, reliability and internal and external validity. To achieve trustworthiness the design of a qualitative study should ensure credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Gerard, Tobin, & Begley, 2004; Shenton, 2004; Cypress, 2017).

Shenton (2004) argues that credibility can be ensured by the adoption of well-established research methods, the development of familiarity with the culture of participants, prolonged engagement, random sampling (appropriate selection of participants), triangulation, establishing rapport, getting informed consent, negative case analysis, frequent debriefing

sessions, peer scrutiny of research project, thick description and examination of previous research findings. In my case I established rapport through preliminary visits, I got written informed consent and the project was peer reviewed. Shenton (2004) argues that it is generally argued that because of small samples, it is difficult to apply qualitative research to other situations. However, some argue that unique cases may be examples within a larger group and so transferability should not be immediately discarded (Shenton, 2004). This observation applies directly to my research where the farmer experiences can be, to a limited extent, transferable to other farmer situations in land reform. Without pre-empting the study, this is actually the thesis of this study. Cypress (2017) mentions that some researchers use purposive sampling, thick description, and immersion to foster transferability. In this study, purposive sampling was used to identify the appropriate farmer to interview. The 9 farmers agreed that he was the best to represent their views and since I had given them a good idea of the subject I wanted to cover in the interview, they discussed and agreed on what they thought were the important aspects of their experience in land reform. Dependability, whose quantitative equivalent is replicability is a challenge in qualitative research (Shenton, 2004). It can be achieved by the use of overlapping methods (triangulation), by describing what was planned and executed on a strategic level, by addressing the minutiae of what was done in the field and by reflective appraisal of the project. In my case, I had a professional transcribe the interview and I compared it with my transcription. I found no major differences. After I identified the themes, I asked an expert qualitative analyst to do the same. We came up with similar groupings. We then had a discussion on how to describe the themes the result of which I used in the titles of the themes.

Interpretation of data can be easily clouded by the researcher's subjectivity (Cypress, 2017), so confirmability is an important aspect in qualitative research. Researchers achieve confirmability by keeping a reflexive journal and audit trails. During the interview I kept my reflexive notes. Immediately after the interview when the farmer had left I went through my notes to understand my immediate perceptions and presuppositions. It was these notes that I used for bracketing. Even though I made attempts to achieve validity, these efforts need to be interpreted with the caveat noted by Cypress (2017, p. 259) that "Establishing validity is a major challenge when a qualitative research project is based on a single, cross-sectional, unstructured interview as the basis for data collection."

In the ensuing analysis, for lack of better terms, the farmer representing the previous owners is referred to as "the farmer" the previous owners are referred to as "the farmers" and the restitution claimants are referred to as "the beneficiaries."

## **Results**

### **Thematic Analysis**

I identified eight themes, namely;

- a. Theme 1: The process from gazetting to farmer pay outs
- b. Theme 2: Willing-seller, willing-buyer principle,
- c. Theme 3: Willingness of the previous owners to participate in post-settlement,
- d. Theme 4: The lease arrangement and how it maintained production,
- e. Theme 5: What was purchased with the money given to the farmers/what was not purchased,
- f. Theme 6. A development plan is hatched,
- g. Theme 7: Where should the previous owners go after they are paid off?
- h. Theme 8: Job creation

A summary of the analysis of each theme follows.

**The process from gazetting to farmer pay outs.** When the process of restitution started unfolding for them, the farmers were informed by Agriculture-SA that, a claim had been gazetted on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2006 and that as a result there would be farm valuation inspections. The farmers decided that they would cooperate. Since there were 10 farmers, they met to discuss who of them wanted to participate in willing seller negotiations. Nine out of 10 agreed to negotiate and were willing to perform in this process. Only one farmer moved away, but even for that one, his son continued on the farm. Because they had witnessed some disorderly inspections, they insisted that their inspections be orderly. Part of the process involves farm valuations and the evaluator was appointed by the government. At the onset, the evaluator told the framers that he does not answer the farmers' questions because his salary was not paid by the farmers. The farmers thought this made it sound antagonistic; however, they patiently proceeded with the process because they had already committed to it. They were paid in January 2009 according to the farmer, so as the farmer observed, "...it took too long..."

The farmer also observed that the government seemed to expect that the beneficiaries would own the farm immediately after the farmers were paid out. He cautioned against this expectation because if production is to continue, arrangements of delivering the farm need to be done properly.

The request by the farmers for orderly inspections is evidenced by the quote "So... we said we will cooperate with the inspections with certain rules and regulations. .... we said we don't want to see 160 or 200 people running all over, it must be in an organized way and we will manage it from there." They requested this because they had witnessed some quite disorganized inspections.

The frustration of the farmers with the length of period from being gazetted to being paid out is evidenced by the quote: "In the end it worked very nice .... **but it took long** (farmer's emphasis). We were gazetted on June 2006; they started the valuations in June 2007. That was frustrating because you cannot develop nor do anything" It is important to note that it is a government requirement that from the time the farm is gazetted to the time it is transferred to the beneficiaries, no farming activities can take place.

**Willing-seller, willing-buyer principle.** The farmer observed that the government politicizes the land reform process. He posited that more farmers would be willing to sell if the government created a conducive environment for such and if the payout processing did not take so long. He emphasized that at Maitjene they made sure that they had a good relationship with the beneficiaries and the agreement to sell was a starting point. Even though they had sold their farms, they met with the beneficiaries to discuss the process and their vision of the future before the financial settlements were made. As the process unfolded, the farmers already had a vision where they would not leave their farms but would rent them from the beneficiaries. The farmer emphasized that the success or failure of the programme depends on the willingness of the farmer to sell. At Maitjene, of their own accord, the farmers had meetings with the claimants and kept them informed of the process until settlement was done. The willing-seller, willing-buyer principle worked very well at Maitjene.

**Willingness of the previous owners to participate in post-settlement.** At Maitjene all the farmers were willing to participate in post-settlement discussions with the beneficiaries. This is the reason why they were engaging the farmers before they were paid off. The farmers' concern in participating in post-settlement discussion was clouded by the fact that they did not know when they would be paid out. However, the reason why they were able to carry out the discussions with the beneficiaries, even though they had no idea when they were going to be paid, was because, as the farmer mentioned, they had managed to build a good relationship with the beneficiaries. The farmer pointed out that the time between being gazetted and when the farmers are paid out can destroy the farm operations. If this happened, the farmer indicated,

there would be no need for pos-settlement discussion. The farmer stated that when production stops, thus destroying the farm, this is a direct result of the slow claim process by the government. The farmer also had some concerns about the government role in the relationship between the farmers and beneficiaries because he observed that when the government was involved, it was then that there tended to be misbelief between farmers and beneficiaries. This suggests that government involvement was not encouraging or supportive of the cooperation that was going on between the farmers and beneficiaries. The farmer stated that the slow pace at which the government works for the settlement process and the uncertainty created, negatively affect the post settlement process even if the farmers are willing to make it a success, as was the case at Maitjene.

The frustration of the farmer with the possibility of destruction of farm operations due to the slow pace of land reform process is evidenced by the quote: "If nothing happens [in terms of payment], I will have no choice but to go like what happened at Driegesdaal. The farms where closed, electricity was switched off and production was completely stopped." Driegesdaal is a restitution project across the road from Maitjene which completely collapsed from a very successful operation.

**The lease arrangement and how it maintained production at Maitjene.** After the farmers were paid off they started off with a lease arrangement with the beneficiaries. The farmers were satisfied with the arrangement. The farmers thought that their arrangement was something clever on the farmers' side and also on the beneficiaries' side because usually if the farmer leaves, production also usually stops, yet the objective of the government is for the beneficiaries to continue with production. He observed that before restitution 19 trucks used to come out of Driegesdaal, full of vegetables and fruits per day, however, after land reform, not even two trucks are coming out. This saddened the farmer who went on to explain that when production stops on the land reform farms, he blames the government because, for Maitjene, with the lease arrangement, the only gap in production was the time between being gazetted and when the farmers were paid out, about two years and five months

The farmer's belief that their lease arrangement maintains production is evidenced by the quote:

.... if I give you the farm now, where are you going to get the money for production. You cannot tell me that you have passion for agriculture. That passion is not going to help you to continue with production if you don't have capital. There must be some kind of a proposal or plan...What we tried to do was, as government pays today, the next day everything must be in place, like the lease agreements etc. We said from day one with the claimants that there must be no month, year or week going past where nothing happens. The production must be throughout; there must be no vacuum for being unproductive.... We informed them [the beneficiaries] that we don't want you to go the same route as the other areas like Driegesdaal and they agreed because they know what happened there.

**What was purchased with the money given to the farmers?** The farmers wanted to know what the government was purchasing so they asked the question to the government which replied that it was buying the land and features on the land only, not the assets. Because the farmers knew that the farm operation cannot continue without the farm movable assets, like the farm implements, they raised the issue with the commissioner and the claimants. The commissioner confirmed that the government was not buying movable assets. This was very concerning to the farmers. Up to now, under the lease agreement, the farm and all immovable assets belong to the beneficiaries, and the movable assets, including farm implements, belong

to the farmers. The real danger, as observed by the farmer, is that if the farmers decide to leave with the assets, the beneficiaries cannot immediately continue with farm operations.

The farmer knows that, there are valuation reports, but does not know what was bought with the money they were paid. He is not aware whether the beneficiaries know what was in the valuation reports which state what was bought by the money that was paid to the farmers. In the event that they had to leave, the farmers would have left with the movable farm assets. If the beneficiaries do not know what was paid for, it creates the possibility that the farmers could move out with some assets that were paid for by the government. Furthermore, if the movable assets were part of the production process for the farmer, and the government wants the beneficiaries to continue production, the farmer stated that it is baffling why the assets are not included in the purchase price. If the beneficiaries do not inherit the production assets from the farmers, how are they expected to keep the farm as a going concern, asked the farmer. The farmers stated that this concern becomes a serious problem when the beneficiaries are not aware of whether the purchase price included the water rights. He mentioned that he has heard of instances where the issue of water rights has delayed the ability of the beneficiaries to use irrigation on the farm.

**A development plan hatched.** The farmer stated that they had a vision for the trust. That their intention is not to stay on the farms forever is evidenced by their discussion with the beneficiaries to select and train individuals from the beneficiaries who would take over operations. The quote below demonstrates the vision.

Part of the plan was to select young people through the help of the Limpopo Department of Agriculture and use a fund to send them to agriculture colleges to study agriculture. Afterwards, the selected individuals must come back to work for the trust for a period of 3-5 years as part of paying back and transferring the skills.

The farmer stated that the beneficiaries agreed with the plan. The farmer described what happened. Together, the farmers and beneficiaries, hired a consultant to assist them with the plan. The plan was developed at a cost of R75,000 paid by the trust. The conditions for selection included that the selected people must be interested in studying and practicing agriculture, must be qualified to be admitted to an agricultural college or university to study agriculture and that they must be selected from the community of beneficiaries. The farmers suggested to the beneficiaries that after completion of their training, the trainees could be used as model claimants as evidenced by the quote:

For example, he can stand out to say I have studied through my grandfather's funds and now I can train other people on how to farm.....We gave it [the plan] to the commissioner and he said no you have hidden agendas

The farmer said that the commissioner discarded the plan, even though the beneficiaries had agreed. The farmer lamented that the plan would have assisted tremendously in transferring skills to the beneficiaries. He said there is a lot of mistrust between farmers and officials, no matter whether the intentions are good.

**Where should the farmers go after they are paid?** The farmer stated that because they were interested in the land reform process they kept meeting with the claimants out of their own initiative. They also did this because they realized that suddenly leaving the farm would be traumatizing both for them and probably for the beneficiaries too, observed that farmer. The farmers had 10 to 15 meetings with beneficiaries where they discussed the fact that

the farmers cannot be expected to leave immediately after being paid off. The beneficiaries understood and listened

The farmer stated that the current land transfer system is making neither the farmers nor the beneficiaries happy. The farmer feels that farmers, who earned a living from farming, are expected to leave the farm as soon as they are paid. He perceives this as a threat. He mentioned that the process of discussions between the farmers and beneficiaries was initiated by the farmers because they realized that they both need this interaction. The farmers were not happy with the expectation that they were to move away from the farms immediately after being paid out because this expectation, in his opinion, made both the future of the farmers and that of the beneficiaries uncertain. This is evidenced by the quote below:

If you can check, the problem is not the previous or new owners; the problem is the government that is in between. The government does not come to the party, for example, there were promises made to claimants that never materialized. If you ask me what must be done to get satisfied claim? I would say, **there must not be any threat to anyone** [farmer's emphasis]. Don't threaten the farmer that I'm going to take the farm. Don't threaten a farmer that after settlement you will leave. Don't threaten the claimants that you don't get on the farm before any settlements. I think what is most important is to get both parties before anything to say this farm has been claimed, what can be done after settlement. In our case as from 2006 we became part of the process to help the new farmers with the transition process. We guide the farmers to continue with the production and adapt to the whole process.

**Job creation.** The farmer said he was aware that one of the expectations of the land reform programme is that it will create jobs, especially for the beneficiaries who were previously disadvantaged. Commenting on the issue of job creation the farmers believes that labor probably increased on the other farms after the lease agreement. He believed that the lease arrangement was achieving the government's objective of job creation at Maitjene as compared to Driegesdaal where no such lease arrangement was made and where everything went according to the expectations of the government in terms of land transfer. The farmers went further by putting conditions on the hiring process by agreeing that they would hire first from the communities of beneficiaries and only go outside of the beneficiary communities if they cannot find the needed skills. In other instances, the farmers opted to train the people from the beneficiary communities. He reported that the farmers are truly committed to hiring labor from the beneficiary communities.

## Discussion

Regarding theme 1, "The process from gazetting to farmer pay outs," according to the farmer the time from being gazetted to the time of pay out took more than two and a half years. This length of the time span from negotiations to farmers' pay-out, which then allows the beneficiaries to start farming, is not unusual in the current land reform process. Golele (2016) notes that because of the time taken between gazetting and final transfer when the beneficiaries are formally allowed by the government to start using the farm, it is usually no longer a going concern. This is a major problem in restitution. Referring to the progress of a claim Logan et al. (2012) describe a meeting that was held between the Regional Land Claims Commission (RLCC) and the Mothiba community elders on 7 June 2007 to discuss the claims and counterclaims of the same land in Polokwane Limpopo Province by the Mothiba and the Mathapo communities. Not only was the meeting held nine years after the communities first

filed the claims, but the RLCC admitted that some documents that the communities had submitted several times had been lost. The response from the RLCC representative to a question about the whereabouts of documents which the Mothibas claimed to have submitted several times was that part of the reason for the confusion and the slow progress was that when someone resigns from the RLCC, the information associated with that person's files is sometimes lost or misplaced (Logan et al. 2012). Not only is the timeframe surprising (nine years!), but it is baffling how the information for such an important programme can be associated with an individual and then be lost. The pace at which land reform is occurring (the time from launching a claim to the time when beneficiaries access the farm) effectively reduces the scale and therefore impact of the programme. After being gazetted the previous owner cannot use the farm and the beneficiaries can only use the farm after the previous farmers are paid off. Besides taking a long time, the process seems to also have elements of antagonism. I conclude that there are process issues that need adjustment in order to make the land reform programme more effective.

In relation to theme 2, "Willing-seller, willing-buyer principle," many experts believe that the willing-seller, willing-buyer principle has presented insurmountable problems for the land reform program (Fraser, 2008). Logan et al. (2012) clearly articulate some of the problems associated with the principle. They point out that one of the problems presented by the approach is that it allows some racist landowners to avoid selling to the government opting for the open market instead. Cousins (2013) also points out that there was some dissatisfaction with the willing-seller, willing-buyer principle. However, Cousins (2013) also queries why the complaints against the willing-seller, willing-buyer principle can be justified in view of the fact that it takes years from the time a farm is identified and gazetted to the time when the beneficiaries can actually use it. From the farmer's narrative it is clear that he believes that it was through the conversations they had with the beneficiaries that encouraged the farmers to participate as willing sellers. The willing-seller, willing-buyer principle, is no longer a concern since the government of the ANC under President Cyril Ramaphosa has recently declared that land would be expropriated to speed up the land reform process. I recommend that expropriation be carefully applied and that situations, if any, where it has been successfully applied, be carefully studied.

With reference to theme 3, "Willingness of the previous owners to participate in post-settlement," Binswanger-Mkhize (2014) points out that post-settlement support is usually late. Cousins (2013) points out that the implementers of land reform in the department of Rural Development and Land Reform and the officers in the other government departments that are supposed to provide post-settlement support have never farmed themselves. Because of the lack of farming experience, the government implementers of land reform may not have the proper appreciation of the devastating impacts of all their actions (or lack thereof) including the late arrival of post-settlement support. The case of Matjene shows that there are farmers who are willing to participate in post settlement activities. The question is, whether Matjene is an isolated incident or are there farmers who are willing to participate in post-settlement in attempting to make land reform a success?

The importance of maintaining production after land transfer cannot be overemphasized. The farmer continuously referred to Driegesdaal, a completely failed restitution project. Driegesdaal is not an exception because generally the land reform projects have not delivered the expected livelihoods impacts to the beneficiaries. Hart (2012) points out that poverty reduction was the central issue in the business plan of the Kagiso Trust, but laments that the good intentions were not realized in practice. Even in the cases cited as successes, for example the Ba Bina Noko CPA where Golele (2016) concludes that the mentorship program is working to assist the productivity of beneficiaries, the level of production has neither reached where it would have an impact on poverty reduction and the improvement of the livelihoods of

the beneficiaries nor the level that was achieved before land reform. The management staff at the Ba Bina Noko CPA also confirmed that production has also not reached the level of the previous owner. At Maitjene, of their own initiative, but together with the beneficiaries, the farmers tried to make sure that production neither stops nor drops (to the benefit of both the farmers and the claimants).

Regarding theme 4, “The lease arrangement and how it maintained production,” the farmer mentioned that one of the reasons why there are challenges to maintain production is that the beneficiaries are not ready to take over production and therefore if the farmers leave, the beneficiaries cannot continue with production on their own. The case studied by Hart (2012) shows that when land reform is implemented, the beneficiaries usually have neither the experience nor the skills to efficiently produce on their newly acquired land. They also do not have any knowledge of the land acquired. This knowledge goes with the previous owner. Partly to address the issue of lack of skills, the government has introduced a mentorship programme which is described in detail by Golele (2016). Even as Golele (2016) concludes that the mentorship programme is successful, it still does not address the issue of loss of critical production information from the previous owners. The lack of skills among beneficiaries is well documented (Binswanger-Mkhize, 2014, Bradstock, 2005, Bromley, 1995).

Unfortunately, partly due to the beneficiaries’ lack of skills, the poor performance of current land reform projects seem to lend credence to the claim by the white farmers who refuse to sell land that “African agriculture would continue to survive if-and only if-they [white farmers] stayed on the land.... Africans were inherently incapable of meeting the country’s economic demands.” (Fraser, 2008, p. 33). I recommend that the government has to accept the fact that the beneficiaries cannot be turned into successful commercial farmers overnight and that, “...land reform approaches that fail to involve white farmers will lead the country towards disaster” (Fraser, 2008, p. 33). This may be a really bitter pill for the South African government to swallow; however, the current performance of the land reform projects and restitution projects, in particular, suggests it may be just what the doctor ordered.

The farmer also mentions the need for capital in order for the claimants to maintain production. The government tries to address this need. As part of the process of accessing production funds the government designed the recapitalization (RECAP) funding program under which land reform projects are required to present business plans (Golele, 2016; Hart, 2012) which they design together with a mentor under the guidance of the Department of Agriculture. The business plans will only be presented to the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform after approval by the Department of Agriculture. The plan is usually made without a budget constraint. Golele (2016) reports that the Ba Bina Noko CPA, which has 182 beneficiary households, requested R18, 000, 000 in their business plan but received only R6, 516, 500. The experience of Ba Bina Noko CPA prompts some questions to be asked like: Why is the amount claimed reduced? What are the criteria for determining the reduction? Which part of the plan should the beneficiaries develop given the reduced amount? Is the reduction a sign of the lack of farming experience of the officials? Given the reduced amount, do the beneficiaries have to make a new (operational) business plan? Since the business plan is developed with assistance for Department of Agriculture does the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, therefore, doubt the expertise of the Department of Agriculture in determining the financial needs of the claimants? The problem posed by this approach is that the mentor and the beneficiaries are usually left to draft a budget constrained business plan. It is not clear whether the Department of Agriculture still assists in the development of the budget constrained business plan as enthusiastically as they do in the initial business plan which is not budget constrained. This has led to failure and loss of production as the money given usually ends up being spread very thinly.



In relation to theme 5, “What was purchased with the money given to the farmers/what was not purchased,” Hart (2012) describes the case of the Kagiso land redistribution project where the farm was purchased in 1999 but partially because water access rights were not included in the purchase price, the formal transfer of the farm only took place in 2007, eight years later! At Maitjene, although there have been no problems of water access, it is not clear whether the purchase price included water rights. This is a sign of the lack of farming experience of the land reform officials. How can one purchase the farm land for a sum running into millions of Rands and then not include the water rights or assets? This is almost unbelievable on the part of government and leads Cousins (2013,) to conclude that everybody knows that land reform in post-Apartheid South Africa is in disarray.

With reference to theme 7, “Where should the previous owners go after they are paid off?” Fraser (2008) argues that farmers refused to sell because they are concerned about their prospects in South Africa if they sold their farms. Farming is the only way of life they know, so there is a fear of the unknown. They are afraid that they cannot get a job in non-agricultural industries because of non-transferability of farming skills. If they buy another farm, restitution might still catch up with them and leaving South Africa is not an option. These fears are real and therefore I recommend a more cautious approach, which can allay the fears, even under the banner of expropriation.

Regarding theme 8, “Job creation,” it is clearly stated in the White Paper on land reform that one of the expected outcomes of the land reform programme is employment creation (Government of South Africa, 1997). Mendola and Simtowe (2015, p. 66) conclude that in Malawi; “Results show that the land program significantly increased land holdings, agricultural output, and the crop specific land productivity...of beneficiary groups.....” This conclusion is reached by comparing productivity of land for the beneficiaries before and after the land reform program. In South Africa, hardly is the analysis of impacts performed by comparing the productivity of land before and after the land reform by comparing the productivity of previous land owners with that of beneficiaries. This type of analysis cannot be performed for the projects that have been transferred to date because the production data of previous owners is lost and rarely accessed by the beneficiaries. Thus, the national impact of the land reform programme is only partially evaluated and understood. When analyzed purely from a beneficiary perspective, land reform programmes can be hailed as successes if they increased the beneficiaries’ access to land and improved their productivity and incomes. However, it is possible (maybe even more likely) that the productivity of beneficiaries is lower than that of the previous owners (Golele, 2016). This aspect is hardly ever analyzed. As the farmer clearly implies, this analysis can be accomplished if there is cooperation between the farmers and beneficiaries. Also, unless the productivity of beneficiaries increases, compared to that of the farmers, how can employment be created?

When the farmers need unskilled labour, they first hire from the community of beneficiaries before they look elsewhere. Even though the beneficiary communities benefit from this decision, at national level this is not employment creation. It is a transfer of the labor employment from one community to another. It is also not clear what the government means by employment creation. Do they mean that the net effect of land reform must be positive in terms of employment? That is, the labor used by the beneficiaries’ must be higher than that of the previous farmers? This is the meaning of employment creation. It is possible that there may be isolated land reform cases where the net effect on both productivity and employment has been positive. However, in most cases, as pointed out by the farmer, restitution projects have generally had a net negative effect on both productivity and employment. At best both have been maintained such as is the case at Maitjene.

For land reform to have the desired employment creation impact, it needs to be done at a large scale. In Japan, Taiwan, and Korea post-World War II, land reform affected two thirds

of rural households and in Bolivia, Nicaragua, Peru, and Mexico land reform benefited up to a third of the rural population. (Mendola & Simtowe, 2015). In South Africa, therefore, there is need to realistically measure some of the impacts of the land reform program, most importantly including what proportion of the rural population it has benefited and to what extent the livelihoods of the beneficiaries have improved. Under the current circumstances, if at all, only employment transfers are achieved not employment creation. It is important that, not only should there be a transfer of control of the productive asset land, but beneficiaries must be able to control the benefits from land utilization (Kepe & Cousins, 2000, as cited in Logan et al. 2012). So far, it appears the restitution programme has, albeit slowly, managed the transfer of land to beneficiaries but not the generation and control of benefits and the generation of employment.

### Insights into the Way Forward

The introduction highlights some issues that may be responsible for the poor performance of the land reform programme in South Africa. However, given the farmer's perspectives, I conjecture that, in addition to these possible causes, the failure of the land reform programme in South Africa can be attributed to a missing link. That missing link is **the conversation** that has not taken place between the previous farm owners and the beneficiaries. My hypothesis, therefore, is that if government land reform implementers were to facilitate this conversation and avoid the approach where they attempt to make farmers out of beneficiaries overnight, this alone, *ceteris paribus*, would lead to more success for the land reform programme. The valuation of the gazetted properties provides the first window of opportunity where **the conversation** could be initiated. After the valuations, the farmer/s could continue orienting the beneficiaries to their newly acquired property, orientation which does not take place under the current process. If the process is not confrontational, the farmers can also share the all-important farm production data with the Department of Agriculture who can store it for future performance evaluations. The involvement of the previous owners in such a way also begins to allay their fears about their future.

Perhaps fueled by the emotions of the historical circumstances, which were characterized by systematic dispossession and incessant social disadvantage, the (black) implementers of the South African land reform program have tended to adopt an us/them attitude, much to the detriment of the program. The signs of this us/them attitude are evident in the refusal of the valuator to answer the farmers' questions and by the way the commissioner turned down the farmers' plan to identify and develop the local talent, from the beneficiaries, that could take over the management of the farm/s. The farmers realized that not all beneficiaries can be turned into farmers. A fact which the government needs to realize soon. The us/them attitude means that **the conversation** does not take place.

Most researchers and observers agree that the willing-seller, willing-buyer principle has slowed down land reform in South Africa. The recent announcement by the ANC government under President Cyril Ramaphosa that it will expropriate land may lead to a speeding up of the process. In Scotland, when land owners refused to sell the land to the land reform programme, powers of compulsory purchase have been used (Macmillan, 2000). This approach could also have been a possibility in South Africa. Land expropriation in South Africa can be justified on the basis that there is a moral question about compensating white farmers. The question is what is the compensation for? Bromley (1995) asks if white farmers are paid for the land are blacks paying for what is rightfully theirs. Is this the moral question that was continuously posed, by Julius Malema, the leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters concerning South Africa's land reform process? The expropriation stance taken by the ANC government addresses the concerns by Julius Malema. If the land reform process is not sped up, it is possible problems

resulting from frustration may arise. Bobrow-Strain (2004) states that in Chiapas, Mexico, between 1994 and 1998 there were invasions of privately owned farms and notes: "...the invasions in Chiapas dramatically forced agrarian demands back onto center stage, leveraging massive redistributions with unprecedented speed." (Bobrow-Strain, 2004, p. 888). This is definitely not the way that the South African government wants land reform to be sped up. Thus encouraging **the conversation**, even under expropriation, might avoid this.

One of the major failings of the South African land reform programme is that it has failed to ensure that production continues during and after farm acquisition so that beneficiaries can be able to earn a living from the land. In Chiapas after the farm invasion initiated dramatic land redistribution, a government official addressing a symposium warned that unless the Mexican government had policies that "...gave peasants the ability to support themselves on the land the reforms would fail." (Bobrow-Strain, 2004, p. 899). Research shows that for the redistributed land under the Chiapas land reform program, "At least 40% of all land .....had been abandoned by its original recipients." and that "...this land may have been abandoned because farmers lacked the basic resources necessary to make it produce..." (Bobrow-Strain, 2004, p. 899). If **the conversation** is properly facilitated, this can avoid such an outcome for the South African land reform programme. If **the conversation** takes place, it is also more likely that such embarrassing incidences as the failure to include the water rights and production assets in the purchase price can be avoided. Currently previous owners, government implementers and beneficiaries seem to be acting in silos. **The conversation** could break these silos leading to more transparency and, I posit, more success.

There are differences in land received by different beneficiaries. Bradstock (2005) provides insight into these differences. Therefore, what works for one restitution project may not work for another. **The conversation** cannot be a panacea for the land reform ills, and it can certainly be adjusted to individual circumstances. Although somewhat similar, I am not proposing a mentorship programme similar to the one described by Golele (2016). I am proposing that, through **the conversation**, previous owners be made an integral part of a properly planned transition from white to black land ownership. Given that beneficiaries usually do not have farming experience, I posit that this transition could take at least a period of 10 years for all the farms that are acquired as going concerns. Within this period, a transition plan could be successfully designed to include formal training of some of the beneficiaries as had been hatched by the farmers at Maitjene. The approach also offers the government a window of opportunity to involve a selected set of willing farmers in policy formulation so that policy does not make the maintenance of production on restitution farm land a peripheral issue as appears to be the current case. This approach also makes the farmers who did not participate in the willing-seller, willing-buyer principle, and whose land is expropriated feel better as they derive financial benefits from such an approach. They also get a chance to transition into a different lifestyle or to continue farming. The beneficiaries will benefit because they will immediately start deriving benefits because production does not stop. Therefore, **the conversation** has the potential to create a win-win situation.

### Limitations

In this study, only one interview was conducted. Therefore, transferability is only on the basis that this may be a case within a larger group. Shenton (2004) discusses this condition. The fact that I do not speak Afrikaans presented some challenges during the interview. It was evident that, although fluent in English, there were times when the farmer felt like switching to his native Afrikaans language. Due to my busy schedule, and the busy schedule of the farmer, I did not get the time to have him verify the transcripts and make any changes if he needed to. Cypess (2017) mentions how important this is to qualitative research.

## Conclusion

Due to forward and backward linkages with industrial development, raising the productivity of agriculture is a necessary condition for rapid transition out of poverty (Davis, 2011). If the South African restitution program is to reduce poverty, the question is, is it raising the productivity of agriculture? In addressing this question two comparisons need to be made:

- a. The agricultural productivity of beneficiaries before and after restitution.
- b. The productivity of the land before and after restitution. This will necessarily involve data from previous owners.

It is possible that agricultural productivity after restitution might decline while the productivity of beneficiaries after restitution might increase. Improving the productivity of beneficiaries through restitution is a necessary condition for poverty reduction but the sufficient condition is that productivity needs to be maintained or increased after restitution. This is because the link of the poor to economic growth is through agriculture (Davis, 2011; Mendola & Simtowe, 2015). Although in, South Africa agriculture sometimes contributes as low as 3 percent to GDP, it is an important source of food security and a foreign currency earner (Davis 2011). It is also a vehicle for rural development (Government of South Africa, 1997) especially in South Africa where 47 percent of population lives in rural areas and where rural areas account for 76 percent of poverty (Davis, 2011).

In the effort to transform the South African rural society, the democratic South African government needs to take a serious look at transforming the land reform policies and mechanisms that it has used for the past 22 years. Some of the transformations needed are quite involving and complex but some are quite simple, yet they could go a long way in improving the performance of the agricultural transformative process. **The conversation** is an example of the latter.

The previous owners had developed a way of life on the farm and they are expected to just drop that and start leading a new life. The abruptness with which this is expected to happen can be traumatizing for previous owners. The beneficiaries, upon assuming ownership of the farm, suddenly discover that they do not have any knowledge about what happens on the farm. They have neither the skills nor capital (both equipment and liquidity) to produce on the farm and therefore benefit from it. Their only direct benefit is the transfer of the land from the white owner to them. This can also be traumatizing. **The conversation** can reduce this trauma on both sides.

The absence of **the conversation** necessarily means that those white farmers who are willing to participate in post-settlement support are not identified and allowed to freely participate in order to make the land reform programme successful. Instead, under the current us/them approach, those farmers willing to participate in post-settlement support are, sadly, in one stroke, painted with the same paintbrush as those who are racists and or are unwilling to participate. This could and needs to be avoided through **the conversation** in order to make the land reform and especially, the restitution programme successful. Lastly, it is possible that **the conversation** can give the large scale commercial farm approach a chance to succeed thus addressing the concerns raised by Aliber and Cousins (2013) and Binswanger-Mkhize (2014) leading them to conclude that farm subdivisions could serve the land reform programme better.

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