

Panel 3: Moral Economies and State Policy in Practice

Tim Hart --- *Contemporary Rural Livelihoods? Policy Errors and New Opportunities.*

Despite significant policy changes over the past two decades, South Africa's land reform policy remains contested in many ways. One glaring failure has been the inability to address rural livelihoods and how and why this change. A crucial misconception is that rural livelihoods are agrarian-based and that rural residents are naturally 'communal'. The paper focuses on changing livelihood patterns in rural areas before, during and after COVID-19. It examines the policy and its changes over the past two decades and the havoc this has wrought for policymakers and rural residents. Policymakers tried to make land reform interventions fit changing policy objectives, while rural dwellers limited participation in interventions to acquire resources for survival. Even with an agrarian livelihood's lens, land reform scarcely considered the needs and desires of rural dwellers. As agrarian practices declined somewhat before COVID-19 and the harsh lockdown in South Africa, other livelihood sources were used – possibly triggering fewer agrarian activities. The urbanisation of the rural countryside provided opportunities for more local employment in retail and construction. With the implementation of the National State of Disaster for two years, livelihood sources shifted dynamically. Migrants lost their urban jobs and returned to rural areas increasing the local population but bringing their paltry social relief of distress grant with them. Other social grants continued. The paper reveals how livelihood sources changed and that while they are always in a state of flux, agrarian livelihoods, as exemplified by land reform policies, remain scarce. COVID-19 has made it strikingly clear that land reform is another stagnant policy that does not focus on practised rural livelihoods but rather perceived livelihoods. Will the main rural livelihoods policy change, or will rural people and their needs continue to be ignored, despite policy discourses of inclusion?

Aneza Madini & Zipho Xego --- *Localizing Economic Development: Women's Participation in Trade and Rural Markets in Cwebe, Eastern Cape*

Deepening rural poverty in South Africa is often attributed to the high levels of grant dependence and absence of local economic initiative in the face of the intrusion of large retail stores from the cities that soak up the limited income that rural households can access to grants and remittances. The provision of these services has large been confined to small towns where grants are collections and rural households do most of their shopping. The lockdown imposed during the Covid pandemic, together with the increasing cost of transport, has limited mobility, which has brought new traders into the rural areas. At the same time, local women have organised to ensure that they have greater control over value chains and circuits of the exchange at the village level. Trade has the potential to expand women's role in the economy, decrease inequality, and expand job opportunities, enhance, and promote their choices and increase their bargaining power as they women control spending in rural households. They know the role they play in ensuring the wellbeing of the members of their families, including provision of food, and care for children and the elderly. Women's buying power cannot be overlooked, as they influence and decision-making power and consumer behaviour. This paper therefore will therefore address and engage in different aspects related to women livelihoods and consumer strategies during and since the pandemic in Cwebe and other rural areas, with a focus to their participation to trade and access to markets. This paper also seeks to highlight alternative measures that women have developed since pandemic as a way of localising benefits and devising new survival strategies.

Ziyanda Xaso and Leslie Bank -- *Strains on the Body: Developing Rural Women, Comorbidity, and the Labour Theory of Value*

This paper is concerned with the representations of women in the rural development sector and how rural women are so often represented through images of the labouring body. These bodies, we argue, are invariably burdened by some “load” – the load of a water or wood on their heads, or a baby on their backs they enter clinics. The labour of the rural is women’s labour. The imaging of poor women in development also typically has women in custom dress and working in groups, invoking the spirit of cooperative labour. This suggests that their burden is both physical and socio-cultural. By contrast, new female rural entrepreneurs in these setting are usually presented as more youthful, culturally hybrid and modern. They are also pictured as individuals not as groups and often with technology close-by. But poor rural women all have cell phones and use technologies that are seldom seen in rural development brochures. Furthermore, the association of the cultured bodies of rural women with poverty rather than advancement, implies that advancement requires a ‘loss of culture’. This paper notes these representational orders and reflects how these external visions of women’s labouring bodies are embraced by rural women themselves, who believe that their labour defines their social identities and agency as they thrive to free themselves from poverty and degradation. The paper then shifts to a consideration of the increased viral and emotional loads that women carry in their bodies because of comorbidities and trauma, which accelerated during the pandemic. The paper reflects on the how rural women’s bodies have become incapacitated by comorbidity and trauma and how this is impacting on their self-image., optimism and their ability to “build back better” as women after Covid. In making these observations it reflects on the relative absence of men from the rural development discourse and how that ultimately increases the strain on rural women and their bodies.

Kamva Miza, Bukelani Mboniswa and Zena Msutu -- *Rural Governance and the State: The Moral Economy of Service Delivery at the Margins in South Africa*

“The state is not a cold monster; it is the correlative of a particular way of governing,” states Michel Foucault. “The problem is how this way of governing develops, what its history is, how it expands, how it contracts, how it is extended to a particular domain, how it invents, forms, and develops new practices.” In other words, one should not first posit the existence of the state and then examine how it manifests itself, but “start with these concrete practices” to discover the nature of governance and the practice of the state. The aim of this paper is to apply these insights to the nature of state formation and development practice in the Eastern Cape with reference to rural areas. The paper will start with a discussion of the ideas and practices that exist in both the state and the NGOs sector about the nature of their agency and the meaning of the rural development agenda. What defines this agenda in their minds and ideology, and what practises are best suited to managing this sphere of engagement. The paper will then home in on the work of four specific areas of engagement: livelihoods planning, policing, social development, and gender-based violence (GBV) as particular fields of practice. It will investigate the policy imperatives that officially or theoretically structure engagement in these three areas, namely by law, policy, and mandate, before exploring how statecraft is created translated and constructed as a set of concrete practices, both in the past and in the present. The particular focus of the ethnographic work in the paper will also not primarily focus on exchanges and interactions between elites (state officials and tender entrepreneurs) but rather with the way the state constructs and encounters rural people at the clinic, the police station, at school, on a what project or land restitution scheme. Conceptually, then the paper seeks to depart from a dominant normative (capable, constitutional etc.) or ideological (developmental or neo-liberal) imperatives of the state to one which defines the state through the moral and social practice in context. The paper also avoids the pitfalls of perspectives that limit their focus to the theme of ‘unintended consequences’ consequences of development by connecting the consequential and accidental as state formation.