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# RURAL ECONOMY

**“Then It’s Clear Who Owns the Trees”: Evaluating  
Privatization in the Social Forest in a Zimbabwean  
Resettlement Area**

Allison Goebel

Staff Paper 97-06

## STAFF PAPER



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Allison Goebel is a PhD student in Sociology at the University of Alberta. This paper is based on part of her field work undertaken during 1995-7 in Sengezi Resettlement Area, Hwedza District. Her dissertation, "No spirits control the trees": History, Culture and Gender in the Social Forest in A Zimbabwean Resettlement Area (PhD Dissertation, Department of Sociology, University of Alberta, Canada), investigates institutions, tradition, gender relations and power in the social forest. The study is qualitative, based on Participatory Rural Appraisal workshops (PRA) and five different formal interview schedules for villagers from four of the six original villages in the scheme. Numerous key informant interviews with local officials and leaders, documentary research, and newspaper analysis also inform this paper.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The value that associates private property regimes with better management of arable land played a consistent role in colonial policy and practice in "African" areas of Southern/Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). In the woodlands, however, common property management systems characterized African areas. This persisted in the post-Independence state, both in the Communal Areas, and in the newly demarcated Resettlement Areas. Recommendations by the recent Land Tenure Commission (1993), however, are set to change tenure in the woodlands in Resettlement Areas from common property to private property, on the perception that the common property system fails to sustainably manage the woodlands. In this paper, the apparent failure in common property woodland management in a case study of a Model A resettlement scheme in Zimbabwe is explored. Tenure insecurity and the types of controls and institutions in the woodlands are examined as possible sources of the failure. The major stress on the woodlands, besides clearance of land for agriculture, emerges as resource poaching by Communal Area neighbours. The currently popular notion of resource-sharing as a possible solution to this problem is discussed. In the final analysis the author finds that privatization is unlikely to solve the management crisis as it inadequately deals with the major problem of resource poaching. This failure is part of a wider conceptual problem of dealing with Zimbabwe's different land-use categories in isolation, rather than as an interrelated system. The paper is framed by an analysis of how a new focus on tenure issues, particularly privatization, in the land redistribution process in Zimbabwe fits with a growing trend wherein issues of justice and development for the rural poor are eclipsed by a discourse of "efficiency" and "productivity".



# **"Then It's Clear Who Owns the Trees"<sup>1</sup>: Evaluating Privatization in the Social Forest in a Zimbabwean Resettlement Area**

Allison Goebel

## **Introduction**

The value that associates private property regimes with better management of arable land played a consistent role in colonial policy and practice in "African" areas of Southern/Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Colonial efforts to improve African farming productivity and land management were underpinned by the institution of private land tenure relations to replace "communal" tenure. Most notably, the creation of African Purchase Areas under the provision of the Land Apportionment Act of 1930, and the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951 both had private property relations at their centres (Cheater 1990; Schmidt 1992; Shutt 1995). In the woodlands, however, there was no comparable link in colonial thinking between improving woodland management in African areas and privatization of tenure. Throughout colonial times common property management systems characterized the social forest in African areas. Colonial efforts to improve woodland management in African areas focused not on tenure, but on a combination of afforestation through eucalyptus woodlots and controls on African practices in the indigenous forests.<sup>2</sup>

Common property regimes in the woodlands in African areas persisted in the post-Independence state, both in the Communal Areas (formerly the "Reserves" or "Tribal Trust Lands"), and in the newly demarcated Resettlement Areas (see below). Recommendations by the

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Chirere (deceased), Master Farmer. Sengezi Resettlement Area, Wedza District Zimbabwe. Interview July 29 1995. Mr. Chirere was commenting on the positive effects, in his view, of a change to private tenure in the currently communally used woodlands in resettlement.

<sup>2</sup> See Southern Rhodesia The Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs and Chief Native Commissioner for the 1940s to 1960s. A detailed historical account is beyond the scope of this paper. Please see Goebel 1997, Chapter Three, for more detail.



1993 Land Tenure Commission (Rukuni 1994), however, are set to change tenure in the woodlands in Resettlement Areas from common property to private property, on the perception that the common property system fails to manage the woodlands sustainably. This move represents a shift in government thinking on woodland management, from a focus on peasant practices to a focus on tenure system.

In this paper, I probe what does indeed appear to be a failure in common property woodland management in a case study of a Model A family farm resettlement scheme in Zimbabwe.<sup>3</sup> In order to assess whether the tenure system is at the root of the problem, I investigate a range of tenure issues. I look at tenure insecurity as a possible problem in the management system. I then delineate the types of controls and institutions operating in the woodlands and draw out the key internal weaknesses in the management system. Next, I examine a conflict over use of woodland resources by neighbours in adjacent Communal Areas. This "poaching" emerges as arguably the biggest strain on the social forest in the resettlement. The social, political and economic dimensions of this conflict are discussed at length. The central problems appear to be the acute resource shortages in Communal Areas, and Communal Area residents' sense of entitlement to resettlement resources. Given this conflict over resettlement resources, I consider the currently popular notion of resource-sharing as a possible solution. Given all the factors discussed, I address the question of whether private tenure is likely to solve the problems of woodland management in resettlement. But first, the discussion must be located

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<sup>3</sup> Central to this paper is the Household Schedule used to interview a selected sample of 60 individuals, half men, half women. Direct quotations from these interviews are cited only by informant number to protect anonymity. For example, 3.41f, means female informant from household number 41 in village 3.

within the larger context of the discourse of land redistribution in post-Independence Zimbabwe.

In early post-Independence Zimbabwe, the issue of land was dominated by the need to redress past injustices in land access through land redistribution. This affected views on tenure as well as views on the causes of land degradation. At Independence, the new government had no commitment to private property ideology. In fact, the new government favoured socialistic land tenure relations motivated by revolutionary visions of just land redistribution and fair relations of production. The former Tribal Trust Lands (Reserves) became "Communal Lands", emphasizing the role of "home for all" initiated by the colonial government.<sup>4</sup> The resettlement program was designed to redress the past injustices of land distribution. Upon Independence in 1980, the new government moved quickly to establish schemes on unused or abandoned land, upon which landless or destitute peasants were to be settled. Of the four main models of the resettlement programme, none operated with private tenure.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Cheater (1990) outlines the continuity of post-Independence policy in Communal Areas with colonial policy on Reserves. The Communal Land Act of 1982 gave authority of land allocation in CAs to the District Councils, hence continuing "the colonial process of subordinating custom to state control" (Cheater 1990: 201). Ideology about "customary" rights and practices of land use and allocation underpin the post-Independent discourse on CAs just as it did the colonial discourse on Reserves. However, this policy ultimately increases state control through manipulation and transformation of what is "customary".

<sup>5</sup> Model A, Normal Intensive Resettlement, is the most common and is similar in structure to communal lands: families are settled in nucleated villages and given permits to reside, cultivate and depasture stock. Grazing and bush areas are treated as common property to all who fall within village boundaries. This model also later included the Accelerated Intensive Resettlement model, designed to deal with the problem of squatters on former commercial farms. The model followed model A structures, but included a minimum of infrastructure and service development as a means to formalize squatters' land use quickly. Model B is a cooperative model wherein groups of between 50 and 200 members live and farm cooperatively. Model C settles farmers through a lease system on state owned estates, such as tobacco, coffee or dairy, and farmers benefit from state infrastructure such as processing or marketing facilities. Model D is a grazing scheme rather than a resettlement model. In all cases, ultimate land holding resides with the state. Of these models, Model A has dominated, and Model B has been declared a failure. The scheme in this study is of the original Normal Intensive type,

In the early years of post-Independence Zimbabwe, the critical views of the Liberation War also set the tone for government analysis of land degradation in the African sector. Degradation was said to be caused by the unjust land distribution policy of the colonialists, wherein peasants were forced off the most fertile land, and pushed into unsustainable practices due to land shortage. The remedy was large scale land redistribution and resettlement. In the Transitional National Development Plan 1982/83 - 1984/85, government planned to spend \$260 million over the plan period to settle 162,000 families on 4.2 million hectares of unutilized and 3 million hectares of underutilized commercial land (Zimbabwe 1982).

The resettlement program has remained central to the government's rhetorical commitment to undoing the colonial legacy of white domination in most of the good agricultural land in the country. However, in practice government has consistently failed to meet its own targets for resettlement. Government primarily blames lack of funds for land purchase and infrastructural development<sup>6</sup> and the intransigence of white commercial farmers.<sup>7</sup> Other factors stalling the establishment of sufficient numbers of schemes to meet demand include the centrality of commercial agricultural to the Zimbabwean economy and the subsequent lobbying power of large-scale commercial farmers, pressure from multilateral institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to protect commercial farming, and government corruption through which acquired land is given to ministers and other government friends. To date, between 62,000

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and is one of the first to have been established in the country (1981).

<sup>6</sup> See "No cash for resettlement programme as State acquires 25 farms" The Herald April 4 1996:1. "Zimbabwe and Britain still discuss resettlement funding" The Herald May 21 1996. "State to get British help to acquire land" The Herald September 7 1996.

<sup>7</sup> "State to compulsorily acquire 27 farms" The Herald December 29 1995:1. "Farmers turn abusive over land issue" The Sunday Mail June 23 1996: 1.

and 70,000 families have been resettled,<sup>8</sup> while government estimates that about 200,000 families are waiting for resettlement plots.<sup>9</sup> (See Drinkwater 1989, Elliott 1991, Goebel 1997, Moyo 1996, Nkala 1996, Wekwete 1991 and Zinyama 1991 for analyses of resettlement since Independence).

Alongside missed targets for resettlement, government policy increasingly downplays the question of justice in land distribution, and focuses instead on questions of "efficiency" and "productivity". This is seen, for example, in the change in selection criteria for resettlement farmers. In the beginning, the landless, returning war refugees, and the poorest people were granted land (Wekwete 1991; Zinyama 1991).<sup>10</sup> As early as 1982, however, plots were granted to Master Farmers as well as the "landless poor" (Alexander 1994: 333; Munslow 1985: 46). By the mid 1980s, Government perceived that the land was "underutilized", and all settlers were to have Master Farmer training by 1986/7. But as the available land quickly filled up, criteria became even stricter: in the current context, applicants must also demonstrate farmer success through ownership of such implements as a scotchcart and a plough.<sup>11</sup> As the Minister of Lands and Water Resources, Cde Kumbirai Kangai states: "Land should only be given to people with the potential

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<sup>8</sup> "Land shortage problem deteriorates" The Sunday Mail June 16 1996.

<sup>9</sup> "Resettlement funds too low" The Herald August 3 1995: 12.

<sup>10</sup> In my area, this was indeed the case on the ground, not just on paper. Preferred settlers were refugees or squatters, particularly those whose current status was a result of the war. Particular favour was given to those who had been active in the war. People were asked if they had been to Mozambique, Zambia, Botswana or Tanzania because of the war (Former Ward Councillor, September 1996, Field Assistant Interview, Field Diary Village 3, Book I).

<sup>11</sup> Resettlement Officer, Interview July 17 1996; Former Ward Councillor, September 1996, Research Assistant Interview, Field Diary Village 3, Book I. The District Administrator of Hwedza District asserts, however, that while there is no shortage of applicants who meet the new criteria (they have a waiting list of about 500 people), allocations are still made to the "needy" such as those displaced by developments like dam construction or the expansion of the growth point (Interview February 18 1997).

to fully utilize it".<sup>12</sup> As only about 20% of farmers in Communal Areas will be able to meet the new criteria, the selection process is likely to enhance the differentiation processes in rural areas further, deepening inequality in terms of land distribution (Moyo 1996).

There has also been a growing acceptance of the pre-Independence construction of the African peasant as "destructive". Land degradation in African areas thus becomes a question of farming practice rather than a result of land shortage. This facilitates changing the emphasis of the aims of resettlement from an issue of justice, to one of productivity and sustainable resource management. Influential voices had urged a focus on peasant practices in Communal Lands and caution regarding the role of resettlement in rural development since Independence (Drinkwater 1989). The Riddell Commission of 1981, while noting the need to devote some land to resettlement, recommended "a substantial restructuring and transformation of agricultural production within the peasant sector" (Riddell 1981: para 686). The Chavunduka Commission of 1982 recognized the problem of land shortage, but suggested that bad husbandry practices were a more serious and fundamental problem (Chavunduka 1982: para 266). Chavunduka urged caution in focusing on resettlement to the cost of improvement in Communal Areas (Chavunduka 1982: para 284).

In the 1990s, the duo of "productivity" and "efficiency" in the post-Independence discourse on land has been joined by the issue of land tenure as a dominant thread:

Due to the colonial history of this country and the communal land tenure system

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<sup>12</sup> "Land Shortage Problem Deteriorates". The Sunday Mail June 16 1996. See also: "Resettlement must depend on productivity: seminar" The Herald April 16 1996: 1. "Comment: Landmark decision" The Sunday Mail August 18 1996: 10. "Residents with resources sought for resettlement" The Herald August 20 1996: 7.

which is a result of this history, the use of these communal lands has been a free-for-all affair with nobody feeling responsible for the proper or sustainable use of this land, since the user has user-rights only and no responsibility for future generations.<sup>13</sup>

In 1993, President Mugabe appointed a Commission of Inquiry, headed by Professor Mandivamba Rukuni, to investigate the appropriateness of each land tenure system in the rural areas. These were to be considered "in relation to sustainable resource management, farm productivity and investment" (Rukuni 1994, Executive Summary: iii).

Government accepted many of the Land Tenure Commission's recommendations, including those on resettlement.<sup>14</sup> In its analysis of resettlement, the Commission states that tenure insecurity and the weakness of local institutions has meant that common property resources have been poorly managed. It therefore recommends that all current resettlement villages of both Model A family farms<sup>15</sup> and Model B cooperatives, be redemarcated into private holdings which would include homestead, fields and grazing areas. All new resettlement schemes should follow this pattern. The permit system should be abandoned, and settlers be given 99 year leases with options to purchase after an initial ten year "trial" period, in which settlers demonstrate serious farming intentions and good practices.

This new focus on tenure issues in relation to land reform should be read through the post-

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<sup>13</sup> Josiah Hungwe, Governor of Masvingo, quoted in The Herald. "Land-use seminar opens", September 28 1995.

<sup>14</sup> K. Kangai, Minister of Lands and Water Development, May 28 1997, speaking at the Consultative Conference on Land in Zimbabwe, convened by the NGO ZERO, and held at the ZESA Training Centre, Harare, May 27-28 1997. See also: "Big change for resettlement areas" The Herald August 7 1995: 7. "Major changes in land tenure" The Herald August 16 1996: 1.

<sup>15</sup> Subject to settler agreement.

Independence experience of land reform to date. An early focus on justice was displaced by the primacy of "productivity" and "efficiency". Will the new theme of "tenure reform" be used as a smokescreen for further stalling on land redistribution? Perhaps more crucially, can tenure reform at the micro level have an real meaning or effect when gross inequality in land distribution at the macro level remains?

This article addresses this question through the specific case of the woodland management crisis in resettlement. Is this crisis primarily about tenure relations as the Land Tenure Commission suggests? Will privatizing tenure in resettlement solve the crisis? To explore these questions, I evaluate tenure security, management systems under varying degrees of private control, rules, institutions and the nature of the conflict with the Communal Area neighbours in order to evaluate privatization as a "solution".

### **1. Tenure Security and Management Systems.**

The Land Tenure Commission expressed concern about the lack of **tenure security** felt by residents of resettlement (Rukuni 1994). Recent evaluations of land tenure systems suggest that the **security** of tenure appears to be more important than their form (ie common or private) in defining the sustainability of the system and users' willingness to invest in long term improvement (Fortmann and Bruce 1988: 3). Does the type of tenure system in resettlement lead to a feeling of insecurity among settlers? Is this a cause of weak management in the social forest?

Model A Resettlement is a family farm model. It grants usufruct rights and management systems under ultimate state ownership. Farmers are given three permits: one to reside, one to plough, and one to depasture livestock. The permits, while having no expiry date, have tended to be renewed every five years, and in theory can be revoked if a settler is unproductive. On paper,

this appears to be a situation of insecurity of tenure, and some studies have identified this (Cliffe 1986 noted in Fortmann and Bruce 1993). Other scholars have found that people are secure enough to build houses and plant fruit trees (Cusworth and Walker 1988 noted in Fortmann and Bruce 1993).

In the study site, there is some indication that settlers at first felt insecurity because of the permit system, which is connected to reckless cutting of trees in the early years.<sup>16</sup> There was also extensive confusion in the beginning about the purpose of being moved into the Resettlement scheme, with many people reportedly not coming by choice, but being "chosen" by their headmen. Many people feared they were being sent to do forced labour on the farms, as before Independence people were often forced to work there if their cattle strayed onto the farms.<sup>17</sup> Despite this insecure beginning, settlers are currently treated as permanent residents, and permits are not generally revoked. According to the Resettlement Officer, it would be nearly impossible to evict an "unproductive" farmer, once they were established there.<sup>18</sup> According to the settlers, the place belongs to them, largely because they do not have any other homes: "we take this place as our own because there is nowhere for us to go" (1.35f).<sup>19</sup> Also, they feel entitled because "we were given by the government" (2.9f).<sup>20</sup> It is common practice for people to bury their dead in the area, rather than returning them kumusha (original home in Communal Lands). Partly this is for

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with former Village Chairman, Village 1, July 29 1995. This informant also mentions "we were war-minded", which he states led people to engage in unsustainable and destructive tree-cutting practices in the early years of Resettlement. My analysis of this statement is that people were disoriented by the war, and acted in ways that disregarded the future.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Secondary School Headmaster, April 11 1996.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Resettlement Officer, May 9 1996.

<sup>19</sup> Response to Household Schedule III. 9.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.



practical reasons (kumusha is very far in some cases). But the effect is to contribute to people's sense of ownership of the land: "yes <it changes how we feel about the land> because we can't leave our dead here <ie leave them behind>, so we can't go anywhere" (2.2f).<sup>21</sup>

In spite of the apparent tenure insecurity as indicated by Resettlement policy, therefore, it appears that settlers do feel reasonably secure, or at the least, entitled to the land.<sup>22</sup> Tenure insecurity, therefore, does not appear to be a central problem, nor to be strongly linked to problems in woodland management. Settlers would rather have greater security of tenure (Rukuni 1994).<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, people do not feel under serious threat of eviction, and hence it would be wrong to read people's behaviours as related to some kind of tenure insecurity.

People's tenure security is expressed through tree-planting and other conservation measures. Nearly all the people interviewed on the topic (56 out of 60), said their household had planted trees.<sup>24</sup> However, tree planting also seems to be affected by the extent of privatized control in different areas of the resettlement family's holding. Most of the trees planted were fruit trees planted in the homestead area, where families have their houses, granaries, a small homefield and/or garden and often a fruit orchard. Trees planted in the homestead area are under the **private control** of the household. A full 76% of households had planted an average of 11 fruit trees in their homestead areas.<sup>25</sup> A large minority (42%) of the sample had planted eucalyptus,

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Grundy and Elliott also found this in other resettlement sites (Grundy 1995: 121; Elliott 1995: 7).

<sup>23</sup> The difference in men's and women's perceptions on what would constitute increased security is an important topic which I intend to treat in another article.

<sup>24</sup> Household Schedule II. 6.

<sup>25</sup> This finding is consistent with other studies in Communal Areas in Zimbabwe, which find fruit tree planting in the homestead area a common practice (Campbell and Musvoto 1995; Campbell, Vermeullen and Lynam 1991; Fortmann and Nabane 1992). Grundy also found this in her Resettlement study site (Grundy 1995: 121).

mainly in fields or homestead areas as private plantations. Arable fields, which are often at some distance from the homestead, are under **semi-private control**, meaning that the fields themselves are fully controlled by their "owners", as are many products found on the edges of fields such as thatching grass, poles, or firewood. Some products, however, like wild fruits, may be gathered by anybody. Only a few people mentioned large plantations in grazing or village plantation areas. Grazing and bush areas are used **communally**, by each village as a whole, and hence are mainly beyond private control. See Figure 1 for a "Resource Map" of one of the study villages. This map shows the nucleated village and the location of different resource areas.<sup>26</sup>

The fact that few households are involved in planting trees outside the homestead area suggests that private control is an important factor in tree planting motivation.<sup>27</sup> While fields and their resources are largely viewed as private,<sup>28</sup> it is easier to steal from someone's field area than from their homestead. In communal management areas, such as grazing and village plantation sites, the species planted (eucalyptus), was supplied by the Forestry Commission in cooperation with the Agritex worker.<sup>29</sup> Hence, unlike with the planting of fruit trees in homesteads, this

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<sup>26</sup> Participatory Rural Appraisal data, September-October 1995.

<sup>27</sup> There is a large literature on the relative merits of land holding systems as related to productivity and sustainability (Berry 1989; Barrows and Roth 1990; Bromley (ed) 1992; Feeny et al 1990; Fortmann and Bruce 1988; Hardin and Baden 1977; Herring 1990b; Okoth-Ogendo 1989; Richards 1983). In neo-classical economic theory, it is often held that in common property tenure arrangements, people have little incentive to work for long term productivity or environmental management gains. This position has been refined since the 1960s when Hardin (1968) asserted that common property regimes were incapable of caring for the environment because of people's tendency to take a "free ride" in such systems. The only secure land management system, the argument went, was private ownership. Currently, the more usual question is "under what conditions, and in what forms" do common property regimes function (Fortmann and Bruce 1988: 1-3). Or, put another way, in what contexts does privatized tenure actually increase investment and security in land holding (Barrows and Roth 1990).

<sup>28</sup> Tenure Interview Schedules.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Agritex worker, July 10 1996.

activity does not spring from the settlers' initiative. In addition, trees are still relatively abundant in the area, so people may not be convinced of the importance of planting trees in field, grazing and bush areas. Also, while people may view afforestation of grazing and bush areas as important, drought, pests such as termites, and damage done by roaming goats and cattle all militate against successful tree growing in these areas. Finally, people's lack of control over the poaching of resources by Communal Area neighbours in communal use areas of the bush and grazing areas seriously undermines motivation to plant trees in these areas.<sup>30</sup>

While RA residents are not widely engaged in tree planting in communal use areas, they do, however, appear to follow proper cutting and harvesting practices. These areas, the Agritex worker asserts, are being depleted mainly by the CA "outsiders", especially along the boundaries, through random and careless cutting.<sup>31</sup> It is reported that criminal elements within the resettlement, who are often "youths", are said to engage in illegal practices such as the selling of firewood. This practice was rampant in the mid 1980s, when people were even engaged in filling lorries of firewood which were taken to Harare,<sup>32</sup> but is currently only happening on a low level.<sup>33</sup>

People are also mostly inactive in other management practices in grazing areas: 47% of the sample said they do nothing to improve grazing areas, 25% said they practice rotational grazing, while 22% say they avoid veld fires or care for the grass. However, they are active in preventing erosion along paths: only 3 respondents said they do nothing about erosion caused by

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<sup>30</sup> This is discussed at length below.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Agritex worker, July 10 1996. Preliminary transect work by biologist Buck Sanford (University of Colorado) in the study site, support this point. Sanford found extensive cutting along the border areas (Unpublished findings, 1996).

<sup>32</sup> Research Assistant from Village 3. Also found by Grundy (1995), although apparently more rampant than in my study site.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Agritex worker, July 10 1996.

paths. Others mention filling holes and gullies with rocks, branches, bricks, or soil (55%), avoid pulling sledges, ploughs or tree branches on the paths (20%), or leave grass, plant grass or plant rhizomes (5%). In answering these types of questions, people use a language full on "modern" conservationist concepts, indicating a high level of absorption of the Agritex view of erosion and deforestation.<sup>34</sup>

The major points of this section are as follows. Firstly, tenure insecurity is not felt sufficiently by settlers to prevent them from investing in the area through tree planting and conservation measures. As such, it is unlikely a cause of poor management in the woodlands. Secondly, management of woodland resources, as represented by tree planting and conservation measures, is most developed in the more privately controlled areas of the homestead and fields. Active management in communally used areas is weak. However, a broader look at the controls and practices in the social forest casts doubt on a simple equation between private control and better woodland and resource management.

## **2. Rules and Institutions in the Social Forest**

In the study area, as is found elsewhere in Zimbabwe (Bruce, Fortmann and Nhira 1993), people collect a wide variety of products from a large number of different resource areas. Many of these areas fall under communal use management regimes. People collect or use poles, thatching grass, firewood, wild fruits, bush vegetables, herbal medicines, rope (fibre), grazing vegetation, wild animals, fish, garden vegetables and water from their environment. Similar geography and purposeful village demarcation by Resettlement authorities, mean that the villages have similar kinds of resource areas. Resource areas mentioned by villagers were fields, dams, gum

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<sup>34</sup> Household Schedule II: 4, 5, 6.

plantations, wetlands (veld, mapani), kopjes (small rocky hills), rivers, bush, grazing areas, and nearby Wedza Mountain. Of these resource areas, kopjes, fields, rivers and plantations emerge as the most important among the resource areas, as more kinds of products in relatively large quantities are being sourced in these areas.<sup>35</sup> Refer back to Figure 1 for a diagrammatic view of the different resource areas.

People depend on a variety of areas for the same product. See Table 1. In the exercise that produced this table, villagers were given 20 stones, and asked to place them for each product according to the relative amount obtained from the different resource areas. Table 1 gives Village 4 as an example.

**Table 1. Product x Source Matrices for Women in Village 4.**  
**Resource Areas**

<b>Product</b>	<b>K</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>W.Mt</b>	<b>P</b>
Firewood	10	5	1	2				2
Thatch Grass		13	2	2		3		
Poles	8	4		2				6
Wild Fruits	5	1	1	4		3	6	
Fish			8		12			
Herbs	4	1	1	1	1	5	6	1
Ropes	12						8	
Total Number of Resources	5	5	5	5	2	3	3	3

**Resource Area Key**

**K**=Kopjes

**F**=Fields

**R**=Rivers

**G**=Grazing Areas

**D**=Dams

**W**=Wetlands/Veld

**W.Mt**=Wedza Mountain

**P**=Plantations (Gum)

**B**=Bush

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<sup>35</sup> Participatory Rural Appraisal data, September-October 1995.

Table 1 indicates the interconnected nature of the resource areas in terms of supplying household needs. People use five different areas to source firewood for example, and eight different areas to source medicinal herbs. The use of different areas for the same category of product is related to seasonal patterns, the use of different varieties, and the type of controls and institutions operating in a certain area or product. This latter issue is discussed in the next section. People have a complex and interrelated relationship to the social forest. The elimination of communal use regimes could hence seriously limit some people's access to particular products. For example, if a family's self-contained farm contains no gum plantations or kopjes, then the family may face severe shortages of firewood, poles and ropes.

Nhira and Fortmann (1993) codify local management systems in an attempt to capture the different types of controls operating in Communal Areas in Zimbabwe:

1. Sacred Controls. Community norms and controls based on traditional religious beliefs and enforced by individual internalization, community sanction, and the authority of religious and traditional leaders.
2. Pragmatic Controls. Forms of protection (old or new) designed to allow a secure flow of a resource (eg. ban on fruit tree cutting).
3. Civil Contract. The "norms of civility that govern daily contact" (p. 140). That is, self-regulation of overly avaricious behaviour, for example, stealing fruit from trees in another's compound or taking a woodpile left for later collection. These may be reinforced by religion, but not usually thought of as religious.
4. Initiation of new controlling institutions and rules. New forms of management initiated by local institutions with or without outside instigation due to

environmental crisis (eg in woodfuel, soil erosion, etc). These could be wildlife committees, natural resource committees, Village Development Committees (VIDCOs)<sup>36</sup>, etc.

The controls can be species specific, area specific, and land tenure specific. **Species specific** rules include bans on cutting certain types of trees because they have religious significance (sacred controls), or because they bear fruit people want to eat (pragmatic controls). **Area specific** rules include bans on cutting trees in kopjes or mountains, because these areas are thought to be resting places for spirits, or are sites for graves. Other area specific rules, which are also species specific, include leaving trees in fields, either for shade, soil fertility benefits, or fruit (pragmatic) (Wilson 1989). **Land tenure specific rules** include restrictions on users in land areas considered "private" such as the homestead area, and for some products, the fields. Areas considered "common property" or what I am calling "communal use areas" such as grazing or bush areas, have different rules, such as bans on cutting live trees of any type, and admonishments not to "cut recklessly". Communal use areas rely heavily on civil contract and pragmatic controls to prevent exhaustion of resources.

This codification of types of controls and management systems provides a useful framework in the study of resettlement. Most of the same dimensions are found, although with somewhat different relative prominence. Traditional and sacred controls, for example, are more

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<sup>36</sup> See Higgins and Mazula (1993) for a general discussion of the ideology, purpose and structure of the VIDCO system. These authors outline an attractive portrait of the VIDCO system as a means to decentralized the political structure and promote equity, empowerment and economic development. My own work suggests that a critical perspective is important in examining how this structure acts as a means to ensure centralized party control rather than to decentralized political power. See also Alexander (1994).

weakly formed in resettlement, while government institutions have greater presence and power.

In the PRA workshops, a **Tenure Diagram** exercise was designed to collect data on the rules, responsible institutions, and degree of compliance and enforcement in natural resource use and management. Tables have been compiled for firewood, poles, wild fruits, fields, kopjes, thatching grass, herbs, grazing areas, river areas/dams and wetlands. Here I show data from one village on firewood as an example.

**Table 2. Tenure Data for Firewood by Village 4.**

<b>FIREWOOD</b>	<b>RULES</b>	<b>INSTITUTIONS</b>	<b>ENFORCEMENT/ COMPLIANCE</b>
<b>VILLAGE 4</b>	<p><b>Women:</b> no cutting or burning live trees; don't use plantation trees for firewood</p> <p><b>Men:</b> no cutting of live trees (except thorn trees) in kopjes, grazing areas, or other people's fields</p>	<p>rules by government to the Chief; NRB in charge and councillors</p> <p>VIDCO; NRB; Village Chairman</p>	<p>pay fine to the chief; people sneak in from CAs at night and cut down trees</p> <p>rules followed in kopjes but not well in grazing areas; those caught are fined</p>

VIDCO = Village Development Committee

CA = Communal Area

NRB = Natural Resources Board

The major findings from this exercise are as follows. Rules can be species specific, such as a ban on cutting certain types of trees (eg. mobola plum, Shona muhacha), or in using particularly species for firewood ("plantation" trees-eucalyptus). People are also directed by the NRB to avoid cutting any live tree except thorn trees. There are also area and tenure specific rules, such as special controls on cutting in kopjes or grazing areas, or in **other** people's fields (cutting in one's own field being allowed). The legitimacy and viability of rules in a given area will determine the



vulnerability of the resource to unsustainable use. The case of poles, is a good example. Since VIDCO permission is required to cut poles in eucalyptus woodlots, people also source poles in other areas, where controls are more favourable or weakly enforced, such as in one's own fields or kopje areas.

There are complex rules involving a fair number of institutions in the management of the woodlands. VIDCOs, the Village Chairman, the Resettlement Officer, the Natural Resources Board (NRB) and the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) are the state supported institutions involved. Spirit mediums, the Chief, and village elders are "traditional" institutions, which claim legitimacy through lineage, special connection to the ancestors, or special knowledge through experience. The local chief lives in a nearby Communal Area, and has no official authority in the Resettlement Area.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, some people have carried allegiance to the Chief with them into resettlement, and hence attribute some authority to him. Chiefs get mention in relation to fields in terms of establishing the sacred chisi, that is, the day(s) off ploughing, an important part of traditional culture. In cases where traditional rules are violated, people are said to be dealt with by the Chief, who may levy a fine, such as a goat. In the case of firewood, there is brief mention of spirit mediums and village elders in one village. This is in relation to the ban on cutting mobola plumtree (Shona muhacha), which is considered sacred to the ancestors.<sup>38</sup> Traditional institutions have a larger role for some other products and resource areas, particularly herbs, kopjes, and river areas, these being associated with traditional medicine, and sacred areas. Kopjes are used as burial sites, as well as being thought to be preferred places for ancestral spirits to reside. River areas,

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with Resettlement Officer, July 10 1996.

<sup>38</sup> Muhacha is also used extensively by traditional healers, who use roots and bark for different remedies. Fruits are also eaten (Drummond and Coates Palgrave 1973: 17-19).

especially pools, are thought to be inhabited by spirits.<sup>39</sup> Harvesting of wild fruits is also under traditional rules which ban cutting and harvesting of unripe fruit.<sup>40</sup>

In most cases, however, the major institutions involved in the area are part of the state. The Natural Resources Board (NRB) is the main rule making body, working together with Forestry Commission to enforce government legislation.<sup>41</sup> VIDCOs and Village Chairmen (the official village level representatives to the state), Village Neighbourhood Watch (appointed by the NRB), the Agritex worker, and the Resettlement Office work together to monitor the situation for the NRB. The Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) is called in for enforcement, and has the power to levy fines.<sup>42</sup>

People's views on the nature of the rules and the institutions involved are fairly consistent. However, there is a strong indication that many of the rules are not followed well. Even more important than understanding the rules governing resources is understanding which types of rules are most likely to be violated and why.

The tenure data suggests that rules instituted by government bodies such as the NRB, Agritex, or Resettlement Office are as likely to be broken as sacred controls imposed by

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<sup>39</sup> These spirits are not ancestral but something translated as "mermaids" (Shona nzuzu). Generally malevolent, they are thought to "take" people, who may then re-emerge as traditional healers.

<sup>40</sup> Traditional institutions and customs form a large topic in themselves, which I address elsewhere (see Goebel 1997, Chapter Four). In general, traditional institutions are poorly formed in resettlement, as people are not settled according to lineage, and have not named Headmen. Chiefs have no official power in resettlement. The new state institutions of the RO and the VIDCOs have the bulk of local administrative power.

<sup>41</sup> There are numerous relevant pieces of legislation, but the most important here are the Natural Resources Act (1941), the Forest Act (Amended 1981), the Parks and Wildlife Act (1975), the Water Act (1976), the Communal Forest Produce Act (1982), and the Communal Land Act (1982). See Nkala 1996.

<sup>42</sup> PRA data; Interview with Resettlement Officer, July 10 1996.

traditional leaders like the Chief or spirit mediums. In river areas, for example, both government and sacred rules are extensively violated. Rules against cutting wild fruit trees and picking unripe fruit, which are attributed to both traditional and government institutions are reportedly followed well. What does seem clear is that where the nature or location of a given resource makes it more visible to the responsible authority, then rules are more likely to be kept. For example, rules in eucalyptus plantations are mostly followed, probably because a plantation is a discrete entity that can be patrolled. Meanwhile, rules in grazing areas, which are spread out and hence more difficult to monitor, are sometimes kept, and sometimes not, and extensive mention is made of resource poaching in this area by CA residents bringing their cattle. Tenure is also important. Rules in fields, where tenure is private-like, are well followed. Since a farmer has a right to resources in his or her fields, like poles, firewood and thatching grass, there is an incentive to enforce the rules protecting this right. Communal use areas such as grazing areas and rivers are less effectively protected by the rules.<sup>43</sup>

These findings indicate that in most cases, the institutions as they stand are not fully effective in sustainably managing the resources. Particularly in communal use areas, it is reportedly difficult to control people's practices.<sup>44</sup> In this sense, pragmatic and civil controls, as per Nhira and Fortmann's discussion are weakly formed, especially in common property areas.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> People report that rules in kopjes, another communal use area, are mostly followed. However, physical evidence contradicts this. In some kopjes, so many trees have been cut that graves are becoming uncovered. It is unclear if this destruction is caused by CA residents or the settlers themselves.

<sup>44</sup> Agritex worker, August 25 1996.

<sup>45</sup> A notable exception could be the apparent adherence to the ban on cutting fruit trees. When asked why people avoid cutting fruit trees, the overwhelming answer is: "because we want to eat the fruits" (Household Schedule III. 14).

The problem may lie in the fact that the rules of resource management are not developed by or in consultation with RA residents, but imposed by state bodies. The main rule makers are the NRB and the Resettlement Office. Enforcement is in the form of the state police (ZRP). The VIDCOs, Village Chairmen, and Neighbourhood Watch are "watchdogs" for these rule-making bodies, not active participants in the formulation of the rules. Hence, while VIDCOs may appear as decentralized democratic institutions, giving local people a "voice" in government, their actual function maintains centralized control. In practice,

Local authorities... were free to articulate 'felt needs', <but> were not in a position to redress them; ministries regarded local authorities primarily as policy implementing, not formulating agencies; planning remained the realm of 'experts' employed by the government (Alexander 1994: 330).

As such, then, while the management practices in the RA involve "local institutions", they are not technically "communally-based resource management regimes" (Murphree 1991: 5). People interpret the rules as "imposed", and hence there is an oppositional dynamic in the management of resources. These findings suggest that Grundy 1995 and Murphree and Cumming 1993 are correct in their view of institutional development in Resettlement. Resettlement is "still based on the colonial model of centralised bureaucratic control with assumptions about appropriate technology strategies for resource use", which marginalize rather than reinforce any collective control or "locally-evolved ecological knowledge" (Grundy 1995: 112). This inhibits "the institutional dynamics required for effective common property management regimes" (Grundy

1995: 112; see Murphree and Cumming 1993, to whom she refers).<sup>46</sup> Hence, if the focus is cast on the practices and institutions of settlers themselves, in a context where a radical change in the nature of local institutions is not on the horizon, then a change to private tenure as recommended by the Land Tenure Commission could make sense. However, the next stage of the discussion throws this into doubt.

### **3. "Poachers" in the Woodlands**

The most talked about problem in the first round of village meetings was that of neighbours from Communal Areas (CAs) coming into the resettlement and stealing resources such as firewood, poles, and thatching grass, and bringing herds of cattle to graze.<sup>47</sup> A fence erected to protect the area was stolen, and efforts to stop poachers through threats and violence only drove the thieves to steal under cover of darkness. The resettlement is bordered on two sides by two different CAs, both of which are extensively deforested. See Figure 2 which shows a portion of the border shared by one of the CAs and a resettlement village. The black line forms the boundary, to the right of which lies the CA and to the left, the resettlement. The CA is nearly denuded of forest, being given over largely to arable fields. In the RA, by contrast, pockets of

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<sup>46</sup> There has been increasing interest in the role of local institutions in natural resource management in Zimbabwe (Murombedzi 1990; Murphree 1991; Nhira (ed) 1995). Particularly in relation to common property resources, local institutions have been seen as key to sustainable management practices. However, "local" institutions are not necessarily "indigenous", and are not always seen by local people to represent their interests or perspectives. Hill (1996), building on Murombedzi (1992), discusses how CAMPFIRE (Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources), a program developed to bring the benefits of resource conservation to the local people who bear the brunt of this management, has in some cases provided an opportunity to extend centralized state control, rather than increase local control of resources.

<sup>47</sup> This problem was also observed in the two Resettlement villages in Fortmann's Rapid Rural Appraisal sample (Fortmann and Nabane 1992), mentioned by Scoones and Matose (1993), and found by Grundy (1995).

forest, plantations and trees in grazing areas still stand.

People in the CAs need the resources, but also feel entitled to the resources in resettlement because of their role in helping the guerrillas during the war, who chased out the white farmers resident on the land.<sup>48</sup> In one of the study villages, settlers told of how some nearby CA residents had even started ploughing in area, before the settlers came. In another village, which lies right on the border with a CA, extensive woodland resource pillaging was allegedly undertaken before the resettlement village was even founded.<sup>49</sup> This sense of entitlement felt by CA residents has reportedly increased since 1986 when changes in district boundaries meant that the resettlement area became part of the same district as the bordering Communal Lands. Before that, the RA had been part of the district shared by commercial farms, and police had been very active in arresting tree cutters.<sup>50</sup>

Why are the Resettlement residents unable to stop their CA neighbours from using "their" resources?<sup>51</sup> Part of the answer is clearly historical, lying in the sense of entitlement to the resources felt by the CA people. The lack of authority of local institutions as outlined above, is another factor inhibiting the clear establishment of "insiders and outsiders". Another institutional problem seems to be that the rules are designed for management practices of the RA residents, as if they lived in a sealed environment. There is no special body to deal with poaching problems.

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<sup>48</sup> Village meetings, plus interview with Ward Councillor, September 13 1995 (Field Notes I, p. 10). Also found by Grundy (1995).

<sup>49</sup> CA neighbours also had a history of collecting firewood from the area that later became a resettlement scheme in Elliott's study (Elliott 1995: 11).

<sup>50</sup> Interview with former Ward Councillor, September 14 1995.

<sup>51</sup> Establishing clear categories of "insiders" and "outsiders" is commonly acknowledged in the literature as crucial to successful common property management (Arnold 1993).

The issue has been raised with the District Administrator, but so far no action has been taken.<sup>52</sup>

Elliott (1994 and 1995) found that settlers had difficulty protecting the use of firewood and other resources from "outsiders" because many of them were relatives of the settlers.<sup>53</sup>

Elliott's study suggested that the RA residents still felt very connected to their former homes, often maintaining graves, homes and land there, and very involved with members of their extended family still in the CA.<sup>54</sup>

In my case study, a somewhat different picture emerged. While villagers agreed in general village meetings that some of the resource poachers from the CAs were their relatives and this made it more difficult to stop them, more detailed questioning in household interviews made it clear that this was hardly the general case. Most respondents said their relatives do not collect resources from the RA. The reason for this lies less with respect for resource tenure than with the fact that most relatives live too far away to make resource collection in the RA an attractive option.<sup>55</sup> Taking the whole sample from the four study villages, the overall average distance to RA settlers' former homes is 57km, which could take about one to two hours by bus. Further, only

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<sup>52</sup> Interview with former Ward Councillor, September 14 1995. In an interview at the local branch of the Natural Resources Board, October 7 1996, officials said that they were well aware of the problem of poaching of resources by the Communal Area residents. However, given lack of resources themselves, they were powerless to put into effect the educational campaigns, monitoring and law enforcement practices that might help the situation. Similarly, the District Administrator for Hwedza said he is well aware of the poaching problem, but it is difficult to find a solution. They have been relying on persuasion, but he feels that stricter rules and enforcement are necessary (Interview, February 18 1997).

<sup>53</sup> Also in Grundy (1995).

<sup>54</sup> The difficulty people feel in giving up rights in their former homes in Communal Lands was recognized by the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement in 1986: to give up traditional rights in Communal Areas is an "alien if not impossible practice for many people for social and cultural reasons" (Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement 1986: 24). The issue was mentioned again in the 1992 Report.

<sup>55</sup> Household Schedule I. 7.

18% of the sample live within reasonable walking distance (that is  $\leq$  5km).<sup>56</sup> Settlers have remained connected to former homes, visiting relatives and receiving visits for funerals, traditional ceremonies and to maintain contact.<sup>57</sup> However, distance precludes these relatives from making extensive use of the natural resources in the RA. In general, it should not be assumed that resource pillagers coming into RAs from CAs are close relatives of RA settlers, and that this is the main reason for settlers' difficulty in preventing these "outsiders" from using the resource.

Rather than familial connection between settlers and "poachers", there may be another aspect to RA/CA social relationships at work. As mentioned earlier, people were originally suspicious about the resettlement process, and recruitment of the first settlers was difficult. According to a key informant,<sup>58</sup> the first settlers were not volunteers, but were chosen by their headmen in the Communal Area villages. These settlers formed three main groups. The first were the "landless", in the sense that they did not belong to lineage groups entitled to land in that particular village. The second group were undesirables, such as thieves and suspected witches. The third group were pushed out for making leadership bids, and hence were viewed as a threat to the incumbent headman. All three groups were in some ways "social outcasts". Hence, there was pre-existent antagonism between the settlers and the CA residents which has perhaps found expression in the conflict over resource use in the resettlement.

#### **4. Solutions: Resource Sharing and Privatization**

Work on Zimbabwe's social forests commonly suggests forms of resource sharing in cases

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<sup>56</sup> Household Schedule I. 1, 2.

<sup>57</sup> Household Schedule, I. 3, 4, 5.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with local Secondary School Headmaster, April 11 1996.



of conflicts over access to woodland and other natural resources.<sup>59</sup> Efforts to exclude people who both need and feel entitled to resources are said to be fruitless, and can often lead to further destruction of the resources as people resort to covert and often spiteful actions.<sup>60</sup> The logic of resource sharing is attractive, especially when linked with other strategies designed to decrease people's reliance on indigenous woodlands.<sup>61</sup> However, it is very difficult to imagine a form resource sharing could successfully take in this context. Unlike in Grundy's site, settlers in Sengezi feel very strongly that the CA residents are not entitled to the resources, and that they should be excluded. They would like nothing more than a huge fence, which they say they would patrol.<sup>62</sup>

This feeling of the settlers is matched by the equally ferocious view of the Communal Land neighbours. Informal interviews revealed outrage that settlers tried to exclude them from the resources, arguing that they fought for the land during the war, just like the settlers. They admitted to purposefully destructive and "uncivil" behaviour such as telling their herdboys to let cattle graze in settlers fields during the growing season.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, considering that the current institutions are not succeeding in managing the communal use resources even among the

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<sup>59</sup> See Matose (1994) on conflicts with CA neighbours of gazetted state forests, Grundy (1995) and Nhira and Fortmann (1993) on conflicts with CA neighbours to Resettlement.

<sup>60</sup> Matose documents the retaliation of "poachers" in a state forest in Zimbabwe, reacting to Forestry Commission's coercive efforts to end neighbours' use of the woodland products. People cut more and bigger poles than they actually needed, unnecessarily cut trees when gathering caterpillars and felled trees to collect honey, all in order to spite the Forestry Commission (Matose 1994: 81-5). There is some evidence from the study site that poachers' practices of CA neighbours have increased in destructiveness as RA residents step up efforts to stop them.

<sup>61</sup> See Grundy (1995). Grundy suggests interventions to encourage planting of multipurpose trees in private areas like households, gardens, and fields, and some community woodlots, plus strategies to improve the longevity of poles such as creosote or diesel treatments, use of alternative fuel sources such as dung and agricultural residues, and use of improved brick kilns or unburnt types of bricks to reduce use of fuelwood (pp. 129; 140-4).

<sup>62</sup> This in spite of admitting that a fence erected earlier had been removed.

<sup>63</sup> Field Assistants' Diaries. Notes for September 1996.

settlers, it is unlikely they would serve successfully with an expanded user group originating from different tenure systems. Grundy acknowledges this by recognizing the need for "devolvment" of management to the village level so that people have the power to manage the resource (Grundy 1995: 140). There is also the problem of lack of social cohesion in resettlement villages caused by people being settled from different original villages, the presence of different religions, tensions caused by wealth differentiation, and gender differences in resource use and perception (see Goebel 1997). Would this mean that each RA village would work out a sharing agreement with a discrete set of CA residents? How would these be defined? Whose rules would be used? Clearly, a resource sharing program would take a great deal of study, institutional change, and careful negotiations.

This may be the only way forward for resettlement villages that remain demarcated according to the original village layout. As mentioned above, government has accepted many of the 1993 Land Tenure Commission's recommendations, including those on resettlement. Among those accepted is that all current resettlement villages of both Model A family farms and Model B cooperatives, be redemarcated into private holdings which would include homestead, fields and grazing areas. All new resettlement schemes should follow this pattern. The permit system should be abandoned, and settlers be given 99 year leases with options to purchase after an initial ten year "trial" period, in which settlers demonstrate serious farming intentions and good practices.

In the study site, the Resettlement Officer began talks with villagers about redemarcation of villages in mid-1996. As it is not government's intention to impose redemarcation on established resettlement villages against people's will, it is unlikely that redemarcation will occur in

the study site villages as consensus on the issue is unlikely to be reached.<sup>64</sup> In one of my study villages, people responded to the issue of redemarcation in three main ways. Some strongly support, others as strongly reject, and a third group does not know what to think. There are some clear divisions along gender, wealth and age lines. Women tend not to want to leave the village, mourning the loss of social contact with friends. They also complain loudly about all the hard work it will be, making bricks and clearing land. Although some men are reluctant, men are more likely to support redemarcation than women, speaking of the need for bigger pastures and arable lands. In terms of wealth status, the better off farmers, especially "Master Farmers" tend to be keen on redemarcation, talking about the benefits of having larger fields and pastures to grow new crops like tobacco and other cash crops. Those who are worse off see no point in having more fields when they are not even fully utilizing those that they have. Older people also tend to oppose the move, saying they lack the energy to start afresh. However there are some elders who welcome it, thinking of getting more land to pass on to their inheritors.<sup>65</sup> Similar responses are being found elsewhere in the country.<sup>66</sup> This means that the problems of communally used woodlands will remain in many resettlement villages.

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<sup>64</sup> District Administrator of Hwedza (Interview, February 18 1997); Resettlement Officer, Sengezi (Interview, February 19 1997).

<sup>65</sup> Research Assistant Field Diary, Village 3, Book I.

<sup>66</sup> A recent article in The Sunday Mail describes village level conflicts over redemarcation in Soti Source Resettlement in Gutu. The article states that two years ago, when farmers were consulted by the Land Tenure Commission, 95% of farmers agreed to a change to private small scale farms. Now, when consulted on the best means to implement redemarcation, only 55% of farmers agree to it, while the rest oppose. Opposers resist on the grounds of losing the investments they have made in their homesteads, including large houses and orchards, and that many farmers were too old to start afresh with new houses to build. Some farmers suggested that they be given title deeds collectively as a village ("Farmers in bitter debate over land move" The Sunday Mail October 26 1996: 1).

For many old resettlement villages and all the newly established ones, however, the dynamic will change. Government plans to eliminate common property areas completely with a change to private tenure.

New villages in the study site are following the private holdings pattern, with each family being allotted 30 hectares of self-contained land. Local officials, including the Resettlement Officer,<sup>67</sup> the Agritex worker,<sup>68</sup> the Natural Resources Board at the Rural District Council<sup>69</sup> and the District Administrator,<sup>70</sup> echoed the thinking of the Land Tenure Commission in predicting that resource management in the formerly communal use areas of grazing and bush areas in resettlement would improve through privatization. The Resettlement Officer felt that this move would end poaching of resources by Communal Area neighbours, because whereas now people think of the woodlands and grazing areas as communal resources, no one would dare to poach from someone's private property. The District Administrator pointed out that with private property, poaching becomes a private legal issue, wherein the owner can take the poachers to court.<sup>71</sup> Settler views mirror this thinking.<sup>72</sup> A former Village Chairman said that privatization would clarify the ownership of trees: "then it's clear who owns the trees". This clarity, he felt, would reduce deforestation. As it is now, he said, people just say the trees are there from God, so

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<sup>67</sup> Informal Interview, July 10, 1996. Field Book II, p. 24.

<sup>68</sup> Interviews July 10 1996 and August 25 1996.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with NRB officials October 7 1996.

<sup>70</sup> Interview February 18 1997.

<sup>71</sup> Interview February 18 1997.

<sup>72</sup> Raising this issue in early village meetings in September 1995, before the Resettlement Officer had been directed to discuss it with villagers, caused much confusion and suspicion. I therefore did not include the question in household interviews carried out from February to July of 1996, and chose an informal route of key informant interviews to explore this question.

everyone can use them.<sup>73</sup> After the Resettlement Officer had discussed the issue in village meetings, another informant, a local ZanuPF committee chairman and prominent farmer, said that people had felt the move would be good for looking after resources.<sup>74</sup>

It is important to point out that the Land Tenure Commission and local people, both officials and settlers, have slightly different perceptions of the problem of resource depletion. The Commission emphasizes poorly developed institutions and lack of tenure security which leads to low incentive for investment. Settlers and local officials, on the other hand, emphasize the determination and often the spitefulness of the Communal Area neighbours. The Commission did discover the problem of conflict between Communal Land neighbours and settlers over common property resources in Resettlement Areas. It notes that the Communal Land neighbours often feel they have a greater right to the resources than the settlers, who often come from more distant villages (Rukuni 1994, Vol. 1: 63). The Commission also locates this problem within the wider issue of the development of Resettlement Areas without thorough consideration of the conditions in neighbouring Communal Areas (Rukuni 1994, Vol. 1: 123). However, in the final analysis, the Commission emphasizes weakly developed local institutions and tenure in resettlement as the problems in common property management areas:

lack of a clear management authority is responsible for the deterioration of the environment. The tenure system does not encourage proper utilisation of resources and does not define those accountable (Rukuni 1994, Vol. 1: 69).

Since Resettlement lacks the traditional institutional structures found in the Communal Areas, the

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<sup>73</sup> Interview July 29 1995. Field Book I, p. 6.

<sup>74</sup> Interview October 7 1996, Field Book II, p. 31.

Commission recommends a change to private tenure rather than a programme of strengthening local institutions. In the technical reports the Commission adds the more conventional view that links private ownership to incentive for investment. Good conservation is linked to freehold tenure and land having a market value:

In the absence of these two conditions, as is the case in communal and resettlement areas, farmers have no incentive to invest for the future (Rukuni 1994, Vol. 2: 83).

Hence, while the Land Tenure Commission and local actors agree on privatization as a solution, there are important differences in their analyses of the source of the original problem.

This dissonance in perception opens a space for questioning whether privatization will really solve the problem. From the evidence of this study, it is doubtful if changing tenure will end poaching by communal area neighbours. Firstly, successful exclusion relies not only on clear rights, but on a physical input, fencing, and the labour issue involved in patrolling ones own resource area. In the new settlements, demarcated in the new way, the Resettlement Officer mentioned that fencing had not been provided, and it was unclear if it would be. Hence it could be left up to settlers themselves, who are unlikely to have the resources to fence 30 hectares. Secondly, the belief that private tenure keeps outsiders away from resources directly contradicts some settlers' own practices. Many settlers admit to illegally entering the commercial farms that share borders with some of the resettlement villages, to collect firewood and other woodland products. Finally, the approach does not directly deal with the main source of the problem: the real need of communal area farmers for the resources since their areas have been depleted, plus their profound sense of entitlement to those resources. While the Land Tenure Commission is thoroughly researched and very astute, in the final analysis it fails on this particular issue to rise

above a central problem it identifies itself: the past failure to plan resettlement hand in hand with conditions prevailing in neighbouring Communal Areas.<sup>75</sup>

It is true that the Land Tenure Commission appropriately focuses most attention on the Communal Areas, which harbour the majority of Zimbabwe's population, and suffer the greatest environmental and development problems. It recognizes that the areas are under profound population and resource depletion pressure, and hence recommends the intensification of the resettlement programme through the breaking up of more large-scale farms (Rukuni 1994, Executive Summary: 1). Through this, the Land Tenure Commission seems less inclined to sidestep the question of land distribution than its predecessor, the Chavunduka Report (1982)<sup>76</sup>: "land distribution is highly skewed in Zimbabwe. The status quo is not politically, socially or economically sustainable" (Rukuni 1994, Executive Summary: 3). But the focus on land tenure, reorganization of communal lands, and the treating of each sector of the rural land groups in isolation, still makes room for government to adopt strategies that can avoid the question of large-scale land redistribution. The focus on tenure, although important, can act like the focus on peasant practices in the past to sidestep the basic problem of land access. It remains to be seen if the government's seriousness in pursuing tenure reforms will serve to deflect any real efforts towards increasing land access for Zimbabwe's rural majority.

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>75</sup> This conceptual problem stands in other literature on resource depletion in resettlement. Nkala (1996), for example, writing with the benefit of the Land Tenure Commission's findings, still attributes resource degradation in resettlement to a combination of tenure insecurity, poor land quality and overall poverty. Poaching by neighbours in Communal Lands is not even mentioned.

<sup>76</sup> The Chavunduka Report (Chavunduka 1982) warned against large-scale resettlement, arguing instead for improvement of peasant farming in Communal Lands. See Drinkwater 1989.

This article has raised five main points concerning using privatization to solve common property failure in woodland management in resettlement. First, tenure insecurity does not appear to be a problem in resettlement, and therefore should not be used, as the Land Tenure Commission uses it, as a justification for privatization. Second, private tenure does appear to improve woodland management, as evidenced by tree planting in homestead areas, and better compliance with rules in fields. However, this effect may have more to do with the proximity of the trees to the homestead, and/or their association with arable land than with tenure per se. Also, the complexity of people's relationship to the woodlands, in that they use multiple sources for various products, suggests that privatization may reduce some people's access to certain products. The third point is, therefore, that if maintaining equitable use of the forest in resettlement is a goal, then privatization may jeopardize this. Fourth, "local" institutions are not "indigenous", and rules are in general, imposed by state bodies. This explains some internal reasons for failures in rule compliance in common property regimes by the settlers themselves. It also explains part of the problem of exclusion of "outsiders" in the common property areas in the resettlement. This supports the Land Tenure Commission's targeting of institutional weakness as part of the resource management problem. However, a greater problem appears to be the "outsiders'" sense of entitlement to the resources in the resettlement, coupled with their own profound need. This is the fifth point. Settlers' lack of care in common property areas in the resettlement may indeed be less linked to the institutional problems than to despair that outsiders are destroying the resources. In the many resettlement villages not likely to demarcate along the proposed private holdings pattern, this problem will remain. In those that do demarcate, and in new villages, privatization is unlikely to solve this problem, as there is little evidence that private tenure acts to deter outsider



use, either in state forests or commercial farms. In general, a plan for sustainable management of the forests in resettlement that does not take account of the wider problem of land shortage and resource depletion in Communal Areas, is likely to have little effect.

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