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Traditional authorities as conduits of belonging: Exploring linkages between communal and resettlements in Zvimba District, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

This article investigates how and why beneficiaries of the A1 villagised model of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) retain a sense of belonging to the traditional authorities of communal areas of origin. The extent to which beneficiaries of land reform who live in new communities have maintained a sense of belonging in communal areas governed by traditional authorities has received limited attention in the literature. The most common forms of belonging in communal areas highlighted in the literature include a sense of connection through familial relations, family graves and historical landscapes. Through a case study of Zvimba district, the paper shows that people who relocated to FTLRP resettlement areas maintain a strong sense of connection with the traditional authorities in their original areas through lineage and totemic ties.

Key words: Land governance; traditional authority; Zimbabwe; communal areas; land reform.

Introduction

This article investigates the reasons for a sense of belonging by beneficiaries of the A1 villagised model of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) to traditional authorities of communal areas of origin. In 2000, the government initiated the FTLRP to address the uneven distribution of land in the country, particularly as regards its ownership by a minority of white farmers. As a range

of academic research indicates, the programme was characterised by some violence and a significant number of white farmers were effectively dispossessed of their land, causing severe economic disruption to the country's economy (Sachikonye, 2003; Chaumba *et al.*, 2003). Other scholars have highlighted the positive outcomes of the programme, which include the deracialisation of access to land and the contribution to livelihoods (Scoones *et al.*, 2010; Moyo, 2011). However, these aspects of the land reform programme are not addressed here (Sachikonye, 2003; Chaumba *et al.*, 2003).

About 13 million hectares of land were distributed to about 180,000 families over a period of 13 years, from 2000 to 2013 (Chipenda, 2022; Tom, 2022). The programme was implemented through two models, namely the A1 (small farms) and the A2 (medium-to-large farms) models (GoZ, 2001). The A1 model had two variants; the self-contained and the villagised. The former allocated individual plots to beneficiaries who subdivided land for arable, household and grazing use (GoZ, 2001; Moyo *et al.*, 2009). The villagised model, which is the focus of this article, allocated individual residential and arable plots to beneficiaries who shared grazing land, social infrastructure and services (GoZ, 2001; Chiweshe, 2011). Studies have shown that the majority of beneficiaries of the A1 villagised model originated from communal areas, with the rest originating from urban areas and the diaspora (Moyo and Yeros, 2007; Moyo, 2009).

The institution of traditional authorities dates back to the precolonial period of Africa (Nuesiri, 2014). Traditional authorities are still very much present in postcolonial Africa and they retain control over large swathes of customary land in most African countries (Chitonge, 2022). Traditional authorities fulfil a number of functions which include natural resource management, religious tasks, dispute settlement and local development, among others (Ubink, 2008). In most parts of Africa, traditional authorities collaborate with statutory authorities in matters of land governance (Marewo *et al.*, 2021). This is evident in some sub-Saharan African countries, such as South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Ghana, where traditional authorities and statutory institutions work together, in some cases with overlaps in authority (Chitonge, 2015; ECA, 2007; Boni, 2008; Nuesiri, 2014).

Questions raised by the overlap of customary and statutory authority in the governance of land have been central to several debates in Africa (Chitonge, 2019; Murisa, 2013). In some cases, the interplay of traditional and statutory authorities in a postcolonial context of multiparty politics and democratisation has seen traditional authorities becoming a significant force in politics due to their influence on rural populations, as Chitonge (2022, p. 45) and Boone (2017,

p. 282) have argued. Studies have illustrated that traditional authorities retain relevance even in the postcolonial state, but few studies have been conducted on the question of how traditional authorities retain influence on people who relocate to resettlement areas.

In Zimbabwe, traditional authorities played a key role in mobilising people from communal areas to occupy farms then owned mostly by white commercial farmers (Scoones *et al*., 2010; Mkodzongi, 2013). Studies of the FTLRP and belonging focus mainly on beneficiaries' connections to communal areas through family and personal networks, and graves (Scoones *et al*., 2010; Mutopo, 2014). Such studies provide limited insights in the way beneficiaries of land reform programmes maintain a sense of belonging through their ties with the traditional authorities influential in the communal areas from which they relocate, though the importance of these ties is a central theme in the literature. "Traditional leaders/chiefs can claim special legitimacy in the eyes of their people because these institutions can be seen to embody their people's history, culture, laws and values, religion, and even remnants of pre-colonial sovereignty" (Ray, 2005, p.5).

This article argues that beneficiaries of land reform maintain their sense of belonging through their connection with the traditional authorities in communal areas of origin just as they do through their use or ownership of land and through their connection with ancestors' graves. Thus, while traditional authorities have a complex relationship with the state, they also have a dynamic relationship with the people who live in their areas, and those that have left because of land reform.

The article draws insights from a case study in Zvimba District of beneficiaries of the A1 villagised model of the FTLRP on Machiroli Farm, an FTLRP A1 village, and in a Ward 6 communal area in the district. They were selected due to their close proximity, as well as the fact that people moved from the surrounding communal area to the FTLRP farm during the resettlement period. This was a dominant trend across Zimbabwe (Chambati & Mazwi, 2022; Mutopo, 2014; Mkodzongi, 2019). The insights were gained from fieldwork conducted for a PhD study by one of the authors in Zvimba District between 2017 and 2019. This study includes findings that were not included in the thesis due to its limited scope.

The article is arranged as follows: the first two sections detail the concept of belonging, the theoretical framework and the methodology of the article. The third section is a review of land governance in Zimbabwe, highlighting the role of traditional authorities in communal areas. The fourth section reviews the literature on the traditional authorities' governance of land under the FTLRP. This is followed by a detailed account of the findings of the case study, focusing

on the ways in which FTLRP beneficiaries continued to maintain connection with traditional authorities of communal areas of their origin even after they have left to be resettled elsewhere. The sixth section analyses the findings of the case study and is followed by the conclusion, which sums up the article.

The concept of belonging

Belonging is a multidimensional concept that cuts across various disciplines. It raises questions that resonate with the concept of identity such as "who am I?" or "who are we?" and "where do I/we belong?" This study defines belonging as a condition of human existence "entail[ing] rootedness or being attached to a place… being an indigene or having roots in a certain place as opposed to being a stranger" (Mujere, 2011, p. 1126). It involves relations such as "attachment to a group, place or categories" (Mujere, 2011, p. 1125). This view is complemented by Geschiere and Nyamnjoh (2000), who argue that belonging in most cases is about experiences of being part of the social fabric, social bonds and ties manifested in practices, experiences and emotions of inclusion in a group. At the heart of belonging is the feeling of being at home. Although this is contested in scholarly literature, this article sees the notion of home as a matter of attachment, not only to physical spaces such as graves, mountains, religious places, social spaces such as families, clans, groups and nations, and symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security and emotional attachment. Hooks (2009), in particular, argues that the concept of "home" includes the notion of symbolic spaces. In essence, our overall understanding of belonging encompasses attachment to people, social emotions and places.

The scholarly literature has documented various ways in which belonging can be constructed or cultivated. Attachment to land or to the soil is one way in which people have enforced their belonging (Chabal, 2009; Magowan, 1994; Shipton and Goneen, 1992). Social, cultural and religious ties are another element through which belonging is built, and these include relational ties and social networks (Murray, 1980; Njwambe, 2019). Familial relations are particularly an important source of belonging (Chabal, 2013; Murray, 1980; Foster *et al.*, 1997). In Africa, these are strongly associated with funerals and rituals performed at a family or community level (Mujere, 2011; Fontein, 2011; Geschiere, 2003). They are also asserted or reaffirmed by people's sense of identification with the patrilineal totems of their family.

Totems are broadly defined as any natural or mythical plant, bird, insect or animal that spiritually represents or connects a group of related people, such as a clan or tribe (Mandillah & Ekosse, 2018; Makgopa, 2019). For example, totems among the Shona serve as a social bond, in some cases, based on an

assumption that members of the same totem need to assist each other in times of need (Bourdillom, 1976; Mabvurira, 2016). Though they may not have of blood ties, those who share totems in Shona communities are regarded as related (Mabvurira, 2016). As symbols of a particular kind of group identity, totems are associated with the responsibilities, taboos and duties that are important in affirming one's belonging to the group (Makgopa, 2019). These are just a few of the many components of belonging.

Critics of the concepts of belonging argue that it is "often used simultaneously, overused and under-theorised in the context of population movements" (Anthias, 2006, p.645). Others argue that belonging is an ambiguous concept that subdivides social orders into various categories – such as countries, classes, ethnicities – that can be interpreted differently in different contexts (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Some scholars argue that the concept of belonging in scholarly debates is sometimes treated as if it were self-explanatory (Antonsich, 2010). Nevertheless, the concept of belonging has provided some explanatory clarity to studies of land reform, some of which have been consulted in this article. We also found it to be a useful concept in unpacking the dynamics around the connections of beneficiaries of the FTLRP with traditional authorities of communal areas of their origin.

Methodology

This article draws insights from Machiroli Farm, an FTLRP A1 village located in Ward 21, as well as communal areas in Ward 6, in Zvimba District, Mashonaland West Province. The A1 villagised model of the FTLRP allocated individual arable and residential plots to beneficiaries, while they shared grazing land, social infrastructure and services (Moyo *et al*., 2009). Machiroli farm, which accommodates 21 beneficiaries, in proximity with Zvimba communal areas and is located close to amenities such as schools and clinics. Most of the beneficiaries of Machiroli originate from surrounding communal areas, mostly from Ward 6, due to its proximity to the farm. Very few came from urban areas and none from the diaspora.

The article sets out to study how beneficiaries of the FTLRP maintain ties of belonging to traditional authorities in their original communal areas through semi-structured interviews and observations. The qualitative approach was important in the interpretation of "everyday events, experiences, social structures, and the values people attach to phenomena" (Collis & Hussey, 2009, pp. 56-57). Twelve beneficiaries from Machiroli farm and 10 from the communal areas of Ward 6 were interviewed. The selection of participants was purposive, based on their availability, while a balance of gender, age and class was also

sought. Traditional authorities and land officials were also interviewed. The former were the chief, headmen of Machiroli and Ward communal area, and respective village heads. The land officials interviewed included the district administrator, the rural district councillor, and representatives of the Ministry of Lands and Agricultural Research and Extension Services (AREX) officials operating in the area.

Traditional authorities and the governance of communal areas in Zimbabwe

At independence in 1980, Zimbabwe's constitution maintained the colonial land structure and glossed over challenges faced in communal areas (Palmer, 1990). Through the Communal Lands Act (CLA) of 1981 (amended in 1982), the former colonial "reserves" and later Tribal Trust Lands (TTL) were re-categorised as communal areas (Moyo, 1995). Nevertheless, overall the structure of land use in communal areas originally designed by the colonial state was maintained by the independent state; land was subdivided into individual arable and residential plots, with people sharing grazing land and natural resources (Moyo, 2000).

The postcolonial state also aimed at undermining the authority of traditional leaders. Government-elected district councils reported to the district administrator (DA), with the responsibility of land allocation and related matters (Tshuma, 1995). During the colonial period, the allocation of land had been a key responsibility of traditional authorities (Land Commission, 1994). In the postcolonial context, traditional authorities were marginalised, mainly due to their former role in the colonial period, where some had supported the colonial state and its structures (Drinkwater, 1991). However, following independence the traditional authorities retained their authority in practice; people continued to consult with chiefs on matters related to land allocation and in relation to various disputes, ignoring district officials (Murisa, 2014). This is mainly because of the cultural and spiritual role of traditional authorities in the lives of people in communal areas (Chadambuka, 2020, p. 122).

The government began to recognise chiefs/traditional authorities in the late 1980s to 1990s. A significant indicator was the Traditional Leaders Act of 1999, which gave traditional authorities some power over the allocation of land (Government of Zimbabwe, 1999). The Act provides that the Rural District Council (RDC) must consult the chief of the communal land in question on matters of land allocation (Rural District Act, 2002; Murisa, 2014). This arrangement partially restored the authority of traditional leaders' functions, given that they had possessed ultimate authority over land during the colonial period (Murisa, 2014).

Currently, the institution of traditional leaders which consists of a chief, headmen and village heads, has blurred roles and functions in its collaboration with statutory structures (Ncube, 2011). This challenge is evident in the administration of resettlement and communal areas, where in many cases traditional authorities clash over the jurisdiction and efficacy of their authority (Murisa, 2013). The post-independence state initially denied recognition to traditional authorities, but they have remained relevant to people in Africa, not only with respect to land governance but to a range of social issues, particularly in Zimbabwe (Ubink, 2008).

The role of traditional authorities in the governance of the FTLRP

The governance of land under the FTLRP maintained the incorporation of traditional authorities within state structures. The Traditional Leaders Act (Chapter 20:17) of 1999 placed resettlement areas under the relevant traditional chiefs and headmen, who are paid salaries by the state (Moyo et al. 2009, p.149; Mkodzongi, 2016). The Act also gave chiefs the authority to nominate headmen. This occurred in FTLRP areas from 2003 "despite the widespread absence of lineage and kinship ties" which, according to Murisa (2014, p. 92) is the general source of the legitimacy of the chief and other traditional structures under his authority. The Act also opened up the opportunity for traditional leaders to participate in council activities in an *ex-officio* capacity (Murisa, 2014; Moyo *et al*., 2009, p.149).

The District Land Committee (DLC), established in 2001, recognises the role of chiefs in the land administration of fast-track farms (Murisa, 2013). The main responsibility of the DLC was land administration, which included "identification of land for settlement, beneficiary selection [and] attending to land disputes among the newly resettled" (Moyo *et al*., 2009, p. 148). In effect the composition of the DLC enables traditional authorities to work in collaboration with various state structures, such as the village head (Murisa, 2014). The main responsibility of the village head is to oversee all matters in the village and to chair the Village Development Committee (VIDCO) (Murisa, 2009). The VIDCO is a selected group of representative beneficiaries whose responsibilities include addressing the development needs of the village, such as establishing and ensuring the maintenance of systems of communally shared "inherited infrastructure" (Murisa, 2009, p. 178).

Traditional authorities played a key role in the early days of the farm occupations that preceded the FTLRP (Moyo, 2001). Alexander (2018) argues that the FTLRP coincided with the return of traditional authorities' powers to allocate land in communal areas, and that they operated mostly on partisan

lines. During land occupations, many traditional authorities aligned with the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) to remain relevant. While traditional authorities played a role in the farm occupations, in many cases this was based on maintaining their loyalty to ZANU-PF (Alexander, 2006). As other scholars show, the customary authorities had little choice but to join the land occupations (Matondi, 2012). Under the FTLRP, chiefs have used their authority to make spiritual and traditional claims to land (Mujere, 2014; Mazarire, 2008; Fontein, 2009). In some cases, traditional authorities partnered with groups of "war veterans" in the occupation of land (Sadomba, 2008). War veterans are constituted of "former military youth and former refugees, whose nucleus were fighters of Zimbabwe's liberation war" (Sadomba, 2013, p. 79). These partnerships reaffirmed and recast the chiefs' authority and sense of belonging, but brought tensions with them that would later become a source of conflict within the formal FTLRP structures that were later put in place (Matondi, 2012; Murisa, 2013).

While the FTLRP provided traditional authorities with the opportunity to expand their influence in resettlement areas, many traditional leaders viewed the FTLRP as an opportunity to regain ancestral land appropriated during the colonial period (Mujere, 2011, p. 7). Although some of the objectives of the programme were to provide land to people in communal areas, with the idea of replicating state governance structures in resettlement areas, these have not always worked in the same way (Moyo, 2009). Under the FTLRP, social organisation in former commercial farms was transformed to include traditional authorities (Chiweshe, 2011). Murisa (2009) argues that traditional authority structures were introduced in many resettlement areas without a basis in kinship and lineage ties and thus lacked the de facto authority to organise communities for production and consumption that their counterparts within customary tenure areas possessed (p.26). The traditional authorities' role in FTLRP areas has become problematic because their subjects originate from different parts of the country with no shared family, lineage and clan identities (Murisa, 2014). Such identities play a key role in the legitimacy of traditional authorities, and this the gap that this article grapples with.

Belonging and traditional authorities: insights from Machiroli farm and communal areas in Zvimba District

This section reviews the insights gained from the semi-structured interviews with and observations of 12 beneficiaries from Machiroli Farm and 10 from the communal areas of Ward 6, conducted during field research. As noted, the selection of participants was purposive, based on their availability, while a

balance of gender, age and class was sought. Traditional authorities and land officials were also interviewed

The connection to the 'village'

Most beneficiaries of the FTLRP who relocated to Machiroli farm maintained their relations with their parents, as well as nuclear and extended family members in communal areas. This was mostly due to their need to maintain a sense of connection and belonging to their areas of origin. The proximity of Machiroli farm to such communal areas contributed to the ease of connection and social interaction of beneficiaries with families in their places of origin. According to the fieldwork data, FTLRP beneficiaries who relocated to farms further away from Machiroli Farm, about 20km from the communal areas, still maintain contact and ties with communal areas of origin. Apart from the need for a sense of belonging, most interviewees said they relocated to Machiroli because of its proximity to other FTLRP beneficiaries. A respondent on Machiroli Farm explained this:

> "Yes, we are connected; all our relatives are still back in the communal areas: my brother, my parents, uncles, and aunts are all back there in communal areas. We visit them as often as we can as we are close to them. I will say that our relations are still strong. My relatives also come to visit us as often as we do. Our departure from the communal areas has not affected the nature of our relations" (Interview, Machiroli Farm, January 2018).

This suggests that constant interactions keep people connected; social gatherings are the primary purpose of these interactions, though they are used in some instances for labour exchange. Interactions such as these, which support a sense of belonging, are widely documented in scholarly literature (Marewo, 2020; Murisa, 2009; Scoones *et al.*, 2010).

A significant feature emerging from the observations was that FTLRP beneficiaries greatly valued traditional authorities, particularly those from their communal areas of origin. Most of them indicated that traditional leaders had actively encouraged people to occupy land in the resettlement areas under the FTLRP. The active involvement of traditional leaders in land occupations of A1 beneficiaries has been documented (Moyo, 2009). This appears not to have been the case with regard to FTLRP beneficiaries under the large-scale A2 plan. A local headman explained:

> "When the Fast Track Land Reform Programme began, we as elders encouraged our sons to get land in resettlement areas; some agreed to go, and some refused. Some remained on their parents' lands, especially firstborn sons who had children, and that

is how they were left behind. Some did not want to go. However, for some, it was by choice to go because they wanted a larger area to grow their crops" (Communal Area headman, 20 October 2017).

Traditional leaders used the argument that FTLRP was a process of reclaiming lost ancestral land. According to a local chief, "the farms opposite Kutama Hospital were previously our land so the FTLRP was a way of regaining our lost land" (Interview, communal area, 18 May 2018). The involvement of traditional leaders in encouraging FTLRP beneficiaries to occupy land helped them to regain influence over members of the communities that resulted. FTLRP beneficiaries attested to the role of traditional authorities in encouraging farm occupations. One beneficiary stated:

"Coming to Machiroli was mostly through the encouragement of our traditional authorities. I am grateful to our traditional authorities that encouraged us to move into this farm and occupy land. I am in a better position than I was before moving into this farm" (Machiroli Farm interview, 21 October 2017).

Encouraging land occupations was one of many ways in which traditional authorities actively participated in the FTLRP. Importantly, the occupations were centrally instigated by the ruling party, but at the local level, the motivations involved in occupying land were differentiated and included the local interests of war veterans, traditional and other leaders, and informal community organisations (Moyo, 2001, p. 322). In some instances, chiefs in communal areas worked with war veterans on the occupation of farms (Moyo, 2009; Mkodzongi, 2016).

FTLRP beneficiaries who participated in the study expressed strong allegiance to traditional authorities in the communal areas although resettlement areas were allocated by their own traditional authorities. As noted, the same chief presided over the Machiroli farm and the Ward 6 communal areas. However, the traditional authorities from FTLRP beneficiaries' original communities continued to play a key role in the lives of FTLRP beneficiaries at Machiroli. As one beneficiary said:

"I know we have leaders here on this farm, but it is not the same for me. I still regard [the] traditional authorities [headman and village head] where I come from with high regard as I still need to be assisted by them" (Machiroli Farm, 2 March 2018).

Another respondent agreed:

"I can easily relate to my headman and village head because they are my kinsmen and at times when there is a crisis in my communal area of origin I always go to them. It

> is different from [here], as the leaders are from different clans [than me]" (Machiroli Farm, 4 May 2018).

A particularly important element of the sense of belonging in the area was related to totems. Historically, in traditional African societies, totems were regarded as an important element of defining belonging and enhancing social identity, and they continue to play an important role in symbolising identity in postcolonial Africa (Bourdillom, 1976; Mabvurira, 2016). While there are many totems in Zvimba, the *gushungo* (meaning crocodile) totem, which was affiliated with the late former president Robert Mugabe, was prevalent. Another totem, *moyo chirandu* (meaning heart) was regarded as another prevalent totem by respondents.

In Zvimba, totems associated with traditional authorities were regarded as an important component of a sense of belonging, but they were not tied to the new FTLRP settlements. A totem is tied both to place of origin and kinship, and individuals cannot therefore "choose" a totem as a "new" symbol of belonging or identity. Their totem affiliations therefore tie them in identity terms to their places of origin in ways that could not be replicated or replaced in new settlement contexts. According to a communal headman, totems are an essential element of the Zvimba people's sense of connection with kin and the environment. The totems regarded as important all represented the patriarchal and matriarchal side of FTLRP beneficiaries' kindship ties, as explained by a local headman in Ward 6:

> "Totems are an important element to us as they are a sign of collective pride and unity and help guard against socially inappropriate behaviour. When we speak of totems, it is very broad, but I will explain what it means. We have *mutupo* (this is a clan name, mostly a name of an animal and part of the human body), *dzinza* (family line tracing the father's line) and *chidawo* (a family name or sub-clan name/praise name). Here in Zvimba there are many different totemic networks but the *gushungo* is most prominent" (Communal area headman, January 2018).

In Kutama Village, in an informal conversation, a respondent acknowledged that totemic connections were important: totems provide a sense of a relationship between people in A1 settlements and their original communal areas. FTLRP beneficiaries in the area said that it was difficult to connect to traditional leaders in Machiroli Farm because they did not share lineages and totems with them. Instead, when they felt the need, they consulted traditional leaders in their original communal areas. In the early stages of settling on resettled land, the traditional authorities in their original communal areas continued to be involved in the resolution of conflicts that emerged in the resettlement areas. According to one respondent: "My communal area headman was influential in addressing

some of the challenges that we faced here in resettlement areas" (Interview, Machiroli Farm, 2 May 2018). Conflicts revolved around the allocation of land to FTLRP beneficiaries or their use of it, particularly before state structures had formalised land allocations. Cases where cattle strayed onto neighbouring land were another source of conflict. Many conflicts had to do with a general lack of social cohesion during the early phases of land occupations and even after land had been formally allocated.

FTLRP beneficiaries' continuing sense of belonging to their original communal areas was also seen in the involvement of their traditional leaders in the burial processes of people who died while living in Machiroli. Importantly, most FTLRP beneficiaries preferred to bury their dead relatives in their original communal areas. During fieldwork, the researcher attended one such burial of an FTLRP beneficiary who had been living at Machiroli; the burial was attended by the traditional leaders of the person's original communal area, and not those who presided at Machiroli. One beneficiary explained:

> "I want to be honest with you, here on this farm [Machiroli], yes we have our leaders that we have been given, that is a headman and a village head; but their influence is not the same as those in our communal areas. In case of death of a member here on this farm I have to go back and tell my village head that this is what has happened, and he has to give us the go-ahead to bury our relative in our communal area. So, because of some of those functions I have to maintain my respect for him despite being here on this farm. My current headman here does not have that power" (Machiroli Farm, 26 May 2018).

Most respondents indicated that they still maintained ties with the traditional authorities in their original communal areas, and that they are still recognised as members of those communities, particularly in cases of death. However, burials were not the only reason why respondents maintained links with their original traditional leaders. Many respondents indicated that they did not want to lose their traditional rights to land in their original communal areas, and so kept frequently in touch with the leaders there. As one respondent put it:

> "Yes, we have a homestead in the communal areas, but [presently] no one stays there. I am sure termites have done their job. The last time I went there I wanted to check if everything was ok. Though we have our home in the A1, we feel that we should not completely abandon our homestead in the reserves. The farm we used to cultivate, we permitted others in the family to use it. The headman is aware and we constantly keep in touch with him" (Interview, Machiroli Farm, December 2017).

It appeared that FTLRP beneficiaries who had been allocated land in the area preferred to hedge their bets by maintaining their traditional rights to land in

their former communal areas because the allocations of land in the A1 settlement were subject to some uncertainty with regards to tenure on the land. The issue of maintaining rights land in communal areas because of insecurity of tenure has been documented in other studies of the FTLRP (Matondi & Dekker, 2001; Zikhali, 2008).

A headman in the communal area confirmed that some FTLRP beneficiaries in Machiroli Farm still maintained rights to land in their former communal areas and that they continued to participate in important activities there. Most of the resettled people in Machiroli were still registered in their communal areas of origin and continued to attend some important meetings there, he said (Interview, communal area, January 2018). One of the important elements that emerged from the study was that people's sense of belonging was closely tied to their sense of connection with their original traditional authorities. Although they lived in resettlement areas, their emotions of belonging were closely related to their places of origin and much more significant for them. Their sense of belonging appeared to be related to two factors: their connections with the living, on the one hand, which often involved their relations with people in the communal areas, and on the other hand with their sense of connection with past, present and future generations represented by their kinship ties in their places of origin. The latter, in particular, was closely tied to the governance of the land associated with past, present and future generations through the role of traditional authorities in presiding over important social events and rituals. This was explained by a respondent:

> "The final link in the African belief system is the belief in the unborn. Africans … make provision for children and generations yet unborn. Traditional leaders represent the whole community and the ancestors as well. Our traditional leaders are given the same respect as our ancestors. Our leaders make provision for the living and future generations to come; this is also part of the reason that land in Africa is not sold but held in trust [by] the family [for future generations]. The traditional authorities under normal circumstances make sure that this does not happen [i.e. that the land is sold]" (Interview, Machiroli Farm, January 2017).

The above highlights the important role of traditional leaders in communal areas in maintaining multi-generational relations between kinship members and thus, their sense of belonging to the particular places associated with them. Belonging in this sense is embedded in the lives of the living and future generations. Studies have documented the weakening effect of Western religions on the influence of the traditional authorities (Mushayavanhu and Duncan, 2014) but the fieldwork in the Zvimba area reported here reveals that the traditional

authorities retain their influence over people's sense of belonging through their governance of land and its associated provisions of social support.

Not all beneficiaries of Machiroli maintained strong connection and social interaction with traditional authorities in their original communal areas. Some FTLRP beneficiaries relied on social networks that they created in resettlement areas for social support because they lacked kinship networks elsewhere. These respondents appeared to be somewhat disconnected from their original communal areas and their traditional authorities. They recognised that the traditional authorities in their original communal areas played an important role in the management and allocation of land there, but as they saw it, this role was fulfilled in the resettlement area by state land officials. For them, traditional leaders have proved to be replaceable. One beneficiary explained:

> "I think traditional leaders have no influence in land issues; the government has all the power; their role is mostly to organise people" (Machiroli Farm, May 2018).

These views show that though some FTLRP beneficiaries do not regard the role of traditional authorities in their communal areas of origin as significant in their lives, most FTLRP beneficiaries were convinced of their importance.

Belonging and land governance: discussion

The views of respondents collected for this case study illustrate that beneficiaries of land reform maintain a sense of belonging to the traditional authorities in their places of origin. The respondents' views indicated that they felt they could belong in both the resettlement area and their original communal area, but that their places of origin were associated with a much more significant sense of belonging. It also emerged that the traditional authorities in their places of origin played a significant role in their sense of belonging there. This is mostly based on connections such as totemic and social relations and the role of traditional authorities as symbols of belonging.

This phenomenon has been demonstrated to occur in other African countries. In Ghana, for example, many people maintain a sense of belonging to their traditional areas and their associated authorities even after relocating to urban areas (Ubink, 2007). For such people, the traditional authorities in such areas play a particularly important in supporting their sense of belonging. Geschiere (2009) argues that in this period of globalisation, people have made a conscious decision to ensure that elements of their sense of belonging, such as allegiance to traditional authorities are preserved. Although in some cases, people gravitate to alternative leadership structures, they often retain a sense of belonging in and to their original traditional leaders. According to Nuesiri (2014, p. 54) the re-

emergence of the importance of customary authorities in a number of African countries as a factor reinforcing a sense of belonging is more important for people in rural areas.

In Zimbabwe, it is important to note that there was some nuance in the way traditional authorities were able to claim and exercise authority in the aftermath of the land reform (Mkodzongi, 2016). Traditional authorities in resettlement areas, although relevant as this case shows, did not always receive full recognition by the FTLRP beneficiaries who were resettled in their areas of influence (Mkodzongi, 2013; Ncube, 2018). The beneficiaries' sense of belonging was often more closely tied to their sense of connection with their original areas and therefore with the traditional authorities there.

Some of the criticism levelled against traditional authorities has been that they are dysfunctional, as Ubink (2007) shows in the case of Ghana. However, they have largely remained relevant based on their ability to retain control of land in communal areas (Ntsebeza, 2004). Although the control of land has been a dominant factor in defining the authority of traditional authorities, the significance and role of traditional authorities goes beyond that. In such cases, this study suggests, resettled people retain their agency through the maintenance of their connections with the traditional leaders in their original areas, whose authority extends to important rituals such as burials. New connections with new authorities, it appears, cannot easily be "enforced" by state resettlement plans (Alexander, 2018).

The close relationship between individuals' sense of belonging and their connection with the traditional leaders in their original areas persisted during resettlement. For many, then, their sense of belonging in their place of resettlement was relatively shallow as compared to their sense of belonging in their original areas, where traditional leaders were seen to function as representatives of their communities In the postcolonial context, land governance needs to take account of important facets of social identity, such as people's need for a sense of belonging.

Conclusion

This article has illustrated that belonging plays a key role in the sense of the identity of beneficiaries of land reform through links to the traditional authorities in their places of origin. Land governance and belonging, then, are two sides of the same coin. The social engineering involved in resettlement programmes such as the FTLRP does not re-engineer the sense of belonging of beneficiaries, which often remains deeply connected to their places of origin.

Resettlement programmes such as the FTLRP that involve the relocation of people should recognise the connections that land reform beneficiaries retain with the traditional authorities of their places of origin and the possibility this generates for social cohesion. Whether beneficiaries experience a sense of divided loyalties that could undermine the development of social cohesion in resettled communities is a subject for further research.

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