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**COMMUNITY, CLASS AND GRAZING  
MANAGEMENT IN ZIMBABWE'S  
COMMUNAL LANDS**

By

**Ben Cousins\***

July 1993

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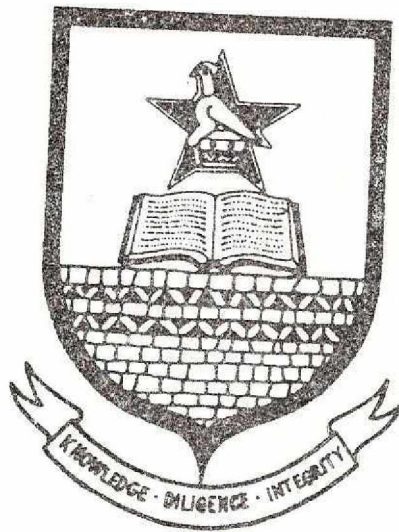
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

"Community" and "class" are concepts with a long history of usage in the social sciences, both for descriptive and for analytic purposes. This paper explores the relevance of these dimensions of social organisation for an understanding of the prospects for effective management of communal grazing lands in Zimbabwe, and attempts to clarify some of the ambiguities that often accompany their use. It also presents a preliminary analysis of data collected in a survey of 31 grazing schemes which was carried out between October 1987 and March 1988, and which focused on a similar set of questions.

### 1.1 Community, a term both ubiquitous and elusive

In the idiom of latterday development-speak "farmers" receive loans and agricultural advice, "families" are resettled, and "communities" engage in projects. Researchers tend to be more critical of these terms. They ask awkward questions like : "which farmers? rich or poor? male or female?", and "family, how defined?", (although it must be admitted that often they fail to reach agreement even amongst themselves on such questions as the usefulness of "the household" as a unit of analysis.) Somewhat less attention has been given to the last of these entities. Yet references to **community** are ubiquitous, and if anything, the term is even harder to define than "farmer" or "family".

Thus the First Five-year National Development Plan states that government will support "community development through collective self-reliance" and "community participation"; "the roles of the state and that of the community in development are complementary..." (Zimbabwe 1986, p39).

Donor agencies often make "community participation" an important criterion for funding. The Lome II agreement under which the EEC dispenses funds for Micro-projects requires that these must "ensure the active participation of the local community" (ACP-EEC 1984, p36).

The term is even enshrined in law, as in the Communal Land Act of 1982, which states that district councils shall grant consent for the use of Communal Land

*only to persons who, according to the customary law of the community that has traditionally and continuously occupied and used land in the area concerned, are regarded as forming part of such community.... (Zimbabwe 1982, p136).*

In none of these documents has any attempt been made to define precisely what is meant by the term "community", and common-sense connotations have clearly been regarded as adequate. But **are** they adequate? Would we all agree on what these connotations are? In 1955 Hillery reviewed ninety-four existing definitions of community and found that "beyond

the recognition that "people are involved in community" there was little agreement among sociologists and others" (Quoted in Worsley et al. 1970, p245).

## 1.2 Class, a term both popular and opaque

While "community" is often associated with cooperation and sharing, another term increasingly in use is usually taken to imply its opposite: class is mostly used to point to opposition and struggle, to structures of inequality. In relation to rural Zimbabwe, class struggle is the major theme of Ranger's history of Makoni District (Ranger 1985). It is also the central focus of three recent analyses of the agrarian question in the post-independence period (by Moyo, Mumbengegwi and Shopo, all in Mandaza 1986).

But again, there is little consensus on exactly how the term should be used. Ranger's work has been heavily criticised by Kriger (1988, p307), who takes him to task for making "peasant consciousness" central to his account of rural struggles without ever defining precisely what he means by peasants. Similarly, the other three writers mentioned above all employ the concept of class rather loosely, often implying that "the peasantry" as a whole is an oppressed and undifferentiated class, but sometimes referring to growing internal divisions (e.g. Moyo 1986, p188).

A large volume of socio-economic research on the Communal Lands is now beginning to emerge which provides evidence of a great deal of internal differentiation and inequality (e.g. Adams 1987; Jackson et al. 1987; Weiner 1988). Much of this is once again conceptualised in terms of class and processes of class formation, but in none of these studies has a coherent theoretical framework been put forward. Confusion rather than clarity characterises the use of the term in most recent discussions.

## 1.3 Grazing schemes in the Communal Lands

Grazing management schemes in Zimbabwe's Communal Lands have a history which stretches back to at least the 1940s, and encompasses the massive interventions in land tenure and land use embodied in the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951, the policy of community development in the 1960s and 1970s, and many initiatives since independence (Cousins 1987, pp9-28). Grazing schemes are widely seen as essential for both the prevention of environmental degradation and as a springboard for improvements in communal area livestock production (Zimbabwe 1987, pp 27-28; GFA 1987).

These schemes provide for the participation of both stock owners and non-owners and the emphasis has always been on "community management" of a common pool resource. "Communities" are here mostly seen as those groups who share the use of the same area of grazing land, but again the term has never been formally defined.

The issue of inequality immediately raises its head: how do grazing schemes benefit those households who own no cattle, and who form between 30 and 50 percent of the population in most Communal Lands? (Cliffe 1986, pp29-31). What are the prospects for these schemes if members perceive a divergence of interests within the "community" rather than a convergence? If Communal Land populations are becoming increasingly class-divided, as some analysts assert, then will grazing schemes contribute to this process, or not? (Scoones and Wilson 1988, pp 39 and 55).

These questions make it urgent to attain a degree of clarity with regard the difficult concepts of "community" and "class".

## 2. MODELS OF COMMON PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

### 2.1 The "Tragedy of the Commons" and its critics

The dawning realisation of the central importance of common pool resources in many rural economies has been accompanied by a search for theoretical models which would allow an understanding of how these systems function, and of what kind of interventions are required to either support, develop or perhaps transform them.

The earliest and most influential paradigm was Hardin's "Tragedy of the Commons", which proposed that the structure of incentives surrounding the use of common resources would inevitably lead to over-exploitation. Using the case of communal grazing land as an example, Hardin argued that because the private benefit of grazing an additional animal on the commons exceeds the private cost, the costs of degradation of the resource are shared by the group as a whole (Hardin 1968). The prescription which naturally followed was the privatisation of use-rights, to bring costs into line with benefits.

Hardin's model has, however, been widely criticised in recent years. Ciriacy-Wantrup and Bishop (1975) point out that Hardin confuses two quite distinct situations: "open access", in which there are no rules governing access to and use of resources, and "common property", in which

*potential resource users who are not members of a group of co-equal owners are excluded. The concept "property" has no meaning without this feature of exclusion of all who are not either owners themselves or have some arrangement with owners to use the resource in question (Ciriacy-Wantrup and Bishop 1975, p715).*

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Ciriacy-Wantrup and other writers (e.g. Runge 1986; Artz 1986), point out that common property institutions have survived for long periods in a diversity of cultural settings. They are not in themselves the cause of resource mismanagement, and may well be more appropriate than private property in many situations.

Hardin's model rests on the assertion that free riding, "the incentive that any individual may have to shirk responsibility to the community or group to which he or she belongs" (Runge 1986, p625), must be a dominant strategy. This means that even if individuals attempt to develop cooperative rules governing their use of shared resources, they are bound to fail because nobody has an incentive to observe these rules. The assumption is that individuals pursue strategies without taking into account the expected actions of others.

Runge argues that this is unreasonable, and that what is required is an approach which deals explicitly with the question of uncertainty regarding the actions of others, and with the interdependence of decisions in village economies. These involve choices in which the benefits and costs of resource use are a function of the total actions of the group. Common property institutions are mechanisms for coordinating community decisions so that individuals are provided with the assurance that others will not misuse common resources. Free riding does not necessarily dominate as a strategy, although it may do so in any particular situation.

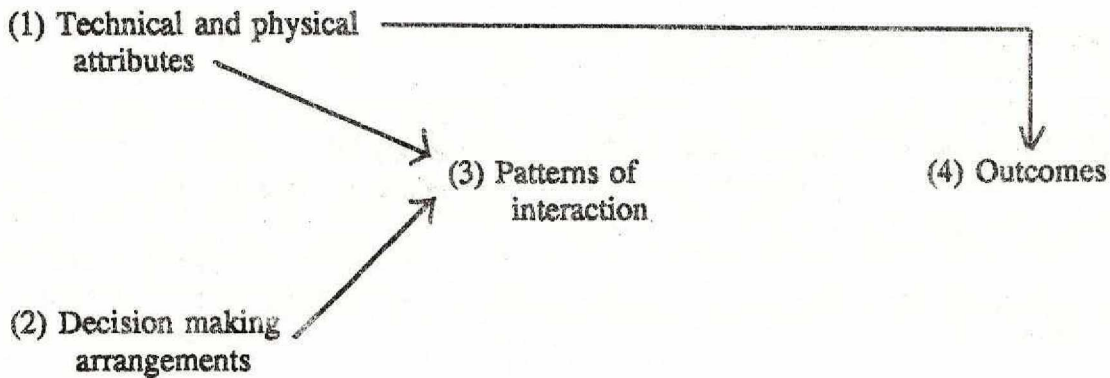
It will be particularly difficult to coordinate decision making in communities which are "heterogeneous" i.e. comprise a membership with markedly different resource endowments and who therefore face very different resource constraints. However, Runge states that coordination norms offer their own incentive to be maintained, and that enforcement of rules may readily emerge from within.

Runge's model is based on an abstract and generalised view of the nature of "village economies". A high degree of interdependence in decision making is assumed, as are social mechanisms for making and enforcing the rules necessary to solve the "assurance problem". Central to the model is the idea of some kind of collective identity, sometimes referred to as a "village", sometimes as a "community".

## 2.2 The Oakerson model

Oakerson (1986) has proposed a general framework for analyzing common property problems. His model consists of four inter-related components: (1) the technical and physical attributes of the resource (2) the decision making arrangements and rules governing relationships among resource users (3) patterns of interaction among users (4) outcomes or consequences.

**Figure 1: Oakerson's model for the analysis of common property management**



In (3) a pattern of social interaction results from the strategic choices made by individuals, these choices reflecting the combined set of constraints and opportunities found in (1) and (2). Outcomes (4), follow from these interactions.

Decision making arrangements "need to be comprehended as commonly understood and applied by the relevant community of decision makers" (Oakerson 1986, p23). They are "organisational" and "institutional" in character and have to do with authority relationships. Some of these arrangements establish the ability of a group to act collectively, while others are operational rules which govern the use of the common resource. Some of the latter regulate access to the commons by defining "qualifications for participation in a community of users (entry) and whether membership in an organisation of users is compulsory (exit)" (Oakerson 1986, p19).

Outcomes are evaluated by the criteria of efficiency (is resource utilisation approaching the optimal level set by physical and technical attributes?) and equity (do individuals get a fair return on their contribution to the collective regulation of the commons?). If some individual users are able to benefit at the expense of others, then the resulting inequities may lead to conflict and the collapse of cooperation.

Thus Oakerson's model, like Runge's, is abstract in character but makes reference to a social context for critical relationships and interactions. It posits as central components of common property management regimes both a specific resource base and a specific "community" of common pool resource users who agree on sets of rules, interact with each other, and evaluate the consequences of their individual and collective choices. It also suggests that social relationships which involve authority (power) and inequality are likely to be important influences on eventual outcomes.

Gupta (1986) brings the question of inequality to the fore in his analysis of the failure of a

of landless pastoralists or cultivators-cum-pastoralists can be expected to have different stakes in protecting the environment. They also have differing expectations of the kinds of assurance.....that they should receive from the various institutions that control resource use" (Gupta 1986, p305). The Oakerson framework would be sharpened by a proper recognition of "historic inequities in resource use".

This review of the theoretical discourse around common property reveals that two major themes are indeed those of "community" and "class". However, both of these tend to be treated in a highly abstract manner. As Peters has pointed out, common property regimes must be understood as operating within systems of production, not in isolation (Peters 1986, p619). They must also be situated historically, "embedded" in specific sets of political-economic structures, and "culturally embedded in systems of meanings, symbols and values" (Peters 1987, p10). This kind of analysis will avoid both the error of positing unattached, asocial individuals (as in the Tragedy of the Commons type model), and its opposite. the view of undifferentiated, harmonious "communities".

Common property theory, then, leads us in a circle: the relevance of concepts of "community" and "class" is confirmed, but in a highly abstract manner. It seems we must look elsewhere for greater clarity on just how to employ these basic but troublesome terms.

### **3. THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY: "COMMUNITY" IN THE EYES OF ANTHROPOLOGISTS AND SOCIOLOGISTS**

#### **3.1 "Community" as meaning and as practice**

Anthropologists and sociologists have often studied small-scale societies which inhabit the same locality, are ethnically homogeneous, share a common culture, engage in similar kinds of productive activity, and share a common political system. Their members have, in short, a great deal in common.

Thus Redfield in his book The Little Community (1955) gave as defining features: distinctiveness, small size, self-sufficiency, and homogeneity of inhabitants. These characteristics, however, are relative and difficult to specify in precise terms, as Redfield's critics have pointed out. Boundaries are often hard to define, most villages contain members of varying occupations or class, their political and religious affiliations are not always the same, and few are not tied into the operations of wider market systems (Worsley et al. 1970, p250-251).

Worsley et al. go on to discuss two studies of rural communities which show that the term still retains meaning even when the notion of strictly unitary communities is abandoned. Arensberg and Kimball show that in Ireland

*...what we have called the "rural community" is no simply defined*

*geographical area. Any one of the recognised divisions of the countryside in Ireland, a townland, a group of townlands, a parish, an old barony, a mountain upland, a portion of a valley floor or plain, except perhaps the newer administrative divisions, is in a sense a community (Arensberg and Kimball 1940, quoted in Worsley et al. 1970, p253).*

The reason for this is because a farmer has "allegiances to all these communities. He is quite ready to find his emotion stirred in any one of them" (ibid, p253). In other words, he pursues a set of interests within a series of "communities", which together do not comprise a unitary whole.

Similarly, Frankenberg shows that in the Welsh border village which he studied there was no absolute set of criteria, as used by the inhabitants themselves, for defining who really "belonged" to the village. A "stranger" in one context was seen as "one of us" in another (Frankenberg 1957, cited in Worsley et al. 1970, p254).

Thus communities can contain multiple and overlapping identifications, and exist as "communities within communities", with their members living their lives in a number of different contexts, each with a distinctive set of social relationships. With this kind of perspective it is possible to abandon a view of "community" as inherently harmonious, and instead find internal conflict, division and a lack of well-defined boundaries.

Cohen (1985) asserts that "community" implies both similarity and difference; the term expresses a relational idea: the opposition of one group to other social entities. This sense of discrimination is embodied in the boundary, which marks the beginning and the end of the "community". Some boundaries are physical, others are linguistic or religious, but some exist mainly in the minds of their beholders. This being so they may be perceived in very different ways by people on both sides of the boundary. For Cohen the consciousness of community is expressed largely through the symbolic constitution of boundaries (Cohen 1985, p13).

This emphasis on meaning rather than social structure leads Cohen to challenge what he calls three prevalent myths about local communities: the myth of simplicity, the myth of egalitarianism, and the myth of inevitable conformity. Rural communities should be seen as complex, internally differentiated, and replete with a diversity of beliefs and meanings. The appearance of homogeneity and consensus is often the result of a deliberate presentation to the outside world of a sense of common identity, of difference - in other words, of the marking of a boundary.

These debates that have taken place around the term have undoubtedly given us a more nuanced and complex view of "community". Recent work by social historians in South Africa has attempted to use this kind of view to understand the diverse processes by which a highly stratified industrial proletariat (divided in terms not only of race but also ethnicity, language, gender, and skills) came into being (Bozzoli 1987). Of particular concern in these studies has been two further aspects of the problem. The first is the articulation of "community" with "class", understood both as a structural term and as a source of identity and "belongingness"

in its own right. The second is the ideological dimension, the ways in which myths and motifs are manipulated by self-conscious groups and by active ideologists in order to create communities.

There is evidence from these detailed historical case studies that often "community" and "class" exist in a relationship of tension, with the former acting to weaken identification with broad class interests. But there is also evidence that

*Some of the most effective and radical forms of class expression appear to have taken place in situations where class and community reinforce one another, while changes in the form and structure of the community (linked analytically to changes in the nature and organisation of work) have significant effects on how class consciousness is expressed (Bozzoli 1987, p6).*

Clearly the relationship is a complex one. One of the reasons for this becomes evident when consideration is given to the role of ideas and ideologies in the formation of both communities and classes. As Anderson has pointed out: ".....all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined" (Anderson 1983, quoted in Bozzoli 1987, p4). "Communities" are constituted by the beliefs of their members, by a mutual recognition there is something that the collectivity has in common. This is why myths and symbols can be potent forces in the active creation of communities.

Similarly, classes only become actors on the political-economic stage when individuals occupying the same structural position in a system of production consciously identify themselves with each other, when as Marx says, they become a class "for themselves" as well as a class "in themselves" (Marx 1852).

"Communities", then, may be created, and can form around important symbols, myths and motifs. However, it would be a mistake to dismiss the whole notion as nothing but an ideological construct. As Bozzoli comments, "real communities are most likely to ...combine elements of both 'myth' and 'reality'" (Bozzoli 1987, p7). "Imagined communities" are also based on "real interconnections between people" and "ideologists seeking to create myths about community, will surely have difficulty in succeeding unless the material preconditions are propitious" (ibid, p8).

Perhaps the most rounded view is Mulhern's, which seeks to give full weight to both the imaginary and the material:

*To be human at all is, among other things, to be "identified", by oneself and others. "Community" is likewise universal, representing one major form of "identity". It is best understood as the effect of any identification that positions individuals as members of a group of comparables or counterparts; it is the work of a process of collective identification. As a singular, collective identity is an abstraction, for any person or group possesses more than one. Concrete human beings are a complex of such*

*identities, which need not be harmonious or coextensive and are very often mutually contradictory. Identities of class, ethnicity, gender, religion, generation and so on coexist in all social aggregations (households, towns, trade unions, countries alike), implying different and often conflicting rights, duties, capacities and positions for their members. If "communities" are notoriously hard to find, it is because they are everywhere - not places but practices of collective identification whose variable order largely defines the culture of any social formation (Mulhern 1984, p24).*

### 3.2 Zimbabwean studies of "community"

In 1962 the Rhodesian government initiated a new phase of colonial rural administration, the policy of "community development", which aimed to initiate

*the process by which the people of each community are given responsibility for their own development, a responsibility which can only be discharged through communal organisation, formally and informally, for democratic planning and action (Passmore 1972, p120).*

Green, the expert Adviser employed by the government, defined community in terms of "a locality ... whose boundaries are defined by the people living in it and recognised by them as an entity", institutions which serve "basic needs", "a sense of togetherness" and "the potential to work together" (cited in Passmore 1972, pp 95-96). After engaging in field investigations in several areas Green came to the conclusion that the area that rural people themselves regarded as their "community" was the dunhu, the traditional headman's ward. This was "the unit with which there is psychic and social identification by practically all the people" (cited in Passmore 1972, p95). The binding factors, according to Green, were the control over entry into the community exercised by the headman (via land allocation), and the headman's judicial role as adjudicator in disputes.

This emphasis coincides with the views of Holleman (1952; 1969), and it may be that Green himself was influenced by them. Scoones and Wilson (1988) dispute the assertion that wards were/are the basic units of land management in Shona society, although they accept that these are considered by rural people (but especially chiefly lineages!) to be administrative units. Citing evidence by White on ward boundary disputes, they argue that complex interactions between colonial administrative policies and lineage politics have resulted in a constant shifting of the formal boundaries of wards. This instability "contradicts the argument of Holleman that people feel a permanent attachment and stake in them" (ibid, p49).

For Scoones and Wilson people have a "special interest" in the resources immediately adjacent to their villages rather than in the ward as a whole, and these can cross ward boundaries. Even villages are sometimes divided in respect of resource use. The result is that

*Individual homes, homestead clusters, spatially defined village sections,*

*political villages and wider communities all therefore have overlapping rights of different strengths to any one natural resource in a specific place (ibid, p50).*

We return here to the concept of "multiple communities", rather than the single, unitary entity the expert Adviser was seeking, and claimed to have found. Scoones and Wilson emphasise that the existence of overlapping rights means that any claim to exclusive tenure, as in grazing schemes, is inherently problematic.

Nevertheless, a motivation does exist for such claims in a situation of inequality in common pool resource endowments between communities, at any of the levels described above. Grazing schemes which reinforce these inequalities may lead to longer term problems.

To overcome these, what is needed is

*the definition of suitable management units, the identification of the appropriate scale of organisation to be responsible for management, the resolution of conflicts over overlapping rights and the involvement of both rich and poor (ibid, p57).*

Despite the problems associated with the delineation of Village Development Committees (VIDCOs), which often do not represent groups with a history of cooperation and shared resource use, Scoones and Wilson do finally recommend the VIDCO as the most appropriate unit for resource management programmes. This is because they are more coincident than any other with "special interest" neighbourhood land units which are "managed by shallow lineage groups" (ibid, p57).

An important question, then, is that of focus: in relation to what issue or concern is any particular collective identification taking place? How important is that concern in the larger framework of social and economic activity?

Changing definitions of "community" in response to new needs and problems is the focus of a study by Murphree (1970). The establishment of a village school for a group of eighty five households under four "headmen", (in this case *sabhuku*), led to a redefinition of the bases for cooperative efforts and the emergence of a new structure of authority and decision making, the elected school committee.

*The interests of (parents of school-age children) could not be adequately channelled through a traditional system of influence and authority ..... the new group cut across the boundaries of village organisation within the valley; a new alignment was required to direct its activities and enforce the demands of its objectives (Murphree 1970, p4).*

#### 4. CLASS IN THE COMMUNAL LANDS: CONCEPTUALISING DIFFERENTIATION

##### 4.1 Descriptions of inequality

Theories of common property resource management pose as a potential problem the degree of inequality within communities, and studies of "community" raise the question of the relationship between this kind of collective identification and another, that of class.

Questions of inequality and class have always been a concern of social theory. A conventional sociological approach uses indicators of inequality to construct a scale of relative privilege and deprivation, and assigns "class" labels to various strata along the scale. Often the purpose is purely descriptive (Worsley et al., p292).

In rural societies a wide range of variation in wealth is easily noticed, and some of it may be related to such factors as household size and composition, access to land and irrigation water, regular remittances from household members in wage employment, stage in the demographic cycle and so on. But these factors do not in themselves explain the observable differences, and enable us to understand the processes through which they come about. A theory of differentiation and class formation is required.

A more useful approach is that of political economy, which attempts to use the concept of class to explain inequality rather than simply describe it. Here the key focus is on the social relations of production i.e. on the structural relationship between different groups in society (Bernstein 1977).

Most Zimbabwean analyses identify the major classes in society as capital (national and international), labour (workers), peasants, and the petty bourgeoisie (see for example Mandaza 1986; Garlake and Proctor 1987). In agriculture the large scale commercial sector is labelled "capitalist" and inhabitants of the communal areas are described, by virtually every writer on the subject, as "peasants". As Adams has pointed out, this characterisation, while undoubtedly indicating the great disparities between the average commercial farm and units of production in the Communal Lands contributes to a view of the peasantry as a class essentially homogeneous in its composition (Adams 1987, p4).

Yet historical studies have shown that in fact both pre-colonial societies and the rural population in the early colonial period were highly differentiated (Beach 1977, p55; Phimister 1977)

For the contemporary period too evidence is accumulating that "the peasantry" in Zimbabwe is far from homogeneous. Moyo (1986, pp188-189) shows how the bulk of marketed grain from the communal areas (the post-independence "peasant miracle") comes from the high potential regions, in which live only a small proportion of the Communal Land population. Coudere and Marijsse (1988) find that there is much greater inequality of agricultural income within villages than between them, even when they are located in different agro-ecological



zones. (They find access to land to be the most important factor explaining production and income variation.)

Jackson et al. (1987) have investigated the structure of rural income and report that the top 10 percent of households in their survey controlled 40,4 percent of all cereal production, and that the bottom 50 percent accounted for only 10 percent of all crop incomes (ibid, pp41 and 69). In addition, 44 percent of all livestock income was controlled by the top 10 percent of cattle and stock owners; the top 25 percent of stock owners controlled 74 percent of all stock. Total income is derived from a diversity of sources, and

*income levels are affected by the level of diversification of income between farm and non-farm sources. Narrowly based agricultural incomes are often associated with the lowest, most variable and insecure household incomes (ibid, p70).*

Crop income was the single most important source of income, providing for over 50 percent of total income and affecting 96 percent of households (ibid, p53).

In contrast, Weiner and Moyo (forthcoming), find wage income (from migrants and from local wage labour) to be more important than agricultural income in all agro-ecological regions except the most productive (ibid, p22). (The reason for the discrepancy may lie in the fact that the two surveys were carried out in two different years: the Jackson et al. results are for a relatively wet agricultural season (1984/5), while the Weiner and Moyo data are for the drought year of 1982/3.)

Weiner and Moyo also find that households receiving wage income earn nearly twice the mean income of those without, and can not only purchase more consumer goods but also invest some of their wage income in agricultural means of production; they are also more likely to hire agricultural labour. In their analysis what they call "community-level processes of agrarian differentiation" are strongly related to the functioning of a "migrant labour economy" or a "labour reserve economy".

Adams' work has focused on wage labour within the Communal Lands, and she finds a significant degree of reliance on both permanent and casual wage labour on the part of households with "little or no access to the means of agricultural production, principally land and draught power" (Adams 1987, p24). Such people earn extremely low wages, define themselves primarily as workers not as farmers, and are ignored by development assistance programmes. Emphasising the complexity of the patterns of labour hiring (both hiring in and hiring out), she nevertheless clearly distinguishes between this "rural proletariat" and the wealthy rural households which hire in labour on a regular basis. Many of the latter have access to non-agricultural income or to a salaried job. Adams has made no attempt to quantify just how common these patterns are, but she claims that they are more prevalent than is often supposed, and concludes that "important processes of accumulation and proletarianisation (are) now occurring" (ibid, p33).

Scoones and Wilson (1988, pp 34-40) write of the pressures of commercialisation which are leading to greater differentiation between rich and poor, but they also stress the continuing importance of lineage-based clusters in production. Relations of reciprocal obligation are constraints on differentiation and an "escape" into beef production on communal land, although there is also an "apparent weakening of the lineage structure" and other forms of cooperation may become more important over time.

The question of the political expression of class divisions at a local level has not been addressed much in the Zimbabwean literature to date (but see Phimister 1988). Yet this a central issue in any attempt to understand the political economy of the Communal Lands, particularly when examining the relationship between different kinds of collective identifications (e.g. class, community, gender, ethnic group, party affiliation). How is power exercised, and what is the social and economic base of those who wield power? Is class formation at the level of economic relations constrained by a community politics articulated in terms of popular interests? A great deal more research into these questions is needed before even provisional answers can be given.

#### 4.2 Theoretical approaches to class analysis

The studies cited above are reports of recent empirical investigations which have usefully opened up the question of just how homogeneous Communal Land populations really are but, they do not go much beyond description. We now have a more informed picture of the profile of rural inequality, but we still lack a theoretical account of process. The passing allusions to certain theoretical approaches made in these studies ("labour reserve economies"; "accumulation and proletarianisation"; "kulakisation" etc) do not constitute such an account. What is now urgently required is work along these lines, rather than simply the further accumulation of facts.

Analytical approaches to the class nature of rural societies have been the subject of a great deal of heated controversy. An important focus of this debate in relation to Southern Africa has been the relationship between the impoverished rural "sector" and the rapidly industrialising urban centres, often originally based on mining development. In other words the political economy of the region has been seen as one system, with a central question being how to understand the role of migrant labour in the simultaneous creation of development and underdevelopment.

Arrighi's seminal work, based on the Rhodesian/Zimbabwean case, has been highly influential. In the early colonial period favourable market opportunities allowed an African peasantry to emerge, which supplied the mining centres and towns with the bulk of their food supplies. This was highly unsatisfactory for the mining companies, who needed a source of cheap labour in order to be profitable, and the colonial state was instrumental in undermining peasant production and assisting a rival sector of capitalist farming to establish itself in its place. The Reserves became the home base of a semi-proletariat, which could not support itself without selling its labour power. At the same time this emerging working class was not dispossessed of all its land and continued to engage in below-subsistence agricultural

production. Some of the reproduction of the worker and his family was thus undertaken outside of the capitalist sector, in "peasant" production, which effectively subsidised the low wages being offered by employers. Thus was created a "labour reserve economy" (Arrighi 1970).

What then is the meaning of "peasant" and how is production organised in this sector? And what is the class status of a migrant worker? General definitions put forward by Palmer and Parsons state that

*"peasants" are small agricultural producers who intend to make a living by selling part of their crops or herds, while "proletarians" are wage earners in the hire of an employer. Thus people... may be more or less one or the other: the typical colonial economy ... put people in an intermediate position through the phenomenon of temporary labour migration and "the tradition of a subsistence wage" (Palmer and Parsons 1977, p2).*

The notion of an "intermediate" class status is clearly inadequate for purposes of explanation rather than description, but indicates a general problem for theorists, not resolved by simply resorting to composite labels such as "peasantariat" (Parson 1981).

Wolpe's thesis of an "articulation of modes of production" has been widely accepted. This asserts that capitalism did not destroy the indigenous, pre-capitalist mode of production but instead dominates it, "conserving" certain elements and "dissolving" others (Wolpe 1975). Thus the pattern of reciprocal obligations within and between households which survives in many rural economies, albeit in a changed form, is described as the conservation of pre-capitalist relations of production, which help to reproduce the cheap labour-force required by the dominant capitalist mode. (For an example of the theory applied to Zimbabwe, see Riddell 1978, p2).

Some writers dispute that "pre-capitalist relations" survive to any degree in the labour reserves of the region, and argue that the term "peasant" is now inappropriate. Thus Innes and O'Meara (1977) for the Transkei, Davies et al. (1985) for Swaziland, Murray (1981) for Lesotho, and Parson (1981) for Botswana all assert that the proletarianisation of rural producers is far advanced, and that the majority are little more than a "reserve army of labour" for South African capital.

These arguments sometimes make reference to "classical" views on the differentiation of the peasantry. Lenin, for example, in his earlier formulations, saw capitalist development leading inevitably to an internal differentiation of the peasantry into landless labourers, poor peasants, middle peasants, and rich peasants. "Poor peasants" are unable to reproduce themselves by household production and are forced to sell their labour; "middle peasants" can reproduce themselves through family labour and land; "rich peasants" invest in production and hire in labour. Over time rich peasants accumulate wealth and become a fully-fledged agrarian bourgeoisie, while the other layers of the population are transformed into a rural proletariat (Djurfeldt 1981, in Harriss 1982).

Various arguments have been levelled at all of these views. Thus the "labour reserve" thesis has been criticised for its mechanical functionalism, which does not take into account the response of the direct producers themselves. The active resistance of the rural population often succeeded in shaping the patterns of labour migration; often the state and capital faced great difficulties in their attempts to directly attack or control independent cultivation (Cooper 1981, p311).

The notion of an "articulation of modes of production" has also been attacked for its functionalism, and for its failure to clearly specify the social relations of production in the "pre-capitalist" mode. Furthermore, since it is admitted that the reproduction of the "semi-proletariat" can only be secured through cash earned in wage employment, it makes little sense to talk of a mode of production which fails to secure the conditions of its own reproduction (Bernstein 1977; Neocosmos 1987, p37).

The "linear proletarianisation" thesis has been criticised for effectively failing to take account of crucial divisions within the class of "semi-proletarians", for example between migrants who remit cash purely for subsistence and those who invest significant amounts of earnings in agricultural production. It thus contributes to a (misleading) view of the rural population as essentially homogeneous (Neocosmos 1987, p39).

With regard to the poor/middle/rich peasant schema, Leys has commented on the difficulties in applying it in migrant labour economies which regularly suffer drought. Labour is hired out in the wider economy by most households rather than locally, and those households with the most secure relationship to the labour market, and commanding the highest rates of return, have the greatest access to resources and are therefore the least drought susceptible. Using the criterion of the hiring out of labour, the "rich peasants" would become the "poor" and vice versa (Leys 1986, p262).

#### 4.3 Peasants as petty commodity producers

Most recently a body of work has emerged which addresses these difficulties, and which provides a useful framework for further research. This literature proposes that the concept of a "peasantry" or a "peasant mode of production" be abandoned in favour of a concept of petty commodity production (Friedmann 1980; Gibbon and Neocosmos 1985; Neocosmos 1987; Bernstein 1986).

The problems with the concept of a "peasantry" are firstly, that peasants are asserted to share a common and peasant-specific rationality, wherever they are found, a distinctive "logic of subsistence". This is an essentialist assumption with a subjectivist bias. Secondly, peasant economies are seen both ahistorically and as without internal contradictions, so that changes in them can only come from the outside world i.e. through the penetration of capitalist relations. Thirdly, the peasant farm-household is conceived of as an unproblematic unity, whereas in fact internal cleavages along the lines of gender and age are common. Fourthly, peasants are posed as being at the other end of the spectrum from a modern proletariat, and the process of transition between them is seen as being linear and one-way

in character. Taken together these assumptions imply that the only differences between peasants are the result of natural or biological factors, as in Chayanov's "demographic differentiation".

The concept of petty commodity production is proposed as an alternative. "Peasants" are more usefully conceived of as a "category of commodity producers who possess the means of production necessary to produce commodities and who engage in production on the basis of unpaid household labour alone" (Gibbon and Neocosmos 1985, p170). This definition is based on an understanding of capitalism as generalised commodity production, in which individuals are unable to produce and reproduce themselves outside of capitalist commodity relations. The essential relation of production in capitalist society is that between capital and wage labour, which is inherently antagonistic. This is not to say that all productive enterprises will be composed of capitalists and workers, but that social formations may be said to be capitalist when only the capital/ wage labour relation is able to "structurally and historically explain their existence" (Gibbon and Neocosmos 1985, p169).

Thus petty commodity producers combine within households or individuals the functions of both capital and wage labour, and it is this contradictory relation that gives this form of production its inherent instability. Competition between petty producers and with capitalist enterprises also contributes to this instability. In relation to agricultural petty commodity producers, "middle peasants" are then those able to reproduce themselves without employing wage labour and without selling labour; the "side of capital" and the "side of labour" are in relative equilibrium. If reproduction cannot be satisfied by household production alone, requiring the sale of labour power, then the "side of labour" dominates, and these "poor" peasants are more properly designated semi-proletarians. And "rich peasants" are those where the "side of capital" dominates. This category may also sell their labour, not in order to reproduce themselves, but to acquire funds for investment and accumulation (Neocosmos 1987, p71).

However, although this kind of differentiation is made possible by the general instability of petty commodity production, it cannot be stated to be a process taking place continuously or ineluctably. The extent to which differentiation takes place and the mechanisms through which it occurs are contingent upon particular conditions of competition and class struggle (Bernstein 1986, p21).

Gibbon and Neocosmos suggest that the general features of petty commodity production are:

- production for exchange within conditions of generalised commodity production
- private rather than collective production
- regulation by the same laws of competition and accumulation as apply to all other commodity production under capitalism (Gibbon and Neocosmos 1985, pp 171 -173).

These are "essential" relations in that they provide the conditions of existence of the different "phenomena" of capitalist society. These "phenomena" (the forms of organisation and the social entities which make up the social division of labour, in all its diversity), are not just expressions of these essential relations - their production must be explained.

Thus the degree of capitalization of enterprises, labour processes, sexual divisions of labour, modes of economic calculation, and so on, are all matters for specific investigation. The places of "capital" and "labour" within household enterprises may be constituted and structured through gender and generational categories and idioms of kinship, with an apparent similarity to genuinely pre-capitalist labour processes. They are, however, qualitatively different, their conditions of existence having been transformed by capitalist relations - and the reasons for the retention of these phenomenal forms need to be investigated and explained (Bernstein 1986, p25).

Finally, the contradictory combination of the places of capital and labour within petty commodity production means that the political and ideological practices of this class tend to combine collective with highly individualised and privatised practices.

*In the case of peasants.... ideological and political "solutions" may take the form of reconstructions of "community", "tradition", "custom", etc, as a means of defence against the depredations of capital and the state (notably where land rights are concerned) (Bernstein 1987, p38).*

Smith (1985) has similarly suggested that "community consciousness" is not just a left-over of a previous cultural stage, but an appropriate form of class consciousness for petty commodity producers.

#### 4.4 Summary of the discussion thus far

Defining a "community" is a far from unproblematic task, and perhaps the most useful way to understand the term is as one kind of collective identification amongst others; in Mulhern's terms a social practice rather than a place. The focus of the identification is then critical to the definition of social boundaries.

An alternative type of collectivity is that of "class". For a class to act in concert presupposes a common consciousness of structural position and shared interests, interests which often conflict with those of other classes. But class consciousness is not automatically given by structural position, and other identifications may be more powerful; one of these may be membership of a local "community". While this may mean that class and community identities exist in tension with (or even contradict) one another, the converse can also be true: the two identifications can be mutually supportive. (The same might be said of gender identifications; see Batezat et al. 1988.)

In the Communal Lands of Zimbabwe specifying the contents of these two difficult terms and explicating their relationship to each other is important for a number of reasons, including

the development of appropriate policies and long term strategic plans, informing political and economic interventions at a local (e.g. VIDCO) level, and so on. It is also critical for any assessment of the prospects for successful common property resource management projects, including grazing schemes.

## **5. GRAZING SCHEMES AND EMERGING DEFINITIONS OF "COMMUNITY"**

A recent survey of 31 grazing schemes had as two of its central concerns the definition of "community" and the issue of inequality in cattle ownership (which some researchers have suggested is an index of a more general stratification of the rural population, see Chipika, this volume).

The questions that the survey set out to answer were: does a notion of "community identity" provide a basis for the coordinated action required for management of common grazing land, and how does inequality in cattle ownership affect the prospects for this coordination?

### **5.1 Purpose and methodology of survey**

Between October 1987 and March 1988 37 grazing schemes in Communal Lands in different parts of Zimbabwe were visited and between three and seven interviews carried out in each scheme. Some of these visits formed part of an evaluation of EBC funded grazing schemes, and the rest were a sample of the 106 schemes identified in a previous survey undertaken as part of a larger research programme on the dynamics of decision making in common property regimes (Cousins 1987). This second survey was designed to gather data on aspects of decision making, conflict and farmer perceptions of resource management and provide a sound basis for the selection of field sites for the detailed case studies which form the core of the research programme.

The sample consisted in the end of 31 schemes, selected in proportion to the numbers of operating unfenced, operating fenced and planned schemes found in the 1986/7 survey. Agritex field staff helped to arrange interviews with members of grazing scheme committees, who formed the bulk of respondents, and interviews with non-committee members and non-cattle owners were sought to try and obtain a greater spread of opinion.

Each scheme has been characterised in terms of origins, institutional development, degree of member's commitment, level of external and internal conflicts, perceptions of grazing management and related issues. An attempt was made in the interviews to cross-check responses and corroborate information on the more sensitive questions, and these were often approached in different ways in the course of the same interview.

Nevertheless, the data presented here are clearly based on a subjective assessment of what are undoubtedly controversial issues, and it cannot be claimed that the respondents' views

are "representative". The bulk of those interviewed were committee members, and most of these are cattle owners. On the other hand, in most cases the views of committee members and non-members, and of cattle owners and non-owners, tended to bear each other out, and in schemes where conflicts of opinion occur there is often a remarkable degree of frankness about them.

## 5.2 General characteristics of the sample

Tables 1, 2, and 3 present data on some of the general features of the sample as a whole. Because of a skewed distribution the median value is a better measure of central tendency than the mean as regards size of scheme. Ninety percent of the schemes contain fewer than 150 households, and eighty six percent are 800 hectares in extent or smaller. Very large schemes are in the minority. Two thirds of the schemes are stocked at more than twice the recommended rates for their Natural Regions, using Agritex data on stock numbers and on recommended stocking rates.

Nearly forty percent of the schemes coincide with a VIDCO, although in three cases this is in the context of a ward level grazing scheme, as are currently being planned in Midlands Province in particular. Nearly half of the schemes are smaller entities within VIDCOs, and four cut across VIDCO boundaries.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of grazing schemes

	n	mean	median	range
Number of households	29	140,5	78	17 - 800
Area of scheme (ha)	28	754,7	335	83 - 5687

Table 2: Stocking rate (n = 26, missing cases = 5)

As compared to recommended rate	n	%
> twice as much	17	65
twice as much or less	9	35



**Table 3: Coincidence of scheme with VIDCO (n = 31)**

Coincidence	n	%
Coincides	12	39
Smaller	15	48
Cuts across	4	13

### 5.3 Status of scheme

A comparison between previous status, as reported by Agritex field staff in 1986/7, and present status (October 1987-March 1988), is presented in Table 4. Some of the changes in status were the result of internal dynamics, some were due to the completion of fencing programmes, and some were evidently mis-reported in the first place.

**Table 4: Previous and present status of schemes (n = 31)**

Status	Op. unfenced	Op. fenced	Planned	Abandoned
Previous	11	5	15	-
Present	5	8	14	4

The first survey of grazing schemes carried out in 1986/7 found that the most significant differences were between schemes categorised by status i.e. by whether they were operating but unfenced, operating and fenced, or still at the planning stage (Cousins 1987, pp 59-61). It was concluded that unfenced schemes in particular were worthy of greater attention because of the reduced costs, reduction in the likelihood of boundary disputes, greater flexibility in management, and dominant role of "traditional" leaders associated with them.

This survey, however, found that from the point of view of decision making status is not a critical variable: significant relationships were found in relation to only some of the variables investigated. Some of the previous relationships (e.g. between status and size, period of origin, and perceived problems) were confirmed, but unfenced schemes appear to face as many problems with regard to boundaries as fenced. Since boundary disputes have also been found to be much more common than was previously reported (in 77 percent of cases as opposed to 36 percent), it is likely that the under-reporting of disputes by extension staff was more severe in respect of unfenced schemes than the other two categories.

The major finding of this survey in respect of status is that levels of internal conflict (for definition, see below) are likely to be higher in planned schemes than in operating schemes. Four of the previously planned schemes have since been abandoned, internal disagreements being the basic reason for this in three cases. Some schemes, however, proceed to the operational phase in spite of a degree of unresolved internal conflict.

In fourteen schemes, including most of those whose previous status was first classified as "operating unfenced", the views of respondents on the viability of unfenced schemes were obtained. In four of these people felt grazing management was possible without fences, but many problems were caused by the incursion of neighbours' cattle and by the difficulties of herding within unfenced "paddocks". In ten cases people felt these same problems made the whole notion completely unviable, and some respondents also mentioned the problem of a shortage of herding labour. The potential significance of unfenced schemes thus appears to be perceived more by outsiders (e.g. extension staff and researchers) than by members of grazing schemes themselves.

#### **5.4 Community commitment, institutional development and internal/external conflict**

The degree of community commitment to the grazing schemes was assessed using six criteria (see Table 8 below). Some of these relate to the emergence of social institutions which are the context for resource management decision making (committees and by-laws), others are measures of the degree of member participation (attendance at meetings, cash contributions, violations of by-laws).

Institutional development is important for two reasons. Firstly, if the notion of "community identity" has a reality in respect of the critical resource of grazing land, then it has to be expressed in social forms which make possible collective decision making. Committees and by-laws are the usual institutional locus for decision making in grazing schemes, (although of course it must be recognised that decisions may also be made outside of these formal contexts).

"Commitment", however, is not easy to assess and the evidence for it can be interpreted in different ways. A high degree of commitment as visible in, for example, high levels of attendance at collective work sessions, could indicate a widespread perception of common interests and demonstrate the reality of "community". But it could also reflect the effective rule of a powerful elite which coerces, persuades or mobilises the majority into undertaking common action which will provide benefits primarily to that elite. Between these extremes lies the possibility of a more ambiguous political process in which both common interests and private (and unequal) benefits have a degree of reality.

In the second case institutional development would have to be seen in a different light. Committees, by-laws, and meetings will be the institutional form of domination, the means by which a minority enforces its will on the majority. A "low degree of commitment" in this context may then be the expression of the resistance of the majority to the designs of the

elite. Alternatively, it may indicate the existence of factional disputes between rival groupings within a particular "community" setting. In either case the changing fortunes of power struggles will often be manifested in the functioning (or malfunctioning) of these institutions; this is the second reason why they are an important focus of research into these issues.

Power struggles may also take place outside of these institutional contexts, however, and the survey attempted to assess the extent of internal conflicts whatever form they took.

#### 5.4.1 Grazing scheme committees

Only three schemes had no elected grazing scheme committee, and two of these had probably never had one; all three schemes had been planned but are now abandoned. Mean committee size is 8,4 and the median value between 6 and 7. Three quarters of all committees have *sabhukus* (kraalheads) on them. The regularity of committee meetings and community meetings to discuss grazing scheme issues is shown in Tables 5 and 6; regular here means at least once a month and irregular any interval longer than one month. (NB: in the case of the abandoned schemes this refers to meetings held in the past). Most committees meet at least once a month, and often twice a month, and community meetings are held at regular intervals by 45 percent of schemes in the sample. This is what is claimed, at any rate; in some cases a regular work session for fence erection or repair or weed clearance is held and this is also the occasion for a meeting.

**Table 5: Regularity of committee meetings**  
(n = 29, missing cases = 2)

Degree of regularity	n	%
Regular	25	86
Irregular	1	4
None	3	10

**Table 6: Regularity of community meetings**  
(n = 29, missing cases = 2)

Degree of regularity	n	%
Regular	13	45
Irregular	15	52
None	1	3

The quality of record keeping undertaken by these committees was assessed wherever possible, and the results are shown in Table 7. In 63 percent of the sample the quality was "high" or "fair"; in these cases livestock holdings data was recorded and updated at least once a year, and work attendance records were maintained. In a few cases where rotational grazing had begun the dates of rotations were recorded, and sometimes minutes of meetings were kept. In nine cases no records of any kind were being kept.

**Table 7: Quality of record keeping**  
(n = 27, missing cases = 4)

Quality assessment	n	%
High	10	37
Fair	7	26
Poor	1	4
No records kept	9	33

#### 5.4.2 By-laws

Seven of the schemes had not yet formulated by-laws of any sort, and three had agreed to by-laws but not recorded them in any form. Twenty one schemes (68 percent of the sample) had by-laws in a written form, or rather claimed to have them, because they were not available for viewing in every case.

In two cases these by-laws referred only to punishments for failing to attend work sessions or for fence cutting, either by neighbours or community members; they made no reference to resource management. In fourteen cases, or 61 percent of the total, rules included regulation of resource use in one form or another. Examples include by-laws requiring everyone in the community to follow the same rotation and to ask permission from the committee before felling trees or thatching grass, and the prohibition of grass burning. In seven cases (30 percent) the by-laws included a reference to regulation of stock numbers.

In four schemes which were EEC funded it was found that two sets of by-laws exist, side by side. A formal set, drawn up by Agritex or the District Council and sometimes signed by the grazing scheme committee as a precondition for funding, includes a stocking rate by-law. Another set, referred to when respondents were questioned about the contents of scheme by-laws, appears to have been agreed to at community meetings and often includes rules not appearing in the "official" set; these do not make mention of stocking rates. In the other three cases where stocking rates are referred to, the influence of extension staff is apparent. Of the 24 schemes with by-laws, 50 percent claim that the by-laws are operational; this can be the case even before a scheme is completed since some by-laws refer to work attendance and cash contributions at any early stage in the project. However, only 4 schemes have

imposed fines as laid down in the by-laws: evidently it is easier to design a set of sanctions than to apply them.

### 5.4.3 Assessing commitment

Six criteria were used to assess community commitment, and these are shown in Table 8. Scores were assigned for each criterion and an overall score for each scheme obtained; these were then ranked as "high", "medium" and "low" levels of commitment. Table 9 shows the results obtained.

**Table 8: Criteria for assessing community commitment**

	High(2)	Medium(1)	Low(0)
1. Adoption of by-laws	Yes	Discussed	Not yet discussed
2. Cash contributions	\$5.00 or >	< \$5.00	None
3. Community meetings	Regular	Irregular	None
4. Committee meetings	Regular	Irregular	None or no committee.
5. Work attendance	Good	Average	Poor/none
6. Violation of by-laws	Very few	Occasional	Many
Scoring:	High = 9 - 12	Medium = 5 - 8	Low = 0 - 4

**Table 9. Level of community commitment to the grazing scheme (n = 31)**

Level of commitment	n	%
High	15	48
Medium	8	26
Low	8	26

This method of assessment is clearly problematic for schemes at an early stage of planning or development, when a set of by-laws may not have been discussed and criterion 6 is therefore inapplicable. In practice it has been used as a guide only and intuitive judgements have also been made, based on a close reading and subsequent interpretation of interview material.

A general statement of the powerful but highly variable impressions of community commitment given in different schemes is therefore in order. In those schemes assessed as displaying high levels of commitment the notion of "community membership" appears to be strongly present; a social boundary is implicit in oft-repeated references to "us" and "them" (people outside the scheme). A strong sense of resource proprietorship also appears to be present; people talk of "our grass" and "our trees" as well as "our cattle".

In other schemes, and these tend to be the ones unable to organise regular meetings or sustain high levels of attendance at work sessions, and in which the raising of cash contributions and the adoption of by-laws is problematic, these notions are expressed much less often, and with little force when they are. In these schemes it is common to find committee members talking of the need to "educate" the rest of the community.

Does level of commitment vary significantly with other variables? Analysis of the data found few statistically significant relationships between variables, but this was partly due to the small size of the sample. After collapsing medium and low levels of commitment into one category ("indifferent"), a significant relationship was found between level of community commitment and whether or not a scheme had originated in the pre-independence period: post-independence schemes are far less likely to show high levels of commitment (see Table 10).

Table 10: Level of community commitment by pre- or post-independence (n = 31)

Commitment	Pre-independence	Post-independence
High	12	3
Indifferent	5	11
Total	17	14

( $X = 7,429$ , probability = 0,0064)

No significant relationship between size of community (number of households) and level of commitment was found.

#### 5.4.4 Internal and external conflict

##### Internal conflict:

Criteria used to assess the level of internal conflict were the degree of outright opposition to the idea of a grazing scheme; the number of households resisting relocation out of the grazing area (where this was required by the plan for the scheme); the incidence of fence cutting by community members; the extent to which scheme by-laws were being violated; and the incidence of disputes between "community leaders" focused on the implementation of a scheme. Again, intuitive judgements complemented the mere recording of instances.

The results are shown in Table 11. Thirty five percent of the schemes were experiencing major internal conflicts at the time of the survey, and these were perceived as highly problematic by most respondents and jeopardising the success of the scheme. Fifty five percent of the schemes were experiencing only minor conflicts, generally perceived as not constituting a major obstacle to successful grazing management. In three schemes no signs of internal conflicts were apparent.

Table 11: Level of internal conflict (n = 31)

Level of conflict	n	%
Major	11	35
Minor	17	55
None	3	10

In five of the schemes experiencing major internal conflict the issue at hand was the resistance of people whose homes and/or fields fell within planned paddocks to relocation at a different site within the community. This reluctance to move sites was based on either the fact that substantial brick buildings would have to be demolished and rebuilt, or on a perceived shortage of good quality arable land to move to.

In five schemes internal conflict took the form of major disputes between kraalheads and/or villages within the scheme, usually over the question of land allocation. In two schemes the land in dispute was arable land, and in another two it was grazing areas allocated to sub-units within a larger overall scheme.

In three cases internal problems appeared to be caused by the designation by planners of a VIDCO as the framework of a proposed scheme, when local inhabitants felt there was little basis for joint action in terms of shared use of resources in either the past or the present.

Other issues which appeared to lie at the root of severe internal divisions were the levying of a large cash contribution of \$30 per household (one scheme), and the fact that fenced paddocks were depriving previously employed herders of a source of livelihood (one scheme). In another scheme the root cause of conflict remained obscure, but could possibly lie in the origins of the scheme as a project proposed by a small group of elite leaders (and accepted for donor funding) without much community discussion ever having taken place.

(Note that more than one of these forms of conflict appeared in some schemes, hence the fact that the total adds up to more than eleven.)

The major instances of internal conflict, then, turned on access to and control over land, in both its major uses as arable and as grazing. In many of these cases access and control was defined in terms of collective identities (kraals or villages), and in those where relocation was being resisted the conflicts cut across "class" lines. Only in the instance of previously employed herders opposing the scheme did conflict appear unambiguously along a fracture line defined in terms of unequal ownership of the means of production.

As stated above planned schemes were more likely to be experiencing major internal conflicts than operating schemes. This is shown in Table 12, where only two levels of conflict are used, "major" and "minor", with the latter including those schemes assessed as having no conflicts. (The relationship held for both previous and present status).

Table 12: Internal conflict by present status (n = 31)

Level of conflict	Status of scheme	
	Operating	Planned/abandoned
Major	2	9
Minor	11	9

(X = 3,951, probability = 0,0468)

A relationship was also found between level of conflict and period of origin; post-independence schemes are much more likely than pre-independence ones to experience major conflicts.



Associated with high levels of conflict are irregular community meetings, and a greater likelihood of either no by-laws or by-laws in verbal form only (see Tables 13 and 14).

**Table 13: Internal conflict by regularity of community meetings (n = 29, missing cases = 2)**

Level of conflict	Regularity of meetings	
	Regular	Irregular
Major	2	8
Minor	11	8

( $X = 3.804$ , probability = 0.0511)

**Table 14: Internal conflict by form of by-laws (n = 31)**

Level of conflict	Form of by-laws	
	Written	Verbal/no by-laws
Major	5	6
Minor	16	4

( $X = 3.876$ , probability = 0.049)

**External conflict:**

A contributing factor to the emergence of community identity may be confrontation with "outsiders". The incidence of external conflict, in this case with neighbouring groups over the issue of exclusive rights to grazing land, was recorded in each scheme. Major boundary disputes with neighbours were found in 15 schemes (50 percent of the sample), and relatively minor disputes in a further 8 (or 27 percent); 7 schemes (23 percent) reported no boundary disputes. Fence cutting by neighbours has taken place in 6 schemes, or one third of the 18 schemes with fencing (in various stages of completion at the time of the survey). In 18 schemes respondents mentioned that the incursion of neighbours cattle onto the grazing scheme ("poaching") was still a problem.

These three dimensions of conflict with neighbours were included in an overall assessment of the degree of external conflict, and the results are shown in Table 15.

**Table 15: Degree of external conflict (n = 31)**

Degree of conflict	n	%
Major	17	55
Minor	13	42
None	1	3

#### 5.4.5 Searching for patterns

On analysis the level of external conflict did not appear in significant relationship with other variables, such as the level of community commitment. The level of internal conflict, however, did show such a relationship, as seen in Table 16. Again, categories have been collapsed because of the small size of the sample.

**Table 16: Internal conflict by level of community commitment (n =31)**

Level of conflict	Level of commitment	
	High	Indifferent
Major	1	10
Minor	14	6

( $X = 10,542$ , probability = 0,0012)

For descriptive purposes Table 17 shows the distribution of the schemes in the sample in a cross tabulation of these same two variables, but here distinguishing between three levels of community commitment.

**Table 17: Internal conflict by level of community commitment**  
(n = 31)

Level of conflict	Level of commitment		
	High	Medium	Low
<b>Major:</b>	Chihubvumwana	Kowoyo Mangezi Chiweshe Jeka	Zinyoro Chinehasha Govera Mahume Boora Ngwere
<b>Minor:</b>	Mataga Mabachi Ndambani Mazambani Maraire Chiwenga Chamatamba Mutakwa Chichevo Muchinjike Mashambamuto Mbembesi Murwisi	Nyundo Tagwerei Makatose Mukarakate Matemai	Junction Mudapakati

In the case of schemes evidencing both high levels of internal conflict and a low degree of community commitment, a relationship between the two variables exists partly as a result of the way the variables have been defined. However, it also seems plausible to assert that divided communities will find it difficult to reach agreement on the kind of coordinated action required to initiate any kind of collective grazing management. Three schemes with high levels of internal conflict have been effectively abandoned.

Some of the schemes assessed as showing medium overall levels of commitment (e.g. Kowoyo, Mangezi and Chiweshe) also had committee members who appeared highly committed to the scheme, some in powerful positions (*sabhukus*, VIDCO chairmen etc), and it may be that this leadership can raise the degree of commitment over time despite the high level of internal conflict. One scheme (Chihubvumwana) was experiencing a great many problems relocating households out of one of the paddocks, but nevertheless evidenced a high level of overall commitment; it was said that the troublesome households were recent arrivals from another area.

Some of the schemes assessed as showing medium or low levels of commitment did not show signs of a great deal of internal conflict. In the case of Junction, Nyundo, Makatose and Mukarakate an attitude of passivity was expressed: if a donor happened to provide fencing then a scheme would be accepted, but until that happened there was not much point in mobilising people for grazing management.

### 5.5 The issue of inequality

While Communal Land grazing schemes in Zimbabwe are fully inclusive of all "community" members, whether cattle owners or not, the question of just how non-owners perceive schemes and are persuaded to contribute cash and actively participate in fence erection, fence maintenance and so on is of central importance. Roughly twenty percent of the interviews carried out in this survey were with non-owners. Their views on the benefits of grazing schemes were recorded, and the views of owners on the issue of benefits to non-owners were also solicited in some interviews.

The most common responses were that benefits to non-owners were twofold. In the first place participation in making the scheme operational guaranteed their right of access as soon as they acquired stock of their own, which they all hoped to do some day. In some schemes with mobilisation problems the threat of exclusion has been used, indicating that "the right of avail" is something that some grazing scheme committees feel is dependent on cooperation with the majority in a joint project. In the second place there were immediate benefits because of the access to draught animals enjoyed by non-owners through various mechanisms (borrowing, hiring, through beer brewing etc). It was argued that animals in better condition would benefit owners and non-owners alike.

Less common responses included mentions of existing reciprocal arrangements such as kuronzera or kusisela, (i.e. access by means of longer term loaning arrangements), protection of the crops of non-owners from the depredations of inadequately herded animals, more thatching grass for one and all, and not wanting to make enemies within the community. One man said: "If I don't work with the others I will be a fish out of water - an enemy to the community".

In a few schemes the lack of motivation of non-owners was said to be a problem, but in many others a low level of commitment was said to be apparent from both owners and non-owners. In only one scheme was outright opposition from non-owners an instance of major internal conflict. This was in the case of Kowoyo, where previously employed herders had lost a source of livelihood once fences had been erected.

In summary, when the issue of unequal benefits was raised respondents emphasised the securing of rights to common pool resources, on the one hand, and the existence of reciprocal arrangements which tied owners and non-owners together, on the other. This is how the issue is perceived, or at least talked about. Taking this finding together with the data on internal conflict discussed above, one must conclude that at a phenomenal level inequality

is not at present an occasion for divisions and political conflicts within communities.

In 22 schemes the number of non-owners on the grazing scheme committee was recorded. In 13 of these (59 percent) non-owners were represented on the committee, but generally in small numbers. The mean number of non-owners on committees was 1,136 (compared to a mean committee size of 8,3), and in only three schemes was the total 3 or more. Committees are thus dominated by owners. However, this is not perceived as problematic by non-owners.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

An important question in rural Zimbabwe is the manner and degree of class differentiation taking place. We need to understand both the socio-economic processes which are producing inequality, and its likely tendency; this means also understanding how larger political-economic factors and local social relationships may constrain class formation. An understanding of class in terms of petty commodity production will probably assist in developing such an understanding. Also important is a non-reductive approach to local politics which takes into account the complexity of definitions of collective identity at a "phenomenal" level.

It would appear that grazing schemes are at present a focus for an emerging redefinition of "community identity" in the Communal Lands; some groups are defining their boundaries in relation to the physical boundaries of their grazing land and developing sets of rules for the management of shared resources. In a sense "resource management communities" are being created, although of course the emerging identity is based firmly on older definitions: perhaps "shallow lineage groups" in some cases, or a group of "kraals" which have shared the use of a grazing area and cooperated with each other in the past.

In other cases the issue of grazing management is not one around which "community identity" is being formed, and may even be the cause of a great deal of conflict. Although access to and control over land appears to be an important factor in these conflicts, the precise reasons for this difference are still to be explored.

Is the common property of communal grazing land being effectively appropriated by the wealthy under the guise of a "community project", the grazing scheme? The evidence of the moment is that this is not how the poor and stockless perceive things, and instead the existence of networks of reciprocal support are stressed. In order to understand the likely effects of grazing schemes we need to know more about the net flow of benefits between cattle owners and non-owners through complex and changing networks of reciprocal obligation, and this means we will have to quantify these flows. The social relations of petty commodity production in the Communal Lands need to be described in more detail, at both household and community level, and in their political as well as their economic dimensions. What is needed, in fact, is a combination of the tools of anthropology and political economy.

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