



CRISIS DOES NOT SPELL THE END

**The peasantry during a decade of economic decline in
Zimbabwe**

A case of Gwanda South (Ntalale)

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List of Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
FTLRP	Fast Track Land Reform Programme
HIV	Human Immune Virus
MARS	Migration and Remittances Survey
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
RDC	Rural District Council
SAMP	South African Migration Project
USD	United States Dollar
VIDCO	Village Development Committee
ZAR	South African Rand

Abstract

Crisis is not the end, as shall be demonstrated in this paper presenting the case of Ntalale village situated in Gwanda, Matabeleland South in Zimbabwe. The economic decline witnessed in Zimbabwe in the last decade has reshaped the livelihood strategies of people in both the urban and rural areas. This paper seeks to highlight and explain how the peasant farming households in Ntalale have had to reorganize their lifestyles by engaging more in diversified income portfolios as coping strategies in the climate of macroeconomic decline. Trends of de-agrarianisation in the area shall be explored with emphasis placed on the empirical evidence that this phenomena has not only been the result of the economic collapse but that there are other contributing factors leading to this situation.

Venturing into the different income making strategies has created a visible differentiated class of people in the village and this has had a bearing on social relations in the area. This paper shall therefore also explore how these relations have been reshaped and how they have reconstituted the social relations in the area. Conclusions drawn from this paper reveal that though the economic decline and harsh climatic conditions have resulted in diversified livelihood portfolios and de-agrarianisation in the area this has not led to the 'inevitable' demise of the peasantry.

Relevance to Development Studies

The survival of the peasantry is crucial in development studies as its continuity has been linked with the ability to feed the world. The survival of the peasant class has inspired the agrarian question debate questioning the agrarian transformation under the global capitalist system. Would penetration of capital result in an inevitable demise of the peasantry? Or can diversification of incomes if securely harnessed expand rural economies without undermining the agro base of rural communities.

Keywords

De-agrarianisation/ Crisis/ Depeasantisation/ Diversification/
Differentiation/ Accumulation/ Peasants/ Livelihood Strategies/

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

Zimbabwe has a largely agricultural economy which according to Rukuni et al (2006) contributed between 12-20% GDP between 1985 and 2007. The percentage share of agriculture to the overall GDP has however been on the decline following the land invasions of 2000 code named 'jambanja' operationalized under the Fast Track Land Reform Program which resulted in a massive dispossession of the white commercial farmers from the land. The re-occupation of the land was a political move meant to correct the unequal distribution of the land, a remnant of the colonial period. Scoones et al. (2010: 4) argue that, at attainment of independence Zimbabwe inherited an uneven land ownership pattern, with around 42% of the countries prime land owned by approximately 6000 white large scale commercial farmers. Commercial agriculture dominated the formal agricultural sector economy contributing 75% of the total agricultural output and 96% of sales. Advanced technology and effective farm management resulted in high yields with maize for example averaging 4.2 tonnes per hectare. The penalty for the contested 'violent' removal of the white farmers from the land was the imposition of sanctions on the country by the United States of America and the European Union. Following the economic meltdown which became inevitable with the industrial collapse and recurrent droughts, agricultural production has been on the decline in the country to the extent where the country which used to be known as the 'bread basket' of Southern Africa has been referred to as the 'basket case' of the Southern horn by different media.

The country has suffered hyper inflationary environment in the past decade which has been attributed amongst a host of reasons to the wage –price spiral (when the price of goods rose workers demanded a rise in salary to complement the price hikes of goods and services). In 2006 according to the Reserve Bank Statistics the rate of inflation was 4500%, this hyperinflationary environment had a negative impact on agricultural performance in the country; according to Biti ((2009: 14) the agricultural sector suffered a heavy decline during the period 2000 to 2008, shrinking by an annual average of -7.1% with the cumulative agricultural output contracting by -79.4% between 2002 and 2008. Political instability and economic challenges have been some of the factors attributed to the disintegration of the agricultural sector in the past decade.

The shrinking economy had a negative impact on peasant farming because prices on agricultural inputs and food were pushed beyond the reach of the ordinary peasant farmers. The monetary exchange rates in Zimbabwe quickly became a method of creation of wealth for those who had access to foreign currency resulting in steep social differentiation in both the urban and rural

areas of the country. Soon after independence according to Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe online (2008)¹ 1US\$ was exchanged at less than Z\$2 on the official market and in 2000 the official rate was 1US\$ is to Z\$38. However the exchange rates soon spiralled out of control exacerbated by the parallel market exchange rates that mushroomed overnight in the country. Table 1.1 below shows an illustration of parallel exchange rates compared to the official market rates against the US\$

Table 1.1: Official and parallel exchange rates

<i>Year</i>	<i>Official exchange rate</i>	<i>Parallel exchange rate</i>
2000	38	56-70
2001	55	70-340
2003	550-824	1400-6000
2005	5,730-26,003	6,400-100 000
2006 ²	250	550-3
2007	250	3,000-2,000 000
2008	30,000	5,000,000-7,500,000

Source: RBZ online, 2008

Litwin (1992: 5) emphasizes the role of agriculture in Zimbabwe by arguing that, 'when agriculture sneezes, the Zimbabwean economy catches a cold'. According to the Reserve Bank online (2008) between the years of 2000 and December 2007, the national economy of Zimbabwe contracted by 40 %, inflation increased to about 66 000% and there were persistent shortages of foreign currency, food, fuel and medicine. GDP per capita reduced by 40%, agricultural output dropped by 51% and industrial production decreased by 47% and the participation of agricultural products on the international market has been on the decline since the implementation of the FTLRP in year 2000.

With this backdrop the government was forced to reduce most of the subsidies it provided to peasant farmers due to the shortages of foreign currency and the liquidity crisis the economy suffered with industrial collapse and trade sanctions. Foreign currency shortages and the diminishing industrial productivity resulted in the failure by the government to plan for agricultural seasons, since it could no longer invest effectively in agricultural infrastructure, source inputs like fertilizers, seeds, farm equipment and machinery. Peasant farmers were left vulnerable to the market system which saw the 'rise and fall' of the peasant farmers. Following the escalating poverty growth rates in the rural areas donor aid became prevalent and a necessity to sustain livelihoods. Though necessary the donor aid created a culture of dependency which in

¹ <http://www.mopanetree.com/press-releases-reports/5239-zimbabwe-reserve-bank-zimbabwe-statement-cash-situation-stabilisation.html>

² On the 1st of August 2006, the Reserve bank redenominated the Zimbabwean dollar at the rate of 1 revalued dollar=1000 old dollars in the revaluation campaign code named 'Operation sunrise'.

some cases saw the abandonment of farming by some peasant farmers leaving the land fallow for more than one farming season and in some cases renting out land to neighbours who had access to cash or goods for exchange. This period saw an increase in non-farm incomes as the peasant farmers tried to find coping livelihood strategies beyond the farm.

1.2 Exploring and dissecting intent of paper

This paper intends to explore how the peasant class in Zimbabwe has had to reorganize its livelihood strategies in the past decade of economic decline. Economic decline has created a vulnerable peasant class which has had no alternative but to seek and engage in other income generating activities as agricultural production has been on a decline in the country. As research from the field will reveal, these new coping strategies have had an effect on agricultural patterns in the village of Ntalale in Gwanda South leading to a visible de-agrarianisation process. Could this process then mark the first signs of de-peasantization in the area or is it just a temporary scenario that has been encouraged by the economic decline coupled with other factors on the ground? Below is a map showing location of Gwanda within Zimbabwe

Map 1.1: Political Map of Zimbabwe



Source: www.mapsofworld.com

The diversified income portfolios that the villagers of Ntalale have ventured into include migration to the bordering countries Botswana, Mozambique and South Africa, gold panning, brick moulding, cross border trading, small retail businesses, garden farming, informal trading, part time on farm and off farm work. The result of these economic activities has been the creation of a more visible differentiation of the peasant households in the

village of Ntalale. The participation in the different livelihood strategies yielded different strata in incomes generated in the households and this had an effect on the accumulation potentials of the households. Some households managed to accumulate more than some of the households in the village because of the increased inflows of cash resulting in productive consumption. This paper will seek to establish if these diversified portfolios have created in the case of Gwanda a rural economy which is more reliant on non farm income as opposed to agricultural production. With the distribution of income being uneven there was and is the emergence of a new rich peasantry which has used its new found wealth to accumulate possessions (land, labour, business ventures, farm equipment, livestock, and e.t.c) this paper will explore how the existing social structure has paved way or reorganized itself in the face of change happening in the area. And in so doing, also address how the old rich elite have been affected by these changes. Power in rural areas has always been vested along traditional lineages and political lines with those privileged determining who gets what, when and how? With the emergence of this new 'elite' group, this paper seeks to establish if any power struggles are imminent within the two groups and if yes which one wields more influence and has the power visibly shifted hands?

With the economic pressures facing the peasant farmers there has been an increase in the number of villagers selling their labour cheaply for any form of work which has a return be it in cash or be it in kind. In essence while some peasants became poorer in the last decade others have used this economic situation to their own benefit thereby creating a visible differentiated peasant class of (winners and losers). The paper shall trace the implication of these actions to the rural economy, is this reality further increasing differentiation among the peasants, what are the implications of these incomes on the agrarian economy? With this backdrop, the main objective of this paper is to ascertain if livelihood strategies like non farm incomes have an impact on the organization of rural societies and how this would affect social relations and social reproduction of a rural community. All this will be done within the context of the economic crisis looking at the ways in which it has fuelled the uptake of diversified portfolios in the village of Ntalale, Ward 11 in Gwanda South. However as field findings reveal, economic decline has not been the sole driver towards de-agrarianisation.

Research Questions

The main research question of the study carried out in Ntalale is:

- ❖ How has the economic decline in Zimbabwe in the past decade reconstituted the peasant class and reshaped its livelihood strategies?

To help with data collection the main question was broken down into five sub questions below:

Sub questions

- I. What was the impact of the economic decline on peasant farmers in Gwanda?

- II. What strategies did the peasant farmers adopt to cope with the situation?
- III. Has the economic decline pushed peasant farmers out of farming? And are there other factors that may have created opportunities for this scenario for example drought and relief aid?
- IV. Has agriculture lost its importance and value to the peasant farmers in the district?
- V. How different is the new peasant class of accumulators different from the old elite peasant in terms of social origins, political networks, economic capabilities, and household demographic profiles?

1.3 Organization of the paper

This paper has been structured into five chapters; chapter 2 is a presentation of the analytical framework on which arguments in this paper are premised. Chapter 3 will be opened by a discussion on the situational analysis of the case study as well as the methodology used in the conduction of the research. This shall be followed by an introduction to the field findings with discussions on the effects of the economic decline on the peasant households, as well as the various factors that have resulted in de-agrarianisation and the consequent livelihood diversification as coping strategy. Chapter 4 will engage the concepts of de-agrarianisation, depeasantisation, differentiation and livelihood diversification in investigating the social changes that have been manifest in Ntalale village for the past decade. Chapter 5 will conclude the paper by discussing the field findings and juxtaposing them with the theoretical framework engaged in the study.

Chapter 2

Analytical framework

2.1 Livelihood diversification as coping strategy to crisis

Diversification and exchange of goods on the informal and formal market has always been part of the economic opportunities for the African rural populations. Sen and Dreze (1981: 76) are of the contention that, 'one of the earliest and most robust findings of anthropological studies in uncertain environments is that diversification is among the chief strategies adapted by vulnerable communities to reduce the precariousness of their lives'. People learn not to depend on one source of income. Rural livelihood diversification as defined by Ellis (1999: 02) is a process by which households diversify into different income activities and social support capabilities as livelihood strategies for survival. The causes of the adoption by rural families of diversified income portfolios range from credit market failures, economic shocks for example economic decline in Zimbabwe. Livelihood diversification is definitely not a homogenous trend, as most literature indicates; multiple motives are behind the diversification of incomes and activities at individual and household level. Barrett et.al (2001: 1-2) are of the assertion that motives towards diversification comprise:

"Push factors": risk reduction, response to diminishing factor returns in any given use, such as family labour supply in the presence of land constraints driven by population pressure and landholdings fragmentation, reaction to crisis or liquidity constraints, high transactions costs that induce households to self-provision in several goods and services. The second set of motives comprise "pull factors": realization of strategic complementarities between activities, such as crop-livestock integration or milling and hog production, specialization according to comparative advantage accorded by superior technologies, skills or endowments

A diverse portfolio of activities contributes to the sustainability of a rural livelihood because it improves its resilience in the face of adverse trends or sudden shocks. In general, increased diversity promotes greater flexibility because it allows more possibilities for substitution between opportunities that are in decline and those that are expanding (ibid: 4). Diversification in the case of Gwanda has been spearheaded by the first motive of push factors. Economic decline and poor climatic conditions in the past decade have worked together into pushing peasant farmers into adopting other livelihood strategies that have created a diversified income portfolio in Gwanda. These push factors have played a role in the trend towards de-agrarianisation and social differentiation in the village of Ntalale in Gwanda. Scoones et al. (2010: 168) address questions towards this trend are we seeing a decline in agriculture, a de-peasantization and proletarianisation, with economic forces driving people away from agriculture or are we seeing increasing investment in peasant style livelihoods, with small holder agriculture becoming more central to a locally driven economy? However the context of these assertions differs with place and time, and in the case of Gwanda would raise the questions, would the

process of de-agrarianization have been localized in the area without the downturn in the economy and where the result of these processes fully market driven or they were led by other factors ?

In this paper I shall argue that though de-agrarianisation is visible in the country side of Matabeleland South region this is not a uniform trend as households in the region are not homogenous. While some households are now more and more reliant on non farm incomes there are still some households that try to subsist from agricultural production on the family farm. 'De-agrarianisation should be seen as a process embedded in social change, bearing in mind the reversibility between farm and nonfarm livelihood strategies used by households' (Yaro, 2006: 1). To put this in perspective Bryceson (1996: 99) defines de-agrarianisation as, 'a long term process of occupational adjustment, income earning, re orientation, social identification and spatial relocation of rural dwellers away from strictly peasant modes of livelihoods'. However it is subject to interpretation what one would subscribe as, 'strictly peasant' modes of livelihoods because the peasantry is not a single homogenous class because it transcends borders and context. What could be determining characteristics of a peasant in one area might not apply in another different geographical location with a different set of beliefs and knowledge system. In her analysis of the concept of de-agrarianisation Bryceson (2004: 618) defines depeasantisation as a more specific variation of de-agrarianisation whereby the economic capacity and social coherence of peasantries are being progressively undermined resulting in the exit of the peasantry from farming. However it is of importance to note that in every socio-economic calamity we have winners and losers, though economic decline in Zimbabwe might have created or expanded the peasant class vulnerabilities part of this class of peasant farmers has benefited during this time through capital and asset accumulation.

Diversification into nonfarm income sources has increased in the past decade and now accounts for a considerable share of household incomes in Matabeleland South. This trend is very evident in the area of study undertaken in Gwanda; results showed that 80 % of households interviewed had one or more incomes derived from nonfarm activities. The growth of diversified incomes in the era of economic decline in Zimbabwe has in the village of Ntalale been responsible for the widespread commercialization of most goods and services even those that have always been known to be free in the past for example, wood fuel and water supplies, that have always been free natural goods as far as traditional heritage was concerned, have become scarce and are now known to assume a cash exchange value with respect to their procurement and transport. The economic meltdown in Zimbabwe saw the further penetration of formal and parallel market systems into the communities of rural areas resulting in the transformation of relations into single interest relations of individuals with goods to sell or exchange. Peasant farmers have had to contend with not only the economic collapse but also watching the mainstay of their livelihoods being harshly trampled on by droughts that have besieged the country in the last decade. Study of literature indicates that the process of de-agrarianisation accelerated with the economic crisis in the country. Bryceson (2002: 727) is of the contention that the movement towards de-agrarianisation became evident with the imposition of structural adjustment

programs from the mid 1980's to the mid 1990's. These SAP's were instrumental in the undermining of most peasant capital injected production through the removal of subsidies on farm production inputs such as pesticides, seeds, fertilizers and farm equipment. Farmers thus became vulnerable to the operating market forces with its fluctuating market prices, increase in input prices and reduced market supply given the private actors outreach was not as wide as that of the parastatals. Thus the promise of SAP's of a revitalizing the rural economy became an actual deterrent in peasant farm production. To cope with decreased farm production rural communities had to find new alternative coping strategies to sustain their livelihoods.

Economic meltdown in Zimbabwe has been instrumental in the voluntary and in some cases forced diversification of incomes in the rural areas, with some households engaging in different non-agricultural activities simultaneously or at different times all year round as a way of coping with stresses of rising agricultural input prices on the market and low production on the farm. Voluntary as a way of seizing opportunities for further accumulation of resources and store of wealth in assets as well as involuntary in the instances when the peasant farming household had to find alternative incomes as they could not derive a sustainable income on the farm given the economic crisis and poor climatic conditions that were a major deterrent factor in farm production. The economic crisis in Zimbabwe has inevitably resulted in the re-configuration of the peasant class livelihoods and its social relations in the past decade.

2.2 What's in a name? Interrogating the term peasant

The peasantry is not a uniform entity and has varied over years in their social composition and economic structures. The peasants have four main characteristics in common according to Teodor Shanin (1976):

Peasants share the pursuit of an agricultural livelihood combining subsistence and commodity production, their internal social organization revolves around the family unit as the primary unit of production, reproduction, socialization, welfare and risk spreading, they are externally subordinated to state authorities and regional international markets that involve class differentiation and transfers of tax and profit and lastly they reside in rural settlements and often identified with a traditional conformist attitudinal outlook relative to more urbanized populations (as quoted in Bryceson, 2002: 37).

Though the peasantry in Gwanda does fit and embrace the characteristics as theorized by Shanin (1976) the argument in this paper is that, though externally subordinated by market forces regulated by state, regional and international markets' the peasantry has its own internal inclinations towards being exploitative within the parameters of its social structures (peasant exploiting peasant). Also this paper argues that though peasant livelihoods are premised on agriculture for subsistence and comodification it is no longer the only income and mainstay of the village livelihood. On the contrary people are being pushed out of farming due to the economic crisis and climatic challenges that have besieged the region in the last decade. However this could only be a temporary phase as people in the village pointed out that if the climatic

conditions could turn for the better and the economy stabilized they would engage again in full scale farming as it is and will always remain a part of their culture and tradition.

Wolf (1966: 3–4) defined peasants as rural cultivators whose surpluses are transferred to a dominant group of rulers, while Kincaid cited in Wolf maintained that peasants were 'rural cultivators from whom an economic surplus is extracted, in one form or another, freely or coercively, by non-producing classes' (ibid: 145). These orthodox definitions of the peasantry as postulated by Wolf and Kincaid could have been applicable at certain points in history under systems of oppression that have taken various forms over the years, however in present day societies their relevance has waned in some societies and lost meaning. In present day political economy of Zimbabwe peasants produce for personal subsistence and personal profit when they sell their surplus commodities on the market. The way they dispose their surplus production is in no way determined by any other class in society it is purely free will and free agency. At the same time though oppression of the peasant class has been determined by privileged classes and still is in some societies the peasant class farmers are now faced with the uneven regulations of the world market system they have to operate in given the scale of globalization. Scott (1976: 85) alludes to the rude shock linked to the world market as destroying subsistence security in the early 20th Century. The peasantry of today even as depicted in Gwanda has intensified their activities on the market for commodities, agricultural technology, loans from credit facilities, and all other services provisioned on the market which has brought with it interconnected vulnerabilities. According to Edelman (2005: 336):

Peasant's widespread adoption of modern technologies, even when employed in traditional cultivation systems has deepened dependence on the cash economy and exacerbated the multiple environmental and health catastrophes too often associated with industrial agriculture. The subsistence crisis of droughts, floods, insect crop blights, animal diseases and plummeting prices still occur but they are compounded by new risks and more uncertainty and punishing impacts of decades of economic liberalization and institutional restructuring.

Therefore, though external forces contribute towards social differentiation of the peasantry evidence in Gwanda points to the fact that even without working formal markets the seizing of opportunistic coping strategies has inherently resulted in internal escalated social differentiation in Gwanda proving that peasants like any other class have inclinations towards accumulation for its own sake. African case study material according to Bryceson (2002: 734) shows that 'non-agricultural income diversifications can re-in force class as higher income earners redirect portions of their agricultural capital to more lucrative non-agricultural activities'. The case of Ntalale village supports this assertion; non agricultural activities have intensified social differentiation and created a very capitalist economic system in the village. Though social networks are still maintained and still used in the extended family of the African tradition it now has boundaries and limitations of applicability. This reaffirms that the peasantry is 'a process within the broader

framework of society yet with a structure, consistency and momentum of its own: emerging [. . .], disintegrating and re-emerging at times' (Edelman, 2005: 336).

2.2.1 against all odds

This paper is grounded in the agrarian question's theoretical framework as first posed by Kautsky in 1899. According to Kautsky (1899) quoted by Akram- Lodhi and Kay the agrarian question is defined as, 'whether, and how capital was seizing hold of agriculture and revolutionizing it, making old forms of production and property untenable and creating the necessity for new ones' (2010: 179). This raised the question of how the family farm and the peasantry would fare in a capitalist society, would this inherently result in the demise of the peasantry. However a century has passed since the formulation of this theory and the peasantry in some parts of the world persists despite the penetration of capital into these societies and the increased scale of globalization. According to McLaughlin (1998: 25) 'the principal challenge confronting theorists employing this model is to construct systematic theories of obstacles that explain the likelihood of alternative historical outcomes given specific social, economic and environmental conditions'. In the case of Ntalale village it raises questions of whether economic decline has created new spaces for agrarian change and new social formations spearheaded by rural nonfarm economies.

Though there has been a tendency towards proletarianisation in the village as a coping strategy this has in no way resulted in dispossession of the peasantry. The relation between capital and labour has come to be central determinant of rural life in Southern Africa, not because agrarian capital is strong but because proletarianisation based in nonfarm labour is so deep. Peasant farmers in Gwanda have in the past decade of economic collapse had to take up extra income making activities by; selling their labour mostly in nonfarm activities, distress migration as well as engaging in casual wage labour in or outside the village as a coping strategy. Scoones et al. (2010: 168) contends that though migration may be a voluntary or an involuntary movement and its effects could be reinvestment in agriculture, enterprise or consumption at the home or migration site. Migration and remittances foster household farm investment and agricultural production, while in others; the opposite occurs. Labour availability for farm production may decrease when family members migrate, but this can be countered by hiring labour by those households who have the means. The major impacts of migration and remittances on agriculture and rural employment depend directly on patterns of expenditure, investments and labour allocation of migrant households, and indirectly on the multiplier effects of remittances and changes in the labour, goods and services markets. Receiving households may choose to spend their additional income on increased consumption, investing in housing, education and health as well as in entrepreneurial none farm activities, while others may favour agricultural production. (Vargas-Lundius et al., 2008: 32). Migration in the case of Gwanda resulted in the loss of labour which some households failed to counter through hiring of labour as they did not have the resources to do so and this resulted in decline in farm production. Findings from research

conducted in Gwanda show that there has not been any marked increase in agricultural investments as most respondents were eloquent in pointing out the unfavourable weather patterns and exorbitant input pricing that has been besieging the country in the last decade. Remittances and other income sources appear to have encouraged farming households to reduce agricultural activity as these households have an income to use as exchange on the commodities market and service provision.

Akram-Lodhi and Kay (2010: 179) postulate that, 'with rural livelihoods in the twenty-first century being constructed on such a vulnerable terrain, could it be, as Henry Bernstein says, that much is obscured by characterizing social formations in the South today as peasant societies, or contemporary classes of petty commodity producing small farmers as peasants'. And it should be clear according to Bernstein (2001: 32) that the peasantry is hardly a homogenous, or analytically helpful, social category in contemporary capitalism, in considering changes in agriculture and rural social existence generated by imperialism/globalization. The same applies to any views of peasants as a (single) 'class' (exploited or otherwise). The aftermath of the economic collapse in Zimbabwe is a very peculiar interesting case, capitalistic tendencies have not dismantled the peasantry but have actually managed to reinforce and consolidate its existence contrary to what de Janvry (1980: 159) claimed:

There is no theoretical possibility for peasants to remain in their contradictory class location. However lengthy and painful the process may be, their future is full incorporation into one or the other of the two essential classes of capitalism—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

Though there has been a marked increase in nonfarm incomes in the region, evidence from field research indicates that peasant farmers despite all the challenges facing farm activities have maintained some connection with the farm. Farming remains an important revered tradition to the people of Ntalale. Byres (1995: 509) in discussing the agrarian question argues that, the nature of agrarian transition not only has implications for the fate of the countryside, but has a decisive influence upon the pace, manner, limits, and very possibility of capitalist industrialization. Could the reliance of the village on nonfarm incomes be the genesis of the demise of the peasantry in the region?

The case of Ntalale village shows that peasants are differentiated and respond differently to circumstances to the extent were peasants become exploitative of each other for accumulative purposes. Hobsbawm (1973: 1) discussed the general subalternity of the peasant world, claiming that peasantness was defined by subalternity, poverty, exploitation and oppression. This paper will however argue that the peasant class in itself is fraught with internal exploitation, power struggles, resistances and tensions which are negotiated and battled through the capital market system. Therefore capital becomes a means to an end of exercising power and control over means of production. According to Marx (1976) cited in Akram-Lodhi and Kay (2010: 182) accumulation is nothing more than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production thereby creating a class of workers that are free (or released) from the means of production and free (and compelled) to sell their labour power. The result according to Akram-Lodhi and Kay as Marx indicated 'is the slow emergence of qualitatively distinct types

of rural households which differ in their purpose of production, with one group producing for the market and accumulation while the other strives for maintaining subsistence in increasingly difficult circumstances'(ibid: 187). Therefore households who have the means to accumulate seek to increase their control and power over productive assets so that they can keep accumulating while households without propensity to accumulate have to sell their assets to dynamic producers, in order to be able to cope. This is a perfect scenario to what is happening to the peasantry in Zimbabwe, where the richer peasants are buying assets from the poor peasants for their social and economic enrichment. According to Chimhowu and Woodhouse (2006: 361), there is growing class differentiation within rural communities, evident not only in income and housing, but also in the size of herds and land holdings, in the type of agricultural techniques employed and in the yields achieved. The case of Ntalale is not any different there have been some major changes in household structures which now resemble the common town and city houses, increased mobility from the village to the urban areas, improved farming techniques and equipment, shifting size of herds.

The peasantry should be understood as a process which is constantly being reshaped, globalization has altered the land, labour, and capital intensity of production, reconfiguring the rural production process in ways that may, or may not, affect the processes that expand the commodification of labour and alter the purpose of production from production for use to production of exchange (van der Ploeg, 2010: 2). Peasants with nonfarm incomes in Zimbabwe use their resources to accumulate possessions which include physical assets, capital, land and footloose labour of dispossessed peasants and those seeking work to cope with the difficult times. This new class of rich and middle peasant has used their resources in a capitalist manner which has created a new differentiated social formation which is easily discernible in their accumulated wealth as opposed to the other struggling households who can barely reproduce themselves with resources available for them. The tendency to class differentiation arises from the commodification by the peasantry of their subsistence. It however remains interesting that this scenario was not a gradual phenomenon in the peasantry of Zimbabwe but has actually been due to imminent shock the economy of Zimbabwe has suffered in the past decade. In the present economic situation in Zimbabwe most peasant farmers cannot fully reproduce themselves on the farm through petty commodification and have had to take up different kinds of work to supplement their incomes resulting in highly diversified income portfolios. According to Cousins et al. (1992: 12-13):

An alternative approach to analyzing rural social formations in the region is to view both proletarianisation and the emergence of petty commodity production as class trajectories within a capitalist economy, and, furthermore, to see these as being able to be combined with each other (in complex and contradictory ways). This possibility yields the composite category of 'worker-peasants', in which simple reproduction is achieved through combining small-scale agriculture and wage labour.

Below is a class-analytic typology of rural social formations that foreground the combination of agriculture and wage labour in Zimbabwe according to Cousins et al. (1992: 13):

Table 1.1: Class analytical typologies

Typology A	Typology B	Typology C	Typology D
Petty commodity producers: able to meet their simple reproduction needs through their own production	Worker peasants: combine wages and own production to secure their simple reproduction.	Lumpen semi-peasantry: unable to reproduce themselves without external assistance (family or state)	Rural petty bourgeoisie: produce a surplus, invest in means of production, Engage in expanded reproduction; often have an urban or business-based source of income

Source: Cousins et al. (1992)

Of the households interviewed in the village of Ntalale 72% fall under typology B, because of the challenges facing the peasantry on the farm, they can no longer fully reproduce their needs through their own production on the farm. There has been a need to diversify incomes by looking to other income generating ventures off the farm. Households falling under typology C accounted for 4 %, the household composition of these households were mostly those of widowed women over the age of 60 who had to take care of their grandchildren without assistance from the parents who were either deceased or had migrated to the bordering countries without further contact. 14% of the households fell under typology D and these were mostly households that are involved in mining and received a constant supply of migrant remittances and goods. Typology A has not been viable or sustainable in the past decade of economic erosion and weather calamities.

According to Borras (2009: 18), the dynamics of agrarian transformation can be understood largely by having a clear grasp of the notion and actual condition of the social differentiation of the peasantry. Araghi (2009:118) on the other hand asserts that Marx recognized that the processes of capitalist development in agriculture can create both peasant dispossession by displacement, or enclosure and peasant dispossession by differentiation. In the Zimbabwean case it seems the latter is true, the poor peasant is being squeezed out of production making way for the new rich peasant to accumulate and widen their sphere of influence.

Chapter 3 of peasant farmers and economic decline in Ntalale Village (Gwanda)

3.1 Situational analysis of Gwanda



Road sign: Field picture

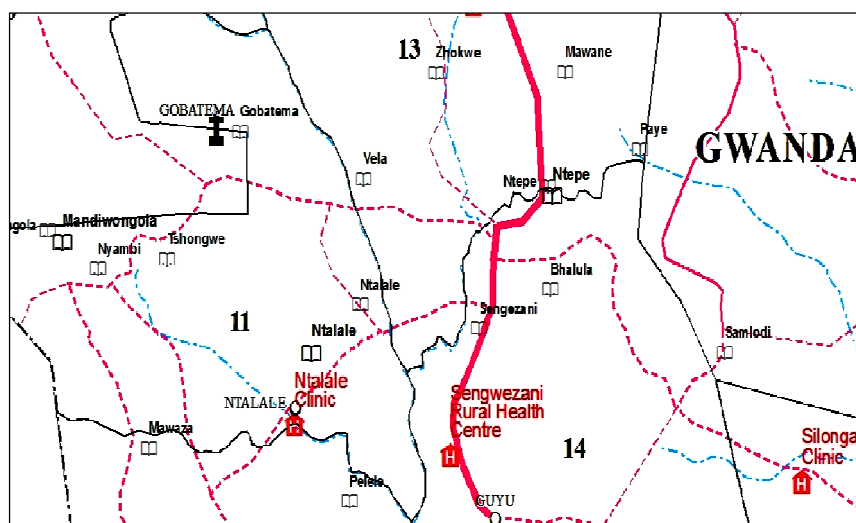
Gwanda district is the capital of Matabeleland South region (Zimbabwe). Gwanda was founded in 1900 and its name was derived from the nearby hill which is called 'jahunda' by the local population. It is located 119 km away from Bulawayo which is the second capital city of Zimbabwe. Gwanda is the chief centre for the South-western Zimbabwe cattle district although trading in agricultural produce is also an important activity. The place is very affluent in mining mostly in gold, asbestos and chrome. It is strategically located close to the bordering countries of South Africa and Botswana which would explain the inclination to migration to cope with economic stress a result of the adverse macro-economic environment. Zimbabwe is divided into five natural ecological regions; these regions were demarcated on rainfall patterns, soil types and vegetation among other physical characteristics. Gwanda lies in Region 5 which according to Vincent (1960) is to be found in the lowland areas of both north and south of the country lying up to 900 metres above sea level and receiving annual rainfalls of less than 650 millilitres. Mostly extensive cattle and game ranching practiced in these regions though agriculture is also practiced in the area. Small grain drought resistant seed varieties like sorghum and millet are the most suitable for this region which is drought prone.

3.1.1 Data Collection and limitations

The study undertaken in Gwanda (Ntalale) seeks to explore how the economic crises compounded with environmental calamities have been driving factors towards subsequent de-agrarianisation visible in the region. To cope with this crisis as field findings reveal, peasant farmers had to diversify their income strategies by venturing into different economic activities. The subsequent result of which was an increased differentiation of the different households in the village. This study does not claim or purport to make generalisations of these trends in the region given the sample size. However this study captures the consistent patterns of these trends as derived from the

interviews carried within Ntalale and Gwanda in the month of July 2011. Below is a map showing the location of Ntalale in Gwanda District

Map 3.1: Ntalale village (Ward 11)



Source:

<http://ochaonline.un.org/MapCentre/ReferenceMaps/tabid/3057/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

The study in Gwanda was inspired by the fact that even to date there has been little documentation of the aftermaths of the economic distress peasant farmers have had to contend with in the past decade of economic meltdown in Zimbabwe especially in the Matabeleland Region. Yet the region has managed to survive through the difficult times and progress at the same time substantiating Sainath (1996: 295) claims that, 'given a chance, people hit back at the forces that hold them down. They may have different ways of doing this, some less effective than others. But fight back they do'.

Collection of data for this research involved a number of activities which were mostly qualitative in nature. As introduction into the area a transect walk was undertaken, in definition a transect walk is a 'systematic walk along one line (transect) across the community area together with the people involved to explore the spatial differences by observing, asking, listening, looking and producing a transect diagram' (RUAF; 2004: 21). The transect walk was undertaken before the field study was done in the month of July and it helped introduce me to the community and its inhabitants. It also helped shape an aerial view of the village by helping in the collection of information about resources, farming practices, differences in household structures in an informal manner where the participants were given the opportunity to share their own opinions about their views on the research. This activity formed the background and entry point into the interviews which followed in the village.

An ethnographic approach was used in gathering data in the field, as a method that attempts to explain the web of interdependence of group behaviours and their interactions, its main emphasis is importance of understanding things from the point of view of those involved (O' Leary, 2010: 115). Primary data collection in the field was mostly done through

observations, interviews and administering a questionnaire. Interviews involved the gathering of insights by different respondents on their understanding of social and economic differentiation as well as their posited understanding of livelihood success in the context of their geo-spatial location. The first interviews were carried out with 6 key informants from the Rural District Council in Gwanda and the local Ngo's and 2 key informants were interviewed within the village of Ntalale-the village chief and councillor. These key informants were extremely helpful as they created a more logical context of the area under study and provisioned me with crucial statistical data. Their personal experience and long standing knowledge of the area was invaluable as they captured the general trends of de-agrarianisation, social differentiation and livelihood strategies within a broader framework of the whole area as opposed to singular household experiences. This helped with shaping main entry points into the village, which questions to concentrate on, strategic ways of asking the questions to get more honest responses as well as provisioning me with the understanding of local issues and deeper understanding of intent for study. They also gave their own analytic understanding of the situation in the field and it was very interesting to note how most of their opinions tallied.

Household interviews undertaken were all within the Village of Ntalale in Ward 11, and for all interviews carried out at least one reliable respondent was present mostly because research was undertaken off farm season. 15 interviews were carried out within the village of Ntalale at household level, 80% of the respondents were women with the other 20% made up of different household members. Selection of respondent at household level was premised on the availability of the responsible household head or family member present during the interview. Selection of households for the interviews was done in a random manner along the transect line chosen to represent the nature of all households in the village. All households in the village were legible participants. A representative transect line was easy to map as homesteads tended to be clustered around mostly water sources. Interviews were terminated after the 15th household because of the frequent recurrence of trends and patterns of information gathered. Interviews carried out entailed in-depth semi structured biographical interviews which examined the respondents on perception on the invariable changes within their own households as well as the whole village in the past decade. Most of the households interviewed expressed their need for confidentiality and therefore no names shall be used in this paper, they shall all be referred to as respondents in most cases.

These field findings were substantiated by personal observations made throughout the period of the interviews with both the key informants as well as the peasant farming households. Also my own personal experience and knowledge of the area was invaluable during the analysis stage of data gathered. Secondary data used in this paper was collected from published books; published peer reviewed journal articles, government articles and national survey reports, as well as a different collection of data from the internet. Literature review was important in the structuring and analysis of arguments presented in the paper.

Limitations

Given time and resources, study was carried out in the shortest possible time and, therefore research findings presented in this paper inevitable do not claim reality of the situation but an approximation of the truth. Interviews were carried out in a tense and politically volatile atmosphere which necessitated a close censorship of questions asked to respondents as well as limited access within the village. This affected the quality of information gathered especially those pertaining to power issues.

3.2 Death to the peasant farm – myth or reality

The rural economy in Gwanda which is mostly premised on livestock, crop production and derived activities suffered a predictable recession following the economic crises suffered by the country in the past decade. The same fate suffered by the country in the 90's following the drought period of 1992, as Sen and Dreze (1981: 152) aptly describe, 'the output of food crops fell to very low levels, cattle mortality increased substantially and the decline of employment opportunities further aggravated the deterioration of rural livelihoods'. History has the uncanny way of repeating itself as the country has had to go through the same fate in the past decade, however this time droughts were coupled with the economic collapse which saw a decrease in agricultural investment and production. The diagram below shows the fluctuating maize yield production in Zimbabwe from 1995 to 2007:

Table 3.1: Maize yields in Zimbabwe (1995-2007)

Crop	Year	Area (Ha)	Yield (kg/ha)
Maize	1995	1 487 606	595
	1996	1 459 611	1,415
	1997	1 406 074	1,104
	1998	1 181 207	1,012
	1999	1 477 290	1,087
	2000	1 373 117	1,180
	2001	1 239 988	1,231
	2002	1 327 854	455
	2003	1 352 368	783
	2004	1 493 810	1,129
	2005	1 729 867	529
	2006	1 712 999	867
	2007	1 445 800	659

Source: Central Statistical Office Harare

Institutions that have always supported traditional farming activities like the department of agriculture, engineering and veterinary services, District Development fund and the Agricultural and Rural Development Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture have failed to continue with their services in the past decade given the massive brain drain from the country resulting in high

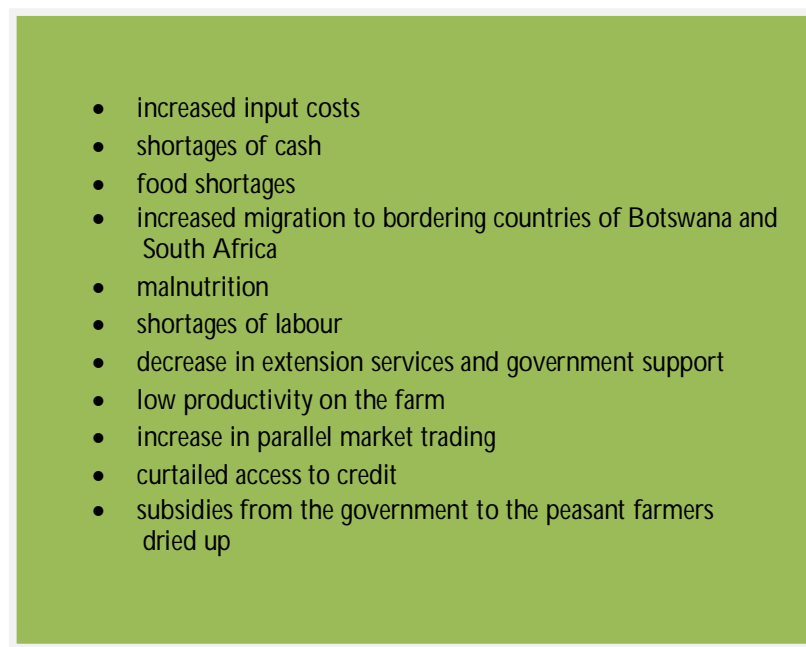
turnover as well as loss of funding to continue running their operational projects (Bryceson, 2002: 727). According to a key informant in the Rural District Council in Gwanda, agricultural support service has been on decline due to the negative macroeconomic environment. For example in 1994/95 real per capita spending on agricultural support services was 26% yet in the 2004 fiscal year the Agritex national budget allocation was just enough to pay the salaries of the civil servants in the department and nothing else (interview, 24/07/11, Gwanda). The potential of agriculture as the mainstay of the rural economy has been gradually eroded due to the absence of timely policy interventions and investments guaranteeing timely input support and broad extension support which have been lacking in the country in the past decade.

Economic decline in the country seems to have opened up new opportunities for entrepreneurialism given how off farm activities have mushroomed in the Gwanda area. The new breed of elite peasant farmer's has over the years accumulated more assets as compared to the previous generation of elites in the area. These assets include motor vehicles, ox-drawn carts, ploughs, cultivators, and bicycles. Though there is indication of increased asset ownership in the area including agricultural assets, evidence on the ground seems to point out that off farm incomes do not necessarily increase agricultural investments as well as productivity. Most households in the last decade seem to have spent their off farm incomes on consumptions as opposed to investment in agricultural activities. Has de-agrarianisation been a natural process in Zimbabwe or has the economic crisis been responsible for de-agrarianisation in Gwanda? This is an important question which Bryceson (2002) counters by arguing that the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programs in Africa in the mid 1980's-to mid 1990's were instrumental in the trend of de-agrarianisation meaning that the economic crisis in Zimbabwe in the past decade has been instrumental in fuelling or accelerating de-agrarianisation and social differentiation.

3.2.1 Brunt of economic decline on peasant farmers in Gwanda

The adverse macroeconomic environment in Zimbabwe since the year 2000 has had spiral trickle down effects on the small holder peasant farmers in the communal areas. Peasant farmers in the country have always reproduced themselves on the farm for subsistence as well as commodification whenever necessary. However with economic collapse and the recurrent droughts these farming families have had to take up new livelihood strategies to cope with the poverty that culminated from this situation. Below is a figure showing some effects of economic decline and droughts on peasant farming families in Ntalale village:

Figure 3.1: Impact of economic decline and droughts on peasant farmers in Ntalale



Source : data from interviews with farmers and key informants
(Ntalale, July 2011)

Due to shortages of cash, goods and services on the market most farmers faced difficulties obtaining farm inputs which include seeds, fertilizers, dipping chemicals for livestock, and draught power for cultivation. In some cases as highlighted by farmers, even with money that had become an elusive commodity one could fail to obtain seeds because of un-availability or astronomic prices on the parallel 'black market'. According to a key informant in the Rural District Council of Gwanda (interview, 22/07/11, Gwanda), subsidies from the government dried up eventually and even when seed handouts came to the village they were never on time for the planting season and they became highly politicized which resulted in some villagers being removed from the beneficiary list.

Hyper inflation did not help but worsened people's situations as prices went up as much as five times a day. According to Hanke (2008) hyper inflation is the rate of inflation per month that exceeds 50%. He further posits that Zimbabwe's year on year inflation peaked at a stupendous 89.7 sextillion percent in November 2008 (79,600,000,000% monthly inflation rate with an equivalent daily inflation rate of 98%). Hyper inflation meant that prices of farm inputs and food were pushed beyond the reach of most peasant farmers. Some farmers resorted to using grain from previous harvest as seeds and this affected harvest from the farm. Because of shortage of food, malnutrition became rife as people were not eating well. In extreme cases people were surviving on herbs and tree roots and this had a bearing on agricultural production as people did not have the energy to work on the farm. As one

respondent in Ntalale said, 'to keep soul and body together, we had to resort to eating herbs and wild fruits as we did not have money to buy food' (24/07/11).

Shortage of foreign currency also exacerbated inflation because possession of foreign currency became priceless in an economy with a parallel market with extremely high exchange rates as highlighted in Table 1.1. Farmers could not afford to buy cattle dozing, dip medicine and pesticides and most of their livestock succumbed to diseases. Draught power hiring by farmers without cattle or donkeys became impossible given the exorbitant pricing by neighbours. There was also shortage of farm labour as farming households cannot afford to pay hired labour to counter the serious void created by out-migration. Valuable time was lost attending political gatherings which became the norm leading to the year 2007 as explained by a key informant (interview, 10/07/11, Ntalale). Decrease in labour time and input in agriculture was compounded by fact that agricultural extension officers could not travel to the villages to assist farmers because of shortage of fuel and poor remuneration, a lot left their jobs in search of the so called greener pastures creating a vacuum in knowledge and a gap in agricultural extension service.

It is important at this point however to remember that the efforts of the peasantry are not governed wholly by the exigencies internal to its own way of life, 'a peasantry always exists within a larger system' (Wolf, 1961: 08). A system in which to survive, the peasant exploitation thus moves beyond simple exploiting woods, forestry, and water but looks to self exploitation in form of labour and exploitation of each other in the name of survival. In the harsh times characterizing the country of Zimbabwe, the peasantry has had to redefine itself as individuals and as a group. In the course of cultural evolution necessitated primarily by change of economic and political environment, the people of Ntalale village have had to find new forms of livelihoods that go beyond the farm as a form of income. Reproduction through non-farming activities however brings the question, at what point do the peasants remain peasants with any meaningful sense? As the research findings reveal, de-agrarianisation has increased momentum in the countryside of Matabeleland Region in the past decade but the major question is, is it complimented by depeasantisation? According to analytic findings in Gwanda de-agrarianisation is evident on the ground and has not been an overnight scenario. It appears even beyond the SAP's and economic grind down, there are other vital factors peculiar to the area that have created the diversified nature of incomes and the trend towards de-agrarianisation in Ntalale village.

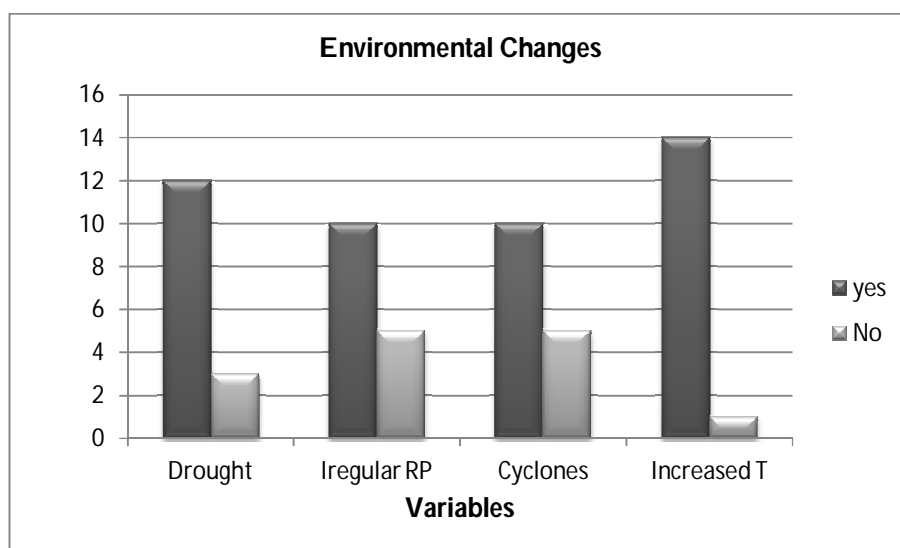
3.2.2 Environmental changes

Climate change has become noticeable in the area, areas that used to be wetlands have dried up, and perennial river flow has decreased. Rainfall patterns in the area have also drastically changed for example according to the Agritex supervisor, in 2009-2010 rains were received in April to May when crops had perished, and the first rains were too early resulting in everything being scorched by the heat (interview, 22/07/11, Gwanda). According to one farmer interviewed, 'we now plant around December were previously we used to plant in October, and this now varies with seasons and has become a major

challenge for the farmers' (interview, 20/07/11, Ntalale). Changuatah (2010: vi) in his foreword argues that, 'the reliance of the vast majority of Zimbabweans on rain-fed agriculture and the sensitivity of major sectors of the economy to the climate make Zimbabwe particularly susceptible to climate change'. According to Ms Mutsa Chasi of the Environmental Management Agency, as quoted by Russell (2008: 01) 'a report compiled by the Met Services using 30 years' data collected at stations at Belvedere, Harare, Bulawayo Goetz, and Beitbridge revealed that rainfall data shows no consistent trend indicating that changes in temperature and weather patterns were affecting the frequency and severity of rainfall, droughts, floods, which has impacted on peoples access to water and is slowly changing the use of land by farmers'.

Droughts as pointed out by 80% of the respondents have resulted in low agricultural productivity during the farming seasons of the past decade, with 75 % reporting that there is a greater frequency of water deficit years with a later onset of the rain season and premature rains resulting in a reduced length of growing period. Below is a table showing people's awareness to environmental changes in the last 10 years:

Table 3.2: Awareness to climatic changes



Source: authors' elaboration, created using field findings

According to Russell (2008: 1) 'there has been an increase in the frequency of droughts since 1990 (90/91, 91/92, 92/93, 93/94, 94/95, 97/98, 01/02, 02/03, 04/05, 06/07) and this has resulted in extensive decline in crop yields in the country's agricultural sector'. Irregularities and change in weather patterns have besieged the region, rains no longer fall at expected times which make it difficult to forecast on whether to start planting or not. This has resulted in major losses by farmers who have planted at the wrong time unknowingly. There has been serious drying up of local water sources in Gwanda South which has also affected irrigation farming plots resulting in decrease of productivity by farmers using irrigation. Siltation of the major rivers has not helped the shortage of water situation in the country at all, 'most of the local dams have been silted and this is a problem for garden farming as well as

watering livestock' as explained by a key informant (interview, 22/07/11, Ntalale).



Illustration of siltation in Gwanda South water sources

Zimbabwe has been under the mercies of a failing economic system and unpredictable weather in the past decade. Apart from the droughts the country has had to contend with flooding that has become all too frequent since the country was hit by the cyclone code named Bonita of 1996. The agricultural sector was paralyzed by cyclone induced flooding in the years of 2000, 2003 and 2007 (Russell, 2008: 2). According to FAO (2003: 12) cyclone Japhet of 2003 was a disaster on agricultural production but improved livestock conditions which were generally good with good pastures and water availability in the otherwise dry area. This however did not benefit all peasant farming households that have livestock because most livestock had perished in late 2002 following the drought period that marked the agricultural season. It seems all the weather calamities in their extremities have dampened peasant farmers zest for farming as they are constantly being faced by reality of crop failure and livestock declining numbers not only due to the weather elements but also livestock diseases because of decreased access to veterinary services.

3.2.3 Relief aid

According to the chief in the village (interview, 20/07/11, Ntalale) because of the serious droughts that have plugged the area in the last decade the government and NGO's like World Vision and Plan International had to intervene in the area through provisioning of food aid to alleviate hunger and food shortages amongst those mostly affected. According to Changutah (2010: 05) humanitarian aid for 2008 was a massive \$490 million against a background of over 90% unemployment and the worst crop failure in the country's history. This however had the effect of creating welfarist households that in some instances down scaled their farm activity to depend on food handouts. Some farmers as mentioned by a key informant were even known to rent out their land to some neighbours as well as their draught power and other farm equipment because they themselves had no use for them (interview, 18/07/11, Ntalale). According to the Agritex supervisor:

...around 2007 some farmers abandoned farming entirely to survive on relief aid- a culture of dependency had been created which was instrumental in pushing some farmers out of farming as it lost its appeal and relevance. NGO's created parallel structures to the government; they came in and went out of communities with no continuity to their operations. Before farmers could adapt to some of their extension work projects meant to be beneficial

to the farmers, their programs would have come to an end and they moved out (interview, 22/07/11, Gwanda).



Illustration of a relief aid point

There was no integration with government extension officers in the implementation of these programs. The selection criteria used by NGO's to get lists of beneficiaries was criticized by most of the Rural District Council Officials interviewed as fostering dependency amongst the selected beneficiaries-“we need poor people” this created a culture of people that thrived to be recognized in the community as being poor thereby destroying their capacities to be innovative and map their own survival strategies in the climate of redundancy. NGO's seem to have failed to draw out the resource capacities in the area to promote intervention strategies that promoted development. They in fact managed to cripple the thinking of some peasant farmers who chose the easy way out of their dilemma which eventually was not sustainable but further increased their vulnerabilities. Neefjes (2004: 47) argues that vulnerable people are those who are more exposed to risk, shocks and stresses. In this case these farmers who became dependant on relief aid exposed themselves to aid and have had to suffer from withdrawal symptoms which most of them have failed to overcome thus plunging their households into abject poverty and misery.

3.2.4 Mining

The FTLRP of 2000 saw some of the community people become beneficiaries to mine land claims. The redistribution of land saw the resurgence of gold panning as some of the beneficiaries of the FTLRP sold some of their pieces of mine claims to other people in the area or rented them out. Mining has always been a livelihood strategy in Gwanda, however the difference is that before the land distribution exercise, these mines were in the hands of the white commercial farmers. After 2000 some villagers with political influence and connections were able to get mining rights however those who failed to get legal mining rights became involved in illegal gold panning. Because of the high incomes derived from mining and gold panning, households involved in this activity have down scaled their agricultural activity and become more reliant on these alternative incomes.



Illustration of a gold panner ('omakorokoza')

According to one female respondent whose husband is a gold panner, 'we are making a decent income out of gold panning and so I just plant the plot near to my homestead which yields very little given the droughts in the area' (interview, 15/07/11, Ntalale). However at least 3 of the households interviewed with a constant income from gold panning have expanded their agricultural activities by investing in irrigation farming for purely commercial purposes.

3.2.5 Effects of HIV/AIDS

According to FAO (2003: 18) statistics from the Ministry of Health revealed that the AIDS pandemic was officially captured as causing the death of 2500 people per week in 2000. During the past decade of increased mobility in Ntalale, there has been an increase in number of households affected by HIV/AIDS and this has had an impact on peasant farming which depends on family labour on the farm. The largely seasonal or temporary character of migration in southern Africa, with migrants returning home to their families on a regular basis, has facilitated the rapid spread of the virus (Fages, 1999: 40). Out migration for casual work in bordering countries such as South Africa and Botswana increased levels of HIV/AIDS related deaths and infections. Lurie, 2001: 23) in explaining the relationship between migration and HIV/AIDS says:

If one were to design a social experiment in an attempt to create the conditions conducive to the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, you would remove several hundred thousand rural men from their families, house them in single-sex hostels, provide them with cheap alcohol and easy access to commercial sex workers and allow them to return home periodically. These conditions roughly describe the situation for more than eight hundred thousand gold miners and countless other migrant labourers working throughout South Africa today.

However not only man have been responsible for the spread of the virus women have also been known to engage in prostitution as casual employment. Men working in the mines according to a Rural District Official were known to take up more than one woman at a time because they had the money to do so (interview, 18/07/11, Gwanda). Many households have lost the head of house leaving the burden of caring for orphans and the sick on the grandparents and the women who also have to tend to the farming for food and income for the household at the same time. Even with food aid these households have been

faced with inadequate food supply and the lack of proper dietary requirements has resulted to most HIV/AIDS victims succumbing to the virus faster.

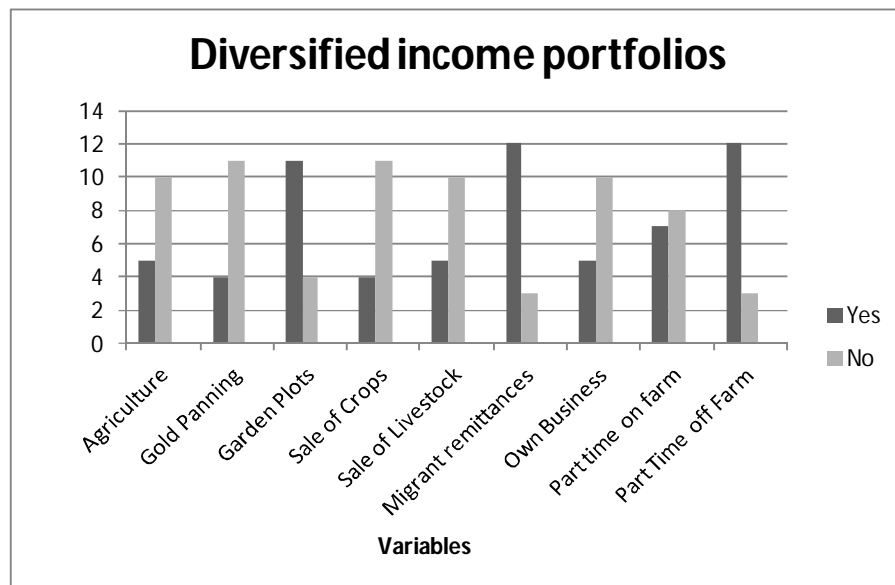
From thorns to harvest in diversified economies

3.3 Coping strategies in Ntalale

The case study of Ntalale village demystifies the notion that economic crisis plunges the masses into heightened poverty, on the contrary it points to the fact that crisis can be good and rewarding to the development of some regions. Every person interviewed alluded to the fact that the last decade in the country has been the toughest in living memory however most were also quick to add also very rewarding. Diversified incomes have not eroded the traditional lifestyle of the village but have restructured and consolidated the households of the village which has had an effect on the social fabric of the community. Livelihood analysis seeks to interpret how different people gain access to assets in the pursuit of their livelihoods, according to O’Laughlin (2004: 387), ‘this must necessarily encompass questions of power and politics as the rules of the game governing access are of course mediated by power relations’.

Farmers have ventured into different income generating activities ranging from off farm to on farm incomes. The table below shows some of the income generating activities undertaken by the different households in Ntalale. Yes is an indication that the household derives an income from the activity with no indicating the opposite. Most households interviewed participated in more than one income deriving activity:

Table 3.3: Diversified incomes of Ntalale



Source: author's elaboration created using field findings

The most common coping strategy with the onset of the economic crisis was distress migration by villagers mostly to the bordering countries of South Africa and Botswana mostly through cross boarder jumping due to lack of legal travelling documents like passports and valid visa's for entry into these countries. According to the Zimbabwe Monetary Policy Statement of 31 January 2008, the officially recorded foreign currency receipts from migrants reached an estimated value of US\$ 5, 7 million in 2006 and US\$ 47, 5 million in 2007. These remittances did not have a large impact on the macro economy however impact was high at the household level as these remittances were mostly spent for consumption purposes. According to the MARS³ survey, the annual median amount of cash remittances received by Zimbabwean households was US\$ 109.30 and in kind remittances amounted to US\$54.90. In kind remittances according to respondents in Ntalale comprised mostly food, toiletries, household appliances, mobile phones, satellite televisions, clothing and goods for resale within the village as well as agricultural inputs.



Illustration of cross boarder jumping

About 80 % of the households interviewed have a family member who migrated mostly to South Africa and Botswana. However the rate of migration has not been complimented by the equal receipt of cash remittances from these members. 80% of the households with a family member who migrated acknowledged receipt of cash and kind remittances at least once or twice in two months with some recording a more frequent receipt. However 20% of the households were recorded as never having received any form of remittance from their family members who have migrated.

Women have also played a very important role as providers for their families as some of them engaged in cross border trading which was very lucrative and rewarding as most of the women claimed despite the high labour involved. Most development initiatives in the area have been attributed to cash remittances received by the different households, for example most of the

³ In 2004-05 the South African Migration Project (SAMP) conducted a nationally representative Migration and Remittances Survey (MARS) at household level in Botswana, Lesotho, Southern Mozambique, Swaziland and Zimbabwe.

small retail business initiatives in Ntalale have been attributed to investments from cash remittances from migration and mining initiatives undertaken in the area.

Not all migration was outside the country, some villagers moved to different areas in search for income opportunities that were cropping up around the country. Formal employment was very low and wherever present people were leaving because of the poor salaries that were viewed as exploitative and ridiculous given the economic situation in the country. People preferred to engage in informal occupation which was more rewarding and in some cases enriching. Not all “get rich initiatives” during the time were in line with the law but some people have managed to get away with criminal activities with loads of gold falling from their pockets. Falling yields on the farm and the need to buy food has been a contributory factor to migration particularly of young male and females of Ntalale village.

3.3.1 Irrigation schemes

Some peasant farmers in Gwanda were beneficiaries of the FTLRP which saw them become landholders of prime land which had previously been white owned. Because of climatic changes happening in the region there have been inconsistent rain patterns in the area that have resulted in droughts over the past decade. And this has resulted in the increased investment in irrigation schemes by the government as well as personal initiatives. These irrigation schemes are mostly on the new resettlement areas and their existence is mostly for commercial purposes. Those practicing irrigation farming on the former white owned farms gained during the land redistribution of 2000 hire seasonal labour which is abundant given that a lot of the peasant farmers now only partially utilise their farm land and are constantly looking for part time income.

Commoditization is very frequent but not practiced by all peasant farmers, growing for the market in the past decade has become highly profitable in the environment of food shortages and low productivity on the farm. Most farmers producing for the market do not themselves need to subsist from the farm as they have money to buy food stuffs from South Africa, Botswana or in Gwanda town or otherwise receive food packages from their migrant family members. Accumulation of financial resources and assets has become of paramount importance as opposed to accumulation of stock in the granaries and livestock traditionally. According to one respondent:

one's wealth was measured by the stock in the granaries and number of cows and goats but now wealth is measured more by the value of building structures, assets like TVs', decoders, cars, cell phones, ownership of businesses and cash spending abilities amongst a very long list of technologically advanced assets now evident in the village (interview, 14/07/11, Ntalale).

Though irrigation schemes have thrived in the past decade, they have also been met with their own fair share of challenges ranging from fuel shortages which affected mobility to transport farm produce especially to Gwanda town, high transport cost in the event of hiring transport, shortages and irregular rain patterns, highly priced farm implements, constant movements of hired labour

some who just left without any prior notice, siltation of the two major dams in the area caused by river bank cultivation. Despite all the challenges, irrigation farming has been very profitable to farmers under the schemes and has enhanced the economic standing of these families in the community of Gwanda.

3.3.2 Garden plots

Garden or greens plots as referred to by a key informant in Ntalale (interview, 15/07/11) are a thriving business which has carried many families through the difficult times in the village. These garden plots are mostly under the care of women who do all the work in these plots. The most common things grown on these plots are vegetables, tomatoes, green peas, onions, chilli's and pumpkins. Though some of the produce is consumed in the homes most of it is for resale in the surrounding communities. One female respondent had this to say:

Though we have not got rich from our garden plots, we have managed to get a decent income to buy food, send our children to school and sometimes buy seeds and fertilizer for our fields (interview, 11/07/11, Ntalale).

About 78% of the households interviewed owned a garden plot in the area and mostly were taken care of by women. These garden plots have been instrumental in the economic empowerment of women in the village as they now have an income to use for their own needs. Vegetable growing not only provides households with an alternative income, vegetable growing has promoted the improvement of the local diet.

3.3.4 Mining

Some villagers have ventured into small claims gold panning on previously white owned mines that were re-distributed under the FTLRP in 2000. Gold panning has become a very important income deriving source for some of the villagers in Ntalale as shown in figure 1. Some households interviewed that engage in gold panning revealed that through use of incomes derived from panning, they have managed to accumulate resources in the past decade. According to one respondent:

Some lucky gold panners have become overnight sensations by striking sizeable amounts of the precious mineral gold which they sell through middlemen traders and transactions are normally done illegally because the market value price on the formal market is lower than the one offered on the parallel market (interview, 18/07/11, Ntalale).

Some mining investments have been very profitable and some households have managed to accumulate a lot of assets that at times include agricultural investments, livestock, building and household assets.

3.3.5 Other diversified incomes

According our research findings in Ntalale, hiring out own labour to on the farm and off farm for cash and kind remittances is very common. These

range from clearing fields, harvesting, ploughing, heading livestock (cattle and goats), gathering firewood, guarding small grain fields by constantly chasing quail birds through making noises or practically chasing them away, household errands like washing and cooking and cleaning the homestead. These menial tasks are engaged in by both female and male villagers looking to make an extra income for their own personal use. Relief aid though very common especially in the period of 2007/8 has now been replaced by food for work programs which are encouraging development as opposed to welfarism (NGO official, interview, 19/07/11, Gwanda). Most of the villagers expressed their appreciation of these programs that are promoting self help and development in their village as opposed to creating dependence of villagers on food aid, a situation that had become very common in Ntalale in previous years.

Research findings also revealed that, small businesses like wielding (making burglar bars, door frames, window frames), brick moulding, small retail businesses are also very affluent in the area, and most of the people in these activities are those of between 17-46 age groups. Selling of livestock has become a fundamental source of income for those households who own different livestock. In 2007 according to a key informant:

Most households are engaging in barter trading with their livestock in exchange for grain though this has been uneven and skewed in the past decade. Most farmers lost their livestock to unscrupulous traders who took advantage of the desperate situation most farmers were in, for example for a 50kg bag of maize you would part with one cow and for a 10kg bag of maize you would part with a goat (interview, 21/07/11, Gwanda).

Not only external traders were involved in this extortionist behaviour some people in the village have been noted to have accumulated their wealth through this activity. This has resulted in resentment in some cases where a villager has now to watch what used to be their herd of cows now safely in another villagers kraal. Though farm production has been on the decline in the past ten years, in good farming seasons households mostly practising irrigation farming and conservation farming had good harvests and they managed to get an income by selling their surplus produce from the farm to their neighbours and other villagers and in some cases engaged in barter trading. Conservation farming according to Mazvimavi et al. (2008: 1) 'is agriculture that can be practiced by small holder farmers using small implements such as the hand hoe to create planting basins, in general it is any tillage sequence that minimizes or reduces the loss of soil and water and achieves at least 30% soil cover by crop residues'.

Four households interviewed confidentially said they had managed to rent out land in return for a fee or a portion of the harvest from the piece of land farmed. People seem to have come up with all manner of activities in the quest of getting a much needed income. Selling Mopani worms whenever they are in season is also a very profitable venture in the area, some of the villagers travel as far away as the capital Harare because they are in demand and they can get a better price there. Income diversification in economic stress situations creates inequalities because consumption and investment patterns by the different households are different. It is important to realise that within any vulnerable population, uptake of diversified incomes does not happen at a uniform scale

and the process is very heterogeneous. The nature of livelihood strategies implemented to cope with economic stress do not yield the same income returns to the different households in Ntalale because of their diversity, therefore though almost all households in Ntalale have taken up at least one livelihood strategy to survive in the harsh economic decline, not all have managed to rise above the prevailing poverty which was exacerbated by the parallel market system operational in the past decade increasing inequalities and differentiation within the village of Ntalale.

Chapter 4 De-agrarianisation-but no de-peasantization

4.1 The cultivated lands and grazing livestock of Ntalale

There has been a decrease in unit area of farm land cultivated in the area in the past decade and this trend seems to have increased in the years 2004-2010. Agricultural productivity though important to the economy of Gwanda South has suffered massive decline in the past decade. Subsequent decline in cultivated land and farm productivity has been attributed to the droughts, shortage of cash to buy farm implements, and the removal of subsidies for peasant farmers. Environmental changes in the climate of the region was mentioned by most of the respondents as being also instrumental in the diversification of livelihood given decrease in agricultural production. According to one farmer:

Even after the dollarization of the economy when we can now get goods and services on the market the droughts and irregular rain patterns have made farming impossible. Consecutive droughts have demoralized farmers from farming as they used to back in the day when to live and survive in the village was to farm (interview, 12/07/11, Ntalale).

Land tenure in the area is dictated by customary law which states that land cannot be sold outright. Therefore the only way to derive an income has been through renting out land to villagers who had the inputs to work the land. This was in return of cash or an agreed portion of the harvest. Some farmers had a subsequent increase of farm holding in 2000 after they were beneficiaries to the FTLRP in Zimbabwe. These farmers have done considerable well in agricultural production because the lands that they inherited were prime lands which were mostly under irrigation. Farmers practising irrigation farming have not been affected as much by the droughts because they have access to water and have used this as a comparative advantage by increasing their commodification of farm produce in the era of considerable food shortages.

Shortage of labour in households has also been a reason noted as resulting in decrease in cultivated area in Ntalale resulting in huge tracts of farm land lying fallow or underutilized. Migration was instrumental in the loss of family labour which is core to agricultural production in peasant farming. Faced with inability to hire labour some farmers now cultivate plots closer to their homesteads because they are smaller and more manageable than distant fields. Draught power is an important aspect to peasant farming in Gwanda, however not all families have draught power and hence have to hire from neighbours or other villagers in the community. This has proved a great challenge as some peasant farmers did not have the cash to hire and even when they did they could only get access to the draught after the owners were done with their own fields which became problematic as this was mostly after the first rains of the farming season.

Small grain seed varieties like sorghum and millet are the most suitable for the region, however farmers prefer to plant maize which is not really suitable

for the climatic conditions. Therefore in extremely dry years farmers have had small productivity in their maize fields. According to a key informant, 'farmers who have managed to be productive on their farms are those who continue to plant the traditional drought tolerant small grain seed varieties' (interview, 19/07/11, Ntalale). Maize seems only to thrive on the irrigation scheme plots and in the garden plots because they do not only rely on rain fed rain but also on irrigation. Because of consistent poor productivity on the farms most farmers have lost their zest for farming and leave most of their farm plots fallow during the farming seasons. According to most of the key informants, decrease in government subsidies and poor market buying prices of farm products in the past decade by the Grain Marketing Board have also been instrumental in the heightening despondence to farming and livestock rearing by the villagers.

Livestock rearing is an important part to the economy in Matabeleland Region. However the economic collapse and recurrent droughts have resulted in the dwindling size of livestock ownership by the people of Ntalale. Droughts and inability to buy pesticides and dipping chemicals fundamental to rid the livestock of diseases wiped out most of the communities livestock in the past few years. Livestock was also sold for cash or barter trade to get access to food and money which was used for household sundry expenses. Farmers who were beneficiaries during the FLTRP and had various incomes have managed to invest in livestock rearing given they have more grazing fresh nutritious land just inherited from the dispossessed white farmers. Some of these new resettled farmers have also been innovative in getting extra income from their land by hiring it out to the other peasant farmers for grazing their livestock at an agreed individual fee. Shortage of fertile pasture land in the drought years has discouraged some peasant farmers from investing in cattle rearing; farmers with financial resources are investing more in smaller livestock like goats and chickens that do not require huge fodder areas. Livestock ownership is seen as investment and insurance to safeguard against difficult times by most peasant farming households in Ntalale. Nomadic grazing and synthesized stock feeds have been cattle rearing strategies used by peasant farmers with the necessary financial and human resources to continue the activity. Nevertheless livestock rearing has become increasingly vulnerable as more and more households have sold, traded, or slaughtered their livestock to cope with the extended economic crisis. Though some farmers have abandoned farming this does not mean that they have lost their land or that they have moved out of the rural area only that they have left the land fallow for during some farming seasons opting for other forms of income generating activities.

4.2 Is agriculture still important in the village of Ntalale?

Given the diversified portfolios of Ntalale village, it would be easy to assume that agriculture has lost its importance amongst the people and is becoming a relic. However field findings point to the fact that agriculture is still important though not much income and productivity has been derived from it in the past decade of economic decline and droughts. Most households interviewed maintained that agriculture is still an integral part of their lives and

they are not willing to entirely move away from the farm despite the various challenges agriculture has faced in the past decade. Though most households have been forced to diversify to cope with the times this has improved their well being and lifestyles. One respondent had this to say:

We thank God for the problems that have besieged the nation in the last years, because if it were not for these problems some of us would still be living in abject poverty and misery without hope of change to our situation. The time of troubles has made us to look beyond our comfort zones and to see that life does not start and end in farming but can be complimented by other activities (interview, 22/07/11, Ntalale).

The people have no inclination to abandon the village life but they are spurred by the need to develop themselves so that they are not looked down upon by other classes of people in society. Most farmers went as far as maintaining that if given sufficient inputs on the farm and if there were adequate rains they would really get back to farming with all their hearts. The shift in incomes has generated a lot of changes such as dwelling structures from the traditional mud huts to brick houses, and accumulation of what normally would be called town assets (televisions, satellite dishes, electrified homesteads, cell phones, cars) hence there still is an interesting mix caused by these new changes with the old lifestyle of the rural areas. Though innovativeness pervades the area people still stick to their traditional beliefs and values of old. The economic crisis has not resulted in the decay to poverty in the village however it spurred the people to progress themselves by using new ideas to sustain and improve their lifestyles. With the genesis of the changes most villagers have been working towards being more improved in their status as no one once to be referred to as poor anymore. For some poor households without alternative income agriculture is still the mainstay of their survival, they have to scrap out as much as they can get from the land and defeat all odds or face hunger or otherwise become beggars in the community. These households as typified by Cousins et al. (1992: 13) would fall under typology C of Lumpen semi-peasantry: unable to reproduce themselves without external assistance (family or state).

Reasons leading to the seemingly disinterest in farming have mostly been because of the challenges agriculture has been facing in the country. It is safe to assume that without the challenges in the past decade people would still be very much into farming with little diversification as opposed to the situation on the ground present day. Not all crises are bad is something positive in every negative. Peasants have not been pushed entirely out of farming however the economic crisis has created opportunities for diversification into other livelihood strategies that have improved their livelihoods. Peasant farmers have persisted with farming despite the economic hardships coupled with climatic disasters that have besieged the country in the last decade. People now believe in working as opposed to constantly waiting for government and NGO handouts. It is interesting to note that the younger generation in the village is opting out entirely from agriculture in preference to off farm work. With the older generation sticking firmly on the farm, for example just before the rainy season the elders of the village still go to the ancient shrine of Njelele to ask for the rains from 'Mwali' their God.

Diversification of incomes in rural areas has not led to the disappearance of the peasantry in Gwanda South; on the contrary it has expanded the rural economy by expanding income portfolios. According to Kearney (1996) 'improving the quality of rural life might lead to avoidance of the twisted modernist mentality, whereby the peasant is viewed as a doomed figure, who is not able to face the present and future challenges of the society, therefore his destiny is historical disappearance'. The peasant class in Gwanda despite the out migration to the bordering countries still persists and there is no evidence pointing to its demise. Most of the community that out migrated still has its roots in the village, there is constant to and from movement by the migrants from their casual employment in the bordering countries and their home village. According to a key informant, most of these migrants have homes and pieces of land that they always come back to once they finally decide they have had enough of being away from home (interview, 21/07/11, Ntalale). Maybe it is just not yet time to bid adieu to the peasantry in the region of Matabeleland south.

4.3 Change not demise-dawn of a new peasantry

The impact of liberalisation processes following the adoption of the Structural Reform Programme of the 90's became the landmark of the trend towards de-agrarianisation and livelihood diversification by the communal farmers in Zimbabwe. With the implementation of ESAP as Bryceson (2002) hypothesised, the proportion of food deficit households increased. However the difference to this trend with Ntalale in the past decade is that in the 90's agriculture remained the major source of income though supplemented by other livelihood strategies. Below is a table showing income rankings in Ntalale in the 1990's:

Table 4.1: Income rankings in Ntalale in the 1990's

Source of income			Rank
Sale of livestock			1
Sale of sorghum, maize, groundnuts			2
Hiring out labour			3
Beer brewing			4
Sale of goods from neighboring countries			5
Garden farming			6
Remittances			7

Source: Own elaboration using field data

4.3.1 The 'old' elites

Social relations within class dynamics are governed by the way in which property is distributed (land) divisions of labour, distribution of incomes as well as the inherent patterns of consumption and accumulation. Access depends on individual participation in a variety of social institutions as well as

self positioning towards access to productive resources. The old elite class in Ntalale is in no way peculiar to these social dynamics, field data findings reveal that this elite class before the year 2000 comprised people holding important community positions like chiefs, district administrators, headmasters, teachers, village herdsman as well as government extension officers. Access to means of production and resources remains a fundamental ingredient for differentiated accumulation of resources across households. Below is a table showing some the major characteristics of the old peasant elites:

Table 4.2: Characteristics of the old elite

<i>Characteristics of the old elite prior to the year 2000</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Access to resources skewed by political capture by powerful individuals. ▪ Monopoly of power-distribution of resources to kin and friends. ▪ Preferential access to funding by actors with positions on bodies such as District councils and VIDCO's. ▪ State power used to manipulate rules of access to land, labour and capital by influencing legislation administrative practices or the outcomes of judicial procedures. ▪ Formation of party based conditions as precondition of doing business successfully. ▪ Social identity and status depended on ascribed and achieved qualifications. ▪ Membership in social groups and rank used as instruments of accumulation. ▪ Control over productive resources depended on one's ability to dominate or influence others and could be claimed. ▪ Incomes mostly derived from agriculture. ▪ Indicators of wealth-land area, cattle holding, farm equipment owned for example (number of scotch carts), ▪ Number of wives and children, number of hired labour e.t.c. ▪ Elites reliant from accumulation from above as promoted by patronage politics.

Source: own elaboration combining Cousins (1992), Berry (1989) complimented with field data (July 2011)

The old elite used their influence for accumulating possessions as well as furthering their own political interests by patronizing decision making within the community. The characteristics of the old elite as described in the above table are not only relevant to this group, with the dawn of the new elite peasant class there is a replication of some of these trends in the quest of accumulation and influencing decision making. With the economic decline following the land invasions of 2000, most of the old elites where unable to hold onto their accumulated fortunes which gradually ebbed in the harsh macroeconomic environment which resulted in industrial collapse as well as the decline in agricultural productivity further destabilized by the recurrent droughts of the past decade. The rising costs of inputs and droughts resulted in perpetual food deficits which pushed peasant farmers to sell their accumulated assets as well as their stock of grain for survival. The households that failed to get social and institutional means to exploit their labor and land though not dispossessed of their physically means of production where exposed to poverty and had to find alternative means to survive. Alternative livelihood strategies ranged from selling their own labor to having one meal a day.

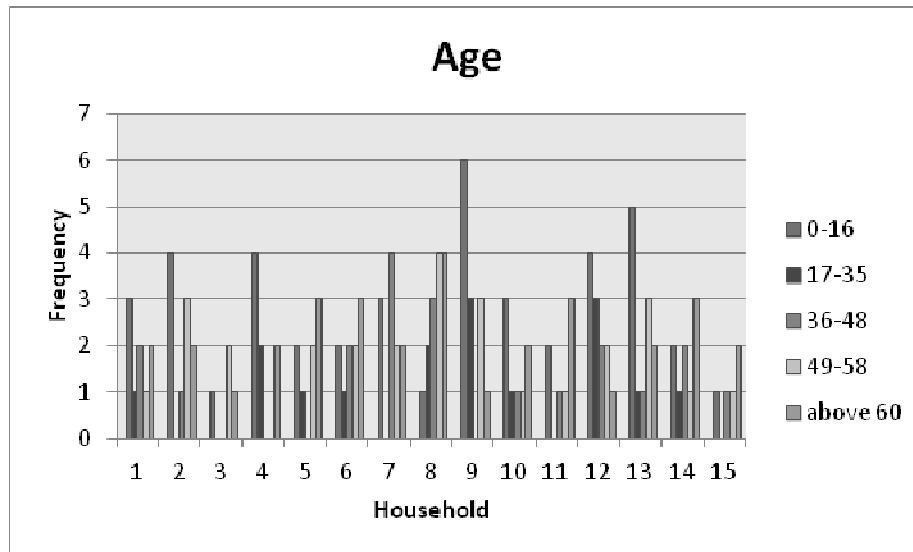
4.3.2 Social changes in Gwanda in the past decade

The past decade in the history of Ntalale has ushered in different social changes in the organization and way of life of the peasant farmers. The economic and agricultural crisis in the past decade has witnessed the evolving social dynamics within the countryside. Relationships have become highly commercialized due to the increased penetration of the market system in the villages. With food shortages, cash supply shortages, foreign currency shortages and the decline in agricultural productivity the rural community has had to rely more and more on the market system for goods and services. Strategies of production and accumulation have been directed towards establishing and strengthening social relations which were cultivated to influence the terms on which people gain access to resources (Berry, 1989: 48). This reinforces my argument that in the economy of crisis peasant farmers have not been above exploiting each other for the purposes of accumulation and gaining social status. Diversification into different livelihood strategies ushered in changes within the community, with different income brackets came the deepening of differentiation within the peasant farmer class as well as the altering of demographic profiles.

4.3.3 Changes in Demographic profiles

Migration and constant movements by the villagers in search of income generating activities has resulted in a change in the household demographic profiles in the village of Ntalale. 85% of the households interviewed were mostly composed of the age groups 0-16 years and 45 and above age groups. This is the normal trend as highlighted by a key informant in Gwanda, though it does not mean that all of the age group of 17-44 is missing. Most of the villagers falling within the age group of 17-44 years have migrated temporarily and in some instances permanently to boarder countries of South Africa, Botswana, beyond African borders as well as in local cities of the country. Table below shows the age frequency in the households interviewed in Ntalale

Table 4.1: Age frequency in households

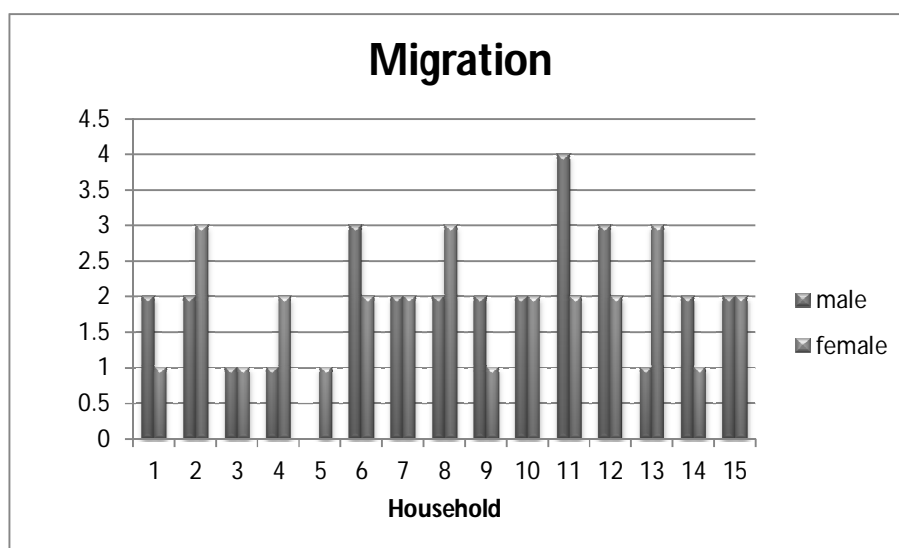


Source: authors elaboration created using field data

Most of the households in the village face a major challenge of labour shortage due

to the out migration and constant mobility of the family members. An interesting case in the area as highlighted by almost all key informants was the nature of outmigration. In most African countries the normal trend is to have more men moving out of the village in times of stress in search for different employment. However in this instance there seems to be a 50-50 ratio of males and females leaving the village in search of livelihood strategies to cope with the crisis. Table below shows the migration trends of males and females within interviewed households:

Table 4.2: Migration trends in males and females in Ntalale



Source: author's elaboration created using field data

The older generation sees no reason for moving out of the village as they are settled and comfortable in their way of life. Some of them are getting support from their children and extended family to have any inclinations and thoughts of moving out of the rural area. There has been a decrease in population as acknowledged by some of the key informants, which leaves the older generation shouldering most of the work which would normally be attended too by the younger generation who are at the moment absent. This trend supports Riggs (1998: 502) claims that, 'it is not uncommon to find younger people engaged in nonfarm activities while older cohorts continue to work the land'.

4.3.4 The 'new' elites

Each crisis has its own winners and losers, it is easy to assume that crisis is tantamount to poverty however as the case of economic decline in Zimbabwe has proved; crisis can be good. Crises or cases of economic distress create opportunities for accumulation, not everyone benefits from these opportunities as access to productive resources and assets is determined by political, economic and social dynamics. During the past decade different households in the village of Ntalale have diversified their incomes by negotiating access to resources through forming political alliances, economic alliances as well as social alliances. People sought access to new sources of

wealth and power through existing institutional channels, using their accumulated wealth and influence in ways which restructured old institutions and social relations rather than to destroy them (Berry, 1989: 44). Because of the hyper inflation in Zimbabwe and high levels of patronage, key resources in a highly distorted environment, such as cheap credit and foreign currency at the official rate, were allocated to selected individuals and groups, enabling them to amass enormous levels of wealth in a very short space of time. Those with political clout borrowed heavily from the banks and then declined to pay, waiting for inflation to remove the burden of the original debt (Robinson, 2007).

Different accumulation rates of resources have resulted in a visible differentiated community where there are obvious signs of who is doing better than the rest. And this is measurable by the possession of assets like livestock, cars, cell phones, solar panels, in some cases electrification of rural households as well as building of houses that are modelled on those from the city. The more money you accumulate the more your influence in decision making in the village. It is interesting to note that according to most respondents, some of the new rich elites have become rich by exploiting other people in the community; through exploitation of labour and manipulation of prices. Accumulation of wealth has become a measure of success in the area; there is a clear distinction in the society of the rich, the poor and the middle class.

Those who used opportunities have become very influential in the area of Ntalale, they influence implementation of development projects in the village because they have resources to fund them –there is however a measure of resentment displayed by those who used to be the decision makers the former ‘old’ elites. As Berry (1989: 41) postulates, ‘people’s ability to generate a livelihood or increase their assets depends on their access to productive resources and their ability to control and use them effectively’. With this in mind, it is therefore not surprising to find that tensions between the old and new rich elite in Ntalale are not explicitly fought out. The less successful people in the village have found that to gain access to means of production they have to cooperate with the new elites. These new rich elites have increased their decision making power and influence in community as they own the resources to sway people to their own way of thinking in the attainment of their individual interests and goals.

Though these new rich elites do not necessarily have authoritative titles like chief, district administrator they have the resources to be seen and to be heard. They are known to advise these official authoritative figures behind closed doors as well as influence decision making of NGO’s and their various projects as they are in the position to influence the community. These elites are mostly the ones that are elected to new committees for example the Water Point Committee as people think they have what it takes to represent them effectively in these committees. Some of the new rich elite have gone to the extent of using their resources to increase their influence through forging political alliances with any of the two major political parties in the country this has been done through influencing or buying support from local villagers as ‘money buys everything, even people’ as reiterated by a respondent (interview, 15/07/11, Ntalale). Of those old elites who did not progress over time, they have lost their bargaining power and ability to influence decision making even

when they do hold traditional titles. The table below shows the shifts in income patterns from 1990-2010 in percentages:

Table 4.3: Income patterns in Ntalale from 1990-2010

<i>Livelihood income source</i>	<i>1990-1995</i>	<i>1996-2001</i>	<i>2002-2006</i>	<i>2007-2010</i>
Livestock sales	50	48	42	32
Crop sales	28	8	12	10
Vegetable production	20	20	21	25
Migrant remittances	-	15	25	36
Gold panning	23	10	10	6
Vending	-	5	2	1
Fishing	5	1,9	-	-
Beer brewing	2	0,1	-	-
Hiring out labour	14	22	38	47

Source: author's elaboration using data from the Gwanda RDC

Households that have become more influential and rich derived their incomes from mining, migrant remittances and hiring out labour. However households composed of the older people of age group 60 and above failed to take part in these economic opportunities and therefore remain poor. As one respondent mentions:

We have become poorer and we are looked at as beggars and given handouts by the rest of the villagers (interview, 21/07/11, Ntalale).

Decrease in gold panning and fishing activity in households has been attributed to the increased humanitarian aid in the district which hit a high in the year of 2007. Some households became dependant on aid thus decreasing their production capacity on the farm and other livelihood strategies. Such distinct livelihood patterns have resulted in a socially differentiated peasant where it is easy to separate the rich from the poor. Respondent's perception about wealth and differentiation was premised on the accumulation of assets and capital by the different households in the village. According to a key informant though there is no documented data, the number of rich households in Ntalale have increased by approximately 36% in the past decade and this increase is mostly attributable to cash remittances that increased with more out migration from the area.

Crisis does not spell the end, in a climate of economic decline and recurrent droughts, opportunities for accumulation of resources have presented themselves and the fortunate are reaping the benefits. Livelihood diversification has changed the setting and development rates for different households in Gwanda South in the process creating new spaces and opportunities towards agrarian transition. With change new questions arise proving in fact that all relations are dynamic and can be constantly shaped and reshaped.

Chapter 5 Conclusions

This paper explores the dynamics of economic decline and its effects on the peasant class farmers in Ntalale village. Arguments raised were premised on the notion that economic crisis and severe droughts do not have to spell the end of the peasantry and neither does it spell abject poverty. Conclusions from the field findings question the dialectic behind the peasant as a class for itself and in itself. The peasant class of farmers in Ntalale does possess the characteristics of the peasantry as postulated by Shanin (1976). However a lot is obscured by fitting heterogeneous households within a singular paradigm. Foucault as discussed by Spivak (1998) raises concerns of power as discourse creating a system of statements within which the world can be known. In so doing the peasant class remains the subaltern (of low rank) thereby provisioning an allegory of its displacement and its inescapable demise. The 'peculiar' case of Ntalale village as has been referred to in the paper, proves that the penetration of capital within the community has not been tantamount to depeasantisation but has created opportunities for the survival of the peasantry in a macroeconomic environment of industrial collapse, market distortions and recurrent droughts.

Discursive productions of knowledge on the peasantry perpetrate the notions of the peasantry as a class exploited from without, however in this paper the argument is that exploitation of resources (labour, land, capital e.t.c) is also internal, that is 'peasant exploiting peasant'. In the harsh economic environment of the past decade peasant households have had to grab at different income strategies to maintain their livelihoods and this has involved entrepreneurship involving manipulation of prices, distortion of wages and salaries. In essence the peasant households with opportunity or monopoly over certain goods and services used this to their comparative advantage thereby increasing their accumulation rates and enhancing the differentiation process in the village.

Differentiated capacities lay in the ability to forge political, social and economic connections. For example some peasant households increased their accumulation rates through political connections, this enabled them access to relief aid, access to agricultural inputs and markets. This reiterates Bernstein's (2001: 31) assertion that much is masked by characterizing social formations in the global south today as peasant societies, or contemporary classes of petty commodity producing small farmers as peasants. The peasantry is not a torpid phenomena, it is a dynamic process which is continuously evolving and adjusting to different circumstances like globalization, dynamic market systems as well as redefinition of social relations within any contemporary society.

The penetration of the capitalist system within Ntalale in the past decade has not dispossessed the peasantry from their land or divorced it entirely from the means of production this is attributed to the land tenure in the area. Land is customarily owned meaning that individuals cannot sell the land, however in a climate which is inclined towards accumulation, some peasant households have been able to make a profit from the land through informal land rentals. The connection to the farm persists even as there is a decline in farm

production and unit area of land cultivated in the area. The logical explanation to this trend according to most respondents is that, embracing new opportunities of survival has enabled the peasant households to maintain their existence within their own familiar territory. The farm is part of the cultural rubric fibres that symbolizes the ethical beliefs and values of the peasant household farmers in Ntalale. The farm defines their existence therefore even as the sun burns red hot they continue to toil on the lands of their forefathers. Existence of other alternative incomes has ensured that they are not displaced from their cultural heritage.

Field findings reveal that accumulation is directly proportional to differentiation because accumulation rates are not homogenous and also not all households had the opportunity to accumulate in the past decade. The unproportional accumulation rates have resulted in a clear demarcation of the wealthy and the poor households, the rich are rich and the poor are poor. Diversification into different livelihood strategies has not eroded the importance of agriculture in the rural economy of Ntalale, all households still practice farming on different scales what has changed is that income derived from the activity is not enough to subsist upon given the economic and climatic challenges. This finding accentuates Yaro's (2006: 1) argument that 'de-agrarianisation is a process embedded in social change, bearing in mind the reversibility between farm and nonfarm livelihood strategies used by different households'. The case of Ntalale demystifies the notion that penetration of capital within the peasantry and the family farm would be the inevitable demise of the peasant class. The peasantry is still alive and will still live to see yet another day, proving that not all crisis is bad.

APPENDICES Questionnaire

Confidential

RESTRUCTURING OF THE PEASANT CLASS IN NTALALE VILLAGE (ZIMBABWE)

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS – GWANDA

This research interview seeks to investigate how the economic decline in Zimbabwe in the last decade has restructured the peasant class and changed their livelihood strategies. Coping strategies employed by different households shall be investigated as well as the subsequent results of these strategies on farming activities. Your participation in the interview is humbly requested and please note issues of confidentiality shall be observed.

Date of interview

District/ward

Village

Respondent code

Section A

Respondent and general household information

- ☐ Gender of interviewee
- ☐ Age of Interviewee
- ☐ Marital status
- ☐ Employment status
- ☐ Is respondent household head
- ☐ If not relationship to household head, determine whereabouts of household head
- ☐ Gender of household head

2) Household composition

	Male	Female
No of members aged less than 16		
No of members aged < than 16		
No of members aged above 65		
No of members working on farm full time		
No of members working off farm part time		
No of members who have migrated to city or outside country between years 2000-2010		
No of those who migrated but have returned		

Comments

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Subsequent questions for the above

- ✚ How did the economic downturn affect your livelihood?
- ✚ What were the immediate coping strategies with this time?
- ✚ Have these coping strategies been maintained?
- ✚ How have these strategies changed your economic and social positioning?

SECTION B

3) Land size being utilized- for the past 10 years

ow nership	total land-ha			rented land-ha			culti- vated land- ha			fallow land-ha			oth- ers		
Year	0	5	10	0	5	10	0	5	10	0	5	10	0	5	10
owned															
rented in															
rented out															
sold/bo ught															

Comments

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Subsequent questions

- What is the explanation to the increase/decrease in land holding, increase/ decrease in cultivated land, increase/decrease in fallow land?
- How important is agriculture in the household, now and before the economic downturn?
- If given more land and inputs would the household increase their farm productivity?
- What other reasons have contributed to the decrease in farm production?

4) Livestock ownership

Livestock	Number			Reason for change
Year	0	5	10	1
Oxen				
Cows				
Donkeys				
Goats				
Chicken				
Other				

Comments

[illegible]

Subsequent questions

- How important is livestock rearing in the household compared to farming?
- Has the increase/decrease in farmland changed the status of the household in the community?

5) Crops grown (2000-2010)

crop	Grown every farming season	Grown for food/cash	Unit area planted in hectares	In-crease/decrease in farm size

Comment

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Subsequent question

- ✚ What is the explanation for the increase/decrease in unit area of crop planted over the years?
- ✚ If there is increase in crops grown for cash establish were food is obtained?

6) Household income

Comments

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Remember to thank the respondent and don't make any false promises under false pretence 😊

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