

EARLY CAREER WRITING WORKSHOP 2021

Keynote Lecture: 'Approaching Land Reform in South Africa'

Professor William Beinart, University of Oxford

Chair: Professor Martin Hipondoka, University of Namibia

Discussant: Mr Phaniel Kaapama, University of Namibia

Wednesday 30 June 2021, 18.00–19.30 (Southern African Time)

Register at:

https://unibas.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_d_OOZSPCS2GS24dW44dvTg

How should land reform be handled in the post-apartheid era? Professor Beinart will discuss what is happening on the ground in South Africa, and suggest how this research should inform policy. He will also reference the history of land reform in Zimbabwe. Phaniel Kapaama will draw out comparisons with the Namibian situation.

The lecture will be chaired by Professor Martin Hipondoka, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Geography, History, Environmental Studies and Tourism Management, University of Namibia.

The speaker

William Beinart is emeritus Professor, St Antony's College, University of Oxford and formerly Director of the African Studies Centre. His publications include *The Rise of Conservation in South Africa* (2003), *Environment and Empire* (2007) with Lotte Hughes; *Prickly Pear* (2011) with Luvuyo Wotshela, *African Local Knowledge & Livestock Health* (2013) with Karen Brown, *Rights to Land* with Peter Delius and Michelle Hay, and *The Scientific Imagination in South Africa* (2021) with Saul Dubow. A co-edited book on *Land, Law and Chiefs* has recently been published by Wits University Press.

The discussant

Phaniel Kaapama lectures in Politics, Governance and Development Studies in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies at the University of Namibia, where until recently he had the privilege of serving as Head of Department. His primary areas of research and professional interest are development theory and practice, with particular focus on restorative justice and land rights in post(neo)colonial African settings. He served as Deputy

Chairperson of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Ancestral Land Rights, Claims and Restitution, whose report was released in early 2021, and was a member of the Namibian team engaged in bilateral negotiations with the Federal Republic of Germany on the 1904 Herero and Nama Genocide, Apology and Reparation (2016–2021).

The lecture

This paper offers a pragmatic approach to land reform that prioritises production and rural livelihoods, as well as facilitating deracialisation with gradual redistribution. The speaker will analyse recent changes both in large-scale commercial agriculture and smallholder production in South Africa, in order to argue that a fast track approach focused on smallholders would likely have a significant impact on reducing production and broader economic growth. There are pockets of smallholder dynamism and the state should work more effectively with these.

Evidence also points to successful partnerships between commodity groups, commercial farmers, state and smallholders. These are a particularly promising route, with the emphasis on projects rather than percentages of land transferred. Agricultural production, as well as the employment and income that is promised from land reform, requires investment, knowledge transfers and intensification. Property rights and certainty are also significant, and expropriation without compensation would be likely to militate against satisfactory outcomes. There is already a good deal of land available in South Africa, land acquisition budgets have not always been fully spent, small additional budgetary allocations could provide significant new areas, and land itself is not the major cost of land reform.

Some comparisons will be made with Zimbabwe, where a technocratic land reform up to 1997, transferring nearly 30 per cent of commercial farms, was relatively successful. Subsequent fast track has had major costs, even though the production of maize (in the best years) and tobacco has now returned to levels in the 1990s.

A central element of this approach is also that provision of secure land and housing in urban and peri-urban areas is a priority in land reform. Rural and urban contexts should be considered within the same field of analysis. The major movement of people is still to towns and cities and the major demand for land is there. Progress on all of these fronts will help to leverage private sector finance, knowledge and support, but will also require increased expenditure, organisation and capacity on the part of the state.

This public lecture is part of the Early Career Writing Workshop, a partnership of the University of Namibia, the *Journal of Southern African Studies* and the Centre of African Studies, University of Basel. Additional funding is provided by the British Academy's Writing Workshops Programme, supported under the UK Government's Global Challenges Research Fund, and the Mopane Trust.

All are welcome to attend. Register now by going to:

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