



Land Access and Participatory Territorial Development

Land and Territory Research Paper No. 1

Overcoming the impasse in redistributive land reform – towards a territorial approach

A Research Paper for DFID
Central Research Department
(Project R8736)

December 2005

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Abstract

This paper was developed as an early working paper elaborating a problem statement of the challenges to land reform as a means of poverty reduction in land unequal countries, as a first stage in undertaking a research project examining the interrelationships between policies and programmes for land access and emerging territorial approaches to rural development in land unequal countries. The paper examines the cases of South Africa and Brazil, considers briefly the place of Territorial Development as an emerging approach to rural development, and concludes by considering the linkages between land access and territorial development.

Disclaimer

This paper is an output from a project funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for the benefit of developing countries. The views expressed are not necessarily those of DFID.

Overcoming the impasse in redistributive land reform – towards a territorial approach

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1. Challenges to land reform as a means of poverty reduction in land unequal countries

Land is a fundamental source of livelihoods for many of the poor and a basis for wealth creation and economic development. Egalitarian land distribution safeguards against poverty and food insecurity, and provides a basis for access to and investment in livelihood opportunities by the poor in small scale farming and other activities. (DFID 2003, Deininger / World Bank 2003). Moreover there is evidence that when ownership of land is inequitable, economic growth delivers less benefit for the rural poor, in terms of incomes, employment and direct access to the fruits of the land. In the formerly white-settler dominated countries of Southern Africa and throughout Latin America, inequitable land distribution is widely recognised as both a cause, and a product of continuing poverty.

Land reform has been actively pursued by governments in both of these regions, and improving land access of the poor is a significant feature of government programmes in South Africa since the mid 1990s and in Brazil since the mid 1980s. In practice, historically, results have been mixed and anticipated transformations in agrarian structure in favour of small farmers have been achieved. The achievements of land reforms in terms of new land access and related poverty reduction in South Africa and Brazil, while significant, particularly in Brazil's case (Leite et al 2004, Schmidt et al 1998), fall far short of both official targets and social demand. The prospects for continued progress and economic impacts (in terms of agricultural livelihoods, employment, and growth) are uncertain, despite sustained political and social demands in civil society, together with ongoing commitments to improved land access as a means of social inclusion of the poor and of black economic empowerment by the Brazilian and South African governments respectively. In a post liberalisation context, the capacity and resources of the state to deliver land reforms are limited, and agricultural policies have become more oriented towards trade in regional and global markets (Ghimire 1999).

In each country, and in their wider regions, rural and urban landlessness, and in particular the under-employment of landless agricultural workers is a significant source of income poverty, social exclusion and vulnerability to food insecurity. Moreover, unequal land distribution constrains local economic development and social mobility, and is strongly associated with social and political conflict in rural areas. Since the mid 1990's, land and agrarian reform has been a central feature of the

landscape of rural development (and as such, significant in the politics of national development in both South Africa and Brazil) and each government has introduced substantial land reform programmes.

In 1994, South Africa's democratically elected government adopted a land reform programme in order to address the highly unequal patterns of land ownership and widespread rural poverty resulting from colonial land alienation and decades of apartheid rule. The programme comprised three elements, land redistribution, land restitution, and tenure reform. However, despite the political demands for land redistribution, much of South Africa's black population having been alienated from the land for generations, possess few farming skills and aspirations, and the primary demand has been for jobs. Government economic policy has been unwilling to disturb an increasingly fragile, but important white commercial farm sector, and less than 1% of the total state budget in recent years has been devoted to the land reform programmes. At independence, Government hoped to redistribute 30% of agricultural land to blacks in a five-year period; in practice 2.9 % (2,493,567 hectares) (PLAAS August 2004) has been transferred in 10 years. Government now plans to transfer 30% of the land through various means by 2015.

In Brazil, sustained efforts to achieve land access for the landless poor began in the mid-1990s under the Cardoso government, which transferred almost 20 million hectares to hundreds of thousands of families. This represents 8% of the land area controlled by large landowners, and succeeded in increasing the proportion of farm land in the family sector by 5% - from 37% to 43% of the national arable area (de Viegas 2003).

Efforts by the Lula government to scale up and improve the programme were born in a climate of economic austerity and political reaction by rural landowners, leading initially to controversy and widespread rural conflict during 2003, and to continuing frustration amongst landless social movements. Although by the end of 2003 government reached agreement with them to collaborate in a new national agrarian reform programme, progress in subsequent years has been extremely limited.

Historically, a major weakness of redistributive land reforms, globally, has been their frequent failure to create conditions for sustainable farm and other enterprises managed by land reform communities, as a result of problems of integration with wider local social, economic and environmental planning. In both Brazil and South Africa, the planning of land reform has broadly neglected the need mechanisms to link and follow up land access and transfer programmes with programmes to deliver basic infrastructure, services, technical and productive support and market development (Lahiff et al 2004, MDA 2004 (a)). In responding to political demands, and to opportunities to acquire and redistribute land, land reforms have rarely been undertaken on a basis of understanding of their potential impacts and linkages in relation to the of local and regional economic dynamics, in terms of employment, agricultural outputs and markets, and overall local economic development. While land access in itself is likely to be seen as positive by the beneficiaries, and favourable for food and broader social security, the local economic development impacts may be positive, but also neutral or if new settlements are inadequately supported and less successful than landlord estates or large commercial farms, even negative in terms of creation of sustained market opportunities, employment creation, and income

generation. The lack of integration of land reforms with effective development strategies reflects failures in the institutional capacity of the state to facilitate sectoral coordination.

Moreover, the perspectives of land reform beneficiaries themselves, and those of the civil society organisations involved in advocating for and delivering land reforms have also been neglected by programme planning, although participation by these actors can potentially facilitate the effective integration of land access with rural development planning and local economic development strategy. These dimensions, however, are critical to the longer term sustainability and success of land reforms, the longer term benefits they offer, and the appropriateness of the strategies, and specific programmes and methods in different local contexts.

In both Brazil and South Africa the dominant focus of agricultural development has been the established commercial sector. In Brazil, different Ministries are charged with supporting family farming and large scale agri-business, with the latter, the Ministry of Agriculture commanding the research and extension budgets. In South Africa, the Department of Agriculture, although falling within the same Ministry as the Department of Land Affairs, is oriented almost exclusively towards the needs of large scale commercial farmers.

While the two governments, have been concerned to protect and support their commercial sectors, and foreign exchange earners and implicit political allies, demands for land reform have arisen primarily from concern with redistributive rural social justice, allied to socialist political objectives, emerging from earlier struggles against dictatorship, or in South Africa's case, apartheid. As a result, during the 1990s, debates about land reform concentrated primarily on questions of quantity – the scale and pace of land transfers – rather than the quality and sustainability of land access projects.

Allied to this was a concern with mechanisms of land transfer – basically a question of how pro-active the state should be in intervening to acquire land for redistribution. As demands by civil society and social movements to increase scale and pace of land reforms in both countries faced ongoing political contestation of land reforms by landowners and rural business classes, international development agencies, notably the World Bank, sought less controversial ways of enabling land transfers. Experiments with “market-based” or “market-assisted” solutions to the problem of land transfers (Binswanger 1996, 1999; Binswanger and Deininger 1996, 1999; Deininger 1999) found favour with governments in both countries. These, however have led to ideological controversy over the relative roles of the state and the market in bringing about more equitable land access (Borras 2003, Reidegger et al 2001,). Despite the political advantages and apparent efficiency gains of these programmes which provide packages of grant / credit packages for land purchase, productive development and new settlements to individuals or groups on a demand led basis (the recipe developed by the World Bank in Brazil and taken up to a degree in South Africa's LRAD programme), there have been difficulties in practice in linking market-based land access approaches to real opportunities for the poor.

In practice, market based and “demand led” land access programmes such as LRAD in South Africa and *Credito Fundiario* in Brazil seek to create new opportunities for

small farmers through targeting towards those best able to use land efficiently, but tend to favour those who already have some existing asset base, and with capacity to negotiate entry to the schemes. For the poor in South Africa a number of structural barriers to land access by the poor in South Africa have been identified (Zimmerman 2000) including limitations in labour and capital resources for farming, difficulties in coping with agricultural risk, and disinclination to move the distances demanded). Land purchase schemes in Brazil have succeeded in meeting the needs of some groups whose members already have some land or other employment opportunities, but have also been found to increase risk of indebtedness and failure amongst the poor, while subject to political manipulation by landowners and local elites (Sauer 2003), particularly under adverse climatic and market conditions in the semi-arid Northeast. By themselves, these market-based programmes are likely to have limited impacts on poverty and the overall distribution of land rights, and, as with conventional land transfers by the state, supplementary programmes are likely to be needed to create new agrarian opportunities for the landless poor on any significant scale.

Alongside these concerns with impact and sustainability of land reforms, governments and civil society have begun to focus on a broader range of land reform related issues in recent years.

In South Africa, given the limited opportunities for successful smallholder agriculture, especially the poor, it can be argued that it is the more politically driven Land Restitution programme aiming to restore historically alienated land rights to blacks which has greater potential in the longer run to create new economic opportunity, if complemented by programmes to develop more inclusive forms of social ownership of agrarian enterprise. Recent evaluation studies of South Africa's land reform and restitution programmes found that although the majority of urban land restitution claims have now been settled, a minority of rural claims are highly significant in terms of land areas and numbers of people involved, with a potentially significant impact on the transformation of the countryside (Hall 2004). However the programme faces frequent unwillingness of commercial farmers to relinquish land, a lack of post settlement support to claimants, bureaucratic delivery and difficulties in integrating policy objectives of historical justice and land based economic development.

In Brazil, there is growing recognition of the need to factor in to land reform programmes the historical land and resource claims of indigenous and afro-descendent groups as well as the rights of neglected minorities, such as riverine and coastal peoples, and livestock keepers, whose less traditional resource utilisation practices are under threat. In addition to the restitution of historically alienated land rights there is also a recognised need in both countries to strengthen the tenure security of these and other vulnerable groups, such as tenant farmers, securing the existing rights which though ongoing processes of expropriation, fuel future demands for land reform. Demands to secure and regularise tenure, lead, in turn to a renewed focus on the need for more effective, appropriate and transparent systems of rural land administration. Experiences of community based resource utilisation, public concerns with environmental sustainability and the recognition that poor people's livelihoods are rarely purely agricultural in character, have led land reform movements and projects to engage in more holistic strategies, involving for instance, forest conservation, rural tourism, agro-processing and marketing schemes, and emphasising education.

In various ways, the singular concern with land access, and land transfers in favour of the poor, is giving way to broader concerns about how to secure social benefits from land use and shape the character of development to meet social need on a broader territorial scale. Moreover, governments in Latin America are beginning to frame responses to these problems in terms of a territorial development approach. In South Africa, although the term “territory” is not widely used, there has been a marked concern with the possibilities of more equitable social economic development, which has required a reorganisation of municipal boundaries, and efforts to strengthen a more integrated spatial and participatory approaches dimension in development planning. Although land reform has so far been poorly integrated into these endeavours, there is now interest in taking a more coherent area based approach to land issues.

Below we explain and explore the notion of territorial development which has come to the fore particularly in debates about rural development in Latin America. We go on to ask what opportunities it may offer for renewal of agrarian reform programmes in the 21st century, and how in turn, improved land access and agrarian reform for the poor might enhance the quality of development at a concrete, territorial scale, and to explore this in practice through case studies in each country.

2. Territorial Development as an emerging approach to rural development

Territorial Development is an evolving and innovative approach to rural development and poverty reduction, based around the existence and encouragement of shared territorial identity amongst different stakeholders and social groupings living within specific but not necessarily precisely bounded geographical areas. It focuses on strengthening local economies through fostering dynamic market development by drawing on the comparative advantages, wider linkages, and distinctive productive, historical, cultural and environmental features of regions, through socially inclusive and participatory planning strategies involving civil society, private and public stakeholders.

So far, Territorial Development as a perspective has developed primarily in Europe and in Latin America. It has developed in part from more established and more widely practised Local Economic Development (LED) approaches, but involves a broader focus on rural areas, together with urban settlements, markets and industrialised zones. As such, Territorial Development focuses on the dynamic nature of urban-rural interactions and requires a holistic, cross sectoral approach to local planning and an understanding of the differential geographical and historical trajectories of specific territories which have shaped their identities and economic characteristics. In relation to rural-urban development TD approaches have assimilated, and implicitly include many of the principles, insights and developments of the Livelihoods Approach. Notably TD perspectives recognise the centrality of capital assets – most conspicuously the mutually reinforcing roles of social capital and productive assets in shaping livelihood and market opportunities – and the fact that rural people’s livelihood strategies are complex, and frequently to a large extent non-agricultural in nature. Territorial approaches may help to set the stage, in practice, for more

synergistic engagement by social movements with economic development issues, across sectoral boundaries, and in partnership with the state.

We suggest in this paper that TD in fact offers opportunities to concretise, spatially, a livelihoods approach in practice – and, that by applying this approach to land reform, more sustainable impacts in terms of economic opportunity and thereby, poverty reduction. By placing localised development in a dynamic wider market and policy / institutional context, TD is both people-centred and area-focused, offering the means, encapsulated in the notion of territories (considered as geographic or economic regions with a shared cultural identity and therefore some actual or potential development subject)¹. In common with SL approaches, TD has sought to stimulate responsive and participatory planning, civil-private-public civil partnerships, and build an enabling institutional environment in which livelihoods can prosper and accordingly, poverty can be reduced.

In addition, a territorial approach, built on an understanding of the spatial dynamics of markets and social networks can potentially assist in determining appropriate forms of investment in rural space, in view of the growing recognition of the significance of migration and urban livelihood opportunities for the hitherto “rural” poor, and thereby overcoming the contradictions posed by potentially e polarised development alternatives of investing in people and investing in places (Ellis and Harris 2004)².

In its practical applications to rural development in Europe and Latin America, TD has sought to enhance the roles of both civil society and the local private sector in development planning and implementation, refocusing the role of the state as enabler. Key ingredients are enhancing and creating space for dialogue, negotiation, consensus building and participatory planning amongst stakeholders, including strengthening voice of the poor, and reconfiguring institutional arrangements to link bottom up and top down planning

In the context of growing decentralisation and efforts to build the capacity of local government, territorial analysis has found that existing administrative units of local government are frequently too small and localised effectively to support socially inclusive development and thriving market opportunity. In Latin American countries particularly, a plethora of micro-municipalities - often configured around historical patterns of land ownership and political power, has enabled the capture of public development funding by clientelist local political elites, often closely associated with established remnant aristocracies and dominant business figures. Whereas decentralisation in Latin America, where successful, has to a degree enabled municipalities to direct social expenditure based on stronger local information and accountability, the creation of new sustainable economic opportunities requires an approach based on larger territorial units and the inclusion of rural towns and secondary cities in strategic planning (de Janvry 2003).

Consequently, territorial development initiatives seek and recommend institutional realignments at the meso level, and to enable more productive, democratic and

¹ We explore definitions and concepts of territory in detail below in Working Paper 2.

² This paper argues broadly, for facilitating migration by the poor by appropriate investments in urban areas and in mobility, rather than in enhanced opportunities in deprived rural area, based on improved empirical understanding of livelihood strategies.

responsive prioritisation of national public investment programmes, and in some cases to counterbalance or overcome the controlling power of individual politicians. In practice this has involved fostering links between established municipal development councils, promoting the role of cross-municipal consortia, civil society and business networks, rural unions and social movements based on wider constituencies.

3. Land Access and Territorial Development

Assessing the prospects for agrarian reform post market-liberalisation, Herring (2000) advocates re-conceptualisation of the traditional agrarian reform project which "...presents and apparent political impossibility. Land confers power in agrarian systems; reform...must then work through a system of power to overthrow its base". Consequently, reform of the state is needed, yet agrarian reform itself is required in order to enable the development of more broadly based rural power. To achieve change "...pro poor reform...must recognise then potential of larger coalitions of the poor" including elements of "environmental integrity and regeneration, women's rights, human rights cultural survival and democratisation."

The political near impossibility of conventional agrarian reform programmes may do much to explain the lack of progress in Brazil and South Africa's land reforms. The difficulties of achieving horizontal coordination between state programmes, and democratically accountable decision making by local government, marginalising land reform settlements from economic development, where arguably they should be at its centre, and fully integrated with it. Until recently, little had changed in their conceptualisation and centralised execution by the state, but the land reform movements in Brazil and elsewhere have gradually come to embrace broader objectives. In practice, the demands emanating from, and the alliances forged by civil society in addressing the needs of the poor in rural development have begun to shift the terrain of strategy and debate. Civil society is fundamental to democratic endeavours in general and territorial development is no exception. Just as governments face the need to coordinate better their sectoral programmes and make national policies meaningful locally through effective decentralisation, social movements find it necessary to network across areas and regions so as to create broader alliances and linkages between land and wider struggles, so as to facilitate meaningful participation and achieve more tangible impacts. In this respect, the territorial dimension provides, potentially, an arena in which the rural development concerns and strategies of state and civil society might effectively be combined.

The related problems of poor inter-sectoral coordination and weak responsiveness to grass roots concerns and local priorities have provided a principle impulse behind territorial initiatives in Brazil, which are linked explicitly to the renewal of agrarian reform and development programme. At bottom, these are the same core problems which South Africa has sought to address in its Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme.

The Brazilian Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA) has recently initiated efforts to reconfigure rural state institutions and democratise planning through a territorial development approach, and adopted a new more diversified and more locally responsive 2nd National Agrarian Reform Programme (MDA 2004 (b)) in which the

land reform social movements have agreed to work in broad partnership with progressive elements of the state.

Through these programmes, government promotes partnerships between government programmes and organised civil society on an area by area basis, (following broadly accepted notions of territory (in terms of social, economic and environmental identities, rather than micro – municipal boundaries) to tackle rural development needs, including those of land reform, in more systematic and democratic ways, using different programme and instruments depending on local conditions and opportunities. These initiatives respond implicitly to Herring's challenge for the creation of broader alliances so as to bring about the transformation in power relations necessary to renew the land reform agenda and enable its greater impact.

In Brazil, the Lula government which took office in January 2003 continues to see land access as the fundamental step in enabling production by and extending services to the rural poor, citing agrarian reform as a critical element of policy to correct social inequality. However, for poverty reduction to be effective right across national territory, considering the polarisation of patterns growth between urban and rural areas, and the deepening poverty of many rural areas, government proposes taking a territorial approach needs to be taken to rural development. Accordingly, land reform needs to be considered within an integrative territorial vision, in which success is measured not only in terms of numbers of families settled, but rather through their contribution to the development of the regions in which they are located, in terms of sustained improvement in indicators of quality of life, and the overall contribution which land reform areas make at the territorial level (NEAD 2003): "Land access needs to be allied to investment policy and provision of services to provide the conditions for family farming to promote and assure sustainable territorial development".

Concerns with facilitating effective sectoral coordination, with securing economic impacts, with responding to diversity and achieving social inclusiveness and environmental sustainability are now recognised explicitly in Brazil's National Agrarian Reform Programme. Territorial development is one of the key strategies set out by Brazil to address these issues and achieve broader impacts from land reform

At present, although family farms constitute 90% of farming enterprise in Brazil, and deliver about 40% of agricultural production (over 50% of basic food products), only 20% of family farmers are well integrated into the market. 40% are considered to be poorly integrated, and the remaining 40% generate no cash income. Despite the gains of land reform to date in Brazil, as elsewhere in Latin America, access to land by the poor often remains extremely limited, and the poor are extremely poorly integrated into markets. As de Janvry, one of the principal economic analysts of land reform and land access in Latin America, remarks to tackle poverty requires, amongst other things, gains in productivity such as shifts to high value added crops, subcontracts with supermarkets, and complementary off-farm sources of income, which can only be achieved through a cross-sectoral approach and the promotion of 'the totality of activities in a particular region' (de Janvry 2003). However, the results, if a territorial approach is taken to the development support of these family farm enterprises are potentially dynamic and far reaching.

In South Africa the group based nature of large rural land restitution claims, particularly in Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal, highlights the need for a more integrated territorial approach reconciling the needs of economic development, employment creation and the social benefits which flow from control of land resources by the original, broader community. As Hall (2004) remarks in assessing South Africa's land restitution programme: "Restitution, as a rights based programme, has the potential to serve as a lever for comprehensive area - wide solutions to multiple land needs ". A key problem, in fact is that needs and demands for land in any one area in South Africa are diverse, and not confined to the clients of any one programme.

The difficulties of achieving successful cross-sectoral integration have been recognised in general terms in South Africa, in evaluations of the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme (ISRDP) launched in 1997 (Everatt 2004, IDT 2004) . Explicit proposals to integrate land reform within this wider process have not as yet been made, although in launching a decentralised programme of local economic development government had clearly hoped that land reform should provide a principal basis for local economic development in rural areas (RSA 1998). Nevertheless, civil society groupings have begun to question the lack of significant economic impact of land distribution programmes so far, and to how it may be possible to set about solving problems of land access and land base livelihoods more systematically by taking a more focussed area based approach (Nkuzi 2003) instead of relying on national policies and programmes which reach down the grass roots in a cohesive way.

4. Conclusion

This paper has sought to provide a working statement of the problems confronting progress with redistributive land reform in South Africa and Brazil. Other papers in this series will examine in more depth ideas of and approaches to territorial development, what these have in common with other decentralised development approaches and make a broad assessment of the evolution of policies and programmes for territorial and integrated area based development in Brazil and South Africa respectively. This work provides background to a series of case studies in each country intended to assess empirically the interactions between land access and land reform interventions with decentralised territorial planning initiatives, and for the subsequent development of policy recommendations in discussion with research partners and stakeholders in the research in each country. The findings will be detailed in subsequent papers.

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