

Land Resettlement and Elite Monopoly in Peri-urban Harare: The Colonial Legacy of Land Ownership in Post-colonial Zimbabwe, 2000-2019

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Abstract

The article argues that the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) in Zimbabwe was characterised by stratification which alienated the poor and the marginalised in Harare from accessing prime peri-urban land. It uses the case of peri-urban Harare to unpack dynamics around allocation of farmland during the post-colonial FTLRP since 2000. The article argues that class-based land segregation in the post-colonial era replaced racially based land segregation in colonial Zimbabwe. The article posits that instead of land being distributed to the deserving poor peasants, farmers and the vulnerable, land barons emerged from the ruling elite, business tycoons and war veterans who allocated to themselves land and multiple farms in an approach that typified the colonial land distribution process. The article further argues that land re-distribution must be examined because the post-Third Chimurenga land redistribution methodologies exhibited both elite monopoly over peri-urban urban centres and other renowned centres of mineral production and the absence of institutional regulatory mechanisms on the politically powerful. It adopts an empirical analysis of peri-urban land redistribution modalities with particular bias on spotting elite beneficiaries and the consequent emergence of land barons. The central argument is that in order to put Zimbabwe's economy back on track and move towards a developmental approach, objective conditions for land reform are necessary as opposed to a political approach to land reform. The article uses qualitative methods of data collection and employs historical analysis of both secondary and primary documents relating to land issues in Harare as well as field observations.

Keywords: Third Chimurenga, Fast-Track Land Reform, peri-urban, colonial legacy, land reform, elite monopoly, Mugabe, resettlement, legacy