

Culture, politics and material landscaping as strategies of belonging: the case of ex-farm workers of foreign origin in Bushu communal areas, Zimbabwe

Patience Chadambuka & Kirk Helliker

Abstract

This article examines the movement of former farm workers of foreign origin (mainly from Malawi, and a few from Mozambique) into the Bushu communal areas of Shamva District in Mashonaland Central Province in Zimbabwe subsequent to the disruptions caused by the state's Fast Track Land Reform Programme beginning in the year 2000. It focuses more specifically on the project of belonging pursued by these ex-workers and their families in Bushu and the various non-economic strategies adopted in constructing this project. This project involves potentially transitioning from their historical status as farm people, people of foreign origin and cultural-ethnic strangers to becoming authentic autochthonous communal villagers. While these ex-farm labourers seek to actively immerse themselves in the milieu of Bushu, they also maintain – to some extent – a separate cultural identity, thereby developing their own unique version of communal-area belonging.

Keywords: Zimbabwe, belonging, Bushu, ex-labourers, fast-track land reform