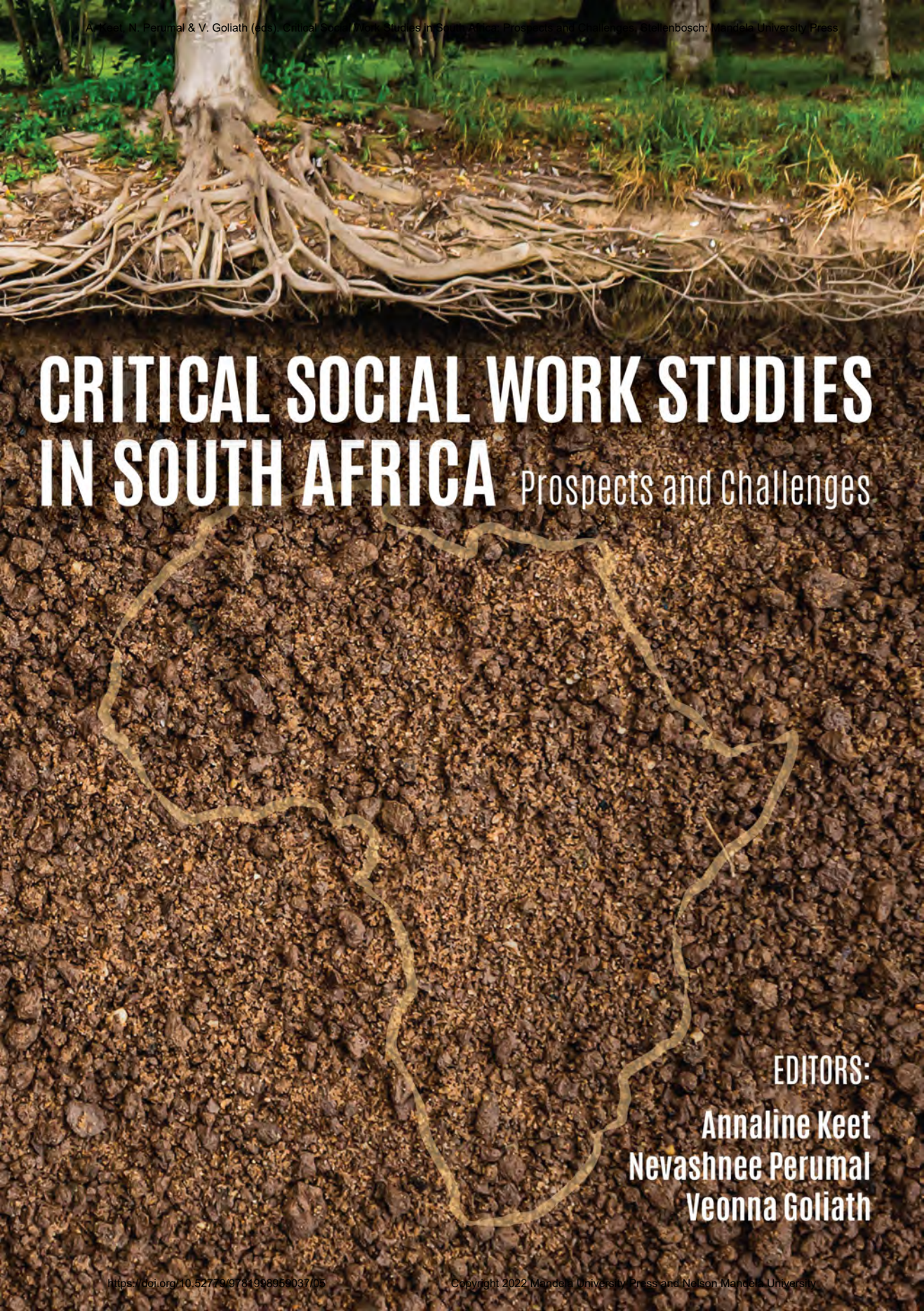


The background of the cover is a photograph of a forest floor. In the upper half, the thick, gnarled roots of a large tree spread out across the ground. Below the roots, the soil is dark and textured, with a yellowish-brown outline of the map of South Africa superimposed on it. The title text is overlaid on the upper part of the image.

CRITICAL SOCIAL WORK STUDIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Prospects and Challenges

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THE RACIALLY-BASED LAND DISTRIBUTION AND OWNERSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICA

A challenging discourse for social work

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ABSTRACT

The call to question racially-based land ownership, land expropriation without compensation and racial injustice has become significant in post-apartheid South Africa. Social workers are challenged to respond and contribute to the new discourse on racially-skewed land ownership. This conceptual chapter examines contestations of racially-based land ownership in South African society – its past, present and future. It provides a dialectical-historical perspective on land, race, socio-political and socio-economic inequalities, which in turn connects to the social dynamics with which social workers deal with the micro-, meso- and macro-level of intervention. Complex issues regarding racially-based land ownership for social work practice are teased out. Finally, the chapter proposes the key roles social workers can play in participating in land ownership issues from within a social justice approach.

KEYWORDS

land, ownership, redistribution, social justice, social work

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines contestations of racially-based land ownership in South African society – its past, present and future. The chapter seeks to critically explore the historical events and socio-political contexts of land ownership in relation to race, as well as socio-economic inequalities, which in turn connect to the social dynamics with which social workers deal with the micro-, meso- and macro-level of intervention in social work practice. In the complex and highly racialised historical context of South Africa, these critical dynamics help to analyse the structural forces that have sought to shape the lives of South Africans, and of the country's institutions, policies, the social work profession and social control, and have shaped land ownership and policies and the influence of these on the social work profession. Historical

materialism debates and critical theory provide useful ontological perspectives to facilitate a critical understanding of how political factors have influenced these debates, how political interests have sought to exploit ethnic and racial contexts, and their role in social inequality and the implications for social work. The challenges for a social work practice that has sometimes been split along racial and political lines, its professionalisation and its allegiance to state priorities will be explored. The author will address complex challenges related to racially-based land ownership in post-apartheid social work practice and in relation to historical injustice. The complex challenges highlighted in this chapter resonate with the criticism of South Africa's post-apartheid land ownership debates, often without understanding the role of policies and the historical context that progressively find voice in social protests, such as land grabs. Therefore, this chapter aims to present historical eras in which land was dispossessed and provide an analysis on how social work as a profession was displaced from land ownership debates. The chapter also locates social workers' role within land distribution and land ownership using a social justice approach.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF RACIALLY-BASED LAND OWNERSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICA

In order to provide a comprehensive context of racially-based ownership in South Africa, analysis of the concept of 'blackness' and its meaning and impact on theories of race and racism is vital. Therefore, the first segment of the section gives an overview on the etymology of both concepts, 'blackness' and 'race'. The concept of blackness is broad and is considered one of the most complex concepts to analyse. The concept of blackness has been used in theories of race for both the external and internal characteristics of the so-called "black group" (Hrabovský, 2013). Black skin was regarded as 'damned' and as one of the reasons for enslavement since the launch of the slave trade in 1441. In this analysis, blackness is considered as a long-lasting prejudice against and humiliation of human beings on the basis of their external appearance. Furthermore, analysing the concept of blackness requires a clear defining methodology of the word 'race' to distinguish between: the term of race – the origin of the term itself, e.g. the term is derived from *nazza* which stands for 'kin', 'breed', 'origin' and 'mankind'; the concept (notion) of race – derived from the Greek *νοήμα* (*noéma*) as a certain perception, idea, comprehension, and understanding; and finally, theories of race – a specific and various use of the concept of race in different theories (Hrabovský, 2013).

Regarding the etymology of race, Ranwedzi H Nengwekhulu (1986) and Fredrickson (2005) point out that the concept of race is based on social construction and should be viewed as a complex process. Hrabovský, 2013 lists three meanings of the word race:

1. a fast run (*ras*) in the Old English of the 14th and 15th centuries;
2. a family, a class (*razza, raze, raggia*) in mediaeval Italian, taking over from the Latin *radia, radiare* and
3. a root (radix), which was adopted in the Old French as *rais, radiz*.

Various meanings of the race concept are presented from this short analysis. The concept is unclear from the etymological point of view and is marked by several explanations and an ambiguous origin. However, blackness is still the main 'criterion' of a 'lower' racial origin.

The second section of the chapter provides a historical overview of racially-based land ownership. Since the advent of democracy in 1994, issues at the heart of the racially-based land question in South Africa have been how to reverse this historical phenomenon and how a large-scale redistribution of land can contribute to the transformation of the economy and the reduction of poverty, both rural and urban (Ntsebeza & Hall, 2007). However, the focus of land redistribution must be poverty eradication as mainstream in national policies and actions in accordance with the internationally agreed development goals forming part of the broad United Nations Development Agenda such as the Sustainable Development Goals 2030. Therefore, focusing on poverty eradication through land distribution is vital as a transformative agenda of reversing the injustices of colonial mechanics. Hall and Kepe (2017) allude to the fact that, after centuries of colonial rule and decades of apartheid rule, democratic South Africa set out to redistribute rights to the land to remedy past racial injustice and lay the basis for more equitable development.

Land ownership in South Africa is deeply connected with the country's historical political contexts and developments at various stages of its history through conflicts and progressions, and these historical conflicts have determined the context of racially-based land ownership. Smith (2014) cites Bundy (1992), Lester (1996) and Worden (2008), who have pointed out that the various South African socio-political phases may be described on the basis of historiography: the pre-colonial era and colonial conquest; industrialisation and the mining revolution of the 1870s to 1920s; the 1920s until 1948; the apartheid era; 1985 to 1994 as an era of violent repression, resistance and change; and the post-apartheid era. Therefore, the racial-historical events that shaped legislation and land ownership in South Africa must also be looked at from within such a historical time frame. Significant historical events that shaped the context of land ownership in South Africa will be presented in terms of three different time phases (past, present and future).

Past: 1652 to 1948

South Africa has a sad history of land dispossession, with land deprivation that started shortly after Jan van Riebeeck arrived at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652 to start a refreshment station for Dutch ships sailing between Europe and the East (Rugege, 2004). The first group of colonists – called ‘free burgers’ – were allowed to farm for their own profit by the Dutch authorities (Rugege, 2004). Clashes over land increased in intensity after the Khoikhoi and San were declared vermin by the Dutch authorities and systematically hunted down by armed burgers with orders to shoot on sight (Henkes, 2016). Many of the indigenous inhabitants were driven into the interior. Meanwhile, the arrival of groups of British settlers in the Eastern Cape intensified an already tense relationship between the European settlers and the Xhosa communities, culminating in a series of frontier wars (Lester, 1998) and thus began the erosion of imported class (and other). The first of these wars broke out in 1779, with another eight wars following over the next 100 years.

In Natal, the defeat of the Zulus at the battle of Blood River on 16 December 1838 against the Boers, and later against the British (after they had initially triumphed at the Battle of Isandlwana), saw the kingdom of Zululand dismembered and annexed by the White colonial authorities in 1879 (Redding, 2000). The Glen Grey Act of 1894, inspired by Cecil John Rhodes, was aimed at driving Black people off the land and into wage labour (Bouch, 1993). In introducing the Act, Rhodes had complained: “We do not teach them the dignity of labour, and they simply loaf about in sloth and laziness. They never go out and work. This is what we have failed to consider with reference to our native population” (Soudien, 1979:23). Through the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910, the new government formalised land ownership via the Natives’ Land Act of 1913, in terms of which White people received 93% of the land while Black people were given 7% (Modise & Mtshiselwa, 2013). This era was marked by the non-representation of Black South Africans in the formulation of policies or governing. Black South Africans were rendered landless and relegated to overcrowded communal areas, known as Bantustans. Under the 1913 Land Act, Black South Africans were prohibited from buying land, and the land that was reserved for Black people was not sufficient to sustain viable rural communities.

A number of laws were promulgated to bring about segregation and land deprivation. These included the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act No 52 of 1951, the National States Constitution Act 1922 (which allowed the government to move boundaries of homelands at will), the Black Prohibition of Interdicts Act No 64 of 1956 (which barred the victims of forced removals from petitioning the courts) and the Group Areas Act No 41 (forced physical separation and segregation between races by creating different residential areas for each race). Millions of Black people in rural and urban areas were forcibly removed in terms of these pieces of legislation. Thousands were

simply dumped in the veld, many kilometres from their places of work, or – as was the case with mainly Coloured people in the Western Cape – moved to tiny, box-shaped houses on the Cape Flats. Tsotsi (2000) describes colonial racism as the story of how Europeans defeated, robbed and ruled ‘blacks’ for the enrichment of ‘whites’. Massive structural inequalities were introduced in the form of slavery and the “reduction of the Khoikhoi to landless labourers” (Smith, 2014). During this historical era, which was marked by colonialism and imperialism, there was disruption and denigration of traditional forms of social relations, and the social work practice that grew from this context was characterised by paternalism and welfare policies that favoured White people as the welfare elite (Smith, 2014).

1950 to 1993

The Group Areas Act of 1950, described as the ‘second wave’ of evictions, was used by the then National Party government to forcibly remove Black, Coloured and Indian people from designated ‘White areas’. The aim of the Act was to provide for the establishment of group areas and for the control of the acquisition of immovable property and the occupation of land and premises. In 1966, the Group Areas Act 36 of 1966 was enacted as the final of the four Land Acts which complemented the Group Areas Act of 1950. The aim of the Act was to consolidate the law related to the establishment of group areas and to regulate the control of the acquisition of immovable property and the occupation of land and premises. It was estimated that between 1960 and 1983 approximately 3.5 million people were forcibly removed as a result of the Acts (Kloppers & Pienaar, 2014). After the unbanning of the African National Congress and the release of Nelson Mandela, the National Party government of FW de Klerk had to begin to effect measures to end the centuries of apartheid – a system supported by the Land Acts.

1994 to present

The end of apartheid on some statutes allowed equal rights for all South Africans, regardless of race. However, the country is struggling to correct the social inequalities and land ownership problems created by decades of apartheid. The Republic of South Africa Constitution Act 108 of 1996 makes the achievement of equality a foundational value of the Republic of South Africa (RSA), while Section 9 of the Constitution guarantees the right to equality. In addition, the Constitution includes provisions that consider the need for the state to actively advance equitable access to land (Section 25(5)), housing (Section 26), health care services, food, water and social assistance (Section 27), and education (Section 29). The National Development Plan 2030 (NDP) is a key policy initiative that sets out the government’s plans to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. However, opening of the land claims process aligned with the NDP complicates the process of reviving the rural economy aimed at eliminating poverty.

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Critical Social Work Studies in South Africa: Prospects and Challenges

The dispossession of most of the population's land by the colonial and apartheid-era governments constitutes one of the key drivers of persistent wealth inequality in South Africa. Section 25(5) of the RSA Constitution accordingly provides that the state must take legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to foster conditions that enable citizens to gain access to land on an equitable basis. The state must consider access to land and ownership as a fundamental indication of realising section 25(5). There have been policy changes and initiatives since 1997, after the introduction of the 'willing buyer, willing seller' concept in 1993. This principle has underpinned the practice of land redistribution in South Africa, in the absence of a new Expropriation Act and its use, and despite provisions to the contrary in the Constitution. The willing buyer, willing seller experiment in South Africa had its own success, but was slow and unable to effectively target the most needy. The White Paper on South African Land 1997 (Department of Land Affairs, 1997), which gave provision to the Municipal commonage 1997, provides poor households with access to municipal commonage land in which access to land has been redistributed, and the constitutional requirement of equitable access promoted (Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, 2013). The policy sets out four categories of intended beneficiaries. The category relevant to this chapter is Category 1: Households with no or very little access to land, even for subsistence production. The One Household, One Hectare Policy (Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, 2015) aims to provide small allotments for vegetable gardening for non-commercial purposes on state land. However, these efforts have not been successful and achievable as a huge number of Black people are still landless.

It is thus clear that special measures may be instituted in respect of land reform to ensure substantive equality in this context. Moreover, equitable land reform constitutes a critical component of radical socio-economic transformation, to the extent that it aims to achieve substantive equality in terms of both ownership patterns and land use practices. However, since 2012, South Africa has experienced an increase in protests, with the most common reasons for these related to urban land and housing (South African Human Rights Commission, 2018). The democratic era in South Africa has been marked by escalating protests since 2004 (Friedman, 2014). Protests related to land and housing have erupted in shack settlements and have been led by the squatters' movement. For example, Abahlali base Mjondolo occupied a piece of vacant state-owned land in Macassar Village near Somerset West, outside Cape Town, on 18 May 2009. The occupation was later ended by the city's anti-land invasion unit.

According to Harris (2002:5), social work in South Africa evolved within a neoliberal context after 1994, when a social work 'business' discourse emerged, as the culture of neoliberalism had "colonized the public sector as business thinking and practices crossed the public-private sector divide and were transplanted into activities such as

social work". Smith (2014) says that the social justice aims of social development include promoting social and economic development, facilitating participation by the socially excluded, improving the quality of life of people, building human capabilities, promoting social integration, and promoting human rights. However, social workers' involvement in fighting for social justice in relation to land ownership for historically disadvantaged individuals and communities seems to be non-existent, even though it is argued that the social work discipline is interconnected with the events and wider forces in history that shape people's lives and institutions (Harman, 2008). Lack of land ownership is associated with a lack of educational facilities and a high rate of inequality in, and opportunities for, education (Spaull, 2013). There is also a lack of health care service delivery with inadequate resources, including insufficient designated beds, specialist staff and seclusion rooms to deal with the demand and challenges of caring for disruptive patients (Petersen & Lund, 2011), and housing and mental health (Turok & Borel-Saladin, 2016).

The principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work (IFSW & IASSW, 2014). Social justice is grounded in rights-based and access-based principles with a strong focus on the individual. The aim of incorporating social justice in social work is to ensure that basic human rights are distributed equitably and without prejudice. Morgaine (2014) argues that, in relation to social justice, social workers understand forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination, advocate for human rights and social and economic justice and engage in practices that advance social and economic justice. Understanding the history of land and race in South Africa and socio-political and socio-economic inequalities, which in turn are connected to the social dynamics that social workers deal with at the micro-, meso- and macro-level of intervention, means that social workers have a significant role to play in shaping and transforming the status quo on issues related to inequality.

THE LAND QUESTION AND THE FUTURE

The land question in South Africa continues to present challenges, and various researchers have identified the different problems faced by land and agrarian reform in South Africa. The following are among those identified by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (2009), Hall (2004) and Rugege (2004): the willing seller-willing buyer principle, where it takes a long time to negotiate a price for the land with the current land owners; claim disputes, experienced as a long process of mediation to find resolution and gaps in different policies, which compromise the effective implementation of land reform programmes. There are also different political views, with a lack of consensus among political parties on the land reform debate. Various authors such as Hall (2004), Thobela (2011), James (2009) and

Jarstad (2021) argue that most of the unresolved land claims are rural claims, affected by a number of issues such as: disputes with land owners on the validity of claims, land prices, settlement models and conditions, along with family or community disputes; conflict among traditional leaders, community, trusts and beneficiaries; boundary disputes among traditional leaders; reluctance of other government departments and institutions to release state land; high land prices and disputes on land valuation; a lack of technical and financial support; mismanagement of resources; untraceable claimants and land claim dispute resolution and mediation.

South Africa foresaw the potential problems of land reform and thus created a court to deal exclusively with restitution claims (Bank & Hart, 2019; Hall & Kepe, 2017; Makhado, 2012). An additional difficulty in this process might be the lack of administrative capacity and effective administration at the court. An increased number of restitution claims would increase the number of court orders for land evacuation, which would require adequate land-valuation procedures and a system for compiling public land tenure records. However, the future of diverse racial ownership of land continues to be shaped by negative questions raised in the 1980s about whether the future of Black people in the economy can be significantly related to farming at all (Davenport, 1987). This question positioned the debate regarding land as simply an economic debate, yet land ownership is intended for more than economic activities only.

Gandidzanwa, Verschoor and Sacolo (2021) argue along the lines of Davenport (1987) that the proportion of Black people still engaged in farming activities, however unproductive, is unusually high, although there is a universal tendency for the numbers engaged in farming to diminish dramatically in a world where diversity of employment is fast taking the place of a predominantly agricultural base. The provision of work on the land is one of the most expensive forms of job creation and, in general, Black people may be better adapted, as are most Whites, to careers in industry and commerce. But if it were to be agreed that fewer rather than more Black people should derive their living from the land, then instead of making vast areas of farmland available to them, it would be more rational to concentrate on the provision of more land in peri-urban areas for people seeking work in town. Therefore, the future of Black land ownership must be steered away from an association of land ownership with a purely economic and agricultural purpose.

However, land distribution must be aligned to social problems such as unemployment, housing, psychosocial well-being, physical wellness, educational resources and welfare resources. Pillay (2000) identified new kinds of inequalities in South Africa related to socio-economic challenges that are replacing racial manifestations of income and wealth inequality, including a high and rising level of unemployment, coupled with

negative formal-sector employment, as well as high and increasing levels of crime, especially serious and violent crime. These key socio-economic challenges relate to macro-economic policy, poverty and inequality. South African macro-economic policies are constrained by low domestic savings, inadequate levels of foreign direct investment, crime, labour market rigidities, low skill levels and restrictive monetary and fiscal policies, all of which are invariably put forward as causal factors by economists and other social commentators (Pillay, 2000).

CHALLENGING COMPLEX ISSUES OF RACIAL LAND OWNERSHIP IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Land ownership is a social challenge that creates complex problems in South Africa, which social workers must equate analytically with the daily lived experiences brought to and dealt with in practice. The first democratic government inherited a nation characterised by high levels of poverty reflected in its racial and regional dimensions. In South Africa, there are two social problems that cannot be looked into with linear lenses. Firstly, unemployment, currently at 29%. The negative consequences of unemployment for the well-being of individuals and families have been well documented (De Witte, Rothmann & Jackson, 2012). Secondly, there is a lack of proper housing, with the housing backlog being 2.3 million in 2014 and rising, and there have been escalating community protests over housing.

The complexity of the social challenges in South Africa can be understood clearly from the NDP 2030. These social problems include: access to basic electricity, water and sanitation, and public transport; building sustainable communities; human capital, social security, food security and basic services; making land reform work; resolving issues related to human settlements; improving education through early childhood development; promoting health; addressing the skills deficit in the social welfare sector; and ensuring the safety of women, the girl-child, children and the youth and rights of women in land ownership. The challenges identified in the NDP are issues related to land ownership. A lack of access to basic electricity, water and sanitation and public transport are often experienced by rural communities who struggle to gain access to these services because of the costs involved. The General Household Survey in 2019 indicated that South Africa has about 10.1 million households without access to basic electricity, with close to 50% of households in South Africa using electricity in combination with other fuels such as firewood, paraffin and gas for cooking (Statistics South Africa, 2019). Most of the households without basic electricity are in informal settlements which largely fall through the cracks of municipal service provision and nationally allocated poverty alleviation subsidies.

In South Africa, many infants and one in five young children experience stunted growth – this is related to a lack of food security and basic services. In South Africa about 11% of people (one in 10) experience hunger. At 2018 population rates, this meant that about 6.5 million South Africans were hungry (Statistics South Africa, 2018). Issues related to human settlements in South Africa continue to be one of the most prominent social problems over the past two decades. Housing delivery has shifted from an emphasis on building houses to recognising the importance of providing access to resources and opportunities, which would facilitate active participation in the social and economic fabric of South Africa (South African Cities Network, 2014). Resolving and addressing these challenges requires social work interventions as such social problems are experienced largely by previously disadvantaged individuals, groups and communities, as well as individuals with investment interests in South Africa. It is vital to understand the connection between these various social problems and land ownership.

One of the most damaging aspects of land ownership in a constitutionally principled country like South Africa is women's land ownership. More than 60% of women in Southern Africa are dependent on land for their livelihoods (Glazebrook, Noll & Opoku, 2020). Despite the importance of land to women in the sub-region, customary land rights discriminate against their land rights (Nara, Lengoiboni & Zevenbergen, 2021). A continuing social problem social workers need to address on land ownership for African women is the statutory and customary laws which seem to favour male ownership of property, disadvantaging women. To address issues related to women's land ownership in social work practice, the factors constraining women from acquiring land rights, like in other countries, must be attended to and include the following:

- Application of customary law, which is patriarchal and discriminates against women. Customary law has a status that requires respect but is often one way – offered to men, and this is recognised as integral to the law.
- Under-representation on community land committees and participation in traditional community decision-making structures, although in some communities, women are now allowed to attend and participate in public meetings. However, observations made by an NGO working with rural women in South Africa indicate that women bear the legacy of entrenched traditional values that make it difficult for them to speak freely in the presence of men (Hargreaves & Meer, 2000).
- Social workers can be instrumental in establishing and facilitating the formation of Non-Profit Organisations aimed at addressing issues of land ownership.
- Widespread ignorance among women of their rights to land from the provisions of the constitution, due to factors such as illiteracy, and little or no dissemination of the legislation to grassroots levels.

KEY ROLES SOCIAL WORKERS CAN PLAY IN PARTICIPATING IN LAND OWNERSHIP FROM A SOCIAL JUSTICE APPROACH

The complexity of land ownership in South Africa is multifaceted, involving a variety of social problems. The involvement of social workers is vital in the quest for land ownership for disadvantaged individuals, groups and communities. The challenges of land ownership in South Africa have been widely contested politically, since it is an issue of social justice, equality and human rights, as enshrined in the South African Constitution. Therefore, it is often perceived as a political matter or a social activism issue. Social justice has been part of the social work profession since the early beginnings of the Progressive Era (Morgaine, 2014). The concept of social justice in social work has been a rights-based and access-based issue with a strong focus on the individual. Social work incorporates social justice practice in organisations, institutions and society to ensure that basic human rights are distributed equitably and without prejudice (CSWE, 2015), while Jacobson (2003) position social justice in the context of social work as a tool to generally address the different philosophical approaches used to inform societal decisions about the distribution or allocation of resources. Therefore, social workers must consider land ownership as a social justice issue. Finn and Jacobson (2003) argue that social justice in social work focuses on the three dominant theories of resource distribution: utilitarian, libertarian and egalitarian. Therefore, key roles social workers can play in participating in land ownership within a social justice framework are reflected in the three dominant theories in line with case work, group work and community work methods of intervention.

Utilitarian theories emphasise actions that bring about the greatest good and least harm for the greatest number of people. From this perspective, individual rights can be infringed upon if so doing helps meet the interests and needs of the majority (McCormick, 2003; Van Soest, 1994). Social workers' role in this approach would be to assess an action in terms of its consequences or outcomes. This approach would enable social workers to empower communities to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number of community members, while creating the least amount of harm or preventing the greatest amount of suffering. Within this thinking, social workers' role must be located in an analysis of community needs that could possibly be resolved by land ownership, and to mobilise communities to decide on using vacant and available communal land for the benefit of the majority of individuals in the community. Social workers would have to co-facilitate that process with community leaders and civil society groups by questioning existing by-laws and land injustices to justify actions being taken by communities.

Libertarian theories reject obligations for equal and equitable distribution of resources, contending instead that everyone is entitled to any and all resources that he or she has legally acquired (Finn & Jacobson, 2003). Libertarians strongly value individual freedom and see this as justifying strong protection for individual freedom. In line with the core argument of this theoretical position, social workers' role is to focus on individual interests in land ownership. Even though the theory is not focused on benefiting the majority, social workers can focus on the strengths of individuals who want to own land for multiple reasons. Social workers' services could aim at linking an individual with land distribution entities and programmes that empower people with skills and knowledge on land usage.

Egalitarian theories contend that every member of society should be guaranteed the same rights, opportunities and access to goods and resources. From this theoretical perspective, the redistribution of societal resources should be to the advantage of the most vulnerable members of society. Thus, redistribution is a moral imperative to ensure that unmet needs are redressed (Rawls, 1971).

However, as Reichert (2003) notes, the idea of social justice, expressed variously in these theories, remains elusive, especially in terms of concrete applicability in practice. Egalitarian thinking is focused on the notion that people should get the same, or be treated the same, or be treated as equals in some respect. An alternative view expands on this option that people should be treated as equals, saying that they should treat one another as equals, should relate as equals, or enjoy an equality of social status of some sort. Based on egalitarian thinking, social workers' emphasis must be focused on ensuring that everyone in a community gets the same opportunities, rights and access to land ownership. Social workers must be at the centre of advocating for equal access to the distribution of land. Social workers in the urban and commercial land space can advocate that land procurement is carried out in a manner that does not favour well-established companies. Black small businesses must also be given equal opportunities to secure a portion of land for commercial purposes. In rural communities, social workers' role must be focused on challenging biased ethnic land distribution.

Additionally, the role of social workers in the transformation of land ownership should be based on the global call for social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people using social justice and human rights. The focus should be on collective responsibility and should build a sense of solidarity and purpose to challenge land reform policies. Social workers can use laws as an instrument of social change by organising legal rights awareness campaigns on land distribution. The creation or development of land distribution systems rooted in radical transformation policies, legal frameworks and the facilitation of land ownership from grassroots level can be central to social workers' role. To ensure the formulation

of a transformative policy approach, social workers can be involved in community mobilisation for land reform policy inputs, which not only promote but also shape the implementation of land ownership and equitable distribution. The focus could be on policies which have an impact on the institutional set-up of land ownership, namely indirect and direct policies. Indirect policy is related to the country's land redistribution and restitution policies that change the ownership structure of land, thus affecting access to land and produce. Direct policy will require that social workers engage with government to support, and even force, the implementation of favoured instruments to ensure redress of historical injustices.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In an attempt to position social workers on the question of land ownership, it is vital to understand South Africa's history of land, race and socio-political and socio-economic inequalities, which in turn connect to the social dynamics that social workers deal with on the micro-, meso- and macro-level of intervention. Social workers are significant agents in shaping and transforming the status quo on issues related to inequalities. Social problems in South Africa cannot be assessed and addressed while excluding land ownership. Fast-tracking land ownership might have the potential to indirectly address some of the challenges identified in the NDP 2030. In relation to social justice, social workers should understand forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination; advocate for human rights and social and economic justice and engage in practices that advance social and economic justice. However, social justice and human rights practice in South Africa are strongly linked to political, socio-economic and structural factors that continue to maintain inequalities.

The retreating practice environment in South Africa is surprising, given the state's commitment to ensuring a more equitable and equal society and embracing social justice for all. The professional path in challenging inequalities is bumpy, given the focus on positive aspirational policies such as family welfare policies rather than a clear focus on citizens' rights and challenging the economic environment.

Leadership in the profession and ongoing professional debate are necessary to engage with the challenges, to understand the growing discontent of many citizens, to allow for interventions to support alternative dialogues, as well as to use civic engagement in addressing the challenges of land ownership. Social workers demonstrated leadership during the turbulent struggle to end apartheid and can do so again. Therefore, in the quest to work with marginalised and land-deprived individuals and communities, the following recommendations are made for education research and practice.

5

Critical Social Work Studies in South Africa: Prospects and Challenges

Education – even though social work education and land ownership is not discussed in this chapter, it is vital to consider the social work education curriculum. The recommendation is that social work education should cover the structural determinants of land ownership, poverty, gender inequalities, and oppressive traditions and their manifestations and consequences for individuals and communities. It should put more emphasis on literature that equips social work students with critical theories and possible responses to these complex structural social challenges. Policy courses in social work education must include policy and legislation on land ownership and land redistribution with the aim to equip students with the knowledge necessary to intervene on land-related issues at all levels of service delivery (micro- to macro-level).

Research – social work research must consider focusing on issues relating to land ownership in South Africa and social workers' role. It might be vital to explore and understand the views and perceptions of social work service users on land ownership. Investigating social workers' involvement in land ownership transformation processes at all levels of intervention could produce knowledge for educational purposes.

Practice – given the politically contested nature of land ownership in South Africa, social work practice from micro- to macro-level must include radical activism and joint engagements on critical social issues. Land ownership can be considered as a collective problem, therefore social work community methodology must aim at empowering communities, and specifically women, socially and economically. This may involve legal literacy campaigns, legislation on land redistribution and land registration.

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