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Cultures of Development: Committees, Workshops and Indigenous Knowledges

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Introduction

This paper is situated in a set of analytically uncomfortable and complex intersections and contestations between indigenous knowledges, development policies and practices, and anthropology. The indigenous knowledge literature emphasizes how smaller-scale societies and cultures have lived in harmony with nature and practiced sustainable development. In doing so these societies are often said to have constructed profound knowledge of their environments, which is in danger of being lost and/or appropriated.¹ The assertion of the importance of indigenous knowledge and practices is used in Africa to counter the notions that only western development can bring progress. In North and South America, notions of indigenusness have been used in a more politicized fashion by groups attempting to maintain some autonomy for their land, languages and cultures.

Development has overwhelmingly been viewed as antagonistic to indigenous peoples and knowledges. There is a large and overwhelming literature on the atrocities committed by the expanding European and North American nations against indigenous peoples throughout the world. Perhaps the most systematic recent account is that by John Bodley entitled **Victims of Progress**. Times do change so that more recently, at least in some circles, development which incorporates indigenous knowledge and practice is viewed as morally and practically better than past colonial, statist and national policies to pursue development. Significantly Indigenous peoples have organized themselves to pursue their rights in national and international organizations and fora. Their rights have been incorporated if all too often ignored in the United Nations (Draft) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This paper will not attempt to address the thorny set of issues concerning who might be considered the indigenous peoples of Africa and what should or should

¹ See Maffi (editor) 2001 and Ellen, Parkes, and Bicker 2000.

not their rights be?

Within the discipline of anthropology the ideology and practice of development have been subject to much intense debate. James Ferguson, an influential contemporary American anthropologist, has termed development anthropology's "evil twin (Ferguson 1997)." By this he means that for most of the twentieth century real anthropologists didn't either study or do development.² And, on the other hand, those that did were purchased or co-opted by some "development establishment" and therefore they betrayed anthropology. Ferguson writes:

Insofar as an explicitly nonevolutionist anthropology through most of the twentieth century continued to be construed as the study of "small populations" who "remained faithful to their traditional way of life," the anthropological object continued to be defined within the terms of a plainly evolutionary dualism that insistently distinguished between a developed, modern us' and a not-yet-developed, primitive 'them.'

Real anthropology was then the deep understanding of the other, or the 'them' rather than the us. Ferguson links anthropology's ignoring of "development" by reference to the methods pioneered by Malinowski among others which would provide a full account of a society, a people or a culture.³

In a related and highly influential book **Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World**, the anthropologist Arturo Escobar finds that development is hegemonic discourse, which has reshaped and divided the world after World War II. Escobar modeling himself after Foucault finds that the world became a new place after Harry Truman

² Sometimes a distinction is made between the anthropology of development and development anthropology. The former refers to the study of development policies, practices and ideologies while the latter implies "doing development" whereby anthropologists are part of implementing teams.

³ This notion that anthropology has not engaged U.S. and western society in general is critiqued by Micaele di Leonardo in **Exotics at Home**.

labeled the Third World the third world and poor. Like many other anthropologists Escobar concludes that what is meant by development turns out to be the use of the Third World's resources - human and material - to build western societies. His fundamental analysis deviates little from Walter Rodney's ideas that the third world was underdeveloped by the west. In addition though, he considers development to be a western discourse and therefore not just external but also repressive toward the Third World. He then places hope upon new social movements his contours and outlines are only poorly known and understood. His perspective in the end, like Vandana Shiva, is that local is better, the more indigenous, the greater the potential for living sustainably with the environment.

Within the wider world of the social sciences, Escobar, Ferguson, Shiva, etc. are in the minority of critics of development. Their critique of both development and modernization contained in this pattern of thinking has not been accepted by most other scholars nor by many people in the South in general or in Africa in particular. Other scholars have linked the idea of development to older notions of progress and evolution, with history proceeding in a teleological manner up a ladder. This is manifest in theories of modernization and now contemporary discussions of all the positive benefits of globalization. I tend to think that anthropologists continue to be highly suspicious of both.

Anthropology figures in multiple ways in these diverse discourses and practices. Without entering into a fuller discussion of the relationship among all the different social sciences, not just anthropology, and the colonial and imperial enterprise, let me just observe that the kinds of analyses by Ferguson and Escobar tend to greatly oversimplify colonialism and imperialism while overemphasizing anthropology's role. At the same time, they neglect how and in many different ways development was incorporated into the thinking of African leaders, intellectuals and rural

populations.⁴ Rather I want to point to a strange disjunctive between the salience and importance of development policies, practices and analyses in the daily lives of rural Africans and how the latter have engaged (both openly and secretly) in contesting and reshaping development in relation to their own governments and external donors.

Different African leaders and intellectuals have formulated and attempted to implement different frameworks for development. There is not time here to elaborate on the visions of the early leaders - Kwame Nkrumah, Ahmed Sekou Toure, Leopold Senghor, Patrice Lumumba, Amilcar Cabral, and Julius Nyerere. Just listing the names illuminates the outstanding political leadership of the early independence period and the strength of economic and political forces that have impeded African development. The point that I would like to emphasize, however, is a different one. Notions of development - political, economic, health, however defined, has not been a discourse and practice external to Africa. It has become Africanized to differing degrees and extent. There has been a healthy and vigorous debate all across the continent on the relationship between politics, development and democracy. This includes not just reference to externally driven frameworks but how to build upon African history, culture and institutions. There are many versions of this effort. Indeed, African voices entered onto the world stage in combination with Indian intellectuals in formulating the notion of a human "right of development." This is part of a normative framework that encompasses the entire range of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, and the right to development. These present a necessary counter weight to individual rights that are so privileged in some western states.

⁴ There is not space to venture on to the difficult terrain of assessing the historical costs and deformity of first the slave trade and then colonial rule upon Africa, the attainment of African independence and how this has shaped African discourses on development. How this historical legacy has made African development so difficult is the subject of a vast literature casting responsibility and blame in all directions.

It would be, in my view, a mistake to separate African political leadership and intellectuals from wider African populations. It is not sufficient to claim that all development projects and discourses have been western projects. While acknowledging the much greater power of dominant institutions and governments, many NGOs, international, national and local have pioneered alternative strategies and perspectives. This is reflected in the large literature against "development as normal." Indeed I have two long shelves of books filled with titles such as *People's Self Development: Perspectives on Participatory Action Research*, *An Anthropological Critique of Development: The Growth of Ignorance*, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the First Last*, *Critical Development Theory: Contributions to a New Paradigm*, *The History of Development from Western Origins to Global Faith*, (etc.) Similarly I have another shelf of books on why and how African politics gets in the way of development. And, need I add that most participants in development projects in Africa have read little or none of these works.

However, in terms of my own field research I have observed and participated in multiple meetings and workshops where most of the fundamental issues concerning development have been raised and discussed. Where even at the risk of angering government officials, strong presentations and critiques were and are being made of government policies.

This paper is organized into four parts. The first part asks a set of questions about the extent of what constitutes "indigenous knowledge." I assume that since this has been the subject of earlier workshops I need not go into it in great detail. The second part explores how indigenous knowledge although usually framed in more pragmatic terms was mobilized to oppose elements of a resettlement project. The local populations were clear that they did not oppose development but rather elements of each. In this context claims of indigenous knowledge, institutions and practices in the eastern Zambezi Valley were used to resist and reshape the larger project. The third

examines a much more heterogeneous sight of development - the national water reform process of Zimbabwe. Here I draw upon a discussion of customary law (is this indigenous knowledge) with new national water laws. The last explores some implications drawn from my research. In general, I examine the interface between development experts (either international or national) and local populations. The focus is upon how and in what ways local populations have articulated their knowledge and perspectives in complex settings. It is my experience that throughout Africa there has been a set of ongoing discussions in formal and informal settings through which governments, donors, NGOs, village leadership, etc. have been trying to engage African populations in development activities. Finding the complex balances between local knowledge and practices with national concerns will continue to be extremely difficult.

Part I. Problematizing the Indigenous:

In settings which might be termed quite "traditional" development issues are often central to the proceedings. In the eastern Zambezi Valley, the royal ancestral spirits speak through their spirit mediums. Initially the mhondoros were opposed to the use of chemicals to grow cotton - at least those who expressed an opinion. This perspective changed over time when some of the spirit mediums themselves began using chemicals on their own cotton fields. It was also the case that different spirit mediums/mhondoros didn't all hold the same views on their use. Initially mediums also refused to ride in motor vehicles and buses. This has also changed for some while others insist on only walking.

In the drought of 1992-93 President Robert Mugabe asked the spirit mediums to bring rain. Once again mediums held different views but during a spirit possession that I attended the three senior mhondoros refused to do so on the grounds that the President should consult with them on all matters not just when he chooses. When the Ministry of Agriculture wanted to alter a river's flow to provide water for irrigation, they had to ask "permission" from the different mhondoros

associated both the land and water. A research team utilizing aerial photographs concluded that areas under the control of chiefs have more intact forests than those under the Mid-Zambezi Rural Development Project.⁵ Are spirit mediums/mhondoros the keepers of "indigenous knowledges" or are they the voices of a community consensus in the face of change?

Where and how is indigenous knowledge kept and transmitted? Who does this? How is it done? In examining the profound changes that have taken place throughout Africa how and where do we look for what is "indigenous?" How do we do this without becoming lost in formal definitions while maintaining clear concepts so someone (certainly not American anthropologists) can argue that some things are more and others less indigenous? How do we explore indigenousness not just in terms of ethno this or ethno that - ethnoscience, ethnobotany ethnopharmacology as opposed to real pharmacology, but in their own terms? Can we conceptualize a changing indigenousness along with a changing western science? And, who decides what is genuinely indigenous and not. For example, in much of the debates surrounding gender culture is used to justify knowledges and practices about women. Who gets to define what these are? How do we assess the range of interests involved?

Another example drawn from my current fieldwork is what is termed "fast track land reform" in Zimbabwe. After twenty years of off again and on again land reform and resettlement processes the government used people who called themselves "war veterans" to invade large scale commercial farms. The government then changed all the criteria used for the past twenty years and has now declared more than 90% of the land to be designated and appropriated by the state. Under the current fast track the former roles of VIDCOS and chiefs are all disrupted as war veterans and provincial land committees allocate former commercial farmland. No indigenous land tenure

⁵ Byers, Cunliffe and Hudak 2001

systems will be put in place in the near future since all land is to be state owned. Under the current program including participating in land reform, size of a farm, right to compensation, all black Zimbabweans are exempted from all new restrictions and they are to apply only to whites. Thus by definition white Zimbabweans cannot be indigenous since they are viewed as all "children" of the colonialists.

There are multiple methodological implications of exploring these complications. The original title of this paper the subtitle pointed to committees and workshops which referent nationally or regionally created structures to form and implement policy. Typically by their formal structures, rules of participation and operations they are not fully indigenous. Yet of course their actual functioning, leadership, and membership will more likely than not reflect local context and concerns. And often in the Zimbabwean context, the proceedings are recorded in note form, all too often in English rather than the language of the area. Workshops have become a dominant form of communication for those identified as local leaders, representatives of organizations, etc. In my current research we initiated a workshop to report back to "stakeholders" the results of our research both at the village and catchment levels. In addition we asked if our research was of value and what new directions it might take. Often government is represented at meetings and workshops. How active, etc. varies from place to place and context to context. I wanted to point to how these were used not just for top-down or hierarchical instructions from the government to the people, but also for "the people" to talk back to their government and political parties. It means that I and the scholars with whom I have worked combine the use of detailed notes at meetings, interviews, but also formal notes often kept by official secretaries of the different at some kinds of meetings. Whether or not these meetings and workshops are held, can also reflect the existence or absence of democratic possibilities.

Part II. Comites du Base in Revolutionary Guinea

to be written, if appropriate

Part III. Resettlement in the Zambezi Valley

The Mid-Zambezi Valley Rural Development Project was formulated in the mid 1980s to bring development to what was conceptualized as an underdeveloped, remote rural area. It began in 1985 and ended in 1997 not having really been completed.⁶ Neglecting historical knowledge that places the river as a center of trade, innovation and state building, it was reconstructed as an area of untamed wilderness made inhospitable to human habitation because of the tsetse fly. Ignoring the diminution of the fly during the 1940s-1970 when the liberation war prevented cultivation and cattle raising the fly reemerged. Thus after Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 a large multifaceted project was conceived and implemented.

There have been multiple meetings and confrontations throughout the valley concerning the project. In the following interchange, one can glimpse the nature of the debate that has taken place between long-term residents in the project area, and between them and project staff. The debate centers on what constitutes development and who should decide the form that development takes. These debates took place all over the valley as the MZP attempted to resettle residents.

The context of this interchange was that Negomo, the mhondoro, - which roughly translates as a royal ancestral spirit who is generally recognized as the spiritual authority in the area - has called the Ward Councilor to explain to him why he has not been consulted about the project.⁷

⁶ For a more complete description of the project see a series of Derman's papers. The role of spirit mediums in the project is the subject of Marja Spierenburg's soon to be completed Doctoral Thesis.

Overlapping fields of authority, which include four over-lapping sets of institutions, marks the Mid-Zambezi Valley. In addition, there are the specific structures of the MZP The general valley structures are:

(A) "Traditional" structures: These are ones that, in fact, have been greatly modified in colonial and postcolonial times. They include chiefs, sub-chiefs, spirit mediums and headmen (sabhuku). In general, the national government has kept a greater place for chiefs while reducing the authority of headmen. Spirit mediums continue to be of importance particularly in mediating disputes and natural resource management. Their influence has been lessened due to the large numbers of

Negomo the mhondoro called the Ward Councilor of Neshangwe Ward (within the District of Guruve) to talk with him because he had been "left out of the conversations about the MZP and land allocation."⁸ The typical valley phrase is that "he had not been informed." Informed implies to acknowledge that whoever is informed has some authority. In its first phases, the project did not inform either chiefs or mhondoros of its plans, perhaps believing that they would not agree or that they did not need to be told since the official lines of authority in land allocation were clearly through District Council. The Councilor responded to the mhondoro's question as to why he had not been consulted by stating:

Sekuru [a term of respect] your territory is going to be pegged [refers to the placing of metal stakes in the project allocated land]. I hope you are not going to deny it because it is not because they are trying to take your people but to have a better standard of living. Sekuru there are now more people in Dande [the term used for this part of the valley], the

migrants many of whom do not recognize their influence.

(B) In the Zambezi valley, only the dominant party, ZANU-PF has been active and well-organized. There are United ZANU-PF party committees at the district, branch and village level.

(C) The Ward Development Committees (WADCOs) and Village Development Committees (VIDCOs), along with their school, wildlife and natural resource committees which operate under the elected District Council. A ward's 's adult population elects representatives to District Council and they are called Ward Councilors. These are the effective units of local government. The Administration of the district is carried out by the District Administrator, an appointee of central government.

(D) Churches and non-governmental organizations including grinding mill cooperatives, and the Lower Guruve Development Association which has become the over-arching organization for different parts of the valley. They are a non-profit organization that provides a range of services to valley residents including tractor plowing of fields, transport of cotton, sewing cooperatives, etc.

(E) The MZP as a resettlement project has a set of centrally determined structures through the Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development (MLGRUD) and its Department of Rural and Urban Development (DERUDE), which has the ultimate responsibility for the project. DERUDE has also been tasked with the coordination of multiple ministries and departments with interests and activities in the project area. The MZP has a separate management entity known which includes the Project Director who allocates half of his time to the project, six budgeted resettlement officers and their assistants. The key technical person is a land planner from the Ministry of Agriculture who has been delineating the actual land for arables, residentials and grazing areas.

⁸ This meeting took place in July of 1990 at the height of the project. The meeting was recorded by my co-researcher Lazarus Zhuwao and translated by him. Mr. Zhuwao died in 1999 of what the ward councilor called "that modern disease." His death was a great loss not only to his family but to the intellectual history of the valley.

Government is trying to see that there are no more people who are coming to Dande anymore. I told these people that the medium and his clan are to be allocated first and then the rest. This is what happened to Katuu [another mhondoro part of whose territory also falls within the Ward's boundaries] but Katuu didn't do what I told him. You see now he is accusing me of not allocating him arables. I cannot do that.

The Councilor attempts to defend the government by stating they are trying to protect the people already in the valley while pointing out that if the project plans are not followed then even a mhondoro can lose his land. This is further complicated question by the project's initial confusion of the spirit with the medium. The medium, as a person and a head of household needs land just like any other person. This however is not the same as the mhondoro who must also retain his sacred places.⁹

A resident of the area immediately commented to the Councilor that:

You mean to tell us that the Government is saying we don't know what we are doing? We were born here and we have our families here too. What is wrong with our standard of living?

The Councilor responded by pronouncing that:

We cannot let our land stay undeveloped. I am also your child [to Negomo], I am not doing my own things. I am told and that is what I tell your people.

The Councilor wanted it both ways - he wanted to demonstrate his subservience to Negomo at the same time pointing out that he was just following orders.

The Councilor was then asked by another resident "What about our children, where are they going to get land when they grow up?" The Councilor declared:

We [now including himself as part of the project] are leaving land unpegged. That land is for your children.

⁹ This issue deserves its own paper. David Lan found clearly defined territories for the different mhondoros that seems to historically reflect the creation of small kingdoms in the valley. Within their areas, the mhondoros had their own sacred places including pools, trees, the areas where previous mediums had died, etc. These areas were not respected in the early phases of the project. And, as the project then tried to take into account sacred areas, project residents attempted to use sacred areas as a justification for preventing pegging in relatively large areas now called sacred.

This statement was and is untrue. There were and are no lands deliberately left unpegged for the next generation. Indeed, when I asked project officials about the next generation, they said that was not their problem. When I asked VIDCO chairs and other residents of the valley, they said they had no idea where the next generation would find land.

In this instance, the conversation is relatively explicit. It engages the Ward Councilor, mhondoros and residents. The Government, while not physically present, dominates the discussion. These are contending social fields with very different views of "development." The man who asked "What is wrong with our standard of living?" rejects the explicit view that valley residents' lives need to be dramatically altered. Negomo too represents the past in the present by ordering and defining spatial and social relations. Pegging, the government's act of- defining residential and agricultural space delineates who has and who does not have power. Thus, the land is divided into arables, residential, and grazing areas - categories carried from the colonial period into the present. The residents clearly understand the colonial heritage of these categories and their historical continuities. The government planners deny these past continuities and argue that these patterns are what is required for proper development.

Part IV. The Water Reform Process in Zimbabwe¹⁰

Are customary norms part of indigenous knowledge? What are the connections between indigenous knowledge, practices and institutions? How do we describe political and social representation at meetings, presence of absence of chiefs, spirit mediums and other formally labeled "traditional authorities" in Zimbabwe? In a highly bureaucratized process of committee meetings with formal agendas and notes how are customary norms and practices included or ignored? How

¹⁰ This case study is based upon a paper entitled co-authored with Anne Helium "Neither tragedy nor enclosure: Are there inherent human rights in water management in Zimbabwe's communal lands?" to be published in the European Journal of Development Research. The use of "we" in this section refers to the joint research and writing.

does water reform proceed in Southern Africa when rural surveys clearly indicate that local populations view chiefs and spirit mediums as the most important managers of water?

But traditions also don't stand still. The water reform has engaged a Chief, trained as a planner, a member of the Zimbabwe National Water Authority and the Chairman of the Manyame Catchment Council, one of the most important watersheds in Zimbabwe. He tries to tell people that they need to use water more commercially and to obtain water permits. He is interested in water for development but firmly believes that there is no such thing as free water.

Zimbabwe, like many other nations, water reform has taken place as though there were no other water management systems than those of the nation-state. Access to water, like most other natural resources, is regulated by both statutory and unwritten customary norms. Zimbabwe's waters have been divided into the categories of commercial and primary since the beginning of the twentieth century. This division of water seems to reflect the core land tenure division between commercial (formerly European) lands and communal (formerly Tribal Trust Lands) lands. It also reflects the dual legal system where imported Roman Dutch law and British common law applied to the white settlers while relationships between black Zimbabweans were regulated by customary law. In the Water Act of 1998, but not substantially different from earlier ones, primary water is defined as water used for: 1) domestic human needs in or about the area of residential premises, 2) animal life, 3) making of bricks for private use and 4) dip tanks.¹¹ Commercial water use is an economic concept including agriculture, mining, livestock, hydroelectric power, etc. Water used for commercial purposes now must be permitted while water for primary use is not.¹² To access primary water, no one's permission is needed.

Commercial agriculture is the largest user of Zimbabwe's water consuming 75 per cent of all

¹¹ Water Act 1998 section 32(1)
¹² Water Act 1998 section 32.(2)

water. The urban industrial mining sector consumes 20 per cent and the communal lands only about five per cent.¹³ Water management for commercial purposes centers on thousands of small, medium and large scale dams. Water use in communal areas centers on boreholes, open and closed wells, streams, rivers and small dams. Apart from dry season vegetable gardens located along streams, rivers, seasonally flooded grasslands (vleis) and increasingly boreholes, agriculture is primarily rain fed.

At first glance it would appear that the notion of primary water would be linked to the indigenous idea that no one should be denied access to water. However, this seems not to be the case. Primary water, in the sense of the Water Act, is not a category among African peoples in Zimbabwe. It was an introduced concept stemming from a residual, non-reflective category in the earliest Southern African water laws. In discussions with drafters of Zimbabwe's new water law, they stated they assumed the concept came from Roman Dutch law, remained there unchanged and was then incorporated into the new Water Act without further reflection. (Interviews with Zeb Murengweni and Dr. Hugh Williams, Harare, August 2001). There was no explicit concern with customary law and customary water rights unlike other areas of colonial regulation such as land, marriage, inheritance and even political leadership.

Water, in our reading of the Shona literature and our own research, cannot be denied to anyone. Good rains or poor rains were understood as indicators of social well-being or social conflict [Bourdillon 1987; Lan 1985; Maxwell 1999 and many others]. Droughts were said to be caused by serious breaches of conduct both in general and in people's dealing with water. Good communication needed to be maintained with the ancestors to insure good water supply and rainfall.

11 Sithole and Williams have attempted to quantify the amount of water required to supply primary water needs in the Mazowe Catchment and its subcatchments. They suggest 50 m³/h/year be used and be increased for cattle and wildlife areas. This works out to be between 4-6% of water flows are required to satisfy primary needs in the various subcatchments of Mazowe.

In general it was believed that water could not be individually owned and that everyone had a right to use it as they saw fit within the norms and practices of the different cultural groups.

The Water Act of 1998 and its companion one, the Zimbabwe National Water Authority Act, were to remedy past legal and institutional inadequacies. Water is considered a critical national resource to be vested solely in the state. Unlike the other water acts, any private individuals or corporations can no longer own water. All Zimbabweans should have equal access to water and stakeholders should be involved in decision making in the development and management of the resource. All development in water resources should be economically viable and environmentally sustainable.¹ What's both significant and interesting is that most of the reform processes involve commercial water, not primary water. In order to use water for commercial purposes permits are now required. It is the obtaining of a permit that legitimizes the use of Zimbabwe's waters for commercial purposes be it agriculture, mining, industry or for water works by towns and municipalities.²

¹ Towards Integrated Water Resources Management: Water Resources Management Strategy for Zimbabwe GOZ, [2001].

² The key elements of the water reform are the following:

1. End the priority date system of first in last out. This is to be replaced by a 20-year permit system. The new allocation system remains undefined but we presume it will be some form of proportional allocation so that in drought years all users will lose an equal proportion of their water.
2. Broaden the scope of who can apply for a permit to use water. Communal area residents can now apply for permits on their own without having the District Administrator do so on their behalf. For water to be used for agricultural purposes, it is still tied to land. What this means for communal area residents that don't have individual title deed is unclear since permits have not yet been issued.
3. Democratize water management by increasing the participation of stakeholders, especially black communal farmers. Under the previous Act, River Boards whose membership was restricted to water rights holders managed either by government or waters, typically white commercial farmers. It was up to the discretion of government to represent the interests of communal area residents. Under the new Water Act, waters are to be managed through Catchment Councils and Subcatchment Council, which are composed of different stakeholder groups including communal area residents and Rural District Councilors. They are to carry out their work in coordination with the new Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA).
4. The wide definition of primary water remains although Catchment Councils are empowered to limit it. In concert with global water policies, water is to be considered an economic good. In Zimbabwe this has been captured in the phrase user pays. This refers only to commercial water

A broader study of the water reform carried out by Centre for Applied Social Sciences at the University of Zimbabwe (CASS) shows that primary water supplies, while central for communal areas, are in practice peripheral to Catchment Councils' interests because they claim this is the domain of "development institutions."³ From the water development perspective that still dominates Zimbabwean water policy, communal areas are regarded as underdeveloped due to their lack of water rights/permits, low use of commercial water, low use of water for irrigation and lack of storage capacity for water to be able to carry out agricultural or other activities.

As a part of a broader study of water management in selected communal lands in three catchments, a survey of water use and awareness had already been carried out in two of the three villages, Kaondera and Bangira in Mhondoro.⁴ The results showed that 20 per cent of households are growing tobacco, all in one village, 70 per cent of households have invested in water and 90 per cent of households have some form of dry season garden which requires hand irrigation.⁵ We made the assumption that because the deep and open wells were located on homesteads, they were "private". This seemed reasonable given the growing of tobacco and other cash crops. We assumed that these trends in commercialization of agriculture would be reflected in the management of water. We expected to find decreasing open access to the water resources of the area. We were curious to see if there was an emerging informal market in water as there has been in land. We were also curious to know if there was increasing neglect of common water resources such as boreholes, wells

since primary water cannot, by matter of law, be priced. The main concern of water policy is to promote use of commercial water through encouraging business activities. Although the strategy emphasizes a uniform policy for all Zimbabwe, the development of water in communal areas still takes place under District Development Fund's and Rural District Councils' water and sanitation programs. These remain, overwhelmingly for primary water._

³ Catchment Council Minutes for the Mazowe, Manyame and Sanyati, 2000.

⁴ CASS BASIS survey data, CASS 2000-2001.

⁵ For a discussion of the sustainability of some of the economic activities in the area see Stewart (ed) **Grounding Good Governance & Democracy in Communities. An Exploration of Some Zimbabwean Experiences**, 1998.

and dams.

In analyzing the preliminary findings in terms of a broader survey, observations through visits to the area, and discussion of water management in Mhondoro, we expected to find weak indigenous institutions for managing water. The reason is that water resources are dispersed and not linked to central authority. The villagers when asked who was the most important person in allocation of your water sources 73 per cent responded either the chief or spirit medium. This is consistent with their view on what they do to maintain water supplies. Eighty-four per cent say they observe rules and/or perform rituals to do so. The link between rainfall, the ancestors, social relations and the land remain strong despite other changes.

Despite our expectation of increasing privatization we found no evidence that this was taking place. Rather there was a trend of private wells or boreholes funded for specific economic purposes being made available to all for drinking and cooking. In a relatively small area with multiple sources of water, these were the ones that were perceived as safe or good for drinking. Cutting across all the different tenorial systems is the notion that no one should be denied access to safe drinking water.

The notion of safe seems to be hybrid. It's influenced by sanitary notions of disease as well as by fears that the water could be poisoned. A rule concerning use was that a well should⁶ be kept closed to be protected against animal waste or children throwing things into it. The question of poisoning appears more complicated since this seems to refer to potential acts by those who have been denied access to water. Poisoning is not possible if everyone is drinking from a well but would

⁶ One woman said that her well at home was unsafe for drinking because school children played soccer and the balls fall into the well. Sometimes frogs, snakes and rubbish fall into the well. They removed the dead frog and other things but feel that the water is contaminated because there is no chlorine at the Health Clinic to purify the water.

be possible if there was exclusion.⁷ The poisoning could be literal or through witchcraft.⁸ The belief that human disaster like poisoning, disease or death is caused by spiritual revenge must be understood in the light of the way in which health, body and law is interlinked among the Shona speaking groups in Zimbabwe. Most people believe that accidents, deaths or diseases occur because they themselves or someone in their family have done something that has caused the wrath of the spiritual ancestors. Underlying these spiritual sanctions is the socio-legal order of the society.⁹ We were on a number of occasions told by the villagers that water sources had dried up or deteriorated because of misconduct. People we talked to were clearly afraid of denying anyone water because they believed it could lead to poisoning. No one we interviewed could ever cite a case of poisoning yet all the villagers seemed to avoid the well of one specific widow. This appears more linked to fears of witchcraft. In sum, the sense of community, trust and the moral approval of the person who possesses the water thus seems to be involved in the conception of safe drinking water. In examining peoples' choices as to where to obtain water kinship was more often decisive than physical closeness to the water source. It seemed, however, that a sense of entitlement, safeness, trust and water quality led people to not simply choose on the basis of physical closeness and cleanliness.

Drinking water appeared to be free. All respondents reported that it was not necessary to pay money or give gifts to obtain water. The well owners who said they never received anything for use of their wells confirmed this. This pattern continues for the increasing number of people having wells dug on their land. The two research assistants' observations at the wells support the congruence in this case between what people say and what people do. We anticipate that this will

7 This is not specific to Mhondoro but rather widespread in communal lands.

8 James Ferguson reports that in the rural villages supplying labor to the Zambian Copperbelt no distinction is made between poisoning through witchcraft and poison itself [1999: 118]

9 Childlessness is, for example, believed to be caused by the groom's failure to fulfill the obligation to pay a beast to the bride's mother [Helium, 1999: 188-205].

continue to be the case in the near future although we recognize that when norms are changing people tend to justify their actions within established paradigms. There appears to be a difference between sharing water for drinking and cooking on the one hand, and gardening and watering livestock on the other. Many of the families in the three villages had a dry season garden. These were located at the homestead, near the dam or on a vlei outside of homesteads. Rather shallow wells for gardens were treated as family property rather than common pool property. In other words, access to the water was only for garden use or by a very close relative. We did not come across any instances where water sharing for hand irrigation outside of close familial relations took place.

This snapshot of how local level (or customary norms and practices) ideas and practices continue after a century of national water laws (both colonial and independence) illustrates the continuities between these periods despite efforts to change. The local, or the traditional, or the indigenous - whatever term is used - remains unincorporated into national laws and policies. Yet at the same time, local level norms and practices reflect the international movement for a "right to water."

Conclusions or Reflections

In this paper I have examined the Mid-Zambezi Rural Development Project and the water reform process. (I would have liked to incorporate other field-based materials from the use of local committees to facilitate the Guinean revolution during the 1960s and what happened to them in the 1970s and 80s. I also would have liked to incorporate results from research carried out by Anne Ferguson on what Malawian intellectuals think development is and what it is not.) In both development processes - resettlement and water reform - the Zimbabwean state has begun from the notion that government knows best. It has been, from that standpoint, little different in its approach to local knowledge and local practices than what many critiques of development have so often cited. From the perspective of local populations, it can be understood why African

governments are seen to be often acting just like the former colonial powers.

And yet, it's more complicated. The water reform in Zimbabwe does aim to reallocate Zimbabwe's waters. Primary water will no longer remain just a residual category as efforts will be made to have it be used more productively, i.e. commercially. The water reform process has proceeded by workshops, reports, discussions with stakeholders, the formulation of new laws but as pointed out in the section on Water Reform completely ignoring the existence of alternative already existing waters management systems. Are there indigenous models for managing an entire river system? There are not, at least not formulated in secular, scientific terms. Does this mean that deeply rooted but historicized environmental and economic understandings are irrelevant? Not quite, but they can be effectively ignored for a while.

It is difficult now to speculate on what might happen since water management depends upon either the sale of water (clear for city consumption, raw for use by farmers) or government funding. The commercial farmers are being destroyed as a class and so sale of water - both from private and public dams - has greatly diminished. In the current context water reform will have to await the outcome of "fast track" land reform. It is hard for me to imagine though how all the new settlers and farmers will be able to pay for water as well as raise capital to keep their newly acquired farms functioning.

The Mid-Zambezi Project is now over, at least in a formal sense. All the donor monies have been spent. The implementing government departments no longer exist. New migrants are still coming and they are taking up the land formerly used by those who had to be resettled. Conflicts between stream bank gardens and cattle have intensified and when possible, the women have shifted their dry season gardens to bore holes. Cotton has triumphed and land use planning and the environment have not! But cotton has led to improved housing, roads, purchase of cattle, the use of fertilizers and pesticides, the purchase of scotch carts to fetch water and wood. There are

the ranges of ecological consequences from increased population and use of resources. The older crops have been replaced, the wisdom of older women to plant sorghums and millet rather than maize has been lost with the loss of seeds. Unfortunately the valley has been convulsed in violence due to the elections and a massive new irrigation project is underway. There is to be a large dam on top of the escarpment where water will be stored to flow into the valley for irrigation. The mhondoros are upset that ancestral graves are being flooded on the escarpment as well as to be dug up by irrigation perimeters and canals down below. The resettled population will be resettled again by the irrigation project. The managing entity for this new Dande Irrigation Project is the government-owned parastatal the Agriculture and Rural Development Authority (ARDA).

Certainly the narratives contained in meetings and meeting notes tell the story of how the MZP and the water reform were implemented. It points toward a complex process of negotiations and patterns of acquiescence, resistance and acceptance. It points toward a changing understanding of what constitutes tradition, culture and indigenusness. These are changing, dynamic categories which reflect changing norms, practices, and interests.

Bibliography to be completed later

Declaration on the Right to Development

Adopted by General Assembly resolution 41/128 of 4 December 1986

Proclaims the following Declaration on the Right to Development:

Article 1

1. The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized.

2. The human right to development also implies the full realization of the right of peoples to self-determination, which includes, subject to the relevant provisions of both International Covenants on Human Rights, the exercise of their inalienable right to full sovereignty over all their natural wealth and resources.

Article 2

1. The human person is the central subject of development and should be the active participant and beneficiary of the right to development.

2. All human beings have a responsibility for development, individually and collectively, taking into account the need for full respect for their human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as their duties to the community, which alone can ensure the free and complete fulfillment of the human being, and they should therefore promote and protect an appropriate political, social and economic order for development.

3. States have the right and the duty to formulate appropriate national development policies that aim at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals, on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of the benefits resulting there from.

Article 3

1. States have the primary responsibility for the creation of national and international conditions favorable to the realization of the right to development.

2. The realization of the right to development requires full respect for the principles of international law concerning friendly relations and co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

3. States have the duty to co-operate with each other in ensuring development and eliminating obstacles to development. States should realize their rights and fulfill their duties in such a manner as to promote a new international economic order based on sovereign equality, interdependence, mutual interest and co-operation among all States, as well as to encourage the observance and realization of human rights.

Article 4

1. States have the duty to take steps, individually and collectively, to formulate international development policies with a view to facilitating the full realization of the right to development.

2. Sustained action is required to promote more rapid development of developing countries. As a complement to the efforts of developing countries, effective international co-operation is essential in providing these countries with appropriate means and facilities to foster their comprehensive development.

Article 5

States shall take resolute steps to eliminate the massive and flagrant violations of the human rights of peoples and human beings affected by situations such as those resulting from apartheid, all forms of racism and racial discrimination, colonialism, foreign domination and occupation, aggression, foreign interference and threats against national sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity, threats of war and refusal to recognize the fundamental right of peoples to self-determination.

Article 6

1. All States should co-operate with a view to promoting, encouraging and strengthening universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without any distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.

2. All human rights and fundamental freedoms are indivisible and interdependent; equal attention and urgent consideration should be given to the implementation, promotion and protection of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

3. States should take steps to eliminate obstacles to development resulting from failure to observe civil and political rights, as well as economic social and cultural rights.

Article 7

All States should promote the establishment, maintenance and strengthening of international peace and security and, to that end, should do their utmost to achieve general and complete disarmament under effective international control, as well as to ensure that the resources released by effective disarmament measures are used for comprehensive development, in particular that of the developing countries.

Article 8

1. States should undertake, at the national level, all necessary measures for the realization of the right to development and shall ensure, inter alia, equality of opportunity for all in their access to basic resources, education, health services, food, housing, employment and the fair distribution of income. Effective measures should be undertaken to ensure that women have an active role in the development process. Appropriate economic and social reforms should be carried out with a view to eradicating all social injustices.

2. States should encourage popular participation in all spheres as an important factor in development and in the full realization of all human rights.

Article 9

1. All the aspects of the right to development set forth in the present Declaration are indivisible and interdependent and each of them should be considered in the context of the whole.

2. Nothing in the present Declaration shall be construed as being contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations, or as implying that any State, group or person has a right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the violation of the rights set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenants on Human Rights.

Article 10

Steps should be taken to ensure the full exercise and progressive enhancement of the right to development, including the formulation, adoption and implementation of policy, legislative and other measures at the national and international levels.

1. The call for papers for this workshop was the following: "This conference will bring together senior scholars and practitioners for intensive discussions on the dynamics and uses of oral heritage and indigenous knowledge in contemporary Africa. It concludes a three-year initiative, funded by the Ford Foundation, which included developing web-pages in partnership with African universities and organizing extended seminars. During four-week summer institutes held at Indiana University in 2000 and 2001, junior faculty and advanced graduate students from Africa and North America studied alternative research methodologies. Their discussions and the contributions of visiting speakers have brought new questions forward concerning the topic under consideration. We forcefully assert that Africa's oral heritage and indigenous knowledge is relevant for the 21st century and absolutely vital for sustained economic and social development. Since local communities and policy makers will need to draw upon these cultural resources, they should be conserved in ways to make them accessible and to allow for their continued transmission and transformation. Methods for recording indigenous knowledge in its different forms have been explored extensively, and the associated ethical concerns have also received considerable attention. Several other equally significant issues have emerged in the course of our Ford Foundation-funded initiative, and the experienced researchers invited to this conference may well raise more. We would like to invite papers that speak to any of the following issues:

- * Grassroots initiatives that draw on local knowledge and successfully integrate it into community projects
- * Successful collaborations between researchers and community groups for sharing and making available jointly documented knowledge.
- * Challenges for the continued production, reproduction and adaptation of indigenous knowledge.
- * Indigenous knowledge and the transformation of formal education.
- * Contestation over the content and implications of oral heritage and indigenous knowledge.
- * The historical dynamics and conceptual boundaries of the category "indigenous knowledge."