



Land Tenure Center

# **Rezoned for Business: How Eco-Tourism Unlocked Black Farmland in Eastern Zimbabwe**

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## **SESSION 1: AGRARIAN CONTRACTS DELIVERING LAND AND SECURING RURAL LIVELIHOODS: POST-INDEPENDENCE LAND REFORM AND RESETTLEMENT IN ZIMBABWE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Eco-tourism is undermining black smallholders' entitlement to land in Zimbabwe. In the 1890s, British administrators restrained whites from alienating the whole of the country by demarcating native reserves. In terms of this limited aim, the policy of native reserves worked. It ensured a land base for black agriculture, particularly for women and children. In the late 1980s, however, Campfire (Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources) invited the tourism industry to begin operations in the lowland reserves. These firms have claimed land, made money, and relocated smallholders. Based on economic and ecological arguments, Campfire has redefined the black entitlement as merely a claim competing with those of other 'stakeholders'. No guarantees exist for residents and cultivators. Indeed, government and NGOs are fast transforming the lowland reserves into privileged and subsidized investment zones. Held in check for a century, a new kind of settler colonialism is sweeping down from the highlands.

# REZONED FOR BUSINESS: HOW ECO-TOURISM UNLOCKED BLACK FARMLAND IN EASTERN ZIMBABWE<sup>1</sup>

by

**David McDermott Hughes**

Native reserves represent the best and worst aspects of settler colonialism, past and present. In one view, expanding ‘neo-Europes’, such as the United States and Australia used reservations to dispossess and partially annihilate aboriginals.<sup>2</sup> The ‘rez’ (in Native American parlance) served as a concentration camp. From another perspective, a handful of well-meaning colonials established reserves to protect native people from total dispossession and enslavement. Particularly in tropical settler colonies, metropolitan offices had to balance the interests of a small white population and against those of the native masses.<sup>3</sup> They did so spatially, by allocating fertile, disease-free highlands to whites and retaining lowlands as reserves. Patently unfair, this rural segregation ‘put the lighter skins in control of the darker soils, and vice versa’ (Shipton and Goheen 1994, 363). Nonetheless, the darker skins *did* find sanctuary on 42.1% of the land.<sup>4</sup> At least some of Rhodesia’s district-level native commissioners demarcated reserves not to confine blacks—as the concentration camp thesis would suggest—but to confine *whites*. The reserves kept settlers and business out, and they allowed black farmers, grazers, and hunters to survive and reproduce themselves. Rural people, especially women, children, and the elderly, came to depend on the reserves. And

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<sup>2</sup> Crosby (1986, 2-3) coins the term ‘neo-Europe’.

<sup>3</sup> Kennedy (1987, 2-3) writes of this ‘demographic conjunction’ in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, contrasting it with the situation in colonies of simple exploitation (the Belgian Congo as a case a point).

<sup>4</sup> The figure for communal land as proportion of Zimbabwe land area derives from the 1982 census (cited in Zinyama and Whitlow 1986, 371).

they could depend on the reserves: the weakest, poorest, economically least productive individuals were *entitled* to farmland.<sup>5</sup> Against tremendous white opposition, that entitlement survived 84 years of colonialism, 14 of which were under a settler-run regime (1965-1979). The ‘communal areas’, as they became known after independence, stand as the most humane achievement of an inhumane period.

That is not saying much. Such an extraordinarily low benchmark gave post-colonial authorities ample scope for progress. Yet, by the standard of entitlements, the government of Zimbabwe has actually retrogressed. To its credit, the longstanding resettlement program has established new zones that blacks from the reserves can *claim* to farm. However, such claims are particularly weak—a far cry from entitlements. Administrators have threatened to evict smallholders for infractions ranging from streambank cultivation to wage employment (Fortmann and Bruce 1993, 205)(Hughes 2000, 12)(Jacobs 1983, 41)(Kinsey 1983, 17)(Moore 1999, 671). It is unlikely that residents’ descendants will be farming the same resettlement areas 84 years from now. Meanwhile, district-level governments have rolled back the hard-won accomplishments of their colonial counterparts: they have redefined the reserves from zones of entitlement to zones of opportunity and claim-making. Beginning in the late 1980s, district councils and rural district councils allowed business to use land, forests, and wildlife in the communal areas. Through profit- and power-sharing arrangements, under the Campfire programme (Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources),<sup>6</sup> smallholders could, in theory, gain something. More often, however, local government arrogates to itself the money and responsibilities earmarked for local people. Scholars and practitioners have amply demonstrated the shortcomings of Campfire as an effort towards community-based conservation and government decentralization (Campbell, Sithole, and Frost 2000)(Derman and Murombedzi 1994, 125-7)(Duffy 2000, 107-11)(Gibson 1999, 113)(Hill 1996, 114)(Murombedzi 1992)(Murphree 1997, 21). They have written much less on Campfire’s impact on land distribution. From many smallholders’ point of view (and from the perspective of Zimbabwe’s *longue durée*), Campfire constitutes a perplexing kind of

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<sup>5</sup> I use the term ‘entitlement’ in its colloquial sense: goods which one is guaranteed and for which one need not articulate or defend claims. This definition corresponds roughly to Sen’s category of ‘endowment’ (Sen 1981)(cf. Leach, Mearns, and Scoones 1999, 232-3).

<sup>6</sup> The name ‘Campfire’ refers variously to a set of principles, a collaborative group of NGOs and government agencies, and to an association of rural district councils (local government). ‘Campfire’ acts only to the extent that the Association and rural district councils implement changes in the name of those principles.

land reform. The programme maintains many of the fortress walls excluding smallholders from resources in national parks (Neumann 1998, 211).<sup>7</sup> At the same time, it encourages tourism firms to expand from their established redoubts in the parks onto agricultural fields and pastures (Moyo 1995, 271).<sup>8</sup> Zimbabwe has crossed a rubicon: government—local government in particular—is tearing up the minimal Rhodesian guarantee of black farmland.

At bottom, state agencies, donors, and NGOs have been losing faith in smallholder agriculture. This movement started in the late 1980s in the most logical place, western Zimbabwe. There, low rainfall severely constrains both cultivation and stock-raising. On Kalahari sands, sport-hunting and other forms of wildlife-based tourism seemed to offer higher returns to land than either crops or cattle.<sup>9</sup> Brute economics argued for what a founder of Campfire termed ‘wildlife-based “industrialization”’ (Child 1993, 296). So did the ecological imperative of saving game habitats from the plough. In short, the new alliance of ‘conservation and development’ concluded that drought-prone Zimbabweans ought to farm less and tend tourists’ campsites more—or simply do nothing (Adams and McShane 1992, 180-1). Then Campfire’s backers disregarded agro-ecology. Beginning in the mid-1990s, they transplanted the programme from the sandy soils of Zimbabwe’s western, northern, and southern fringes to the fertile Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe, chiefly to Chimanimani District.<sup>10</sup> There, agriculture earns far more, and, since big game are lacking, tourism earns far less. In Chimanimani, bananas trounce hiking and birding. Moreover, fruit tree planting in reserves has provided household food security and security of land tenure. Why, then, does a phalanx of agencies promote touristic white elephants? Have globalization and ‘market triumphalism’ (Peet and Watts 1996) taken over? Perhaps, but, more precisely, planners in Southern Africa are falling back upon what Peet and Watts (1996, 16) call a ‘regional

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<sup>7</sup> Where Campfire *has* removed the walls, smallholders have been allowed to graze cattle and collect resources, such as, thatching grass, inside national parks (Gus Le Breton, pers. com., 23 February 2001).

<sup>8</sup> Elsewhere I have described the ways in which Campfire managers try and fail to negotiate for firms and communal land residents to share parcels of land. Zimbabwe’s endemic cadastral politics—conflict over the demarcation and bounding of land—often overwhelm such negotiations (Hughes, forthcoming). Derman (1995, 209) raises a parallel issue at a smaller scale, that is, among smallholders. Land-use planning linked to Campfire in Omay (Nyaminyami District) may alienate land from Tonga-speakers to other smallholders.

<sup>9</sup> Scoones et al (1996), however, defend the productivity of even Zimbabwe’s driest soils.

<sup>10</sup> Grundy and Le Breton (1997/98, 18-19), for instance, argued that Campfire had focused too narrowly on wildlife and should grow to include woodland in other parts of Zimbabwe.

discursive formation’ of settler-led development. New, frontier-crossing investment of any kind with any potential has a green light. White- and black-owned firms are now leaping the fences that hemmed them into eastern Zimbabwe’s white highlands, and local governments are helping them to do so. Conditions are ripe for a territorial scramble—similar to but more inventive than that of the 1890s.

## **THE COLONIAL ORDER OF RACE AND SPACE**

For six decisive years, ‘fortune hunters’ planted their feet, property pegs, and crops between the Limpopo and Zambezi Rivers. So writes Robin Palmer (1977) in his classic description of the winner-take-all situation of 1890-1896. Under the chairmanship of Cecil Rhodes, the British South Africa Company had neither the ability nor interest to manage its northern frontier in a prudent fashion. The wider inter-metropolitan scramble for Africa and the continued independence of African polities demanded rapid pacification and occupation. To this end, Rhodes’s deputy Leander Star Jameson contracted with pioneers, mercenaries, and adventurers of various stripes. For Melsetter—an area that now includes Chimanimani District—Jameson made a deal in 1892 with Dunbar and Thomas Moodie of the Afrikaner-dominated Orange Free State (now Free State Province, South Africa). In exchange for all the land they could farm, the Moodies and their associates would hold the high country against the Portuguese (Moyana 1984, 110f)(Palmer 1977, 36, 41). Dunbar embraced the Mission: ‘I will make possession nine points of the law and be damned!’, he is reported to have declared (Burrows 1954, 121). He and Thomas organized two treks of Afrikaners and allocated land to another six. To each incoming family, they allotted a 2500-hectare (3000 morgen) farm, retaining the best land for the Moodie clan itself. Ultimately, they kept Portugal south of the Rusitu River and east of the Chimanimani Mountains. They also established the property map for the following century. Still bearing Afrikaans farm names, the white highlands of Melsetter have never ceded more than a toehold to black smallholders. ‘Once you are in possession of the African forests, they are yours’, Dunbar Moodie is thought to have said, ‘and the Melsetter colonists are now in possession of this territory’ (Olivier 1957, 139). Settlers had closed the frontier.

This new dispensation coupled white land-holding with physical control over people—the cadaster with the whip. Whereas settlers in much of the colony speculated on land, the ‘Boers’ of Melsetter intended to till the soil immediately. Needing labor, incoming trekkers deliberately avoided the more sparsely inhabited parts of the country (which may have been



less fertile anyway). Instead, they deployed themselves in proximity to the agricultural labor supply. Moodie and his neighbors, Commissioner L.C. Meredith later reported, ‘pegged the richest spots... In fact, the very spots where the Natives were most thickly situated were, to a great extent selected as farms’. Thus positioned, landlords pushed their primitive accumulation to the hilt, charging their African ‘tenants’ rents payable in days of work. ‘The Natives were treated more like slaves than free subjects’, added Meredith.<sup>11</sup> Blacks’ self-sufficiency made matters worse for the colonists, and the more rough-hewn used whatever means necessary to wring labor out of the unwilling populace. As Dunbar Moodie’s diary records for an unpleasant day in 1895: ‘Niggers troubling us. Not coming to work. Brickmaking at critical stage. Had to sjambok several’.<sup>12</sup> Such ‘kaffir farming’ epitomized the primordial geography of conquest: settlers and natives lived on the same parcels of land, the former as feudal lords, the latter as indentured serfs.

Shortly, however, the Native Department arrived—and with it a limited defense of African interests and space. In 1896, Native Commissioner J.D. Hulley (Meredith’s short-lived predecessor) proposed the creation of a native reserve (Palmer 1977, 41). The next year, Meredith himself announced: ‘I pegged off a tract of country for a Native reserve and told the Natives that if they were not content to remain on private farms, they were at liberty to move to the Reserve’.<sup>13</sup> By 1898, the Native Department was mapping reserves throughout the country.<sup>14</sup> The Department’s room for manoeuvre was slight. Unless land-owners failed utterly to use their land—violating the ‘beneficial occupation’ clause of their grants—the title deed stood. ‘I have done the best I could in the selection of this piece of land,’ Meredith wrote of

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<sup>11</sup> National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) public record NUE 2/1/2, L.C. Meredith, NC Melsetter to CNC Salisbury, 20 October 1897.

<sup>12</sup> The sjambok is a hippo-hide whip. Dunbar Moodie’s dairy excerpted in NAZ historical manuscript MO 11/4, ‘The undaunted: the story of the Moodie Trek and the early days of the Melsetter settlement’, by G.B.D. Moodie, p. 138.

<sup>13</sup> NAZ public record NUE 2/1/2, L.C. Meredith, NC Melsetter to CNC Salisbury, 20 October 1897.

<sup>14</sup> The Land Commission had actually demarcated the first reserves in Matabeleland in 1894, Shangani and Gwaai, but did not address the same need in central and eastern Zimbabwe (Alexander, McGregor, and Ranger 2000, 21)(Palmer 1977, 30-4). Meredith’s colleagues in districts affected by the 1896-1897 urprisings (which did not touch Melsetter) demarcated reserves with additional purposes. The unrest generated refugee flows and a need to set aside land for refugees. See Beach (1970, 30-1) for such an account regarding Charter District.

his reserve, 'as there was no choice. The rest of the district was already pegged off.'<sup>15</sup> Still, west of the white highlands, Moodie had not allocated the arid Save Valley. To the east, he had also spared the extremely fertile Rusitu and Haroni Valleys, presumed (incorrectly) to be Portuguese. Meredith demarcated this eastern low veldt as Ngorima Reserve, along with five other native reserves, each associated with an African chief. Settlers, especially Afrikaners, despised him for giving blacks an exit option from tenancy and its labour obligations. 'The English government pampers the blacks to such an extent as to make the country impossible for the whites', wrote a sympathetic German visitor, 'Exeter Hall [the Colonial Office] is ruining Africa'.<sup>16</sup> Thanks to Exeter Hall, African smallholders held slightly more than half of Melsetter District (Palmer 1977, 262-3). Thus, Meredith's lasting dispensation of race and space enshrined white highlands and black lowlands. The black refuge constituted a forbidden zone to whites farmers.<sup>17</sup>

As the colonial political economy evolved, the reserves took on additional, less protective roles. Outsiders and insiders exploited the reserves in multifarious ways. Politically, segregation placed rural and rural-based blacks outside civil law and civil liberties and within (colonially invented) 'customary law'. Chiefs and headmen had free reign to rule the reserves and impose what Mamdani (1996) calls 'decentralized despotism' (cf. Ribot 1996)(Ribot 1999). On the economic front, chief-administered 'communal tenure' obstructed ambitious smallholders in obtaining either title deeds or investment credit. Upwardly mobile blacks could neither mortgage nor legally sell their fields in the reserves.<sup>18</sup> These handicaps helped insulate white business from competition in agriculture and from wage demands in industry. Mines, factories, and other employers profited from the absence of 'kaffir farming' in the

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<sup>15</sup> NAZ public record NUE 2/1/2, L.C. Meredith, NC Melsetter to CNC Salisbury, 20 October 1897. Eventually, however, Meredith did repossess all but two of the Moodie farms for want of 'beneficial occupation' (Burrows 1954, 158).

<sup>16</sup> In the midst of a tour of Melsetter estates, this quotation derives from the 29 April 1900 entry in the diary of Carl Peters (1902, 252).

<sup>17</sup> The claim would apply to all uses of natural resources were it not for indigenous tree-felling by the Rhodesia Native Timber Corporation (chiefly in Gwai, western Zimbabwe) and by various mining concerns (in all mining areas) (McGregor, 1991, 452)(Vincent Machangaidze, pers. com., 10 November 2000).

<sup>18</sup> With the Land Apportionment Act of 1930, formal racial segregation closed an important loophole: upwardly mobile blacks had been legally (though not practically) able to buy commercial farms. The Act limited such acquisitions to 'African Purchase areas' set off from white agriculture (Palmer 1977, 135-6).

reserves. Labor was ‘free’—in the sense that it was available for hire by anyone, including by other reserve residents (Worby 1995). And labour was cheap. Because the Rhodesian equivalent of South Africa’s ‘influx control’ banned workers’ families from the towns, women continued to farm the reserves. They fed the young and old. In effect, women and the reserves reproduced the labour force, lessening the responsibilities of employers. Consequently, black men earned less, and white industrialists accumulated more than either party otherwise would have (Arrighi 1970). In all these ways, the reserve boundary cut blacks off from opportunities for advancement.<sup>19</sup>

Yet, even this bleak cloud held a silver lining: the same segregation that stymied black ambition underwrote black security. In Melsetter, the commercial development of alienated land made that tenurial guarantee increasingly essential and Meredith’s contribution to the cadaster increasingly valuable. During Meredith’s tenure itself, blacks hardly used the reserves. In their calculus, suffering moderate corvées on the high veldt was preferable to the hardship of farming dry soil and/or grazing disease-ridden valleys. The undercapitalized settlers, moreover, allowed tenants to plant substantial gardens for consumption and, to an extent, for the market as well. By the 1950s, however, these landlords were going bankrupt and selling out to more industrious farmers or to agri-business. The new owners planted the highlands intensively to tea, coffee, and exotic trees, leaving no space for family plots. In other words, economic development finally rendered ‘kaffir farming’ uneconomical. The estates promptly ‘manumitted’ large numbers of their tenants by ejecting them from the highlands. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Africans from a wide catchment spilled into the low veldt, where chiefs and headmen shoe-horned them into farmland.<sup>20</sup> Women and children in particular peopled Melsetter’s reserves while men worked seasonally elsewhere. Members of both sexes remember this period bitterly. ‘Tarka Forest [Estate] drove people off ...’, recalled one evicted man, ‘We had a big place. It was taken from us. We were left with a

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<sup>19</sup> A long the lines of O’Laughlin (1996), the reserves and their residents stood firmly within, rather than outside (as in dualism), the larger capitalist system.

<sup>20</sup> 1962 and 1969, the population of Ngorima Reserve shot up at least 60% (far above the natural rate of increase) to reach a density of 40-50 persons per square km. By 1982, the density had reached the range of 80-120 persons per square kilometer, making Ngorima Reserve among the most tightly packed rural areas in Zimbabwe. The ranges derive from Government national maps based on census data: ‘Rhodesia African Population Density’, 1969, including, as an inset, ‘African Rural Population Percentage Change 1962-69’; and ‘Zimbabwe Rural Population Density’, 1982.

very, very small place [Ngorima Reserve]'.<sup>21</sup> That place would have been smaller still had the native commissioner not defended black territory. In 1952, he refused the Rusitu Mission permission to expand onto 21.25 additional hectares (25 morgen) of 'overcrowded' reserve land.<sup>22</sup> Local government's policies towards race and space sustained the black lowlands. That policy reached a limit, however. Meredith and his successors did not and could not grant *rights* to Africans. Natives were wards of the colony—clients and subjects rather than citizens (cf. Mamdani, 1996). Without any obligation to do so, the state chose to honour its native commissioners' ideal of black entitlements. Yet, beginning in the 1930s, governmental practices of conservation infringed upon that ideal. Programmes of 'centralisation' (1930s) and 'native land husbandry' (1950s) sought to prohibit farming on slopes and streambanks and strictly to regulate cropping and grazing throughout the reserves. Most ambitiously, colonial conservation sought to nucleate a dispersed African population into villages. In the east, these regimes had less impact than elsewhere in the Rhodesia; for the slopes were so ubiquitous and the population so dense that enforcement would have made the reserves patently unviable. To protect forests, conservations compromised rather less. Under the harsh Rhodesian Front regime of 1965-1979, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management gazetted three species-rich woodlands in Ngorima Reserve.<sup>23</sup> Park rangers did their best to remove residents of these areas. Thus, otherwise well-meaning, ornithologists and herpetologists accomplished for the sake of birds and lizards what white settlers had not been able to achieve for themselves: in practice, they violated the ideal of secure territorial entitlements for black farmers. Shortly thereafter, the Rhodesian Front regime fell.

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<sup>21</sup> 'Vakadzinga vanhu ngeTarka Forest ... Takanga tine nzimbo hombe. Takaitorerwa. Tasara nekaplace kadiki-diki' (Vhimba, Ngorima Communal Land, 15 September 1996). Hughes (1996) provides a fuller description of this period.

<sup>22</sup> Society for International Ministries (SIM) archive, Charlotte, NC, USA, AEF—British Council Box 28, Zimbabwe Reports, 1949-1972, Rusitu District Conference, 1952. NCs, were, nonetheless, disposed to make exceptions for Missions. The Rusitu Mission did eventually acquire additional land in Muusha Reserve. Initially, in 1899, Meredith had allocated 2.5 ha. (6 acres) in Ngorima Reserve, although the Mission had requested fully 425 ha. (500 morgen). NAZ file NUE 2/1/2, L.C. Meredith, NC Melsetter to Civil Commissioner, Melsetter, 30 November 1897; NUE 2/1/2, L.C. Meredith, N.C. Melsetter to Mr. Raney, South African General Mission, 26 January 1899.

<sup>23</sup> The three forests now lie in the southern extension of Chimanimani National Park (gazetted, 1968) and the Haroni and Rusitu Botanical Reserves (1974). Donald Broadley, Director of the Mutare Museum at that time, pushed for a much larger gazettement within Ngorima Reserve (Interview, Bulawayo, 29 March 1997). Chipinge Wildlife Area is the remaining protected area.

Ultimately, the policy and the practice of native reserves survived—and mostly thrived—under colonialism.

## CAMPFIRE THOUGHT

From its inception, Campfire contested the conventional spatial order. The academically savvy “Campfire intelligentsia” raised ecological, economic, and, in particular, social challenges. To begin with the ecological, reforms leading up to Campfire introduced the concept of bioregionalism. Having started in the United States in the 1960s, the bioregional movement questioned administrative and national borders (Aberly 1999; Berg and Dasmann 1977). Surely, proponents argued, those who wished to preserve nature had to think and act with ecological units of analysis—watersheds, valleys, mountain ranges, etc. Developments in the East African savannah supported this reframing. During the mid-1970s drought, elephants inside Kenya’s Tsavo National park ate the woodland and then starved in enormous numbers.<sup>24</sup> This carnage—the effect of “insularization,”<sup>25</sup>—incriminated the entire system of discrete protected areas. Nature now had to exceed its colonially-mandated enclaves. Before independence, Rhodesia’s Director of National Parks, Graham Child, convinced white land-owners to “allow space for wildlife on their land, thus providing corridors between the protected areas.”<sup>26</sup> Elephants should reconstitute their archaic Zambezi Valley migration. Meanwhile, managers adopted what one principal described as a “landscape strategy”<sup>27</sup>: bioregions spanning the escarpment between highlands and lowlands. Ultimately, roaming animals accomplished what trekking colonists had failed to do. They overcame the colonial partition of white, black, and natural zones.

Economic thinking also helped weaken those walls. Unwittingly, Campfire’s advocates borrowed the principles and vocabulary of 19<sup>th</sup>-century frontier boosterism. Proponents of

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<sup>24</sup> Beard (1988: 235ff) provides a compelling pictorial account of the death.

<sup>25</sup> The term derives from the ecological theory of island biogeography, which exerted a strong influence on African conservation (MacArthur and Wilson 1967: 176; cf Western 1994: 42). Some experts, however, still subscribe to a minority view: that stochastic crashes of the elephant population are normal and could be expected even absent humans (Richard Bell, pers. com.).

<sup>26</sup> In this way, Graham Child (1996: 361) initiated Operation Windfall (Wildlife Industries New Development for All), the precursor to Campfire.

<sup>27</sup> Interview, Harare, 13 July 1999. David Cumming of WWF-Harare compiled comprehensive maps of drainage basins, species habitats, centers of endemism and other trans-boundary “eco-regions” in Southern Africa (Cumming 1999: figures 2.2-2.20).

investment in the western United States had expounded that the right configuration of natural resources *inevitably* generated wealth. As the story went, soil, climate, and navigable rivers would make (and did make) Chicago and the Great West.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps Zimbabwe's fauna, sunshine, and (to stretch the parallel) air routes and roads could produce a similar success story. So thought wildlife managers in the 1980s and 1990s. Indeed, tourism exploited the "big-five" species, and visitors doled out dollars to photograph and/or kill them. How could it be otherwise? Wildlife, Graham Child later wrote, possessed an "*inherent* financial comparative advantage" (G. Child 1996: 358; emphasis added). Development and entrepreneurial possibility seemed to emanate from the very landscape, unmediated by culture. Hayfield B estate, boasted its owner, contained a fail-safe location for a new-age spiritual retreat: spot on latitude 20 South, longitude 33 East.<sup>29</sup> Deeply flawed, such boosterism assumed the unalterable attractiveness of the region and an unending flow of travelers.<sup>30</sup> When tourism collapsed in 2000, Campfire proponents would have reason to reconsider their assumptions. Until then, boosterism and bioregionalism freed the Campfire intelligentsia to concentrate on what really troubled it: rural black society.

In the 1980s, various public and private agencies converged on one point: fewer people should live in Zimbabwe's reserves (or at, least, the rate of increase should go down). The resettlement programme transferred over 70,000 families from the communal lands to parcels abandoned or sold by whites (Kinsey 1999, 173). With less success, industry created urban jobs, complete with family accommodation. Programmes aimed at population growth helped lower the birth rate while conservationists consistently bemoaned the 'population problem' in Zimbabwe's low veldt. As a result, the reserves, once a place to go *to*, officially became a place to go *from* in search of opportunity elsewhere. At the very least, this unlikely consensus among proponents of industry, conservation, and resettlement stipulated that the reserves' population should be stabilised. Yet, the people did the opposite. In the most significant post-independence migration, smallholders moved from the southeast to the northwest low veldt. They filled up communal lands of the cotton frontier in Gokwe, Binga, and Nyaminyami

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<sup>28</sup> Many such boosters, however, were also speculators, attempting to manipulate public opinion in order to make their predictions come true (Cronon 1991: 31ff). Boosters of Southern African, eco-tourism, by contrast, believed fully in their assertions.

<sup>29</sup> Interview, Hayfield B, 23 July 1997.

<sup>30</sup> Patrick Bond (1998: 401) argues that many foreigners visited Zimbabwe precisely because structural adjustment had weakened its currency. Tourism owed its boom, in part, to economic woe in most other sectors and in the lives of ordinary Zimbabweans.

Districts.<sup>31</sup> As other government agencies eradicated tsetse fly, migrants and their cattle advanced towards the Zambezi. Meanwhile, the resettlement program stalled in 1985, and industry hit its own ceiling around 1990. Against most official hopes, people discovered opportunity in the reserves.

Campfire blossomed in this atmosphere of demographic disappointment. The programme identified the reserves as zones of wild abundance and human threat, a longstanding conservationist view (Schroeder 1999, 361-2). As opposed to old-style ‘fortress conservation’, however, the designers of Campfire imagined that local people themselves could reduce the excess population. In support of this belief, conservationists elaborated a historical narrative of the reserves that sanctified local natives and demonized in-migrants (without, however, including that narrative as an explicit component of policy). As Simon Metcalfe, a social scientist and early Campfire organizer, explained, ‘The traditional roots of communal life are still strong, providing a web of affection and social and material security’. Yet, he continued, two problems impinged from outside. First, ‘the modern state apparatus .. imposed [itself] on communal Africa’ (Metcalf 1994, 185). Campfire found a legal solution to that externality: in 36 districts, it transferred control of game from the central government to local people or their representatives in district government. As for the second problem, new settlers—stigmatised as ‘immigrants’—were overrunning wildlife habitats of the Zambezi Valley.<sup>32</sup> Metcalf (1994, 184) predicted:

Unless modern and traditional authorities pull together together locally, membership of Campfire producer communities will be threatened by a lack of exclusivity, spontaneous unplanned settlement and fragmentation of wildlife habitat. The ability to exclude settlers, if necessary, may be a prerequisite for ultimate success.

In other words, headmen, chiefs, and the whole ‘web of affection’ were embracing outsiders too readily. Could technical support reform these institutions, making them less hospitable? Metcalfe and others certainly thought so, but their faith misconstrued the *raison d’être* for ‘traditional authorities’ and for the reserves as a whole. In Zimbabwe, in-migration

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<sup>31</sup> The migrations had already begun in Gokwe in the 1960s and accelerated in the 1980s (Nyambara 1999, 124ff)(Worby 1998, 567)(Zinyama and Whitlow 1986, 373).

<sup>32</sup> Even authors sympathetic to migrants use this terminology, helping to conflate foreignness to a locality with foreignness to Zimbabwe (Dzingirai 1994, 2000)(Nyambara 1999).

constitutes the founding principle of reserves and their leadership. As explained above, the Native Department created reserves as zones of arrival. Headmen rose to power precisely when and because people did arrive in the reserves (the 1950s in Ngorima).<sup>33</sup> Newcomers, petitioned them for access to farmland and, from that moment on, owed their tenure to higher authorities. Each migrant added to the power of headmen—certainly not a ‘traditional’ power.<sup>34</sup> Of course, newcomers and latecomers competed and still compete for land and other natural resources. On the other hand, migrants contributed to the critical mass of people necessary to obtain a clinic, school, bus route, member of parliament, and other services that benefit everyone. As Worby (1998, 567) writes, migrants turned Gokwe from a wildlife-infested backwater into ‘the pre-eminent cash-crop zone of Zimbabwe’s widely-heralded small-holder revolution’. To many rural and development-oriented Zimbabweans, migrants mean modernity.

Still failing to grasp this popular idea of progress, Campfire agencies spent the late 1980s and the 1990s trying to convert rural Zimbabweans to another belief. Proponents narrowed their focus to the economics of reserves—the commodities and markets linked to them. Could the reserves generate more income from the conservation of wildlife than from cattle grazing and other activities that jeopardised wildlife? ‘Yes’, said the economists, and tourism was the answer. In the 1990s, Europeans and North Americans recycled their growing incomes and investments as holidays in the African savannah. Some of the wealthiest would pay US\$800 per day to hunt big game and thousands more for the necessary trophy fees. The World Wide Fund for Nature calculated that sport-hunting would almost certainly generate higher profits than extensive stock-raising. Such comparisons overlooked cotton and so came to a rosy conclusion: if smallholders could only capture the revenues from wildlife, they would gladly and immediately return cultivated areas to wildlife habitat.<sup>35</sup> Surely, they would also prohibit in-migration, both to preserve their own share of the loot and to further protect the habitat. In other words, ‘rational peasants’ would voluntarily relinquish their entitlement to farm and graze the reserves. Meanwhile, local governments would contract with eco-tourism firms

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<sup>33</sup> Hughes (1999a: 102f). As opposed to Metcalf’s ‘communal Africa’, Cheater (1990)(cf. Bruce 1988: 24-5) argues that men as well as women had owned and bequeathed land virtually as private property.

<sup>34</sup> Nyambara 1999, 441ff. Some migrants, however, settled with their own chiefs and headmen, thus empowering a transplanted leadership.

<sup>35</sup> For the cattle-wildlife comparison, see Jansen, Bond, and Child (1992). Comparisons with cotton would have been complex since that crop is grown intensively whereas wildlife and cattle roam intensively (Ivan Bond, pers. com., 15 September 2000).



and—acting altruistically—devolve the lion’s share of revenues to the ‘producer communities’. These ‘Campfire principles’ envisioned far-reaching alternatives to conventional national parks and fortress conservation. Yet, Campfire’s protocol has worked almost nowhere. Many councils, it is now widely acknowledged, act like true ‘rational peasants’ and monopolize the money.<sup>36</sup>

Yet, even in the two Campfire cases widely heralded as successful, rural district councils have done structural damage to rural security and land tenure. The programme and its principles rezoned the two reserves. In Masoka, Guruve District, residents delineated an enclosure for agriculture. The World-Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) donated an electric fence to protect people and crops from wildlife (and vice-versa).<sup>37</sup> Leaders of Chikwarakwara, Beitbridge District drew up a similar plan for villagisation and for ‘retain[ing] remote and wild land which is valuable for tourism and wildlife’ (Child 1993, 290). Both the relevant district councils returned revenues directly to local people. ‘Cash is the best extension agent’, boosters told me in 1994, and that cash inoculated Masoka and Chikwarakwara from criticism.<sup>38</sup> Proponents then inflated these two cases into a general model. A widely circulated diagram from WWF (1997, 7) suggested that animal-rich reserves be remapped into two zones: ‘community wildlife management areas’ and much smaller, agricultural ‘settlement areas’ (Figure 1).

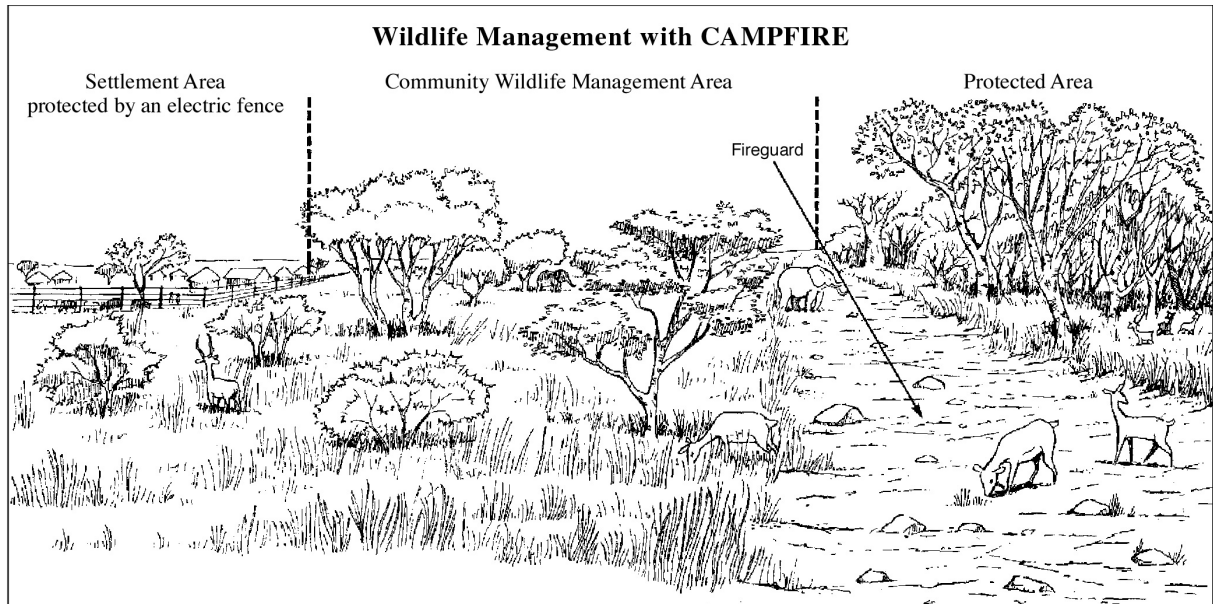
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<sup>36</sup> Authors are cited in the introduction to this article.

<sup>37</sup> (Matzke and Nabane 1996, 77-81; Murphree, 1991: 10) Early on, a National Parks ecologist expressed the ambivalent nature of these fences as follows: ‘...the project *cannot* promote wildlife management—through *restriction of access to arable and grazing lands*—as a replacement for traditional crop and livestock productions. Instead, it must be viewed as a complementary system which is compatible with the established system. One element of this compatibility is to protect, people, crops, and livestock from marauding wildlife by *fencing the village areas off from the game management areas*’ (Murindagomo 1990, 130 emphasis added)(cf. Wunder 1997, 261-2)(cf. Duffy 2000, 98-9).

<sup>38</sup> The phrase appeared frequently in print as well (Child and Peterson 1991, 39)(Murphree 1991, 14)(cf. Munro 1998, 277).

**Figure 1. WWF Diagram**



Source: World-Wide Fund for Nature, 1997. *Quota Setting Manual*. Harare: World-Wide Fund for Nature, Zimbabwe Trust, and Safari Club International, p. 7.

Conservationists and the tourism industry would, thereby, enclose the bulk of the reserve, converting farmland into a buffer zone for the adjoining protected area. This ‘*exclosure* of resident human populations’ (Schroeder 1999, 365) would prejudice non-residents to an even greater degree. Rump reserves would surely lack residual space to support in-migrants. Unborn children—WWF seemed to assume—would need to limit their numbers so as not to overcrowd the settlement areas. In short, WWF deftly overturned the inclusionary logic of the reserves—with the full support of Campfire agencies.

On the ground, this type of partition generated irate peasant protest and muted dissent from the intelligentsia. In 1989, Nyamandlovu District called upon Campfire scholars to help it launch sport-hunting. Council and the Department of National Parks had already zoned a wildlife-rich ‘buffer zone’ within communal land adjacent to Hwange National Park. The affected residents, Council hoped, would retreat ‘voluntarily’ from the outer edge of the reserve to a more secure and well-served location. One Campfire fieldworker recalled Council officers coaxing: “We want to bring you back into the lines [of Land Husbandry] so it is easier for Council to do what Council is supposed to do.” Certainly, the provision of

schools, clinics, and water points was attractive; “it made sense,” recalled the social scientist.<sup>39</sup> Another social anthropologist noticed a contradiction: ‘If wildlife production is to be, as is postulated, a real money-spinner, they [local residents] should benefit from their location. Why move them?’<sup>40</sup> For a more visceral view, authors deferred to local voices: ‘You have moved us to let your wildlife in’, declared one virtual evictee in an unpublished document.<sup>41</sup>

Meanwhile, Campfire-related rezoning provoked an even more blatant conflict elsewhere in western Zimbabwe, in Binga District. Violating an agreement on fencing, Broom Safaris unilaterally encircled a farming area much smaller than that stipulated. The safari operator, whom another researcher and I encountered in 1994 in the disputed zone, called it “my best hunting ground.”<sup>42</sup> Again, a Campfire scholar intervened in print, quoting the lament of Binga elder: ‘Campfire is now ransoming everything that we have. First it was the animals ...Now it is the land’ (Dzingirai 1995: 7). In the face of an escalating row, District Administrator Dumisani Ncube clarified the situation to the press:

The Campfire project... is, in fact, a people’s project. What is being done at the moment is to demarcate the concession area from other parts of the communal land so that safari operators can do their work without any disturbances. People should not panic.<sup>43</sup>

This valiant defense of partition calmed no one. Five years later, as discontent still simmered, the Campfire manager for Binga sowed panic himself. Calling migrants “foreigners in inverted commas,” he startled a conference with his own update on the conflict:

This issue of migrants is now a needle in the Manager’s tongue. It is high time [a] council resolution should be implemented to get the environmental disturbance rubbed off once and for all... This illegal occupation of our promised land will seek an intervention by high ranked politicians ... (Lunga 1999).

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<sup>39</sup> Interview, Harare, 26 March 2000.

<sup>40</sup> Interview, Harare, 29 March 2000.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Madzudzo (1996: 7). For an earlier assessment, see Murphree (1989). Alexander and McGregor (2000: 621) describe a Campfire-related eviction in nearby Lupane Communal Land.

<sup>42</sup> Interview, Kabuba, Binga District, 7 July 1994. I am grateful to Vupenyu Dzingirai for allowing me to accompany him during fieldwork.

<sup>43</sup> “ZANU(PF) intervenes in Binga row,” *Bulawayo Chronicle*, 22 May 1994.

Thus, smallholders, who once enjoyed a guaranteed sanctuary, now squat insecurely on someone else's business district. The logic of Campfire culminates in eviction.

## PIONEERS IN IMPROBABLE PLACES

Spreading to eastern Zimbabwe, Campfire lost its economic rationale altogether. Compared with the arid, game-rich west, eastern Zimbabwe benefits far less from tourism and far more from agriculture. The region contains the most fertile land with the highest annual rainfall in the country. Estates grow tea, coffee, and various fruits. In the early 1990s, smallholders started planting these crops as well. By 1994, the banana boom had gripped Ngorima Communal Land, and especially Vhimba, the area under consideration for eco-tourism (cf. Manzou 2000, 10-12). In that year, Vhimba's two fruit marketing groups grossed US\$4,388. Each group member earned, on average, US\$61, while the top five producers brought in a mean of US\$296 each (Figure 2).<sup>44</sup> One household, Wilbert and Ester Yaibva, grossed US\$307 annually per hectare (Figure 3).<sup>45</sup> The accumulation—even if lopsided—was unmistakable. Indeed, so profitable was the banana boom that the Rural District Council itself alienated 20 ha. in Vhimba in 1994 for a parastatal farm. Planners intended to intensify production to the incredible level of US\$4,851 in profits plus local wages per hectare per year (Figure 3).<sup>46</sup> Combined with smallholder fields, the plantation left little room for tourism,

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<sup>44</sup> Neglected by all previous studies (cited below), these data derive from the 'production books' of the Nyakwaa and Marirangwe groups of the Rusitu Valley Fruit Growers Association. Since farmers used no inputs, revenues from sales are equivalent to profit plus the cost of labour. The production books indicate only a portion of each member's harvest of bananas. Depending on price and terms, farmers often marketed outside the Association. Hence, total production might have gone much higher. I counted as members only those people who marketed bananas through the groups in a given year. Hence, the total number of producers varies from year to year, as does the identity of the top five producers. Official exchange rates apply to 1 July of the given year (8.21, 8.56, and 9.86 for 1994-96). All figures are in current dollars. Amounts for 1997 and onwards are misleading due to rapid devaluation of the Zimbabwe dollar and hyper-inflation.

<sup>45</sup> These are pseudonyms. The income figure is an average of 1994 and 1995, as recorded in the production books of the Rusitu Valley Fruit Growers Association. The field size (2.3 ha.) derives from my examination of the Zimbabwe Surveyor General's 1996 aerial photograph #077 (Chipinge series). Wilbert Yaibva himself stated that his field size was roughly 2 ha. and his number of banana plants as 2,600 at 3-meter intervals (giving a field size of 2.34 ha.) (interview, Vhimba, 4 February 1997).

<sup>46</sup> 'Project Appraisal Report, Haroni Banana Project', p. 11. The pre-tax figure was based on a 1 September 1994 exchange rate of 8.20. Bananas were to be planted at only 2-meter intervals, rather than at Yaibva's 3-meter spacing. Council also assumed perfect transportation and zero spoilage, conditions certainly not experienced by Yaibva. Nonetheless, as the banana plants matured, the chairman of the Rural District Council announced a comparably high figure: 'Chimanmani to Earn \$3m from Bananas', *The Herald* (Harare), 1 May 1995, p. 6.

even for chalets or campsites. Of course, any such facility—if it truly represented development—would have to top the US\$4,851 per hectare mark. Council’s wildly optimistic numbers boxed it into a corner.

**Figure 2. Vhimba Smallholders’ Revenue from Bananas (US\$)**

	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>
<b>Mean of top 5 producers</b>	296	312	267
<b>Mean of marketing members</b>	61	54	60

**Figure 3. Profitability of Land Uses (US\$)**

	<b>Chimanmani Rural District Council’s estimates of profit plus local wages per ha. p.a.</b>	<b>Actual profit plus local wages per ha. for the year immediately following the estimate</b>
<b>Banana production</b>	4,851	307
<b>Eco-tourism</b>	1,471	0
<b>Opportunity cost of eco-tourism</b>	3,380	307

How could tourism, especially when limited to bird-watching and hiking, beat the banana? Boosters trusted in a future ‘eastern circuit’ and in travelers’ desire to foray into little-known communal lands (Africa Resources Trust n.d.). On the front lines of this campaign, NGOs fastened on Vhimba, in the deep recesses of Ngorima Communal Land, where rains regularly interrupted vehicle traffic. The quixotic proposal for a ‘Vhimba Eco-Tourism Project’ predicted local benefits of only US\$1,924 per annum. According to the proposal, the project committee would then divide this grand sum between a revolving fund and dividends to beneficiaries.<sup>47</sup> At the maximum level conceivable, each of the more than 200 households would take home at most US\$10. Such a pittance could hardly justify any household’s

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<sup>47</sup> The figure represents profits plus the wage bill for staff. The author of the report included this cost because jobs would constitute a benefit to the community (SAFIRE 1996, 19, 27). Thus, the comparison with smallholders’ banana revenue (where labor was the only cost) is exact. The exchange rate refers to 1 January 1996 (9.33).

opportunity cost of giving up a banana field. Delicately, another study admitted that ‘the estimated annual income ... [will] have possible negative repercussions to the [local] people’s continued interest to participate in the project’ (Matikinyidze 1995, 12). Truly, bird-watching amounted to petty cash as against Vhimba’s golden fruit! Among Campfire agencies, however, interest remained strong. Tourism, profitable or not, might help protect forests and rezone the reserves for future investment of unknown proportions.

Boosters of eco-tourism began by demonizing black newcomers to Vhimba and sanctifying white ones. At least some of the blacks migrating to Vhimba had jumped the Mozambican border—sometimes in both directions (Hughes 1999b). In the early 1990s, National Parks sounded its usual alarm with more than the usual double-speak: ‘the main cultural and political difficulty is the problem of illegal immigrants ... [who may] have family in both Mozambique and Zimbabwe hold both Mozambiquan [*sic*] and Zimbabwean papers’ (Kawadza and Rogers 1993). Parks blamed these itinerant dual citizens and refugees from Mozambique’s war for partially clearing the Haroni and Rusitu Botanical Reserves in favor of bananas and other crops. Of course, Parks could have helped protect the forest by providing land to refugees elsewhere in the district (Hughes 1996). Instead, Parks sought assistance from another outside group with interests in Vhimba: plantation owners and other whites on the highlands. Gathered together under the banner of the Chipinge Branch of the Wildlife Society of Zimbabwe, these conservationists provided transportation and uniforms to National Parks patrols. Until Parks’ provincial office explicitly banned the assistance—as a violation of civil service rules—armed scouts arrested and assaulted numerous Vhimba smallholders. By that time, Parks had decided to defer to Campfire-style initiatives and outside investment. In 1996, the only true immigrant involved—a one-time British Hong Konger and stock-trader—approached the Rural District Council for a business license to operate in Vhimba. John Oberlander envisioned a string of backpacker lodges and adventure outposts anchored at Vhimba and supporting local communities. Council joined in the effort.<sup>48</sup> It hired a British tourism officer (a VSO volunteer), and she advised that Vhimba should ‘work with an experienced partner’ to develop its ‘tourism product’ (Steward 1997, 4). A white expatriate, thus, obtained a privilege local government had long denied to local whites and even to Mozambican dual nationals: an official invitation to do business in the native reserve.

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<sup>48</sup> John Oberlander is a pseudonym.

Once inside the reserve, Oberlander rapidly and predictably claimed land. Council actually pushed Oberlander and his junior partner—Colin Walker, a white Zimbabwean—in this direction. In a move that stirred much controversy, Council granted them access to a ‘business centre’ located next to Council’s banana plantation. Vhimba people knew of only one business center, a block of locally-owned stores some kilometers from this site. Maps showed no similar ‘business centre’ here, and Council did not officially declare one. There was a disused ‘corner store’ then serving as a storage shed for the banana plantation. In effect, Council enlarged the store into an enclave, excised it from the reserve, and ceded it to investors. Thereupon, heated debate ensued as to the boundaries of this investment zone (and the parties called upon me to mediate and translate). A smallholder, C. was cultivating along its eastern edge. He and his crops might have to go, and Vhimba smallholders began to relive past evictions. Oberlander ‘will take our land from us,’ warned one farmer. Another interrupted a meeting with Oberlander to demand: ‘Where will we farm now, [across the border] in Chief Mafussi’s area’?<sup>49</sup> To Vhimba people, whites seemed poised to complete Jameson and Moodie’s unfinished business: to colonize the whole of Melseetter, and push the natives clear into Portuguese territory.

The community, however, won this battle in a circuitous and provisional fashion. Trying to make the best of a bad situation, Council and NGOs (and myself) urged Oberlander to form a joint venture with a local committee in Vhimba and to operate according to Campfire principles. That committee had, in fact, agreed in 1994 to run its own, independent tourism facility. (As a means of resolving the conflict between conservationists and local people, the Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources [an NGO] sought funds for such a project as well as for agricultural initiatives.) Now, the increasingly fatalistic committee had been waiting three years for its grant from the Campfire Association. Thus, the marriage between external capital and local entrepreneurship seemed to be made in heaven. It would give Vhimba people money and give Oberlander political legitimacy. A joint venture would also lay the groundwork for the ‘culture based activities (crafts, music, dance, etc)’ that the tourism officer recommended to tourism investors (Steward 1997: 4). Walker, who believed that business in the reserves required ‘a mixture of subtlety and brutality’, assessed this possibility in blunter terms: Vhimba, he later reminisced, has ‘got black people smiling. They wave. It’s

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<sup>49</sup> Respectively, ‘*Anozotitorera nyika yedu*’; ‘*Tinongorima papi? KwaMafussi?*’ (Vhimba, 26 July 1997; addendum to my minutes of 4 March 1997 meeting).

not like Harlem'.<sup>50</sup> Despite these auspicious conditions, Vhimba people soon stopped smiling. Having identified Oberlander as a land-grabber, headmen, in particular, pressured the committee to renege.<sup>51</sup> The District Administrator added his considerable weight until, in mid-1997, the Committee performed a dramatic about-face. To a stunned planning workshop, the committee chair pronounced, 'Death before partnership!' Reluctantly, Council withdrew its invitation to Oberlander.

Nonetheless, Council persevered in rezoning the Ngorima Reserve. For the next three years it vetted proposals for investment and/or partnership with the unwilling people of Vhimba. Council turned first to the Chipinge Branch of the Wildlife Society. Despite their earlier parapolic involvement, members of the Branch desired to collaborate with Vhimba residents for tourism and conservation. Terry Eagle, a birder already running the nature-oriented Kiledo Lodge, had thought for years of expanding operations and providing employment in Vhimba. If blacks could only 'improve their lot' off-farm, he fervently believed, then they would spare wildlife and forests from the ravages of the plough.<sup>52</sup> He made scant progress and soon ceded the field to others in the Wildlife Society. In 1999, one of its Branch officers met with a consultant to the Campfire Association to discuss the Branch's construction of five chalets in Vhimba. Again, nothing came of the idea.<sup>53</sup> In the same year, Rainbow Tourism Group, owner of the nearby Chimanimani Hotel, developed the most ambitious plan. On a detailed map, the company plotted a wide footprint of nine structures, quite similar to Eagle's Kiledo Lodge. In a breathtaking solution to the perennial transport problem, the company also sited a

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<sup>50</sup> Respectively, interview, Chimanimani National Park, 7 August 1999; interview, Harare, 8 July 2000. Walker had never been to Harlem.

<sup>51</sup> The rift between headmen and the committee grew, in part, from the structure of the eco-tourism project itself. Headmen, for whom territorial battles were paramount, had been adamantly opposed to recognizing the Rusitu Botanical Reserve. In order to obtain the community's agreement to the protected area, a conservation-minded NGO helped create the committee in 1994 as an alternative local authority. Composed of Vhimba's most literate resident and other business-minded individuals, the committee would promote eco-tourism and, thereby, win adherents to conservation—as per the Campfire model. Headmen lobbied against the deal with Oberlander, identifying it (correctly) as a land grab. One would have expected land-poor in-migrants to oppose the deal as well. By and large, this was the case, except that the committee's vice-chair had come to Vhimba only in 1991, and the chair grew bananas inside the botanical reserve. The collapse of the committee's deal with Oberlander represented a coup by headmen against the committee (Hughes 1999a, 160-77).

<sup>52</sup> Interview, Chipinge District, 28 July 1999. Terry Eagle is a pseudonym.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Humphrey Hayes, Chipinge, 2 August 1999.



helicopter landing pad. The complex would occupy 36.9 ha. of arable land<sup>54</sup>—at a staggering annual opportunity cost of US\$179,002 (based on Council’s figure for per-hectare banana revenues in the parastatal farm). Then, the Rainbow Tourism Group sold the Chimanimani Hotel and turned its attention away from eastern Zimbabwe. Still, as of mid-2000, the manager of the Hotel clung to his Vhimba dream. A black businessman, he spoke more openly about eviction than any other would-be investor in Vhimba: ‘Talk to him [the local farmer], give something [or] else compensate [him]. Then you can take over there. If he says “no that is not good enough”, just go ahead and take over’. The hotelier utterly misunderstood the communal lands. He referred to them only as ‘remote areas’ and informed me, ‘You can get title deeds there. I am sure’.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps he understood only too well.

Such investor confidence rests on nearly blind adherence to settler-led development. In 1999 and 2000, Chimanimani’s local government endorsed this concept in stronger and stronger terms. According to the financial tenets of settler-led development, residents of the reserves cannot succeed through self-help. Regarding tourism, the Campfire officer explained, Vhimba people ‘can’t just bump into it without the necessary expertise’.<sup>56</sup> Thus, local government has discouraged Vhimba’s committee from building their own campsite while seeking an investor to train the community in ‘basic tourism management and operations’.<sup>57</sup> This form of partnership could possibly generate valuable spin-off effects. Tourists, the boosters claim, would demand a more comfortable road. A new road would stimulate an even bigger banana boom (although the subsequent scheme of flying tourists by helicopter may make this plan moot). Yet, the numbers do not add up. Council’s most recent and professional feasibility study of a tourism investment in Vhimba projects a staggering loss of US\$290,754 over five years.<sup>58</sup> International donors, the study anticipates, will cover such start-up costs *gratis*. Even when eventually self-sustaining, the chalets will earn only

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<sup>54</sup> Much of the area is currently cultivated or under crop rotation, and the soil, rainfall, and agro-ecological classifications are equivalent to those of the banana plantation (Bromley et al 1968, maps 1,2, and 4).

<sup>55</sup> Interview, Chimanimani, 12 July 2000.

<sup>56</sup> Interview, Chimanimani, 12 July 2000.

<sup>57</sup> Chimanimani Rural District Council, ‘Draft Tender Notice’, 1999, p.2.

<sup>58</sup> Mazambani (1999: 29, 32). The conversion rate for 1 August 1999 is 38.4 .

US\$54,279 per year, or US\$1,471 per hectare.<sup>59</sup> Based on Council's own estimates, Vhimba smallholders would lose roughly US\$3,380 of potential income for every hectare rezoned from farmland to tourism (Figure 4). Shortly after this report, political violence demolished the tourist trade throughout the country. When I visited Chimanimani in July 2000, I stayed at the only hotel (of four) in the district center not closed, and there I was virtually the only guest not attending a workshop. Close to year-end, the Kiledo Lodge was running at 15% occupancy, and only 40% of these guests were nature-lovers. From eco-tourism, the Lodge's rate of profit (really negative profit, or losses) plus local wages lay at or below zero (Figure 4)!<sup>60</sup>

Against these odds, the dream of a Vhimba hotel lives on. How can NGOs, donors, and the investors themselves continue to hope? Campfire's ideology has blinded them to the negative economic indicators—including the slump in tourism nationwide—and even eclipsed the positive ones. From east to west, utopianism is breaking out. In common with the liberal 'born free' (after 1980) generation, idealists inside and outside government are groping towards a new dispensation of race and space. They would shrink exclusionary zones or abolish them altogether. In smaller, WWF-style reserves, people would live more compactly and vertically: 'OK', explained a leading Campfire professional, 'let us expand upwards, and, if we can have some five-storey buildings, rather than expanding that way [arms outstretched]'.<sup>61</sup> Needless to say, his one-storey office had not yet run the numbers on this vision. In mid-2000, in the Council's new tourism officer, a young, black Zimbabwean, articulated an even grander future, completely without reserves: 'Why should there be segregation? Whites, blacks ... we are all out to help each other, to build a better nation. So

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<sup>59</sup> The aggregate figure derives from the fifth year estimates of the revenue and expenditure (Mazambani 1999, 29, 32-5). I have excluded local salaries from expenditure and—generously—used the exchange rate at the time of the writing of report (38.4) rather than the rate as of late 2000 (55.0). The per-hectare figure assumes a compound equivalent in size to that proposed by the hotelier above. Mazambani himself gave no estimate of the amount of land required for tourism.

<sup>60</sup> Interview, Mutare, 9 November 2000. Sixty percent of the guests were businessmen visiting nearby Chipinge town. Such travelers would have no reason to stay in Vhimba. As the only land use within a 250-ha. private forest, the hotel must earn a relatively low rate of profit per hectare even in good times.

<sup>61</sup> Interview, Harare, 31 March 2000.

why should we be segregating?’<sup>62</sup> Such ideals of urban modernity and racial harmony lift Campfire from the banality of (in)feasibility studies and breathe life into it.

They are risky ideals, however, and desegregation is especially so. Long stuck in the rear seats (the reserves), some smallholders now may soon lose their place on the bus (or train or restaurant) entirely. The Campfire programme undermines their time-honoured entitlement to farmland. However paltry, an income stream from tourism might help sweeten that bitter pill, but only if rural people were entitled to that income in perpetuity (and in hard currency!). Even in the animal-rich west, Campfire projects have never warranted such confidence. As events have now shown, moreover, no one in Zimbabwe should bank on the tourist dollar. Thus, Campfire’s benefits are fast evaporating, leaving a hazardous residue. As in other development schemes, the intended, planned effects are giving way to undesirable, only half-anticipated ‘side effects’ (Ferguson, 1990). The partial alienation of Vhimba is one of these. No land has yet changed hands, but, as a principle, Chimanimani’s black lowlands are already gone.

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Old and new processes of colonization are underway in eastern Zimbabwe. In some respects, the current crop of potential investors descends from the ‘fortune hunters’ of 1890-1896. Crossing their own Limpopo, they are seeking profit on the other side of the reserve boundary. In spatial terms, they are building upon Moodie’s legacy and undoing Meredith’s work. Current colonizers may evict the great-grandchildren of those evicted by the original colonizers. Yet, the new colonizers are different and operate differently. First, most act with good will. They do not ‘sjambok’ the natives, as Moodie did. Indeed, many investors are sharing profits with local communities. Second, many investors and boosters are black, although virtually all the tourists themselves are white. A business ethic, rather than racial solidarity, gives these colonizers their unity of purpose. Third, they justify their claim to obtain and retain land on grounds of conservation. Here is an ironic reversal: whites in the 1890s held land by cutting trees—the ‘beneficial occupation’ clause. To use another term of the era, homesteading ‘opened’ the highveldt. Among blacks, homesteading and migration also fulfilled the inclusionary mandate of the reserves. A century later, eco-tourism firms apply for business licenses to the reserves with a promise to *protect* native flora. Tree-cutting smallholders, especially migrants, lose out. Fourth and finally, these colonizers differ from

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<sup>62</sup> Interview, Chimanimani, 13 July 2000.

the trekkers in that they avail themselves of state and donor subsidies. The ‘fortune hunters’ of the 1890s mostly found their own fortunes, if they found any.<sup>63</sup> The Moodies grabbed directly and crudely from the natives. Comparatively coddled, today’s settler-cum-investor may draw upon studies and management services paid for by donors.<sup>64</sup> Ultimately, ‘Campfire’ has come to denote an expensive public-private partnership for latter-day colonization. Or, at the very least, it is laying the ideological groundwork for foreseeable material change. Settler-led, investor-led development has reemerged as the leading model for Zimbabwe’s remote areas.

How might investment and colonization proceed? Already the outlines of three strategies are emerging: partition, land titling, and contract farming. Each one merits strict monitoring and regulation on the part of NGOs and government. This article addressed the first and most straightforward of these incipient land-grabs, partition. Rural district councils and investors are erecting real and imaginary fences—ranging from electrified wildlife barriers to the ‘business centre’—within reserves. If repeated, these acts of enclosure will reduce the reserves geometrically until there is nearly nothing left. Family-level land titling—to speculate on the second possibility—would eradicate the reserves in one fell swoop. The Movement for Democratic Change, Zimbabwe’s opposition party, recently revived this moribund notion, perhaps proving the Chimanimani hotelier foresightful. Under a system of titles, that investor could simply buy the site for a lodge and heli-pad.<sup>65</sup> Such real estate costs little and will cost even less if, as predicted, Zimbabwe’s economy crashes (Rotberg 2000). Finally, the most imaginative of the new strategies breaks the mold, so to speak, of land-grabbing. Contract farming allows an investor to control production without controlling land per se (Watts 1994). Land-limited firms can accumulate from a wider hinterland, as Chipinge tea estates are now doing in communal land. In all of these ways—partition, titling, and

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<sup>63</sup> Although after the initial period of conquest, colonial subsidies in markets, etc, were substantial.

<sup>64</sup> In addition to the documents already cited, the material relevant to Vhimba includes: Chimanimani District Environmental Team (1999), Hobane (1993), Hughes (1995), and Welford (1998).

<sup>65</sup> For similar criticism of individual titles, see Shipton (1992, 316-7)(1994, 365-6) and Rukuni (1994, 49-50). The ‘Manifesto’ of the Movement for Democratic Change (2000, section 3.3) seems to agonize over the issue of titles and land alienation: it advocates ‘the provision of title deeds in communal areas to enable land to be used as security [i.e. as collateral] to attract much-needed investment but in a manner that ... provides strong safeguards against the transfer of land from poor people to the rich or to finance houses [i.e. in manner that prevents creditors from claiming the collateral of debtors in default]’. Such a system would contradict itself: collateral is not collateral unless it can be confiscated.

contract farming—business will derive profits from natural resources in the reserves. Some smallholders will, doubtless, benefit too, but there are no guarantees, certainly not to land.

With this loss of entitlements, the century-old order of race and space is crumbling. From 1896, settler colonialism established and maintained rural apartheid. The Southern Rhodesian Native Department segregated land *for natives* (especially for women, children, and the aged) while accepting the permanence of white highlands established after 1890. The policy created a stalemate rather than the neo-Europe of some temperate zones. And, for nearly a century, neither the gun nor the market could separate smallholders from their land. Now, desegregation is rapidly removing those barriers and protections. Thanks to Campfire, white-owned firms and white tourists are coming onto black land. (As of late 2000, 36 of Zimbabwe's 55 districts had 'appropriate authority' to proceed with Campfire). Similar processes began shortly before the transition in South Africa as white 'organized agriculture' invested in Bantustans (Bernstein 1996, 22-4). Meanwhile, blacks are also coming onto white land. In 2000, hundreds of 'invasions' have shattered white entitlements in Zimbabwe, and this activism may cross the Limpopo into South Africa (Cousins, 2000). In the midst of such actual and potential dislocations, whites, blacks, and business are grasping for a social law of land access. They must now *claim* land by reference to economic productivity, past occupation, conservation, sheer force of arms, or all these criteria together. As in Vhimba, neither the colour of one's skin nor the heft of one's profits is sufficient to preclude eviction. There is cause for a bizarre nostalgia—for the comfort and security of black lowlands. Today's times recall the frontier spirit of Moodie and the fortune hunters: ambitious, dangerous, and rife with opportunity for squatting, resettling, or for doing both at the same time.

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