

Erwin Schweitzer

THE GOVERNANCE OF LAND REFORM IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

Transforming Racial Inequalities?

Land presents a critical aspect of the transformation of 'racial' inequalities in 'new' South Africa. The research project explores how the governance of land reform in the post-apartheid society affects *historical accumulated structures* of 'white' domination and advances 'black' empowerment.



The Governance of Land Reform

One key element of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa was the *land dispossession* by Europeans from Africans starting from the 17th century. European colonialists ended up annexing 93 percent of South Africa. In 1994, at the end of apartheid about 86 percent of the rural land was owned by white farmers. The new government, NGOs, and international actors believed that by *redistributing land* to

'black' South Africans the structural basis of 'racial' inequality could be transformed. While the first land reform policy intended to give land especially to *rural poor*, later political programmes focused more on emerging 'black' commercial farmers. Today, less than 5 percent of 'white'-owned agricultural land has been transferred to 'black' South Africans. Among others, the *government, local and international civil society, the private sector, and 'tribal authorities'* are trying to shape the land reform within processes of *social transformation, 'black' empowerment, neoliberal restructuring, and economic globalization*.



A Critical Anthropology of Governance

The research project is dedicated to the development of a critical anthropological theory of governance.



It will borrow, extend and synthesize intellectual tools of:

- *critical realism*
- *praxeology* (practice theory)
- and *governmentality studies*.

The theoretical framework will be complemented with *ethnographic fieldwork* to trace governance on the ground in diverse governmental and everyday worlds by conducting extended *dialogue* with actors and *observing* their actions in South Africa. This communicative method must be supplemented by the analysis of policy and legal documents as *cultural 'texts'* to connect local with larger scale societal levels.

Research Questions

Within the scope of the main research question, *how the governance of land reform affects 'racial' inequalities and transforms power relations in South Africa*, the project deals

with relations between different *ethnic groups (ethnicity)*, between *state and non-state actors*, between *the local and the global*. Thus, it explores questions such as how different ethnic groups participate in the land reform and with what effects; how government, civil society and the private sector actors mould the governance of land reform; how the local and the global articulate with each other in the governance of land reform and how this affects the transformation of the post-apartheid society.



The Researcher

Erwin Schweitzer was born in Vienna in 1981. He studied social and cultural anthropology in Vienna and Hamburg (2001 to 2007) and did field research in the Western Cape, South Africa (2005 and 2006). Furthermore, he is a member of the editing board of the Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies (ASEAS).

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